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**Prodigal Son**  
**a Play in Two Acts**

**Robert Majzels**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## ABSTRACT

*Prodigal Son*: a Play in Two Acts

Robert Majzels

*Prodigal Son* is a play in two acts with three characters. David Hellman, after ten years as a labor activist, returns home in defeat. His older brother Benny, who stayed home and dedicated himself to the God of Success, is all that remains of the family. During David's first night back in the family home, the two brothers debate their conflicting world visions. Their common Jewish heritage becomes the site of a struggle for meaning, and when the spirit of their dead father is raised, Benny and David engage in an exhausting battle over the truth of his life.

Until the brothers' reconciliation finally results in the materialization of their father's ghost, Benny and David must take turns reenacting their conflicting versions of the events which took place in the concentration camp where their father was imprisoned during the War. The play refuses to grant more authority to either one or the other brother's version of the past.

As past and present, history and imagination are blurred, the play's form explores the frontiers of realism and impressionism. *Prodigal Son* presents the dilemma of the post-Holocaust generation and its attempts to use the past in order to survive the present; and, perhaps even to forge a future.

1  
**PRODIGAL SON, a play in two acts**

**CHARACTERS:**

**DAVID HELLMAN, a young man in his mid-thirties**

**BENNY HELLMAN, David's older brother, 42 years old**

**HELLMAN, the ghost of their father**

## ACT ONE

*The Hellman home: just enough furniture to imply a plush living room: a sofa, a bar, a shag carpet; and D.R., three steps leading down to a bedroom which is furnished with only a bunk bed.*

*BENNY enters L. and turns lights on in living room. He is wearing an expensive suit and tie. DAVID follows, wearing jeans and a teeshirt and carrying a rucksack. The room is untidy: stray papers, dishes.... The bunkroom, D.R., remains darkened. DAVID hesitates on the threshold.*

BENNY: Well, don't just stand there. Come on in.

DAVID: *(stunned)* It's all changed.

BENNY: *(proudly)* Not bad, eh? We redid the whole thing after the old man died. Brought in a decorator; the whole works.

DAVID: *(still stunned)* You changed the furniture:

BENNY: Everything. The latest styles. You don't like it.

DAVID: I didn't expect it to be all different.

BENNY: It's been ten years, David. *(a bit testy)* For christ's sake, did you expect me to put everything in mothballs until you came home? It's not a shrine, you know.

DAVID: *(moves slowly into the center of the room, still looking around him. Then looking down at the white shag carpet)* No, not a shrine.

BENNY: Looks like genuine wool shag, doesn't it? *(proudly)* Well, there isn't a single shred of sheep in it. The whole thing is made of plastics, one hundred percent plastics. It's a new discovery. Indestructible. You could dip the entire carpet in a vat of industrial oil, and it'd come out white as snow. They actually did it in the commercial. Completely spotless.

*DAVID remains motionless in the middle of the room.*

David, you look like you're hitchhiking. Sit down.

DAVID: *(drops rucksack)* Annie's not here.

BENNY: She's out.

DAVID: I thought she'd be here.

BENNY: *(begins to tidy up haphazardly, picking up loose papers on the floor and putting them down)* She'll be back. She's just gone over to her mom's.

DAVID: She's uptight about my coming, isn't she?

BENNY: What are you talking about? Why should she be uptight?

DAVID: Did she say anything? About my staying here? Or anything?

BENNY: What do you want her to say? You're my brother. She's my wife and you're my brother. End of discussion. Sit down!

DAVID: You haven't changed. *(sits down, then gets up again)* Benny, I've been thinking.

BENNY: You haven't changed either. *(points to sofa)* Can't you think sitting down?

DAVID: *(sits)* About the job.

BENNY: Never mind that. There's plenty of time to talk about the job in the morning.

DAVID: *(stands again)* I think I should find my own job.

BENNY: Will you stop worrying about that now. You just got here, David. You haven't even unpacked. Take it easy, get a good night's sleep. In the morning we'll talk about your job.

*DAVID sits down reluctantly.*

Hey! I know. I forgot to show you your room. Come here. You'll get a kick out of this*(goes to edge of bunkroom)*. Here's one room you'll recognize.



DAVID: *(gets up again and follows to the steps of the bunkroom)* It's exactly like when we were kids.

BENNY: *(goes down steps and over to lower bunk)* I put some sheets on the bed. They're too big, but I folded them. I couldn't find the single ones. God knows where she put them. I guess these'll be alright.

DAVID: You kept the old bunk beds.

BENNY: Damn right I did. After the hell we had to go through to get 'em, I wasn't going to throw them out. Shit, I thought the Old Man would have a stroke. Remember how we had to beg and cry for weeks to get them. I swear, I could never figure out why he was so pissed off.

DAVID: *(quietly)* They reminded him of the camps.

BENNY: *(not hearing DAVID)* I thought he was afraid we'd fall out of bed and kill ourselves or something.

DAVID: No, it was the Camps.

BENNY: Jesus, I never thought we'd get to keep them.

DAVID: *(uneasy)* He never set foot in here again.

BENNY: Annie didn't want them either. But I figured we'd need them if ever we had...I mean, when we have kids. She wanted to turn it into a den, or a painting room--I can't remember--one of Annie's projects.

DAVID: *(stepping down and over to the bunk)* I remember. She wanted to paint.

BENNY: I told her: no way we scrap the bunks. I told her: me and my kid brother had to fight like hell for them. The bunks stay. All the nights we spent in here together, in those bunks. Remember how we used to play like we were in a train? You on the top, and me on the bottom? And the train lost its breaks going down into a canyon, and you had to climb over the top to the engine car. Remember that, David?

*No response from David who, sensing a presence, is not listening.*

*You remember runaway train, don't you, David? Hey, David.*

DAVID: Benny, do I smell funny to you?

BENNY: What?

DAVID: Can you smell anything funny on me?

BENNY: No, I don't smell anything.

DAVID: You sure you don't smell it? *(steps closer to BENNY)*

BENNY: *(steps back)* No, I told you. Jesus, David, what's the matter with you?

DAVID: You're not smelling. Here, do you smell it?

BENNY: You smell fine. It's not my favorite perfume, but it's fine.

DAVID: It's the stink of prison. I can still smell it. Once it gets inside your pores you can't get rid of it.

BENNY: I don't smell anything.

DAVID: You don't notice it? Maybe I should take a bath.

BENNY: Sure, take a bath, if you feel like it. But I don't smell anything.

DAVID: I don't really need a bath. I mean, they keep you pretty clean in there. It's just that smell. There's a special smell.

BENNY: I never thought I'd see the day when my kid brother asked to take a bath. They used to have to practically tie you up and throw you in.

DAVID: I guess it's kind of late for a bath.

BENNY: You're home, David. You can have a bath whenever you want.

DAVID: No, that's okay, I'll wait 'til tomorrow.

BENNY: I'll get you a towel. A bath would do you good: calm you down.

DAVID: I'm okay. Really.

BENNY: Take a bath, David.

DAVID: No, really, I don't want one.

BENNY: Take a bath.

DAVID: No.

*BENNY starts to reply, then gives up and sits on the edge of the bunk.*

*(David goes up the steps and into living room to look out the window) She ought to be back by now.*

BENNY: *(from the bunkbed)* Who?

DAVID: It's because I'm here.

BENNY: *(comes up into living room)* What are you talking about, David?

DAVID: She doesn't want to see me.

BENNY: Oh for shit's sake, David, will you forget about Annie for five minutes: I told you, she's at her mother's.

DAVID: She's not coming home. She doesn't want me here.

BENNY: She is at her mother's. She will be back later. She is not uptight about you coming here. Okay? And what if she was uptight? I mean, what the hell, technically, this is your home too. Right?

DAVID: *(slumps into sofa)* Technically.

BENNY: I guess I should have done something. I should have made it a real homecoming: put up some streamers, a few balloons, maybe a banner: WELCOME HOME, DAVID. Right across the living room.

DAVID: *(uneasy)* I just thought she'd be here, that's all.

BENNY: Too bad the Old Man's gone. He would have made a big deal of it, you coming home. He would've killed the fatted calf and all that.

DAVID: *(getting up)* What's your point, Benny?

BENNY: *(appeasing)* Nothing, nothing. I was just thinking about the Old Man. I didn't mean anything.

*(David sits down again.)*

Thing is, you're a few years too late. That's the problem. A few years too late.

DAVID: I never knew he was sick.

BENNY: You didn't exactly stay in touch.

DAVID: What good would it have done?

BENNY: He used to wait up for the mail.

DAVID: What was I supposed to say?

BENNY: I don't know. What difference does it make? What does anybody say? Dear Papa, how are you? Just thought I'd drop a line to let you know your son is alive and well.

DAVID: Right: everything is just lovely here in Bordeaux Penitentiary. Looking forward to see you soon — in about ten years, when they let me out. Your loving son, David.

BENNY: It's a damn good thing he never knew. It would've killed him.

DAVID: I thought my not writing killed him.

BENNY: *(turns back)* I didn't say that.

DAVID: But it didn't help.

BENNY: I just said, you should have stayed in touch.

DAVID: *(rising)* For crying out loud! And said what?

BENNY: You could have lied, for christ's sake, like everybody else.

*DAVID does not reply. They glare at each other in silence.*

Jesus, will you listen to us? What are we fighting about, anyway? We sound just like when we were kids. Going at each other like a couple of alley cats. I guess I forgot how we used to fight. Funny, how things turn out. In those days, it was always you had the big future. Straight A's all the way. We all figured you'd end up a brain surgeon or something...find a cure for cancer. I can still hear the Old Man: Little David this, Little David that. You want to know the truth? I was jealous. You believe that? Me, jealous. Shit, I used to beat the crap out of you. You remember how I used to beat the crap out of you, David?

DAVID: *(going back to sofa)* The good old days.

BENNY: Boy, that made him mad. He hated that. Remember how he used to take you out for those long walks? Papa and David and their long walks. What the hell did you do on those walks anyway?

DAVID: Nothing. He talked.

BENNY: He talked. What a crazy old bastard. What did he talk about?

DAVID: Just stories. Stuff that happened to him. Nothing. I don't remember. I was just a kid.

**BENNY:** Well, he never talked to me like that. Still, what the hell, I can't complain. I guess it turned out alright for me in the end. I did pretty good. You didn't even recognize the old place, did you?

**DAVID:** Benny, I can't take that job.

**BENNY:** Let's talk about it in the morning.

**DAVID:** Benny, listen to me. This can't wait 'til morning. I need to get it clear. I've thought a lot about it. It's not that I don't want the job.

**BENNY:** I know how it is. You're nervous. Starting over. A new job. It's understandable.

**DAVID:** I think I should find my own job. You've done enough for me already. Why should you have to stick your neck out any further?

**BENNY:** Don't bullshit me, David.

**DAVID:** I just don't think it's right.

**BENNY:** It's all fixed up.

**DAVID:** I know, and I appreciate it, really. But, the thing is, I'd rather find my own job.

**BENNY:** What's the matter with this job?



DAVID: Nothing. Nothing's the matter with your job. I just want to find one myself, that's all.

BENNY: You don't want the job I got you. You don't like it.

DAVID: That's not it, Benny. I told you...oh, forget it. You're right: we'll talk about it in the morning.

BENNY: No. We'll talk about it now. What's going on here? You're backing out on me.

DAVID: I am not backing out. I just want to find my own job.

BENNY: He's too good to take a job from his own brother.

DAVID: No, it's just the opposite. The job's too good.

BENNY: That's it. I knew it. You're backing out. You're not going to take the job.

DAVID: I am not backing out.

BENNY: All that stuff about straightening out, coming home, the job: that was all bullshit.

DAVID: What are you talking about? I came home. Look, I'm here. I'll find a job.

BENNY: Well, let me tell you something, mister. Before you turn your nose up at this job, you'd better think twice. Because there are not a whole lot of places interested in hiring guys like you.

DAVID: What do you mean: guys like me?

BENNY: You know what I mean.

*DAVID picks up his rucksack and starts for the door.*

What the hell are you doing?

DAVID: This isn't going to work out, Benny.

BENNY: You're leaving. I don't believe this. You just got here. Where the hell do you think you're going?

DAVID: I don't know. Don't worry about it. Thanks for helping me out.

BENNY: Oh no you don't. *(grabs DAVID's sack)* You made a deal, and you're going to stick by it.

DAVID: Come off it, Benny. What difference does it make?

