

Back to Isra-Isle

A play for two actors and an urn

By Nava Semel



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English Translation

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Back to Isra-Isle (*Be'Chazara Le'Eesrael*) was produced by Itim Ensemble, Tel-Aviv, September 2015, under the direction of Orly Noa Rabinyan, with the following cast:

SIMON	Gil Kopatch
VARIOUS WOMEN	Chen Garti

The play is based on Nava Semel's novel *Isra-Isle* (Yediot Achronot publishing House, Tel-Aviv, 2005),
Due for American publication by Villard Press, summer 2016.

CHARACTERS

SIMON T. LENOX -- Late 40s, an American photojournalist who travels to Isra-Isle, with a mission to scatter the ashes of his lover, despite his family's objection.

VARIOUS WOMEN --

Flight attendant

Rosie Peterson (an event producer)

Native American Bible saleswoman

Cab driver

Student

Little Dove (a political activist)

Judge (Manuela Wynona Noah)

Sitti (an Arab grandmother)

SYNOPSIS

What if Israel did not exist? What if instead there was a Jewish state on an American island, founded almost two centuries ago? Isra-Isle is the state that could have been.

The play is inspired by a true historical event. Before Theodore Herzl, there was Mordechai Manuel Noah - a journalist, a diplomat, a playwright and a visionary. In September 1825 he founded a Jewish state on a Native American island by Niagara Falls and named it "Ararat". He called upon all Jews to come and settle in this safe haven of his own creation, but they never came.

Back to Isra-Isle brings this forgotten state to life, and creates a parallel reality where the Jews accepted Noah's call. Under the patronage of the USA Isra-Isle has been the legal home of the Jewish people for almost two centuries.

Simon T. Lenox, a black, gay photojournalist flies to Isra-Isle on its 190th Independence Day. He carries with him an urn full of ashes, looking for the perfect burial spot for his lover David Goldberg, a native of the Island. In his Journey through this foreign land, Simon meets different women who guide him on his path. His quest turns the Zionist narrative upside-down, and raises questions of wandering, belonging, and the relentless search for the promised land.

By the end of the play a surprise awaits both Simon and the audience. David had a different plan in mind. He wanted his remains to be scattered somewhere else, far away from the safe and secure Jewish island in America...

The play explores current issues of racism, minorities and the high cost of a territorial dispute. It places Jews, Native-Americans, African-Americans, and all persecuted people in a shared search for a homeland, asking the question "What if?"

SCENES

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ACT 2

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SCENE 4	The Courtroom
SCENE 5	Niagara Falls
SCENE 6	A beach in Grand Palestine

ACT 1

Scene 1 The Airport

(JFK airport. Simon T. Lenox is running through the airport, a boarding pass and big backpack in his arms.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Deborah Moses, and I'm your chief flight attendant. On behalf of the entire crew, welcome aboard "Sky Isra-Isle" Airlines flight 271. It's a real pleasure flying with you tonight on this very special occasion of Isra-Isle's 190th Independence Day. We will be flying over Boston, heading west towards Albany, then over Rochester and Buffalo, towards our final destination – Ararat Niagara International Airport. Our flight time will be of approximately 55 minutes and we are expected to land at six o'clock, local time. The weather is nice and the sky is clear. Have a pleasant flight and I wish you all a happy Independence Day.

(Simon enters the plane, breathing heavily.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. We were just about to take off. You almost missed the flight.

SIMON. Sorry. I was held up by security.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. No wonder. *(pointing to the backpack)*
Put it in the overhead compartment.

SIMON. No way! I bought him a ticket.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. It's against airline guidelines.

(She tries to grab the backpack. Simon puts up a struggle.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Where's the security clearance tag?

SIMON. I assure you; he passed all the screenings and detectors.

(He puts the backpack in the seat next to him.)

Don't you worry, I'll fasten his seatbelt.

(He buckles up the backpack and then buckles himself.

Sound effect: Airplanes take off.)

SIMON. *(to the backpack)* Are you OK, David? We'll get through this, my love, I promise. I wrapped you in your favorite towel, of course. Do you think your uncles will press charges for kidnapping? I'll just say you gave your consent.

Of course I bought two tickets. I wanted you to feel comfortable. Your motherfucking uncles Abe and Izeek – couldn't possibly claim that I acted with criminal intent.

I'll find a good place for you, David, somewhere we can both agree on. Fuck your uncles. They say it's sacrilege. I wish your grandma was alive. She would have been on my side.

Yeah, yeah, no need to remind me. You have a fear of flying.

How could I possibly forget? Relax, I'll be with you the entire time. We're going home, David. The same place you left behind, when you shut the door and swore you will never come back.

Hurray Isra-Isle, we're coming home.

Scene 2

The Airplane

(Airplane. Rosie enters, and stands in front of Simon, points to the seat next to him.)

ROSIE. Excuse me! That's my seat.

SIMON. No it's not.

ROSIE. This must be a mistake. I never book a window seat.

SIMON. I won't push you out the window.

ROSIE. But I have fear of flying.

SIMON. You too?

ROSIE. Who else?

(She's a nervous wreck. Simon gets up. He changes seats with her. The backpack now sits on the middle seat between them.)

ROSIE. Thanks. I appreciate it. Excuse me for asking, are you an Isra-Islander?

SIMON. Do I look like an Isra-Islander to you? I'm black. Any problem with that?

ROSIE. On the contrary. Isra-Islanders get special discounts today. "The Chosen People Sale". Did you buy anything? What's in the backpack? Must be expensive.

