

The Scepter Has Departed

by Sterling Cullipher

Dramatis Personae:

The Cellist
The Violinist
The Piano Player
Pierre, the Seer

Sergeant Alastair Bletchley
Dallas Abdullah
Achdut
Lochamei
Metzudah
Hamitboded
Rak Kach
Golem
Amida
Rabbi Sisera
Arab Merchant
Arab Merchant Number Two
Yael
Prison Rabbi
Sergeant Franklin Quincy

Act I Scene I: In Pasadena, California, during the early 1930s, three socialists gather one evening to discuss their first wives, Socialism, the rise of Nazism, and the music that they play. The room is darkly shadowed, except for the figure of Upton Sinclair, who sits at the piano near the light of a lamp. The figure of the Cellist sits in a chair with its back to the audience. He periodically waves his cane while speaking and removes his derby while listening. The Violinist faces the audience but cannot be seen in the darkness.

The Violinist: May I quote the Naturalist, when he quite correctly states that the gaping vacuum between the civilized and savage man is wider than that difference between a lap schnauzer and a scavenging dingo wolf, is more disparate than a gerbil from a lion, is more a stark juxtaposition than any genetic dispositions separating a goldfish from the vengeful great white whale herself. My experience in the USA does not confirm this theory, nor my belief in it, nor have I hiked Machu Picchu. It is my troubled sense, call it a sixth sense, of Berlin, past, present and future, yes Berlin, of the power of government to insist on the Naturalist's theory of this wide discrepancy. It is this insistence on class difference which turns the civilized man into his darker nemesis. This, of course, is not as the passive Naturalist intended, and is a perversion of his intended supposition.

The Cellist: London, as Dickens says, indicates not the civilized from the uncivilized, but as openly as any city on the earth, the condescension of the Conservative Party to Labour. There is no difference upon the island, only over and beyond the seven mad seas, between those responsible for teaching, and those responsible for putting down their cannibalism and learning.

The Piano Player: You mean to confirm that London has no “Jewish problem”?

The Cellist: That nor any other native social ill to rank with the rest of Europe, which just goes to show why I am here, but not why I am the world’s most popular man. A German, for example, would only be here against his will, the man from London against the will of others, bringing class standards to an obnoxious, but ultimately harmless, level.

The Violinist: There is a property common to all planets in the solar system known as perihelion, an orbital point during which earth, for example, is its closest point to the sun. When most people would conclude proximity to the sun to create a global season, a corresponding summer, perihelion does nothing of the kind, as it occurs every January. So is the phenomenon with Jews, that the closer Gentiles come, the closer they are to conspiracy and the trickster, to Shylock and to blood sacrifice. The more they would conclude a causal fallacy that we Jews make the solar system go round. How should it be then in the coming crisis that Nazis ship all to Palestine, Madagascar, or some other closet of Europe? Mass exile may be their modest proposal, but the last time I was in Berlin, modesty was mythic as the ether itself.

The Piano Player: Economically speaking, Fascism is the reason I no longer subscribe to Socialism, and as a Democrat, my best hope for putting a scare into California. With the right propaganda, the Reichstag could become the platform for feeding our families. It has become clear to me that the Kremlin will never be used in this way. The proper way to fight hatred is with plenty of food for every man, woman, and child ever brought into this world. This is not a matter only of government, but the only matter government has.

The Cellist: People tell me the funniest sight they ever saw was me boiling my shoe for dinner. People tell me they went back time and again. People tell me they told everyone they knew. They said hunger never looked so good, and that humor was never so sad. I always tell them, “Thanks. But there is more.” There is more of that than they ever knew to come. I tell them, “Keep watching.” There are more pots boiling.

The Piano Player: No one ever tells me I made them laugh, but I told the same story, you know, in Chicago. But soon, the good people of California will know my face for my novels, and I hope they do approach me and say, “We are a brotherhood, one brotherhood feeding from one bowl, one pot, living one life,” so that whatever I may eat is theirs also. Bread, peaches, beef, we shall all dine together on like victuals. I never hope they tell me I made them laugh. I would prefer they say I made them read. I hope the children of today will have children with the audacity to do what I do.

The Violinist: The odds of this are unlikely. At least I think so.

The Piano Player: Indeed, the muckraker's craft belongs only to a few, and then would come a self-governing Utopia otherwise, which is the point.

The Violinist: I predict the opposite. That the journalism you founded will not extinguish itself with Utopia, but will instead be kaput by insensitivity, I am afraid. Indeed, I am afraid there are secrets, secrets locked within this universe which are already afoot, which are in the capable hands of a number so few that when the question arises, "What shall we do about this problem?" there will not be an answer. There will not be answers for problems of the future. Thus the paradox of modernity, not that the stomach is fed as much as the mouth gets wider.

The Cellist: The house fly has twelve eyes, and can glide through air as it does – does it indeed do this, professor, have twelve eyes? – then is it not in at least two distinct and envious ways, more highly evolved than any of us and the three cultures we represent? This is what I was thinking when I boiled the very rubber sole of that boot. If among all God's creatures, including the lowly nuisance fly, there are the skills which humanity lacks, then would not unique, various talents be among all classes of humans? This is the appeal of The Tramp, that we are all citizens of the world.

The Piano Player: Contributing differences, we should naturally extract equal shares, I say.

