

Centre Stage: the floor features a First Nations painting in the style of Norval Morriseau. There is a sense that the river and the fish spill out over the lip of the stage.

The Back Wall/Screen: Lighting effects create various pockets in the play; Nature, reflecting Alec's shack-like home and the surrounding marsh in lake country, and a hidden small cave; a family-run Furrer Store in Winnipeg, Herb's work environment; adjacent to it, Herb and Rose's Dining Room table/fancy home on the Assiniboine River in Winnipeg.

Characters move from Centre Stage a few steps Stage Left to Alec's shack-like home, denoted by wood and a framed photo of his wife on the bare set wall; a few steps back into the marsh/lake panorama (the entire back wall/screen); a few steps in the opposite direction, Stage Right to enter Herb's store, a single rack with a few fur coats hanging, and a tiny sewing machine table; and behind it and up, Herb and Rose's living room, denoted by a dining room table and a silver menorah (candle-holder).

We're just on the cusp of 1950.

### **The Characters:**

**Herb Sampson** - sixty-five, a Russian-Jewish furrier who speaks with an accent.

**Alec Greywolf** - sixty-five, former chief of Salteaux band.

**Rose Sampson** - early fifties, Herb's wife.

**Max Sampson** - mid-thirties, Herb's son, a musician who works in his Dad's fur business.

**Elijah Greywolf** - mid-thirties, Alec's son, the current chief.

**Michelle Sampson** - twelve, Herb's granddaughter, Max's niece

**Bernie Mazursky** - sixty-five, Russian-Jewish accent.

**ACT ONE****Scene One:**

*(Alec's Shack. Morning).*

HERB: (singing): O Horsey keep your tail up, keep your tail up,  
keep your tail up - O Horsey keep your tail up,  
keep the sunshine outa my eyes.

*(Herb Sampson is quite fit for his age, like a lean old monkey with a belly. He's a Russian Jew, a self-made man who still speaks with an accent. He sings as he paddles an old canoe up to Alec's shack-like house).*

1. *(Alec Greywolf tends a small fire outside. Alec is slightly older than Herb. He's quite tall with wonderful long, grey hair. There's a twinkle in his eye though he's been sick lately. He's a former chief of the Saulteaux band just north of Winnipeg near Lower Fort Garry).*

*(Alec dresses like a country man who bought his clothes on one particular visit to the city, and hasn't upgraded them for years. When we meet him he's getting ready to go hunting. It's the end of 1949. But it could be 1849. Their teasing game starts almost immediately).*

ALEC: Herb! Back for a visit so soon, eh?

HERB: Oy Alec - don't ask.

ALEC: Oy is right. You starting with me already?

HERB: Go on-

ALEC: What a day, eh! What're we gonna get today?

HERB: We gonna get ducks. I had a dream about em.

ALEC: You had a dream, eh? You wanna cup of tea?

HERB: No thank you, Alec.

ALEC: You always say that.

HERB: You starting with me?

ALEC: You always say that!

HERB: Gay avek.

ALEC: Gay avek your own self. Hope your clothes dried off from last time you were here when you -

HERB: Hey - my wife and son are already ganging up on me, ever since she got him to come back, to 'help out.'

ALEC: How come?

HERB: I don't know.

ALEC: Yes you do.

HERB: I don't want to talk about it.

ALEC: Here we go...You can't fight it, Herb. We're getting old.

HERB: You are. That fish smells good boy.

ALEC: I got the biggest dining room in the world. Bigger than yours in Winnipeg, eh. Hungry, eh Herb?

(Herb reaches down to taste some fish. He tastes it and spits it out).

HERB: Feh! Bulleye!

ALEC: Bullhead! Catfish.

HERB: Not kosher.

ALEC: Me neither.

HERB: Alec please, you're tiring me out.

ALEC: Y'see - gettin old.

*(Alec laughs)*

HERB: What're you laughing at?

ALEC: So how many ducks did that dream of yours say anyway?

HERB: Ten. Ten princess ducks that we're gonna pluck outa the sky with our fingers.

ALEC: Princess ducks - I'm beginning to worry about you, ... sounding too much like one of my people, but from a weird tribe, nu?

HERB: Go on. If a fish swims upstream once a year to lay her eggs, doesn't mean she swims that way all the time.

*(Greywolf just stares at Herb)*

ALEC: I don't know what you're talking about. Here's a cup of tea for you. We should get going soon - nu?

HERB: Lemme rinse it out in the river first.

ALEC: The hot water's gonna sterilize it anyway.

HERB: Got any sugar cubes in that medicine pouch?

*(Alec pulls out some sugar cubes)*

HERB: Like a magician.

ALEC: I know the way you like to drink your tea.

HERB: You take good care of me, Greywolf, like you was my wife

*(Herb and Alec reach for their cups at the same moment, touching hands inadvertently).*

HERB: Oops -

ALEC: Yeah, watch it. You should bring yer wife fishing out here with you. Then maybe she wouldn't be so upset with you.

HERB: Don't be crazy. But my granddaughter, Michelle keeps telling me she wants to come out again.

ALEC: Bring her then.

HERB: I will.

ALEC: Sure you will. That still ain't normal, Herb, what you're doing, holding the sugar cube between your teeth like that while you sip your tea.

HERB: It's normal back in Russia.

ALEC: That must be *some* place, that Russia. The game warden's going to be watching for you today, so we gotta be real quiet. If he catches you hunting ducks, he'll string us both up alive.

HERB: Hell, I'll just tell him, if we can't hunt ducks then he can't hunt an old Jew and an old Indian. We're outa season.

ALEC: That's right. We're outa season too.

HERB: I got pastrami sandwiches for us from Oscar's, two for a quarter, and a couple of Suncrests...

*(Herb gets into the canoe)*

ALEC: Herb...

HERB: What - ?

ALEC: I was really worried about you last time you were out here.

HERB: Go on. I had a little accident. That's all.

ALEC: I'd say. You almost drowned. If it hadn't a been for you know who - (indicating himself)

HERB: What're you talking - ?

ALEC: You know what I'm talking.

HERB: I was just trying to...test myself in those rapids.

ALEC: Trying to what -? C'mon, look at you. Never mind.

HERB: You never mind. Elijah coming?

ALEC: He's meeting us over there. Let's get some ducks before the warden wakes up. Is it safe for me to get into the boat with you?

HERB: Go on. Hell, I could paddle you around the world you old moose.

*(Alec gets into the canoe)*

ALEC: Just stay away from those damn rapids of yours, wouldya? And no testing.

HERB: Gay avek. (SINGING): O Horsey keep your tail up, keep your tail up, keep your tail up -

HERB AND ALEC (SINGING): O Horsey keep your tail up, keep the sunshine outa my eyes.

ALEC: Come on paddle, you moose. I'm doing all the work myself.

*(They paddle towards the opposite shore).*

## **Scene Two:**

*(Herb Sampson's Store. Winnipeg. Morning. 1949).*

*(The old lettering on the window reads "Herb Sampson, Fine Furrier," - and below - "Serving Winnipeg since 1920)."*

*(Max Sampson is Herb Sampson's son. Besides his recent full time involvement in the store, Max is also a musician. Max speaks to **Bernie Mazursky**, an old Russian/Jewish tailor who works in the store. Bernie speaks with an accent).*

MAX: Why are you replacing the lining?

BERNIE: Your Dad said it wasn't right for this coat.

MAX: Why not? Who's it for, the queen?

BERNIE: You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

MAX: Any tricks if you're Herb Sampson. How come you're not like him? You got off the same boat.

BERNIE: I'm not so different.

MAX: Oh yeah, you don't believe in the Great Spirit - not the one he does! Why did he have to go out there today?

BERNIE: You know, it's business.

MAX: With an old Indian in a shack?

BERNIE: Our people have always lived among strangers. That's how we know who we are.

(Max starts examining a three-way mirror used for trying on coats, looking at himself for a moment).

MAX: I know who I am - I'm a slave. Back from New York to be a slave in Winnipeg.

BERNIE: I'm the slave! (indicating his work) You're just upset. Maybe that's why Jews love freedom so much, cause we were once slaves too.

MAX: Sew. Sew the lining, Bernie. Freedom for me is Forty-Second Street, the movies, the lights, the crowds in Times Square.

BERNIE: Okay here's a riddle for you. What do New York and Winnipeg have in common?

MAX: Nothing?

BERNIE: They both think they're the centre of the world.

MAX: So does my Dad. I needed him here today. I have a meeting -

BERNIE: A meeting?

MAX: With this guy.

BERNIE: Uh-huh. Listen, you'll do fine here, once you get the hang of it.

MAX: Look at this stuffed wolf's head...

BERNIE: Wolfie...

MAX: I can smell it from here. Make me want to puke. And look at this new mirror, it's cracked for Chris sakes. Bernie -

BERNIE: You did the right thing coming home. There's plenty of time for New York and your jazz music and the girls -Jewish?

MAX: You know I look at this mirror, you know what I see?

BERNIE: A little crack. It's just a little crack -

MAX: Seven years of bad luck, that's what I see -

BERNIE: Jews don't believe in that.

MAX: Bad luck - where would we be without it? We thrive on bad luck! I owe so much to bad luck. It brought me back home, took me away from my girl -

BERNIE: Aha, so you have someone back there?

MAX: I don't really want to -

BERNIE: Not Jewish. So fine, throw away thousands of years of Jewish history.

MAX: I'm only staying til the store gets back on its feet. Plus I could use the dough.

BERNIE: Just remember what they say in the kabbala...?

MAX: You gonna talk kabbala here - with the fur coats? What do they say?

BERNIE: "Everything that happens in this world below affects things in the world above."

MAX: Then they're really screwed up there. I thought it was the other way around.

BERNIE: No, we make the difference up there. Can I say something? Don't get mad...you play music like an angel, Maxie. Just try to help out where he needs you. Let your Dad stick to the furs.

MAX: Let my Dad stick to the furs. Sure! Look what he's done! Another couple of months like this and goodbye, kaput!

BERNIE: Where are you going now, your big meeting?

MAX: (indicating the store) I'm trying to fix this whole mess.

(Max starts to open the door to leave)

BERNIE: I'll see you at the Rosenberg wedding tonight. Do me a favour - play some Benny Goodman, and tell your mother to save me a dance.

MAX: I will.

(Max exits).

### **Scene Three:**

#### **Soundscape/Musical Transition to -**

(Herb and Alec in their canoe arriving. *Alec's son, **Elijah Greywolf**, waits for them on shore*).

HERB: Hey Elij, long time no see!

ELIJAH: Come on. I seen you last Monday on Donald Street!

HERB: What?!

ELIJAH: You gonna move in there, eh Herb?!

HERB: Move? Hell no! My son just wanted me to have a look at some property!

ELIJAH: At some property. Pretty fancy location!

HERB: Go on with you! He's a big dreamer. I've been in the same spot for thirty-five years!

ELIJAH: Thirty-five years!

HERB: Where am I going to go?! Business has been terrible.

ELIJAH: I don't know Herb! But I know you've always been clever like a fox! You'll figure it out!

HERB: If I'm so clever then why can't I get the bank to loan me any money?

ELIJAH: Maybe because you really don't need any?

HERB: What're you saying, Elijah? Who are you talking to?  
(Then, to Alec) Did I tell you Max got this  
three-way mirror for the store. You can see  
yourself three times in it.

ALEC: You don't say.

HERB: I'm gonna move my wolfie's head over to where the rich  
ladies try on the coats..."yes Missus, that's a good  
fit y'know." And they'll take the coat just like  
that.

ALEC: If only they could see us in there guttin' those  
rats, eh Elijah?

HERB: I'm a good salesman, boy.

ELIJAH: That's for sure. (**then, in Saulteaux**) Ask him about  
the furs. Or do you want *me* to?

ALEC: Elijah! Herb...

HERB: What Alec? What about the furs?

ALEC: There's something we've been meaning to ask you?  
We had a bad year last year, a-and the people are  
pretty broke. It's bad, Herb...

HERB: I understand.

ALEC: Well, you been saying that you need a loan. Your expenses,  
and well, Max...

HERB: Don't worry about it.

ELIJAH: Are you gonna give us a good price, Herb?

HERB: Go on, don't I always. How many years your Dad and me been  
chumming together?

ALEC: Pretty near thirty.

HERB: And I always give you the best price for your furs.

ELIJAH: A fair price.

HERB: The best price.

ALEC: He always gives us a ...good price. What's got into you, Elijah?

HERB: What's wrong with you, Elijah? You don't trust me all of a sudden?

ELIJAH: We gotta look out for ourselves. It's been a really bad year so far, it's serious. Think the white man cares if we starve? I'm the chief now and we wanna join together with some of our people and sell to the Manitoba Fur Auction this year. You're not the only one who wants to buy our furs.

HERB: So fine, do whatever you like, but what I wanna know is...who you been talking to over there- Kaminsky? You know I'm going to give you a good price like always. Hell, the season's not even started yet. You don't even lay your traps for weeks, so why are you making a problem?

ALEC: Herb still gives us the best price yet, and that's why we go to him.

ELIJAH: That's not why, Dad!

HERB: Why is it, then?

ELIJAH: (**in Saulteaux**): I've got to get going. I can't take anymore of this.

*(Elijah exits).*

ALEC: Come on, let's go.

