

The Cage

cage, *n.*, **1.** a boxlike receptacle or enclosure having wires, bars, or the like, for displaying or confining birds or animals. **2.** anything that confines or imprisons. (**Arabic**, **gafas**; **Hebrew**, **kluv**)

**A dramatic work
in two acts
by**

Synopsis: *The Cage*

by

SCIfor55years

The Cage was derived from frustration with the inability of peacemakers to bring about a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The world watches Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Yasser Arafat express disdain for one another, while innocent persons continue to die in both camps. More than one person frustrated at the impasse has thought that, "someone ought to throw Sharon and Arafat in a room and lock the door until they can settle their differences." In *The Cage*, a group of Palestinian and Israeli mothers of victims does just that.

The mothers, who have worked together to promote mutual understanding and peace, conclude that their efforts are having no impact. In a last desperate attempt to facilitate the settlement of the dispute, the mothers kidnap and throw the Prime Minister and President in a cage with scant provisions. They also impose conditions upon them that will allow only one to be freed, at most. The result of this blend of historical fact, fiction, and fantasy is an intriguing look into the history and personalities underlying the conflict.

Act I is focused on the pent up anger between the Prime Minister and President, as well as that resulting from their capture. In Act II, they fall into a working relationship despite their seemingly irreconcilable differences. The play has an ending that reflects the unpredictable outcome of the actual dispute, and is intended to keep audiences talking. Stark staging and nameless, faceless mothers representing the many victims of the conflict add to the tenor of the play.

The full-length, two-act play requires only modest staging, and a cast including six "anonymous" mothers, the President, and Prime Minister. The approximate reading time for the play is one hour and fifty minutes.

Characters

3 ISRAELI MOTHERS:

The Israeli women wear conservative dresses with large pockets.

3 PALESTINIAN MOTHERS:

The women are dressed in the traditional Muslim long dress (Abaayah), head dress (hijab), and veil, so that only their eyes and forehead show.

The MOTHERS secretly have been meeting in an effort to build bridges between the Palestinian and Israeli people that will lead to peace. To date, their efforts appear to have been a waste.

PRESIDENT: (Yasser Arafat)

The aging (70+) President of the Palestinian Authority. HE is relatively short. He wears the checked koufiyya (headdress) that has become symbolic of the Palestinian cause. HE also wears a baggy military uniform, and has a scissors-cropped growth of whiskers. HE has noticeable Parkinson's Disease-like tremors in his lips and fingers that are more pronounced when HE is excited or angry.

PRIME MINISTER: (Ariel Sharon)

The Prime Minister of Israel is a young looking 70+ year old dressed in a conservative business suit and necktie. HE is large in stature compared to the PRESIDENT.

Stage

A black curtain should be used to form the left, back, and right stage walls, with strategically located curtain breaks to function as entrances/exits.

Left front stage: A podium with an official looking emblem on the front to be used by the PRIME MINISTER at a news conference being held somewhere in the Defense Ministry.

ii

Right front stage: A small, worn wooden table and chair to be used by the PRESIDENT during a television talk to his people from somewhere in a makeshift Palestinian Authority office complex.

Center: An improvised cage to be used to imprison two men. It should be about 10 feet square and 8 feet high, with the audience side open to permit unobstructed vision inside. The cage door, which is locked with a chain and padlock, is on one side. A covered chamber pot sits at the rear. The closed sides should be constructed from poles or other material that can be seen through, and to which the men can be handcuffed. Lights hang from the ceiling outside the cage, and provide the only light. There is an open area surrounding the cage that will allow room for action. In general, its appearance is that of a formidable enclosure that was constructed by hand.

During Act I, Scenes 1 and 2, the cage should be obscured from the view of the audience by means of a black drop curtain or removable screens, or other shield.

Time

The year 2002.

Place

Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

ACT 1

Scene 1

SETTING: The Israeli Defense Department briefing room and the Palestinian Authority office complex following a bombing by a Palestinian terrorist.

AT RISE: The podium and table at left and right front stage are dimly lit. The PRIME MINISTER walks to the podium, on which he places a notepad, and the PRESIDENT walks to the table, sits down, and places papers he was carrying in front of him. A spotlight brightens on the PRIME MINISTER.

PRIME MINISTER

(Somberly)

As you know, there was another suicide bombing on the coast this morning. You are assured that we will respond quickly and vigorously against those who have perpetrated this brutal terrorist attack. As I speak, a military strike is being prepared, directed at those who have launched this evil act.

(The spotlight dims on the PRIME MINISTER and brightens on the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

(Angrily)

On behalf of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people, I strongly condemn yet another act of aggression being launched against innocent civilians by the Israeli forces. It is a continuation of the slaughter carried out in Jenin, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarem, and even the church in Bethlehem. We implore the world to stand with us in the condemnation of these senseless massacres.

(The spotlight dims on the PRESIDENT and brightens on the PRIME MINISTER.)

PRIME MINISTER

Time and time again we have been told that appropriate measures are being taken to stop such attacks, but they continue. They are followed by excuses that imply we are responsible because we weaken the security forces of the Palestinian Authority to the point where action is impossible. Yet we know for a fact, that it is within this infrastructure that the terrorism is being nurtured.

(The spotlight dims on the PRIME MINISTER and brightens on the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

This follows our strong condemnation of all terrorist activities because of our belief that violence and terror against civilians is counterproductive to achieving a political solution that will endure. This is also after we signed the Oslo accords, and have worked tirelessly with the United States and the United Nations to bring about a permanent and just peace.

(The spotlight dims on the PRESIDENT and brightens on the PRIME MINISTER.)

PRIME MINISTER

The state of Israel has, in good faith, made numerous attempts to restore calm and to seek a political solution to a lasting peace. Our overtures are met with scorn by the Palestinian leader, and wave after wave of terrorism directed at innocent civilians.

(The spotlight dims on the PRIME MINISTER and brightens on the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

Despite our best efforts and deep commitment to the political process, the violence against the Palestinian people only escalates. As a consequence, the hope of the Palestinians evaporates, and they become more and more desperate. Then, when in the torment of hopelessness, some

fling their very bodies at those they hold responsible, we are blamed. The Israelis are the ones who have control over the despair that drives these individuals to their desperate acts.

(The spotlight dims on the PRESIDENT and brightens on the PRIME MINISTER.)

PRIME MINISTER

We must and we will fight unrelentingly until they are so weakened that they cannot wage their war of terrorism, and until they understand that a negotiated settlement is the only road to peace and prosperity for the Palestinian people. They must recognize that their cowardly acts are futile.

(The spotlight dims on the PRIME MINISTER and brightens on the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

The world must recognize our thirst for peace and apply pressure to those who put up roadblock after roadblock. I will continue to work with all who support a just peace for the Palestinians.

(The spotlight dims on the PRESIDENT and brightens on the PRIME MINISTER.)

PRIME MINISTER

The course our actions take is in the hands of the head of the Palestinian Authority who embraces this strategy of terrorism. For now, we have no recourse but to root out the terrorists from their dens wherever they are. If they hide among civilians, it is they who sacrifice innocent people because we will not be thwarted by their dastardly tactics. If civilians hide them, they are as guilty as those they hide and deserve no protection. When we have overturned every stone under which they hide, we once again will pursue a cease fire, a settlement, and a lasting peace.

(The spotlight dims on the PRIME MINISTER and brightens on the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

The course our actions take is in the hands of the Israeli authorities who embrace this strategy of mass destruction and annihilation. For now, we have no recourse but to strengthen our resolve and resist these criminal acts with slings and stones, if we must. When they massacre our children, women, and innocent bystanders, it is they who incite the wrath of Palestinians. Only when they cease their dastardly tactics will we again pursue a cease fire, a settlement, and a lasting peace.

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 1

ACT I

Scene 2

SETTING: A secret meeting place a few days after the speeches of the PRIME MINISTER and PRESIDENT. A black side curtain with a break that can be peered through and serve as an entrance.

AT RISE: The six MOTHERS are huddled together by the curtain, with one PALESTINIAN(#3) serving as a lookout through the break.

ISRAELI-1

(SHE holds a news paper up with one hand.)

Ashdod this time: Three dead and nine injured Monday. Children, parents, grandparents - three generations with one bomb. And a teacher. The bomber was a university student gifted in mathematics.

ISRAELI-2

More mothers weeping.

PALESTINIAN-1

Ramallah on Tuesday: Two dead, 19 injured when the tanks came and shelled again. A nine year old boy run over by a tank when he fell running, and the young soldier who got out of his tank to help him. Many of the injured will die because there are no supplies at the hospital.

PALESTINIAN-2

The river of grief overflows again. The flood of tears must be stopped.

ISRAELI-2

I fear one day we will be among the dead.

PALESTINIAN-3

(SHE looks toward the other MOTHERS from

the curtain break.)

Maybe. Maybe all, maybe one, maybe some, maybe none. Our cause is just and somehow we will succeed.

(SHE resumes looking through the break.)

It is getting so difficult to meet.

ISRAELI-3

Yes, but we must. There will always be a way.

PALESTINIAN-1

I was stopped twice on the way. We can no longer dismiss the danger.

PALESTINIAN-2

Sometimes they watch my house.

ISRAELI-2

It's getting worse on both sides, not better. The hatred is growing too thick to cut.

PALESTINIAN-1

We waste our time. There is not even talk of negotiations.

PALESTINIAN-3

(SHE draws in from the curtain)

We are a bucket trying to stop a flood.

(SHE resumes her lookout.)

ISRAELI-1

The mixed camps for our children, the mutual charities for victims, the discussion groups, and all the other projects combined have produced little change for the good.

ISRAELI-3

We cannot lose our belief in peace. Our resolve must be strong. Pray for strength.

PALESTINIAN-2

Strength for what? Our efforts are unnoticeable. What else can we do?

ISRAELI-1

She is right.

ISRAELI-2

We are not finished.

PALESTINIAN-2

What else is there?

ISRAELI-2

We have one thing left. Maybe it is necessary.

ISRAELI-3

The final plan?

ISRAELI-2

Yes, the plan.

PALESTINIAN-1

That's for real? I know we put our minds to it, but in my heart, I thought it was a game. Maybe a dream.

PALESTINIAN-2

It's for real, alright. I had no other thought.

ISRAELI-1

I always felt it would take such a desperate action.

PALESTINIAN-2

I always hoped peace would come from our bridge-building, but in my mind, I knew it would take more.

ISRAELI-2

We are in agreement that we must carry out the plan? Anyone who does not want to continue should say so now for the good of all.

(Quiet)

ISRAELI-2 (continued)

Let's go ahead then. With the hatred growing, there is no time to waste.

PALESTINIAN-3

(SHE pulls back from the curtain.)

How long will it take to prepare?

(SHE resumes her watch.)

ISRAELI-2

Only a few days since we already have the place. I know a builder.

PALESTINIAN-1

He can do a good job?

ISRAELI-2

Yes. I have seen his work.

ISRAELI-1

That will be the easy part. For the rest, we need God's help.

PALESTINIAN-3

And Allah's

PALESTINIAN-2

What about the builder? He might talk if he gets caught and they torture him.

