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Barbara Sperber
645 Goodrich Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55105
651-222-4904
Bsperber45@gmail.com

WHY ARE WE HERE?

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WHY ARE WE HERE?

SETTING:

An underground prison (Anywhere in America, possibly the Mid-West)

TIME:

The Recent Future/ the present/ the immediate future

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

There are basically four main actors (*SEE NOTES BELOW ON CHARACTER DOUBLING)

BEN ABRAMOVICH, A moderately successful film critic with an anxiety disorder, around 40

TONY SAPERSTEIN, A high school history teacher and ex-radical; BEN's partner for almost twenty years; early 60's

CLARISSA La RUE, A low level official in the prison, manipulative and wildly ambitious to get ahead; in her early 30's

GERHARD, A neo-Nazi (aggressive) guard in the prison with a slight stutter, in his late 20's

GERHARD 2, Also a guard in the prison: GERHARD's twin and an intellectual who has empathetic leanings; in his late 20's

LOUDSPEAKER/ Dr. BEASLEY (CEO of the PRISON): We hear his voice but We never see him

PRISONERS from surrounding cells shout things out periodically--We only hear their voices

9 (Non-speaking) PRISONERS walk across the STAGE briefly in 2 different scenes--once dressed in WW2 prison garb and once in contemporary prison garb

S.S. LIEUTENANT, Obedient and punctilious, in his late 20's (We only see him once at the end of the play)

VITTORIO EMANUELE BARDONE, The protagonist in Rossellini's 1959 movie, "General della Rovere", in his mid to late forties

SS COLONEL MULLER (There's an umlaut over the "u"), The antagonist in Rossellini's 1959 movie, "General della Rovere," in his mid to late 40's

DOUBLING: *The same Actor that plays BEN plays BARDONE; The same ACTOR that plays COLONEL MUELLER plays CLARISSA; the same Actor that plays GERHARD plays GERHARD 2

GERHARD sometimes speaks with a slight stutter; GERHARD 2 speaks without a stutter;

GERHARD has tattoos, earrings, and a wife-beater tee shirt;

GERHARD 2 has granny glasses, a button down shirt, a suede jacket, and fashionable slack

WHY ARE WE HERE?

SCENE ONE

The STAGE is DARK except for a SPOTLIGHT on CLARISSA and BEN. CLARISSA plays COLONEL MULLER (umlaut over the u) and BEN plays BARDONE, dressed in WW2 prison garb. THEY are enacting part of a scene from the movie "General della Rovere."

COLONEL MULLER

(German accent) Now tell me what you prefer. You can be tried as Colonel Grimaldi for sabotaging German war regulations and corrupting German officers or you can simply be Emmanuele Bardone, son of the late Luigi and Teresa Camarano, born in Sorrento May 3, 1894, and be charged with fraud and impersonating an officer.

BARDONE

Is that a choice? In the first case, I'd be shot. In the second, I'd get 3 years at most

(COLONEL MULLER offers BARDONE a drink.)

COLONEL MULLER

Listen I want to help you. Despite everything, I like you.

(THEY both raise their glasses and drink.)

BARDONE

Can I say something?

COLONEL MULLER

Go ahead.

BARDONE

I like you too.

COLONEL MULLER

Bardone I have a proposal for you...

*CLARISSA's phone rings. SHE steps out of the SPOTLIGHT
And goes over to her desk. SHE quickly takes off her
WW 2 German military jacket and hat, and sits down
At her desk and answers her phone.*

CLARISSA

Yes, Dr. Beasley.

(Dr. BEASLEY's voice is the same as the LOUDSPEAKER's VOICE)

LOUDSPEAKER's VOICE

Did you nab the cunt from the June 6th meeting in Chicago?

CLARISSA

Which cunt is that, sir?

LOUDSPEAKER's VOICE

The W.C. Fields cunt.

CLARISSA

Not yet, sir. I'm in the process--

LOUDSPEAKER's VOICE

(Interrupting)

Are you a fucking *nut case*? Do you know what will happen if The List *IS LEAKED TO THE PUBLIC*?

CLARISSA

I--

LOUDSPEAKER's VOICE

(Interrupting)

Maybe you were happier being an MFA drop-out at N.Y.U.? *Beat.* or 2. What was your field again?

CLARISSA

(Meekly)

The History of Film.

(SHE pauses)

And a minor in Mixed Genre Performance Studies.

LOUDSPEAKER'S VOICE

And your offence?

CLARISSA

(Embarrassed)

Intellectual Masturbation.

LOUDSPEAKER'S VOICE

Well fucking get me W.C. Fields from that June 6th meeting or I'll put you in our MFA program for one armed toilet bowl cleaners? *Verstehst?*

CLARISSA

Don't worry Dr. Beasley. I'll give you W.C. Fields, If it's the last--

(LOUDSPEAKER turns off)

CLARISSA

Fucking A!

(SHE puts her head down on her desk for a few Beats.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO

The STAGE is DARK

WE hear TONY singing “You’re The Top” by Cole Porter:

“You're the top!
You're Mahatma Gandhi.
You're the top!
You're Napoleon Brandy.
You're the purple light
Of a summer night in Spain,
You're the National Gallery
You're Garbo's salary,
You're cellophane.
You're sublime,
You're turkey dinner,
You're the time, the time of a Derby winner
I'm a toy balloon that's fated soon to pop
But if, baby, I'm the bottom,
You're the top!

You're the top!
You're an arrow collar
You're the top!
You're a Coolidge dollar,
You're the nimble tread
Of the feet of Fred Astaire,
You're an O'Neill drama,

You're Whistler's mama!

You're camembert. “

(Several Beats., while TONY continues to hum the tune)

(LIGHTS UP)

(TONY is dancing in his prison cell and snapping his fingers while HE hums. BEN is in the adjoining cell, slumped in the corner and shaking in his boots. Their cells are separated by a thin wall, and so THEY can't actually see each other.)

TONY

Come on man. Groove and jive. How Stella—I mean how Benny—gets his *mojo back*.

(A few Beats. of silence in BEN's corner, then:)

BEN

Is this the party?

TONY

(Still dancing)

You're fucking right it's the party.

BEN

(sarcastic) It doesn't *feel* like a party.

TONY

Get up off your *tusch* and celebrate good times. Remember Kool and the Gang?

BEN

(A half assed attempt to be witty)

But we don't have party hats. Or balloons. Or noisemakers.

TONY

Grab yourself a noise maker, man.

(TONY starts banging the bucket in his cell)

BEN

What! They gave *you* a bucket to piss in?

(TONY continues to bang the bucket)

TONY

I wonder what we should watch tonight. How's about "*The X Files*"?

BEN

Like they're gonna give us a Blue Ray player and our choice of flicks.

TONY

They can chop up our *kishkas* and fly them to Miami but they can't step on our dreams.

(TONY bangs the bucket even louder)

(CLARISSA ENTERS, clipboard and legal pad in hand. SHE's walking up and down the cells, observing the prisoners, and occasionally writing something down)

BEN

(Petrified)

Chop up our *kishkas*. You sure got that right, Tone.

A PRISONER's Voice From A Surrounding Cell

Shut the fuck up! Or I'll disembowel you and string you up like Mussolini in the town square!

TONY

Hmm I wonder who taught that joker the history of World War Two.

(Shouting back to the PRISONER)

Go do your sister. *Beat*. Listen, Benny. If you let yourself go under, it just makes their job easier.

BEN

Their job? Oh my God! What is their job, Tone? I swear I'll give them my mama if they let me outta' here!

(CLARISSA stops dead in her tracks and starts writing madly)

TONY

Only your mama? Not your Grampa and Aunt Viv as well?

BEN

I'll give them anyone they want, if they just let me go!

A PRISONER's Voice From A Surrounding Cell

I mean it Jewboy. Shut the fuck up if you want your dicks to stay fastened tight.

Another PRISONER's Voice From A Surrounding Cell

Don't you sweet peas ever need shut-eye? Or is you too busy so-dom-iz-ing?

BEN

Chill out, man. We'll be glad to shut up.

(CLARISSA sits down in a makeshift chair in a corner and continues making notes)

TONY

C'mon, Benny. Where's your pride? Did your balls disappear down your—

BEN

(Interrupting)

Oh my God! I forgot my inhaler!

BEN

And the cat! Will anyone find her? Will she die of starvation? *HE pauses.* Like we're going to---

TONY

If you act like you're shitting in your pants you will.

BEN

Will what?