HERB: Elijah!

ALEC: He's just being a fool. He doesn't mean it. It just comes gushing out of him lately.

HERB: Hell, who do you think he got his name from?

ALEC: I wouldn't remind him of that now. Let's go.

HERB: Why is your boy treating me like I was a stranger?

ALEC: He may have been talking to someone who poisoned him a bit, y'know. Our people are hurting.

HERB: I know, but who Alec, who poisoned him?

ALEC: There are things you don't understand Herb. Being forced to send your kid away to the white man's school can hurt him y'know, harden his heart.

HERB: Hell, my family sent me away.

ALEC: That's different. They just took ours away from us, took away their language and - anyway Elijah's the new chief now. Doesn't mean I always agree with him either.

HERB: And you say I should turn my business over to my son the musician who runs after the girls and drugs in New York? Not on your life.

ALEC: I say we're outa season. So keep it quiet.

HERB: I'm not afraid of no game warden. He knows you can hunt and fish whenever you like.

ALEC: Me doesn't mean you.

HERB: You starting with me again.

ALEC: Don't think he likes us chummin around together.

HERB: Hell we're just doing some business. Maybe that's who's been talking to Elijah?

ALEC: Maybe..? Uh, before we go...about the rapids...

HERB: Forget about the rapids. It was an accident. You should look after yourself, not me.

ALEC: Quiet, you'll scare the ducks away. Shhh.

HERB: You shhh.

***(Musical Transition - A Klezmer-like jazz tune)***

**Scene Four:**

*(The light of a synagogue).*

*(Herb stands outside the entrance hearing the celebrations and Max's music inside. He hesitates, decides not to enter).*

**Scene Five:**

*(The Sampson's house overlooking the river. Winnipeg. Night)*

*(Herb is at the table with a deck of cards. Beside him is his wife, **Rose Sampson**. Rose is a very attractive woman, quite a bit younger than Herb).*

ROSE: That name still makes me laugh! Elijah was a prophet not an Indian.

HERB: Maybe me and Alec named him wrong.

ROSE: Me and Alec - cut it out. He's not your family. You could get hurt out there. Last time you...

HERB: Gay avek. I've been going out there for years, so why are you starting with me now?

ROSE: He really wanted you there tonight. Me too.

HERB: By the time I got back, I would have come to the schul smelling like ducks, in the synagogue, you woulda given me hell - all your sisterhood friends. And you know they're never gonna make you a member cause of me anyway. When you gonna learn?

ROSE: I've learned. They treat me like I'm...some kind of Indian. Herb, he played beautiful. When he takes out his clarinet and starts playing Jewish music, the whole room - like heaven.

HERB: Y'see, Rosie, he should stick to Jewish music, not that jazz chazerai. That boy is so stuborring. He dances on his own tune...

ROSE: You're a tune no one can hum.

HERB: At least I always made a living. But he's a - running off to New York to be a big shot. Think I never had dreams?

ROSE: It's so nice having him home. You got to encourage him, give him more responsibility.

HERB: He doesn't listen. Do we have any vorsht?

ROSE: I don't know. Look in the pantry.

HERB: I'm looking.

ROSE: Herb, you need to let him do more around the store.

Herb reacts.

ROSE (cont'd): Yes. He could even run it for a while. You'd still go in.

HERB: Oh, I'd still go in.

ROSE: He was there all by himself today, nothing went wrong. We're in trouble, Herb. Thirty thousand dollars of trouble. You have to get a loan to pay it off or we're finished and all of this is going to be gone. And we still need to find us a better location like Max says.

HERB: My location has been good enough for thirty-five years. You don't move at a time like this! He's not helping. That good-for-nothing Sokoloff accountant. Why didn't he warn me?

ROSE: Because you keep everything in your head.

HERB: Hell, I got a store full of fur coats, beautiful coats. They're worth ten, fifteen thousand dollars.

ROSE: And what do you owe - twice as much! You're dreaming like a little boy again.

HERB: The hell I am.

ROSE: Max is young. He wants to make a name for himself.

HERB: He wants to be back to New York on the top of the Empire State Building with this jazz shmazz and all the girls smoking marijuana. They'll put him in jail.

ROSE: Come look. Did you see this ad he put in the Jewish Post about the store?

HERB: Ad? We can't afford an ad!

ROSE: Shah. Listen. (reading aloud)" November 17, 1949.  
The furrier store, Herbert Sampson and Son, already  
a landmark in the city of Winnipeg -

HERB: You see - why are you talking a new location!

ROSE: ...is planning one of the biggest fur sales ever. "

*(Rose has noticed something else in the paper)*

HERB: What is it?

ROSE: Nothing.

HERB: Read, read...

ROSE: Victor Templeman.

HERB: Victor Templeman?

ROSE: Someone I once knew. You know -

HERB: The boy you went with before me.

ROSE: He died. Drowned in California where he was living.

HERB: In California. That's terrible. You didn't know him  
for a hundred years...(beat) Rosie...?

ROSE: What?

HERB: You're better than any of them in the sisterhood, believe  
me.

ROSE: What're...? Herb, don't bother me now. I'm going to bed.

HERB: Why are you so upset? The Templeman boy? You barely  
knew him. He went away years ago.

ROSE: Such a lovely boy.

HERB: Sure, a lot younger than me. And no accent either.

ROSE: To drown like that, in a river. So far away.

HERB: I almost drowned in a river close by.

*(Rose leaves the room).*

HERB: You got all your fancy things and your big plans.  
But I'm here too. You got me too, Rose. But I  
never matched the fancy chinas, did I?

*(Max enters with his instruments).*

MAX: What's going on, Dad?

HERB: Nothing.

MAX: You should have been there tonight. They loved it.

HERB: Excellent good.

MAX: What's wrong?

HERB: You shouldn't be involved in all this.

MAX: All what -the business? Please not now. (pause) So, catch  
anything today?

HERB: Game warden almost caught me. Never mind. I got  
home too late to come tonight. She said they liked it?

MAX: Yeah, I think so.

HERB: You care too much about what other people think. You  
shouldn't care so much.

MAX: Maybe you don't care enough. Good night.

*(Max head for the stairs).*

HERB: Good night! Wait wait. Max c'mere. How was it in the store  
today? Everything go alright?

MAX: Do you really want to know?

HERB: Did Mrs. Goldstein come in to pick up her muskrat with the new lining?

MAX: Yeah. You know who also came in? Someone I think you may have heard of...ever heard of Phillipe Laurier?

HERB: No. Wait- related to Alain -?

MAX: That's right, from Laurier and Laurier in Montreal.

HERB: What did he want? Wants to buy the place?

MAX: Could you let me talk. You don't even give me an inch to tell you something that could be exciting.

HERB: I'm not selling - I don't care.

MAX: Dad - forget it.

(Max starts to go upstairs)

HERB: Where are you going? C'mere, what did he say, Max?

MAX: He's very proper, talks like - "Hello, I'm looking for Herbert Sampson. My name is Phillipe Laurier, from Laurier and Laurier."

HERB: His Dad liked the women.

MAX: He retired five years ago. You had to hear him, Dad, "Guys like your father and my father built the fur business." The guy doesn't look like he's done a hard day's work in his life. But seems nice. Says the Lauriers want to do some business out west.

HERB: Don't trust him for a minute. Do you know how big Laurier and Laurier is? I've been to their factory in Montreal. Our whole store would fit into their pipic. They're like a big whale.

MAX: Dad, lemme finish. He says his old man told him that you were the man to see if they ever wanted to expand their operation -

HERB: Expand-? It's a bunch of bullshit. You shoulda told him Phil, I'm happy with the way we do things here. But say a big hello to your Dad from me.

MAX: They want to add more stores between here and Vancouver. Or find stores that want to represent them. Maybe use your name...

HERB: My name? Use my name! Are you nuts!

MAX: No Dad, listen, it's not such a bad idea.

HERB: Terrible idea. I know all the customers in Winnipeg. I make all the coats special for them. I know all the Indians, the trappers - I even know the name of all the animals. Like Wolfie. I turned him inside out with my bare hands.

MAX: That's why they want you. They wanna work with someone whose established, to make the large buys, then ship the furs back east to their factories. They'd pay a lot more than we're getting now for the coats. And they'll guarantee us a full stock of the finest furs.

HERB: Enough, please -

MAX: ...at less cost to us, and styled by Montreal designers and shipped back to us ready to sell. That's what people want now, Dad.

HERB: If I lived my life by what people wanted I'd still be dead back in Russia with the rest of my family.

MAX: If you don't move quickly on this you're going to lose it. He promised he wouldn't talk to anyone else.

HERB: Let him promise. Let's not fight, Maxie. She's mad at me. Play something she likes.

MAX: Huh?

HERB: Open the ferkakta case - not the saxophone, take out your clarinet and play. Give a little concert.

MAX: Since when do you want me to play?

HERB: Max, please. She'll feel better. I know you can play good.

MAX: You do?

HERB: What do you think? Here, I'm making you a nice drink. Excellent good. You stayed at the Rosenberg's so late? A girl, maybe?

MAX: I went down to the 4 D on Pembina afterwards, played a few tunes there with some of the guys.

HERB: The 4 D.

MAX: What's wrong, it's famous.

HERB: For what? For the drug addicts -

MAX: Dad -I'm not a drug addict.

HERB: You've been taking them, I know you have. And plenty of these shucks are addicts who play that jazz.

MAX: Jewish jazz, Dad.

*(Max picks up his clarinet and begins to play a few jazz riffs on his clarinet)*

ROSE (O.S.): What's going on? Max, what're you doing?

HERB: I hired him to play for you. But Yiddish, Max - Yiddish.

ROSE: You going to wake up the neighbours.

*(Max starts playing a Yiddish song they like)*

HERB: Good. (Singing) Bei mir bist du shein....

ROSE: Herb. You're meshuga.

HERB: "Don't mean to complain..."Come on. Dance a little. Come on.

*(Herb takes Rose and they start moving around the floor).*

HERB (cont'd): See I'm trying not to step on your toes. Play Max, beautiful. You learned some new things in New York, didn't you?

*(Max enjoys this rare experience as he plays a melody and his mother joins in. She has a lovely voice).*

ROSE: Okay that's enough.

HERB: See where you get your music from Maxie. What a voice she had! The prettiest girl on McRae Avenue, with those long piggytails. Isn't that right, Rosie?

ROSE: Herb, not now. I'm tired.

HERB: C'mon Rosie.

ROSE: I can't. I have to go to bed.

*(Rose heads upstairs)*

MAX: The sax. You never hear me play it, Dad. You gotta see New York, 52nd street on a Friday night. Jazz pouring out of all the clubs. That's where I met Coleman Hawkins, the guy I told you about. He heard me play Dad. He told me come back and see him. He's one of the best and he thought I was -

HERB: Excellent good. (a pause) She'll be fine. Somebody died.

MAX: Who?

HERB: Someone she knew ages ago. Good, go to bed soon. So you'll be fresh tomorrow.

*(Herb exits, leaving Max alone. Max starts humming a Thelonius Monk tune).*

MAX: "Round Midnight" in Winnipeg! Sure. I'm a... fucking loser.

### **Scene Six:**

*(Elijah enters Alec's shack. Alec is repairing one of his windows. A cardinal whistles outside the shack).*

ELIJAH: (Greeting, In Saulteaux, then) How ya keeping, Dad?

ALEC: Not too bad. Yourself?

ELIJAH: Not as good as I'd like. But I think that's gonna start changing. There's someone I want you to talk to. He'll be here in a couple of minutes, across the creek.

(Alec continues repairing the window)

ALEC: Oh yeah - ?

ELIJAH: Fixing that window again, eh? Why don't you move back to the other side of the reserve?

ALEC: I'm happy here.

ELIJAH: You don't even have good heating for Christ sakes. You're gonna get sick out here again. I can find you a better place.

ALEC: You gotta live on the land to feel it. This here is sacred land.

ELIJAH: I know. But you could still move in to be closer to the rest of your family.

ALEC: I like it over here at the edge of our land. I can watch over it better.

ELIJAH: Watch over it - you don't have to watch over it. It's fine all by itself. You're the one who needs watching over now.

ALEC: Don't remind me.

ELIJAH: You got me worried. Alice and the grandkids miss you. Maggie and Norbert too.

ALEC: I'm gonna come see everyone soon. Your Alice is good with them kids of yours. You being good to her?

ELIJAH: Don't worry, I am. She likes you a lot, y'know.

ALEC: All the girls like me a lot. Used to. That berry pie of hers could win a prize. On that old wood stove, nothing like it. You're a lucky one.

ELIJAH: Dad, I don't want to talk about berry pie.

ALEC: I'm just taking some room for myself out here.

ELIJAH: Plenty of that out here. We should all go down to Lockport, play some bingo. You used to love doing that...

ALEC: Yes I did, boy. Your mother was always good at bingo. She was lucky too. She was good at everything.

ELIJAH: I wished I coulda seen her more, before she passed. I was different back then. I was so mad being treated so bad at the residential school.

ALEC: I know. Wasn't your fault. She cared about you, boy. You used to do some funny things when you were a little one. We used to laugh, your mother and I. We once took you into the Hudson Bay store in Winnipeg with this whole floor filled with brand new bathtubs and sinks. And we turn our backs for a minute and we see you standing over one of them new toilets and taking a leak. But it wasn't connected to anything. We grabbed you and snuck out there so fast before anyone saw us. You were a funny boy.