BENNY: What difference does it make? I'll tell you what difference. *(goes to bar)* You want to fuck up your whole life, that's your business. I don't give a damn. You want to go back to standing on street corners with stupid leaflets: fine. You want to go around carrying placards and tossing rocks at cops: wonderful. I don't care. You go ahead: blow up a few monuments, hijack an airplane. Fine, great, good luck. Only, there's one little detail you're forgetting, little brother. You've been released in my care. I

signed for you. I got the papers right here to prove it. *(rummaging through papers in his briefcase)* You're not flushing me down the toilet with you. I've got the papers. *(tossing papers out of the briefcase as he searches)*

DAVID: You don't know what the hell you're talking about. I never blew anything up.

BENNY: Here! Here it is. Listen to this: "will refrain from all public declarations or participation in labor activities..."*(scanning)* mmm...here it is: "and will reside in the domicile, and under the supervision of his brother, Mr. Benjamin Reuben Hellman." You signed this. Look, look where you signed. And here, right underneath: see where I signed? You're not going anywhere. You "reside" here, buddy, right here, under my supervision.

DAVID: I see. Were you planning to install bars on the windows? Or do you have a ball and chain here, somewhere?

BENNY: I gave my word. I signed my name for you. We both signed.

DAVID: I think you better send me back to prison.

BENNY: You leave now, you break your parole. You can't afford to break your parole.

DAVID: You can't afford to hire an ex-con. Not with a respectable name like yours. *(pushes past BENNY towards the door)*

BENNY: Wait. Okay, okay. The hell with the papers. Goddamn it, David, you're my brother.

*DAVID hesitates at the door. BENNY gently takes the sack out of his hand again and lays it down.*

Look, kid, I'm just trying to help. Why can't you try it my way? Just for a while. Your way didn't work out, you said so yourself. Just come in here and sit down. Talk it over, quietly. Like grown-ups. Okay? Just come in and sit down, that's all I ask. *(bringing him to sofa)* You can leave anytime. What's the hurry? Here, sit down. Take it easy.

We're both nervous. It's been a long time. I tell you what. We'll get you a suit. We'll go see Klein. He'll make you a real beauty, made to measure. *(indicates sack)* I'm guessing you don't have a suit in there.... On Monday, I'll take you round to meet the buyers. I'll introduce you. We'll start you on the local run. Easy pickings. Wait 'till you put on one of Klein's suits. You'll feel like a million bucks.

DAVID: Benny, I can't.

BENNY: You can't wear a suit? You got allergies or something?

DAVID: I can't sell.

BENNY: What do you mean, you can't sell? That's the job. The job is selling.

DAVID: I'll do anything you want. I'm not backing out. But not selling. I can't sell.

BENNY: Why? What's the big deal about selling all of a sudden? You sold union cards, didn't you? You sold those political papers on goddamn street corners, for christ's sake.

DAVID: This is different.

BENNY: Believe me, this is a lot easier.

DAVID: I can't sell stuff I don't believe in.

BENNY: What's to believe in? You have to believe in a pair of pants?

DAVID: This is bullshitting around...pushing merchandise....I can't, Benny.

BENNY: What's wrong with our merchandise? You think this is shmatas, we're selling here? This is top quality stuff. There's nothing wrong with this stuff. This stuff sells itself.

DAVID: I'm not talking about the merchandise, Benny. I don't give a damn about the merchandise.

BENNY: No wonder you can't sell it.

DAVID: It's the bullshit. Hagglng for money, grinning and pressing flesh, sitting around with a bunch of greasy buyers, laughing at their dirty jokes, stuffing yourself in some fancy restaurant.

BENNY: What do you care? You're on the expense account.

DAVID: No, I won't do it, Benny. I can't.

BENNY: We already settled all this. You agreed.

DAVID: You never said it was selling.

BENNY: What did you expect: an executive position?

DAVID: I am not looking for an executive position.

BENNY: What's wrong with an executive position? I've got an executive position. What's wrong with me?

DAVID: Nothing. Nothing's wrong with you; you're a success.

BENNY: That's it. Success is a dirty word.

*DAVID turns away.*

Go ahead, why don't you say it, Comrade Hellman. I'm a...a capitalist exploiter.

DAVID: I didn't say that.

BENNY: But that's what you're thinking.

DAVID: Oh, for shit's sake, Benny. We were discussing my job, not your social status.

BENNY: Never mind what we were discussing. Your brother's a bloodsucking boss. That's what you think. Why don't you say it?

DAVID: Technically, that's not quite accurate. To qualify as a capitalist, you'd have to own the means of production. You're not quite there yet.

BENNY: I knew it! I knew it. I offer him a job and he starts calling me names.

DAVID: I am not calling you names.

BENNY: Yes, you are. You just did. You called me a bloodsucker.

DAVID: You said that.

BENNY: A bloodsucking pig.

DAVID: Bloodsucking pig is not a social class or category.

BENNY: So, what? I'm some kind of bastard?

DAVID: Shit, Benny, make up your mind. First you're a bloodsucking pig; then you're a bastard. What is it exactly that I'm calling you?

BENNY: How should I know? I can't keep up with all the insults you throw at me.

DAVID: Just forget it, okay?

BENNY: Sure. You call me a son of a bitch, blood-sucking bastard and I'm supposed to forget it.

DAVID: I didn't mean it. I apologize. Okay? I'm sorry I called you a...a careerist, or whatever.

BENNY: Careerist? You never said careerist.

DAVID: Alright. What difference does it make? Careerist, profiteer, bootlicker, pig, whatever. It's all the same. I'm sorry. I apologize. Okay?

BENNY: I'm going to bed.

DAVID: It's the pressure. I can't handle the pressure. You've seen guys like that, guys who couldn't handle the pressure of selling. They're just no good at it. Well, that's me. I can't sell. That's the way I am.

BENNY: You said you'd take the job.

DAVID: I didn't know it was selling.



**BENNY:** Did you think I was gonna put you in the shop?

**DAVID:** Yes, in the shop. Put me in the shop. Please, put me in the shop.

**BENNY:** You're out of your mind.

**DAVID:** Why? What's wrong with the shop? You can get me in there easy.

**BENNY:** Jesus, kid, what do you think I am: some kind of monster would put his own brother to work in the shop?

**DAVID:** Why not? I don't mind the shop.

**BENNY:** Believe me, it's not for you, kid.

**DAVID:** Is it reserved for Blacks and immigrants?

**BENNY:** God, he's starting with this shit again. Please, so help me, I'm going to kill him.

**DAVID:** Let me work in the shop.

**BENNY:** I don't believe this. A union organizer. This is how you negotiated? No wonder the union let you rot in jail.

**DAVID:** I was too radical for them.

BENNY: No kidding. This is very radical here. How does it go? The boss offers a three dollar raise. You say no, you demand a fifty cent wage cut, or else we strike. And more: you demand immediate layoffs or we blow the whole factory to kingdom come. Very radical.

DAVID: This has nothing to do with the union. This is for me.

BENNY: Oh, I get it. For them: wage hikes; for you: garbage. What am I supposed to do with him? He's got it all backwards.

DAVID: What do you care? I'm taking a job, aren't I?

BENNY: Sure, you'll take a job. But not just any job. Mr. Hellman doesn't like the position his brother is offering. Mr. Hellman wishes to choose his own job. Mr. Hellman doesn't wish to sell. And why, pray tell, does Mr. Hellman not choose to sell? The restaurants are too expensive, the food's too good, the pay's too high, the people are too sleazy. They make jokes: you have to laugh. Maybe even, maybe, you have to have a good time. Enjoy yourself.

DAVID: I can't explain it.

BENNY: Because it doesn't make sense.

DAVID: Okay, I'm crazy. What difference does it make, so long as I stay.

BENNY: Sure, he'll stay. He's going to organize a revolution in his brother's shop.

DAVID: So that's what you're worried about. You're afraid I'll tell your employees about the minimum wage laws.

BENNY: Don't talk to me about laws. I haven't broken any laws. You: you're the one who broke the law..

DAVID: I told you a hundred times, Benny, that was political.

BENNY: The judge didn't say anything about political. The judge said it was manslaughter.

DAVID: *(defensive: he is convinced of the politics but still agonizing over the act)* The judge was political.

BENNY: Right. And what about the poor shmuck of a guard? He was also political? What about his wife and kids?

DAVID: That was an accident.

BENNY: Oh, well, that makes it alright then.

DAVID: If he'd killed one of us, that would have been alright.

BENNY: He was doing his job. You had no business being there in the first place.

DAVID: We were on strike. What was he doing there?

BENNY: He was a security guard.

DAVID: He was a company goon.

BENNY: Protecting the plant.

DAVID: A hired goon. A scab.

BENNY: A goddamn security guard! Protecting his plant.

DAVID: It wasn't his plant; it was our plant.

BENNY: Ah, but it wasn't your plant! It didn't belong to you. It was private property. And he was hired to protect it.

DAVID: Exactly. Private property: it was political.

BENNY: That's it. You see, I knew it. Nothing is sacred with you: not another man's property, not even his life, nothing.

DAVID: Tell me something, Benny. Why did you get me out?

BENNY: I told you why. Because you're my kid brother.

DAVID: Damn it, Benny, don't lay that on me anymore. I can't help who I am. I can't help what I believe. Why do we have to argue about it? Why can't we just let it alone.

BENNY: I thought we'd worked all this out before the parole hearing. I thought we agreed you were coming home. You were finished with all that revolution bullshit.

You were going to straighten yourself out, stay out of trouble.

DAVID: I know, I know.

BENNY: You said you were through worrying about the rest of the world. You said you were going to take care of yourself for once.

DAVID: I know what I said.

BENNY: You said you were fed up living like a bum, fighting the system, while the union bosses sit around in eight hundred dollar suits, drinking cocktails with the politicians and the bosses. You said it didn't do any good. People didn't give a shit, anyway.

DAVID: Jesus, Benny, did you get it all on tape? Is there a tape recorder going now?

BENNY: I didn't twist your arm. You said you wanted to start over.

DAVID: I do.

BENNY: Then stop talking like a goddamn revolutionary.

DAVID: You're the one doing all the talking.

BENNY: I didn't put the words in your mouth.

DAVID: No, you only memorized them.

BENNY: So, it was all bullshit.

DAVID: I said I'd lay off the union, I'd get a job, and keep out of trouble. The revolution is over. We lost. Do you want me to put that in writing too?

BENNY: I'm just trying to make sure you keep it straight in your mind, that's all.

DAVID: How can I forget it? You won't stop playing it back.

BENNY: Alright, alright. Take it easy.

DAVID: I told you, I'm through with all that. I promised. What do you want? You want it in blood? You want me to pour ashes on my head?

BENNY: All I'm asking is you make a little compromise.

DAVID: Compromise.

BENNY: Oh, another dirty word. You want to eat in this world, you got to compromise.

DAVID: Alright. I promise to lay off union organizing. I promise no more politics. I promise to stay out of trouble. I promise to compromise. How's that? You have your lawyers draw it up in the morning, and I'll sign it.

**BENNY:** Well, what the hell am I supposed to think? You said you wanted to start all over, you wanted a job. Now, you're out, you don't want it anymore. Or you want it, but you don't want it. I don't know what you want.

**DAVID:** I told you what I want. I want to work in the shop.

**BENNY:** Would you like me to fire one of the pressers so you can have his job?

**DAVID:** Come on, Benny. Do you have to be such an asshole?

**BENNY:** That's it. That's it. It's one o'clock in the morning. I've got to get up and go to work in five hours--I still work. So why don't I go to bed? Because I got to stay up and listen to my little brother call me an asshole. And why am I an asshole? Because I got him a job. He doesn't like the job. Okay. Never mind, I tell him. That's okay. Take it easy, get some sleep, we'll talk about it in the morning. No. He wants to settle it right now. He wants things to be clear. Have I got it right so far? I mean, that's how it went, so far, right?

**DAVID:** Is this like a disease: you have to memorize everything?

**BENNY:** So, he wants things clear: he wants me to understand. Understand what? What's so important I should understand, I got to stay up all night to hear it? I'm an asshole. That's it. He wants me to stay up all night so he can tell me I'm an asshole.

DAVID: Alright, cut it out. I'm sorry.

BENNY: So is that it? Are you satisfied now? Everything is understood. I am an asshole. Can the asshole go to bed now?

DAVID: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Goddamn it. I'm sorry.

BENNY: No, don't be sorry. Why should you be sorry? I'm the asshole: I should be sorry. I'm sorry I got you out of prison. I'm sorry I brought you home. I'm sorry I found you a job. I'm sorry I'm such an asshole. You know what this is?

DAVID: I didn't mean it like that.

BENNY: It's like goddamn Alice in Wonderland, that's what it is.

DAVID: It's only a job.

BENNY: Everything is backwards. That's it. I just stepped through the goddamn looking glass, and everything is backwards. Any minute now, there'll be fucking rabbits running through here.

DAVID: I give up.

BENNY: "I'm late, I'm late, I'm late..."

