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“And when the children of Israel saw it they said one to another:
‘What is it?’ for they knew not what it was.”

—Exodus 16:15

For Jill, the best part of myself.

Cast of Characters

MADELEINE, 34, whimsical, imaginative, sensitive, childlike

BESS, 26, Madeleine's sister. Very young looking, but the hardened attitude of someone years older. Works for a hedge fund. Tough, practical, no-nonsense.

THE CHORUS:

CHORUS MEMBER #1, man 30's. Plays Morris, Exterminator

CHORUS MEMBER #2, woman 30's. Plays Aviva

CHORUS MEMBER #3, man 60's. Plays Mr. Iefshahr, Dan Rosen

CHORUS MEMBER #4, man 20's. Plays Per, Uncle Itzy

CHORUS MEMBER #5, woman 20's. Plays Francesca, Bubbe Chaya

CHORUS MEMBER #6, woman 60's Plays Bubbe Hannah, Lillian Rosen

CHORUS MEMBER #7, man 40's Plays Rabbi Yakov Baer

Setting

New York City

Time

Now

Production Notes

Multiple backslashes (////) in dialogue are used to indicate when the subsequent line should overlap with the line being spoken.

MANNA
OR, THE BOOK OF MADELEINE
by Cheri Magid

ACT I

(Darkness. Closed curtain. Lights slowly up on a CHORUS. They hold prayer books with Hebrew lettering and wear white robes. The CHORUS sings a round of hallelujahs. Their song is joyous, fervent, creating a holy atmosphere. After their song, the CHORUS opens their books. Noises of pages turning.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. In the beginning there was flour, water, yeast, and some salt.

(Curtain opens. A dilapidated studio apartment. MADELEINE mixes batter in a bowl in the makeshift kitchen area. She stirs in one direction, then the other. The contents get harder and harder to turn. MADELEINE stops. The spoon sticks straight up in the bowl. MADELEINE raises the bowl up to the heavens. She flips it over. Smack! of the dough hitting the counter. Beat. MADELEINE smiles.)

CHORUS. And she looked upon it and saw that it was good.

(Blackout.)

Two:

(Lights up. MADELEINE kneads the dough. She puts the full force of herself into it.)

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Now the firmament was unformed and sticky. And she said, "Let us lay our hands upon it, so that that which has been separate may now be joined." And she drew together all that had been separate and molded it after its kind. And Madeleine called the substance *Sch'lemut* "Whole."

CHORUS. And she lay her hands upon it and felt that it was good.

(MADELEINE continues kneading. Blackout.)

Three:

(Snap of a cloth. Lights up. MADELEINE brings a white cloth down over a bowl, which now contains the dough.)

CHORUS MEMBER #3. And she said, “Let that which has lain in stillness be wakened forth!” And she drew breath and breathed upon it thus the breath of life; and lo, it was a living thing. And she covered it and let it lie. And she called the time of lying *Ibbor*, Gestation, for it was unto her like a womb.

CHORUS. And Madeleine heard the rush of life and knew that it was good.

(Blackout.)

Four:

(Lights up. MADELEINE lifts the cloth off of the bowl. The dough has risen. MADELEINE runs her hand over the risen dough in wonder. Her hand becomes a fist. She punches down the dough. Blackout.)

Five:

(Lights up. The dough has re-risen and is now in a baking pan. MADELEINE raises up the pan and puts it in the oven. Blackout.)

Six:

(Lights up.)

CHORUS MEMBER #6. And she said, “Let it be revealed.”

(MADELEINE brings the baked bread out of the oven.)

CHORUS. And Madeleine created it in her image; in the image of herself she created it; bread and crust created she them. And Madeleine looked upon all she had made and behold it was very good.

(MADELEINE holds the pan out to the audience. She smiles proudly. Blackout.)

Seven:

(Lights up. The bread is out of the pan. It is perfectly formed, mythic. The choir sings a harmonized riff on the hamotze.)

CHORUS. *Baruch Hashem elokanu melech ha'olam hamotzeh lechem mein ha'ar—*

(MADELEINE goes to cut the bread. She raises up an enormous knife just as the CHORUS is reaching triumphant crescendo when...)

BESS. (From outside:) Open the goddamn the door!

(MADELEINE and the CHORUS stop abruptly. BESS starts pounding away at the door.)

Maddie! Don't fuck around with me! I know this is where you live.

(MADELEINE mouths the word "shit.")

MADELEINE. Coming!

(Exit the CHORUS. MADELEINE frantically looks around at her hovel of an apartment, trying to figure out what to clean first. She shoves the bread wrapped in a towel under a cushion of the couch. She throws all of the dishes and cookware into the refrigerator, tosses clothes into the kitchen closet—which is actually a shower stall, already filled with junk. Finally she searches and finds a bottle of air freshener and begins spraying both the room and herself liberally. BESS continues underneath.)

BESS. (Offstage:) I can't believe you. I can't believe you would go to such great Herculean efforts to just totally royally fuck with—do you know why I came here? Do you Maddie? I bought you that fucking poncho. The one you were looking at at Bloomingdales last week when you thought I was still paying for your fucking day planner. And I knew you would never buy something like that for yourself even if it would look great on you and God knows you need a new jacket. So I went back the next day on my lunch hour, and I bought it. And I wrapped it in this pretty paper and I over-

nighted it and I couldn't fucking wait. I couldn't wait for you to show up for coffee or or to the gym wearing this cute little knit little springy thing, but then I go back, I go back to the office the next day and what is on my desk? Your package. Your fucking package with this great "delivery refused" sticker stuck across the front of it. So I called you but the phone—nothing, nothing fucking happened, so then I tried you on the cell phone that I gave you but all I could get was my fucking voice on the fucking voice mail message. So I went to your building, the one I've driven you "home" to 3, 4, 7 different times since I've moved here, and I buzzed 3F and I buzzed 3F and something in my little pea brain must have snapped because all of a sudden I was just buzzing all of them all at once until finally the super comes out and tells me yeah he knows you sure. But you haven't lived there in the three years. Three years? Three fucking years! And then I'm like oh my God, OH MY GOD. "Oh no Bess, you can just drop me here, I need to go to the Korean deli." "Oh no Bess this is fine, I need to mail a letter." "Oh no Bess, you don't want to come up—the downstairs neighbors are doing all these renovations, your allergies will go fucking ballis—

(MADELEINE opens the door.)

MADELEINE. Hi.

(BESS stands there mid-rant, clutching the poncho in one hand and a ripped open FedEx package in the other. She is immaculately put-together in a high-end suit and a no-nonsense ponytail, pearls, nails, but still looks like she's about seventeen. Now that the door is actually open, she seems at a loss.)

Um. Come in.

(MADELEINE opens the door wide, to let BESS pass. As soon as BESS enters, her face falls. Utter horror.)

So. Can I offer you something to drink?

(MADELEINE opens the refrigerator and everything comes crashing out—pots, pans, wayward oranges, laundry. BESS covers her mouth.)

Don't look at me like that. Don't—you see this is why I didn't want you to come here. I knew you'd make that face—

BESS. I am not making any—

MADELEINE. You look like your entire world just fell apart. You look like this is the most horrible awful thing that's ever happened to you—

BESS. Oh because I don't want you to live this way? That, that makes me a bad person?

MADELEINE. It's gentrifying Bess. Read the paper. For God's sake it hasn't been a squat for the last two and a half—

BESS. Let me get you a job. Let me rent you a studio in my—

MADELEINE. Oh right now I'm going to move to the Upper East Side.

BESS. Please I am begging you. Let me at least get a contractor in here. Your window doesn't even fucking close you're going to fucking freeze—

MADELEINE. I AM NOT GOING TO FREEZE!

(BESS is silenced.)

This is my space. Mine You can't go—

BESS. Did you lie about the job too, about the society lady who was doing all this—

(MADELEINE looks, down, caught.)

you lied about the...so what do you do then? To make money. Or should I not even ask.

MADELEINE. I—I do fi—

BESS. Fine! How could you possibly be doing fine. Your phone is dead. Your walls are crumbling. You wear a ripped jacket held together with fucking binder clips—

MADELEINE. I have projects. I—I have things that are important to me things that you couldn't possibly understand. I am not you////stop trying to make me into—

BESS. So you're still trying to kill yourself, is that it Maddie? You're just doing it slower this time.

MADELEINE. ...get out.

BESS. I—I'm sorry. I really—I didn't mean. That was—

MADELEINE. GET OUT!

(Beat. BESS gathers her things.)

BESS. You want me to go...fine

(She goes to the door, then turns around.)

You can't do this anymore you know. For fifteen years all you've done is push me away. Like I'm not your sister. Like I don't matter. Well I've got news for you. I exist. I live in the city too now. And and you can't keep thinking I'm just going to go away because I'm not, I'm going to be here I'm going to be in your face whether you like it or not because you need me. You need me Madeleine.

(She goes to exit, turns around, sees that she still has the package, hesitates then throws it and the poncho on the floor slamming the door behind her. MADELEINE sits with her arms crossed. Beat. She gets up and begins cleaning up, walking carefully around the poncho. She starts with the refrigerator. Sees the knife, picks it up, goes back to the couch, takes out the bread. She closes her eyes and resumes.)

MADELEINE. *Baruch Hashem elokanu...*

(She stops, and unceremoniously rips off a piece and shoves it in her mouth. Closes her eyes, reaches out her arms. From offstage the CHORUS begins to sing an elaborate "amen.")

CHORUS. *(Offstage:) A-a-a-a-meeeeee—*

MADELEINE. Pllllll!

(She spits it out, gags, wipes out her mouth with a towel. Goes to throw the bread. Stops. Sinks back into the couch. She thinks. She gets up, goes to her shelves, takes out cookbooks. Lots and lots and lots of cookbooks. She opens one of them up, reads as she carries it to the kitchen. MADELEINE takes out ingredients as she reads and begins putting them into the bowl. She stirs.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. And Madeleine cooked.

CHORUS MEMBER #2. She cooked until Sabbath gave way to Sabbath

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Until tenfold, day became night and night day

CHORUS MEMBER #4. And the loaves were rife and increased abundantly.

(Ding of timer. MADELEINE takes out the first loaf. She slices it, tries it, makes a face, and puts it aside. Ding of a timer. She slices it, tries it. Another face.)

CHORUS MEMBER #5. And the dry begot the soggy.

(Ding of a timer. MADELEINE takes out another loaf. Slices it, tries it. Uch.)

CHORUS MEMBER #6. And the soggy begot the bland.

(Ding of a timer. Same routine.)

CHORUS MEMBER #7. And the bland begot the salty.

(Ding of a timer. Same routine. MADELEINE gags.)

CHORUS MEMBER # 1. And the salty begot the flat.

(Ding of a timer. Same routine. MADELEINE grows increasingly exhausted. The CHORUS begins to slow down and speak softer and softer. The lights begin to dim.)

CHORUS MEMBER #2. And the flat begot the flimsy

(Ding of a timer. Same routine.)

CHORUS MEMBER #3. And the flimsy begot the—begot the—the crumbed

(Ding of a timer. Same routine.)

CHORUS MEMBER #4. Begot the begot the And the crumbed—

(MADELEINE yawns. She pushes the bad loaves onto the floor, climbs onto the table and lies down.)

CHORUS MEMBER #5. Begot the begot the begot the begot the...

(The sound of chimes. MADELEINE is asleep. The CHORUS moves closely around her and whispers in her ears. One of them sprinkles flour over her head which lands in a bowl held by another.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Two and ten teaspoons of flour

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Cakes mingled with oil

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Syrup of pomegranate

CHORUS MEMBER #4. And figs

CHORUS MEMBER #5. And it shall be a sweet savor unto the Lord

(Another CHORUS MEMBER pours water into the bowl. Still another moves MADELEINE's hands so she is mixing the batter. In her sleep, MADELEINE begins to laugh, stretching out her arms.)

CHORUS MEMBER #6. Corn in the ear parched with fire

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Honeycomb and almonds

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Seasoned with salt

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Cinnamon

CHORUS MEMBER #3. And cloves

CHORUS MEMBER #4. And it shall be thy consecrated portion

(MADELEINE laughs louder. The CHORUS lifts her up above their heads and whirls her about the room. They continue chanting, repeating the above, all the while mixing, stirring with MADELEINE's hand, adding ingredients. Somehow MADELEINE acquires the knife. The CHORUS floats MADELEINE down over the bowl. She laughs, stretches out her arms—)

(—and slits open her wrist.)

(Light change. The CHORUS is gone. MADELEINE screams, drops the knife with a clatter. She sees the blood on her hand and in the bowl, backs away across the room. She crouches in a corner, trying to catch her breath. Blackout.)

(Lights slowly up. MADELEINE is asleep. The light is coming directly from the bowl. It brightens and brightens until it is almost

blinding. MADELEINE wakes up, shielding her eyes. She sees the light coming from the bowl. She stares. Blackout.)

