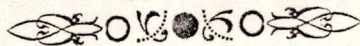


V

Sholem Aleichem It's Hard to Be a Jew by Sholem Aleichem
 Written in collaboration with I. D. Berkowitz; trans. Mark Schweid

CAST OF CHARACTERS



DAVID SHAPIRO, a respectable Jew with a graying Herzl beard, nearing fifty. He was once rich, but is at present a small broker on the exchange. He is immaculately dressed, bears himself with dignity, has an authoritative manner of speech and a hot temper.

SARAH SHAPIRO, his wife. She is several years younger than her husband. She is simple, but not a foolish woman. There are traces of her past beauty.

BETTY, their daughter, 19, is in her graduating class in High School. A beautiful and capricious girl.

SYOMKE, their son, a lively school-boy, 13.

SHNEYERSON, a College graduate, about 22, typically Jewish. Black, slightly curly hair, Semitic nose, fiery eyes.

IVANOV, his chum, a Gentile. A classmate of SHNEYERSON. A typical Russian. Red cheeks, his hair is fair and straight, clipped in Russian style.

HURVITCH, ex-preparatory student, now a teacher, Passing as a watch-maker. A Litvak.

KETZELE, a little Jew, very hirsute, somewhat irritable speaks rapidly, repeating his words. He wears a short coat and a faded hat. Hangs out on the exchange.

A GROUP OF GIRLS, BETTY's school friends. They are all wearing green dresses, black aprons, white collars and cuffs. All the time they are laughing and making bows.

A GROUP OF COLLEGE BOYS, all Russian types, in uniform, with white buttons.

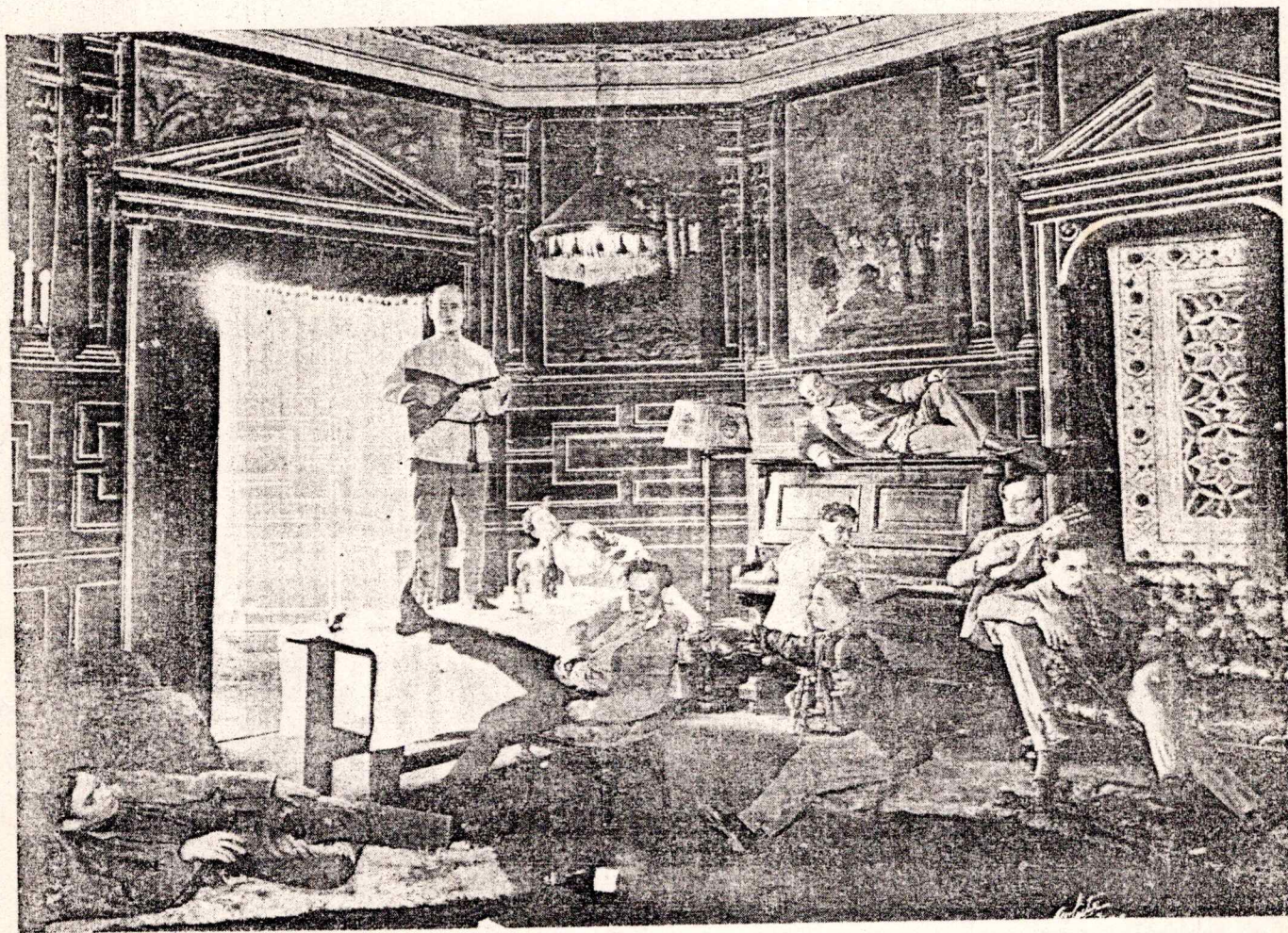
A CHIEF OF THE GENS d'ARMES.

POLICEMEN, GENS d'ARMES, INSPECTORS, A

CONCIERGE with a badge.

WAITERS IN THE RESTAURANT.

PROLOGUE



IVANOV (Paul Muni, seated playing mandolin) and SHNEYERSON (Mischa German, on top of piano), with a group of students having a party.—Scene taken from a presentation by Maurice Schwartz Art Theatre in New York.

Place: The Prologue takes place in a Russian city, where not all kinds of Jews are permitted to live.

Time: 1913-1914.

SCENE: A separate room at a swanky cafe-restaurant. Luxuriously furnished. Tall mirrors. Soft seats, pictures on the walls, a piano. Table in centre, with plenty of drinks and good food. Many empty bottles. Things are in disorder, much smoke is in the air. Some twenty-odd young men, who are about to enter the University, are having a party. Even before the curtain rises, they are heard singing:

Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenus dum summus,
Post uundas Juventutem
Nos habebit humus . . .

When the curtain rises everyone is pretty far gone. The young men are all in uniform, in various poses: one plays the piano, another is sitting on the floor, or stretched out on the sofa, and still another is on the table. Some are smoking and others are still holding their glasses—but all are gay. VANYA IVANOV is facing the audience—he is conducting a chorus with a teaspoon, ending the song with:

Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenus dum summus . . .

Then he taps on the table, calling in Russian:

IVANOV: Hey, Champān—sko—vo! *Tchort vozmi!*

A STUDENT: Vanya, are you crazy? Champagne? Have you an idea what this would cost in this place?

IVANOV: None of your business! It's on me, *tchort vozmi!* I pay! *Champān—sko—vo!*

(Two WAITERS are bringing champagne and placing it on the table. They fill the glasses and exit).

IVANOV: Gospoda! Pick up your glasses, *tchort vozmi!* (All take them) What were we yesterday? Why, yesterday we were just kids, snot-noses, school-boys! But now? Tomorrow? *Tchort vozmi!* Tomorrow we are men! Students! Down with High School! Long live the University! Hurrah!

A STUDENT: Let's go in there, to the larger room.

(They all leave the room, except IVANOV and SHNEYERSON)

IVANOV: (With his arm on SHNEYERSON's shoulder) What's the matter with you, Hershko?

SHNEYERSON: (Waking up) Nothing, nothing at all.

IVANOV: You seem to be down in the dumps.

SHNEYERSON: Who, me? You're not seeing right.

IVANOV: I'm not seeing right? I see. I've been watching you all the time. You can't fool me, Hershko. I know you.

SHNEYERSON: I'm glad you know me. Still, it wouldn't hurt if you knew me a little closer.

IVANOV: What then?

SHNEYERSON: You would ask no questions. You'd understand then, that I am not one of you boys; I'm not your equal. (Pause) I cannot take the same measure of enjoyment as you do.

IVANOV: Why not?

SHNEYERSON: Because, when you fellows are enjoying yourselves, you're taking in that joy with all your being, with all your limbs and senses . . .

IVANOV: (Ironically) And you?

SHNEYERSON: Me? I mustn't. Before my eyes I see forever the inscription: *Memento mori* . . .

IVANOV: *Tchort vozmi*, what are you talking about? What inscription? What *memento mori*? . . .

SHNEYERSON: Did you forget that I'm . . . that I'm a Jew?

IVANOV: What the deuce is this? So you're a Jew, so what?

SHNEYERSON: Nothing . . . (Gazing at him in silence)

IVANOV: I don't understand you, Hershko. You're talking strangely tonight. (Extremely polite) I should think you have no kick against pals . . . We, your pals . . .

SHNEYERSON: Pals! Pals! You're a fool, Vanya! Who's talking of pals? You seem to think that the whole world is contained in here, in this room. We and our pals, eh? You're forgetting that there is a world outside the University, and a big world at that. There are other people beside us. But you seem to know very little about that big world outside, almost nothing. You know nothing of the hell outside. (Pause) If you were in my skin for at least one year, then you'd know, then you'd feel what it means to be subject to percentages in college, ministerial circulars and similar good things . . .

IVANOV: What do you give a hang for circulars and percentages? With the kind of diploma you have! With a gold medal!

SHNEYERSON: Gold medal, indeed! Those things have been seen before. Aren't there enough medalists left over from last year? And from two years ago? Ha, ha, medalists indeed! But what's there to talk about? You can't understand it!

IVANOV: (Imitating) You can't understand it! . . . Why can't I understand it, *tchort vozmi*? I'm anytime as smart as you.

SHNEYERSON: Darn fool! You don't have to be smart to understand it, you just have to be a Jew. If you were a Jew only for one year . . .

IVANOV: What'd happen then?

SHNEYERSON: You couldn't take it. Not even one year.

IVANOV: You mean that?

SHNEYERSON: Convinced.

IVANOV: I say you're mistaken. You don't know me. You don't know Vanya Ivanov. (Pause) I'll tell you what. An idea strikes me. Listen, Hershko. How would you like to change parts with me?

SHNEYERSON: What do you mean change parts?

IVANOV: Let me put the combination before you. You say, I couldn't be in your skin for one year? Let's change then.

SHNEYERSON: (Still not comprehending) What do you mean change?

IVANOV: Very simple. We'll change. You suggested I try and be in your skin for one year, that is, I try and be a Jew? Alright! We'll change for one year. You'll be Ivanov and I'll be Shneyerson.

SHNEYERSON: (Rising) It seems, Vanya, you can't find anyone else to ridicule. Go look for a fool bigger than yourself . . .

IVANOV: (Also rising) I'm not fooling. I'm serious, *tchort vozmi!* I should like to be in your place. I'd like to try it on myself how it is to be a Jew. How does a Jew feel? This is our chance. We both have to enter the University. We're both of us coming to a new place, a city where no one knows us. What devil is supposed to know which of us is Ivanov and which Shneyerson? Or who would give

a hoot whether I'm Shneyerson and you're Ivanov? How do you like the idea?

SHNEYERSON: What shall I say? I can only say you're blabbing, because you're . . .

IVANOV: Drunk, eh?

SHNEYERSON: God forbid. Who says you're drunk? I'm only trying to say, you're a little under the weather . . . just a bit soused . . .

IVANOV: Me, soused? You're a liar. I was never more sober in all my life, *tchort vozmi!* I'm serious, Hershko, pal, I give you my word. Take my hand. (*Offering his hand*) I want to try how it feels to be a Jew.

SHNEYERSON: You'll feel it, alright. You won't urge anyone ever after.

IVANOV: (*Beats his chest*) You don't know me. You don't know Vanya Ivanov, *tchort vozmi!* Listen to me, let's change. Just for one year . . .

SHNEYERSON: (*Pushing him aside*) Don't talk nonsense. It's sickening. What do you mean change? How can you change?

IVANOV: Very simple, you just change. I'll be Shneyerson, you'll be Ivanov. You'll give me your diploma with all your top marks, and I'll give you mine with all the low marks that nearly flunked me, *tchort vozmi!* (*Offering his hand*) Is it a go?

SHNEYERSON: Honest, Vanya, you're talking like a baby. What are you talking about? Documents are no joke, and what will our parents say?

IVANOV: Documents, nonsense. It's only for one year. Who cares? Our parents, what do they care? Who's supposed to know it? We'll be at the same University, they'll be writing us and we'll exchange the letters. Isn't it simple, smarty? (*He drags the resisting SHNEYERSON to the table*).

SHNEYERSON: Leave me alone, Vanya. Then our friends have to know it . . .

IVANOV: Don't worry about them. They won't give us away. Besides, it remains right here with us. (*Calling*) Come in, boys! (*They enter*) Listen boys, from now on I'm no more myself. I'm he and he is me. Don't laugh! I'm not drunk, *tchort vozmi!* You know very well I'm not drunk. I know how to drink. Now, listen, pals, Shneyerson and I changed places for one year. We made a bet. You all promise faithfully not to divulge our secret for one year. You're not concerned. Just look, listen and be dumb. I want your promise that the thing is buried with us right here and not a soul will know. Promise?

VOICES: It's a promise. We don't even know what it's all about.

IVANOV: In a minute you'll know. Raise your hand and say: I promise.

ALL: (*Raising their hands*) We promise . . . (*Singing*)

IVANOV: Stop kidding, no singing. Just say we promise.

ALL: I promise! I promise!

IVANOV: That's the way. Now that you've promised, let me tell you what it's all about. Our pal here, Hershko Shneyerson, as you know, is a son of that chosen people that's hated and persecuted throughout the world, wherever it is found scattered; in a word, he's a Jew, and it is very hard to be a Jew. Almost impossible. That's what Hershko says. But I say, it's not so terrible. The devil is not as black as he is painted . . . He says the reason I'm serious is because I never was a Jew. He says that if I should try to be in his skin for one year, then I'd feel it. Well, we decided that I should enter his skin for one year.

You want to know how this is to be accomplished? We made a change for one year . . .

SHNEYERSON: We didn't make the change yet, but he wants us to make it.

IVANOV: It's made. Don't listen to him. The change is made. From this minute on he is no more Shneyerson, but Ivanov, and I'm no more Ivanov. I'm Shneyerson. (*He jumps from the chair on which he stood and changes coats with SHNEYERSON*).

ALL: (*Applauding*)

IVANOV: (*Jumping onto a chair again*) Friends! Now that the thing is done, permit me to introduce myself. I'm no more the Christian gentleman Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov, but . . . (*Takes out passport from SHNEYERSON's pocket, reading*) a citizen from Shklov, *tchort vozmi*, Hersh Movshov Shneyerson, the son of the hated and persecuted but God-chosen people of Israel. And you, Hershko, take out from your pocket your newly acquired documents. He is no more Hersh Movshov Shneyerson, but a true gentleman, the son of a true State Councillor, *tchort vozmi*, Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov! To celebrate this metamorphosis I propose that we empty our glasses. Here's health! (*Glasses are filled*)

SHNEYERSON: Friends! Our pal Vanya Ivanov, or if you wish to call him by his new name, Hershko Shneyerson, made a joke, which, as you now see, turned into a serious matter. The thing is done. We've made a change. I wish us luck. Which of us two struck a better bargain—that I know, and you too, if you have any sense in your heads, ought to know. But, in case you don't understand it, I'm not to blame . . . There's one thing, though, I must tell you in advance: I have one condition, in case anything happens to either of us during this year . . .

IVANOV: (*Interrupting*) No conditions! No compromise! Whatever happens will have to be accepted. The thing is done, that's all there's to it.

ALL: It's done! It's done!

SHNEYERSON: So, remember, Vanya, I mean Hershko, no regrets!

IVANOV: Regrets! The Ivanovs? . . . I beg your pardon! I mean the Shneyersons never have any regrets. I come from a people, *tchort vozmi*, that went through fire and water and anything between. My great-great-grandfathers had to go through enough before they settled in the blessed land of Egypt . . . Pardon me! I mean Canaan. And after we had settled in the blessed land of Canaan then Belshazzar . . . I beg your pardon, I mean Nebuchadnezzar, came and burned our holy temple and led off our sons and daughters in iron chains into his barbaric Babylon, and then to Spain . . . Friends! Can you imagine chums, what sufferings my ancients went through in the Inquisition? They let themselves be burned at the stake, *tchort vozmi*, and they let themselves be killed, cut, hacked, broken, quartered . . .

ALL: (*Applauding enthusiastically*) Bravo, Hershko, good for you!

VOICES: You can't even recognize that he's a Gentile!

OTHER VOICES: A Jew! A real Jew! (*Laughter*)

A STUDENT: A born Jew! All he's missing is just his ear-locks!

ANOTHER: And his holy fringes!

ANOTHER: Oy, oy, Tottele! Mommele! (*Laughter*)

IVANOV: Silence, *tchort vozmi!*

SHNEYERSON: Take your time, this ridicule you're getting is only a beginning. You'll get more later . . .

IVANOV: Whoever would dare to ridicule a Jew, will have me to deal with. (*Showing his fist*) I won't let anyone get away. I won't permit anyone, *tchort vozmi*, to make fun of me. I hail from a people that gave the world a law, and a Czar David, and a psalm, *tchort vozmi*! Fill your glasses again, please, and let's drink for this people, for the chosen people of Israel, to whose children I now belong. Long live that ancient chosen people! Hurrah!

ALL: Hurrah!

ONE: Well, what are we waiting for?

VOICES: Let's pick him up! Come on, boys!

ANOTHER: Both of them!

ANOTHER: Both of them! (*One group is raising SHNEY-ERSON, another is lifting IVANOV*)

A STUDENT: Three cheers for Hershko!

ANOTHER: Three cheers for Vanya! (*Merry noises*)

CURTAIN

Act I

SCENE: At DAVID SHAPIRO'S—A large dining-room, snugly furnished. Not luxuriously, but neatly and with taste. White curtains, green vases, an old piano, a few Jewish pictures. There are four doors; two on the right, leading to the other rooms; one in the background, leading downstairs; one in the upstage, left corner, opening into the kitchen. Left, a window. Near the window, close to the foot-lights, there is a sofa. BETTY, her head in her hand, deep in a book, is sitting on the sofa. She is dressed in a green school-girl dress, with a black apron, white collar and cuffs, long pig-tail. SYOMKE is pacing the room with a book in his hand, wearing his school-uniform. He is repeating his lesson, two lines of Russian poetry:

Kak ninie zbiraietaya vieshchie Oleg
Otomstit nierazumnim razoram . . .

A distant door-bell is heard ringing, then SARAH SHAPIRO, with rolled-up sleeves, enters from the kitchen.

SARAH: Betty! (*BETTY does not answer*) Betty!

BETTY: (*Without taking her eyes from the book*) Mhm?

SARAH: Can't you tear yourself away from that book at all?

BETTY: What do you want, mother?

SARAH: That's a nice how do you do. What do I want? Isn't somebody ringing? (*Another ring*) It must be somebody wanting a room.

