

SAP

...

One Plays

m kennedy v o l c o f s k y

volcofsky.com

SAP was first performed May 9 & 10, 1996 @
The Atrium Theater 64 West 11 St., NYC

Designed & Directed by the Author

Cast

? - Elizabeth Juviler

! - Jessica Willis

\$ - Patrick Gallo

The Mezuzah Thief - Matthew Seidman

Running time approx 1'20''

Characters

... ..

? — A girl, twelve years old

! — A woman

\$ — A man

The Mezuzah Thief — A man

? is the tallest person on stage.

. Each Audience member is given a Program and a small taped folded glassine envelope containing white powder on which various "Brand Names" are stamped. Inside the Program an aged black and white photograph of someone else's family -single individuals, couples, siblings, nuclear families or large gatherings- is also given with the "Ticket" of Dope. No photograph is alike.

Set

... ..

. *Dark, firelit.*

. *Sabbath candles in cans as footlights*

. *No electric lights*

. *A small pile of clothes on the floor in the middle of the stage*

. *Up Left an upended "Bed", which, when upright acts as a Shadow Screen; a sheet hangs from one of the legs*

. *UpCenter a set of "Steps", wooden steps which are hinged and in which objects can be put. The top step brings ! + \$ eye-level with ?*

. *Down Right a squat wooden cabinet with a hinged top and single door in its front arranged like a table with two chairs*

. *A wine glass filled with Earth is atop this "table"*

. *Up Center a lit sabbath candle in a bent cage hung from a branch attached to a pole on wheels, by the Steps. The "Candle-Cage". The pole and branch have twigs, green leaves and flower blossoms wound round them with rope. The twigs leaves and flowers are live*

. *Down Right, a knee-height slat-crate, the type used to transport drinking water kegs is on end, a sabbath candle stuck in it and lit. This area is behind white transparent fabric. This will become an Onstage "Offstage"*

. *Up Right Half a Door Threshold is hung from invisible thread. A sabbath candle is attached to the inside of this threshold in the location and on the angle of a Mezuzah, on the right - making the view of this door the view looking into - not out from - an entrance*

. *The Audio begins after the Audience has been fully seated*

The Grief: This is a full-body full-face gesture of visible, unendurable endured suffering. An arc from pleasure back to pleasure with grief -physical & mental suffering- at the apex. Sound may or may not accompany it; tears may or may not accompany it. No

words. No rapid movement. It is the slam of inhaled Survivor Extract. ! first displays it (sans Extract) upon her being thrown into the performance area.

UPPER CASE USUALLY SIGNIFIES RAGING VOICE. SOMETIMES *RAGING WHISPER.*

Italics usually indicate Whisper.

~~*Struck-through words are “heard”, not spoken. “Telepathized”*~~

In the play’s world, paper money has a woman’s face on it.

Mezuzah - (From the Hebrew, *mezuzah*, “doorpost”.) Small amulet attached to the right (when entering) doorpost of Jewish homes; inside a small, tightly rolled parchment scroll on which is written the Shema, the prayer asserting the oneness, the unity of the Jewish God, as well as the commandment to attach a Mezuzah to the doorpost of the Jewish home, indicating the act of faith: obedience. Lenny Bruce calls Mezuzahs “Jewish Chapstick”, because of the custom of touching them on the way in or out of the door, then kissing the fingers which touched it.

SAP

... ..

? + \$ stand motionless, backs to Audience, at the farthest Downstage Left and Right corners; ? in a solid colored dress, \$ in white t-shirt and dark pants.

The Audio begins: A slow Klezmer Dirge —street-traffic sounds have been slowed and layered under the music. Psychedelic Klezmer.

With their hands at their sides they move in rhythm to the music, progressing slowly Upstage with backs to Audience, heads down, knees bending, a scolded dancing. They converge Up Center, side by side backs to Audience as the Audio ends. They flank the Candle-Cage. She is almost a whole head taller than him.

Pause.

? + \$ begin to breathe, audibly, in rhythmic unison. Deliberate, striving, as if they share a single space helmet.

Continues.

After 30 seconds or so there is a knock, a single rap off-stage.

The breathing halts.

Pause.

There is the sound of a struggle, a bell ringing.

