

DANIEL. I guess it was a few years ago now, there was one winter, it didn't snow. It just did not snow. And people kept talking about climate change and global warming, so it was on my mind, but also, I love winter. And to be in Paris when it snows... it doesn't get old, at least, not to me. But this one winter, no snow. December, January, February. Nothing. Finally, it's the first week of March, I'm walking to the metro... I feel flurries. It was too warm for anything to stick, but still - flurries. And I felt... grateful: to be alive, to have grown up at a time when I really got to experience winter. I wanted to say thank you, but who do you thank for the snow? So I went to synagogue, and I prayed, and, I liked it, so I kept going. And I'm - I'm still figuring out how I feel about, you know, God but, I believe in the Earth. That feels close enough.

END

(A beat. They are both thinking about kissing the other person, but unsure if that's unseemly.)

END

You think I'm ridiculous?

MOLLY. No. I don't.

DANIEL. *(Laughing.)* I feel a little ridiculous. Talking about the snow, and -

MOLLY. Well you shouldn't.

DANIEL. I shouldn't?

MOLLY. No. It's actually... *(Unspoken. Wacky.)*

(They're now much closer to kissing, and that's just the moment CHARLES walks into the living room. MOLLY and DANIEL turn away from each other, as if they've been caught doing something wrong. CHARLES immediately reads the situation correctly but acts like there's no tension in the room.)

~~**DANIEL.** Oh, I was just getting water.~~

CHARLES. OK. How are you feeling?

DANIEL. I'm OK.

CHARLES. OK. I'll, I'll take a look in the morning.

DANIEL. OK. Thanks.

CHARLES. Yep.

(CHARLES exits into the kitchen.)

DANIEL. You must be tired.

MOLLY. Yeah.

~~**DANIEL.** OK, well, have a good water.~~

(DANIEL exits. MOLLY turns out the light.)

(In the dark, we hear a MALE VOICE say:)

MALE VOICE. And now, we rise to recite the Prayer for the French Republic.

(The offstage COMPANY, in unison, should join the MALE VOICE for each "Amen.")

(Perhaps we see CHARLES and DANIEL cross the stage, or CHARLES listening, taking the words in. Or perhaps we see something else. Or nothing.)

O Lord, Master of the world, your Providence embraces the heavens and the earth, strength and power belong to you: by you alone, everything rises and everything grows stronger. From your holy dwelling, O Lord, bless and protect THE FRENCH REPUBLIC AND THE FRENCH PEOPLE. - Amen!

May France live happily and prosperously; may it be strong and great by union and harmony. - Amen!

MARCELLE. So who's stopping you?

CHARLES & ELODIE. You!

MARCELLE. Well I can't listen to more of your, I walked down the street, I heard a prayer, I want to leave. I can't listen to that, OK? Our lives are here. They're here. We live here. You have a practice, I run a department. We have a home. Our children live here. All our friends. My father – and his needs are only growing, and we all know my brother is never going to step up and take responsibility for the overseeing of his care, which means, I need to be here. So let's say you decided, in a burst of romanticism, that you had to live by the sea, and we should move to Normandy, or Biarritz, or Antibes – we couldn't do it. We're too young to retire and we're too old to start over, even in our own country. We have too many obligations. So it's not just impractical, it's impossible, and frankly

CHARLES. I'm scared.

START

(Beat.)

I'm scared, Marcelle. You lay everything out, you lay it out so rationally, and I hear every word you're saying, but, I'm scared. We are Jews. We are Jews. The only reason we're still on this planet is because we learned to get out of dangerous situations before they got the better of us. Something is happening in the world, and it's happening in our country, too – I can feel it. I feel it when I walk with Daniel, I feel it when I read the left wing editorials, I feel it watching Le Pen and her base, all stirred up. Something is happening, and when that thing comes, I don't want to have to pray so my own country will protect me from it.

END

(On the other side of the stage, IRMA runs on, carrying a letter.)

IRMA. Adolphe! Adolphe! My god, Adolphe!

CHARLES. Is it rational? Maybe not.

IRMA. Adolphe?

CHARLES. Is it practical? Absolutely not.

IRMA. Adolphe!

(ADOLPHE enters.)

~~**ADOLPHE.** What is it? What?~~

CHARLES. But my heart –

IRMA. It's news.

CHARLES. My gut.

IRMA. Lucien!

CHARLES. Every bone in my body, every inch of my core –

IRMA. And Pierre!

CHARLES. Is telling me the same thing:

~~**MARCELLE.** And what is that?~~

IRMA. They're coming home!

(Beat.)