(Clickety-click of an office. Lights up, the exterior of Bess' office at Winston Global Funds. BESS dictates to her secretary FRANCESCA, who types one painful key at a time.)

BESS. In conclusion then, Vietnam's dynamic economy with its 7% GDP making it the fastest growing economy after China, represents an emerging market that remains relatively unexploited by investors in the west. Bien Hoa Confectionery Corporation (a.k.a. Bibica) for one has shown a fourfold growth in two years making its stock and options ideal acquisitions for Winston's Maverick fund portfolio. *(The phone rings.)* I'll call them back—did you copy the chapters I marked in that *Vietnamese for Dummies* book?

FRANCESCA. Bess Rosen's office.

BESS. *(Proofing her work over her shoulder:)* Pro forma. Not performa.

FRANCESCA. Yeah. Yeah. Okay

(Hanging up the phone.)

BESS. There. Two words. So copies, yes?

FRANCESCA. Yeah.

(FRANCESCA searches for the right keys—punch punch punch.)

BESS. Good. So the cultural briefing's finished, and the stats on the tech stocks...let's see, Morris has got an hour before he leaves for Kennedy...okay—who was it?

(FRANCESCA looks up at her blankly.)

On the phone?

FRANCESCA. Oh. Ari.

(Punch punch punch punch. Enter MADELEINE wearing the poncho and carrying a bundle wrapped in a white cloth. She hangs back waiting to approach.)

BESS. Did he say something?

FRANCESCA. Oh. Yeah. He said that Mrs. Schactor, Mr. Schactor's wife she's like in labor so Mr. Schactor, he can't go to Ho Chi Minh City—

BESS. What!? What do you mean he can't—

FRANCESCA. Yeah. So Mr. Schactor said for Ari to go to the Ho Chi Minh and—

BESS. ...Ari? But—but I'm the one who did all the research. He's not going to know the first thing of how to deal with these people.

FRANCESCA. Yeah he said that um you should bring the profile stuff into his office and—

BESS. Great.

(Goes into her office.)

FRANCESCA. ...what was that word you said again?

(No response from BESS. FRANCESCA turns. MADELEINE is in front of her desk. She jumps.)

MADELEINE. Hi.

BESS. They wouldn't even be in Vietnam if it weren't for me.

(MADELEINE ducks behind the partition upon hearing BESS. FRANCESCA follows her with her eyes. Then turns around and looks at BESS. She turns back to MADELEINE. MADELEINE pops up again, whispering.)

MADELEINE. Um. She's really busy isn't she?

FRANCESCA. ...uh...

MADELEINE. You know I'm just going to go. You don't need to say I was here or anything.

(Enter BESS from her office.)

BESS. This is it, this is what they do. They get together for synagogue or to play basketball and they end up spending the whole weekend together talking business so when it comes down to Monday, it's like, "Bess Rosen—who's th—

(BESS sees MADELEINE ducking behind the desk. Caught MADELEINE straightens up and waves.)

MADELEINE. Hi.

BESS. H—Hi. Wow. This is so—what are you doing here?

MADELEINE. Look if you're busy—

BESS. No no. I'm so totally not busy. I'm—oh the poncho—it looks—

FRANCESCA. Ari said to be in his office in five—

BESS. I said I'm not—so, what are you doing here?

(Announcing to unseen co-workers.)

This is my sister. My sister. That's Moishe and Oren, they're analysts like me. Don't we look alike? And and you met my secretary. And this is my office. Oooh—come on you totally have to see the view, you can see all the way to—what's in the sheet?

MADELEINE. Um...

(BESS goes into her office. We hear her from offstage.)

BESS. So I'm going to put in an area rug here, you know something soft, a little color to work against the industrial—Maddie?

(Coming back out.)

Maddie come on you have to see...what? What is it? What's wrong?

MADELEINE. ...nothing's—it's not. Um. Look. I know...

(Whispering around FRANCESCA. FRANCESCA pretends to type, but is clearly eavesdropping.)

I know I've been...distant. That I haven't included you in stuff. And I was trying to be better, I was, I wasn't making it up when I met you at The Bakery or I went with you to the Spin—bike—thing, it was fun I had fun...I was even going to tell you, you know, about the—where I live and everything, I was, but then all this—this...stuff...started happening? You know? And I wanted to tell you about it, I did, but...I wasn't sure what I had to tell exactly—um...I think it's good...anyway... I'm probably just—let me—

(She takes out a perfectly formed challah, puts it on Francesca's desk.)

Um. Tada!

(BESS just stares.)

I made it. Me. It's a challah.

BESS. Oh. A challah...I don't...you're making a challah. Um...

MADELEINE. God it's. it's so funny talking about it out loud. I...it started a few weeks ago. Um. I was wrapping this present with the dining section of the Times, and I just happened to look down and...all I can tell you Bess is the second I picked up a bowl, the second I poured something in it, my blood...um...I mean—I felt it moving inside my body. I felt my heart beat. And I know I know it was all happening before but I'm telling you it literally...it was like something finally started again.—do you, do you know what I mean?

BESS. Yes. Yes totally...so you're making challahs.

MADELEINE. ...what?

BESS. I mean, I mean—that's what you're going to do. You're going to make—

MADELEINE. No. It's not about—you know what? Forget it.

(She takes the challah and begins to leave. BESS grabs her hands. Under the following a tug of war begins with the challah. FRANCESCA follows it with her eyes.)

BESS. Wait. What did I say? I think it's great you made a challah. You don't have to turn it into a job.

MADELEINE. This is stupid. It was stupid to come talk to you. Forget it.

BESS. Maddie stop—you always have this right answer and I don't know how it is I'm supposed to—what do you want me to say?

(BESS wins the tug of war. She sets the bread on Francesca's counter. MADELEINE storms off. BESS follows her.)

MADELEINE. Nothing. I don't know.

BESS. Well then how can you expect me to know. I thought that's what you were telling me. You said you had all these projects and the personal assistant thing was made up so I just thought—

MADELEINE. I wanted to eat it okay?

(FRANCESCA takes a bite. Her eyes bug out. She begins to gorge herself furiously. Neither MADELEINE nor BESS are aware of her actions.)

BESS. We can eat it. I can get a knife. I can get some preserves. If you just give me forty-five minutes, an hour—

MADELEINE. I wanted to celebrate. I wanted to go get some wine and wait until the sun sets and I don't know say the blessing and maybe get some tofu brisket or something

BESS. We could do that. I mean, I would rather have chicken but you know we—we could get both. Why don't you just take a seat—

MADELEINE. No. Forget it. It's ruined. It's stupid.

BESS. No it's not. It's not. I'm just going to have Francesca call down to the cafeteria and get a knife—Maddie stay right there. Do not go anywhere, okay? This will take all of five, three—

(FRANCESCA's eyes widen as BESS approaches. She tries to furiously rearrange the scraps so it looks like she hasn't eaten so much. At the same time, she keeps stuffing her face, trying desperately to eat as much as possible.)

Call Irma ask her to send up a couple of plates a knife—Where's Maddie's bread?

FRANCESCA. *(With mouth full:)* Huh?

BESS. Did you eat—you ate ALL of it? You ate a LOAF? How is that even poss—

FRANCESCA. No.

BESS. —ible. There are crumbs all over your mouth.

MADELEINE. *(Racing back:)* You ate my challah?

FRANCESCA. No!

MADELEINE. You ate my challah.

(FRANCESCA hangs her head in shame. MADELEINE looks at her nervously.)

Are you—I mean—well, you look okay...wait. You...you liked it. Oh my God you...tell me. Please. I have to know. What is it? What do you taste?

FRANCESCA. I—I want it...

(A look of recognition passes between the two of them. BESS sees it.)

BESS. Okay. Time to get back to work. Now.

MADELEINE. —shhh—just let her finish—

BESS. No. The only thing she needs to finish is prepping this packet so Ari can make his stupid flight to stupid Ho Chi Minh—

MADELEINE. —but

(BESS speaks and dials the phone simultaneously. MADELEINE retreats realizing she has lost her window. FRANCESCA looks from MADELEINE to BESS and back again, not knowing what to do.)

BESS. Call Ari. Tell him I'll be there in ten and that he should give me one hour uninterrupted—very important—we've got a lot of territory to cover. Meanwhile email me back this report, I'll finish it but first, call the florist, I want a bouquet going to Morris and Aviva, I think they're at Beth Israel, you should check that—hi—this is Francesca in Bess Rosen's office at Winston Global Funds—

(BESS hands FRANCESCA the phone. She stumbles.)

FRANCESCA. —hi. Um. Yeah. She needs some flowers...

BESS. —orchids, she likes orchids—

FRANCESCA. —some orchids—

(FRANCESCA throws down the receiver and stands.)

Can I have the recipe? Can I have it? Can I have it!

(BESS stops, looks from FRANCESCA to MADELEINE. Black-out.)

(Lights up MADELEINE alone giggling. She giggles and giggles. Recovers. MADELEINE walks into her cooking space. She goes to the bowl, lifts off the cloth. The glow. As MADELEINE begins stirring, her imagination takes off. The CHORUS sings joyously.)

CHORUS.

And Madeleine lift up her heart
 Her mouth filled with laughter, her tongue with glad song.
 The light of the Lord shined down
 Glorified, exulted, and lightened was she—yea the Lord is in her
 inmost parts!
 It envelopeth her like rays from the sun.
 It worketh its way through her blood
 Her hands moved she knew not how
 And the skin of her face put forth beams
 Holy holy holy are the works of Madeleine. Blessed is the bread of
 Madeleine, blessed is the Lord who is blessed for all eternity.

(The chorus begins walking forward procession-like on either side of MADELEINE. They carry dishes, crossing each other in the front, laying them out on a long table. The last CHORUS MEMBER carries a scroll that resembles a torah.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Halavah sweetened with pumpkin

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Fried Haman's ear with confectionery sugar

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Teighlach simmered in honey of date

CHORUS MEMBER #4. Rugelach with almonds, hazelnuts, and with quince

CHORUS MEMBER #5. Maccaroons rolled in toasted fresh coconut

CHORUS MEMBER #6. Ginger cake with powder of crystallized ginger

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Nut filled filo triangles in syrup of fig

CHORUS. Mondelbrat and orange cake and bubeleh and ba-clawa—

(Whoosh! The CHORUS unspools the scroll, which is actually a bright blue banner, with red letters saying MADDIE's on it. MADELEINE spins around in wonder, taking it all in. We are now at the Union Square Market. The CHORUS becomes customers. PER is an NYU freshman with dreadlocks, pierced nose and eyebrow. He listens to his iPod and carries a skateboard. Throughout the entire scene he stuffs his face, as if he hasn't eaten in weeks.)

PER. Mmmmm!

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Miss, can you tell me what's in here? This spice. It's so unusual but so familiar.

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Yes. I'd like to sample this.

PER. Mmm Mmmmmmm.

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Something I had a long time ago. Or yesterday maybe. It is organic isn't it?

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Hello, Miss, Miss! This is your stall?

MADELEINE. Yes sorry there was something you wanted to sample—

CHORUS MEMBER #7. *Zer gut! Vunderbar!*

MADELEINE. Oh. Thank you. Um—you were talking to me, weren't you? I know some Yiddish.

CHORUS MEMBER #6. Are you always on this side of the Square? I've never seen you here before. You need to come out from behind those traffic signs!

MADELEINE. Oh. Um. This is kind of like my first day actually. *(Confiding:)* I'm not even really sure if it's legal for me—

PER. But Saturday you're here, right? And Monday, Monday's good too—

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Sweetheart. Excuse me. Can you—I can't read your sign. My glasses—

MADELEINE. Oh this one—um this is actually very interesting. You see, it's modeled after an ancient flatbread, and traditionally

it's cooked between two bricks made of camel dung roasted over a fire overnight and the Bedoins they used to—

(Collective pause.)

Um—I—well off course I did some substituting. Uh—that mounted policeman over there was kind enough—

(Laughs all around.)

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Oh she's a comedian too.

PER. You got lunch stuff, like sandwiches and stuff?

CHORUS MEMBER #6. How about an ordering form. Do you have an ordering form? Or a website?

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Would you do a bar-mitzah?

MADELEINE. Okay everyone. Hold on! One question at a time.

(An ancient Jewish man emerges from the crowd. He walks very tentatively with a cane and wears a well-worn suit with ritual fringes hanging out of the jacket and a kippah. When he speaks it is with a thick Eastern European accent.)

Yes. Can I help you?

(The man bends down on his cane shaking looking at the food.)

Teiglach. Would you like to try some? Here. Let me—

(MADELEINE brings it to him on a napkin. He tries to reach for it, but does not have the strength.)

Um...

(She tentatively lifts it to his mouth and feeds him. He chews. She smiles. Suddenly food begins dribbling out of his mouth onto her hands. The old man gurgles and begins to choke.)