! is hurled naked into the performance area from Stage Left. She has been thrown with force, dangerously. A bell is hung around her neck. She crawls slowly and with great effort, injured, abused, spent, without surprise rises Center Stage. The Grief. Her knees are dirty: she brushes them off and it is clear they are sensitive to the touch. She sees where she is. She gathers herself, dressing from the pile of clothes on the floor, putting on a flowered dress onto which is sewn a sacklike pocket, at the left hip; highheel shoes; she goes through the pockets of the pile of clothes, finding keys, discarding them, finding money in some child's clothes; she stuffs that in the pocket on her dress; she walks Downstage Center and applies lipstick found in the pocket, looking into a "Mirror" hung on the fourth wall. She stuffs the remaining clothes into the top of the "Table", which is

hinged. She turns, moves UpLeft and tips the bed down from standing on end, letting the sheet fall to the floor.

She sniffs the fingers of her hands, sniffs the air.

She moves Downstage, Center.

She begins the Prologue.

!

I need a story to be here, or else what Or else I will not be allowed to enter

I need a story a story I'll make up a story to be here Or else what

Or else I'll not be allowed to enter

Or else I'll be made to leave

You understand, this is why we must prevent the story at all cost At all cost,

She walks to \$, who, as she speaks, ignoring her, disappears under bed pulling the dropped sheet under with him

He's got a story ...

He just walks into Holocaust Survivor's houses He connives tricks manipulates makes them talk and then abducts

And then kills them in some unimaginable machine And then sells them as some drug creates a grief so strong the only defense is to want more, and she ...

She walks to ?, who also turns, ignoring her, rolling the Candle-Cage to lamp the "Table" Down Right; ? then waits Up Right, standing by Threshold

She's got a story being used and sold and experimented upon

! (cont)

I've done a halfway decent job preventing her story but not Not halfway decent enough obviously

And me my story is really Starts with with wanting to see all this happen and to pretend, knowing full well it is pretense that I

I am the orch—

the MEZUZAH THIEF appears next to ?, UpR

The conductor of all this

You get one play babe and you got to make it count

You get one play

! pulls the bell off of her neck, hangs it from Candle-Cage, walks UpCenter, sits with back to Audience on Steps

The MEZUZAH THIEF begins to walk down stage. He has a severe limp. ? imitating all his movements, mirroring him. She is almost a whole head taller than him. They both make their way DownStage. Something resembling a Jewish prayer shawl, white with blue stripes, covers his head. After two steps ? sits at Table. He continues to Center. At once Prophetic and Pathetic. He is dressed in a sleeveless undershirt, workboots and workpants; a coil of rope hangs from a belt loop; he is filthy with what looks like coal soot

He “sees” something in a distance. Shock, then pain, then mourning. He clutches his own head. “Weeps”

MEZUZAH THIEF

The burnt place from afar. Smell nothing but think I see smoke.

Pause. He pulls the "PrayerShawl" off his head and hangs it from a belt loop. It resembles a dirty dishrag.

To Audience

They are feeble, with tiny machines stopped in the drains of the wrinkled sinks of their ears

Drugged, medicated medicated with the syntax and rhythms of authority

They derive their lexicons and diction from these implanted speaking kernels

They sit, wishing

Suddenly aware of the floor against their shoes

Aware of the floor against their shoes because I said so

Do you understand

Because I said so

They sit, wishing they were here

Wishing they were right here and that here was elsewhere, you understand

It is not that they want to be elsewhere

Not that they don't want to be here, they want to

To be

Here

But what they want is for here

To be elsewhere

For the here to change

Heretofore here to change

But not the wanting to be.

It is reputed, that Hamlet, is a piece, of, bacon.

Slaps hand over mouth in horror of the joke
Notices ? at table
? begins to hum to herself

MEZUZAH THIEF

The burnt place from afar. Smell nothing but think I see smoke.

The MEZUZAH THIEF stands by ?'s chair while she hums

Continue

She starts, standing in suprise

He is startled by her and crouches, covering his head

He recovers and gestures to her to sit. She does

He dips his fingers into the air, sniffs them, sniffs the air

MEZUZAH THIEF

Sap.

Its sap.

?

Mmmmm.