SIMON. Priceless.

ROSIE. I always get screwed. The airline handed out coupons but I missed it. *(touches the backpack)* You're not smuggling drugs, are you?

SIMON. *(Pushes her hand away)* That's none of your business!

ROSIE. Forgive me, but you don't really look like you belong here.

SIMON. I'm what they call "a dark man". That's what they call people like me in the bible.

ROSIE. Awesome. I never thought anyone actually knows the bible.

SIMON. He does.

ROSIE. Who? (*Panicked*) This fucking flight. I wish it would end already.

SIMON. It is statistically less likely to die in a plane crash than in a motorcycle accident.

ROSIE. Still scary.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Ladies and Gentlemen, tomorrow is a very important day for all of us. On this very day, September 15th 1825, Mordechai Emanuel Noah established a state for the Jewish people on the native American "Grand Island" by the Niagara Falls.

Our founding father was also a famous playwright, a famous diplomat, a famous journalist and a famous lawyer. In short – a celebrity of his time.

We have prepared a special presentation for you this evening, based on Noah's original manifest from 1825 – in which he called upon all Jews to emigrate to the new state.

NOAH (PRESENTATION). "I Mordechai Emanuel Noah, a citizen of the United States of America, former Consul to Tunis and the High Sheriff of New York, hereby declare that a safe haven was chosen for the Jewish people, a place where they will enjoy peace, quiet and happiness. On this island in the state of New York I will put a cornerstone, to commemorate the birth of Ararat.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Let me remind the children on the flight that the original name of the 51st state was indeed Ararat, but it was officially changed to Isra-Isle in 1848. We have a special coloring book which the flight attendants will hand out to you before dinner.

(Air turbulence. Rosie is terrified.)

SIMON. *(to the backpack)* Relax. We're almost there.

(to Rosie) You too. *(Rosie is fidgeting.)* What about therapy? Ever tried that?

ROSIE. I probably helped three shrinks pay of their mortgage, and put their kids through college. It didn't help. Valium – that's the only cure. I already had two.

SIMON. *(Looks through the window)* I don't understand why they say Isra-Isle looks like a bird.

ROSIE. This here is the wing... And that's her wings... Can you see the "Trio Towers"? peeking through the clouds? That's the beak.

SIMON. I think so.

ROSIE. The triangle-shaped one is 'Mordechai'. The cylinder is 'Emanuel'. Do you see them?

SIMON. And the cube?

ROSIE. That's 'Noah'. Good. We're getting closer. To think that these towers were built more than a century ago, same as the Empire State Building.

SIMON. But here no one jumped out the window in the stock market crash. Niagara Falls is by far the best suicide location.

ROSIE. I hope that's not what you're planning.

SIMON. That's not on my list right now.

ROSIE. You really shouldn't miss the Independence Day celebration. It's gonna be fabulous. I'm on the production team. That's the only reason I'm flying.

SIMON. You're a Producer?

ROSIE. Rosie Peterson. Ceremonies are my specialty. This is my first

Jewish one.

SIMON. Mine too. Are you really nonparent the inauguration of the state?

ROSIE. Every detail of it. Including the Free Masons parade, Handel's Judas Maccabaeus and gun salutes with the original cannons from 1825.

SIMON. Impressive.

ROSIE. And get this! I convinced Barbara Streisand and Paul Simon to sing a duet. The National anthem "Get thee out of thy country" ... *(pause)* ... In English and in Yiddish!

SIMON. Well done.

ROSIE. Not to mention a million dollars' worth of fireworks over the falls, courtesy of the White House.

SIMON. *(points to the window)* Are these the fireworks?

ROSIE. Nah, that's just the laser beams over the "Birthright Casino".

SIMON. Isra-Isle -The jewel in the crown of the USA. You're not a very modest people, are you?

ROSIE. Not "you". They. I'm from Texas. I suppose you're not exactly Jewish yourself.

SIMON. Not that I know of. But I can check again.

(He unbuckles himself.)

ROSIE. What are you doing?

(Simon unbuckles the backpack. He gets up.)

ROSIE. Where to?

SIMON. We're going to take a leak.

ROSIE. Go ahead; I'll babysit your backpack.

SIMON. No thank you.

(Simon goes to the restroom. He returns.)

ROSIE. *(referring to the backpack)* Is it a musical instrument?
Musicians always buy separate seat. Are you in Barbara's band?

SIMON. No. And I'm not Jewish either. I double checked.

ROSIE. So you're just a tourist?

SIMON. Not exactly.

ROSIE. What then?

SIMON. Let's just say, I'm on a mission.

ROSIE. What kind of a mission?

(Simon doesn't answer.)

Would you like some recommendations? Where to go, what to do...

SIMON. No, thanks.

ROSIE. It's a small island, but very crowded. Six million Jews in one place... That's a lot to handle. It's easy to get lost.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Ladies and gentlemen, we have just been cleared to land at the 'Ararat Niagara' International airport. Please return to your seats and fasten your seat belts.

ROSIE. *(terrified)* Landings. My worst nightmare.

SIMON. His too. *(to the backpack)* How can you be scared to death when you're already dead?

ROSIE. *(alarmed)* Who's dead?

(Sound effect: plane landing.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to 'Ararat-Niagara' International airport. On behalf of the entire crew, I'd like to thank you for joining us. Have a nice stay!

(The passengers clap. Simon picks up the backpack. It makes a metallic sound.)

ROSIE. So it is a musical instrument! I knew it!