BETTY: So many ask about the room, but no one wants to rent it. Ever since you hung out the room-to-rent sign, the bell never stops ringing, but no one likes the room.

SARAH: *Mazel tov!* How do you know? Maybe this person will like to rent it?

BETTY: (*Still in the book*) What's there to like? A little cubicle without furniture, without looks, without anything.

SARAH: What do you expect, mirrors? Velvet sofas? Did you ever hear the likes of it? For the money we're asking, there's enough furniture there. Just go downstairs, please, and open the door. I can't show my face on the stairs like this. I'm smudged all over . . . Someone might see me . . .

BETTY: (*Not removing her eyes from the book*) Why pick on me? Let Syomke go.

SARAH: What are you dicking about? The child is learning his lesson, so must he be disturbed? What do you know about that?

BETTY: (*Deep in the book*) No calamity. It won't hurt his lesson at all if he goes to open the door.

SARAH: (*Irrked*) My aristocratic children! I don't know how I can stand it! (*To SYOMKE*) Go, Syomenue, open the door downstairs. Someone's ringing.

SYOMKE: (*Looking at his mother, repeating*) "*Kak ninie zbiraietaya vieshchie Oleg . . .*"

SARAH: Look at that, I'm talking to him as if to a wall. I'm telling you, go open the door. They're ringing. Well, how do you like that? (*Again ringing*)

SYOMKE: (*Awakening*) They're ringing? I didn't even hear any bell ringing. I didn't. I'm rushing. (*Running playfully to the door*)

SARAH: (*Preparing tea on the table*) Everyone in the house is so dizzy. He is always on the exchange, scheming little deals. This one goes to high school, reading books. The other goes to school, doing his homework. And poor me must be on my feet day and night, what with one thing and another, here and there, for this one, for that one . . .

BETTY: (*In the book*) Who are you talking to, mama? To yourself?

SARAH: And who should I be talking to? What do you know! Everyone here is so preoccupied, and I'm running around like a bride's mother at the wedding of her youngest daughter. God bless you all, but I have to do all the work in this house, without any help, without anyone lending a hand . . .

BETTY: Whose fault is it, mummy? Why don't you take in a maid?

SARAH: (*Talking in one breath, while the daughter is still looking into her book*) Maids I should take in? And where shall I get money to pay them? From the great earnings on the exchange, that your poor father has come down to, to be a petty broker like Ketzele and other *Shlimmazels* like him, and with the expenses we have now-a-days too? You have to pay rent, you have to pay for the right to live here, you have to pay for the right to send the children to school . . . Day and night, all you hear about is the right to do this, or the right to do that.

(*SYOMKE comes back, following him is IVANOV*)

IVANOV: Have you a room to let?

SARAH: *Mazel tov!* (*To BETTY*) Has it come to this, that Gentiles are looking for rooms in a Jewish street? (*To IVANOV*) It's here, here . . .

IVANOV: Furnished?

SARAH: Furnished.

IVANOV: May I see the room?

SARAH (*Rolling up her sleeves*) Why not? (*To BETTY*) By the look on his face I know he'll never rent the room. (*To him*) Please! (*He puts down his little suitcase and blanket. SARAH takes him off right. After a moment she returns with him*) Sit down, please. Why don't you sit down?

IVANOV: (*Standing*) Well, what will you charge me for the room?

SARAH: (*Aside*) Betty did you hear that? The gentleman likes the room. He is asking, how much. How much shall I tell him?

BETTY: (*Meeting his eyes*) As much as you want. What are you asking me for?

SARAH: I don't know how much to tell him. Fifteen? You think that's enough? Twenty? Maybe that would be too much? The way he is dressed, he looks to have plenty of money. But to look at his little bag, he seems to be a *Goy*, a *Shlimmazel*.

BETTY: Tell him as much as you want, mother, but it's got to take an end.

SARAH: The room will cost you twenty-five a month rock-bottom.

IVANOV: Twenty-five? Splendid.

SARAH: (To BETTY) It just slipped my tongue, twenty-five. I thought he would bargain, but he seems to be satisfied. (To IVANOV) But there's a hitch to it. I must tell you in advance, we have a custom to collect half a month's rent in advance.

IVANOV: Even for a whole month. (Giving her money)

SARAH: What do you say, Betty? He seems to be too quick with money. Who knows who he is, the *Shlimmazell*!

BETTY: Don't you think you've had enough with your *Shlimmazells*? What do you care who he is, as long as he pays the rent?

SARAH: What do you mean what I care, how do you like that! I'm certainly not going to let in anybody, and a *Goy* to the bargain. That's number one. Then we have to ask him about some papers, you know what I mean, black on white.

BETTY: So why don't you ask him?

SARAH: I certainly will. (To IVANOV) Excuse me . . . don't take it too hard . . . We have a strict rule around here . . . a very strict rule . . . We must present papers to the police . . . documents . . . a passport . . . Have you got a passport?

IVANOV: What? A passport? (He gives SARAH his passport)

SARAH: (Giving it to BETTY) Take a look, Betty, and tell me what's written in it.

BETTY: (Reading half-loud) The bearer, a citizen of Shklov, Hersh Movshov Shneyerson . . . where Jews are permitted to reside . . . (A pause in which they all look at each other)

SARAH: (Happily) So you're one of our own? So why did we have to go to all that trouble and be so careful, thinking you're a *Goy*? And all the while we could talk plain *momme-loshen*, what do you know about that! Please, forgive me if I did say something improper . . .

IVANOV: (To BETTY) I don't understand . . . What's your mother saying? . . .

BETTY: (To her mother) He says he doesn't understand what you are talking about.

SARAH: That's a nice how-do-you-do. A Jew by the name of Shneyerson, don't understand what I'm saying?

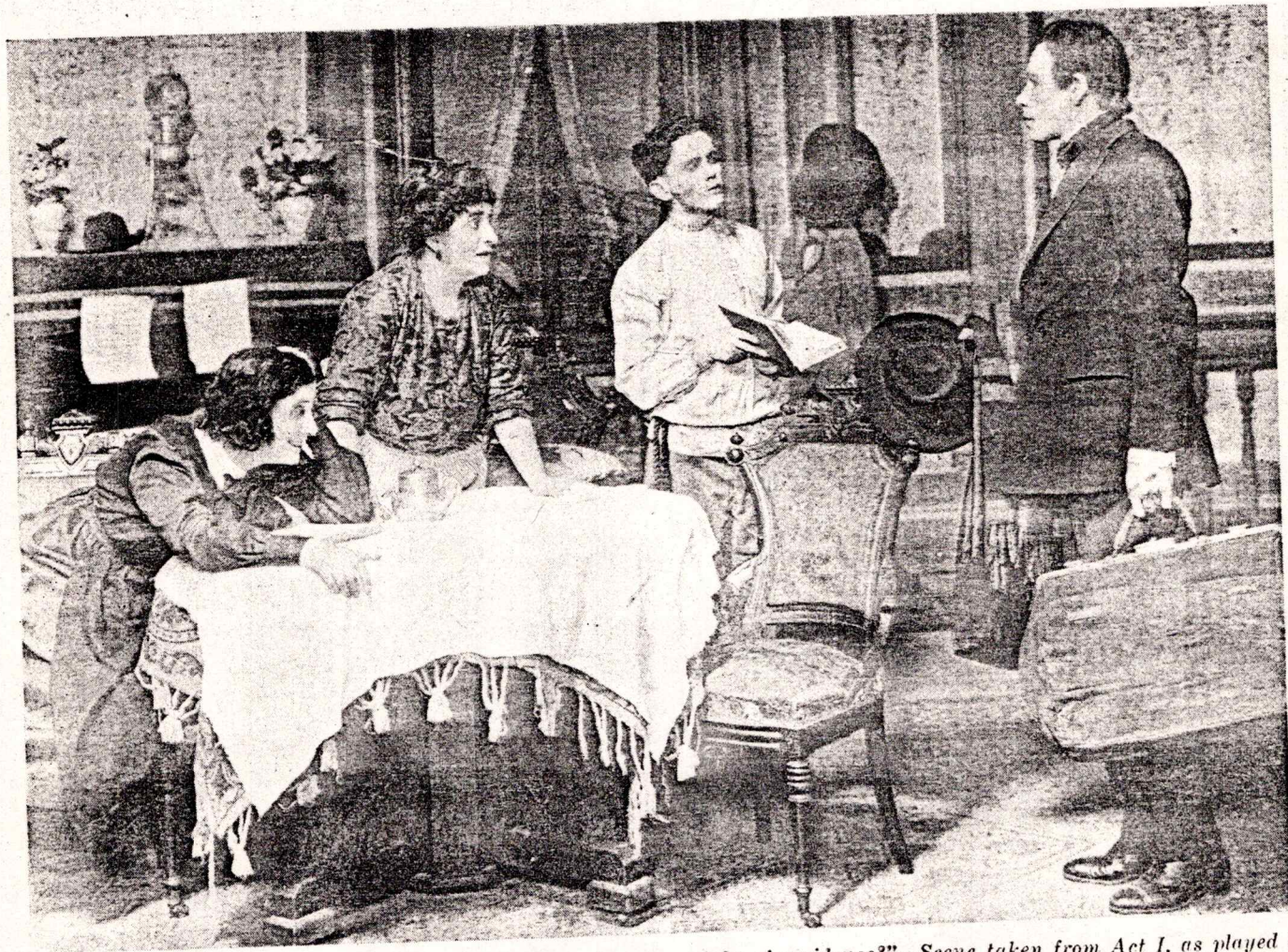
BETTY: That's it, mama. There are plenty of Jews nowadays who don't understand each other.

SARAH: But a man who comes from Shklov? For heaven's sake!

IVANOV: (To BETTY) Your mother's wondering how come I don't understand her? You see, I didn't grow up in my parent's house in Shklov, but in a Russian city . . . I was brought up by my grandmother . . . among Gentiles . . . that's how I don't understand Jewish talk so well.

BETTY: Did you get this, mother?

SARAH: I got it, I got it. But what's good getting it? If he's one of us, I pity him just the same. How can he hire a room in our house, if he probably hasn't got the right of residence?



IVANOV (Paul Muni): "Right of residence? What does it mean, right of residence?"—Scene taken from Act I, as played by Maurice Schwartz Art Theatre in New York. At left is Bertha Gersten as BETTY.

BETTY: My mother says, how can you stay with us if you haven't got a paper showing your right of residence?

IVANOV: Right of residence? What does it mean, right of residence?

BETTY: (*Laughs out loud*)

SARAH: (*To BETTY*) Well, was I right in the first place, when I said he was a *Shlimmazel*? To me he looks a little dumb.

BETTY: My mother's wondering how come you don't even know what right of residence means. We have to explain to you. Right of residence means that since you are a Jew, you have no right to live in this city, because it is considered outside the pale . . .

IVANOV: Allow me! How can I study at the University here, without the right to live in this city?

BETTY: You're going to study at the University? So you're a student?

IVANOV: Almost a student. I turned in my papers, and I expect to be accepted today.

BETTY: Did you hear this, mama? He's a student at the University. (*To IVANOV*) And you're sure to be accepted?

IVANOV: More than sure. I have a gold medal.

BETTY: (*To her mother*) He has a medal. A gold medal.

SARAH: Is that so? He has a gold medal? Well, now you see who is right. You and papa always laugh at me, because I expect Syomke to get a medal. (*To IVANOV*) Sit down. Why don't you sit down? (*To SYOMKE*) Come here a minute, sonny. You see this man, he graduated with a medal, a gold medal, so, with God's help, they'll take him in. Now you see why one has to study hard?

BETTY: (*To IVANOV*) My mother's giving him an admonition to study hard, so he should get a gold medal. He's my little brother . . . goes to school. . . Syoma, come here. Shake hands. (*SYOMKE shaking hands*)

IVANOV: What class is he in now?

BETTY: He is in the third class.

IVANOV: Such a big fellow only in the third class?

BETTY: Rather you should ask how many years it took him to pass through the examinations before he was admitted. And all the tears mother's shed over it.

IVANOV: Why wasn't he admitted?

BETTY: (*Laughing*) You're a Jew and asking such questions.

IVANOV: (*Apologetically*) Yes . . . this isn't what I mean. I mean something else. He is in his third class, and already there's talk about a medal?

BETTY: Of course, otherwise he'll never be admitted to the University.

IVANOV: (*Glad to talk with BETTY*) Why must your little brother go to the University?

BETTY: Why must you go to the University?

IVANOV: You got me there.

BETTY: I didn't mean to get you, but the questions you're asking are more fit for a Goy than a Jew.

SARAH: (*Glad to enter the conversation*) With God's help, he'll get a medal like you. He's been getting the highest marks.

IVANOV: Good boy!

SARAH: And for every good mark he gets a coin from his mother.

IVANOV: So he's buying his good marks, eh?

SYOMKE: I'm not buying them, I just deserve them.

IVANOV: Good for you. Let me see your book. (*Takes the book from SYOMKE*) Go ahead, recite it.

SYOMKE: (*First blowing his nose, then reciting*)

Kak ninie zbiraietaya vieshchie Oleg

Otomstii nierazumnim razoram . . .

IVANOV: Excellent! But why are you swaying? And why do you have to sing it?

SARAH: What did he say? He doesn't like the way Syomke said it? It's not good?

BETTY: He didn't say it's not good. He's only asking why he has to sway and to sing it.

SARAH: Maybe he could teach Syomke a little. Just ask him what he could expect for it. Tell him that if he'll coach him a little, we'll let him have the room a little cheaper.

BETTY: Mother says we'll let you have the room a lot cheaper.

SARAH: Not a lot, but a little cheaper.

BETTY: If you'll teach my little brother.

IVANOV: With the greatest of pleasure. It doesn't have to be cheaper. I'll teach him free. I'm not in need.

SARAH: God bless him, what a perfect gentleman! I could see it from the minute I set eyes on him. (*To IVANOV*) You are getting money from home? (*Sitting opposite him*)

IVANOV: Am I getting money from home? Yes, I'm getting money from home.

SARAH: Who is sending it to you, your father, or your mother?

IVANOV: (*Looking at BETTY*) Yes . . . No . . . That is, I'm getting money sent from my grandmother . . .

SARAH: Is that so? It means, you're an orphan?

IVANOV: Yes, I'm an orphan.

SARAH: Without a father and mother?

IVANOV: Without father, without mother.

SARAH: Has it been long?

IVANOV: It's been a long time.

SARAH: When you were still a child?

IVANOV: When I was still a child.

SARAH: And you have no grandfather?

IVANOV: There is no grandfather.

BETTY: Mother, please, why this examination?

SARAH: It's not an examination, I just want to know.

(*To IVANOV*) So she is a widow?

IVANOV: Who?

SARAH: Your grandmother.

IVANOV: Of course, she's a widow.

SARAH: Has she been a widow long?

IVANOV: It's been a long time.

SARAH: And she doesn't intend to get married?

IVANOV: No.

SARAH: And, is she rich?

BETTY: Momma, what are you questioning him for?

SARAH: I'm not questioning him, I'm just asking him.

(*To IVANOV*) Is she rich?

IVANOV: Who?

SARAH: Your grandmother?

IVANOV: Rich.

SARAH: Very rich?

IVANOV: Very rich.

SARAH: Approximately how much do people think she has?

IVANOV: (*Hesitatingly*) Well . . . about two hundred thousand . . .

SARAH: Two hundred thousand? Betty, did you hear that? Two hundred thousand!

BETTY: It really isn't nice, mama.

SARAH: What do you care? (*To IVANOV*) Tell me, please, and she has no other grandchildren?

IVANOV: Who?

SARAH: Your grandmother.

IVANOV: No, she has no other grandchildren.

SARAH: So you're the only one?

IVANOV: The only one.

SARAH: The only one?

IVANOV: The only one.

SARAH: That means, that after a hundred and twenty years you're the . . .

BETTY: (*Interrupting*) I'm sure you want to take a rest, or change . . .

IVANOV: (*Picking up his things*) Yes, I have to change to go over to the University to make some inquiries . . .

SARAH: (*To BETTY*) Take the bag to the room, fetch some fresh water and a towel and put on some fresh pillow-cases. Go ahead, Betty. I'll look to the *samovar* in the meantime. Father is coming soon. Syomenue, help her with those things. (*BETTY and IVANOV are going into the other room. SYOMKE carrying the things after them, reciting his lesson all the while. SARAH goes to the kitchen, then returns with the samovar and paraphernalia for tea. BETTY enters again*)

SARAH: Well, what did I tell you?

BETTY: What did you tell me?

SARAH: That the young man is pure gold.

BETTY: Pure gold did you say?

SARAH: What else did I say?

BETTY: But, mama, you said he was a *Shlimmazel*.

SARAH: I said he was a *Shlimmazel*? I?

BETTY: Who else said he was a *Shlimmazel*? I?

(*There is a ring at the door. DAVID SHAPIRO enters. He stands in the doorway for a moment, listening to their talk*)

SHAPIRO: He said—he said—he said! . . . I said . . . you said . . . Already on the stairs I could hear it . . . for God's sake! (*Taking off his coat*) Whose inheritance is it, that you cannot divide up between yourselves? (*Going to the table*) Mother and daughter! When will you finally stop quarrelling?

BETTY: Who is quarrelling?

SARAH: There's less harm in our quarrel than in other people's kisses.

SHAPIRO: "There's less harm in our quarrel than in other people's kisses." Tell me, what were you arguing about, I said you said? (*Sitting down*)

BETTY: You see, papa . . .

SARAH: (*Interrupting*) There's nothing to it. Why do you have to tell it to him? It doesn't pay to bother. But listen, David, I have to tell you something . . .

SHAPIRO: And I have to tell you something too.

BETTY: Oh, papa, tell us, please, please!

SHAPIRO: Wait, let mother talk. She comes first. (*To SARAH*) Noo?

SARAH: (*Pouring tea for DAVID*) God sent us good fortune. What am I saying, good fortune? It's double good fortune, two in one.

SHAPIRO: Two good fortunes at the same time? *Ken eine horreh!* What double good fortune is it? The cow had a calf and the cat kittens?

BETTY: First of all, we have a new boarder.

SARAH: And what a boarder! Some boarder!

BETTY: Secondly, he'll be a teacher to our Syomke . . .

SARAH: And what a teacher! Some teacher! Without pay! He won't take a penny!

SHAPIRO: But why?

BETTY: He is rich . . .

SARAH: And how rich! A wealthy man! A magnate! A millionaire!

BETTY: Not he personally, his grandmother . . .

SHAPIRO: (*Covering his ears*) Wait a while! Both at the same time! Let one of you speak. I only have one pair of ears, for God's sake!

SARAH: (*To BETTY*) Well, you tell him, since you know better. (*Stepping aside*) You're in the seventh class at school, so you come first.

BETTY: But, mama, you know better. You tell it to him, go ahead.

SARAH: (*Coming nearer*) What a neighbor God sent us. (*Softly*) A boarder, a strange boarder! First, just imagine, his name is Mayerson . . .

BETTY: Not Mayerson, but Shneyerson.

SARAH: (*With an angry look*) I mean Shneyerson. And, imagine, he doesn't even understand a single word of Yiddish! He doesn't even know what it means to have the right of residence here . . .