*(Elijah smiles in spite of himself)*

ELIJAH: I wasn't trying to be.

ALEC: Well you were. (Alec picks up a framed photo) Remember this picture?

ELIJAH: Sure I remember, (shifting gears) so what d'you think? Dad, he's gonna be here any minute-

ALEC: That's me there. "To The Descendants of Chief Peguis. From King George the Fifth -1924." C'mere, look at this picture of your mother. I miss her so much. You know I do, boy. Our spirits were like one person.

ELIJAH: You were both lucky.

ALEC: I think she took that away with her. I miss you Nora. Every day.

ELIJAH: I miss her too. But Dad... it's been a few years now...

ALEC: Every season she's been gone is like a whole year for me.

ELIJAH: You're not dead yet.

ALEC: Not alive either. Like one of them ghosts from the old stories.

ELIJAH: You're no ghost. There he is

*(Elijah notices Laurier O.S. arrive across the creek and shouts to him O.S.)*

ELIJAH: MR. LAURIER. I'M OVER HERE. BE RIGHT THERE!  
He's a big French furrier, Dad.

ALEC: Looks like the Prime Minister in that big hat.

ELIJAH: He's from Montreal. He's a rich man. Says he'll give us twenty percent better than Herb or MacLoed's or Kaminsky. How's that sound, Dad? He's only talking to us, no one else. He plans to be the biggest fur outlet in Manitoba. He came out here all the way from Montreal...

ALEC: Then why doesn't he get outa the car?

ELIJAH: And he agrees with me that it's a good idea for our people to get together t'sell our furs to him.

ALEC: I'm not the chief anymore. You are, Elijah. It's up to you y'know.

ELIJAH: Come on, Dad, it's not up to me. Everyone knows you won't let me make a decision. Everyone knows that you sell to Herb. But not everybody agrees with you anymore.

ALEC: We've always dealt with Herb. He gives us a good price. You gotta think about more than just about what you can make today.

ELIJAH: But Laurier is offering us twenty percent better than what Herb can, Dad...two dollars more per pelt....times thousands. Anyway, you know Herb's having financial problems. It's not like you have a contract with him.

ALEC: Well, I do, cause every year I give him my word.

ELIJAH: To a Jew?

ALEC: He gives his to an Indian. "To a Jew," Elijah? How can you talk like that?

ELIJAH: You don't see what's been going on. All these Jews coming over here again from Europe and sticking together, running the businesses along Main Street, making money while our people suffer. Angus and Kenneth Ducharme fought against Hitler, Dad. But what do our people get out of it?

ALEC: I know what's happened to us. It hurts my heart. But it's not on account of the Jews. The Jews have been fine with us, Herb and Kaminsky, better than the white man.

ELIJAH: Maybe they're the same, they just talk funnier than the white man. I want to sell to Laurier. Come and hear what he has to say. You haven't made a deal with Herb yet -

ALEC: Yes I have as a matter of fact -

ELIJAH: When did you do that?

ALEC: Never mind - you don't just spring this kind of thing on me. You talk to people, get their opinions.

ELIJAH: I have. A lot of people don't agree with you.

ALEC: The hell they don't. Who? Never mind. You don't know what you're jumping into here - and I'm not gonna jump just cause you say so, without looking. That's not a leader. This is what you used to do -

ELIJAH: Not anymore. Are you trying to tell me that you don't want to sell to Laurier for three thousand dollars more? Are you crazy?

ALEC: I guess so. Yes.

ELIJAH: I've got Phillipe Laurier over there. I want him to meet you.

ALEC: No that's alright...

ELIJAH: What are you afraid of Dad - someone else being right for a change? This is a great opportunity for us.

ALEC: You go ahead if you want to. I'll just stay here. You're the chief.

ELIJAH: I'm the chief. You're making a fool of me. You know I haven't been back to the Occidental Hotel for a really long time. I'm strong now. So why're you treating me like it's still back then? I didn't make Mom sick.

ALEC: I never said that you did.

ELIJAH: Y'didn't have to. Now he's calling me. You coming?

ALEC: Now your big shot's calling. No, I can't. You go ahead, Elijah. Tell him what I said.

ELIJAH: BE RIGHT THERE. COMING, MR. LAURIER!

*(Elijah exits. Alec is left alone. The SOUND of the cardinal returns).*

ALEC: Not talking can be a good idea sometimes.

*(After a moment, the bird responds).*

### **Scene Seven:**

*(Herb's Store. Monday Noon).*

*(Max is playing his saxophone. He's into it, a bit stoned. Rose enters).*

ROSE: Max?

MAX: I didn't hear you come in.

ROSE: Max, what are you doing?

*(He puts the sax down)*

MAX: It's my lunch hour.

ROSE: You can't play a saxophone in the store. What's that smell?

MAX: I don't know. Maybe it's the shellack in the back. Okay. (getting excited) Ma, I met with Laurier again.

ROSE: What did he say?

MAX: He really wants to go ahead. Make us his exclusive dealer.

ROSE: Really? What'd Herb say?

MAX: I can't talk to him.

ROSE: You have to tell him.

MAX: You want me to do this deal or not? What does he care? Look at this.

*(Max presents her with a sample of a Laurier coat in a fancy garment bag. She removes it to examine it)*

ROSE: It's lovely.

MAX: Isn't it? We just might end up being the best fur outlet between here and Vancouver. The Lauriers want him to represent their line in the west. It's perfect. They supply the finished coats, everything.

ROSE: That's wonderful. Just please tell your father.

MAX: You know Dad? He's happy as long as he doesn't have to know the truth.

ROSE: How do I get this - you with the meshugena saxophone and your father with the Indians. Jewish men don't act like this.

MAX: You knew I was never going to play in the Winnipeg Symphony.

ROSE: You could have. Quit trying to escape from your life.

MAX: I can't win. Can't your life be something you have to escape from? Shit, maybe I really am my father's son.

ROSE: Don't swear. Of course you are -

MAX: He runs away to the woods...

ROSE: It was business. He used to-

MAX: Ma - I keep trying to tell you, a jazz club on Pembina Highway doesn't compare to twenty clubs on Fifty-Second street alone. I played in a club that Coleman Hawkins walked into. Coleman Hawkins, Mom!

ROSE: Better should be Benny Goodman?

MAX: You know how great his music is -and he heard me play before I knew he was there. Then he says, "come on back and bop some time." To me! And he meant it. He meant it. (beat) Listen Ma, I don't know how long -

ROSE: I mean it too. We need you here. Look at everything that's happened - Now calm down and stop being so dramatic. You're a grown man. We're counting on you.

MAX: He's counting on me?

ROSE: Think about what it's like for him. He made a good name for himself -

MAX: Don't I get to - make a good name? Any name?

ROSE: Of course you do. But you can't leave now. Not now. I can't have one more person leave me now.

MAX: Who else -? That guy who drowned?

ROSE: You don't think I sacrificed, Max? Your father's a lot older than me...I had some dreams - I don't want to end up poor again. If I lose the house, what do I have left?

MAX: You have Dad.

ROSE: Of course I do. I didn't mean it like that. Max - make the deal with Laurier. Then tell your father.

Max: He went out to the woods anyway.

ROSE: He what?

MAX: He told me to tell you he was taking Michelle out fishing -

ROSE: Michelle!

MAX: It's her last day before she goes back to school.

ROSE: I don't want Michelle out there in the boat with him and that Indian.

MAX: Penny said it was -

ROSE: I don't care what Penny said. It's not safe. You have to go out there - go out and bring them back.

MAX: I don't know how to find them.

ROSE: Yes you do. They all know Greywolf. You'll find them right away. I'll watch the store. Your father's not himself lately. He's out there looking for something.

*(He starts packing up his instrument).*

MAX: A big goldeye is what he's looking for.

*(Max exits the store. Rose turns around and notices herself in the three-way mirror which she now stares into).*

### **Scene Eight:**

*(Herb and Alec are in a rowboat with Herb's almost thirteen year old granddaughter - **Michelle**. Michelle is confident and pretty. She's savvy for her age. They're having a very good time, laughing and teasing).*

MICHELLE: Ne Po Win.

ALEC: That's good.

MICHELLE: What does it mean?

ALEC: Death River.

MICHELLE: Oh.

HERB: Oops. You're safe, don't worry, Mich. They call it Death River cause of all the dead Cree people Chief Peguis, my ancestor found when he got here. They all died of smallpox.

MICHELLE: Maybe we should go somewhere else?

ALEC: Maybe she's right, Herb? They caught the smallpox from the white man?

HERB: Don't blame me, Alec.

ALEC: You're no white man. You can barely speak English.

HERB: My English is as good as you.

ALEC: My English is as good as you.

HERB: What're you laughing at?

MICHELLE: Nothing.

HERB: My own granddaughter's laughing at me cause of you.

ALEC: That's why I'm glad you brought her out here. You're kinda like your Grandad. Guess you know that, Michelle.

MICHELLE: Thanks. I think.

ALEC: Oh yes. How old are you now?

MICHELLE: Twelve going on thirteen.

ALEC: Going on thirteen, eh?

HERB: I'm going to take her to Florida for her thirteenth birthday. Like a bar mitzvah.

MICHELLE: Promise.

HERB: Didn't I already take you. Oh Alec, Florida! I told you. It's beautiful warm there, and the fish, beautiful fish. They're salted you know, from the ocean.

ALEC: Like peanuts, y'mean?

MICHELLE: No they're not, Zaida. The water's salty. The fish are sweet.

HERB: You been there once...

MICHELLE: Twice.

HERB: Okay. You think you're an expert?

MICHELLE: Yes.

HERB: All right, listen ..the fish are real sweet inside,  
and they come bigger than anything you ever seen  
around here. Christ, the hooks are as big as your arm.

ALEC: You don't say.

MICHELLE: Zaida!

HERB: What? ...there're beaches for miles, and big luxury  
hotels Oh Alec, Florida. Now that's the promised land.

ALEC: What did they promise you? They promised us a lot  
of land too.

HERB: I know.

ALEC: I told ya a hundred times before, Herb.

HERB: Hell, I know. It's not my fault. (beat) Some day we're  
going to go to Florida together, all of us.

ALEC: Better be soon.

HERB: What're you talking - ? Mich, y'know Indians used to  
have something like bar mitzvahs.

(Michelle's fishing line starts twitching).

MICHELLE: Zaida -

HERB: Tell her what you found out about the naming ceremony?  
Go ahead, tell her. (To Michelle) Don't tell your Baba.

MICHELLE: Zaida -

ALEC: Our cousins on the Plains used to give boys and girls  
their real names around the age of thirteen. Indian names meant  
something in those days, before the white man came. They told  
you how a person saw the world.

HERB: Watch it, the line's jig-jigging. The Indians divided  
the world into four pieces.

ALEC: Four directions, Herb.

HERB: Okay fine. Each direction has a different animal to go with it.

ALEC: You're born into one direction, but you have to make a journey to all the directions before you die. A lot of schlepping, eh Herb.

(Michelle's line jerks and she squeals)

ALEC (cont'd): Wait. The fish is just rubbin' it with his cheek. Wait til it starts jiggling and pulls down hard again, then pull it quick to catch its mouth, not too hard or you'll yank the line right outa the water. Pull it up once, like that...

HERB: It's a big Bulleye, Greywolf!

ALEC: Bullhead. You want some help, Michie?

MICHELLE: No. I can do it.

HERB: Pull it in, pull it in.

ALEC: No Herb. Let it play, Michelle. Let it play.

HERB: Okay, now wind it in. Wind it.

MICHELLE: I can do it. I can do it.

ALEC: Let it out.

HERB: Pull it in.

MICHELLE: Make up your minds.

ALEC: Get the net. Get the net.

HERB: Thata girl. That's my girl, Michie.

ALEC: It's a ten pounder. A Bullhead.

HERB: Bulleye. You gotta be careful cause their teeth are real sharp.

ALEC: You scooped that out of the water like a bear. That could be one of your animals. I got to get her to meet one of my grandsons, one of Elijah's boys. He's a little bear too.

HERB: I don't know if Elijah would be too keen about that. Hey, you got a name for me?

ALEC: Lots of 'em.

HERB: I bet.

ALEC: I still haven't found your real name, y'know. I'll think about it. I'm still learning some of this stuff from the elders.

HERB: Your elders? What are you then?

ALEC: I'm young yet.

HERB: Here you go, Mich... you want a coke...Alec, pastrami with the hot mustard that you like.

ALEC: What's say we take 'er down to the Lower Fort to have a look?

MICHELLE: Shouldn't we have life jackets? What about life jackets?

HERB: What about life jackets? It's safe.

MICHELLE: Couldn't we drown by the rapids?

HERB: Nobody I know has ever drowned there.

ALEC (joking): ...yet.

MICHELLE: Zaida!

*(The roar of the water)*

**Scene Nine:**

*(A Cave. Later that Night).*

*(Alec pulls a candle out of his medicine pouch and lights it. Herb, Alec, and Michelle are all in a tiny dark cave huddled together. Alec gathers together some kindling and starts a small campfire. They speak quietly).*

MICHELLE: A secret cave.

ALEC: You can't tell anyone.