*DAVID sits down in disgust.*



No, wait. I got a great idea. How about, you pay me, and I'll let you clean out the toilets in the shop? How's that? You can clean toilets, can't you?

DAVID: Why? Have you installed toilets?

BENNY: Goodnight. *(starts to exit, but stops to listen to DAVID)*

DAVID: *(ignoring BENNY)* I want something where I get up in the morning, real early, so early I'm too tired to think. I just take the bus, along with everybody else, just dozing or reading the morning papers--not the news; just the sportspage. I go into the shop, and I work up a sweat, I get my hands dirty, and I come home bushed. I watch some lousy TV, and I go to bed, dead tired, so tired I have no trouble getting to sleep. Not too much money, not enough to take long vacations, not enough to worry about investing in the stock market. Just enough to get by. That's all I want. I don't want success. Something dull: dull and simple, and clean. You can understand that? All I'm asking is you give me something where I can pull my own weight and mind my own business.

BENNY: I got a cross and some nails in the basement.

DAVID: Forget it.

BENNY: I know what you're trying to do, David. You're trying to throw in the towel. Well, I'm not going to let you

do it. You think you can dig a hole and crawl in, and the world will just leave you alone? It doesn't work like that. The world's not going to lay off just because you throw in the towel. They'll bury you alive. Listen to me, David. You want to make it, you got to get out there and be aggressive. You've got to carve out your own piece of territory. You can't do that talking like some kind of...of idiot marshmallow. You got to get aggressive, David.

DAVID: Aggressive. Before, it was compromise; now it's war.

BENNY: I know, it sounds ugly, everybody talks about peace and harmony, love your neighbour. But I'm your brother, I'm telling you how it is.

DAVID: Well, it's not how I am.

BENNY: I know you got it in you, David. All that energy you put into the union; you've got to channel that energy for yourself now. You've got skills, kid. You've got to get out there and market those skills. You've got to sell yourself.

DAVID: *(erupts)* No, not selling. I can't sell. I can't sell. I can't sell. *(collapses)*

BENNY: *(regretting his onslaught)* Alright. Okay. Forget it. I'll put you in the shop. Okay?

DAVID: *(brightening considerably)* Yes. Okay. Great. In the shop.

BENNY: I can get you in pressing. We need a foreman in there. Someone we can trust. You know anything about pressing?

DAVID: No, not foreman. Not a foreman, Benny.

BENNY: *(groans)*

DAVID: I don't want to tell people what to do. Just put me on a machine or something.

BENNY: No.

DAVID: Come on, Benny. We're almost there.

BENNY: No.

DAVID: Give me one good reason why you can't.

BENNY: No.

DAVID: Please. Look, I'm begging.

BENNY: There is no way I am gonna put my own brother on the shop floor. No way.

DAVID: You said you'd put me in the shop. This is in the shop. It's the same thing.

BENNY: No. No way.

DAVID: Why not? Just tell me why not.

BENNY: I can't: that's all.

DAVID: You'd lose your membership in the golf club.

BENNY: Listen to me, David. I'm not an asshole. Only an asshole would put his own brother to work in the shop. *(turns aside)* What do you think the employees would say?

DAVID: Since when do you care what they say? Tell them I asked for it.

BENNY: Great. So they'll think: not only I'm a mean-hearted son-of-a-bitch, but I got a half-wit for a brother.

DAVID: I'll explain it to them.

BENNY: Fucking pied piper couldn't explain this to a pack of rats.

DAVID: I'll explain it to them, I'll tell them you offered me a job selling. I'll tell them I turned it down.

BENNY: David, do you know what a shlemiel is?

DAVID: They'll understand.

BENNY: You don't know anything about these people.

DAVID: I know they're not a pack of rats. You don't care what they think, so long as they don't think too much. You're afraid of them.

BENNY: You think you understand these people better than I do, don't you? You think the guy down there is working so he can qualify as part of the international proletariat.

DAVID: No, he's working to make you rich.

BENNY: He's no different from me. Give him half a chance, and he'd put me down there working for him.

DAVID: But you won't give him half a chance.

BENNY: That's the name of the game. And he knows it. He knows it better than you do. What do you think would happen if I went down there and offered this job to some guy in the shop? Go down there tomorrow morning, first thing, and ask him: how'd you like to kiss your comrades down here goodbye, put on a nice new suit and move upstairs for double the pay? What do you think he'll say? No thanks, boss. I couldn't dirty my hands with those greasy buyers. I'd rather stay down here in this shithole with all my brothers and sisters.

DAVID: Maybe, if it wasn't such a shithole, he or she would think twice.

BENNY: Oh, for christ's sake, David, what do you care about these people? You don't know them. You got some kind

of image of them like they're pure and good and kind or something. These guys'd stab you in the back for an extra hour of over-time.

DAVID: You treat a man like a dog, he'll learn to bite.

BENNY: You think they give a shit about you? As far as they're concerned you're just a lousy kike.

DAVID: I'm a kike, and they're wops or niggers or spiks.

BENNY: That's the way it is. People stick together.

DAVID: And I'm a kike, so I should stick with you.

BENNY: You're Jewish. You and me, David, we're Jewish.

DAVID: So I should pattern myself on you. Benny Hellman: the perfect Jew.

BENNY: At least I'm not ashamed to say it. I'm a Jew.

DAVID: No, you've got nothing to be ashamed of. No one's going to confuse Benny Hellman with some poor slob just off the boat. You go to Synagogue on high holidays. It's a good place to be seen, talk business. You bought a few trees in Israel: you think you're a Jew.

BENNY: I should be a martyr like you? I should give everything away, put on some rags, and get thrown in jail? That's not Jewish; that's Christian.

DAVID: Listen to me, Benny.

BENNY: I'm not taking any lessons from you. You were the one supposed to come home covered in glory. Look at you. You came back with your goddamn tail between your legs.

DAVID: At least I didn't make it by climbing over someone else's back.

BENNY: You didn't make it at all.

DAVID: Making it. Is that your religion? Is that what it's all about, Benny?

BENNY: You wouldn't know what it's all about. You wouldn't know enough to come in out of the rain.

DAVID: Right, and you: you'd be out there selling paper umbrellas.

BENNY: You're a loser. A dud.

DAVID: You're a pig.

*BENNY starts towards him.*

*Don't, Benny. We're not kids anymore.*

*They stand in a stalemate for a moment. The ghost of HELLMAN appears on the steps to the bunkroom. He is old as he would have been before he died, but he is*

*dressed in the uniform of a camp prisoner and his head is shaven. His shoes are worn out and one of them is wrapped in cloth. BENNY does not see him.*

BENNY: I'm going to wash up.

*BENNY exits U.C.. DAVID stares at HELLMAN.*

DAVID: Papa?

HELLMAN: So much noise.

DAVID: Don't be angry, Papa. Benny means well. It's not that I'm ungrateful...

HELLMAN: It's cold in here. At night it gets colder. Sometimes you can't get to sleep from the cold: the shivering keeps you awake.

DAVID: I know, you're disappointed. I let you down. I didn't want to. I didn't think it would end up like this. I thought...but I can't change all that now. Still, try and understand. I was trying. I was trying to do something important. I thought I could change things.

*HELLMAN moves D.C. and begins rewrapping the cloth around his shoe.*

Papa, are you there? Listen to me, Papa. Alright, I know: the arrogance. I, David Hellman, will change the world. But I was just a kid. You don't get marks for trying. The road to hell is paved.... Everything is



measured by results. Intentions don't count for anything. But what if we'd won, what if we'd built a strong grassroots movement, penetrated the factories.... No, I know. The arrogance — there was too much arrogance. But, Papa. Papa, can you hear me? I let you down, Papa.

HELLMAN: *(working on his shoe)* This shoe is finished. Like a sieve. Everything passes through: the cold, the water.

DAVID: Papa, I want to talk to you. I want to explain.

HELLMAN: *(shrugs)* Explain. Sure, explain. Explanations help to pass the time. We look for causes. We argue how we got here. Why. Everybody is interested in the why. Should I have gone to temple more often? Observed the Sabbath? Should I have left in '39, when there was still time? Explain: it passes the time.

DAVID: I need your help, Papa. Tell me what to do.

HELLMAN: *(working on his shoe)* The most important thing is the feet. You want to survive, you have to protect your feet. *(points to DAVID's sneakers)* Those shoes are no good. They look fine now, but they won't last a week. I always told you: never skimp on shoes. The worst part of it is I had a good pair. At home. You walk out the door one morning, and that very same night you're in here. You never know. They don't let you go by the house to pick up your good shoes. You have a good pair of shoes? Wear them, David. That's my advice to you. Feet are the most important thing.

DAVID: Papa, listen. I know, you're disappointed in me. You didn't think I would end up like this.

HELLMAN: When I first came here, at night sometimes, lying in my bunk, I let my mind wander. I tried to imagine the promised land. When you come to this place, you have to have something to dream. You have to have an idea of paradise. It keeps you alive. Oh, not the paradise they told us about when we were children: not that picture like a postcard: land of milk and honey, golden rivers in golden sand, palm trees heavy with fruit. No. Here, every man makes his own promised land. Sometimes, it's a going back. Sometimes it's nothing more than a going back to my father's old medical office in Warsaw: the clean white jacket, the sterile instruments all lined up neatly on the table, his patients, so polite and full of awe. Sometimes that was my promised land. Sometimes I remembered the lessons in Shul. Then it became something vague, something very abstract: a concept you have to dig out somewhere in the clauses of the Torah. *(whispers)* For some here, it's Israel: Jewish armies driving their enemies into the sea. *(shakes his head)* So much blood. But most often, for me, when I first came, it was America. Not your America. What did I know about your America? My America was as distant as the Rabbi's paradise. But simpler. Very simple. Like a child's building block. You know, a six-sided cube with the word America stencilled on every side. The same word, in thick square letters on every side. But in different colors: America in blue. Turn it over:

America is green. America red. I could turn the cube over, around and around in my mind, and no matter how I turned it, the dream was always there, always the same. Just America.

DAVID: Papa, you're not listening. I have to talk to you.

HELLMAN: Yes, I know, I know. It was all straightforward for me, too. At first. At first it was very simple. After the Kapo, it was different. After the Kapo, things were more complicated.

DAVID: *(he has heard something about the Kapo before)* The Kapo, Papa?

*The ghost vanishes.*

DAVID: Papa, wait.

*BENNY comes in through the living room, carrying a towel. He picks up a dish of cake and a fork from the floor, and comes down into the bunkroom eating.*

Benny, what did he say about me?

BENNY: What did who say?

DAVID: Papa. At the end, he must have said something.

BENNY: Oh, for christ's sake, David, will you forget about that?

DAVID: I'm just curious. Come on, what did he say?

BENNY: What difference does it make? He was old, sick. He didn't know what the hell he was talking about.

DAVID: Did he talk about the Camps?

BENNY: He never talked about that stuff. You know that.

DAVID: He talked to me about it. That's what he talked about, on those long walks, when we were kids.

BENNY: Come off it, David. Everybody knows the survivors never talk about it. On account of it's too painful to talk about. I saw a thing about it on TV.

DAVID: What the hell does TV know about the Camps?

BENNY: They know a hell of a lot more than we do. They had some actual survivors.

DAVID: Talking about how they never talk about it?

BENNY: They've got experts: doctors, historians, guys who didn't drop out of college.

DAVID: That's just like you, Benny. If the TV told you Jews had two heads, you'd run out and buy an extra pair of earmuffs.

BENNY: If I had two heads, I'd have given you one a long time ago.

DAVID: I know what he told me. Maybe he never saw that program on TV: he didn't know he wasn't supposed to talk about it.

BENNY: What do you want to start in on the Old Man again?

DAVID: Because he would have understood. Because that's why I had to leave home. That's why I did what I did. That's why I can't take that job. I think Papa would have understood. Because they put him in prison too.

BENNY: It wasn't a prison; it was a concentration camp.

DAVID: What's the difference?

BENNY: He didn't do anything to deserve it.

DAVID: That makes no difference. It's still political.

BENNY: It's not the same if you didn't do anything.

DAVID: You think he never did anything?

BENNY: They just picked him up. Like all the others.

DAVID: What about the Warsaw Ghetto?

BENNY: What about it?

DAVID: He fought in the uprising.

BENNY: Did he tell you that?

DAVID: He was in the resistance.

BENNY: Oh, come on. He was a poor shmuck, like all the others.

DAVID: That's how they caught him. His family left, but he stayed behind to fight.

BENNY: They picked him up on some country road.

DAVID: He was on a mission for the resistance.

BENNY: He was out riding his bike.

DAVID: He was delivering supplies.

BENNY: He was going for a picnic. He had a basket of food.

DAVID: Supplies for the Ghetto.

BENNY: Oh, for christ's sake...