ISRAELI-2

No. He is strongly committed to our cause. He will go to Argentina as soon as he finishes. From there, who knows?
(SHE shrugs her shoulders.)

ISRAELI-1

It's so complicated. There is not room for one mistake.

ISRAELI-3

We will succeed. The blood shed by our children and the grief of all mothers gives us strength.

PALESTINIAN-2

We will succeed. The hope for peace and for a future gives us strength.

PALESTINIAN-1

When then?

ISRAELI-2

Wednesday, two weeks. That should give us time to prepare. The builder only needs a few days.

ISRAELI-3

Yes, two weeks should be good. We will be able to review the details many times.

PALESTINIAN-2

We should tell our families goodbye in case something goes wrong.

PALESTINIAN-1

No. Nothing unusual. No one must suspect us. We discussed this. We agreed.

PALESTINIAN-2

You are right. But it will be hard.

ISRAELI-2

Watch the news, read the papers, look for signs of trouble. Four a.m. on Wednesday will be the last moment to stop. If you find a problem, use the usual means to contact the rest. The network has worked well.

PALESTINIAN-3

Everyone agrees then?

(ALL agree.)

ISRAELI-1

We leave then. Remember, we do it for the children. We do it for the mothers. We cannot fail.

(THEY leave.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT I

Scene 3

SETTING: The cage, which has secretly been built, approximately two weeks later.

AT RISE: As the stage lights come up, the cage is revealed for the first time. There is no sign of activity.

(A loud door slam is heard coming from backstage followed by a muffled moan from the PRIME MINISTER. MOTHERS voices are then heard giving him directions.)

ISRAELI-2

To your left.

(Stumbling footsteps are heard.)

ISRAELI-1

Now straight ahead.

(The ISRAELI MOTHERS come through a curtain break pushing and pulling the PRIME MINISTER, who has his hands handcuffed behind his back and has a pillow case pulled over his head so he cannot see. HE is also gagged and can emit only muffled sounds. ISRAELI-2 carries a heavy stick or club.)

PRIME MINISTER

Aww. Aww.

(HE gives a sudden jerk, as if to break away. ISRAELI-1 and ISRAELI-3 restrain him, and ISRAELI-2 hits him on the shin with her stick. The PRIME MINISTER

gives out a moan.)
Oooo! Oo!

ISRAELI-2

Don't be foolish. Do as you're told.
(ISRAELI-2 opens the cage door.)

(The three ISRAELI MOTHERS guide and maneuver the PRIME MINISTER into the cage near one of the side walls. ISRAELI-2 lays her club aside.)

ISRAELI-1

Sit.

(The ISRAELI MOTHERS help the PRIME MINISTER to the floor, and position him so he is leaning against the wall with his hands still handcuffed behind him.)

ISRAELI-3

I have the other cuffs.

(ISRAELI-3 walks out through the cage door to the area behind the PRIME MINISTER. SHE then pulls out another set of handcuffs and puts them on the PRIME MINISTER so HE is fastened to the cage side. SHE then returns to the inside of the cage and removes the original handcuffs used in transporting him. The THREE MOTHERS carefully check the PRIME MINISTER over to make certain that HE is secured.)

ISRAELI-2

We can leave him.
(Picking up her club, SHE gives the PRIME MINISTER a firm rap on the head.)
Don't try anything foolish.

PRIME MINISTER

Mmmm!
(HE squirms to make himself more

comfortable.)

(The THREE MOTHERS leave the cage and close the door.)

ISRAELI-1

I'll call the others.

(SHE pulls out a cell phone from a pocket, dials, then waits for an answer.)

ISRAELI-1 (continued)

Yes, our meal is ready. It is time to come home.

(Pause)

We will wait for you.

(SHE turns off the cell phone and puts it away. SHE looks at the others.)

They are nearby. Just a few moments.

ISRAELI-2

Good. So far it has been like a miracle.

(A scuffling is heard backstage, followed by a door slamming shut, and heavy footsteps.)

PALESTINIAN-3

(The voice of the MOTHER is heard from behind the side curtain.)

Straight ahead!

(The THREE PALESTINIAN MOTHERS enter through the curtain break guiding the PRESIDENT who has his hands handcuffed behind his back and a cloth sack pulled over his head so he can't see. HE is also gagged. PALESTINIAN-2 wields a large wooden spoon or other implement that can serve as a weapon. As soon as the group becomes visible, the ISRAELI MOTHERS come to their assistance.)

PRESIDENT

Mmmm. Mmmm.

PALESTINIAN-2

(Rapping the PRESIDENT on the side
of the face with her spoon.)
Be quiet or I'll really use this.

ISRAELI-1
(Opening the cage door.)
In here.

(The THREE PALESTINIAN MOTHERS guide
the PRESIDENT into the cage to the wall
opposite the PRIME MINISTER.)

PALESTINIAN-1
Now down on the floor.

(The THREE assist the PRESIDENT to the
floor and position him so his back is
against the cage.)

ISRAELI-3
(SHE rushes to the wall behind the
PRESIDENT and takes out the handcuffs
previously used on the PRIME MINISTER.
Hurriedly, SHE handcuffs him to the
cage wall.)
Okay, remove yours.

PALESTINIAN-2
(SHE bends down and removes the
original set of cuffs, leaving him
secured to the wall with the other set.)
That's it. You sit still now.

(ALL the MOTHERS leave the cage and
gather near the door.)

PALESTINIAN-2
Who has the sacks?

ISRAELI-1
I'll get them.
(While the others silently wait,
SHE leaves through the curtain break,

and a few moments later, returns carrying two paper bags. In one is a plastic bottle of water, and in the other, a small canned ham that can be opened with a key. SHE enters the cage and sits the bag with the water beside the PRIME MINISTER, and the bag with the ham next to the PRESIDENT. SHE then joins the other MOTHERS outside the cage.)

That's it. That's everything.

PALESTINIAN-3

Let's lock the door then.

(ISRAELI-1 momentarily exits through the curtain break and returns with a chain

PALESTINIAN-3 (continued)

and a padlock. SHE and PALESTINIAN-3 close the cage door, and secure it shut with the chain and padlock.)

ISRAELI-2

(Holding up the key to the lock.)

Who keeps this? I can't remember.

(There is a brief silence, and the MOTHERS look at one another.)

PALESTINIAN-1

Who loses things easily?

ISRAELI-2

Why?

PALESTINIAN-1

Give it to her!

(THEY laugh at the joke.)

PALESTINIAN-2

(Speaking to ISRAELI-2.)

We don't have time to joke. You keep it.

PALESTINIAN-2

Yes, hurry. The next step.

ISRAELI-1

Wait until I get the masks.

(SHE exits through the curtain break and returns in a few moments carrying three ski masks.)

Here.

(SHE hands masks to the other two Israeli MOTHERS.

(The THREE ISRAELI MOTHERS put them on. THEY wear the masks throughout the remainder of the play.)

PALESTINIAN-1

Finally, they see the value of the hijab!

(Again they break out in laughter.)

ISRAELI-3

(SHE quickly moves to the wall behind the PRIME MINISTER, taking out and readying the key to his handcuffs.)

PALESTINIAN-3

(SHE moves behind the PRESIDENT, readying the key to his handcuffs.)

ISRAELI-2

Ready?

(Simultaneously ISRAELI-3 and PALESTINIAN-3 say, "yes.")

ISRAELI-2

Insert...now!

ISRAELI-3 & PALESTINIAN-3

(THEY unlock one handcuff and jump back safely away from the cage.)

(The PRIME MINISTER and PRESIDENT, feeling their hands freed, rip the head coverings off and remove the gags from their mouths. THEY quickly stand up. Gazing around, THEY are stunned at what THEY see. The handcuffs remain fastened to one hand for the remainder of the play.)

PRIME MINISTER

What's going on here? What is this?

(HE rushes to the side where the MOTHERS have gathered. HE pays little attention to the PRESIDENT and does not yet realize who HE is imprisoned with.)

PRESIDENT

(He gains his composure somewhat more slowly because of aging-related stiffness and fatigue. Only seeing the back of the PRIME MINISTER, HE moves along side him, looking at the women.)

This is somebody's idea of a joke?

(The MOTHERS say nothing. Finally the PRIME MINISTER and PRESIDENT realize THEY are not alone, and their heads turn toward one another.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Glaring.)

You!

PRESIDENT

(Faintly, with disbelief.)

This is real? I'm with the murderer?

PRIME MINISTER

(The PRIME MINISTER grabs at the throat of the PRESIDENT, trying to strangle him.)

I said I would see you dead!

(Two MOTHERS begin banging against the

cage with the club and cooking implement.)

ISRAELI-2

(Screaming)

Stop! Listen before you kill each other.

(The PRIME MINISTER backs off and glares at the women. The PRESIDENT composes himself and looks at the clustered MOTHERS. THEY both grasp the cage walls, peering at the six MOTHERS.)

PRESIDENT

Who are you?

PALESTINIAN-3

The Palestinian and Israeli mothers of the dead. Mothers of all those killed by the tanks and bombers.

PRIME MINISTER

You are all women. How did you get by the security?

ISRAELI-2

You'll get none of our secrets. It is sufficient to say that we were able to do what we did because we were determined to do it.

PALESTINIAN-1

It was no challenge. Your security were no more effective than those who are supposed to protect the people.

PRESIDENT

What are you going to do with us? Where are we?

ISRAELI-1

Ah. The small talk is over. Now we get down to business with our caged tiger and lion. They look so meek when they don't have tanks and bombers to do their dirty work.

PRIME MINISTER

Let me out of here. My men will find me and you will pay for this. Be sensible. You may still garner some mercy.

ISRAELI-1

They may only have corpses to find.

PRIME MINISTER

What are you talking about? What are you going to do? I am the Prime Minister. Do you understand?

PALESTINIAN-1

We have stopped the killing for a moment. We have caged the two killers of our children who cannot find a way to stop their lethal game. The game will not go on because only one, or perhaps neither of you, will be set free alive.

PRESIDENT

You are mad. You are going to kill us?

PALESTINIAN-1

No.

PRESIDENT

You must be mad. That is what you just said.

PALESTINIAN-1

No. You two are the masters of your own fate. You have your lives in your own hands.

PRIME MINISTER

(Recognizing that he is the stronger of the two.)

The one who can survive will be set free?

(HE smiles and looks at the PRESIDENT.)

ISRAELI-3

One may survive and be freed. But listen carefully. In order for one to be set free, the other must beg for his life. If no one begs, no one will be spared.

PRESIDENT

Did my ears deceive me? Do you mean that if I am to be freed, he must beg for my life, or I will be killed.

PRESIDENT (continued)

(The PRESIDENT points to the PRIME MINISTER.)

PRIME MINISTER

And I cannot get out unless he begs for me? Then he will be killed?

(HE points to the PRESIDENT.)

This is madness. You know that cannot happen. This is murder.

ISRAELI-2

The only provisions you will get have been placed in the cage. When they are gone, you get no more. In effect, you will starve yourself to death if you are not first freed.

