

As We Like It

By
Oded Gross

1 6 25

Contact:
Oded Gross
odedgross@sbcglobal.net

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CHARACTERS

Rose - (24, Female) - A young Jewish woman
Avram - (43, Male) - Rose's uncle
Miriam - (17, Female) - Avram's daughter
Idis - (32, Female) - Another Jewish woman
Roland - (23, Male) - A wanderer. Kurt's brother.
Kurt - (25, Male) - A wanderer. Roland's brother.

SETTING

A camouflaged refuge deep within a dense, shadowy forest.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

Our location is unclear at first.

A woman, ROSE (24), wears a worn-out dress, once of a simple, elegant cut but now fraying at the edges. She also has a scarf around her neck and wears a wool coat over everything. Around one of her shoulders is a baby sling with what looks to be a completely concealed baby inside, which she occasionally and habitually rocks or pats. Rose is currently addressing three others.

UNCLE AVRAM (43) who is dressed in gray, also in layers. His clothes also worn and frayed, and a type of black sailor's cap on his head.

MIRIAM (17) - Her clothes are perhaps more tom-boyish, though equally ragged and layered.

IDIS (32) wears a brown woolen dress that, like everyone else's, has seen better days. And a coat on top.

ROSE

I know thou hast been troubled by the matter of the play, in particular, the casting of which that requires us each to take on more than one role. For that, necessity compels us, for many of our company have unexpectedly taken their leave. But fear not, for I have now re-ordered the parts so that the tale may unfold with strengthened clarity to our good patrons, and moreover, methinks it shall be a greater joy to us, as each shall have a role most worthy, with ample substance to engage both wit and spirit.

AVRAM

(Cheerfully)

I confess I would like very much to hit the boards chewing on something meaty.

IDIS

(Disdainfully)

The last time I chewed on something meaty it was horse.

Rose pays no heed to Idis' comment and continues on.

ROSE

It is not yet as I would have it, I confess, though, as I say, we are bound by our numbers. Would that we had but two more players! Yet necessity births invention, and in the boundless realms of fancy, we may find our remedy.

AVRAM

Tis true. Imagination has no limits.

IDIS

(Disdainfully to Avram)

Unfortunately, reality does.

AVRAM

(Discretely)

Idis.

ROSE

(Continuing)

In sooth, I do believe we shall present a finer spectacle for the Duke's wedding feast and for his fair betrothed ...The Queen of the Fairies.

She pats the child in her sling.

AVRAM

A wondrous union, indeed!

ROSE

And, with Heaven's favor, perchance we shall win the contest, which, as thou knowest, holds a prize of one hundred drachmas, a boon we all desire.

AVRAM

Most definitely.

IDIS

(Pointedly)

How much is that in Zloty?

AVRAM

(Still trying to be discrete)

Idis, please.

Again, Rose ignores Idis' snipes.

ROSE

Now, I shall read the new parts assigned, and thereafter, mayhaps we shall rehearse a scene or twain. Does that sound well?

Avram nods and smiles.

ROSE (CONT'D)

And I pray you, bear in mind that these changes are made for the sake of clarity.

Uncle Avram, thou shalt take the roles of The Banished Ruler, The Lovelorn Shepherd, The Young Country Boy, and The Usurper.

Idis, thou art cast as The Melancholy Lord, The Jolly Fat Man, The Disdainful Shepherdess, and The Aged Servant.

Miriam, thou shalt play The Dear Friend, The Handsome Youth, Another Shepherd, and The Goatherd.

And I myself shall take the parts of The Strong-Willed Daughter, The Fool, The Wicked Brother, and The Wrestler.

Are there any questions?

IDIS

(Challenging)

This is in the sake of clarity? I shudder to think how these roles would be assigned for the sake of opacity.

AVRAM

(To Rose, agreeably)

I think it shall be most plain.

MIRIAM

(To Rose)

What pray you is the difference between a Shepherd and a Goatherd?

ROSE

A shepherd shepherds sheep while a goatherd goatherds goats.

Miriam nods, still not understanding.

AVRAM

This new arrangement is much to my liking.

IDIS

(Challenging)

You say I'm to play a man?

ROSE

Aye, as must I. Thou wilt find that feigning to be what thou art not, this is a chief theme within this play.

IDIS

A jolly *fat* man, no less. I will need more horse meat if you wish it to be believable.

ROSE

'Tis more needful thou be jolly than fat.

IDIS

And as I recall, the Jolly Fat Man is in scenes with the Melancholy Lord. How pray tell do you expect me to play them both?

ROSE

Such is the case with many parts I have allotted in this play. 'Tis a trial we cannot escape. But fret not, for I have pondered this quandary and do believe 'tis easily resolved with clever staging, and the goodwill of the audience who must oft suspend belief. Perhaps we may begin with one of thy scenes, and I shall show thee my intent. Act the second, scene the fifth. The Jolly Fat Man doth enter singing a merry song, praising the beauty and peace of this pastoral life, where no foe doth hide, save perhaps the capricious skies. Canst thou sing? The melody is not harsh upon the ear.

She motions to the baby in the sling.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Indeed, even little Jozef here might learn it, and he hath not yet found his tongue.

Rose lets out a small laugh at her joke.

The others have focused their attention on the not so distant sound of an airplane flying over head.

AVRAM

Hide!

Avram, Idis and Miriam quickly take cover.

ROSE

Ah. Is that the Fairy Queen's silver chariot, drawn by a wingéd steed, passing o'er our wood with a blessing?

Idis turns back and grabs her.

IDIS

Dammit, Rose!

Idis drags her off to hide.

The stage goes dark, as the plane passes by overhead.

Slowly the lights shift, the set transforms and our location becomes readily more apparent.

We are in a makeshift camouflaged refuge deep within a dense, shadowy forest.

This is a central part of the camp where meals are cooked and the group gathers, often over a small, controlled fire, made to avoid detection. A few cracked pots and pans sit precariously balanced on stones, and simple tools are scattered around.

Upstage we can see sleeping areas that have been built. Simple shelters made from the lumber in these woods and offering only the bare minimum of protection from the elements.

Avram returns checking that the sky is now clear.

AVRAM

I think we're good.

Idis and Miriam follow.

IDIS

I can't do this anymore.

AVRAM

It's fine.

IDIS

It's not fine! It's careless!

Rose returns.

ROSE

Idis? What gnaws at thee? Is it the merry tune the Jolly Fat Man sings praising the beauty and peace of this pastoral life? If 'tis the singing that doth trouble you, mayhaps you could speak the words, as one recites a poem.

IDIS

(To Avram)

I'm done!

Idis exits. Avram calls after her.

AVRAM

Idis!

Rose looks to her uncle.

ROSE

Is she... unwell?

AVRAM

She has um... Her humors are...

MIRIAM

I'll speak with her, father.

AVRAM

Thank you.

Miriam exits after Idis.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

(To Rose)

Till she's well, I wonder Rose, might we delay this rehearsal for a time?

Rose shakes her head reluctant, but then acquiesces.

ROSE

Aye, we may, yet do bear in mind, the wedding 'twixt the Duke and the Fairy Queen is fast upon us. We must make ready.

AVRAM

And ready we shall be, I do swear it.

ROSE

In this case, I shall use this time to commit my lines to memory. Jozef and I shall seek a quiet nook where we may rehearse aloud.

Rose exits with her baby in the opposite direction of the others. Avram stands alone, lost in thought and far less cheery.

Miriam returns with Idis.

IDIS

I'm sorry, Avram. I really am.

Avram nods silently.

MIRIAM

She's not getting any better, dad. It's been 8 months!

AVRAM

I know. But we can't...

IDIS

We can't what? Acknowledge reality? We're living in a fucking forest. Hiding from people who want us dead! She's going to get us killed.

AVRAM

Not if we keep playing along.

IDIS

I can't tolerate this obscene pastoral comedy world of hers any longer. If I am going to be shot dead, I want it to be on my terms. Not living in whatever Shakespeare play she thinks we're living in.

AVRAM

What choice do we have, Idis? You remember what it was like? When we tried to... break the spell of this delusion she's under?

IDIS

“Break the spell?” Really Avram? Please don’t talk like her.

AVRAM

When we would try to force her to see the world around her! She wouldn’t have it! She’d become manic! Unstable! Dangerous even! To herself. To all of us. Why do you think the other families have left?

IDIS

I don’t blame them for leaving! God knows I thought about it myself!

Avram stands silently for a moment, his expression shifting subtly as he takes in the weight of her words. His gaze drops slightly, and a faint sadness passes over him before he collects himself to respond.

AVRAM

Yes... I can’t imagine why you’d stay.

Miriam watches her father, sensing the tension. She doesn’t want to worsen the situation.

MIRIAM

(Gently)

Dad, she needs help. She’s only going to get worse.

AVRAM

She’s not getting worse. She hasn’t had an outburst in weeks. So long as we don’t trigger her.

IDIS

What if something else triggers her? A plane. A bomb. A nearby soldier. Who hears her outburst and finds us!

MIRIAM

We can take her to the Partisans.

AVRAM

No!

MIRIAM

There are more people there. Maybe a doctor among them. They have more resources than we do. We barely have enough to eat, let alone take care of her. *They* can help her.

AVRAM

The Resistance won't help her.

MIRIAM

You don't know that.

AVRAM

That's all she needs is to be around more shooting and killing. It was that environment that made her lose her mind to begin with, you think putting her back in the middle of this war will help her?

MIRIAM

Yes.

AVRAM

I don't. And I don't see the harm in playing along with her fantasy. She doesn't ask much. A few hours in the week preparing for an imaginary wedding that will never come. She spends most of her time in her own little world by herself. Why not indulge her? What's a few hours? What else are we going to do?

IDIS

(Sarcastic)

Nothing. Nothing. God. What else could we possibly do? Except for maybe find food. Build a better shelter. Practice an escape plan. Ward off predators. Prepare for another winter. Sneak into town to get supplies. Pray to God we don't die of Typhus or a bullet to the head from the German army! But other than that, we got nothing going on! Let's put on a play, Avram!

Idis walks away from him.

AVRAM

Idis.

She turns back.