TONY

Shit in your pants. *Beat.* The cat will be fine. Bobby's coming over this afternoon to stain the bookcases. He'll take her to his place when he hears that the

Gestapo--

BEN

(Interrupting)

Gestapo? Oh my God, you've got that right! You know I've been thinking, Tone... Maybe we're in here because I signed my blog "General della Rovere,"

TONY

Are you nuts?

TONY

(Doubling up with laughter)

Emmanue Bardone you're not, *bubbie!* I can just see you posing as General della Rovere, giving all the partisans comfort before they're marched into the yard to be shot! Then in that final moment double crossing the Nazis and refusing to give them Fabrizio!

(TONY continues laughing)

BEN

If only you hadn't goosed me to start up my blog again--

(Imitating TONY's authorial delivery)

"And if you can't think of anything new to say, dredge up your heroes and put them in a modern context!"

TONY

(Bored)

So what else is new?

BEN

If you hadn't pressured--

TONY

(Interrupting)

Fucking bull-shit. They probably dumped us in here because you sneezed. Or you stepped off the curb before the light turned green. How many times have I told you--they've been planning this for years.

(CLARISSA gets up from the chair, puts her clipboard under her arm, and EXITS)

BEN

This?

TONY

Rounding us up at the drop of a hat, then detaining us in their cushy P.I. camps.

BEN

P. I.?

TONY

P.I. Preventive Incarceration. *Beat.* Didn't you hear? They're gonna bill them as the new retirement homes. C'mon Ben. Where have you been? We've already lost our country and our values. Now it's showtime: when we lose our freedom.

BEN

Tone?

(BEN pauses)

I'm hungry. And I gotta' piss. *Beat.* Real bad.

TONY

You need my permission?

BEN

You forgot?—they gave *you* a bucket!

(*Beat.*) (Then HE pauses)

I suppose they gave you a chair and a mattress too.

TONY

So?

BEN

Unbelievable!

(Then:)

I can't hold it in. I'm in dire straits here.

TONY

Do what your Grandpa Max did. Pee into the slats of the cattle car then cup the stain and suck out the liquid.

BEN

Ooooh my...God!

(BEN hesitates, then un-zips his fly. A Beat. or 2. HE changes his mind, zips up, and slumps down in his cell. Another Beat. or 2. He gets up again, turns his back from the AUDIENCE, and pees into the wall of the cell.)

TONY

That's the way, old boy!

(Mimicking My Fair Lady): “

“Old Boy, I think you've got it! By Jove you've got it”:

(Very slow and emphatic now)

“The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain. Again! Repeat after me”--

A PRISONER's Voice From A Surrounding Cell

(Shouting)

Shut the fuck up, dickhead. Or I'll chop up your balls and serve them on a platter to your shit fag roommate.

TONY

(Continuing to sing louder and louder)

“And where's that soggy plain?

In Spain! In Spain!

(WE hear banging from the cell above them, and then gradually, from all nearby cells. BEN covers his ears. TONY is loving it.)

TONY

“The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!
The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!”

(HE stops for a Beat.)

TONY

Not exactly your iconic General della Rovere moment is it? The *homies* in these cells aren't exactly your Italian partisans thinking the general has suddenly entered the prison and given them inspiration! I guess the assholes on top of us and the assholes below us never read your blog!—And most certainly never saw the movie-- like you did, 50 thousand times!

(TONY bursts out laughing and continues singing at the top of his lungs. The banging gets louder also.)

(GERHARD ENTERS with a night stick.)

GERHARD

(Raising his night stick)

You want I should be your tango partner in the Dance Hall?

(His night stick still raised, HE does a few quick steps to accompany TONY's singing.)

(TONY quiets down and the banging in the cells gradually lessens.)

GERHARD

Ah! I thought not.

(GERHARD turns around and exits, still dancing, and humming “The Rain in Spain.”)

BEN

I'm hungry, Tone!

TONY

(Tenderly)
Sha-shtil. Try to get some sleep.

END OF SCENE

SCENE THREE

CLARISSA La RUE's office, accoutered with plants, video games, art work, and golf clubs in the corner.

*CLARISSA is jerking off to on-line pornography.
GERHARD and BEN ENTER the corridor outside
CLARISSA's office. GERHARD knocks on her door.*

*CLARISSA quickly finishes, then SHE starts getting herself
and her office ready for the movie SHE's about to shoot,
unbeknownst to BEN. Before HE ENTERS, SHE starts
applying her make-up and combing her hair. Then SHE
clicks on special lights until they're at just the right
angle. SHE reaches into her desk and takes out a
few cameras. Then SHE gets up and walks over to the
shelves and takes down two Teddy Bears. SHE places the
cameras inside the Teddy Bears, and SHE positions the
cameras on a shelf that faces where BEN will sit.*

(GERHARD knocks again)

CLARISSA

Come in.

(GERHARD and BEN ENTER)

CLARISSA

Clarissa. Clarissa la Rue here
(Reaching out her hand)
You can call me Claire.

BEN

(HE doesn't take her hand.)
Ben Abramovich here, aka Adolf Hitler.

CLARISSA

Good. A sense of humor. Sit down. You like Darjeeling? Or a cinnamon latte?

(BEN remains standing. CLARISSA nods to GERHARD. GERHARD pushes BEN roughly down in the chair.)

(CLARISSA goes over and turns BEN's face so it's more in a direct line with the camera)

CLARISSA

Could you please turn your face an inch or two, so it faces the light?

(CLARISSA goes back to her desk and pours tea for herself. SHE takes out a cinnamon roll and eats it seductively to taunt him, since HE hasn't eaten for 24 hours. Then SHE puts her feet up on her desk.)

(then to GERHARD).

The new Swiffers are under the shelf. GERHARD picks up a Swiffer and starts dusting the video games, the plants, etc.

(SHE ruffles through BEN's file)

Let's see. Says here you're a movie critic with a specialization in Roberto Rossellini's 1959 film, "General della Rovere."

(SHE stops to take a few sips.)

But first—I'd like you to key me in on what "General della Rovere" is about. I'm not so familiar--

BEN

(Sarcastic)

Frankly Claire, between you and me, I don't remember.

CLARISSA

Are you sure? Says here you've reviewed the film 45 times in sundry prestigious magazines and journals. *Beat.* And you currently write a blog titled *General della Rovere.*

(SHE pauses to taunt him again with her cinnamon roll.)

Correct me if I'm wrong. It's the story of an unscrupulous con man named Bardone thrown into a Nazi prison in Genoa. Since he's such a wonderful actor, they want him to impersonate the great partisan, General della Rovere. Then they ask him to infiltrate a group of Resistance fighters-- these prisoners don't know that the Nazis have already killed this general. Am I correct so far?

(BEN doesn't answer.)

And this is the clever part--they ask him to ferret out a prisoner named Fabrizio, the leader of the Resistance.

(to GERHARD)

more sugar please.

(GERHARD leaves the room, comes back with sugar and douses it in her cup, then continues dusting).

But at the very last minute this Bardone has a change of heart. When he sees how courageous his fellow prisoners are... and how they're willing to sacrifice their lives and never see their families again-- to combat the Nazis and liberate Italy...he transforms into the very person he's playing: the great General della Rovere. *(Beat.)*

Are you sure you wouldn't like some tea? We order it from Mumbai.

(CLARISSA pours some more for herself)

BEN

I thought you weren't familiar--

CLARISSA

(Interrupting)

Most of us lie some of the time. *Beat.* And some of us lie most of the time. Wouldn't you agree?

(CLARISSA hops onto the desk and swings her legs so HE can see up her skirt, Then SHE sips her tea as SHE talks.)

CLARISSA

Now this is just a surmise mind you, but I suspect you also harbor a secret desire to transform yourself...from a yellow bellied slime into someone with Bardone's balls.

SHE leans closer so SHE's breathing into his face)

You probably even have imagined yourself playing a similar role in a parallel situation.

BEN

(Contemptuously)

The situation you're referring to isn't relevant now. Good guys against the bad guys. Us against the Nazis. We can no longer tell who our enemies are.

CLARISSA

I beg to differ.

(to GERHARD)

Number 31, please.

(GERHARD stops dusting, moves the ladder to another shelf, takes down no. 31, climbs down and gives it to CLARISSA. SHE gets up and puts the video into the DVD player.)

CLARISSA

Another sugar, Gerhard.

(CLARISSA turns on the video and shows it to BEN. Then SHE turns The video off.)

CLARISSA

Well?

BEN

Well?

CLARISSA

Do you recognize your partner in crime?

BEN

I didn't *do* any crimes so how can I recognize my partner in crime?