DAVID: They took him because he was part of the Resistance.

BENNY: They took him because he was a Jew.

DAVID: You don't know.

BENNY: And you do? Why do you have to make such a big deal out of it? Listen to me, David: they went through the

camps; not you. If you're looking for some fancy psychological justification...

DAVID: Maybe, what happened to them makes us different from most people, makes us more sensitive to injustice.

BENNY: That's a load of crap. What about me? I'm the son of a holocaust victim too. There's nothing wrong with me. I don't have some weird sensitive thing.

DAVID: Well, maybe I turned out more like him than you did.

BENNY: He never killed anyone.

DAVID: (pause) He killed a man in the Camp.

BENNY: That's a lie. My Old Man never killed anyone.

DAVID: The Kapo.

BENNY: You're nuts.

DAVID: He told me.

BENNY: That's a load of crap.

DAVID: In the Camp.

BENNY: Shut up, David. You're sick.

DAVID: He had to do it, for all the prisoners. He had no choice.

BENNY: Sure. Our Papa killed some big armed guard in the Camp and got away with it. Make a movie.

DAVID: A prisoner. A Kapo. A kind of trustee.

BENNY: Go to hell.

DAVID: The man was a collaborator, a Kapo.

BENNY: Papa never killed another Jew. You want to try and tell me he killed some Nazi, that's one thing. I still don't believe it. But he never killed another Jew.

DAVID: The guards put this Kapo in charge of the toilets. The toilets were in the cellar of the barracks: an open row of bowls along the wall. They'd march the prisoners down there in a line and sit them down, in groups of twelve, to take their turn on the toilets. The prisoner sits there in the open with his pants down around his ankles. And everybody standing there, waiting and watching while you try to take a crap. Nobody ever thinks about that part of it. We try and imagine the pain, the hunger, the fear; but we forget about the humiliation.

BENNY: I don't want to hear this stuff.

DAVID: When the Kapo blew his whistle you had to get up and move off, and the next group sat down. The Kapo was a Pole: a huge man, about seven feet tall. And he had absolutely no hair anywhere on his body. All blubber



and muscle: a giant hairless walrus. The guards kept him around for entertainment: a sideshow. In the toilets, he had this stool on the end of the row. And a whip: a short leather whip with a knot in the end. He'd sit there on that stool, with his whip, and from time to time, when the spirit moved him, the Kapo would start whipping some prisoner while the poor guy was sitting on the pot. Maybe the guy was too slow moving off after the whistle, maybe the Kapo just felt like it.

BENNY: You're making this up.

DAVID: He'd whip until the prisoner fell off the toilet, and he'd keep on whipping. The guy would be lying there on the cement floor, in the water and piss, with his pants still down around his ankles. And bleeding. But the Kapo kept on whipping, swinging that whip down, over and over, and grunting like a pig. Whipping, whipping, whipping. And all the time the guards are standing around, watching until they figure the guy's dead. Then they have to wait a while until the Kapo gets tired. All that's left is a mess of blood and skin and bone and shirt. When he stops, a few prisoners carry out the body, and the next group takes their turn on the toilet. The next group is lucky, because he's too tired to do it again for a while.

BENNY: Papa killed him.

DAVID: The Kapo terrorized them. He took whatever he wanted. They were scared to death of him. He took

their food. He kept getting stronger while they got weaker.

BENNY: Papa couldn't have killed him; not alone.

DAVID: Papa had a fork. *(picks up Benny's fork)* Just a mangled piece of old iron with two prongs on the end. But it was metal, and sharp. He knew he couldn't tell anyone what he was going to do. It was late at night. He waited until everyone was asleep.

BENNY: Why would he take the chance?

DAVID: Someone had to.

BENNY: Not him. He didn't have to take the chance.

DAVID: That's just it. Don't you see? He didn't have to, but he did. The lines were drawn; he had to choose. He decided to do something about it. He chose to act.

BENNY: You're trying to make it political.

DAVID: It was political.

BENNY: What's the point of this fairy tale? I'm a Kapo? Is that it? I'm some kind of a pervert with a whip?

DAVID: I'm not talking about you; I'm talking about Papa.

BENNY: You don't know what you're talking about.

DAVID: He told me.

BENNY: You were a kid and he told you this story? You don't remember. You had a dream.

DAVID: I remember. It's not something you forget.

BENNY: Is that right? The Old Man went down and killed this giant, single-handed, like Jack and the Beanstalk, David and Goliath?

DAVID: The Kapo was asleep.

BENNY: He killed him with this, this fork thing?

DAVID: That's right.

BENNY: Bullshit. That's not what happened and I can prove it.

DAVID: How?

BENNY: You say he had this fork thing?

DAVID: He found it, in the Camp someplace.

BENNY: He had it before he went down to kill the Kapo?

DAVID: I told you that's how he killed him.

BENNY: Impossible.

DAVID: What do you mean, impossible? He told me the whole thing.

BENNY: He didn't have the fork.

DAVID: He used it to...

BENNY: He didn't have the fork until after the Kapo was killed.

DAVID: He never told you any of this.

BENNY: The fork belonged to the Kapo. Papa took it from his bunk after he was killed. *(grabs fork from DAVID)*

DAVID: What are you trying to prove?

BENNY: *(hops up on top bunk)* Anyone can make up a horror story. You got it all mixed up. So, there's this freak: he's seven feet tall, a big vicious maniac. And the nazis get a kick out of watching him tear Jews apart.

DAVID: You don't know any of this. Papa never talked to you about it.

BENNY: You say. What if he did? What if he told me all of it?

DAVID: You said he never talked about it.

BENNY: Maybe I don't brag about it. Maybe he told me everything after you left. You think he just clammed up for seven years? Seven years without anyone to talk to? Maybe he started to talk to his other son, his

first son. I mean, his wife's been dead for a long time; his favorite son's fucked off on him: vanished. So what's left? Good old Benny, that's what. The guy who stuck around to do the shit work, the guy who took care of the house, the guy who busted his butt to earn a living when the Old Man got too sick to work. The guy who sat by his bed and wiped his chin when he couldn't swallow his soup. Maybe the Old Man told that guy a few things too, before he died.

DAVID: About me? Did he say anything about me?

BENNY: We're not talking about you. We're talking about the thing with the Kapo.

DAVID: Papa killed that Kapo. I don't care what you say, he killed him.

BENNY: You really want to know what happened? I mean, really? Alright, so there's this crazy Kapo down in the toilets. And he goes around killing the prisoners. But there's more, there's something else. This Kapo likes little boys, you understand? He picks out some young kid in the Camp, and he makes him his boy. Which wouldn't be so bad: I mean it happens, in prisons, right? And a guy like that, usually, takes care of his boy. Except that this Kapo is too big, and too rough. So the boys don't last long. That's the Kapo. So what does our Old Man do? What does he do about this crazy bastard? Nothing. Same as everybody else. All of them: they all shut up and mind their own business; and, most important, most important, they

stay the fuck away from this Kapo. Why? Because they're smart. So one morning they find the Kapo down in the toilets, and he's dead, stabbed to death. And nobody knows who did it. Nobody's sorry, but nobody knows who did it. Maybe it was one of his little boys, couldn't take it anymore. The guards don't know. The Jews don't know. Our Papa doesn't know. So, Papa sees the Kapo's dead. So, he goes up to the bunk, and he finds the fork there. He figures, the Kapo's dead; he won't need it, right? What should he do? Should he leave it for the guards to pick up? Should he leave it so someone else can get it? He takes the fork. That's how you survived in the Camps. That's how he got the fork. That's all.

DAVID: You just made all that up. He never told you about the Kapo.

BENNY: *(tosses fork down on the bunk and comes down)* Sure. He only told you. Nobody else; just you.

*Hellman appears and walks over to the bunk. He picks up the fork and examines it. BENNY does not see him.*

DAVID: *(sees Hellman)* It was...like a legacy. He wanted to leave me something.

BENNY: This house was his legacy, and he left that to me.

DAVID: *(watching BENNY to see if he is aware of HELLMAN)* He never told you about the Kapo.

BENNY: You say.

DAVID: Alright, Papa, tell him. Tell him now.

*HELLMAN does not reply. Instead, he busies himself with straightening the blanket on the bunk.*

Papa, please. Say something. Tell him, damn it.

*HELLMAN sits down on the bunk.*

BENNY: David? What the hell is this?

DAVID: He's here, in this room, right now. Didn't you see him? If he told you so much, how come you can't see him?

BENNY: What are you talking about?

DAVID: Damn it, Benny, look.

BENNY: Knock it off, David.

DAVID: He won't talk, but he's here. Come on, Benny. You're not trying. Try and feel it.

BENNY: I'm supposed to believe you? I mean, he wouldn't even come in here when he was alive. You want me to believe he'll come in now?

DAVID: He's here.

BENNY: For christ's sake, David. Enough.

DAVID: (disappointed) You don't see him.

*HELLMAN lies down to sleep.*

Papa? Wait. Talk to me.

BENNY: I know what you're doing. You've got some sort of private line to the Old Man. That's it, isn't it? I don't see him, but you do.

DAVID: Listen, Papa, I'm going to get a job. I'm going to get everything straightened out, I promise.

BENNY: Go fuck yourself.

*BENNY goes up steps to living room. DAVID follows.*

DAVID: Benny, wait. I can't help it.

BENNY: Bullshit.

DAVID: I know it sounds crazy.

BENNY: No, I believe you. What's next? Wait, let me guess. You're going to saw me in half.

DAVID: Listen, Benny, this is serious.

BENNY: You want serious; I'll give you serious. (pushes past DAVID and down to the bunkroom) Come here.



*DAVID follows to the steps. HELLMAN is lying on the bunk. BENNY, standing in the center of the room, points his finger up at David and takes on the role of his Father.*

David Hellman, you broke the Covenant.

DAVID: Benny.

BENNY: You broke the Holy Covenant.

DAVID: What...

BENNY: *(as Benny again)* You wanted to know what he said. That's what he said. David broke the Covenant: his words.

DAVID: Papa said that? When?

BENNY: Why don't you ask him yourself? You're the one with a direct line.

DAVID: Tell me what he said.

BENNY: Who me? How should I know? He never talked to me. I can't even see his ghost.

DAVID: Tell me.

BENNY: Don't ask me. Ask him.

DAVID: He won't talk to me.

BENNY: Ask him.

DAVID: I told you...

BENNY: Ask him, David.

DAVID: I'm asking you.

BENNY: Ask him.

DAVID: Alright, I'm asking him. I'm asking Papa. Papa, what did you say?

BENNY: (as Father) You are a plague sent to torment me. You are God's punishment for my sins.

DAVID: He never said that.

BENNY: (as BENNY) You betrayed him. After everything he went through: the war, the Camp, busting his ass to make it here, and when Mama died, he had to take care of us on his own. What was it all for? For you. So you could make something of yourself. You could have made it. You were the smart one. You owed it to him. But you blew it. You ran away and blew it.

DAVID: I didn't want to make it. That's not what he wanted.

BENNY: No, he wanted you to run away from home, quit school, live like a bum, running around tossing molotov cocktails. That's why he did it all. Don't talk to me

about the Camps. You got no right to mention that word. You turned your back on him. *(as Father)* You abandoned your roots.

DAVID: I had to go.

*HELLMAN sits up on the bunk,*

BENNY: *(as Father)* A man can't make himself out of nothing. He has to start from something. *(as Benny)* That's what he said.

DAVID: *(appealing to HELLMAN)* Papa. Is that what you said?

HELLMAN: Without an identity, a man is lost.

BENNY: Look at you now: you've got nothing, no future, no family, no direction. No wonder you see ghosts.

*DAVID stares at HELLMAN.*

You think you can make up your own definitions. You're going to decide what it means to be a Jew? You think it's like a trade union, you can make it whatever you like: some sort of fight against injustice, Jews for a better world.... That's not what it's about. It's a tradition, there are rules. You forgot about that part. Never forget, David. That's what he said. Never forget.

HELLMAN: I remember my father's examining table. I used to put my feet in the shining stirrups and ride like the wind.

DAVID: (to HELLMAN) People made those rules; people can change them.

BENNY: Never mind your ghosts, David. I'm telling you what he said. You don't choose to be Jewish.

HELLMAN: There used to be a joke: born a Jew; too bad for you.

BENNY: You were chosen. The Chosen People: that's what it means. You think Abraham chose God?

HELLMAN: (he is not lecturing DAVID but merely giving the right answer as though in school) God chose Abraham.

DAVID: I am not Abraham.

HELLMAN/BENNY: (in unison) Abraham made a Covenant with the Lord.

BENNY: You can't break the Covenant.

DAVID: (defensive) I never made any deal with any God.

BENNY: Not a deal; a Covenant. It's different. And you're bound by it, whether you choose to be or not. You're a Jew.