The Violinist: As you know, each action has an equal and opposite reaction, so I am not altogether sure as I once was in this form of government. I like President Roosevelt, but I believe his policies should reflect his environment, the economic troubles and so forth, the peace in our time and so forth, the environment that he finds himself in, and not a blanket endorsement of any particular party or party policy. I may disagree with you upon my opinion that no particular party-based strategy is always the best. I believe primarily in context.

The Cellist: Indeed, Professor, we have all found plenty to be critical of in Stalin, but Stalin would not be Stalin in this country. His country is but a teenager yet learning to comb his hair and flex his muscles while on holiday. He does not enjoy the Harvard advantage of a Roosevelt.

The Piano Player: No such thing as Harvard is to Hitler's advantage either. Proof once again, as we can all agree, that this America is a wonderful experiment. His swirl of influence is the same as ours – hunger, hunger the world over – but look at the difference of our proposed solutions. I just mean to express the experiment is no way finished, that the American stamp of its economy is not as yet finished. We are in the Professor's mind an unfinished equation. I wish to impress upon President Roosevelt this very notion about starving children in this the honey pot of the world. Visiting him soon, I hope for more graciousness than proffered from his cousin. The Bully.

The Violinist: Nobody is perfect, as I think of my first wife, and our dear sickly Eduard. She and I never recorded meanderings on the subject on paper, but when she mentioned "The Spartan's Method" of abandoning a child to his own limited devices, it gave me pause. I agreed for a split of a second, that the child in theory who does not have the heart to run and the lungs to jump, what is the use of caring after his cough and his braces? Then Maric said this dreadful thing to

me. That perhaps we should leave Eduard to the wilderness mountain, and only then could he grow up strong. But she has less heart in this even than I.

The Cellist: Well I've had more wives than anybody. And we are all callous as individuals. Marriage is not a young man's role. Personally, I will be an old man before I am happy with where my heart leads me. As a Socialist, however, any of us, all of us, we can lose sight of the things which wreck our marriages, and be better in numbers. We can be better collectively when we act collectively, you see, and if a little man with a little mustache and cane shows us that in film, or if another little man with a little mustache tells us that in another European war, then citizens of the world is all we should be.

The Violinist: Without there being a Jewish citizen in a Jewish state, anywhere in that world to be found, yes, of the world. This is the best for the most, indeed, but the Germans are mounting the inverse theory like a crazy horse headed to Carthage. How do you say? Barnstormers?

The Piano Player: I believe, Professor, that you have lost Charles Lindbergh in the translation of Nazi Stormtroopers. I believe they call themselves "Stormtroopers".

The Cellist: Anyway, it is like Will Rogers says – you cannot feed prohibition to the hungry. Let's get people to work together, and by that work for the benefits of being together. Wouldn't it be a grand buffet for both the factory and the farm to eat from one another's hand?

The Piano Player: Well and good. Well and good both of you. But I must ask you as I must ask myself. A man named Brown ended my first marriage, but I can't say for any of us that first marriages were any more than foolhardy experiments in naïveté. If any two people cannot manage without anarchy, is it really true that two hundred, or two billion, can manage under some collective script of cooperation? This Brown brought a great deal of caveats to community living as I knew it. Unfortunately, but then again no, my wife and I agreed that sexual communities was one of them. We've spent a million years trying to evolve from tribal identity, and now to treat it as some new idea? Frankly, I do lose sleep at night thinking there may be too many moving parts to this largest tribe we each propose.

The Cellist: If you both were in agreement to disagree, then it's not like divorce doesn't happen everyday. It's not as if we have faithful and eternal marriages to lose, for we never had them. There is a "Brown" for every city and state, constitution and king, now and forever, and which of us would complain of him? We have all moved on to other women and greater pleasures.

The Piano Player: True.

The Violinist: True enough, indeed. Stop and listen. Gentlemen, we have little choice in this the 20th century to consider our own defects once we weigh the alternative to a world government and a socialist distribution of wealth and happiness. Stop and listen. The alternative for a Jew like me, and for everyone on behalf of Jews, like you, Jews in spirit, the alternative is no wealth or happiness. We would not simply be looking at asymmetry but annihilation. Annihilation, gentlemen. Let me tell you a cautionary tableau. One of my Nobel colleagues – perhaps you have heard of him, Dr. Alexis Carrel – can dissect a chicken for its heart, a cow for its brain, a coyote for its stomach, and a man for its liver. One day in the laboratory, the doctor shows me not these

four individual organs independently sustained for two weeks and counting under his manipulation – this is outside the body of the animal, which is dead and otherwise discarded – but the interconnected network of these four functioning as one system. This was one grotesque engineering feat, a skinned Frankenstein, under the doctor’s deliberate manipulation and will. As he never has a frank wit, I was surprised to hear him remark – A race so cowardly as the chicken, stupid as the cow, starved as the coyote, and indulgent as man could, if bred correctly, be bred into extinction. I said to this genius “What a pity?” And then said Dr. Carrel that proper Eugenics could eliminate all cause for any nation to raise a military.

The Cellist: No choice indeed. This type of master plan in the wrong hands. And the wrong hands we all know to be those of Patriotism. I have announced this belief to the broadcasters, and they do not support me, but they, Professor, do not understand the full ramifications of your story.

The Piano Player: And Patriotism will be the trumpet’s cry for a country up in arms, such as these new Germans.

The Violinist: Many long nights lie ahead, I fear. Just in talking with Dr. Carrel himself of extra sensory perception, I see nights filled with knives and broken glass. I see great fires and lightning strikes.

