

MICHAEL
 (beat)
 You're bleeding...

SCENE 6

MICHAEL (age 25) gets a call on his cell phone. His crutches are gone, replaced with braces on both his hands.

MICHAEL (cont'd)
 Hey Grandma!

ESTHER
 Hi Michael, it's Grandma Esther.

MICHAEL
 I know... I said "Hey Grandma." How are you feeling?

ESTHER
 Oh, *loads* better. I went to the oncologist yesterday, and it seems that the Tamoxifen is working quite nicely.

MICHAEL
 That's wonderful!!

ESTHER
 The tumors have shrunk, and it looks like I *will* be able to join you for Thanksgiving.

MICHAEL
 That's great!

ESTHER
 Thank you. I am very much looking forward to seeing you all.

MICHAEL
 Me too. Grandma...

ESTHER
 Yes, dear.

MICHAEL
 (hesitant)
 Is there any chance the cancer might go away completely?

ESTHER
 (beat)
 No... No, I don't think so. But I'm very grateful that I'll be well enough to visit.

MICHAEL
 Me too. I'll see you soon.

SCENE 7

Philadelphia. ESTHER is hunched over her walker, quite frail - but only in body. MICHAEL walks her to the bed.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

How was your trip?

ESTHER

Oh, it was all right. Although I was sitting next to this very heavy gentleman on the plane, and I'm afraid his skin was leaking onto me.

MICHAEL

Euhh...

ESTHER

You're looking healthy.

MICHAEL

Thanks. You're looking pretty good yourself.

ESTHER

Flattery will get you nowhere.

MICHAEL offers ESTHER his arm, helping her to sit on the bed. He then sits beside her.

ESTHER (cont'd)

I'm afraid your grandma has turned into a very old lady.

MICHAEL

Not to me.

ESTHER

You're walking beautifully.

MICHAEL

You know what? I stopped eating sugar. Two weeks later, no more crutches.

ESTHER

Good for you!

MICHAEL

Which is good, because I wouldn't be able to use them anymore.

(he indicates his injured hands)

ESTHER

Oh dear... Are you able to write?

MICHAEL

Sort of. I got dictation software, but it can't write plays.

ESTHER

Have you tried?

MICHAEL

Yeah, but the formatting's too complicated, and it doesn't recognize commands. And then I get upset, and the play just ends up as a string of curse words.

ESTHER

That would be an interesting play.
(rubbing MICHAEL's shoulder)
You'll figure it out. At least you're walking.

MICHAEL

Yeah...

ESTHER

And it was just sugar?

MICHAEL

Yup.

ESTHER

Where did you get that idea?

MICHAEL

Uh, from a girl I met.

ESTHER

(interested)

Oh?

MICHAEL

She has the same condition.

ESTHER

Is this a special girl?

MICHAEL

(shyly)

Little bit.

ESTHER

No one tells me anything!

MICHAEL

It's pretty new.

ESTHER

Your dad didn't say anything.

MICHAEL

Yeah, that's not surprising.
 (ESTHER looks inquisitive)
 She's not Jewish.

ESTHER

Hmph.

MICHAEL

I know.

ESTHER

No, not *you*-hmph. *Him*-hmph. You tell your father that he dated plenty of non-Jewish women, and I'd be happy to make him a list. We were positively shocked when he married your mother.

You are Jewish. It's what you are. It's who you are. And there's no one in the world who has any say in that except for you. It's between you and God.

MICHAEL rises and walks DS.

MICHAEL

(pained)

I don't think I believe in God. I believe in something. Maybe the Universe. Maybe... But I don't think we can talk to Him.

ESTHER

Or Her.

MICHAEL

Or Her.

(beat)

All I wanted was to walk again. And I can. And then this happened.

(he lifts his hands)

I can't write. That's all I had.

ESTHER

You'll find a way.

MICHAEL

I don't think God is listening. I don't think God can hear.

ESTHER

Probably not.

MICHAEL

The messed up thing is - I can't stop praying. At the worst times, and the best times, I just - keep talking.

ESTHER

So do I.

MICHAEL

Really?

ESTHER

Every night, before I go to bed, I say a prayer. Even though I don't rationally believe anyone's listening.

MICHAEL

What do you pray for?

ESTHER

For you. For my family, and friends. For all people. I pray that everyone will have peace, and food, and health, and shelter. Every night, that's what I pray for. What about you?

MICHAEL

I just want to get better. And stay better. Any time I fix one thing, something worse comes along. Every time. And it never ends... I've learned so much from it, I know that, and I'm a better person, but God, I just - I'm so *angry*. And time just passes, and passes, and I'm just stuck on the ride. I know it's selfish. And I know it sounds melodramatic. But I feel like my childhood was stolen from me.

ESTHER watches MICHAEL
sympathetically, then loses herself
in her own thoughts.

ESTHER

I was a little girl when the Nazis came. They humiliated my family, murdered our neighbors, gassed my friends... And I - I was eight years old. I think that part of having a childhood *is* losing it.

MICHAEL

How do you get over that?

ESTHER

You don't. Not really. I got my revenge ten years to the day after *Krystallnacht* - the day your dad was born. All you can do is keep going, and hope and pray that life will work itself out. It did for me.

MICHAEL

(hesitant)

Do you ever pray you'll get better?

ESTHER

(beat)

No.

MICHAEL doesn't know how to
respond. He doesn't understand.

ESTHER (cont'd)

I'm the better part of eighty-seven years old. Life doesn't owe me anything. I had a wonderful husband for over 60 years, and together we raised a wonderful family. So when something happens to me now, I don't feel I have the right to *blame* anything supernatural. And I don't feel right continuing to pray for the same things. So when I do pray for myself, it's often very short:

(beat)

"Thank you."

SCENE 8

MICHAEL (age 26) sits at his computer, and speaks into a microphone, composing an email.

MICHAEL

To those in need of healing,
Who can never quite be healed:
May curses be your blessing,
And may weakness be your shield.

While MICHAEL reads, ESTHER is revealed, sitting in a mobility scooter (or wheelchair), and hooked up to an oxygen tank.

To feel despite the numbness,
And to hear the silent sound.
To see there still is meaning
When no answers can be found.

I hope you'll keep on searching,
While you also search no more.
For know that sometimes healing
Is

ESTHER joins in.

MICHAEL AND ESTHER

far different and
far purer and
far greater
than a cure.

SCENE 9

MICHAEL walks DSC, looking empty and morose. He takes out his cell phone, which announces, "You have one new voice message!"