

The Torah

By David Jamison

Lights up on bare black stage, including one black chair center stage. Downstage left and downstage right each contain one black chair. YAVI, 50, is standing behind center chair, with his hands on the back of the chair, stooped forward. ALI, 23, is seated stage left, with his hand on his brow. JESSE, 32, is stage right, with one leg up on his chair. He has long flowing hair and is brilliantly handsome. He is smiling. Yavi and Jesse are white, while Ali is of a darker complexion.

A NARRATOR stands far upstage right at a podium. There is a small light affixed to the podium.

NARRATOR

There once was a man and two sons. One of the sons was a dashing, complicated young ideologue while the other was a brooding brilliant young idealist. The father was a once-willful man who, though mostly guided by principle, sometimes had conflicts with his own self-obsession. They lived in a house on the planet Earth.

ALI and JESSE both alternately brood and preen on cue.

ALI

Dad, I don't see why you have to insist on having it your way. Haven't you ever considered that I might know something about the way the world works?

YAVI

Nothing would make me happier than to know that my son has found his path, Alikshov. But I cannot in my conscience allow you to continue along on a journey I know has no future.

ALI

But I learned it all from you!

YAVI

I didn't teach you this.

JESSE

Al, can't you see that Dad is just looking out for what's best for you?

ALI

The only time either of you is interested in talking to me is when you're trying to push your principles on me. Why do you both see me as such a failure?

YAVI

It's not that, Ali, it's just that you have so much potential. You're such a beautiful soul but no one will see it with you stuck in your basement all day

ALI

I like my basement.

JESSE

We're both here for you, Al.

Jesse begins to fish out money from his wallet.

ALI

Put your fuckin' money away, Jes, you know this isn't about money. And don't call me Al. I've asked you a thousand times to start calling me Ali.

JESSE

Fine, Ali, how can I support you?

ALI

Talk to *him*. Just get him to give me . . . respect.

JESSE

I can tell a man what to say, but I can't change what's in his heart.

At this point, FANS come on stage right and begin handing autograph books to Jesse, who graciously obliges.

YAVI

Ali, your brother has never resented my interest in his life.

ALI

Why should he? You've never given him anything but praise. Jesse the millionaire. Jesse the movie star--

JESSE

Now that's not fair! Am I supposed to turn these people away because it hurts your ego?

ALI

Ask yourself how many of those people are really your friends, Jesse. Ask yourself how many will still be around when the well runs dry.

JESSE

Whatever, brat.

ALI

Oh, I'm the brat? I'm the one who can't go five minutes without his pedicure, or his manicure, or his spa appointment? Do you even know what it's like to struggle?

JESSE

Are you fucking kidding me? You don't remember what it was like when you were growing up? How hard I struggled? How much I sacrificed?

ALI
Ancient history.

JESSE
To you, maybe.

ALI
To everybody. To the world. We're sick of hearing about your
martyrdom. Get a new shtick.

JESSE
Fuck you, Ali.

ALI
All that sacrifice don't mean shit if you sell your ass to the first pimp
who flashes enough gold.

JESSE
Fuck you, bitch! You wanna start something with me right here, and
now?

Boys stand and start at each other. YAVI separates the two.

YAVI
Alright, alright boys. That's enough. Jesse, go see if your mother
needs help in the kitchen.

JESSE leaves stage right.

YAVI
Why does it have to be like this every time we get together?

ALI
Ask him.

ALI exits stage left.

YAVI

Why does it have to be like this every time we get together?

Yavi walks off stage and walks back on with a slide projector and a small screen. He sets the projector on the table facing the back wall and sets up the screen. He sits facing the back wall and begins slide show, which illustrate narrator's speech.

NARRATOR

The Jews were originally desert nomads who traveled in tribal clans denoted by patrimonial lineage. Since their livelihood depended on the elements, they worshipped a sky god who rewarded them with rain when happy but who could show awesome thunderous vengeance when displeased. This god enjoyed the sacrifice of lambs, calves, and oxen, but frowned on the sacrifice of humans, as it depleted His core demographic. Since nomads couldn't build temples, they carried a large wooden box, called an ark, with them on their travels, which was the spiritual home of their god. They would also carry this ark into battle, their victory or defeat hinging on the strength of their god versus the strength of the gods of their enemies.

The Jews finally gelled into an empire with the ascent of King David in 1000 BC. Israel was one of the great powers of the Near East before being subsumed first by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians.

