And The Miracles Keep On Coming

by

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AND THE MIRACLES KEEP ON COMING

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O/S TEXT: “A daughter is a vain treasure to her father: Through anxiety on her account, he cannot sleep at night. As a minor, lest she be seduced; In her majority, lest she play the harlot; As an adult, lest she be not married; If she marries, lest she bear no children; If she grows old, lest she engage in witchcraft!”

-Sanhedrin.

SFX: child laughing. The sound intermingles with the words of her father.

LLOYD
So, what am I looking at here?

ESTHER
A village.

LLOYD
A village?...A village. I see it. Hey, nice village.

ESTHER
Are you gonna devour it?

INT. HOROWITZ KITCHEN - DAY

We see on an endearingly messy kitchen table various indiscernible lumps of playdough that if you’re using your imagination kind of form a village.

LLOYD
Devour it, why would I devour your village?

ESTHER
‘Cause you’re a dragon.

LLOYD
A dragon? No.

And now we see LLOYD HOROWITZ, early 40s, charismatic in a kippah, playing with his daughter ESTHER, 6 years old, all messy hair and giant eyes. About twenty different playdough canisters and a large pile of construction paper sit on the table along with the “village.”
LLOYD (CONT’D)
I am the playdough king. All the playdough subjects live under my rule.

ESTHER
How did you become the king?

LLOYD
They crowned me.

ESTHER
Why did they crown you?

LLOYD
Well, I gave advice on some infrastructure problems, brought the taxes way down, and I put in a community center.

ESTHER
With unicorns?

LLOYD
Community center without unicorns. I look like an evil dictator to you?

Esther giggles.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
Mom said you made me something. Can I see?

Esther takes from one of the canisters a tiny playdough rabbi.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
Is this me?

Esther nods.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
I think I have a little more hair than that...I’m kidding. This is great. Very life-like...I wonder though. I wonder if it could use a little something extra...hand me some paper.

Esther obeys, handing him a sheet of construction paper from a large pile.
LLOYD (CONT’D)
In the beginning. There was Adonai, right? God.

He expertly rips the construction paper in half three times, takes the middle half.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
And God...hand me a marker?

Esther does.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
Thank you. God crafted the universe. You, me, the unicorns--he formed us. His words shaped reality. For a very long time I thought He was the only one with that power--to change things--mold them as he saw fit.

He writes a series of Hebrew letters and numbers on the scrap of paper, rolls it up into a tiny scroll and places it in the mouth of the figurine. Suddenly the thing comes to life. It waves at Esther and smiles at her.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
Turns out that’s not the case...

ESTHER
How did you...isn’t that against the rules?

LLOYD
Essie, I’m gonna tell something and I want you to remember it. A secret, Nu? With people like us the rules don’t matter much one way or the other. We can shape this world the way we want it. Open up entire worlds we’ve never seen and close them back up again. All we have to do is say the right words. With conviction. The Talmud and the Torah--for us they’re not just sacred texts. They’re instruction manuals.

ESTHER
Can you show me?

LLOYD
I thought you’d never ask...
INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

A fourteen year old Esther, still wild-haired and eyed, huddles in a small mass outside her mother’s bedroom. **Eight years have passed.** Next to Esther sits a seventeen year old girl, trying to keep it together, hair blowdried and back in a ponytail. This is Esther’s sister, MIRI. They hear their father say--

**LLOYD (O.S.)**
I’m sorry. I’m sorry, I don’t know how to say this.

INT. RACHEL’S BEDROOM - MIDDAY

Lloyd, now in his early 50s, faces off against his wife, RACHEL HOROWITZ, late 40s, who sits on her bed.

**RACHEL**
The packed bag and the car outside are pretty good visual aids I think.

**LLOYD**
No. You don’t understand, it’s not just that.

**RACHEL (CONT’D)**
We have to figure out what to tell the girls--where are you staying, are you gonna be at Fred’s?

**RACHEL (CONT’D)**
Which part do I not understand? You’re not leaving me? You’re not leaving Miri, Esther right before she starts high school?...There’s something else. What is it?

**LLOYD**
The Congregation’s decided...they think I should go in a new direction...ever since I started there, David’s been on my ass, and as soon as they came up with these performance reviews--

**RACHEL**
What happened, Lloyd, what did you do?

**LLOYD**
I borrowed some money. From the Schul.
RACHEL
Define "borrowed."

LLOYD
I was gonna pay it back--

RACHEL
Oy. You stole money--are they taking this to court? Are they sending you to jail?

LLOYD
They’re currently in talks with the board, but Rachel--

RACHEL (CONT’D)
What?

LLOYD
I don’t...I don’t have anything. Not right now...I think...whatever else you decide, I think you should go back to work. Otherwise with the mortgage...you could lose the house.

RACHEL
This isn’t how people act when they love you. Do you understand that?

LLOYD
I don’t know if I love you. I don’t...I don’t know if I ever loved you.

And they just sit there.

EXT. BEDROOM DOOR – DAY
Outside, Miri tries to drag Esther away from the door.

MIRI
Es, I don’t think we should be--

ESTHER
Shh. I can’t hear.
INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

RACHEL
You know I’m not letting you near
the girls, right? You won’t get to
see them.

LLOYD
That’s... that’s okay. That’s
probably for the best.

EXT. BEDROOM DOOR - DAY

Miri is trying to hold back her tears. Esther is making no
such effort.

INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

LLOYD
I think I should go.

Rachel slumps over as he picks up his suitcase, leaves and
opens the door on--

INT. BEDROOM DOOR - DAY

Esther and Miri. Sitting on the floor. Looking up at him.
Esther breaks away from her sister’s embrace and blocks her
father’s way on the stairs.

ESTHER
Dad. Dad, c’mon. You’re gonna like
what sleep in some motel on the
freeway? Stay the night. We’ll
work it out tomorrow with Mom. Go
out and get bagels. Dad.

Her father looks at the floor.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
C’mon.

Lloyd takes a deep breath and walks past his child. Esther
falls to the floor. As Lloyd walks down the stairs, Esther
runs to...

INT. ESTHER AND MIRI’S BEDROOM - DAY

Esther looks out at the cab pulling away, and...
INT. STAIRS - DAY

Bolts down the stairway, Miri in swift pursuit...

MIRI
ESTHER!

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Esther just keeps going, Miri still following her.

EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHT - DAY

Esther runs down the sidewalk in order to become adjacent to her father’s cab before the light turns green again. Miri finally catches up to her, is about to yell at her, but then notices how transfixed her sister is by the cab, her eyes glazed over.

The window rolls down. In the driver’s seat is a CONGENIAL OLDER MAN in a Kangol newsboy cap. He surveys both girls with sympathy, then winks before burning rubber and driving off.

Esther just stays in the middle of the street. She doesn’t even budge when a truck comes barreling towards her.

Miri pulls her sister out of the road and on top of her. They lie together on the sidewalk, panting. A sound wakes them from this trance

RACHEL
ESTHER! MIRI!

Their mother comes running to the sidewalk after them. She hugs them fiercely.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
Don’t ever do that again. Do not ever run into the street for your piece-of-shit embezzling rabbi father. Do you understand me?

Both girls nod dutifully.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
It’s just us now, okay?

They get up, cross the road, and head back home. Lovin’ Spoonful’s Do You Believe in Magic begins to play and we see...
THREE YEARS LATER...

Esther is studying dutifully for the SATs. Rachel on the landline, is talking to Miri, who is on speaker.

RACHEL
And your sister is...studying, actually. Math section.

ESTHER
Why do you sound so surprised by that.

MIRI
(on the phone) ESTHER (CONT’D)
Studying? Why are you saying that like
it’s surprising?

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Can we talk about Miri’s boyfriend though?

RACHEL MIRI
Boyfriend? Oh my god.

RACHEL
No one ever told me about a boyfriend. This is new information.

MIRI
Oh my god, mom I’m so sorry I have a house dinner with everyone so--

RACHEL ESTHER
No, go ahead. Oh, she has a “house dinner” with “everyone”

MIRI
Jesus Christ. Bye you guys.

RACHEL ESTHER
Call me tomorrow, I have a free period. Bye.

Beat.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
So, you know...Ali’s dad cheated. On her mom. And they still all went to look at BU together. Like they all stayed in the same hotel and everything.
RACHEL
Ok. What’s that have to do with us?

ESTHER
It’s just...do you think that if we got in touch with Dad...do you think he might wanna come with us? On some tours?

Rachel doesn’t say anything.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Reconnecting with his daughter when she was applying to college. Once-in-a-lifetime milestone and all. Would be the normal father thing to do I feel like.

RACHEL
Well, there’s very little about your father that is normal.

ESTHER
Do you ever miss him?

RACHEL
Sometimes. I remind myself that he did us a favor...your father wasn’t meant to have children, Esther.

ESTHER
So where does that leave me?

RACHEL
Well you have a sister last I checked. And a mother.

ESTHER
Yes and that’s great but...I feel like I just wake up every day and like...you know how he used to make “eggs in a basket”? Like I can smell them. Just for a second. And the um--those old like...musical cast recordings he used to play. Like Guys & Dolls or whatever. I can hear them. And then...then I get sad all over again.

RACHEL
Okay, listen to me. If this test goes how I’m pretty sure it’s gonna go...you’ll be able to go anywhere you want for school.

(MORE)
RACHEL (CONT'D)
Do anything you want. But you have
to stay focused. And you can’t let
him ruin it for you.

She kisses her daughter on the forehead.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
Get the section done by 8, okay?
We’ll watch a movie or something.

Rachel leaves her daughter to study. Instead of shading in
the bubbles, Esther dreamily doodles a combination of Hebrew
letters and numbers on the top of the page...

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

ONE YEAR LATER...

Miri, now dressed smartly in professional clothes cuts out
lining for her sister’s drawers while her mother unpacks an
elaborate system of plastic ziplock bags.

RACHEL
You’re gonna wash your pillowcases
once a week, right?

ESTHER
Yes mom.

RACHEL
The way you just said that makes me
think--

ESTHER
How would you like me to say it?
Should I do an accent?

RACHEL
Don’t take that tone with me.

ESTHER
I wasn’t taking a--

MIRI
Mom, Es doesn’t have Windex yet.
Can you run out and get some? The
rite-aid on Broadway’s like a two-
second walk.

Rachel looks apprehensively at her younger daughter, as if
Esther will accidentally set herself on fire if she leaves
her in the room.
RACHEL
Try and get the toiletries done.

She leaves. Both girls exhale simultaneously.

ESTHER
I don’t know why she’s so worried.

MIRI
If mom weren’t worried I’d think she’d been replaced with a Russian spy.

ESTHER
(goofy Russian accent)
Yes. She ees definahtley zeh one who ees Russian...

MIRI
I’m sorry he’s not here.

ESTHER
 stil in the bit)
Who ees not here? Handler?

Miri gives her a look.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
I wasn’t even thinking about dad.

MIRI
Es.

ESTHER
But if I was—if I was sad that he didn’t even care about missing his daughter’s first day of college...hadn’t even attempted to contact me for the last four years would that be so weird? ’Cause it didn’t seem weird for you.

MIRI
Well. I was never his favorite.

ESTHER
I feel that his leaving was kind of an umbrella statement of his feelings towards all of us, so...

MIRI
Just don’t let him ruin today for you. Today is cool. Today is...you know. College-y.
Beat.

MIRI (CONT’D)
(Russian Accent)
You walk on green, enjoy lager of wheat, watch Pulp Fiction with patronizing men, no?

Rachel comes back wielding a gigantic caddy full of cleaning supplies.

ESTHER
That was fast.

RACHEL
Your neighbor had some extra stuff. Her name’s Michelle, she’s a very nice girl.

ESTHER
And I’m sure Michelle thinks I’m very cool now.

16 EXT. DORM - NIGHT

THREE YEARS LATER...

Esther, a junior in college now, is walking back to her dorm with two friends--SIMONE and ABBY.

SIMONE
I can’t believe you tried to just leave the bar with an open container that’s the funniest thing I’ve ever seen.

ESTHER
Yeah, making me drink every time I talk is a very good way to get me very drunk.

They reach Esther’s dorm.

SIMONE
Happy birthday.

ABBY
Happy birthday, love.
They kiss her on the cheek and are on their way. Esther, a little tipsy, squints at a shadowy figure sitting on the bench outside her dorm. After a moment she realizes that it’s Lloyd.

LLOYD
Hello.

ESTHER
Oh my god.

LLOYD
Es...

ESTHER
Oh my god. What are you doing here?

LLOYD
You thought I was gonna miss your twenty first birthday?

ESTHER
You’ve missed the last seven. We’re not working with a stellar record here...How did you find me?

LLOYD
I’m your father. I talked to your Dean. You’re making a name for yourself by the way. I have “a very bright young woman” on my hands...He didn’t mention that you were beautiful.

ESTHER
Well that would be kind of a weird thing for my dean to mention.

LLOYD
I knew you’d be beautiful.

Esther tries not to let it register on her face how much this means to her.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
Have a meal with me.

ESTHER
Dad.

LLOYD
Some fried food--soak up the liquor. You’ll feel better in the morning. Essie--
ESTHER
Don’t call me that.

LLOYD
Tomorrow...tomorrow you can do whatever you like. Tonight, let me eat with my daughter on her birthday, Nu?

Lloyd watches as his daughter’s face softens. Frank Sinatra’s Witchcraft begins to play.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
(Ruthlessly charming)
You still like knishes?

INT. DINER – NIGHT

Lovely, warm, very New York. Esther and her father are working on a huge spread of knishes, latkes and soup. The music continues on the radio.

LLOYD
So--I got you something.

He hands her a dark brown mahogany box with a silver star of David on it.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
Open it.

She does. Inside she finds several sheets of goat-skin parchment, a stone stylus, and a little bottle of ink.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
It’s from Portugal. A rabbi buried it during the inquisition. That box is about 500 years old.

ESTHER
Did you steal it?

LLOYD
Smartass. No. I did not steal it. There was this expedition. They found this artifact, asked your very learned father to authenticate it and gave him this as a thank you.

ESTHER
Where’s this artifact now?
LLOYD
The Jewish Museum.

ESTHER
Oh my god. Remember that story you used to tell me about the...the secret door in the Jewish museum?

LLOYD
Remember it. You made me repeat it over and over.

ESTHER
Until Mom came in, yeah.

LLOYD
And we had to pretend you’d gone to bed at 8:30 PM sharp after drinking a glass of milk.

ESTHER
Thanks for covering for me, by the way.

LLOYD
Dr. Leibowitz had no idea where I was getting so much calcium.

ESTHER
(re:parchment)
So does this do anything, or...

