

THE LAST SEDER

By Jennifer Maisel

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THE STAGE -

The set needs to imbue the audience members with a sense of how in this house stories are woven and lives move forward simultaneously. Minimal prop pieces can indicate a room - things pulling out of moving boxes that litter the house. The set and the lights need to facilitate the action moving forward without blackout, that some characters are continuing their lives and action onstage when they are not the ones currently in focus.

In any home a family lives, at once, the same life and different lives. It is my intention that the play and its production reflect that.

CHARACTERS

LILY PRICE - sixties, family matriarch

MARVIN PRICE - seventies, her husband, suffering from
Alzheimers

JULIA PRICE - oldest daughter, mid thirties, very pregnant

CLAIRE PRICE - second daughter, early thirties

MICHELLE PRICE - third daughter, late twenties

ANGEL PRICE - the youngest, early twenties

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HAROLD FREEDMAN - seventies, next door neighbor

JANE - Julia's lover

JON - Claire's fiancée

KENT - late twenties, early thirties

LUKE - of color, early twenties

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There is no intermission.

Man plans and God laughs

-yiddish saying

BLACK

(Marvin stands in his own light)

MARVIN

Why am I in some place with angels?

*(The rhythmic lulling sounds of a TRAIN on the tracks -
-lights crossfade to Michelle-)*

PENN STATION

MICHELLE

Ummm, excuse me - hi? - look, I know you don't know me, but you look like someone who might..might be open to a complete stranger asking you...I'm not some psycho-chick, in case you're thinking I am which I'm sure you are - here's my license, so you know I'm me...

(There's a shadow of a man at the edge of her light. She hands him card after card from her wallet)

here...Library card, museum membership, prescription card - so at least you know I'm a semi-cultured literate insured psycho, I guess - Thank you for not running away. It's just that for months I've known this was coming, there's been this impending dread which was only exacerbated by

*(Michelle continues speaking as we see the various members of her family -
Lights rise on ANGEL PRICE , outside, backpack, rolling up her sleeping bag.)*

the Hallmark store across from me – its windows a mad succession of hoblins goblins witches and candy accented by Happy Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement cards and Halloween wasn't even over before they added Indians and Pilgrims decorating

(Lights up on CLAIRE PRICE and JON PRESCOTT, driving a U-HAUL truck. She drives and he shifts gears, his hand snaking in to her lap. She laughingly slaps it away.)

Christmas trees sprouting out of Plymouth Rock, of which I doubt the historical accuracy and then

(192 Waverly Ave, the Price Family home. Lights up on LILY PRICE, sixties, small with great strength, stands before her husband, MARVIN PRICE, seventies, unbuttoning his shirt.)

MICHELLE

(continued)

Valentines day, hearts everywhere since New Years and now they have Easter Barbie, Easter Barbie for Christ's sake which really gets me up in arms even though I'm not religious -

(Lily pulls Marv's head down to kiss her.)

really, it's more of a cultural thing I have to admit, but all they'd have to do is stick a jar of gefilte fish and a Haggadah in the leftover Easter Barbie's hands and we'd make all the little girls with mezuzzahs on their Malibu dream houses very *(she catches herself in the rant)* happy...

(Lights up on Julia and Jane's home. JULIA PRICE, mid-thirties, very pregnant, packing a suitcase as JANE, her girlfriend, strokes Julia's stomach)

Right. Well - every day..every day some relative calls me to confirm whether I'm bringing flourless chocolate cake this year to seder - with my family passover is a

(ANGEL stands outside #55 – Luke's House - , transfixed - A huge baby wreath that says "ITS A GRANDSON!" circles the house number She backs away from the door as if hoping no-one sees her.)

big hulabaloo-- not so much in a do everything-according-to-the rules sense but more in a digging-horribly-and-obsessively-into-every-detail -of -your-life-between-appetizers-and-desserts sense - and since it's the last time...well... it's all much more...that.

(192 - Lily and Marv recline against each other in a huge bathtub)

But they're really not calling to find out what I'm bringing, but who I'm bringing and I couldn't put up with hearing Aunt Mabel say, "So Michelle, why don't you have a man yet?" in her frog voice. Again. I'm tired of making excuses and I'm tired of sympathetic "I've-got-a-friend"s. And this, this is the last year so it becomes important in a way I can't explain. So I'm walking up to you, and you must think I'm crazy and I know you don't know me but you're wearing a nice suit and you looked somehow...right...and that's a step in the right direction anyhow. Do you like matzah?

(The four daughters: Julia, Claire, Michelle and Angel, speak to the audience)

DAUGHTERS

The last Seder.

(shift to)

*TRAIN TRESTLE**(Michelle and KENT, suitcases.)*

MICHELLE

You know what?...This is a mistake. We can check the schedule downstairs and I can pay your ticket to wherever you were going to before I - well, before -

KENT

It's an adventure - look, you've enticed me this far, don't get cold feet now.

MICHELLE

I was so worried that you might think I was psycho, that I completely forgot to consider the possibility that you might be.

KENT

I'll show you my library card later -

*(He picks up their bags and goes. She follows.)***192:***(Angel rings the bell.)*

LILY

Shit.

(Ring)

Go away!

(INSISTENT DOORBELL RINGING. Lily appears, wet, wrapped herself in a towel.)

Fucking Jehovah's witnesses. Fucking door to door Fuller Brush guy, frigging campaign to elect some right wing fat ass. This better be good! This better be very very good.

(Lily throws open the front door.- Angel stands there. Silence.)

ANGEL

Hi..