Nice.

MEZUZAH THIEF

I wasn't gonna come but I decided to come.

?

I'm glad you did I think.

MEZUZAH THIEF

You might know that and, you then again maybe might not.

?

They call you the Mezuzah Thief don't they.

MEZUZAH THIEF

They do.

?

And so I think I'm glad you came.

You're the one they say tears the pages out of peoples books.

MEZUZAH THIEF

Yes.

I leave them torn and empty between their covers,
in a good way.

?

I want you to do this for me.

MEZUZAH THIEF

I don't know that I can do that.

?

Why?

MEZUZAH THIEF

From what I see, and this is why, you haven't the pages to spare.

?

But I thought the book inside was endless, was infinite.

MEZUZAH THIEF

No, only the idea of the book is endless.

The book itself comes to a most defined end.

?

I was born with a bad book inside, and I want you to tear it out. Please.

MEZUZAH THIEF

I said, like I said, I will not do that for you.

?

But as a thief —

MEZUZAH THIEF

As a thief I have other choices. I can steal meaning from words, leave the pages intact. I can teach you how to read the book inside different. Your teachers didn't write it. I would prefer to do this for you. You have had far too many pages ripped from between your covers.

?

I am glad you came.

MEZUZAH THIEF

And I.

They both touch the wineglass filled with Earth

The MEZUZAH THIEF opens the top of the table, which is hinged, and pours the Earth into it

He lets the lid slam shut

He plucks one of the footlight candles from its can, extinguishes it, puts it in his pocket

The MEZUZAH THIEF leaves, limping off, carrying his chair with him, on his back. He kisses his fingers, touches them to the candle mezuzah on the way out

Exits.

? rises, begins to walk Upstage while removing her shoes, stepping out of her dress. She wears a worn black teddy, underwear

? kneels behind steps, ! sits on chair behind her, takes hair brush out of steps and begins brushing ?'s hair

The following lines spoken while ? is walking and then kneeling, "Mom?" being the entrance into the beginning of their play

?

I've to remove my shoes, to start this. Now don't forget, you and I, that I am twelve. That is why I've to remove my shoes, because I am twelve Mom?

! (Brushing ?'s hair throughout)

Yes.

?

I had a dream this morning, mom, while you were gone.

!

Yes.

?

You would like to hear it, mom?

!

Yes.

?

It was. And don't worry I am counting.

!

Yes.

?

It was we were all in a kitchen, you, me, father. Although it wasn't you and him really, but I knew it was us.

!

Yes.

?

Do you know how I knew it was us? There was the sound of an engine, outside the room. A huge huge engine, and it was racing, but it was in neutral. Roaring roaring, and then it got quiet. Just a hum, hummmm. But it stayed.

!

Ohkay.

?

So it was all of you but it wasn't really you, and we, but we were really really a family, that was what the engine meant, the sound of the engine. We were really a family. And we are in this kitchen, and we are all doing something, you're washing dishes at the sink and father was fixing the hinge, making the kitchen door quieter and I was cleaning food out of the refrigerator. It was old, disgusting rotten food and I was cleaning it out, out of the cracks. Only I wasn't disgusted at all. It was just something's got to be done and I was doing it. Come to think of it father was cleaning something too. We were all cleaning. But it wasn't really you or him but it was my family.

!

Mmmmm.

?

You don't want to hear.

!

I'm listening.

?

And I'm speaking. So we were all cleaning, cleaning cleaning cleaning but the thing was, we were speaking too. But we couldn't really speak mom. The only way we could talk was to just, just sob. Sob. Sobbing and sobbing, all of us in the kitchen and crying, sobbing. And we were talking this way. And the engine outside hummed while we were crying. But really, really crying, from our guts mom. From my deep deep down. So when I woke up I was sobbing too and my belly hurt from all the crying. What do you think it means mom?

!

You know me babe.

?

All right.

Nothing will stop this will it.

!

YOU REMOVED YOUR SHOES! YOU DID! NO ONE ELSE! STOP NOW? We have gotten to this point, and so, listen: It cannot be returned. Do you understand?

?

Ah.

!

I was out, and now I am back, and we are brushing, and I am listening, and you have removed your shoes, and so it cannot be returned.