~~**CHARLES.** Run~~

(Blackout.)

let me tell you, when you get to the point where you can't pile anymore dead bodies up, you've made some pretty impressive piles! But to be fair, a lot of Jews committed suicide to avoid being killed, so technically you can't blame Peter the Hermit for everything.

We know about this because someone wrote it down. A Jew whose name has been lost to history wrote something called the Mainz Anonymous. That's the thing about Jews, we write it all down. Look, if we didn't keep track of it, you think they'd keep track of it for us?

The Mainz Anonymous is a great read, I have to say, I highly recommend it. Here's how someone named Isaac son of Daniel died:

"They put a rope around his neck and dragged him through the entire city in the muddy streets to the house of their idolatry. There was still some life in his frame when they said to him: 'You can still be saved if you agree to change your religion.' Having already been strangled, he could not utter a word from his mouth, so he gestured with his finger to say: 'Cut off my head.' And they slit his throat."

Sorry, was that too much? I forget what it's like, the first time you hear the details...

(PATRICK returns to the piano.)

I TOOK A TRIP ON A TRAIN
AND I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU
I PASSED A SHADOWY LANE
AND I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU

START

Truth be told, I didn't know all this growing up. Mom wasn't Jewish, Dad wasn't religious. Other than weddings and funerals, we didn't do too much with religion. We just wanted to be French. And we are! But then Marcelle married who she married, their children became who they became, and every year they got a little more...

(He makes some gesture to suggest whatever they've become, he thinks it's too much.)

I mean, the idea that France isn't safe? France! The first country in Europe to emancipate its Jews? The country our family loved so much that, in 1870 when Germany annexed the region where they had lived for centuries, they moved! Went west, to remain French, that's how much they loved it and it must have broken their hearts - because Strasbourg is fucking gorgeous. I was there on business actually, not too long ago. Gorgeous. Cobblestone streets, nice shopping - I had a little time to kill before my train back to Paris, so I was strolling around, buying a couple things, before you know it, I'm on Jew Street - which I assure you is a totally benign name you see in lots of cities here that means, "Street where Jews live - lived," and out of the corner of my eye, I see a faded stone plaque on the side of a building: "In this section was the center of the medieval Jewish community, prior to the massacre of 1349."

Who knew? Turns out 2,000 people were killed - burned alive - during what's affectionately known as the Valentine's Day massacre, cause they were a little more humane that day, they spared the children. And also women they found attractive, so, that's something.

(He pauses, still looking at the plaque.)

END

Do I descend from survivors of this massacre? My family lived in this area for centuries, they spared the attractive women and, well, look at us: we're gorgeous. But no one ever talked about it. What would they have said?

It was the middle of the night. She was a pretty young mother. She held her tiny baby to her breast as she watched her husband being burned alive. She thought she could make out his scream but so many were screaming, it was hard to know which was his, and to be fair, she'd never heard him make a sound like that before.

MARCELLE. It's not about feeling scared for Daniel, per se, but...

PATRICK. But what?

MARCELLE. Charles feels - and I don't disagree, necessarily -

PATRICK. Necessarily -

MARCELLE. ~~The fact that~~, when we expose ourselves, in public, as Jews, we double triple quadruple the chances of violent attacks - that *that* exposes something about how people really feel. And the only way our people have stayed alive all these years is either -

PATRICK. Our people -

MARCELLE. Is either we -

PATRICK. You sound like you're in a cult. ~~Our people -~~

MARCELLE. Is either we have been lucky, or we got out before it was too late. And he would know. He watched his family make that decision when he was a kid. He knows the signs.

PATRICK. What signs? Are there incidents? Yes, there are incidents. Guess what? It's not safe anywhere, not anywhere, no matter who you are. In America they shoot people at the movies, at night clubs, ~~they don't care.~~ How many people were killed in Nice last summer? People of all stripes? More people died in Nice than all these Jewish attacks combined. So let's say you never went to synagogue, you never did anything quote unquote Jewish, but one day you go to celebrate Bastille day and all of a sudden -

MARCELLE. I would never have been there -

PATRICK. You don't know

MARCELLE. I would not have been there -

PATRICK. You don't know -

MARCELLE. I don't go to the beach Patrick, I know. I wouldn't be caught dead, in July, outside, in a crowd of people, to watch fireworks! That is not something I would do that is actually one of my recurring nightmares, so no.

PATRICK. You know what I'm saying. It's all, it's indiscriminate.

MARCELLE. It's actually not.

PATRICK. It's mostly indiscriminate.

MARCELLE. Mostly mostly mostly. That's the key word.

PATRICK. Look, just use your brain here. OK?