The Piano Player: Perhaps a little “mental radio” could tell us more of what you mean. Perhaps we could tell you what these nights may mean.

The Cellist: And just maybe we can alter the course of this Nazi Stormtrooping before it happens, if we get a clear enough picture. Maybe we can save the Jews if the Professor is right. Maybe he can save himself.

The Piano Player: But the Professor will be an American citizen soon. The Professor is never going back again. This is right, isn’t it Professor? The Professor will be safe as an American, as all American Jews will be. Won’t they be, Professor?

Enter Pierre the Seer, a visitor from the People’s Spiritualist Church of Los Angeles. He walks to the center of the room and stands in full view, holding the edges of a blindfold in each hand in front of his chest.

In my experience Pierre has supreme powers of telepathy, including channeling, the animal kingdom, séance, and clairvoyance. He specializes in international politics and matchmaking. I think he could help the Professor with his ESP.

Pierre the Seer attaches his blindfold and crosses his legs as he sits. He speaks.

Pierre the Seer: Internacia tribunalo bezon-as amikon efektive. Paco pluvo kaj la eterno. Montr mi via doloro kaj mistero. Montr mi.

The Piano Player: He wants the professor. He wants the professor to repeat himself with a written note. He wants the written note placed in his hands, in English if possible Professor.

The Violinist accepts a pad and pencil from The Piano Player and quickly scribbles a note, giving the pad back. The Piano Player places the pad in an envelope, seals it with tape and balls it up, awaiting Pierre the Seer.

Pierre the Seer: *(takes the envelope from The Piano Player and a pause follows)* Knives. Sharp knives. Glass. Broken glass. Glass scattered in the windows of city streets. Fires. The world is on fire. The synagogue too. A great storm. A great storm striking the world into a revolving ball of flames. Faces. Names. Too many to name. Too many to know, but I see this sequence exactly as it is said. I see the sequence as the Professor sees it, clearly, more clearly now. Yes, a big ball of flame, a big explosion. A big explosion in the sky. But something else.

(An anxious moment of anticipation follows as the listeners bend closer and Pierre is silent.)

But something else, shapeless but with sound. Something entirely without intent. Something the Professor is not sharing. But no, fairly random, as in a huge mob of a crowd.

The Piano Player: I wonder what it could be.

The Cellist: Perhaps the Professor himself doesn't even know.

Pierre the Seer: A Spiritualist at his best does not simply paint the tree, he replants it. *(pause)* I have been asked to perform the gimmick of what this man, the esteemed Professor, knows. But I will also attempt his unwitting perspective for what he doesn't know. The Professor, he thinks of Berlin often. He speaks of it. Is he Jewish? Yes, I'm getting a clear visual. It's coming clear now. It's Berlin. A restaurant in the hot summer of 1923 and a simple meal during what became known as the year of Auslander. Auslander, French and American Auslander, and the Jewish professor at a table. Has the Professor ever been to that district in the east of Berlin – I see the name coming to me – that district known as Scheunenviertel? Once more, Scheunenviertel. No, don't answer that. This is not where the Professor was dining. This is not that Jewish quarter the Professor would frequent. I see the collapse of the mark. I see Jewish coats, not the Professor's coat mind you, Scheunervniertel Jewish coats, lined with the franc, the pound, and the almighty dollar. And across town, watching the town clock like some sort of Father Time, sits the Professor, served his – what is it, Professor? – lentil and bean apple salad. That is what I see, non-practicing Jew. The waiter, non-Jew, German, erudite, clean, proud, an architect put out of school and work by the panic, hungry and sallow. He stole your bread, Professor, the waiter did. He took it right off your table, and there was great poverty in all of Berlin that year, but in Scheunervnieral, where a Jew's overcoat fattened his back and ribs alike. But just as the Professor did not offer his salad, he did not associate in Scheunervnieral. You said for him, the waiter, to have the bread, but you did not offer your meal. This was the autumn, you will recall Professor, that a skyscraper of marks would not have equaled a dollar's worth of rye.

The Piano Player: *(aside)* Normally, he just talks to Jack London. Normally, he speaks for the dead, not an impoverished Nazi.

Pierre the Seer: The German victim has yet to make his intentions fully known, gentlemen, but nothing he will do will be an accident. Look to your migrant camps, these American jungles, and add to that those whom God distrusted and disowned. Add those marked from the East, stoners of Stephen, drinkers of Christian blood, those from the Venetian ghettos, yes even Scheunervnialt Jews. They will be hungry, gentlemen, and the camps will already be full, refugees on top of refugees.

The Piano Player: *(aside)* Pierre the Seer is channeled. He is a spirit after all. He is the voice of another, a voice of the dead, a most fascinating transformation.

Pierre the Seer: I am none other than Pierre the Seer, and I repeat: nothing the German victim does will be an accident. This is no hocus pocus but history, and while you are trying to uncover the love interests of Adolph Hitler, those spiritual kin of yours are being branded with the Star of David as we speak. How futile it must be to invoke the special powers of a Seer when the past is clear enough, and the writing is on the wall. Professor, have you not left Berlin in a state of rabid depravity and poverty, those same conditions being railed against here in your campaigns? Was not a waiter at your service, the German architect, who once begged the crumbs off your table, then stole, then lied? Did he run into the streets crying madness, a starving German in Germany, the kitchen manager threatening to cut his very hand clean off? Have you ever even heard of Scheunervnialt?

The Cellist: Why we are but three men. We do not shape public opinion. It picks us up and lands it where the tide wills.

