

COLLATERAL DAMAGE



Scenes in a Sealed Room

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We are in a home-made bunker constructed somewhere deep beneath West Jerusalem.

BENNY KATRANSKI lies asleep on a deck chair, dressed like Topol in "Fiddler on the Roof", and surrounded by columns and columns of boxes of every conceivable grocery item or tinned food imaginable.

Colourful posters of Eilat, Masada, and the Old City of Jerusalem adorn the walls. Lots of blue and white balloons, bearing the Star of David, surround a large, hand-written sign announcing: "Welcome To The End Of The World."

Paper cups and party food have been laid out neatly on a couple of folding tables. There are few other comforts apart from a chemical toilet, TV, two stretcher beds, and some very basic camping-type facilities for washing and cooking. An overhead pipe running the length of the bunker drips fetid water into an old bucket.

Suddenly a SIREN goes off on the television !

Benny is startled awake and looks around the bunker but no one else is there.

Benny
(calling out)
Sharon ?

He springs into action, strapping on his gas mask as he races to a large steel door and looks frantically around outside.

Still nothing. At 30 seconds the SIREN increases in pitch, reaching a crescendo. He glances nervously at his watch before slamming the door closed and leaning back against it, holding his head in his hands.

But he has to keep moving. Working fast, he attempts to seal the door with plastic tape; but the faster he tries the more he gets tangled up. Finally, he throws towels soaked in bicarb of soda along the bottom of the door. Then he braces himself for the impact.

Instead, there's a knock.

Sharon
Benny ?
You've sealed the door.

He tries the handle but can't budge it.

Benny

Sharon! Honey, there's been an alert !

Suddenly she bursts through with a trolley full of fresh groceries.

Benny

That tape cost me 18 sheckles a roll !

Sharon

And look how you've wasted it !
This wouldn't have stopped a snowflake.

Benny

Close it up will you, there's a missile coming.

ts the door behind her and frantically goes through the re-sealing procedure again.

Sharon

What missile ?

Benny

(indicating the TV)

The alarm went off 3 minutes ago !

Sharon goes over to the video machine and ejects the tape that's been playing.

Sharon

(reading)

"African Sex Slaves of the Third Reich". Oh Benny, Benny Katranski, what a sad, wierd little man you are.

He looks guilty.

Sharon

When did you tape this ?

Benny

Thursday. You were at your clairvoyant's.

He slips his gas mask off.

Sharon

(dropping the tape in a rubbish bin)

Yes, she told me to leave my husband immediately.

Benny

She wants to get into bed with you !

Sharon

At least somebody does.

Benny

Well, where the hell were you till after midnight !
I've been worried sick.

Sharon

Of course I'm late, since when does airport security have an
end to it ?

Benny

Not so good at work today ?

Sharon

Work today ! Work today. At least somebody in this family had
work today. Ruthy Bittermann miscarried twins again.

Benny

Oh, I told her she should use the vest.
What's she saving, not buying a vest ?

Sharon

Nobody's had a normal birth at work for months now.

Benny

They should all have a vest. It's basic, it's like not
cooking with aluminium, or not having a radiation filter in
front of your TV.

Sharon

(taking hers off)

The vests are heavy, Benny, people don't want to carry an
extra 8 kilos around all day.

She starts unloading the trolley adding to the piles of
boxes.

Benny

Titanium 30, is the only protection.

Sharon

(dismissive)

What good's a vest when that X-Ray machine leaks all over the
place ! I told Ruebenstein, I did a geiger counter check.
It's dangerous ! Some people's bags are still glowing when I
hand them back.

Benny

(shrugs)

Ah ! that's the price you pay for living a democracy.

Sharon

(stops unpacking as she realises)

Where is everybody ?

Benny

Nobody came.

Sadly, Benny removes the Topol cap and fake red beard.

Sharon

You're joking ! Nobody ?

He gestures around the empty room, the untouched food. . .
Shrugs.

Sharon

What are they afraid of ?

Benny

There's no Chutzpah anymore.

Sharon

You offered them protection.

Benny

I said they could form a convoy and come behind my nephew
Yitzach's tank.

Sharon

You went to a lot of trouble, Benny.

Benny

What's wrong with people ? Why won't they try an outing
occasionally. They can wear crash helmets if they're afraid
of getting hit by rocks.

Sharon

(waving it away)

Everyone's got armour plating on their windscreens now.
They break down in the wrong spot there's a helicopter over
in five minutes.

Benny

(gesturing fondly at the ceiling)

Our boys in the airforce, hovering up there like guardian
angels.

Sharon

If you can't live a normal life why bother going on ?

Benny
There's no Chutzpah anymore.

Suddenly there's another knock on the door.

Sharon
(going to answer it)
It's about time.

Benny
(blocking her, whispering)
Where are you going ?

Sharon
What ?

Benny
It's humiliating anyone should come now.
We'll be a laughing stock.

Rifka
(off)
Hullo, Benny ? It's Rifka.

Benny
Pretend we're not here. Hide forgodsake.
He switches the light out. Sharon switches the light on.

Sharon
Who's Rifka ?

Benny
(whispers)
I've got no idea.

Sharon
She sounds like she knws you.

Benny
(loud whisper)
Sharon, please ! They're obviously gatecrashers.

Rifka
Sharon ? Is that Sharon ? Is Benny there ?
Benny is shaking his head, doesn't know her.

Sharon angrily pushes him aside and once again breaks the tape seal to reveal: RIFKA and MICHAEL standing there wearing cheap cardboard party hats. Michael hangs in the doorway, unshaven, he looks a shambles. The new Australian flag is sewn onto his backpack: Southern Cross on Red, Black and Yellow background.

Rifka

Hi ! Everybody ! Happy Armageddon !
(throwing her arms around him)
Benny !

Benny hastily disengages, frowning.
Sharon starts packing her things.

Benny

Sharon please, I've never seen this woman before in my life!

Rifka

You look great, Benny. How are things ?

Benny

Please leave my bunker immediately.

Rifka

You remember, Michael ?

Benny

No !

Rifka

Oh, games, great ! What will we play, Benny ? Charades,
Lounge Room cricket, Smurf Ball ?

Sharon

You'd better start explaining, Benny.
(starting a stop watch)
You have exactly 2 minutes to save this marriage.

Benny

Sharon, what do I know about . . . about Australians ?
(indicating Michael's bag)
I've never seen these people before in my life !

Rifka

Come on, Michael, say hullo.

Michael

Hi, Benny great to see you again.

He holds out his hand to shake but as Benny vaguely takes it
Michael slumps to his knees where he appears to go to sleep.

Rifka

He's a little bit tired.

Sharon

I'll take a few essentials now and come back for the rest
tomorrow.

Benny
Look- this is insane. Will you people please go away !
(appealing)

Sharon. . .

Rifka tries to shake Michael awake.

Rifka
Have you got a glass of water or something ?

Benny sighs, goes to a water cask with a paper cup.

As Sharon moves towards the door she retrieves Benny's video from the rubbish bin..

Sharon
(handing it to Rifka)
These are some of his favourite positions.
Good luck with the rubber gloves.

She steps over Michael and walks out with her suitcase.

Benny
(yelling after Sharon)
How dare you ! How dare you mention that.
(he takes the tape off Rifka, hands her the water)

Rifka
(to Sharon, concerned)
I don't think you quite understand . . .

Sharon
No, thank you, I don't want to know you or see you or have anything more to do with you.

And she goes.

Benny
Look, how did you find this place ? Only my closest friends know about it.

Rifka
You have friends ?

Benny
Of course I have friends.

Rifka
Well, why did you need us ?

Benny
(at his wits end)
Who ARE you ?!

Rifka
You mean you didn't order us ?

Benny just looks at her blankly.

Rifka
(turning away)
This is a little embarrassing.

Benny
I'm really awake, yet. . . yet I must be still be dreaming. . . Yes, yes, I remember. I was sitting here in my favourite deck chair from the SS Titanic.

(returns to it, sits)
I was sitting here dreaming about the siren going off. Then Sharon came home. . .
Oh, thank god.
Thank god its only a nightmare.
Oh good. I'll wake up soon.

He closes his eyes.

Rifka
Well, somebody ordered us.

Like before Benny is startled awake.

Benny
Ordered you ?

Rifka
The people who hire us usually know who we are. They do it to impress people.

Benny looks at her blankly.

Rifka
We're from "Dial A Friend".

Sharon reappears in the doorway intrigued.

Rifka
Oh well that's blown it.
(sighs sinks onto a box)
We've failed Michael.
We've broken the cardinal rule: Sprung.

On his knees Michael jerks away, shakes his head.

Michael
I'm sorry, what ?

Rifka

Oh, you were no help.

Michael

I remember flying out of Melbourne about 49 hours ago.
There was a mix up somewhere. . .

Sharon

You mean, you don't really know my husband ?

Rifka

Look, it's a job alright. I used to be a tour guide.
I enjoyed my work. I loved hiking in the desert.
Now. . . I haven't seen a tourist for 3 years.
When I passed this backpack on the freeway, well of course I
had to pick him up. I was curious. Besides, my regular
partner was poisoned last week at a bar mitzvah in Ramallah.
It's easier with two.

Sharon

You mean you just turn up at people places and pretend to be
their friend ?

Rifka

There's a bit of skill to it.

Sharon

People pay to ave a friend now ?

Rifka

(shrugs)

There's a lot of loneliness out there, Sharon.
Some of us are too busy to have a social life.
It's easier to hire.

Benny

Oy oy oy. What is the modern world coming to ?

Rifka

So we'll get out of your way now.
Come on Michael.
I'm very sorry. There'll be a refund.

Sharon

But who hired you ?

Rifka

Look, madam, all we get is a name and address.

Sharon

Well, I suppose. . . if one of our friends paid for you.

Benny
It's the thought that counts.

Sharon
I hate to see someone lose their job.

Benny
Sharon, it's incredibly late.

Rifka
The fee includes penalty rates.

Sharon
Let's face it Benny, you could use a little conversation.

Benny
Sharon, I'm exhausted.

Sharon
I'm the one who's been working ! Maybe I'd like a little late night winding down. My job is tense.

Benny
Tense !

Rifka
Look, do you want us or not ?

Benny
You said there's a refund.

Sharon
Put some music on, Benny. I'll get our friends a drink.
Michael sits down on the floor as Sharon puts a beer his hand. He stares at it.

Sharon
Lakheim

Rifka
(taking her beer)
Lakheim

Michael
Bottom's up.

Benny
Who needs friends ? Did we have friends during the shoa ? Did anyone come to our aid then, when 6 million went to the gas chambers? Not. One. Nation.

Sharon
That's the world's problem, not ours.

Rifka

Oh please, lets not talk about the holocaust. This is An Armageddon Party. We're supposed to be enjoying ourselves.

Sharon

Of course. Yes, please remind us. Just do as you normally would. Isn't this exciting, Benny ? We haven't had two people visiting us like this for ages.

Benny

Yes we have. We had the Glicks over for cocktails last week.

Sharon

Oh, make an effort, Benny, please. These people are going to a lot of trouble.

Sharon leans down to Michael offering him some dried seeds.

Sharon

So do you love Israel, Michael ?

Michael

(blinks at her)

I've only been here five minutes.

Sharon

And. . .

Michael

(strugglin to find the words)

It's. . . it's. . . kind of. . .
sort of. . .

They nod at him, waiting.

Michael

Interesting. . .

Benny

(weighing it up)

Interesting ?