LLOYD
Hasn’t for a while. But back then...they used to write out protection charms on this parchment.

Esther smiles a little.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
What?

ESTHER
You’re just going through all the stuff I loved when I was little. Don’t you care that your plan is totally transparent?

LLOYD
Not if it’s working, no. I don’t.

Beat.
ESTHER
It’s a really nice gift.

She puts it away in her backpack, trying not to make eye contact.

LLOYD
So. Tell me what you’re studying.

ESTHER
Oh, um. Psychology. I think I wanna be a therapist. You know. Help people who’ve been through stuff.

LLOYD
On top of everything else, you’re empathetic.

ESTHER
Not really. Just have a lot of prior experience with trauma on my resume.

Oy.

LLOYD
Es. You know I wouldn’t have gone if I didn’t have to, right? It wasn’t working. Wasn’t like your mother wanted me there, by the way.

ESTHER
That’s not how she tells it.

LLOYD
Well. It was a long time ago. And I’m hoping now that...that maybe it can change.

ESTHER
Yeah, that’s what I was hoping all through high school. I was hoping you’d maybe give me a call.

LLOYD
I was trying to...I don’t know. Thought maybe you were better off without me.

ESTHER
I’ve never been better off without you, Dad. I have...I have missed you. So much.
LLOYD
Look, I wasn’t just saying that thing about your birthday to get my foot in the door.

He extends his hand. Esther looks at it apprehensively. He withdraws.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
You’re an entire person now, Es...we could see each other. If that’s what you wanted. I could hear all about your life. You could hear about mine.

ESTHER
Yeah...speaking of which. What are you doing?

LLOYD
Oh, you know. A funeral here, a wedding there. It hasn’t been...to be honest, it hasn’t been easy. Especially the past few months.

ESTHER
Where are you living? Have you been in the city?

LLOYD
I was in Kansas for a while.

ESTHER
I didn’t know they had Jews in Kansas.

LLOYD

ESTHER
Can I come visit you? Like see your place?

LLOYD
No. No I wouldn’t want you to see it.

He takes a deep breath, tears up just a tiny bit. Esther takes his hands in hers.
ESTHER
It’s gonna be okay, Dad. We’ll figure it out.

LLOYD
Entire person.

Beat.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
I want to be a part of your life but in order to do that...there’s some things I need to take care of. And...I’m just not sure how.

ESTHER
What do you mean?

LLOYD
I’ve just...dug myself into a hole, Nu? I’m not sure how to get out.

Something has changed...the spell Lloyd has cast on Esther is wearing off.

ESTHER
(warily)
Is there something I can do?

LLOYD
Well...what if we could do it...exactly like you said. Figure it out together.

Esther bristles.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
If we could go together to your mother.

ESTHER
For what?

LLOYD
I need a loan. I wanna do right by you, and I have to pay off my debts, if I wanna--

ESTHER
No.
LLOYD
Be a father to you--if I want
things to change from when you were-

ESTHER
No, Dad, you’re joking, right?

LLOYD
I’m not...this would be...I would
pay it back right away...I wouldn’t
ask, it’s just time sensitive

LLOYD (CONT’D)
And I still trust your mother
more than anything. She’s
still family to me. Will you
just listen?

ESTHER
Oh, I didn’t know it was time
sensitive. That changes
everything.

LLOYD (CONT’D)
It is time sensitive that’s
why--I wouldn’t ask if I
didn’t--try to understand,
I’d be doing it for your
sister, Es. For you--

ESTHER (CONT’D)
So what’s it for? Gotta be
pretty big for you to finally
remember my birthday. “Entire
person.” I’m your mark, Dad?
I’m your mark for this?

LLOYD
No you’re not--of course you’re not
my--

ESTHER
I’m going. I’m going and if you try
to contact me again, Lloyd, I will
get a restraining order. Do you
understand?

He reaches out as she’s leaving, grabs her hand.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Don’t.

She takes her coat from the booth.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
The knishes really sold it, Nu?

She leaves him there, storming out of the diner and into the
night.

18 INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT

18 Make Me Wanna Die by The Pretty Reckless plays.

19
Esther walks in, takes the box out from her backpack, raises it up to smash it on the floor, then crumples, instead. She puts the box in her underwear drawer instead, and slams it. She gets into bed, pulls the blankets over her head.

FADE TO BLACK.

A Strokes song or something equivalent plays as we see...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

THREE MONTHS LATER...

Esther, deep in conversation with a medium-interesting boy named ARI.

ARI
I’m not saying Pulp Fiction is the be-all, end-all, I just mean--

ESTHER
Be-all, end-all, yeah, no, that’s what it sounds like you’re saying--

ARI
But like...if you look at what he’s doing...

ESTHER
What he’s doing? I can tell you right now he’s doing a shit ton of cocaine.

ARI
That’s fair. What’s your major, anyway? You haven’t told me.

Esther beckons the bartender--

ESTHER
Can I get another...

He refills her shot-glass with tequila. She kills it, not even wincing.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Thank you. Um. Probation. My major is probation.

ARI
Oh...how’d that happen?

ESTHER
Well, I didn’t do any of my homework for a semester. And I went to class once. Twice. Once.
ARI
Gotcha...I mean, people go through shit. Get in trouble. Oh man...this one time...it was so embarrassing. My family’s coming back from Paris, right? And my dad gets stopped cause he’s got all these illegal cheeses. We thought he was gonna get arrested.

ESTHER
My dad almost got arrested once too.

ARI
For what?

ESTHER
He embezzled $186,000 from a synagogue.

Ari laughs. He thinks she’s joking.

ARI
Fuck, you’re funny. I wish we could hang out after this. But I’m projecting for the film series.

ESTHER
Oh. Oh yeah. That’s too bad.

27 INT. PROJECTION BOOTH - NIGHT

Esther and Ari make out vigorously in the projection booth, Esther perched on the table, Ari in a swivel chair. Esther accidentally knocks the projector over. It crashes to the ground, and the screen outside the booth goes black. They continue to make out.

28 INT. ARI’S BEDROOM - DAY

Esther wakes up to the sound of her phone ringing. She grunts sleepily, squints at the contact photo--Miri making a goofy face, her mouth full of spaghetti. Esther answers as she pulls on her clothes.

ESTHER
(whispering)
Hello?

Her eyes widen in shock. Something has happened.
EXT. TEMPLE BETH-EL - DAY

The girls walk together. They are wearing black.

MIKI
Are you okay?

ESTHER
I’m okay.

MIKI
You’re sure?

ESTHER
I’m sure.

MIKI
You don’t have to go in if you don’t—

ESTHER
I can go in.

MIKI
You sure?

ESTHER
How many more times are you gonna ask me do you think?

MIKI
Four, probably. Somewhere in the vicinity of four.

INT. TEMPLE BETH-EL - DAY

And now we see the event itself—their father’s funeral. RABBI DAVID COHN, one of their father’s former friends, stands on the bimah.

RABBI DAVID
Lloyd was—well. We all know this—he was a storyteller. Better one than me that’s for sure. And he knew it.

We see there’s a pretty big crowd here. Rachel and Esther sit on either side of Miri. They are the only ones not smiling sadly at this affectionate eulogy

RABBI DAVID (CONT’D)
Lloyd could pick out any tune you could ask for on the piano.
ESTHER
This is a great eulogy. Don’t you think this is a great eulogy, Miri?

MIRI
Esther, you have to be quiet right now.

RABBI DAVID
Sometimes you’d just hear this lounge version of *Surrey With The Fringe on Top* emanating from the Bimah.

ESTHER
Yup, that’s what I remember about Dad. His jazzy cover of *Oklahoma*. Not how he slithered down the ranks once he was fired for embezzling.

Rachel snickers a little bit. Miri looks at her in horror.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
From weddings, to funerals, right on down to off-the-books circumcisions.

MIRI
He was a rabbi, not a mohel.

RACHEL
Hence “off the books.”

Miri puts her head in her hands.

32 INT. FUNERAL RECEPTION – DAY 32

Esther has made her way to the buffet table and is shoveling bagels into her bag.

MIRI
You shouldn’t be doing that.

ESTHER
Cover me and I’ll give you half the everything bagels.

Miri considers this offer and obeys. Esther finishes up, and beckons Miri. They move to another part of the room to avoid suspicion.

MIRI
Sure you’re ok?

ESTHER
Just cause Dad died, I’m not okay?
MIRI
I mean, there’s also the fact that neither of us saw him for seven years.

ESTHER
(vaguely)
Yeah.

MIRI
Esther.

ESTHER
What.

MIRI
Neither of us saw him for seven years, right?

ESTHER
Yeah, no. I mean I saw him last year, but--

What?

MIRI
But it was just for a--

ESTHER
You saw Dad and you didn’t tell me?

MIRI
I don’t wanna--

ESTHER
How was it?

Oh, you know he apologized for everything, agreed to pay the rest of my tuition and my student loans. And then he turned into a pink fluffy Pegasus and galloped through the city streets. How do you think it was?

MIRI
Es...

ESTHER
Hey--who’s that guy?
MIRI
Nice try you really think I’m gonna-
-
She looks where Esther’s pointing and immediately gets
distracted.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Oh my god, who’s that guy?

They both stare in confusion at a SKETCHY STRANGER, mid-
thirties, munching on a black and white cookie in the corner.
He’s underdressed, his yarmulke dissonant with his jean-
jacket and faded t-shirt.

ESTHER
Is that the guy who came when the
car got repossessed?

MIRI
When you were 12? No. Maybe it’s--
oh, what was your nickname for his
weird friend?

ESTHER
Which weird friend?

MIRI
Fred--Fred who sold us all that
crappy furniture and then went to
jail.

ESTHER
(still watching the guy)
Oh yeah. Jailbird Fred.

The sketchy guy finishes his cookie and skulks out of Es’s
sightline. Her brow furrows.

EXT. TEMPLE BETH EL – DAY

Esther and Miri stand outside the temple, waiting for Rachel,
who momentarily is ushered out by Rabbi David. He holds her
hand in a special Rabbi way. Rachel politely excuses herself
and joins her daughters.

ESTHER
What did David want?
RACHEL
He was talking about this exhibit? Apparently Lloyd helped to authenticate some artifact for the Jewish Museum, there’s a benefit or something...I wasn’t really listening.

ESTHER
Okay well who’s gonna be the one to tell the Jewish Museum they’re getting scammed?

RACHEL
How are you two getting home? You need anything?

RACHEL (CONT’D)          ESTHER
You want some money, Es? You can take a cab. I’m fine on the subway, Mom. Keep it.

MIRI
Es is coming downtown with me, Mom. She’s gonna sleep over.

RACHEL
Fine, just don’t stand so close to the tracks.

MIRI          ESTHER
Ok, mom. (Doing Hepburn)

RACHEL
I’m trying to do something nice for you. One nice thing. Am I supposed to stand far away from the tracks, really close to them? I can never remember.

MIRI
Mom, you didn’t have to come today.

RACHEL
What, you thought I was gonna let you two go through that bullshit alone?

MIRI
Exactly. You deserve the cab.
Rachel is momentarily appeased. She stands on the corner and hails a cab. Before she gets in she kisses Miri on the forehead.

RACHEL
Don’t stay up too late.

As she’s getting in she commands Esther...

RACHEL (CONT’D)
And respond to my texts.

And with that she’s gone. The girls walk towards the subway, perfectly in sync.

MIRI
She’s right, you know. You never respond to texts.

ESTHER
You don’t have to respond to texts in a group chat. Direct quote from the Torah.

38
INT. MIRI’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

The girls return to the dark apartment, light streaming in from the hall as they open the door.

MIRI
You wanna watch something?

ESTHER
Watch is the wrong word. I want to consume. I want to consume Gossip Girl until I am Gossip Girl.

Miri turns on the light to find the sketchy guy from the funeral sitting on her couch. She looks around, for a weapon, decides on her NPR totebag, filled with extremely heavy law books, and begins swinging it into the stranger’s head. He falls to the ground.

SKETCHY GUY
Jesus. That’s my eye.

We realize as he speaks for the first time that he is British.

MIRI
Esther, call 911.
SKETCHY GUY
That’s not gonna help.

MIRI
Now, Esther.

Esther dials 911. An odd pause as it rings. Miri stands over the stranger, totebag still in hand. He looks up at her, squinting.

SKETCHY GUY
(re: the bag)
What, are you selling dictionaries or something?

A vibrating and old-school flip-phone ringtone emanating from Sketchy Guy, in sync with the ringing on Esther’s phone. Somehow, her call has been routed to him instead of 911.

ESTHER
(horrified)
It’s ringing.

Sketchy Guy answers the phone, speaks into it. We can hear his voice on Es’s phone as well.

SKETCHY GUY
Yeah, 911, please state the nature of your emergency.

MIRI
Who are you?

SKETCHY GUY
I’m not here to murder you or anything if that’s what you think. I was friends with your father.

MIRI
Friends?

SKETCHY GUY
Colleagues, really. Now are you gonna let me sit down? Or does your sister have a backpack full of encyclopedias she’d like to throw my way?

Miri backs off, suspiciously, comes to stand with her sister as the guy takes his seat back on the couch.
SKETCHY GUY (CONT’D)
I’m not gonna lie to you. Your father owed my boss quite a bit of money.

Miri and Esther look at him like and?

SKETCHY GUY (CONT’D)
People are usually surprised by that...anyway the two of you have the misfortune of being his last remaining relatives. Blood relatives, that is. I reckon you’d rather not see your mum involved.

MIRI
Ok, please don’t touch our mom.

SKETCHY GUY
Exactly my point.

MIRI
We don’t have the money.

SKETCHY GUY
Yeah, well no one ever does, do they? Something still has to be worked out.

MIRI
Tonight?

SKETCHY GUY
Not tonight. But soon.

ESTHER
Who’s your boss? Our father owed money to a lot of people. You have to be specific.

SKETCHY GUY
Probably best to let him explain.

He takes a pen and a post-it from Miri’s end-table, writes an address.

SKETCHY GUY (CONT’D)
Meet me tomorrow. 10 AM sharp. I’ll take you to him.

He hands the post-it to Miri. Esther comes to look at it.

MIRI
What happens if we don’t show up?
The guy collects himself, gets up, heads for the door.

SKETCHY GUY
That’s understandable. Perfectly understandable response...but if you don’t show, it won’t be me in here tomorrow. It’ll be another guy. One who won’t flinch at a totebag.

He’s leaving when Miri says...

MIRI
What’s your name?

He looks at her curiously. People don’t ask that a lot...

MIRI (CONT’D)
I’d like to be able to refer to the person threatening my family as something other than “sketchy British guy.”

SKETCHY GUY
Samuel. Sam.