(The PRIME MINISTER immediately moves to where HE was cuffed to the wall and grabs the bag sitting on the floor. Upon seeing this, the PRESIDENT seizes his package. THEY grasp the contents and examine them.)

PRIME MINISTER

(HE holds out the bottle.)

A bottle of water. This is only a bottle of water. It is nothing.

PRESIDENT

(HE begins loudly laughing)

No! No.

PRIME MINISTER

Why are you laughing?

PRESIDENT

(HE holds the can HE removed as if to show the MOTHERS, pointing at it with his other hand.)

For me? Canned ham?

PRIME MINISTER

(Laughing)

What you deserve...pig for a pig.

PRESIDENT

(HE moves toward the PRIME MINISTER as
if to strike him with the can.)

You are the swine!

ISRAELI-3

(Banging on the cage with her club.)

Stop. You will have plenty of time for that. Remember,
that is all you get.

PRIME MINISTER

Why are you doing this?

PALESTINIAN-2

Neither of you would stop the cycle of violence, so we are
trying to do so. If only one of you survives, there is no
one to strike back. And because he has been saved by his
enemy, maybe he will have compassion for his enemy's
people. If neither survive, the world is rid of two
heartless killers. New leaders will emerge that are not so
blinded by personal hatred for each other.

ISRAELI-1

You have not been able to agree on anything. Now you will
feel the consequences of your ego games. Until now, the
people have borne the brunt of these games. Now, it is
your fate that hangs in the balance. Maybe one of you will
leave with open eyes.

PRESIDENT

You are mad. Yes, yes.

ISRAELI-3

No, you two have been infected with madness. You unleash
your unrelenting hate on innocent victims. Now you have
come to the final lesson in hatred.

PRIME MINISTER

You are women, mothers. How can you do this? Have you no
conscience?

1-3-22

ISRAELI-1

We have only regrets, Mr. Prime Minister. We regret that we did not do this long ago. To stop the killing, one must stop the killers. We take pride in this action. We will see it through to the end.

PALESTINIAN-1

Yes. There is no turning back.

PRIME MINISTER

(Defiantly)

When I get out of here, and I will, you will regret this. All of you.

ISRAELI-1

If you are granted your freedom by your mate there, you will be returned the same way you arrived. If by chance you have some idea of escaping, you will be under a constant watch.

ISRAELI-2

If you try something, the bite of Uzis and Kalashnikovs is waiting for you. Remember: You were not captured by fools and fools will not be guarding you.

PRIME MINISTER

Mark my word, my men will find me and free me.

PRESIDENT

Maybe my men. More likely we are on the West Bank, or maybe Gaza.

PRIME MINISTER

You shut up. I have eyes and ears all over. My security forces are probably already circling in on this spot.

PRESIDENT

Then we are all dead. We will soon be shelled. They cannot do anything else.

ISRAELI-1

Don't worry. We will tell your men where to find your bones.

1-3-23

PRESIDENT

Some of you are Muslims. You must set me free or you will bear the wrath of Allah.

PALESTINIAN-1

It is you who should worry about Allah's wrath. It is you who have sent our young people to their death. It is you who taunt the tanks into coming and killing our people.

PALESTINIAN-3

Think about this: Maybe we are Allah's wrath.

PALESTINIAN-2

It is time to leave them.

PALESTINIAN-1

Yes. I should like to see how the people are reacting to the disappearance.

PRESIDENT

You are going to leave us? How can you leave us and watch us at the same time?

ISRAELI-2

So pathetic. There is no pleasure looking into the eyes of two killers and listening to them quibble while innocent people struggle to survive. We simply go outside where it is easier to breathe.

PALESTINIAN-3

You call when you decide your fate. We will come.

(The MOTHERS file out through the curtain break.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Shouting after the MOTHERS.)

You will be sorry for this.

(There is quiet while the PRESIDENT and PRIME MINISTER size each other up.)

PRESIDENT

See what your tanks have caused?

PRIME MINISTER

Your dirty terrorists.

PRESIDENT

[Menachem] Begin was a terrorist. Rabin was a terrorist. You walk arm in arm. You are all criminals.

PRIME MINISTER

Terrorists? They were freedom fighters.

PRESIDENT

Your mind is a wonder. It conveniently forgets that Begin was the head of the bloody ETZEL. Ask the British if he was a terrorist.

PRIME MINISTER

He was a freedom fighter then. He was fighting for a nation.

PRESIDENT

Just like I am fighting for a nation. How the viewpoint changes when the shoe is on the other foot. Israelis are freedom fighters; Palestinians are terrorists when we do the same thing for the same reasons.

PRIME MINISTER

That's it. I'm not going to spend my last days, maybe, listening to your dribble and lies. I will kill you now and enjoy some tranquility.

(HE starts toward the PRESIDENT intent on strangling him.)

PRESIDENT

(HE waves a finger in the approaching PRIME MINISTER's face.)

If you kill me, there will be no one to beg for your life. You commit suicide.

PRIME MINISTER

You want me to think that you might save me? The pyramids will be flying before that happens.

1-3-25

PRESIDENT

You underrate yourself. You convinced many of your people to vote for you when it wasn't in their best interest.

PRIME MINISTER

People voted for me because they wanted a strong leader. They knew what they were doing!

PRESIDENT

Believe what you will. But remember, I also have the Nobel Prize. I am recognized as a man of peace. I am also an old man. I might consider sacrificing myself to become the greatest peacemaker in history. Think of the glory.

PRIME MINISTER

Surely you are joking. You are as mad as the women.

PRESIDENT

How will you find out if I am dead?

PRIME MINISTER

(Pensive for a few moments. HE then turns away from the PRESIDENT.)

I can rid the world of you at anytime. Maybe you'll be useful for some plan I think of.

PRESIDENT

On the other hand, you could get them to set me free.

PRIME MINISTER

And why would I do that?

PRESIDENT

If you walk free and I die, you will be held responsible. You will unleash the mother of all intifadas against the Israeli people. Think of the lives you could save.

PRIME MINISTER

It is the women who are responsible. Not me.

PRESIDENT

You think anyone will believe that women captured us and killed me? What will you tell them?

PRIME MINISTER

1-3-26

Shut up. You have too many answers in your questions.
Just let me alone. Let me think.

PRESIDENT

Yes, you think, and I will wait for my men who will soon
find us.

(BOTH sit down facing one another and
lean against the cage walls.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 3

ACT I

Scene 4

SETTING: The cage a few hours later.

AT RISE: The PRESIDENT is still sitting with his back against the cage wall looking restless, and the PRIME MINISTER is pacing about, looking pensive.

PRESIDENT

(HE picks up the canned ham and begins carefully looking it over. Then he places it on the floor beside him. HE looks at the PRIME MINISTER.)

Your excellency, I am a bit thirsty. I don't suppose you would offer me a drink of your water?

PRIME MINISTER

You know the answer, so why do you bother me with a moot question?

PRESIDENT

A man with a parched throat cannot beg for your release. I thought you might at least consider my request.

PRIME MINISTER

I am starved. I didn't even eat breakfast today. You don't hear me asking you for food.

PRESIDENT

But that's different. All I have is a canned ham. Pork is forbidden to us. It's a joke by the women...or maybe their idea of torture.

PRIME MINISTER

Oh, I would eat the ham if I had it and it would enable me to survive.

PRESIDENT

It's Haraam - forbidden - not kosher.

PRIME MINISTER

It's forbidden for you. For me, it's only a tradition. I'm not so orthodox that I wouldn't eat it.

PRESIDENT

I don't understand. You don't keep kosher? What kind of a Jew is that?

PRIME MINISTER

A sensible one. Look, in the Biblical days, pigs were often diseased and cooking was done poorly. It was recognized that people often fell sick when they ate pork, and some even died. For public health reasons, it was banned by the religious leaders. Now the situation has changed. But the religious tradition is still kept, when possible. Only those who try to live in the past consider it forbidden.

PRESIDENT

(Claps his hands, applauding.)

An even better answer than I expected from the politician.

PRIME MINISTER

Don't you make fun.

(HE makes a threatening gesture.)

PRESIDENT

You should applaud me for being able to make light when I'm so thirsty.

PRIME MINISTER

Don't look for sympathy. No water. One can go several days without food, but only three or four without water. Every soldier knows that. With my water, I have more time to figure a way out or buy time for my men to find me.

PRESIDENT

Or my men. What do you think will happen to you if my men find me here dead and you alive? I can tell you, I know one who would pick your skin off with his finger nails if he got hold of you.

PRIME MINISTER

Shut up. I know you are trying to get under my skin. You

think you can get me to lower my guard so you can attack me in some way.

PRESIDENT

I might be quiet if I had some water.

PRIME MINISTER

Out of the question. Ramble all you want.

PRESIDENT

(At this point, HE begins to taunt the
PRIME MINISTER.)

So you didn't have breakfast? I was lucky.

PRIME MINISTER

You had breakfast? What did you have?

PRESIDENT

Oh, just some oatmeal. I like it. I can go all day without eating if I have oatmeal. They say it's healthy too. I like to put some dates on top. The sweetness mixes in. Then I had a cup of tea.

PRIME MINISTER

(Rubbing his belly.)

Oatmeal. That would be good.

PRESIDENT

(HE picks up the canned ham and begins
reading from the label.)

Prime Danish ham packed in natural juices. Do you know about natural juices from ham?

PRIME MINISTER

(Irritated)

Of course I know.

PRESIDENT

It's good?

PRIME MINISTER

Yes it's good. Now leave me alone.

PRESIDENT

Will the juices quench my thirst?

PRIME MINISTER

What does it matter? It's from the pig. Juices, meat, it's all forbidden to you.

PRESIDENT

I was just thinking, your excellency, maybe not eating pork is just a Muslim tradition. I won't know for sure until I can consult an Imam, so maybe I will take a chance. If I was wrong, Allah will forgive me. I wouldn't do it again. Yes, I will drink the juices, but not eat the meat.

PRIME MINISTER

It is forbidden. I have read the Qur'an. You have no excuse.

PRESIDENT

A Jew who eats pork is an authority on Haraam and Halaal? Now you joke. If I accepted advice from you, surely Allah would shake his finger, laugh at me, and then unleash his wrath.

PRIME MINISTER

Take your chances if you like. I withdraw my advice.

PRESIDENT

You know what I think? I think the women intended for us to share our provisions. It would make no sense for one to have food and the other water.

PRIME MINISTER

There was no rule given. No sharing rule.

PRESIDENT

We'll see.

(Shouting toward the curtain break.)

Hello out there. Will you come in?

(In a few moments, ISRAELI-2 comes through the curtain break into the cage area wearing her ski mask. SHE is carrying a banana that she has started eating.)

ISRAELI-2

Someone summoned? Is one of you ready to set the other free?

PRESIDENT

It was I who called to you. I have a question.

ISRAELI-2

Yes?

PRESIDENT

We find ourselves in a predicament. You see, one of us has the water, and one has the ham. Was it your intention that we share our provisions?

ISRAELI-2

No.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE scoffs at the PRESIDENT.)