IDIS

I'm done. You can rehearse your little pageant with your niece for the "Duke and the Fairy Queen" all you want! Break a leg!
I'm not doing it anymore.

Idis exits.

SCENE 2

In another part of the woods, but still part of the encampment, Rose rehearses some lines. She still has on the sling with Jozef inside.

ROSE
(Rehearsing)

Alas, what danger will it be to I,
Maid as I am, to travel forth so far?
Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.
Were it not better,
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man?

Rose gently puts the sling with the baby down and takes her scarf and wraps it around her head trying to conceal her long hair and look more like a boy.

ROSE (CONT'D)

A gallant curtal-axe upon my thigh,
A boar-spear in my hand, and in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will,
I'll have a swashing and a martial outside—
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances.
I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page
And therefore look you call me *misbeliever, cut-throat dog,*
And spit upon my JEWISH GABERDINE!

Rose freezes, startled by her own words. A beat, as she gathers herself, willing the fantasy to hold firm.

ROSE (CONT'D)

No, wait. That's not right. I've mixed the plot.
(Trying again)
And therefore look you call me... Ganymede! There it is. Ganymede. I remember now.

Unseen by Rose, two men enter on the other side from where Rose is. They are ROLAND (23) and KURT (25). Their clothes are less worn than the others, though Kurt's has fresh tears and is stained with blood.

He looks like he was recently attacked and can barely stand. He is practically being carried in by Roland. Roland also wears a backpack on his back and a second pack is slung over his shoulder. Roland drops the bags and leans Kurt against a tree. He then sees Rose across the way.

ROLAND

Hey! Hey, you!

Rose turns alarmed.

ROSE

Oh! You frightened me!

ROLAND

Will you help me, sir?

ROSE

Sir? Ha. Thou dost mistake me for a man. Surely, I play my part most well.

ROLAND

Please help me!

She takes off the scarf.

ROSE

So long as thou knowest it is no man that aids thee.

ROLAND

What?

She picks up the swaddled baby again.

ROSE

'Tis but a role I do rehearse - Rosalind - who hides herself within the forest, and in disguise doth find safety.

ROLAND

(Confused)

...What are you talking about? Please! I need your help! My brother. He's... I think he's dying!

Rose walks closer and finally sees Kurt leaned up against the tree, his body bloodied and near lifeless.

ROSE

Oh. Heavens! I'll get... I shall fetch my uncle!

She runs off to get help. Roland turns back to his brother.

ROLAND

Kurt. Kurt!

Kurt is barely conscious.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Help is on the way, you understand? Just hold on. These people are going to help you.

KURT

(Weakly)

What people?

ROLAND

A woman. She was just here. She ran off to get her uncle. I think they are in hiding. Like us.

KURT

(Weakly)

In hiding?

Kurt considers this for a moment.

KURT (CONT'D)

Are they Jews?

Roland stiffens at the question.

ROLAND

...I don't know.

Quickly, he grabs both backpacks and shoves them out of sight behind a nearby underbrush. Just as he returns to Kurt, Rose re-enters followed by Avram, Idis and Miriam, who is holding an axe.

Avram rushes over.

AVRAM

Who are you?

ROLAND

My name is Roland. My brother and I are in hiding. We came to the forest. He was attacked.

AVRAM

By what?

ROLAND

A wolf.

AVRAM

Good God.

Rose steps closer to her uncle.

ROSE

Uncle?

AVRAM

Rose. Stay back! Um...

(Correcting)

I prithee stay back.

IDIS

Rose, dear heart, come with me.

ROSE

Wolves, dear uncle? Here?

ROLAND

A huge wolf!

AVRAM

(To Rose)

Doubtful. Fret not. It is more likely a sheep.

ROLAND

A sheep? Are you nuts?

IDIS

Rose, away with me! Quickly, come!

ROLAND

Look how much blood he's lost! And his leg. I think it's broken!

ROSE

(To Avram)

Shall I gather herbs and craft an elixir to tend to this poor man's wounds?

ROLAND

What?

AVRAM

A fine notion, Rose. Pray, do so.

Rose runs off.

ROLAND

(Desperate)

Did she say an elixir? What is the matter with you people? What is she talking about?
Please tell me you have medicine. Bandages.

Avram nods.

AVRAM

We do. We do.

(Then)

It's just the two of you? You traveled alone?

ROLAND

Yes.

Look... we, we mean you no harm. I swear it.

AVRAM

Where are you from?

ROLAND

Zhetel.

Miriam steps forward, still holding the axe.

MIRIAM

We have cousins in Zhetel. Do you know the Labners?

ROLAND

...No.

Miriam turns to Idis and Avram.

AVRAM

(To Miriam, discretely)

We don't have cousins in Zhetel. Who are the Labners?

MIRIAM

I made the name up. If he said he knew them we'd know he's lying.

Avram nods at his daughter, impressed.

AVRAM

Go get our kit. And a dampened rag to clean the wounds. With the *boiled* water!

Miriam nods and then exits. Avram turns back to Roland.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

(To Roland)

Don't worry! We're going to help him.

ROLAND

Thank you!

(Calming down, then)

Not... not with an elixir I hope?

Avram gives him a comforting smile and starts to take off his jacket. Roland goes to check on his brother.

IDIS

(To Avram, discretely)

Avram, we don't know these people. We barely have enough for us.

AVRAM

This man is going to die if we don't do something.

Avram approaches Kurt and Roland.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

(To Roland)

Here, let's move him here.

He helps Roland move Kurt off the tree and to a flattened part of the forest. Avram folds his jacket and places it under Kurt's head.

Then unbuttons Kurt's shirt to evaluate his wounds. Roland looks on, horrified by what he sees.

ROLAND

Christ! It looks terrible.

AVRAM

Yeah. This was a wolf all right.

(Then, calling off)

Miriam!

Miriam re-enters with their medical kit and some dampened rags.

MIRIAM

I'm here. I'm here.

Avram takes one of the rags and he and Miriam clean Kurt's wounds. Kurt squeals in pain. Each moan from Kurt, a painful dagger to Roland.

Idis does what she can to distract.

IDIS

You say your name is Roland?

Roland nods.

IDIS (CONT'D)

And you're here from Zhetel?

ROLAND

...What?

IDIS

You're from Zhetel.

ROLAND

That's right.
You?

IDIS

Vilna.

ROLAND

How long have you been here?

IDIS

8 Months.

ROLAND

8 months? Jesus!

IDIS

We escaped from the Ghetto last fall. We hid in a skron for 5 days before we could make our way into the woods.

(Then)

We don't have much.

ROLAND

We are grateful for whatever you can spare.

Avram and Miriam begin to bandage Kurt's wounds.

AVRAM

Not to worry. We can always get more.

IDIS

You say that like it's as simple as taking a walk to the store.

AVRAM

We will do what we have to do.

IDIS

It will be weeks before this man can walk again, Avram. How much more will we be able to get?

ROLAND

I can help. How do you replenish?

AVRAM

A Christian farmer-

IDIS

(Admonishing)

Avram!

AVRAM

It's fine.

(To Roland)

He's a few days south of here. He's a friend. He gets what he can for us.

IDIS

At great risk.

ROLAND

I can make the trip.

IDIS

He doesn't know you. He won't trust you.

ROLAND

We will earn our stay. Whatever you need us to do.

IDIS

How will you earn your stay? This man can't even stand.

ROLAND

I will do whatever is necessary. Help find food. Help build shelter. Steal supplies. Whatever you need. I... I have skills.

AVRAM

(To Miriam)

We need to lift his leg. Help me.

Miriam and Avram gently lifts his brother's leg up and places it on a rock.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

(To Roland)

Find me some splints.

ROLAND

Splints? I... What do you mean?

AVRAM

Branches. We have to set his leg.

MIRIAM

I'll do it.

Miriam goes off to find some branches.

IDIS

(Dubious)

You have skills. What skills could you possibly have? You came out here to the forest with no supplies of your own?

ROLAND

We left in a hurry.

AVRAM

It's fine. I am sure we will find a use for you.
What did you do?

ROLAND

...What?

AVRAM

Before the war. What did you do?

ROLAND

Oh. I was a student.

IDIS

(Sarcasm)

That ought to be helpful.

AVRAM

What were you studying?

ROLAND

...Behavioral science.

IDIS

(Sarcastic)

Wonderful!

Do you even know how to start a fire?

Rose re-enters holding a small pot.

ROSE

I have coriander, mixed with musk-mallow, which should ease both swelling and fever. I also found some anise, though its chief virtue lies in curing wind. I know not if it shall serve in this case.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

(To Roland)

Does your brother have flatulence?

Roland, confused, exchanges a glance with Avram and Idis.

IDIS

(To Roland)

Behavioral science, you say? Maybe we can find a use for you.

Black out.

SCENE 3 - THE NEXT DAY

Rose sits with Jozef in his sling in the central gathering space. She is repairing a hole in her jacket with some needle and thread. As she does this, she sings to the child.

ROSE

(Singing)

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither.
Here shall he see
No enemy
But *winter...* and *rough weather*.

She pauses for a moment on the words "winter" and "rough weather" reflecting on something we don't know. Then goes back to sewing. Roland enters.

ROLAND

Good morning.

Rose smiles at Roland.

ROSE

Good morrow to thee.

ROLAND

(Correcting himself)

Good morrow. Yes. That's... what I meant to say.
I beg your pardon for the intrusion.

ROSE

'Tis naught.

ROLAND

(Re: Jozef)

I hope I didn't wake him.

ROSE

He wakes not easily.

ROLAND

What's his name? Your child?

ROSE

Jozef. Yet he is not mine own.

ROLAND

No?

Rose shakes her head. Roland, confused by this,
is uncertain if he should inquire more.

ROSE

How fares thy brother?

ROLAND

He lives. Thank to... *thee*. Though still recovering. It will be some time still.

ROSE

I shall beseech the Goddesses of the forest to aid in his healing.

ROLAND

The Goddesses of the Forest. Yes. Speaking of which, I spoke with your uncle. I understand you need some actors to perform in your play... for the Duke and the... the Fairy Queen?

ROSE

'Tis true. Art thou a player?

ROLAND

In my youth, I did perform, and would gladly lend my hand. My brother, too, when he is able, can assist.