Michael

But bad for your health. I think.
(smiling)

Sharon

In what way, ?

Michael

(nervous, self conscious laugh)

Well, I sure hope my life insurance policy covers this part of the world.

Benny and Sharon look disappointed.

Benny

You have some problem with this part of the world ?

Rifka

You can be frank, Michael.

Michael

How can I be frank, if I'm Michael ?

(nervous snigger)

But the jokes aren't working.

Almost as a team Sharon and Benny move in on him, vaguely menacing.

Benny

Do you know anybody in Israel, Michael ?

Michael

Not till now.

Benny

Did you pack this bag yourself ?

Benny quickly tips the contents on the floor.

Michael looks shocked.

Benny

Did you accept any gifts from anyone ? Any wrapped parcels you don't know the contents of ?

Michael

No.

Sharon

So if we find a weapon in here, it's not yours ?

Michael

I've got a swiss army knife.

Benny

Which army ?

Michael

I thought they were neutral.

Sharon
Did anyone approach you and ask you to carry a gift ?

Benny
Where do you plan to stay while you're here ?

Michael
I don't know, I thought I'd just look around.

Benny
Look around for what ?

Sharon
For military installations ?

Michael
No !

Sharon
What do you do, what is your occupation ?

Michael
I'm I'm ah writer. . . sort of.

Benny
A writer !

Rifka
That's nice.

Sharon
Why did you come to Israel ?

Michael
I thought I might try some travel stories. . .

Benny
You want to write bad things about Israel ?

Michael
I've only been here 5 minutes.

Sharon
You said that 5 minutes ago.

Benny
Who do you know here ?

Michael
No one.

Sharon
What are their naes ?

Michael
I just thought I'd have a holiday.
Maybe if a story came up. . .

Benny
A holiday ? Here ?

They both look to Rifka, the tour guide.

Rifka
Yes. It's quite true. Australians don't seem to have any
fear. The last real guiding job I had was showing a group
of pensioners from Adelaide round the bomb sights.

Benny finds a map amongst Michael's things.

Benny
Why is there a circle round Natanya on this map ?

Michael
It's second hand, I bought that map in Paris. . .

Sharon
Paris !

Benny
A centre of arab intrigue.

Sharon
Who do expect to contact in Natanya ?

Michael
No one. I've never heard of Natalya.

Benny
Does our security system bother you ?

Michael
God no ! I'd much rather be on the plane that doesn't have
the bomb . . . on board.

Sharon
Then where's your passport ?

Michael
I don't have it.

Rifka

It was stolen. his wallet, ear-rings, ankle bracelet. He was mugged at the bus stop outside Ben Gurion airport.

Michael

My credit cards, travel insurance. . .
I haven't got a brass razoo.

Sharon

Arabs did this to you ?

Michael

No- Some girls. A group. They were . . . jewish I think.
They had batons and things. Knuckle dusters. . .

Benny

(impressed)
Our girls huh ?
(nodding)
Not bad. Not bad.

Sharon

Ah, a day off training- they're at a loose end.
They're kids.

Benny

You can say what you like about conscription but I tell you, this new generation. They can look after themselves.

Rifka

Now it's Pasach. The consulate's closed for a week.
He has nothing.

Benny

Why are you lying to us ?

Michael

I'm not lying.

Benny

You said you didn't have any weapons.

Michael

It's true. I hate violence. I live in a rainforest in Northern New South Wales!

Benny

Then what's this doing here ?

Benny unpeels one of Michael's socks and out drops a hand grenade.

Michael
(shocked)

That's not mine, you did that !

Benny
Pick it up.

Michael
No !

Benny
Pick it up.

Michael
What, so my prints'll be on it ?

Sharon
This is a hanging offence, Michael.

Michael
Look, I got stoned in Amsterdam. There was a mix-up with my booking. I was supposed to be flying to Barcelona, I didn't even want to come to Israel ! Now I can't get out of the damn place ! I've got no ticket, no way of proving who I am.

There's a tense pause. Benny steps forward and picks up the handgrenade. He pulls the pin. The others gasp.

Benny flicks the lid off.

Benny
Have a chocolate.

The "hand grenade" is really only a small barrel of chocolates.

Sharon and Benny smile at him.

Michael
(takes one tentative)
Oh yes, I forgot, I bought these in Singapore.

Benny
Mm. Chocolate coated macadamias. Not bad for shrapnel.

Laughing, Benny offers chocolates all round.

Sharon
Welcome to Jerusalem, Michael.
Here's your gas mask.

All the Israelis laugh.

Michael

(taking it awkwardly)

Gee thanks, I have got a bit of sanding to do back home.

Benny

You know the Russians, they come here in their hundreds of thousands and all their lives in Russia they have to queue up. They queue up for petrol, food, clothing. . . to get a breath of fresh air they queue. Half their lives they spend waiting in line. But here- they step off the plane and straight away we give them their gas mask.

(he laughs)

Michael

(handing back his beer)

Look, I hope you don't mind but I think I really should go.

(to Rifka)

Thanks for the lift. And the gas mask and everything. . .

Benny

Where are you going without any money ?

Come drink, enjoy. Please be our guest. You've come a stranger to our house and we welcome you.

Sharon

Are we monsters that we can't take pleasure in each other's company ?

Benny

Come, be our friend.

Tell us, honestly, what you really think of Israel.

Sharon

Then we'll break your knee caps, huh ?

Again they laugh.

Michael smiles, uncertain.

Michael

Break my knees. Oh that's good.

That's an Israeli joke is it ?

Benny

Sharon grew up in New York.

Sharon

Brooklyn.

Benny

Hey now there's a dangerous place.

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Sharon
My mother wouldn't even let me go to the corner shop to buy pizza.

Rifka
You're much safer here. Thank god.

Benny
You see Michael, we are the only democracy in the Middle East.

Michael
I didn't know that.

Benny
And every day I go down on my knees and thank god he has given us, his chosen people, this freedom to be here.

Rifka
Well, yes, but it's not really freedom is it? Sitting in concrete bunker waiting for things to fall on you from outer space.

Benny
Concrete bunker! This happens to be an ancient Roman cistern. Look at this.

He scrapes some dirt and rubble away with his Topol boots.

Benny
You should see the mosaic we found under here. Now there was a party! They had women, animals, dwarves. . .

Sharon
Disgusting! Cover it up, Benny, for goodness sake.

Benny
I put these studs in myself.
(placing a proprietorial hand on a wooden pole)
The whole building above could collapse and we'd survive in here easy- weeks if we have to. 'Til they dig us out. It's amazing to think how much water they could have held in here enough for years!

Sharon
You did a lot of work here, Benny.

Benny
I slaved over this place. You should've seen the rubbish when we first occupied: old bits of pottery and fragments of parchment in funny old languages, rusty tools. . . an incredible amount of junk!

Sharon
He filled three industrial rubbish bins.

Benny
80 Sheckles each, they cost me.

Sharon
Then of course everyone wanted to use it.

Benny
Old Mrs. Kratzmeier upstairs tap tap tapping with her white cane on the door all night. Wanting to be let in. Wanting to use the toilet. . .

Sharon
She had a good strong bathroom herself she could have sealed.

Benny
Some people are just bone lazy if you ask me.

Sharon
We know its not exactly private land but we do own one of the apartments up above.

Benny
I mean how far down does a title go ?

Sharon
They drove us nearly insane with their demands and eviction orders. We had a terrible struggle to get established here.

Benny
Eventually I had to put that brick wall in.

Sharon
That got them off our backs.

Benny
Found the bricks second hand, did it all myself. Saved a pile.

Sharon
It was lucky they demolished those Palestinian houses. You'd have had to buy new bricks for sure.

Michael
(looking round, nodding)
I've heard about bunkers like this in California.

Sharon
Oh we're way ahead of California.

Rifka
It's a prison, really.

Benny
A prison? It's only a prison if you can't leave it.

Rifka
This's where our politics have brought us- straight back to the cave man era. We've just eroded about 40,000 years of civilization.

Benny
I can walk out of here any time I want to.
I mean, look, can you do this in a prison?

He strides to the door and opens it.
There's the sound of a muffled gunshot somewhere up above.
Benny hesitates. . .

Michael
What was that?

Benny quickly closes the door, bolting it.

Michael
It sounded like a gun.

Benny
Nah, just a car back firing.

There's a sustained sound of machine gun fire.

Rifka
And what was that a sewing machine?

Sharon
(shrugging)
Ah you get used to it.

Michael
I hope not.

Benny
To us it's the sound of- reassurance. It's like knowing that your burglar alarm still works. We're perfectly safe in here.

Sharon
That door, properly bolted down, will stop anything short of a medium sized artillery piece firing point blank.

Benny
Or Sharon pushing her supermarket trolley through.

They laugh.

Michael

Well I think it's monstrous that you're forced to live like this.

Benny

Forced ?

(nearly choking on a pretzel)

We choose to live like this.

Sharon

We're the chosen people.

Rifka

Choosey people.

Benny

And this is our promised land.

Michael

Well, I'm sorry, but it doesn't look terribly promising to me.

Rifka

He's right, you know, it will consume us in the end. This madness. This culture of guns and revenge.

Michael

It's a like a cancer.

Sharon

I don't think you've come with quite the right attitude, Michael.

Benny

Didn't guns forge your own country ? Guns and disease ? You Australians slaughtered your indiginous people wholesale.

Michael

We didn't put them in concentration camps.

Sharon

You didn't have to ! They died from the small pox on the rotten blankets you gave them !

Benny

And oh, yes, you have the benefit of historical distance. "It all happened a long time ago" I hear you say. Not your problem, huh ? Yet you still enjoy the fruits. You still own the land you took from them.

Michael

I don't own any land. And I can't change the past. This is happening now ! It just seems to me that you've cut yourself off completely from the other side. And in building a fence to keep them out you've only constructed your own. . . prison.

Sharon

Are you suggesting that we don't defend ourselves ? We live amongst our problem. It's true, here it's right up close. Your country has the space to push the wall out a bit further- you have this luxury. You don't have to bother with it day to day because the problem is removed, the fence is invisible. But there is a wall around Australia nevertheless. You keep them out just as much as we do.

Benny

Your lifestyle could not survive without it.

Rifka

But Michael's right, surely we can't go on like this.

Sharon

We've been going on like this for 5,000 years.

Michael

(putting his can down)

Well, thanks for the beer, it was nice meeting you.
(goes to leave)

Benny holds his backpack, delaying the exit.

Benny

Look, I'm not saying we have a divine right to be here; because Moses said so- or its written in the Talmud- don't get me wrong. It's not a biblical thing. If you go back far enough nobody has a right to be anywhere. Who knows where it all started ? Africa ? The Eurphrates ? Homo Sapiens may even have started in Australia for all I know.

Sharon

We have a right to be here because we made this land work. We tore a living from it with our bare hands.

Benny

We planted the forests. We dammed the Jordan, we made the desert bloom.

Sharon

With our bare hands and our faith in God.

Rifka

23.

Then why do we poison wells ? Bulldoze houses ?
Shoot children ?

Benny

Look, I'd give them back the West Bank and Gaza tomorrow if I thought it would bring peace. Much as I love Judea and Samaria I would let them have it. What do I care if they have their own flag and their own bit of authority ? That causes me no problems at all. Only trouble is that's not all there is to it. They also want to drive us into the sea !

Rifka

We've got to break the cycle of violence.
We've got to trust the good people on both sides.