But the Jews have never rescinded their claim on their former empire, which was spread out on land granted them by their god centuries before. They also comprise a diaspora spread out across six continents, with a tradition of scholarship and social justice.

YAVI turns off the projector, folds up the screen, and takes them both offstage.

HERA, ISIS, ASTARTE, POTNIA and MARY walk on stage from stage right and line up abreast across the length of the stage and address the audience.

HERA

We are the wives and ex-wives of Yavi, Jesse, and Ali. My name is Hera.

ISIS

I am Isis.

ASTARTE

I am Astarte.

POTNIA

I am Potnia.

MARY

And my name is Mary.

HERA

Of course, we all had our own lives before we met our husbands, but when we saw how successful they would become, we gladly sacrificed our own careers.

ASTARTE

The proper role for any wife is to be a complement to her husband's dreams. Though it might have satisfied me personally to maintain my individual notoriety, eventually it would have had to have been at the cost of my family, and that's not something I'm willing to risk.

MARY

So we stood in the shadows and folded the clothes and made
wonderful small talk at office parties, but . . .

ISIS

But . . .

POTNIA

But there was always something missing. I was a household name
across the western Mediterranean.

ISIS

I wasn't even sure I wanted to get married. But when Jesse came
along with that hair and that smile . . .

ALL WOMEN

Mmmmmm.

HERA

It's like you can't even think straight.

ISIS

You can't even see straight.

ASTARTE

And before long your ankles are in the air and you're a sidekick.

MARY

It's so romantic.

POTNIA

I don't think it's so romantic. Not all of us are mentioned on the
society pages.

MARY
Potnia, don't start.

POTNIA
Don't start? Excuse me Miss Face on Every Wheaties Box in Latin America. At least people know your name! No one's ever heard of me and I used to be the Queen Bee in this neighborhood.

All women are silent.

POTNIA
And when are we gonna start talking about the way those bastards "courted" us? I'm sorry, but I don't think being bound and gagged is a very romantic dating ritual.

ISIS
It wasn't like that, Potnia.

POTNIA
It wasn't? It wasn't? Do you even remember anymore, Isis? Don't you even remember your humiliation?

ASTARTE
/remember.

ISIS
The point is that now we're a family. We can't go back into the past and change the future. We are who we are.

HERA
We are the wives and ex-wives of Yavi, Jesse, and Ali. My name is Hera.

ISIS

I am Isis.

ASTARTE
I am Astarte.

POTNIA
I am Potnia.

MARY
And my name is Mary.

All women file out.

Ali and Isis are seated at a table stage left.

ALI
Bills, bills, bills, bills, bills.

ISIS
Once you start working again it'll pick up

ALI
No one's beating down my door to give me work.

ISIS
Lay not burdens on any but thyself, baby.

ALI
I don't know how you stand it with me.

ISIS
What're you talking about?

ALI

You could have anybody. You're the most beautiful girl in the universe. You could be sitting in the lap of luxury right now if you wanted. I don't how you stay with me.

ISIS

I don't want the lap of luxury. I want you. You're powerful and strong. You have principles. Your eyes flash when people question you. Who wants luxury when you have a man with principles? My mama raised me right.

ALI

She raised you to be poor.

ISIS

So be it, Ali. I love you. And I don't think I like you questioning my faith. What kind of a girl do you think I am?

ALI

I don't know. I guess I was just always raised to believe that if you couldn't provide for your woman, you couldn't do anything for her.

ISIS

Who taught you that? Not Yavi. He doesn't treat Potnia like that.

ALI

Not when you're around.

ISIS

Not when anyone's around. I don't talk to him, I talk to her. Do men know anything about women at all?

ALI

You all smell good. That's about it.

ISIS

Are you gonna call and wish your brother a happy birthday?

ALI

I probably won't even be able to get through with all the people that'll be calling.

ISIS

You'll never know unless you try.

Ali holds fast.

ISIS

(grabbing the phone and placing it on the table in front of him)
You'll never know unless you try.

Ali stays still. Isis walks up behind him and puts her hand on his cheek.

ISIS

Sweetie, none of those people are his brother. You're the only one he has. Do you remember after your graduation ceremony last month when you said you wanted to do something you'd never done before?

ALI

Yes. I can't believe my dad went skinny-dipping.

ISIS

And remember we had to stop by Jesse's afterwards so I could pick up my organizer?

Lights come on stage right. All around are decorations and a banner that says "Congratulations Ali!" Jesse is taking the decorations down. Isis walks in, aghast, looking all around. He has his back to her as

she enters. He turns with a start and starts to take the banner down, but then gives it up.