And with that, he leaves. The girls look at each other, neither of them quite sure how to proceed.

INT. MIRI’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Laura Marling’s Ghosts plays.

Miri’s sheets rustle in the dark. Esther has crawled into bed with her.

MIRI
Mmmm. Your feet are cold.

ESTHER
Sorry...hey, Miri?

MIRI
Yeah.

ESTHER
How do you think he did that 911 thing?

MIRI
We talked about this. Underground British tech genius, remember? Dark web.
ESTHER
An underground British tech genius with a flip phone?

MIRI
I don’t know, okay? I just want to go in and figure out what’s going on. Once I have more information I’ll know what to do. Why are your toenails sharp like a troll?

ESTHER
Sorry…Miri?

MIRI
Yeah.

ESTHER
Do you remember…do you remember when Dad left—I ran out of the house after his cab and you ran after me?

MIRI
(sarcastically)
Yeah I think I remember that…

ESTHER
Am I crazy or did that cab driver wink at us?

MIRI
You are crazy. And he did wink at us…go to sleep, Es.

EXT. KATZ’S DELI – DAY
Sam chain smokes outside, sees the girls and puts out his cigarette with his foot.

SAM
You showed.

MIRI
Yeah, well. We didn’t want to meet that other guy you were talking about.

SAM
I mean…the other guy’s me…it was figurative.
(MORE)
SAM (CONT'D)
Like the first time I’d give you a chance to get your bearings and the second time...that really wasn’t clear? You didn’t get that?

MIRI
No. I thought they’d literally send a different, more competent guy.

SAM
Follow me.

INT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

As they walk, the familiar world of the Lower East Side begins to change. Sam takes them down windy-er and windy-er streets. Everything around them gets sketchier and more colorful. The wares people are vending look less like jewelry and a lot more like amulets.

ESTHER
Where are we?

SAM
Lower East Side. Where do you think?

ESTHER
I’ve lived here six years and I’ve never seen any of this.

SAM
You can’t just see it. You have to know where to look.

They’re clearly in an old part of the city. There’s tenements everywhere, cobblestone streets. Not like they’ve gone back in time or anything but they’re definitely in a different world.

SAM (CONT'D)
This way.

He takes them down...

INT. ALLEY - DAY

A narrow alley. They turn a corner.
EXT. MURRAY'S TAILORING - DAY

They reach a storefront. In old-timey lettering, the words Murray's Tailoring are stenciled on the window. Sam opens the door for the two girls and ushers them down a steep set of stairs. They reach another door and head in.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The skeeziest waiting room of all time. The Shirelles' original version of Will You Love Me Tomorrow plays on the radio. After a moment, the door at the end of the room is opened by MR. MURRAY, a congenial man in his early 60s, shabby but elegantly dressed.

MR. MURRAY
Esther? Miri?

FLASHBACK

EXT. STREET - DAY

Esther is fourteen again, looking at the driver of a cab winking at her before he drives her father away. It's THE SAME GUY.

PRESENT

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

We're back. Esther looks at Miri, who is also staring at Mr. Murray, the same look of recognition on her face.

MR. MURRAY
Come on in.

They follow him, Esther trying to hide her shock as they walk into...

INT. MR. MURRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

A nice carpet, some framed posters of old musicals, a Mets banner, and a coke machine in the corner. Most notably, the room is adorned with various magical-looking pendants. Mr. Murray sits down behind his desk, gets settled.

MR. MURRAY
Um. Drinks. You want drinks?

They're too weirded out to answer.
MR. MURRAY (CONT'D)
Samiel.

Wordlessly Sam goes to the machine, retrieves three coca-colas in old-fashioned glass bottles. He pops the caps off with the machine, slides them across the desk for Mr. Murray and the girls, and perches himself behind Mr. Murray, on top of the radiator.

MIRI
You’re Mr. Murray?

Mr. Murray nods. Esther is looking around the room, her eyes falling on the many Hamsas and evil eyes. Mr. Murray catches her eye and she quickly looks away.

MIRI (CONT’D)
It’s...so great to meet you.

MR. MURRAY
Oy. So serious. You must be Miri...and that would make you Esther. Casing the joint.

The girls look at each other, confused.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
What, you think your father never talked about you? He wasn’t lying for once. Very beautiful girls...

He loses himself for a moment in terrifying reverie. Sam clears his throat.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Oh, right. You’re waiting for an explanation. Well. Your father worked for me. For a very long time.

ESTHER
Doing what?

FLASHBACK

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Lloyd, wearing a baseball cap and up to no good, waits as a shadowy figure approaches.
MR. MURRAY (V.O.)
He started out selling charms for
me. Always with the commissions,
that one.

Lloyd hands the man a mystical looking necklace in a little
ziplock bag. The man gives him cash in return.

MR. MURRAY (V.O.)
Did so well we brought him in-
house.

INT. OFFICE - DAY
47

The same set-up--Mr. Murray at his desk, Sam behind. But
flanking Mr. Murray on the other side is Lloyd. Sitting where
Esther and Miri sit now is an older woman in tears.

Lloyd is carefully crafting a wax doll and carving hebrew
letters into it with a toothpick. He hands it to the woman.

MR. MURRAY (V.O.)
Standard sympathetic magic. Revenge
spells. Crowdpleasers.

The woman takes a pin from a little sewing kit in her bag,
stabs it deep into the heart of the figurine.

INT. BAR - NIGHT
48

Lloyd buys Mr. Murray a whiskey on the rocks. Sam watches
from the corner.

MR. MURRAY (V.O.)
But, your father was your father.
Couldn’t last without him asking me
for something extra...

MIRI (V.O.)
You lent him money?

PRESENT

INT. OFFICE - DAY
49

And we’re back. Mr. Murray smiles in response to Miri’s
question.
MR. MURRAY
I lent him money. And after three months of putting me off, he came back with a plan. “Forget the cash.” He said. “I have something better. I’ll run a job for you to end all jobs...I helped the Jewish Museum unearth some incantations--

MIRI
I’m sorry...Incantations?

Mr. Murray starts to answer, but Esther gets there first.

ESTHER
Chants written out in Hebrew on goatskin parchment. Sometimes they’re in Yiddish. Rabbis used them to ward off spirits and stuff.

Mr. Murray looks at Esther, impressed.

MR. MURRAY
Anyway, your father told me a story. “I held them in my hands. And on one of them, I signed my name.” Do you know what that means?

ESTHER
If he marked the incantation...that means only he could use it, right?

MR. MURRAY
Exactly right. Anyone else even tries to touch it with their bare hands and the thing will turn to ashes. Was his to do with as he pleased. “I’ll steal it back and use it for you.” Your father told me. “You’ll praise Adonai I ever owed you money.” But God had other plans...Heart attack. Terrible thing. Really was sorry to hear. Can’t get the image out of my mind...your father in some emergency room. Gasping for air...Well I’d love to reminisce about him all day, but it’s not in my stars. I’m out a job and a lot of money.

MIRI
How much money?
MR. MURR
Seventy thousand dollars.

Esther drops her coke on the floor in response.

MR MURRAY (CONT’D)
Don’t worry about that. We’ll clean that up later.

MIRI
Seventy thousand dollars.

ESTHER
What does it do, make Manischewitz palatable or something? Why is it worth that much to you?

Mr. Murray doesn’t have to answer. But the wildness and curiosity in Esther’s eyes charms and intrigues him.

MR. MURRAY
If read out loud. Correctly. By your father. This thing could banish ghosts. All ghosts from the person he’s blessing.

ESTHER
Which would be you, I’m assuming.

MR. MURRAY
You’d be assuming right.

ESTHER
You’re afraid of ghosts?

MIRI
Esther.

MR. MURRAY
No, no. It’s alright.

Mr. Murray curls in on himself like a freaked out cat. We become more aware that the office is a little cold and drafty.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Some spirits...don’t like taking responsibility. For their decisions. People in this business who have died...they tend to blame me. And it just gets...noisy. Would be nice to have some peace...
An almost tangible moment of connection between Esther and Mr. Murray.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
But. Your father’s dead now. No one to bless me. So the money’ll have to do.

MIRI
What happens if we don’t have it?

MR MURRAY.
Well then. We’d come to some other arrangement...The eyeballs of a rabbi’s daughter could fetch a good price around here. Especially big blue ones like yours.

The girls stiffen. Sam looks down at the ground.

MR MURRAY (CONT’D)
Now I can give you about a week to come up with the cash, but--

ESTHER
I have a question.

MR. MURRAY
A question?

ESTHER
Yeah. Like a comment slash question. Slash suggestion. It’s just...you keep saying you needed our father for the job. But he’s dead.

MR. MURRAY
Yes...

ESTHER
I’m alive. And I have his name...Yeah. Miri changed hers, but I never got around to it. Lots of paperwork...We can do it. We can run the job for you.

MIRI
Esther--
ESTHER
It’s a benefit at the Jewish Museum, right? We could find a way in or something--

SAM
Right, it’s not like anyone with the name can just waltz in--

MR. MURRAY
It takes skill. Knowledge. The kind your father had.

ESTHER
And you think I lived in a house with him for fourteen years without learning anything?...The Talmud isn’t just a holy text--

MIRI
Will you excuse us for just a second?

ESTHER
(To Mr. Murray)
It’s an instruction manual, right?

She steers Esther towards the door and out of the room.

Miri leads Esther into a corner.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Hi. Hi. Hi. What are you doing.

ESTHER
Saving our lives and our eyeballs apparently. What do you think I’m doing?

MIRI
This isn’t a joke.

ESTHER
I know that.

MIRI
This is--
ESTHER
Have you been saving money in a special “my Dad owes $70,000 to a magical mob boss” account because I completely missed that option at Wells Fargo.

MIRI
No. Obviously not.

ESTHER
Okay. Then trust me. I really think I can do this. And if I’m right...Miri, think about it. No more sketchy British guys in your apartment, no more elderly gangsters threatening to sell our eyeballs. Us and Dad...we’ll be done.

Miri looks at her sister. She takes a deep breath, and allows herself to believe.

51
INT. OFFICE - DAY

The girls come back in.

MR. MURRAY
Everything in order?

ESTHER
Depends. Do we have a deal?

MR. MURRAY
Well. I’m gonna need to see some proof first. Show me what your father taught you.

ESTHER
I was hoping you’d ask me that.

From her pocket, Esther takes the post-it on which Sam wrote the address. She takes a pen from Mr. Murray’s pen cup, writes out the string of Hebrew letters and numbers that her father taught her.

She folds the post-it into an airplane and launches it into the air. It takes off and speeds around the room. Everyone follows it with their eyes as it moves in graceful spirals. Finally, it comes to rest, landing smoothly on the runway of Mr. Murray’s desk. Miri’s eyes are wide. Sam and Mr. Murray are impressed.
MR. MURRAY
He’d have been so very proud of you...

Black Magic Woman by Fleetwood Mac begins to play.

INT. MR. MURRAY’S OFFICE – DAY

Five minutes later. The room is dark, our girls visible only by the light of ceremonial candles. Mr. Murray takes a ritual dagger from his desk and hands it first to Miri. Miri, wincing, makes a deep cut in her hand. Blood falls onto an awaiting piece of parchment. She uses it to sign her name.

Esther does the same, her hand steadier than Miri’s. She signs her name with a flourish, then looks Mr. Murray in the eyes, meeting his gaze.

EXT. ALLEYWAY – DAY

Samiel is walking Esther and Miri back towards the more savory part of the Lower East Side.

SAM
So I’m assuming you can get all the ingredients on your own.

ESTHER
Told you, I have everything under control.

SAM
Do you know what I’m talking about?...Something your father loved, something he loaned, something he lost...any of this ringing a bell?...

Esther caves a little, her face revealing the truth.

SAM (CONT’D)
You don’t know how to run this, do you love?

ESTHER
Not...not really. But I’m very anxious to learn.
SAM
Oh my god.

MIRI
Esther are you serious right now?

SAM
Right.

Sam begins to head back the way he came.

ESTHER
Whoa, okay where are you going?

SAM
I have to tell Mr. Murray.

ESTHER
No, no you don’t.

SAM
And why’s that exactly?

ESTHER
Because...um, you know...

MIRI
Sam, what about your contract? You have one like ours with Mr. Murray, don’t you? Or are you just his evil crony for fun?

SAM
Sure I have a contract. Crony’s a bit rude--

MIRI
Es is a fast learner. You teach her how to do this, you can take the credit afterwards. Might be able to use it as like a...

ESTHER
Bargaining chip.

MIRI
And then--Freedom.

ESTHER
Out of nowhere.

MIRI
Like magic.

ESTHER
Normal life.
MIRI
Doing taxes and getting broken up
with and stuff.

SAM
Alright. Fine. I’m listening.
Just...stop finishing each other’s
sentences it’s very annoying...if
this goes wrong in any way at all.
If you so much as blink at me the
wrong way...I am telling him you
lied. Understand?

The girls nod.

SAM (CONT’D)
And those contracts you signed are
binding. If you don’t perform to
his satisfaction--you’re his. Both
of you...Right. We’d better go to
mine. I’ve got stuff we can
practice with. Amulets,
incantations and the like.

He starts walking, the girls follow him.

ESTHER
(to Miri)
Thanks for backing me up by the wa--

MIRI
Don’t talk to me.

ESTHER
Okay.

57 INT. SAM’S APARTMENT – DAY 57

Sam opens the many locks on his apartment door, letting
Esther and Miri in, both of them carrying overnight bags.
The place is grimy, sad, and ill-decorated. As the girls take
it in, Sam settles down in an armchair.

MIRI
Do they not have Clorox wipes in
England?

SAM
Well that’s kind of offensive...

MIRI
I just mean if we’re gonna be
living here...
SAM
You’re not living here, you are
staying for two weeks.

MIRI
Two weeks is still--

SAM
I need to talk to your sister.

MIRI
Do you have coffee?

SAM
In the--

MIRI
I’ll find it.

Miri heads into the kitchen, Esther sits down with Sam.

SAM
Do you understand exactly what
you’ll be doing?

ESTHER
Stealing a thing.

SAM
Not just any thing. The Holy and
Awesome Name of 72.

ESTHER
Oh, I’m glad you’re excited about
it.

SAM
I’m not excited, that’s just what
it’s called.

ESTHER
Gotcha...and it banishes ghosts.

58 INT. JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT 58

We move steadily into the Jewish Museum, the lighting weird
and mystical and creepy. Only guy in the building is a
janitor. In the center of an exhibit full of amulets and
ritual daggers is the scroll itself, encased in glass.
SAM (V.O.)
Well. Reports vary. Cures everything from hives to heartbreak.

The janitor looks at the scroll, curiously.