SHAPIRO: Is he a *meshumod*?

SARAH: God forbid! He is a Jew!

BETTY: He is a student.

SARAH: (*Softly into her husband's ear*) He has a medal. A gold medal. He is paying me twenty-five for the room.

SHAPIRO: (*With a look at his wife*) Twenty-five for the room? What, is he crazy? Lost his mind?

SARAH: Wait a second, you are not through yet. (*Softly*) Besides this, he undertook to teach our Syomke free, without a penny.

SHAPIRO: (*Aloud*) Some kind of a joker, as they call that kind on the exchange . . .

SARAH: Shhh . . . He might hear you . . . what do you think!

BETTY: (*Bursting with laughter*) How could he hear you, unless he'd be standing behind the door listening . . . and then he wouldn't understand a word of what you are talking about.

SARAH: (*Aloud*) I forgot all about that—he doesn't understand our kind of language. I'm telling you, David, God sent us a strange boarder! He didn't even try to bargain with me. If you're asked twenty-five, at least say twenty-two . . . But I'm telling you, he is such a rich man . . . a millionaire . . .

BETTY: (*To her father*) It seems that mother's regretting why she didn't ask him for more.

SHAPIRO: (*Sarcastically*) That's right, why didn't you ask him for twice twenty-five? A room like that! A royal suite . . .

SARAH: (*Offended*) That's the trouble with you—the least little thing, right away you make fun. Father and daughter!

SHAPIRO: Who is making fun? Nonsense! It's just that we are talking, so I'm talking too. To make it short, it seems to me you have a real Godsend, you caught some catch! I'd just like to look at him, to see what kind of an animal he is . . . What's he studying, medicine?

SARAH: May God spare us from all troubles, how should I know!

BETTY: He is supposed to enter the University only today.

SHAPIRO: Is that so? . . . He's only supposed to enter the University today? (*Laughs*) Well, if this is the case . . . (*Suddenly*) Where is he? I'm going to give him a piece of my mind! I'm going to break the news to him, you understand, that as far as his entering the University is concerned, he may say good-bye to that forever!

SARAH, BETTY: (*Together—Surprised*) But why?

SHAPIRO: Why? Just like that! That's why we are Jews in this world. That's why we are the chosen one of all the peoples of the earth . . . Didn't I tell you that I brought you some news? . . . They've just issued a brand new circular, addressed especially to us Jews, that's what they are talking about on the exchange. But such a circular, that since circulars have been circularized there never was such a circular. Only once in a thousand years can they issue such a circular. (*He laughs*) Where is he?

SARAH: Who?

SHAPIRO: That little squirrel, Syomke, your son.

SARAH: Why my son? Why isn't he your son?

SHAPIRO: Let him be my son.

SARAH: What do you want him for?

SHAPIRO: It's nothing. I just want to tell him the good news, that he doesn't have to torture himself with his lessons any longer, day and night, just to get a medal. No more medals—that's all.

SARAH: (*Delighted*) Is that so? No need for medals any longer? They'll accept him at the University just like this? Thank God!

SHAPIRO: (*To BETTY*) How do you like that? She is in a hurry. (*To SARAH*) Thank God for what?

SARAH: You say they won't need any medals, they'll accept him like this...

SHAPIRO: Sure they'll accept him like this, but not at the University. They'll take him into the army. He'll be a soldier.

SARAH: I'm thunder-struck! It can't be!

BETTY: Papa, please, why do you frighten mother like this?

SHAPIRO: Why did she have to eat my heart out all the time—gymnasium, gymnasium, gymnasium? Syomke just had to enter the gymnasium! She was so stubborn about it! Syomke just had to study, and he had to be one of the best students! Why?

SARAH: I ate your heart out, that the child had to enter the gymnasium?

SHAPIRO: Who else was it who said, that he just had to enter the gymnasium?

SARAH: Noo, Betty, what will you say to that? You be a witness.

BETTY: Shhh, please, let it be enough! Please, our new boarder is coming...

(IVANOV enters, sees SHAPIRO and greets him in silence)

BETTY: This is my father. This is our boarder, Mr. Shneyerson.

SHAPIRO: (*Shaking hands*) Sholom aleichem, where does a Jew come from? From what branch of the Shneyersons?

SARAH: (*Whispering to SHAPIRO*) Speak Russian to him.

SHAPIRO: Russian did you say? You're not frightening me. Russian is Russian. (*To IVANOV*) Sadities! (*Sodeetyes*) Sit down, Panie Shneyerson. Why don't you sit down?

SARAH: (*Pushing a chair forward*) Sit down, why don't you?

SHAPIRO: (*To IVANOV*) You won't refuse us a cup of tea, would you? (*To his wife*) Sarah, will you pour the tea. (*As she does it*) I heard it said that you're a student, that is, you would like to become a student...

IVANOV: I'm almost a student... I've already submitted my papers. I have a medal.

SARAH: A gold medal.

SHAPIRO: I heard it. A medal, and a gold one yet, is a wonderful thing. Gold is always gold... But, whether this will help you in entering the University—that, you see, is very doubtful.

IVANOV: (*Curiously*) Why so?

SHAPIRO: Because a medal today is no longer of great importance. They have a new system now—a drawing.

IVANOV: What's that?

SHAPIRO: A lottery, a drawing. They'll draw a number. The lucky man wins, hahaha! You understand, or don't you? You are a graduate of the gymnasium. You have a gold medal, I have nothing. Then they tell us to draw lots. If I draw the lucky number, I'm accepted and you are not. So they tell you to go home. Did you digest this, or not yet?

IVANOV: Is that so? What's the story behind this?

SHAPIRO: Oh, it's a beautiful story, only a short one. You know that way up there, in the high circles, all they do day and night is just to worry about us. They're always contemplating something new how to sweeten the life of us Jews. Noo, so they found, that in all fairness and humanity it is fit that only those with medals should be accepted at the University. So you see, it's a pity for those who have no medals. They, too, have souls. That is why all have to be equal. No privileged characters.

Medalists, or no medalists—at the time of entering the University, the number of Jews who are about to enter must draw lots. The same as when they are taken for military service. It's a drawing, a lottery, you understand? The lucky man wins.

IVANOV: In that case it is possible that the worst students might be accepted at the University, while the best might remain outside?

SHAPIRO: That's it. That's just the meaning of it. At last, you got it. They realized that within the past few years only the best fill the universities... And pudding alone is not too good... It might harm the stomach... I'm sorry, young man, but I must tell you, that in spite of your gold medal, you are still an outsider... Unless you are lucky and you draw one of the lucky numbers.

SARAH: Oh, what misery! What misery!

SHAPIRO: Well, let's talk about something merrier than this. Where do you hail from, and from what Shneyersons? Is it from the true, the Libavitcher Shneyersons you are?

IVANOV: Of course, from the Libavitcher... But how do we know that what you are telling is the truth? Maybe it is...

SHAPIRO: Maybe it's only a rumor, is this what you want to say? You may rest assured it's the truth. Shapiro is telling you this, not just anybody, but David Shapiro—you don't know me yet. But if you start asking, you'll find out. I am of the true Shapiros, those from Slavita, you must have heard about them. You haven't heard? I'm sorry!... This takes care of number one. Number two, you want to know how I got it? I heard it on the exchange. I'm a kind of broker on the exchange, you see, and on our exchange they know everything. As soon as a new law, or a circular comes out—who do you think knows about it first? The exchange, of course. And what's more, on the exchange they very often know about things that haven't even been born yet—things that are to happen in the future. In short, you are probably going over to the University, so you'll surely hear about it, they'll tell you. Now we just have to consider what's going to happen in case what I told you really is true—then you'll remain with your gold medal, just like the Rabbi from Drazhue at the fair, when his driver's horses were stolen from him. Well, a medal is a medal. But what's going to happen to your right of residence, I mean your permit to live here?

IVANOV: What do I need a permit to live here for?

SHAPIRO: What do you mean what for? Just to make you feel at home. Many things might happen. What in case, God forbid, there is a raid?

IVANOV: What raid?

SHAPIRO: (*Laughing bitterly*) Well, what will you say? He doesn't even know the meaning of a raid.

BETTY: How should he know, he's a stranger here, who has just arrived from a Russian city, from the deep provinces.

SHAPIRO: That's all right, but still, he's a Jew. And a Shneyerson, too. What do you mean he has never heard of the raids that are being made upon us here?

IVANOV: Your daughter is right, and you are right too. A Jew should know everything, that concerns his... people. But, as I've told them before, I've been brought up among Gentiles, in a Russian city... But I've heard and read many times about the pogroms that are being perpetrated upon the Jews who live in these parts.

SHAPIRO: What are you talking about? Who is talking about pogroms?

IVANOV: Well, you've just said raids...

SHAPIRO: (*Bursts out laughing, his family joining*) We are talking about raids, so he bursts in with pogroms.

SARAH: (To SYOMKE) You too here, you little squirrel? Go make your lessons. (SYOMKE exits)

IVANOV: In that case . . . forgive me . . . I didn't quite get you. What raids are you talking about?

SHAPIRO: What raids could I be talking about? Our own, of course, the raids made upon the Jews every night. What are you staring at me, as if you didn't know what I meant?

IVANOV: They are raiding the Jews here, why?

SHAPIRO: (Laughing bitterly) He is asking why. (To his wife and daughter) What do you think of him as a Jew?

IVANOV: No . . . I mean . . . You said raids. In that part of the country I come from there are raids, too, but they are raiding animals, not human beings.

SHAPIRO: But we are treated worse than animals. Cats and dogs, for instance, are permitted here to roam about as much as they like, without being molested. But we Jews are not permitted to stay here. And since this is so, we're hiding stealthily in holes, like mice. You see, in the night they raid us; then, those who are caught are sent back to their regular places of domicile—that's what we call raids. Well, did you catch on, or not yet? Ah, my young man! You seem to be a novice altogether! And you are lucky at that. Just wait for a while, if you stay here, and if you will be deserving, God willing, you will certainly live through more than one of those raids.

SARAH: (Aside) I wish you would keep your mouth shut! Why do you have to make his heart heavy with care? God gave you a tongue and you babble!

BETTY: What are you afraid of, mother, he'll get scared and run away?

SHAPIRO: (To BETTY, pointing at his wife) What do you know, she's got to teach me sense, how to talk to a man!

BETTY: (To IVANOV) You see, my mother is afraid that if we tell you all about our raids, you might run away and leave us without a boarder.

IVANOV: (Laughing) Oh, nothing to be afraid of. (To SARAH) Don't worry, mother, I'm not the scary kind. I am not afraid of such things. (He rises to go)

SHAPIRO: (To his wife, victoriously) You see now? You just have to interfere in everything! (Rising) So you are going to walk over to the University to find out, eh? Go right ahead, they'll tell you everything. God willing, you will find out the truth of the saying: he who comes with nothing, will leave with nothing. But, of course, you don't understand the meaning of this, and since you don't know it, I hope it won't hurt you. But before you go, I would like to tell you something that might do you some good. IVANOV: What, for instance?

SHAPIRO: If the story is true about the drawing of lots, that would mean that for the time being you are without the right to live here. And without the right to live here you are a dead man.

SARAH: Again you are trying to scare him?

SHAPIRO: Again you interfere in other people's business? (To IVANOV) You cannot stay here under any circumstances. You can't even stay here overnight.

IVANOV: Not even one night, is that so?

SHAPIRO: (To BETTY) What will you say to that? He thinks I'm kidding . . . He certainly is funny.

BETTY: Didn't we tell you right away, that they are very strict here . . .

IVANOV: Yes, I know, I need a permit to live here. So what shall I do?

SHAPIRO: What you should do? Now you are talking. I like you for this. When a man is asking what he should do, it is time to consider and offer him advice. (Thinking a while) Now, I've got it!

IVANOV: What, for instance? Send a petition to the minister? Send him a telegram?

SHAPIRO: Shhh . . . don't rush! A Jew is forever a Jew. A Jew never has any time. (Stroking his beard) Let's consider this thing slowly, without rushing, and from all sides, you understand, round about. Now listen carefully to what you are told. Do you have a diploma?

SARAH: David, what are you talking about? He has a medal.

SHAPIRO: Don't bother! There she is with her medal! (To IVANOV) And you have a passport too? And you probably have all the other necessary papers?

IVANOV: They're all in order.

SHAPIRO: That's good. If this is the case, it's good. Now, just don't let's fool ourselves, (In a sing-song) where is it written, that . . . excuse me, what is your holy name again?

IVANOV: (Looking at the ceiling) They call me Shneyerson.

BETTY: Papa means your given name and the name of your father.

IVANOV: Oh, I get it! Hersh Movshovitch, citizen of Shklov . . .

SHAPIRO: (Still in a sing-song) Where is it written, I say, that Hershko Movshovitch Shneyerson, the citizen from Shklov, must positively enter the University and must positively study medicine, what? Maybe another plan would work out better? Supposing you will really go ahead with what you intend to do, that is, you will first of all draw a lot, then you will enter your petition and go through with all the rest of the rigmarole. But, in the meantime, before anything happens, you understand, you will register with a dentist, that is, as a dentist, a sort of half a doctor. Just to make sure, you understand, that you have the right to live here. Because, as soon as you register with a dentist, you immediately acquire the right to live here, you understand. Then you'll be able to do whatever you want. Did you get this?

IVANOV: What do I want to register with a dentist for, when I didn't even come here to study medicine?

SHAPIRO: It's a nice how-do-you-do to have to do something for a Jew like this! Who is talking about studying? So far, we're only talking about your right to live here. To study at the University—that's a separate story, and your right to live here is something else again. One has nothing to do with the other. Do you understand?

IVANOV: You know what, is there a telephone here?

SHAPIRO: There's a telephone downstairs, where you can talk. What for do you need a telephone?

IVANOV: I want to call up a friend of mine. He is a man with a head on his shoulders, he'll tell me what to do.

SHAPIRO: Who is he, your friend, who has a head on his shoulders, as you say?

IVANOV: He happens to come from the same city, where I just graduated from the gymnasium . . . He's a Russian . . . His name is Ivanov.

SHAPIRO: A Russian, whose name is Ivanov and who has a head on his shoulders, as you say, and he can tell you what to do? Who is he? From which Ivanovs?

IVANOV: His father lives there. He is a regular civilian attorney.

SHAPIRO: What's that, a general? So you want to call him up and ask him over the telephone? Or, do you want him to come here?

IVANOV: Let him come here.

SHAPIRO: So tell him to come right away, while I'm still here. (Calling) Syomke! Go down, Sonny, with this man to the telephone for just a minute. (SYOMKE and IVANOV exit)

SARAH: Well, David, what did I tell you? A strange person?

SHAPIRO: An ordinary person, there is nothing to him . . . (Drinking his tea) But there's just one thing: a Shneyerson

from the Shneyersons of Libavitch, and he doesn't seem to grasp a word you say. (*Sighing*) There's your up-to-date education for you, with their teachings and gymnasiums . . .

BETTY: (*Looking into her book*) It isn't the fault of the gymnasium, but the city. He comes from a Russian city . . . He lived among Gentiles . . .

SHAPIRO: Well, yes, a Russian city, among Gentiles . . . But Shneyerson! The Shneyersons are no joke. His great-grandfather Reb Shneyer Zalmen from Ladi, if he would rise from his grave to see his grandson! . . . But then again, I'm thinking, if my great-grandfather, Reb Shmuel Abba Shapiro, from those of Slavita, would rise from his grave to take a look upon . . . (*SYOMKE and IVANOV come in*) Noo?

IVANOV: He will be here soon.

SYOMKE: He's coming in an automobile.

SHAPIRO: Why in an automobile? Sit down, why don't you?

SARAH: Sit down, why don't you? (*Pushing a chair*)

SHAPIRO: We've been talking here about your grandfather, that is, about your great-great-grandfather, the Rabbi from Ladi, blessed be his memory. I say that if he should rise from his grave and take a look upon his grandson . . . You will excuse me for talking so openly, I hate to talk ambiguously. I am a Shapiro of the true Slavita Shapiros, so I like to say what I think in front of people's faces. Looking at you, I'm thinking, my God! Shneyerson, Reb Shneyer Zalmen's grandson, and he doesn't even understand our language. Well, I can understand *that* . . . You grew up among Gentiles, in a Russian city, what can you do? But your looks, that's something I can't understand. When I take a look, excuse me, at your face . . . You are a different type, you understand. Where do the Shneyersons get such a typically Russian face? (*They all look at IVANOV*)

IVANOV: (*He takes a look in the mirror*) Is that so? Is it because I am blond?

SHAPIRO: Blond? That's nothing. Some of the Shapiros are blond too.

SARAH: (*To her husband*) Who for instance among the Shapiros is blond?

SHAPIRO: My cousin Pinye Shapiro.

SARAH: Nonsense! Your cousin Pinye is not blond—he's yellow.

SHAPIRO: (*Irritated*) My Pinye is yellow?

SARAH: What do you think—he's green?

SHAPIRO: Betty, did you hear this?

BETTY: (*Raising her eyes from her book*) I heard it. Here's a car . . .

IVANOV: (*Rising*) That must be my friend Shneyerson . . . (*SYOMKE goes out*)

SHAPIRO: What Shneyerson? You mean Ivanov.

IVANOV: (*Laughing*) Of course, I mean Ivanov.

SHAPIRO: It's because we've been talking about the Shneyersons all the time. It's always that way. A name you talk about remains in your memory . . . (*SYOMKE comes in with SHNEYERSON. He wears a new student's uniform. Bowing*)

IVANOV: (*Introducing*) My friend Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov. (*SHNEYERSON shakes hands with everybody*)

SHAPIRO: A triple name. With us Jews that's not possible. And for the son to bear the same name as his father—that's out altogether. Unless, God forbid, his father dies before the son is born, then the son inherits his father's name. (*To SHNEYERSON*) Sit down, why don't you?

SARAH: (*Pushing a chair*) Sit down, why don't you? (*SHNEYERSON sits down*)

SHAPIRO: (*Drawing nearer to SHNEYERSON*) There's a history to the story, as they say, and thereby hangs the following tale: your friend, Mr. Shneyerson, has rented a

room here. All around everything is perfectly nice, but there's just one thing missing.

SHNEYERSON: A permit to live here.

SHAPIRO: (*To his wife and daughter*) You see that? A Gentile, and new around here—still, he already knows that a Jew needs a permit to live here.

SHNEYERSON: It's almost a week since I first came here. I heard a lot among my Jewish friends.

SHAPIRO: I see. (*Pointing to IVANOV*) He'll find it out, too—in time. In the meantime, I hope he'll forgive me for what I say, he is still an infant. He doesn't even know about the new circular that's just come out . . .

SHNEYERSON: You mean about the drawing of lots for the Jewish students? This circular has just come in at the University.

SHAPIRO: (*To IVANOV*) You see? What did I tell you? (*To SHNEYERSON*) You say only now the University got it? And on the exchange we have known about it since this morning, and possibly since last night . . . In short, it's a bad affair, it means lots, and if one has to draw lots . . .

SHNEYERSON: Then it's easier to win the first prize on a lottery . . .