Benny

I'll trust them, already.
I'll trust them at the end of the gun because that's the only law they understand- someone who's stronger than they are.

Sharon

It's true. You sign a contract with an arab it might as well be written on bubble gum. It's a different culture. You ask them where their land starts they tell you-
(pointing)
"Three cigarettes from here."

Benny

We gave back 90% of the land we conquered in '67. 90% !
What other country has given back so much conquered territory in history ?

Rifka

We conquered nothing, Benny. This bunker is all we've conquered. After all that toil and sacrifice this is the only place we feel safe in. Our hearts and minds are as sealed as the caves we've retreated into. Michael's right and yet we won't listen to him. We always ignore the outsider. We blind our eyes and our hearts to what's really going on- in our name ! Our very souls have shrivelled up. Why can't we see that we have become the Nazis our parents warned us against !

Sharon

We should just let them come and trample all over us again ?
Like they've been doing in every pogrom since Abraham ?

Rifka

Our army is crumbling apart at what it has to do in the West Bank. We can no more suppress the intafada than the Americans could win in Vietnam.

Benny

You can't trust them, Rifka.
They don't understand

Rifka

Of course they understand.
They understand honour.
They understand love.
They understand peace.
They are just like us.

Benny

How would you know ?

Rifka

Because I married one.

There's a shocked pause.

Benny

(crushing his can, throwing it into a bin)
I think it is getting a bit late.

Rifka

Don't turn away now, Benny.
We were just beginning to get somewhere.

Benny

I no longer want you in my house.

Rifka

Well it's OK Benny cause he's dead now.
So you don't have to worry.

Michael

Let's go Rifka, you said you'd show me dawn on Mt. Scopus.

Suddenly a SIREN goes off above them- very loud.

Benny

(ushering them to the door)
Right, well thanks for coming.

Rifka

Hang on, I'm not going out there.

Benny

Thank you this is my bunker. Will you please
leave now so we can seal the door.

Rifka

Are you mad ! There's a rocket coming.

Like Sharon Michael starts flumbling for his gas mask, but has a lot of problems breathing.

Benny

They wouldever dare bomb Jerusalem. Can you imagine what would happen if something went a bit off course and hit the Dome of the Rock ?

As before the Siren goes into a higher, final pitch.

Sharon

Benny, seal the door !

Benny

Please GO NOW.

Sharon

(checking her watch)

One minute Benny. . .

Benny grabs Rifka and physically tries to wrestle her through the door frame. She resists kicking out with her legs. Michael rushes over and retrieves her from Benny. Still nearly choking in his mask he stands determinedly between them, protecting Rifka.

Sharon

Forgodsake, Benny, NOW !!!

As before Benny springs into action. It's all panic and confusion. He slams the door shut and frantically tries to seal it with plastic tape.

Sharon has her mask on and is throwing towels at the bottom of the door. She tries to get Benny's mask on as he tangles up the tape again.

Benny

Fuck this tape !

Rifka takes over the tape and just manages to cover the gaps when there's a TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION right above them.

They brace themselves.

The noise continues to thunder through the ground around them, dislodging dirt from the ceiling of the bunker, reverberating on and on into the distance.

Benny

(shaking his fist at the ceiling)

You rotten profligate sons of Cain !

Your eyebrows will be dipped in acid !

Sharon

Benny, settle down, you'll give yourself a coronary.

Michael gives up trying to adjust his mask and takes it off again. Rifka never even bothered with one.

The lights blink on and off.

Benny

The radio !

Sharon grabs a small transistor and switches it on. It's mostly static and interference. Only a few words can be made out.

Radio voice

. . . General Ehud Makor . . . senior officer commanding the central front . . . dissolved . . . Knesset and has taken control of the country . . . plutonium scatter device . . . radius . . . kilometres . . . repeat do not . . . repeat do not . . .

Benny comes over clutching for the radio.

Benny

To the right and down.
The army channel is to the right.

But in their struggle with it, trying to improve the reception the transistor falls to the ground and is shattered.

Benny

Shit !

Sharon

Now we'll never know what it was.

Benny

It was plutonium scatter.

Michael

Plutonium ?

Sharon

They don't have an actual nuclear weapon, they just drop a bomb that scatters radioactive material all over the place.

Benny

(shaking his fist at the ceiling again)
I hope your toes wither from leprosy !

Sharon

They'll clean it up though. Our boys in the radio-toxic squad will see us through.

Michael

You mean we have to wait in here till they clean up a whole bunch of plutonium ?

Benny

Three or four weeks, tops.

Michael

Four weeks !

Benny

Unless you want to see the skeleton through your skin.

Michael

I don't even like illuminated dials on watches.

Sharon

Complain complain. I had a hair appointment tuesday. So I cancel- what's the big deal ? Relax already. We have enough food here for. . .

(re-calculates, now there's 4 of them)

Benny

Yes Sharon, for TWD people we have enough food.

Rifka

There's mountain of food in here !

Michael

I haven't eaten anything since Sydney.

(spotting a carton-full of tinned salmon)

I'd love an toasted salmon sandwich.

Benny comes straight up and takes the box away from him. holds it possessively.

Benny

So get your own tinned fish.

Michael grabs another box. Benny also takes it off him.

Benny

For US dollars I'll mark it down to you at cost.

Michael

I told you I lost all my traveller's cheques.

Rifka

What are you going to do, watch us starve to death ?

Michael
You can't let us die.

Benny
Why not ?

Michael
We'll smell.

Sharon
Oh please. . .

Rifka
Yes, our bodies will putrify.

Benny
I've got a gas mask.

Rifka
You'll be stuck here with two corpses, bloated and stinking
and crawling with maggots.

Benny
I'll eat you before then.

Rifka
Oh no you won't

Benny
No ?

Rifka
Because we taste like pork.

Benny
Sorry to disappoint you, but we are not kashrut.

Sharon
(offering a bowl)
Have another prawn cracker.

Michael inspects the hebrew writing on another box.

Michael
Well I'm going to open a tin of something and if
anybody tries to stop me I'm going to open it on their
skull OK ?

Benny rips his Topol coat off and reveals underneath a body-
hugging pastel shirt with buttons open down to the navel.
There's masses of gold chain and chest fur. He takes up a
challenging stance.

Rifka

Benny ! You're a cha cha !

Sharon

Benny. give them a tin of fish.

Michael takes a tin and slowly opens it with his swiss army knife.

Benny

You're going to bring that down on my skull ?

Michael

This tin ? No this tin I'm going to eat.

Benny produces a gun and points it at Michael.

Sharon

Don't be ridiculous Benny.

Benny

Put the tin down. Slowly

Michael does so. Slowly.

Rifka

I'll pay for the fish, alright.

Michael

Look it's fine. I'm really not hungry.

Sharon

Eat it Michael, just ignore him.

Benny

Yeah eat it, Michael, you'll swallow lead with the first mouthful.

Michael

No truely, I've lost my appetite.

Michael carefully puts the tin back in its box.

Michael

I'd much rather have a smoke anyway.

He sits, pulls back the ripped sle of one of his tattered Reeboks, and extracts a large joint.

Michael

Been saving this for the right moment. With a bit of luck we could be rebreathing it in here for hours.

Benny

Excuse me, this is my air in here.

Sharon

Oh Benny, relax already. Put your feet up.

Benny

Hashishim- that's where the word "assassin" comes from. They got stoned then went out and killed people.

Rifka

You're the one pointing the gun.

Sharon

I'll have a puff.

Michael takes a drag and passes it to her.

Benny

Sharon ! You want to ruin your health now ?
Oh great. Now my home smells like a turkish brothel.

Sharon passes the joint to Rifka.

Sharon

That's good stuff.

Michael

I love Amsterdam.
A truly civilized race, the Dutch.

Rifka

Apart from the ones who ended up in South Africa.

Michael

Great, so they got rid of all their bible bashers.
What's bad news for the zulus is good news for the lulus.

The three smokers find that hugely funny.

Benny

Can't you see Sharon ? it rots your mind.

Sharon

Benny, if we're going to be stuck we might as well get on a little OK ? The next few weeks can either be very pleasant or a living hell.

Benny

You're stoned already.

Benny starts pacing up and down.

Benny

The Bedouin smoke that stuff and they're still going round in circles. They've been going round in circles for three thousand years.

Sharon

You're the one going round in circles, Benny, will you sit down? I'm getting dizzy watching you.

Rifka

Show us what's on your video, Benny.

Benny

No.

Sharon

Yeah, Benny give us a look.
(grabbing for it)

Benny

(snatches it back)

How dare you.

Sharon

Come on Benny.

Benny

Right, party's over thank you.
I'm tired, I'd like to get some sleep now.

Rifka

Please- be our guest.

Again the smokers find that hugely funny.

Benny

Are you coming, Sharon?

Sharon

Coming? Coming whe?? We stuck in a bunker, Benny.
No one's coming anywhere.

Michael, Rifka and Sharon laugh.
Benny is not amused.

Rifka

Everyone's got to be somewhere.

More laughter.

Only Benny remains serious.

Benny stops listens.

Benny
What's that ?

Rifka also hears something.

Rifka
Sounds like . . . digging, someone digging.

Benny
Our boys in the radiotoxic squad. At their jobs already with
What efficiency ! What elan ! These are the elite troops of
the Western World. Nothing on this planet can stop us. We'll
be out of here in 23 days tops ! You know what they call
someone who is good at everything ? Huh ? Who can really do
things. Get them done ?

Michael
Jack of all trades ?

Benny
No. No. Some one who masters everything.
Can fix absolutely anything that's broken down. . .

Sharon
Good with their hands !

Benny
Don't be embarrassing, Sharon.

Rifka
We call them Israeli's don't we ?
(laughs)

Benny
Yes exactly,
(laughing with her)
Israelis ! Ha !
No job's too impossible. Three million we stood and faced
100 million arabs and in 6 days we conquered an area three
times the size of our original territory.

Rifka
It wasn't a six day war, Benny. It was a six million day war.

Benny
How dare you mention the six million.
How dare you in this context.

Rifka

It wasn't over in 6 days- it's still going on. June 1967 was one brief little battle in a long endless war. And still we go on using the Holocaust to justify it.

Benny

How dare you !

Rifka

We are creating the Holocaust. A new Holocaust.

Benny

Well then I welcome armageddon.
I embrace it with open arms.
Because with it comes a cleansing of these insane ideas.

Rifka

You've got to believe that deep down people, ordinary people, just don't want to go on killing each other.

Sharon

Israel is a state of mind.

Rifka

Mind's can be changed !

Benny takes a deep breath, starts stacking boxes, making a wall between him and Rifka.

Benny

I may have to share this space with you, but that doesn't mean I have to look at you.

Sharon

Oh, Benny don't be ridiculous.

Benny

Are you coming, Sharon ? It's nearly 2 am.

Sharon

Benny, stop this nonsense immediately.

Benny

Suit yourself.

Benny constructs the wall of boxes so as to exclude Sharon. But she steps through to confront him on his side.

Sharon

Benny !

He goes on building. oblivious to her.

Michael and Rifka just sit on the other side, sniggering- as if Benny is like some mad parent who's lost control of his children. The line of his wall reaches the drip from the pipe up above.

Benny

Since we've got all the fresh water I'll leave you the drip.

Rifka

That's a sewer pipe.

Benny

Tap water leaking from our apartment block.

Rifka

I'm not drinking that.

Benny

You can boil it if you want to

Michael takes the small portagas stove.