Oh my God! Oh my—! Wait wait let me just get you—

(She grabs a napkin and goes to wipe his mouth.)

Here Here. Everything's going to be just fine. Do you need me to get you a doctor—

MR. IEFSHAHR. Blood.

MADELEINE. ...I'm sorry...?

MR. IEFSHAHR. There is blood in that. You dare to feed me blood!

MADELEINE. No. It's not—

MR. IEFSHAHR. It is monstrous. *K'hillul Hashem*. You do this—you spit on all that is holy!

MADELEINE. It was a mistake. I'll fix it////please please please don't be mad at me—

MR. IEFSHAHR. Who are you *Miriam Aliza bat David*, your father a *t'zaddik*, a pillar of the community—

MADELEINE. Wait wait how do you know that? How do you know my name?

MR. IEFSHAHR. I saw you. Mocking me during the *Amidah*. Whispering and giggling during the Rabbi's sermons. You are a silly little girl. You are nothing. You will become nothing.

MADELEINE. Mr. Iefshahr...? But but—you're dead. My mom, she sent me your obituary—

(He comes at her, holding out the napkin stained with her food. It has turned red with blood.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Choose your lot *Miriam Aliza bat David*. Atone, and you will be spared. Persist and cursed will be the days of all your life. *Hashem* will appoint Terror over you and you shall flee for I, in the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, will come after you. Your blood will be upon you. Your blood will be upon you!

(MADELEINE turns to run, she smacks directly into BESS.)

MADELEINE. Aaah! Jesus—God—Oh my God. Bess!

BESS. What, what is it?

(MADELEINE looks back at the crowd. If MR. IEFSHAHR is there, he has been swallowed by them.)

Maddie...Maddie! Cut it out. Stop it. You're scaring me

MADELEINE. Did you see him? He was—he was—he was after me! He was gonna put my face in it!

BESS. Jesus. You forgot to eat didn't you. You know how you get when you don't eat. I'm buying you a bagel.

MADELEINE. I'm not—I ate fine I had a whole Frozefruit just—wait. Wait. What are you doing here?

FRANCESCA. Hi Maddie!

(And she's off, skipping her way to the front of the table.)

BESS. You told her to come here in the middle of the work day—

MADELEINE. No of course not.

BESS. —when I've been working nights and weekends just to try to—do you have any idea what I'm up against at Winston?

MADELEINE. Bess I didn't even know I was coming here. I was just cooking and cooking and I stepped outside just to stretch just to take a break and all of a sudden I was walking...I—I didn't even know where I was going...when I started getting closer? That's when I heard them.

CHORUS MEMBER #1. I'll take three of the halavah, four of the baklavah, five slices of this orange cake—

PER. Hey you need like a prodigy? 'Cause I'd work for grub.

FRANCESCA. You guys don't know nothin'. I've had her challah!

CHORUS. Ohhhhhhh!

(All questions and energy now goes towards FRANCESCA. BESS remains apart trying to piece together the backstory. No one pays any attention to her.)

BESS. She—she wouldn't sit still. All morning. Kept asking me if I wanted her to go get coffee. I have an espresso machine in my office. She makes my espresso in my office every morning. I'm like, no Francesca, I have coffee. Remember?

FRANCESCA. So then I bite into it, right? And you know when you sit on your knees or somethin' and you get up and your foot's dead, it doesn't have nothin' to do with you? Well my whole frickin life was that! I didn't know it or nothin' but everythin' was wakin'.

CHORUS. Ooooooooooh!

BESS. So then she said she's going to the bathroom. I'm waiting, I'm waiting, I look out my window and...there she is. Francesca. Making a break for it across Park. She's not even in the crosswalk. She's like dashing through traffic, stopping cars as if she's in some sort of Jason Bourne movie so—

CHORUS MEMBER #7. My father, he sold the mandelbrat.

MADELEINE. Oh.

BESS. I mean what was I going to do? I just—so I trailed her for twenty blocks—

CHORUS MEMBER #7. From a pushcart. On Delancy street. You know this?

MADELEINE. They have one at the Tenement Museum. I saw it.

CHORUS MEMBER #7. *(He kisses her hand.)* You—you make me remember.

(MADELEINE puts her hand over his. BESS takes it in, begins to look around. The crowd swarms.)

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Miss I'd like to order one of your challahs.

CHORUS MEMBER #1. I'd like to start an account for your challahs. Just charge me one a week until I tell you not to. You got that?

(MADELEINE begins working again.)

BESS. Wait. This is yours? This is—you made this?

(MADELEINE smiles. Blackout.)

(Lights slowly up. MADELEINE and BESS entering Madeleine's apartment, carrying Madeleine's supplies, and unsold goods.)

MADELEINE. Oh my—did you see all those tents? There were like a hundred. And all the farmers and bakers from all over the place. Maybe I should hire him, you know, that kid, the one with the dreads, the one that was eating everything. I mean, it was really busy. Besides I'd like to see what other stuff people had, go talk to them, get a feel for the—do you think people are out there in the winter? I guess I need one of those heaters, or sell coffee. Or drink

coffee. Oh my God they paid me. They gave me dollar bills and twenties and I needed to make change. I'm going to go count it.

(MADELEINE begins counting.)

BESS. ...where did you learn how to make all that Jewish stuff?

MADELEINE. \$50, \$70, \$75—

BESS. I mean, you told me about the challah. But that was only like three days ago. And God knows Mom never...did you take some kind of an intensive or—?

MADELEINE. I have \$300!

(She returns to counting.)

BESS. Yeah. So bake, you're going to bake...okay. Who do we know who... Ravi's sister has that celebrity bakery downtown...maybe we could get you a job apprenticing or... Ravi says she's a psycho though. Course Ravi's a psycho so who really... you're not catering. They'll make you waitress to like move up the ranks and then you never know who you might be serving, it could be totally embarrass...Jesus. What are the good jobs in the food industry? ...I need paper do you have paper?

(BESS begins going through Madeleine's kitchen.)

MADELEINE. Hey. What are you doing?

BESS. Looking for paper. Listen I know you get all bent out of shape about this kind of thing but can I please hire you a cleaning woman? There's a lot of gunk forming around the edges of your cab—

MADELEINE. Can you not go through my stuff?

BESS. I'm just looking for some—oh I bet there's some in the trunk

(MADELEINE continually tries to block her path.)

MADELEINE. No there's not—Bess. Just. We were just talking here. Can't we just sit and just have a good time and not think about anything right—

BESS. No. We are coming up with a list. Now.

(MADELEINE *thrusts a phone book at her.*)

MADELEINE. Here.

BESS. Why are you handing me a phone book?

MADELEINE. There's paper. There's that note section in the back

(*Beat. BESS takes the phone book.*)

BESS. ...okay. We are going to sit down and make a list of all of your options. Union Square, it's great, it's a great part-time, lunch-money type of gig. But you need to think about the big picture here. You've got your cost of living, and then if you do do this, there's your overhead—that's your man hours, equipment costs, transportation—

MADELEINE. Wait—I don't even know if I'm going to do this. I haven't made any decisions yet.

BESS. Well that's why we're going to give you options. Oooh. A live-in chef. To like a star or a CEO or something You'd get a whole new living situation with maid service oh this is brilliant.

(*Taking a bite of one of the pastries.*)

Mmm. What'd you put in here?

(MADELEINE *grabs it away from her.*)

MADELEINE. No.

BESS. Maddie. Come on. I was eating that. I didn't even have breakfast.

(MADELEINE *starts throwing the leftovers away. All of them.*)

Wait. What are you doing?

(*She gets up, goes over, tries to stop her.*)

Stop. I was going to—these were going to be for the office, They were going to be samples—

(MADELEINE *starts throwing the pots away and the knives.*)

Stop it. Stop it Don't do this. Please don't do this. Maddie I'm sorry I didn't mean to—whatever I said I take it back—

MADELEINE. (*Delivered to an unseen MR. IEFSHAHR.:*) You want me to choose? Well I choose to be left alone. Are you happy?

BESS. No I wasn't saying that was what you should—you're twisting everything around.

MADELEINE. So go away already! Leave me alone!

BESS. Stop it stop it stop it! Why do you always have to ruin everything? You do this. You you back out. You get all enthusiastic about whatever and then you break your ankle before your first audition or you lose your camera after someone paid you \$500 to—God would it kill you to follow through? Would it kill you? Answer me!

MADELEINE. I...I

BESS. This is about me, isn't it? You're still punishing me. God is there nothing I can do to—I'm going to go.

MADELEINE. Bess. I'm not—it's not—listen. Listen This really doesn't have anything to do with you. I prom—

BESS. Of course not. Why would it have anything to do with me?

MADELEINE. Will you—Listen. Listen to me. Just stop for a second, okay?

(BESS stops.)

Look. I don't know how to tell you...oh my...what I did to get the batter Bess...I—look, if I keep doing this, something really bad is going to happen.

BESS. Maddie it's not...look. I know you're scared, okay? But whatever you did, you did it. It's inside of you, it's not going to go anywhere. I'll do whatever. Please. Let me help you. Let me—let me fix it. Please.

MADELEINE. ...okay.

BESS. Okay?

(MADELEINE nods almost imperceptibly.)

Oh my God yeah!

(BESS throws her arms around her.)

Oh this is going to be so great. Okay. So I've already thought about the first thing we could do. Forget all the other stuff I was talking about. We'll keep it simple. My fund manager, Morris Schactor, he's having this—this thing, this get together no big deal—

(MADELEINE suddenly grabs BESS and hugs her to her tightly. We see her stricken face.)

Oh.

(BESS hugs her back awkwardly. Hold. Then BESS steps away.)

Um...anyway um—I overheard Morris saying how there were no good caterers anymore, and and I was thinking, with what you do this might be the perfect...

(Slow fade to black.)

(In the dark, a long long long pregnant pause. Then the sudden loud sound of a particularly foreboding doorbell. MADELEINE and BESS appear in spot in the doorway of Morris and Aviva Schactor's Upper East Side brownstone. MADELEINE is in the exact same spot and position as in the last scene, bug eyed. BESS is dressed up and clearly nervous.)

MADELEINE. ...I really don't think this is a good idea.

BESS. You said that. Just remember to breathe.

MADELEINE. But I really think we should go. I think we should go right now. They're obviously not home anyway—

BESS. Oh they're home.

MADELEINE. Maybe they went away. Maybe they had an emergency. Maybe there was a big fire and they all had to evac—

BESS. Shhh. They're coming. It'll be fine.

MADELEINE. This is the last time I'm doing this. Do you hear me? The last time I ever—

(Boom. Lights up to full. We are inside the house. Morris and Aviva's house buzzes with the energy of an extended family gathering. AVIVA, with baby ELISHA in her arms, BUBBE HANNAH

and BUBBE CHAYA stand in the foreground. UNCLE ITZY and MORRIS cross hurriedly.)

BESS. Hello! *L'shanah tovah.* I'm Bess. This is my sister Madeleine—

BUBBE HANNAH. Why is that *goyisha-kupp* wishing you a happy new year?

BUBBE CHAYA. The caterer is a *goyisha—kupp?*

BESS. I mean I mean, hah, *mazel tov.* What am I thinking. All the excitement. Oh you must be Aviva. Bess, Bess Rosen. You have such a lovely—huh! This must be Elisha! Oh—he looks just like his—there he is, the man of the hour—Morris. Hello. I can't tell you what a privilege it is to share this wonderful event with you.

BUBBE CHAYA. That must be the pushy one. From work.

(Again, that really really loud doorbell.)

MORRIS. I'll get it.

(MORRIS goes to exit. BESS immediately follows.)

BESS. Well this must be so exciting for you. Your first son!

(Exit MORRIS and BESS.)

AVIVA. I'm sorry. You must be Madeleine. Aviva Schactor. We're so happy to have you here for this occasion. Let me show you the kitchen.

(Light change. We are now in the kitchen.)

You can use this side. This refrigerator. There's plates up in here and I've laid out our silver—

MADELEINE. You're wearing a wig.

AVIVA. Oh. Well it's a fall actually.

MORRIS. *(From offstage:)* Viva! Yakov's here!

AVIVA. Coming!

(To MADELEINE:)

Ahhh! I'm so nervous. Daughters, they don't prepare you, do they? I know it's the law but it all seems so pagan right now—I hope I don't faint!

MORRIS. *(From offstage:)* Aviva!!!!

AVIVA. Coming!!!! Just bring everything out when you're ready sweetheart.

(Going out, then from offstage.)

Rabbi. Shalom.

RABBI BAER *(Offstage:)* Shalom. This is our *mohel* Mr.—

(MADELEINE knocks over a serving tray with a crash boom bang. The entirety of the situation hits her. She cups her hands over her mouth. Enter BESS.)

BESS. Okay. Looks like everything's in order. Let's slice these in half. And we need to see if there's any more serving trays. God she's got a lot of cabinets.