SIMON. No.

ROSIE. But I heard a...

SIMON. Are you sure?

ROSIE. Pretty sure.

SIMON. *(to the backpack)* Maybe your nipple piercing survived?
The one I bought you at Tiffany's on Valentine's Day... Isn't gold
supposed to melt when you burn it?

(puts his ear to the backpack) I don't hear a thing.

ROSIE. What is it?

SIMON. "Send your ashes upon the water." *(to the backpack)* I'll
find the perfect place for you, my love. You'll make trees grow
high. David's Forest. Your grandma will be pleased.

(Rosie watches him as he talks to the backpack.)

ROSIE. Are you OK? Happy Independence day Mr.....

SIMON. Lenox. Simon T.

ROSIE. Simon T. Lenox, The famous photographer?

SIMON. Good luck with your production. Happy Holiday.

*(Simon runs through the terminal. The terminal is full of
posters and banners for Independence Day - with the
Emblematic-Isle – a green star of David with Elm tree
leaves inside.*

*He walks past a booth with a Native-American woman
bible saleswoman. She offers him two. One with a blue
cover, the other has a green one.)*

BIBLE SALESWOMAN. It's on sale. For just 99 cents.

SIMON. What's that?

BIBLE SALESWOMAN. A hybrid Bible. Our Indi-Jew version.
Give it a try.

*(Simon takes some change out of his pocket. He counts
the coins and pays her.)*

BIBLE SALESWOMAN. The blue or the green?

SIMON. Makes no difference to me.

(He picks up the green bible.)

BIBLE SALESWOMAN. The blue is much more beautiful.

SIMON. Really?

BIBLE SALESWOMAN. Can't you see?

SIMON. I'm colorblind.

Scene 3

A Taxi

*(Simon tries to catch a taxi. A female **cab driver** stops.)*

CAB DRIVER. Where to?

SIMON. Four Seasons Hotel.

(He enters the backseat with his backpack in hand.)

CAB DRIVER. Do you want to put it in the trunk?

SIMON. No. He stays with me.

(The driver shrugs. A TV screen in the cab shows a commercial.)

COMMERCIAL. Come find the Isra-Isle within you.

Come explore the home of true innovation,
Come see the newest wonder of the world.

CAB DRIVER. Come see the biggest fucking traffic jam in the world. This place has gone mad, just this morning I had a drummer in my cab, for... Rihanna? Beyoncé?... Streisand! Is it your first time here?

SIMON. Yes.

CAB DRIVER. Ah, another journalist...

SIMON. 'Time Out' New York.

CAB DRIVER. I can give you an interview!

SIMON. I'm a photojournalist.

CAB DRIVER. Even better! An Isra-Islander cab driver in action.
How do you like it here?

SIMON. I haven't formed an opinion yet.

CAB DRIVER. Let me tell you something, I'll tell you what Isra-Isle

really is. Are you listening?

SIMON. Do I have a choice?

CAB DRIVER. Listen carefully, Isra-Isle is not a religious autonomy, not a penal colony...

SIMON. So it really is a Ghetto?

CAB DRIVER. *(laughs)* What does Ghetto have anything to do with Jews? Ghettos are for... your kind. No offence.

SIMON. None taken.

CAB DRIVER. I'm gonna tell you the truth... Isra-Isle is really... Nothing. Zero. Gornisht (*'nothing' in Yiddish*). Just a tiny state that has no real power.

SIMON. That's not how Isra-Islanders see themselves. *(to the backpack)* Right?

CAB DRIVER. An Island full of Jews is a bigger tourist attraction than Disney world. Are you taking my picture? Do it in the stop sign, I don't look too good while I'm driving. 190 years ago the Jews had an excuse to demand protection. Uncle Sam took them under his wing and the world was happy. The Jews weren't their problem anymore.

SIMON. *(to both the driver and the backpack)* Win win situation.

(The driver steps on the brakes abruptly. The backpack almost falls. Simon catches it.)

(screams) Watch it!!!

CAB DRIVER. I'm trying to get you to the Hotel before the next Independence day. *(looks at the rear-view mirror)* And Photoshop my face, will you? No wrinkles!

SIMON. I'll take care of it.

CAB DRIVER. Let me tell you something. We're lucky that Isra-Isle already existed during the Nazi period. My cousins left Berlin on the "George Washington" rescue ship. and came straight here. Good thing the Jews had a state ready for use.

SIMON. Like instant soup. Just add hot water.

CAB DRIVER. And a seasoning packet.

(The driver laughs.)

CAB DRIVER. They got special certificates as a persecuted people, and got the hell out of there.

SIMON. *(to the backpack)* Where's your grandma's certificate? We might need it.

CAB DRIVER. If it weren't for Isra-Isle the Jews would have ended up like the Gypsies, the handicapped, the mentally ill... the homosexuals too.

SIMON. *(to the backpack)* Well, at least they would have burned us together.

CAB DRIVER. *(turns around)* Did you take my picture?

SIMON. Not yet.

CAB DRIVER. Listen. Are you listening? Even the critics – and there are plenty – have to admit that Isra-Isle is a phenomenal success story. The American dream come true. You'll like it here, despite the tourists. See the traffic? Perfect order, nobody cuts lanes. Except for me... When will my picture be published?

SIMON. Tomorrow. On our website.

(The driver stops the car and turns around.)

CAB DRIVER. That's my good side.

(Simon takes her picture with his camera.)

CAB DRIVER. I thought you had some special equipment. Is that what's in your backpack?