See? There is no rule.

ISRAELI-2

You two make the decisions inside the cage; we make the decisions out here.

PRESIDENT

(Protestingly)

What happens when we can't agree? Must one suffer because the other is obstinate?

ISRAELI-2

Now you experience the plight of our two peoples.

PRESIDENT

I protest!

ISRAELI-2

(SHE gives out a shriek of laughter and drops the banana on the floor, just out of reach from within the cage.)

See what you have done? You made me waste a perfectly good banana. What makes you think you have a right to protest?

If you had listened to the protests of the people, you wouldn't be here.

PRESIDENT

(Angrily)

This is no joking matter. You won't even listen to what you have done. You have given the pork eating Jew the water when he is hungry and not thirsty. You have given me, a Muslim for whom pork is forbidden, a ham, while I am thirsty and not hungry. That is most unfair. I demand to talk to one of the Muslim women. They would not allow this.

ISRAELI-2

Request denied. All the others will tell you the same thing. We are one. We are mothers of dead children who just happen to be Muslims and Jews. Muslim, Jew, Palestinian, Israeli...these are irrelevant.

PRESIDENT

I don't believe you.

ISRAELI-2

As you wish. In time you likely will have the opportunity to talk with others.

PRESIDENT

You will be sorry!

ISRAELI-2

I leave you. You interrupted supper. Be so considerate as to not disturb us over such trivial matters.

(SHE turns and leaves.)

PRESIDENT

(Pointing at the PRIME MINISTER.)

She is on your side. You are all alike.

PRIME MINISTER

Didn't you hear her? She said it didn't matter that she was not a Muslim. There is one set of rules.

PRESIDENT

See? You defend her. If she was one of the Muslims, would

you defend her?

PRIME MINISTER

You are impossible. I defend none of them. I only told you what I heard. They are all criminals for what they are doing. That I believe for sure. Now just leave me alone. I have to think.

(The PRESIDENT does not respond. HE sits down and leans against the wall and starts examining the handcuff still attached to one arm. The PRIME MINISTER slowly paces about with his head down.)

(The PRIME MINISTER spies the banana left behind by ISRAELI-2. HE gets down on his knees and tries to reach it through the cage wall.)

PRESIDENT

What are you doing?

PRIME MINISTER

None of your business.

PRESIDENT

(HE stands up to get a better view.)
You are trying to get that banana. I see it there.

PRIME MINISTER

Stay away from me. I'm warning you.
(Unable to reach it on HIS knees, the PRIME MINISTER lies down and tries again.)

PRESIDENT

You can see it's too far for either of us to reach. It's a desperate try. You would eat a banana from the floor?

PRIME MINISTER

(Pulling his arm in and sitting up.)
It's a perfectly good banana. Most of the peel is still

on.

PRESIDENT

You must be famished.

PRIME MINISTER

You know I'm hungry.

PRESIDENT

(Smiling)

First, you said you would eat pork. Now you try to eat a banana from the floor. I thought I knew about kosher. I wonder what else I don't know about Jews.

PRIME MINISTER

Don't you make jokes. Do you understand the seriousness of our situation?

PRESIDENT

Oh, I understand. What can I do but wait? I don't have control.

PRIME MINISTER

That's always your excuse. You don't have control. So you do nothing. Then you claim you are the Palestinian leader. You can take control like me.

PRESIDENT

I don't have control. You imply you do. We end up here the same. Take control of the women. Show me what you mean.

PRIME MINISTER

I should have finished you when I had my hands around your throat.

PRESIDENT

And that's my point. I did nothing and I am still here. I believe that patience is master. If you wait, sooner or later the wind blows in your direction.

PRIME MINISTER

What are you? Some kind of philosopher?

PRESIDENT

When you grow up and have had enough experiences, you can be a philosopher. It's obvious that wisdom didn't call on you yet. You stir up things like young people tend to do.

PRIME MINISTER

You have to act to make things happen. That's all I do.

PRESIDENT

You act when you know what the bloody outcome will be. I...

(HE stops and just stares with his mouth open.)

PRIME MINISTER

Is something wrong? You don't look well.

PRESIDENT

I feel some dizziness, some weakness. I must sit down.
(HE eases himself to the floor and leans against the cage wall.)

PRIME MINISTER

(HE watches the PRESIDENT with concern.)
Are you going to be okay? Should I call the women?

PRESIDENT

No. No. Don't call them. I guess I'm tired. My mouth is dry. Do you have the time?

PRIME MINISTER

No. They got me before I put my watch on. You don't have a watch either?

PRESIDENT

Yes, I have a Rolex. It cost many thousands of dollars. It was given to me as a gift by a head of state.

PRIME MINISTER

Why don't you have it?

PRESIDENT

How could I wear such a watch in front of my people when half are starving? They can't even buy bread. It would bring trouble.

PRIME MINISTER

I see your point. We don't even have a window to see if it's light or dark. It must be late because the woman said they were eating supper.

PRESIDENT

Yes, it must be late. That's why I'm so tired.

PRIME MINISTER

(Pacing slowly back and forth.)

I just thought of an idea. A way to escape. Yes, I think I can get us out of here. It requires your help.

PRESIDENT

I have no choice but to listen. But I agree to nothing.

PRIME MINISTER

(Looking directly at the PRESIDENT.)

Look, your faintness gave me the idea. You could pretend you are sick, maybe having a heart attack. I call the women, they come to see what is wrong, open the cage, and then we run out. They are not so strong. I'm sure we could fight them off if they tried to stop us.

PRESIDENT

You are forgetting two things.

PRIME MINISTER

What?

PRESIDENT

Uzis and Kalashnikovs.

PRIME MINISTER

I don't believe the women when they say they have guns. Did you see as much as one gun?

PRESIDENT

No.

PRIME MINISTER

Don't you think if they had guns, they would be carrying them?

PRESIDENT

That's a good point.

PRIME MINISTER

So we try?

PRESIDENT

No.

PRIME MINISTER

Why not? There's some risk, but consider the alternative. There is no chance if we remain here.

PRESIDENT

I am too weak, too tired. You would run off and leave me.

PRIME MINISTER

No. No. You can trust me.

PRESIDENT

How can I trust someone who won't even give a thirsty man a drink of water?

PRIME MINISTER

(HE thinks about this for a few moments.)

If I give you a drink of water, will you agree to the plan?

PRESIDENT

Of course!

PRIME MINISTER

Now I don't know. You didn't sound sincere. How do I know you won't change your mind after I give you the water?

PRESIDENT

(Thoughtfully.)

I can think of nothing certain. But you might give me a small drink now and then more after we escape.

PRIME MINISTER

That might be fair...yes, that is fair.

PRESIDENT

(Reaching out.)

Please give me the water then.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE starts to hand the bottle to the
PRESIDENT, then abruptly jerks back.)

No. I don't trust you that much.

PRESIDENT

(Angrily)

Why do you play this game and torment me? And you want me
to trust you?

PRIME MINISTER

I'm not going back on my word. You will get your drink. I
can't just give you the bottle because you might take a big
drink. I must measure out the amount.

PRESIDENT

How? There is nothing here but the chamber pot.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE goes over to the pot, lifts the lid,
and looks in.)

PRESIDENT

I will not drink from a chamber pot! I will not be
humiliated.

PRIME MINISTER

That is not my intention. I was just curious. I haven't
seen one of these in a long while.

PRESIDENT

You satisfy your curiosity and leave me here thirsty.

PRIME MINISTER

A while ago you lectured me on patience. I will give you
your drink.

(HE walks over to where the PRESIDENT is
sitting. Again, the PRESIDENT reaches
out.)

No. You put your hands behind your back.
(HE proceeds to remove the cap from the bottle.)

PRESIDENT
How can I drink without my hands?

PRIME MINISTER
Open your mouth. I will hold the bottle. If I sense that anything but your head is about to move, you will be finished.

PRESIDENT
I am too thirsty to argue.
(HE purses his lips to receive the bottle.)

PRIME MINISTER
(HE holds the bottle up and checks the level of the water.)
A small drink is down to where the neck and main part of the bottle connect.
(HE places his finger on the spot, showing it to the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT
Okay. Okay.

PRIME MINISTER
(HE kneels down and carefully places the bottle in the PRESIDENT'S mouth, giving him a couple of swallows. HE pulls the bottle back and checks the water level. HE puts it back to the PRESIDENT'S mouth, giving him a couple more sips. The PRIME MINISTER then checks the water level and screws the cap back on.)

That's it. It's down to the line.

PRESIDENT
That wasn't much, but it was good water. Hopefully, it will soothe my mind for a while. At least for now, I feel

better.

PRIME MINISTER

I hope so too. Are you ready for the plan?

PRESIDENT

The plan?...Oh, the escape plan.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes, the escape plan. You remember how it will work? You will pretend you suffer from a heart attack and I will call

PRIME MINISTER (continued)

the women. When they open the door to check on you, we rush them and fight our way out, if we must.

PRESIDENT

Yes, yes. I remember. But I also remember I have one question to ask you about it.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes?

PRESIDENT

What's going to happen if we are in the territories? I will not be able to protect you. Even small children would recognize you and stone you.

PRIME MINISTER

(Looking stunned.)

I didn't think of that. But how could Israeli women be in the territories?

PRESIDENT

How could Palestinian women be doing such a thing under the noses of the Israeli authorities?

PRIME MINISTER

You have a point. Why didn't you ask this question before?

PRESIDENT

My throat was too parched.

PRIME MINISTER

If I thought for one minute you were trying to pull something over on me, I would finish you right now.

(HE sits down and leans against the cage wall, deep in thought. HE suddenly jumps up.)

We will do it now.

PRESIDENT

I know, you have been thinking.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes. It has to be late now and dark outside. People will be sleeping. If we are in the territories, you will recognize the place, and we will be able to find our way out in the dark. If we are in Israel, I will know, and we will

PRIME MINISTER (continued)

be okay.

PRESIDENT

I still think it's a big chance, but I agreed. We will follow your plan.

PRIME MINISTER

Fine. Are you going to have a heart attack?

PRESIDENT

Maybe, if I find myself in Israel. But for now, I will just pretend.

PRIME MINISTER

Don't joke now. You can hold your chest and moan.

PRESIDENT

I know a heart attack. Palestinians have doctors too.

PRIME MINISTER

Then it's settled. I will stand by the door and you lay there.

PRESIDENT

I can have a heart attack sitting, but if you insist.
(HE lays on his side.)

PRIME MINISTER

As soon as you hear them coming, you start to moan. You're ready?

PRESIDENT

Yes.

PRIME MINISTER

(Shouting toward the curtain break.)

Help. An emergency. The president is ill.

(HE watches the curtain break.)

(PALESTINIAN-3 comes through the curtain break polishing the barrel of an assault weapon.)

PALESTINIAN-3

What's happening in here? Who called?

PRIME MINISTER

(Having noticed the gun, the PRESIDENT lies still and quiet. The PRIME MINISTER is stunned by the fact that PALESTINIAN-3 has a weapon.)

I called.

PALESTINIAN-3

What is it?