DAVID: And if I don't choose to be bound by this Covenant?

HELLMAN: (weary of the debate, begins to rewind the cloth on his shoe) So many words.

BENNY: You asked Papa. You wanted to know. I'm telling you what he said. He went through hell for it.

DAVID: Is that what we were chosen for: to go through hell?

BENNY: God brought him out of there.

HELLMAN: *(again remembering his lessons)* And the Lord brought them forth from Egypt.

DAVID: *(goes over to HELLMAN)* But didn't this God put them there in the first place?

HELLMAN: He told Moses: lead my people forth. And they crossed the Red Sea, in a terrible storm. With the armies of the Pharaoh coming behind. And still it wasn't over. Still, it wasn't enough. Even after Moses led them out of the land of Egypt, even then, they wandered all those years in the desert before God showed them the promised land. All those years in the desert. Always hungry, sometimes without water. And at night: the cold. Some of them must have wished they could go back. Some of them must have cursed the day He took them out of Egypt.

BENNY: The Camps were a punishment because they broke the Covenant.

DAVID: Every Jew broke this Covenant? What kind of God is this, anyway? Were they all guilty? Why didn't he just punish the ones who sinned?

**BENNY:** This is a Covenant we're talking about; not a constitution.

**DAVID:** (to **HELLMAN**) You don't believe this. You never said this.

**BENNY:** He isn't here. I'm here, and I'm telling you what he said.

**HELLMAN:** We are all one people. If only one breaks the Covenant, he brings God's wrath down on all of us. One people.

**DAVID:** That's right: all one people. (turning on **BENNY**) He said all one people. Not just the Jews. All one people. The whole world.

**BENNY:** They put him in the Camp because he was Jewish. That's why you can't forget. If you forget you're Jewish, it'll happen again.

**DAVID:** It was the Nazis put him in a Concentration Camp; not some imaginary white-haired god. This is history. Not some bible story. The fascists did it, the fascist system.

**HELLMAN:** It was in the early afternoon when they picked me up. I was on the road that goes south to Lublin. They put me in the back of the truck with the others. I never saw my bicycle again.

**BENNY:** Because he was Jewish. (goes up into living room)

HELLMAN: Maybe they wanted the bicycle. (*lies down in the bunk again*)

DAVID: (*hesitates a moment, then follows BENNY*) What about all the people in concentration camps today? What about the people being exterminated, right this minute? What about South Africa? What about the Palestinians, Benny? Who chose them? They're not Jewish. Maybe God changed his mind. Maybe the Jews aren't the Chosen People anymore. I mean, it's the Palestinian children who are being gunned down today; it's the Palestinian's houses they're blowing up; it's the Palestinian's who are without a homeland. What do you suppose the Palestinians did to be chosen like this?

BENNY: You're a Jew. The Jews are your people.

DAVID: And if I was Aryan in '42? If the Germans were my people? It's not the Germans killing in Palestine today.

BENNY: You wanted to know what the Old Man said.

DAVID: This isn't Papa; this is your version.

BENNY: Alright then, you tell me. You know everything? Tell me what Papa said at the end. Explain it to me. I'm listening.

DAVID: (*uncomfortable*) I wasn't there at the end.

BENNY: What does your ghost say?

DAVID: That's not the point.

BENNY: It is the point. You say you've got some direct line to Papa, you tell me what he said. You tell me when Papa told you it was all politics, history. You tell me how he said we should forget about the Covenant.

DAVID: Never mind.

BENNY: What's wrong? Your ghost isn't talking? You lost your direct line? You're not so sure anymore?

DAVID: He doesn't want to talk about it. Maybe he didn't see it that way, but I think he would have...if I could have explained.... He would have understood.

BENNY: If, if, if. But he never said there was no Covenant. He never said it was all political. Well, did he?

DAVID: I don't want to talk about it anymore.

BENNY: I bet you don't. David, the great lover of humanity. All busted up about the plight of the Palestinians. But you couldn't even come home to see your own father die.

DAVID: Shut up, Benny.

BENNY: You want to make up some new religion, that's your problem; but don't tell me what my Old Man thought.



One people, single and undivided before God. His words. You wanted some kind of legacy. This is it. Take it or leave it.

DAVID: *(defeated, goes to the steps of the bunkroom)* He could have left me some old furniture, a few dishes, a couple dollars.

BENNY: He left all that stuff to me: I listened. Now, I'm going to bed, unless your ghost has something to say.  
*(starts to leave the room)*

DAVID: *(staring at the bunk)* He's in the Camp.

BENNY: Jesus, David, give it up.

*HELLMAN is still lying on the bunk.*

DAVID: I thought he was here, but he isn't. He's still in the Camp.

BENNY: No more about the camps, please.

DAVID: He's in the camp and it's late at night. He's lying in his bunk, but he's awake. Everyone's asleep except him.

BENNY: David, I'm warning you.

DAVID: He's been waiting for them to fall asleep. Now, he can get up. He can slip downstairs.

*HELLMAN mimes the actions as DAVID describes them.*

BENNY: There is no one here.

DAVID: He's getting up to go down. He's very careful not to wake anyone.

BENNY: I see nothing.

DAVID: He's going downstairs to the cellar, to the toilets.

BENNY: He had to piss. He went down because he had to piss.

DAVID: *(gestures for quiet)* He stops. He forgot something. He goes back to the bunk. To get the fork. He's got the fork. Going down now.

BENNY: He was afraid someone would steal it. You leave something in your bunk, it's bound to get swiped.

DAVID: He climbs down the stairs to the cellar. He has to move slowly because it's pitch black and he can't see anything. Moves to the wall, over the bowl.

BENNY: I knew it. He went down for a leak. And that's all.

DAVID: It's totally dark, and absolutely quiet, except for the sound of his pissing.

*HELLMAN stands legs apart and facing the audience as if pissing.*

Something's wrong. It doesn't sound right. It should sound a loud, clear echo in the empty bowl. But this is a dull, solid sound.

*HELLMAN bends forward, eyes shut, peering down.*

It's too dark. He tries to see down into the dark, tries to make something out of the pitch black. Nothing. And then, two eyes; two eyes open wide.

*HELLMAN opens his eyes.*

Right there in the dark, staring right up at him.

BENNY: Oh, Jesus.

DAVID: It's the Kapo. He was sitting there, asleep on the toilet. Papa's pissing right in the Kapo's lap.

BENNY: It was a mistake.

DAVID: And the Kapo's staring right up at him. He starts to wake up now, starts to register, to see what's happening. And then, then, his whole face breaks into a big, wide grin.

BENNY: He's crazy.

DAVID: No, he reaches out and grabs Papa's arm.

*HELLMAN mimes his own arm being grabbed.*

He stands up, closer, closer, pressing up against him...and...and he...kisses him.

*HELLMAN turns his face away to avoid the kiss.*

He pulls Papa down.

*HELLMAN goes down to his knees.*

Papa has the fork, the fork he brought down with him from the bunk.

*HELLMAN raises fork above his head.*

He's got the fork...and he...he drives the fork up into the Kapo's neck. The Kapo goes down. Papa pulls the fork out. And in again...and out...and in...and out...and in...

BENNY:

David!

*DAVID is standing over HELLMAN now. He bends down and helps HELLMAN to his feet. HELLMAN steps back leaving the fork in DAVID's hand, and turning away.*

*DAVID looks down at the fork in his own hand, drops it and slumps down to the floor. BENNY helps DAVID to the couch, where he stretches him out.*

BENNY:

Here, lie down.

DAVID:

You were right, Benny. It was just an accident.

BENNY:

Maybe, David, maybe. Just take it easy, now.

DAVID: All that time, I thought he chose to do it. I thought it was political. I thought I was being faithful to his memory.

BENNY: Forget about it, kid.

DAVID: But it wasn't his memory at all. It was mine.

BENNY: Come on, just lie back here, for a while. Jesus, David, I wish you wouldn't do stuff like that.

DAVID: I was the one that hit him.

BENNY: *(gently)* Hit who, David?

DAVID: I was on the picket line. This truck drove up and the driver wanted to go through into the plant. The guys were yelling and pounding on the hood with their placards.

BENNY: Don't start on that now, David.

DAVID: The guard came out. He was wearing one of those shit-brown pinkerton suits, and you could tell he was real proud of it. He had this crowbar in his hand; he was letting it dangle in his hand, rolling it around in his fingers.

BENNY: What's done is done.

*As DAVID speaks, HELLMAN moves closer to listen.*

DAVID: Domenic was draped over the front of the hood. I saw the guard come up behind Domenic; he shoved the end of his crowbar into Domenic's ribs: "You're on private property." Domenic whipped around, and he slipped. He fell down under the bumper, and the truck was still coming. The guard was still standing there over top of him with that crowbar. I swung my placard at him. It was only a two-by-four, and I didn't aim or anything, but it hit him right in the throat. And he went down.

BENNY: It was an accident.

DAVID: *(looking at HELLMAN)* No, I'm certain. I was the one that killed him.

BENNY: Listen to me, David. You can't torture yourself with it: going over it again and again.

DAVID: They arrested four of us. The others are still inside.

BENNY: That's all finished. You can't let it crush you.

DAVID: *(to HELLMAN)* It was a promise. No more Camps. I was going to wipe out every trace of Camps. I was going to do it for you.

HELLMAN: *(turning away from DAVID)* It's very cold.

DAVID: It was for you, Papa. Do you understand, Papa?

HELLMAN: At night it's always worse. It gets colder at night. You lie in your bunk, dead tired, but you can't sleep, it's so cold. You just lie there alone shivering.

DAVID: Papa.

HELLMAN: No more camps. Yes, no more camps. But in the meantime, oh God, what are we doing to each other in the meantime? How we treat each other.

DAVID: The company wouldn't even talk to us.

HELLMAN: Things have to be done. You have to survive, stay warm.

DAVID: They treated us like animals.

HELLMAN: If you tie a dog on a chain long enough, they say he becomes a killer. In the long run, the solution is to get rid of the chains. But, in the meantime, David...how do we keep from becoming killers in the meantime?

*HELLMAN retreats out of sight. DAVID starts to rise to follow, but BENNY restrains him.*

BENNY: Come on, kid, just take it easy. Jesus, I didn't mean to mess your mind up like that. Only you got me stirred up. You shouldn't have got me stirred up like that.

DAVID: What a joke. I started out to change the world; I ended up... with these hands, my own hands. And for what?

**BENNY:** No. Listen, David. All that stuff I said the Old Man told me. "You are a curse sent to punish me." He never said all that. I made it up. You understand? He never said it. You got me mad and I made it up.

**DAVID:** I betrayed him. Everything that happened to him, everything he did, everything he wanted for us: I destroyed it.

**BENNY:** This is all my fault. I should have put you to bed right away. I should've made you take that bath.

**DAVID:** Listen, Benny, about the job. You were right. I'll take it. Whatever you say now, I'll do it.

**BENNY:** Sure, sure, kid. Don't worry about it. You'll get some sleep and tomorrow you'll be a new man.

**DAVID:** *(animated)* No, listen. I don't want to decide anything anymore. From now on, you tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Whatever you decide. Okay, Benny? Whatever you say.

**BENNY:** Right. And I say: go to bed and sleep.

**DAVID:** *(grabbing BENNY)* No, I'm serious, Benny. I mean it. From now on, you decide. I'll sell suits. I'll be a foreman. Whatever you say. But you've got to tell me. You've got to tell me what to do. Alright, Benny? Alright? Will you do it?



**BENNY:** *(loosening DAVID's grip)* Come on, David. Don't talk like that. It isn't natural.

**DAVID:** *(pursuing BENNY)* It is natural. That's just it. Papa wasn't trying to save the other prisoners. He was just going for a piss, for Christ's sake. That was natural. He was natural. You're natural. I'm the one who's unnatural. I'm the one who tried to save the world. And look what happened: that guard is dead. And what for? The union sold out, the whole movement's dead, nothing is changed. I'm on parole. And those three guys, Benny. Those three guys they arrested along with me, they're still inside. No, you were right. No more politics. Look out for number one. Do what's natural. That's what I want to do now. That's what he would have wanted. But, the thing is, I don't know how to be natural. I'm just no good at it. That's why I need you, Benny. I can't be trusted to do the natural thing. You've got to watch me all the time. Make sure I don't mess up. You have to make the decisions now. All the decisions. I didn't see that before. But now I understand. You tell me what to do, Benny. Just tell me what to do. I'll do it.

**BENNY:** Stop it, David. Stop talking. It's not healthy to talk so much.

**DAVID:** Why? This is what you wanted. This is what you've been saying all along. You wanted me to sell. I'll sell.

**BENNY:** Never mind what I said, David. You don't want to sell.

DAVID: I'll sell. You want me to sell; I'll sell. I'll sell, Benny. Really. I'll sell.