CLARISSA

Do you know who's walking with your bitch? Do you recognize whose apartment they're entering?

(2 or 3 Beats.)

Have you any inkling of the subject of their meeting? Are you aware who else attended this event?

BEN

No No. No and no.

(Yawning and pretending to be bored)

And frankly my dear, I don't give a damn.

(BEN starts to wheeze like HE does at the start of an asthma attack. But after a few Beats., HE's slowly able to gain control.)

CLARISSA

Would it surprise you to learn that your beloved is involved in a dangerous scheme to stir up the population with false accusations and incite them with incendiary rhetoric?

BEN

What crime did he commit?

(2 or 3 Beats.)

CLARISSA

I'm not at liberty to tell you that.

BEN

Excuse my French but can you fucking tell me what crime he's *supposed* to have committed?

CLARISSA

I can't tell you that either.

BEN

You can't *tell* me?

CLARISSA

(2 or 3 Beats.)

It's a matter of national security.

BEN

This is fucking absurd. Can't you—

CLARISSA

(Interrupting)

No, I can't do that either.

(2 or 3 Beats.)

For reasons that are classified top secret.

BEN

Did you get that phrase from an old Grade B movie about Nazis? Because if you did--

CLARISSA

I didn't.

BEN

What do you think he was planning to do? Blow up the Sears Tower?

CLARISSA

I can't answer that.

BEN

What *can* you answer?

CLARISSA

I can't answer that either.

(A few Beats.)

BEN

(HE pauses)

Tony gave up his interest in politics 20 years. And I stress: *gave up*. He reads a blog or two, and sometimes mouths off. So fucking what? Don't we all?

CLARISSA

Gerhard, two more sugars please.

(Gerhard gets off his ladder, gets CLAIRE two more sugars, and then continues dusting.)

CLARISSA

We have reason to believe that your cunt, your dearly beloved, is one of two conduits for a very dangerous person who goes by the moniker W.C. Fields.

(BEN starts yawning again)

(CLARISSA gets up and starts practicing her golf swing. SHE positions herself in front of the camera to show off her stroke.)

(BEN looks around the room at the video games to help distract himself.)

CLARISSA

(Swinging her golf club as SHE talks)

I see you like games. Do you like games, Mr. Abramovich? Because if you like games, I have a special game I suggest that we play. With a juicy role for you. In fact the part of a lifetime. Of course we'll have to make a few substitutions. Instead of asking you to finger Fabrizio: the leader of the Italian Resistance, we'll ask you to give us this dangerous person with whom your sweetie is conspiring.

BEN

What a sick—

CLARISSA

(Interrupting)

I assure you it will all go down with the most impeccable verisimilitude. Just like the last scene you so adore in Rossellini's flick.

(Beat.)

You'll go into a room where the prisoners are waiting to be shot--

BEN

(Interrupting and finally conveying his intense desperation)

But Tony didn't *do* anything! He sits on his ass all day and makes complaints about the state of the world! A modern day *Cassandra* who wouldn't hurt a flea!

CLARISSA

(SHE stops practicing her golf swing and goes over to him and gets in his face again)

CLARISSA

YOU THINK THE PERSON WE'RE ASKING YOU TO GIVE US IS A TRIVIAL SON OF A BITCH? HE'S OUR TOP-NOTCH PERP, KING OF THE HILL, WHO WANTS NOTHING LESS THAN TO BRING OUR COUNTRY DOWN FIRST HAND!

BEN

Oh I get it. You want me to finger some very brave guy in return for my immunity from beatings, death, and torture.

(Mimicking her manner of speaking):

Is that correct?

CLARISSA

Inside our "The Play Room," as we call it here, the prisoners will be pacing nervously, while outside in the courtyard, the shooting squad will ready their guns.

BEN

What in heaven's name did this W.C. Fields actually do? I haven't heard a peep!

CLARISSA

(Getting up in his face again)

WHAT DID HE DO? WHAT DID W.C. FIELDS DO? He's only disseminating fake news! That he's got stored in some clandestine spot a list of thousands of citizens who he says have disappeared! The kind of purely fanciful bullshit that will, yes I'll say it—cause a revolution!

(BEN starts laughing hysterically)

(Then:)

BEN

Tell me, is it clean or dirty?

CLARISSA

What do you mean?

BEN

Well in America we're taught to believe we have clean lists, in Argentina, they had dirty lists. Oh excuse me! What happened in Argentina was called *The Dirty War*—I got lists and wars all mixed up--

CLARISSA

(Interrupting)

As I was saying, you're to enter our Play Room where Fields is one of ten prisoners waiting to be taken into the courtyard and shot. He might not speak much, if at all, but he'll nod to Mr. Saperstein as certain as the day is long—and Saperstein will nod back and maybe whisper something in his ear.

BEN

Holy Jehovah! Et tu, Brute? As if my sweetie would compromise my safety!

CLARISSA

Oh no?

(SHE takes an envelope out of her desk drawer and hands it to him)

(HE reads it.)

BEN

(In his Austin Powers voice):

Oh c'mon. A third grader can fake an email.

CLARISSA

A skeptic, eh? Well wait until you're in The Play Room. You'll see if your
(Emphasizing the word sweetie):
sweetie and W.C. interact.

(A few Beats.)

BEN

And if I refuse?

CLARISSA

You've reviewed the movie, what, 45 times, and you don't know what will happen if you refuse?

Gerhard, take the prisoner away.

(GERHARD pushes BEN to the DOOR and THEY EXIT)

(CLARISSA goes over to the cameras SHE's hidden on the shelves, and turns them off. Then SHE clicks off the special LIGHTS SHE's arranged to highlight BEN's face.)

(Her phone rings SHE answers)

CLARISSA

Thank you so much for returning my call, Professor Lindstrom! Well I have some very exciting news... Yes, I understand-- I'll make it short.

(SHE starts to rush her sentences)

You know you said my film wasn't unique enough to fulfill the requirements—Of course, I know you don't have much time. Well I've put together a very unique project--a post-modern take on Rossellini's film, "General della Rovere." Oh yes, it's combination docu-drama, reality t.v. show, and avant- garde homage to Italian post war realism...Yes—I'll send it Overnight Express. Oh please don't hang up yet! If you think it's good, I'd like to be reinstated into the MFA program—and if

so, would you write a letter to Dr. Beasley rescinding my sentence, so I can leave the prison and go back to the world?

(A Beat or 2.)

No, not inciting the masses to riot. My charge was intellectual masturbation...Oh thank you! Thank you so very much, Professor Lindstrom!

END OF SCENE

SCENE FOUR

The STAGE now is completely DARK, but after a few initial Beats., WE hear BEN'S Voice:

BEN

If I refuse?

(Repeating the question)

If I refuse?

(Several Beats.)

(SPOTLIGHT on CLARISSA and BEN on a spot UPSTAGE)

(CLARISSA and BEN are re-creating the last scene of the movie "General della Rovere." CLARISSA plays COLONEL MULLER (umlaut over the u), dressed in a Nazi SS uniform and BEN plays BARDONE, dressed in WW2 prison garb. GERHARD plays the S.S. LIEUTENANT. The PRISONERS are dressed in WW2 prisoners' garb as well.)

(COLONEL MULLER pulls BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE over as the other PRISONERS are starting to walk out into the courtyard, one by one, to be shot.)

COLONEL MULLER

Well? Did he talk? Do you know who he is?

BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE

Who?

COLONEL MULLER

What do you mean? Fabrizio. I'm sure that on a night like this Fabrizio would have told you who he is.

BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE

What do you know? Have you ever spent a night like this?

(BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE joins the line of PRISONERS walking into the courtyard)

COLONEL MULLER

Bardone! Bardone!

(BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE ignores COLONEL MULLER and continues walking)

(COLONEL MULLER runs up the stairs after BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE, shouting even louder):

COLONEL MULLER

Look! What are you doing? They're going to die!

BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE

(to a GUARD)

Open up the gate.

(COLONEL MULLER tries chasing after BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE but to no avail. BARDONE/GENERAL DELLA ROVERE disappears into the courtyard)

THE S.S. LIEUTENANT

(To COLONEL MULLER)

I thought only ten men were supposed to be executed

COLONEL MULLER

The mistake was mine.

(The STAGE suddenly goes completely DARK)

(Several Beats.)

LIGHTS UP

(BEN is lying on the floor of his cell. HE starts to wake up, yawns a few times, then falls back to sleep.)

(Several Beats.)

TONY

How's about the Chinese herbs?

BEN

(Pissed HE'S been woken up)

What?

TONY

Maybe one of those herbs your acupuncturist gave you to cleanse your sinuses.