?

Ah.

! *(Sniffs the air, her fingers, ?'s hair)*

Sap.

It's sap.

?

Sap?

!

Yes sap.

Yes. Yes I believe it is.

?

How? How how how how how?

No. No no no no no ...

Why? Why now? Why now?

! *covers ?'s mouth*

!

Stop it. Can't be returned. Nothing you or I can do.

! + ?

Nothing you or I can do it's sap.

?

I refuse. I refuse.

!

Yes. How many's that.

?

Seventynine.

!

Eighty. Eightyone. Eightytwo. Eightythree.

?

I refuse.

!

Yes. Eightyfour. Eightyfive. Eightysix.

?

I'll leave with you.

!

Yes. Eightyseven. Eightyeight. Eightynine. There. That just about finishes us.

! stands, stands ? up as well

?

You. You.

! hands ? hair from the brush.

!

Now go throw this in the toilet and put your PUT YOUR SHOES on ON.

Yaaace.

? puts hair in Steps and pulls sneakers out of

Steps

And tie them. TIE THEM.

And get your nipples hard or I'll do it for you nothing fucking worse think we're paying so you can have no tits? C'mere C'MERE.

! pushes ? to "Mirror", reaches around

squeezing

? 's nipples, preparing them

?

Mother mother mother its never the tits you know that its not my tits we pay them for mom ow OW MOM!

The following in front "mirror", ! behind ?.

! ties a red satin ribbon around ? 's neck

!

There ... At least that's a little better. A lit-tle bet-tah. Lemme see. C'mere lemme see ... Yur about good and its about time I ... Think I can ... Leave.

?

You look at me worse then them.

After "Absolutely" ! leads ? to bed, where she sits her on its edge, ! kneeling painfully before ? on one knee

!

Absolutely. But I really see you, babe. You know? You know yur lit-tle dream? You know what I think it means? I think it means, I think it means all this shit all this DIRT you're so set on cleaning out, you know what? I think it means You know, deep deep down it has nothing to do with any of US ... I think you know that, you see ... That's why you make up the family in yur lit-tle dream, yur little pathetic story ... Nothing to do with us ... Nothing to do with me, you understand? DO YOU UNDERSTAND? NOTHING TO DO WITH ME. Just keep me out of your dreams.

Through the following ! + ? step in unison to the Downstage corners, ending up at corners facing ¾ to house: ! DownRight & ? DownLeft

?

~~I heard you.~~

!

What?

?

~~I heard you say Sap I heard you say it.~~

!

Yes?

?

~~Its no good is it its no good we smelled the sap is it its no good right?
It means something ...~~

They have arrived at the Corners

! covers her eyes with her hands

? lowers her hands, drops her eyes, bows her head

“*” is a “Kiss”: with her hands covering her eyes ! punctuates the following with kisses in the air

!

It means something. * 'Salways got to mean something. * Why does it have to mean anything at all? * You know? * We smell the walls * the traffic * the water in the pipes * Our lungs * Smell our stomachs, * farts and shit, * piss, * sweat, * feet, * cunts, * breath * ... You know ... * Sometimes I can even smell the inside of my own nose. * I'm telling you * you want * and they can all mean something. YOU WANT. * Not me. * It doesn't really matter.

! lowers her hands slowly, so slow it takes the whole following speech for them to meet her sides, her head bowing at the same speed, taking the entire length of the speech, eyes lowered

? covers her eyes, palms over eyes, elbows out

The *italics* are vehemently whispered, with unnaturally large space before and after

?

I don't believe you mother. I don't believe a word *you said* . *I saw* you when you smelled it ... I listened. *Do* you understand? I listened. I. Listened. So I know. You think I could live here, *down here with you* and not have learned to listen? TO FUCKING *LISTEN* ? *Close* my eyes and its all clear ... *Yur not you* ... That's what *my* dream means and you know that too ... I heard that too, MUHHHH THAARR. But I believe you are right. I believe its time *for* you to go. Yes. This is where you leave. 'Slong as you left the money I'm good and you *should* go. Really you should. (*Sings*) Good good good good bye.

! + ? turn towards each other.

! pulls a piece of paper money from the sacklike pocket attached to the outside of her dress, crumples it and throws it at ?.