HERB: She won't. This is excellent good!

ALEC: Either of you...or you'll be cursed.

HERB: Why are you showing this to me now?

ALEC: You brought your granddaughter out here to meet me after all these years, didn't ya? It's something she'll always remember.

MICHELLE: I'll say.

HERB: What is this place, Greywolf?

ALEC: An old hiding place, a place to escape from the white man - not you, don't worry. They made a tunnel under the fort, a place for them to store their food or their furs, so they wouldn't be taken away...a place to rest, to spend the night if you had to. A little bit of promised land.

HERB: Alec....you sonofagun.

ALEC: We Saulteaux got some secrets yet, y'know. You too, eh Herb?

HERB: Me? What're you talking - I don't got no secrets.

ALEC: Oh yeah sure. You wanna teach Michelle a few things. Like Indian names?

HERB: Why not?

ALEC: But he really wants to learn his own name.

HERB: I've got enough names.

ALEC: You changed your name once already, eh Herb?

HERB: They changed it for me when I got off the boat. From Avram Samovitch to Herbert Sampson.

ALEC: Still haven't found your real name, nu Herb?

MICHELLE: How do you actually name someone?

ALEC: Well, in the old days, like I was telling you about my cousins, the Plains Indians, not as wise as the Saulteaux, but they're okay, to get their true names, a young person would go off into the bush for a whole day and night all alone on a vision quest. Then, they'd come back to tell the old ones what happened. Let's say a little boy took care of a lot of details, just like a mouse, but also spent time watching the clouds like the eagle. The old ones might name him (in Saulteaux) Little Eagle Mouse.

HERB: Those old folks knew some things, eh Alec?

ALEC: Sure did. My grandmothers and my grandfathers.

HERB: I've been thinking about mine too.

ALEC: I thought this was for Michelle?

HERB: Gay avek. You forgot to tell her - some of the tribes would have shields made for them out of deerskin, with their names from their visions quests painted on them, using all the right colours from the right directions.

MICHELLE: Greywolf...what would you call me?

ALEC: You Sampsons got Indian blood in you somewheres. Somebody snuck in. Look at those black eyes of yours. You got the white bison of the north because you're wise for your age. You seem to be looking inside yourself like the bear...and you like to give your Zaida a hard time. I'd call you (in Saulteaux) Laughing White Bear.

MICHELLE: Laughing White Bear?

ALEC: You don't like it? I'll try to come up with another one.

MICHELLE: Let me think about it.

ALEC: That's just what the bear in you would do!

HERB: What would you call me, Alec?

ALEC: Do I have to, Herb...? I'm just kidding, just kidding.

HERB: What do you call it when you feel like you know someone from another time?

ALEC: I was wondering about that too.

MICHELLE: It's called a soul mate.

HERB: A what?

MICHELLE: A soul mate.

HERB: Sounds like someone you're in jail with.

MICHELLE: No, I read it in this book my Mom has on the Greeks.

HERB: The Greeks? You mean like Kelekis on Main?

ALEC: Who?

MICHELLE: A soul mate is someone who really understands you.

HERB: My older brother Shmuel, boy. He understood me. He'd make me laugh so hard I'd cry. He was a mimic. He could pretend to be other people's voices, even an old woman's.

MICHELLE: What happened to him?

ALEC: He doesn't want to talk about it.

MICHELLE: I know. They all died.

HERB: We came to have fun.

MICHELLE: I don't mind. What would your brother be, my great something?

ALEC: His brother would be your great uncle.

HERB: He took good care of me, always looked out for me. He hid me from the Cossacks when they came after us, put me in a laundry basket. They would ride into town and start killing my people, Greywolf - just like that.

ALEC: What do you think the white people did to us? It's hard to talk about it.

HERB: Oy Alec, when he'd come home from work the whole family would wait just to hear his funny stories. Today, he coulda been on the radio telling jokes. We'd laugh so hard.

ALEC: Like when you brought that bag of pruits out here, eh?

HERB: Oy Alec....

ALEC: We were in the boat Michelle, way out in the middle of the lake fishing, and your granddad pulls out a big bag of pruits he brought from Winnipeg. So we ate em all up. And pretty soon we had to go to the bathroom. We had t'paddle all the way to the shore.

ALEC (cont'd): It was far eh, Herb. By the time we get there we started tearing off our clothes like we was gonna have a fight.

(The are all laughing, enjoying this moment)

(Suddenly, **Elijah Greywolf** enters the cave).

ALEC: Elijah!

HERB: Elijah, what are you doing here?

ELIJAH: I saw your boat tied up down by the river.

**(Now, in Saulteaux)**

ELIJAH: What the hell are they doing here, Dad?

ALEC: We decided to camp out, son.

ELIJAH: Camp out? Get them out of here. Come on, let's go.  
So what do you mean bringing them here?

**(In English)**

ELIJAH: Your son's lookin for you.

HERB: My son? What's he doing out here?

ELIJAH: He came out to the creek lookin for you. He's back at the reserve having a cup of tea at my house.

ALEC: Let them stay, son.

**(In Sauteaux)**

ALEC (cont'd): They're fine with me.

ELIJAH: What about your own grandkids!

**(In English)**

MICHELLE: What are they saying Zaida? Did we do something wrong?

ELIJAH: You don't belong here.

ALEC: They're okay.

HERB: Come on, Elij. We were just having some fun.

ELIJAH: I don't like when you call me that, Herb.

HERB: It's your name...

ALEC: Son-

ELIJAH: I don't wanna talk now. Not with your granddaughter here. I came to bring my Dad home. He should be with his own people. (beat) Herb, Max is waiting for you. Better save him from all those Indians. Come on, Dad.

MICHELLE: Couldn't he stay? Please.

ALEC: *(To Michelle)* Don't worry. You didn't do anything wrong, Michelle. It's my fault, son.

HERB: We're sorry, Elijah. We were just -

ELIJAH: Good night.

*(Elijah leaves).*

MICHELLE: What did we do?

ALEC: You didn't do anything. I did.

HERB: Alec...

ALEC: We better leave now. It was just a little misunderstanding. Nothing for you to worry about.

HERB: She's alright. You're alright, aren't you?

MICHELLE: Yes. Zaida...

HERB: You wanna go home now?

MICHELLE: I think we have to. Uncle Max is waiting for us.

HERB: Alec, I'll come back out another time and we'll talk about the furs. Our boys are crazier than we are.

(They exit the cave).

### **Scene Ten:**

(Two simultaneous scenes on different parts of the stage: One, a campfire/smudge ceremony in front of Alec's shack; the other, a Steambath/Svitz at the YMHA in Winnipeg).

(Alec completes a prayer as he smudges. We hear the distant SOUND OF A DRUM).

(The Steam-Bath/Shvitz at the Y).

(Steam rises to reveal Herb, Max, and Bernie. They are all wrapped in towels. The steam spreads across the stage to envelop them).

BERNIE: (singing a Hebrew song, mixing with Alec's chant)

HERB: Shh, you hear that?

MAX: What? Dad we have to talk.

HERB: (Singing) Up in the mountain spreading in the sail,  
Did you ever tie a knot in a bulldog's tail.

MAX: You're quite a character. It's hard being the son of a character.

HERB: That steam is beautiful. Excellent good. What kinda character -?

MAX: I don't know how you can take it in here?

HERB: You gotta be strong, Maxie. Jews love the svitz. Like Moses with the burning bush. We were born for it. Indians got their own svitz you know.

MAX: You and Greywolf made me bake in one when I was a kid, remember?

HERB: You used to fidget, like now. You used to come here to the Y. You were the captain of this, the president of that. You had all the Jewish girls calling. What happened?

MAX: I stopped fitting in here.

HERB: You could fit in if you wanted to. I learned to fit in.

MAX: You - you learned to fit in?

HERB: Quiet.

*(Alec and Elijah)*

ELIJAH: You shamed me in front of them - Winston, Angus and Kenneth Ducharme. No wonder they still question me about the important decisions? You talk about tradition, respecting the past. You spend more time with Herb than you do with your own people. Why don't you come to the reserve and tell Maggie her kids can't have good toys this year because you're making a lousier deal with your friend "Herb."

ALEC: Are you finished talking?

ELIJAH: You gotta trust your own kind first. You gotta trust me first, Dad. What happened to me was a long time ago.

ALEC: I know, Elijah.

ELIJAH: Elijah. Bullshit. I should have my own name. I want an Indian name.

ALEC: It may be from their old book, but it's a special name.

ELIJAH: I don't care.

ALEC: You should. They say Elijah's supposed to come down to earth as a messenger to announce that the messiah's coming.

ELIJAH: Jesus already came, Dad.

ALEC: Herb told me that the Jews don't count him as the Messiah.

ELIJAH: Really. Then the Jews are right about one thing. The Messiah hasn't come yet - not for us anyway. (beat) Not for me.

*(The Steam-Bath/Shvitz at The Y).*

MAX: This is a big opportunity and we don't want you to miss it.

HERB: You're not a businessman. If it were up to you, you would lose everything I spent my whole life building - from nothing. No family. No money. Not like what you've been used to.

MAX: You don't know what I've been used to the past five years.

HERB: And I don't wanna know -

*(As Herb opens the door, Bernie enters the steam-bath humming his Hebrew tune).*

BERNIE: Boys, boys. Leave him, Max. That's some heat. G-d is in the shvitz, you know that? A little shvitz down here and they can feel the steam up in heaven.

HERB: Bernie. Close the door. Throw some more water on the rocks. (to Max) And I don't want to hear any more about that ferkakta Laurier. You'll see - the future's gonna be the same as it always was.

BERNIE: Relax, it's the shvitz.

HERB: These little pishers think they can run around and change the way things go. So I had a couple of not so good years.

BERNIE: I'd say. We're doing less than half of what we did last year and last year was, oy veh last year.

MAX: Dad, you're not paying attention...

HERB: Quiet - this is like a broken song.

MAX: Record.

HERB: Bernie please, tell him -

BERNIE: Herb, the more you argue the hotter it gets.

HERB: We're not arguing, who's arguing?

MAX: Dad...

HERB: Did I ask you, I asked Bernie.

*(Steam rises)*

*(Alec and Elijah)*

ALEC: You're right... it is time we had some cooperation with our brothers in how we sell our furs. But we don't just change our minds because we can make a little more money. Remember after the war when we had a bad crop of furs, and Herb Sampson still gave us as a good a price because he knew how badly we needed it.

ELIJAH: I'm supposed to make those decisions now. You've got to get out of my way so I can be the chief.

ALEC: I'm doing it for your own good. That Laurier, he'll use you and leave you, and then we've got nothing. What's this Laurier gonna give us next year? I'll tell you - nothing! And you won't even get the money he says this year. Go ahead. I still haven't made a deal with Herb anyway.

ELIJAH: You what?

ALEC: But we're going to.

ELIJAH: Either you untie my hands right now or you be the chief. I've had it. You wanna be the chief. Be the chief. I know what I need.

ALEC: That's right, you run away. Gonna go have a drink?

*(Elijah pivots in anger, clenching his fists,  
then leaves)*

*(The Steam-Bath/Shvitz at The Y).*

HERB: Without telling me?

MAX: Don't get mad at her. She just said I should go to the bank and talk to them. So I did. She wanted me to tell you before.

HERB: I can't believe, my own family -

MAX: Your own family, what! You wouldn't listen. We need the loan so we can buy from Laurier. I'm getting out of here.

*(Max gets up to leave).*

HERB: You're just like your mother.

MAX: At least she doesn't lie to herself.

MAX: Go. Be a stubborn mule. You're right. I can't wait to get away from this sickening place - and from you!

*(Herb hesitates, facing Max, wanting to strike him)*

HERB: You talk to me like that! Okay, I'm gonna sign them. Tell your mother you can run the store. You think you can do better. But I'm not having anything to do with it - go ahead. But no advice from me. Nothing.

BERNIE: Herb -

HERB: No Bernie, it's better like this.

*(Max leaves. Herb turns to Bernie).*

HERB: Bernie...

BERNIE: What Herb?

HERB: Promise me you'll always take care of Rose.

BERNIE: Don't talk foolish. Where are you going all of a sudden?

HERB: I don't know. Somewhere. Nowhere.

*(Herb begins to towel himself off. He stands in shadow, silhouetted, an old man with no power).*

TRANSITION TO:

*(Herb's Store)*

*(Max takes a sample of a Laurier coat out of a zippered clothing bag and admires it as WE HEAR a blues/klezmer melody which becomes more frenzied and emotional).*

*(Alec's Shack)*

*(Alec is alone, CHANTING. He's showing signs of illness. WE HEAR A DRUM BEATING).*

ALEC: What's all that water I hear? Hear it, Nora? Like a big river gonna sweep everything away.

**BLACK OUT**

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO****Scene One:**

*(Herb's Store. One Month Later. Bernie enters and overhears Max mumbling to himself).*

BERNIE: You're talking to yourself?

MAX: Oh, I...

BERNIE: Day dreaming?

MAX: I wish I could.

BERNIE: You could do whatever you like. You're the boss now.

MAX: The boss? I don't feel like the boss of anything.

BERNIE: You tell me what to do and I do it, don't I?

MAX: C'mon.

BERNIE: But you're supposed to pay me better.

MAX: This past month's been pretty dead.

BERNIE: I know - any day now, they're coming.