PRIME MINISTER

I..ah...it's late and the president is having difficulty sleeping because of the lights. Will you be turning them out soon?

PALESTINIAN-3

That is why you disturbed me? I am going to finish cleaning my gun before I go on watch tonight.

PRESIDENT

(Getting up.)

That means you are not turning the lights out?

PALESTINIAN-3

Of course not. We cannot watch you in the dark. Not such

a devious pair.

PRESIDENT

I expected as much. You might as well go back to your gun cleaning...I'm sure you can use the gun well since you take such good care of it.

PALESTINIAN-3

To tell the truth, I'm the poorest in the group. My instructor complains that I didn't practice enough. The last time, he estimated that only about 75 percent of my bullets were hitting the empty oil drum about 50 paces away. Some of the others have done much better.

PRESIDENT

Well, it does take practice.

PRIME MINISTER

(Speaking to PALESTINIAN-3.)

You practice? How could you practice right under our noses?

PALESTINIAN-3

Sometime, when your head is in the clouds, you can't see under your nose.

PRIME MINISTER

I should have known better than to ask.

PALESTINIAN-3

I pray that one day I won't have to practice at all. Peace must come first.

PRESIDENT

Sorry we disturbed you. I will try putting something over my head when I sleep.

PALESTINIAN-3

I leave you to your sleep.

(SHE heads toward the curtain break.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Faintly)
Shalom.

(PALESTINIAN-3 exits)

I was wrong about the guns. My plan was ridiculous.

PRESIDENT
You almost got us killed. You see what can happen when you try to stir things up?

PRIME MINISTER
I have never been wrong like this.

PRESIDENT
I can argue with that, but I won't because I'm tired. I'm going to relieve myself and then go to sleep. Will you stand between me and the curtain while I do my business in case one of the women comes in?

PRIME MINISTER
Yes, do your business. Do your business. I don't think I can sleep now. Anyhow, thanks for your quick thinking when you saw the gun. I don't think she suspected anything.

PRESIDENT
One last thing before I fall asleep.

PRIME MINISTER
Yes?

PRESIDENT
If you try to kill me while I'm sleeping, do it quickly so I don't suffer.

PRIME MINISTER
Sleep. I have no plan to kill you. I have no plan at all.

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 4

ACT I

Scene 5

SETTING: The cage the following morning.

AT RISE: The PRESIDENT and the PRIME MINISTER are sleeping on the floor. Their heads are covered with a shirt/jacket. The chamber pot sits uncovered, with the lid at its side.

PRESIDENT

(HE begins to stir, uncovers his head, sits up, and looks around.) The canned ham is next to him, having been covered by his shirt/jacket. HE picks up the can and begins to examine it. It slips from his grasp, falling to the floor and making a loud noise.)

PRIME MINISTER

(At the noise, HE sits up, ripping away his head covering at the same time. The bottle of water is on the floor next to where his head was.)

(Startled)

What's happening? What's going on?
(HE rubs his eyes.)

PRESIDENT

I'm sorry if I woke you. I just dropped the ham.

PRIME MINISTER

What were you doing with the ham? Ah, you were going to eat it when you thought I was sleeping. Go ahead. Do it if you want to. You don't have to worry about me. It's Allah who forbids you to eat it.

PRESIDENT

You misunderstand. I woke up, and when I looked around, I was confused. I thought I was having a bad dream and when

I woke up, I would be in my own bed. I was feeling the ham to make certain it was real. Regrettably, it is. Everything here is real.

PRIME MINISTER

Of course it's real. What time is it? It must still be the middle of the night.

PRESIDENT

Remember, we don't have a watch. I feel somewhat rested. I usually waken about 5:30. It must be morning.

PRIME MINISTER

It couldn't be. I'm too tired. I admit though, it did take sometime for me to fall asleep. I couldn't get the thoughts about the escape plan out of my mind, and then you were snoring loudly.

PRESIDENT

I don't snore. No one has ever complained.

PRIME MINISTER

They probably were afraid to criticize you. Believe me, you snore. Maybe I will go back to sleep now if you can keep quiet.

PRESIDENT

Let's ask the women for the time. They can't refuse us that little thing...Wait. What's that smell? Something stinks.

(HE starts sniffing.)

PRIME MINISTER

(HE inhales deeply.)

There is a stench. Maybe we are in a stable or maybe there is a sewer nearby.

PRESIDENT

But we didn't smell it yesterday. I don't remember smelling anything like this even when they brought me in.

(HE looks around.)

Aha.

(HE stands up.)

PRIME MINISTER

You know what it is?

PRESIDENT

Yes.

(HE walks to the chamber pot, picks the lid off the floor and puts it on the pot.)
I'm not accusing anyone, but someone forgot to put the lid on when he relieved himself.

PRIME MINISTER

(Apologetically)
I guess I did. I had so much on my mind, I must have forgotten. I know better. Excuse me.

PRESIDENT

All our problems should be so easy. Oh, the time.
(Loudly)
Hello out there. Will someone come here?

(THEY BOTH watch the curtain break.)

ISRAELI-1

(Coming through the curtain break)
You called? You have decided?

PRIME MINISTER

No, we have decided nothing. We were wondering if you would be so kind as to give us the time. We have no watch and we can't see outside to know if it's light or dark.

ISRAELI-1

Such a hardship. You don't know the time. Well, I see no harm. We were just finishing morning tea. It's nearly 7.

PRESIDENT

I was exhausted. I never sleep so late.

ISRAELI-1

I'm going back to my tea before it gets cold.

PRIME MINISTER

Before you leave, maybe you could tell us the news. They must be looking for us by now.

ISRAELI-1

Don't get your hopes up. Even if they were looking, they wouldn't find you. Both sides are still wringing their hands and accusing the other. Groups on both sides are claiming they kidnaped you. Some have even asked for a ransom. A few blame the United States...the C-I-A.

PRIME MINISTER

You are lying! They must be looking for us.

ISRAELI-1

If you know, then why do you bother me?
(SHE turns and leaves.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Turning toward the PRESIDENT.)
They must be looking for us. Do you believe her?

PRESIDENT

They said they had guns, and they had guns. Why should she lie?

PRIME MINISTER

Why do they do anything? You can't deal with madmen. They're not rational.

PRESIDENT

Maybe so. What does it matter? They don't want to deal anyhow.

PRIME MINISTER

I think my security forces are looking. They don't want anyone getting in their way, so they don't announce it to the world. They may already know where I am, but have to be careful so the captors don't kill me.

PRESIDENT

If they blame the Palestinians, they must be looking in the territories. Maybe we are in Israel, right under their noses where they would never think to look.

PRIME MINISTER

No, no. You are wrong. You will see. There are too many eyes and ears in Israel for this place to go unnoticed.

All Israelis are on high alert to report anything out of the ordinary.

PRESIDENT

You don't think I have eyes and ears? We have plenty in Israel, just as we have in the territories.

PRIME MINISTER

We know all the spies. Don't brag.

PRESIDENT

The women are clever. I'm not so sure we will be found in time.

PRIME MINISTER

What they ask is impossible.

PRESIDENT

What's impossible?

PRIME MINISTER

That one of us will agree to die for the other's freedom. I don't want to die. You don't want to die...or do you?

PRESIDENT

No. I swore to Allah that I would live to see a Palestinian state. Without that, my life - the struggles - will be meaningless. It would be a painful death knowing all was in vain.

PRIME MINISTER

It's your own fault. You want Jerusalem, you want the settlements to go. Demand after demand, that's all I heard.

PRESIDENT

We only want what was taken from us. You have your country. You weren't satisfied. Rabin started to understand. We were so close.

PRIME MINISTER

Rabin turned soft. He wanted to give too much away. What is ours, is ours. We cannot go backward. There are millions of Jews around the world who want to come home to Israel. We must have room for them.

PRESIDENT

What could I expect from someone with the mind of a war criminal.

PRIME MINISTER

(Waving his fist.)

Don't you throw that up. You weren't there. When you are a soldier, you take no chances.

PRESIDENT

When you are a soldier, there is the Geneva Convention. It forbids attacks on civilians.

PRIME MINISTER

Listen to Mr. high and mighty who sends his killers to blow up school buses and ice cream parlors.

PRESIDENT

I send no one. I condemn all actions against civilians. Those who bomb are not soldiers. They are desperate people who see themselves left with no future. They receive no

PRESIDENT (continued)

orders from me.

PRIME MINISTER

A wink is as good as an order.

PRESIDENT

You are as mad as the women. To send someone to death with a wink is absurd.

PRIME MINISTER

Forget it. Time is running out. There's not much water,
(HE picks up the water bottle and checks
it.)

and it has been almost a day and a half since I ate.

PRESIDENT

(With alarm.)

There is only half left! You drank some.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes, I drank before I went to sleep. You have nerve to complain when you had the first swallows. And besides, it

is my water.

PRESIDENT

I had hardly any, and still am thirsty. Are you going to give me more?

PRIME MINISTER

There is no reason to give you more. I must save it for myself so my men have as much time as possible to find me. It's obvious you won't beg for me.

PRESIDENT

I have no reason to beg for your life. There would still be no Palestinian state and I would be left to die. I will go on as long as I can and then drink the juices from my ham.

PRIME MINISTER

You will be sorry.

PRESIDENT

If I am alive, I can earn forgiveness from Allah. If I am dead, I have no chance.

PRIME MINISTER

That's not what I meant.

PRESIDENT

Oh?

PRIME MINISTER

At best, you will find no more than a spoonful of the natural juices, as they call it. Furthermore, the juices will be salty and make you more thirsty. You will go mad.

PRESIDENT

I knew you would have an answer that would discourage me. You only want the ham for yourself.

PRIME MINISTER

You are incredible.

PRESIDENT

You are absurd.

PRIME MINISTER

Look, the truth of the matter is that you can only live a few days without water, but people have survived weeks, even a month or more without food. The water is most valuable right now.

PRESIDENT

Keep your water. Then when I die, you can drink my blood and get a few more days.

PRIME MINISTER

(Spitting on the floor.)

Never, never, would I drink your filthy blood. I prefer to die sooner if that is the alternative.

PRESIDENT

Then why do you insist on shedding the blood of the Palestinian people? I thought you had an appetite for it.

PRIME MINISTER

Your insults will get you no water.

(There is a shuffling behind the curtain, and moments later, ISRAELI-2 and PALESTINIAN-2 emerge through the curtain break. ISRAELI-2 is carrying an assault weapon and PALESTINIAN-2 is carrying a stick/club. The PRESIDENT and PRIME MINISTER jump up and peer through the cage wall at the MOTHERS.)

ISRAELI-2

Both of you to the middle. Sit down back-to-back and don't move until you are given permission.

(The PRESIDENT complies with the order.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Still standing)

(Anxiously)

What are you going to do?

ISRAELI-2

Get down before you cause me to shoot you in the knees.

PRESIDENT

(Alarmed)
Obey her before you get us both shot. Idiot!

PRIME MINISTER

All right! All right. There's no need for nastiness.

(The PRIME MINISTER scurries to the middle of the cage and sits down with his back toward the PRESIDENT'S, but deliberately avoids touching him.)