Michael

Your water will run, out.
Our drip will go on forever.

Benny shrugs and steers his wall round the drip.

Rifka

The government lied to us Benny.
The government and the media and the higher echelons of the military. In '91 they told us to put on gas masks when the other side never had chemical weapons. And for why? So once again the world could see the jews suffering in the gas chambers. And who copped it in the neck? The poor old bloody Palestinians of course. They didn't get gas masks.

Benny

They were out on their roof tops cheering when the scuds hit

Michael

Who can blame them!

Rifka

And instead of being underground protected against the conventional bombs that were falling all around us we were upstairs in our sealed rooms totally vulnerable.

Michael

Ah- you pick up a newspaper to read the next set of lies.

Rifka

We are ruled by the intelligence services.
And they're stuffing it up like they always do.

Benny goes on building his wall of boxes, ignoring her.

Michael

It's the concentration of power in the hands of a few.

Benny

What do you expect ?! It's the nature of power to be concentrated. Power doesn't work any other way.

Rifka

What we need is diversity, not concentration.
Diversity sustains us. It makes us human !

Benny

When faced with a crisis the nation must unite behind it's leadership. Anything else will lead straight to disaster.

Rifka

Look where their leadership has brought us !
Cringing underground, in caves !

Benny

Yes, underground in caves. Like we were when the Romans came for us. After they'd destroyed the temple and razed Jerusalem to the ground. And we survived in the caves and when the Roman empire crumbled like all the other empires we emerged and kept our people going. And we'll do that again. And even if it takes a 1000 years we too will build another even more beautiful Jerusalem !

Sharon

It's the nature of this land to be always fought over because of where we are: at the crossroads. Ultimately everyone wanted to come through here. Violence is a way of life in the Middle East. It's always been an eye for an eye.

Michael

If christianity hadn't started here I would've had to have been invented.

Rifka shudders.

Rifka

What was that ?

Michael

What ?

Rifka

Did you feel it ?
Something passed through here.
You didn't feel it ?

Michael

I did feel a bit strange. Yes.
I did feel something.

Sharon

Feel what ?

Rifka

Like we're being watched or something.

Benny

You smoke that stuff what do you expect.

Rifka

Do you believe in ghosts ?

Sharon

Oh please, I have to live here.

Michael

I believe in angels.

Sharon

Please- it gives me the creeps just thinking about it.

Rifka

Then you felt something also.

Sharon

All I felt was cold.

Michael

That's what I felt. A real chill, like a shiver.

Rifka

Yes. It passed through all of us

Benny

You ask me, it's hot down here. Tomorrow there's going to be
a chumsin.

Michael

He disagrees with literally everything we say.

(to Benny)

There's no common ground with you at all is there ?

Rifka

You see this is the real problem of the Jews, Michael. And our ultimate nightmare. Because once we solve the issue of the Palestinians- which we must and we will- we'll then have to confront the problem of the divisions within ourselves. And once that happens the fissure lines of Ashkenazi and Sephardi, left and right, Orthodox and Secular will become so numerous and insoluble that we'll just explode ourselves apart again.

Michael notices the line that Benny's box wall is taking.

Michael

He's cutting us off from the light.

Rifka

We share the light.

She starts dismantling the wall.
Benny replaces the boxes that she removes.

Rifka

This isn't fair.

Benny

It's my light I can do what I like with it.

Suddenly the light blinks on and off a few times then goes out.

Sharon

Oh No !

Benny

I suggest we get some sleep anyway. A power failure can take hours to fix. Are you coming Sharon ?

Sharon

Oh well, if that's it, I suppose that's it.
Good night

Benny

Look out.

She knocks something, it breaks.

Benny

Sharon !
You're stoned.

They go to sleep on their stretchers

Michael flicks on his lighter and finds a small menorah.
He lights the candles.

Michael and Rifka survey the tiny area that Benny has left
them on their side of his box wall.

Suddenly, almost like magic, a moonlit desert landscape
appears on the wall behind Rifka- a mysterious, alluring
image which they don't appear to notice.

Rifka looks around sharply, eyes widening.

Michael
What ?

Rifka
Listen. . .

Michael
Listen to what ?

Rifka
Just listen.

There's silence for a few moments.

Rifka
Isn't that amazing ?

Michael
What ?

Rifka
The silence.

Michael listens.

Michael
My ears are ringing.

Rifka
That's it. That's it exactly. It's so silent you actually
hear your ears- for the first time. That background ringing
that 's always there.

Michael listens again.

Michael
That is pretty amazing.

Rifka

Just like the desert. Not a breath of wind, no leaves, no running water, no life at all to disturb the absolute silence- like being on the moon.

They look at each other.

Rifka

I'd love to take you to the Sinai.
A fanatastic, magical landscape, incredible mountains, exotic oases, mystical starlight- places where you can almost touch . . . infinity. It's easy to see why so many religions started there.

Michael

I feel like a explorer who's been shipwrecked. I've woken up on a strange beach only to find that I've been saved by a mermaid.

Rifka

Yes, I will save you Michael. I will gather you up in my arms and hold you close to my long fishy tail.

Michael

Nothing. . . quite this exciting has ever happened to me before, Rifka.

Rifka

I'm yours if you want me.

Michael

You're the most amazing woman I've ever met.

Rifka blows the menorah out.
They are enveloped in complete darkness.

Rifka

Take me like a slave.

Michael

(a touch nervous)

What ?

Rifka

Be my Roman emperor and I'll be your bedouin slave.

Michael

Your skin's so soft. So dark. So beautiful.

Rifka

Yes, yes.

Be my King Solomon and I'll be your Queen of Sheba.
Your hot, black lover come 800 leagues across the burning
desert sands to cool, high Jerusalem. Come to her king,
thirsting for his love in his mountain fortress.

Michael

Oh Rifka, I just want to explode inside you !

Rifka

Do it to me Michael. Do what all the other good christian
boys have been doing to jews for centuries.

Michael

It's incredible. We're like an oasis of affection in a world
where love has been lost, shoved under the mat, stuck away in
a corner like so many used cockie traps.

Rifka

We could start a new religion, one based on sex.
A new, new testament.

Michael

Gee, my mother warned me about this sort of thing.

Rifka

Give reality to your fantasies, Michael.
All the rest is bullshit.

Michael

We ar crazy. This is a crazy game we are playing.

Rifka

Yes, it's a game. Of course it's a game.

Michael

You're the Virgin Mary and I'm the Holy Ghost.

Rifka

Yes, Michael, yes, I'm open to you.

Michael

You're a wandering Jew. But I'm going to pin you down.

Rifka

Yes, I'm wandering and I'm going to take you out of your safe
little middle class cocoon, Michael Davidson, out of your
comfortable habits and your western lifestyle and take you
straight to heart of the matter. To the very centre of the
desert.

Michael

This is really very exciting, Rifka
Are all Jewish women like you ?

Rifka

Give me a baby.

The sound of their lovemaking stops.

Michael

What ?

Rifka

Will you give me a baby ?

Michael

A baby ! What here ?

Rifka

Yes. Here now and forever. . . .

Again there's a long pause.

Rifka

Wow, the silence was deafening.

Michael

You mean- unprotected sex ?

Rifka

Do you know of any other way ?

Michael

It's a bit risky isn't it.

Rifka

I love risk. I love living on the edge. That's why I'm in
Israel. It's the only place I don't have to justify myself.
The only place I'm truly alive.

There's the sound of bombs going off in the distance
somewhere above them.

Michael

Look, Rifka, I like you a lot. . .

Rifka

There's no strings attached.
You don't have to worry about a thing.
I've got it all worked out. I'm going to bring this child up
by myself.

Michael

Rifka, you don't know what you're letting yourself in for. It'll change you completely.

Rifka

I want to change completely.

Michael

It's a lifetime thing.

Rifka

I need a life time thing.

Michael

But- we've only just met. I don't understand the big rush.

Rifka

It's not your biological clock that's running out.

Michael

It's just, I dunno. . . I've already got a kid. She's great. She really looks after me. Sends me money whenever she can. But you know, that's the thing really. You see I sorta need looking after myself. I'm not responsible, Rifka.

Rifka

I don't need your responsibility.

Michael

Yeah, but it's not that simple.

Rifka

Look, I've tried all my old boyfriends. I even put an ad in the paper. I'll go to the sperm bank if I have to.

Michael

You want your kid to turn out like a young doctor ?

Rifka

Not really, that's why I'm asking you.

Michael

But I'm 42, my life's almost over.

Rifka

You don't have to be involved.

Michael

How could I not be involved ?

Rifka

Oh this is what all my depressing dinner dates were about- with the men who answered my ad. Men are so sentimental.

Michael

Look, of course I'll give you baby. . . if I can. If that's what you want. I'll give you anything . . . anything. But I couldn't just walk away from it.

Rifka

Oh- I see.

Michael

Weren't counting on a father, huh ?

Rifka

No, quite frankly, I'd given up.

Michael

I can't imagine you're not deluged with lovers. You're so beautiful

Rifka

Oh, Michael. I love you.

Michael

I love you too.

Rifka

Then do it to me Michael. Make me whole.

Michael

Rifka !

In the absolute blackness we hear them fall into each others arms, followed by the soft moans of their wild, passionate lovemaking.

door, on the other side of the box wall Benny switches on a torch.

Sharon

What ?

Benny

Shh ?

He gets out of his stretcher and tip toes over to the box wall, listening.

Sharon

What are you doing ?

Tentatively, Benny nudges the boxes towards Rifka and Michael's side- pushing the bottom row a few centimeters.

Sharon
Benny ?

Benny
Shh, you'll wake them.

Sharon
(whispers)
Benny, stop it.

Benny
(whispers)
It's the boiling frog principal.
If we do a centimetre a day they won't notice.

Sharon
(going back to sleep)
You're mad.

Benny continues to nudge the wall slowly, carefully towards the lovers.

Suddenly the light blinks on again.
Benny freezes.

Rifka and Michael are upside down behind some boxes at the back of their section. All we see are their entwined legs sticking up in the air. They're laughing.

Michael
Look at us.
We said we we're going to have a quite night.

Giggling behind the overturned boxes they scramble back into their clothes.

Michael
I love you.

Rifka
You know how long it's been since anybody said that to me ?

Michael
I adore you.

Rifka
Michael. . .

Michael

I'm an angel to your goddess.
I sing your praises then I die happy.

Rifka

Oh Michael. . .
(starts crying, quietly)

Michael is perplexed.

Michael

What? What's the matter?

Rifka

Nothing.

Michael

You're crying.

Rifka

It's alright.

Michael

Rifka, it's me, remember?

He hugs her.

Michael

I adore you, I can't get enough of you.

Rifka

I don't deserve you, Michael.

Michael

Don't be stupid.

Rifka

You don't know me.

Michael

What do I need to know?

Rifka

I'm bad. Very bad.

Michael

Who says you're bad?

Rifka

I do. I know I am.

Michael

What have you done that's bad?

Rifka

There's a dark side, Michael, you don't know me.

Michael

Are you kidding ?

You're the most selfless person I've ever mt.

Rifka

You're biased.

Michael

All I know is- I was lost and you found me. And you took me on. God knows why. But you did and I'm pinching myself to see if it's real because this kind of thing doesn't happen more than once in a lifetime.

Rifka

I killed my husband.

There's silence for a moment.

He wonders if he heard it right.

Michael

What ?

Rifka

I killed him.