MAX: Today. This afternoon. I've been thinking...

BERNIE: Thinking's good. More people should do it.

MAX: Once the coats arrive...it's going to change how we do things around here. I know they'll never make coats like you, where every stitch counts. You sew like Charlie Parker plays.

BERNIE: What -oh Charlie Parker.

MAX: Everyone wants machines now. Doesn't matter what they can't do, as long as they make things look stylish.

BERNIE: And each one exactly the same. You wouldn't want to make music like that. Listen, can I leave a little early tonight? I want to get to the service at the Ashkenazi. It's good we're not busier.

*(Max doesn't understand).*

BERNIE: So I can be more religious.

MAX: Bernie, I have to...

BERNIE: Oh - while I was out buying thread we'll never need I bumped into Dave Rosenberg. You'll never guess what I heard -

MAX: I heard -

BERNIE: You heard? His daughter's interested in going on a date with you. You don't have that girlfriend in New York anymore...

MAX: Thanks for reminding me.

BERNIE: And you've got your new apartment...

MAX: It's temporary. Bernie, I've kind of been dating someone.

BERNIE: I heard. Not Jewish, again. We Winnipeg Jews know everything. We're a very small tribe.

MAX: Please don't use that word.

BERNIE: You should try a kosher girl.

MAX: Think I haven't. I don't fit in.

BERNIE: Like father, like son. This shiksa. It's gonna hurt your mother very much, and your father.

MAX: Does anything hurt my father very much?

BERNIE: There's always hope. I'm sure he's hurt not coming in here anymore.

MAX: He's in the back. Go ask him yourself.

BERNIE: Where -?

MAX: In the back. Why do you think I was talking to myself? He dropped in to see how wolfie was.

BERNIE: What's the occasion?

MAX: A month was as long as he could wait to see that I was failing. He knows the bank's been calling. But the coats are supposed to come today, seriously, and I don't want him here. Bernie, before he comes back, about how quiet it's been...

BERNIE: You want me to work less hours? (beat) Want me to take a week off?

MAX: How about a month?

BERNIE: A month?

MAX: Just to be safe.

BERNIE: I could be dead in a month.

MAX: I promise things will pick up soon. Once the coats come in and start to sell. I just can't take a chance now.

BERNIE: It's alright. I'll just have to live on all the money I embezzled.

MAX: I'm glad you can joke about it.

BERNIE: What am I supposed to do - start crying just 'cause I'm going to starve naked in the Winnipeg winter.

MAX: Just for October.

BERNIE: The month of the revolution. Do you know how hard it is for a Jew to get welfare in Winnipeg without another Jew knowing? Easier to date a shiksa.

MAX: Bernie - you're not going to have to go on welfare.

BERNIE: Max, it's no joke for me.

HERB: Welfare, what welfare, Bernie?

BERNIE: Oy, here's Davey Crocket.

*(Herb emerges from the back carrying Wolfie, the stuffed wolf's head, on a stand)*

HERB: Whose talking welfare? Feh! I never talked about welfare in my life, even when I came here and I didn't have a spot to piss in.

BERNIE: A pot, Herb...

HERB: (to Max) You planning to go on welfare now?

MAX: No one is planning to go on welfare.

HERB: So where are the coats? Nu?

MAX: They're coming, Dad.

HERB: They're coming. They're coming. You're dreaming. Your Laurier screwed you.

MAX: Dad, don't start up.

HERB: You want me to stay away until they come and carry this place away. Bernie, how could you let him put wolfie downstairs?

MAX: It didn't look right in here Dad, after I moved some things around.

HERB: I caught him myself. Turned him inside out with my bare hands.

BERNIE: Herb, you should spend more time with the Jews. Eat a little smoked fish instead of catching it.

HERB: You don't catch it smoked. You on his side too?

BERNIE: Sure, why not?

HERB: The Indians are a big kibitz for me. I do business with them, that's all. Unless some people think they know better how to make coats in a big factory like salami sandwiches. But why should I care? What's left of me in here, anyway?

BERNIE: Plenty, stop kvetching-

HERB: I don't even know how to set the new alarum.

BERNIE: Me neither.

HERB: I told him to stick to his music. He doesn't know what he's-

MAX: - what I'm doing, right?

BERNIE: Herb, I wanted to go to the schul before sundown.

HERB: While you're there say a big bracha for this business. We need all the blessings we can get. He's borrowed us up to our pipics. I'm sorry Bernie. I let you down.

BERNIE: You didn't let me down. I can go to the synagogue more, spend time with my sister, my kids, eat more corned beef at Oscars. Hashem'll look after me. We have a special deal. I won't bother him if he won't bother me.

MAX (to Bernie): I still want to talk to you.

BERNIE: It's fine. Good luck today. So Herb, you wanna drive me to the north end?

*(Just then, the BELL RINGS and ALEC GREYWOLF enters the store).*

HERB: Oh my - Alec! What're you doing - I mean, hello. Come on in for Chris sakes.

ALEC: Hello Herb...Max.

HERB: Come in. What are you doing in town? You never come - once in a blue moon, maybe. It's like a convention here.

ALEC: I ain't seen you for awhile. I came in with my daughter and my grandson. I was gonna go back today, but I missed my bus. Some guys were making trouble for me over there at the bus station, so I...

HERB: What kinda trouble?

MAX: Dad, Bernie's got to leave now.

ALEC: That's okay. I can see you're busy...

HERB: No, keep still, I was just going to give Bernie a ride - you remember Bernie, don't you, Alec? He's our tailor.

ALEC: The guy who does all the work.

BERNIE: We met a long time ago. How are you..?

ALEC: Call me Alec. Herb sometimes calls you the rabbi.

MAX: The rabbi?

BERNIE: I'm not. You're a chief, aren't you?

ALEC: Used to be.

BERNIE: Retired? I didn't think a chief can retire, can he?

ALEC: Yes he can. I'm really not much of a chief anymore.

HERB: You and me both, kiddo.

BERNIE: I'm just Bernie. Bernie whose going to get a forced vacation...

MAX: Bernie and my Dad who were just leaving...

ALEC (to Max): So how's everything coming along?

MAX: Everything's fine. How are you, Alec?

ALEC: Pretty good, y'know.

HERB (to Alec, aside): You sure everything's alright?

ALEC: Sure I'm sure.

HERB: Just like me. Everything's fine, nu?

ALEC: (to Max) Guess you're getting ready to find yerself a wife soon?

HERB: Alec -

MAX: Soon, Alec.

ALEC: Better hurry. Make your Dad happy. Herb I remember him when he was a little one. Wouldn't stop fidgeting in the boat. You used to scare the fish away with all that fidgeting. You still fidgeting?

MAX: Dad, if Bernie's going to be on time -

BERNIE: Don't worry -

HERB: You wanna come with me, Alec? I've got to take Bernie to the north end, then we'll figure out what to do?

ALEC: I don't mean to be any trouble, Herb.

HERB: Trouble, you're no trouble. I could take you wherever you want. I got nothing else to do these days? I could take you back down to the bus station if you like?

ALEC: Bus has gone.

MAX: So what are you going to do, Dad?

HERB: I'm gonna take them both with me and we'll all rob a bank and take back that loan of yours. Let's go boys. (To Max, about to protest) What? You wanna tell me who my friends can be now? You watch the store.

## **Scene Two:**

*(The threesome, Herb, Alec, and Bernie, stand just outside the synagogue which consists of Light from the stained glass streams down on them. Alec is at first shy around Bernie. Bernie gives them some space).*

HERB: Bernie, wait a second. Alec, you musta come to see me for a reason today?

ALEC: Elijah's been getting mad at me about the furs. Says I'm deserting my people. That's why I wanted to come and see you.

HERB: Deserting your people?

ALEC: Yes.

HERB: Our boys are mishugenas.

ALEC: I treated him with disrespect. I didn't think he could accept all the responsibility of being chief. So I stepped in, like I do sometimes...

HERB: So you stepped in -

ALEC: Like I do. It hurt him. It was hard for me to persuade him and some of the others to come and bring all the furs to you this year. I still hope he's coming tomorrow. That's what I wanted to tell you. In case he doesn't. Things aren't going so good at home.

HERB: I'm sorry. Bernie, go ahead inside. I'll drive Alec back downtown.

ALEC: I'd like to stay awhile.

HERB: You really want to go in there, Alec? It's nothing special to see.

ALEC: You don't want me to?

HERB: Go on. I don't care. They don't even like me in there.

BERNIE: Don't be ridiculous, Herb. Who doesn't want you there? Anyone can come into the synagogue -as long as they cover their head.

ALEC: Herb, before we go in there, there's something I've been meaning to ask you.

HERB: Now, Alec?

ALEC: Your people...you got your religion, you got your customs and everything, but what is a Jew, y'know?

HERB: A Jew...what is a Jew? I'll tell you. A Jew, Alec, is someone who tries to do the right thing and mind his own business, and who a lot of people still don't like.

ALEC: Sounds like my people.

BERNIE: I think it's a bit more involved than that, Herb. A Jew is someone who follows the commandments given to Moses on Mt.

Sinai.

ALEC: Where is that exactly?

HERB: Near Egypt.

BERNIE: Not far from the promised land.

ALEC (joking): Oh, Y'mean Florida?

HERB: Alec -

BERNIE: Not Florida. Israel. Since last year we Jews finally have our own country again.

ALEC: Wish I could say the same. You got Indians there?

BERNIE: We got Arabs. Our cousins. But we were also the Indians there, way back. That's what everyone's fighting about.

ALEC: If you got your own country, why aren't you living there?

BERNIE: Maybe some day. From your lips to G-d's ears. Le Shana Ha Baah, B'Yerushalaem.

HERB: I couldn't hunt ducks there.

ALEC: My people believe this land is our promised land.

HERB: Alec...

ALEC: We're still living like slaves Herb. They call us names, treat us like dirt, won't let us go where we want. They won't even let us vote even if we wanted to. Take our kids away from us.

HERB: Go on, Alec..

ALEC: We're not free yet. Maybe that's why you don't want me comin' in there. Cause of what they'd think of you?

HERB: I don't care what people think, you know that.

ALEC: Does that mean your own people too?

HERB: I told you, we can go in. But I have to pick up my granddaughter. You coming, or you wanna go in and have your bar mitzvah.

ALEC: Thought I was too old.

HERB: You're never too old. Some day I'm gonna have another one myself. You'll see.

ALEC: When you find out your new name?

HERB: What're you talking - let's go. Alley oop.

BERNIE: It was nice meeting you, Alec Greywolf.

ALEC: Nice meeting you, Bernie, who does all the work.

BERNIE: Don't let him forget.

(Bernie enters the synagogue light alone).

### **Scene Three:**

*(The Sampson's House. Front Door. Early Evening.  
Same Day)*

*(Rose opens the door to find Herb, Michelle, and Alec, who all seem to have all been having a good time together).*

ROSE: Herb, you didn't call.

HERB: We went to the park.

MICHELLE: Hi Baba.

ROSE: Your mother was worried about you. Hello, Alec, what a surprise.

ALEC: Hello, Mrs. Sampson.

MICHELLE: Mom knew Zaida was taking me to the park after school.

ROSE: Not this late. You should have called. Herb, a couple of

the girls from the sisterhood are coming over soon.

HERB: Fine. I want to make us something to eat. We didn't eat yet. We won't bother you. Come on in, Alec. Mich, you take Alec to the kitchen I'll be right there.

ROSE: Herb, I...

*(Michelle and Alec go to the kitchen).*

ROSE: Can I talk to you, Herb?

HERB: What did I do wrong?

ROSE: What's he doing at her school? I don't want him in here now. Do you understand?

HERB: Shh. Him! How can you talk like that? It's Alec.

ROSE: It's Alec. I don't care who it is. I don't want him in here. Not now. And I don't want him with Michelle. He's a bad influence.

HERB: Go on - I'm a bad influence.

ROSE: Take him away, please. I don't want him sleeping here again. Once was enough.

HERB: That was years ago.

ROSE: I still remember the smell of moose meat he brought from the woods.

HERB: Don't talk like that. What could I tell him?

ROSE: I don't know what you can tell him. This isn't fair, Herb.

HERB: Fair? It's my own G-damn house! What else do I have left?

ROSE: You're acting so strange. I've never seen you like this.

HERB: Like this. You wanted me like this.

ROSE: You're making things very hard for me, you know?

HERB: For you? Every day I lose something else.

ROSE: Herb, please - you don't have any respect, you know that?

HERB: Your sisterhood friends that you're trying to be like. They don't have any respect. You don't have to be ashamed.

ROSE: Ashamed of what?

HERB: What do you think?

(The Kitchen. Alec and Michelle)

ALEC: I don't think your Gramma wants me here?

MICHELLE: That's not true. She's just nervous because of her friends. She's in this...like a club.

ALEC: Oh, I see...

MICHELLE: She's always worried about doing the right thing. I make her just as embarrassed as you do...uh, I didn't mean -

ALEC: It's all right. I know exactly what you mean.

MICHELLE: She's kind of afraid you'll turn me into an Indian.

ALEC: Oh boy, look out. You already are one.

(Herb enters the kitchen)

ALEC: Are you sure it's all right, Herb?

HERB: Go on with you. She doesn't care.