SHAPIRO: (*Victoriously*) My words! (*To wife and daughter*) What will you say to this? And he's a Gentile, too. (*To IVANOV*) You should change parts with your friend. That is, I meant to say, that he should be in your place and you in his . . . (*The two exchange looks*) (*To SHNEYERSON*) So I gave your friend an advice. The lot is a lot. The papers are papers. But in the meantime, in order to play safe, you understand, he should be provided with a dentist's certificate.

SHNEYERSON: You mean, he should be assigned to a dentist, so that he could live here?

SHAPIRO: (*With satisfaction*) You catch on to everything with a mere look, just like a true Jew. I hope you'll excuse me, Ivan Ivanovitch, for my bluntness . . .

SHNEYERSON: That's nothing . . .

SHAPIRO: And your friend is just the opposite. (*Looking at IVANOV*) He is asking such things as if he were no Jew at all. But in reality he is a Jew, and what a Jew, too! A Shneyerson of the true Shneyersons . . . You don't know who the Shneyersons are. How should you know? It has to be made clear to you, then you will understand . . .

IVANOV: My friend is not interested in this . . .

SHNEYERSON: On the contrary—it's very interesting. (*To SHAPIRO*) Tell me, tell me.

SHAPIRO: His grandfather, that is, his great-great-grandfather, the Rabbi from Ladi, was called Reb Shneyer Zalmen . . .

SARAH: (*Softly to her husband*) What does a Goy know about the Rabbi from Ladi and about Reb Shneyer Zalmen?

SHAPIRO: (*Angrily*) Maybe he should come to study with you how he should talk to a person?

BETTY: (*Covering it up*) Our boarder is right, Papa, it isn't interesting. (*IVANOV is exchanging looks with BETTY. SHNEYERSON notices it. BETTY's eyes return to her book*)

SHAPIRO: I'm saying all this in connection with our boarder. I say that the best type of permit to live here is the one you get from a dentist. And since there are many kinds of dentists, it isn't every dentist that has the right to adopt dentists. That's why it is necessary, first of all, to see the dentist. I know one, who wouldn't do it for somebody else for even three hundred rubles. But from me he'll take only one hundred. (*To IVANOV*) He doesn't have to know, Mr. Shneyerson, if you are a rich man or not. Dentists, generally, are blood-suckers. Leave it to me. No one can suck me. My name is David

Shapiro. Talk it over with your friend. That is, with Ivan Ivanovitch, and let's go over to the dentist right away and let's conclude it, one, two, three . . . (SHNEYERSON stands up, calling his friend)

SARAH: To which dentist do you want to go with them?

SHAPIRO: To which dentist? To Henrich Lapitutnick.

SARAH: To that quack? They say that he is pulling healthy teeth and puts in decayed ones . . .

SHAPIRO: What does it matter? It doesn't harm your right to live here.

BETTY: (To her father) And that he is a cock-eyed crook, doesn't matter either?

SHAPIRO: No, it doesn't. What decent dentist will want to bother with police and with rights? (IVANOV is staring at her all the time. SHNEYERSON sees it. He takes him aside. They smoke)

SHNEYERSON: Well, how do you like your first debut? Is it hard to be a Jew?

IVANOV: Nonsense! What do you say about my lodging? I mean, how do you like the girl?

SHNEYERSON: Not bad. A nice girl.

IVANOV: (Enthusied) A nice girl, you say? Why, she's a beauty.

SHNEYERSON: See to it, Vanya, that you don't show your true face here . . . Don't forget who you are and who she is. You are a Gentile and she is a Jewish girl . . . A Jewish girl.

IVANOV: (Looking at BETTY all the while) Go on, Hershko, who do you think I am? I'm only saying just like this: look at the girl. She shines like the sun. How do you like her eyes? Her eye-brows? Her look? . . . A beauty!

SHNEYERSON: A beauty, a beauty. You're quite right. But I wouldn't advise you to look at her too closely. I'm saying it again; she is a Jewish girl! . . . And I want to ask in general, to be careful of your words here. Whenever you hear something that you don't understand, it is best that you keep quiet. So they don't notice the fact that you are a Goy. Why, for instance, did you have to make up a lie, that you are from the Libavitch Shneyersons? . . .

IVANOV: You're funny! . . . It's not me. It's Mr. Shapiro who told me that I am from those Shneyersons . . . Generally, he is a strange man . . . (Laughing) But his daughter! His daughter! . . .

SHNEYERSON: Again his daughter? Stop looking at her so closely. (Throwing away his cigarette and going to the table) That's splendid, Mr. Shapiro, we've decided that you should go with him to a dentist, and I'll go home. (Taking leave)

SHAPIRO: Of course I know what I am talking about. Another man would be a rich man with all the money I spent for my right to live here. See my gray hair? It's all, excuse me, Ivan Ivanovitch, your police and your precincts and your rights . . . (Ready to go)

SARAH: David! You haven't even finished your tea. You didn't eat at all.

SHAPIRO: (At the door) Why tea? Why eat? I'm a Jew and to do a man a favor comes before any drinking and eating. It seems you've forgotten that my name is David Shapiro, of the true Shapiros, you understand . . . (Exit) from Slavita . . .

CURTAIN



SHAPIRO (Maurice Schwartz): "We're discussing how hard it is to be a Jew . . . So they're laughing at the idea."—
Scene from Act II of the Broadway production with Georgie Jessel (left) as SHNEYERSON.

Act II

SCENE: *The same room, arranged for a party. The table is covered with flowers, fruits, preserves and dishes for tea. SARAH dressed in her best is busy at the table. SYOMKE is helping her. She is constantly changing his arrangements.*

SARAH: Not so. This is the way it should be. You're a young man, thank God, in his third class, and you don't understand the least little bit. It isn't your job. You'd better go make your lessons.

SYOMKE: But, mother, you called me to help you.

SARAH: Help me? Yes, but you don't know how.

SYOMKE: Why don't I know how?

SARAH: Because you don't know how, that's all. You see, this glass belongs there, and this cup should be here, and the tall wine-glass should be there, and this little whiskey-glass belongs right here. Now you know it?

SYOMKE: That's the way I wanted it. *(Breaks a glass)*

SARAH: Already? *Mazel tov!* How many glasses did you break already?

SYOMKE: How many glasses? Only one.

SARAH: Is that all? Thanks to the ranks. Lucky you didn't break all of them.

SYOMKE: Is it my fault that the glasses are so breakable? Just touch 'em and they break.

SARAH: Yes, when you have the touch of a little bird made of lead! *(Picking up the pieces)* Let this be a *kaporah* for you and for all of us and for the whole tribe of Israel . . . *(A pause)* Don't you suppose you'd better go make your lessons instead of breaking glasses? Go ahead, go make your lessons.

SYOMKE: *(Sadly)* My lessons? Day and night I've got to work on my lessons. Once a year Betty's got a birthday, so I've got to make my lessons too. *(Exit. BETTY enters. She is half-dressed)*

BETTY: No one here yet, Ma?

SARAH: So early?

BETTY: And where's Papa? And where's our boarder?

SARAH: Where should they be but at the police station? Did you forget that our boarder was called to appear at the station at seven o'clock?

BETTY: So why does it take so long? *(Looking at her wrist-watch)* It's soon eight o'clock. *(Showing it to her mother)* What do you say to this, Ma?

SARAH: *(Astonished)* A bracelet?

BETTY: Yes, a bracelet.

SARAH: Gold?

BETTY: Gold, of course.

SARAH: With diamonds?

BETTY: With diamonds!

SARAH: Real ones?

BETTY: Real ones!

SARAH: Betty!

BETTY: Why are you scared, Mother?

SARAH: It's from him, from our boarder.

BETTY: Yes, for my birthday, so what?

SARAH: So what, she says. You shouldn't have accepted it.

BETTY: Why not?

SARAH: Because it's not the way people do it.

BETTY: People . . . who are people?

SARAH: People means the whole world . . . all decent people. Decent people don't do it that way.

BETTY: How do decent people do it?

SARAH: Decent people first make some arrangements, then there's an engagement, then plates are broken . . .

BETTY: *(Impatiently)* Mama! I've told you so many times, that I don't even want you to talk to me about such things—it hasn't reached that stage. Leave me alone. Let me first get through with school.

SARAH: You'll graduate soon, with the help of God. May all Jews find salvation no sooner. And if he likes you, he should first tell us about it, and presents, why—that comes later.

BETTY: *(Still staring at her bracelet)* So according to you I should return it to him?

SARAH: God forbid! Who says return it? A present you don't return—it's a slap in the face, don't you know?

(There is a ring. BETTY runs out. SARAH calls aloud)
Syomke! Syomke! *(SYOMKE appears)* Go, somebody's ringing.

SYOMKE: *(Goes down to open, returns immediately)* It's our boarder's friend, Ivan Ivanovitch.

SARAH: Oh, the *Goy*? He's a nice little *Goy*, this Ivan Ivanovitch, may he be the *kaporah* for your least little finger-nail.

SYOMKE: Why do you curse him, Mother? Why did he deserve it?

SARAH: None of your business, you little squirrel. You, too, want to argue with your mother? Go, make your lessons!

SYOMKE: Again lessons! *(He goes out. SHNEYERSON enters. He is the one now called Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov)*

SHNEYERSON: *(Well-dressed as a student)* *Mazel tov, Madame.* Where is she, your daughter? And where's your husband? And where's your boarder, my friend?

SARAH: *(Inviting him to sit down, and taking a seat)* She is not quite dressed yet. Don't you know, a young lady, it takes her quite some time before she gets dressed . . . And my husband and the boarder—they are at the police station. It's a matter of your friend's right to live here.

SHNEYERSON: Again at the police station? Again about the right to live here?

SARAH: Well? You think it's easy to be a Jew? It's easy for you, because you're not a Jew, so you know nothing about special rights . . .

SHNEYERSON: But your boarder did have all the special rights, didn't he?

SARAH: All rights did you say? I wish the *goyim* had no higher possessions than the rights he possessed . . . excepting you, of course . . . We don't consider you a *Goy* at all.

SHNEYERSON: *(Laughing)* Why not?

SARAH: Because you have a Jewish head on your shoulders. And your face, I must tell you, is also quite Jewish.

SHNEYERSON: *(Looking in the mirror)* Is that right?

SARAH: What do you think, I'll make up a lie? Ask whoever you want . . . I hope I didn't insult you by saying this. I beg you a hundred pardons.

SHNEYERSON: Insulted? God forbid! Just the opposite.

SARAH: May I have such *mazel* as you are a smart man! More than once I wished we had more *goyim* like you . . .

SHNEYERSON: What would happen then?

SARAH: Maybe the Messiah would come . . . *(Speaking softly)* There was something I meant to ask you, Ivan Ivanovitch. *(Looking around)* There's no one here now, so I may speak with you eye to eye. I've been wanting to speak with you for quite some time. *(Hesitatingly)* Excuse me, maybe I shouldn't do this, but a mother's heart . . . *(Decisively)* I meant to ask you, would you please tell me like a true friend: Who is he and what is he?

SHNEYERSON: Whom are you talking about?

SARAH: Who? You know who I mean. I mean your friend.

SHNEYERSON: Which friend?

SARAH: Which friend? . . . I mean Shneyerson.

SHNEYERSON: Oh, you mean Shneyerson? But, really, why do you ask me? *(Taking out his cigarette case, and finds no cigarette)*

SARAH: Why do I ask? I ask because they say that whoever asks, does not get lost . . .

SHNEYERSON: So why ask *me*?

SARAH: Whom shall I ask? You are so friendly with him, and he considers you like his own brother; he doesn't make a move without you.

SHNEYERSON: So what do you want me to tell you?

SARAH: I'd like you to tell me what kind of a person he is . . .

SHNEYERSON: He's a very nice man.

SARAH: Is that all?

SHNEYERSON: What more do you want?

SARAH: I know it without you telling me, that he is a nice man.

SHNEYERSON: So what do you want of *me*?

SARAH: I want you to tell me if it's really true that his grandmother is a millionairess, that she has two hundred thousand . . .

SHNEYERSON: (*Interrupting*) You're a strange woman! You said yourself a little while ago that we are the best of friends, so now you want to control the stories that he tells you

SARAH: You think, God forbid, that I don't believe what he tells me? I believe every word. He is a wonderful fellow, I can swear it. He's nice and decent, he keeps his hand open, he has a good heart, and he is a gentleman. But . . . something is missing . . . I don't know what it is . . . It's too bad that you're a Gentile, because you won't understand what I mean . . .

SHNEYERSON: It's all right, you may talk, I understand everything. (*Drawing his cigarette case, and seeing it is empty, he puts it back*)

SARAH: You understand everything, but this you won't understand—Because, still—you're not a Jew. If you were a Jew—well—

SHNEYERSON: (*Glad*) What then?

SARAH: You'd understand it differently, but like this it's a mere waste of time—all our talking—

SHNEYERSON: I'm sorry. But, tell me, please, what's the purpose of all our discussion?

SARAH: The purpose? It's concerning what you say, that you don't know a person before you eat a ton of salt with him. I mean your friend, our boarder Shneyerson. You've known him for so long, almost since you were a child, so what's your opinion of him? You may be sure that whatever you tell me, remains between us. We're not the kind of people, God forbid—

SHNEYERSON: (*Draws his cigarette case and puts it back*) Listen to me, Madame. You said yourself that I have a Jewish head on my shoulders—

SARAH: I say? Everybody says it and a Jewish face, too.

SHNEYERSON: That's very nice. If this is the case, you understand yourself, that I understand you through and through. I understand a thing with a look. You don't have to put a finger in my mouth . . .

SARAH: Of course not, you may bite it off . . .

SHNEYERSON: So listen to me, dear Madame. As far as I'm concerned, you get your wish. I'll tell you all you wish to know, but . . .

SARAH: But what?

SHNEYERSON: But on one condition . . .

SARAH: What's the condition?

SHNEYERSON: You will first answer my question.

SARAH: Oh, with the greatest of pleasure. I'll tell you everything like my own father. Now, what is it you want to ask me?

SHNEYERSON: I want to ask you . . . that is, I'd like you to tell me whether he spoke with your daughter, or just with you alone.

SARAH: Who spoke what?

SHNEYERSON: Now you're asking me who? I'm speaking about the same person you've been talking about . . . I want to know if he spoke with you.

SARAH: Spoke about what? You will excuse me, I don't quite understand what you mean.

SHNEYERSON: Oh, you don't quite understand . . . (*Wants to rise*)

SARAH: You will excuse me, Ivan Ivanovitch, maybe I offended you . . .

SHNEYERSON: Offended? God forbid! I'm not easily offended . . . but I think you're a little too smart . . .

SARAH: Why should you suspect me, Ivan Ivanovitch? Believe me, the harm I wish you should happen to myself. My husband, for instance, tells me that you are a darling. And even my daughter, you know, she doesn't like to give in easily. You know, she's a Shapiro of the Shapiros, even she says, that—

SHNEYERSON: (*Lively*) She says what?

SARAH: That . . . But you won't tell it to anyone . . .

SHNEYERSON: Who do you think I am?

SARAH: My daughter says, God bless her soul, that you're more of a Jew than our boarder Shneyerson.

SHNEYERSON: Is that all?

SARAH: What more do you want? (*Sweetly*) So what did you say about him?

SHNEYERSON: About whom?

SARAH: About whom! About Shneyerson!

SHNEYERSON: About Shneyerson? Nothing. What have I got to say about him? I only asked you something that I must know, that is, in your own interest, so you are pretending not to understand—Then, of course, I have nothing to say to you about it. (*Rises to go*)

SARAH: (*Frightened*) Where are you going, Ivan Ivanovitch? They'll all be coming in soon, your friend and my husband and all the other guests . . .

SHNEYERSON: I'm just going out for one minute, I forgot to buy cigarettes. I'll be right back. (*Exit*)

(*Betty puts in an appearance, she is well-groomed*)

BETTY: Mom, who was here? Who were you talking with?

SARAH: The Goy was here. Come here a minute.

BETTY: (*Approaching*) What Goy?

SARAH: Don't pretend. Our boarder's friend.

BETTY: Couldn't you say Ivan Ivanovitch? So where is he now?

SARAH: Now you're going to teach me how to talk. He'll be right back. Sit down, I have something nice to tell you.

BETTY: I'm glad it's something nice. (*They both sit down*)

SARAH: Some people may be nice, but I'm smart.

BETTY: What's on your mind?

SARAH: I mean concerning what you said, that it's a secret for the whole town. It turns out that the whole world knows about it except your own father and mother.

BETTY: What's the secret?

SARAH: About you and our boarder . . . that it's pretty near . . .

BETTY: (*Angrily*) Mama! It's nothing like it, I've already told you. I'm not even thinking about what you have in mind and what you'd like.

SARAH: So how come other people know about it?

BETTY: Probably from you. I mean from you and papa. If you would talk less about it, no one else would talk.

SARAH: Are we saying anything? We are quiet. It's others that are doing the talking . . .

BETTY: Who are the others?

SARAH: This Goy, for instance, just spoke to me for half an hour . . .

BETTY: So what was he talking about?

SARAH: He asked what, when and how your engagement is coming along . . .

BETTY: He asked you this so plainly in these very words?
SARAH: Must you have the same words?

BETTY: What did he say?

SARAH: You think I must remember every single word?
And what are you, a district attorney, I owe you a detailed report? If I tell you he asked me, so he asked me. I am no liar, never was and I am not one today.

BETTY: Alright, Ma. Did I, God forbid, say something?
Go ahead, tell me. So what was your answer?

SARAH: I should answer him? You think I am such a fool? I took a mouthful of water and I kept quiet.

BETTY: You gave him no answer?

SARAH: I was as silent as the wall.

BETTY: You should have told him, first of all, that the whole thing is not true.

SARAH: Of course, I told him that it isn't true.

BETTY: Secondly, that strangers have no business to interfere in this.

SARAH: I told even better than that, I told him that he may have a Jewish nose but that he doesn't have to push it where it isn't wanted . . .

BETTY: You see, Mother, this was too much. This you shouldn't have told him.

SARAH: God forbid, you think I said it in these very words? I am not so rude. I only told him that everybody, including you, find his nose very Jewish . . . No! That is, I didn't say a Jewish nose, but a Jewish face.

BETTY: (*Impatiently*) Why did you have to say this, Mother? Why did you have to have such conversation? And what do you want of me with your ideas to marry me off . . .

SARAH: Don't shout like this! You are not making any fortunes for us, don't you know?

BETTY: Ma, I don't want to quarrel with you on my birthday. I just want to ask you one favor; don't interfere in my affairs . . .

SARAH: Her affairs!

BETTY: Of course, every person has his own affairs. You stay at a distance, just watch, and that's all.

SARAH: You mean look, listen and keep quiet?

BETTY: Exactly, keep quiet. I am no longer a little girl. I can take care of my own business. I am nineteen, you know.

SARAH: Is that so? Nineteen? That's no small matter! I wonder what people would say about this ancient! She is nineteen! (*There is a ring. BETTY runs off to her room*)
(SARAH, *calling*) Syomke! Syomenne, go open! They are ringing!

(SYOMKE *appears. He goes to open, then returns with his father, SHAPIRO*)

SHAPIRO: (*Carrying paper bags, gives them to SARAH, and takes off his coat*) Here, some running around! Troubles just naturally come my way, so God sent us a boarder with no privileges to live here. In case we didn't have enough of our own troubles, so we have to have other people's troubles to the bargain.