ROSE

Thy offer is most generous, yet the stakes are high, and I must needs see if your skills are fit for the task.

ROLAND

You want to audition me?

ROSE

(She nods)

I would have you prove yourself.

ROLAND

Right now?

ROSE

Unless thou hast other pressing matters.

ROLAND

No. No, let's do it. Have you a script I should read from?

ROSE

No script is needed. I shall give thee a scenario, and we shall improvise our way through the scene.

ROLAND

I see. And who do you... who dost thou wish me to play?

ROSE

I see thee as the Handsome Youth, suitor to the Strong-Willed Daughter.

ROLAND

Who plays the Strong Willed Daughter?

ROSE

I do.

A coy smile from Rose, as she stands and places the jacket back on her.

ROSE (CONT'D)

We shall perform the scene when they first meet. The Handsome Youth, Orlando, is to fight a mighty wrestler and my character, Rosalind, seeks to dissuade him, fearing for his safety.

ROLAND

Orlando and Rosalind. Yes, of course. I'm familiar.

Beat.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Who starts?

ROSE

I'll begin.

Rose takes a moment to get into character.

ROSE (CONT'D)

(As Rosalind)

Young sir, did I hear rightly? Hast thou challenged Charles the Wrestler?

ROLAND

He challenged me. I merely said yes as a way to prove my worth.

ROSE

Prove it to whom?

ROLAND

Now that we have met, I'd like to prove it to you.

ROSE

I fear you wilt prove naught but thy folly. Have you not seen the breadth of him? Let me stop this contest, ere thou suffer grievous harm.

ROLAND

It pleases me to know that even though we just met you care if I get hurt.

ROSE

I don't wish to see anyone get hurt.

ROLAND

I don't see you expressing concern over Charles The Wrestler.

ROSE

Concern for him is not warranted.

Roland laughs.

ROLAND

You think I'm going to lose.

ROSE

I do.

ROLAND

This only spurs me on more. I wish to win your favor through victory.

ROSE

Perhaps you already have won my favor. Will that stop you from fighting?

ROLAND

No. Now I fight to keep it.

ROSE

Is there aught I may say to turn thy mind?

ROLAND

Impossible, now that I know what I am fighting for.

ROSE

In that case, I pray Hercules lend you strength and speed.

ROLAND

All I require, I draw from thee.

ROSE

Then take this.

She takes off a necklace. She hands it to him.

ROSE (CONT'D)

For luck.

He examines the necklace.

ROLAND

I shall treasure it now and evermore.

He moves close to her, perhaps to kiss her.

Rose is tempted but pulls away at the last moment, breaking the scene

ROSE

(Flushed and nervous)

Good. Yes. Thou art well accomplished, truly. I think you will serve the part most admirably.

ROLAND

It's easy when you have the right scene partner.

ROSE

If thy brother has half thy skill, our performance for the Duke shall be grand indeed.

Roland nods.

ROLAND

Might I ask, why it is so vital this performance should succeed?

ROSE

For one, the entertainments are part of a contest held by the Duke. The victor shall claim a prize of one hundred drachmas.

ROLAND

A worthy sum.

ROSE

Yet there is a more selfish cause for my desire.

ROLAND

Oh?

ROSE

The Duke weds the Queen of the Fairies.

ROLAND

So I have heard.

ROSE

She hath taken my son... a child not yet past his first year. In his place, she left me with this... changeling.

She removes from the sling a baby doll, that looks to have been handmade.

ROSE (CONT'D)

My hope is that, should our performance please her, she may return my boy.

Roland stares at the doll, his expression shifting from confusion to empathy.

Rose returns the doll into the sling.

The weight of her delusion hangs heavy in the air.

ROLAND

I understand. In that case, I shall strive to be as good as I can be. And urge my brother to do the same.

ROSE

I thank thee.

ROLAND

I should... tend to him now, and see if he's awake- see if he stirs.

ROSE

Of course.

Roland offers back to Rose her necklace.

ROLAND

Here. Your necklace.

ROSE

No. Keep it. For luck. For your brother.

ROLAND

Thank you.

SCENE 4

We are in the sleeping area. A collection of tattered blankets and makeshift bedding, arranged around a few small clearings between thick trees. The bedding is patched together from whatever materials they could find during their escape, a mix of frayed clothing and remnants of fabric.

This area is communal but divided slightly by natural features such as rocks or bushes to allow for a semblance of privacy.

Avram is about to change Kurt's bandage. Kurt is asleep.

Miriam enters.

MIRIAM

Dad?

AVRAM

Yes, love.

MIRIAM

I want to talk about Rose.

AVRAM

What about her?

MIRIAM

I think you should reconsider bringing her to the Partisans.

AVRAM

There is no need. We have a doctor here now.

MIRIAM

He's hardly a doctor. He's a student.

AVRAM

He seems capable to me.

MIRIAM

What are you basing that on?

Avram doesn't have an answer.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Why are you so stubborn about this? You must see that taking her would be better for all involved.

AVRAM

I don't see that.

MIRIAM

We had two people just wander onto our camp! What if they had been soldiers?

AVRAM

They're not.

MIRIAM

If they were we'd be dead! We don't have anybody keeping watch.

AVRAM

You want take the first shift?

MIRIAM

We need more people, dad! We can't survive out here just the four of us.

AVRAM

We just got two more.

MIRIAM

It won't be enough.

AVRAM

I don't want to take Rose to the Partisans.

MIRIAM

Why?

AVRAM

Why is it so important to you that we do?

MIRIAM

I just told you.

AVRAM

I don't think you did.

MIRIAM

I want her to get better.

AVRAM

That's not the reason!

MIRIAM

I don't know what you mean-

AVRAM

Don't bullshit me! I know what this is about. You want to join them.

MIRIAM

Yes! Fine! I want to join them! You caught me. I want to fight! Is that so surprising to you?

AVRAM

I don't allow it.

MIRIAM

Why?

AVRAM

It's not safe!

MIRIAM

It's safe *here*?

AVRAM

You think just because the Russian partisans are fighting the Germans means they don't hate Jews, as well? There are just as many antisemites among them.

MIRIAM

I don't think that's true. There are Jews fighting alongside them.

AVRAM

I won't allow it.

MIRIAM

How can you just hide here? How do you not want revenge? They killed my mother.

AVRAM

Killing Nazis won't bring her back.

MIRIAM

They killed your wife! And yet you do nothing!

AVRAM

You think I do nothing?

Roland enters.

ROLAND

(Cheerfully)

Oh sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

MIRIAM
(To Avram)

I think you're a coward!

ROLAND

...I should probably go.

MIRIAM

It's all right. I'm going.

Miriam goes to leave.

AVRAM
(To Miriam)

You think taking a life is brave? There are braver things. Yehareg ve'al ya'avor. The preservation of human life. Even at the expense of your own.

Miriam turns back to her father.

MIRIAM
If only the Nazis felt the same. But they don't think we're human. You can cherry pick the Talmud all you want looking for ways to rationalize your cowardice, but the reality is they will kill us all. Unless we stand up and stop them.

Miriam leaves.

Avram turns to Roland embarrassed that Roland had to witness this confrontation.

AVRAM
Sorry.

ROLAND
No, I'm sorry. I was just going to check on my brother.

AVRAM
Good.

(Then)
Idis' shelter needs repairs. We had a heavy rain three nights ago. It knocked some of it down.

ROLAND
You want me to take care of that?

AVRAM

No. I'll do it. You take care of your brother. His bandage needs changing.

Avram hands Roland the clean bandages. Then exits.

A long pause before Roland crosses to Kurt. He gently tries to remove Kurt's old bandage. As soon as he does, Kurt grabs his hand.

ROLAND

Jesus Christ! You scared the hell out of me!

Kurt tries to sit up. It's difficult.

KURT

Are we alone?

ROLAND

Yes. Don't get up. I need to change your bandage. What is it?

Kurt swallows hard, grimacing in pain as he does.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

What?

KURT

...I think we made a mistake.

ROLAND

What mistake?

KURT

I can't do this. Hide in the forest like an animal. We won't make it.

ROLAND

We will.

KURT

We need to go back.

ROLAND

Are you insane?

KURT

I can't stay here. It's too difficult.

ROLAND

We can make it.

KURT

We can't!

Look at me. Goddam wolves. God knows what else.

We're going to die out here!

ROLAND

Kurt... We are deserters. We left our unit. What do you think will happen if we go back?

Kurt sighs then shakes his head.

KURT

You don't know they'll kill us.

ROLAND

They're going to hang us.

KURT

Fine! Then let them. I'd rather be killed by our own than these fucking Jews!

Roland rips the old bandage off his brother.

KURT (CONT'D)

Ow!

Beat.

ROLAND

These Jews saved your life.

KURT

Give me a break. They have an agenda.

ROLAND

I don't think they do.

KURT

You know the stories.

ROLAND

I know what we've been told.

KURT

They can't be trusted! You know what they do. Infiltrate. Pretend. Pretend to be with us. Pretend to be us.

ROLAND

We're the ones pretending right now.

KURT

They're parasites, Roland! We can't stay here.

ROLAND

You can't even sit up. Where do you expect us to go?

KURT

I have a plan.

The Juden here... they know the location of the Resistance.

ROLAND

How do you know that?

KURT

I overheard them talking. I haven't been asleep here the whole time. What the hell have you been doing? Making friends?

ROLAND

I've been doing what I had to to keep you alive.

KURT

Well, now you have to get one of these rats to tell you the location of the Partisans. Once we have that we contact General Heller. If we lead our people to the Resistance, they're not going to kill us. They'll throw us a fucking parade!

Roland places the new bandage on his brother
who squirms with pain.

KURT (CONT'D)

Fuck!

ROLAND

Sorry.

Kurt looks around his surroundings.

KURT

Where is my bag?

ROLAND

I hid it. I hid all of our stuff.

KURT

Why?

ROLAND

Why? Because if they go through our bags and see P38s... It will be pretty clear to them we're Wehrmacht.

KURT

I want it.

ROLAND

You don't need it.

KURT

I want my gun!

ROLAND

You can barely hold yourself up, let alone your gun. You don't need it. They trust us. They think we're one of them.