Pierre the Seer: Two of you have amassed fortunes on their waves, nevertheless, and the Professor has made his on a force to destroy it altogether.

The Piano Player: Pierre the Seer has spoken. That's it. Never again will I blow the trumpets of revolution. Pierre has spoken. I will fail at public office and the Germans will have their Fascism.

The Cellist: You may, but I am still a Jew at heart, and will show the world.

The Violinist: Dear Upton, my property in Berlin has been seized, leading me to the conclusion that your Seer, who claims I have abandoned my home, may be warped by the smoldering fringes of anti-Semitism.

Act II Scene I: In late 1937, in the Musrara neighborhood of Jerusalem, a British agent and a Palestinian meet to discuss anti-Zionist efforts. The Arab riots against immigrant Jews and the British Balfour Declaration have especially increased pressure on both the British and Palestinians to obstruct Jewish presence in Palestine. The two meet in a neighborhood bar in the middle of the afternoon.

Sergeant Bletchley: Might you excuse me sir for asking, but perhaps I have made your acquaintance at Haifa, or in my time exploring the Golan Heights. I have practiced His Majesty's diplomacy in both, once with a sword and once with a cane. Unlike my Anglo kinsmen, I never forget a face such as yours.

Abdullah: Haifa, you say? I have been. Yes, you have seen me, I am sure. Your face, it is familiar, very familiar. I have been to Haifa many times.

Sergeant Bletchley: What about the Heights then? You ever visit the Heights?

Abdullah: I don't believe so. No, of course I have not visited the Golan Heights. No. That is a matter very far away from me. I am a Christian, *Nasrani*. I am not a Muslim, and so that is another matter, and I have not been. That is, you have not seen me at the Golan Heights, but, yes, many times in Haifa.

Sergeant Bletchley: Well enough then. It's a splendid day, and I shall buy you a tumbler. You wouldn't mind, would you, having a little chat about old times? Two old Christian soldiers?

Abdullah: I enjoy such talks. Please sit down. Call me Dallas, Sergeant, and please sit down.

Sergeant Bletchley: (orders two drinks Athol Brose and sits) Speaking of old times, Dallas, I have been instructed to remind you of the graciousness you owe the British, collectively speaking of course, not you as a free-spirited, rugged individualist.

Abdullah: Why, we shall drink a toast if you'll indulge me. You are indeed owed a debt of gratitude. The Turks are a foul and dirty breed of tyranny. We shall never forget. Do not be humble in this reminder. We shall never forget, unless shame on us. The day your people took over during the war, I was taught that the streets of Jerusalem were lined with monks in their robes. I shall not describe it as the Messiah's return, but as you know, Christian rule is the only true Palestinian law.

Sergeant Bletchley: Perhaps I've been too forward. I shall not have to squeeze the lemon today. (the waiter brings the drinks)

Abdullah: I like to believe my messenger needs more sole than yours. No worries, as you say. Let us drink: "To one hand washing the other".

Sergeant Bletchley: "To clean hands." (they drink)

Abdullah: After all, count my enemies, and all on this little speck of dust where you can barely turn around without Martial law and bang, bang, bang. These are the Muslims and the Jews, the Jews and the Muslims, and all my people can do is be forever vigilant. To stay out of the burning wreck. To watch it burn.

Sergeant Bletchley: To petrol upon the fire.

Abdullah: No, no, no, no. No, no, no, no. No, no. My friend there is ideology and then there is suicide. No, no, no. Of course, we Christians, how do you say, “sand niggers?” predate Islam by several hundred years. But to them we are *dhimmi*, but never mind. We are smarter than to say what we mean. Even if I were to suggest irreconcilable dogma between the converts of Muhammad and the lovers of Christ, even if I were to suggest that, even a Christian Arab has the occasional black sheep to sleep under the rug. So you see, we are smart enough to think more and to say less. Am I right? You understand of course.

Sergeant Bletchley: If you mean to be a peace-lover so much that you don’t care whom to kill to get it, peace that is, then we shall get straight on with it.

Abdullah: Just for the record, let us be clear then, there is no war on the Arab front but that to wage against the Jews, the Jews who believe there is a red carpet in Palestine at the same time all of Europe suffers their conspiracy and their greed and expels them like fleas carrying plague. Not even America loves the Jew. Not even the Jews love the Jew. Let us push the Jew into the sea.

Sergeant Bletchley: Peace in our time, it is agreed.

Abdullah: I swear with my word, Sergeant, I swear upon Golgotha itself, that the attacks being waged on British convoys, any attacks under my domain, that is Jaffa Road, the Jaffa Gate, down to David’s Tomb, they will no longer be. Do I speak on behalf of Islam? This you know I don’t. These people I do not wish to be held accountable for. They are hot-blooded devils.

Sergeant Bletchley: We are not so different, you and I. “Your domain”. Very well, but I am not altogether convinced of your estrangement from the Muslims.

Abdullah: As I am not altogether convinced of yours from the Jews your country vowed to return to their Wailing Wall.

Sergeant Bletchley: Well, there is nothing to be purely certain of in today’s times, is there? But I feel you are a safe bet.

Abdullah: I swear it upon Golgotha itself. No, no, no. This is a good faith deal. This is a very good faith deal.

Sergeant Bletchley: Then our protection of Jews, here in Musrara, will go the way of the dodo. Do you know that way, Dallas?

Abdullah: I know I do not see such birds in the homeland. If I do, I shall be sure to shoot. So what other way do we need?