!

I will see you tomorrow.

! removes a striped hatbox from inside the "Table", and

Exits.

Remains "offstage" Right, behind fabric, visible

From "offstage" ! makes exaggerated footstep sounds

?

You listen to that.

Listen.

Liss-en.

The footsteps cease

Ah.

In 'mirror', playing.

Me? I think it smells like cunt.

I think it smells like asshole.

I think it smells like asshole above the roof of the world.

I think it smells like cunt asshole in the dirty roof of the mouth of the world's cock.

I think it smells like the cock on the dirty asshole in the cunt roof of the world's mouth.

I think it smells like the fuck tit cunt asshole roof of the mouth cock of the smell of the balls of the fuckunting universe.

I think it smells like piss cock cunt shit come asshole roof of the mouth diarrhea stinking rancid putrid filthy rotten food vomit.

I think it smells like never washed asshole.

Like never washed asshole on top of pale skinny hairy

Shoving

Stops playing

? (cont)

Legs. Rancid cockhead. Piss and shit and come rotten ...

Smells like spring. * This is the smell of spring. * Sap. That's right. She said sap.

Why. Why now.

? uprights Bed on its foot-end, pushing it UpLeft, hiding \$ who has been underneath since the beginning

That completed, she pauses

She starts, as if someone has entered

Then begins, indicating speech to a much taller partner

Oh yes hello. No you're not actually you're right on time. Yes my mother just left. Yes yum yes that was her yes. Yeah she's not bad. Yes yuh-um we should we should right get started. Yes twelve I'm twelve almost thirteen actually yes. Yes we should get started yes. Yes you get the whole night yes and it does yes it looks as if you could use it fer sure does right. Ah wait yes but wait not here that's just not here that's the only thing the only thing not here 'sgot to be in my room alright that's the only thing to think about ohright? Stop. Stop. Do you understand only in my room this is the one thing. Do you understand? Good. Mmmm. So come. Come. Lets go. Lets you come with me.

? rolls Candle-Cage behind uprighted bed

A man's shadow

Candle blown out

Pause

*(Throughout \$ + ?'s scene, ! "offstage"
performs a number of tasks: there are two
drinking glasses, a pitcher of water, skinny
Hanukah-Birthday-style candles,*

*hardbound books, a striped Konzentration
Camp Uniform & Cap ...)*

Candle-Cage re-lit. \$'s shadow

*? emerges, naked, holding small glassine envelope ("bag") and short inhaling tube
She has been spent*

*\$ emerges behind her, naked, pushing candle-pole. He has a sheet over his head; the
sheet has a hole in it; he alternately uses the hole to stare through and speak through; he
has an oversized number on his left fore-arm; he hobbles, as if his feet -and only his feet-
were damaged; clearly they hurt*

*She raises a bag of Survivor Extract, puts it to her ear. Listens. With the short tube
snorts a hit of the Extract*

The Grief

He circles her, hobbling, proclaiming

\$

*(With pole) Ck. Ck. Ck. The nomads of inch to inch. Tchk. Tchk. Tchk. Hmmmmm.
Hmmmmm. This. Huuuuuu. Is the evil. Mmmmmmm. Ck. Ck. Ck. Of wheels.
Ssssssss. Tchk. Tchk. Tchk. (Sing-song) Fee-las. Fee-las. Fee fee fee fee fee-
laaaaaaaaaaaaaaas —*

She joins the final "fee-las", hanging on it in unison, ending it

?

*Fee-laaaaaaaaaaaaaasophy? You think philosophy 'll take care of this? I don't think you
know anything about. Philosophy.*

\$

*Pulls the sheet off his head, chucks it
away*

Have another hit and tell me what you don't think. Again. Sssssssss.

She does. The Grief

\$

(Grabbing bag of Survivor) This. Is pure survivor. Extract of the hips and sacrum. Hips. And. Sacrum. Here, little girl, is where it all collects. It is in these, the sockets of our hips that our lights are turned on. As you have seen. It is these cups which runneth over. The earth is a honeycomb running with the nectar of suffering. Here, and here ... These are the oarlocks of suffering ... *(Makes humping movement)* We ache ... For the other side ... Just to get on the other ... Side ...