KURT

Insulting. How can they possibly think that?

ROLAND

Just be grateful they do.

KURT

I'll be grateful when you get the location of the Resistance and we leave these filthy animals to be killed in the forest.

Black out.

SCENE 5 - WEEKS LATER

*

In the gathering space, Avram is about to eat.
Roland enters carrying a stick like a sword.

ROLAND

Hold!

Stay thy hand!

Roland brandishes the stick threateningly.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

If you value your life, you shalt not take another morsel!

AVRAM

I've yet to take my first.

ROLAND

That matters not!

AVRAM

I think it doth. For how may I take "another" bite if I've yet to taste the first? 'Tis but a question of grammar.

ROLAND

Grammar? GRAMMAR?

Roland looks to the side where the lights now
show Rose sitting, watching the rehearsal.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Grammar?

ROSE

(To Avram)

Let us not tarry about the grammar, good uncle.

AVRAM

My apologies. I do but improvise the best I can, though I know this scene not well.

ROSE

Thou art the banished Duke, remember? Orlando cometh, threatening thee and
demanding sustenance.

ROLAND

I demand sustenance!

ROSE

(To Avram)

Yet thou art not cowed by his manner.

ROLAND

(Less menacing)

I demand sustenance?

ROSE

(To Roland)

No, you *wish* to cow him-

ROLAND

(To Avram, demanding)

I demand sustenance!

ROSE

(Avram)

It simply lacks in the cowing.

AVRAM

Demand me naught, thou base peasant!

ROSE

Not base peasant. The duke is noble and full of grace.

AVRAM

(To Roland)

Sorry about the base peasant thing.

ROSE

Thou ask if his coarse manner stem from great distress—

AVRAM

(To Roland)

Are you in distress?

ROSE

—or if 'tis rudeness born of ill-breeding.

AVRAM

(To Roland)

Or are you a cloddish knave?

ROSE
(Reminding)

Noble. Full of grace

AVRAM
Please and thank you tell me the answer!

ROSE
(To Roland)

So... you tell him.

ROLAND
I am a cloddish knave!

ROSE
(Correcting)

No. You are in distress.

ROLAND
I am in great distress!

ROSE
Aye, for thou art starving, and thy faithful and elderly manservant, Adam, doth share thy plight.

ROLAND
Ah. Yes. I remember now. I left Adam behind and came here in the hopes of getting food for the two of us. I assumed the Duke would be resistant and am surprised when he speaks so gently to me.

ROSE
Don't tell me, tell him.

ROLAND
(To Avram)
Speak you so gently? I thought all here were fierce and wild, and thus I came with a harsh countenance to match the presumed cruelty.

AVRAM
And yet, you can persuade me more with gentle words. Tell me, good sir, what do you seek?

ROLAND
I beg of thee, spare me a morsel, for hunger doth gnaw at my very bones.

AVRAM

(Impressed by Roland's Shakespearean
talk)

Gnaw at your bones. That's very good.

ROLAND

Thank you.

AVRAM

Please! Sit. Join me.

ROLAND

Your kindness overwhelms me. I apologize for wrongly assuming that if you were living here in the forest you must be...

AVRAM

An animal?

ROLAND

(Nodding)

Yes. Or at the very least, known better days, and are now compelled to act in a beastly manner.

AVRAM

I have known better days, 'tis true. Yet if I can ease another's burden, then I do so gladly.

ROLAND

I pray you then let me retrieve my manservant Adam that he may share in thy bounty.

AVRAM

I shall await you both.

ROSE

Excellent! Now, Orlando exits to fetch Adam, and the Duke doth muse on the woes of the world.

Miriam enters carrying a bunch of soaked rags.

AVRAM

Who do I muse this to? Miriam?

MIRIAM

(Coldly, shaking her head)

I shall not be amused. I'm not in this scene.

ROSE

(To Avram)

Nay. Thou speaks to Jacques. The Melancholy Lord.

(Then)

Where is Jacques? Is Idis still unwell?

AVRAM

I'm afraid so.

ROSE

This can not be. We need a Jacques. It is a role too important to discard.

Miriam, perhaps thou shall play Jacques?

MIRIAM

(Coldly)

I would rather not. I know not the role, and prefer to stay with those parts thou hast already given me.

AVRAM

We seek only a temporary hand, dear daughter.

MIRIAM

(A hint of disdain)

I am otherwise engaged... dear father.

She shows her father the doused rags.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Think you not this bears greater import?

ROLAND

What weightier task than to tread the boards and breathe life into a play?

MIRIAM

These cloths, steeped in vinegar's scent, must guard our camp from prowling beasts.

(Then, pointedly)

Like wolves.

ROLAND

(To Rose)

It seems she doth have her hands quite full.

ROSE

Very well. I shall take it on myself. He recites one of the play's most profound speeches. Depending on how it is delivered, it may be seen as either despairing... or hopeful. For my part, I lean toward hope.

(Then, reciting)

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in his mother's arms.

Rose looks down at Jozef who she is still holding.

ROSE (CONT'D)

(Crescendoing in emotion and anger)

And this infant... will he not come again?

No... no, he is dead! DEAD I SAY!

HE NEVER WILL COME AGAIN. NEVER!

Roland, Avram and Miriam are taken aback by the outburst.

MIRIAM

That didn't sound very hopeful.

Rose tries to laugh it off, but is clearly affected by the unintended speech.

ROSE

I fear I've tangled my lines.

She gathers herself.

ROSE (CONT'D)

No matter, 'tis not my part to play. 'Tis Idis' role to do as she pleases.

I shall counsel her on it.

Perhaps I will go to her now, if that pleases you.

I pray you all continue without me.

Rose exits.

Beat.

AVRAM
(To Roland)

How is it going with her?

MIRIAM
It doesn't seem to be going well.

AVRAM
Roland?

ROLAND
It's a process.

AVRAM
It's been three weeks. Do you see any hope?

★

MIRIAM
It's obvious she's not improving, dad.

AVRAM
I'm not talking to you.
(Then, to Roland)
Any hope at all?

ROLAND
It might help if I knew when and how this all started.

Avram shakes his head slightly, not sure what
more to tell Roland.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
Or really anything else you can tell me about her.

AVRAM
Have I not told you enough?

ROLAND
Just that she is in this very particular delusional state owing to the trauma of war and
previous attempts to snap her out of it have been met with bursts of high emotionality and
self-destructive behavior.

AVRAM
What more do you need to know?

ROLAND

Anything.

It's clear Avram is reluctant to do this, but ultimately sees the need.

AVRAM

Before the war she was a teacher.

ROLAND

What did she teach?

MIRIAM

Guess.

Roland nods. Shakespeare, no doubt.

AVRAM

She was married. He was older, her husband. Also a teacher. A professor of History. Smart man.

ROLAND

Where is he now?

MIRIAM

The Germans don't like smart men.

AVRAM

A truck pulled up one day as he was leaving his home. They forced him inside. They said they'd bring him back by day's end.

Avram shakes his head.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

He never came back. That was two years ago. Rose was six months pregnant at the time.

ROLAND

Is that when these delusions started?

AVRAM

No. Nor did they start 6 months later when her parents were killed. Her mother was Sara's sister.

ROLAND *
Sara? *

AVRAM *
My wife. We all lived together in one of the ghettos in Vilna. Nazis came one day, forced *
everyone out into the streets for yet another *selection*. Thankfully, Miriam here was *
watching Rose's baby and had the good sense to hide with him in the skron, a hiding spot
we built in the apartment walls, so they were spared.

The rest of us, Rose included, didn't have working papers, so we got marched into the
woods. We were lined up along the edge of these gaping pits...

Avram visualizes the order demonstrating it
accordingly.

AVRAM (CONT'D)
Rose's father, her mother, Rose, my wife... and me. And many others, of course. It took
hours for the Nazis to shoot and kill over a thousand people that day. Bang! Bang! Bang!
Right down the line they went. As they got closer... My wife switched places with Rose. *
My wife was the last to get shot before they ran out of bullets. Rose and I, Idis, she was *
there, too, and about a hundred others were offered a reprieve and sent back to town.

Beat.

ROLAND
I'm sorry.

AVRAM
Not your fault.

ROLAND
And you're saying this is *not* when her psychosis started?

AVRAM
(Shaking his head)
It started 8 months ago when we made our escape. A very dangerous escape from the
ghetto. Rose's son didn't make it.

Avram looks at his daughter who doesn't return
his gaze. He then turns back to Roland.

AVRAM (CONT'D)
Can you help her? Do you have any ideas?

MIRIAM

(With attitude)

Or did you not yet take the Behavioral Studies class that covers this?

ROLAND

...I don't know.

MIRIAM

I've suggested that we take Rose to the Resistance. What do you think about that?

AVRAM

I don't think that's the solution.

MIRIAM

I was asking him.

(To Roland)

The best chance for helping her is with them, don't you agree?

AVRAM

That's not why you want to take her.

MIRIAM

What difference does it make why if it will help Rose either way?

AVRAM

It won't help her either way. And it makes a difference to me!

MIRIAM

We can take her tomorrow for crying out loud.

(To Roland)

It's a simple trip. I know the way myself. It's literally-

She begins to point the way.

ROLAND

Please don't!

Roland looks upstage to where Kurt is asleep.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Don't... Don't take her there. I just... I have to agree with your father on this. I don't think it will help. Just give me more time with her. I think we just need more time, her and I. I will make progress.

I promise.

Avram nods.

Roland exits.

AVRAM
(To Miriam)

Nice try.

MIRIAM

You can't keep me here father.

AVRAM
The Russians won't take you. They're not baby sitters.

MIRIAM

I'm not a baby.

AVRAM
You have to come with your own gear there. Weapons. You have to come with a gun of your own if you want to join them. Do you have a gun of your own?

MIRIAM

I'll get one.

AVRAM

How are you going to do that?

MIRIAM

I'll find me a Nazi and kill him and take *his* gun.

AVRAM

Is that what you'll do?

MIRIAM

Whatever it takes. I won't do nothing. I won't stay here.
And I'm not a child.

AVRAM

You are. You are my child. I will do whatever it takes to protect you.