Sergeant Bletchley: My authority, very simply, has it that before the year is out all Jewish home seekers will just have to stay put and tough it out. Maybe Brazil, or maybe North America, maybe. What difference would that make? It will be in a new White Paper, I wager before the year is out. No more Jew swine to Palestine is what I’m saying. They can cower under Stalin’s

umbrella or they can make nice with Hitler, and he may just land them in Madagascar or some other God-forsaken exile. Maybe they can sneak to America. A cockroach can sneak anywhere, but not here, no longer, not on our watch. Chamberlain himself will run the guns to your ports. That's Haifa, my friend, right? He is a coward and a duplicitous Dickensian but I do not disagree with his motives in this particular case. You are our friends, you see, and we value friendship. We value honor, and we have come around to abhor any such thing resembling partition.

Abdullah: Yes, I like this Chamberlain fellow's stripe myself. And I like Haifa so very much. It is so beautiful to go and watch the oil flow. There will be no more attacks as promised. Return to Saint Sophia Cathedral and pray for me.

Sergeant Bletchley: I will do that, Dallas, and I will look for you a good job in the Civil Service.

Act II Scene II: At a Tipat Chalav in one of Jerusalem's Jewish neighborhoods, Jewish militants of the Irgun meet to discuss their ongoing response to the Arab riots in early 1938. A new arrival from Lithuania who has made aliyah is instructed about the many concerns confronting his new organization, including the Havlaga or "self-restraint" dictum adopted the previous November. The headquarters is an office for charity that translates into a "Drop of Milk".

Metzudah: The leader is in Ireland, where they know how to run the Underground. But he is after little fish. He is after appeasement, groveler. But maybe he will find a Sten gun or some more of these cigarette tins. To me, when you go too far to the bourgeoisie, you become an appeaser.

Achdut: Jabotinsky, he is a good judge of character, no? No matter how many you snipe at, you should not fool about him. (the men sit as they clean the tins and prepare them as packed explosives) After all, if you do not like the bourgeoisie, then Russia is always waiting.

Metzudah: Go back to Russia? Go back to Odessa? So many times here now, the cart before the horse. I will talk economics until I am blue in the face, and you know that, but Socialism does not come first in front of a Jewish majority. There is nothing first to a Jewish majority, comrade, especially going back to the land of the pogrom. Seven generations from now, the Jews, the children, may not know of czarist pogroms that washed us clean of Russia, but they must not be like these puppets of Socialism. If it means going back to the land of ritual murder. You wait and see, Stalin is as different from Lenin as Lenin from the czar.

Achdut: Jabotinsky has got us thus far, standing on the shoulders of Herzl. We have the British eating out of our hand and the Arabs going to Egypt. These are not the results of The Operating Jew crying in the wilderness. Yes, as you say, there is no time to kill on those richest of Jews that betray their history. We need tanks.

Lochamei: Tanks? We don't need tanks from Jabotinsky. We need blind obedience for him. We all know the dogs have not been called off to love the Arabs. This is not the real fight. The

proper way to wage war, we all know, is to fight the smallest adversary, and that is to have the British forget we are here.

Metzudah: For how long? They are a sleeping dog but they are nervous. For how long do you expect to humble yourself in this quietness.

Achdut: Until we are not here. (he laughs) Until we are with God.

Lochamei: Until we have two grenades for every partisan within 100 miles, mercenary, maiden, and otherwise. It won't hurt to have more pistols in flour sacks, kidney beans with bullets, and flashlights which operate with a miracle mechanism of batteries saturated in sulfuric acid. (holds up rigged flashlight) Pay off a few more Tommy Helmets. You don't have to respect a man to buy him off.

Metzudah: The Tommies though, they entertain all bidders. Like I say, they are a nervous sleeping dog. I would rather deal with a French assimilationist Jewess and her backward Jew for Jesus husband, I feel sometimes, than with the General Allenby's of the world. I would rather deal in silver and gold.

Achdut: This is precisely why you are not Jabotinsky. And you doubt Jabotinsky on this score?

Metzudah: No. No, I don't doubt Jabotinsky on this score and I don't doubt the Jews that want to make aliyah. I live without doubt, and that includes no doubt, my comrade, of the Arab Legion, the Nazis, and Yezhovism. I have no doubt of the Trotskyite Trials. I have no doubt in the Passfield White Paper, that the British don't want Polish Jews here, my friend, "Mr. Unity," and that your own Polish family only came to Jerusalem because you were not welcomed in the United States. Seven Arabs for every Jew. That's seven for me and seven for you. Jabotinsky? He is small potatoes compared to the tests of my courage. Be strong and of good courage, yes. This speaks straight to my heart. (a pause)

Lochamei: What do you think there is to come from Ireland? I love Jabotinsky, but what is there to come from Ireland? This is a poor country, after all.

Metzudah: How to walk fast and look inconspicuous? No disrespect, Achdut, but it must be a plea. He must be down on his knees and asking them to pardon the Empire, to put their hatred on hold. Does this sound feasible to you? Would you stop our fight so the Japanese and the Chinese can hold hands? Do you at this particular moment care about their side of the world? Are Irish nationalists going to come for their love of a different nation?

Achdut: I like to think he'll return and show us how to occupy our own country.

Metzudah: Not with a dictum of self-restraint he won't. He'd better orchestrate some home fires burning and get these Tommys to defend their own homeland. I don't care if they bomb Buckingham Palace itself.