MARCELLE. I'm trying to use my brain, Patrick. That is what I am trying to do. And part of my brain tells me, when I went to visit Israel I thought it was a perfectly interesting country, and I couldn't wait to get home. Part of my brain tells me I am as French as anyone, and no one and nothing is going to push me out of my own country. When you feel like you're under attack, when your country is quite seriously considering electing a woman from the National Front, the *National Front*, the party that refers to Nazi gas chambers as a quote unquote "point of detail," when you find yourself in that situation you stay and you fight, because you have a right to live in your country as much as anyone, *anyone*, and while there may be a few bad people, that's not a reason to leave because guess what there are bad people everywhere. But. Part of my brain also reminds me, we grew up without a grandmother, without aunts, with almost no cousins to speak of and why? Because they didn't leave when they could. So I better be damn sure, when the man I trust the most in this world tells me he's scared, that I think long and hard about what he sees that maybe I don't, or you don't, and pay attention.

PATRICK. And what does Papa think of your big plans?

MARCELLE. There are no plans, there's no reason for him to know any of this so just, shah

START

END

Ladino was the language of Spanish Jews, a mix of Spanish and Hebrew – like Yiddish, but with Spanish instead of German – today there are very few speakers left, almost none, but my point is, it is actually *breathtaking* to imagine a moment in time when Jews felt so secure, they invented a whole new language perfectly suited to that country. I mean, you don't invent a *language*, unless you feel *really* fucking at home somewhere, and of course we know how that turned out – expelled, forced conversions, burned at the stake, the works – American Jews haven't done that, there's no combination of Hebrew and, I don't even know, Valley Girl? – which suggests they understand that America, which has been their home and given them refuge may turn on them someday, perhaps sooner than they realize. I mean, stay tuned, right? So. Then you have the American Jew who hates Israel or is highly critical of Israel and I would argue part of why they feel able to be so critical of Israel is because they feel so safe in America, because they've convinced themselves that they can stay in America forever and maybe that's true now but if history is our guide and history must always be our guide then you have to ask, so you feel safe today but will that be the case a hundred years from now? Or ten?

MOLLY. I just think –

ELODIE. Hold on, let me just finish this – I don't have an issue with criticism of the state of Israel, I know some see that as a betrayal, or an act of self-hatred but I think it's honorable, or it can be – sometimes it's performative, like look at me I'm not one of those disgusting Jews I'm a different kind of Jew I'm a genius enlightened Jew who shits on Israel love me hug me kiss me fuck me, *that*, I fucking hate – but the Jew who holds Israel to the highest standards because they believe we have an obligation to always strive to be more just and righteous and honorable, *that* I applaud, *that* I think, yes, yes, I want *that*.

MOLLY. I'm sorry, but I'm only following about half of what you're saying –

ELODIE. The problem is, we are a tiny minority, we cannot survive without allies, so then the question becomes, where do we turn? You can get in bed with the right, but they're also in bed with the *far-right*, and let's be real, *far-right* is just a polite way of saying Nazi, and I don't know about you, but I don't get in bed with Nazis, and I'm not about to accept the occasional bone they'll throw me so they can take cover behind me and pretend they're decent and then go off and commit whatever atrocities they're gonna commit to appease that far-right base which we already established is just another word for NAZIS. Not happening! So you think, OK – let's get as far from the far-right as possible so you run to the left but that's a whole other shitshow because every lefty will tell you their opinion of Benjamin Netanyahu but I guarantee, you ask what they think of the Prime Minister of India, half of them couldn't even tell you that man's name and what's worse is they don't stop to interrogate why. ~~Why do they know so much more about Israel than almost anywhere else in the world because combined, Israel and Palestine combined have about thirteen million~~ people. Do you know what the population of India is? Do you? One point three BILLION people. We're talking a HUNDRED times more people. Do you see a HUNDRED times more news stories about India than Israel? Do you? And they say *we* control the media? Indonesia has TWENTY times as many people. Twenty times. Forget getting twenty times as many articles, when do you hear ANYTHING about what goes on in Indonesia? Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh all have more than a HUNDRED MILLION citizens. You think your average person in France has an opinion on the state of Bangladesh? But I guarantee you they have an opinion on Israel, maybe if we heard about what was going on in Indonesia even half as often as we read about

START

END

DANIEL. How will you say we met?

MOLLY. Who cares? I met you in PARIS! And like, in my wildest dreams, I never pictured that, you know, if I had a French boyfriend he'd be wearing a kankas hat to hide his yarmulke because he didn't feel safe, but honestly, that is just a minor detail!

DANIEL. Don't leave.

MOLLY. I mean, I should finish college. That seems important.