SIMON. Don't you worry. You look perfect.

(Simon leaves the cab. He pays her.)

CAB DRIVER. *(points up at the sky)* And you should take a picture of this too. Up in the sky. The National hot-air Balloon air show over the falls.

SIMON. So many stars of david!

CAB DRIVER. The more – the merrier.

(Simon takes another picture.)

Scene 4

The Hotel

(Simon enters. He opens the backpack and takes out an object wrapped in a towel. The TV is on and a commercial is playing.)

COMMERCIAL. Welcome to the Four Seasons Hotel. Our chef prepared a special Independence day menu with a main course of Flatfish on a bed of corn puree with goose liver pate, served with a glass of hot maple, on the house.

(Simon talks to the object.)

SIMON. The land of milk and maple... Would you like to stretch your legs? Not that you have any.

(Simon opens the mini-bar.)

How about a drink? OK, I get it. you want to stay sober to the very end. I can respect that, but drinking alone is no fun.

(Simon takes out a small bottle of Jack Daniels and puts it next to the object. He removes the towel and reveals an urn. The airport security sticker is still on it.)

79the floor. Double room. What else?

It's not like I'm single now.

You're the love of my life, David. Till death do us part – that is, my death.

(Simon sniffs the towel.)

I managed to grab it at the very last second. I didn't even have time to pack my toothbrush. I was too afraid that Abe and Isaac will get there before we leave.

(sniffs)

I can still smell it. I was addicted to your scent from the moment I met you in that party. Even when I took your picture from way up in your DJ booth. You were dancing like crazy,

and you looked like you're going up in flames. Yes, they told me you are a redhead. You knew immediately the photographer has the hots for you. I was playing with fire, but you're the one who got burnt.

(Simon opens his camera, and looks through the pictures from that night.)

The pictures are out of focus because you wouldn't stop dancing. No more dancing for you. Maybe just a taste?

(Simon offers the urn a drink, then drinks straight from the bottle. He opens the TV.)

TV BROADCAST. Welcome back to our special Independence day broadcast. After the break, we will interview Isra-Isle's Governor Manuela Wynona Noah. Her childhood memories, growing up in her famous great-great-grandfather's estate and more. Stay tuned.

(Simon turns down the volume and looks through the window.)

SIMON. What do you say, David? Should I scatter you here? Out the window? Another night out. You think I don't know why you were sneaking out in the middle of the night? I saw that sexy guy with the motorcycle waiting for you.

(Simon hugs the urn and puts it gently on the bed.)

You can have your side of the bed, even though you don't deserve it. Your grandma would have been on my side. Why did you need that one-night-stand? You wanted to prove you still have your freedom?

Your uncles Abe and Isaac think I did it out of revenge.

"How dare you cremate his body?"

"Ashes to ashes, isn't that what's written in the bible?"

"Dust to dust, you ignorant gentile."

It could have been worse. They could have said nigger... or faggot... Maybe just a small taste?

(A knock on the door.)

Who is it?

ROSIE. Rosie. Rosie Peterson.

SIMON. I specifically asked - not to vacuum my room.

ROSIE. I'm not the maid. We met on the plane, the producer.

SIMON. Not interested. Go away.

ROSIE. Please open the door, Mr. Lenox.

SIMON. Bye bye.

ROSIE. It's important. Please let me in. I'd like to help you, Simon T. Lenox. We'd like to help.

(Simon opens the door. Rosie holds a bottle of wine.)

ROSIE. Ta-da! On the house. 2000 Cabernet Merlot, "Forefathers' Winery", winner of Sommeliers International!

SIMON. To whom may I owe this honor?

ROSIE. The famous color blind photojournalist from Time Out! I was asked to take care of you personally.

SIMON. Who asked you?

ROSIE. The big Boss, who else. We understand this is your first visit to Isra-Isle.

SIMON. Right.

ROSIE. Perfect. You're a virgin. Don't worry, I'll be gentle. Do you need some background materials for your story?

SIMON. "Ask not what your country can dream for you, ask what you can dream for your country."

ROSIE. Close enough. We've arranged a special tour for you, Mr. Lenox.

SIMON. No need. I can manage by myself.

ROSIE. There's a bonus. I'm going to take you to the new settlements on the West Bank. You'll have an exclusive story.

(Rosie notices the urn.)

ROSIE. So that's what you were hiding in your backpack!

SIMON. David Goldberg, may he rest in peace.

ROSIE. Is he a part of your story?

SIMON. He is my story.

(Rosie tries to touch the urn.)

SIMON. Don't touch it!

ROSIE. I'm sorry for your loss. Please accept my condolences, Mister Lenox.

(Simon doesn't respond.)

Why don't you put it in the hotel safe?

SIMON. Better sorry than safe.

ROSIE. Don't worry, we can help you. Ceremonies are what I do for a Living.

(Simon still doesn't answer.)

ROSIE. I'd like to help. The next two days are gonna be crazy here. Let me cut the red tape for you. Let's just say... I'm your special tour guide.

(Simon laughs.)

Nine o'clock.

SIMON. I'll think about it.

ROSIE. It's settled then. Meet me in the lobby.

(She leaves. Simon opens the bottle of wine.)

SIMON. Are you sure I can't interest you in some wine? A little bit of liquid courage before entering heaven? You should probably be drunk if Abe and Isaac manage to arrest me and bury you in the family plot.