Achdut: You won't be singing that song when Hitler is their bedfellow.

Metzudah: God damn it, Achdut. Goddamn. We are fighting our own war here, now. Stop it with worrying over every little handshake in Europe. Let the Russians fool the bourgeoisie Jews. And the Germans, they are fighting a German war. It is not to do with us, we who are here. We are here, Achdut, where our real enemies are.

Lochamei: Maybe it's money. Maybe it's money Jabotinsky is after and he works in mysterious ways.

Metzudah: Maybe it's money. Maybe it will buy us some heavy artillery. We are going to fight several nations of galvanized lunatics with unlimited oil funding and the national recognition to go out and buy some heavy artillery, goddamned rockets, and to mobilize several armies and maybe the leader will bring us some money. (pause) Maybe he will bring us some tanks so our sticks and stones, hand grenades, Sten guns and booby traps (picks up rigged flashlight), won't look like David's slingshot.

(Enter Rak Kack, who introduces Hamitboded)

Rak Kack: (to Hamitboded, who is blindfolded) Stand silent and humble before the one we call Metzudah. He is the milkman.

Metzudah: Yes, that is right. I am the milkman, feeder of the sons and daughters of paupers. This is the last that you will be called your name of Shalom. If you live long enough, you will be called Hamitboded. If you read the newspapers, you know you may not live long enough. This is not, however, the last that you will hail from Lithuania. A Lithuanian Jew is a good debater, a sturdy thinker. Weizmann, we should not forget, is from Lithuania. He does not see the whole story, but I won't hold that against you. A Lithuanian Jew lives a long, long time. I have met one or two in my day. If only everyone was so principled. Never forget their will to fight, to become a nation.

Achdut: Then ask him where his comrades are. Where are your comrades, Shalom, home fighting for their nation? Metzudah, the Lithuanians are the ones who fought for Lithuania, not the Jews, who now they kick around.

Rak Kack: (to Hamitboded) Do not listen to that voice you hear. He is still naïve. He was born with a bourgeois spoon, but he has a good heart.

Metzudah: Indeed we all have good and huge hearts or we would not be here. There is dissent within these walls but do not let it get you down. Dissent is necessary and unavoidable in trials such as ours, but you must know. Sometimes zone it out. Now I have a series of questions to ask you, Hamitboded, one who is alone. I have a series of questions and I want you to speak without inhibition.

Achdut: Ask him for more Lithuanians.

Metzudah: God damn it, Achdut. You talk too much. So there are poor Jews in the world and they are your comrades. I was told this young man was a refugee and a stowaway. Do you not know that he who stands alone stands tallest? (pause) Hamitboded, tell me this. Do you respect the Sabbath? What does modesty mean to you? What are your feelings about Jabotinsky?

(pause)

Why are you here, Hamitboded? What are you willing to fight for? (Rak Kack pushes Hamitboded down to the floor.)

Rak Kack: Do not waste time being Julius Caesar, but answer quickly.

Metzudah: Let him speak. Speak now, Hamitboded.

(pause. Hamitboded is lying on the floor.)

Hamitboded: I will answer the questions in descending order, starting with the least important to me first, so to elaborate more with the later questions. This will tell you more about how I feel.

Metzudah: Stand up, please, if this is going to take a while. Stand up for your Lithuanian ancestors, worthless dead Zhid that they always will be.

Hamitboded: There is something unwise with this picture. You are very busy, you are organizing, but want to play this game. You need recruits but want to vet me. I am a fighting Jew. What else do you need?

Rak Kack: (pushes him down again) To prove you are a fighting Jew, not an idealist, not a child. Not a traitor.

Metzudah: And not a goddamn wise ass. Not a goddamn philosopher. Never mind this descending order. Your only allegiance to the cause is your allegiance to orders. You do not think twice.

Hamitboded: (starts singing "Shir Betar") "Betar. From the pit of decay and dust, with blood and sweet shall arise a race. Proud, generous and cruel, captured Betar, Yodefet, Masada shall arise again in all their strength and glory. Hadar. Even in poverty a Jew is a prince, whether slave or tramp."

Metzudah: That's enough. Don't be a clown. Don't be a clown anymore. Careful not to be a buffoon and a clown.

Hamitboded: (sings over Metzudah) "You have been created the son of kings, crowned with the diadem of David, whether in light or in darkness, always remember the crown, the crown of pride and Tagar."

Metzudah: (interrupting Metzudah) Enough of the clownish buffoonery. Don't go pretending to be a patriot when you have no country. We have no country, Hamitboded, yet you sing like a foregone conclusion. You are here to die, not to parade. My job is to give you the order to die. So just answer my goddamn questions.

Rak Kack: No more gypsy act, Hamitboded. Just get to your feet and answer the questions. (helps him off the floor) You are going to irrigate a Citrus grove like the rest of us and then are going to die. Just answer the question.

Hamitboded: Since I was born I was a Zhid. My parents were called Zhid so much it was the household term my father had for us. I think now, I am no longer this word because I am no longer in Lithuania. And I am no longer their son. Jabotinsky? That is a Christian question. They say he has all the qualities of fascism and the cult of personality, except he is not demanding to be fascist. For what I know, this has never happened before. This is all I know, and this is only what I heard. Asking me to choose allegiance to a man I have never met when the cause is bigger than any one man. This is not shortsighted? You want me to hang his portrait in the synagogue? The Sabbath (spits). This is where I come from. This is why I left. The Sabbath? I will kill the enemy while you Jews are lighting candles and going hungry. (spits again)

(pause)

Metzudah: Once a Zhid, always a Zhid. A gypsy and a clown and a Zhid. You don't land in the Land of the Fathers and get a sense of entitlement. We are a generation of martyrs, and martyrs don't sing songs.