SAM (V.O.)
But that story Mr. Murray told...it’s the one that kinda overtook the others.

INT. MR. MURRAY’S OFFICE - NIGHT
The light of a million candles surrounds Mr. Murray. He has put on an evil eye necklace over the Hamsa and is rocking back and forth slowly in his chair, murmuring something.

SAM (V.O.)
If read out loud. Correctly. The Holy and Awesome Name has the power to banish malevolent spirits. Anyone still knocking around in your head after they’ve died...

ESTHER
They’ll be banished? From our world?

SAM
Not from our world, but from your mind and body. It’d be like...going through intensive therapy and exercising for your entire life. Only you took this convenient little shortcut.

INT. SAM’S APARTMENT - DAY
Esther is listening intently. Miri comes out of the kitchen with a coffee mug in hand.

MIRI
So what are the ingredients you were talking about? This coffee is terrible by the way.

SAM
Well, That piece of parchment is 500 years old. It knows stuff, and--
ESTHER
It knows stuff. What, it’s alive?

SAM
I mean it’s not gonna have a conversation with you but, you know. It’s not not alive. It expects something from you. Your father, were he still with us, would have sacrificed some stuff to get it back.

ESTHER
Something he loved, something he loaned, something he lost. Then what?

SAM
Crush the items into a mixture, use them to make a circle around yourself, use the energy of the circle to summon the Holy and Awesome Name.

ESTHER
Sounds very new age-y to me.

SAM
Mystics began this stuff in medieval times so old-aney, really.

ESTHER
And because my father could do it--

SAM
It’s not about your father anymore. It’s about...you know.

Sam gestures vaguely upwards.

ESTHER
What, God?

SAM
If you think about it that way, it might get a bit overwhelming. Sit on the floor.

Esther obeys. Sam takes Miri’s coffee from her, places it in front of Esther. He takes a silver hamsa on a long chain from a drawer in the coffee table.
SAM (CONT'D)
I’m gonna drag this around us and
we’re gonna say the Rosh Hashannah
prayer, alright? The blessing for
the apples and honey.

ESTHER
Are we sweetening something?

SAM
Your sister’s coffee. Hopefully.

Esther looks at Miri skeptically, Miri shrugs. Esther opens
her mouth to speak.

SAM (CONT’D)
Not so fast. There’s one more
thing.

ESTHER
Yeah?

SAM
You have to stay grounded.

ESTHER
Grounded?

SAM
Can’t just be a vessel for pure
energy. It needs to go somewhere.
Get distributed so it doesn’t
overpower you.

ESTHER
And how do I do that?

SAM
Well for now, I’m gonna be your
anchor. We’ll share it.

ESTHER
Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu,
melekh ha’olam,
bo’re p’ri ha’etz

SAM (CONT’D)
Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu,
melekh ha’olam,
bo’re p’ri ha’etz

SAM (CONT’D)
Very good. Now.

He sits down.

SAM (CONT’D)
Close your eyes.
Esther does.

SAM (CONT’D)
Do you feel any warmth? Any vibrations?

ESTHER
I feel...itchy.

SAM
Yeah, it’ll do that too. Like static electricity or something.

ESTHER
And um. Warmth, yeah. In my wrists...is that God? Is that God in my wrists?

SAM
Energy’s in your wrists. Don’t overthink it...send the vibrations into your fingers.

There could be a sound effect here or something in the music—energy creeping forward mischievously from Esther’s wrists to her fingers.

SAM (CONT’D)
Right. Open your eyes.

Esther does.

SAM (CONT’D)
I’m gonna take your hands if that’s okay.

Esther nods. Sam takes her hands in his. She stiffens a little at the touch of this stranger.

SAM (CONT’D)
We’re gonna put the sweetness together piece by piece.

ESTHER
How?

SAM
With a very old word. Indolico. Comes by way of our ancestors in Turkey. We build it together. Syllable by syllable. In. Indo. Indoli. Indolico. Alright?
ESTHER
It doesn’t mean anything weird, does it?

SAM
We’re sweetening a cup of coffee. It means “to sweeten.” Nu?

ESTHER
Nu. Yeah.

SAM
Make sure your mind is blank. As blank as it can be.

Esther squirms uncomfortably.

ESTHER
Did you ever do this with my father?

SAM
Best not to think about that right now.

ESTHER
(uneasily)
Got you.

SAM
You need to stop?

ESTHER
I’m fine. Centered, blank mind, one with the force, etcetera.

Beat.

SAM
In. Indo. Indoli. Indolico.

He gestures at Es, encouraging her to join in.

ESTHER          SAM (CONT’D)

ESTHER          SAM (CONT’D)

Esther closes her eyes AND SEES HER FATHER, holding her hands and chanting along with her. He winks conspiratorially.

MIRI (V.O.)
Oh my god.
SAM (V.O.)
Hold on. It’s okay.

INT. SAM’S APARTMENT - DAY

Esther opens her eyes to find the cup of coffee on fire. Miri is dragging her away from it. Sam, hurrying back from the kitchen with a Chinese food container filled with water, uses it to extinguish the fire. Everyone tries to catch their breath.

MIRI
Es, are you okay?

ESTHER
I’m--yeah I’m fine. Did I...what just happened?

SAM
You closed your eyes, you were holding my hands very tightly--I think you conjured some sort of image that was outside of our purpose. Did you see anything?

ESTHER
Did I see anything? No.

SAM
Were you thinking about your father?

ESTHER
(defensively)
No.

Beat.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
I mean...I didn’t mean to.

SAM
If you’re not grounded, the energy gets channeled somewhere it’s not supposed to. Grief, rage, all that fun stuff. You have to stay rooted in something to keep your mind from going there.

ESTHER
And if I can’t?
SAM
If you can’t then...I don’t know. I
don’t know, we might have a
problem.

INT. SAM’S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Esther has fallen asleep on the couch. Sam moves past her
quietly, trying not to wake her. There’s a light coming from
the kitchen. He pads in to find Miri rummaging through his
fridge.

SAM
What are you doing?

MIRI
Can’t sleep. I thought I’d organize
your fridge...

Off his look.

MIRI (CONT’D)
I’ll stop.

SAM
Yeah, I would if I were you.

MIRI
Why are you up?

SAM
Just trying to figure out how to
help your sister.

MIRI
What exactly happened back there?

SAM
She’s powerful. Just as powerful as
your Dad. But she’s not grounded.
Channeling that energy--it was like
a hairdryer in a bathtub or
something. I thought if I anchored
her she’d be alright.

MIRI
Well--I mean couldn’t that be part
of the problem? You anchoring, I
mean? Not that there’s anything
wrong with you. Having to do with
this anyway...it’s just...Esther
might need someone she trusts.
SAM
There’s someone your sister trusts?

MIRI
A couple of us. Just not strangers. This one time when she was really little? We went to the Stardust Diner. You know, with the train and the singing waiters? And one of them sits in the booth. Right next to her. And she was so not into it--she just crawled under the table. So I crawled under too. And I held her hand until she wasn’t scared anymore.

Beat. Sam looks at Miri, an idea striking him.

MIRI (CONT’D)
What?

INT. SAM’S APARTMENT - DAY

Esther, sleeping, wakes up to Miri’s face.

ESTHER
Uhn.

SAM
Remember what I told you we needed?

ESTHER
Something my father loved, something he loaned, something he lost.

SAM
We’re gonna get one of those things today. And you’re gonna use an incantation.

ESTHER
Might I remind you that we tried that yesterday and God hated it so much He implemented pyrotechnics?

SAM
First of all, way more complicated than that, second of all, I’m not gonna perform it with you.

He gestures to Miri with his head.
SAM (CONT'D)
She is.

Esther looks at Miri, unsure. Miri smiles back assuringly.

SAM (CONT'D)
If your sister anchors you, I think we have a better chance.

ESTHER
(To Miri)
And my sister is okay with this?

MIRI
If it works? Yes I am.

SAM
Now. What’s something your father loved?

ESTHER
Stealing money.

MIRI
Getting high at funerals.

ESTHER
Getting high at Miri’s Bat Mitzah.

MIRI
Wait, what?

SAM
Oh my god. A thing. A physical thing.

MIRI
Something he loved? Genuinely?

Sam nods. Miri looks to Esther.

ESTHER
He loved playing the piano.

EXT. TEMPLE BETH-EL - DAY

Our heroes are walking towards the synagogue. Miri and Sam are wearing worker’s jumpsuits, Esther is not. They reach the entrance.

Sam hands Esther a burlap sack, the content of which is unknown to us.
SAM
At exactly 10:10, say the incantation. And your sister will be saying it too.

ESTHER
What if you guys can’t get in?

Sam looks at Miri expectantly.

MIRI
We’ll get in, Es. I promise.

Esther looks at her sister who returns her gaze reassuringly. She heads around the back of the Synagogue.

INT. TEMPLE BETH-EL LOBBY - DAY

Miri and Sam approach the front desk.

MIRI
When I said Esther needs an anchor she trusts--

SAM
Uh-huh?

MIRI
I didn’t mean me.

SAM
What exactly was I supposed to take away from that story?

MIRI
That singing waiters can be very disorienting? We were in a kitchen at 2 A.M. I didn’t think this was an actual possibility.

SAM
Sure you did. You’d never pitch anything you didn’t think was a viable option.

MIRI
That is not what I--

SAM
You’ve made yourself a part of this world as much as your sister.

(MORE)
SAM (CONT'D)
Might as well have a little fun
with it, Nu?

They’re interrupted by the receptionist at the Synagogue’s
front desk.

RECEPTIONIST
Shalom.

MIRI
Shalom. Hi.

SAM
Shalom.

RECEPTIONIST
Can I help you two with something?

SAM
Oh--had no one mentioned?

MIRI
We’re here to tune the piano.

RECEPTIONIST
Really? I didn’t see anything on
the calendar...Unless...wait a
minute, who’d you talk to on the
phone? Did you talk to Karen?

MIRI
I think--yeah it was Karen
wasn’t it?

SAM
I think we did talk to a
“Karen,” yeah...

RECEPTIONIST
She went to sleepaway camp with the
cantor’s cousin. Can’t make a
spreadsheet to save her life.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE – DAY

Esther is on a bench outside, taking ingredients from the
sack--a vial of water and a canister of kosher salt.

ESTHER
Grounded. I’m grounded. So very
grounded.

INT. SYNAGOGUE – DAY

The receptionist leads Esther and Sam into the synagogue and
towards the piano.
RECEPTIONIST
Our rabbi played it for our children’s Shabbat service on Friday and it sounded wonderful...

SAM
We deal in...very subtle tonal flaws.

They approach the instrument, then look at each other blankly for a moment. Sam goes in first, plays two random keys together.

SAM (CONT’D)
Oh yeah. You hear that? The notes are fruit-forward with an oaky aftertaste.

MIRI
Textbook piano sickness, ma’am.

The receptionist nods, somewhat perplexed, and leaves.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Oaky aftertaste?

SAM
I’m not musical.

Miri sits down in the center of the room, checks the time on her phone and we see...

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Esther checking the time on her phone, pouring water into a bowl. She begins to chant.

ESTHER

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Miri, still seated on the ground, is chanting as well.

MIRI
Opna.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Esther, feeling the energy emanating from her sister’s words as well as her own, continues.
ESTHER
(smiling a little)

INT. SYNAGOGUE LOBBY - DAY

A woman wearing one of those shirts with the shoulders cut out, clearly KAREN, strolls in.

RECEPTIONIST
Karen. Nice of you to stop by...I wish you’d told me about those piano people. They might conflict with evening services.

KAREN
(blankly)
Piano people?

The receptionist’s brow furrows.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

The receptionist and Karen burst in to find Sam and Miri moving the piano towards the door.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Esther pours the salt into the water and stirs it counter-clockwise.

ESTHER
Op. Opna...

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

The synagogue fills up with mist.

MIRI
Opnare. Opnarerei.

Miri looks at Sam, who nods. They begin to push the piano towards the emergency exit.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Esther is anxiously stirring the water with her finger.
ESTHER
Come on, come on, come on, come on...

Miri and Sam come bursting through the doors. Esther sighs in relief.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Karen and the receptionist stride towards the doors, their view obstructed by all the frikkin’ mist, obviously.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Esther and Miri are marveling at what just happened.

ESTHER
Oh my god. Oh my god. Mist. We made mist. We’re mistmakers.

MIRI
I saw.

SAM
The doors.

ESTHER
Oh right.

Esther takes a spool of thread from the bag, breaks off a piece with her teeth, and ties it in a knot around the door handles.

Frustrated banging emanates from within, but the thread holds, unbreakable as a metal chain.

SAM
Come on. It’ll only keep for about five minutes. Maybe less.

ESTHER
Where are we taking the piano?

SAM
Orchard Beach.

ESTHER
(exhilarated)
How are we getting there? Some sort of spell?
SAM
Oh yeah. A really powerful spell.

A VAN screeches around the corner and stops in front of them. In big red letters on the side it says “Murph’s Catering.”

INT. VAN - DAY

Miri and Esther sit in the back of this van with the piano and a whole lot of hors d’oeuvres in saran wrap. Esther has unwrapped the plate next to her and is helping herself.

ESTHER
Well this is kind of disappointing.

SAM
My friend’s doing me a favor. Don’t be a dick about it. And don’t eat the shrimp.

Esther takes another shrimp and eats it.

75
EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

75

Sam, Esther, and Miri stand, facing the piano, their backs to us as the waves crash in front of them. Love Love Love by The Mountain Goats plays.

Sam guides Esther’s hand as she pours a little bit of lighter fluid on a twist of parchment, places it inside the piano, near the pedals. Sam hands her a lighter, and she lights it.

They watch as the flames begin to envelop the piano.

ESTHER
So we just have to collect the ashes, right?

Sam nods “yes.”

MIRI
This feels very funereal...Es, I think we should say something.

ESTHER
What, like kaddish or something? For the piano?

MIRI
Yeah. For the piano...or, you know. For Dad? Maybe?
Esther looks at her incredulously.

**MIRI (CONT’D)**
You’re supposed to do it every day for a year.

**ESTHER**
For people, yes. That is what you’re supposed to do. Not the garbage fire in a yarmulke that was our father.

**MIRI**
Esther, that’s not fair.

**ESTHER**
You know what’s not fair? He has two daughters and the only thing he definitively loved has footpedals…I’m sorry, Miri, I can’t.

Esther storms away down the beach. Miri stares into the fire, trying not to cry. Beat.

**SAM**
Yitgadal v’yitkadash sh’mei raba.
B’alma di v’ra chirutei...

He trails off, looking to Miri for confirmation that it’s not weird--him saying the Kaddish for her dad. Beat.