BEN

What the fuck are you talking about?

TONY

(Beat.)

Well she's mainland Chinese, isn't she? That's why they dumped us in this shithole. Maybe they think there's a link between you and the Chinese government.

(HE bursts out laughing)

BEN

Ha, ha, Tone. That's a good one.

(BEN starts to wheeze. It grows louder and louder)

Oh my God! I forgot my inhaler!

TONY

We've been over this. Listen sweets. Try to wrap your mind around something else beside your inhaler. Meditate. You're always gabbing about The Tao de Jing-- especially when I'm trying to work. Now put your money where your mouth is.

(BEN starts to cry)

I can't help you now with everything little thing, sweetie, like I do at home. *(HE pauses)* You're going to have to be a grown up and act like a *mensch*.

BEN

(Wheezing while HE's crying)

Yeah I know. *Zum alles aus pressen*. It will all press out with the wash.

TONY

No, not even that, toots.

(Silence for a few Beats., then gradually BEN's sobbing and wheezing start to lessen)

TONY

And what the fuck does it matter why we're here. That's gruel for *dummies*. For assholes who have no sense where this country's headed. Do you get what I'm saying?

(BEN doesn't answer but still works on stopping the wheezing)

TONY

We're expendable, man.

BEN

Tone—

TONY

What is it, toots?

BEN

Why do they give you a bucket to piss in and not me?

TONY

They're trying to get one of us to turn on the other. Divide and conquer.

BEN

They can't make either of us do anything...that we don't want to do.

(HE pauses.)

Can they?

TONY

You tell me, love. You'll need to. And sooner, not later.
Do you hear me, Benny?

(A Beat. or two)

(BEN fights back tears again)

BEN

Tone?

TONY

(Starting to drift off to sleep)

Close your eyes, princess. You want I should sing you to sleep?

(HE forces himself awake and sings):

“On top of old Smokey all covered with snow
I lost my true lover for courting too slow
For courting's a pleasure and parting's a grief
And a false hearted lover is worse than a thief
For a thief will just rob you and take all you save
But a false hearted lover will lead you to the grave
And the grave will decay you and turn you to dust
Not one girl in a hundred a poor boy can trust
They'll hug you and kiss you and tell you more lies...”

(As HE's singing, TONY falls asleep and starts to snore)

BEN

Maybe it's on account of you

TONY

(Pissed that HE's been woken up)

What?

BEN

Well...we both know you had a file.

TONY

And the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening.

BEN

You've been telling me for years they've been keeping track--

TONY

So?

BEN

What's so supposed to mean? What's your subtext?

TONY

(Irritated and tired)

I'm telling you that at this point in time it doesn't matter what the reason is.

(HE Shrugs)

File, no file, the same thing. It doesn't make a difference.

BEN

But *you* actually did something. *I did nothing.*

TONY

Did something?

BEN

Yeah.

TONY

You mean sign a few petitions, once in a while attend a protest?

BEN

Oh come off it, Tone. We know what you did. *(Beat.)* Anyways I can't be arrested for wanting to be like Bardone—a scumbag who can transform and finally access his braver self. What's the big deal? I have a secret fantasy life! So what? I never did anything.

TONY

Ba-zoom. You've hit the jack pot. YOU NEVER DID ANYTHING IN YOUR LIFE. Have you ever stood up to someone? Have you fought for anything?

BEN

Oh you're so annoying. I can't take it when you perform your righteous Modern Day Jehovah act.

TONY

So how righteous do you have the balls to be?

(HE laughs hysterically)

Bardone! Bardone! Your hero! So tell me—which Bardone is the real you? The scumbag imposter who charges families to “save” their loved ones from the camps—though they've actually been shipped off? Or the scumbag imposter who poses as della Rovere--but at the final moment of his life suddenly grows balls and refuses to inform?

BEN

You have the nerve to laugh at me? Well up your mother's ass! FUCK YOU TONY! Did you hear what I said? FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!

TONY

Bardone! Bardone ! My hero Bardone!

(TONY starts dancing around his celt)

My hero Bardone!

BEN

Fuck you, Tony! **FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!**

(GERHARD ENTERS, unlocks BEN's cell, and grabs him by the hair.)

GERHARD

Okay Horse Breath, you wanna a few rides on the Giant Catapult?

TONY

Take me instead.

(GERHARD pushes BEN back into his cell, walks over to TONY's cell, opens it, and grabs TONY)

GERHARD

So Mordecai—you wanna be a big shot? Then get up off your ass!

(HE pushes TONY forward very roughly and THEY EXIT))

BEN

Fuck me! Fuck me! Oh Lord God in heaven fuck me ten times over! What have I done?

(HE puts his head in his hands and sinks down further in His cell.)

FADE-OUT

(A few Beats.)

(Then LIGHTS UP on a spot UPSTAGE)

(GERHARD dumps TONY on the floor-- bruised, battered, one eye swollen, and unable to move.)

(WE hear screams of other PRISONERS in nearby cells.)

(TONY opens his good eye.)

TONY

It must be the food.

LOUDSPEAKER'S VOICE:

Welcome aboard!

(WE hear another prisoner screaming out in pain. Then the dissonant chords of several PRISONERS singing "Deutschland Uber Alles.")

END OF SCENE

SCENE FIVE

When the scene opens BEN is pacing in his cell. A few Beats. Then GERHARD dumps TONY, battered and bruised, in the adjoining cell and locks it shut.

GERHARD

(Looking down at TONY):

Still opting for emotional generosity, mate?

(GERHARD EXITS)

BEN

(Extremely worried)

Are you okay, sweetie?

(A few Beats. of silence.)

BEN

Are you all right? Tone?

(A Beat. or 2)

Are you still mad at me? I'm sorry Tone, I'm really sorry. The last thing I want to do is to fuck you up!

(Then thinking TONY is not answering him purposely).

Remember that night outside Sedona? We tore off our clothes in the middle of the desert... And just as I knelt and you slipped inside me, a humongous blue snake crawled out from the rock! And we raced to escape—both of us butt naked—but that asshole with the Bible called the cops!

(HE pauses)

Oh Tony! Will you please forgive me? Will you ever forgive me? You're right. I have a moral screw loose. That's why I was drawn to you that very first night in the *Lions Head*. Even then I could sense your strength! Like steel you were--not budging an inch! I could *read* it in your eyes, your walk, your teasing smile... Oh God forbid this should be our last time together! Oh please absolve me! Hear my confession, Father Tony! And if by a miracle we ever get outta' this shit hole, I

promise I'll trust you! I'll always trust you! I've always wanted to be a better man-
-a man just like you. Please Tony--Don't ignore me now!

(BEN breaks down sobbing. A few Beats. Then WE hear the Voice of a PRISONER in an adjoining cell):

PRISONER'S Voice

The poor slob don't realize the guy went down for the count 20 minutes ago.

END OF SCENE

SCENE SIX

One of the DVD's drops while GERHARD is dusting with his Swiffer in CLARISSA's Office. HE bends down to pick it up.

GERHARD

This one doesn't have a title, Miss.

CLARISSA rushes over and grabs it out of his hand.

Don't you want it alphabetized, Miss?

CLARISSA

It's not necessary, Gerhard.

GERHARD

(Reaching for it again)

I'll put it back on the shelf.

CLARISSA

I SAID it's not necessary.

GERHARD

What's in this video? *Debbie Does Dallas?*

CLARISSA

Smart ass, eh?

(SHE sits on her desk, swings her legs, opens a desk drawer, and puts the DVD inside. Then SHE lights up a cigarette and starts blowing smoke rings.)

GERHARD

You're not supposed to smoke in here. They have strict rules against smoking.

Beat.

And other things.

CLARISSA

You gonna tell Dr. Beasley, Gerhard?

GERHARD

No.

CLARISSA

No, what?

GERHARD

No, Miss, I'm not going to tell Dr. Beasley.

(GERHARD continues to dust the videos, books, art work, and the plants.)

CLARISSA

(SHE reaches down to make sure the desk drawer is closed tightly)

Tell me Gerhard, have you ever done something that made you enormously proud, something that reflected the God given talents you were born with-- but which you were afraid the world would never see?

GERHARD

Yeah. I beat up seven Jews in one day—like the fairy tale. You know, the tailor who swatted seven in one blow.

CLARISSA

But those were flies, Gerhard, not human beings. Human beings are the most precious commodity we have on this earth. We need to learn to be kind to our fellow human beings.

GERHARD

He stares at her. Yeah, right.

CLARISSA

Talking about which, Gerhard, sit down.