MADELEINE. You—you told me this was a coffee.

BESS. What are you talking about? It is a coffee.

MADELEINE. *(Raising her voice:)* Do you think I'm some kind of an idiot—

BESS. Shhh. Okay okay...so it's a coffee with a ceremonial cutting of the foreskin thrown—

MADELEINE. Are you out of your mind?! They—they keep kosher!

BESS. Listen to me. Calm down, okay? I thought about this, I really did. Everything you made is completely dairy. And you've been a vegetarian for the last five years, so it's not like your oven has ever—

(MADELEINE starts frantically packing everything up.)

Don't you dare—

MADELEINE. You have no idea the kind of things you're playing around with!

BESS. (*BESS calmly puts her hand down to stop her:*) No. You listen to me now, okay? I have been trying to get that man in there alone ever since I started at Winston. But everywhere I turn he's surrounded by this A-list Yeshiva boy's club. They do everything together. They're like—like a frat house or—it doesn't even matter that I'm Jewish, I'm just not one of them. But I'm the only one here, right, and that is key because he is going to move. All the financial trades are predicting it, and whatever new fund it is he's going to start up next, I'm going to be in place to run it—no one is going to take that away from me.

(Strains of Hebrew begin from outside.)

Now. We're going out there, okay and it's all going to be okay. I promise. This is the best thing for you. Really. Sometimes you need to be pushed.

(BESS pushes her out into the living room and immediately the lights change, up on the whole stage. The bris. Hebrew chanting. Very otherworldly. There are two chairs. In one of them sits MORRIS holding ELISHA in a bundle. The other is empty. The MOHEL stands next to MORRIS in shadow, with the rest of those gathered in a semicircle around them.)

MOHEL (MR. IEFSHAHR). *Baruch Hashem elokanu melech haolam, asher kidshanu bimetzvotav, vitzevanu al hamelah.*

(MORRIS hands the baby to the MOHEL. Just as he takes it, he looks up. MADELEINE sees his face—he is MR. IEFSHAHR.)

MADELEINE. No!

(Slow motion. MADELEINE enters and tries to wrestle the baby away from MR. IEFSHAHR. There is a tug of war. MADELEINE grabs the baby back but the force sends it flying through the air. It lands with a splat and bursts open. This time it is not the baby or the bread, but a bloody mess—the placenta, the afterbirth. All recoil then look at MADELEINE. MR. IEFSHAHR points.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Your blood will be upon you!

(MADELEINE looks down. Her hands are covered in blood. The crowd comes for her, surrounding her, all anger and fists and nails.

MADELEINE *screams covering herself. The sound of a collapse. Black out.*)

(Lights bump up immediately. All those assembled are in same pose [except MR. IEFSHAHR who is gone] with MADELEINE on the floor in a dead faint. The guests are trying to revive her. BESS sits off to the side, white-faced, her hand over her mouth.)

UNCLE ITZY. Where's the Rabbi with the ice? Rabbi!

AVIVA. Uch it's my fault. I said something about fainting. I put it into her head!

MORRIS. Aviva. Shah! You're not helping. Watch the baby.

UNCLE ITZY. MADELEINE! MADELEINE! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

BUBBE HANNAH. It's a coronary.

UNCLE ITZY. What are you talking about a coronary—if it were a coronary she'd be blue.

MORRIS. Okay. Let's move her to the couch

AVIVA. You can't move her to the couch. She could have a spinal cord injury.

MORRIS. She doesn't have a spinal cord injury. Ready. One two three.

(They hoist her so she is upright in one of the chairs.)

BUBBE HANNAH. Now she'll have a spinal cord injury.

BUBBE CHAYA. That's what happened to Hershel Simkavitz. His family carried him to the toilet? Snapped him in two.

BUBBE HANNAH. Ach, you're farmisht. Hershel slipped in the tub. Drowned in his own blood.

BESS. ...no...

MORRIS. Okay let's call an ambulance.

BESS. No no—you're not taking her!

(Beat as everyone takes in the intensity of her response.)

MADELEINE. ...Uh!

(Breaking out of shock, BESS is immediately at Madeleine's side.)

BESS. Maddie!

MORRIS. Madeleine I'm Morris Schactor. You're at my son's bris. Do you remember?

AVIVA. You fainted, hit your head

(RABBI BAER enters. We see now he's a handsome man in his early forties.)

RABBI BAER. I have the ice!

AVIVA. Here's some ice dear

(AVIVA takes the ice, puts it to MADELEINE's head.)

RABBI BAER. She is alright then?

MADELEINE. Ow!

BESS. You're okay you're okay you're okay you're okay.

AVIVA. Shhh. Just to stop the swelling. You gave us quite a scare sweetheart.

BUBBE CHAYA. Her eyes rolled back like in an old horror picture. A Vincent Price picture.

MORRIS. Well hopefully she didn't scare the *moyl* too badly. Give me the baby.

MADELEINE. No! No—don't—

(ELISHA begins crying.)

BESS. ...Maddie...it's okay. it's okay. I'm right here. I'm not going to go anywhere.

(BESS puts her hand on Madeleine's. MADELEINE pulls her hand away, turns in her chair. Awkward pause as everyone in the crowd looks down or away.)

BUBBE HANNAH. *(Clicking her tongue, then under her breath:)* ...did you see that?

RABBI BAER. Em. Everyone. Why don't we move this way, yes? Come. We still have a little boy to name.

(The assembled move upstage with their backs to the audience. They begin the naming ceremony, and continue underneath.)

BESS. ...do you want some water?

(MADELEINE doesn't answer.)

Maybe you want some food? I could get you something. It doesn't have to be some of your...I mean, I could just go into the refrigerator and and...honey I'm sorry...I'm so so sorry. I just thought—please tell me you know how much I love you and how I would never—

MADELEINE. I'm not the one who ruins things. You are.

BESS. ...Morris! Morris! I'm so sorry. We have to go!

(Those attending the ceremony turn around to shush her. BESS meekly joins them, turning around to look at MADELEINE every once in a while. MADELEINE is left alone in the foreground. She looks at her hands. No blood. She looks around. No MR. IEF-SHAHR. She collapses, cradling her head. Then behind her, she hears the unmistakable chewing sounds. The ceremony has ended and now all eat her food. MADELEINE runs into the crowd trying to stop them.)

BUBBE HANNAH. Did you try this teiglach?

MADELEINE. No—no—you don't want to have that—

BUBBE CHAYA. The best teiglach I've ever tasted dear.

UNCLE ITZY. You're a good girl—

RABBI BAER. I thought perhaps you would like some—

(MADELEINE turns to get away and smacks directly into RABBI BAER, who is carrying a glass of water, which spills all over him.)

MADELEINE. Oh my—I'm so—your suit!

RABBI BAER. No—it is alright—

MADELEINE. Here—here let me—I

(She takes a napkin, begin to clean him up. They are very close. Their eyes lock.)

RABBI BAER. ...I am sorry. I should—Yakov Baer—

MADELEINE. Oh. Madeleine. Madeleine—

RABBI BAER. Em I should say Rabbi Yakov Baer.

MADELEINE. Oh...

(Beat. MADELEINE backs away.)

AVIVA. Honey! Bess said you were worried we wouldn't like what you made. Oh you shouldn't! Everything is just delightful! We've never tasted anything like it.

MORRIS. And the baby's penis is fine.

AVIVA. Morris!!!!

MADELEINE. Oh good that's really—

(She backs away and again turns to find RABBI BAER.)

RABBI BAER. Em—I wanted to ask you, this pastry. What did you do to it?

MADELEINE. ...please...

RABBI BAER. *Jihnun.* It is jihnun. Em...you cook it in a pot of fat—

MADELEINE. No!!!!!!

RABBI BAER. Oh. Perhaps you use butter in this country. It is Yemenese originally. The dough not the inside. That—that is something else. Em.

(He takes a bite, closes his eyes. Then laughs.)

It is labne, isn't it? The cheese. You—you strain the yogurt through a cl—

MADELEINE. —cheesecloth. Yes. That's right that's—how did you—

(The RABBI has taken another bite. He is enraptured.)

What—what is it—what do you taste?

RABBI BAER. I don't believe it. It is quatre epice. The four spices. Eh—ginger, cardamom, cinnamon—

MADELEINE. It has a name? I made something with a name?

RABBI BAER. Impossible. It is like being back in my mother's kitchen after so many—you are not Yemenese or from Yisrael like myself—

MADELEINE. I'm from southern California.

RABBI BAER. You are American. I don't understand. How did you—how did you know to make this?

MADELEINE. I—I—I think I remembered it...

(Again, their eyes lock. They stare, looking at each other. After a moment, MORRIS yells from the doorway.)

MORRIS. Rabbi—the *moyl* has come back!

(MADELEINE nearly falls over. She runs to the opposite side of the room.)

RABBI BAER. Oh excuse me I must have a word with—wait. I wanted to tell you something—

MADELEINE. Please just let me go.

BUBBE CHAYA. Why is she going to the laundry room?

RABBI BAER. *(Yelling right before MADELEINE goes offstage:)* —it's a covenant!

MADELEINE. *(Slowly reappearing:)* ...what did you say?

RABBI BAER. *(He walks over:)* I was saying—I think you fainted Ms.—

MADELEINE. ...sorry—Rosen—

RABBI BAER. Ms. Rosen...because at the ceremony, you saw Elisha's flesh being cut. You saw perhaps a little blood, the crying, the pain. But we, Elisha's parents, his family, myself—what we see is a little boy entering the kingdom of God. And for this, the sacred covenant, we are only joyous. Not fearful, not pained. Joy. If you

remember this, Ms. Rosen, the larger meaning in the act, I promise, next time you will not faint. Shalom.

MADELEINE. Shal...

(He walks away. She stands for a moment, immersed in thought. Then she goes after him. The family is slowly gathering at the door, in a semicircle upstage—obscuring someone. BESS approaches.)

BESS. Um—I called us a car. I tried to get the food away from them I did but—

(MADELEINE catches the RABBI just before he gets to the door.)

MADELEINE. ...Rabbi Baer?

RABBI BAER. Yes

MADELEINE. Um...

(She leads him downstage.)

MADELEINE. Um, I know this is...this is sort of...um...

RABBI BAER. No—I was thinking this too. I am glad you approached me. I am...eh—somewhat shy in these matters...

MADELEINE. What?

RABBI BAER. Oh. Forgive me—I—

(He laughs nervously.)

Yes?

MADELEINE. Um...I would like—can you say a blessing for me. I mean, here.

(Looking over her shoulder.)

Quickly.

RABBI BAER. Oh...—surely—what is your Hebrew name then, Ms. Rosen?

MADELEINE. Miriam. Miriam Aliza.

RABBI BAER. Yes 'Miriam'. Sister of Moshe.

(He puts his hands on her head, says the blessing in Hebrew, then in English.)

Yivor-a-hech elohim, Miriam Aliza, ad me-ah v'esrim.

May God bless you Miriam Aliza with much joy and many years. Amen... Em perhaps you would like to join me at our schul some time. For services.

MADELEINE. Sorry—um—can you bless my hands. Too.

RABBI BAER. Oh...it is not really our practice to bless the hands unless—

MADELEINE. Please.

(He pauses, looks at her, then tentatively lays his hands on hers and speaks the following in Hebrew then in English. Those gathered start to turn their attention from whatever is upstage towards MADELEINE and the RABBI.)

RABBI BAER. *Yivorech elohim ma'aseh yadayich.*

May God bless the work of your hands.

MADELEINE. And my blood.

(A hush falls over the room. RABBI BAER removes his hands from hers as if struck.)

RABBI BAER. No—I don't think—

MADELEINE. *(Taking his hands back:)* Bless for me my blood.

RABBI BAER. *Bar—...baruch Hashem elokanu boray dam etzem ha'hayim.*

(Fade out on RABBI BAER. The family becomes the CHORUS. They begin repeating the series of Hebrew blessings. MADELEINE walks forward into her kitchen. The CHORUS gathers around as she goes to her bowl. She washes her hands. Rolls up her sleeves. Pours oil over her hands, anoints her head with oil. The chanting grows in intensity. MADELEINE takes a knife. She raises it up, brings it down—and slits her wrist. The CHORUS abruptly stops. MADELEINE plunges her bleeding hand into the bowl with the batter. She looks up.)

MADELEINE. Amen. Amen.

(Blackout.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Closed curtain. The CHORUS is assembled as in the beginning of Act I, books in hand. They sing madrigal-like.)

CHORUS. So it came to pass.

So it came to pass.

It came to pass.

So it came.

It came to pass.

It came to pass.

It came to pass.

(The curtain opens on barren stage. After their first line, the CHORUS disperses to reveal MADELEINE, healthy and radiant, as if the last scene had not happened. During the sequence, the CHORUS constructs the bakery, and dresses MADELEINE, moving the set pieces as they speak it. The feel should be celebratory and festive, a cross between a bar-mitzvah and those old Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney “let’s put on a show” movies.)