**SAM (CONT’D)**

**MIRI**

**MIRI (CONT’D)**
(surprised, suspicious, and touched)

Amen.

**EXT. MARKETPLACE – DAY**

A new part of Sam and Mr. Murray’s Lower East Side we’ve never seen before. The girls are in a booth placing various dried animal parts in plastic bags. Sam leans on the booth’s support beam. Miri is focusing on bagging eyeballs, Esther is juggling three eyeballs pretty skillfully instead of bagging them.
SAM
(to Esther)
Hey.

She looks up.

SAM (CONT’D)
I’m three days behind on this packaging thanks to that piano thing. Get back to work. And try to think of something your father loaned.

Miri’s phone buzzes six times in a row.

SAM (CONT’D)
Who’s that?

MIRI
It’s our mom.

Her phone buzzes 4 to 6 more times.

SAM
What does she have 9 fingers on each hand?

MIRI
(To Es)
You were supposed to go jogging with her tomorrow

ESTHER
Well that doesn’t sound like me.

MIRI
Clearly, you’re a little busy becoming a hardened criminal, so I’m gonna cancel for you.

Esther gets an idea

ESTHER
Wait. Don’t do that.

MIRI
Why, what are you thinking?

ESTHER
I’m thinking about something Dad loaned.
MIRI
At Rachel Sachar’s apartment?
She gave everything he left to
Goodwill seven years ago.

ESTHER
Not everything.

Miri’s eyes brighten with recognition as she realizes what
Esther’s thinking.

EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

The three are now walking through the marketplace, on a
mission.

SAM
Your mum’s wedding ring...

ESTHER
Yup.

SAM
And that counts as something loaned
for a reason that’s about to be
pithily explained to me I’m
assuming...

ESTHER
On the day our father left, he was
waiting in the bedroom with a
packed bag for our mom to come
home. He told her, “I lost my job,
I’m moving out, and

ESTHER (CONT’D)  MIRI
“I don’t know if I ever loved  “I don’t know if I ever loved
you. I’m sorry. you. I’m sorry.”

ESTHER
Thus the ring, intended to be given
was in fact--

SAM
Loaned. Right.

They’ve reached their destination--another booth and a woman
manning it--late 50s with dyed blonde hair named ANGIE.

ANGIE
You look like you haven’t slept in
a month.
SAM
Well hello to you too, Angie.

ANGIE
You want a salve or something? Or is this a thing people are doing like a vampire look?

SAM
This is Miri and Esther. Stop looking so closely at my eyes.

ANGIE
Lloyd Horowitz’s girls?

The girls look at Sam like “what the fuck?”

ANGIE (CONT’D)
What can I do for you?

SAM
We need a Yiddish key. I can trade you a shipment of--

ANGIE
You come to my place of business and insult me? You’re not paying for anything.

Sam begins to protest--

ANGIE (CONT’D)
Not another word or no service.

She bustles into the darkness of the booth for a moment.

ESTHER
How’d she know who we are?

Sam raises an eyebrow mischievously instead of answering. In a moment, Angie returns.

ANGIE
C’mere, sweetie.

Esther steps forward. Angie takes a vial out of the bag.

ANGIE (CONT’D)
This is snake-fat. You’re gonna rub it on...

She takes out another foot of a bird, this one slightly thinner and more imposing than the chicken’s foot from earlier.
ANGIE (CONT’D)
This. It’s from a very nice raven named Joshua. Then you’re gonna
stroke the lock and say “efenen
Adonai.” Three times.

ESTHER
And if Miri anchors me--I’ll be
able to do it?

ANGIE
That’s what this schmuck told you,
Nu?

SAM
Hey.

ANGIE
Anchors can be very effective, but
for this one--you can’t be rooted
in someone else. You have to be
rooted in your purpose. You’re
opening something specifically not
meant to be opened. If you don’t
believe in what you’re doing, it’ll
backfire.

ESTHER
Backfire how?

ANGIE
Some people get nauseous, run a
fever. My cousin’s boyfriend once
broke out into this disgusting rash
with this yellow pus oozing out of
his--

SAM
Alright I think we get the idea.
Thank you.

Angie puts the ingredients away and hands the bag to Esther.

ANGIE
I threw in the salve for British
Edward Cullen over here.

SAM
Uh-huh.

They start to walk away...

ANGIE
Oh, and Sam?
Sam returns to the booth, Angie leans in, glancing over at Miri and whispering confidentially--

ANGIE (CONT’D)
I like her for you.

Sam takes a cigarette from a pack in his pocket, lights up, eyes on the ground. He doesn’t wanna talk about this.

SAM
Bye, Angie.

Sam joins the girls again.

MIRI
What did she say?

SAM
Oh, um. The rash turned out to be infected. Her cousin’s boyfriend had to take antibiotics.

MIRI
Okay.

SAM
After that it kept peeling for months.

MIRI
Why are you telling me this?

SAM
I don’t know.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET – DAY

Sam, Esther, and Miri are walking briskly towards Prospect Park. Miri is wearing jogging clothes. Esther is wearing the kind of clothes non-jogging people wear when they are forced to go jogging.

ESTHER
Sure of my purpose. Is anyone completely sure of their purpose?

SAM
It’s a trick you have to play on your brain.

ESTHER
How?
SAM
You’re sure what you’re doing is the right thing, aren’t you?

ESTHER
I mean--

SAM
Relatively the right thing.

ESTHER
Yes. Yes I am.

They reach the park, form almost a huddle by a tree.

SAM
So hold on to that.

MIRI
Okay, there’s mom. Subway.

Esther and Sam look at the subway entrance from which Rachel is indeed emerging.

SAM
Wow. That is some purposeful walking.

ESTHER
Yup.

MIRI
She walks everywhere like that.

ESTHER
You get used to it.

SAM
Stay cool. Stay grounded. She’s not even gonna know that anything’s wrong.

He puts on a baseball cap and skulks sketchily away.

80
EXT. PROSPECT PARK - DAY 80

The girls are jogging, trying to keep up with Rachel who is very fast. Miri’s doing pretty well, Es is out of breath.

RACHEL
What’s wrong?
ESTHER
Nothing.

RACHEL
Need to slow down?

ESTHER
Thanks mom, I’m fine.

Rachel and Miri move more slowly so Esther can catch up.

RACHEL
What was I just asking you?

ESTHER
I think you were--

RACHEL
That’s right, I was asking about school...How’d that psych exam end up going?

ESTHER
It went fine.

RACHEL
Did you get it back?

ESTHER
Not yet.

RACHEL
You know you can always ask the TA to give you some hel--

ESTHER
Before I even get the test back, that seems rational.

RACHEL
Don’t get defensive I just wanna know what’s going on with you.

Esther can’t take this conversation any more. She kicks the plan into action, accidentally “tripping” over something and falling to the ground.

ESTHER
Ow.

MIRI
Esther, you okay?

Rachel runs to her daughter’s aid.
ESTHER
Yeah...I’m okay I think--

She gets up, winces a little bit.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
I can keep going--

RACHEL
I don’t know. Maybe we should head home.

ESTHER
I’m fine. I just need some ice or something.

RACHEL
Bu--

ESTHER
It’s really okay. I’m not gonna ruin your run.

Esther and Miri wait for a very scary second. Beat. Rachel takes her keys from a pocket in her leggings.

RACHEL
Head back to the house and lie down.

ESTHER
Oh no I don’t need to--

RACHEL
(forcefully)
There’s icepacks in the freezer.

Esther takes the keys and conspicuously limps off the path.

81
INT. RACHEL’S APARTMENT – DAY

Esther comes in, takes a deep breath. Heads to her mom’s bedroom.

82
INT. RACHEL’S BEDROOM – DAY

Esther comes into her mom’s room, feeling uneasier and guiltier by the second.

She walks towards the dresser as if she’s scared it’s watching her.
She opens the top drawer, digging through underwear and bras until she finds the locked jewelry box she was looking for. Something underneath it that catches her eye—a pile of pictures. On top sits one of her mother and father on their wedding day.

ESTHER

Hi, Dad.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK – DAY

Miri stops jogging to discover Rachel is several steps behind her.

RACHEL

We should go back.

MIRI

Why?

RACHEL

Because your sister’s gonna start walking around on that ankle.

MIRI

I don’t think so...

RACHEL

Besides, there’s some other things I want to talk to her about.

MIRI

She might be asleep or something, Mom--

RACHEL

Miri Rebecca Sachar, Do you have some vested interest in us staying?

Beat.

MIRI

No, of course not. Let’s go home.

She takes out her phone and texts Esther.

INT. RACHEL’S BEDROOM – DAY

Esther’s phone buzzes, but she is completely oblivious staring at the photos. There’s one of her, Miri and Lloyd, celebrating Chanukah with a pile of barbies and dress-up clothes.
EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

Rachel is basically race-walking. Miri is attempting to subtly slow her down by walking a step behind. She looks at her phone. No new messages.

MIRI
(under her breath)
Come on, Es...

INT. RACHEL’S BEDROOM - DAY

Esther reaches a photo of herself and her father sitting together at the very piano that she burned the day before. Suddenly she hears footsteps, and Miri speaking very loudly.

MIRI (O.S)
ES WE’RE BACK.

She hastily takes the polyester sack from her bag, rubs some snake-fat into her hands and applies it to the raven’s foot.

She strokes the lock on the box with the raven’s foot and says the words...

ESTHER
Efenen Adonai.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Miri is on the verge of bodily preventing her mother from going into the bedroom.

RACHEL
Esther?

MIRI
Mom--

Rachel ignores this, her age-old Jewish Mother instincts telling her something is off.

INT. RACHEL’S BEDROOM - DAY

They open the door to find Esther, lying in bed, eyes closed positively angelic. No sign of the box anywhere. Esther opens her eyes.

ESTHER
Hi.
RACHEL
I thought you’d be walking around on it...

Esther shakes her head.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
Well, come into the kitchen when you’re ready. I’ll make you some tea.

ESTHER
I’m ready now.

Esther gets up, moves to the doorway.

MIRI
(Did you get the ring?)
You sure you’re okay?

Es kisses her mom on the cheek, simultaneously drops the ring into her sister’s jacket pocket.

ESTHER
(Oh FUCK YEAH)
Yeah.

89  INT. SUBWAY CAR – DAY
Miri and Esther are riding back--Es is unusually quiet.

90  INT. SUBWAY STATION – DAY
Sam is waiting for Es and Miri’s train. It pulls up, the doors open. Esther and Miri begin to move through the crowd to the doors

SAM
Well well well. Hail the conquering heroes...

Esther doesn’t respond. Something is wrong.

MIRI
Esther?

Suddenly Esther COLLAPSES.

MIRI (CONT’D)
ESTHER.
Es’s entire body is shaking. Her eyes are rolled back in her head. She is precariously positioned, her head hanging right over the gap between the platform and the train. Miri grabs her sister by the wrists. Sam runs over.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Get her feet.

Sam manages to drag Esther to the safety of the platform. The train pulls away.

MIRI (CONT’D)
What’s happening?

SAM
Hold on.

Sam takes a silver hamsa from around his neck, places it around Esther’s. She stabilizes somewhat, her eyes closing.

SAM (CONT’D)
Should do for now.

MIRI
Sam--

SAM
Let’s get her home.

INT. SAM’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Esther wakes up to Sam and Miri’s faces peering down at her. She tries to move, but finds herself weighed down. We see that she is lying in Sam’s bed, large painted stones covering her stomach and pelvis.

ESTHER
What are these?

SAM
Evil eyes. To soak up the negative energy. Best remedy for a seizure. Besides holding the hand of a dead gentile. But those are hard to rustle up on short notice...I’m gonna ask you something and you don’t need to answer right now. Do you have any idea what happened?

ESTHER
Supposed to be sure of your purpose, right?
SAM
And you weren’t?

Esther shakes her head. She takes from her pocket the photo of herself and her father at the piano.

ESTHER
(To Miri)
Mom didn’t get rid of all the pictures, did you know that?
It’s just like...his nose transferred onto my face. There’s no difference.

MIRI
Esther--

ESTHER
You look like mom, I look like him.
Don’t you think that’s funny?

MIRI
Es...I think you’re just tired.

ESTHER
Promise you won’t tell mom, okay?

MIRI
Tell her what?

Esther has drifted back into a deep sleep. Miri looks to Sam for guidance.

SAM
She doesn’t have a fever, and she’s not raving. Well, not exactly.
When she wakes up I’ll give her something for the pain.

MIRI
What like a potion or something?

SAM
I was thinking Matzoh ball soup, actually. Deli across the street isn’t half bad.

Smiling a little, Miri takes the ring from her pocket.

MIRI
So what do we do with this?
SAM
Drop it in some wine, say a prayer.
The ring’ll turn into powder and we
can mix it with the ashes.

MIRI
Wait. You have wine?

INT. SAM’S KITCHEN - NIGHT
Sam is pouring wine into a wooden chalice. Miri is drinking
wine from a glass.

MIRI
This is very good.

SAM
It’s ceremonial. You’re not
supposed to drink it.

MIRI
Thou shalt drink wine when thy
sister has a seizure on a subway
platform.

SAM
Hell of a lot more interesting than
my torah portion, I can tell you
that.

MIRI
You’re really Jewish?

SAM
No, I just know the Kaddish and
have an overarching sense of doom
for fun. There’s a book in the top-
right cabinet, could you get it?

Miri does, brings it back. Sam opens the book to the correct
page. Miri looks at it over his shoulder.

SAM (CONT’D)
So in the Kiddush. We call on the
angels, right?

Miri nods.

SAM (CONT’D)
This wine turns the prayer into an
invitation. We’re asking them to
come and work a miracle. Annnnd if
I’m not incorrect...
He glances at the book.

SAM (CONT’D)
Yup. Dumiell. He’s an angel. We can summon him with a “mystical silence” We say the prayer in our heads and then we leave space for him to come down from above and help us.

He squints down at another line.

SAM (CONT’D)
And the angel shall cleave through the wine and favor the mystics only if...huh.

MIRI
If what?

SAM
Only if they lie facing heaven. Should the mystics in their unholy foolishness fail to lie before the Angel Dumiell he will not cleave and with a curved knife he shall peel the skin from their manhoods.

MIRI
So what it’s just assuming we’re men?

SAM
I think you might be missing the larger point...we’re supposed to lie on the floor for this. Like...next to each other.

Beat.

SAM (CONT’D)
Look, I don’t wanna make you uncomfortable. If you don’t wanna do the spell, we can wait until your sister--

MIRI
Sam. There’s three things you’re gonna need to learn about me...I...am Miri.

SAM
Okay.
MIRI
Rebecca Sachar.

SAM
Yeah.

MIRI
And I always follow instructions.