?

Grabs back bag of Survivor

You kill them.

\$

I'm a distiller. An extractor. A chain link fence tic tac toe referee. Ex. Oh. Ex. Oh. Ex. Ex. Oh.

?

But you kill them.

\$

Yes. I am a business man. Catching a ride on basic human need, getting off before the train crashes. Hopefully with something in my pockets. *(Indicating hips again)* These. Are the hinges on the door where god made exit. I've heard their stories. Their disgusting impossible stories. I know. They are old. Oh oh oh oh. Ex. Old. *(Indicating*

\$ (cont)

bag of Survivor) This is basically all that's left of them by the time I get there anyway. Why do you think old people's hips break so much? The grief collects there. Snaps them in half. The nectar, this nectar collects there and must, MUST, runneth forth. Sap from the trees is the same. I'm basically a woodsman, screwing faucets onto trees, so people can make their tasteless lives a lit-tle bit sweetah. I provide a service. As do you. Yes. I kill them. Your mother loves you.

! ("*Off-stage*")

Pay the man babe.

\$

Yes babe. Pay the man.

?

Ah.

Gets money out of Steps

(To money.) She. She is beautiful. My life, I always wanted to grow up to be just like her.

\$

Meaning?

?

Look like her. Look out like her. Be at the center of what everybody wants. She? She is riveted to the I-beam of the world. And the world is mounted upon her. Get rid of her, get rid of the world. And I want to be just. Like. Her.

\$

Promises. Riding into the sunset and no one's watching. That's the biggest. You want to be the dead star at the center of everybody's world. That's it?

?

No. That's not it. That's not it at all.

\$

I think it is.

?

It isn't. That's very far. That's.

\$

I think it isn't. Because. Because I think you are. (*Grabs money*)

Do you remember your mother going out this morning? Do you remember her leaving?

?

No. Only her coming back. But that's it, always.

\$

She sat down at my table and offered you to me. Just like that. Seven A M in a stinking coffee shop and she sits right down says I've a daughter that's twelve and me, ME who deals Survivor don't know for the first second how to respond. And that's all there is. The first second. Always. That is the only one that lasts.

?

I've heard this before you understand. She always asks. She always gets. She always pays. My mom.

\$

She wrote your address down on a torn piece of napkin stuffed it in my shirt pocket I didn't say a word. She knew I would be showing up. Do you understand? She knew

\$ (cont)

before I knew. She just walked out. All day all day I could smell your cunt in the air. I'd n't met you but I could smell your cunt all day. All day.

?

Sap. That's the sap. That's not me ...

\$

No that IS you. THIS (*indicating money*) is not you but THAT (*picks up sheet, smells it*) is you. Smell. SMELL. (*Smelling all their hands.*) You can smell yur stench everywhere. Rotten ...

Takes ?. Pushes her down ontop Steps. Places sheet with hole in it over her back. Fucking her from behind, through sheet. Hand and sheet over her mouth. She making noises

(While fucking her)

\$

There's always this smoke on the horizon. Always something burning somewhere. The trains passing night and day. A whole day's wait sometimes just to cross the tracks. Trains are so long. So fucking long. Sometimes see an eye inside the train. Just a glimpse. Tiniest bald reflection. And at night the trainwheels. Pounding the tracks. Becomes the sound. The pulse in the head. Endless. Pounding. Distant. Rusted. Ck. Ck. Ck. Tch. Tch. Tch. Hmmm. Hmmm. Sssssss. These. Endless. Wheels. Evil. Wheels. Always something. Burning. (*falsetto*) "No. That's not the bridges. Those are the bodies. Burning." Sap. Yur mother calls it sap. I was quiet. I followed my ssss. Followed my silence. Here. See. There's no telling anymore. You see. There's just. No. Telling.

They 'come'.