JESSE

I didn't see you come in.

ISIS

Your door was open. You were gonna have a party for Ali.

JESSE

Yeah, I thought I might surprise him, but then he said he wanted to go swimming.

ISIS

I can't believe you didn't say anything. I'm sure he would've loved to have seen all th—

JESSE

It's alright. It was his day, you know? I just wanted him to be happy.

ISIS

Still . . .

JESSE

You don't have to say anything to him, do you?

ISIS

I don't have to—Oh my god.

Isis spies something in the kitchen and is off before Jesse can stop her.

ISIS

Oh my God.

She is overcome by a big cake with a little figurine of two men, one darker than the other, each with their arm around the other. Isis starts to well up.

JESSE

You want a piece?

Isis goes over to Jesse and hugs him for a long time, pulls back, and cups his face in her hands.

ISIS

He is very lucky to have you as a brother.

JESSE

I wish he felt the same.

ISIS

He does. He knows.

She plants a wet one on his cheek, grabs organizer, shows it to him to tell him that's why she was there, and starts walking over to stage left, where Ali has been watching stone-faced. Jesse sits on his couch with the cake in his lap. He bites off the Ali half of the figurine and sticks himself back in the cake. He then starts to eat the cake part.

ISIS

You should call him.

Ali picks up the phone and dials. The phone rings over on Jesse's side, and he picks up.

JESSE

This is Jesse.

ALI
Hey bro.

JESSE
What's up punk?

ALI
Happy 33rd. You get lots of cake?

JESSE
I got a mouthful right now.

Isis walks offstage smiling as lights fade.

Jesse walks offstage and walks back on with a slide projector and a small screen. He sets the protector on the table facing the back wall and sets up the screen. He begins slide show, which illustrate narrator's speech.

NARRATOR

Christians began their storied ascent as a persecuted cult in Caesar's Rome. The government tried for years to discourage and humiliate these hippies of the ancient world, with little success. Persecution would result in nonviolent resistance. And out and out execution, such as the practice of pouring boiling oil down their throats or feeding them to lions, would only result in more Romans growing to admire and respect the Christians' utter belief in their salvation.

When emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of Rome in 395 A.D., he opened a spiritual floodgate that was to sweep over Western Europe and both American continents. The new religion's great power opened the door for corruption, however, as

opportunists and carpetbaggers wended their ways into the upper echelons of the church hierarchy, and even the papacy.

But the simple beliefs of a Nazarene shepherd has had an immeasurable impact on the course of human events, and Christian civilization remains to this day the most powerful and widespread the world has ever known.

Jesse stops projector, packs up, and walks off stage right.

Jesse and Yavi are down stage left, side by side, rehearsing a dance number. Ali is off stage left, polishing dancing shoes. Light on Yavi and Jesse but not Ali.

YAVI

No . . . that's not . . . you're not getting it.

JESSE

What do you mean I'm not getting it? It's spin step spin step step shuffle shuffle step ball change.

YAVI

Yes, technically you have the piece but it is inside (points to Jesse's chest) here, where it matters the most.

JESSE

Dad, no one's gonna be looking inside my heart, they're gonna be looking at my feet, and my feet are doing the steps right.

YAVI

Fine, forget it, maybe you've nothing left to learn from me.

Goes and takes a seat in chair upstage left and wipes face with towel and drinks water.

JESSE

No, you're not . . . I didn't mean I don't have anything more to learn from you, it's just . . . I'm doing the move right, and it's not like I've been getting any complaints.

YAVI

Well maybe that's the problem. Maybe you've become to blinded by your own success. I see the late-night dalliances, the new cars every couple of months. You know that's not what you're about.

JESSE

How do you know what I'm about? You don't think I remember the little comments you used to make to your friends? About how hard I'd have to work to get somewhere in life? Well take a look around pop! It's the Jesse show now, day in/day out. More people are dancing to my tune than have ever even heard of you!

YAVI

That's not true. I've been arou—

JESSE

I know, I know, but what have you done for the world lately?

YAVI

You used to be my biggest fan.

JESSE.

Used to be, dad, I'm a grown man now. Everybody can see that but you.

YAVI

I can see it. I'm just not so sure you know what being a man is yet.

JESSE

And you do? The way you treat Ali? That's your son, over there! It's shameful how you talk to him, spying on his every move. Same way you used to do me.

YAVI

I'm a father, Jesse. You'll never know what it's like until you have children of your own. Children you own up to, anyway.