SAM
That’s two things. And one of them was your name.

MIRI
I’m a little drunk. That’s the third thing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Miri has laid out towels on the floor. Sam places the chalice of wine next to her, and then lies down as well.

SAM
You sure you can do this?

MIRI
What?

SAM
Be silent for a whole 30 seconds.

MIRI
(defensively)
We don’t like quiet. Me or Esther. That’s not abnormal.

SAM
I didn’t say it was--

MIRI
Quiet’s the sound of two people who have nothing to say to each other.

SAM
Yeah. That’s one interpretation. Alternatively, two people who like hearing each other breathe... Hypothetically, I mean.

Looooong beat.

SAM (CONT’D)
You gonna put the ring in, or--
MIRI
Oh. Yeah.

Miri places the ring in the wine, lies back down. They both close their eyes. A gust of wind blows through the apartment, over them. Miri gasps. Sam reaches out and holds her hand, steadying her. Toothpaste Kisses by The Maccabees begins to play.

The wind slows and eventually stops.

Suddenly, the timer on Miri’s phone goes off. It should be one of the truly terrible iphone timer sounds, preferably “summit.”

They open their eyes and JUMP APART.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Is that it? Is it done?

SAM
Yeah. Yeah, it should be.

MIRI
I should, um. Check on my sister.

Miri heads towards the door, turns back.

MIRI (CONT’D)
I didn’t know that was part of the ritual.

SAM
What?

MIRI
The hand-holding thing. It wasn’t in the book. Is it just more powerful that way? Like it creates a ring of energy or something?

SAM
(improvising)
Right. Yeah, um. Exactly right. Ring of energy.

She nods, goes into the bedroom and closes the door. Sam eyes the bottle of ceremonial wine, takes a swig.
INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Miri is making sunnyside-up eggs at the stove in PJs when Esther comes in, still wearing her clothes from the day before.

MIRI
Morning.

Esther sits down, not saying anything.

MIRI (CONT’D)
How’re you feeling?

ESTHER
Like I had a seizure in a subway car. And then slept with a bunch of weird flat stones on me.

Sam comes in, his jacket on, holding brown paper bags. The whole vibe of the room is suddenly weird.

SAM
Morning.

MIRI
(manically)
There’s eggs.

SAM
Oh that’s um...thanks.

He sits down next to Esther. Miri transfers the eggs to a plate, puts them on the kitchen table.

MIRI
I’m gonna get dressed.

She hastily leaves. Esther takes a pair of scissors from the kitchen drawer, cuts off a lock of her own hair, hands it to Sam.

SAM
What’s this?

ESTHER
A piece of me. I’m the thing my father lost...will that work?

SAM
Yeah. Yeah, should do us fine.
ESTHER
So what’s the plan for Friday?

SAM
I was just asking our dear Mr. Murray the same question.

He takes from one of the bags a yellowed, rolled up sheet of tissue paper.

SAM (CONT’D)
Old plans to the Jewish Museum. Your father stole them when he was working with the board.

ESTHER
What a surprise.

Sam takes out the plans, spreads them out on the table.

SAM
This place used to be a mansion. The man who owned it was named Felix M. Warburg.

ESTHER
And he was secretly evil.

SAM
No, he was fine. His daughter Sarah, though. Had a little too much free time on her hands. Used to hold seances.

ESTHER
Aren’t seances a standard 1900s rich people pasttime?

SAM
Well, yeah. But Sarah’s were special...

He gestures to the plans.

SAM (CONT’D)
She built a secret tunnel.

ESTHER
(remembering)
Secret tunnel in the Jewish museum...
SAM
Exactly. Anyway, she would hire actors from the Yiddish theater to light incense, and whisper things through the vents.

ESTHER
And her guests fell for that?

SAM
Give people a voice and some smoke, they’ll provide the face and the name.

ESTHER
Everyone’s haunted, huh?

SAM
Right up until they die and you know. Haunt someone else.

Esther considers this grim prospect.

ESTHER
So. Someone gets into the tunnel...

SAM
Me, probably...

ESTHER
And then you do some sort of fire incantation?

SAM
Not exactly. The spell you’re doing is powerful--it’s best not to have any current around it.

ESTHER
Set off the smoke alarm manually, get me alone with the holy and awesome name.

SAM
Assuming you’re already in somehow. With a cover.

ESTHER
There’ll be a piano at this party, right?

SAM
You play?
ESTHER
Before he left my father taught me a little magic and a lot of Cole Porter.

SAM
We’ll have to get rid of the guy who’s there already, but it has definite potential. Good in for you. As for me...these plans were made when there weren’t any smoke alarms. I’ll need some sort of updated guide.

Miri comes in.

MIRI
I can go in and case the joint. Make a map with all the smoke alarms, make a trace of the old plans and combine ‘em to create a master edition.

SAM
How’re you gonna avoid suspicion in the museum?

MIRI
Pretend I’m an art student at FIT.

Sam and Esther look at her, bemused at how quickly she came up with that.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Or something...I’m gonna head over there, then back to my place.

SAM
For what?

MIRI
Highlighters. We’re gonna color code this bitch.

She grabs her jacket and leaves. Lady Gaga’s A-YO begins to play.

SAM
Your entire family is terrifying. You know that right?
ESTHER
No idea what you’re talking about.
What’s the easiest way to kidnap a
pianist?

*BEGIN MONTAGE*

INT. JEWISH MUSEUM LOBBY - DAY

Miri, wearing a beanie and holding a sketchpad, smiles
sweetly at the security guard, pays the fee and heads in.

INT. DELI - DAY

Sam and Esther head to the register with an inordinate number
of cigarette packs. Sam pays, asks the cashier for one other
thing. The cashier nods, takes a crowbar from behind the
counter, hands it to Sam. Sam shakes his hand confidentially,
throws the crowbar to Esther.

INT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

Angie leads Esther and Miri into her booth, pulls back a
curtain to reveal racks of expensive dresses, clearly stolen
directly from a warehouse.

INT. JEWISH MUSEUM - DAY

Miri stands in front of a Chagall painting, thoughtfully
“sketching.”

We see that on her sketchpad, a detailed floorplan is
forming, the smoke alarms marked in red.

INT. SAM’S APARTMENT - DAY

Miri has taken over the entire floor of the living room. In
front of her is a detailed, hand-drawn map she has made of
the Jewish Museum, next to it the tissue-paper map that her
father stole.

There’s also a lot of highlighters, and also those fancy
multi-colored pens, but like the extended pack of those that
nobody buys.

*END MONTAGE*
EXT. MARKETPLACE – DAY

The music continues as we see Sam chainsmoking, waiting for the girls. Esther comes out wearing her street clothes, holding a garment bag.

SAM
Where’s your sister?

ESTHER
Could be another fifteen to ninety minutes.

SAM
Sorry, fifteen to ninety?

ESTHER
She takes forever with this kind of stuff.

Miri comes out, Angie bustling behind her fiddling with the back of the skirt. Her dress is midnight blue with silver rhinestones embedded. Her hair is swept to one side, Jessica Rabbit style. Sam looks at her in awe.

MIRI
No, I really like it, I just don’t wanna be too encumbered.

ANGIE
Yeah but the color looks amazing...

Miri kind of practices a little, weaving and dodging adorably.

MIRI
I need to be able to move around and distract people.

ANGIE
What do you think Sam, will she distract people in this?

Sam puts out his cigarette, looks at the ground. None of this escapes Esther.

103  EXT. SAM’S ROOF – EARLY EVENING

The three sit together. Esther has just finished mixing the ashes, the powder that used to be the ring, and the hair into a weird mixture. Sam takes a small vial filled with petroleum and hands it to her. She folds the petroleum in, creating an ointment.
SAM
Right. Spread this in a circle
around yourself right before you
get started. It’s your calling
card. Gets you in conversation with
the thing. And then...

ESTHER
Then, what?

SAM
Then it’s up to you. To give
something of yourself. Something
emotional. Let the parchment know
exactly why you’re worthy.

ESTHER
Shouldn’t Mr. Murray be doing that?
It’s for him.

SAM
Yeah, but it’s your incantation.
And your name.

ESTHER
And lemme guess, say it with
conviction?

SAM
Seeing a pattern here?

ESTHER
You call on the power
of...whatever. And stay rooted in
something you believe in. Like your
sister, or your purpose, or
yourself.

Sam takes three beers from a cooler at his feet, opens and
distributes them.

SAM
You’ve got it, love.

ESTHER
Should we toast to something?

MIRI
To the blindspots in the Jewish
Museum’s security system.

SAM
Bloody few and far between.
ESTHER
To our father. May he not rest in peace.

MIRI
To Sam’s complete lack of professional integrity.

SAM
How ‘bout L’chaim? Nice and simple, Nu?

Esther raises her bottle.

ESTHER
L’Chaim.

SAM  MIRI
L’Chaim L’Chaim.

EXT. JEWISH MUSEUM – NIGHT

A line of people waiting. A bored looking INTERN stands in front of the entrance taking people’s names and checking them off on her ipad.

INTERN
Name?

PARTYGOER #1
Ari Gold?

The intern looks down at the list, checks it off on the ipad. The next PARTYGOER steps up.

INTERN
Name?

PARTYGOER #2
Joshua Liebowitz.

Same deal as before. She looks at the ipad, checks him off the list. He goes in.

INTERN
Name?

We see that the next partygoer is Miri.

MIRI
Hannah Steinberg?

Beat. The intern furrows her brow. Is there a problem?
INTERN
Hannah Aviv Steinberg, Hanna Yael Steinberg, or Hanna Shira Steinberg?

MIRI
(relieved)
Hannah Shira Steinberg.

INTERN
Cool.

Miri heads inside. Three SOMEWHAT IDENTICAL GIRLS approach the intern together.

INTERN (CONT’D)
Names?

ABBY #1
Abi Lesnick.

ABBY #2
Abby Disick.

ABBY #3
Aby Mitnick.

The intern sighs.

EXT. BACK OF JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

Sam taps at the plaster lightly with a crowbar. Esther leans against the wall next to him. Her phone lights up.

ESTHER
Miri’s in.

SAM
Neat...you don’t think your father was lying about this entrance, do you?

ESTHER
Why would he be? Other than like...habit.

SAM
Dunno. This is taking a while to find. I don’t want to leave your sister hanging.

ESTHER
Well that’s very thoughtful of you.
SAM
No it’s not.

ESTHER
What do you mean “no it’s not?” Are you five?

SAM
No, I just mean it’s not person
thoughtful it’s partner thoughtful.
I am her partner. I’m partners with
both of you. We’re all partners.

ESTHER
You’re saying the word partner a
lot.

SAM
I know that.

ESTHER
Fine it wasn’t thoughtful. I take
it back...it’s just that mystical
silence thing--

SAM
She mentioned the mystical silence?

ESTHER
I shouldn’t really say anything--

SAM
Why not?

ESTHER
You guys are partners I wouldn’t
want to jeopardize your partner
relationship.

SAM
Stop saying partners. What did your
sister tell you?

He brings the crowbar down with a fair amount of emphasis.
The plaster crumbles away, revealing a small, old wooden
doors. Es and Sam look at each other.

ESTHER
And the miracles keep on comin’...

Sam turns the handle. The door is locked.
ESTHER (CONT’D)
How’re you gonna open it without magic?

Sam eyes her hair, takes a bobby pin from it.

SAM
The old-fashioned way.

Sam kneels down and begins picking the lock with the bobby pin.

SAM (CONT’D)
I’m all good here. Go wait for your sister’s signal.

ESTHER
Miri’s not good at reading those, by the way.

SAM
Not good at reading what?

ESTHER
Signals. If you want her to know something, you have to say it.

Sam gives her a look.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Going. I’m going.

INT. JEWISH MUSEUM – NIGHT

Lots of hors d’ouvres and Jewish people in fancy clothes. Miri heads straight for the open bar. A pianist plays Night and Day in the corner.

MIRI
Merlot please?

The bartender obliges, handing Miri a glass of wine. She sips it, cases the room, and strategically staggers, as if drunk, towards the piano. She leans against it, smiles at the PIANIST.

MIRI (CONT’D)
(slurring her words)
I really love this song...

The pianist smiles at her politely. Miri “attempts” to lean on the piano and tips over a little bit, spilling the wine all over the pianist’s tux.
MIRI (CONT’D)
Oh my god.

PIANIST
It’s alright, really.

MIRI
No. No it’s not alright. Come with me.

PIANIST
You really don’t have to--

MIRI
But you’re so good at playing the piano you shouldn’t have wine shirt.

She smiles at him winningly.

MIRI (CONT’D)
You’re like...so good at piano. And piano’s hard.

The pianist, entranced, lets her lead him by the hand towards the bathroom.

MIRI (CONT’D)
We’re gonna get--like we need seltzer...water. Maybe vinegar. Do they sell vinegar here?

PIANIST
At a museum?

She ushers the pianist away from his post. We see her taking her phone out as she walks away.

MIRI
Also I’m just gonna text my friend Ashlyn ‘cause she’s having a hard time...

EXT. JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

Esther comes running towards the museum, waves at the intern, and tries to go in.

ESTHER
Sorry I’m late. Traffic was--

INTERN
Excuse me--
ESTHER
What?

INTERN
You need to give me your name.

ESTHER
I’m entertainment. I play the piano. Just had some trouble getting across town--

Esther tries to head in again, the intern blocks her.

INTERN
The pianist for this event is named Ian.

ESTHER
Yeah. And Ian has food poisoning, so they called me.

INTERN
No one notified--

ESTHER
Sure, because it happened like just now--

INTERN
I think I’m just gonna call the--

ESTHER
It’s probably already too warm in there for everyone.

INTERN
The temperature is fine--

ESTHER
And with no music to distract them...I don’t know. Could get messy...but if you want the event to be a failure, you know. Be my guest.

The intern rolls her eyes and steps aside.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
(indignantly)
Thank you.
INT. JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

Esther, right at home at the grand piano, is playing some more Cole Porter.

EXT. BATHROOM WAITING AREA - NIGHT

Miri, her ear to the door of the men’s bathroom, checks in on the pianist.

MIRI
How’s it going in there?

PIANIST
Fine. It’s coming out...kind of. Is someone playing the piano?

Miri gets up from the chair where she’s sitting, places it under the doorknob, thus jamming the door.

PIANIST (CONT’D)
Is there uh. Something jamming the door?

Miri sits down in the chair in order to further jam the door.

MIRI
Nope.

INT. JEWISH MUSEUM TUNNEL - NIGHT

Sam is crawling through the tunnel. There’s only just enough space for him. He looks down at Miri’s map and makes a turn.

SAM
“Thoughtful.” I’m not thoughtful...