She gives both of them hits of Survivor, from out the Steps. Both The Grief. Both enter Post-sex nod, \$'s head on ?'s back

! enters dressed in Konzentrazion stripes ... The uniform has a pocket sewn onto the outside of the jacket, on the left side, by the hip ... She is carrying two books, hardbound ... She places an open book under each of their sleeping heads, one on the Steps, one on ?'s back, lifting them one-handed by their hair ... She pulls an empty wine glass out of her pocket and moves to the Table, opens the top, and reaches in, coming up with a handful of Earth ... She fills the wine glass with Earth, moves Downstage Center ... She tears a piece of her pants-leg off, wraps the glass with it and, barefoot, steps on it, marriage style ... She dozes, standing, resting on her own pillow of hands, claps, waking herself up ... all her movements deliberate, unexaggerated, unsentimental, but approaching the martial ... Her eyes never look at a point higher than her own head ... She pivots, steps Upstage Right to the threshold ... She wipes her hands on her pants-legs ... Pulls matches from out the pocket and lights the Mezuzah on the doorjamb ... She wipes her hands on her pants-legs, kisses the fingers of her right hand, touches them to the Mezuzah ...

Exits,

returning to "Offstage"

! ("Offstage", while changing back into her dress)

Prevent the story at all costs. We must prevent the story from We must stop We must prevent the story at all costs. *(Whisper) Obviously. Obviously. Obviously.*

!, kneeling, blows out the candle atop the knee-high slat-crate

\$ + ? raise their heads off the books, for ten seconds Listen to the open pages.

*! pours water into two wine glasses atop
slat-crate as they Listen*

They kneel upright.

*! lights two Hanukah-Birthday-style
candles, one behind each glass*

? (Whisper)

I'm. Starving.

*! enters, in original dress, carrying the two wine glasses filled with water. Gives them to
\$ + ?. They drink, handing the glasses back to !, who*

Exits

?

Mother.

*! blows out the candles behind the emptied
glasses*

A pause long enough to have the echo of the word forgotten

! ("Off-stage")

I'm listening.

?

Father.

Same endless pause

\$

Yes little girl.

? (Crying)

I'm hungry.

! returns, carrying their original clothes. \$ + ? dress. ! remains on stage

? (Crying has stopped)

Mother. Father. I am grateful. So grateful. To be here. But I am hungry, mother. I am so hungry, father.

The following is all spoken simultaneously while: ! removes the clothes from inside the Table and proceeds to fold them; ? stops-starts around the performance area, lurchingly blows out the footlight candles, letting just a few remain lit; \$ removes a scrub-brush from inside the Steps -on his hands and knees Downstage using a circular motion he sets the revolving rhythm of this simultaneous speaking. It ends as raggedly as it starts; whatever the final sound is hangs

!

Pure horizon. What door I came in pure horizon.

\$

Responsibility. Huge betrayal. Natural state of things. One hand reaches. I know this sound. I know this sound. The engine in the dark. What door I came in natural state of things.

?

I burn a candle while I sleep. So the rooms in my dreams are always lit by flames.

\$

While I burn I let a candle sleep.

!

I like this. While I sleep I let a candle burn. So the walls in my dreams are like the skin of a hand covering a light bulb. Can see deep through them.

?

It is as if, during this night. Someone has been here. Someone's come and put this candle out.

!

I slept.

\$

This morning came. I hear the engines in the street. The wheels. The machines building.

?

The shouting. Someone has been here.

!

Everything has been moved. Just the smallest. Imperceptible. Change.

\$

Someone has been here. And now is gone. The dream.

?

The dream. Has left a trace. Perhaps it was dark now in the rooms. In the dream.

!

I don't know.

\$

And so the daylight, that is good, so so good, is not near enough.

?

I, listen. I have been picked up, carried, set down again. Just outside the border. Just on the other side of the line.

\$

Because I wake.

!

And the candle has been blown out.

?

The candle I burn.

\$

While I sleep.

?

Do you see. Yur not you. Neither of you are you. Do you see? He has come. He has come and done what he said he would do. He has ripped the bad book out of me. He has torn those pages out of me. He said he wouldn't but I knew he would. I knew he would. I knew he would.

!

Words hatch in my mouth.

\$

When they dug up the graves, there were no bodies. Just hundreds, and hundreds, of, books.

!

Some insect has made its nest in my mouth. A spider. A spider has nested in my mouth while I slept in darkness. Nnnnnh. These eggs hatch. Spring out. My tongue is numb with stings. *(Whisper) It hurts.*

\$

Hundreds and hundreds of buried books. Hundreds of buried books. The bodies had vanished.