(HE doesn't)

CLARISSA

If you insist.

(SHE blows a few more smoke rings.)

You're almost finished with guard duty and your sentence will be over soon. Do you think you've achieved penance for beating up Jews?

(GERHARD mumbles something)

CLARISSA

Speak up, Gerhard. I can't hear you.

GERHARD

Yeah.

(HE pauses)

I achieved penance.

CLARISSA

Yes what?

GERHARD

I achieved penance.

CLARISSA

You know beating up Jews then cutting off their ears is not such a trivial offense. But I'm sure you're now of the same opinion as the rest of us. This Van Gogh Anti-semitism is a thing of the past.

(SHE pauses)

Right?

CLARISSA

(SHE repeats)

Right?

GERHARD

(Sarcastic)

Oh yeah...right.

CLARISSA

Good. I'll mark that done and give it to Dr. Beasley.

(HE puts down the duster and goes to shake her hand.)

Penance completed. Sentence revoked. You're dismissed now.

(HE turns to leave)

CLARISSA

And Gerhard, you missed a spot on my shoe. Will you lick it off?

(HE turns around and goes over to her. HE bends down and licks her shoe. Then HE gets up and turns to leave again.)

And Gerhard?

(HE turns back to face her again)

Good Luck.

(GERHARD EXITS into the CORRIDOR. But HE's so disconcerted HE forgets to take his duster with him.)

CLARISSA

(Muttering under her breath while SHE dials her phone)

Not supposed to smoke, is it?

(GERHARD realizes HE left the Swiffer in CLARISSA's office. When HE hears CLARISSA talking on the phone, HE stays outside her office and listens in):

CLARISSA

(Speaking on the phone)

Dr. Beasley? Clarissa La Rue. Gerhard didn't achieve penance. He's got a long way to go. He tried to steal one of the DVD'S in my office.

(SHE pauses)

And sometimes... he diddles the male prisoners.

(A Beat or 2.)

Yes. I will have him transferred to the cell block for dangerous political prisoners. I assure you, he will never again see the light of day.

(CLARISSA hangs up and lights another cigarette.)

(GERHARD waits a few Beats., then HE ENTERS her office, and grabs the Swiffer.)

GERHARD

Sorry to intrude.

CLARISSA

No *problemo*, Gerhard.

(GERHARD EXITS, Swiffer in hand.)

(CLARISSA reaches into her desk and takes out her flask. SHE downs several gulps.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE SEVEN

During this scene WE can hear the water dripping and building up in TONY's cell.

TONY

Did it rain on you all night too?

BEN

What do you mean?

TONY

Like Chinese torture. Each fucking drop missing the bucket by a quarter of a centimeter. You didn't hear it?

BEN

I must have fallen asleep.

TONY

Unbelievable.

BEN

Tony?

TONY

Yeah?

BEN

If anything happens to you...and I'm left here to forage on my own...How will I manage?

TONY

You'll manage.

BEN

Are you fucking kidding?

TONY

Something will fire up your belly when you least expect it. Remember what Grant said to Sherman the evening after that first battle at Shiloh? After the Union troops got fucking decimated? “We’ll nab em’ tomorrow.”

BEN

I want to be with you forever.

(HE pauses)

Without anything intervening.

TONY

You mean like death?

BEN

Yes. Like death.

TONY

Work on it. *Beat or 2.* You’ll have to learn to trust me though. No matter what happens.

(Beat.)

Remember the Raisin Test?

BEN

Oh my God. The Raisin Test! How was I to know it was—

TONY

(Mockingly)

Just a raisin.

BEN

It could have been laced with Meth or magic mushrooms! You know my nervous system. It was barely a week after we’d met. I hardly knew you!

TONY

You fucked me all day and all night--starting that first day I met you. I’d say you fucking knew me.

BEN

But all I did was refuse to eat one tiny little raisin!

(A few Beats.)

TONY

(HE pauses)

So what did they ask you?

BEN

Not much.

TONY?

(Sarcastic)

What else?

BEN

Oh...just about some dangerous character who goes by the moniker W.C. Fields.

(A Beat. or two)

Who they say you've been cavorting with.

(TONY laughs)

TONY

(Imitating W.C. Fields inimitable voice)

"Once, during Prohibition, I was forced to live for days on nothing but food and water."

(Beat.)

(Continuing to imitate Fields)

"I like to keep a bottle of stimulant handy in case I see a snake, which I also keep handy."

Beat.

(Continuing to imitate Fields)

"I once spent a year in Philadelphia. I think it was on a Sunday."

(Beat.)

BEN

(Interrupting)

WOULD YOU FUCKING STOP? Are you off your gourd? What does W. C. Fields have to do with—

TONY

(Interrupting)

You don't remember Alfonso? His yearly public bonfire of all W.C.'s extant quotes encouraging assholes to drink?

BEN

But what does Alfonzo, a 12 step guy, have to do with--

TONY

Your guess is as good as mine, hon.

BEN

(HE pauses)

But you haven't been to a meeting since—

TONY

Oh yes I have.

BEN

When?

TONY

June 6th.

BEN

(A long pause)

And you didn't TELL ME?

TONY

You mean give you concrete ammunition to argue with them? My God, princess, they might have tortured you to death right then and there if you'd *decided to disagree with them*. Better that you knew nothing.

BEN

So if it wasn't politics, why did you start drinking again? *Beat*. Was it me?

TONY

Was *what* you?

BEN

Why you started drinking again?

TONY

(Thinking for a Beat or 2)

Not exactly.

BEN

The national security/surveillance state and the morality of the scumbags who rule the crumbling empire?

TONY

Not really.

BEN

Your usual cyclical depression, but maybe more intense? The fact that you're getting old?

(TONY doesn't answer)

Well?

TONY

(Pausing)

Maybe...a little of all those things.

(Several Beats.)

BEN

So what is it about me? Are you bored with my conversation?

TONY

Oh I don't know.

BEN

You must know! You just listed me as one of the prime causes for you drinking again.

TONY

Well...You're always spouting off and

(Sarcastic)

"waxing eloquent" on old political movies, and your takes on their dramaturgy are coming out of your *wazoo*. But to tell you honestly, you're really not involved in the world around you. Let alone the suffering of other people. It's always I feel cold, I'm horny, I want that DVD. Me, me, me, me. Can't you ever think about anything but yourself and whacking off three times a day?

BEN

Well I'm always hearing about the one percent and the imminent economic collapse—which by the way, I've heard about for the last 20 years! But what do you ever do about it besides *kvetch*? When do you ever get off your *tusch*? I have news for you bud—you're not the left wing John Wayne you thought you were during Viet Nam.

TONY

Ah! Trapped in my own web! Whaddaya' gonna do? Sue me for false representation?

A Beat or 2.

I guess we're just two old Jewish hypocrites with the standard set of moral ambiguities.

BEN

Speak for yourself. I'm still young.

(Several Beats.)

Tell me, Tony. Are we ever going to get outta' here? I need to publish my second book of reviews!

TONY

Maybe if you'd been nicer to your editor, Ben Brantley would have done a piece on your book by now in *The Times*.

BEN

He's a drama critic, dorfus. Not movies. *Then*: What about you?

TONY

What about me?

BEN

If things don't... what will you regret the most?

TONY

Let's see. I'll regret I forgot to clip my 3rd toenail in the bath tub last Sunday.

BEN

Ha ha. Very funny. Haven't you *ever* have any regrets?

A FEW BEATS

LOUDSPEAKER

LIGHTS OUT JAIL BIRDS!

(Sarcastic)

"Schlafe vol!!!" (GOOGLE YIDDISH)

(The LIGHTS turn off in BEN and TONY's cells)

(A Beat. or two, then WE hear a few notes of a harmonica in an adjoining cell)

(A few more Beats.)

(Then WE hear several screams, followed by banging on the bars as well)

(A few more beats., then:)

(The water dripping from the ceiling of TONY's cell suddenly escalates Rapidly)

TONY

Christ almighty!

(GERHARD ENTERS with a flashlight and unlocks TONY 's cell.)

GERHARD

(Pulling TONY roughly out of his cell)

We're gonna' play nice, Spartacus, we're gonna' patch up your cell for you so you won't drown and your little *tchotchke* won't die of a broken heart.

(GERHARD EXITS with TONY)

BEN

(Calling after TONY)

Ulysses Grant!

TONY

(Calling back to BEN)

General della Rovere!