SARAH: And where is he?

SHAPIRO: Who?

SARAH: Our boarder.

SHAPIRO: Shneyerson? He'll be here soon. He had a rough time getting out, like from a Turkish bath, and he ran away to buy flowers and a cake in honor of today's birthday. (*Looking around*) Where is she, our daughter?

SARAH: She is getting dressed. (*To SYOMKE*) Go, do your home-work. You have nothing to stand here for.

SHAPIRO: What are you chasing the child around for? Home-work, home-work! Today too?

SARAH: I don't want him to stay here. There's something I want to talk to you about.

SHAPIRO: A secret? Go, son, you'll come out a little later and taste all these good things. (SYOMKE *goes out*)
Well, what secrets, for instance?

SARAH: (*Softly*) I can tell you some glad news, David. It's come very far between them, quite far.

SHAPIRO: (*Quite aloud*) Who are you talking about?

SARAH: Shhh . . . Don't pretend not to know. Do I have to chew it up for you and put it in your mouth? I mean the children, of course, our daughter and our boarder.

SHAPIRO: Now I understand what you are talking about. So what do you mean by "far"? And what makes you glad about it?

SARAH: And why not? Have you got a nicer boy for your daughter? You said yourself that he comes from the Shneyersons of Libavitch, the first Jewish family.

SHAPIRO: Not the first, but the second. First came the Shapiros, then the Shneyersons. Well, and then what?

SARAH: And then what? The young man himself.

SHAPIRO: I have nothing against the young man, except that he is a little . . . a little like a Goy . . .

SARAH: But he is a diamond of a man and he has a nice grandmother, a millionairess . . .

SHAPIRO: You see, with me, this is the least. First of all, I didn't count her millions, and they add little warmth to my body. And secondly, as far as money is concerned, our Betty is not just anybody. (*Proudly*) She is Shapiro's daughter, and she comes, you know, from the real Shapiros . . .

SARAH: The real ones, the Slavita Shapiros. I know, I know. I heard it before! But may God forgive me for speaking so harshly, the poor child has nothing to wear. She hasn't a copeck for a dowry—you mustn't forget this. And, in these times, a girl without a dowry is like a—

SHAPIRO: Well, say it, like a cantor without a pulpit, like a teacher without pupils, or like a house without a roof—but tell me, please, my dear, how do you know that they went that far? Did Betty say anything to you, or did he himself?

SARAH: Must anybody say something to me? And where are my eyes? (*Softly*) You should see, David, what a bracelet he gave her today, for her birthday, with diamonds—diamonds like that!

SHAPIRO: (*Amazed*) A bracelet? Diamonds? (*Loudly*) What bracelet? What diamonds? Phooey! He can't do this to me! I am a Shapiro! (*Goes to the other room*)

SARAH: (*Holding him back*) Shhh—make no noise! Don't show you're a Cohen! You can say the same thing in a softer voice. Why be angry? What for?

SHAPIRO: (*Angrily*) What anger? Who is angry? I have anger. I like it the soft way. I'll go in now and tell her just two words, I hate long discussions! I'll tell her like this: now, listen, daughter. As to flowers and cakes—well, it isn't hard to understand this. But, bracelets—Diamonds? Be so good and return this bracelet to him, and, that's all! (*Goes towards BETTY's room*)

SARAH: (*Going after him*) Try it the gentle way, David, please, not in anger. With modern children you durstn't do it any other way . . .

SHAPIRO: (*Walking*) She is teaching me how to talk. (*Exit. SARAH remains. She listens. There is a ring. SYOMKE goes to open and returns panting*)

SYOMKE: Ivan Ivanovitch!

SARAH: The devil brought him here. He's a shrewd Goy. (*Friendly to SHNEYERSON, who is now IVANOV*) My husband is here already, he's getting dressed.

SHNEYERSON: And my friend? (*Takes out a cigarette*)

SARAH: Shneyerson? He'll be here soon, too. (*Another ring*) This must be him. Syomenne, be so good.

SYOMKE: (*Runs out and returns*) It's our boarder Shneyerson. (*Enter IVANOV, who is known as SHNEYERSON, carrying flowers and a cake. He looks happy. He greets his chum and places the things on the table. SHAPIRO returns from his daughter's room, he greets SHNEYERSON, who is known as IVANOV. Looks at the flowers and the cake, and exchanges glances with his wife*)

SARAH: (*Removing the flowers and the cake*) Why did you have to go to all this trouble?

SHAPIRO: (*To his wife*) Don't you understand, a good deed is better done with your own hands. (*To the students*) Sit down, why don't you?

SARAH: (*Placing chairs before them*) Sit down, why don't you? (*They decline gratefully, lighting cigarettes. To her husband*) Well, David, what about the police station? Are you rid of it?

SHAPIRO: (*To his wife*) Of course! Once I go there! I put something in their mouths. To one I gave a ten-spot, another one I desecrated with a fiver, another got only three, and our porter I gave only half a ruble . . . (*To the true SHNEYERSON*) You know what I'll tell you, Ivan Ivanovitch? (*Sighing*) It's hard to be a Jew! It's as hard and as bitter as death!

SHNEYERSON: (*To SHAPIRO*) Is that so? Why? (*To his friend*) It's the old song again. Again to the police station? Again you need the special permit to live here? You are not tired of it yet?

IVANOV: Nonsense! (*To SARAH*) And where's your daughter?

SARAH: She'll come right out.

SHAPIRO: (*To the boarder's friend*) Here he calls it nonsense. Here he's a strong man! But just ask him what he said there when the old bureau chief called him: Hey, Hershko, come here!

IVANOV: (*To his friend*) You see, an old drunkard has the effrontery to address me as if I were his valet. Should I have kept quiet about it?

SHNEYERSON: (*Laughing*) So what did you say to him?

IVANOV: Nothing. I only asked him: Since when did we get so familiar?

SHNEYERSON: (*Laughing*) Then what?

IVANOV: Then he says to me: Shut up, Jew! We nearly came to blows. (*SHNEYERSON laughing more and more*)

SHAPIRO: (*To SARAH, who is untying and arranging the packages*) Look at him laughing! (*To SHNEYERSON*) It's easy for you to laugh, because you are a student and your name is Ivan Ivanovitch, and your father is a State's Attorney—I'd like to see you in his boots . . . for, at least, one year . . . (*Both friends exchange glances and burst out laughing. BETTY enters, all dressed. Both friends go to her with their congratulations. The parents smiling happily. SHNEYERSON notices her bracelet. She hides her hand. The friends look at each other*)

BETTY: What's the great joke here? I heard your laughing in my room. What were you discussing?

SHAPIRO: We're discussing how hard it is to be a Jew. So Ivan Ivanovitch doesn't understand me. So I'm telling him, that if he'd be a Jew for at least one year, he would get a good taste of it. So they're laughing at the idea.

SHNEYERSON: (*To SHAPIRO*) Excuse me, we didn't laugh at your idea, but it was funny the way my friend discussed the matter with the old bureau chief. (*To BETTY*) He offered my friend a compliment.

BETTY: (*To SHNEYERSON*) He called him his real name.

SHNEYERSON: As if you were right there. (*The friends laugh*)

SHAPIRO: (*To SHNEYERSON*) You think it's a laughing matter, eh? To you it doesn't mean anything when you hear that disgusting word, because you're a Gentile, so

you don't feel it. But when you are called: Jew! our hearts go out in anger. When a Goy says that word, he pronounces it with so much malice and poison, that you feel insulted involuntarily . . . Of course, your friend was incensed—(*Pointing at IVANOV*) when that fellow called him a Jew. It is possible to get not merely incensed, but to drop dead. Why? Whom did he do any harm? Did he crowd out anybody? You just take an innocent fellow and you keep on dragging him to the police station, not giving him any rest for even one week. They always find some fault with his residential permit. Here, they don't think the documents are in order . . . It's a pity on the poor fellow, isn't it?

IVANOV: (*To SHAPIRO*) Why do you have to pity me? SHNEYERSON: Really, why do you have to cry for him?

SHAPIRO: Because my heart aches. Because I'm a Jew, and a Jew is not a Goy. A Goy hasn't got a drop of pity in him.

IVANOV: (*To SHAPIRO*) You think so? You believe only a Jew has the feeling of pity?

SARAH: (*To SHAPIRO*) The man is a Goy, so why do you have to talk to him like this? Don't you see that even this Yehudi is taking his side?

SHAPIRO: How do you do, she's here too! I'm not saying that a Gentile hasn't got the feeling of pity. I'm only saying that a Goy pities a Jew as much as a dog or even less, that's all I'm saying! (*To SHNEYERSON*) Just confess that you are dealing with us Jews much worse than, for instance, with dogs or horses. A dog, you know, needs no residential permit; for horses you have a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but as far as Jews are concerned, it is proper to hunt and to persecute them, and to beat them and make pogroms upon them . . .

BETTY: (*To her father*) Papa, why are you saying this to Ivan Ivanovitch? Ivan Ivanovitch is not of those Gentiles, who . . .

SHAPIRO: I know, I know, he is not of those. That's why I am telling him. Would I talk like this with anybody else? (*To the boarder's friend*) For curiosity's sake I'd like to see you being a Jew, and graduate from the gymnasium with a gold medal and then not being able to enter the University, and being compelled to have business with dentists and chiefs of bureaus and similar rabble.

SHNEYERSON: What would happen then?

SHAPIRO: Then you'd get a taste of what it means to be a step-child, and what it means to be in Golus, alone and lonely and superfluous in everyone's eyes. Oh, Ivan Ivanovitch! You certainly may be proud of your men who are complaining about us Jews and reproaching us with all sorts of sins, saying that we are blood-suckers, that it's us who are sucking your blood, haha . . . Pity, there's no one to laugh at this . . . the world considers us the blood-suckers. (*Getting more excited*) We, who are occupying the last place, we, who are lower than the lowest . . . We're afraid of a fly, so we are your murderers. No! If you want to know the truth, it is you, Gentiles, who are the real blood-suckers. I am telling it to you plainly, straight in your eyes. You—I don't mean you personally, I mean the whole Russian people—you are a blood-thirsty people, you understand, or don't you?

IVANOV: (*Controlling his anger*) I think this is getting a little too far. How do you know so much about Gentiles? How long is it since you know the Russian people so well?

SHAPIRO: How I know it is a separate story. Thank God I am clear in my mind, but it seems to me he should be the one to ask me those questions, not you. (*IVANOV wants to answer, but is checked by SHNEYERSON. IVANOV takes another cigarette. SHAPIRO continues to SHNEYERSON*)

Take this, for instance, you are accusing us of using your blood in our *matzoh* on Passover . . .

SARAH: (*Confidentially, to her husband*) Why do you have to speak about this calamity now?

SHAPIRO: Maybe you are going to teach me what to say and how to say it?

BETTY: Papa! Mother is right, this is no subject to speak about on my birthday.

SHAPIRO: (*To BETTY*) What's the difference birthday or no birthday? You go listen to the new troubles they are discussing in town, awaiting us Jews. The exchange is bubbling with the Christian child that was recently found murdered in our Jewish Quarter.

SARAH: May they be murdered by the hand of God for all they are causing us. It isn't worth mentioning such horrors at night . . . (*Seeing SYOMKE listening attentively*) You little squirrel, you must be listening too, when they talk of such horrors? Go, do your home-work. The evening is still long. (*Exit SYOMKE*)

SHAPIRO: The town is boiling with this ugly thing. The air is charged with hatred, and pogrom is in the air . . . I am thinking of pogroms because I have already survived two, you understand. If I didn't know Ivan Ivanovitch, and how he looks at those things, I wouldn't have discussed it in his presence. Isn't it a heartache, that in our days, in the days of science and wisdom, of electricity, telephone, gramophone, airplane, motion pictures and similar things, people should believe such wild stories, namely, that among us there is such a sect that uses human blood!

IVANOV: There are sects and sectarians all over, among all peoples—

SHNEYERSON: (*To IVANOV*) Only not among us Jews! Not among us! (*BETTY laughs boisterously*)

SHAPIRO: She is right to laugh, because you've changed arguments. He, the Jew, (*Pointing to IVANOV*) maintains that we, too, have sects and sectarians, and he, the Gentile, (*Pointing to SHNEYERSON*) denies that we Jews have sects. Well, isn't this funny? (*The boys look confused*)

IVANOV: (*Apologizing*) I didn't say that you . . . I mean, that we . . . have sectarians. I only said, that we . . . I mean, that they, I mean the Gentiles, might believe, that you . . . I mean, that we, do have sectarians . . .

SHAPIRO: What do you say, how he got mixed up? I mean that we—I mean that they—we they, they we—

SHNEYERSON: (*To IVANOV*) Mr. Shapiro is quite right. As a Jew, you should have known that that fairy-tale about certain sects using human blood is an ancient story. You, as a Jew, should know that the same false accusation has been levelled against us Christians many years ago, that we slaughter alien children and use their blood for sacred purposes . . .

SHAPIRO: (*Interrupting*) Nonsense! What kind of a Jew is he? You call him a Jew? It is to laugh, I tell you, what a Jew! Will you believe me, or won't you? There are times when I don't believe at all that he is a Jew, and a Shneyerson too! And do you know what more I'll tell you, Ivan Ivanovitch? You'll forgive me, but I must tell you openly, that you are more of a Jew than he is. Much more, believe me! Say what you will, but there's something in your make-up—you know, there's a spark of a Jew in you . . . You have a soul, a Jewish soul . . .

SHNEYERSON (*Laughs*) Is that so? Your wife thinks that I have a Jewish head on my shoulders, and you say that I have a Jewish soul . . . Soon you will accuse me altogether, that I am a Jew . . . (*All laugh. There is a ring.*)

SARAH: Guests are coming! Syomke, where are you? Syomke!

SHAPIRO: You forgot you've chased him out?

SYOMKE (*Runs in*) What's the matter?

SARAH: Go, Syomenne, they're ringing (*He goes out*)

SHAPIRO: I'd like to know what you think the boy is, a butler? A porter? (*To SHNEYERSON*) A pretty lively fellow our little son, and very studious too, your friend will tell you.

SYOMKE: (*Coming back*) Betty's friends, a whole bunch of them. (*Five or six GIRLS enter. BETTY greets them with kisses, then introduces them to her parents*)

BETTY: My friends, my parents. Mr. Ivanov, Mr. Shneyerson. (*The girls greet them*)

SHAPIRO: Sit down, why don't you? (*Urging his wife to meet them*)

SARAH: (*Pointing at chairs*) Sit down, why don't you? (*The girls sit down. There is another ring at the door*) SYOMKE runs out to open and returns smiling)

SYOMKE: Another three guests: two students and one person. (*General laughter*)

SHAPIRO: Like that man from Poland said: I've seen two Jews and a Litvak. (*To his daughter*) Who could this be?

BETTY: They are the students Greensberg and Fratkin. I met them at a birthday party. The third one is Hurvitch; he used to be a student, now he is a teacher.

(*The arriving guests are heard in the ante-room. The two STUDENTS appear, with HURVITCH in mufti, behind them. BETTY goes to meet them. The students brought flowers*)

GREENSBERG: I have the honor to congratulate you. FRATKIN: Congratulations!

HURVITCH: *Mazel tov* and a merry holiday to you.

BETTY: (*Introducing*) Student Greensberg; Student Fratkin, Mr. Hurvitch! He speaks Yiddish!

SHAPIRO: Give him credit for this. There's nothing to be ashamed of our language. (*BETTY then introduces them to IVANOV and SHNEYERSON. A holiday spirit prevails*) Sit down, why don't you?

SARAH: Sit down, why don't you?

GREENSBERG: Thank you kindly.

FRATKIN: *Merci, Madam!*

HURVITCH: Thank you, auntie!

SHAPIRO: Very welcome guests! I like young people, youth! Young blood! (*To HURVITCH*) I think your name is, if I'm not mistaken, Hurvitch! Which Hurvitches do you come from?

HURVITCH: The real Hurvitches, those from Pinsk.

SHAPIRO: Is that so? Then I know you. Your grandfather was, if I'm not mistaken . . .

HURVITCH: He was a Shames in a Synagogue, and my father was a Hebrew teacher . . . (*Laughter*)

SHAPIRO: Well, what's there to laugh about? A Shames is nothing to be ashamed of. Anything for a living, as the saying goes. Every person has got to do something. And there's certainly nothing to be ashamed of being a teacher. (*To HURVITCH*) It only shows that your father is a learned man . . .

HURVITCH: This does not happen to be the case. He's only an elementary teacher, teaching Jewish children the first words in Hebrew . . .

SHAPIRO: Well, that's something too, to teach Jewish children the prayers. (*To his wife*) Sarah, would you please take a look at the *samovar*, just for curiosity's sake. Just whisper into it to make it boil, so, first of all, we can offer our guests tea, then we'll serve refreshments and drink for the sake of our daughter, because God has helped us, since she is now, thank God . . .

SARAH: Why talk so much? Who is asking you how old she is? What do you think of that? Who is pulling your tongue?

SHAPIRO: (*To his wife*) What are you afraid of? It'll hurt her in getting a nice husband? Or are you scared she might get sick otherwise?

SARAH: Never mind that, but why should a man talk of things that no one is asking him about? (*Goes out, taking SYOMKE along*)

SHAPIRO: (*To all*) There you are! A woman is a woman even if she is the wisest one in the world. Don't take me the wrong way, young ladies, but I say—women are always smarter than the rest of us. With me it's plain up and down. I am a Shapiro, and the Shapiros know no tricks. I stick to the rule that with the truth you can go through the whole wide world—Now, listen, ladies and gentlemen, what I'll tell you—(*Putting his arm around his daughter*) You see this girl, I mean this young lady? Bertha Davidovna Shapiro is her name. I make it known that this lucky day she is just nineteen years old! (*He kisses her*)

ALL: Nineteen? Nineteen years? (*Everybody gets up to congratulate her, exclaiming: Nineteen years!*)

(*SARAH enters, carrying a samovar, with SYOMKE carrying the tea-set*)

SARAH: Say at least: may she live to a hundred and twenty! What do you know about that!

BETTY: I'm afraid, mama, a hundred and twenty might be a little too much. Well, everybody to the table, please.

SHAPIRO: To the table, my dear guests, to the table! Sit down, why don't you?

SARAH: Sit down, why don't you? (*They all sit down at the table, including SYOMKE*)

SHAPIRO: (*At the head of the table*) That's the way I like you all. Now put sugar in and drink your tea, and there are preserves. Sarah, hand them the preserves. (*To the guests*) And tell me what's going on in the great world? I mean at the University. Who is in, who is out, who changed his faith and who is going to change his faith? (*Stirring his tea, sighing*) I don't know how you feel about it. But when I talk about people who change their faith, especially those who did it just to enter the University, my blood boils and I could plain kill somebody.

SARAH: (*After serving everybody, she sat down*) Why should you aggravate yourself for every little thing? Let them all be the *kaporah* for you!

HURVITCH: (*Drinking*) Amen!

GREENSBERG: Mr. Shapiro, why should you be so angry at them? Just think it over first, consider their situation, and then try to accuse them...