ALEC: Tell me something. What's that candle you got burning there?...with the Chinese writing?

MICHELLE: It's not Chinese.

HERB: It's Hebrew, Alec. I light a candle every year on the day my father died, a Jewish custom.

ALEC: Oh, I see.

HERB: You know, I have a better idea. Alec, you want to see some real Chinese writing, we'll go out for Chinese food.

MICHELLE: Chinese food!

HERB: You can't come.

MICHELLE: Why not -?

HERB: It's a school night.

ALEC: Oh, let her come, White Buffalo Woman.

MICHELLE: What happened to Laughing White Bear?

ALEC: Bring her too.

#### **Scene Four:**

*(Herb's Store. Night. Herb and Alec finish off the leftover Chinese food).*

HERB: Some like the "Shanghai." We like the "Nanking."

ALEC: Fried rice - almost as good as fry bread. Herb, y'say you won't eat bulleyes cause y'say they're not kosher.

HERB: Bulleyes don't got a backbone.

ALEC: But you ate them shrimps?

HERB: You can't help it, Alec. It's in all the dishes.

ALEC: You just like them shrimps, don't ya, Herb? Talking goes one way, and doing goes the other sometimes, eh Herb. (beat) Seemed like your wife was pretty upset when you brought me over? I hope I didn't upset her.

HERB: She's always like that with me. It's me, not you. They all want me to drop dead.

ALEC: Don't say that.

HERB: It's true.

ALEC: Ya think so?

HERB: Yes I do. Some day you and me, we'll have Chinese food in Florida. For Jewish people, Greywolf, that's heaven.

ALEC: Heaven for me is sitting around a big fire with all my grandmothers and grandfathers and laughing and eating and telling big stories til the sun comes up.

HERB: You remind me of my brother back in Kiev. We used to kibbitz boy.

ALEC: You don't remind me of any of mine.

HERB: We used to go to our little synagogue together.

ALEC: Does the synagogue remind you of back there, eh? What's wrong?

HERB: Forget it.

ALEC: I been meaning to ask you. You say Jews don't believe the Messiah's come yet? When's he supposed to come then?

HERB: How the hell should I know? When everything's excellent good.

ALEC: That's when he's gonna come? When everything's good? What do you need him for then?

HERB: I didn't write the book. You asked me. I told you. It means we have to make things good here.

ALEC: Ourselves?

HERB: Include me out. Alec, what does this say?

*(He hands Alec a piece of paper).*

ALEC: This here says "Bank Of Montreal." Can't read too good, can ya, Herb?

HERB: Sure I can read.

ALEC: You don't have to be embarrassed just cause an Indian can read better than you.

HERB: I never had any lessons.

ALEC: Me neither.

HERB: Oy Alec, never go into business. It's a big pain in the ass. Thirty years and now I can't even get a loan from the bank.

ALEC: I thought only Indians had that problem.

HERB: Herb Sampson - Furrier. I made that name from nothing. And now my name doesn't even mean a damn thing. Max had to get the loan.

ALEC: Oh, he got it, did he? How'd he manage that?

HERB: I had to sign the papers.

ALEC: It's a good thing you did that, Herb. Hey, that mirror - pretty fancy. Is that the mirror that Max bought?

HERB: I told you could see yourself three times.

ALEC: Once is enough.

HERB: Don't be a smart Alec.

*(They both get the unintended joke and  
have a laugh over this)*

ALEC: You know what my Dad used to say? He used to say to me, he says, "Try and look at your reflection with your eyes closed and see if you can see yourself."

HERB: Aw, go on with you. That's foolish. What're you doing? Open your eyes.

ALEC: I knew you were going to say that, Herb. They were smart people, those old ones. What my Dad meant is if you closed your eyes and really looked at your yourself, you'd see who you really are.

HERB: That's hocus pocus. And what if you don't like who you really are?

ALEC: Aha - go ahead. Try it. Stand in front of your big mirror and take a look.

HERB: Why bother, Greywolf. Life is a big disappointment. It starts off tough and then you get old. It should get better towards the end, not worse.

ALEC: You're still lucky, Herb.

HERB: I'm lucky?

ALEC: I wish I still had a big beautiful wife to be upset with me.

HERB: You got your son too be upset with you. Come on, Alec, we gotta make a bed for you. These coats are all yours...from last year. What's this?

ALEC: What're those coats. Got some new coats, eh, Herb? Look pretty fancy.

HERB: It's nothing. Don't worry about it.

*(Herb quickly pushes a RACK OF BRAND NEW LAURIER COATS to the back of the store).*

HERB(cont'd): Never mind about those.

*(He returns and continues to make a pile of coats on the floor for Alec).*

HERB: *(Cont'd)* You're gonna sleep like a king in here tonight. Go ahead. Get some more. Here. Here's a mink pillow.

ALEC: You sure it's all right?

HERB: Hell, make a mink pillow, and you want an ermine blanket, you take an ermine blanket...

ALEC: Why don't you stay? I'll go to your house.

HERB: Alec - I'll be back in the morning. You know where the bathroom is. Good-night.

ALEC: Night, Herb. Thank you. Hope Elijah's still coming tomorrow, eh?

HERB: Don't worry.

ALEC: See you tomorrow, Wandering Spirit.

*(Herb stops for a moment. Then he leaves)*

### **Scene Five:**

*(The Sampson's House. Morning).*

MAX: Dad, I don't want him sleeping in the store.

ROSE: It's not a hotel...

HERB: What was that whole rack of silver fox coats doing in there - with the Laurier label? You gonna buy that many?

ROSE: Let me talk to -

MAX: No, please. Dad, you...

ROSE: Herb, he -

MAX: Mom...we already talked about it. Laurier's going to supply all our coats from now on. All of them! That's the deal I made with him, Dad.

HERB: Rose, did you know about this?

MAX: I did it on my own, Dad.

HERB: You don't do anything on your own.

MAX: I'm running the store on my own -

HERB: How are we gonna buy all those coats from this shmuck and from Greywolf?

MAX: We're not buying from the Indians...

ROSE: Max doesn't want to make coats in the store anymore.

HERB: We're buying all their furs. I don't care how much it costs.

MAX: Dad...you can't just say that now.

HERB: Now -? You're doing all this so you can run off to New York.

MAX: No I'm not.

HERB: Why don't you? Columbus took a chance. Why can't my son?

MAX: I am taking a chance!

HERB: Breaking your word isn't taking a chance. Keeping it is.

(Max attempts to leave. Herb grabs onto him)

MAX: You knew what I was doing. You put me in charge.

HERB: We're buying the rest of them!

MAX: We don't have the money! I paid Laurier an advance.

HERB: An advance?

ROSE: ...to buy the coats next season.

MAX: Please - I'll tell him...

HERB: Don't you tell him anything! Get out of this house!  
You hear me!

HERB: Get out of this house!

ROSE: Don't act like an animal!

HERB: You put him up to this. Stay away. You and your --

ROSE: What?

MAX: Leave her alone. What kind of person are you?

HERB: I'm an animal, didn't you hear her - ?

MAX: An animal doesn't try to drown itself.

(PHONE RINGS)

ROSE: Max -!

HERB: Get out!

MAX: Dad! Let go of me!

HERB: Rose, I want him out! I want him...

*(PHONE RINGS AGAIN. Herb and Max separate as Rose answers it).*

ROSE. Shah! It's the police, Herb. (beat) Someone broke into the store.

**Scene Six:**

*(Herb's Store. Morning)  
(Herb and Max arrive)*

HERB: Alec! What happened?

ALEC: I told them! I didn't break in, I -

*(Alec is bleeding slightly. He is cleaning himself off when Herb arrives and goes into a frenzy).*

HERB: What did they do to you? Alec -you're bleeding Alec! He's bleeding! Did they hit you?

MAX: What happened?

ALEC: Police said I broke into your store.

HERB: Sonofabitch! Those G-d damn bastards! You didn't break in!

ALEC: I forgot about the alarum and opened the door this morning. The police passed by and -

HERB: Did they do this to you?

ALEC: They didn't believe me, at first. Until I got them to phone you. They just left.

HERB: They hit you and left you lying there. I'm going back to the police. I know people there -

ALEC: No Herb - you'll just make it worse.

MAX: Alec, are you okay?

ALEC: It's okay. They're gone now. I wanna stay put til my son gets into town.

HERB: These police are stupid. They didn't believe we know each other?

ALEC: I told him we do business together, but...Elijah!

*(Elijah arrives bearing a stack of furs. Our impression is that some men, Offstage, accompany him).*

ELIJAH: What's going on? Why're you bleeding, Dad?

ALEC: I'm alright, son.

MAX: Everything's alright now.

ELIJAH: What happened?

HERB: Just a misunderstanding. He slept in the store last night.

ELIJAH: In the store -?

MAX: The alarm went off this morning -

ELIJAH: Why did he sleep in the store?

MAX: The police thought he broke in.

ELIJAH: The police did this? What are you gonna do about this, Herb? Nothing, that's what you're gonna do - right? Come on, Dad.

HERB: I'm going to complain to the police - don't you worry.

ALEC: I don't want him to do anything, Elijah. I'm okay. Herb, I gotta ask you something. I saw a whole rack of brand new Laurier coats in there. You still buying our furs, Herb?

HERB: What? Not now, Alec.

ALEC: Why not? Herb, I asked you a question.

HERB: I've got to talk to you, Alec.

ALEC: Are you buying our furs or not?

MAX: We can't, Alec.

HERB: Quiet!...I was coming here to tell you - I just found out.

ALEC: Just found out what -?

ELIJAH: I knew we couldn't trust him.

ALEC: Quiet - you gave me your word, Herb!

ELIJAH: My people need food! We had to turn down an offer from Laurier!

MAX: He'll still buy some of them from you.

ELIJAH: Some of them -

HERB: Alec, you've got to believe me...I didn't know... I'm sorry this...I'm your G-d damn friend for Chris sakes!

ELIJAH: Friend. Sure. I told you this was going to happen. He's just another -

MAX: Another what, Elijah -?

ELIJAH: Another Jew!

HERB: Don't you talk like that -

*(Alec and Elijah walk away. Herb runs after them).*

HERB: Wait, wait, wait, wait! Alec, Alec, listen to me! It's not my fault...You gonna walk away from me like we don't even know each other?

ALEC: You're not who I thought you were. I don't know you anymore.

*(Max tries to hold Herb back)*

HERB: Don't you touch me! *(To Elijah)* Don't you come back here! You hear me! Get out of here! I don't need you or your G-d damn furs!

ELIJAH: Y'see Dad. It's just business.

*(Herb and Max enter their store. Herb picks up the wolf's head and smashes it into the mirror).*

MAX: Dad! Are you crazy?

HERB: Get away from me! You're nothing but a bum, Max. I'm ashamed of you. I don't want anything to do with you either!

***(Transition - Sound of Wolf, and Wind).***

***(A Month Later. Winter has arrived. Several scenes connected by snow falling)***

**Scene Seven:**

*(The Woods. Day)*

*(Alec wanders through the woods as snow falls around him).*

**Scene Eight:**

*(The Sampson's House. Day)*

*(Herb lies on his favourite couch. Rose reads to Herb from the Jewish paper).*

*WHAT FOLLOWS ARE TWO OVERLAPPING SCENES as Bernie continues reading the same article in the store.*

ROSE: *(Reading)* "March 3, 1950. Max Sampson...son of well known Winnipeg furrier, announces the opening of a new ultra-modern fur salon at 425 Portage Avenue. It will be the sole authorized outlet for the exclusive line of Laurier furs from Montreal."  
Herb, turn around so I can see you.

HERB: What?

*(Herb's Store).*

(Bernie reads the same article to Max).

BERNIE: Born to the fur trade, Herbert Sampson represents a third generation of furriers. His father Jacob...and his grandfather, Nachum, were both skilled craftsmen in the province of Kiev, Russia." (Pause) You should call him, Max. Please - for me.

MAX: I've tried, Bernie. I've called my Mom and asked her to put him on the phone but he won't talk to me. It's no use now.

BERNIE: So nu, how was it last night, hearing your big trumpeter at the 4 D on Pembina there?

MAX: Saxophone, tenor saxophone - Coleman Hawkins, from New York.

BERNIE: So - what did Mr. Hawkins say?

MAX: Not too much.

BERNIE: Did he remember you? Did you ask to play with him afterwards?

MAX: It doesn't matter -

BERNIE: It doesn't matter? You admire him.

MAX: Did the last batch with the fox trims get put in the cold storage?

BERNIE: What do you think, I'm gonna put the coats in the svitz? They're all back there in the fridge. I could make em nicer mind you. But they're pretty good. Relax, nu, play something. I can take it.

(Max picks up his horn but instead of playing it he turns it over in his hands, examining it).

MAX: You know what he remembered, Coleman Hawkins, not me, he didn't remember me. He remembered one of the girls I was sitting with that night back in New York, a coloured girl he knew.

BERNIE: Now you're dating coloured girls?

MAX: Maybe. He was sweet on her. That's how he remembered me.

BERNIE: So did he let you play for him? Is he gonna to let you play in his band?

*(Max begins to laugh, unhappily)*

MAX: I can't play in his band. I'm not that good, Bernie. Sometimes when I'm y'know a bit high, I mean drunk, maybe-

BERNIE: Stop talking like that - sure you're good enough.