JESSE

I knew it. I knew it'd only be second before you brought that up.

YAVI.

Yes, I'm bringing this up. You have a child right across town and you've never even spoken to him face-to-face.

JESSE

I don't know that that boy is mine.

YAVI

He looks exactly like you. He walks like you, he talks like you—

JESSE

How do you know?

YAVI

People talk.

JESSE

Dad, claiming that boy would have ruined everything. I would have had to sacrifice—

YAVI

Your clothes? Your cars?

JESSE

Our careers! It's been my name on that marquee that's been drawing them in for years, Dad. I never saw you complain about the checks coming in. You're no stranger to the good life either. If I would've left everything to take care of a baby—

YAVI

Forget I brought it up.

JESSE

You won't let me forget it, dad. You'll never let me forget that I'm just a second-rate version of you. Thanks for the vote of confidence.

YAVI

You think it's because I don't have confidence but I think you don't realize that maybe it's because I have too much. You have so much going for you, Jesse. You could change the world. But instead you're just making it a second-rate version of what it used to be. You're right. I don't want to see you waste your talent the way I did. Fixating on petty jealousies and slights. I had my chance, I know! But you could do something better.

JESSE

I'm a grown man, now. I can only be me. Try the step again. And stay in time this time.

Lights fade as the two go over the steps of their dance. Lights come up on Ali. They continue dancing while Ali talks.

ALI

My dad and my brother love each other very much. Jesse used to follow my dad around like a little puppy, waiting for his shot in the spot. But Envy lurks like a hidden viper. Once Jesse started to make

a name for himself, my dad was the first one to doubt his talent. He'd tell people Jesse wasn't the real thing, and when caught he'd say he was just trying to make him stronger for when real criticism came. But it never did. And you could see how uncomfortable it made my dad. I suppose fathers should be expected to always be proud of their son's accomplishments. But when the boy's successes so outshine the man's, somewhere, deep inside . . . there's a viper lurking.

Lights fade on Ali as he exits, back up on Jesse and Yavi.

JESSE

That's it, now spin, step, spin step . . . in time, dad!

YAVI

Just a second, Jesse. I need a break.

JESSE

That's our third break this hour, dad. Have you thought anymore about what we talked about?

YAVI

There's nothing to think about. I might get a little winded, but I can still bring it onstage.

JESSE

You told Ali he'd have his own spot a year ago.

YAVI.

Ali's not ready yet.

JESSE

There you go again. Not ready. He has fans ready to die for him. Girls and boys camp out in front of his dressing room for nights on end.

YAVI

Those aren't fans, those are groupies.

JESSE

What's the difference?

YAVI

Fans have class.

JESSE

You mean fans have money.

YAVI

You're a smart little son of a bitch.

JESSE

You know that's what you mean. Ali's fan base is mostly poor, and you could give a fuck about somebody who can't afford to buy your records. That's why you don't wanna feature him in the show.

YAVI

You're a smart-ass little son of a bitch, Jesse, and don't forget whose name is at the bottom of the contract. Mine. Your ass is mine until I see fit to let you go, you understand? I been around too long to let a smart mouth punk like you tell me how to run my show. I've seen too much shit and wheelin' and dealin' and real men fall at my feet. I've been around this long because I have claws, Jesse. You better not forget that.

(beat)

Now after I have a smoke we're gonna try it once more. With feeling.

Yavi exits. Lights down while Jesse practices alone.

HERA, ISIS, ASTARTE, POTNIA and MARY walk on from stage right and line up abreast across the length of the stage and address the audience.

ISIS

When I tell Ali that he needs to talk to his father, he tells me that I have no idea what it's like talking to a man with such an enormous ego.

ASTARTE

When I tell Yavi he needs to be more emotionally available to his sons, he asks me how he's supposed to help them become men if he's always sharing his feelings like a woman.

MARY

When I tell Jesse to try and see things from his brother's perspective, he tells me to shut the fuck up and worry about what I know about. So, I do.

HERA

When I get that not-so-fresh feeling, I hole myself up in a hut for five days in the back of our yard. There, I pray together with a few female friends in the hopes that we might soon no longer be unclean.

POTNIA

Oh, that I could wash away this burden of my womanhood; that my sex could have found favor in God's eyes, rather than be cursed with this fallen vessel of procreation.

All five women take out tape from their pockets and tape their mouths shut. They stand silently for about 30 seconds. A BOY walks on from stage left. He goes to Mary and takes her tape off. He then goes to each woman and takes the tape off. As he does, each mouths an

emotional “thank you” and hugs him. He then sits at the edge of the stage, cross-legged, facing the women.