Michael

Your Palestinian . . . ?

She nods.

Rifka

He suffered a massive stroke- after we had this terrible row.

Michael

You can't blame yourself because somebody had a heart attack.

Rifka

He was drunk and wanted to sing at his brother's wedding. And I wouldn't let him.

(short laugh)

He had a terrible voice. And anyway that sort of thing is frowned upon at a time of crisis. There's no room for joy. Even at wedding. No private display. Everything is collective- music, dancing, And oh, the incredible energy. The energy in the room was electric.

Rifka

(continued)

Weddings are about the only public gatherings they're allowed these days- weddings and funerals. The young men of two villages were parading round the reception centre like a platoon of crack troops eager for battle- a war dance in a way. Young braves carrying spirit of the race. Vigorous, mob energy snaking round and round and through the guests- a flaunting of the willingness to fight. A demonstration for the elders and the whole community.

We were hypnotised by the sheer power of it, the energy, the mad display. Into which . . . Ishmail wanted to sing. But I stopped him. He was (shrugs) drunk. I forced him into a cab and made him go home by himself. He died on the way.

Michael

Rifka, you can't blame yourself for that.

Rifka

The driver had no idea. Just thought he was drunk. Later, in the morgue, I had to identify him. I thought my heart would burst. All that night I couldn't sleep. There was a tearing down the side of my body- like I was being wrenched away from a soul mate- as if my whole physical being was being ripped apart. The next morning I had this uncontrollable desire to make wild passionate love to the first person I could get my hands on- anybody. Just for the human contact of it. Just to feel some one else's touch.

Michael

Look if he had a bad heart it would have happened anyway, eventually- a month or a year later. . . what's the difference ?

Rifka

A month, a year.

Michael

It's not how long you live, it's how you live.

Rifka

So how do you judge that ?

Michael

Were you happy ?
Was it fulfilling ?

Rifka

It might have gotten better.

Michael

And the sky might've turned red and water might flow upstream. You've got to forgive yourself, Rifka. Give yourself a bit of indulgence. There is this thing called absolution. Besides, what's meant to happen . . . happens.

Rifka

He was rooted in the soil. A farmer until they bulldozed the family olive grove. I remember his thick, strong hands covered in tractor grease, so belonging to the earth it's as if he wasn't so much born as sprung from the ground like a potato. After he died I couldn't stay in the village. I took off for Europe and just wanted to keep travelling- retracing a trip we'd made four years before. But somehow, this time, there was no magic, no excitement at seeing those places for the first time. I felt as bored as any other tourist.

The whole of Europe was one big museum- an old world as burnt out as I felt. On the train from Nice to Florence I gradually became aware that I was staring at an unbroken line of apartment buildings that went for hundreds of kilometres. I felt that people can't live boxed in like this anymore. We need a new vision, new ways of sharing space together. So I came home to Israel and I fell into the Dead Sea. I wanted to drown and let its acidic salt dissolve me. But of course you can't drown in the Dead Sea. You just bob back up again.

So as I lay there I suddenly had this sinking feeling that, in the overall scheme of things, we no more know where we come from than we know where we are going. You're born, you're alive for a while, and then. . . you just fade to black. And it struck me that this is why we had invented God. Because the full, awful reality of our eventual demise, and therefore the absolute meaninglessness of our short sweet lifetimes, is too horrible a thing to contemplate unassisted by some soft option called heaven, or reincarnation. But we worshipped the idea of those things because, however much it contradicted the evidence of our senses, religion offered the opiate of hope.

And we clung to that hope like drowning sailors desperate for a continuation of this dream of living. So we invented God and we worshipped that false hope and force fed it to our children and we even killed in the name of it. And here was the final irony and the limit of our intelligence. Because, by killing and dying in the name of God, we actually brought about that absolute nothingness that He was supposed to help us deal with in the first place. The whole idea is not to die for God but to live in spite of him.

She stops. Looks around.

Rifka

Where is he now, Michael ?
Where has he gone ?

Michael

Don't ask me, I was educated by the Christian Brothers.
I'd be the last to know.

Rifka

I can still feel him, in a room.
A presence or- something. . . It's very odd.

Michael

Well, Van Gogh thought we went to the stars.
I dunno. He could be in a flock of birds. Or some distant
planet circling another sun. Who knows ? There's got to be a
circularity about it all. We do seem to be part of some kind
of life force.

The light blinks on and then off again.
Once again they're plunged into darkness.

Michael

I'm finding it incredibly hard to keep my hands off you.

Rifka

Why fight it ?

Michael

Can I rub your nipple with my stubble ?

Rifka

Yes, Michael, yes, be rough with me, hurt me.
Oh god ! That's amazing.
I feel like I'm climbing over a hedgehog.

Michael

You're so German it's incredible-

Rifka

German ? Only partly.

Michael

Proud, intelligent, passionate, direct, cultured, superior,
organised, doomed. . .

Rifka

Too high, I'd never live up to that.

Michael

I'm in heaven.

Rifka

My breasts are electric.
Hurt me, pinch me. Oh Michael
(She screams a little)

Michael

Yes, scream, scream your lungs out.
I want to make you sing opera.

Rifka

Anything, anything. . .

Michael

You're my goddess.

Rifka

You are, you are my angel.

Michael

Created to adore you.

Rifka

Come with me on my magic carpet, Michael.
It's the only way to fly.

Michael

I want to start a new religion,
One based on sex.
The third testament. We haven't had a new testament for
2000 years now we're obviously due for another one.

Rifka

Come with me, fly with me to the Holy of Holies.

Michael

In direct contact with God.

Rifka

Beam me up, Scottie.

They laugh.

Their love making reaches a audible climax and the lights
blink on and off again. On the other side Benny continues to
push the wall a fraction of a centimetre at a time.
He freezes as the light blinks and stays on.

It reveals that Michael and Rifka are upside down again
behind some boxes at the back

They start giggling.

Michael

We said we were going to have a quiet night.

They laugh.

Michael

You're insatiable, where's your off button ?

Rifka

I don't have one.

Michael

Are all jewish women like this ?

Rifka

Of course. The energy of slaves.

Michael

I can see why your husband died of a heart attack.

Rifka

Can we be exceptional ?

Do other people make love like this ?

Michael

Only olympic athletes.

The light blinks off again.

Benny resumes pushing boxes. We hear them scraping on the floor.

Rifka

In a place that's gone crazy with hatred. . .

Michael

. . . We are anoasis of love and devotion.

Rifka

We are crazy. We play a crazy game.

Michael

How amazing that we found each other.

Rifka

Are you sure about this, Michael ?

Michael

I feel like a teenager.

I go weak at the knees just holding you.

Rifka

Who are you ?

Michael

I'm the Holy Ghost and you're my Virgin Mary.

Rifka

Hardly !

Suddenly we hear boxes tipping over. The light flicks on and Benny is caught in the gap that's created looking guilty.

Benny

"Holy Ghost" ? Virgin Mary !
Call yourself a writer ? He'd be lucky to get his name
printed in the telephone book !

Sharon

Benny, Go to sleep.

Rifka realises.

Rifka

He's been moving the wall.

Benny

Your conversation is driving me crazy.

Rifka

How dare you eavesdrop on us !

Benny

(shrugs)

So she feels guilty she stopped her husband singing.
You should've let him sing at the wedding of his brother.

Sharon

What do you expect when the girl lives in Hebron.

Benny

If God hadn't wanted us to sing he wouldn't have given us
voices.

Sharon

Benny ! Get some sleep. You'll be in one of your moods
tomorrow.

Benny

How do I know when tomorrow is ? All I've got to go on is
this stupid light, that I had to pay 28 sheckles for. And it
can't make up its mind whether it's night or day.

Rifka

All you talk about is money. You're actually obsessed, aren't you, with how much everything costs.

Michael

Of course they talk about money. They're the sort of people who make it in this world. You and me, Rifka we don't care. We're always going to be poor. We don't think like they do.

Sharon

Oh we had money. Once. Benny put it all in a bank ! I told him. I said, I'd rather trust our grandson with a mob of starving piranha.

Benny

(laughs)

Sharon keeps her money in a tin under the bed.

Sharon

In coins !

Benny

In case of a fire.

Rifka gives up and moves to the toilet only to find that the door won't open.

Benny

That door that takes 5 shekile coins, there's a slot on the side.

Rifka

I haven't got any 5 shekile coins !

Benny

So get some change from Sharon !

Michael takes a small folding shovel.

Michael

Don't worry Rifka, where I come from, when nature calls we dig a hole.

He starts hacking away at a side of the bunker. Dirt and parts of an old skeleton fall out. Benny quickly restrains him

Benny

You'll compromise the seal ! What are you doing !

Then everyone notices the bones. They hang there stunned.

Sharon
A corpse !

Rifka
This must be the side of an old catacomb !
Look, early Christian rosary beads.
(She pulls them out of the wall)
And over here. . . 4th Century pottery, probably Nabotean.
(finding the handle of an old jar)
And here, Jewish mystics.
(unrolling an old Women in Black poster)
Ash from a common bakery. . .
In all my years of guiding I've never seen anything like it.
Three distinct cultures living in complete harmony- in this
one, same area.

Michael
You see Benny, it can be done.

There's a tremendous explosion directly overhead.
More dirt falls from the ceiling.
The light blinks on and off.
Until we are in complete darkness again.

Michael strikes a match looking for the menorah

Michael
That's funny.

Rifka
What ?

Michael
Did you move the candles ?

Rifka
No

Michael
Somebody did.

Rifka
Well it wasn't me.

Michael
It's gone, I can't find it.

Rifka
Perhaps it was . . . moved by something else.

Michael
It's really wierd because . . . you'll think I'm mad.

Rifka
No- what ?

Michael
I'll swear we had this exact same conversation yesterday.

Rifka
No.

Michael
This exact same form of words passed between us in more or less the same order.

Rifka
I don't remember that.

Michael
Perhaps we dug up a ghost today.

The light flicks on.

Again they're upside down behind some fallen boxes.
All we see are their entwined legs sticking up in the air.
They're laughing.

Michael
Look at us.
We said we we're going to have a quite night.
Giggling, they scramble back into their clothes.

Michael
I love you.

Rifka
You know how long it's been since anybody said that to me ?

Michael
I adore you.

Rifka
Michael. . .

Michael
You're my goddess and I'm your angel.
I sing your praises then I die happy.

Rifka
Oh Michael. . .
(starts crying, quietly)

Michael is perplexed.

Michael
What ? What's the matter ?

Rifka
Nothing.

Michael
You're crying.

Rifka
It's alright.

Michael
Rifka, it's me, remember ?

He hugs her.

Michael
I adore you, I can't get enough of you.

Rifka
I don't deserve you, Michael.

Michael
Don't be stupid.

Rifka
I don't. You don't know me.

Michael
What do I need to know ?

Rifka
I'm bad. Very bad.

Michael
Who says you're bad ?

Rifka
I do. I know I am.

Michael
What have you done that's bad ?

Benny wakes up out of his stretcher next door.

Benny
Oh No No No not again !
I can't stand it.
It's these drugs, my head is spinning.

Benny puts his mask on.

Benny

I've been breathing the disgusting smoke.
This is what it does to you- it warps your brain.

Rifka

You're eavesdropping on us !

Shaon

She feels guilty because she stopped her husband singing.

Benny

No ! No ! No !
I don't want to play this game anymore.
You're driving me crazy.
Count me out of the deja vu thing, already.
Call yourself a writer ! Hoh ! You couldn't even get your
name printed in the phone book.