CHORUS. And she said:

MADELEINE. Let us make unto ourselves a space: thirty cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and twenty cubits and a half the breadth thereof. And westward shall be two large windows—a fine sunny exposure, a sweet savor unto the Lord. And the location therein shall be at 119 Avenue B, even at 7th Street. And it shall be unto the people a shrine of gastronomy, a beacon of Alphabet City.

CHORUS. And she said:

MADELEINE. Let in this space there be an outer room; fifteen cubits shall be the length thereof and twenty and one-half cubits shall be the breadth thereof. And upon the hinder part of the outer room shall be a display case of glass and of silver, wherewith to show our cakes. And affronting the case shall be four tables each of acacia-wood—two cubits by two cubits—and may the tables be adorned with cloths of the finest gingham and dried flowers and let the flowers hang even from the ceiling. And moreover upon the walls, let there be vintage signs and folksy wonders, a fine Vermont in the midst of the city.

CHORUS. And she said:

MADELEINE. Let there be a curtain dividing the outer room from the inner, the holy from the holy, the work of the weaver in colors. And the cloth shall be like that of the curtains of the windows, of fine twined rayon of blue and white chequer work. And let the hinder part be lined in plastic so as to be germ-resistant. And let this curtain be forever drawn so that all behind it be as sacred and as wonders.

CHORUS. And she said

MADELEINE. Behind the curtain eastward, let there be an inner room. And let there in this room be the instruments of the kitchen in all the service thereof. A bread kneader and a bread couche, a sheeter and a proofbox, stone-hearthed ovens, and even shall they be self-cleaning. And round about this room let there be chrome racks where shall be kept the dishes thereof, and the pans thereof, and the jars thereof, and the knives thereof, and the bowls thereof and let them be of the finest materials, of cast iron and aluminum, of Calphenon and Le Crueset, of Fagor and of Cuisenart.

CHORUS. And she said:

MADELEINE. In the hinder part of the inner room eastward, let there be an office separating the holy from that which is most holy.

(The CHORUS places a key around her neck. They bow their heads.)

And into this place shall only the chef go. None shall enter who hath not been purified. And it shall be a sweet savor unto the Lord, a memorial before him continually.

CHORUS. And she said:

MADELEINE. Finally, let us fashion for ourselves holy garments, for splendor and to keep clean. Let us clothe ourselves in a tunic of loose-knit cotton-blend and breeches of chequer work. And round about let us envelope ourselves in an apron of fine twined linen, of scarlet threads, and let this apron be embroidered with our name, Miriam's, above the heart. Let us for our feet choose sneakers of fine white canvas with ergonomically correct insoles and air-cushions for comfort. And we shall adorn ourselves with a spoon of silver and a rolling pin of gold.

(The CHORUS crowns MADELEINE with a chef's toque.)

CHORUS. And she said:

MADELEINE. This is a holy place, blessed be it!

(The CHORUS becomes MORRIS, AVIVA, FRANCESCA, and PER [in aprons], DAN and LILLIAN ROSEN, [Madeleine and Bess' parents], and RABBI BAER. We are at the opening of Madeleine's bakery Miriam's. All assembled are dressed up for the occasion. BESS looks somewhat shell-shocked. LILLIAN cries silently throughout.)

RABBI BAER. *(Sung in Hebrew then spoken in English:) Baruch Hashem elokanu melech ha-olam shehekianu vikimanu vihigianu la-azman hazeh.*

Blessed are you, oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, who grants us life and sustenance and has permitted us to reach this festive occasion.

ALL. Amen

RABBI BAER. Shalom and welcome on this happy happy day. I know we are all of us eager for the main event—the buffet table—but first, I apologize, I must have a few words. When Ms. Rosen asked me to come and bless this, her kosher bakery Miriam's for its opening, I was so happy. All of us here have eaten her breads and have been taken away, “transported.” A piece of teiglach perhaps and we are in our mother's kitchen; a bite of *jihnun* or of *bimuelos* and we return again to our homeland. How to bless something already so blessed. I offer you a story. There was a man. As a child he had come to Palestine from Shetlitz, Poland when a pogrom took his village. His father Mordechai, the town's rabbi, knew he was too frail to make this journey. He gave to his son then a parcel, his last most precious possession, something he had concealed from his attackers. “When you get to Palestine my son”, he told this man, “may you place this and remember not myself your father, not Shetlitz your home, but *Hashem K'Elkanu*, the Lord your God. Think of what is inside and you will know, as I have, the hidden love and wisdom in all things.” The son did as his father asked, treasuring this gift for seventy-one years. He then in turn passed it to his son.

(He reaches in his pocket, pulls out a small object in tissue paper. He unwraps it, holds it up.)

I can think of no better place for my grandfather's mezuzah than here.

(Gasps and murmurings from those assembled. MORRIS whistles.)

FRANCESCA. Whoah. That's deep.

RABBI BAER. Em, Ms. Rosen, each time you enter this door to make your bread, each time you touch this mezuzah, then kiss your fingers, remember as my grandfather Mordechai Baer said not only the story of its history, but its inner contents as well.

DAN. *(Loud whisper:)* I think he likes her.

LILLIAN. Shhh!

RABBI BAER. For em...within this metal casing, as you know, is written the *Sh'ma*, the Jewish declaration of faith. *Sh'ma yisrael adonai elohanu adonai echad*. Hear oh Israel the Lord is God, the Lord is One.

DAN. *(Bad whisper:)* I'm telling you Lil. He's nuts for her.

RABBI BAER. Em when you say these words em Ms. Rosen may you feel yourself a part of this eternal Jewish choir and may you always know the wisdom and hidden love em—

(The RABBI stumbles.)

...em—of of Go—

(POP! MORRIS has opened a bottle of champagne.)

MORRIS. Mazel tov Miriam!

(RABBI BAER and MADELEINE jump and turn quickly away from each other. Everyone else laughs then applauds.)

PER. Dang girl, you are flu—ushed.

FRANCESCA. *(Nudging MADELEINE, an aside:)* Hey. You didn't tell me your rabbi was a hottie!

(People step up to shake MADELEINE's hand, kiss her congratulations. BESS is repeatedly jostled as people make their way to MADELEINE. Cocktail mixing talk continues underneath.)

AVIVA. Ah Mrs. Rosen! You must be so proud.

LILLIAN. Oh you can't imagine. All you want is for your children to be happy. And when Bessy called to invite us, I just...to think after all that's happened, my eldest—

DAN. Hi Doll!

(He grabs MADELEINE in a bear hug, then pulls BESS in as well. Then, to MORRIS.)

Did you meet my two girls—these are my girls—my chef and my CFO!

BESS. Dad I'm not a CF—I didn't tell him that.

MORRIS. Oh I thought I was out of a job.

DAN. Hey let me tell you something Morris, you've got to watch your back with this one! She's my shark!

BESS. Dad! I can't believe you just—Mom!

LILLIAN. Dan don't antagonize Bessy in front of her boss.

DAN. Oh Lillian.

(To MADELEINE:)

So. When you going to franchise?

BESS. You know I happen to think it's great she has *one* store.

LILLIAN. Just as long as you're happy pumpkin. That's all your father and I care about.

BESS. Right. That's why it was totally okay when one of us got a 99 on a test. That's why Dad's favorite line was, "Where's the other point? Where's the other point?"

LILLIAN. Dan I think that maybe we should let the girls mingle with some of the other—

DAN. You girls love to pick on your Dad, don't you? All I'm saying is why have one when you can have ten. We need a Newport Beach branch. Honey—you don't want to have to FedEx us our brownies every day, do you? Of course we'd pay for them if you had to—

PER. 'Kay. Photo op. Everyone say teiglach

(They get into “happy family” formation. LILLIAN is next to MADELEINE.)

MADELEINE. Mom. Can you—will you please stop crying already.

LILLIAN. I’m sorry honey. It’s just so good to have family together. Five years without seeing your own daughter and you begin to think—

(She grabs MADELEINE meaningfully.)

You’re taking care of yourself, Madeleine—“Miriam”? Your father and I, we want to respect your independence, we do, but you have to know how much we worry.

(MADELEINE squirms. PER snaps the picture.)

PER. Fun times! An action shot.

MORRIS. Ok Rosens. Let’s eat!

(MORRIS escorts LILLIAN and DAN off to the spread.)

So which of you can I thank for my latest investment?

DAN. I’ll tell you Morris—she doesn’t get it from Lillian’s side.

LILLIAN. Dan!

(BESS and MADELEINE are left alone. MADELEINE gives her a look.)

BESS. I know. I know. It was a really bad idea. Anyway, um...congratulations honey.

(They hug, then break away.)

MADELEINE. So? So?

(Indicating the breadth of the bakery.)

BESS. Oh Maddie it’s—I mean I’m just so—um—what’s with this “Miriam” thing? It’s kind of um—a little—

MADELEINE. Do you like it? Tell me that you like it.

BESS. Oh it’s...it’s...perfect actually. Like a dream.

MADELEINE. I specifically wanted it to be cozy you know—

BESS. No, no it's definitely—there's something distinctly—

MADELEINE. I mean everything else around here is just hip—hipper than thou—and I just, you know, that's not me.

BESS. No you're right. This is yours, your own business, your very own um...

MADELEINE. Hey...thanks.

BESS. ...oh. you don't—it's okay you don't have to say—

MADELEINE. I don't—Bess come on, everything you've—introducing me to Morris, getting him to give me the financing, helping me with the real estate people and the community board—Jesus letting me hire Francesca, everything it's just so...I wanted you to know. You were right. I did need to be pushed...

BESS. Maddie—

MADELEINE. And—and—I want you to be really involved here you know. I mean I know you said you'd do the books and that's great, that's really—but I mean if you wanted to maybe bake sometime or maybe just I don't know be here with me—I mean I know what you do is so much more important—

BESS. —no it's—that would be great, I would love to. I would—Maddie. Please. I want to know—what you said at Morris and Aviva's—is that, is that really true? Am I the one who ruins things...?

(MADELEINE shifts uncomfortably. At that moment the RABBI comes over and interrupts.)

RABBI BAER. May I offer my congratulations.

MADELEINE. Oh. Rabbi. Hi hello. You remember my sister Bess.

RABBI BAER. How are you Ms.—

(He puts out his hand.)

BESS. You know what? Forget it

(She starts to walk away.)

MADELEINE. Bess! Wait. The rabbi was—

BESS. You know and I know we were in the middle of a conversation.

MADELEINE. So...that—that doesn't mean you can't just say hello—

RABBI BAER. Em. I could come back...

BESS. No. Don't bother. I wouldn't want to break up your little twosome.

(She leaves.)

RABBI BAER. Em...

MADELEINE. Wow—I'm so...I don't know why she's so...anyway, um. How are you?

RABBI BAER. ...I think I must go.

MADELEINE. Oh. Okay.

RABBI BAER. I have another affair—another occasion I must attend to. So...

MADELEINE. Oh. That's—that's too bad. Um...did you even get to the buffet? Because I made *jihnun*, I don't know if you saw it—

RABBI BAER. Yes—it looked lovely. Excuse me then.

(He goes to go.)

MADELEINE. Oh...wait—wait—Rabbi. I wanted to tell you...your gift—

RABBI BAER. It is nothing.

MADELEINE. No. It's not nothing. No one—no one has ever given me something like that.

RABBI BAER. He asked me to place it somewhere special. I thought it was a good idea at the time.

MADELEINE. It was, it is—I—I will treasure it. I promise.

(Their eyes meet. Beat. They look down, then begin speaking awkwardly at the same time.)

I—

RABBI BAER. Em—

MADELEINE. Oh—no—you. Please.

RABBI BAER. Oh...em I was just wondering—you have not come to schul—except for that one time. I looked for you after the service but you had gone.

MADELEINE. Oh. I'm just um—not a big synagogue person actually. Um. You know. I should probably go see about Bess—

RABBI BAER. Yes. Certainly. I as well should—em. Was there something about the service perhaps?

MADELEINE. No no. You were great It wasn't—it's not like it was anything in particular. I just—I don't know—it's probably my—

RABBI BAER. You did not like your experience as a child perhaps.

MADELEINE. Wha...why would you say that?

RABBI BAER. You may start anew.

(A look. Then FRANCESCA bursts right through them.)

FRANCESCA. Come on youse guys!

PER. Race 'ya.

(And they're off. The two watch them go.)

MADELEINE. “Come on?” What's she talking about come on. Shit. Oooh. Sorry sorry. I'm just—I'm not supposed to give a speech am—Bessy, Bessy come here. Am I supposed to give a speech?

BESS. What?

AVIVA. Come on! Time to open the doors. Morris!!!!!!

MADELEINE. Aaahh! Oh my God—the doors. Bess, you have to come do this with me. Hold my hand. Don't let go of me I swear—

(BESS reaches out her hand just as DAN and LILLIAN sweep by engulfing MADELEINE.)