(Looks at the view out the window)

Look at your people, David. Six million Jews snore, fart, masturbate, make love, someone probably drops dead as we speak. It's so beautiful here, I don't understand why you hate your birthplace. What are you afraid of?

I miss you so much. I wish I could kiss your dreadlocks one last time.

(He raises the urn towards the window, intending to scatter the ashes. He changes his mind.)

No, David. Not yet. Not here. It's not the right place for you. Too humid.

Your grandma was right. I hope you're with her, wherever that is. She'll nag you to the end of times

"David darling, it's not too late to die or get married".

Why didn't I go out that night? I could have stopped you from going on the motorcycle. I would have held your white hand in my black one. Your one-night-stand on the motorcycle, he took off. Left you bleeding on the side of the road. If I could lay my hands on him, you would have seen what vengeance looks like. A prick for a prick. A nipple for a nipple. The Biblical way.

Now I won't be able to sleep.

Maybe I should read a bedtime story...

(Simon opens the backpack, taking out the hybrid bible he bought from the Native American woman at the airport. He opens it and reads out loud.)

"In the beginning The Great Spirit *Wakan Tanka* had created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was unformed and void, and the Great Spirit hovered over the face of the waters. And *Wakan Tanka* said unto the first Chief of the Hebrews: 'Sail thee out of thy country, unto the island that I will show thee.'"

(Simon hugs the urn. He rests his head against the bible like a pillow and closes his eyes.)

Scene 5

Noah Memorial

(Simon and Rosie enter. He carries the backpack on his back.)

PA SYSTEM. Welcome to Noah Memorial. Please pay your respects and remain silent.

ROSIE. Every presidential candidate stops here to give a speech in his campaign trail. Their governor is running.

SIMON. Really?

ROSIE. She announced it yesterday on National Television. Didn't you watch the live press conference?

SIMON. I fell asleep.

ROSIE. You fell asleep??? You missed the whole thing.

(Simon doesn't answer)

She said that even though she's an Isra-islander and a Jew, as president she will be a leader for all the American people. Manuela Wynona Noah is a new kind of candidate. She'll win by a landslide.

SIMON. Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

ROSIE. Not me. They. Hold onto your bag. It can get crowded.

(They step closer to the monument - a poll with the star spangled banner, and a pole with the Isra-Isle flag.)

PA SYSTEM. This is where the pioneers from Tunisia anchored. Mordechai Emanuel Noah welcomed them by saying "Blessed are the returning", and erected the Isra-Isle flag on the turquoise-blue flagpole.

ROSIE. You see?

SIMON. Sorry. I don't know what turquoise-blue is.

(Rosie leads Simon to another monument - the cornerstone of Ararat.)

ROSIE. It was commissioned from a quarry in Cleveland. Two tons. They brought it on a four horse carriage. Don't forget to take a picture of Noah's name. Can you see it? Engraved at the bottom.

SIMON. Quite an ego...

ROSIE. He sure knew how to produce an event. Tonight is the reenactment of Noah's ceremony. You have to come! It's gonna be exactly like 1825. Look, we have the original cape he wore at the ceremony.

(She points to a purple cape on display, next to the cornerstone.)

Noah was in the theatre. He borrowed it from his theatre in New York. Richard the Third. It was a huge flop. Governor Noah is going to wear it tonight.

SIMON. *(points to an ornament on the cape.)* What's this?

ROSIE. "Hoshen". Breastplate. The traditional garment for the Jewish High Priest in the Temple. It has 12 precious stones: ruby, amethyst, topaz, diamond, emerald, sapphire, onyx... God knows.

SIMON. Treasure Island indeed. Tempting fate, are you?

ROSIE. These are all fake.

(Simon takes a picture.)

Noah was actually a successful playwright. He made tons of money writing cheesy romantic dramas. He used the royalties to buy the island.

SIMON. So Isra-Isle owes its existence to the theatre. Bravo.

ROSIE. It's a smash hit. The audience just can't get enough of the island of the Jews. *(reads the engraving on the corner stone.)*
 "Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad" - Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

SIMON. Which way is the men's room?

ROSIE. Right here, behind "the Lord is One."

(She tries to take his backpack.)

Here, I'll watch him for you.

SIMON. No way. We never part.

(He leaves with the urn under his arm. Rosie walks around the corner stone, looking for the best angle for a photo. Simon returns.)

ROSIE. Listen Mr. Lenox, Simon – can I call you Simon? –we would like you to scatter your boyfriend's ashes right here. It's great PR, and we think it will send the right message.

SIMON. The right message?

ROSIE. Beginning and end, Life and death, right here, where the Jewish people survived, the most ancient of nations. The big boss decided that this is the perfect spot for your partner. What are you waiting for? Scatter him, and take the picture. I was told to upload it right away.

SIMON. *(to the urn)* Is this where you want to be, David? In the Noah Memorial? Stuck for all eternity with millions of tourists? You won't have a moment of peace. Click, click, click. No, I'm not leaving you here.

ROSIE. Think about it. It's a perfect location. He will never be forgotten. It will go viral. The internet is the new eternity. Stand here, next to "Hear O Israel"... *(points to the urn)* A bit to the right. I can't see "Our God the Lord is One".

SIMON. Listen, Lady, forget about it. Tell your Boss to get of my back.

ROSIE. I don't understand.

SIMON. If they could fit six million Jews into such a small space, I'm sure I can find a spot for my partner - without your help.

ROSIE. Ok, not here. I get it. Our next stop is the west bank. Maybe we can find a more appropriate spot there.

SIMON. You can have the West Bank.