END OF SCENE

SCENE EIGHT

GERHARD is sitting, legs splayed out and very drunk, on a spot UPSTAGE. HE reaches for a bottle, and takes several big gulps. Then HE bunches up a wad of paper and throws it off the STAGE. HE takes a few more gulps and then repeats the process. After HE's thrown a few more wads of paper, HE starts to fight back tears. HE wipes his nose on his shirt, but HE can't hold the tears back. When HE's finally able to stop crying, HE starts singing "The Rain In Spain"--

*"The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain!
On the plain! On the plain!
And where's that bloody plain?
In Spain! In Spain!"*

How kind of you to let me come!...

And where's that blasted plain?

In Spain! In Spain!..."

while intermittently taking several more gulps. Then HE puts the bottle down and is quiet for several Beats., as though HE's thinking some deep thoughts. After a while HE picks up the bottle again, takes a few more gulps, and starts humming "On Top of Old Smokey."

FADE OUT

END OF SCENE

SCENE NINE

When the SCENE opens BEN is pacing in his cell. A few Beats. Then GERHARD and TONY ENTER. GERHARD pushes TONY back into his cell.

GERHARD

(To TONY):

All patched up and clean and cozy for you, Jewbird.

(GERHARD EXITS))

BEN

(Extremely worried)

Are you okay, sweetie?

(A few Beats. of silence.)

BEN

Are you mad at me again?

BEN

(Getting up and starting to sing and dance to cheer him up):

“You’re the top.....”

“You're the top!

You're the Coliseum.

You're the top!

You're the Louvre Museum.

You're a melody from a symphony by Strauss

You're a Bendel bonnet,

A Shakespeare's sonnet,

You're Mickey Mouse.

You're the Nile,

You're the Tower of Pisa,

You're the smile on the Mona Lisa

I'm a worthless check, a total wreck, a flop,
But if, baby, I'm the bottom you're the top."

(A few Beats. of silence.)

BEN

(Nervous that TONY's not responding)

Remember that night we met in the Lion's Head... I was arguing with that jack ass who wouldn't criticize Kubrick for adding a happy ending to "Paths of Glory," though luckily Kirk Douglas demanded he cut it. And you introduced yourself and said I was a pretentious pile of crap and you agreed with him, but you'd stomach my inanities because liked my bod.

And then you walked me back to my 5th floor walk-up. And you stopped at every landing and slapped my *tusch*...then as we stepped onto the 5th landing and I turned the key...you stuck your tongue in my ear and I came right there!

And then you fucked me a second time. And later that evening a third and fourth time. And by then it didn't matter who won the argument (though a month later you said I'd had a point or two, and should write for *The Voice*). Remember?

(TONY doesn't answer)

BEN

And then we settled down into our State of Sexual Paradise, and I taught you to love Brahms and Mahler—while you played Queen bee in a macho kind of way. A *Beat or 2*. And then six months later... we made love on that narrow street in *Padova*...to the smell of *semperoni* burning on the window ledge...

(His voice trails off)

(2 or 3 Beats.)

TONY

(Coldly)

Yeah. I remember. What's your point?

BEN

Isn't it enough just to remember? Isn't memory sufficient to...

(A few more Beats. of silence.)

What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?

(Beat.)

Don't tell me after 20 fucking years, you've fallen out of love with me in the last fifteen minutes?

(2 or Beats.)

Oh I get it.

(Knowing this isn't true but baiting TONY).

You're actually *scared* to express your undying love for me, Mister Never Shaking In His boots. Because what you've been predicting for years is at last coming true. Incarceration by unknown, corporate powers.

(A few more Beats of silence.)

I'd never have guessed! Even you! The only human being I've ever known who could survive in a concentration camp...and if not be happy, at least *accepting*.

TONY

(Sarcastic)

Been listening to Mahler's Adagio from his Fifth Symphony lately, hon?

(BEN doesn't answer.)

TONY

Cat got *your* tongue too? *Beat*. And what about grabbing my most expensive bottle of *Remy Martin* that I hid in my drawer 10 years ago? Have you done that lately, sweetie? Or had any thoughts in that direction?

(TONY starts to hum Mahler's Adagio.)

BEN

(Very sarcastic) I thought you'd given up drinking 9 years and three months and sixteen days ago!

Anyway, you're changing the subject. What exactly did they tell you that I did? I'm sure they exaggerated for *poetic* effect. *(Beat.)*

(TONY hums more of the Adagio, even louder this time.)

BEN

Oh lay off it, Tony. It was an exceptional circumstance.

TONY

Exceptional, eh? And what was it about Lyle that was so exceptional—beside your state of heavenly bliss brought on by the Adagio? Was his that much bigger than mine?

BEN

Oh stop it, Tone! It wasn't so much of a *physical* thing. More of a...spiritual connection. I'm sick of your paranoid accusations!

(A few Beats.)

And to tell you honestly, you hadn't been giving me very much attention. I was scared to be alone.

TONY

(Contemptuously)

Attention? Scared to be alone? Scared to occupy yourself in meaningful activity? I have news for you, shit—the world doesn't revolve around yours truly.

BEN

You were drifting away. All those meetings you said you had to go to. Why a history teacher of over thirty years experience should have to bone up on protocols--

TONY

(Interrupting)

Did it ever occur to you, *dummkopf*, that the reason we're in here is that your new friend Lyle was the piece of crap that planted dope in our fridge.

BEN

Lyle... was sweet. And in his own way surprisingly authentic.

TONY

Authentic my ass. Lyle was a plant, idiot. And a Red diaper baby. Such people have to redeem themselves in front of the whole "Free World." They're better at

subversion than the rest of us. They've dumped the communistic views of their parents and substituted the ethics of the national security state.

(THEY hear loud banging and then screaming from a surrounding cell, then moaning. They wait to talk again until the moaning stops.)

BEN

Is this how you talk to me after I've just endured a mini-stroke that numbed my entire humerus bone?

TONY

And whose fault was this "mini-stroke" do you think? Could it possibly be the fault of some genius nit that rhymes with crocodile?

BEN

Why are always so sure of yourself? You know as well as I do when some two bit dealer wants to save money he cuts the dope and—

(TONY falls onto his bed and doubles up with laughter)

BEN

What's so funny?

TONY

What a piece of shit! You think signing your blog *General della Rovere* transforms you into a big shot revolutionary in an empire that's crumbling before our very eyes? *Beat.* I present you Benjamin Abramovich, hero of the Resistance! "Non-passaran! Non passaran!"

(HE laughs hysterically)

BEN

Who do you think *you* are? Kirk Douglas as Spartacus you're not. You're a two-bit history teacher with a rich fantasy life, so you always think you're back in the sixties. How dare you pass judgment on me? You think I'm the only one who makes mistakes? When your father died, and you started drinking again—I took care of you 24/7. Only because of *my* efforts did you go back into recovery--

TONY

(Interrupting)

Yeah. Yeah. Yadah yadah yadah.

BEN

(HE pauses.)

Is it possible that the quotes from W.C. Fields *weren't* actually related drinking or bonfires? They told me about your suspect activities.

TONY

(Taken back)

What fucking suspect activities? What did they tell you?

BEN

Oh a lot of things.

TONY

What fucking things?

(BEN doesn't answer)

TONY

WHAT FUCKING THINGS?

(Beat.)

BEN

...That you've been flirting with an organization whose sole aim is to threaten the values our country was founded on.

TONY

And what else did they say? *What else?*

BEN

That you've been...

TONY

Yes? Speak up, prick.

BEN

You have to admit, Tone, you've been acting very secretly lately.

TONY

WHAT ELSE DID THEY SAY?

BEN

(A Beat. or 2)

That you've been inciting people to—

TONY

To what?

BEN

To commit violent acts.

TONY

Is that all, bunky? They didn't tell you I was planning to blow up the Sears Tower?

(HE bursts out laughing)

Or I have a five star scheme to explode dirty bombs over New York City?

BEN

I wish you would take this seriously. You're not just putting your life in danger, you're also playing with my fucking life.

(Pausing)

Have you or haven't you been looking at websites that call for *jihad* and terrorist acts?

TONY

I'm not going to deign to answer that.

Beat.

I can't believe you're taking the high ground. You know you could have fooled me. I thought at one time you were actually a genuine human being. Little did it occur to me that you have a moral screw loose.

BEN

Moi taking the high ground?--Your Highness, The Moralist, Mr. Jehovah!
What a hypocrite! *Beat*. They told me about your meetings in Chicago.

TONY

What did they tell you I did in Chicago?

BEN

That you reconnoitered with W. C. Fields and others for the purpose of spreading widespread chaos--and to bring the government down firsthand! And I bet its all true what they told me! And that you're the reason I'm going to die in this shit hole!