BESS. Maddie wait I—

LILLIAN. Oh sweetie I want to be right by your side while you do this.

DAN. C'mon Maddie-girl. Let's go get 'em.

(MADELEINE is engulfed by her parents. They walk all the way stage right. Everyone else is behind, in a group, as if following MADELEINE. MADELEINE opens the doors. A big creaking noise. BESS peaks her head out, behind everyone in the shadows. The light begins to flow in. All look out with varied expressions at a new land, a new time, a new day.)

(Then, after a few moments, CHORUS MEMBER #1 steps forward.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. So it came to pass.

(The bakery begins operations. MADELEINE, PER, and FRANCESCA begin working. The CHORUS files around the door and enters the bakery, placing their orders. PER tosses bags to FRANCESCA who in turn gives them to MADELEINE. MADELEINE gives them to each customer, shakes their hand, touches their shoulder. She is in her element.)

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Chally bread braided with sesame seeds!

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Pumpernickle sliced as thick as you can get it!

CHORUS MEMBER #6. Madeleine rent wide her heart and each morning her bounty overfloweth, her shelves spilloth over.

CHORUS MEMBER #7. And the smells were as a mountain of spices, of—

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Kindli with poppy seeds.

CHORUS MEMBER # 7. Of—

CHORUS MEMBER #2. Blintzes with sweet chevre.

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Of—

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Apple cake with honey.

FRANCESCA. Ok if everyone could make a single line on the left!

CHORUS MEMBER #6. The people ate of her table and cried out as those who had hungered too long in a desert.

(The CHORUS cries out.)

CHORUS MEMBER #7. And they tasted and they remembered.

CHORUS MEMBER #6. Aye cariño—my *bimuelos*.

CHORUS MEMBER #1. And they remembered and they cried

CHORUS MEMBER #2. It's been so long. So long.

(PER and FRANCESCA take off their aprons and join the chorus.)

CHORUS MEMBER #5. And Madeleine saw of their afflictions and yea!

CHORUS MEMBER #4. Her heart was ravished and her love strong as death.

(MADELEINE picks up a bowl of batter.)

MADELEINE. I'll be with the dough in my office.

CHORUS. She said

(MADELEINE picks up the knife.)

MADELEINE. I'll be with the dough in my office.

CHORUS. She said.

(The CHORUS wheels on an altar.)

She'll be with the dough in her office

(Light change. We are now in the office. The CHORUS forms a semicircle around MADELEINE. She sings.)

MADELEINE. *Navo l'hit pallel*

CHORUS. *(They sing in response, they bend their knees and lower their heads:) Navorech et kakadosh baruch hu*

(MADELEINE washes her hands. She anoints her hands and head with oil. She stretches out her arms.)

MADELEINE. *Baruch Hashem* I come before you in holiness. My hands are but clay yet my heart yearns for your Exaltedness. I beseech you, harken to my voice. *Hashem k'elokanu* you hear the entreaties of those who call out to You from the darkness. *Hashem*

k'malcanu you listen with the whole of Your heart. Accept this my offering for the sake of all those who hunger!

(MADELEINE slits her wrist. The blood runs down her arm. She lets it trickle into the batter then stirs. The CHORUS begins to chant a niggun [a transcendent wordless melody]. Their sound builds. They begin to dance a folk dance like the hora. There is much laughter. The CHORUS comes around in a circle then grabs MADELEINE. She is drawn into the dance. Their movements build and becomes ecstatic—they spin, whoop, cry out. They begin a refrain.)

CHORUS. And she listened and she baked
And she baked and they rejoiced
As if every day was Shabbat
And their cheeks were red roses
And their bellies bales of apples
As if every day was Shabbat

(Finally they spill off of the stage. The music slowly fades. The last CHORUS MEMBER becomes RABBI BAER. He stands there as if just entering the shop.)

RABBI BAER. Em...Ms. Rosen

(MADELEINE doesn't hear him. She keeps dancing, in her own world. He is at first embarrassed to be spying and looks away, but then slowly he starts watching. MADELEINE opens her eyes.)

MADELEINE. Rabbi. What—what are you doing here?

(She grabs a towel and stuffs her bleeding hand into it.)

RABBI BAER. ...you were so happy.

MADELEINE. Oh oh I was—I was closing up. You should um—you should really come back another time.

(She moves him to the door.)

RABBI BAER. I—it was not my intention to embarrass you. I came only to—

MADELEINE. No it's fine.

RABBI BAER. Ms. Rosen!

(She jumps at his intensity.)

Em...I wanted to ask you...there is a Shabbat dinner tonight. I wanted to know if you em—Sasha she...I need a dessert. To bring.

MADELEINE. Sasha?

RABBI BAER. Yes...no. She is—

MADELEINE. Sorry, um...yes—what would you like then? I mean, what would she like? Sasha.

RABBI BAER. No—I would like—

(He sees something that catches his eye.)

kaimak strips! But is it real? Where do you get the buffalo milk?

MADELEINE. It's this organic farm in Wyoming. I don't know. I've never tried the middle eastern version. What they graze on over there it's got to be different. Maybe you could try it, um—

(She goes to give it to him, then realizes she is serving with her cut hand. She tries to use her left but doesn't have the coordination.)

Sorry um—I had a little accident um...

(He comes behind the counter, takes the kaimak from her. He puts it in his mouth. He closes his eyes. He is taken. He opens his eyes. Then blurts:)

RABBI BAER. I came to ask you for a date.

MADELEINE. Oh. Oh.

RABBI BAER. I—forgive me. I am not good at this.

MADELEINE. No it's, you're— really?

RABBI BAER. Ms. Rosen I know you are uncomfortable by my being a rabbi.

MADELEINE. No no it's not—

RABBI BAER. Yes, it is true. It is alright. I know you think you do not like synagogues. I accept this. But I am not the synagogue. I am...I like chess. Also. And to camp outside. I can make a fire with two sticks, you know this?

(She laughs.)

Please...Miriam. Be my guest for Shabbat dinner. Sasha, she was a dear friend of my mother—

MADELEINE. Oh. Whoops.

RABBI BAER. Yes. She would like to meet you. And I—Yakov—would like for you to come.

MADELEINE. But...but I'm a mess. I've got flour in my hair. I'm in my work clothes—

RABBI BAER. You are beautiful.

MADELEINE. ...let me just get my coat

(The RABBI turns away smiling to himself. MADELEINE goes to the coat rack. She grabs her jacket. Under the coat rack is MR. IEF-SHAHR. He grabs her bleeding hand still wrapped in the towel.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Will you show him this? Will you seduce him then with blood?

(MR. IEFSHAHR rips off the towel. MADELEINE screams, throws her coat back on the rack. The RABBI comes after her.)

RABBI BAER. What what is it?

(MADELEINE pushes him away with her good hand.)

MADELEINE. Nothing it's—you know what? I have this this really large order for tomorrow. Um. I can't possibly go any—

RABBI BAER. But it will be Shabbat soon. You will only have an hour to work. Forty-five minutes—

MADELEINE. It's fine—that's all the time—

RABBI BAER. Well then I will wait.

MADELEINE. No! Just—just please—please just go.

RABBI BAER. Miriam. I know there is something that troubles you. Don't you think I know this? Let me help you. Show me what it is that disturbs you—

(He reaches for her hand.)

MADELEINE. No! Just—I'm not interested, okay? And it's not because you're a rabbi. It's because of you!

(Beat. The sound of running footsteps. The door slams. Enter BESS out of breath.)

BESS. Hi. I was just...um—I thought I'd pop by and and check to see if you maybe needed any—

(She sees the RABBI.)

Oh. You're—you're here. I—

RABBI BAER. Well then. *Shabbat shalom.*

MADELEINE. Yakov—

(He exits. MADELEINE watches him go.)

BESS. Um so—do you need anything? I mean, as long as I'm here I could help you bake or—or I could look over the books again if you wanted me to. Um. Is...is everything okay here with you Maddie? Maddie?

MADELEINE. Yeah...

BESS. I said...is everything here okay?

(Blackout.)

(In the dark hurried echoing footsteps. Lights up. Three booths at Union Square market. MADELEINE is running, looking over her shoulder behind her, carrying a basket. She approaches a booth.)

MADELEINE. Um—a bag of skinless roasted almonds. Can you hurry?

(She turns around to look behind her. She rubs her eyes, runs her hands through her hair, takes a deep breath. She turns back to the vendor. He is MR. IEFSHAHR.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. And yet you persist. Why?!

MADELEINE. No!

(MADELEINE walks to the next booth.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. We have followed you into your home, into your cursed bakery, plagued you with terrible dreams. We have made your mouth burn with bitterness, filled your throat with bile and still you will not bend. Do you hate *Hashem* so much?

MADELEINE. A—a—a bag of black mission figs

(The vendor appears. Again he is MR. IEFSHAHR. MADELEINE leaves and goes to another booth. Again the vendor is MR. IEFSHAHR. MADELEINE begins to run. He runs after her.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. You think because I am old you can outrun me?

MADELEINE. You're not old, you're dead!

(MR. IEFSHAHR stops in his tracks. MADELEINE pursues him.)

Chaim—Chaim Iefshahr. Born February 7th 1915. Died December 13th 1989. You threw yourself down the stairs. You broke your neck. Nobody found you for five days. Your own children wouldn't come to your funeral.

MR. IEFSHAHR. Who are you to talk of my children! You will recognize your sin. You will feel remorse—

MADELEINE. No. I'm not going to stop. Do you hear me? Nobody—nobody says *kaddish* for you. Nothing was renamed in your memory. Is that how you wanted to be remembered? You don't exist.

(She begins to walk away.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. You think you may walk away from me? It is you who keeps me here. Sorceress! Sinner! Perverter of all things holy!

(She keeps going.)

They will find you out. You think they won't taste what I taste?

(She stops.)

Yes. You lure them. They eat from you, they come closer, closer. Then will they see.

(From out of his pocket he takes pieces of her teiglach—like those that she fed him in the beginning of the play. This time they are alive—writhing with maggots, stained with blood.)

MADELEINE. Oh God no! Get it away.

MR. IEFSHAHR. It is you who has wrought this, not God! You will eat of it.

(He tries to force it into her mouth.)

MADELEINE. No!

MR. IEFSHAHR. *Miriam Aliza bat David.* Open your mouth. You shall taste what we taste.

(He shoves it into her mouth. She gags, falls to her knees.)

Now repent. Admit you have sinned!

MADELEINE. I—I didn't mean to do any—

(He goes to force feed her again.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Eat of it! You will not—

MADELEINE. Oh my God I'm sorry! I'm so so sorry.

MR. IEFSHAHR. Show us your remorse. Prostrate yourself.

(He pushes her onto the floor.)

Beg our forgiveness. Beg the forgiveness of your God!

MADELEINE. Oh God forgive me. I did something so...oh God—I'm so—please don't hate me, please please please don't hate me, don't hate me

MR. IEFSHAHR. Yes. True *teshuva*. It is good yes? To be released. We have waited so long.

(MADELEINE sobs. He begins to pet her head.)

Yes. It is alright now. *Shah shah mein kint.* I remember you as a *bat-mitzvah* little one. So smart, so without guile. I knew you could be as one of us. Your destiny, your heritage. Come.

(Holds out his hand.)

You will close the bakery. I will help you. You will be as a daughter to me.

MADELEINE. No!

(MADELEINE shoves the bloody pastry into his face, blinding him. She runs offstage.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Stupid girl! Do you know what you have forsaken! They will taste what I taste. You will see! Their mouths will fill with excrement. They will choke on the vermin that writhes within you. Hear me *Miriam Aliza bat David*. You will dishonor me no more!

(Blackout.)

(In the dark, up on what sounds like otherworldly moanings. The sound increases. It becomes the roar of an enthusiastic crowd. Lights up on PER and FRANCESCA in the bakery. PER is at the window.)

PER. *Around. The. Block.*

FRANCESCA. *No. Way.*

(She looks out the window.)

PER. Way. Half the people in line are like pissing themselves. That one, that banker dude? Never been past 14th.

FRANCESCA. You think we could give 'em coffee? You know, complementary like? Before we open?

PER. Aces. She'll be freakin' when she sees this.

(FRANCESCA goes to bring a canister of coffee outside.)

Hey...nice butt.

FRANCESCA. Don't you go harrassin' me in the workplace.

(She walks away exaggeratedly swinging her butt. PER growls. Enter MADELEINE, her face stained with the food Iefshahr has fed her. She slams the door behind her, panting.)

Did you see Mirri? They're around the block!

(FRANCESCA goes around her and opens the door. MADELEINE watches her go helplessly.)

PER. Yo boss, whattup? You see the line out there? Dudes look mighty hungry.

(He goes to open up.)

MADELEINE. Don't!

(PER stops.)

Sorry. Just don't open the...the *mashkiach* is coming. Yeah.

