

**INVECTIVE
(or A Boil in Your Armpit)**

by

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ABSTRACT

The play consists of a series of traditional Yiddish invectives--some direct, some in translated English--comprising single words, phrases, or sentences. The interpretive subtext should reveal intra-group annoyances and intolerance, then an about-face shift and uniting of forces in the face of outside-group hostility, followed by a final reversion to universal everyday man-to-man competition and intolerance: all representing a show-and-tell encapsulation of post-Diaspora Jewish life and history in alien cultures.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

YUSEF.

A Chassidic senior-- bearded, wearing a black yarmulke, the traditional gartel, tzitzis and karpota and carrying a prayer book while reading and davening.

HERB.

A Reformed Jewish senior--wearing a blue yarmulke, dressed casually and wearing a Star of David on a gold neck chain.

A MAN.

An anonymous non-Jewish everyman with certain elitist tendencies and ethnic biases.

THE TIME

The present. Spring. Mid-afternoon.

THE PLACE

Brooklyn. Ocean Parkway. Parkway benches.

(This play's collective vocabulary and spelling come from: *The New Joys of Yiddish* by Leo Rosten; *If You Can't Say Anything Nice, Say It In Yiddish* by Lita Epstein; and *Jewish As a Second Language* by Molly Katz.)

(SCENE: Reading from a prayer book and davening , Yusef walks past Herb who is seated with his feet out on a Parkway bench and reading the New York Times. Yusef almost trips over Herb's feet, does not apologize, and sits on an opposite bench.)

HERB (irritated)

Klutz!

YUSEF

Dumkop!

HERB

Putz!

YUSEF

Poyer!

HERB

Shlemiehl!

YUSEF

Shmegegge!

HERB

Shmuck!

YUSEF

Kucher!

HERB

Kush mich in toches!

YUSEF

Gai cocken ahfen yam!

HERB

Ich hob dich in bod!

YUSEF

Ich hob dich in drerd!

HERB

A bone should stick in your throat!

YUSEF

And a fire should strike you now while you are speaking!

HERB

Your soul should turn into a pancake and be snatched away by an alley cat!

YUSEF

And your soul should enter a cat, and a dog should bite it!

HERB

Do me a favor and drop dead!

YUSEF

Do me a favor and live--with a cramp in your stomach and a boil in your armpit!

HERB

And onions should grow in your navel!

YUSEF

Your intestines should be pulled out of your belly and wrapped around your neck!

HERB

And your liver should come out through your nose piece by piece!

YUSEF

You should get syphilis and your nose should fall off!

(A man walks by and stops to hear their angry banter.)

HERB

Your stomach should rumble so badly you'll think it's a Purim noise maker!

YUSEF

On Pesach in shul, Hashem should make you run to the toilet every three minutes!

HERB

Hashem should bless you with three persons: one should hold you, the second should kill you and the third should bury you!

MAN

(Sneers in particular at Yusef and shouts.)

Jew!

(Herb stands, rushes protectively to Yusef. Both turn to the Man and shout invectives-- antiphonally and in rapid fire.)

HERB

Momser!

YUSEF

Shtuck dreck!

HERB

Schmutz!

YUSEF

Goy!

(Man backs away, walks rapidly, then runs; Yusef and Herb pursue.)

HERB (gesticulating)

You should shit blood and pus--you and all the shkotzim!

YUSEF

A fire should roast in your liver!

HERB

Your bones should rot in hell!

YUSEF

A cannon ball should split your skull!

HERB

A disease should eat you up!

YUSEF

You and your children should go begging from door to door for the rest of your lives.

*(They continue their execrations,
but with a competing search for cleverness.)*

HERB

He should live a hundred twenty years with a wooden head and a glass eye!

YUSEF

He should get so sick he should cough up his mother's milk!

HERB

He should change into a chandelier and hang by day and burn by night!

YUSEF

He should marry the daughter of the Angel of Death!

HERB

No, Dreykop, he should burn in hell with his mama and his papa!

YUSEF

No, Zhlob, he should remain alive and feel bites and pricks all over his body!

HERB

Are you telling me, Bulvon, it's better he should remain alive?

YUSEF

Yes, Kvetcher so he should suffer more.

HERB

Feh, Shmendrik, that would give him a break he doesn't deserve.

YUSEF

You think so, Shlemazel?

HERB

I know so, Tsatskele!

YUSEF

So, Pisher, who elected you chief Rebbe?

HERB

Better a crooked foot than a crooked mind!

YUSEF

When the head is a fool, the whole body can go to hell!

HERB

Nudnik!

YUSEF

Nebbech!

HERB

Shlumpf!

YUSEF

Shtunk!

HERB

Yid!

YUSEF

Goy!

*(Yusef resumes his reading and davening;
Herb picks up his paper, crosses his feet, and reads.)*