TONY

WHAT?

LOUDSPEAKER

Welcome Aboard.

TONY

You want me to tell you what's questionable? What I thought I saw in you that day I walked into the *The Lion's Head*. Tell you what, stoolie, how about we take a coffee break from each other for, say, about a thousand years. And the wedding's off! The orchids, the string quartet, and the marinated squab at the St. James Hotel! Oh yes, and the tickets to Los Cabos! As soon as I'm outta' this amusement park, I'm cancelling--

BEN

You can't cancel. We signed a contract! They won't let us cancel.

TONY

Fuck you and fuck your dumb-ass contract.

(HE starts banging against the bars of his cell):

Guard! Guard! I need to speak with you! I want to change my cell.

BEN

They won't let us out of a signed contract!

TONY

(HE bangs some more)

I want to move to another location!

GERHARD ENTERS

GERHARD

(to TONY)

I see-- you want another ride on the ferris wheel?

(HE turns to BEN):

And you there, shut your trap.

(HE opens the door of TONY's cell and pulls TONY roughly out and leads him away.)

(As GERHARD and TONY EXIT, BEN clenches the bars of his cell and starts shouting):

BEN

Tony, don't leave me! You know how I get in closed spaces! Don't abandon me! I promise I'll never ever invite anyone into our apartment again. I'll cut off my dick! Tony! Take me back!

(BEN's sobs slowly morph into a full-fledged asthma attack. HE retreats to the back of his cell and collapses.)

I hate you, Tony! I hope I never see you again in my life! And I hope you die!

(2 or 3 Beats.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE TEN

GERHARD's doing a strip search on TONY outside his new cell (away from BEN's cell). The cell is considerably smaller than TONY's previous cell, and it has none of his other cell's accoutrements.

Gerhard's drinking beer again during this SCENE. As HE drinks more, HE starts to slur his words a little. And as the SCENE progresses—HE also begins to stutter when recalling his childhood memories during his conversation with TONY.

(TONY continues to take off his clothes as GERHARD strip searches him and the two of them talk)

GERHARD

New abode spacious enough, bud? Not squeezing the nits outta' your butt cheeks I hop

TONY

Nimble at this, aren't you?

GERHARD

Lottsa' practice.

TONY

Giving or receiving?

Beat.

Both.

(A few Beats.)

TONY

So...what was your crime?

GERHARD

Lets see. Theft, robbery, aggravated assault...and beating up kinky haired Jews like you... then saving their teeth in my scrap book with my cross and confirmation pic from Uncle Gerhard.

Beat.

TONY

So why the swastikas still on your biceps?

GERHARD

Nosy cunt, ain't you?

HE lifts his night stick and whacks TONY a few times.

TONY

You can beat me to kingdom come. You can't impress me. I'm not impressionable.

GERHARD

Oh yeh?

(GERHARD strikes him a few more times. Then HE throws TONY's clothes back at him. As TONY's picking them up, GERHARD shoves him back in his cell and locks the door.)

GERHARD

You can get dressed now, *Bubbe*. Just in time to light your *Shabbos* candles.

(TONY starts putting on his clothes. As HE dresses, TONY starts to sing "On Top of Old Smokey.")

TONY

"On top of old Smokey all covered with snow
I lost my true lover for courting too slow.
For courting's a pleasure and parting's a grief
But a false hearted lover is worse than a thief.
For a thief will just rob you and take all you save,

But a false hearted lover will lead you to the grave..."

(After a few Beats., though GERHARD's unsteady on his feet, as HE listens to TONY sing HE starts to hum along.)

GERHARD

Ain't that a Jewish hymn?

TONY

Why do you think it's a Jewish hymn?

GERHARD

Oh...I dunno...

TONY

Hmmm. This is getting

(HE uses a German accent):

very in-ter-est-ing. First tchotchke, then "Bubbie." Then Shabbat candles...and knowing what happens at sunset on Friday night. Yes,

(German accent again:)

very in-ter-est-ing. You know a lot of Yiddish words for a confirmed anti-semite, don't you? And now, "On Top of Old Smokey!"

(GERHARD pauses, then stops himself from speaking.)

TONY

Have you by any chance heard the lyrics to "On Top Of Old Smokey" before, Herr Gerhard?

(GERHARD pauses again. Then HE unlocks the cell and motions TONY to come out into the far side of the corridor. When HE finally speaks, HE starts to stutter)

GERHARD

My/ my/ my/...

TONY

Spit it out, you Aryan son of a bitch! Whaddaya' think you're auditioning for— Brunhilde in the *Ring of the Nibelung*?

GERHARD

My/my/Gran/Granpa Is-aac put/put/me on his lap. Sang it when/when/he got back from *schul*.

TONY

You trying to get on my good side, asshole? I don't believe you.

GERHARD

Ge/Ge/filte fish. *Choch-chochk-tka. Zum Alles Aus Pressen.*

TONY

Ta ta. Any *schmuck* can google Yiddish expressions. *Beat.* Prove it!

(GERHARD pauses, then HE turns his back to the AUDIENCE, faces TONY and takes down his pants.)

TONY

(Holding out His arms to GERHARD though HE's behind bars)
Landsman! Mishpocha! Let me give you a hug!

(GERHARD pulls up His pants.)

TONY

(Repeating):
Landsman! Mishpocha!

(GERHARD pauses, then unlocks TONY's cell. The two of them hug, then step back and look at each other in amazement. After another Beat. or Two, THEY step closer again and hug a few more times. As HE hugs TONY, GERHARD keeps repeating the phrases "Landsman!" "Mishpocha!")

(THEY finally disengage)

TONY

So tell me, Herr Gerhard, why did you forfeit your birthright and turn into a Nazi?

GERHARD

Not/not my doing.

(TONY gestures to GERHARD's that HE wants a sip of His beer, and GERHARD complies. Then TONY hands it back to him after taking a few big gulps)

TONY

Whose doing was it?

GERHARD

(A Beat or 2)

He/he took me away--

TONY

(Interrupting)

Who took you away?

(GERHARD doesn't answer)

TONY

Who took you away?

GERHARD

(Pausing)

From my/my Ma-ma.

(Beat.)

He was my—

TONY

Your Albert Speer, if not your Hermann Goering? I see, we must be talking about your pops-pops, correct?

(GERHARD nods)

TONY

So whatever happened to Pop-pop Goering?

GERHARD

The fucking FEDS shot him.

TONY

Sorry I don't carry any sympathy cards with me. But I want you to know, Herr Gerhard, if either of ever see the light of day, I'll put in a good word for you with my people. And my people will do lunch with your people.

GERHARD

Mishpocha! Thank you, *Mishpocha!*

TONY

By the way, you are my people. According to Jewish law, if your Mom's Jewish that makes you Jewish.

(GERHARD over and hugs TONY again. Then the two of them sit down cross-legged and face each other.)

TONY

Tell me Gerhard, ever hear the term *kapo*?

(GERHARD shakes his head.)

They're using you like a *kapo*—like the Nazis used certain Jews in the camps to beat up and terrorize their fellow Jewish prisoners. They used *capos* to execute the Nazi agenda—a kind of internal police force if you will. Then when they'd served their purpose:

(TONY makes the motion of pressing a trigger and shooting a gun directly at GERHARD.)

GERHARD

(Knowing HE's going to be demoted to the bottom floor and become a political prisoner again, GERHARD pauses then says the following, but with little conviction):

I've served my sentence for beating up Jews.

TONY

That's what you think. It's probable, even as we talk, you've already done what they needed and now they can toss you away like a chicken bone they could choke on.

GERHARD

But—

TONY

No buts about it, bro. They showcase punks like you to underscore to the rest of the world that they're rehabilitating prisoners. Rehabilitation is universally recognized to be the moral, the right thing to do. But now, take it from me, *Landsman, Michpocha*, your days are numbered unless you join the troupe.

GERHARD

The troupe?

TONY

The troupe of citizens that's growing bigger every day. Citizens that want to stop their loved ones from disappearing. And you and I are two of the very few who are in a position to influence events.

LOUDSPEAKERS'S VOICE

Gerhard report immediately to Ward D. And be sure to take all of your personal effects with you.

(GERHARD starts to shake visibly)

GERHARD

What was you saying?

TONY

There's a List of The Disappeared. And I have contacts who are keeping that list safe. Listen, kinsman, I have an idea.