ROSIE. You'll regret it.

SIMON. Bye, bye.

ROSIE. We'll press charges.

SIMON. Join the club.

ROSIE. The boss wouldn't like it.

SIMON. Fuck the boss.

ROSIE. You'll pay for this, Mr. Lenox. There's no such thing as a free lunch

(She leaves. Simon calls after her.)

SIMON. Break a leg! *(To the urn)* What can she do? Kill you? You're already dead. Say cheese!

(He takes a picture of the urn in the memorial.)

ACT 2

Scene 1

On the Road

(Sound Effect: Cars, heavy traffic. Simon tries to cross the road.)

SIMON. Where do you want to stay till the end of time, David? Give me some direction. Not for me, for the Messiah. He's the one who needs to know where you are eventually. I need to tell you something. A week before your accident I had the weirdest dream. We were both naked... well, that's not the weird part. We were in the shower, but it's not a normal shower with water. All around us there are hundreds of naked people. They scream. They cry. They are suffocating and praying. You were consumed with fear, climbing on top of me, scratching my flesh. Suddenly, I notice that I'm the only black person in the shower. The only uncircumcised dick. What if I told you about my nightmare the night of the accident? Would that have made a difference?

(Sound of car horns.)

OK, OK, I'll be more alert. Don't worry, you won't die a second time. Yes, I know, Isra-Isle is the most crowded place in the world.

Right or left? Give me a sign. These buildings are so tall. Manhattan looks like munchkin land in comparison.

(Simon takes a picture.)

This is really the color blind leading the blind here. I'll try to describe it for you. They're building huge complexes deep in the ground. Honestly, I really should scatter you here. The perfect revenge for a cheater like you. You'll be stuck forever 20 floors below the ground. The messiah won't be able to find you.

Scene 2

The University

(A student is handing out flyers.)

STUDENT. Welcome to Ararat-Niagara University, North America's finest. We have a special offer for Independence Day - students who enroll today will enjoy a full scholarship for Hebrew studies, at the department for extinct languages.

SIMON. *(reads the flyer)* "Courses in Latin, Aramaic, Greenlandic and Hebrew. Learn to read the holy bible – in its original language."

SIMON. Beyonce is going to sing a song in Hebrew tonight at the ceremony.

SIMON. Another celebrity? *(to David)* Too bad you can't dance anymore. Should I scatter you here? No, no. I don't think so. Too many sexy students around...
Making love in Hebrew – now there's a kink for you.
Is it just me or are you getting heavier?

*(Simon sees a political activist, **Little Dove**, with a megaphone. She's wearing a traditional Native American garment. A crown of feathers on her head and a Wampum on her arm – an armband made of beads. A peace pipe is hanging from her belt.)*

LITTLE DOVE. *(with the megaphone)* Sign the petition for restoring the legal rights of the Native Americans. This has been our home for generations. The Jews took our homeland.

(She approaches Simon.)

Hey, Mister, will you sign?

SIMON. Why me?

LITTLE DOVE. The Sudanese, the Eritreans, the Kurds, the Syrians, the African Americans - we are all victims of injustice. The Jews aren't the only people who were persecuted, yet the world

awarded them a country. Our country. Every people should get an island of they're own! Yours too!

SIMON. Who are you to push me back into the ghetto?

LITTLE DOVE. We are appealing to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Noah's ownership bill is illegal and racist.

(she quotes from Noah's inauguration speech)

"As for the Natives, born in America, whose origin is from Asia - their marriages, divorces, burials and tribal system prove that they are the descendants of the lost ten Hebrew tribes who went into exile.

We must educate them, explain their situation, and unite them with their lost brothers, the Chosen People."

A piece of paper can't erase the bond between my people and its land.

SIMON. So what can you do? Send all the Jews back to where they came from? Did anyone sign your petition?

(The Political activist doesn't answer.)

Just because I'm black doesn't mean I'm a part of your suffering olympics. No matter how hard you try, there will always be a better victim.

Your appeal is hopeless, sweetheart. The natives sold the island way before the Jews came.

LITTLE DOVE. We won't give up. We'll fight for our rights.

SIMON. *(to David)* You should sign.

LITTLE DOVE. A wire? Who sent you? Are you taping me, you fucking FBI?

(She tries to grab the urn. They struggle. He drops the urn.)

SIMON. No!!!

(He picks it up, hugs it.)

LITTLE DOVE. I'm sorry. I thought it was...

SIMON. Typical Isra-Isle paranoia.

LITTLE DOVE. It's just a small crack. No harm done.

SIMON. Is that a promise? (*listening to the urn*)

Isra-Isle has run its course? Is that what you're saying? Oh, right, the Jews are a safe and beloved people now. No antisemitism. So what do you suggest? Vacating Isra-Isle and giving up the keys. Now who's seeing the world in black and white? (*to the activist*) What's your name?

LITTLE DOVE. Little Dove.

SIMON. Listen to me, Little Dove. (*to the urn*) You listen too.

History doesn't come with a receipt. No refunds. No exchanges. No returns.

(Little Dove takes off her armband and gives it to Simon.)

SIMON. What's this?

LITTLE DOVE. A Wampum. The beads tell our story. Our entire history. (*touches the beads*) "And the earth was an island, hanging from four corners by leather stripes. One day the leather will be worn out and the island will sink back into the water."

SIMON. That's the end?

LITTLE DOVE. No. The Great Spirit *Wakan Tanka* will draw it out of the water and life will begin again.