He reaches the ventilation shaft, takes a cigarette from his back pocket, lights it and begins blowing the smoke through the vent. Nothing happens.

SAM (CONT’D)
Not abnormally thoughtful anyway.

He takes out another cigarette, and now double-fisting, lights it and repeats the action.

INT. JEWISH MUSEUM MAIN EXHIBIT - NIGHT

Smoke wafts out of the ventilation shaft. The fire alarms go off.
Esther stops playing the piano, looks up expectantly. The sprinklers come on.

EXT. BATHROOM WAITING AREA - NIGHT

The pianist is still trying to figure out what’s jamming the door. Miri takes the chair out from in front of it. The pianist comes out, disoriented, still with wine on his shirt.

    PIANIST
    What happened?

    MIRI
    I don’t know.

They move from the bathroom into the main section of the exhibit where...

INT. MAIN EXHIBIT - NIGHT

A chicly dressed, middle-aged woman, clearly the coordinator of the event, stands at the little speech podium, speaking into the microphone.

    COORDINATOR
    Excuse me everyone I’m so sorry for the interruption. There appears to be some sort of...electrical fire on the second floor. If everyone could move towards...

Everyone is already moving towards the fire exits.

    COORDINATOR (CONT’D)
    Thank you.

Miri takes a deep breath, looks around, leaves the museum with everyone else, walking as briskly as she can.

EXT. BACK OF JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

Miri runs to the wooden door, pulls it open. Sam falls out, coughing.

    SAM
    Great party, nu?

    MIRI
    (Brooklyn accent)
    Got a little warm in there for my taste.
SAM
Well you know how it is.
Temperature’s always a little off
at these things.

Miri helps him up, they start walking around, back to the
front of the museum.

SAM (CONT’D)
How’d your sister do?

INT. JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

A security guard, the last person in the building, inspects
the empty exhibit. His walkie talkie crackles and someone
speaks through it.

WALKIE TALKIE
How’s it going down there?

SECURITY GUARD
All clear.

WALKIE TALKIE
Copy that...you should go on
outside, Mike. Fire department’s on
its way.

The security guard nods in acknowledgement, leaves the main
exhibit.

Esther promptly opens the top of the grand piano where she
has been hiding, and hops down onto the ground.

EXT. JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

Esther and Sam wait outside with a crowd of people who are
sticking around and rubbernecking.

SAM
You’re still worried about the
cameras, aren’t you?

MIRI
The cameras, security. You name it,
I’m worried about it.

SAM
I really don’t think that’s
necessary. If it helps. She’s a
tricky one. Your sister.
Miri nods, placated, but after a moment her eyes widen in horror.

SAM (CONT’D)
Ok, so what is it now?

MIRI
My mother. Walking towards us.

SAM
That’s an easy one. What are the chances of...

His eyes slide to where Miri is looking—at the undeniable figure of Rachel Sachar, evening-gowned and walking towards them.

MIRI
Mom. What are you doing here?

RACHEL
I’m representing the school. It’s very good press for them. Apparently. What are you doing here?...Who’s your friend?

MIRI
Oh, this is--

SAM
Samiel Golding, Ms. Sachar. I’ve heard so much about you.

RACHEL
You know each other from--

SAM
Law School.

RACHEL
At?

SAM
Columbia.

RACHEL
Been to the Hungarian pastry shop on Amsterdam?

SAM
Best pistachio Halvah in the city. I’m on their mailing list.
RACHEL
Maybe I’m going crazy, Miri. But I could swear that Samiel here was at your father’s funeral.

Sam begins to answer--

RACHEL (CONT’D)
Let her answer, Samiel.

SAM
Yes, ma’am.

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INT. MAIN EXHIBIT - NIGHT

Esther steps in.

ESTHER
Adonai, v’ein k’mah-ah-seh-cha.
Maltuchicha mal-chut kol ol-la
meem, u-mem-shal-t’cha b’chol dor
va-dor.

Blue, glowy light starts to emanate from the holy and awesome name. Esther takes the ointment from the vial, uses it to make a circle around herself. She drags the hamsa around it three times, sits in the circle, closes her eyes.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Hi, I guess? I’ve never talked to a five hundred year old omnipotent piece of paper before. I’ve come to you because...I think there might be something wrong. With my insides.

FLASHBACK

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Esther’s father is leaving, Esther is fourteen again, begging him to stay.

ESTHER (V.O.)
A part of me broke away when I was fourteen. And sometimes I wonder...what if I was frozen in that moment?

INT. DINER - NIGHT
Lloyd holding Esther’s hand, Esther looking at him in awe.

ESTHER (V.O.)
Sometimes I’m able to forget? And
then it comes back to me. And it
honestly feels like...maybe my
insides are dying. But like...dying
over and over again. Day after day.

PRESENT

INT. MAIN EXHIBIT - NIGHT

We’re back. Es’s circle of blue light has spread all around
the room. She is walking, closer and closer to the Holy and
Awesome Name.

ESTHER
More than anything I wanna know
what I could be.

The light brightens even more. We hear the tinkling of glass--
something in the room has cracked or broken. Esther pays it
no mind.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Without the weight, and the grief,
and the bitterness. What would that
Esther be like? When she’s happy
the happiness stays. When people
say “I love you” she believes them.
This girl who’s...bright and shiny
and sincere. And...and really
beautiful. I just want to meet her.

Tenderly, Esther puts her hand on the glass of the case. The
glass falls away. Esther takes the Holy and Awesome Name from
the case. The glass re-forms, this time encasing nothing at
all. Beat. As the blue light fades, Esther delicately traces
the name “Horowitz” at the bottom of page with her finger.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Amen.

She folds the parchment three times and sticks it in her bra.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
(ruefully)
Just like buttah...
We see as she leaves that the security camera is broken, and
smoke is emanating from it.

123

EXT. JEWISH MUSEUM - NIGHT

Miri and Rachel are facing off. Sam is lamentably stuck in
the middle.

MIRI
He was a rabbinical student, then he switched to law it’s
not that unusual

RACHEL
I understand that you don’t respect me enough to tell me
the truth right now, but--

RACHEL (CONT’D)
If there’s something going on.
Something you’re not supposed to be
doing--

MIRI
What makes you so sure we’re doing
something we’re not supposed to be
doing?

Esther runs up to Miri and Sam, exhilarated, not seeing her
mother.

ESTHER
Oh my god. That was so cool. Blew
out the security cameras just like
you said.

She turns around, sees her mother.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Hi, mom.

RACHEL
Of course.

ESTHER
Just let me explain--

RACHEL
What did you get your sister into
this time?

MIRI
She didn’t get me into--

ESTHER
Mom it’s not what it--

RACHEL
You need to tell me, Esther if you
two are in some kind of danger so I
can help.
ESTHER
Mom. I know that this might be hard
for you to believe, but I actually
have everything under control...I
promise. I am...I am gonna make
everything okay.

RACHEL
Make everything okay, I don’t know
what that means. Esther...

ESTHER
What?

Rachel takes a long, hard look at her younger daughter.

RACHEL
You sound exactly like your father.

And with that bombshell, she storms off into the crowd.

124 INT. SUBWAY CAR – NIGHT
Esther sits between Sam and Miri, looking straight ahead.
Everything is terrible.

125 EXT. MARKETPLACE – NIGHT
They’re walking through the marketplace, towards Sam’s
apartment.

ESTHER
You know what? I’m just gonna take
a walk, okay you guys?

SAM
Where were you planning on
walking? We can go wi--

MIRI
Are you sure? We could go
back just like--

ESTHER
Alone. Okay?

MIRI
Es, she didn’t mean--

ESTHER
Miri, please don’t. There’s no way
you could understand this.

MIRI
I’ve fought with Mom before if
that’s what you--
ESTHER
About whether to go to Columbia or
Penn for law school. That’s not the
same thing--

MIRI
Because everything’s been what,
easy for me?

ESTHER
No but it hasn’t been like it has
been for me I’m sorry it just
hasn’t--

MIRI
Maybe that’s ‘cause I actually work
on stuff instead of shoving it down
and pretending that there’s no way
to fix it--

ESTHER
You think I *like* being this way?
That I wouldn’t do something about
it if I could? I was in there with
that thing--the Holy and Awesome
Name and more than anything I
wanted to *use* it. Erase him. Erase
myself until there’s nothing left.
Start over without this *weight*--

MIRI
Of course you did Es, because you
never wanna talk about anything you
just want to find some *shortcut*.

ESTHER
Shortcut...You think I’m like him
too.

MIRI
No. No, that’s not what I meant.

ESTHER
I have to go.

Esther walks away.

MIRI
Es, that’s not what I meant.
EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Lady Gaga’s *Sinner’s Prayer* plays. Esther walks down the street, past the diner where she and her father ate together on her birthday.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Esther now with a cup of coffee, takes the Holy and Awesome Name of 72 from her bra and contemplates it.

EXT. MARKETPLACE - NIGHT

Miri and Sam continue walking.

SAM
You okay?

MIRI
Me? Yeah. Just drove my sister away forever. Why wouldn’t I be okay?

SAM
Might not know what I’m talking about, but forever feels like a stretch.

MIRI
I’m supposed to fix things. Between her and Mom. Not make them worse.

SAM
How’d fixing things become your job?

MIRI
I don’t know. It’s just...

She sits down on the stoop of a building. Sam joins her.

MIRI (CONT’D)
I’m...the one who makes things perfect, you know? It’s what I do.
Otherwise. What am I good for?

Long beat. Sam decides to be brave.
SAM
Your hair. Looks really good when it’s curly...I guess you were using like some sort of straightening...thing like a device? Before? But then you just brought some product to my place. I knew cause I could smell it. Not in a weird way...and not that it looked bad before. Just...when it’s curly it looks really good. This isn’t an answer to your question. By the way. Just sort of an errant observation. About you. And your hair.

Miri looks at him, smiling just a little. This was the last thing she was expecting.

129 INT. NYU DORM - NIGHT

Esther has slipped back into her old room. She looks down and realizes she’s still wearing her party clothes. She opens her top drawer, grabs a t-shirt. Underneath is the box her father gave her.

130 EXT. MARKETPLACE - NIGHT

Miri is still looking at Sam, bemused.

MIRI
Why are you telling me this?

SAM
Your sister told me you’re shit at reading signals.

MIRI
She said what?

Sam kisses Miri gently on the lips. She kisses him back.

131 INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Esther, sitting at her desk, is alternating her laser-sharp focus on The real Holy and Awesome Name of 72 and an identical copy she’s forging with the parchment her father gave her.
Esther is holding this same piece of parchment and displaying it for Mr. Murray. Miri and Sam stand on either side of her.

MR. MURRAY
Well. This is a pleasant surprise.

ESTHER
You didn’t think I’d follow through?

MR. MURRAY
Not really, to be honest. But there can be miracles when you believe. Isn’t that what the song says?

ESTHER
So I’ll just read the incantation, and--

MR. MURRAY
What’s your rush? We need to celebrate. Samiel. Drinks.

Sam goes to the coke machine, gives the girls and Mr. Murray drinks.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
So, what was it like?

ESTHER
What was what like?

MR. MURRAY
The stealing. Did you enjoy it? Feel it in your bones?

ESTHER
I actually did it. If that’s what you’re asking.

MR. MURRAY
Are you sure?

ESTHER
Yes. And if you just let me perform the incantation, then--

MR. MURRAY
Lying to me right now would be a very reckless thing to do.
ESTHER
We came, we saw, we stole a 500 year old Portuguese incantation. That’s the truth.

SAM
Boss, I’m not sure what you--

MR. MURRAY
Oh, I wouldn’t say anything right now Samiel.

ESTHER
I’m telling the truth.

MR. MURRAY
You stole the incantation, brought it here, debts all paid, you go out and live your life. And that’s enough for a Horowitz girl? You didn’t want anything else?

ESTHER
Just wanted to follow through on the deal.

MR. MURRAY
And how am I supposed to know that for sure?

ESTHER
There’s only one way to tell for sure, you know that.

She offers him the piece of parchment in her hand.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
If you touch it, it’ll turn to ashes. If that’s what you want, be my guest.

He grabs the parchment from her. Nothing happens. He smiles.

MR. MURRAY
You almost had me there for a second, do you know that?

MIRI
It...it must have been a fake. The one in the museum, must have been fake--
SAM
It’s a possibility, isn’t it?
Wasn’t real from the start.

MR. MURRAY
Your father used to look me
straight in the eyes, and lie. And
he’d say that same thing. “If you
don’t wanna trust me, wanna lose a
lot of money, be my guest.”

ESTHER
I wasn’t lying--

MR. MURRAY
You sure? Think hard. Try and
remember.

Mr. Murray takes the contracts of the girls from his desk. He
rips a corner off of one of them. MIRI FALLS TO THE GROUND IN
PAIN. Samiel runs to catch her.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Anything coming back to you?

ESTHER
No. No, don’t do that. If you’re
gonna hurt someone, hurt me.

He takes a pair of scissors from his desk, holds them over
the paper.

MR. MURRAY
Then tell me the truth.

ESTHER
If you’re gonna hurt someone, hurt
me.

MR. MURRAY
I have no hard feelings towards
your sister.

Sam is about to protest this horror show, but Mr. Murray
interrupts.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Although batting her eyelashes at
my right hand man certainly didn’t
help.

He opens the scissors, slides the contract in.
ESTHER
Fine!...fine. I forged it, alright?
My father came to see me a year ago. He gave me extra parchment and ink from the expedition. And last night I forged it. Please please let her go.

MIRI
Es...you forged it?

Mr. Murray smiles at Esther, looks down at the parchment.

MR. MURRAY
Oh, this is very good work.

MIRI
Esther, look at me--

MR. MURRAY
Haven’t seen anything this good since...well. You know.

ESTHER
But Miri didn’t do anything--take me.

MR. MURRAY
Don’t worry, I will.

Esther moves to help Miri. Mr. Murray holds up the contract, tauntingly.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Bring it to me. The real one this time. By sundown. And I’ll let your sister go. Should make Samiel happy. Now that he’s traded everything for a pair of pretty eyes, and a nice--

Sam almost goes for Mr. Murray, but stops at the sight of the contract and the scissors.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Whoa there.

SAM
A shtrek dir oyf-en haldz.
MR. MURRAY
A rope around my neck? Yeah.
Probably some day...go with her if
you’re so worried. I’ll return the
eldest to you untouched.

He looks at Esther.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
You though. You’re mine, Nu?

MIRI
Es...don’t. Please don’t...

ESTHER
Nu.

Miri crumples. Mr. Murray holds the parchment between the
scissors with whimsical cruelty.

INT. ESTHER’S DORMROOM – NIGHT

Esther digs through her underwear drawer, comes up with the
Holy and Awesome Name. She stuffs it back in her bra.