(TONY gets up and bends over and whispers in GERHARD's ear.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE ELEVEN

*GERHARD is continuing to climb towards the roof of the prison.
Just behind him, TONY has stopped 3 floors below the roof and is
busy searching for a trap door)*

TONY

You promised I'd see a trap door three floors below the roof! You assured me!
You said it would take us back to Ben's cell block!

GERHARD

(Not turning around and continuing to climb)

Fuck the trap door.

(TONY's really angry now)

Whaddaya mean--you insisted.

GERHARD

(Turning around and then continuing to climb)

Didn't I hear you say, "How's about we take a coffee break from each other for,
say, about a thousand years?"

TONY

You been *listening in with the Gestapo*? Didn't your pops teach you rule number
one: You can say you'll never come back, that you hate their guts, but if you love
someone you're loyal and do the right thing! And God forbid he's in real danger,
you risk your life for him!

GERHARD

(Huffing and puffing)

We need to get outta' here quick! They'll fucking kill us!

TONY

Don't you have a moral bone in your entire body? You don't feel obligated to save
your fellow Jew?

GERHARD

Whaddaya' think this is a Nazi concentration camp? I'm getting out!

TONY

Fuck your ass Gerhard! Eureka—I've found the trap door! I'm climbing back down to Ben's cell.

(TONY turns around and goes down the hidden stairs, but GERHARD ignores TONY and climbs out the hatch and slides up onto the roof)

(Suddenly sirens are blaring and search lights begin to circle. Then WE hear boots clattering and shouting and screaming)

LOUDSPEAKER

Lock down! 2 Prisoners have escaped! All Guards to the Yard! 2 Prisoners have escaped!

(GERHARD tries to crawl into a garbage can on the roof but the garbage can rolls away from Him.)

LOUDSPEAKER

Stop! We have you surrounded!

(WE hear more clattering of boots and then GUARDS arrive and raise their rifles)

(GERHARD is surrounded. WE hear the gunshots, and GERHARD falls down.)

LOUDSPEAKER

Welcome Aboard!

(The STAGE goes DARK)

END OF SCENE

SCENE TWELVE

GERHARD 2 ENTERS and picks up BEN's plate of uneaten food out of the food door of BEN's cell. HE shakes his head, and walks away with it.

(GERHARD 2 EXITS)

(GERHARD 2 ENTERS the corridor by CLARISSA's Office. HE knocks on her door.)

CLARISSA

(Furiously making notes)

Come in, Gerhard.

GERHARD 2

The prisoner won't eat. He hasn't eaten anything for 2 full days. And only a sip or two of water. *Beat.* He keeps shouting "Tony! Tony!" And when I opened his cell to give him the grub personally, he told me he wouldn't eat until he could talk to Saperstein.

CLARISSA

(Looking up)

Oh my fucking God! You did tell him Saperstein tried to escape like I told you? That he was caught escaping with Gerhard, and not planning to come back to get him?

GERHARD 2

(Meekly)

I'm not sure what I told him.

CLARISSA

Fucking imbecile! Did you forget why the fuck you're here?

GERHARD 2

No, Miss. Free Thinking and Intellectual Sophistry.

CLARISSA

So go back to Abramowitz and show him the first half of the video we made of the two *Landsmen* escaping—we’ve deleted the sequence where Saperstein insists they go back to get Abramowitz—so emphasize his distaste for saving his sweet pea or it’s lights out for you. *Verstehst?*

GERHARD 2

Verstehst.

(CLARISSA goes back to writing furiously)

CLARISSA

Can’t you see I’m busy? Put Abramovich in The Box. Then he’ll soften up, believe me. They all do, in The Box. And keep Saperstein in that undisclosed place until I give you the signal.

GERHARD 2

But Miss, I don’t think it was right to shoot Gerhard. He hadn’t yet turned six when the punks on our block sliced out his eye, chanting “dirty kike.”

CLARISSA

You’re not paid to think. May I remind you what happened to your brother?

GERHARD 2

Yes, miss. But--

(GERHARD EXITS.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE THIRTEEN

5 hours Later

(Several Beats.)

(LIGHTS UP on The Box)

(BEN is in The Box on the side of the STAGE.)

GERHARD 2

(Bending down and talking to BEN)

You have to eat. They won't let you out of there until you eat.

(A Beat or 2.)

Do you hear me?

(GERHARD 2 stands there for several Beats. Then HE turns and EXITS.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE FOURTEEN

8 Hours Later

GERHARD 2 knocks on CLARISSA's Office door.

CLARISSA

Come in.

(GERHARD ENTERS):

What the fuck do you want?

GERHARD

I went in 3 more times and the prisoner still hasn't eaten.

CLARISSA

(Smoking a cigarette and making notes)

Keep him in The Box. It will do him good and help him jiggle his choices.

GERHARD 2

Are you sure? The poor slob was eating like a bird before he went into The Box.

(Beat.)

There is such a thing as the "Categorical Imperative."

CLARISSA

Who's in charge here? Are you in charge, Gerhard 2?

GERHARD 2

I just thought—

CLARISSA

(Interrupting)

You thought! You thought! What a persnickety, faggy, little thinker you are. Maybe you should go back to graduate school and learn how to un-think.

(SHE goes back to making notes) (Beat.)

And you can toss that copy of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason that's bulging in your pocket.

(SHE waves him away.)

(HE EXITS reluctantly and closes the DOOR.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE FIFTEEN

THE STAGE IS DARK.

Then LIGHTS UP on The Box.

Several Beats. Then softly at first but gradually getting louder, WE hear a clarinet playing “You’re The Top” by Cole Porter. After several bars, the music starts to be juxtaposed with blood curdling screams and doors banging, and then the sounds of marching feet. Eventually all these noises stop except for the clarinet playing “You’re The Top,” which now is the only source of sound.

(Several Beats.)

(Then the clarinet stops as well)

END OF SCENE

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SCENE SIXTEEN

THIS SCENE loosely duplicates the last scene in the movie GENERAL DELLA ROVERE. It also includes added dialogue between CLARISSA and GERHARD and mention of the character W. C. FIELDS.

The PRISONERS are pacing silently in the PLAY ROOM, waiting to be shot. Some smoke, others fight back tears, and a few walk with their heads held high.

CLARISSA is standing outside THE PLAYROOM with GERHARD 2 in the corridor that leads to the door to the courtyard. There are special LIGHTS set up by CLARISSA for when the PRISONERS walk out of THE PLAYROOM.

CLARISSA

(to GERHARD 2)

They've been in there all night. I'm having trouble calming down—I can't control my excitement! You did remember put Abramovich and Saperstein into different rooms, didn't you?

GERHARD 2

Of course. You know Goethe said the will is the mother of patience.

CLARISSA

So much for Goethe. Go tell the guard to bring out the prisoners and take them into to the courtyard.

(Beat.)

And tell him to leave Saperstein inside The Play Room. Pretend I want to interview him. I don't want Abramovich to see his sweetie go out with the others until *after* I'm finished talking with him.

GERHARD 2

(Mumbling under his breath)

Like you interviewed my brother?

(GERHARD 2 goes into THE PLAYROOM and speaks to the GUARD. The GUARD escorts the 2 sets of PRISONERS into the corridor. Then HE opens the door and motions for the PRISONERS to start walking through.)

(CLARISSA pulls BEN over as the PRISONERS start walking out into the yard. BEN is shaking and having trouble walking.)

CLARISSA

Well? Did he talk? Do you know who he is?

(then:)

Face the lights!

BEN

(HE doesn't face the LIGHTS.)

Who?

CLARISSA

What do you mean? W.C. Fields!!

(SHE tries to push him to face the LIGHTS but is unsuccessful.)

BEN

(Talking slowly and painfully)

Yes. I know who he is.

CLARISSA

Well tell me!

BEN

(BEN starts to speak)

W. C. Fields is—

(BEN stops speaking. Just at that moment HE sees TONY walking out into the line of PRISONERS. TONY continues towards the DOOR with the other PRISONERS, and after a Beat. or two, BEN joins the line in back of TONY.)

CLARISSA

(Calling after the GUARD)

You idiot! He's not supposed to come out!

(Then calling after BEN):

Mr. Abramovich! Mr. Abramovich!

(CLARISSA runs after BEN)

CLARISSA

(Shouting even louder)

Look! What are you doing? They're going to die!

*(BEN ignores her. HE begins to hold his head higher,
and continues walking)*

(CLARISSA tries chasing after him, but to no avail)

(BEN, the last PRISONER in line, walks through the DOOR.)

(Several Beats. Then WE hear the sound of loud gun shots)

GERHARD 2

I thought only ten men were supposed to be executed.

CLARISSA

The mistake was mine.

END OF PLAY