Avram exits.

After a beat, Miriam starts to exit the other way
but is stopped.

KURT

Don't go.

Miriam looks upstage and sees Kurt trying to sit up.

MIRIAM

You're awake.

KURT

I've been awake.

MIRIAM
(Facetiously)

You like the show?

KURT

Not really. I like your spirit though.

MIRIAM

Don't mock me.

KURT

I'm not. You have a fire about you. It's inspiring.

MIRIAM
(Dubious and with attitude)

Oh really? You think so?

KURT

I do think so. I also think you're right.

MIRIAM

About?

KURT

About wanting to fight.

MIRIAM

...Oh yeah?

Kurt nods.

KURT

That's why I came out here. To fight.

MIRIAM

You came for the resistance?

KURT

I did. My brother was against it. Like your father. So I ran off without him, hoping I can find them on my own... and was nearly killed by a wolf.

MIRIAM

When you get better...

KURT

When I get better, I *will* find them.

MIRIAM

I could show you. I know the way.

KURT

You do?

MIRIAM

Would you take me with you? You think they would take me?

KURT

They'd be fools not to take you. You are a fighter.

MIRIAM

I don't have a gun. My father says you need to have your own weapon.

KURT

I have weapons. In my bag.

MIRIAM

What bag?

KURT

My brother hid it when we arrived. He knows if I had it I would run off as soon as I'm able. I don't know where he hid it.

MIRIAM

Maybe I can find it for you.

KURT

Find me my bag and you and I will go and kill all of these horrible animals once and for all.

Miriam smiles, nods, then exits.

SCENE 6

At a different part of the forest, Idis is chopping wood. Suddenly she hears something. A nearby rustling. She grabs hold of her axe tightly. *

IDIS

Who's there?

Rose enters.

ROSE

'Tis Rose.

Idis takes a breath. Throws the axe down and sits on a log.

ROSE (CONT'D)

We miss'd thee at rehearsal. Mine uncle saith you art yet unwell. Is it so? Still?

IDIS

If you need it to be.

Beat.

ROSE

I did assay to take on thy part myself.

Jacques. The melancholy Lord.

Though 'tis not mine intent to keep it. Only till your health returns. I play not the role as fine as you.

IDIS

I'm sure that's not true.

ROSE

Nay, truly, thou bring'st a depth to Jacques which I, poor player, cannot feign. I have it not in me.

IDIS

You have it. You just choose to hide it.

ROSE

Be it as it may, we need thee for the part.
Thou will not leave us, I hope?

IDIS

...I have been thinking of leaving.

This admission hits Rose hard.

ROSE

I pray you don't. It would be a heavy burden for me.
'Tis hard to carry on... the play, methinks. Without you.

IDIS

I'm sorry, Rose. No more acting for me.

ROSE

Hast thou no love for this craft?

IDIS

No.

ROSE

Know you not how important it is, I see.

IDIS

Acting?

ROSE

Telling a story.

IDIS

Telling it to who? Others or to yourself?

ROSE

Either.
The continued existence of stories... That is the continued existence of a people.

IDIS

Even if the stories are made up of lies?

Rose shrugs.

ROSE

...Can they not have value?

I think on the tale of the Golem, a guardian, born of clay and spell craft. I suspect that story not to be true, yet it comforts me all the same. See? Value.

I suppose I fancy the notion of creating art that then goes on to protect you.

IDIS

That story is *not* true. Your suspicions are correct. The irony is that in order to bring that Golem to life you must carve on its forehead the Hebrew word *emet*, which means truth, but that Guardian protected no one. And still doesn't. That story was created to comfort Jews who were being persecuted in the 1600s by people who were told a different story - a fabricated tale about how the Jewish people were guilty of the ritual killing of Christian children, using their blood for their Passover matzot - a story that many people *did* believe and acted upon. Fictions are only valuable so long as you acknowledge that they are fictions. Otherwise they are dangerous!

ROSE

(Weakly)

But... we can win one hundred drachmas from the Duke.

Idis shakes her head at this.

IDIS

...Oh Rose.

ROSE

We must win! And we shall! Ours is a joyful tale of love beneath the greenwood tree—

IDIS

More lies. There is no love out here “beneath the greenwood tree.”

ROSE

I must disagree. Why, what other cause would keep thee hither, save for love? I do recall
when the others did depart, their paths forked from ours. I thought thee surely bound to
follow, for you were nearer kin to them than to us. Yet didst thou stay. And why, I
wondered. It has since become plain. I have seen how you do look upon mine uncle.
Deny it, if you can.

*
*
*
*
*

Idis laughs mockingly.

IDIS

Yes. Your widower uncle. I can pick'em, can't I? Do you think I have a chance? I mean it's been over a year since his wife died. He's probably gotten over her by now. Do you think there is a future for us?

ROSE

I do.

IDIS

Do you think we're well matched?

ROSE

Aye. Mayhaps?

IDIS

Perchance we shall wed?

ROSE

Perchance.

IDIS

And then have children?

ROSE

I don't see why not.

IDIS

I can't have children, that's why not! Those butchers made certain I'll never have children again! And what difference does it make anyway?

Roland enters.

IDIS (CONT'D)

We know what happens to children out here!

ROLAND

Idis!

IDIS

(Mocking)

They get taken by the "Queen of The Fairies!"

Roland grabs her.

ROLAND

What is the matter with you?

IDIS

She must know the truth! Someone must tell her! NONE OF US ARE GETTING OUT OF THIS FOREST ALIVE!

Idis exits.

Roland approaches Rose cautiously. He's heard how unstable she can be, but has yet to see it.

ROLAND

Rose... Are you... Art thou well?

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE

She is sicker than I did reckon.

ROLAND

Yes.

ROSE

The fairies must have cast a spell upon her, for she doth speak naught but madness.

ROLAND

(Relieved)

Aye. That must be it. Indeed, the fairies. Definitely the fairies. What can be done? You know. They're fairies.

ROSE

The play's the thing. 'Tis clearer now than ever. We must seek audience with the Fairy Queen. She shall break this wicked spell on Idis. She shall return my child and take back this changeling. She shall right all wrongs!

Black out.

SCENE 7

Rose sits by the small fire keeping warm.
Upstage Kurt emerges from the sleeping area. He is standing and moving precariously with the help of a walking stick. Rose turns to him, just as he stumbles.

She quickly goes to him to help him up.

ROSE

Let me aid thee.

KURT

I sought merely to reach the fire. I have a chill this evening.

ROSE

Lean upon my shoulder.

KURT

You are most kind.

The two make their way downstage. Avram enters just as they reach the fire. Rose helps Kurt sit.

AVRAM

(To Kurt)

Look at this. I am told your strength is returning to you, Kurt. It looks to be so?

KURT

Does it? I scarce can move ten paces.

AVRAM

When you first arrived you could hardly move one.

KURT

It's true.

AVRAM

You shall be fully restored anon.

KURT

Thanks to you and your family.

AVRAM

No doubt you'd do the same.

(Then)

And Rose, how dost thou fare? Art thou well?

ROSE

I am well, good uncle. I thank thee.

AVRAM

In that case, I bid thee both good night. May thy slumber be gentle and fair.

They smile at Avram, who turns to exit.

Kurt watches him go, waits a beat, then turns to Rose.

KURT

I hear thy troupe is in want of a player?

ROSE

Aye, and more than one.

KURT

Though I am yet too weak to walk, my wits are keen, and I can feign with the best.

ROSE

(Excited)

You would join us?

KURT

I would.

ROSE

'Twould be wondrous! And if thou art as thy brother—

KURT

I am twice the actor he is.
He's not fooling anyone.

ROSE

His art impresses me, and thine shall too, I'm sure. And you need not worry, we shall stage it such that you needn't walk at all.

KURT

Excellent! I am keen to play my part. I have heard your rehearsals, and the tale is magnificent.

ROSE

'Tis a tale of love.

KURT

Fitting, for a wedding feast.

(Then)

I only hope it gets selected.

ROSE

To win?

KURT

To be seen at all.

ROSE

What hinders it from being seen?

KURT

Not every performance finds its way to the Duke and the Fairy Queen. First it must pass the gatekeeper—the Duke's own scout, who doth appraise the plays and choose which are worthy of the court. And more to that, the scout only appraises shows that have been first recommended to him.

ROSE

I did not know this. Nor do I know any such person to recommend our tale.

Kurt smiles.

KURT

But you do. You know me. I know this gate keeper quite well.

ROSE

You do? Would you vouch for our play?

KURT

I have already.

He holds up a letter. It is sealed.

*

KURT (CONT'D)

In this letter. I have praised this production as joyous and full of love. I shall deliver my recommendation to him as soon as I am able.

ROSE

I am so grateful to thee.

KURT

I think he will be grateful to hear what I have to tell him. The only challenge is getting this letter to him in time.

ROSE

I don't understand.

KURT

He is currently off to view another performance. A much less worthy one if you ask me. A war-story methinks, as all the players in it are dressed for battle. In any case, I know where he is currently headed. I would give him this letter ere he depart from there. But I cannot yet walk, and should he finish his business there first, I know not where he travels next. I fear I won't be able to find him.

ROSE

We must see that this letter finds its way to him straightaway.

KURT

I agree. But what can I do? I can not walk.

ROSE

You say you know where he goes now? Can you so instruct?

KURT

I can.

ROSE

Give me the letter then. I shall bear it to him myself.

Kurt shakes his head.

KURT

But he knows thee not... yet... that should matter little. He need but read the missive. He will recognize my seal, of that I am sure. Many a time have we exchanged words, and he holds my counsel dear.

ROSE

Then there should be no trouble.

KURT

None that comes to mind, so long as thou art truly willing to bear this burden in my stead.

ROSE

Give me the letter.

Kurt hands her the letter.

KURT

The man you are looking for... His name is Heller.

Black out.

ACT 2

SCENE 1 - THE NEXT MORNING

Roland comes up to the fire pit. Next to it is a pot of water. He grabs a nearby cup and scoops some of the water out of the pot to drink.

Miriam enters behind him holding a stack of wood.

MIRIAM

I wouldn't drink that.

She drops the wood next to the pit.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

That water hasn't been boiled yet.