SIMON. This place will have a people of Indi-Jews whether you like it or not. Give me the petition. (*he signs.*) So you won't be alone.

LITTLE DOVE. Here. A peace offering.

(She gives him her peace pipe. He takes a picture with her.)

SIMON. A red woman and a black man... Smile.

Scene 3

Niagara River Bank

(Simon is wearing a blue raincoat, the one provided for tourists in Niagara Falls. He looks around.)

SIMON. *(to David)* I think this is it. The perfect place. Facing East, lots of sunshine, a great view.

(Sound effect: water stream.)

Is that the sound you heard growing up? It's like living inside God's bladder.

(PAUSE)

I would have given anything to see you at your Bar Mitzvah... just the thought of you rowing to the falls in a canoe, wrapped in a feathered prayer shawl... and your grandma throwing maple drops at you all the way from the river bank.

(referring to the water sound)

Dear God, why do you always have to be so loud?

(Simon takes out the peace pipe and puts tobacco and weed in it.)

How about a smoke? Our last trip, baby. *(inhales)* Here's another bedtime story for you, my love. Fifty years after Noah there was another playwright, this time from Vienna. A real basket case. He had a crazy idea of another state for the Jewish people. A franchise. Just like McDonald's. You'll never guess where. In the Middle East! No wonder it tanked.

He should have written a play instead.

Tell me, David, how come only playwrights have crazy dreams of jewish states? Maybe that's why your people are such drama queens.

(Simon takes another smoke. He starts to hallucinate.)

Scene 4

The Courtroom

*(Simon is hallucinating that he is on trial. The **judge** enters.)*

JUDGE. At this time the Court calls State of Isra-Isle vs. Simon T. Lenox, Case No. 07 CF 159, on a count of mutilating a corpse.

SIMON. Wait a minute, aren't you...?

JUDGE. That's right, Manuela Wynona Noah.

SIMON. But what are you doing in my hallucination?

JUDGE. This is my island, and my courtroom. Please remain silent until the state finishes presenting the arguments.

SIMON. Yes, your honor.

JUDGE. The State contends that the defendant was concerned in the commission of the crime of mutilating a corpse by mishandling, without authority, the dead body of a person.

On September 13, 2015, the defendant broke into "Jacob's funeral home" in Manhattan during service, abducted the body of David Goldberg, cremated it and smuggled the remains through state lines.

As such, he violated the rights of the deceased's next of kin, Abraham and Isaac Golbderg, to custody of the body; the religious freedom to bury the deceased according to Jewish custom without interference;

And to have the body treated with decent respect.

SIMON. Your honor, I just wanted to bring him home. What's left of him, that is. "From water to water", isn't that what the bible says?

JUDGE. I'm warning you Mr. Lenox. Behave yourself, or I will hold you in contempt.

(Ballroom music starts to play. The judge offers her hand to Simon, invites him to dance.)

JUDGE. Shall we?

SIMON. *(surprised)* Your honor?

JUDGE. The ball is in my court.

SIMON. But I'm a lousy dancer. *(They dance.)*

JUDGE. Why bring him back to Isra-Isle? You could have left him with his family.

SIMON. Your honor, excuse me if I step on your toes... There is a legal precedent! The first Chief of the Jews, left his home and relocated. So why can't my love? This is your people's thing. You're always in transit. Even the word "Hebrew" literally means 'one from the other side'. Migration is in your DNA!

JUDGE. You're not letting me lead. Let go!

SIMON. Isra-Isle is the safest place for him, your honor.

JUDGE. Mr. Lennox, you can't just ignore thousands of years of discrimination, persecutions, mass murders, massacres, pogroms. In the evolution of a people, 190 years of peaceful island existence is virtually nothing.

SIMON. Et tu, Brute? Do you believe Isra-Isle is just an episode?

JUDGE. A territory doesn't guarantee survival, Mr. Lennox. You're not paying attention to the steps. Two steps back, one step forward.

SIMON. *(surprised)* Tango? Isn't that out of fashion?

JUDGE. Just follow my lead. Mr. Lennox. Why did you do it?

SIMON. Your honor, I acted according to biblical law. I wanted to bring him to an island of refuge.

JUDGE. In the bible, Mr. Lennox, a city of refuge is a place where a

perpetrator can find asylum, and avoid blood vengeance.

SIMON. Exactly. I wanted him to be in a place with no vengeance. The ancient Hebrew chiefs had it right. They tried to break the endless cycle of murder.

JUDGE. But why didn't you get the consent of his next of kin?

SIMON. I'm his next of kin, your honor. We were engaged to be married. His grandmother would have given us her blessing, had she been alive. She's the one who raised him. I knew his uncles would refuse. Abe and Isaac want a grave. Something they can find on a map. But I know what he really wanted. He wanted to be free.

JUDGE. The court calls David Goldberg to the stand.

SIMON. But he's dead.

JUDGE. Just because someone is dead, does not mean he's not an eligible witness.

(Simon holds on to the urn.)

JUDGE. Let go, Mr. Lennox.

(Simon obeys. He hands the urn to the judge.)

JUDGE. Mr. Goldberg - do you solemnly swear that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

(The judge listens to the urn attentively.)

JUDGE. He wants you to save this last dance.

(She hands Simon the urn. Simon and the urn share a dance.)

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to mourn, and a time to dance."

(She exits. Simon and the urn remain alone on stage in an intimate moment of farewell. The music fades out and

*the sound of water returns. He slowly opens the lid,
intending to finally scatter the ashes into Niagara Falls.)*

Scene 5

Niagara Falls

(Rosie's voice is heard off stage.)