PER. The wha?

MADELEINE. The *mashkiach*, the Jewish kosher inspector police people. They called and they're coming and we have to wait before we can open because they need to check everything—

PER. ...oh. I see where it's at.

MADELEINE. What? What do you see? Did you hear me?

PER. You forgot to eat again. Girl's got a need to feed, she does.

MADELEINE. No no. It's just—he *mashkiach*—

PER. *(He takes the teiglach and tries to feed her:)* Alright "Miriam." Lemme see those pearly whites.

MADELEINE. Keep that away from me. I said keep it away from me!!!!

PER. Alright! God.

(Enter BESS.)

BESS. Hey everyone. Chop chop. 8:05. Time to get the show on the road.

PER. No shit.

MADELEINE. Per wait—

(He exits.)

PER. Yo Avenue B—who out there's ready for some eats!

(The effect is the equivalent of the roar of the crowd at a rock concert. MADELEINE closes the doors, locks them.)

BESS. What are you doing?

MADELEINE. ...I...I...we need to stay closed.

PER. *(Offstage:)* Hey! Open up!

BESS. Are you crazy? Let him in.

MADELEINE. No. I...you see, the *mashkiah* is coming. The Jewish kosher inspec—

(BESS turns and begins walking towards the office.)

Where are you going? Where are you—get away from there. Bess I said—

BESS. You won't let them through the front. Then they're coming in through the back.

FRANCESCA. *(Offstage:)* Mirri! It's Franny! I think you locked the door on accident!

MADELEINE. There isn't a back door. There's only a back door through the offi—No!!!!

BESS. Give me the key.

MADELEINE. No you can't go in there.

BESS. Why? Why can't I? Why won't you let me?!

MADELEINE. Because it's holy! It's supposed to be holy...

BESS. ...fuck you. Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck you.

MADELEINE. ...stop...

BESS. You think you can go changing the rules just because you're fucking Jewish all of a sudden? You're name is Madeleine. MADELEINE. You don't believe in God. You hate being a Jew!

MADELEINE. That is not true!

BESS. Yes it is. Yes it fucking is. You think it's bullshit. Every time you had to miss dance class because of Hebrew school, every time you came back crying because the rabbi had yelled at you and how you learned Hebrew without knowing what the fuck you were saying so you could say it in front of all our family and all of the community and everyone could be all proud of you and give you stereos and throw you parties so that they could go out and buy new clothes and everyone could see how much fucking money they had!

MADELEINE. Stop it! I never—you said that! Not me!

BESS. Oh you want to hear you *Madeleine*? In college you—you—stopped going to synagogue even on the high holidays because you said it made you want to KICK SOMEBODY! Is that holy?

MADELEINE. Stop it! I am of God. You can't take that away from me!

BESS. ...this is because of him, isn't it? You're going to marry him.

MADELEINE. What?!

BESS. You're going to throw everything, everything you ever...he'll make you shave your head. You'll have to fuck him through a sheet—

MADELEINE. (*Pushing her out.*) Ok that's it. Get out! Get out of here! You think I'm kidding? GET OUT!

FRANCESCA. (*Offstage.*) Mirri let us in!

PER. (*Offstage.*) You're gonna make me break down the door!

MADELEINE. You think you're so smart, that you know me but you know nothing! You don't know what it's like to bake, what it takes, what you have to do to get it that way. I'm so sick of you looking at me always like I'm just one step away from messing everything up. You didn't save me in college. Do you hear me? I knew what I was doing and I was fine. Look!

(She shoves her face up against the window.)

Do you see that? They're waiting for me. For me! You think they know who you are?

(She flips her back around, gets in her face.)

You are twenty-six years old Esther Elizabeth Rosen. You have no clue the kind of things that can happen to you!

BESS. Yes I do.

MADELEINE. No you don't. You've never even flunked a test—

BESS. I was fired!

MADELEINE. Wha...

BESS. I was...oh my

(She breaks down.)

MADELEINE. Oh Bessy—I'm so—I didn't know...I didn't...

(BESS weeps openly. MADELEINE awkwardly touches her shoulder.)

It's—it's not because of me, is it?

BESS. They—they pulled me into this office. I thought—I mean I know—I heard—my—how I—not there all the—my—but I was there, I was, I was on the weekends and I was going to—oh God—this isn't happening. This is happening to someone else.

MADELEINE. It's okay.

BESS. Oh God I fucked up so bad! I knew it, I knew I was ruining it and I still—

MADELEINE. It's just a job, you can work here. We'll fix it. Bessy? Bessy it'll be okay, do you hear me?

BESS. No you don't understand. It's my fault. And now and now I'm going to be nothing! I'm going to—

MADELEINE. Shut up! Shut up! Don't you ever say that!

(MADELEINE covers BESS' mouth with her hands. BESS grabs her wrists, holds them open.)

BESS. ...tell me what happened in college.

(MADELEINE takes her wrists back.)

Please. We never talk about it. I need to know can't you see that? If—if you weren't trying to kill yourself, then what were you doing?

(The banging on the door is getting louder.)

MADELEINE. They're going to get in.

(She goes to block the door.)

BESS. It's so close Maddie. It's like it's happening all over again. Please. I remember, at the hospital, you said you wanted to feel real, like you were really there. That's how I feel.

MADELEINE. Stop it.

BESS. Tell me what happened or it will happen to me! It is after me, can't you see that? It's getting closer and closer I can feel it—

(FRANCESCA and PER break down the door.)

PER. The fuck is up!?

(Everyone stands still for a moment. Then MADELEINE grabs BESS and throws her out the door.)

MADELEINE. Just get out of here. Get out of here and don't ever come back

(She slams the door shut. Lights down on the bakery, and up on the CHORUS [without MEMBERS #4 and #5]. They appear on either side of the stage.)

CHORUS.

And the door shut.

And the gates sealed.

And the heavens broke open and wept.

And the smells ceased.

And the sounds stilled.

And yea how they stood alone!

Sorrow and hunger was their portion

They lamented and yea they cried out

“Oh Miriam, good Miriam, how do you hear us not?

Restore us. Feed us. Thrust open your doors!

Why do you hear us not?

Why do you hear us not?

Why do you hear us not?!!!!!!!

(Lights up. Continuous. Hours later. MADELEINE, FRANCESCA, and PER in the bakery. The CHORUS continues from outside.)

CHORUS MEMBER #6. You promised me my bimuelos! Why you close the bakery and keep them from me!

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Just a taste. Please. A small mouthful!

CHORUS MEMBER #2. How will I tell my child he'll have no cake!

(Pause. A moment of silence.)

FRANCESCA. Maybe they're gonna go home now...

(Beat. CHORUS MEMBER #7 mimes throwing something out at the audience. The shattering of glass. PER, MADELEINE, and FRANCESCA duck. Someone has thrown a rock through the window.)

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Fucking bitch!

PER. That's it

(He goes to open the doors.)

FRANCESCA. Per—

PER. What? You're down with this? We're not sheep, you and me.

(To the crowd outside:)

Yo customers! We are open for business!

(The CHORUS continues wailing. PER goes to open the doors.)

MADELEINE. No! You can't. It's—it's not fresh any more. It's been sitting out for four—

PER. Then bake something. Do it!

MADELEINE. ...I'll...I'll be with the dough in my office.

(Exit MADELEINE into the office with a bowl of dough. Lights down on the chorus.)

PER. You got two minutes.

FRANCESCA. ...why you gotta be so mean?

PER. She won't let us take off. She wouldn't let you eat. Come on 'Cheska. Some sketchy shit's goin'—

FRANCESCA. You was there. Somethin just went down with her and Bess. She's recoverin is all. We gotta be supportive. We're her friends.

PER. What's she doing?

(Banging on the door.)

Let's go let's go!

(To FRANCESCA:)

You hear that? That freaky chanting she does?

FRANCESCA. Mirri you know she's good people. She won't let them customers down. I know. I known her longer than you. If we just act patient—

PER. I'm opening up.

FRANCESCA. No. Per. You can't—

PER. It's ours too, the bakery. I won't let her mess with everything you and me have—

(FRANCESCA suddenly throws off her shirt and her bra. They stand there for a moment.)

FRANCESCA. What? You gonna just stand there with your mouth hangin open?

(He grabs her pulling her down to the floor. Lights out on FRANCESCA and PER. Up on MADELEINE in her office. She is clutching the bowl to her chest. The CHORUS stands around her. They are angry. MADELEINE sets down the bowl. She knocks over a vial of oil.)

MADELEINE. Shit!

(The CHORUS turns their backs on her, crosses their arms. MADELEINE puts her hand over her mouth.)

Okay, it's okay.

(Deep breaths.)

Okay. *Baruch Hashem* I come before you in holiness. My hands are but clay yet my heart yearns for your Exaltedness. I beseech you, harken to my voice. *Hashem k'elokanu* you hear the entreaties of those who call out to You from the darkness. *Hashem k'malcanu* you listen with the whole of Your heart. Accept this my offering in the name of all who hunger!

(She tentatively drags the knife across her wrist. She waits. Then opens her eyes. Nothing has happened. There is no blood. She shakes her head, closes her eyes.)

Accept this my offering in the name of all who hunger!

(She drags the knife across, harder. Opens her eyes. Again nothing.)

No.

(MADELEINE squeezes her wrist as hard as she can over the bowl. Still nothing. She begins to hyperventilate. She slits her other wrist. Nothing.)

Navo l'hitpallel

(There is no response.)

No answer me please! Don't leave me all alone—

(The CHORUS exits.)

FRANCESCA. *(Offstage:)* Mirri!

MADELEINE. Bless me.

(She slits her upper arm. Nothing.)

Bless me please please please bless me. I need you so bad.

(She tries her leg. Nothing.)

Bless me goddamn-it!

(Brings it to her neck. Wavers.)

Ahhh!

(MADELEINE throws down the knife.)

FRANCESCA. *(Offstage:)* Mirri! Mirri—what should we do?

PER. *(Offstage:)* I'm comin in!

MADELEINE. Here!

(End split scene. MADELEINE exits her office and is in the kitchen.)

FRANCESCA. *(Pulling her shirt back down:)* Are youse okay?

(She hides her bra in her pocket. MADELEINE sees. She looks from one to the other, then shoves the bowl into PER.)

MADELEINE. You want to bake? Well go ahead. Bake!

(Black out.)

(Lights up. The next day at the bakery. PER, MADELEINE, AVIVA, BUBBE HANNAH, BUBBE CHAYA, and others.)

AVIVA. Miriam dear we're so happy you've reopened. We were worried. There was all this talk that you—

PER. Nothing but rumors. Right boss?

BUBBE HANNAH. Aviva made us go to another bakery. A terrible place.

AVIVA. Mother!

(To MADELEINE:)

Morris, he had clients. I didn't know what to do. It was just a small assortment...

BUBBE HANNAH. It was like sawdust.

BUBBE CHAYA. Like drek!

(She spits.)

AVIVA. Well *Baruch Hashem* we won't have to go there again. We won't, will we Miriam?

MADELEINE. ...I—

PER. 'Course not. Ancient history. Fried Haman's ear?

(He offers up a tray of pastries which the family takes. From all around we hear exaggerated chewing noises.)

AVIVA. I wanted to tell you, Miriam... I'm—I'm so sorry about your sister. Morris, he told me just today. I wanted to say something but...please. I would feel terrible if this came between us. You, you've become like family.

(AVIVA blesses the bread to herself:)

Baruch Hashem elokanu melech haolam hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

(AVIVA bites her cookie. The collective chewing abruptly stops. Silence.)

PER. What, what is it?

CHORUS MEMBER # 1. And they looked upon it, and behold.

(BUBBE HANNAH retches.)

AVIVA. Mother!

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Fine scale like things

(BUBBE CHAYA retches.)

AVIVA. Chaya! Oh my goodness!

CHORUS MEMBER #7. Writhing amongst the rot

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Breeding amidst the filth

CHORUS MEMBER #3. Pouring forth the stench of decay.

PER. What have you done?!

AVIVA. Oh no. I think...I think...

(She retches on PER.)

PER. You'll be payin' for this you nut job! You'll be payin' for your life!

(He runs out. The CHORUS staggers forward holding out their writhing napkins.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. And she said unto herself

MADELEINE. No...no...

(MADELEINE backs away. Before she can escape she retches. Black-out.)

(Lights up in the bakery. A cleaning crew handles the aftermath. MADELEINE and FRANCESCA watch as one of the crew methodically mops the floor. Back and forth. From back to front. An EXTERMINATOR emerges.)

EXTERMINATOR. Well that should be the end of your worm problem. May take a few days to get rid of the stench though.

(He shudders, then gives her the bill.)

Well, have a good one.

(Exits along with the rest of the chorus.)

FRANCESCA. ...come on Mirri. Come on.

(She starts to pull MADELEINE to the counter. MADELEINE stops.)