ROLAND

Oh. Thanks.

Roland pours the water back in the pot.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

So much to think about out here.

MIRIAM

I'm surprised you didn't think about it before you came. Seems quite foolish. No offense.

Miriam starts stacking the wood to make a fire.

ROLAND

No, you're right. We were really unprepared.

MIRIAM

You didn't even pack a bag?

Roland shakes his head.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Hard to believe. Seems like a death wish.

ROLAND

Do you need me to get more wood?

MIRIAM

No. We can't make it that high.

ROLAND

Right. Of course.

Avram enters.

AVRAM

Good morning.

ROLAND

Morning.

Avram carries with him some type of pastry. He hands one to Miriam.

MIRIAM

What is this? A peace offering?

AVRAM

It's a hamantasch.

Miriam examines the pastry more closely.

MIRIAM

This is not a hamantasch.

AVRAM

It's the best I can do out here.

MIRIAM

Is it even Purim?

AVRAM

I'm pretty sure it is. Or close enough to it.

MIRIAM

The irony of you trying to make peace with a symbol that commemorates Jews establishing the right to defend themselves against their enemies.

Avram rolls his eyes and tries to ignore the comment.

AVRAM

Roland? You want?

ROLAND

Please. Thank you.

Roland takes a bite out of the hamantasch.

AVRAM

(In Hebrew)

Baruch Atah Adonai...

Roland just realizing he should wait, spits his bite back into his hand.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

...Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Borei Minei Mezonos.

They eat. Miriam makes a face.

MIRIAM

Ugh. This is definitely not a hamantasch. It tastes like death.

AVRAM

It's supposed to be a joyful holiday, Miri.

MIRIAM

I guess I'm just not in a celebratory mood.

(Then)

Excuse me.

Miriam exits.

Beat.

Avram turns to Roland.

AVRAM

Was your family religious growing up? Did you celebrate the holidays? Go to synagogue on Saturday?

ROLAND

No. Not usually.

AVRAM

Yet here you are hiding in the woods. Like the rest of us.
Nazis don't discriminate between religious and non-religious Jews.

ROLAND

...No. They don't.

AVRAM

The good news is neither does God.

ROLAND

You don't think so?

Avram shakes his head.

AVRAM

I don't. So long as you live by his commandments. Do mitzvot. Try to make the world a better place. I don't think God cares about what we believe or don't believe.

Roland's face tightens, his eyes clouded with the weight of unspoken anguish.

ROLAND

...What about what we've done? Does he care about that?

Avram looks down, equally pained.

AVRAM

That he does.

(Then)

...I only pray he cares more about what we *do*... to make it right.

A slight nod from Roland. He holds the same prayer in his heart.

Idis enters frantically, dressed in her sleeping garb.

IDIS

Has anyone seen Rose?

AVRAM

No. Why? She's probably still asleep?

IDIS

Her bed hasn't been slept in at all.

ROLAND

What do you mean?

IDIS

I think she might have run off!

AVRAM

Why would she run off?

Idis looks to Roland, near tears.

IDIS

Roland.

What did I do? What did I do?

ROLAND

No, no, I don't- You didn't do anything.

AVRAM

What happened? What are you talking about?

ROLAND

Yesterday, Rose and Idis-

IDIS

(To Avram)

I said some things to her. Unforgivable things. I'm afraid it might have set her off.

ROLAND

(Shaking his head)

It didn't. I spoke with her after you left. She was fine.

IDIS

You don't know how she gets!

ROLAND

I'm telling you, she seemed fine.

IDIS

Avram! I'm so sorry!

AVRAM

Nothing to be sorry about, Idis. I'm sure Roland's right.

I saw Rose last night, as well. She was talking with Kurt. She didn't seem set off at all.

IDIS

I'm worried.

ROLAND

(Suddenly concerned)

She was talking with my brother?

AVRAM

Yes. I saw them before I went to bed.

ROLAND

What were they talking about?

AVRAM

I don't know. Nothing. Her play probably. He seemed to be playing along with her. You know how she speaks.

IDIS

I asked Kurt! Just now. He says he hasn't seen her. I have a bad feeling.

*

AVRAM

She's probably just taking a walk.

IDIS

Without Jozef?

AVRAM

What?

IDIS

(Panicked)

Jozef. Her doll. Her baby doll! She doesn't go anywhere without it, yet it's sits on her bed as we speak. I'm telling you she's not fine! She's gone! I checked the entire camp!

(Then)

What if she's... heading back to the ghetto?

Avram shakes his head.

AVRAM

No. No. Why would she do that? I don't think she'd do that.

IDIS

We don't know what she would or would not do. She's not in her right mind. We just know she's not here.

(With resolve)

I am going to go after her.

AVRAM

Idis, no- You don't know that's where she went.

IDIS

I have to do something!

AVRAM

Wait!

Avram sighs.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

I'll go with you.

She nods gratefully.

IDIS

I am going to get dressed.

Idis exits towards her sleeping quarters.

AVRAM

(To Roland)

Sorry. We'll talk more later.

Avram goes to exit, as well, but Roland stops him.

ROLAND

Avram!

Avram turns.

AVRAM

What?

ROLAND

...I'll go.

AVRAM

Good. We can cover more ground that way. I doubt she went to Vilna-

ROLAND

No! Just me.

AVRAM
No. I'm definitely going.

ROLAND
You need to stay.

AVRAM
What?

ROLAND
You and Idis both need to stay.
You need to pack.

AVRAM
What are you talking about?

ROLAND
I think I know where Rose is headed. If I'm right, you're not safe here anymore.

AVRAM
I don't understand-

ROLAND
I'm a Nazi!

Avram takes a step back, stunned by the information.

AVRAM
...What?

Roland nods shamefully.

ROLAND
Kurt, too.

AVRAM
That can't be. You're here. You're hiding. Why are you hiding?

ROLAND
We deserted our unit.

AVRAM
You're deserters?

Roland nods.

★

AVRAM (CONT'D)

So you're no longer Nazis.

ROLAND

Kurt is. He wants to go back.

AVRAM
(A slight laugh)

Good luck with that.

ROLAND

He thinks bringing our unit here and having you lead them to the resistance, all will be forgiven.

AVRAM

...But we saved his life.

ROLAND

I know. My brother is... blinded by hate.

AVRAM

So why desert in the first place, if he wants to kill Jews?

ROLAND

They were moving us to the front line. My brother was fine tormenting you all when you're unarmed... but to go into battle? Kurt is a coward.

AVRAM

And you?

Roland looks away. He is ashamed.

ROLAND

I'm a coward for other reasons.

Look, there is no time for me to explain everything. And I know there is no reason for you to trust me, but please believe you are not safe here anymore. Rose is heading to my old platoon. I'm sure of it. If she has made it to them already, then they will be on their way here.

AVRAM

I need to find her.

ROLAND

I will find her! You need to take care of your daughter. And Idis. You need to leave this place.

AVRAM

If we leave here... even if you do find Rose... how will you find us? How will you bring her back to us?

Rolands shakes his head. He realizes this, as well.

ROLAND

I won't.
I'll take care of her, Avram.

AVRAM

No! That's unacceptable.

ROLAND

There is no other way!

AVRAM

We can not leave here without her!

ROLAND

They may already have her! What are you gonna do? Take on a whole German platoon by yourself? You'll die!

AVRAM

And you won't?

ROLAND

...There are worse things.

Avram's gaze softens as he catches the flicker of sincerity and quiet shame in Roland's expression.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

I know where the platoon is. I know my way around the camp. I know where they would hold her. I can get her back.
Or die trying.
What was it you said? Yehareg...

Yehareg ve'al ya'avov.

AVRAM

That's right.

ROLAND

A silent acknowledgment passes between them.

Take what you need and go.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Roland runs off.

SCENE 2

At the clearing where Roland and Kurt first arrived, Miriam forages for mushrooms, collecting them in a sack. Roland runs on stage. He doesn't notice her and beelines to where he had hidden his and Kurt's backpacks. He retrieves his backpack. Then continues on his way.

Miriam, seeing where Roland retrieved his backpack from goes to the hiding spot. A moment later, she emerges with Kurt's backpack.

Black out.

SCENE 3

Rose is in the woods. She sits on a log lost in thought. She takes the scarf wrapped around her and places it down and gently massages her neck. Suddenly she hears a rustling nearby.

She quickly hides, leaving the scarf behind.

Roland stumbles in, breath ragged, his face etched with distress.

His eyes fall upon Rose's scarf draped over the log, and with trembling hands, he picks it up, clutching it tightly to his chest as if seeking solace. Rose, hidden nearby, watches the raw anguish in his embrace. Moved by the depth of his pain, she slowly steps out from her hiding place.

ROSE

Roland?

ROLAND

Rose! Oh thank God!

He goes to her and holds her close.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

I was so worried about you. I mean... My heart was heavy with fear for thee.

She pulls away from him.

ROSE

Why art thou here?

ROLAND

I've come to save thee! To... To stay thy hand from what my brother bade thee do.

ROSE

He bid me but deliver a letter.

ROLAND

Thou must not!

ROSE

How dost thou know I have not done it already?

ROLAND

Because if you did... thou wouldst not stand before me now. How grateful I am to see you here... still with me.

ROSE

Why so grateful?

ROLAND

Is it not plain? I... I care for thee.

ROSE

You care for me? In soothe?

ROLAND

Have I given you cause for doubt?

ROSE

I thought thy care mere pretense.
An Orlando feigning love for Rosalind.
A part played for the play's sake, naught but show.

ROLAND

No.
Nay, sweet Rose.
I mean... I played, 'tis true, but not as thou dost think.
My brother and I... We are not what you think us to be.

ROSE

Is that so?

Roland shakes his head. Rose hands him the
letter that Kurt gave her. It is now opened.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Because I think you're Nazis.

Black out.

SCENE 4

Avram methodically gathers the pots and
cooking tools, preparing for the move with
steady hands.

Nearby, Idis assists, her movements initially
swift and purposeful. But suddenly, she falters,
her hands pausing mid-task. A heavy silence
hangs between them as she stands still, her brow
furrowed, eyes distant, clearly burdened by an
unspoken weight pressing down on her.