SHAPIRO: (*Ironically*) Is that so? How do you like to see how he pities them? These young people are being spat upon, they think up all sorts of troubles and the plagues of Egypt for them—it would be proper, wouldn't it, if they had despised the University with all it stands for!? But, no! They still go back to that stupid *Goy*, kiss his hand and beg his favor.

HURVITCH: Bravo! You just took the words out of my mouth (*Continues eating*)

SHAPIRO: Certainly! I am a Shapiro, I'll have you understand. The Shapiros are hot blooded; this is their inheritance from the Slaviter. (*To HURVITCH*) Mr. Slaviter, you certainly know how the Slaviters were! (*Hotly*) Those who died for his holy name! Those who let themselves be beaten, and yet did not lose their dignity before the ruffians.

IVANOV: (*Hotly*) Everything's fine! But why use such sharp words as ruffians? Have you no other name for—the Gentiles?

SHAPIRO: What are you getting so excited about, when I called them ruffians?

SARAH: (*To her husband*) Isn't Shneyerson right? Why speak such words, when there is a Gentile at the table?

GREENSBERG: (*To SHAPIRO*) All right, supposing we assume that you are right, Mr. Shapiro. What should they do, those who remain outside?

FRATKIN: What they should do? Where is it written that they must be doctors? or lawyers? or engineers?

HURVITCH: (*Standing up*) Let them be shoemakers, water-carriers, salesmen, but don't let them change their faith! (*Sits down again*)

SHAPIRO: (*To his boarder*) Did you hear that? Learn from them how to be a Jew. They, too, are young men, and students too, and they don't, like you, apologize for the *goyim*... for Esau...

IVANOV: For whom did you say?

SHAPIRO: For Esau. Don't you know who Esau was? (*To all*) I forgot to explain, that our dear neighbor (*Pointing to IVANOV*) doesn't understand a word I'm saying. He doesn't know the Bible, doesn't know that Esau was the brother of Jacob. Do you think, God forbid, that he is a nobody? He is no mean person! He is a Shneyerson of the true Shneyersons, I'll have you know, of those from Libavitch...

HURVITCH: (*Excitedly*) And he doesn't understand you? How can this be?

SHAPIRO: Well, you see it for yourself!

BETTY: (*Apologetically*) The man grew up in a Russian city, among Gentiles—any wonder?

SHAPIRO: That's a weak explanation. I say, you can't go away from the truth. He deserves praise to the face. I'll vouch for him as for my own self, that he'll never become a turncoat—for no money! A Jewish soul is beyond estimation! Take, for instance, our own dear boarder, I beg his pardon a hundred times: what is it, for instance, that holds him back from changing his faith? (*Counting on his fingers*) He has no father and mother. He can't speak Yiddish, he doesn't know his prayers—So the question arises: what in heaven compels him to hang on to his Jewishness and suffer as much as he has to suffer? (*Counting on his fingers again*) He didn't make the University, even though he has a gold medal. He has no right to live here. About once every two weeks, God be praised, they drag him to the Station House, and what he has to take from the Gentiles is only half of what I wish them!

HURVITCH: Amen!

IVANOV: (*Having exchanged glances with his friend*) I don't believe it is as terrible as Mr. Shapiro is trying to make it. But even so, so what? The fact that I didn't do it does not give me the right to throw a stone at him who *must* do it...

GREENSBERG: Bravo, Shneyerson. Bravo!

SHAPIRO: (*To GREENSBERG*) What are you applauding for? What for? Where for? I am altogether surprised at you, Mr. Ginzburg, for you to take sides with him. You're a Ginzburg, aren't you? And you probably came from the real Ginzburgs?

GREENSBERG: (*To SHAPIRO*) What Ginzburg? I'm not a Ginzburg at all. My name is Greensberg. (*To the others*) Of course, Shneyerson is right, when he says that we have no right to throw stones at those who *must* do it. And, it seems to me, it's plain to everyone that they must. Just consider their position. The position of young people, to whom a new, free world is opened—should they stop for the sake of some nonsense?

BETTY: (*Aflare*) For the sake of some nonsense, did you say? To renounce one's own people for the sake of a career—you call this nonsense? To deny everything that a person holds near and dear; one's father and mother, one's race, one's ancient people—you call all this nonsense? I just can't understand how a person, possessing the least drop of self-respect, can escape, in these bitter times, from

the weak to the strong, from the persecuted to the persecutors, from the tortured to the torturers? A person doing this ugly thing for the sake of his own little interests, is more than a coward, a renegade, a traitor! . . .

HURVITCH: (*Applauding*) Bravo!

ALL: (*Applauding, excepting GREENSBURG and IVANOV*)
Bravo! Bravo!

BETTY: *Merçi!*

SHAPIRO: (*Rising, kissing his daughter on the forehead*)
That's the way to talk for a girl who comes from the true Shapiros, those from Slavita . . . you understand? . . .

SARAH: (*Pleased*) Her mama's darling!

IVANOV: (*To BETTY*) Bertha Davidovna, excuse me. And how is it, for instance, when one renounces his faith not for the sake of entering the University but for the sake of something else . . . Supposing we say, when a Gentile boy falls in love with a Jewish girl . . . (*His eyes meet those of SHNEYERSON*) Well, something like this *might* happen . . .

HURVITCH: I wish as much it wouldn't happen as it might. (*Peeling an orange*)

IVANOV: And so, I say, he falls in love with the girl, and the girl falls in love with him and she takes on his religion—what then?

BETTY: Then she is a traitor.

ALL: (*Excepting GREENSBURG*) Bravo! Bravo!

SHAPIRO: (*In triumph*) He wants to win from a Shapiro? Ha, ha—

SHNEYERSON: (*Rising*) Excuse me, gentlemen. As a non-Jew I didn't want to take part in all this conversation. Because you have been discussing a subject that is entirely alien to me. But now I just want to make one remark. Bertha Davidovna maintains steadfastly that a Jewish girl, who does such a thing for the sake of a Gentile, is a traitor. I only wish to add, that besides that, it is neither natural nor practical because . . . (*Looking at his friend*) Blood is blood! Whatever you take in with your mother's milk will never leave you! And you may be sure, that at the first opportunity when the couple will quarrel, that perfect Gentile lover will remind her of her race . . .

HURVITCH: And will probably present her with the beautiful nickname—Jew! (*Eating his orange*)

IVANOV: (*Irritated*) This is only likely in the case of a great scoundrel, or a great drunkard.

HURVITCH: A drunk comes right out with it.

SHAPIRO: It's certainly amusing with those two. Here is a *Goy*, a true Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov. He stands up for Jews, heart and soul. While this Jew, Shneyerson, of the true Shneyersons from Libavitch, is just the opposite. It's a funny thing! Magic!

HURVITCH: The days of the Messiah! (*All look at the two who are confused. There is a ring at the door. SYOMKE runs to open, but stumbles over a chair*)

HURVITCH: Here I brought you something, and there it lies! (*All laugh*)

SARAH: Did you hurt yourself? I'm glad now. Don't run like a crazy calf. (*She goes to help him*)

SHAPIRO: (*He, too, helping SYOMKE*) You didn't sprain an ankle, did you? (*To his wife*) What are you chasing the boy around for all evening, here and there?

SARAH: Who is chasing him? He's chasing himself. Every time he hears the bell ring he runs. (*Helping him to get up*) You didn't hurt yourself anywhere?

SYOMKE: It's nothing!

HURVITCH: I knew it was nothing.

SARAH: Thank God, it's nothing.

(*SYOMKE goes out, limping*)

HURVITCH: You have a very able boy.

SARAH: Bless him!

SHAPIRO: (*Returning to his place*) A minute ago she said she was glad, and now: bless him! Oh, those women! That's why our wise men compare them to white geese . . .

(*SYOMKE returns, panting*)

SYOMKE: There's another guest—Ketzele! (*He sits down*)

SHAPIRO: (*Obviously disappointed with the new arrival*) Ketzele? As it is written in the book of Esther—and Haman came—to which Rashi comments: who the devil brought him here?

SARAH: What have you got against the poor man?

SHAPIRO: I forgive you that he is poor, but he is a *Shlim-mazel*. (*To the guests*) You've never seen such a *Shlim-mazel* in all your living days. And not enough that he is a *Shlim-mazel*, he views everything around him with even more *Shlim-mazel* than it really is! (*KETZELE enters. He is dressed in his Saturday-best, including a white shirt, but his hands and face are smudged with ink. SHAPIRO welcomes him*) Welcome to a Jew! You're a very welcome guest. (*Introducing him*) This is Mr. Katz. He is a neighbor of ours and he deals on the exchange, you know, that is, he hangs around; he is not on the best of terms with the police . . . (*KETZELE bows, smiling*) At one time he used to be a real neighbor of our's, that is, he used to live right underneath us . . . Thank God, those days are gone . . . I say thank God! because due to this we always used to be raided by the police . . . (*To KETZELE*) Sit down, Mr. Katz, why don't you sit down?

KETZELE: Thank you, I can stand it. (*Sits down*)

SHAPIRO: So what's new, Mr. Katz? How is it with your privilege to live here? (*Pointing to his tea, that SARAH placed before him*) Drink a glass of tea. Why don't you drink?

SARAH: Drink your tea. Why don't you drink it? (*Giving him the sugar*)

KETZELE: Thank you, I had tea. (*He begins to drink his tea avidly. To SHAPIRO*) You want to know about my privilege to live here? I have a new permit now. I am an ink-maker now, I am. It's ink I'm manufacturing now, yes, ink. (*Showing his smudged hands. All look at them*)

HURVITCH: Well, and you probably sell ink as much as I am a watch-maker and teach children Russian.

KETZELE: Of course. It's for the sake of that permit that I am an ink-maker, and just to please the police I must always be smudged with ink.

SHAPIRO: (*To SHNEYERSON*) You see? That's your police! Your rights! It's for the sake of those rights, that one is an ink-maker and deals on the exchange, and the other—(*Pointing at HURVITCH*) is a watch-maker and coaches children for the gymnasium! It's hard to be a Jew, eh? (*To KETZELE*) And, in general, what's new in the city?

KETZELE: What's new in the city? It's not too good, I tell you. Things are pretty dark in the city. Dark and dusky!

SHAPIRO: For instance? Take some jam, why don't you take it?

SARAH: Why don't you take some jam? (*Placing it before him*)

KETZELE: Thanks, I had some. (*Starts eating jam*) For instance, you say? I'm speaking about this calamity, about that Christian boy who was found killed. They are preparing a pogrom on us. (*All listen attentively*) And there will certainly be a pogrom, you may be sure of that.

HURVITCH: It seems that it was quiet too long.

SARAH: Bite your tongue! Why should you predict?

KETZELE: I am not predicting. I'm only listening to what people say, that's all. They insist that the case come up in court on Passover, so they can make the pogrom right in the Passover days.

SHAPIRO: Right on Passover? And you know it all?

KETZELE: Of course, I know it. I even know that they want to implicate in this case another man, a certain Shneyerson.

SHAPIRO: (To KETZELE) Which Shneyerson do they want to implicate in this case?

KETZELE: The Shneyersons, you know, stem from the Shneyersons of Libavitch.

SHAPIRO: Where the Shneyersons stem from, that we know without you telling us. I'm only asking you what connection has that Shneyerson got in this case?

KETZELE: What connection? This I don't know at all. But I do know that they want to drag in a certain Shneyerson. You see, they're missing a saintly man in this whole affair, because, they say, a saintly man collects the blood of all the slaughtered Christian children and he divides it up among the Jews of the whole world for the Passover, and since the Shneyersons hail from Saints, so they are seeking a Shneyerson. Did you swallow it all now? (All the young people are listening very attentively. Silence)

IVANOV: (To KETZELE) So why must it be a Shneyerson? Aren't there amongst you any other . . . priests?

HURVITCH: What do you think of this pious Jew? He is talking of . . . priests!

SHAPIRO: (To all) Our boarder likes to show off his great learning. He just begins to know what a Jewish saintly man means! Look at him. And he is a Shneyerson. (General laughter. Only KETZELE looks at him in astonishment)

KETZELE: (To SHAPIRO) This one is really a Shneyerson?

SHAPIRO: Certainly a Shneyerson. Have you only just found it out?

KETZELE: A true Shneyerson?

SHAPIRO: Of the true Shneyersons from Libavitch.

KETZELE: (Finishes sipping his tea and wiping his hirsute face) If this is the case, I don't envy him at all.

SHAPIRO: I know what you mean! (Pointing at the boarder) What do you say to this saintly Shneyerson?

HURVITCH: He is one of those thirty-six saints on whom the foundation of the world is resting. (All laugh)

SARAH: (Rises) David! Don't you think we've had enough of this talk about the saints and the Shneyersons? What do you know! I wish you'd much rather take the trouble to go down into the cellar and bring up the wine you have prepared for your daughter's birthday. In the meantime I'll prepare the table—I'm quite sure our guests are ready for the snack.

SHAPIRO: (Getting up) Oh, with the greatest of pleasure. As they say, you don't dance before you eat. Very well! You prepare the table and I'll go down into the cellar and bring up a few drinks—without this, a party is no party. As it is written: And wine shall gladden man's heart. (To KETZELE) Will you please, Mr. Katz, follow me into the cellar. I'll let you keep the lantern, that is, you will hold the light and I shall be looking for the bottles. There ought to be a few bottles of wine left from last year's Passover for this birthday. But wine, I tell you. Real red wine—(SHAPIRO and KETZELE go out. All getting up)

SARAH: Betty, darling, won't you please take the guests into your room for a while, until I prepare the table. Can you do it?

BETTY: Of course, mother. (To the guests) I have the honor to invite you all to my private apartment. (They all go out, SYOMKE bowing before them, he then goes to his mother)

SYOMKE: Do you need my help, Ma?

SARAH: (Spreading a white table-cloth) You won't, God forbid, break something? You better place the chairs around the table. (SYOMKE does it) Now I love you. Now you are a good boy. Now come with me to the kitchen, my boy. You'll help me wipe the dishes. You love to help your mother, don't you . . . I'm all alone . . . (She goes into the kitchen, SYOMKE following. After a short pause, BETTY and IVANOV enter)

IVANOV: Bertha Davidovna! Did you want to tell me something?

BETTY: I meant to ask you something . . .

IVANOV: You? Want to ask me something?

BETTY: I want to ask you a great favor. But give me your hand, that you won't feel offended.

IVANOV: Offended by you? (Holding out his hand) You have my word.

BETTY: I want to ask you . . . this bracelet . . . (She removes it) I wish you'd take it . . . I must return it to you . . .

IVANOV: Why must you? You don't want my present? Have I offended you by giving it to you?

BETTY: God forbid! On the contrary. I am very grateful to you! I really appreciate it a whole lot. You know very well I was quite moved by it . . .

IVANOV: Well then?

BETTY: But, I'm somewhat ashamed before my parents . . . Please, Mr. Shneyerson, take it back, and keep it for some other time . . . sometime later . . .

IVANOV: (Takes it mechanically, holding her hand) When do you mean, later? . . .

BETTY: Later, after all my tests in school . . . I've told you . . . just now, I don't know . . . Let my hand go, Mr. Shneyerson! Let me go . . . my friends are in there . . . It isn't nice . . .

IVANOV: (Not letting her hand go) No! Bertha Davidovna, later it will be too late for me. It's too long to wait. I meant to ask you today . . . This is a good opportunity . . . your birthday . . . I wanted to speak with your parents.

BETTY: God forbid! Not today! Under no circumstances. You hear? Under no circumstances! . . .

IVANOV: (Still holding her hand) So when? Bertha Davidovna, say when . . . Tell me, give me some hope!

BETTY: I don't know . . . I don't know myself. I told you later, after my tests, after all the examinations . . . (Trying to free herself) Let me go . . . somebody might come in . . .

IVANOV: Remember, I have your word. (She runs out. He paces the floor a few times. SHNEYERSON enters from the same room where BETTY went. He puts his hand on IVANOV's shoulder)

SHNEYERSON: What's the matter with you, Vanya? What are you imagining? It's hard to be a Jew, eh?

IVANOV: Nonsense!

SHNEYERSON: You don't regret the change we made, do you?

IVANOV: Regret?

SHNEYERSON: I must tell you, Vanya, you are not very strong in your Jewish part . . . Today, for instance, you played your part very poorly. You acted like a bad amateur! Several times you nearly gave yourself away. Bad acting, rotten! (Taking a cigarette and offering one to IVANOV) In a word, confess, you were not at your best today.

IVANOV: (Taking the cigarette) Yes, there is no denying. I wasn't any good today.

SHNEYERSON: Why is it? Is it possibly because this is Bertha Davidovna's birthday?

IVANOV: What's Bertha Davidovna got to do with this?

SHNEYERSON: A whole lot. You don't think I know what takes place?

IVANOV: What do you know? What takes place?
 SHNEYERSON: I know everything. Sit down. *(They sit down)* Listen, I want to ask you something. But, please, answer frankly and tell me the whole truth.
 IVANOV: Why all the preliminaries?
 SHNEYERSON: Tell me, Vanya, how did Bertha Davidovna get this diamond bracelet? The Shapiros can hardly afford to pay their rent, to say nothing of diamonds.
 IVANOV: Why do you ask? And what concern is it of yours?
 SHNEYERSON: It is my concern, because . . . because I won't permit this thing to get too far . . .
 IVANOV: *(Amazed)* You won't permit?
 SHNEYERSON: *(Firmly)* Yes, I won't. I can't permit it. *(In a low voice)* Is this why we changed our names and started this ridiculous spectacle, this boyish play of Jew and Gentile, to give you an opportunity to mislead a Jewish girl?
 IVANOV: *(Jumps up)* Take care, Hershko!
 SHNEYERSON: *(Standing up)* Now, don't get crazy, Vanyusha! *(Takes his hand)* Why should we get excited?
 IVANOV: You're excited, not I!
 SHNEYERSON: Let's take it easy. *(Sitting down again)* I know it's not in your nature to commit an atrocity . . . But on your honor, are you serious about it?
 IVANOV: I couldn't be more serious than I am.
 SHNEYERSON: And the fact that she's a Jewish girl and you are, as Shapiro expressed it, a triple Ivan—doesn't this concern you?
 IVANOV: That's mere nonsense!
 SHNEYERSON: And the fact that Bertha Davidovna just expressed her opinions about changing one's faith and about renegades, is that nonsense, too? What will you say to that?
 IVANOV: If this should be the only handicap, then we shall look for another way out . . .
 SHNEYERSON: Another way out? What other way, for instance? Perhaps you contemplate remaining forever in this part that you have assumed, and you want to continue the comedy of being a Jew? Perhaps forever?
 IVANOV: It's quite possible.
 SHNEYERSON: I imagine. I should like to know how you're figuring to do this . . .
 IVANOV: This has nothing to do with you. Leave it to me.
 SHNEYERSON: *(Quite irritable)* Leave it to you? No! This will never happen. Don't think, Vanya, that this is something to play with. This involves the honor of an innocent child. It is easy to mislead her, to talk her into something. I am telling you again that I won't permit it. I'll smash all your plans. *(Both are excited)*
 IVANOV: Are you serious?
 SHNEYERSON: Most serious.
 IVANOV: Will you unmask me before the end of May, that is, before the year is over?
 SHNEYERSON: I'll do everything that might be necessary.
 IVANOV: It means, you will turn traitor?
 SHNEYERSON: Call it what you will.
 IVANOV: In that case you really are a . . .
 SHNEYERSON: Say what! What am I? Well, say it. Come right out, what am I?
 IVANOV: *(Threatening with his fist)* Don't make me lose my patience, Hershko! *(With a gesture of resignation he goes into his room)*
(BETTY enters again. She goes to SHNEYERSON)
 BETTY: *(Frightened)* What happened? Ivan Ivanovitch, what happened? That was Shneyerson, why did he run out?
 SHNEYERSON: Your Shneyerson lost his senses.
 BETTY: Have you quarreled?