!

Nnnnnnh. *It hurts.* The words pour out my mouth. *They hurt.* They are not mine. They are not mine.

\$

IT IS THE WORDS. IT IS THE WORDS. IT IS THE WORDS.

?

That is the hunger. Space. He has made space inside me. It is not hunger at all. It is my life. I will not eat. I don't need to eat. Any more.

!

They are not mine. *They are not mine. They are not mine.*

\$

This engine run on words. These wheels spinning on words. This engine fueled by words. It is the words.

?

He did it. I knew he would. He did it.

(!
Pure horizon. What door I came in pure horizon.

I like this. While I sleep I let a candle burn. So the walls in my dreams are like the skin of a hand covering a light bulb. Can see deep through them.

I slept.

Everything has been moved. Just the smallest. Imperceptible. Change.

I don't know.

And the candle has been blown out.

Words hatch in my mouth.

Some insect has made its nest in my mouth. A spider. A spider has nested in my mouth while I slept in darkness. Nnnnnnh. These eggs hatch. Spring out. my tongue is numb with stings. *(Whisper) It hurts.*

Nnnnnnnh. *It hurts.* The words pour out my mouth. *They hurt.* They are not mine.

They are not mine. *They are not mine. They are not mine.*)

(

\$

Responsibility. Huge betrayal. Natural state of things. One hand reaches. I know this sound. I know this sound. The engine in the dark. What door I came in natural state of things.

While I burn I let a candle sleep.

This morning came. I hear the engines in the street. The wheels. The machines building.

Someone has been here. And now is gone. The dream.

And so the daylight, that is good, so so good, is not near enough.

Because I wake.

While I sleep.

When they dug up the graves, there were no bodies. Just hundreds, and hundreds, of books.

Hundreds and hundreds of buried books. Hundreds of buried books. The bodies had vanished.

IT IS THE WORDS. IT IS THE WORDS. IT IS THE WORDS.

This engine run on words. These wheels spinning on words. This engine fueled by words. It is the words.)

(

?

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It is as if, during this night. Someone has been here. Someone's come and put this candle out.

The shouting. Someone has been here.

The dream. Has left a trace. Perhaps it was dark now in the rooms. In the dream.

I, listen. I have been picked up, carried, set down again. Just outside the border. Just on the other side of the line.

The candle I burn.

Do you see. Yur not you. Neither of you are you. Do you see? He has come. He has come and done what he said he would do. He has ripped the bad book out of me. He has torn those pages out of me. He said he wouldn't but I knew he would. I knew he would. I knew he would.

He did it. I knew he would. He did it.)

!, \$, + ? converge DownStage at "Mirror". ! Right, \$ Left, ? Center. ! + \$ each "hold" a side of the "Mirror" in their hands. All 3 are looking in, through it. ! + \$ open their mouths, wide and remain so; ?, mouth closed, makes the humming noise. During this the MEZUZAH THIEF appears UpStageRight as before, at threshold; he is naked; he puts his eyes on the backs of the three and makes the "Sssssssss" sound of hydraulics; the three sink at the knees, descending, ! + \$ still "holding" "Mirror" sides, ? still humming. The MEZUZAH THIEF is holding the candle he took from the footlights; he puts this candle to the burning Mezuzah candle, lighting it. Pause. He kisses the fingers of his right hand, but instead of touching them to the burning Mezuzah candle he snatches the flame from it, extinguishing it. He proceeds Downstage, limping to the table. He reaches into it, pulls out a hardbound book, sits at the table and opens the book. From his stolen candle, with the fire from the extinguished Mezuzah he lights the book on fire. He sits, turns the burning pages. The others slowly rise, ascending, the humming continues, ! + \$'s mouths still open, ?'s still closed. Continue. The MEZUZAH THIEF closes the book. The humming stops. The MEZUZAH THIEF rises, and !, \$ + ?, huddled,

Exit,

StageRight, where ! was originally thrown from

The MEZUZAH THIEF follows, pausing, naked, CenterStage, on the way

MEZUZAH THIEF

This is the smell of spring.

Following the three, he too

Exits.

Pause

An up-tempo Klezmer tune begins to play

END