ISRAELI-2

(Moving up to the wall and keeping her gun pointed at the two sitting on the floor.)
It is time for an inspection.

PALESTINIAN-2

(Methodically SHE inspects the cage walls, looking at the structure carefully and tugging here and there.)

PRIME MINISTER

You, with the gun. If you really are an Israeli, what you are doing can be considered treason.

PRESIDENT

(HE raps the PRIME MINISTER in the back with his elbow.)
Enough, idiot. You're not in charge now.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE elbows the PRESIDENT back.)
Don't you pummel me! Keep your hands to your self. I can take care of you.

PRESIDENT

Just calm down and keep quiet.

(ALL remain quiet while PALESTINIAN-2 makes her way around the cage.)

PALESTINIAN-2

(When she has completely gone around the cage, she speaks to ISRAELI-2.)

Everything is as it was. No evidence of tampering. Is there anything else?

ISRAELI-2

(Backing away from the cage.)

I can't think of anything. We can leave them.

(ISRAELI-2 and PALESTINIAN-2 head for the curtain break.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Calling after them.)

Is somebody going to empty the pot?

ISRAELI-2

(Stopping.)

I have no time for your jokes. With so little food and water, it won't overflow.

PRIME MINISTER

It's awfully warm in here and it smells.

ISRAELI-2

Just imagine the heat and stench experienced by those trapped under the rubble made by your tanks and bombs. You have it good.

PRIME MINISTER

That is no way to talk to your Prime Minister.

ISRAELI-2

We respect only those who work for peace.

PRESIDENT

You know I have been given the Nobel Peace Prize. Me, Rabin, Peres received it together. Why do you treat me like you do this war criminal?

ISRAELI-2

1-5-55

Rabin gave his life because he insisted on working for peace. From you, we only get rhetoric. Now you have the chance to give your life for peace too. Maybe then we can say the prize was not only given, but deserved.

PRIME MINISTER

You tell him!

ISRAELI-2

Hush! You have squandered the progress made by Rabin. You are an expert on war, not peace. I see no bravery coming from you. You are both in the same sinking boat. I have wasted enough time. I leave you to suffer as you cause the people to suffer.

(SHE exits through the curtain break.)

PRIME MINISTER

I will see her suffer! They will all suffer for what they do!

PRESIDENT

If I must say, your arrogance is making things worse. Maybe you think too much. No good can be gained from antagonizing our captors. You are in no position to intimidate them. You will get the same results as you do trying to intimidate the Palestinian people.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE grabs the PRESIDENT near the collar.
The PRESIDENT is startled and nearly
loses his balance.)

When you are strong, you must show your strength. Shall I show you how strong I really am?

PRESIDENT

(HE jerks away from the PRIME
MINISTER.)

There are many kinds of strength! You have your well equipped army. The Palestinian people have their will.

PRIME MINISTER

We will have the final victory because God decreed that the land is ours.

PRESIDENT

You believe what is to your advantage. Where is it written about borders and territories? Where would the borders be if all history was rolled back to the beginning?

PRIME MINISTER

You talk nonsense. My people have returned to the land from which they were driven. They will stay for eternity.

PRESIDENT

The Arabs did not drive out the Jews. By all accounts, it was the Roman legions led by Titus. For most of 2000 years, Palestine was occupied by mostly Arabs, and a few Jews. For hundreds of years, it belonged to those left who could survive in the ruins and waste.

PRIME MINISTER

And Jews survived and remained steadfast. The lineage of those driven out waited patiently for a time to return.

PRESIDENT

And they came in droves after the Arabs and British drove the Turks out, trying to swallow up land that nobody gave them the rights to.

PRIME MINISTER

The British were the declared victors over the Turks and their Lord Balfour deemed that this land be made a home for the Jews.

PRESIDENT

He only stated that a home be made somewhere in this land, and insisted the rights of non-Jews be protected, including the land to which we were entitled. Independence and self-rule were promised to all the Arabs in the Middle East if they fought with them against the Turks.

PRIME MINISTER

Except the Mediterranean coast. You forget that. That small sliver was seen as the home of the Jews - Israel.

PRESIDENT

Not all of Palestine. Fairness required that the Jews only be given a portion according to their numbers. You people knew that and tried to get as many Jews into the country as

possible.

PRIME MINISTER

You did the same. Arabs started to come like flies. In the end, when the British threw up their hands, the settlement drawn up by the U-N was fair. In 1947, it was established that more than half the occupants were Jews, so we were granted slightly more than half the land.

PRESIDENT

The division should have been made only on the number of indigenous peoples. Not immigrants. You know for a fact that all of Europe was dumping its Jews here because they wanted rid of them. Instead of taking part of Germany for the European Jews, since it caused the suffering, they made it an Arab problem. They never asked the Arabs if the Jews were welcome. In my mind, they thought the Arabs were uneducated and stupid and would not understand what was going on. We saw through the intentions. We have suffered too much from broken promises and vague prophecies.

PRIME MINISTER

(Forcefully)

This was the spot decreed by God. Not in Europe. Not anywhere else.

PRESIDENT

When did your God say to steal the land from Arabs and to kill their women and children?

PRIME MINISTER

If it's not God's will, why did we have such a victory as the 6 Days War? You see, God is behind us in every move.

PRESIDENT

You brilliantly smashed Arabs who were not even prepared to fight. Many were without weapons, and some, even without food. They were ready to hurl their bodies at your forces to thwart your planned invasion. In your great victory, who surrendered? Not the Palestinian people. Who lives in peace? Not the Jews.

PRIME MINISTER

You Arabs are so selfish. You occupy the whole middle east, and you are unwilling to return this one small piece to the Jews. We will have peace if we must eradicate every Palestinian objector.

PRESIDENT

Yes, for the good of the Jews we must die. The Jews who were driven from country to country, the Jews who faced genocide in the Holocaust. Now you say it is just to drive us from our houses and our land, and find righteousness in threatening us with extermination if you do not have your way.

PRIME MINISTER

You brought this on. You burned our crops, you shot us in the streets, you threatened to drive us into the sea. We just defend ourselves. Our survival is at stake.

PRESIDENT

You defend yourselves? Now you are joking. Long ago we would have taken back what is rightly ours if it had not been for your American support. You could do nothing without the tanks, and planes, and other killing machines they give you. Without their assistance, you would not be so arrogant. You would not look down at Palestinians.

PRIME MINISTER

I admit, the military assistance has been helpful. But it comes with a high price. I must deal with their constant meddling in our affairs. It is my dream to free Israel from dependence on their aid. Only then will Israel be truly free. I would have squashed you like a bug if they did not tie my hands behind my back.

PRESIDENT

Listen to the beggar complain.

PRIME MINISTER

We do not beg. They give us assistance because they need us. Without us, they could not effectively defend their interests in the region. If you want Americans to dig deep into their pockets, you have to be vital to their

interests.

PRESIDENT

You make no sense. If they treated the Arabs justly, there would be nothing to defend against. No, just as the British, the Americans play both ends against the middle, so long as they can see some advantage for themselves.

PRIME MINISTER

What's the use to argue? You will never change your mind. I prefer to save my energy for figuring a way out of here.

PRESIDENT

I would change my mind if there was proper evidence showing that you are right and I am wrong. There is no evidence.

PRIME MINISTER

This is going to be a long day.

(HE sits down on the floor and remains quiet.)

PRESIDENT

(HE leans against the cage wall. After a few moments, HE breaks the silence.)

I wish there was something to do to pass the time. Maybe chess. It would clear my mind. You play chess?

PRIME MINISTER

Of course. I love chess. I'm very good. I'm sure I could beat you.

PRESIDENT

You are only confident because you know there is no chessboard here.

PRIME MINISTER

Think what you like. Just be careful. I can step on you any time.

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 5

ACT II

Scene 1

SETTING: The cage two days after the capture.

AT RISE: The PRIME MINISTER and PRESIDENT have stripped down to their undershirt and pants because of the heat. The PRIME MINISTER is facing a wall, grasping the wall members with his hands. The PRESIDENT is sitting on the floor leaning against a wall. HE is amusing himself by playing with some buttons HE removed from his clothes.

PRESIDENT

(Looking up.)

You look like you are thinking again.

PRIME MINISTER

(Not turning toward the PRESIDENT.)

You see a tormented man here.

PRESIDENT

Tormented?

PRIME MINISTER

There are so many questions that won't stop running through my mind.

PRESIDENT

(HE resumes playing with the buttons.)

And no answers. No answers to stop them.

PRIME MINISTER

You understand. Why, after two days, haven't my men found me? How did the women get by my security, how can I escape, what possesses the women, and on and on and on.

PRESIDENT

If we don't get out, what does it matter? And if we do get out, we can find the answers.

PRIME MINISTER

How can you be so indifferent?

PRESIDENT

I'm not indifferent. I just know that there is a time to climb a mountain and a time to sit back and admire its beauty.

PRIME MINISTER

Admire its beauty? Ridiculous. What beauty is there to admire here? This is a dungeon, and we are being humiliated by a bunch of treacherous women.

PRESIDENT

We have witnessed one of the most masterful kidnappings that ever occurred. Never would I have thought such a feat was possible. If they had gotten one of us, that would have been an accomplishment. But to get both of us - that overwhelms me. The beauty was in their planning and in their actions.

PRIME MINISTER

That's one of my torments. We knew that someone might attempt to kill me. There have been many threats on my life. After Rabin was shot, the security even began to watch Israelis more closely. How could they have gotten into my home and then by the security guards again when leaving with me bound and gagged?

PRESIDENT

My first thought was that they bribed my security guards and they were in on it. There is a lot of that that goes on. But I am certain a couple are so loyal they would have stopped it.

PRIME MINISTER

Bribery would not work with my security service. They are paid well and know they could not hide the money if they were tempted.

PRESIDENT

Money is not the only bribe. Men have other appetites. Our captors would know this.

PRIME MINISTER

No, no. These are the most dedicated men who are ready to give their lives for their country. They would never jeopardize their country for a brief tryst.

PRESIDENT

There are other means. They could have been drugged or poisoned. You probably know a hundred ways. The point is, even if you happen upon a possible answer, you can't be certain unless you can check it out.

PRIME MINISTER

You are right. I shouldn't let it drain me.

(HE notices the PRESIDENT playing with the buttons.)

We have been sentenced to death and you are amusing yourself with buttons.

PRESIDENT

It takes my mind off the painful reality. It's better to amuse myself than being tormented with thoughts like yours. Maybe you would like to play a game.

PRIME MINISTER

A game? What kind of game?

PRESIDENT

With the buttons. It's a simple game that I played as a child. It's not chess, but it's a game. We used stones, but buttons will do. Look here.

(Pointing to a spot on the floor beside him where HE is lining up seven buttons.)

PRIME MINISTER

Show me.

PRESIDENT

(Pointing to his row of buttons.)

It's simple. We take turns removing buttons from the row.

Each can take either one or two buttons on his turn. The one who must take the last button loses.

PRIME MINISTER

So I should leave one button remaining to win?