BENNY: Okay, you'll sell. But not tonight, David.

DAVID: I'll market my skills. That's what you said, wasn't it? Market your skills?

BENNY: *(mechanically)* Yeah, sure. Market your skills. Get aggressive.

DAVID: Aggressive. That's right. I'll do it, Benny. I'll be aggressive.

BENNY: Sure. Whatever I tell him, he'll do. Very aggressive. Let's go to bed, now.

DAVID: I can do it, Benny.

BENNY: Yeah, you'll do it. I tell you to sell shmatas; you'll sell shmatas.

DAVID: I'll sell shmatas.

BENNY: I tell you fire the little Italian guy down in the shop, you'll fire him.

*DAVID pauses.*

I tell you to bust the union drive, you'll bust it. I tell you to forget about those other three guys still back in prison, you'll forget. Sell guns to South Africa, give

money to the politicians, shoot that Palestinian kid with a rock in his hand....

*DAVID collapses back onto the sofa.*

Ah, forget it, David. It doesn't matter.

DAVID: I just don't know anymore.

BENNY: You're tired, that's all.

DAVID: Benny, I think I'm going crazy.

BENNY: Now you're talking like a Jew.

DAVID: I can't remember his name.

BENNY: Whose name?

DAVID: The third guy. There were four of us inside. I remember Louis, and Armand, but I can't remember the third guy's name. I've already forgotten one of their names.

*END OF ACT I*

## ACT II

## SCENE ONE:

*An hour or two later that night. DAVID and BENNY are still in the living room. They are both too exhausted to sleep. BENNY has removed his shirt and tie and is down to his undershirt and pants. DAVID is standing by the window D.R..*

DAVID: Aren't you worried?

BENNY: She's a big girl; she knows the way.

DAVID: Still, it's late. Don't you think you ought to call her or something?

BENNY: And wake up her mother?

DAVID: She's not coming home tonight, is she?

BENNY: She's at her mother's. She's sleeping over. You remember how her old lady is.

DAVID: It's on account of me. I knew it.

BENNY: What the hell are you talking about? It's got nothing to do with you. The old broad is scared all alone out there. She's been like that ever since her old man died. She reads a piece in the paper about some guy running around raping thirteen year old girls, and she thinks he's after her.

DAVID: You had a fight about me moving in.

BENNY: What's this? You're going to start with Annie, now?  
First it's the Old Man; now it's Annie.

DAVID: How long has she been gone?

BENNY: Go to bed, David. You're sick.

DAVID: *(looks around at mess, picks up towel, displays a hole)*  
She's been gone for a while.

BENNY: Will you lay off?

DAVID: You had a fight.

BENNY: Shut up.

DAVID: I want to know why.

BENNY: It's none of your goddamn business, why.

DAVID: You did have a fight.

BENNY: We did not have a fight. I told you: she's at her  
mother's. She's not coming home tonight, and that's it.  
Are you satisfied?

DAVID: I'm sorry. You're right. It's none of my business.

**BENNY:** Forget it. Women, eh kid? That's one thing you done right: Love 'em and leave 'em. I mean, will you look at us? Here we are with the whole house to ourselves, and we're worrying about Annie. Hey, remember the time the folks went off to New York for Steiner's funeral and left us alone for the whole weekend? Just the two of us for the whole weekend. How old were we? We stayed up all night. Emptied the liquor cabinet. Remember?, We played stick hockey in the living room. Then you puked all over the carpet. You can't have forgotten that. You were sick as a dog.

**DAVID:** She doesn't want to see me. That's it, isn't it?

**BENNY:** Believe me, David, it has nothing to do with you.

**DAVID:** She hasn't forgiven me.

**BENNY:** That was ten years ago.

**DAVID:** I don't blame her. I never even asked; I just took off.

**BENNY:** She married me.

**DAVID:** I know, I know, Benny. I'm not saying she would have come. It's just that I didn't ask.

**BENNY:** Will you shut up about Annie.

**DAVID:** Tell me why she's not here.

**BENNY:** Just shut up.

DAVID: Is she afraid to see me?

BENNY: Will you lay off that. Why should she be afraid to see you?

DAVID: Alright, never mind. Listen, Benny. I just want to say one thing.

BENNY: No. Don't say anything. Do me a favor: don't say anything.

DAVID: No, listen. Just this. (*speaking slowly*) I want you to know, you don't have to worry about Annie and me. I just wanted to see her, that's all. You understand? You don't have to worry about Annie and me.

BENNY: I don't know what you're talking about.

DAVID: So you can call her and tell her it's okay. She can come home now.

BENNY: Thank you. That's very nice of you. (*pretends to make a phone call*) Hello, Annie? David says you can come home now. I'm sure she'll be very grateful.

DAVID: Because you don't have to worry about it.

BENNY: The only thing I'm worried about is you. You're not well.

DAVID: So you'll call her?

BENNY: No.

DAVID: You are afraid.

BENNY: I'm not afraid.

DAVID: Look, I don't blame you. You figured you'd check me out first, see if I was going to be trouble. I can understand that. You wanted to be sure. So you made her go to her mom's. Okay. All I'm saying is, it's not necessary. I haven't seen her in ten years. I just want to see her, that's all.

BENNY: I didn't send her away.

DAVID: Oh, come on, Benny. Don't lie to me. I can tell when you're lying.

BENNY: You are so full of shit, David. I couldn't have kept her here with a shotgun. She didn't want to see you. She didn't want me to bring you here.

DAVID: That's a lie.

BENNY: As far as she's concerned, you can rot in jail.

DAVID: I don't believe you. You sent her away.

BENNY: "He made his bed; let him lie in it." That's what she said. "Let him lie in it."



DAVID: You told her some horrible story about me. What did you tell her?

BENNY: Me? I wish to hell I'd kept my mouth shut. I couldn't shut up about how great it was going to be when David came home. I couldn't stop talking about how smart David was when we were kids. "David this, David that..." You want me to tell you what her last words were? "You and your lousy David can both go straight to hell." Those were her last words.

*DAVID collapses on sofa.*

I figured I'd let you settle in before I said anything. I didn't want to upset you. But you couldn't leave it alone. You had to know.

DAVID: She despises me.

BENNY: She doesn't despise you; she's sick of you. It's different.

DAVID: She hasn't seen me for ten years.

BENNY: But she hasn't stopped hearing about you. First the Old Man, then me...like an idiot.

DAVID: I can't stay.

BENNY: Don't start with that.

DAVID: She doesn't want to see me.

BENNY: So, she won't see you.

DAVID: This is a big house, Benny, but it's not that big.

BENNY: You let me worry about that.

DAVID: I'm not going to stay here and fuck things up between you and Annie on top of everything else.

BENNY: Do me a favor, spare me the noble brother routine, okay? It's too late anyway.

DAVID: What did you do?

BENNY: I didn't do anything. I got my kid brother out of prison, that's all I did.

DAVID: Did you kick her out on account of me?

BENNY: I did not kick her out. Drop it, will you.

DAVID: But she's gone.

BENNY: I said, drop it. I do not want to discuss it. Okay?

DAVID: She left. You had a fight and she left.

BENNY: David, I'm asking you. Please.

DAVID: How can I drop it? It's my fault.

BENNY: You're too much, you know that? Everything's your fault. My wife--my wife--walks out on me, it's all David's fault. He hasn't seen her for ten years, but that makes no difference: it's still his fault. The Old Man got sick and died: it's all David's fault. A bunch of boys get tossed in jail: it's David's fault. A peasant gets shot by the military somewhere in South America? David. Earthquake in China? Drought in Africa? David, David. Who the hell do you think you are: God?

DAVID: You said...

BENNY: Never mind what I said. *(finally coming clean)* I lied. Alright? She left me, not you. Me. You got that? She's been gone for weeks. Can't you tell?

DAVID: I thought it was on account of me.

BENNY: Oh, don't get your hopes up. She doesn't want to see you either.

DAVID: But why, Benny?

BENNY: How the fuck should I know?

DAVID: There has to be a reason.

BENNY: Who says? Where is it written there has to be a reason for everything? Maybe she got tired of the house: it was too big. Maybe she didn't like the black cadillac; she wanted a white one. She's allergic to

miak. Maybe it was too hard, sitting around the house, watching TV, while I busted my ass down at the plant. How the hell should I know?

DAVID: Maybe she wanted to work, get out of the house.

BENNY: Ungrateful bitch. I never made her work a day in her life. She didn't have to lift a goddamn finger. Even when I was working for Steiner at the beginning, and Papa got sick. It was touch and go there for a while. But did I drag her into it? No sir, not Benny. Never made her lift a finger. Good old Benny kept her nice and comfortable and out of all the drek. Good old Benny. Benny the shimock.

DAVID: She must have left something, a message...

BENNY: A message: that's a good one. Sure, she left a message. Trouble is she left too many messages. She left them all over the house. Everywhere. Little fucking messages popping up all over the place. The first night, I went to the fridge, there's a note, taped inside the door: Benny, defrost every three months. That's it: defrost every three months. Nothing else. So, I go to the cupboard for something to eat. And there's a grocery list taped on the edge of the shelf. All neatly printed and divided up in sections. "Dairy products," and underneath: "one carton of milk, one pound semi-salted butter, seven yogurts"--I like to have a yogurt every night around the time the news comes on--so she's got "seven yogurts"--and, in brackets, the brand and everything: "Liberty, light, the

blue tops." And that's not all: under that, she puts exactly where I can find the dairy counter in the grocery store: "last aisle in the back." She laid it all out for me, where to find it, and all the right quantities, for one person. And special advice, like, "don't go Thursday night; it's too crowded, nor Friday; there's nothing left." And that's it. In the breadbox, I found the address of the baker where she buys the black bread I like. At first, I thought it was a good sign: I figured she was worried about me, how I'd make out without her. But then, it got weird. On the inside of the toilet lid: "wash this with Mr. Clean twice a week." Pinned to my pillow, right in my bed: "Change the sheets every week." It was like a mine field in here: messages, like booby traps, springing up at me everywhere I looked. On the bathroom mirror, in red lipstick: "clean your bath after you use it." Like she went nuts. I didn't know what to do. At first, I tried to follow the messages, you know, do what they said. But it was crazy, I was going around in circles. I didn't have the time. I felt like an idiot. Reading little notes and following her orders like some kind of zombie. The thing was, I couldn't bring myself to tear them up. See, she took everything with her: all her clothes, her books, pictures, everything, her shoes. Those notes were all she left behind. I couldn't bring myself to get rid of them, at first. But they were driving me nuts. And what if someone came over, a client or something, and saw them all over the house. It was crazy. Those goddamn notes almost drove me crazy.

DAVID: It must have been hard to go, after so many years. I wonder why she stuck it out as long as she did.

BENNY: I'll tell you why. Because I never walked out on her. How long did you stick it out with her?

*DAVID walks away, silenced for a moment.*

DAVID: Still, it must have been like a prison for her.

BENNY: You think she would have been better off if she'd run off with you?

DAVID: I guess it wasn't much of a choice.

BENNY: What are you talking about? What choice? Look at this place, David. Just look at it. Okay, it's a mess now; but you should have seen it when Annie was here. Spotless. *(skurries around tidying up)* Absolutely, goddamn, fucking spotless. You know how many broads would kill to have a place like this? You know how much I paid for that bar? Guess. Go ahead, how much? Damn you, David, guess!

DAVID: For christ's sake, Benny.

BENNY: Three thousand. Running water, an ice machine. Cost me more than a fucking bathroom. Three thousand goddamn dollars. What were you offering? Sleeping in some hovel and walking picket lines.

DAVID: Maybe she didn't want to sit and watch TV all day.

**BENNY:** She should have gone with you: they don't have television in prison.

**DAVID:** Maybe she wanted to do something.

**BENNY:** What? Sew curtains to cover the bars?

**DAVID:** (*indicating Benny's bar*) Your bar, my bars.

**BENNY:** You don't believe me about the bar, do you? But it's true. I can prove it. It's ~~an~~ in here. (*looking through papers in a drawer in the bar*) Look, here's the bill: three thousand, two hundred and ninety six fucking dollars. I got it all in here. Guarantees. You want to see guarantees? Here, you want a guarantee for the TV? Here. (*throws paper at David*) Here's one for the dishwasher. The vacuum cleaner. Plugs right into the wall: it's got sockets right in the wall, you plug it in, it just sucks up all the dirt. Guaranteed. Here, take them: the car, the car stereo-cassette-four speaker system, the garage door, the microwave, the lawnmower. I got one for the lawn: the whole lawn is guaranteed: every fucking blade of grass. All guaranteed. Goddamn fucking hell.  
*BENNY throws all the papers in the air and collapses on sofa.*

**DAVID:** (*trying to console*) Would it help if I talked to her?

**BENNY:** Don't make me laugh. I told you, she's sick of the both of us. No more Hellmans for Annie Engel, no sir. Not

Mister Hellman Senior, and not either of his boys. And that's that.