BOY

Mama, I’m listening.

All women are too shaken up to speak.

BOY

Show me how to be a man.

HERA

(to audience)

I’m sorry. You’ll have to forgive us. It’s a little embarrassing.

ISIS

Sometimes you forget who your audience is.

ASTARTE

It’s hard to be reminded of what you used to be.

POTNIA

How did we get here?

MARY

How do you mean?

POTNIA

How did we lose our voices so distinctly? So completely?

MARY

When Jesse came along with that hair and that smile—

POTNIA

No! No, I won't . . . we're stronger than that. We know who we are.
Why do we silence ourselves?

HERA
Habit.

POTNIA
How can our sons ever expect to know how to treat women if we give
them all our power when they're still in the crib?

MARY
I'm sick of your militant feminist Nazi crap, Potnia! My man takes care
of me! I know I'm safe when I'm around him. I might have to deal with
a little disrespect but at least I know I can sleep at ease in his arms.

POTNIA
What do you have to be afraid of?

MARY
What *don't* I have to be afraid of? Lust, envy, greed, avarice, sloth.
Would you like a list? Oh, and let's not forget the possibility of some
thug knocking my teeth out before he drags me into an alley. This
world was built on muscle, Potnia, and if you were smart you'd get
your hooks into the strongest man you can find and hold on for dear
life. Your principles won't get you anywhere but lonely and cold.

POTNIA
But see, that's not true. I'm strong, you're strong, Hera's strong. This
world wasn't built on strength, the world we live in was built on
aggression. The man who struck first, and most mercilessly, was the
winner. And look what we have to show for it: a world on the brink of
chaos. Huddled together, praying we avert an apocalypse that those
men you praise so highly insist is coming. Have you ever thought
about that, Mary? Why Ali and Jesse and Yavi all say the end is near

if they're so strong and powerful? It's because they know there's no end to their lusts, their greed. They know the only way they'll ever love each other is once they destroy each other. You mark my words.

MARY

I don't have to mark anything, girlfriend. I've got the Lexus SUV, I've got the diamond-shaped house on the hill, I've got the Mayans praying to an image of me on the side of a cereal box. You go ahead on with your doom and gloom, anything to make your bad choices seem wise. But at the end of the day, people can't hang their hopes on a world that we wish could have been, we can only work with what is. When you get in line, we can do business.

Walks offstage left. Other three women look one way, then the other, then reluctantly follow. Potnia sits for second, shaking with rage, then collapses to a sob and sits on edge of stage. She then tries to turn her sadness back to anger, wiping away the tears.

Yavi walks onstage as kitchen set is brought on behind Potnia, Yavi peeks into cooking pots and inhales.

YAVI

Hey, hon, you look down.

POTNIA

Yeah, I got into a fight with Mary and the girls because she—

YAVI

Oh, sweetie, I'm sorry. Listen, I can't stay for dinner. I'm gonna be out late tonight with—

POTNIA

I got into a fight with Mary and the girls because—

YAVI

I heard you.

POTNIA

But you didn't let me finish.

YAVI

You know how you let yourself get so upset about things. Why don't you just forget about it?

POTNIA

It's not that I want to get upset, but you should want to listen to me if I'm feeling bad. They really hurt me.

YAVI

Listen, why don't we go out for dinner tomorrow with Mary and Jesse? That would cheer you up, wouldn't it?

POTNIA

I don't need cheering up, I just . . . I just want you to care.

YAVI

Of course I care. Would I marry you if I didn't care? It's just that I've had an exhausting day and I'm dead tired. I'm gonna turn in early. Goodnight. (yawns and kisses her on cheek)

POTNIA

Maybe we could have ice cream in bed, like we used to?

YAVI

I'd love to honey, but I have a mountain of paperwork. (starts to collect papers from table) I'll probably be down in the den all night.

POTNIA

Is there anything you wouldn't do to hide your shame?

YAVI

I know you wouldn't understand this, but it's very difficult to be constantly reminded of what you used to be. To wake up every morning and look in the mirror and wonder how come you never grew up. How come you're not the man the rest of the world somehow thinks you to be. I wake up every morning wondering how I tricked you into believing in me, and every day I see a bit of that faith erode, like you're slowly catching on to me. I can't think of a more terrifying thought than for you to see me the way I see myself. Can you understand that?