PRESIDENT

Yes. You want to try? I'll let you go first.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE gets down on his haunches so HE can reach the buttons. Then HE takes one button from the row.)

PRIME MINISTER (continued)

I start with one.

PRESIDENT

I will take two.

(HE picks up two buttons.)

PRIME MINISTER

(Thoughtfully, HE looks at the buttons.)

I take one.

PRESIDENT

(Quickly.)

And I take two, leaving you the last one!

PRIME MINISTER

We'll play again. You go first this time.

(HE places his buttons on the floor.)

PRESIDENT

(HE places the rest of the buttons in the row.)

I take one.

(HE removes the button.)

PRIME MINISTER

And I take one.

(HE removes the button.)

PRESIDENT

And I take one this time.

PRIME MINISTER

I take one...no I take two...Ahhh!

(Realizing HE has lost, and annoyed,
HE jumps to his feet.)

There's some trick to it. It's a stupid game. We
shouldn't be wasting our time on silly children's games.
We should be figuring out how to survive.

(HE throws the buttons in his hand
toward the row on the floor.)

PRESIDENT

You don't plan another escape?

PRIME MINISTER

That's yet another torment.

PRESIDENT

You ran out of ideas?

PRIME MINISTER

No. There are possibilities. When you come down to it,
this kluv is not so strong. It can be breached.

PRESIDENT

Then let's do it.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE pounds a fist into his open hand.)

We can't. The watching, the frequent, random inspections.
The women will notice if we make a scratch somewhere.

PRESIDENT

Then I shall pray to Allah to make them go blind.

PRIME MINISTER

Hah. Joke if you want. There is another side to the
problem. Time. Without tools, to weaken enough supports
to make a hole would take weeks, maybe months. We will be
dead before long.

PRESIDENT

You are right on that. I grow weaker by the hour.

PRIME MINISTER

We're not done for yet. I won't give up. We can fight.

PRESIDENT

How?

PRIME MINISTER

I still have a few swallows of water left. You haven't touched the ham. They will give us some strength to go on longer.

PRESIDENT

Maybe you were right before. If you had killed me, you could go on longer with both the water and ham. You can still do it. Dying at the hands of my enemy could make me a martyr.

PRIME MINISTER

No. I won't do it. Right now, I think it's more important to have two minds working. If we get out of here, it will be by our wits, not force. Our minds against the women's.

PRESIDENT

You dream. Perhaps I should have killed you when I had the chance. Then I could have had the water.

PRIME MINISTER

You kill me? Don't be ridiculous.

PRESIDENT

I could have.

PRIME MINISTER

How?

PRESIDENT

(The PRESIDENT extends his hands and takes the dangling end of the hand cuff in his other hand. Holding it tightly, he opens his arms, raises them, and drops them down, giving a quick jerk on the cuffs as if he had dropped the handcuff chain over someone's head and strangled them.)

You turned your back many times, giving me many chances.

(HE picks up the ham and waves it.)
Even now when I'm weakened, I could smash your head to pieces when you are sleeping. Really, there have been many opportunities.

(HE sets the ham down.)

PRIME MINISTER

So you are afraid.

PRESIDENT

Not afraid.

PRIME MINISTER

What then?

PRESIDENT

As I pointed out before, if one kills the other, there is no one left to beg for his life. You might still change your mind and beg for me.

PRIME MINISTER

I couldn't. It won't happen.

PRESIDENT

If you say so. If no one is going to give in, or kill the other, then what about the water and the ham? Ever since my

PRESIDENT (continued)

small drink, you have kept the water to yourself and there is hardly any left. My ham

(HE picks the tin up from the floor.)
hasn't been opened yet.

PRIME MINISTER

We should eat a little now.

PRESIDENT

We? Oh, just like that he wants to eat a little ham...after he has been stingy with the water.

PRIME MINISTER

I intend to give you more water.

(Holding the bottle up, HE checks the contents.)

Each will have one swallow when we go to sleep at night and

another when we waken until it's gone.

PRESIDENT

So I don't get to catch up with you?

PRIME MINISTER

Well...no. But you can give me as much ham as you think is fair. I accept your judgement.

PRESIDENT

You know it can't be fair. You said yourself that the water is more vital.

PRIME MINISTER

Look, maybe what I did was unfair from your point of view. But at the time I made the decisions, I could not foresee the future. It's unfair to use hindsight to say I was unfair, if you follow my reasoning.

PRESIDENT

(HE pauses momentarily to digest what the PRIME MINISTER has said.)

I'm not certain I understand, but regardless, I will give you some ham because I am desperate for water. As you imply, it is survival that is the priority now.

PRIME MINISTER

May I make a suggestion then?

PRESIDENT

Of course.

PRIME MINISTER

It will soon be time to sleep, I think. Let's eat a little ham and then take a swallow of water. Some food in our bellies will help us to get the most from our sleep.

PRESIDENT

(HE stares upward, contemplating the suggestion.)

If you don't mind, why don't we have a drink of water first, and then eat some ham?

PRIME MINISTER

I should be insulted that you don't trust me. I will overlook that. There is a reason to save the water for last. As I told you before, the ham will be somewhat salty. It will be better if we can wash some of the saltiness from our mouths after we eat the ham.

PRESIDENT

Hmmm. It's good that you thought of that. You know ham better than me. But what of Allah? At the time we are praying for our very lives, it does not seem wise to commit forbidden acts.

PRIME MINISTER

You said before that you understood that abstaining from eating pork might be only a tradition, as I believe.

PRESIDENT

It is one thing to think of doing something forbidden. It is something else to actually do it.

PRIME MINISTER

Look, we are in a desperate situation. Do you think Allah would look kindly upon you if you unnecessarily wasted your life now?

PRESIDENT

I was trained as an engineer. I am a humble man. I can't imagine what Allah might think. Your question is impossible for me to answer.

PRIME MINISTER

If you don't want to look out for your own good, then there is nothing more I can say. The sooner you die, the sooner I

PRIME MINISTER (continued)

will get the ham.

(HE turns his back to the PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

Okay, okay. We will eat some ham and then have the water. I warn you, no tricks.

PRIME MINISTER

No tricks. Just open the can.

PRESIDENT

(HE picks up the can sitting beside him
and begins to examine it.)

We have another problem, I'm afraid.

PRIME MINISTER

(Impatiently.)

Now what?

PRESIDENT

Let me read to you.

(Looking at the label.)

"The contents must be refrigerated after opening."

(Looking up at the PRIME MINISTER.)

I'm no chef, but I know that means it will spoil. We have
no refrigerator and it will be useless to ask the women.

PRIME MINISTER

You are right on all accounts. It will probably be safe to
eat for at least two days. It has salt, and I'm sure,
other chemicals to preserve it. It might not spoil for a
few days.

PRESIDENT

No.

(Looking at the label.)

"No preservatives added."

PRIME MINISTER

That's the Danes for you. So be it. We will eat half
today, and the rest tomorrow. It's such a small can
anyhow.

PRESIDENT

I accept your advice. I don't think you want to poison
yourself. The women won't give us medicine if we get sick.

PRIME MINISTER

Forget about the women. Open the can.

PRESIDENT

(HE takes the key, fits it to the metal
strip, and carefully winds it around

the perimeter of the can while the
PRIME MINISTER intently looks on. HE
then carefully lifts the lid off. HE
then looks up at the PRIME MINISTER.)
Such a good smell for a change.

PRIME MINISTER
Give me some.

PRESIDENT
(Looking puzzled.)
We have no knife to cut it.

PRIME MINISTER
Your fingers. Use your fingers. It should be tender
enough for you to tear it into pieces.

PRESIDENT
(HE wrestles with the ham until he
finally tears a piece off.)
For you.
(HE hands the piece to the PRIME
MINISTER, and immediately begins to tear
a piece for himself.)

PRIME MINISTER
(HE takes a small bite.)
Ahhh.

PRESIDENT
(HE looks at his piece, then upward,
as if at Allah, and then carefully
places a piece in his mouth. HE smacks
his lips.)
Ham is good!

(As the PRESIDENT and PRIME MINISTER
eat their pieces, PALESTINIAN-1 and
ISRAELI-1 come through the curtain
break and quietly watch them. ISRAELI-
1 is carrying an assault weapon.)

PRIME MINISTER
Another piece, please.

PRESIDENT

One moment.

(HE begins to tear at the ham again.)

ISRAELI-1

Our lion and tiger share the kill.

(Startled, the PRESIDENT almost drops
the ham.)

PRIME MINISTER

The filthy spies have been watching us.

PALESTINIAN-1

Enjoy your feast. We only come to inspect.

(SHE begins to move along the cage walls,
examining them.)

ISRAELI-1

We should have brought a camera. The tabloids would pay
good money for a photo of the leaders of the Jews and
Muslims feasting on ham, while the people anguish over
their fate. I can see the headlines: Our Jew eats ham with
his sworn enemy while we pray for him.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE angrily jumps to the wall and pulls
at the structure, as if trying to get at
ISRAELI-1. HE shouts at her.)

You close your mouth. You cause this. You collude with
the enemy. You are no better than the *Judenrats* who helped
the Nazis do their dirty work.

(HE shakes his fist at her.)

PRESIDENT

(With alarm, HE sets the ham down and
rushes to the PRIME MINISTER'S side. HE
tries to calm him, patting him on the
back.)

Don't let her get under your skin. Calm down.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE backs away from the wall and lowers

his head.)
Yes, I must save my strength.

ISRAELI-1

If either of you had courage, one of you would be free to bring peace to our peoples so they could share bread among one another too.

PALESTINIAN-1

(Having completed her round of the cage.)
Finished. No problems.

(PALESTINIAN-1 and ISRAELI-1 silently exit through the curtain break.)

(The PRESIDENT picks up the ham, while the PRIME MINISTER stands still.)

PRESIDENT

(Scoldingly.)
You make things more difficult for us. How can we even expect the small kindnesses if you provoke them?

PRIME MINISTER

I can't stand for those who call themselves Israelis to humiliate me. I am the prime minister of their country. They should respect me. The Palestinians I can understand. Enemies do not look upon you kindly.

PRESIDENT

They complain that we have failed them. You heard them say how they look down on us.

PRIME MINISTER

They are traitors! It is even more of a disgrace that an Israeli woman collaborates with the Palestinian.

PRESIDENT

It's no less a disgrace that the Palestinian woman collaborates with Israelis. Right now, I can care less. Your insults are only going to bring our undoing sooner, rather than later. Accept it. You are not the bulldozer

in here. It is stupid that you claw at the walls like an animal.

PRIME MINISTER

You call me stupid? Remember, it was me who drove the Palestinians into the territories with their tail between their legs.

PRESIDENT

Palestinians run from no one.

PRIME MINISTER

I myself have seen them running from our tanks. Or do they simply turn because they prefer to get shot in their backside?

(HE laughs.)

PRESIDENT

(HE picks up the ham and hurls it at the PRIME MINISTER, but misses. THEY BOTH stare at the ham for a moment, and then together, scramble to pick it up.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 1

ACT II

Scene 2

SETTING

The cage four days after capture.