Rak Kack: That's good. He's not singing any more. Targets need not to be conspicuous, so that's good.

Metzudah: You see, Hamitboded, we don't have weapons. We don't have a nation, so we don't have the legal sanction to purchase weapons. We don't have the financial resources to purchase weapons. We don't have the training if we did. We don't have allies, unless you count the stinking British. Even though I would choose a British over an assimilationist and a French and a czarist and a bourgeoisie any day. Now be quiet and let me tell you what we do need. Jewish neighborhoods, including here in Jerusalem and including the synagogues you've no evident regard or respect for, need their guardian angels, so to speak. We need defense, quiet and discreet, inconspicuous, as Rak Kack calls it. There is no standing army, Hamitboded. There is a fight in the streets, anywhere and anytime, and we don't have the manpower but to wait. Swallow your pride, swallow your song, and wait. We are just here in the Underground, waiting for a better day that probably is not going to come. At least in our lifetime, or in the lifetime of your filthy Zhid offspring. You see, Hamitboded, what you see as a qualification, your Zhid shame, I see as a requirement. Remember that always. Your hardships are simply part of the faith.

Hamitboded: Yes, I understand this. I am festering with hatred, so I understand your shirokaia nature already. I am ready for your orders.

Metzudah: Then you are ready to die. Then you are ready for an allegiance to three symbols of equal power. Do you know what these three are? (motions to Rak Kack) Take him out, Rak Kack. We'll find the right Kibbutz for you, Hamitboded, don't worry. Take him out of my sight.

(exit Rak Kack and Hamitboded)

Achdut: What do you think, Metzudah? Foolish child?

Metzudah: You are a foolish child. He is a fighter, a fighter without an army, goddamn it. A fighting Jew, indeed. What does he care about Revisionism or the labor movement? You can hear the goddamn venom in his voice. I will live only to see him lay ten British scums in their tracks.

Lochamei: Give him his chance and he will take up his opinions, don't worry. It is an occupational hazard. So are you going to bring him back?

Metzudah: Hhmm. He has no regard for the faith, or at least not yet. We'll post him in the country. Let him protect the road from Haifa. He does not care for Jerusalem, per say. He just wants a home. So many of these miserable schmuck kids, they just want a home. Maybe he'll find one in the dusty country up North.

Act II Scene III: Near Haifa, on the road to Rosh Pinna, Hamitboded adjusts to his new job as weapons smuggler and watchman. In a warehouse, he meets other Irgun members who debate their roles and the real intentions of Zionist leadership. Hamitboded, as part of his disguise, wears a monk's habit.

Golem: All of the big Jews, Amida, the really big Jews, they are only Jews by birth. There is not any Orthodox rambling in their theories.

Amida: But Golem. But this is not the measure of our people, theories, fame, and books about math and revolution. This is not even a Jewish tenant only, Golem, but the world wide and throughout known history. That to be of faith, one needs not secular acclaim but shuns it. You know that even Jesus prophesied this. You are infected by, I don't know what, but what have Einstein, Spinoza, Disraeli, and Marx done in the eyes of God that is better than your childhood Rabbi?

Golem: Ask me that question again when there is a nation of Israel and the government is a bunch of curly-bearded men saying Kaddish all day. This is the 20th century, not the Middle Ages. You and your faith are reactionary, and you must want more of the Inquisition. Do you want more of the ghetto and the Inquisition, Amida?

Amida: Reactionary? Modern times have brought us out of these things. There is nothing about your philosophy that cannot be refuted by the mere passing of time, the French Revolution, and that evolution of political science.

Golem: Look at the Americans.

Amida: They are godless people, so what?

Golem: They know how to dance. They dance the night away. They have Babe Ruth. They have cinema.

Amida: And yes, this is the place where the Jews go to go and forget themselves. This is where Jews go to be forgotten. This is also where women are outrageous and above even the Jew, forget themselves. A real Jew Babe Ruth. He would not play baseball on Yom Kippur. Does this sound like a good idea, Golem? Which do you prefer? A Jew saying no to baseball or to atonement?

Golem: This is your opinion of America? That it is betrayal?

Amida: This is my opinion of God. How many of your family know how to write us letters? How many dollars do they send? My father, every week, he used to write my uncle in New York, only to find he moved from New York into some deeper pasture, somewhere where my uncle can be Mischlinge. Yes, I am sure my uncle knows how to dance by now. Instead of Kaddish, this is what you propose our government to do? My uncle, never again, and as he wished.

Golem: But this happens in Germany too. It happens in France, Jews giving themselves away as a means to be accepted.

Amida: Well they are wrong and you know it. No Jew can give away his means to life without a nation to call home. This jumping without a net, I don't recommend. Not even you can argue this. This is the real flood that is coming.

Golem: But for the United States, Amida. But for the United States.

Amida: First, this is moral bankruptcy. And moral bankruptcy, it ends nation states, it doesn't begin them. Second, well you know. Let me see your visa. Not that it is any business of mine, but all of Poland believes like you, but all of Poland is without this precious visa your Americans are so ready to bestow on you. In Poland, still, is their stinking ghetto. Where else could Warsaw be? What makes you think Americans are any different from the rest of Europe, or the Moors, or the Arabs? Rule number one, Golem. Know your enemy. Study his face and refuse his hand. God has promised us this land. This is why you are here, no? Just like me, you are here. We cannot afford, like everyone else, to forget about God. We do not have other means at our disposal.