Benny stops.

Realises he's just repeated himself.
He looks doubtful

Benny

What's going on ?

He stands back from them.

Benny

You've injected me with something.
While I was asleep.
You're trying to drive me crazy.

Rifka

You ARE crazy.
You're crazy because your whole life is a lie, Benny.
From now on, no more bullshit. No more belonging
to a world where people always let you down because they
always exploit you. I'm sick of all that slavery and toiling
and weeping and hating and being lied to in all the shabby
alleyways of what passes for our social and political
culture. Where no matter who you vote the fucking government
always gets in. You've got to believe that that if enough
good people try hard enough some things can actually change.
And that possibility is all we've really got to look forward
to.

There's another tremendous explosion directly overhead.
Again the light blinks on and off and goes out.

Michael strikes a match and starts lighting the menorah.
They scramble back up from behind some tumbled down boxes.
He laughs

Michael
Look at us- we said we were going to have a quiet night.

Then he stops, frowns.

Rifka
You found the Menora.

Michael
It's where it always was.

They look at each other, look around their space.
Then she gasps.
Michael appears to be wearing angel wings.

A sudden mysterious draft blows the candle out and they're
plunged back into darkness.

Michael
What? Where did that wind come from? How can there be a
breeze down here?

Rifka
That's crazy. I really must be dreaming.
You were standing there in angel wings.

They giggle.

Michael
What have you been smoking?

Rifka
I saw you there, you had a pair of wings on.

Michael
On where?

Rifka
On your back.

Michael
There're just my big rugby shoulder blades.

Rifka
You're playing a joke with me, right ?

Michael
Am I ?

Rifka
You arrive by air, carrying no identity papers, no visible means of support. . . I fall in love with you, things disappear then start repeating themselves. . . Either you're really an angel or I'm losing the plot.

Michael
You lost the plot ages ago.

Rifka
Who are you ?

Michael
I'm the arcangel Michael,
Created to adore you.

Rifka
Oh yes, Michael yes. Adore me. Do to me what those big crusader knights did to the women of Judea.

Michael
You're a cloud, Rifka, a vacuum.
How am I ever going to contain you ?

Rifka
You'll tie a golden thread from my heart to yours.
And no matter where we go in the world we will always be connected. Nothing will break this thread. It will just stretch out like elastic and snap you back to me.

There's the snap of bodies colliding in the dark.

Michael
You've got to forgive yourself for killing him.

Rifka
Hold me, Michael

There's gunshots heard faintly above. The lights flick on and off as they stand there holding each other.

Rifka
I must've done something good in my life.
To end up with you.

Michael
You are good.

Rifka
No, No I'm not.

Michael
Your soul wears a perpetual smile.

Rifka
(smiling back)
And that's a beautiful lie.

They laugh and are plunged into pitch darkness again.

Rifka
Sometimes I'm afraid.

Michael
Afraid of what ?

Rifka
Of the intensity of what's happening.

Michael
Don't be afraid.

Rifka
It can't last.

Michael
Of course it can, why can't it ?

Rifka
It doesn't seem natural.

Michael
It's the most natural thing in the world.

Rifka
Who are you ?

Michael
I'm a fallen angel, given up on God so I can worship you instead.

Rifka
You'd have to become mortal ~~to truly love me.~~

Michael
Immortality's not all it's cracked up to be.

~~Rifka
I can't believe you're saying these things.~~

Michael

I was a crumpled heap and you made me whole again.

Rifka

Hurt me, rip me apart, Michael

Michael

Oh god I love you.

Rifka

You're like an acrobat in there.

Michael

I'm so far in I feel like I'm tickling your tonsils.

Next door Benny leaps out of his stretcher

Benny

Right ! That's it. Stop ! Stop it now !
I think I've heard enough.

Benny's large camping torch stabs at them through the gap in the wall.

Sharon

Benny ? Benny, where are you going ?

Benny

(pointing a gun at Michael and Rifka)
Please leave my bunker immediately !!!!

Michael

Hang on a sec. . .

Benny starts ripping off the sealing tape from around the door.

Sharon

You can't break the seal, Benny !

Benny

(putting his gas mask on)
I'd rather spend the rest of the time in this mask than put with another second of their trampling of our beliefs in the mud !

Rifka

Listen to the truth inside you, Benny.
Religion is a cancer of the mind,
You've got to think, feel, and be yourself for a change.

Benny

Out ! Now ! Go ! And take your blasphemy with you !

Rifka

We have to build bridges, not churches, Benny- connections **between** people. It's all a blank out there and this search for meaning is so typically human. So futile in the overall scheme of things. We've got to stop trying to know everything and start feeling it instead. We've got to stop imposing this repressive prescriptive filter on our experience. People have got to be responsible for their own destinies again.

Benny

Then kindly take control of it somewhere else.
Get out of my house and never darken its steel door again !

He wrenches the door open . . .

Sharon

No Benny !

But as soon as it's open they see that the doorway is completely blocked up with fallen rubble.

Benny closes the door, opens it again.

It's rock solid out there. Not an inch of gap anywhere.

Frustrated he shoots off five or six rounds at it with his gun.

There's silence again. Nothing moves.

Michael

We're trapped.

Sharon

(sinking)

I'm going to die.

Rifka

We're all going to die Sharon, eventually.

Benny

Yes, and I die happy knowing I do so in a country that's still ruled by free men !

Sharon

How will we breathe ?
The air will run out.

Benny

(shaking his fist at the ceiling)

I'll roast your terrorist hearts on my own personal BBQ you filthy swine. You will never defeat us ! We will never be slaves again !

Michael

The building above must've completely collapsed.

Sharon

How did we let this happen ?

How did it come to this ?

Rifka

Isn't it obvious ?

This is a prison of your own devising, Sharon.

All you've perpetrated and all you've stood for has lead directly to the destruction of Israel.

Benny

Our boys in the radio toxic squad will soon deal with this. Some of them worked on the Chernobyl clean up, you know that? Russian immigrants. Dying of secondary cancers and they still come here with their shovels to help.

Sharon

Stop talking. You're using up air.

Benny

We will survive here in the bunkers till their evil empire collapses, then we will emerge victorious.

Michael

This isn't a bunker it's a tomb.

You've dug your own grave you stupid bastard.

Rifka

Just like the pharaoh's- they started building their tombs as soon as they ascended the throne.

Sharon

What a morbid concept. Spending your whole life watching your grave grow.

Rifka

They thought they were immortal.

Michael

Wasn't there a curse on somebody who opened a tomb ?

Rifka

Tutankamen's, yes. Virtually everybody involved was dead within a year.

Their eyes drift as one towards the bones that Michael's digging had disturbed earlier.

Sharon starts trying to rebury them, hastily covering them over with dirt.

Benny

It's too late Sharon.
The damage is done.

She stops, kneeling in front of the hole. It's not working anyway, as soon as she sticks a bone in the side of the wall it falls out again.

Sharon

We're cursed.

Benny

Michael's cursed- he did it.

Michael

No I didn't.

Benny

Yes you did. We saw you.

Michael

They- they fell out.

It wasn't my fault. How was I to know there was a catacomb next door? If you got a proper permit for this dump you wouldn't even be allowed to be here in the first place.

Sharon

That doesn't make sense.

Benny

Permits Saermits. You think I've got nothing better to do with my time than wait in a queue at the Public Security Department?

Sharon

Who asked you to come anyway?

Benny

Yes, we wouldn't be in this mess if you two hadn't barged your way into our party.

Michael

Who wanted to come here ?
I should be in Barcelona !

Benny

Well you're not in Barcelona. You're in West Jerusalem.
And thanks to you now, we're all probably going to be struck
down now with some ancient and horrible affliction.

Michael

If you'd let us use your toilet. . . !

Sharon

(cutting across him)
We're all going to die !

Benny

Cheer up Sharon.
We may be on our knees but we can't give up now.
We're almost there.
Do you know how many times Jerusalem was conquered, razed to
the ground and rebuilt again ?

Rifka

At least 28 times.

Benny

Exactly. 28 times !
Do you think the Hebrew garrison at Masada gave up when they
were backed into a coner ?
No way ? Did they panic when they saw the Roman squares
drawn up against them on the plain of the Dead Sea hundreds
of metres below. Imagine the dread as they saw there before
them the mechanics of their own doom, the rampart and the
seige weapons of their mortal enemy.

Rifka

The temple had been destroyed, Jerusalem was completely
obliterated. Not one stone was left upon another.
It would have been like- like a nuclear holocaust.
Everything they stood for: their society, their culture,
their capital city, everything erased from the earth.

Benny

But not their belief in God !

Rifka

Yes, and amongst the Masada garrison each man killed his own
family and then ten men were chosen to kill the rest. That
was some victory.

Benny

Masada will not fall again !

There's another explosion directly above them
The light goes out again.

In the darkness Michael strikes a match and lights the
menorà.

Michael
What ?
What's the matter ?

Rifka
Nothing, just ignore me.

She sits upright on the floor where they've been lying on
Michael's sleepin bag.

Michael
How can I ignore you ?

Rifka
Just one of my black moods.
I warned you about them.

Michael
Oh.

Rifka
Just ignore me.

Michael
Right.

Rifka
I'm bleeding.

The light flicks on and off again.
There's the sound of distant anti-aircraft fire now.

Michael
It's only the first month.

Rifka
I'm too old, it gets harder as you get older.

Michael
You're not old.

Rifka
Yes I am.

Michael

Ok, so technically you could be a grandmother.
So what ? Plenty of women have babies in their 40s.

Rifka

I know there's something wrong.

Michael

It might be me.

Rifka

I've been trying for two years.

Michael

Yeah, but you had an abortion once, so it's obviously possible.

Rifka

Maybe that's the reason. Maybe something went wrong.

Michael

Look on the bright side, you can still sleep whenever you want to, go out whenever you like, your washing machine's not clogged with dirty nappies, you don't have to watch Sesame Street. . .

Rifka

I want to watch Sesame Street !

Michael

Look, as soon as you relax it will happen.
That's the catch 22 of fertility.
The harder you try the less likely it is.

Rifka

There's these tablets you can take.

Michael

Tablets ?

Rifka

Fertility enhancers.

Michael

If God had wanted us to have triplets he'd have given you three breasts.

Rifka

That's a one in . . . 20 chance !

Michael
Can't we just have an organic baby ?

68.

Rifka
(sighs)
I'm running out of time !

Michael
One kid's a work of art, Rifka, two's a family, and three is an ongoing biocatastrophe ! You'd shake me out of my cocoon alright, straight into a billabong full of hungry crocodiles.

Rifka
You don't have to be involved.

Michael
I mean look at us . . .
Look where we are.
Is this any place to bring up a kid ?
Really ? This world ? Here ? Now ?
You want to plunge another poor little innocent into this mayhem and madness ?

Rifka
It's the next generation who will save us.

Michael
Don't hold your breath.
There's a stand off. Rifka sighs.

Rifka
We're just going round in circles.

Michael
Yesterday, on the way here, when we stopped at some traffic lights near the Damascus Gate, a young Palestinian looked at me with such hatred and loathing that I thought, if looks could kill, I'd be dead now.

Rifka
Of course he hates you, you look like a jew.

Michael
But I'm an atheist !

Rifka
For him that's probably worse !

Michael
I don't want to bring a kid into a world where you take one look at a person's lapel badge and you don't want to look at them in the face anymore.

