

Mrs. Abramowitz

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. (*Calls.*) Shirley! Your teachers are here. Shirley? (*Young Shirley stays hidden, faking her father out as he looks down an aisle.*) That's funny, she was here a minute ago ...

MR. HILTON. Actually, sir, it was you we wanted to talk to.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Me?

MR. HILTON. You and Mrs. Abramowitz.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. (*Summoning.*) Clara...? (*Mrs. Abramowitz wipes her hands and joins them.*)

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Yes?

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. These are Shirley's teachers. From school. Mr. Hilton and Miss...?

MISS GLACÉ. Glacé. How do you do?

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Oh, so you're the culprits. The both of you.

MISS GLACÉ. *Pardonnez-moi?*

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. (*Uncomprehending.*) Excuse me?

MR. HILTON. Shirley told us you don't want her acting in the Christmas play.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. That is correct.

MR. HILTON. Being in the show means the world to her, ma'am, and, frankly, she's the best actor we've got. Not to mention that she's an enormous help to me in rehearsal. She's absolutely essential.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Mr. Hilton, I'm sure you're a very nice young man, and I know you mean well. But if you want my advice — and maybe you don't — this is a family matter.

MR. HILTON. But, sir ...

START { MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. What my husband is saying is, don't meddle with people's way of doing things. Not a good idea. This is bigger than you and Shirley Abramowitz and any school play. This is tradition we're talking about. Thousands of years of doing things a certain way 'cause things are done that way for a very good reason. You start mixing things up, you don't know what's what anymore.

MR. HILTON. Mrs. Abramowitz, with all due respect: We're in America.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. I know where we are, young Mr. Hilton. I know all about the land of the free, home of the brave. I saw that in that Thanksgiving show you put on.

MISS GLACÉ. To be an American means to be open-minded.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. To be an American, young lady, you forget who you are? Where you come from?

MISS GLACÉ. No one is telling Shirley to forget who she is.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Yeah? I'm not so sure about that. Our people can't afford to forget. We remember. (*A beat.*) Now, if you will excuse me, it's almost sundown and I have some errands to run before *Shabbos*. (*She puts on her coat and exits.*)

MR. HILTON. Sir, I wish you would reconsider.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. You're not a husband, are you, Mr. Hilton?

MR. HILTON. Well, no, sir. Not yet. (*He glances at Miss Glacé, who blushes.*)

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. I didn't think so. You wouldn't know what it's like having a wife who wants something — even worse, *doesn't* want something.

MISS GLACÉ. If I may, Mr. Abramowitz. Perhaps I can lend a bit of perspective. You see, I, too, am Jewish.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. You are?

MR. HILTON. You *are*? I thought you were French.

MISS GLACÉ. I *am* French, But I am also a Jew. *And* an American. I am a musician, a teacher, and a woman, too. I am all of these things. And proud of every one of them. They make me who I am. Shirley is smart, and strong. I wouldn't worry about her. She knows who she is. (*Pause.*)

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. You're a very persuasive young lady, Miss Glacé.

MISS GLACÉ. Does that mean you'll let her?

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. It means I'll think about it.

MISS GLACÉ. *Fantastique!*

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Don't start celebrating just yet. I said I'll consider it.

MISS GLACÉ. Of course. Thank you, Mr. Abramowitz. *Merci beaucoup.*

MR. HILTON. (*Extends his hand.*) Sir? (*Mr. Abramowitz shakes his hand. As they go.*)

MISS GLACÉ. Good *Shabbos*.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Good *Shabbos*. (*The teachers exit.*) Shirley? Come on out, I know you're hiding behind the sour pickles. (*Young Shirley steps out sheepishly from her hiding place.*) Did you hear all that?

YOUNG SHIRLEY. Yes.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Come here. (*He opens his arms to her. She tentatively enters his embrace.*) If you can promise it won't get in the way of your responsibilities at home ...

YOUNG SHIRLEY. You mean I can do it?