MAX: I'm not too bad for a white boy from Canada. He says I need to spend a couple of years down in New York playing the clubs and learning. Then I'd start hearing things in another way, he says.

BERNIE: Hearing things?

MAX: Listening to the whole sound, not just what I was playing. (beat) He brought the house down.

BERNIE: Wouldn't take much for that place. It's like cardboard.

MAX: He really did. He was marvellous. Didn't think much of me, though, Bernie.

BERNIE: You're better than most of them around here.

MAX: Not really. Winnipeg's always had great talents.

BERNIE: He told you himself. You just have to start listening more.

MAX: Wonder where I got that from?

BERNIE: Don't start -

MAX: You know where I got my ears from? And now I'm gonna be stuck here for life.

BERNIE: We're all stuck here for life.

**Scene Nine:**

*(Netley Creek. Alec's Shack. Same Day).*

*(Alec stretches plastic over one of his windows).  
Elijah arrives, drunk).*

ALEC: What can I do for you son?

ELIJAH: Cold weather makes for good pelts.

ALEC: Don't gotta tell me that, Elijah. Snow's already getting higher than I ever remember. There's gonna be bad flooding in a couple of months. That's for sure.

ELIJAH: Freeze your ass off out here? You should go live on the reserve so you'd have your family around to take care of you.

ALEC: I can take care of myself. What'd you come to talk to me about, Elijah? You been drinking. Eh?

ELIJAH: I gotta have a reason? Hey, I got us a good price for the fall season, didn't I?

ALEC: Not as good as Laurier said it would be, but it was okay.

ELIJAH: He's expecting our winter furs too. We said we'd sell to him.

ALEC: We'll see when the time comes. We don't sell to any one man anymore.

ELIJAH: What about Herb Sampson?

ALEC: You know I don't deal with him no more. We're looking out for ourselves now. So no one's gonna cheat us and no one's gonna scare us.

ELIJAH: I'm not scared of anyone. And I'm not scared of you either. Nothing scares me after that residential school.

ALEC: Sure about that?

ELIJAH: What kinda elder lives away from his own family?

ALEC: You better go now. Go.

ELIJAH: Why are you still blaming me cause she died. I didn't kill her.

ALEC: No one said you did.

ELIJAH: I know the way you looked at me.

ALEC: It's not how I looked at you. It's how you look at yourself. It was my fault. I should never have let them take you kids away to that school.

*(Elijah leaves).*

ALEC (cont'd): His heart is getting smaller and smaller every day. I let this all happen.

*(He sits down)*

ALEC: I can't leave this place too, Nora? Our big grandfather rock. The hawk's nest up there. The sky, like a different painting every night. All the different ways you looked at me.

### **Scene Ten:**

*(The Sampson's House. Same Evening).*

*(Herb sits with Bernie playing cards).*

BERNIE: What is it?

HERB: Nothing.

BERNIE: Can I do anything?

HERB: Play the card. So much snow. It's like Russia.

BERNIE: Russia, with Indians. You don't go out there with -?

HERB: I don't bother with them anymore.

BERNIE: You want to talk about it?

HERB: Play your card, Bernie.

(Rose enters with some tea).

BERNIE: Rose, you going to go to Florida this winter?

ROSE: I may have to go alone.

HERB: I don't feel like it this year, Bernie. First time in years.

BERNIE: So next year in Florida. Next year. Forty years the Jews have been wandering in Florida.

ROSE: Some day I'd like to go to Israel. To see what it's like, to see where we come from.

BERNIE: Jews are coming from everywhere to live there again.

HERB: This was the Indians country before the white man came.

ROSE: Somebody always comes.

BERNIE: And they keep coming.

ROSE: I'm going to make dinner. You staying, Bernie?

(Rose turns on the radio)

ROSE: Stay. Give me a hand with these glasses.

(Bernie helps Rose who then exits).

BERNIE: You're not yourself, Herb. What d'you have - a dybbuk up your tuchas?

HERB: I can't look in the mirror, Bernie.

BERNIE: This is a test. For both of you.

HERB: Greywolf and me?

BERNIE: No. You and Max. What're you talking, Greywolf?

HERB: I made a big mistake, Bernie. I left Russia after I had a fight with my father. He was a poor tailor like I was gonna be. But I wanted more. So I came here. But my mother, my father and my sisters and brothers, alavasholem, all died back in Russia. Did I make a mistake?

BERNIE: of course not, Herb.

HERB: I think I did.

BERNIE: Maybe you made the right mistake? We're worried about you.

HERB: Feh - don't worry. I'm not even here. I'm a ghost, Bernie. Bernie, you're different. When you walk around there's a light over your head. Really. A beautiful light, ever since I met you. But I've got to carry around a generator to light up. I can't carry it anymore, Bernie. It got too heavy.

BERNIE: You're starting to sound like me. With the light and the thing and the...play your card. You wanna know how I got this way? You *know* how I got this way. I've seen miracles Herb. Just being able to sit here in front of you and play cards is a miracle.

HERB: Depends on your hand.

BERNIE: After everything that's happened to me. And to you back in Kiev. And here we are, alive and well. And never forget, our twelve tribes once witnessed a miracle, together, at Mt. Sinai. I don't want to hear about Greywolf.

HERB: The lost tribes of Israel.

BERNIE: Anything's possible. But I know this. We were brought out of Egypt for a reason. And we were brought out of Russia for a reason too. And maybe G-d willing...?

HERB: What did G-d ever do that was so good for me?

BERNIE: Shah. Don't talk like that.

HERB: Maybe he helped me escape Kiev - but I lost my whole family. He brought me Rose - but she doesn't really love me?

BERNIE: Don't be silly.

HERB: Penny, but she never comes over. My son - but he made me so angry. What have I got to show? G-d's gonna do what he likes. We're just like minnows waiting for him to send something to swallow us. Or maybe you'll let me swim around in the river for another day. I'm not even good for bait anymore. Why should he bother with me? Unless he's just an old fool too. They say there's gonna be a bad flood soon. That's good. The water can pick me up and carry me away.

**Transition To: Sounds of Spring and the Water Rushing, plus CJOB RADIO announcing NEWS AND INFORMATION RELATED TO THE FLOOD. The radio plays over the next three scenes.**

### Scene Eleven:

(The Sampson's Kitchen. Early Spring)

(Rose and Michelle face a window overlooking the rising river out back)

MICHELLE: How high is the river going to get?

ROSE: As high as it wants. And your Zaida's not helping. He's making me nuts. He just sits there, all winter long, like an old man. I'd rather he was back out with his Indian friends.

MICHELLE: You do?

ROSE: I used to go out there with him too, you know?

MICHELLE: You did?

ROSE: Oh sure. Years ago. Ate moose meat.

MICHELLE: Moose meat!

(They laugh)

MICHELLE: On the radio they said it's even higher north of the Locks, near where Greywolf lives.

ROSE: Uh-huh. Pass me the cinnamon there. A good kamish always needs a little cinnamon. Do you like spending time cooking with your old Baba?

MICHELLE: Sure.

ROSE: I'm not so old, you know. You want to talk to me about boys you go right ahead. I won't even tell your mother.

MICHELLE: How come you're so mean to Zaida all the time?

ROSE: What? Of course I'm not. That's not really mad. That's pretend mad.

MICHELLE: Seems like more than pretending.

ROSE: You love your Zaida a lot, don't you?

MICHELLE: Mm-hm.

ROSE: More than anything else in the world, including me sometimes. Don't answer that.

MICHELLE: I love you a lot Baba. Do you love Zaida, still?

ROSE: What're you talking...of course I do.

MICHELLE: I mean in love.

ROSE: In love. What's in love? Yes I'm still in love with your Zaida.

MICHELLE: Mom said you were in love with someone else once.

ROSE: She shouldn't talk such foolishness. If you mean, did I ever know another young man before Herb, of course I did. A few. Very few.

MICHELLE: One of them just died, right? Do you ever think what it would be like if you'd had a life with him instead?

ROSE: What makes you ask such questions?

MICHELLE: I don't know. Do you?

ROSE: Yes, you kind of imagine sometimes.

MICHELLE: I imagine having different parents all the time.

ROSE: Quiet.

*(Unseen by them, Herb enters to get something. He  
OVERHEARS part of the conversation)*

MICHELLE: But I still love my Mom and Dad. You and Zaida seem really different from each other. Is that recommended?

ROSE: For us it wasn't... so bad.

MICHELLE: But I want it to be special.

ROSE: Don't worry, it will be special for you I can already tell.

MICHELLE: I want a soul mate.

ROSE: A soul mate.

MICHELLE: Someone who knows my real name -I mean who I really am.

*(Herb exits)*

ROSE: If I understand what you mean, who says that if you know your soul mate you still have to end up with them? Is that so terrible?

MICHELLE: Yeah.

ROSE: At least you knew them.

MICHELLE: Can you have more than one?

*(Rose smiles at her granddaughter, but won't answer)*

ROSE: Now, gimme a touch of salt.

## **Scene Twelve:**

*(Alec's Shack. Evening).*

*(Alec is alone in his shack. It's the beginning of Spring. He is weak and ill).*

ALEC: (*READING THE INSCRIPTION on the back of a photo. He uses a mock Scottish accent*): "In memory of Peguis, chief of the Saulteaux, and in grateful recognition of his good offices to the early settlers." Bullshit, eh? Here's something. A picture of Nora and me. And Herb. Used to be my two best friends. Both gone. How come I have to remember everything so well? It's a curse. (TO NORA'S PHOTO) You always helped me hold on to what I believed, Nora. But I'm so weak now. Lookit that river. Gettin' all swollen up. All swollen up. I can't fight a river like that. No one can.

### **Scene Thirteen:**

*(Herb and Rose's Living Room. Evening)*

ROSE: Tonight Michelle said something...

HERB: She's a smart girl.

ROSE: She said that sometimes our real family is the one we

HERB: Rose, I can't think. When I try it makes me...sad. And Rose...

ROSE: What Herb...?

HERB: I know what I said about that Templeman boy wasn't fair. I think I was jealous. At my age!

ROSE: You're not dead yet. Herb, he drowned.

HERB: I know.

ROSE: Now look what's happening with the rivers this year. It's starting to flood. Everything could be destroyed. People could drown.

HERB: No one's going to drown. We'll jump in a boat and paddle away. We'll take your chinas too. Don't' worry. I'm here now.

ROSE: I don't care about the china -not as much as you think.

*(They listen to a report on the radio)*

ROSE (cont'd): The Wolches had to get a boat to paddle up to their front door to take all their furniture away - by boat! They took the Ashkenazi schul's torah away in a canoe - a canoe, Herb.

HERB: I heard Henry Rabinovitz had to move into the Marlborough Hotel. They're gonna hold his grandson's bar mitzvah there.

ROSE: These sandbags aren't enough? I can't believe that I wanted a house on the Crescent so badly so we could drown.

HERB: Nobody's going to drown. I was scared Rose - that I was losing everything. But now, it doesn't matter. Rose - did you love him, Rose?

ROSE: I won't say I didn't. But not the way I love you, Herb.

HERB: Rosie, you know I don't deserve you.

ROSE: I know. I've invited Max for dinner. So you've stopped running away now?

HERB: I haven't been running away. I've been running to.

ROSE: To what?

HERB: I don't know.

ROSE: It's all here Herb, It's all here.

HERB: It's all here. It's all there.

*(The SOUND OF WATER RUSHING BEGINS).*

### **Scene Fourteen:**

*(Nora's Gravesite. Elijah stands over his mother's grave)*

ELIJAH: It's been so long. Alice and all your grandkids miss you, and all your old friends, everyone at the bingo hall. Me too. A lot. What am I going to do? He won't leave his place, and the water's rising. I tried everything. (pause) I didn't want you to see me like this. You never got to see me happy after I left. It just wish you coulda seen me happy. You deserved it. I'm trying so hard. I promise. But I need your help with Dad.

*(The SOUND OF WATER RUSHING BUILDS)*

**Scene Fifteen:**

*(The Sampson's House. Evening).*

*(Gathered together for a Passover Seder/Dinner, are Herb, Rose, Max, Michelle, & Bernie.*

*(They are all singing the Hebrew song "Dayenu," a song about giving thanks for abundance).*

*(There are several large plates on the table with embroidered linen covers on them. Each member of the party holds a Passover Hagadah in their hands, the book from which the ceremony is conducted. In front of each person is a wine glass on a saucer. Each person dips their little finger into their wine glass and sprinkles a drop of wine onto their saucers as the ten plagues are read aloud. We see some furniture nearby, covered and ready for the movers. There is a warmth and a celebratory energy around the table.*

BERNIE: Daum. Tzfardaya. Keenim, arov, dever..

HERB: Blood. Frogs. Vermin, wild beasts, disease...

BERNIE: ...shichin, barad, arbeh,

HERB: ...boils, hail, locusts...

BERNIE: Choshech.

HERB: Darkness.

BERNIE: Makas Bikorot.

HERB: The striking down of the Egyptians first born. The ten plagues G-d sent down upon the ancient Egyptians to let our people go.

MICHELLE: What about floods?

HERB: Shah. Ten plagues are enough. Bernie you wanted to say something.