SHNEYERSON: Just a misunderstanding, not a quarrel.
 BETTY: *(Sitting down, with him)* Please, Ivan Ivanovitch, tell me everything . . . tell me what happened here? He probably said something to you. Tell me, I demand it. Did you hear me? I demand it.
 SHNEYERSON: Bertha Davidovna, I can't tell you.
 BETTY: I say, tell me.
 SHNEYERSON: When the proper time will come, I will tell it to you myself.
 BETTY: *(Impatiently)* No. You will tell me right now. This minute. This second.
 SHNEYERSON: Bertha Davidovna, I mustn't tell it to you. I gave my promise.
 BETTY: What promise? Why mustn't you? You're not speaking clearly . . .
 SHNEYERSON: If you give me your hand, that you will listen to me quietly, and that it will remain between us, I will speak differently—
 BETTY: *(Offering both hands)* Here's my hand.
 SHNEYERSON: What I have to tell you is a solemn secret, that must still remain so for some time . . . A few months. Then it will clarify itself. Meanwhile, I can tell you one thing—and I consider this my duty, because you are dear to my heart! You must know that, what my friend wants—must never happen! . . . Do you hear? . . . Never! . . .
 BETTY: *(Frightened)* I don't understand you, Ivan Ivanovitch . . . What does it mean? You didn't make a thing clear to me . . .
 SHNEYERSON: I didn't make a thing clear to you. That's true. But I think you understand me . . . And I want you to believe me, to have confidence in me, as your own brother. Right now I cannot tell you everything. The time is not yet ripe. At the end of May I shall be able to tell it to you.
 BETTY: The time is not ripe? The end of May? It's a strange language you are speaking . . . you speak in riddles . . . you confuse me . . . I'm so unhappy as it is, so you are making me still more miserable . . . All! All of you! . . . Even you . . .
 SHNEYERSON: I am sorry, Bertha Davidovna, to cause you any pain. I meant to speak with you differently, simply and frankly, without any riddles . . . But I can't, not yet. I am only asking you in the meantime to believe me. I must not tell it to you yet . . . I'm honor bound. Only to a certain time . . . to the end of May. At the end of May I'll be able to tell you everything . . . everything that happened here . . . untie this whole knot . . . then I shall also be able to uncover my heart and my feelings to you, that I am hiding within me all this time; though, I believe, you must know about this for quite some time . . . you must know it . . . What is it, Bertha Davidovna?
 BETTY: How can you say such things? You're forgetting that—
 SHNEYERSON: I know very well what I am saying. I'm forgetting nothing—
 BETTY: You forget that there is a chasm between us . . .
 SHNEYERSON: Bertha Davidovna, I forgot nothing. I remember very well who *you* are, and I know who I am, and still I am telling you that I am quite certain of our happiness . . . Neither of us would have to sacrifice anything . . . neither of us would have to do anything against his conscience. You will belong to me! To no one but me.
 BETTY: *(Stands up)* I'm all mixed up. What did you say? I'm all confused! . . . I don't understand what's going on here . . . What is going on here? You are getting me crazy.
(SHAPIRO comes up from the cellar, with a few bottles of wine)
 SHAPIRO: *(Lively)* King David knew what he was saying: And wine gladdens the heart of man. What is a happy occasion without wine? *(He opens a few bottles)* Where is

that *Shlimmazel*? I mean Ketzele? I lost him in the kitchen. (*Discerning BETTY with SHNEYERSON*) Well, where are our guests? (*To his daughter*) Where are they all, your guests? Where is Shneyerson?

BETTY: Shneyerson quarreled with Ivan Ivanovitch.

SHNEYERSON: We didn't quarrel. Just a misunderstanding.

SHAPIRO: A misunderstanding sounds nicer? Such friends as you are? How come? Where is he, our misunderstood boarder?

BETTY: He got mad and went to his room.

SHAPIRO: Got mad? I don't like people who get mad. I'm a Shapiro, and the Shapiros, I'll have you understand, don't like to see people playing in misunderstandings! Let me go to him, it won't take me more than a second to bring him here and make peace. I'll have you understand, I like to see people live in peace. My name is Shapiro. (*He exits into IVANOV'S room. KETZELE comes from the kitchen. Young couples come from BETTY'S room. SHAPIRO and IVANOV enter. SHAPIRO leads him to SHNEYERSON*) Here, I brought our misunderstood dentist. Well, shake hands and make up. David Shapiro tells you this, and if a Shapiro tells you, you should listen to him. Betty! What are you standing around like some in-law from the bridegroom's side of the family? Just come here. Help me to make peace between Jacob and Esau, who have quarreled about their birthright—Make them shake hands and let them make up!

BETTY: (*With a strained smile*). What are they, small children? (*Takes their hands, they smile*)

HURVITCH: I wish I knew no more about all our troubles, than I know who was Jacob and who is Esau? (*All laugh*)

SHAPIRO: What's the difference? As long as there is peace. The whole world is resting on a foundation of peace. That's what's written in our holy books . . . Is everybody here? And where's the mistress of the house?

(*SARAH comes from the kitchen, carrying a large vase. SYOMKE behind her, carrying the silver on a tray*) Madame, are you here, too? You've just come in time. Well, people, to the table, and let's take a little drink, according to the dictates of God. (*He takes his place, pours the wine into the glasses. All stand around the table*) And let's drink a toast to our loving guests, and to our daughter, whose birthday it is. Today she is exactly nineteen years old. And while we are drinking, we might as well drink for the whole tribe of Israel, and wish them, that Jacob and Esau shall never again quarrel . . . I mean not only these two, but I mean the true Jacobs, I'll have you understand, with the true Esaus, should live in peace . . . and that there should come an end to living permits, an end to dentists, an end to ink-makers, an end to chief clerks. As it is written: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb . . . (*Raising his glass, all raise their glasses*) *Lehaim, Jews, Lehaim!* (*Clink of glasses*)

CURTAIN



SHAPIRO (*Maurice Schwartz*): "Now that you know something about these things, we may start to go on with the Seder . . ."
—Scene from Act III of the Broadway production. Georgie Jessel (*left*) was playing SHNEYERSON.

Act III

SCENE: *The same room. The table is all prepared for the Seder. The Passover-bed for the master of the house is all made and stands at the head of the table. The white prayer-garments are on it. Several Hagadahs, large and small are on the table. SHAPIRO enters half-dressed; he is irritated*

SHAPIRO: (Calling) Sarah! Betty! Syomke! Where are you all? Died out? (SARAH enters from the kitchen, still in her apron, a wooden spoon in her hand)

SARAH: What's the matter? What are you shouting about, as if a fire broke out?

SHAPIRO: Who was shouting? I didn't even begin to shout. Did you prepare a shirt for me? And where is my collar?

SARAH: Where the shirt is, that's where the collar is. Look for it and you'll find it.

SHAPIRO: Have I got the time to look for it? I've been looking for it for an hour . . . (He goes out)

SARAH: An hour he is looking for it. (She goes into the kitchen. SHAPIRO comes back with his collar on, but no necktie. He nervously tries to button his collar)

SHAPIRO: Sarah! Sarah! (SARAH comes back from the kitchen without the spoon)

SARAH: What's happened now?

SHAPIRO: You prepared a shirt and a collar, so where is the necktie?

SARAH: What is the matter with you? Everything is there. There's the necktie. Even your high hat I prepared for you. What are you so nervous about, David?

SHAPIRO: (Still on the collar) It's easy to get distracted, when you want to discuss something important with your wife, and you can't!

SARAH: What do you mean, you can't? (She goes to him) Something important? So why didn't you tell me before?

SHAPIRO: How could I on holiday eve? I had to bring wine for the Seder? Did I have to wash up? Did I have to get dressed? (Pause) Sarah, I don't like the look of things. It's a bad business! (Looking around, softly) I went to see the Rabbi.

SARAH: Why did you suddenly go to the Rabbi on Passover eve?

SHAPIRO: Quiet! . . . Don't make too much noise, then I'll tell you everything. (Finished buttoning his collar) I'll be right out. (He goes out)

SARAH: What's the matter with him? . . . He went to the Rabbi . . . bad business? . . . I don't begin to understand what it's all about . . . (SHAPIRO enters, all dressed, high hat in his hand. She goes to meet him) For God's sake, David, tell me what happened? What's the bad business?

SHAPIRO: (Wiping the hat with his handkerchief) Is there no one here now? I couldn't speak to you before. All day long people walk in and out, first one, then another. (Softly) Where are the children?

SARAH: (Softly) The children are getting dressed. They'll come right in. So tell me, quick. Don't keep me on edge.

SHAPIRO: Listen, Sarah, but please, keep quiet. It's bad business about our Betty . . . I don't mean about Betty, but about our boarder's friend . . . I mean Ivan Ivanovitch . . .

SARAH: (Wringing her hands) Tell me, what happened.

SHAPIRO: Don't rush me—here I am telling you! I went to the Rabbi, Reb Levi Halpern . . .

SARAH: What were you doing at Reb Levi Halpern's?

SHAPIRO: I went to see him just like this; and I meant to ask him, incidentally, if it was all right for us to have a Gentile, I had in mind Ivan Ivanovitch, sit with us at the Seder.

SARAH: (Aloud) So he probably said no? That's what I said. What did I tell you?

SHAPIRO: Shhh! Just the opposite! But it isn't that—take your time . . . Don't try to catch one thing before the other! In short, the Rabbi told me a very interesting story. (Looking around) That our Goy, I mean Ivan Ivanovitch, also came to the Rabbi five minutes before me, and he also came to ask the Rabbi some advice.

SARAH: Advice? About what?

SHAPIRO: (Looking around, softly) He wants to become a Jew . . . you understand? Ivan Ivanovitch wants to become a Jew.

SARAH: (Loud) Ivan Ivanovitch? He wants to be a Jew? Well, how do you like that? Is he crazy?

SHAPIRO: Shhh . . . wait a while! You don't know his reason yet. I got so excited, I didn't know I could take it. I thought for a minute I was going to get a stroke. He just cut my head clean off! I didn't know what was happening to me!

SARAH: What does he want to do it for, that crazy Goy?

SHAPIRO: (Looking around, softly) He wants to become a Jew because, he says, he is in love with . . . with our Betty, and he wants to . . . to be . . . married to her in accordance with Jewish customs . . . Well? Did you ever? . . .

SARAH: (With a shout) I'm thunder-struck! I won't live it through! I knew right away that something happened here! My heart told me that that Goy wasn't around here for nothing . . . of all the bad dreams! . . . A Gentile in our family! And who? A Ivan Ivanovitch! And wasn't it you who brought him here?

SHAPIRO: I?

SARAH: Who else? I? If it was up to me, I would have showed him the door a long time ago. It was you who got stuck on him. You said he has a Jewish face and a Jewish nose.

SHAPIRO: A Jewish nose—it was you who said that. I only said that he has a Jewish soul . . . But this is not the most important thing right now. Now we have to think up some scheme how to get rid of him.

SARAH: Why should we look for schemes? You just have to show him the way, that's all.

SHAPIRO: (Frightened) God forbid! What are you talking about? We must first consider this—

SARAH: What's there to consider? We must chase him out . . . drive him out!

SHAPIRO: Shh—Don't chase and drive anybody out! May God save you, Sarah, from doing the least little thing without my knowledge. You hear me? Everything will be upside down. I see you want to cook up a nice stew! You'll only bring a misfortune upon all of us. You don't begin to understand what takes place here. This is a romance—do you know at least what this means? (Looking around, softly) They must have fixed it up between them that way!

SARAH: What a misfortune! And what's the matter with Shneyerson?

SHAPIRO: She probably doesn't care about him.

SARAH: What are you talking about, David? Weren't they supposed to get engaged?

SHAPIRO: (Holding his head) What engagement? What are you talking about? I'm telling you this is a romance, not an engagement!

SARAH: Didn't he want to give her a present, a bracelet? And doesn't he write letters all the time to his grandmother?

SHAPIRO: (Pacing the floor) What a woman! My blood was boiling when I heard this, and she is speaking of bracelets and grandmothers! I nearly got crazy merely from the thought, that a Goy could begin to pretend to think about a grand-daughter of the Slavitsers, and she thinks of bracelets! How can you now fill your head with grandmothers?

SARAH: Why did she keep quiet until now?

SHAPIRO: This you should ask her! That's why you are a mother.

SARAH: My God! My God! My life is darkened beyond words!

SHAPIRO: This is no time to wring your hands and cry. Now we must think up something, you understand? We must find a way. But quietly, with reason and with a manner, not fee-foo-fah, just like that. It must be without noise. The Rabbi is right. He says it's a difficult matter! . . . I'm already thinking about it all day long. My head bursts into pieces. Meanwhile, it's holiday and I have to go to the Synagogue . . . This Gentile will come here . . . we invited him; there's nothing we can do about it now! What will he think if we should now refuse him to be at our *Seder*? The Rabbi says the same thing. A mouth, he says, is not a piece of rubber. In particular, when a Shapiro makes a promise . . . First of all, he says, you've got to show that you're a man! You understand? The main thing, you shouldn't interfere yet. Leave the whole thing to me. Let's get through with the two *Seders* first, the first two days of the Passover, then I'll talk to him and I'll do everything . . . and you may be sure, after I talk to him he'll leave of his own good will. He'll go where the holy Sabbath goes. He wouldn't even know why! You may be sure! It will never happen that a daughter of the Shapiros from Slavita . . . (SYOMKE enters, all dressed in his student's uniform, with a prayer book)

SYOMKE: Pa, is this the holiday prayer-book you need?

SHAPIRO: (Reading the title-page) *Mahzor for Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur*. You just guessed it, son, like a blind horse into a ditch. (Returning the book) There on the commode you'll find another *Mahzor*. You'll see in large letters *Mahzor for the Three Holidays* . . . Great times! A son of a Shapiro shouldn't know the difference between one *Mahzor* and another . . . (SYOMKE runs out) Please, Sarah, I'm asking you once again, in God's name! This is a difficult matter, you have to be very, very careful . . . (SYOMKE comes back)

SYOMKE (Reading) *Mahzor for the Three Holidays* . . .

SHAPIRO: Yes, Three Holidays . . . A boy like you, after *Bar Mitzvah*, you should know the difference between one *Mahzor* and another . . . You come from the Slaviter! Come to the Synagogue. (Putting on his silk hat) So remember, Sarah, what I told you . . . In God's name be careful . . . (He goes out with SYOMKE. BETTY enters from her room. SARAH glances at her and busies herself with the glasses on the table)

BETTY: (Before the mirror) Ma, how do you like the way I combed my hair? You like it this way, don't you? (SARAH glances at the mirror, but does not answer) Why don't you answer me? And what are you so angry about? Is it because of the holidays?

SARAH: It's easy to look this way, when I have a daughter like you.

BETTY: (Goes to her mother) What's the matter, mother? What's happened?

SARAH: What's happened? As if you didn't know? (Halting) I didn't know at all that my daughter has such secrets from her mother. I never thought that you would keep such secrets and do such a thing to us . . .

BETTY: (Amazed) What secrets? What did I do? . . .

SARAH: It made father sick. He says he simply can't stand it! And I, too, will probably die before my time . . . (She cries into her apron)

BETTY (Scared) Mama dear! For heaven's sake! What's happened? I don't know anything!

SARAH: (Looking at her) Look into my eyes! How can you say such a thing? How can you deny it before your mother? (Pause) What was the Goy doing in the Rabbi's house?

BETTY: What Goy? In what Rabbi's house?

SARAH: Are you looking straight at my face? (Sternly) Why did Ivan Ivanovitch go to see Rabbi Levi Halpern?

BETTY: (Amazed) Ivan Ivanovitch went to the Rabbi? What was he doing there?

SARAH: I believe you know this better than I do, and you knew it before. Look at her, she doesn't know what to say. What a pity! You don't even begin to know the good news, that the Goy Ivan Ivanovitch no longer wants to be a Goy!

BETTY: (With joy) Ivan Ivanovitch wants to be a Jew?

SARAH: What a joy to your grandmother! And what a shining light upon all of us! And it's all for the sake of you, because his heart goes out to you. I noticed it a long time ago and you certainly knew it, and after all this you have the nerve to look me straight in the eyes and tell me, that you know nothing about it!

BETTY: Ma! I swear that the story about the Rabbi I hear now for the first time.

ARAH: Is that so? You mean to say you didn't arrange this with the Goy before? You mean to tell me that the Rabbi lied? Or that father thought it all up?

BETTY: I think, mother, that you don't know me as a liar either. I didn't lie to you before, did I? When I swear to you, that this is the first time I hear it, you still don't believe me!

SARAH: I can hardly believe that you would ruin such happiness with your own hands! I am not even speaking about his grandmother, I am speaking about the principal: he's a golden boy himself, comes from a good home, from such a family!

BETTY: (Excited) What do you want of my life? All of you! All of you! (She sits down, crying) (There is a ring at the door. SARAH goes out to open and returns) Who is it?

SARAH: (Angrily) It's the new Jew.

BETTY: What new Jew?

SARAH: Your Ivan Ivanovitch! (BETTY wipes her tears and starts to go, but halts. SARAH goes to her room) I'm going to get dressed meanwhile and say grace over the candles. (SHNEYERSON enters; he wears a dark suit)

SHNEYERSON: (In a good mood) Your father was so kind as to permit me to be present at your ceremony of *Seder* . . . where is he now? Probably still at the Synagogue. I'm sorry he didn't want to take me with him to the Synagogue. That would be too much, he said . . . (BETTY sits down, inviting him to a seat) Why is your mother so angry at me? She didn't answer me when I said good evening; she just murmured something and disappeared . . . And you, Bertha Davidovna, if I'm not mistaken, you are not as friendly as usual either . . . (Intimately) What has happened, Bertha Davidovna? Why are you looking at me like this?

BETTY (Softly looking him straight in the eye) Ivan Ivanovitch, you put me in a very great predicament! (SARAH enters, motions to BETTY not to speak)

SHNEYERSON: I? I put you in a predicament? How?

BETTY: By going to the Rabbi.

SHNEYERSON: (Astonished) What are you saying? What Rabbi? (SARAH motions to BETTY to come to her, but the daughter does not move)

BETTY: Yes, yes . . . Why do you repeat these questions? Why do you want to hide this from me? From me! (Pause) You went to ask the Rabbi's advice before taking such an important step for my sake . . . and you didn't even find it necessary to ask me about it? What is the meaning of this? Why are you looking at me? Why do you pretend

to be amazed? You won't deny that you went to the Rabbi, will you? His name is Halpern—

SHNEYERSON: (*Astonished*) I? I went to the Rabbi? Rabbi Halpern? I hear this name for the first time! Upon my honor! (*SARAH continues calling her daughter by motions*)

BETTY: (*Confused*) Again I don't know what's happening here . . . What's going on around me? . . . It'll be a wonder if I don't lose my mind.