Golem: God bless you, Amida. I should never argue with a man whose views are as old as the ghetto itself. You are wise, but you are so old, you will die sooner than the rest of us. You and the Torah.

Amida: If you believe that, Golem, you believe in the thousand year Reich. Johnny-come-lately, tell me, do you believe in the thousand year reign of a country younger than your grandfather?

Golem: God bless you, Amida. Just be aiming your gun straight, you prophet, and keep just one eye in your holy book.

Amida: Just remember this. There is more blood spilt in the Pentateuch than you can discount. For this too, I keep both eyes there. And let me tell you whom I wish to kill first, to kill the most. It is these very Americans you wish to kiss. It is these Roosevelt Jews who suggest we European Jews do not wish to save those left behind, so that we can have our state out of pity, out of the residue of Nazi atrocity. Have you heard of this? This is the first so-called conspiracy I cannot abide.

Golem: These are the British talking.

Amida: Birds of a feather, Golem. Imperial birds, one who talks too much, the other not enough. Birds of a feather. I am talking about rich Jews. American Jews. Mischlinge Jews. Any of these saying Jews should stay and starve in Poland to help promote the Zionist cause, I kill first.

Golem: If this is true then why are we here? How did we get here? Why are we in your holy land? This is a movement not even you can argue.

Amida: We have no one to thank for this. We have only God. And we have millions left behind still. And they have the same chance of arriving here as you do walking the Brooklyn Bridge. You fool. Your priorities, Golem, get them with God, not with the godless and the conspiracy. We will win Israel with perseverance and the gun, not some foreign sympathy for the tokens that survive.

Golem: So you wish to kill the lying Jews first, the ones that are not here telling us this lie. I will tell you my opinion. Now I love America but I am here. It does not have to be one because of the other, so do not tell me that I am not here and that I have not taken the oath. The British, they play us like toys. Last I was in Jerusalem, there was a riot. The Arabs burned down our newspaper. What they like to do, they shoot guns in the air, relatively harmless, and then wait for passing Jews to react. The British, they should know this game. But no, they wait for us to fight back, to respond to being provoked, to defend ourselves. I saw this happen no more than 50 feet from the British police station. All they do was sit and watch and smoke cigarettes, some of them laughing, sitting on their benches outside the station. They wait to arrest the one Jew waving a gun, quite after the fact. They should know this game of rioting, that the Arabs don't riot to protest but to stir a pot. No one knows this, that their riots start on cue. Well, the British are not that stupid; they are dirty and play the game. That is my opinion.

Amida: You know what they want. Based on these new immigration laws coming, they want a Jewish state with no Jews. This is what it's coming to, if we let them. When our day does come, none of us will be allowed in, but Chamberlain will be patting himself on the back.

Golem: This is the 20th century. Indians won't let them. We won't let them. We won't let them if we take our eyes from your Torah. That is the thing, too. The British try to stop us from fighting Arabs, but no one can stop us from fighting the British. The only thing to stop the Jews in this endeavor is the orthodox among us. So Amida, welcome to the 20th century.

Amida: You don't worry about me. I'll keep one eye on the book, if you say. You watch the face of the enemy, not me. The other eye, I will take it out of the Torah and let it free. I will let it roam, I will let it probe, and I will even let it stalk. I will keep my priorities with it. First, the non-Zionist Jew, you must go. Then, as you say, the enabler, the British enabler. And then I will kill the nationalists of Europe, and do it with the Torah in mind, mind you, a thousand years worth of vengeance. Then the Arabs, and they are a wild bunch of fragmentary dissidents by nature, crazies. If only we could get the others in front of them out of the way and get to that, that which is the real fight.

(enter Hamitboded and Achdut, both wearing a monk's habit and cowl)

Golem: Speaking of the devil. I hope these missionaries here bring the new kind of olive branch.

Amida: I don't know whether to extend my hand or run for cover. Lightning may strike. I'd rather eat pork, sometimes, than deal with this Greek Orthodox, pope-loving blasphemy.

Achdut: Haven't you heard, Amida? (taking out sten gun, with Hamitboded, from habit) Hailing "blasphemy" is the only blasphemy left.

Golem: I am working on him, Achdut. The self-restraint dictum is working in this way. Give me a little more time.

Achdut: You best hurry, before Metzudah calls him to Jerusalem.

Golem: But Metzudah hates Amida. That's really how you know what he thinks of you, whether you are in Jerusalem or not, nothing to do with dogma or fighting spirit or anything else.

Achdut: Then he hates us all and that is fine. He doesn't know which way is up. Follows orders. Contradicts orders. Make up orders. Jabotinsky, the demagogue. Jabotinsky, the leader. Weizmann, the traitor. Trotsky, the genius. It's like a wheel go round with him. Selective hearing, Metzudah, and very moody. He hates us? Whom does he like? We protect his road.

Amida: Where is the new recruit from?

Hamitboded: I am from Lithuania.

Achdut: Metzudah actually likes the new guy. Hamitboded, this is Golem and Amida. Yes, he is from Lithuania, Amida. Metzudah says he is a fighter.

Hamitboded: That is because he knows I'm not a singer. (laughs)