DAVID: I would like to talk to her.

BENNY: Goddamn it, here it is again. David Hellman, the one and only, the world's last chance and only hope for housewives, broken marriages, working stiffs, lost immigrants, blacks, browns, and yellows, defender of the down and outers, saviour of the rubbies, glue sniffers, thieves, friend to beggars and murderers.

DAVID: (*seeing Benny's anguish*) I'm sorry, Benny.

BENNY: Save your pity, David; you need every bit of it for yourself.

DAVID: I just assumed... I thought you were happy.

BENNY: I'm happy. I'm perfectly happy. I'm very happy.

DAVID: So you decided to bail me out.

BENNY: What are you talking about?

DAVID: Annie left you, so you decided to bail me out.

BENNY: That's got nothing to do with it.

DAVID: You need me more than I need you.

BENNY: You're out of your head.



DAVID: Look at you, Benny: Annie's gone, your conscience is chewing you up, you're all alone in your empty house with your bar and your little notes.

BENNY: You don't have a house.

DAVID: You're a drowning man, Benny. You're drowning, and I'm the other guy in the water.

BENNY: You weren't in the water when I found you; you were in prison.

DAVID: And this is better? You want to take me down with you.

BENNY: I'm trying to get you straightened out. I'm going to get you back on your feet again.

DAVID: And I almost fell for it. I thought I was the one in trouble.

BENNY: Oh, no, you're not in trouble. You don't need me. Now that I got you out of jail, you don't need me.

DAVID: You're not happy, Benny.

BENNY: So, if you don't need me, what are you doing here? Gloating?

DAVID: You're not happy.

BENNY: Why don't you go on out there and see how you do all on your own?

DAVID: Why can't you admit it?

BENNY: I'm warning you, David.

DAVID: You can't just pretend it's all worked out, Benny.

BENNY: Shut up! Don't say it!

DAVID: You're not happy.

BENNY: Okay, get out.

*DAVID struggles helplessly for words.*

Well, what are you waiting for? Go on, get out. Get the fuck out of my house!

*BENNY picks up DAVID 's sack and tosses it at him.*

*DAVID picks it up and stands there awkwardly.*

BENNY: We'll soon see who needs who.

DAVID: *(starting for the door)* Alright, Benny, if that's what you want.

*BENNY follows him and gets between DAVID and the door.*

BENNY: Fuck you, asshole. I said get out.

DAVID: You're in my way.

BENNY: Loser.

DAVID: Get out of my way, Benny.

BENNY: Make me.

DAVID: Oh, for shit's sake. You're pathetic. *(throws sack down and turns away)*

BENNY: *(walks back toward sofa)* Alright, so I miss her. Goddamn it, David, I miss her. But it's not the end of the world. I've got everything worked out. The business is going alright, you're going to be alright. This thing with Annie; it's just a rough spot we have to get over, a...a temporary setback. That's what it is: a temporary setback.

*DAVID is silent. HELLMAN appears seated in the armchair. BENNY begins to speak to his father.*

BENNY: Papa. You should be in bed. Are you comfortable? I'll get you a blanket. I can make some soup, the clear broth, with just a pinch of garlic, the way you like it. You just sit there and relax, Papa. You don't have to worry about a thing. Listen, Papa. I took care of everything. I'm managing the whole shop, now. You understand? I paid off everything. The house is ours. Look, David's here. I got David out; I brought him home. See, he's here, we're all here.

*DAVID moves closer, but BENNY steps between him and the couch.*

No, wait. Papa, listen to me: it's not true. I lied.  
Papa, Annie's gone.

DAVID: You see him.

BENNY: *(to DAVID)* Will you be quiet. Please, Papa, what do I do? Listen to me. She left. Can you hear me, Papa? She's gone. For good. I'm alone here, now. And I can't stay in this house anymore. It's driving me crazy. You understand? Crazy. I can't go into the shop — they're all there, working at the machines all day. I can't stand to see them all there. They watch me. I know they watch me. I see them all there working the machines, and I can feel it. They're watching. She wouldn't go in there. I took her in once to see it, and she wouldn't go back. Because of the watching. She could feel it. Papa, you're not listening. Goddamn it, old man, I'm talking to you!

DAVID: Benny, don't.

*BENNY turns away, defeated. DAVID takes a step towards him.*

HELLMAN: He wasn't a monster, you know. Not at first.

DAVID: Who, Papa?

HELLMAN: The Kapo. He wasn't a monster. When he first came here, he was very gentle. Like a child.

BENNY: Yes, but about Annie. About Annie, Papa.

HELLMAN: He wasn't a Kapo. Not at first. He was just a prisoner like the rest of us. Oh, he was a big man, very big; but he never hurt anyone in the beginning. He was like a child. In the camp, everybody lies, everybody cheats. You have to do things, to stay alive. Everybody is hiding something: a bit of food, a piece of tin, a blanket, a fork. But not him: he was different. He never hurt anyone. He never lied or cheated. You told him you were hungry; he gave you his last crust of bread. He saw someone falling down on the job; he took up the slack. He never expected anything in return. He never thought about it. He was different. Like a child.

BENNY: (to DAVID) What has this got to do with Annie?

DAVID: (listening attentively) I don't know.

HELLMAN: Some of the prisoners took advantage of him. They took his food, made him do their work. I felt bad about that. At night, I could hear him crying in his bunk. Every night, he lay there, crying in his bunk for hours, like a frightened child. I couldn't sleep listening to him; I just lay there listening to his crying. And neither of us was sleeping.

BENNY: This is the man who was a monster, a kapo. He was killing prisoners.

HELLMAN: He was like a child, crying. One night, I couldn't bear to hear him anymore. I got up, and I went over to his bunk. I lay down beside him, I took him in my arms, and I held him. We fell asleep like that. *(falls silent)*

DAVID: *(prompting)* Papa.

HELLMAN: After that, we slept together every night. None of the prisoners said anything, because he stopped crying. He was quiet. At night, it was ~~so~~ cold, we kept each other warm.

BENNY: You slept together?

HELLMAN: I can still remember his breathing in my ear: deep and slow, like a sea shell, like the ocean.

BENNY: Jesus, Papa. - *(appealing to DAVID)* David?

DAVID: What difference does it make?

BENNY: I don't believe it. My old man was not some kind of...of...

DAVID: I never figured on any kind of love in a concentration camp.

HELLMAN: The guards used to tease him. Because he was so big. They had never seen a Jew that big before. And

because he was...simple. They treated him like a freak. He didn't understand what they were doing. After a few weeks, they put him in charge of the toilets. They made him a Kapo. They confused him. They told him it was his responsibility. No one had ever given him any responsibility before. They told him each man was allowed three minutes on the toilet, and they taught him how to count three minutes. They gave him a whistle. He didn't understand what they were doing. I tried to tell him, but he wanted the whistle, the responsibility.

DAVID: They made him crazy.

HELLMAN: The guards turned him into a monster.

DAVID: A dog on a chain.

BENNY: All right, you were lovers. But then, why would he...with a whip? If he loved you?

HELLMAN: You can turn anyone into a Kapo. He sits there. All he knows is we've got three minutes. He counts: one, two, three...up to three minutes. Then he blows the whistle. When somebody doesn't get up, he panics. He starts thinking they do it on purpose, to get him in trouble. They sit there after the whistle just so he'll lose his responsibility. He starts to go crazy when they don't get right up. Even I can't stop him. He just goes crazy.

BENNY: He went crazy.

HELLMAN: And the guards push him; they love it.

DAVID: Someone had to kill him.

BENNY: (to DAVID) That's how Papa got the fork. (to HELLMAN) I remembered it was the Kapo's fork — you told me about the Kapo's fork. That's why I figured you couldn't have killed him with it. I just figured you picked it up after he was killed. But if you shared the same bunk...you could have taken the fork. You took the fork from his bunk.

DAVID: It wasn't an accident.

BENNY: (sits down) He couldn't have.

DAVID: (staring at HELLMAN) It must have taken a lot of courage.

BENNY: But how? (to HELLMAN) If you loved him?

HELLMAN: The prisoners in the barracks; they say someone has to kill the Kapo. They say I should be the one. Because the Kapo trusts me. No one else can get close to him now, and it's got to be done. At night sometimes, the Kapo forgets to come upstairs to his bunk. He doesn't know what time it is, he doesn't want to miss the next group of prisoners. If no one tells him, he'll sit there all night. So I go down to get him.



DAVID: This time you took the fork: *(picks up the fork)*

HELLMAN: He was asleep, asleep on the stool in the toilet. He must have fallen asleep waiting.

DAVID: *(steps toward BENNY)* It must have been very dark. You could barely make him out.

HELLMAN: I was very careful, very quiet.

BENNY: He never heard you.

HELLMAN: I bent over him.

BENNY: He was asleep.

HELLMAN: I kissed him, once, on the cheek.

*DAVID kisses BENNY.*

HELLMAN: I whispered his name. *(pauses)* Benny.

*Both BENNY and DAVID turn towards HELLMAN in surprise.*

HELLMAN: *(turning away and as if commanding them to continue)*  
I took the fork, I...*(he is unable to say it)*

DAVID: *(drops the fork)* You killed him.

BENNY: *(staring at fork)* All those years, he never told me.

HELLMAN: *(to himself)* Such a heavy secret to carry. And for so long.

BENNY: His name was Benny, Papa?

HELLMAN: I swore my first born.... Benny.

BENNY: *(to HELLMAN)* You should have told me.

DAVID: *(to BENNY)* How could he?

BENNY: He told you.

BENNY: Not all of it.

BENNY: *(to DAVID)* You knew he killed him. You were right. You knew all along.

DAVID: No. I was wrong. I thought it was simple. I thought they were enemies. I thought it was easy to kill, if you were right. He never told me they were lovers. I never thought about that part of it.

HELLMAN: I would like to rest now.

BENNY: I had a right to know.

DAVID: I guess Annie was right. Look at us. The three Hellmans. No wonder she had to get out.

BENNY: *(remembering)* No more Hellmans for Annie Engel.

HELLMAN: *(moves toward the sofa)* I'm very tired.

BENNY: Come on, Papa. I'll help you to your room. *(goes over to help HELLMAN)*

HELLMAN: *(sits down)* No, here is fine. Just to rest a minute.

BENNY: You should sleep.

HELLMAN: *(lying down)* It's so cold.

*BENNY gets a blanket and covers HELLMAN.*

DAVID: Are you alright, Papa?

HELLMAN: Just a quick nap.

BENNY: He was always falling asleep in here. I used to carry him into the bedroom.

DAVID: He'll be alright.

*BENNY and DAVID stand and look at him for a moment, before moving away D.R..*

BENNY: If only I had known.

DAVID: I don't know, Benny. It might not have made any difference.

BENNY: I would have thought about Annie, the people in the shop...I don't know. I would have done things different.

And so would you, David. You would've found a better way. You would've found a way to change things.

DAVID: *(glancing back at HELLMAN)* I don't know, Benny. What if it isn't true? What if it didn't happen that way?

BENNY: What do you mean?

DAVID: I mean the Kapo. Do you think that's how it really happened?

BENNY: You heard him. We both heard him. Why would he lie?

DAVID: What if we made it up? What if we made him up?

BENNY: He's right there, for christ's sake. How could we *(pauses, goes back toward the sofa, but HELLMAN is gone)* We didn't make it up. He was here. It happened the way he said.

DAVID: I don't know.

BENNY: You knew it all along. Don't you remember, when you were a kid, he talked about it all the time, on those walks? You knew.

DAVID: I can't remember for sure what he told me. Maybe he didn't tell me the whole thing. Maybe it didn't happen this way at all. We can't be sure.

BENNY: I'm sure. You're sure.

DAVID: You can't be sure. Not absolutely. Nobody can. We weren't there. It could be just us.

BENNY: What difference does it make? Don't bullshit with me, David. Either it's true or it isn't. You can't have it both ways. You can't just let it slide. If we both say it's true, it's true.

DAVID: I don't know, Benny...I...

BENNY: Did Papa love the Kapo or didn't he?

DAVID: He did. I guess he did.

BENNY: And he killed him. Right? Papa killed the Kapo. Come on, David, we have to decide one way or the other. Say it. Did he or didn't he?

DAVID: He killed him.

BENNY: So, that's it then. It's true. If we both say it's true, it's true.

DAVID: It's true.

BENNY: He should have told me.

DAVID: He wanted you to get along, to have a family, a job. He didn't want you to suffer, Benny. He left you the house, didn't he?