POTNIA

Why do you pretend that you know what's best for everybody?

YAVI

Because that's all I know. Without my power, all I have left is . . . me.

Kisses him on forehead.

POTNIA

You know what? I feel a lot better.

YAVI

Oh good, what's for dinner? (sits down at table) I'm starved.

Yavi sits at table and Potnia begins to fix him a plate. Lights.

Ali walks in from stage left carrying projector and screen and sets it all up.

NARRATOR

The Muslim empire swept across the Gobi Desert like a holy storm. While Arabia was one of the last Mediterranean nations to embrace monotheism, when they did it, they did it all the way, and their desert warrior culture encouraged them to bring the message to the masses, even if at the point of the sword. The Muslims didn't have to force most conquered cities to convert, however. Muhammad's policy of reduced taxes for Muslims and more religious freedom for non-Muslims was a breath of fresh air from the notorious intolerant Christian kings and queens that ruled most of West Asia at the time.

Muhammad's message was that Christians had lost their way with their many saints, cardinals, and divine rights of kings, not to mention the confusing paganism of the Trinity. He felt he was the last prophet of the god of Abraham and hoped to unite Arab, Jewish and Christian peoples into an international brotherhood of man. This message was mocked by rabbis and priests across the Western world, but the Muslim army would prove a better messenger, soon securing the richest empire in the world. For generations, to be civilized was to be Muslim, and it is with a great deal of reluctance that the Muslim world gave up its position of global preeminence. Now she is a third world culture living among the dusty ruins of her own vanity.

Takes projector and screen and walks off stage right. Comes back on with chair and sits in brooding pose from opening scene. Jesse and Yavi walk on and assume their positions also.

ALI

Maybe . . . we could . . . maybe we could . . .

JESSE

You know what we need? A trip together. We need to get away together, just us three, no one else around.

YAVI

Where? We're recognized every place we go, especially when we're together.

JESSE

How 'bout the mountains? No one's gonna bother us there.

YAVI

Eh. I'm not a big fan of the mountains. Plus it gets cold.

ALI

Then the desert, Dad. The point isn't where we go.

YAVI

If we stay at a resort, maybe we can do a couple of shows while we're there.

JESSE

It's not a vacation if we work.

YAVI

Well it's not gonna be the penthouse suite anymore for you if we don't make any money.

ALI

Is it such hell, dad, to spend time with me? Such torment to simply be with me for a while, and get to know me?

YAVI

Now I don't know my own son.

ALI

I might violently disagree with almost all your principles, but I can separate that from the man who is my father.

YAVI

Which principles of mine do you disagree with?

ALI

See that's what I mean. You focus on any negative thing I say and completely disregard the positive.

YAVI

I don't mean to, I just . . . sometimes I get afraid my sons don't respect me.

Silence.

JESSE

You know what we need? Let's do a routine together. That always lifts our spirits.

ALI

I don't feel like dancing.

Silence.

YAVI

I don't see how it's so easy for you to live without security. Believe me, if you had grown up in the times I did, you wouldn't be so carefree about pissing away a chance to work.

ALI

I think if I had grown up in the times you did, I would want my sons to see me live with dignity and honor.

Silence.

JESSE

You know what we need?

ALI

It's not gonna work. This is not gonna work. This is not gonna work until we all let go of trying to prove to each other why we're right and the others are wrong. We stopped being a family a long time ago. Now we're just opposing sides in a tired-ass battle of attrition. I'm just . . . I'm too tired. I don't wanna fight you two anymore. I would've quit long ago if I didn't have a wife and kids. I'm too tired.

Puts two chairs together and lies down.

YAVI

(to Jesse)

You hear that? He's gonna quit. I told you he didn't have what it took. From now on it's you and me. We've gotta make this thing work.

JESSE

I don't know.

YAVI

Do you know how much I've sacrificed for you two? So you could have comfortable lives? No, you wouldn't know. You wouldn't know because I've done things I'd be ashamed to tell you about so you could have food to eat. No one can ever tell me I don't love my sons. All I want is your happiness. Let's rehearse the dance.

JESSE

I don't know.

YAVI

What do you mean you don't know? This isn't how I raised you! To hesitate when an opportunity is presented! Look how you've turned out! Look how successful you are! That's because I made you tough,

both of you. I know it doesn't seem like it sometimes with Ali but I'll tell you what. If I was in a dark alley, there's no one I'd want by my side more than my two sons.

JESSE

Don't you see, though, Dad? We *are* in a dark alley.

Slow fade-out.