LILY

Keys?

ANGEL

I lost them.

LILY

No keys and a day early.

ANGEL

I'm not early.

LILY

You're early.

ANGEL

You're dripping.

LILY

You're early. You've been skulking around town for days already, you don't call and now you're early.

ANGEL

How did you -

LILY

I'm your mother, I know things. You love the great outdoors so much? You've got a sleeping bag. Come back tomorrow.

(Michelle rushes up the walk, Kent stands back. Chaos ensues)

MICHELLE

Mom! Angel!

LILY

Early.

ANGEL

All of us?

(JULIA and JANE, lugging suitcases. Angel runs over and drops down on her knees, putting her head to Julia's belly.)

Oh, hi hi hi hi hi hi.

LILY

You're early.

JULIA

What?

JANE

I've given up Easter for Lent. Besides, I'm told this family gives good sater.

JULIA/ANGEL/MICHELLE/LILY

Seder.

JANE

Whatever.

ANGEL
(to Julia's belly)

Hi hi hi hi hi hi.

JULIA
(to Angel)

Hello? Up here -

LILY

You're all early.

MICHELLE

We're not early.

(HAROLD FREEDMAN - next door neighbor, seventies - comes outside. They wave -)

HAROLD

Hi girls.

MICHELLE

Hi Mr. Freedman.

JULIA

Hi Mr. Freedman. You look fabulous!

HAROLD

Golf. No cart. Four times a week.

JANE
(to Julia)

Golf?

JULIA
(to Harold)

You're coming to seder, aren't you?

HAROLD

Wouldn't miss it.
(He goes inside.)

MICHELLE

How's he doing?

LILY

As well as can be expected – whatever the hell that means. *(To the kids)* You're early. You're early. You're all early. Etiquette. I forgot to teach you etiquette.

LILY(*CONT*)

(from offstage The U-HAUL honks)

Who the hell is that?

(to KENT)

And who the hell are you?

CLAIRE

(from off)

Hey everyone!!!!

LILY

Claire and Jon - Oh god.

MICHELLE

Yup.

LILY

They're never early.

MICHELLE

Nope.

LILY

Damnit.

MICHELLE

Yup.

(CLAIRE and JON rush on. Julia and Claire hug over Angel, head still pressed against fetus.)

JULIA

A U-Haul.

ANGEL

Never one for subtlety.

CLAIRE

Why - what did you guys bring?

JULIA

The car.

MICHELLE

A suitcase.

ANGEL

A backpack.

CLAIRE

Yeah, well, I thought we might need something a little bigger.

JULIA

Hide the silver. And the piano.
(*Claire flips Julia off.*)

MICHELLE

My evil big sisters.

JULIA

Hey, watch who you call big!

LILY

Move out of the way. Out of the way.
(*to Julia's stomach*)

I'm warning you, stay in there as long as possible. It's a dangerous world.

JANE

Where's Marv?

LILY

Oh shit. I left him in the bathtub.

JULIA

Mom?

LILY

It IS contagious. Your father is contagious. I probably know you -
(*She points to Kent.*)
Do I know you? Shit.

MICHELLE

The bathtub? Jesus, Mom, what were you doing?

LILY

Reliving the magic. Marvin! You haven't wandered off somewhere, have you? I found him strolling down the middle of East Rockaway Road last week. No traffic at 3 a.m. - beauty of the suburbs.

MICHELLE

Mom!

LILY

I'm thinking that one of those electronic leashes they have for dogs, that would be good for your father.

(the inside of the house is revealed. They follow Lily)

MICHELLE

I thought you were putting the alarm on at night -

LILY

What do you think woke me up to find out he was gone in the first place?

BATHROOM -

(Marvin sits in the now-empty bathtub, shivering.)

ANGEL

Oh Daddy.

(Lily grabs a towel and gets into the bathtub to get Marvin to stand. She wraps him in the towel, drying him off tenderly.)

LILY

Come on in, the water's fine. Come on in, the water's fine.
That's what you always said. The water could be turning you every shade of blue and you'd just say, come on in, the water's fine.

(Jane hands over a quilt)

JANE

Hello Marvin.

MARVIN

Hello.

JULIA

Hey Dad.

MARVIN

Who are you?

(He turns to Lily. Sometimes Marvin loses words, but he covers valiantly.)

Who are these people? I'm not...I'm naked for god's sake. You like this? You like what you see? Who -

JANE

That's your daughter, Julia, Mr. Price. I'm Janie. And your daughter, Claire, and Jon.
And Michelle -

MICHELLE

Hi Daddy.
(She kisses him. He flinches)

JANE

And Angel. Your youngest.

MARVIN

Angel -
 Angel. Have I died? Am I dead?

ANGEL

No Daddy.

MARVIN

Why am I some place with angels then?
(He appeals to Lily.)
 Why am I some place with angels?

LILY

ANGEL

It's a nickname - You named me that.

(Marvin approaches Kent)

MARVIN

It's been a long time. Too long.
(He throws his arms around Kent. The quilt falls off. Kent bravely rolls with it, as if being embraced by a strange naked man is an every day occurrence.)
 You look...well, you look well.

KENT

And you, sir.

MARVIN

Scotch, scotch! That's what we need.

(Still naked, he ushers Kent out of the bathroom. The rest stand silent.)

LILY

Who the fuck is he?
(They all look at Michelle.)

MICHELLE

My...my - Kent.

DAUGHTERS

Step one. THE SEARCH FOR CHAMETZ clean the house of the impure and evil
or get the yeast out.