SARAH: (*Believing that her daughter has not noticed her gesturing, loud*) Come here awhile, Betty, I need you. Make it faster! . . . Father will soon be back from the Synagogue, and I still have to say grace over the candles, you know. (*BETTY goes to her mother*)

SHNEYERSON: (*After pacing the floor for a while*) Ah! Now I've got it! (*Pointing to his friend's room*) There's the dog in the manger! (*He knocks on the door, but IVANOV enters from the street, dressed in his holiday's best, carrying a large bouquet*) You didn't even ring the bell.

IVANOV: I have a key. (*Puts the flowers on the table*)

SHNEYERSON: Why flowers all of a sudden?

IVANOV: It's in honor of your Passover . . .

SHNEYERSON: You should have brought a nice cake with this . . . You know a *Hometz* cake that we are not allowed to eat on Passover, so Mrs. Shapiro would throw you out together with the flowers . . .

IVANOV: *Hometz*, did you say? I know that Jews are not allowed to eat that on Passover holiday. (*Looks around*) I see, Hershko, you're in holiday mood. You have to thank me for helping you to get this invitation to the *Seder* . . .

SHNEYERSON: Is that so? Thank you.

IVANOV: (*Laughs*) An amazing man, this Shapiro. Three times he asked my advice whether to invite you or not. One moment he decided to do it, and in the next one he made his mind up not to. All the time he was afraid that in case he refused you, you would think God knows what about Jews. Ha! Ha! . . . You know in this dark suit, Hershko, you look like a real Semite, honest!

SHNEYERSON: And you, Vanya, even if you put on three Semitic costumes, you would still look like a real Russian; you won't even be helped by those lessons you are going to take from the Rabbi . . .

IVANOV: (*Astonished*) How do you know I went to see the Rabbi?

SHNEYERSON: (*Sarcastically*) How do I know, eh? I told you long ago I know everything. I even know why you went there.

IVANOV: Tell me.

SHNEYERSON: (*Ironically*) It seems you are quite serious in your desire to become a Jew . . .

IVANOV: Quite possible.

SHNEYERSON: And probably all for that certain purpose?

IVANOV: Of course.

SHNEYERSON: Are you so sure of victory?

IVANOV: Without a doubt.

SHNEYERSON: You don't even think that something might be in the way? For instance, you are not afraid of . . . competition? . . .

IVANOV: Competition? In love? Are you, by any chance, one of my competitors? Now I understand how it is you know so much . . .

SHNEYERSON: Not any more than I need to know.

IVANOV: Enough to spy on me and to keep up the competition? . . .

SHNEYERSON: You won't scare me away with words.

IVANOV: Now I understand why you are so worried about me . . .

SHNEYERSON: It's because I don't want you to make a fool of yourself . . . No Rabbi, not even ten Rabbis, could possibly help you—I'm telling you.

IVANOV: (*Greatly excited*) Of course, you are telling all this out of true friendship . . . And I was such a fool to believe you in everything until now . . . I believed all this time that you acted out of true friendship. Now it turns out that you are my competitor . . . and maybe a *dangerous* competitor at that . . .

SHNEYERSON: I'm glad you know it now. The cards are open, and so we play an open game.

IVANOV: All right! I accept the challenge.

SHNEYERSON: Don't be so sure of yourself, Vanya. I'll beat you like a . . .

IVANOV: We'll see who it is that will be beaten . . .

(*SARAH comes in all dressed up. She carries two silver candlesticks with lighted candles. BETTY is behind her with another pair of silver candlesticks. They all are placed on the table. The men meet the ladies with a smile. SARAH greets her boarder with a big smile, but refuses to even look at the other man. BETTY takes the reverse attitude. In this slight confusion, SHAPIRO enters with SYOMKE behind him*)

SHAPIRO: Good *yon tov!* Good *yon tov!*

SYOMKE: Good *yon tov!*

SARAH: Good *yon tov!* Good *yohr!*

BETTY: Good *yon tov!*

(*Both pals greet the master politely. SHAPIRO seems to be worried. Only SYOMKE is in a happy mood. He studies the wine on the table and the Hagadahs*)

SHAPIRO: (*Studies the things on the table as if to himself*) Well, so you've prepared everything? The Passover plate with the *matzoh* and the *Hagadahs*, and Elijah the Prophet's goblet is here too? So we are ready to start, what? (*with a sigh*) It's been a long time since we've had a Passover like this! All this horrible talk that is going on in town, the fear of a pogrom, those delegations to the Governor, and, above all, that case—all this put together . . . (*Holding his head*) I hope such a Passover will never come again!

SARAH: Why should you speak about this before the *Seder* . . . with the help of God, we will live it through.

SHAPIRO: Of course we will live it through! We will live longer than all of them. We lived through bigger troubles and greater enemies, with a Pharaoh, King of Egypt . . . Well? Children! First of all . . . (*To his boarder*) Tell your friend to be so good as to put on his hat. It is the custom of the *Seder* to wear a hat. And you yourself, Mr. Shneyerson, be so kind as to do the same. At least a Jew like you, coming from the Shneyersons of Libavitch, should have known this . . . (*Both young men go into the hall and return with their hats on. They group around BETTY. SHAPIRO puts on his whites*)

IVANOV: (*To BETTY*) Your father looks like a priest in the church . . .

SHNEYERSON: (*Also to BETTY*) I think, he rather looks like a High Priest in the ancient Tabernacle . . .

SHAPIRO: (*Motioning to his boarder*) Mr. Shneyerson, be so kind! (*IVANOV goes over to SHAPIRO, while SHNEYERSON remains with BETTY*) You see this outfit . . . (*Indicating his white clothes*) I inherited all this from my great-great-grandfather from Slavita . . . those Slavites, who were once treated with mercy by the . . . (*Indicating SHNEYERSON*) great-great-grandfather of this *Goy*—

SARAH: Why mention these things now and talk about it before the *Goy*?

SHAPIRO: Don't you see how much this new Jew is concerned about it? As much as last year's snow . . .

BETTY: (*Wanting to show more friendliness toward SHNEYERSON*) It must look strange to you, Ivan Ivanovitch, all this ceremony . . .

SHNEYERSON: (*Softly to BETTY*) The strangest thing to me is the fact that your father is so displeased with me . . . And more than anything that concerns me just now, Bertha Davidovna, is your sad look on your face . . . My heart pains looking at you . . . I assure you, there is a misunderstanding here, that will be cleared up in time.

BETTY: (*Looking at her father, but speaking softly to SHNEYERSON*) To me everything is a misunderstanding, a riddle from beginning to end . . . I'm all mixed up . . . the whole thing looks like a dream, a confused, distorted dream . . .

SHAPIRO: (*To BETTY*) Betty! What kind of stories are you telling Ivan Ivanovitch there? . . .

BETTY: We're speaking about the *Seder*.

SHAPIRO: Oh, you're trying to explain him the *Seder*? That's very good. Explain him everything. And why are you both so far away? Come nearer. (*BETTY and SHNEYERSON come nearer to SHAPIRO*) Why shouldn't he see better what really goes on? (*Showing him*) You see this plate? (*The two young men and BETTY are looking into it*) Tell him, Mr. Shneyerson, tell your friend—you'll be better able to make him understand—that all this is in remembrance of the days in Egypt . . . (*Showing the bitter herbs*) This, for instance, is horse-radish . . . we call it bitter herbs . . . it means simply bitterness. It is an indication of how they made our lives bitter in Egypt, no worse than they are making our lives bitter right now. And this is *Haroseth*—it is in remembrance of the clay, from which our forefathers made bricks to build the cities of Pithom and Ramases . . . (*They examine it*) You really believe that this is clay? It only looks like red clay, but it's only mashed nuts with apple, and it's poured over not with blood, God forbid, but with a little wine . . . Look at it well. We call it *Haroseth*!—And this is the wing and neck from a chicken, in remembrance of the Passover offering that we once used to offer up to God. But it's only a remembrance, no more! Because today, we have nothing to offer anymore. It is more than two thousand years since we ceased to bring offerings . . . Now, that you know something about these things, we may start to go on with the *Seder*, as we inherited the ceremony from our great-grandfathers. I'll recline at the head, right on this bed . . . (*He sits down, reclining on the pillows*) like a king, to show that we are a people of Kings, of free people, not of slaves that once belonged to the Pharaoh, King of Egypt . . . And you all sit down at the table, near the King . . . just like this. (*All sit down with their Hagadahs*) (*To IVANOV*) You see this old *Hagadah*? I inherited this, too, from the Slaviter . . . (*Looking at the fly-leaf*) What a pity, from their own printing. "Printed in Slavita . . ." (*Sighing*) If this *Hagadah* could speak, it has a whole lot to tell . . . Now we begin. (*Filling all goblets*) What do you think, sonny, you rascal, you won't get mixed up in the four questions just like last year?

SYOMKE: God forbid! I know them by heart.

SARAH: (*Happily*) What a mouthpiece!

(*As SHAPIRO is still pouring the wine, there is a ring at the door. A sudden uneasiness pervades the room*)

SHAPIRO: (*Putting down the bottle*) What is this? All of a sudden at the *Seder*? Who could it be?

SARAH: I'm afraid it's the police . . . Syomke, be so good. (*He runs downstairs. All look at the door. SYOMKE returns frightened*)

SYOMKE: It's the *Gens d'armes* and police, and the house-porter is with them!

SHAPIRO: (*Scared*) A raid? On Passover at the *Seder*? This happens for the first time in my life.

(*The door opens and a large group of POLICE and MILITARY, including plainclothes-men and THE PORTER comes*

in. They are all lined up against the back wall. Two at each door. THE CHIEF with two helpers are going to the table. SHAPIRO attempts to stand up)

CHIEF: Keep your places. Who is the Master here?

SHAPIRO: I'm the house-master.

CHIEF: What's your name?

SHAPIRO: David Shlomov Shapiro, citizen of Slavita.

CHIEF: And this is?

SHAPIRO: My wife Sarah Isaac Leibova Shapiro. (*Indicating BETTY and SYOMKE*) And those are my children, Bertha and Solomon.

CHIEF: Bertha and Solomon. And who is he? (*Indicating SHNEYERSON*)

SHAPIRO: This is a guest of ours. He's a Gentile, Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov, the son of a State's Attorney . . .

CHIEF: (*Exchanging looks with the police*) A Gentile? Of our faith? Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov? How does a Gentile come to be here? At a Jewish dinner? On a Jewish holiday?

SHAPIRO: (*Comes to, talks fast*) This Gentile is really not our guest, but the guest of our boarder. We have a boarder, who is a dentist. (*Indicating IVANOV*) That is, he should have been a student, but he is a dentist, because of the percentage limitations at the University, like, for instance, when one is called into military service . . .

CHIEF: That's not interesting! You better tell me something else, my dear man. There is supposed to be here with you a certain Jew, from the Shneyersons . . . where is he? (*Looks around*)

SHAPIRO: (*Looks at his wife*) A good *yon tov*! But Ketzele did tell us that they were looking for him.

SARAH: (*Wringing her hands*) What's going to happen now?

CHIEF: (*To SHAPIRO*) You're hiding here a Jew by the name of Shney-er-son. You can't get out of this. We'll see in a minute. Porter, come here. (*THE PORTER approaches, opens his book. THE CHIEF runs down the names with his finger*) Here's the police-book for this house, and here it is written black on white . . . (*The police look into the book. THE CHIEF takes a look at THE PORTER*) Go on! It is written here that a citizen from Shklov by the name of Hersh Movshov Shneyerson lives here . . . Where is he? (*SHAPIRO looks at his wife*)

IVANOV: (*Loudly*) Shneyerson—that's me.

CHIEF: (*Looks at him*) You are this Shneyerson? (*He looks in amazement at the other policemen. One points a flashlight at him. To SHAPIRO*) No, Mr. Shapiro, you are too smart a Jew for me. You show me the real Shneyerson, the one from Libavitch . . .

SHAPIRO: (*To his wife*) What does he want of my life?

IVANOV: (*Presenting his papers to THE CHIEF, ironically*) You don't believe I am Shneyerson? Here are my papers. This will convince you that I am the saintly Shneyerson you are looking for. I am the man you need so desperately for your awkward and artificial case which makes you ridiculous before the whole world.

CHIEF: (*Excitedly, to IVANOV*) How dare you? How dare you speak to the police in such language?

IVANOV: (*With fire*) Because you, and those who sent you here, do not know what you are doing! In your hallucination you are covering our whole country with shame.

CHIEF: (*Beside himself with anger*) Stop talking! (*To his colleagues*) Their country! (*He laughs*)

IVANOV: Yes, it's not only your country—it's ours as well.

CHIEF: (*Stamping his foot*) Silence, Jew! In a minute I'll order your arrest, then you'll talk differently. (*All are frightened, except the two young men*)

SHNEYERSON: (*Stands up*) I beg your pardon! (*Indicating his pal*) Leave him alone. He is not Shneyerson.

The real Shneyerson—that's me. (*General astonishment. One of the police raises his lantern to SHNEYERSON's face*) SHAPIRO: (*To his wife*) Tell me, please, what play-acting is this?

SARAH: What a nightmare!

SHNEYERSON: Take a good look at me! I think you can see it even in the dark, which one of us is the real Shneyerson. Saint or no saint, the true Shneyerson—that's me!

IVANOV: No, it's me! Don't listen to him. He is joking. See my papers.

SHNEYERSON: Vanya, enough! This is the end of our joke. The thing is too serious. (*To CHIEF*) I, too, have papers. (*Taking papers from his pocket*) But these papers are nothing. We exchanged our papers. The documents that he is holding are really mine, and the papers I keep in my hand, really belong to my friend Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov. There is a long story to it, but I could tell it to you in a few words. Please! (*Holding out his papers. THE CHIEF takes the papers from both young men and examines them. THE PORTER again sticks his nose in*)

CHIEF: Get out! (*THE PORTER jumps away*)

SHNEYERSON: (*To BETTY*) Just be calm, Bertha Davidovna, this whole riddle would soon be solved, as you call it, and you will understand the whole thing. (*To SHAPIRO*) And you have nothing to fear, Mr. Shapiro, I am really the true Shneyerson. The one they need so badly for their case, but I don't give a hang about them.

SHAPIRO: Did you hear this, Sarah? He speaks like a brave Jew.

SARAH: So what? God's wonder—he is a Jew.

SHAPIRO: Didn't I tell you all this time, that he has a Jewish nose?

SARAH: That's what I said, that he has a Jewish nose.

SHAPIRO: So what did I say?

SARAH: You said a Jewish soul.

SHAPIRO: All right, so it's a Jewish soul. So which of the two went to see the Rabbi?

SARAH: I'm all confused . . . and which of the two has his grandmother?

CHIEF: (*Examined the papers and passes them on. To SHAPIRO and his wife, sternly*) And don't speak Yiddish between you. Speak Russian! All speak Russian! (*To his colleagues*) A strange story! There's some swindle in this! A machination!

SHNEYERSON: It's no swindle! No machination! It was simply a bet between two chums, who had just graduated from the gymnasium. The Jew, Shneyerson, that's me. I got a gold medal, and my Gentile friend, Ivanov, hardly passed his tests. So we made a bet. I said it's hard to be a Jew, and he said—it's not so terrible. So, a year ago in May we exchanged our documents and we came here to enter the University. Well, he was shown the door, because even before we came here the thing was

sealed. He became apprenticed to a dentist, and he had the greatest difficulties in obtaining a permit to live here. Now he knows how easy it is to be a Jew! But as we were honor-bound not to disclose our secret before the year is over, we kept our mutual agreement. We would have held out till the end of May. But since these unforeseen circumstances arose, I feel free to disclose our secret. Why, it's Justice that is involved, isn't it? You are looking for a Shneyerson, whose name has been connected with this ritual case—and since I am the true Shneyerson, how can I permit that the sufferings allotted to the Jew Shneyerson, should be passed on to the Gentile Ivanov? How are you going to accuse a Ivanov, the son of a State's Attorney, that he is using Christian blood for Passover? When it comes to accusing, you will accuse me, the true Shneyerson, who has as much to do with your ritual murder case and with ritual in general, as my friend here, Ivan Ivanovitch Ivanov!

IVANOV: (*To SHNEYERSON*) You tore off the masks from both of us prematurely, Hershko! Too bad! But it's a pity you did that! If I were Shneyerson to the very end, it would give me great pleasure to sit in your place as the defendant. I would show them, (*Indicating the police*) all of them, who squeezed me all winter long, how stupid and ridiculous their story about the ritual murder really is! . . . I would show all these . . .

CHIEF: What are you trying to preach to us, both of you? (*IVANOV makes attempt to speak*) Silence! I'll have you, both of you, shut your mouths! You're both under arrest!

IVANOV: I'm waiting for that!

CHIEF: Take them away, both of them! We'll find out which of the two is the true Shneyerson. Move! (*They are surrounded by the police. General astonishment, confusion and fear*)

SHAPIRO: Unheard of wonders! It's like the deliverance from Egypt!

SARAH: (*Wringing her hands*) God, have mercy! What has happened to us?

BETTY: Mother, I don't feel well!

SARAH: I'm thunder-struck! Water! Water! (*The two young men start to come to BETTY's aid, but are held in check by the police*)

SHAPIRO: (*Giving BETTY his wine-glass*) Take a drop of wine! (*She does so*) That's it. (*To his wife*) It's nothing! It's nothing! It will pass away. And . . . (*Indicating SHNEYERSON*) as far as he is concerned, nothing will happen to him either. This is not the first time we are falsely accused. It's a worthless case . . . and this one here . . . (*Pointing at IVANOV*) Certainly nothing will happen to him. The son of a State's Attorney! (*Straightening up*) Unheard of wonders! . . . (*Loud*) The deliverance from Egypt! . . . Something like this happens once in ten thousand years! And only in the home of David Shapiro!

THE END

MARK SCHWEID is a well-known actor and writer who came to the United States in 1911, after having graduated from the Warsaw Dramatic Academy and having played on the Yiddish and Polish stage. It was in Warsaw that he became a disciple of the great I. L. Peretz. Here in America he has been associated with various Yiddish theatres, not only as an actor but also in a directive capacity, but his main interest since 1919 has been the Jewish Art Theatre in New York. He made his first appearance on the English stage in 1926, and subsequently appeared in productions of the Theatre Guild, the Boston Repertory Theatre, and in other plays, including THE ETERNAL ROAD, directed by the well-known director-producer, Max Reinhardt. Mark Schweid has also engaged in radio productions, having directed the "Israel in America" history series. His first poems were published when he was eighteen. He is the author of BURSHTINENE SHISLEN, TZU GOT UN TZU LEIT, CH'VEL MACHEN TAY, DOS FOLK FUN'M SAFER, and UN ICH RED PROST. He has also written for Yiddish magazines and periodicals—mainly the Yiddish Daily Forward in New York—under his own name and as "M. Daner", "D. Tamarin", "O. Kama", and other pseudonyms. For a time he was president of the Hebrew Actors' Union.