Rifka
Israel is a state of mind.

Michael
Life is a state of mind.

Rifka
You've got to believe that deep down basic ordinary people don't want to go round killing each other.

Michael
Ordinary people are not given a chance here.

Rifka
What are you getting yourself into Michael? We've only met for a fleeting moment. You don't really know me at all. I'll hurt you in the end.

Michael
(smiling)
You can't hurt me, I'm tough.

Rifka
Not tough enough.

Michael
Come with me, come with me to my promised land.

Rifka
Hold me, Michael.

He blows the candles out and approaches her in the darkness.

Michael
Yes, I'm holding you. I adore the touch of your body. I want to express maximum lateral skin contact with you. My body on yours, surface to surface. Are you ready to break a new Guinness Record?

Rifka
Always.

Michael
Here we go then. . .

Rifka
Oh yes.

Michael
Arms, legs, too. . . heads. . .

Rifka
That's amazing.

Michael
A least six square feet of body contact there I reckon.
The light flicks on again.

They're standing at opposite ends of their side of the bunker, fully clothed.

It seems odd, they blink at each other, look around.

Rifka
I feel like we're being watched.
Like there's a ghost in here or something.

There's a small distant explosion and blackout again.

Michael
Perhaps it was the bones we dug up.

Rifka
I'm afraid.

Michael
Rifka, it's me Michael. Your guru, remember.
You're my slave and I'm your Roman emperor.

Rifka
Michaelus Maximus.

Michael
That's the one.

Rifka
It can't last, you and me.
It's too intense. I'm afraid of the intensity.

Michael
Can't we just take it one day at a time ?

Rifka
It doesn't seem natural.

Michael
It's the most natural thing in the world.

Rifka
Hold me, Michael.

Michael
Yes, my darling, yes.

Lights up again, and again they're at opposite ends of their "room."

Michael
Admit it Rifka. You get a charge from this. . . danger. You actually enjoy living on the edge.

Rifka
I know I miss it whenever I leave here.

Michael
But it's not my struggle. I'm sorry I don't like the danger that comes from oppression. I don't like danger full stop.

Rifka
Look, if it's not safe to go somewhere. I won't go. If the army's just been through, or there's a strike-somebody tells me it's not safe. I won't go. I don't deliberately take risks.

Michael
This is an appalling situation !

Rifka
You sound like a crusader, Michael. Have you come on a mission ?

Michael
I'm a pilgrim, not a crusader. I've come for the purposes of adoration only.

He smiles at her.

Rifka
You've got the luxury of choice. You can leave here whenever you want.

Michael
The rest of the world doesn't need Israel.

Rifka
Oh yes they do. You'll see when its gone.

Michael
Come with me, come back to my promised land.

Blackout

A moment later the light flicks on again just as the door to the wall of rubble swings open.

Rifka sits bolt upright on the floor where she's been lying on Michael's sleeping bag.

Michael

What ?

Rifka

I woke up and the door opened.

I'd been dreaming of Ishmail.

It's like- he'd been lying here with me and he just got up and left- through the door.

Was it him leaving or was it some part of me wanting to go?

Some part of me saying: this is the rest of your life unfolding before you now. "Get up, go now !"

Michael

Rifka,

(waving a hand in front of her staring eyes)

Planet Earth calling, darling.

Sharon

(off)

Please don't say that kind of stuff, I have to stay here on my own sometimes.

Blackout

We hear the sound of digging again, this time quite close.

The light flicks on. The door opens. And Benny sits bolt upright in his stretcher. He slowly becomes aware that a different coloured dirt is falling on his head. It's coming from the hole that Michael started.

Benny

Sharon ! Wake up !

He shakes her.

Benny

We're saved. Our boys have broken through.

At last. I told you they would deliver.

Sharon stirs awake, sits up.

Michael and Rifka also, confused at being woken so abruptly.

Benny is rushing around reviving the party paraphernalia.

Benny

We must welcome them properly.

(opening champagne)

After all the trouble they've gone to.

Thank god we're prepared.

It's the least we can do.

Quickly, Sharon more cups, they'll be thirsty . . .

He holds a paper cup full of champagne towards the widening hole in the wall.

Benny

Shalom boys and welcome !

But instead of the rescue squad MUFEEED DARWISH pokes his head through the hole. He wears the black and white keffiyeh of a Palestinian.

Benny and Mufeed take one look at each other and panic !

Benny quickly drops the champagne and reaches for the pistol under his pillow.

Benny

Freeze or I'll shoot !

Mufeed looks like he can't move anyway. His head seems stuck there in the hole like a moosehead trophy on somebody's wall. He rotates it sideways calling back for help.

Mufeed

Omar ! Omar !

Sharon rushes to gag him with a gas mask.

Benny rips it off her.

Benny

What are you doing giving him that ?

Are you crazy ? Gag him with sealing tape.

Mufeed

Omar !

Rifka

Mufeed !

Mufeed

Rifka !

Rifka

Put it down, Benny, he's my brother in law.

Sharon
What's that awful smell ?

Mufeed
I think I'm standing waist deep in raw sewerage.

Rifka
Put the gun down, Benny.

Benny
Are you kidding ?

Michael
There aren't any bullets left anyway.
Benny looks at him.

Michael
You fired them all off at the rubble.

Benny
I only fired five shots.

Michael
Six !

Benny
Five !

Rifka
Six !

Benny
Five !

Benny
(to Mufeed)
Well, are you ready to push your luck, punk ?

Michael casually walks up to Benny and takes the gun off him. Confidant, he points it at the ground pulls the trigger and to his surprise it fires.

Sharon
Six.

Michael
I mean, look at this thing. A machine designed to lodge a bit of metal inside some other poor bastard in order to tear their vital organs apart. It's so casual. Imagine the mentality that designed such a monstrous instrument.

Mufeed
 (obviously in some pain)
 I think most of my ribs are broken.

Rifka
 Michael. Dig round his shoulders, quickly.

Michael reaches for the small shovel he used before.
 Benny snatches it from him, holds it defensively towards
 Mufeed.

Benny
 He's not coming into my bunker.

Mufeed pokes his shovel through the hole. It's much bigger
 than Benny's. They duel with the shovels, like big blunt
 swords.

Rifka
 Stop it, stop it both of you !

Sharon
 Oh the smell.
 (putting on her gas mask)

Rifka wrests the small shovel off Benny and starts digging
 round the hole. As soon as it's big enough Michael pulls
 Mufeed through.

Mufeed
 (groaning in pain)
 My shoulder !

A powerful, fetid odour of sewerage floods the bunker.
 Mufeed's body is covered in blood and slime.

Rifka
 Oh Mufeed !
 Help me, Michael

They carry him over and place him on a stretcher

Benny
 Hang on, I've got to sleep in that !

But they ignore Benny and lower Mufeed gently onto it,
 wapping him in blankets.

Benny
 Not my blankets !

Rifka
Get some water Benny . . .

(turning back to Mufeed)
Where have you been for the last 2 months ?

Mufeed
Russian compound. An underground cell.

Rifka
We looked for you there. They said you were in a prison in the Negev.

Mufeed
No, Russian Compound the whole time.

Rifka
What happened ?

Mufeed
The border patrol pulled me out of a cheerut- going to work. The usual check point outside Tel Aviv. Lined us up against a wall. I didn't want to look them in the eye. Didn't want to give them an excuse to beat me. So I spread my legs and suffered their humiliation of me.

Michael
What was the charge ?

Rifka
They don't need a charge. Mufeed's village is a refugee camp. They're subject to military law.

Mufeed
We leave home in the morning to go to school or work or the sops and we never know if we will make it home again that night. After a few days our family can guess what's happened but where do they go to find out. Every police station tells a different story. There's no trial, no nothing.

Rifka
But now you're free Mufeed !

Mufeed
Well, not quite.

Sharon
How did you get here ?

Mufeed

A missile blew out the side of our cell block about 3 am this morning. All our guards were killed. The blast opened up a hole that led directly to the sewerage system.

Benny

You mean there's terrorists loose ?
Under the streets of West Jerusalem ?

Rifka

They're not terrorists, Benny. They're ordinary people like you or me.

Mufeed

Omar and I took different directions at a major tunnel intersection about half a kilometre back. When I saw the subsidance on the other side of that hole I started digging.

Benny

Block up the hole. Quick !

Rifka

Benny, that's our escape route !

Benny

It stinks, Rifka, the smell's appalling.

Rifka

(she has to agree)

Alright- temporarily.

Benny starts trying to replace the dirt in the hole.

Mufeed

(groans)

Oh my ribs ! The pain !

Rifka

It's alright, Mufeed. We going to get you out of here.

Benny

Over my dead body.

Rifka

If that's what it takes.

Benny

He's just escaped from gaol !

Rifka

He's innocent. Now shut-up and help me bandage his ribs.

Benny
Bandages now !
Why don't you just take half our supplies and be done with it. Where do I send the bill ? Yassar Arafat ?

Rifka
(ignoring Benny)
Is Omar wounded ?

Mufeed
No.

Rifka
You were lucky the blast only affected your ribs.

Mufeed
Oh no, this happened days ago. It was done by a couple of primary school kids. They were on a tour of the gaol as part of their summer camp. I was being treated in the fridge when they came through.

Michael
The fridge ?

Mufeed
That's where they put you when they want you to sign something.

Michael
Literally in a fridge ?

Mufeed
There's another place they have called "the coffin"
You get the general idea. It's a pretty small space.
Men go mad in there.

Benny
Oh really, we're supposed to believe this ?

Mufeed
Anyway these kids asked if they could beat me. So the guards went off for a tea break and this ten year old laid into me with his Nintendo machine. It became like a frenzy. He brought it down on my shoulder- over and over again- trying to break it. I felt like dough. A lump of flesh and bones. I begged him to stop. He said it gave him a wonderful pleasure. Not because I'd done anything to him personally, but because of what he thought I had done to the state.

Michael
Oh my god !

Benny

Give me a look at that shoulder.

Benny kneels on top of Mufeed and rams his knee into the shoulder, pushing hard.

Mufeed screams in agony.

Benny

There, see ! I don't feel any bones move. There's nothing broken at all. Complete fabrication !

Rifka

Stop it ! Michael do something.

But Sharon pushes him aside.

Sharon

Excuse me, I happen to have trained as a nurse.

She also places a knee into Mufeed's shoulder and crushes it with her all her weight.

Again Mufeed screams.

Sharon

No, nothing moving bone-wise. All perfectly sound.

Rifka

Stop it both of you !

Michael

There is a deep, abiding insanity at the heart of this place.

Benny

How would you know ?

What would an Australian know about the middle east ?

Michael

Well my grandfather was with the Australian Light Horse regiment and he died liberating Jerusalem from the Turks. Then my father was wounded in the next war when our Ninth division stopped the Africa Corps in its tracks at El Alamein. We sent the flower of two generations here to fight for this place. God knows why. When you look at this poor devil you'd have to say we blew it.

Benny

It's not your problem. Forget it.

Rifka

It's all our problems ! It's the whole world's problem.

Benny

Well, it's your problem, that's for sure. You married one.

Rifka

And I bless the day I did so.

(nodding at Mufeed)

This family was a godsend to me.

From the very start I was like a daughter to them.

Sharon

But you're a jew !

Rifka

There was never any problem being a jew in Deheishe.

When I first went there Mufeed's Abu Fuard said to me. "You have drunk coffee in my house. Nobody will touch you."