AVRAM

Idis, we have to move quickly.
What is it?

IDIS

I just... I can't believe Rose won't be joining us.

Avram nods, feeling the weight of it, as well.

AVRAM

I know.

IDIS

You don't know.

(Confessing)

All this time I wanted rid of her. I wanted you to take her to the Partisans. I thought your daughter was right about that. Let Rose be *their* problem.

AVRAM

I understand. Her instability... was frightening.

IDIS

Yes. I thought that's why I wanted her gone, too. Because she was unstable. That's the story I told myself. But a week ago, it was the middle of the night, I was awake, restless, I heard you cry out. So I went to you. You were crying, "I'll take care of her, Sara! I'll take care of her." I assumed you were talking about Miriam... but then you shouted, "I won't let anything happen to Rose!"

AVRAM

I don't remember doing that.

IDIS

You were asleep.
It occurred to me then that I didn't want Rose gone because she was unstable... I wanted her gone because she reminded you of your wife's sacrifice. Something I could never compete with. And it is only now that she's not coming back I realize how horrible a person I am.

Idis breaks down. Avram does his best to comfort her.

AVRAM

You're not horrible.

IDIS

I used to think I was decent. Selfless. Compassionate. But I'm not. I'm just afraid. All the time.

AVRAM

I think you're a good person.

IDIS

Not like you. Not like Sara. You both have a faith that I just don't have. I wish I did.

She looks at him tenderly.

IDIS (CONT'D)

I see why you loved her.
And why you could never love me.

Avram had no idea. He lets out a deep sigh
that's hard to read.

AVRAM

I don't have as much faith as you think.

IDIS

You don't have to say that.

AVRAM

I'm not just saying it.

IDIS

I know it's a lie-

AVRAM

I *did* take Rose to the Partisans!

IDIS

...What?

Avram sits.

AVRAM

When the other families were here... before winter... That was when Rose was at her worst... Do you remember?

Idis nods.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

We would trying to “fix” her and she would cry out. It was frightening. We didn’t know what to do with her. Or what she might do to herself. The other families were afraid she was... a liability. She would get us caught. She would get us killed. They told me if I didn’t take her... they would leave.

IDIS

I didn’t know that.

AVRAM

I didn’t want them to go. I thought we’d be safer if we stayed together... so one morning I took her. Under the guise of getting supplies, I took Rose to the resistance.

IDIS

So... I don’t understand. Why is she here? Why has she been here? What happened? Did you change your mind? *

Avram shakes his head.

AVRAM

The resistance said no!

IDIS

They said no?

AVRAM

They didn’t want the burden. They turned us away.

IDIS

...Cowards everywhere.

Avram now stands and crosses away from Idis.

AVRAM

On the way back... I knew the other families wouldn’t stay. I knew they would go. I didn’t think they were bluffing. And I started to think they were right to want to go. Rose was a liability. She could get us caught. I... I started to be scared. Or maybe I was angry... for if not for Rose, my wife would still be alive. I don’t know. I don’t know what it was... but I... I...

Avram winces as the weight of the memory
floods back, his expression tightening with guilt.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

I picked up a rock... and as Rose walked ahead of me... I thought of smashing it down on her head.

Idis watches him in silence, her gaze fixed on his face, torn between the urge to speak and the uncertainty of what words could possibly mend the unspoken wound.

AVRAM (CONT'D)

The impulse left as fast as it came. But the shame and guilt have lingered. I've looked to the Talmud for answers. For forgiveness. Or for a way to hide from the truth. Sara sacrificed her life for her niece, and me the coward that I am nearly took it away. You think you're not worthy of *my* love, Idis? I am not worthy of *yours*.

Pause. Avram's hands tremble slightly, and he exhales slowly, trying to steady himself against the ache.

IDIS

As if there is a point to love out here anyway. We're not safe anywhere, are we? Will we ever have a home again? A place where we can be free and not have enemies all around us?

AVRAM

Soon I hope.

IDIS

Clearly not here.

★

AVRAM

Maybe the next place. Let's get Miriam and find out.

Black out.

SCENE 5

Roland and Rose are where we last left them. Rose is seated back on the log, Roland seated next to her.

ROSE

It was six weeks ago when I first woke up... from my state - When the bubble I was so comfortably living in popped. I thought it was impenetrable to the malignant realities of this world.

I mean, there had been moments early on when trickles of truth seeped in, but somehow my delusional self was able to ignore them, mute the voices trying to get inside my head. Shout over them if I had to. Will them away.

Six weeks ago however I woke and it was twenty below here in the forest. There was no willing that away. My protective shell had been breached by the cold, cruel hand of winter. My pastoral world had literally been shaken as I lay shivering on the frozen ground. And in that moment, it was impossible to deny that I was living in this horrible time... in this horrible place... hiding for my life.

Roland nods. Then:

ROLAND

You have been pretending? For six weeks?

ROSE

Yes.

ROLAND

Why?

ROSE

Because I want to go back! Back to my delusion. The truth I am forced to face here is far too painful. I can not stay. But I don't know how to return to my midsummer night's dream, where the world is literally as I like it.

ROLAND

Rose...

ROSE

I could kill myself. God knows I've thought about that before. Yes, it's a sin, but surely there can be no greater Hell than this.

Or could there be?

I think about Hamlet. To be or not to be, right? He weighed it out. Where did he land? What did he say on the matter?

"To die, to sleep;

To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause..."

What if it's not my midsummer night's dream. What if it's not as I like it. What if I dream about...

She shakes her head, holding back tears.

ROLAND

Your son?

Rose nods.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

He was killed? By the Nazis?

Rose cries. She shakes her head.

ROSE

NOT by the Nazis.

Rose collapses back down onto the log. Roland doesn't dare ask the obvious follow up. He is pretty sure he knows the answer and doesn't want to force Rose to say it.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I need out of this horrible reality. How do I forget again? How do I protect myself from the uncomfortable truth?

Beat.

Roland gently takes her hand.

ROLAND

The unwillingness to reckon with uncomfortable truths has a cost. But I think you know that. Otherwise you would have delivered my brother's letter.

ROSE

That letter is winter all over again.

ROLAND

I know.

ROSE

I don't know what to do.

ROLAND

We have to go back. If we hurry we can catch your family before they leave camp. Otherwise we may never see them again.

ROSE

I can't hurry. I can't. I'm too tired. I've been up all night. I haven't eaten. You go. I'll... I'll catch up with you.

ROLAND

I'm not leaving here without you.

ROSE

I promise I'll be right behind you. Go! Make sure they don't leave.

Roland is not sure if he should leave her, but know if he doesn't she will likely never see her family again.

ROLAND

Please come back.

ROSE

I will.

He hands her his bag.

ROLAND

Here. There's food in my bag. I'll meet you back at camp.

She nods.

ROSE

But Roland... Don't tell them. I don't want them to know.

ROLAND

...That you're not delusional?

She nods.

ROSE

Promise me you won't say a word. If they know... I'll never find my way back there.

ROLAND

What if you don't go back? What if you stay in this world with me?

ROSE

I need to go back.

Roland acquiesces.

ROLAND

I won't tell them.

He runs off.

SCENE 6

Roland runs back to camp where Avram, Idis
and Miriam are all seated around the campfire.

*

ROLAND

Oh thank God! I'm glad I caught you all before you left.

IDIS

Unfortunately you're not the first to catch us.

Seated in the shadows we can now see Kurt,
who is pointing his gun at the family.

KURT

Hello Roland.

ROLAND

What are you doing?

KURT

Take out your gun. Help me.

ROLAND

Help you what?

KURT

Watch them. Guard them until our troops arrive.

Roland shakes his head.

ROLAND

Kurt, don't do this.

KURT

TAKE OUT YOUR GUN AND HELP ME!

Roland flinches at Kurt's sudden outburst, his composure momentarily faltering. He straightens, forcing a steadiness in his voice and stance, determined not to let the crack in his resolve show.

ROLAND

...I won't.

KURT

You won't? Are you with them now?

ROLAND

These people are not your enemy.

KURT

You would align yourself with this filthy race?

ROLAND

Kurt-

KURT

What have they done to you?

ROLAND

WHAT HAVE OUR OWN PEOPLE DONE TO YOU?

What happened to my brother? When did you become so... unjust.

KURT

This is just, what we're doing.

Roland shakes his head.

ROLAND

I don't think so.

(Then)

I remember when we were little. I was maybe 10. You were 12. I took that bicycle from that boy. You remember that boy? What was his name? Karl, I think. A Jewish boy!

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)

He left his bicycle in the park, by the swings. He went off to the slide and left his bicycle by the swings and I grabbed it. Rode it home. And you were so mad at me. You made me take it back to the park. You made me apologize to Karl. He didn't even know it was taken yet. He didn't even know it was missing. But you made me apologize. You made me... You...

You used to know the difference between right and wrong. *You taught me.*

KURT

I'm still teaching you. The Juden are the source of all that is wrong! Don't you see that?

ROLAND

I don't.

KURT

You used to.

ROLAND

I don't anymore.

KURT

Disease, injustice, communism, it's all because of them!

ROLAND

You have been lied to.

KURT

I know the truth!

ROLAND

You know everything BUT the truth! The truth is what kept from you! The truth is what they filtered out leaving you only with their fiction.

KURT

Wrong!

ROLAND

They don't care about truth!
They only care about order!

KURT

Pick a side! Now! I won't ask again. You follow me. Or you follow them.

ROLAND

I did follow you. And it led me to a dark place. To my worst self. My greatest shame.
Now I follow them.

KURT

I won't be able to protect you when our people come.

ROLAND

They're not coming!

Rose enters. Upon seeing her, Kurt's expression falls, the realization of his failed plan settling over him like a heavy weight.

KURT

What is she doing here?

Roland takes out Kurt's letter and tosses it in the fire.

ROLAND

She's not your messenger.

KURT

No? Then what good is she?

(To Rose)

What good are you, Rose, if you can't complete one simple task?

ROLAND

Kurt, please.

KURT

What is the point of you? Putting on your little play for the Duke and the Queen of the Fairies. What is that? It is pointless. It's sick. You are sick. And it's made you useless. And what do we do to things that are sick and have no use?