BENNY: He should have left me courage. Courage is what I needed, instead of a house. He left me too many things, David. Too many things.

DAVID: Benny, he gave you his name.

BENNY: Never forget, he said. Never forget. And I thought it was that simple. But he never told us what to remember. If only he'd told us exactly what to remember.

DAVID: *(goes back to stare at empty sofa)* I thought it was simple.

BENNY: *\*(snapping out of his mood)* You're tired. We should get some sleep.

DAVID: Yes, sleep.

*DAVID goes down to the bunkroom. BENNY follows. DAVID sits on the lower bunk and removes his sneakers. BENNY is standing at the foot of the stairs, reluctant to leave.*

BENNY: Sure you'll be alright in here?

DAVID: *(lies back on lower bunk)* Fine. I'm exhausted.

BENNY: Well, goodnight. *(lingers)* Hey, what about that bath. I forgot all about your bath.

DAVID: Never mind the bath.

BENNY: It's not too late. I mean, if you feel like it.

DAVID: Goodnight, Benny,

BENNY: A while ago you were dying for a bath.

DAVID: *(leans on one elbow)* You worried I got fleas?

*BENNY says nothing, and DAVID flops back down.*

BENNY: David.

DAVID: Hmm?

BENNY: I just got a great idea.

DAVID: *(groans)*

BENNY: No, really. Listen, Why don't I sleep in here tonight?  
It'd be just like old times.

DAVID: *(without moving)* Can I sleep in the master bedroom?

BENNY: I'm serious. Like when we were kids. Just the two of us.

DAVID: Suit yourself, Benny. You can sleep wherever you like.

BENNY: *(hops up onto the edge of the top bunk)* Sure, this is great. Just like when we were kids. *(looks around for*

*a pillow, but there is neither pillow nor sheets on the top bunk*) Hey, David.

DAVID: Mmm.

BENNY: David!

DAVID: Yeah. What?

BENNY: This isn't quite right.

DAVID: *(Still on his back, but knows what's coming)* You always slept in the lower bunk.

BENNY: Yeah, that's it. I knew there was something different.

DAVID: You want my bunk.

BENNY: *(jumps down)* I just want to do it the way we did when we were kids.

DAVID: You're not serious.

BENNY: Just like old times.

DAVID: Aw, shit, Benny.

BENNY: Hey, remember how you never wanted to go up on top? One...two...three...

DAVID: Alright, alright, don't do it, Benny. I'm going. *(climbs up complaining)* I don't believe this. The guy's got a



perfectly good bed in his own room. They didn't do this to us in jail. There's no sheets up here.

BENNY: *(settles into lower bunk)* This is great.

DAVID: There's no pillow.

BENNY: Hey, David.

DAVID: Goodnight *(lies down)*

BENNY: Remember the game?

DAVID: Benny, please.

BENNY: We always played, every night. You remember the game. Your favorite was runaway train. Every night before we went to sleep.

DAVID: No.

*Silence*

BENNY: *(begins game)* It must have been awfully cold at night. In the camps. *(pause)* Awfully cold.

DAVID: Go to sleep.

BENNY: You can't. Because of the cold. And the hunger. They were always hungry.

DAVID: I can sleep.

BENNY: You can't. The hunger keeps you awake.

DAVID: Alright. *(thinks for a moment)* The hunger. Go ahead.

BENNY: You, David. You were better at it than me. The cold.  
And the hunger.

DAVID: *(sits up)* It's freezing. The wind comes right through the walls, right through your bones. You can't stop your teeth chattering. Every part of you is cold. Except your stomach. Your stomach is burning up with hunger. The hunger is chewing up your insides.

BENNY: *(shivering)* God, I'm hungry.

DAVID: Papa knows where we can find food.

BENNY: *(warily)* Where?

DAVID: He has a sack of potatoes.

BENNY: Where?

DAVID: Hidden.

DAVID: Outside.

BENNY: *(sits up)* Where outside?

DAVID: Outside. In a ditch.

BENNY: You can't go there. They'll catch you.

DAVID: He's going.

BENNY: Cut it out, David. You can't do that.

DAVID: You started it.

BENNY: I quit. You can't do this, David. They wouldn't go out.

DAVID: Are you coming or not?

BENNY: No, it's too dangerous.

DAVID: The hunger is too strong. We can't stand it anymore. Those potatoes are out there, ripe and soft and full of juice. Like peaches. Like butter.

*BENNY gets up and starts up the steps. HELLMAN is waiting for him at the top of the steps. He stops him.*

HELLMAN: Wait for the dogs to pass.

DAVID: *(joining BENNY)* Now. Let's go.

HELLMAN: *(steps aside to let them by)* Keep down. Stay out of the lights. This way: across an open stretch and down in the ditch.

*HELLMAN stands near steps and watches while DAVID and BENNY crouch and move D.L. through crisscrossing spotlights.*

BENNY: Where?

HELLMAN: A bag. Hidden in the bottom of the ditch. A jute bag, bursting full of potatoes.

*DAVID bends down at the edge of the stage D.L. and pulls out a bag of potatoes.*

BENNY: Come on, open it. Hurry up. Give me one.

HELLMAN: A whole round perfect potato. You take it in your hands; you raise it to your lips.

*The brothers each take a potato.*

BENNY: I can't bite it. It's too hard.

DAVID: It's frozen.

BENNY: They're all frozen. Damn it, David, they're all frozen. They're useless.

DAVID: Be quiet. It's not my fault.

BENNY: (to DAVID) Well, what are we supposed to do now?

DAVID: How should I know? Why don't you pray to your God, and ask him to thaw these potatoes.

HELLMAN: There is a way.

DAVID: No, Papa. Don't.

HELLMAN: Behind this ditch, there is another pit. You climb out of the ditch and crawl across. A pit full of quicklime.

DAVID: Don't you know what that pit is?

HELLMAN: The quicklime will cook the potato. If you lay your potato down on the edge of the lime and let it heat up....

DAVID: Papa, that pit is full of corpses. Their corpses.

BENNY: I can smell it cooking.

HELLMAN: If you grab the sleeve of your shirt, you can roll the potato over in the lime and make it cook faster.

*HELLMAN moves down beside them, kneels down and begins cooking a potato.*

DAVID: Benny, let's get away from here. Let's go back. It isn't right.

BENNY: You started it. You said we were hungry. Starving. I can smell that potato, now.

DAVID: The lime's too strong. It burns my eyes; I can't see. My nose is running.

BENNY: Soft and juicy. Like butter. Oh, God, I can smell it.

DAVID: I...I can smell it.

BENNY: If we don't eat, we'll die.

DAVID: There are people buried in that pit.

BENNY: It's just a potato. *(hesitating)* You go first.

DAVID: We can't eat right out of their graves.

BENNY: *(trying to convince himself)* They're dead, David.  
What difference does it make to them?

DAVID: We're starving. And it's only the lime.

HELLMAN: It's only the heat. We're only using the warmth from  
their graves. We need their warmth to survive.

DAVID: The smell of the potato.

BENNY: We're their children. We've got a right.

DAVID: The hunger. I can't resist the hunger.

BENNY: God forgive me, I can't stand it.

*They fall on their knees and start to eat.*

BENNY: *(moans)*

HELLMAN: *(rises and walks toward the bunkroom, not looking at them)* Down on your knees, shoving the food into your mouth, and swallowing before you have time to chew.

BENNY: *(shouting)* God forgive me.

DAVID: *(rises and breaks away)* Oh God, what am I doing?

BENNY: *(on his knees)* It's nothing, David. It was just the game.

DAVID: We've eaten out of their graves.

BENNY: There was no disrespect. We're their children. It was Papa who led us here. Only the heat: he said so.

DAVID: We need the warmth of their graves to survive.

BENNY: *(rising)* I'm so cold.

DAVID: You're shivering.

BENNY: I'm cold, David. I'm so cold.

*David embraces his brother. They stand together in each other's arms. Finally they return to the bunk and BENNY sinks down, exhausted. HELLMAN is waiting for them.*

HELLMAN: There's something must be done.

BENNY: We're tired now, Papa. We're too tired.

HELLMAN: It won't take long. We need to finish it. *(approaches BENNY and, laying a hand on his shoulder, begins to recite as though in a ceremonial ritual)* This night the Kapo killed another man. He killed him in the toilets, with the whip, and it was the same way he killed all the others. Come on, Benny.

BENNY: *(hesitates, then rises and begins)* This night the Kapo killed another man. In the toilets. The same way he killed the others.

HELLMAN: *(looking at DAVID)* We asked Hellman to talk to him.

DAVID: We asked Hellman to talk to him.

HELLMAN: But it was too late. He'd become completely crazy. Talking would do no good.

DAVID: Talking would do no good.

HELLMAN: *(to BENNY)* We could not let him kill us off one by one.

BENNY: We couldn't let him kill us off one by one.

HELLMAN: There was no other way.

DAVID/BENNY: *(in unison)* There was no other way.

HELLMAN: We knew they would take reprisals.

BENNY: Reprisals are bad, and then it's over.



HELLMAN: But still, it was difficult.

DAVID: Clean hands was all we had left.

BENNY: What difference does it make to a corpse if his hands are clean?

DAVID: Clean hands are not enough.

ALL THREE: *(in unison)* Clean hands are not enough.

*Silence.*

HELLMAN: *(prompting DAVID)* And so, we do it.

DAVID: I can't, Papa. No more.

*HELLMAN looks at him for a moment, starts to speak, then begins to walk away.*

DAVID: *(reluctantly, to keep HELLMAN from going)* We do it?

BENNY: We do it.

DAVID: Tomorrow.

HELLMAN: *(coming back)* No, tonight. When everyone is asleep.

*They look at DAVID, but he hesitates.*

HELLMAN: *(prompting)* Only Hellman could get close...

DAVID: No, enough. I won't do this. Not again.

HELLMAN: Please, David, we're almost through. And then we'll have peace.

DAVID: No.

HELLMAN: *(turning to BENNY)* Benny? Only Hellman...

BENNY: *(quietly, looking at DAVID)* Only Hellman could get close enough. The Kapo would never suspect Hellman.

DAVID: *(to HELLMAN)* You love him. Listen, we don't have to kill anyone. Benny was right: just stay away from him, leave him alone.... Maybe he'll stop. Or talk to him again. We can wait. We don't have to do it. We can decide not to do it.

HELLMAN: Some things have to be done. Terrible things.

BENNY: I'll do it. *(seeing that they do not take this seriously)* No, listen to me. I'm the one who should do it. *(to DAVID)* I was wrong. All this time, I've been a coward. Just this once, let me do something.

HELLMAN: I have to do it, Benny. No one else has the right.

BENNY: Just this once. I can do it, Papa. It's easier for me: I don't care for him.

HELLMAN: If you don't care for him, you have no right to take his life.

BENNY: It's too hard.

HELLMAN: If we must learn to kill, we had better make it difficult.

DAVID: *(reciting)* This night, the Kapo killed another man in the toilets. We knew they would take reprisals. Still, it was difficult. But clean hands was not enough. Only Hellman could get close enough. We all agreed, Hellman would do it. That night. He took the fork. Before he went down, he said to us...

HELLMAN: *(moves down the steps into the darkened bunkroom)*  
Don't let it be for nothing.

BENNY: *(walks to the steps and looks down)* He's gone.  
*(comes back and stands looking at the sofa where HELLMAN had been lying); then, very uncertain)* I feel better, David. I feel good.

DAVID: *(also uncertain)* Me too. Like I just slipped my chain for a while.

BENNY: *(sits down on sofa)* Well, I almost got you cleaned up, didn't I?

DAVID: You sure did.

BENNY: Still, if the Old Man and Annie had been here, we would have had some kind of party.

DAVID: *(comes and sits beside him)* Some kind of party.

BENNY: We ought to get some sleep.

DAVID: Right. Get some sleep. *(they slump together on the sofa)* You think I ought to take that bath first?

BENNY: Are you kidding? You'd fall asleep and drown.

DAVID: Actually, I'm not that tired.

BENNY: If you're not tired, what are you falling all over me for?

DAVID: *(not moving)* You're leaning on me. You're so tired, you can't even get up to go to bed.

BENNY: If I wanted to, I could carry you over there and toss you up on the top bunk.

DAVID: Sure.

BENNY: I could.

DAVID: Could not.

BENNY: Could so.

*They make no movement to break away from their position.*

DAVID: (yawns) Could not.

BENNY: Yes, I could.

DAVID: Not.

BENNY: Yes.

DAVID: No.

BENNY: Unh.

DAVID: unh-unh.

BENNY: Unh.

*DAVID taps his head against BENNY's. BENNY knocks his head against DAVID's. They knock heads a third time.*

**BLACKOUT.**