BERNIE: Thank you, Rose for inviting me to be with you on Pesach...and you, Herb. I'm sorry Michelle's parents couldn't be here. May your grandmother have a speedy recovery. (beat) On Passover, we celebrate the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery and their march across the desert to the promised land.

HERB: Speed it up, Bernie. We're hungry.

BERNIE: As you all know, G-d sent the waters of the Red Sea down upon the Egyptians when they tried to pursue the children of Israel. Now here we are in Winnipeg...

MICHELLE: ...in the middle of the Red River flooding.

BERNIE: That's right...and Herb and Rose are packing up and leaving their house in a few days, until the flood waters have crested. Still, we have to remember, Passover is a happy time for us because it marks when we went from being slaves to being a free people.

HERB: Who could be happier? I've got everyone I care about around me. Excellent good.

MAX: Dad...

*(Herb makes eye contact with Max for the first time in months)*

HERB: Yes, Max...

MAX: I've got to talk to you about something else. Bernie you remember you said that everything we do down here affects everything above.

BERNIE: I didn't say it. The kabbala did.

MAX: Well I might be about to cause some more trouble up there. I don't mean to...

HERB: Go ahead, Max.

MAX: I've decided to move back to New York. You're right, I have to take a chance. I love playing music, so what if I'm not a big star. I can still make a living and keep getting better. You got better.

HERB: I got better...

MAX: I'm gonna leave soon as soon as it's okay.

*(Herb takes a moment)*

HERB: It's okay. Max, you go. You go - and if you come back, we'll all still be here. Go play your music. I waited all my life to play. Don't wait so long. Just be careful about the - you know -

MAX: I know.

HERB: If the Jews never left Egypt we'd still be slaves. (beat) Now let's open the door for Eliyahu.

BERNIE: The prophet Elijah's after we eat.

HERB: Do it now. It's the second night anyway. I don't want to do it all after supper.

ROSE: Michelle, why don't you go to the door? It's okay.

MICHELLE: Do I have to?

HERB: Yes.

BERNIE: Go open it for Eliyahu. He won't mind if we're early. It's wet out there.

HERB (singing): Eliahu Hanavi, Eliyahu Ha Tishbi, Eliahu, Elliahu, Eliahu Ha Giladi.

MICHELLE: Then he comes in, but he's invisible, and he drinks the wine -right, and you tell me it just happened, like magic.

HERB: That's right. Bernie, pour the cup for Eliyahu. Okay, she's gone. Who wants to drink it?

ROSE: Wait til she's opened the door.

HERB: Okay, okay.

MICHELLE(O.S.): Every year I gotta do this, and every year they tell me that Eliyahu drank the wine.

*(Offstage. Michelle opens the door).*

MICHELLE (O.S.): Ohh.

ELIJAH (O.S): Didn't mean to scare you, Michelle. Herb home?

MICHELLE (O.S): Zaida...y-you're not gonna believe this...

*(Michelle re-enters with **Elijah**. The guests are shocked to see him).*

HERB: Well I'll be a sonofa...Elijah I'm s-surprised to see you. Rose, this is Alec's son, Elijah.

ROSE: I remember Elijah. Come in, sit down, please Elijah.

ELIJAH: I don't wanna bother you...

HERB: You're not bothering us.

ROSE: Here. Sit.

ELIJAH: Okay, but just for a few minutes, Mrs. Sampson.

BERNIE: Eliyahu?

MAX: Hello Elijah.

ELIJAH: Max.

HERB: This is Bernie. He knows your Dad too. Bernie...

BERNIE: Uh, yes. Sorry. It's just...a real Elijah showing up.

ROSE: Have you eaten, Elijah?

ELIJAH: It's alright. I had something.

HERB: You have to have something to eat.

MAX: It's also part of our holiday to invite a guest in, someone who we don't know that well. I mean we know you, but...

HERB: What is it?

ELIJAH: My Dad's on the river and he won't leave his house. He's pretty sick, too, Herb.

HERB: Oh no. Your Dad's a stubborn old man. Like me.

ELIJAH: Said he had a vision. My mother came to him and told him to stay.

HERB: To stay - in the flood?

ELIJAH: Says the world got sad. That's why the flood's come. To carry him away to a good place. He asked me to respect his wishes. He won't listen to me, Herb.

HERB: It's alright, Elij.

ELIJAH: I'm afraid the mounties are gonna come and try and take him away. My Dad's got his shotgun and he doesn't want to budge.

HERB: We'll figure something out.

ELIJAH: I don't know Herb. I didn't want to have to come to you like this.

HERB: Go on.

ELIJAH: I'm doing this for my Dad. I still don't agree with the way things are... and it doesn't mean that what happened between us didn't happen -

MAX: We understand.

HERB: Go on. It's alright.

ELIJAH: But I guess, cause of your peoples' history... maybe you can kinda understand us sometimes. Just a bit, yknow.

ROSE: This flood is terrible. If we can help...?

HERB: Elij, have a sip of wine. It's for Elijah.

ELIJAH: No thank you. No more for me, ever.

HERB: Then have some Manishevitz grape juice. We got that too.

ELIJAH: It's nice of you to ask me in. But I can't stay. I have to leave now.

HERB: I'm coming with you.

ROSE: Herb, maybe you should - Max?

MAX: I want to come.

HERB: Fine. You come then.

**Scene Sixteen:**

*(Alec's Shack. Netley Creek. Day).*

*(Offstage - Herb, Max, and Elijah on the shore across from Alec).*

HERB(O.S.): Wait for me here! I'll bring him back in the boat.

MAX(O.S.): Dad! You can't go out there alone. Don't be crazy!

ELIJAH(O.S.): Herb! The water hasn't crested yet! It's too dangerous.

HERB(O.S.): I have to go or he won't leave! I can't take you.

ELIJAH (O.S.): It's too dangerous, Herb.

MAX (O.S.): You can't go, Dad.

HERB (O.S.): Get off of my boat. The both of you! Get off.  
I have to cross. Go on. Let me untie this!

MAX (O.S.): Don't let go, Dad. You'll get carried away.  
Hold on.

ELIJAH (O.S.): Don't let go!

HERB (O.S.): I've got to! (Pause) There!

MAX (O.S.): Dad! Dad!

ELIJAH (O.S.): If he doesn't come back right away we'll take the other boat after him.

*(Herb arrives in his boat in front of Alec's shack. The water has reached precariously close to the shack. There are sand bags around it but not enough. The river is about to sweep the shack away. Alec's boat is tied up).*

HERB: Alec! Are you there! Come outa there. The river's too high. There's nothing left here. It's all flooded out. It's gonna carry your place away, Alec. You inside!

(Alec comes to the door. *He carries his shotgun. He is obviously ill and trying to hide it.*)

ALEC: Why'd you come out here?

HERB: You're sick. We got to get you out of here. You gotta go, now!

ALEC: Over my dead body.

HERB: That's why I came -so it wouldn't be.

ALEC: So that's why. You're doing my son a favour. Don't bother yourself. That him across the creek? Who's with him?

HERB: Max. You can't stay here til the water just washes you away. Come on, Alec. It's serious.

ALEC: Got my boat right here. I'll paddle away when the time comes.

HERB: The time's already come. Elijah says the mounties are coming around to move everyone.

ALEC: Let them. This land doesn't mean anything to them anyway.

HERB: What land? There isn't any left.

ALEC: It's not just this tiny piece of land, Herb.

HERB: What land is it then?

ALEC: The land in here. If you want to hold onto it you got to do these things. You got to take a stand. Like we did with the furs.

HERB: Okay, alright. What do you want me to do out here, drown again?

ELIJAH (O.S.): Dad - they're comin over there! The mounties.

HERB: Come on.

MAX (O.S.): You gotta get outa there!

HERB: Alright, Alec. We gotta go back across.

ALEC: Tell them to stay away! You don't like to talk, do you?

HERB: Now?

ALEC: We got to talk about it. What happened.

HERB: What happened.

ALEC: You tell me. (TO MOUNTIES IN THE DISTANCE) I said stay away from my place!

HERB: They can't hear you.

ALEC: Tell me what happened. Tell me.

HERB: My son made a deal with Laurier and he didn't really tell me. Okay, let's go. And put the gun away.

ALEC: You must have known what he was up to, or said it was okay.

HERB: I was only looking out for you and me. And you're giving me shit for it! Maybe I was confused.

ALEC: Confused! Admit it, Herb. It's wrong if you don't admit it. Like bad medicine. History's important.

HERB: Hell, you don't think it bothers me? My whole world fell apart. I almost lost everything.

ALEC: You did lose everything.

HERB: I gotta take you away from here. You gotta leave now! Get out of there! They're gonna come up to the dock. Alec!

ALEC: Keep away! Keep away I says!

HERB: Jesus Christ. What're you doing? That's it. Let's go. Now! Get in the boat, Alec.

*(Alec lets Herb help him get into the boat. Alec carries his shotgun and wears his medicine pouch around his neck. He manages to get in and they are immediately carried away by the rushing river).*

ALEC: You gotta get control of the boat!

HERB: I'm trying, we're moving too fast! Shit! Are you okay? Alec?

ALEC: Use the paddle like a rudder! Straighten the boat out!

HERB: Awww, no! No!

ALEC: What happened?

HERB: I lost it. I lost the paddle!

ALEC: Here. Take my shotgun (hands him the shotgun). Don't lose it! Put it in the water, slowly Herb. Slowly. Keep riding it!

There. Let it straighten out the boat.

HERB: Gotta go back.

ALEC: Please Herb. I wanna stay on the river. Let it go. Stay on the river. It's gonna crest.

HERB: Let's go back.

ALEC: Stay on the river. Trust the river, Herb.

HERB: Okay, I'm letting us go. Our boys are going to have a heart attack. I'm letting go. I'm going to let the river take us. Alec - I'm letting go - Now!

*(The SOUND OF THE RIVER is deafening, building to a crescendo. Offstage Voices of Max and Elijah scream at them to return, but their voices are drowned out by the roar of the water, then suddenly, silence).*

**Scene Seventeen:**

*(After the floodwaters have crested, the river has*

*(The boat drifts down the river. Alec is wrapped in a blanket).*

ALEC: Yes sir, we showed em good, didn't we, Herb?

HERB: We sure did.

ALEC: It was the mounties own fault for trying to come after us. They almost drowned.

HERB: Just like the old Egyptians.

ALEC: Why did they chase us?

HERB: They got a small life. We got the whole world. You all right?

ALEC: I'm terrible.

HERB: I'm worried about you. We'll wait til the river crests, then we'll get you out of here.

ALEC: Is your arm okay? You straightened out the boat, but you made your arm crooked.

HERB: It's fine, like new. See. I feel so bad about everything that happened between us. I want the history to be right too.

ALEC: It's right now. As right as it's ever gonna be between an Ind

HERB: That son of yours...

ALEC: Not as bad as yours.

HERB: How did they ever get like that?

ALEC: Don't ask me. I had a dream, Herb.

HERB: See any ducks?

ALEC: Y'can't get ducks in Florida, can you?

HERB: Sure you can. All kinds.

ALEC: We're not goin' there after all. To Florida.

HERB: Go on.

ALEC: Here, I want you to have this.

HERB: Your medicine pouch.

ALEC: Promise not to laugh at me? Promise? I'm gonna die pretty soon.

HERB: Gay avek. Tonight?

ALEC: Soon.

HERB: Who says you're gonna die?

ALEC: I do.

HERB: You're not going to die. You're crazy. The river's gonna crest and then I'm gonna paddle you right outa here.

ALEC: I'm trying to talk to you, Herb.

HERB: Why do you say you're gonna die soon? We're going to take you to a hospital tonight. Right now.

ALEC: Not yet, what're you so scared about?

HERB: I don't know.

ALEC: You know. Same reason you don't like going into the synagogue. Too many memories.

HERB: I'm a little scared...to be alone, Alec.

ALEC: I never did finish telling you the rest of the story about the names.

HERB: Go on, Alec.

ALEC: The name shields, they weren't for war...they were just to show people your name. So y'see, if you and me were strangers, and we were walking across the land towards each other with our shields, when we got close, shields. And from looking at the name, you'd know who the other person is... and I know who you really are, Herb...Ah Herb...

HERB: Oh Alec.

ALEC: Remember that candle you lit for your Dad?

HERB: Sure I do.

ALEC: Well, would you light one for me when I die?

HERB: Yes, I will, Alec.

ALEC: Every year, Herb!

HERB: All right, you old moose!

ALEC: Could you light one for me now?

*(Alec motions to his medicine pouch. Herb takes out a candle and lights it. He lets the wax drip onto one of the canoe's struts, then plants the candle. He pulls a blanket over Alec to keep him warm and takes Alec's hand).*

HERB: When I left Russia it was snowing.

ALEC: You'll be okay, Herb. Don't worry. Just let the river take you. Let the river take you.

*(The boat drifts down the river as Alec passes away).*

HERB (SINGING SOFTLY): Oh Horsey keep your tail up,  
 Horsey keep your tail up  
 Oh Horsey keep your tail up  
 Keep the sunshine outa my eyes.

**Lights Fade Out**

**The End**

# ***The Year Of The Flood***

**A Play By:  
Howard Wiseman  
Nov. 2017 (Rev.)**

Production:  
Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, Berney Theatre

Staged Readings:  
Miles Nadel Al Green Theatre, Toronto  
Theatre Direct, Wychwood Barns

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