ESTHER
I’ve got it. Let’s go.

SAM
Es, we can’t go back there without
some sort of plan.

ESTHER
Plan? What are you talking about?

SAM
I’m talking about you. Working for
an evil mastermind. For the rest of
eternity.

ESTHER
Sam, he has my sister--

SAM
Believe me I know that.

She heads for the door, he blocks her way.

ESTHER
You and Miri get to be together, no
one has to deal with me. Isn’t that
what you wanted?
SAM
Oh, Fuck you.

ESTHER
I’m not trying to be a smartass, I’m serious.

SAM (CONT’D)
You think that’s what I wanted, you think that’s what your sister wants is that why you did this?

SAM (CONT’D)
You were about to be all paid up, what inspired you to forge the thing?

ESTHER
It doesn’t matter now why I did it, okay? That could not matter less right now.

SAM
Well you screwed your entire family over so I think yeah, it matters a little, why--

ESTHER
I didn’t screw my--

SAM
What’s gonna happen to Miri?

ESTHER
Miri? She’ll be alive.

SAM
And what exactly is gonna be left of her? Without her little sister by her side?

His expression softens.

SAM (CONT’D)
I could’ve helped you, Es.

ESTHER
Can we please just go?

SAM
Yeah. Yeah, but you have a stop to make first.
134 INT. RACHEL’S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Half an hour later. Rachel is sitting on the couch, facing Sam and Esther, who are in two armchairs.

RACHEL
So. Just to make sure I’m following. Your father owed money to a magical mob boss. You and your sister decided to pay it off by stealing a 500 year old Portuguese incantation. You tried to cheat the magical mob boss, and now, to save Miri from dying you’re going to give yourself over to a life of indentured magical servitude.

ESTHER
Yeah.

RACHEL
Samiel. Would you mind making us some cocoa, please?

Sam looks at Esther like “what’s going on,” Esther shrugs.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
It’s in the cabinet over the sink.

Sam gets up and heads to the kitchen.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
C’mere.

Esther obeys, lays her head on her mother’s shoulder. Her mother strokes her hair.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
Why didn’t you give him the name?

ESTHER
I don’t know, okay? Just in my DNA I guess.

RACHEL
Try that again. Without the tone.

ESTHER
I’m just worried that...whatever else I am. Whatever else I make of myself...I’m always gonna be this...shadow.

Rachel starts to open her mouth and argue--
ESTHER (CONT’D)
I just thought if I could use the name. Maybe I could get him out of me. For good.

RACHEL
I shouldn’t have said that to you. About your father--

ESTHER
You were right, mom.

RACHEL
I wasn’t.

ESTHER
But I play the piano, just like--

RACHEL
Esther, you’re his daughter. Maybe there’s parts. So you play the piano. So what? Protecting your sister? Without even a second thought? He never could’ve done that...this ferocity you feel inside you. It’s yours. He didn’t give it to you. Admittedly, you’re going about it in the stupidest way possible.

ESTHER
Uh-huh.

RACHEL
 Seriously. Your current plan is really bad.

ESTHER
I know.

RACHEL
Like truly terrible--

ESTHER
Mom, do you have a better idea?

RACHEL
Do I have a better idea. The dog has a better idea, and this morning I found him with his tongue in an electrical socket.
INT. RACHEL’S KITCHEN - EVENING

The sun has almost gone down. Sam and Esther are talking. Rachel is rummaging around in the pantry in order to feed them.

SAM
The problem is he’s so intent on keeping you--

ESTHER
He thinks I have that Horowitz sheen or whatever.

RACHEL
Well clearly he’s not gonna just let you go, Es. You need to trick him.

ESTHER
Another lie? He’ll be expecting that.

RACHEL
I said a trick. Not a lie. There’s a difference.

ESTHER
Give people a voice and some smoke, they’ll provide the face and the name.

Sam’s face lights up at the mention of his words from earlier.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
We’ve gotta pull a Sarah Warburg.

INT. MR. MURRAY’S OFFICE - EVENING

Mr. Murray sits behind his desk, looking at his pocketwatch. Miri is tied to the chair facing it. Sam, Esther, and Rachel burst in.

MR. MURRAY
Well there you are. Your sister and I were beginning to worry.

He catches sight of Rachel. As does Miri.

MIRI
Mom?
MR. MURRAY
And you brought your mother. How fun.

RACHEL
Please don’t do this. Please don’t take her.

ESTHER
Mom, it’s okay.

RACHEL
I’ll give you anything. Whatever you want.

MR. MURRAY
Everything I want is right here. Esther. Would you mind doing the honors? Before your mother has a stroke on my carpet?

Esther nods, takes the parchment from her bra.

ESTHER
Okay. First we have to light the sabbath candles. Sam?

Sam nods, takes the candles from a shelf behind Mr. Murray. Finding himself facing Miri, he winks at her. He lights the candles. Esther takes a deep breath.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
And you sort of have to... kneel before me...

Mr. Murray obeys without a second thought.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Va-he-va. Yoha--

Suddenly, a chill comes over her. She shivers.

MR. MURRAY
Why did you stop? Keep going.

ESTHER
Va-he-Va. Yo-ha...

Her eyes roll back in her head and she sways back and forth.

RACHEL
Something’s wrong. Something’s wrong with her.
MR. MURRAY  
(getting freaked out)  
Quiet!

Esther is now shaking and foaming at the mouth.

ESTHER  
You’re foolish, Esra. A foolish man. You know that, Nu?...Punishing them for my sins? That’s not right, and you know it. It goes against every law. Even our laws.

Mr. Murray looks up, into Esther’s eyes.

MR. MURRAY  
Lloyd? Is...is that you?

ESTHER  
No, it’s Moses. Of course it’s me.

MR. MURRAY  
What...what do you want?

ESTHER  
Like my mother before me I left. My daughters were closing in on me, their eyes weighing down as they watched me and who was I to disappoint them over and over again? One big disappointment was better. And then I was too much of a coward to look back to even try and help them heal. I cannot change that, but I can protect them now. I want them free of you.

MR. MURRAY  
But--

ESTHER  
It is my will that Esther walk her own path. That she foresakes this half-life in the shadows. That she ceases to see my reflection in her own eyes. And if you disrespect my will. If you hurt either of my children. You will never be alone again. I will be with you. Until you grow shriveled and decrepit, until some two-bit criminal shoves your body into an unmarked grave, and even a little bit after that. I will be with you.

(MORE)
ESTHER (CONT'D)
As I am with them. Tell me you understand...tell me--

MR. MURRAY
I understand.

ESTHER
Now free them of their contracts.

Mr. Murray runs to his desk, takes Esther and Miri’s contracts from a drawer. He takes a ceremonial knife from the drawer as well, makes a small cut in his palm, his hand shaking. He presses hard into both pieces of paper, and throws them in the fire, which turns lavender. Wind blows through the office, Esther and Miri are free.

MR. MURRAY
There. There is that what you wanted?

Mr. Murray’s been so freaked out, he hasn’t even noticed that Esther’s convulsions have stopped. She wipes the foam from her mouth.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
Lloyd...Lloyd?

Beat.

MR. MURRAY (CONT’D)
What...what happened. Lloyd are you there?

ESTHER
Oh, come on, Esra. He never showed up for anything when he was alive you thought he was gonna start now?

MR. MURRAY
No. No he was here. I heard him.

ESTHER
Yeah, so it’s called an impression? My best one’s actually Madonna but it didn’t seem super useful in this situation.

MR. MURRAY
(Still like a little bit impressed)
It was you? The whole time it was you?
ESTHER
Glad you enjoyed it. I’ll be here all week.

Afraid for a second he’ll think she’s serious...

ESTHER (CONT’D)
(clarifying)
Not really. Obviously. I will obviously not really be here all week.

Mr. Murray sits down behind his desk, exhausted. Sam takes a pocket-knife and frees Miri from her restraints. Rachel runs to her older daughter to help.

SAM
(to Miri )
Lean on me. There we go.

Supporting Miri on either side, Rachel and Sam head for the door, but not before Mr. Murray says...

MR. MURRAY
So I suppose you’ll be using that incantation for yourself.

ESTHER
I’d be willing to read it for you, just like I said. On one condition.

MR. MURRAY
And what would that be?

ESTHER
I want Sam’s freedom.

Mr. Murray sighs, turns to a file cabinet and digs around for Sam’s contract.

MR. MURRAY
He’s damaged goods.

Save the People by The Mountain Goats begins to play.

ESTHER
Then he’ll fit right in, Nu?
-Esther reads the incantation as Mr. Murray kneels in front of her, his eyes closed.

-She sprinkles a circle of salt around him, then drags the amulet her mother gave her, on a long chain, around it.

-Esther kisses Mr. Murray on the forehead. They both glow a little, outlined by gentle white light.

EXT. MR. MURRAY’S OFFICE – NIGHT

Rachel, Sam, and Miri lean against the wall, waiting. Sam is clearly lost in thought.

MIRI
(To Sam)
What are you thinking about?

SAM
Nothing. Just--had that contract for five years. Technically I’m out of a job. At least I have a dynamite resume. 2014-2019--skulked menacingly.

INT. MR. MURRAY’S OFFICE – NIGHT

The ritual is complete. Mr. Murray gets up, his legs a little bendy beneath him as if he’s a baby giraffe. He sits down at his desk. His skin still has a little bit of a glow to it.

ESTHER
So. How do you feel?

MR. MURRAY
I feel...like someone on the moon. Just...weightless.

ESTHER
Sounds nice.

Esther nods, starts to head out.

MR. MURRAY
You were gonna use the name for yourself, weren’t you? That’s why you took it.

ESTHER
(your point?)
Yeah...
MR. MURRAY
What’re you gonna do now?

ESTHER
I was thinking Pad Thai, but it’s
not just me, I’m with a group.

MR. MURRAY
You’re telling me you’re not
scared? That you don’t feel him
sometimes?

ESTHER
Oh no, I do. When there’s a
particularly creepy gust of wind I
always wonder if he’s there.

MR. MURRAY
And you’re just alright with that?
With that being who you are?

ESTHER
It’s not who I am. It’s something
that happened to me. There’s a
difference...plus? Phenomenal party
story.

She opens the door with a flourish.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
See you around, Esra.

Mr. Murray takes a bottle of whiskey from his drawer.

MR. MURRAY
God, I hope not.

140 EXT. MR. MURRAY’S OFFICE – NIGHT

Esther comes out, exhausted. She embraces her sister and
doesn’t let go. The four walk away from the office, Miri and
Esther arm-in-arm.

ESTHER
Anyone wanna get Pad Thai?

MIRI
Yeah and then, uh--my place is
nearest. Mom you coming?

RACHEL
Obviously I’m coming. Someone’s
gotta keep you on the couch.
Beat as they start walking.

    RACHEL (CONT'D)
    Samiel, what did you do before you were evil? Jobwise?

    SAM
    (a little warily)
    Why do you ask?

    RACHEL
    Because after we eat dinner I’m gonna help you with your resume.

    SAM
    I--

    MIRI
    (under her breath)
    It wasn’t a question.

    SAM
    Okay.

They continue walking, becoming distant figures.

---

EXT. RACHEL’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TWO YEARS LATER...

Sam and Miri are hurrying up the steps.

    MIRI
    We’re late.

    SAM
    I know.

    MIRI
    Like Intensely late.

    SAM
    MIRI (CONT'D)
    Okay, is that actually what you’re worried about or is it something else, ‘cause now you’re making me nervous.

    SAM
    You don’t have to wear it in if you don’t want to. In fact if you want we can just call it off right now if you’re having some sort of second thou--
MIRI
(Soothing him)
When we did that summoning of the
angel Dumiel--did we actually have
to hold hands for that or was it
just a cover?

SAM
That was in fact an extremely
ancient and mystical...
Cover. It was a cover. You know
like a lie. I was lying.

She takes his hand firmly. We see that she is wearing an
engagement ring.

SAM (CONT’D)
Did you just figure that out?

MIRI
Shut up.

142 INT. RACHEL’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Miri and Sam come in to find Rachel sitting at the kitchen
table, reading, while Esther rolls some very misshapen matzoh
balls at the counter.

MIRI
We’re very late.

RACHEL
Oh, that’s okay. Your sister’s
cooking.

ESTHER
I’m making matzoh balls. Just gotta
get them in the right shape.

RACHEL
They look great, sweetie.

RACHEL (CONT’D)
(To Sam)
In about thirty minutes I’m gonna
ask you to--

SAM
Go to 2nd Avenue and get Matzoh
balls?

RACHEL
Yup.
SAM
On it.

RACHEL
How’s work?

SAM
Work is good. Store’s shaping up nicely. Caught a couple kids shoplifting some charms the other day--

RACHEL
Uh-huh.

SAM
Really sloppy technique. Told them you gotta have a decent diversion if you’re gonna--

MIRI
Or just, you know. Not shoplift at all.

ESTHER
Did they at least find the camera’s blindspots?

SAM
‘Course they didn’t. Told them if they’re not gonna steal properly they should go do it at one of the shit magic shops that spells “Kabbalah” with 5 H’s.

MIRI
Or alternatively they could just not steal things.

RACHEL
Es could help you out. You’re only like two subway stops away from-- right?

SAM
See, yeah. Someone who’s good at shoplifting. I’d appreciate that in my store.

ESTHER
I could come through and help out if you need it. Just not this week. I have a paper.
SAM
Ooh, what are you learning in therapy school?

ESTHER
Well, apparently. Childhood trauma can affect you later in life.

MIRI
Oh my god. Do they have proof of this, is there research?

Rachel takes a crystal glass from the cabinet, pours wine from an open bottle on the counter into it.

ESTHER
That for Elijah?

Rachel nods. Esther takes it from her and places it at a reserved, empty spot at the table.

RACHEL
I was about to go open the window.

ESTHER
Fire escape? In the grand tradition of our ancestors? I can do it.

She heads towards Rachel’s room. Miri grabs her hand.

MIRI
Hurry. I have a lot of...

Esther looks pointedly down at the engagement ring.

MIRI (CONT’D)
Updates. To give you...look, don’t say anything yet, okay?

ESTHER
Kept it a secret this long, didn’t I?

MIRI
What do you mean?

ESTHER
Miri, who do you think helped him pick out the ring?

Her sister looks at her with a mixture of shock and delight.
EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

Esther climbs out the window of her mother’s bedroom, onto the fire escape, opens it wide once she’s on the other side. A gust of wind blows over her. She shivers, then takes a deep breath, steadying herself.

“This Year” by The Mountain Goats begins to play as Esther faces the darkness, unafraid for the first time.

THE END