IDIS

Stop talking to her.

KURT

I'll do what I want!

(To Rose)

What do we do, Rose?

Rose steps forward to Kurt.

ROSE

I am not unwell. And I am certainly not without use. It doth amaze me that you think that.

KURT

(Mocking)

Does it *doth* amaze you? You're crazy as a loon!

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE

I am a teller of tales, a weaver of fates. Know'st not the power such art doth wield?
Surely, thou must, for thou thyself are spun from the threads of story.

As am I. As are we all.

'Tis not the sword that doth conquer in battle, but the tale that girds the heart of him who wields it that bends men's will and stirs their very souls. The teller of such tales doth hold dominion over men's minds, shaping their deeds, forging their alliances, e'en their very morals. Story is the true power that sways the course of history. Therein lies the weight of a story's worth, and that of the teller who bears it.

KURT

I don't know what the hell you're talking about.

ROSE

Some tellers bind hearts and raise souls to heights most noble. Others, alas, with darker designs, aspire to stir souls toward foul ends.

As for me, my purpose is more tender, more personal.

I have lost my son, Kurt.

The Fairy Queen, in her wisdom - or folly - deemed she must take him. What tale she hath heard to compel her so, I know not. Yet, I seek to counter that tale with one of my own, one woven from love and loss, of sacrifice and hope. I wish to cast it forth, that it may reach her heart, echo within her soul, and perchance shift her mind toward mercy. Peradventure, she shall see new faces in her own tale, see with new eyes and feel with new empathy.

I seek but to be reunited with my child. Nothing more. Won't you let me live that story? I prithee. For both our sakes. I fear what happens if you continue down this path.

I am not your enemy. Nor am I useless. Nor are any among us. To take a life, that is useless. That is an act without meaning. But to give life... to a story...

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

to cradle it within thy heart when all else falls to ruin, a tale that bears hope, e'en in the blackest hour... that, good sir, is purpose.

Pause.

For a fleeting moment, Kurt wavers, visibly moved by Rose's sincerity and emotion. Yet, he quickly steels himself, refusing to let the feeling linger.

KURT

So it's true what they say about you people... and your duplicitous nature. I've been warned how cunning you can be, using language to exert your influence. But you will not manipulate me!

You wish to be reunited with your son?

He raises the gun and points it at her.

Roland steps between Kurt and Rose.

ROLAND

Put the gun down, Kurt.

KURT

Get out of the way.

ROLAND

No.

KURT

Just because she fooled you-

ROLAND

No one is trying to fool you!

KURT

Get out of the way!

ROLAND

No!

KURT

You think I won't kill you?

The brothers lock eyes, tension crackling between them. Neither flinches, a silent battle of wills unfolding as neither yields ground.

ROLAND

We'll find out. Are you so far gone to kill your own brother? To pull the trigger yourself?

Kurt pauses, weighing Roland's words. A twisted grin slowly spreads across his face. He reaches into his bag, drawing out a knife, then turns his gaze toward Miriam, extending the blade toward her with cold intent.

KURT

(To Miriam)

You. You say you want to kill Nazis? There's one standing before you. Take this. Take it.

AVRAM

Leave her alone!

KURT

Shut your mouth!

(Then, to Miriam)

He is a Nazi, Miriam. Do you know what he's done? He killed a boy. A Jewish boy. Younger than you even. Murdered him in cold blood!

The air thickens as Kurt's words land. Miriam stiffens, her breath catching as the weight of the revelation hits her. She turns to Roland.

MIRIAM

Is that true?

Roland stands motionless, unable to meet her eyes. Then nods shamefully, haunted by the memory.

KURT

You want revenge? Now's your chance. Kill him. Kill that Nazi. Then you can leave.

Miriam takes the knife.

ROLAND

He's lying to you. He's not going to let you go.

KURT

You and all of your family can go if you do this.

She approaches Roland, the knife outstretched.

ROLAND

He will not let you go. He is lying.

MIRIAM

Maybe. But you did kill a boy, right? That's not a lie, is it?

ROLAND

No. I did kill a boy.

Her grip on the knife tightens.

MIRIAM

Why?

ROLAND

I was brainwashed. And scared. My superiors ordered me to. I was scared if I didn't, they would kill me.

MIRIAM

You should have let them.

ROLAND

You're right.
I'll let you.

Roland raises his hands and slowly starts to unbutton his shirt.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

For some, for my brother, committing such heinous acts deepened their belief. There was no turning back for them. It had to be true what they believed, otherwise they were monsters. For others... For me... it was like waking from a terrible dream. Only it wasn't a dream. The boy was dead. And I was the one who killed him. I was a monster. I deserve no less, Miriam.

Roland removes his shirt, revealing his bare chest to Miriam, waiting for her to bury the knife in his heart.

Miriam notices something around Roland's neck.

MIRIAM

Where did you get that?

ROLAND

What?

MIRIAM

The necklace.

ROLAND

Rose gave it to me.

MIRIAM

It's a Magen David. A Jewish star.

ROLAND

I know what it is.

MIRIAM

Why are you wearing it? You're a Nazi.

ROLAND

...Because Rose gave it to me.

The anger in Miriam's face softens, confusion and realization washing over her. Slowly, her grip on the knife loosens. She turns toward Kurt, her hand trembling as the blade slips from her grasp and falls to the ground with a dull thud.

MIRIAM

I can't do this. I am not a murderer.

Kurt shakes his head in disgust.

KURT

Useless.

So now... I will kill all of you myself.

AVRAM

We saved your life. All of us here. And you would murder us? Have you no gratitude? No decency?

KURT

I'll tell you what... I'll let you pick the order. That's decent, isn't it?

AVRAM

Where is your humanity?

KURT

"Humanitarianism is the expression of stupidity and cowardice."
Who dies first, Avram? Your niece?

He points the gun at Rose. Roland immediately
stands between them.

KURT (CONT'D)

My brother?

Miriam now stands between Roland and Kurt.

KURT (CONT'D)

Your daughter?

Idis walks over and stands in front of Miriam. *

KURT (CONT'D)

Idis?

Finally, Avram walks to the front of the line.

KURT (CONT'D)

You. Good. Now we have order. So much better than truth.

The lights darken on all but Kurt who points his
gun at Avram.

KURT (CONT'D)

They didn't have guns in Shakespeare's time, Rose, did they? Let me assure you, they are more powerful than any story.

Bang!

Kurt looks down. Blood starts to stain his shirt.

On the other side of the stage, a light comes on Rose, who has just shot Kurt with Roland's gun.

Kurt falls to the ground. He's dead.

A long pause. Then Rose starts to cry out.

ROSE

WHY? WHY DID YOU MAKE ME DO THIS? I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS! I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS! WHY DID YOU MAKE ME DO THIS?

As she continues to yell, her hand holding the gun slowly raises.

ROSE (CONT'D)

WHY? I WANT OUT! YOU HEAR ME? I WANT OUT!

Her hand is now at shoulder level and she starts to turn her hand inward so the gun is coming closer and closer to being pointed at her head. *

ROSE (CONT'D)

I WANT OUT OF THIS HORRIBLE REALITY!

The gun is now pointed at her head. She continues to cry. Her hand starts to tighten.

IDIS

ROSE!

Idis steps forward.

IDIS (CONT'D)

My God, sweet Rose. The Fairy Queen shall be deeply moved by thy performance. I do swear it!

ROSE

...My performance?

IDIS

Aye, it doth transcend all! So full of truth, 'tis as honest as daylight. Speak, Avram, doth thou not agree?

AVRAM

What? Oh, indeed! It... It stirreth my soul. I cannot tear mine eyes away. Perchance the Fairy Queen herself doth watch us even now.

ROSE

The Fairy Queen?

MIRIAM

Methinks she doth, father. I feel her presence near.

The lights dim softly as the stage begins its slow transformation.

IDIS

We must begin the tale anew, from its very start.

ROSE

But... this isn't part of the tale.

AVRAM

'Tis part of it, should thou desire it so.

ROSE

But what about Kurt?

Avram, Idis and Miriam aren't sure what to say. *

ROSE (CONT'D) *

What about Kurt? *

Suddenly Roland steps forward. *

ROLAND

My brother? He doth fare well. *

ROSE

What? No. I shot him. I killed him!

ROLAND

He doth fare well.

ROSE

He does?

ROLAND

Aye. I see him yonder, in the park...

Roland points off in the distance.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

He sport... with his friend... Karl.

*

Upstage, we can silhouette of Kurt in a park
playing with another boy.

ROSE

Can this all be true?

ROLAND

It is our tale... and so we make it true.

Miriam steps forward.

MIRIAM

Lo, the Fairy Queen doth come; And Rose... thy son is with her.

AVRAM

What say you, niece? Shall we return again to the story's unfolding?

Rose turns to Roland.

ROSE

Do you think I should?

ROLAND

Return? Maybe it's for the best.

ROSE

Will you come with me?

ROLAND

We shall all follow thee.

The set is fully transformed now into the
pastoral beauty of the forest of Ardenne.

ROSE

Then let us begin anew. And prithee, let me call to mind this is a tale of love, of hope, and
of forgiveness. And it unfolds here, in the fair Forest of Ardenne.

Though Rose continues speaking, it becomes
less and less audible.

ROSE (CONT'D)

At the start of play, Orlando doth entreat his elder brother, Oliver, to grant him a portion of the inheritance their father left behind. But Oliver, in his malice, doth conspire to rid himself of Orlando, urging him to partake in a perilous wrestling match, one that beareth near certain death...

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★

Roland approaches the others.

ROLAND

What we are doing, curating this false narrative, enabling this false comfort...

Roland shakes his head uncertainly.

AVRAM

As you said, it's for the best.

MIRIAM

We are protecting her.

ROLAND

We are cocooning her. Are we sure this is the right thing?

IDIS

Who can be sure? But in the moment, when the painful truth is so great, a noble lie does feel like the right thing.

ROLAND

But will we always be able to tell the noble lies from the dangerous ones?
Will we ever believe the truth again?

AVRAM

Maybe there is no more truth. Maybe it is all just a dream. A dream where we get to make the world... as we like it.

Black out.

The end.

★