DANIEL. Eh.

MOLLY. Says the teacher!

DANIEL. Degree, shmegree.

MOLLY. Right, right.

DANIEL. I'll be waiting for you, right here.

MOLLY. Wherever you are.

DANIEL. Here.

MOLLY. Or wherever you are.

DANIEL. You don't mean that.

MOLLY. No?

DANIEL. No, that's not how you feel, I know it.

MOLLY. Oh you do?

DANIEL. ~~I'm staying, OK - no listen - I've decided to~~

START MOLLY. No, you listen, Daniel, you - you want to know how I feel? Listen, I'll tell you. Every weekend, for a year now, I got on a train and came to Paris, and I'd wonder, *what* was my Great-great-grandma Lucie thinking? How could anyone leave France? My Nana says she wanted adventure, and got a job as a governess for the Rothschild families, maybe that's true. Or, maybe she sensed something, and fled. I'll never know.

But as frightened as I am about the future of my own country, I can't help but feel grateful that she made it her home. Cause if she hadn't? I wouldn't exist.

You go wherever you need to to be safe, because the truth is, you can fight for what's right wherever you are. But you have to be alive to do it.

END

(Lights shift.)

(ADOLPHE, LUCIEN, and YOUNG PIERRE sit together.)

(Someone is missing.)

(LUCIEN reaches out to touch his father. IRMA enters, apart, and speaks to us.)

IRMA. I am dying in the other room.

In fact, I took my last breath just moments ago.

~~It is March 11th, 1946,~~

and for all time,

my tombstone will have that date permanently etched onto its stone facade.

~~Even I know, there is no sweeter revenge than an old Jew lying in some forgotten graveyard in Europe with a tombstone dated~~

nineteen

forty-six.

Fuck.

~~You.~~

We are hardly religious,

but, as is our tradition,

I will be buried in a day or two.

I could have been buried beside my sister, in America, ~~but we left there long ago.~~

I could have been buried in Havana, or Mexico, had I gone with my daughter, but I didn't.

~~I could have been dumped like so much meat in a pit beside my granddaughters, somewhere in Poland,~~

START

Of course, I survived, and why? Papa. Right from the start, I was 154982, he was 154983, and that's how it was the whole time, always he was right behind me. I wouldn't have made it otherwise, because Papa was an optimist. He was a natural born salesman. Not like me. I'm a pessimist. But Papa always stayed hopeful.

That first winter, he said, "don't worry, we'll be home for Christmas." But December came and went, we were still in Poland, that year *and* the next. Then spring came, 1945, we were liberated, by Christmas we *were* back in Paris – and my father turned to me with a big grin and said, "See. I told you we'd be home."

END

~~Then Papa wanted me to come work with him. He didn't understand my resistance. I couldn't tell him, each night before bed, I heard my mother's voice, calling out from wherever people go when they're gone: "Forget the pianos. Learn something you can do anywhere. Study, Pierre. Study engineering. That's right."~~

I didn't know what to do. But in the end, I went with Papa. There's no good reason. I just wanted to be near him. ~~Because once Grandfather Adolphe died, I was all he had and he was all I had. And we were together like that until the day I married your grandmother. I went~~ from one optimist's home to another, and that was good for me. I needed that.

Because after '45, no one wanted to hear about the war. But at the store, I could keep them all alive. ~~I could hang a picture of Colette, presenting flowers to~~ the President of France, Albert Lebrun. And you know something? No one has ever looked at the photo and asked, "where's your sister?"

Papa has been dead more than fifty years. I have kept the store going all this time, longer than anyone who came before me. And once again, Papa has saved my

life, because if I had become an engineer, at some office, ~~I would have felt very alone. Instead, I go to work each~~ day, I see the pianos, the old advertisements, I see our name on the door, and I know they are with me. And I go on.

Stay together. Stay with your parents. You have to. In the end, it saved my life.

(Beat.)

MARCELLE. Papa.

PIERRE. It's alright, sweetheart.

MARCELLE. I just... I wish I knew, knew for sure what the right thing to do was, I... Do you think we – am I a coward?

PIERRE. No. No.

You have to trust your instincts, that's all you have. If your instincts tell you time to go, it's time to go.

You must go with your parents, yes?

DANIEL. Yes.

(PIERRE touches DANIEL. He takes a long moment to think. Then he looks up at him.)

PIERRE. Daniel. You're a thinking person: why do they hate us?

DANIEL. I don't know, Grandpa.

(There's a long beat, as they all sit there, letting the question linger.)

Cause we're different?

We're not like them?

And we don't want to be like them...

And they don't understand why...