ROSIE (OFF). Simon T. Lenox!

(She enters.)

Stop! Stop! Don't do it!

SIMON. You again? Why can't you people just let me execute his wishes in peace?

(Rosie hands him an envelope.)

ROSIE. That's exactly why I'm here. This came for you, priority shipping straight from New York. It's From Abe and Isaac Goldberg. They contacted the big boss. He almost bit my head off for leaving you. Now you can finish your story.

(He opens the envelope, takes out a piece of paper and begins to read.)

SIMON. "I, David Golberg, native of Isra-Isle, by Jewish faith, do hereby declare in good health and a sound mind, that this is my last Will, made by me of my own independent decision only. I appoint my partner, Simon T. Lennox to be the executor of this Will.

I bequeath that my body shall be cremated and scattered in its final resting place of...

(to Rosie) I need a ticket for Hebron airport.

ROSIE. Hebron Kentucky or Illinois?

SIMON. Not even Hebron Ohio, or Hebron Mississippi.

ROSIE. There's Hebron Maryland, Indiana and Dakota too. I produced ceremonies for all of them.

SIMON. Hebron, Grand Palestine, the fucking Middle East.

(to David) I guess the afterlife helped you overcome your fear of flying.

(Simon turns to leave.)

ROSIE. Wait. The lid. It's half open. You don't want his ashes to leave a trail all the way from here to the Middle East.

(She helps Simon close the lid on the urn. He wraps the urn with the towel and puts it in the backpack. As he walks away, fireworks start to fill the sky above the falls.)

It's a shame you can't enjoy the colors.

SIMON. Maybe in another lifetime. Come on my love, let's get you home.

(The National Anthem plays as Simon walks away.)

NATIONAL ANTHEM. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Scene 6

A Beach in Grand Palestine

(Sound Effect: A Muezzin - the muslim call for prayer, coming from a nearby mosque. In the distance stands an Arab woman in a traditional muslim Hijab.)

SIMON. *(To David)* Look, this place is empty. Jaffa's mosques on one side, the towers of Gaza City on the other, and nothing in between. No milk, no honey, just sand. And sand, and sand, and sand. They could have built a Riviera here. Where are the hotels, the promenade, the cafés, the bars? How did they miss this real-estate opportunity? Noah would have found at least 60 suckers who would buy properties and turn it into a white city.

(He takes the urn out of the backpack.)

Shall we take a leak? one last time?

(He holds the urn and pisses into the sea.)

It's hot as hell here. The way people live in such a weather, is beyond me. Well, at least they have a sea.

(Tastes the water)

Ew. Salty. The Mediterranean is the complete opposite of Niagara. Well, we did it, David. You are finally in the 'home' of your dreams. I hope you realize you're gonna be here all by yourself for all eternity, because your uncles sure aren't gonna come visit you in this hell-hole. Even the Messiah won't find it. I had some time at the Hebron Airport, so I called the department for extinct languages. I asked them how to say 'I love you' in Hebrew. ANI OHEV OTCHA.

(The woman approaches.)

ARAB WOMAN. They are ahead, and we spend our lives following them.

SIMON. Who?

ARAB WOMAN. The dead, HABIBI. They are always ahead of us.
We are the ones chasing after them. Is that your beloved?

SIMON. My David.

ARAB WOMAN. “My righteous servants will inherit the land.”

SIMON. What passage is that?

ARAB WOMAN. The Quran, HABIBI. Chapter 21, verse 105. The words of the great prophet Daud.

SIMON. So you have a ‘David’ of your very own...

ARAB WOMAN. We can share him, HABIBI. You can call me ‘Sitti’
- Grandmother.

SIMON. In what language is that?

ARAB WOMAN. Grandma is grandma in every language. His soul
is waiting, my son.

SIMON. Sitti, teach me how to say "I love you" in your language.

(The woman kneels down and writes something on the sand from right to left.)

ARAB WOMAN. ANA BAHIBEK.

SIMON. ANA BAHIBEK. *(to the urn)* ANA BAHIBEK. Sounds like Hebrew. Maybe here you'll find some peace and quiet, my love. Perhaps in this godforsaken place people won't kill each other over who was here before, or whose history is right. This is it, my frequent flyer. At last we say goodbye. I already forgave you for what you did. It's never too late to forgive, right?

ARAB WOMAN. You need to pray first.

SIMON. I don't know the words.

(The Arab woman starts to chant in Arabic. Simon wraps David's towel around his shoulders like a prayer shawl and repeats after her. It's the KADDISH, the

Jewish prayer for the dead, translated into Arabic. She lights a candle.)

ARAB WOMAN. AL HAM RAB IL ARSH UK ADIM.

SIMON. May His Great Name grow exalted and sanctified.

ARAB WOMAN. YA HALEK IL KAUN IL WAHED IL AHAD.

SIMON. In the world that He created as He willed.

ARAB WOMAN. YA MALEK IL MULK.

SIMON. May He give reign to His kingship.

ARAB WOMAN. BI HAYATIKUM WAHAYAT BANI ISRAEEL.

SIMON. In your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel.

ARAB WOMAN. BILKARIB IL ADGIL, AMEN.

SIMON. Swiftly and soon, Amen.

(He opens the lid, reaches his hand into the urn and takes out leaves. He scatters them on the stage as he shares a prayer with the Arab woman. Fade to black. The candle light remains.)

The End