Mufeed

Deheishe ! How could you imagine what it's like ?

A village without land. That's what a refugee camp is. 6,000 men, women and children squashed into a tiny bitter area. And yes, people are angry. There's a volcano of hatred there, waiting to burst out. But there's a depression also that permeates everything. We even have a plague of rats now because all the cats were killed by the tear gas. Maybe one in ten of us have got a job- but they're lost as soon as a curfew comes down.

Rifka

Once they arrested an 8 year old for throwing rocks. But when he came before the courts it was claimed that his younger brother was to blame. So this four year old was called for. But when the judge and the court saw him they looked down and laughed. Not believing that such a small child could have thrown a rock that hurt a soldier.

Mufeed

But little Zuhdi said: "Yes, I threw the rock you bastards and I'll throw it again if I have a chance." That took the smile off their faces.

Rifka

We crushed the Palestinians so completely that the whole community has become radicalised. There's no middle ground left with whom we can negotiate.

Benny

You never could negotiate with them.

The moderates say one thing, the radicals do another.

Michael
Then, what? What is the solution?

Mufeed
Either the intafada goes on for another 70 years or the state of Israel ceases to exist.

Benny
You see! Out of his own mouth he says it.

Rifka
Are you surprised? After all they go through?
Is it any wonder? If this is what the state of Israel means then it doesn't deserve to exist. Can't you see? We are losing our direction, our humanity. The army is being eaten from within. I remember when I was conscripted being posted to Gaza. At night we'd just go back to our quarters and lie around drinking and feeling depressed. Sometimes we'd play protest songs from the Vietnam War. It seemed appropriate. I felt like a person the likes of which had never existed before. When a journalist asked if we fought in order to prevent another holocaust we just looked at him as if he was totally in the dark.

There's another explosion off in the distance.

Sharon
We've got to get out of here.

Benny
Are you mad? The sewers are alive with child murderers. The soil above is contaminated with specs of plutonium smaller than a grain of sand with a half life of 750,000 years.

Mufeed
There wasn't any plutonium bomb.

Benny
What?

Mufeed
All the warheads were conventional like they always are. We heard it on the prison radio, just before our cell blew

apart..

Rifka
I told you Benny. It's like the myth of chemical weapons during the Gulf war.

Mufeed
Now there's been a truce. Peace has broken out.

Benny

I don't believe a word he's saying.

Rifka

Then stay here, Benny and rot for all I care.
We're off. Are you coming, Sharon?
Will you help us carry Mufeed?

Benny

You haven't got a clue where you're going.
You'll just wind up in some dead end tunnel.

Rifka

Look-

She goes to a poster of the Old City on one of the walls.

Rifka

If Mufeed broke out of the Russian compound and followed a sewer line to where we are here- then all we've got to do is push on along this main trunk tunnel to where it comes within a few meters of an ancient catacomb under the Christian Quarter. I know for a fact from tour guiding that these link up to Warrens Shaft and this will eventually take us back to the surface somewhere near Silwan in the Kidron Valley.

Sharon

Are you sure we can do this?

Rifka

We've just got a dig a few metres east from the main sewer into the catacombs.

Sharon

But Silwan. . . where will we go after that?

Michael

(taking Rifka's hand)

Back to Australia.
I'll marry you so you can stay there.

Rifka

I can't leave Mufeed.

Michael

We'll take him with us. We'll sneak him across the Egyptian border. There must be a way.

Mufeed

The bedouin do it all the time.
Smuggling is their livelihood.

Michael
Say you'll give it a try.

Rifka
(sighs)
How can I leave this country ?

Michael
How can you stay !?

Rifka
I can't explain my connection. I still belong here. I can't explain it. It's just something that comes from deep within you- beyond religion, something to do with the land.

Michael
That's exactly what I'm talking about. That's what I want too. A connection with the land. Any land but here.

Mufeed
Take it Rifka, this place is fucked.

Michael
I want to dig my hands in the soil and experience that connectedness with things that are life initiating. With things that grow and bear fruit. Come with me to my promised land- a place where you can feel that at-oneness with the good things in life again. I know these people who've got a block of land. It may be only thirty acres of rough scrub but to me its the most beautiful bit of bush we could ever hope for. The walk from the creek down to the waterfall is so varied in its possibilities that everytime you take it it seems like a totally new track. We could build a shack there and have a football team full of kids and grow old together. And grow our own food, and with a bit of luck and a Pridikin diet we might even live to be a 100.

Rifka
Will we get our telegrams from the Queen ?

Michael
Oh, Australia will be a republic by then.

Rifka
Isn't this just a cubby house dream ?

Michael
We can do anything- anything we want.
All you have to do is say yes.

Blackout.

Lights up. They're in slightly different positions to the moment before.

Mufeed

No, no, the war's over, haven't you heard ?

(he laughs)

They've just discovered another solar system in a nearby galaxy. There's radio transmissions coming from a blue planet just like ours. We're not alone anymore.

Rifka

So we don't have to find God.
He's found us.

Benny

He's delirious.

Blackout

Lights up

They're assembled round the hole, Rifka, Sharon and Michael are about to carry Mufeed through it on the stretcher.

Michael

I don't like it here Rifka.
I don't like people hating me because of what I look like.
I don't like seeing people wearing guns in the street, or following a tank convoy every time we go for a picnic.
I just want to look up at the sky and see the Southern Cross instead of a whole bunch of satellites going over every three minutes. I want to wake up in the morning and hear birds singing.

Sharon

Yeah, I wouldn't mind hearing birds singing myself.

Benny

So go to Eilat, watch them fly over every spring.

Sharon

No. I want to leave Israel.

Benny

What ?

Sharon

Let's go somewhere, Benny, we haven't had a holiday for 12 years.

Benny

Sharon, how can we afford to go anywhere ? We're building our dream home in the West Bank.

Blackout.
Lights up.

As before they reappear in different parts of the room again. Mufeed is still in the stretcher but back on the floor where he started.

Mufeed

It's true, I forget all about it when you pointed the gun at me. It slipped my mind completely. Can't you hear ? The shooting has stopped. The war is over.

(laughs)

The others look around, wondering.

Sharon

I must admit I haven't heard any gunfire.

Rifka

There hasn't been a missile for over an hour.

Mufeed

There never was a plutonium scatter bomb, that was a lie perpetrated by the military. They wanted to keep everyone's head down while they staged a coup to stop the peace process. But it didn't work. A truce has been signed. It's all over.

(laughs)

I completely forgot to mention it.

Blackout

Lights up.

Rifka, Michael and Sharon are back at the hole again about to carry Mufeed through.

Michael

Come with me now, Rifka. I can't live in a place where I'm scared to hear the news to find out where the latest stabbing took place. I'm not saying Australia is perfect. Of course we've got a shocking track record. But who needs the sophistication of the old world with it's collapsing wilderness and its crammed in rat-like cities dying on their feet ? Does it ultimately matter where you live as long as you know what you live for ? I just want to drink water from streams that aren't going to poison you. I want to live in a place that accepts the fact that nobody owns the land. The land owns us !

Rifka

Alright ! Alright !
Spare me the nobel prizewinning speech.
I'll come with you, already.

Blackout
Lights up.

Suddenly Mufeed is back on the floor again. Again they're scattered in different positions round the room.

Michael
(smiles)

I still feel like a teenager.
I go weak at the knees just thinking about you.

Rifka

Funny how life turns on lonely little leaps in the dark.
I pulled over to give you a lift. You asked me if I had a place to stay ?

Michael

And you said you'd have to ask Ishmail and think it over.

Rifka

But it wasn't so dark.

Michael

And I don't think we were alone. . .

Blackout.
Lights up

They have the stretcher up again about to go through the hole.

Michael

Hang on a minute, hang on. . .

He puts his end of the stretcher down again.
The others follow.

Michael steps over Mufeed and holds this chin thinking for a moment.

Michael

Can we just rewind the tape for a moment. If you ask me there's something pretty wierd going on here. Rifka's had this constant feeling that she's being watched all the time. I'm personally convinced that Menora has been moving of its own accord.

Sharon

And for sure I know we all experienced a kind of wierd déjà vu back there. We actually seemed to go through the same events twice.

Michael

Now we're jumping around all over the place.
We start here, we finish there.
We pick up the stretcher we put it down. . .
Nothings going in a linear direction anymore.
I feel I get to this certain point, everything goes black,
and I'm back where I started some moments before.

Rifka

We no more know where we came from, than we know where we are going.

Sharon

Perhaps the awful cost of what we've had to do has finally driven us mad.

Benny giggles

Michael

What are you laughing at ?

Benny

Well it is pretty silly when you think about it.
It's very, very silly. It's probably the stupidest thing I've heard you say since I had the misfortune to encounter you.
I guess on a scale of about a million to one its in the world championship bracket of just about one of the most basically brain dead, imbecile concepts I've ever heard.

Mufeed

Don't you see, doesn't it register in your thick skulls ?
The WAR IS OVER- PEACE HAS BROKEN OUT !
There's been an agreement throughout the entire middle east.
The borders are open from Cairo clear through to to Damascus,
You fools ! You've been sitting here for nothing !

Benny

Yes, and Shalom to you too now get out of my bunker. If peace has broken out how come you're still escaping from the Russian Compound ?

Blackout.
Lights up.

Again Rifka, Michael and are at the hole about to lift Mufeed through. Sharon collects her tin of coins and joins them.

Mufeed

Both sides are disarming.
No one has to wear a uniform anymore.
You're free. The borders are open.
Now every Jew can go to Petra !

Rifka

Yalla, let's go.

They start moving him through the hole.

Benny

Sharon !

Sharon

Shalom, Benny. Believe me. And thanks for all the breakfasts in bed.

Benny

But Sharon ! You can't leave.

Sharon

Watch me, Benny. Keep your eyes glued to this space.

Benny

At least . . . leave me some water !

She looks at the plastic bottle of Evian that she's been carrying. Hands it to him.

Sharon

Sorry, that was really thoughtless of me.

Of course dear, please,

(gathering bottles off Michael and Rifka)

We're going to Warren's shaft.

We'll be swimming in it up to our necks.

Benny

(smiling at her)

Jerusalem's lifespring.

Sweetest water in the world.

Sharon

I should warn you though, I've got dreadful diarrhoea.

Benny stops swigging from the bottle she gave him, looks at it uncertainly.

Benny

Oh . . . That's OK, it'll give me something to remember you by.

Rifka

You can still come with us Benny.

Benny is almost tempted, but at that exact moment the muslim call to prayer from some distant minaret echoes through the tunnel behind her. He draws back from the hole.

Benny

Go, go, quickly, and please cover your traes on the other side !

They go. Frantically Benny starts to plug the gap. But he hesitates as he hears a chorus of voices shouting through the earth from above. There's the sound of much celebration. People are calling out "Peace" "Mir" "Shalom !" There's music, laughter, applause.

The light blinks off and Benny's plunged into darkness again. He tries to ignite a cigarette lighter but it won't work.

Slowly an orange glow strikes him from the narrow hole left through to the tunnel. It illuminates Benny's face and he's drawn inexorably to it. The light grows brighter.

Sharon

(off)

Benny ! Benny ! Look !

Rifka

(off)

There's light ! There's light at the end of the tunnel !

Benny rushes to the hole and starts frantically opening it again with his hands as the light grows with the sounds of celebrations.

Benny

Alright !

I'm coming !

Wait for me !

He scrambles through the hole and is gone. . .