The bad stuff's all gone now. Like it hardly didn't happen at all, 'kay?

(She leads her to the counter, goes to the refrigerator, brings out a bowl of batter.)

I made some batter while you was in there—

MADELEINE. Franny...we have to close the—

FRANCESCA. You can take it into your office after. Just like always, right? Almonds.

(She begins to chop nuts.)

My great aunt Carmen? She says if somethin goes bad, like you fall off a bike or somethin, you just get back on for five minutes. And then after those five, you stay on for another five, and then another five until you're just peddlin, you know? You're not thinkin about how you stay up or whatever. It works for lots of things. Choppin nuts. Baking. Yeah. So Per, he just took off huh? I don't know what's goin on with him. He's got—he's got anger issues I think. Yeah. Maybe a insecurity complex. Um. Did he say somethin to you Mirri? About anythin he was maybe gonna do?

MADELEINE. Franny listen I—

FRANCESCA. Ok he's got a really small dick!

MADELEINE. What!

FRANCESCA. Oh my God. He would die. You can't say nothing. But Mirri last nite we were messing around and I pull off his underwears right and it was like there was nothin. And I musta reacted or somethin cuz now he won't talk to me and I think he might wanna break—ow!

(FRANCESCA *drops the knife, grabs her hand.*)

MADELEINE. What's the matter? Did you cut yourself?

FRANCESCA. Ow ow ow ow ow mother fucker!

MADELEINE. Let me see. Franny come on let me see.

(MADELEINE *takes FRANCESCA's hand. She looks for the cut.*)

FRANCESCA. God I hate blood.

(MADELEINE *looks up. FRANCESCA has turned her head away. MADELEINE takes her hand in both of hers.*)

MADELEINE. Franny—you love the bakery more than anything, don't you?

FRANCESCA. Yeah. Tell me it's not bad. I don't want to hafta get sewed up.

MADELEINE. It's not bad. I want you to think, okay? Think hard about God. Let Him fill you. Can you do that? Because I think that would really help.

FRANCESCA. You mean like a hypnotic thing. So it don't hurt so much?

MADELEINE. Yes. So it doesn't hurt so much.

(MADELEINE *slowly moves her hand over the bowl. The blood begins to drip in. She speaks the following in Hebrew.*)

Navo l'hit pallel. Navo l'hit pallel.

(*No response.*)

Um—I'm sorry—can you think maybe a little bit harder?

FRANCESCA. Ow. You're hurting me.

MADELEINE. (*In Hebrew:*) *Navo l'hit pallel.*

FRANCESCA. Ow. Mirri—

(FRANCESCA *turns.*)

What are you—it's going into the batter. It's—it's getting all over the—Mirri! Maddie Maddie stop!

(FRANCESCA pulls her hand away. They make eye contact. A look of recognition, then horror comes over FRANCESCA's face.)

Holy Jesus motherfucker.

(She takes back her hand. Clutches it to her chest. The blood stains her shirt. She backs away.)

MADELEINE. Franny—I swear on my life. It's not what you think—

FRANCESCA. All those times we heard stuff from your office and you said you was prayin'? This is what you was doin'? I thought you were for real. I believed in you. I believed I could do stuff because of you!

MADELEINE. You can, don't you know that? You are the kindest, sweetest, most wonderful—you can do anything I swear—

FRANCESCA. Don't you fuckin swear to me you fuckin, you fuckin—Christ killer! You stupid fucking Jewish bitch! I hate you! I hope you burn in hell!

(FRANCESCA runs out. MADELEINE holds her hands over her mouth in disbelief. FRANCESCA's blood stains her face. From off-stage the CHORUS picks up on her words.)

CHORUS. Burn in hell!

Burn in hell!

Burn in hell! Burn in hell! Burn in hell!

(MADELEINE bolts out the door.)

CHORUS MEMBER #3. There she is!

CHORUS MEMBER #1. Get her!

MADELEINE. Let go of me! Let go!

(The sounds of a scuffle. Then running. Lights down. The noise abruptly stops. Dead silence. A long long long pause.)

(Then, in the dark, the lone still voice of a man chanting in Hebrew. Lights up. A man prays in Rabbi Baer's office at the synagogue. He wears a talit and has his back to the audience. MADELEINE enters, slamming the door.)

MADELEINE. Yakov. Oh thank God you're still here. Listen please. You've got to help me. I—

(The man continues praying and dovening. He pulls the talit above his head. MADELEINE watches. Then slowly, she walks behind him and presses her body against his. The man turns around.)

RABBI. Ms. Rosen!

MADELEINE. Please. Let me—want to feel what you feel.

RABBI BAER. This is not appropriate. I am sorry for your troubles, but if you wish for council there are office hours—

MADELEINE. *(Fingering the talit, then beginning to pull on it:)* Wrap me in it. Come on. Pull it tight around me. I want to feel it smothering me—

RABBI BAER. Do not touch it—it is sacred!

(He lovingly folds the talit and puts it away into its bag. MADELEINE watches.)

MADELEINE. I—I—I'm...sorry. I just. There's been so much to...Yakov. Don't you know? You're the only one. What you think, how hard you believe. You're holy. You're so holy.

(She runs her hands over his hands, his face. She kisses him. She looks down, moves away. Pause. The RABBI slowly softens. He draws her in.)

RABBI BAER. Miriam, oh my Miriam.

(He kisses her back. It is sweet. They continue, gradually becoming more passionate. MADELEINE starts to unbutton his pants. He moves away.)

No. We are in schul.

MADELEINE. Please. I have to have all of you.

RABBI BAER. No. No—I want to court you. Stop.

(He breaks away.)

What has possessed you?

MADELEINE. Please. Just. Bring Him back. Help me bring Him back.

RABBI BAER. Who—who are you speaking of?

MADELEINE. He doesn't hear me anymore. I can't bake. If you can just get him for me everything will be okay again. I know it.

RABBI BAER. ...there is a man—

MADELEINE. No. I mean yes. I don't want to talk about him.

RABBI BAER. Miriam. You cannot use me to escape another.

MADELEINE. You're a rabbi!

RABBI BAER. I am a man!

MADELEINE. *(Grabbing him forcefully:)* Bring Him back. Make Him come back to me.

RABBI BAER. Who? Who is it you are speaking of? Tell me! Say his name!

MADELEINE. God!

(She collapses in tears.)

He keeps leaving me. Why does he keep leaving me all alone?

RABBI BAER. ...I am jealous of God...

(He laughs to himself, shakes his head, then takes her face in his hands.)

No. It's not true. My sweet Miriam, you know God. If anyone knows, you do.

(She shakes her head.)

Yes...you know what I thought when I met you?

(She shakes her head again.)

I thought, she knows—the gates, the crown, the throne. Myself—I go to seminary. I pour over books, I ruin my eyes I study with such intensity. And yet He eludes me. But you, when you bake. An every day act is...divine. That's why they eat from you. They know. The tongue does not lie.

Tell me. I have wanted to know. How do you bake the way you do?

MADELEINE. Please...don't ask me. Don't ask me that.

RABBI BAER. I have never seen someone so...enraptured. You love it with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your means. What is it that you love?

MADELEINE. ...the smell

RABBI BAER. ...yes. Like my mother's kitchen. I remember. What else?

MADELEINE. ...the batter. How it felt.

RABBI BAER. How did it feel?

MADELEINE. Like—like mud.

RABBI BAER. (*Laughing:*) Oh my Miriam.

(He kisses her.)

MADELEINE. ...the spices. I liked...knowing them. How they could change things. This small amount and...it's funny. There are all these separate ingredients. You add one thing, or do one thing and suddenly it—you're looking at the thing you're making. You know? Like mandelbrat. It calls for all this flour. You think, I can't possibly put all this flour in the batter and have it still cohere. But then you roll it into a log and you can see it—it's going to be mandelbrat. And and hamentashen. You have this circle of dough, right? You add the filling, you fold it, pinch the sides and then, it's a hamantashen—it has three points, it looks like a hat, and if you looked in a cook book, if you looked up hamintashen, if there were a picture, it would look exactly like that. I loved that. It made me laugh.

RABBI BAER. You have no idea the secrets you know do you?

(He smiles, takes her face in his hands.)

Miriam. That moment that you speak of. It is that which you have lost. Not God. Yes. Go back to that moment and I promise you, and you will again know God.

MADELEINE. ...back to that moment.

(MADELEINE backs out of the space with the RABBI. The CHORUS surrounds her. MADELEINE closes her eyes. The CHORUS lifts her up and spins her around, as they did in the first dream sequence. Lights begin to shift.)

CHORUS MEMBER #1. In the beginning there was flour water yeast and some salt.

CHORUS. And she looked upon it and saw that it was good.

RABBI BAER. Love what you do with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your means

CHORUS MEMBER #2. She drew together that which was separate and called it *Sch'lemut*, whole.

CHORUS. And she lay her hands upon it and felt that it was good.

RABBI BAER. Love it with everything you have. Love it despite its consequences—abandon yourself to this love, no matter what may come of it.

(Lights out RABBI BAER.)

MADELEINE. And she said. Let it be revealed. Let it be revealed. Let it be revealed

(The bakery. The door to the office is open, revealing for the first time the entirety of the altar covered with blood. As the CHORUS deposits MADELEINE, we see BESS. She is standing over a bowl of batter, her left hand extended. In slow motion BESS lifts Madeleine's knife and deeply slits open her wrist. Blood. MADELEINE lunges for her, knocking the knife out of her hand.)

MADELEINE. Nooooo!!!!!!!!!!!!!! What are you doing?!

BESS. Let me finish. I have to—I have to—

(She goes to the bowl, squeezes her wrist over the bowl.)

Baruch attah adonai—

(MADELEINE pushes the bowl away.)

MADELEINE. What are you doing. Bessy! stop it! You don't know what you're doing.

BESS. I saw you. I saw what's behind, in the office—you're doing it again. I'm so stupid. I didn't listen to you. You were trying to tell me when you were in the hospital—

MADELEINE. No. No. Bess. I was wrong. You were right to stop me.

BESS. No. You see I get it now. You were just trying to get the bad stuff out. You have to let me. *Baruch attah*—say it with me. *Baruch attah*—say it! I can't remember the words.

(MADELEINE grabs her wrist and begins to tourniquet it.)

No you have to let me. Maddie! Please please please please please I'll be the best sister. I'll be better. I promise.

MADELEINE. Listen to me. Listen to me. I love you Esther Elizabeth Rosen. I love that you want me to move to the Upper East Side so that I'll be closer to you. I love that you bought me a poncho because you didn't want me to be cold. I love that fifteen years ago when I was—when I was hurt and very very scared, you stayed with me in the apartment and in the ambulance and and the hospital, and that you wouldn't let go of me until they pulled you screaming out of...you are the best sister. You are. Do you hear me?

(Shaking her.)

Answer me!

BESS. ...Oh my God. Oh my God. It hurts.

MADELEINE. It's going to be okay.

BESS. Oh my God Maddie I don't want to die!

MADELEINE. You're not going to die. I won't let you.

(She raises BESS' hand above her heart. Takes Bess' cell phone out of her pocket. Dials 911.)

Stay with me. Stay right here honey.

(Into the phone:)

Hello—hello yes there's been accident—

BESS. *(Looking over Madeleine's shoulder:)* WHY ISN'T HE GOING AWAY!!!!!!

(BESS hides her face. MADELEINE turns. It is MR. IEFSHAHR. She goes after him. BESS curls into a little ball on the floor.)

MADELEINE. You leave her alone. LEAVE HER ALONE!

MR. IEFSHAHR. It is you who put the knife in her hand.

(She grabs the knife from the floor and lunges at him.)

MADELEINE. I swear to God I'll kill you. You'll die all over again.

(She holds the knife to his neck.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Miriam Aliza bat David. Hear me! You do this and you kill all of them with me. Morris, Aviva, your rabbi, your sister, they and all the generations that come after you. You alone will be responsible for the death of an entire nation!

(MADELEINE screams from the depth of her being and strikes MR. IEFSHAHR in the neck. A moment. Then MADELEINE drops the knife. It hits the floor with a clatter. She grabs her neck, pulls her hand away. Blood. While MADELEINE stares at her shaking hand MR. IEFSHAHR continues with renewed vigor.)

BESS. Oh God make it stop. Make it stop

MR. IEFSHAHR. You see—the wicked will meet their punishment. Yes. Evil doers will—

MADELEINE. You are...you are of me.

(MR. IEFSHAHR momentarily stumbles. MADELEINE sees this through her pain.)

MR. IEFSHAHR. Leviticus 26, 23: And—and if in spite of these things ye will not be corrected unto Me but will walk contrary unto Me, then I will smite you seven times for your sins—

MADELEINE. You are of me. We are the same.

MR. IEFSHAHR. No! Your blood is not my blood.

MADELEINE. Oh my—oh my—

(She rips the mezuzah off the wall.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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