AT RISE

The PRESIDENT and PRIME MINISTER are sitting and leaning against the cage walls facing one another with their clothes piled next to them. THEY have now removed their shoes and socks. The empty water bottle and ham can are laying in the middle of the cage.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE picks up his shirt and wipes his brow.)

There must be a heat wave.

PRESIDENT

(Faintly)

Yes, a heat wave. The women could have chosen a cellar where it is cooler. Not even a breeze here.

PRIME MINISTER

You don't look good. Hopefully, the weather will break soon. That will help.

PRESIDENT

I think this is my last day. Four days is all I can take. My eyes don't want to stay open.

PRIME MINISTER

The women, they won't give an inch. I begged for some water for us.

PRESIDENT

Yes, yes. I heard. They are strong-willed. We have met our match.

PRIME MINISTER

2-2-75

These women are tyrants. They wield much power, yet are so irresponsible.

PRESIDENT

Maybe these women, but there are others who are strong, yet not malicious.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes. They can be strong in different ways. I had such great respect of Golda Mier. You could look at her and feel her strength. My Lily, on the other hand, was more like an anchor with its strength hidden by the sea.

PRESIDENT

If only I could see my Suha and Zahwa one more time. Suha has stood by me in the worst of times. She believed in me...in Palestine. She was my strength. And my daughter, I wanted so much for her to grow up in a new Palestine. My sweet little Zahwa. She complains because I didn't spend enough time with her. She was right. I would like to feast my eyes on them one last time.

PRIME MINISTER

My wives, both good wives have been taken from me. First Margalit, and then Lily. My sons, Omri and Gilad are grown men now. Gru, at a young age, was taken in a terrible accident, as was Margalit. When you lose a wife and a son in such tragic ways, you change forever. You are always looking through a dark cloud. They say you have to go on, and I have.

PRESIDENT

I would go crazy if something happened to Suha or Zahwa. My fear for them was as great as my fear for all the people of Palestine.

PRIME MINISTER

You are lucky you have been spared the pain I came to know. I have faced tragedy after tragedy over the years. Some say it has hardened me.

PRESIDENT

Well, now we die at the hands of women. That is hard to

2-2-76

accept.

PRIME MINISTER

Where could the women have brought us? In five or six hours, one can travel only so far.

PRESIDENT

This heat feels like the West Bank. I have not heard a plane or a truck or even a car since we were brought here. We must be in some remote place. The women must be geniuses to hide us like this.

PRIME MINISTER

It's a humiliation, an embarrassment to be caged like this. This notion that they can bring about peace is bizarre.

PRESIDENT

Maybe the women are right.

PRIME MINISTER

About what?

PRESIDENT

That without us, there is a chance for peace. The women said that so far neither side has acted. The people, the authorities, everybody just speculates about our disappearance.

PRIME MINISTER

If I thought peace would follow our death, I would lay down and go quietly. I truly believe it's the calm before the storm, as they say. One day soon, all hell will break loose.

PRESIDENT

I suppose that is the real world. But what can they do with their leaders gone?

PRIME MINISTER

If we don't return, sooner or later they will find new ones. I wonder how long they will wait. I'll bet that Barak and the others are already making deals behind my

back.

PRESIDENT

The territories are less clear. Several of the organizations will want to take over. None is strong enough to prevail for long. It may take years of Palestinians shedding their own blood before it is settled.

PRIME MINISTER

If they don't bother Israel, that would be a blessing.

PRESIDENT

Oh, they will bother Israel.

PRIME MINISTER

If they are busy fighting among themselves, why shouldn't Israel have at least a respite?

PRESIDENT

Every contender will try to gain popularity with the Palestinian people by inflicting suffering on Israel. That is their politics, as you would call it. Isn't that how you gained your popularity among the Israelis? Beat the Palestinians into submission. Why should it be any different for the Palestinian people?

PRIME MINISTER

You make your point.

PRESIDENT

Sometimes now, my head is in a fog, and I think what I imagine is real.

(HE shakes his head as if trying to shake off a trance.)

PRIME MINISTER

It's good that the mind plays tricks. An escape from reality can be refreshing.

PRESIDENT

You know, I survived a plane crash. I was convinced that Allah had spared me for something special. Now I lay dying in a gafas with my enemy looking over me.

2-2-78

PRIME MINISTER

In a way, true. You have the consolation knowing I will die too.

PRESIDENT

The first to go cannot be sure of the other's fate.

PRIME MINISTER

Well, at least you can know that I feel no pleasure in seeing you die like this.

PRESIDENT

There is a wake of Palestinian blood in the path behind you, and now you want me to believe you have a heart?

PRIME MINISTER

As my enemy, you should die at my hands. Not under the watch of women taken by madness.

PRESIDENT

Ah, that I can accept. During my dying, I get a moment of honesty. I dreamed of my dying last night.

PRIME MINISTER

And you saw me standing over you?

PRESIDENT

No. In a way, it was strange, but on the other hand, so real.

PRIME MINISTER

Like a lot of dreams.

PRESIDENT

I was one of a small Bedouin tribe like those that used to wander across the deserts trading and engaging in other commerce. We got lost in a sandstorm and ran out of water. You know the rest.

PRIME MINISTER

You cannot deny the similarity of the situation. You died of thirst, then?

PRESIDENT

Not for certain. One by one people were dying. I was not far behind, but I woke up. My dying was inevitable. Only in a movie would you escape such a fate.

PRIME MINISTER

Maybe it was an omen. It should give hope that somehow you will survive.

PRESIDENT

Omen, prophecy, sign, revelation...I'm tired of hearing those words. They have bedeviled me all my life.

(HE closes his eyes for a few moments,
and suddenly emits a faint cough.)

PRIME MINISTER

Are you alright?

(HE stands and looks down at the
PRESIDENT.)

PRESIDENT

(HE forces a smile as HE reminisces.)

Yes. You know, there were times when I was proud. The PLO - I breathed life into it. I gave the Palestinian people control of their destiny.

PRIME MINISTER

Ah, the PLO. Like a lizard. We thought we had your P-L-O in Lebanon, but when we opened our hands, there was only the tail. I should have finished you then.

PRESIDENT

Did you know I once was an engineer? With a good business head, too. I ran a successful contracting business in Kuwait.

PRIME MINISTER

I know the story. You used the profits to start Al fatah. A real thorn. I cut my teeth in the Haganah you know.

PRESIDENT

Fatah was not my first involvement. As a teenager, I smuggled weapons to the Palestinians from Egypt so they

2-2-80

could fight both the Jews and the British.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes, the British.

PRESIDENT

When I was just this tall,

(HE raises a hand to indicate a child's height.)

the British broke into the house of my uncle, where I was living at the time. They beat us all and smashed everything, simply because we were Palestinians. I knew then we had a fight on our hands. After we fought along side the British in the first world war, that is the thanks they gave us.

PRIME MINISTER

The British were like a pendulum, swinging from one side to the other. It was us they tried to betray.

PRESIDENT

It has been said that they really wanted to make a colony out of Palestine. I'm too weak to argue.

PRIME MINISTER

When I think back to my youth, I was only 14 when I joined a GADNA youth battalion. But it was in Haganah where I made my mark. Special Commando Unit 101. I taught them how the Jews could fight and win.

PRESIDENT

We are different. You are a trained soldier. I have always been a street fighter. I learned by myself to survive.

PRIME MINISTER

I learned street fighting. But I got plenty of training in the service, and even studied military theory in England. Each one taught me something useful.

PRESIDENT

You know how to strike. I don't deny that.

(HE shifts his body attempting to get

2-2-81

comfortable.)

PRIME MINISTER

Can I be of assistance?

PRESIDENT

He wants to help me hang on so that maybe in my delirium I will beg for his life to be spared.

PRIME MINISTER

Even on your deathbed, you are as unyielding as a rock.

PRESIDENT

You are lucky I survived this long without my medicine.

PRIME MINISTER

We are equal there. I don't have mine either. I was going to ask the women to get me some, but realized their madness would not allow them to do so.

PRESIDENT

I take a blood thinner. Ever since they took the clot from my brain after the plane crash.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes, our intelligence reported you take coumadin.

PRESIDENT

I don't know what you take.

PRIME MINISTER

I take a pill for high blood pressure.

PRESIDENT

The doctors said I should at least take an aspirin if I can't take my coumadin. I know the women probably have some, but I did not ask for any. Quickly I realized that they would not do anything that would take away the pressure.

PRIME MINISTER

You are right. Keep up the pressure. Sooner or later one of us will break. Then they will send the survivor to try again to bring peace to the people. Do you think there can

2-2-82

be peace?

PRESIDENT

More than 200 years ago, the Bedouins and Jews lived here relatively peacefully. If it was possible once, I suppose it is possible again.

PRIME MINISTER

I mean really. In this century. During the time you speak of, there were few Arabs and Jews here.

PRESIDENT

Yes, yes. And a wasteland that was not much to covet. Then the British whetted the appetites - Promises of self-rule for the Arabs and a homeland for the Jews. Hollow promises they were.

PRIME MINISTER

The promised land - they made it the promised land, but never delivered.

PRESIDENT

That's the problem. Too many promises. They promised both people Palestine. Now you put your mark on it and insist the Jews have a right to everything.

PRIME MINISTER

Settlement has been in your hands much longer than mine. There were many negotiations before I became prime minister. There were those before me who were loose with concessions. You could have had peace.

PRESIDENT

The fates were not kind. There were times when I felt strong enough, but there was no opportunity. When opportunities appeared, I was not strong enough among the Palestinian people to take advantage.

PRIME MINISTER

Admit it, you lacked the will to reign in your terrorist organizations.

PRESIDENT

You don't understand my predicament.

PRIME MINISTER

Your predicament?

PRESIDENT

Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, fatah, and maybe a dozen brigades see themselves as saviors, and elude any attempt to control them. The other fact is, I have been serving the Palestinian cause at their pleasure. Regardless of what you believe, I had little or no control over them.

PRIME MINISTER

You could have reigned them in, if you wanted to.

PRESIDENT

You believe wrong. Reign them in with what? I have no forces - only bureaucrats. I needed their support. Any of them could have pulled the carpet from under my feet at any time. My hands were tied. If I did something that was strongly objected to, they would have sent a bomber to me. It took all my energy just to survive.

PRIME MINISTER

If you were any kind of leader, you could have persuaded them to cooperate.

PRESIDENT

I tried and a few times I almost succeeded. A few times I was this close,

(HE holds up a hand and shows a small distance between his thumb and index finger.)

and then some interference would undercut my efforts, like your march to the Temple Mount. You turned prospects for negotiations into a declaration of a new intifada. You excel as a provocateur.

PRIME MINISTER

It was not a provocation. I had to send a message so that everyone understood that all of Jerusalem is off the table.

PRESIDENT

You see, the negotiations are stopped before they start.

2-2-84

We are ready, the Israelis are not. The Israelis are ready, we are not. It has always been like a see-saw. Now that we are held like caged animals, even the small possibility for a meeting of minds has slipped away.

PRIME MINISTER

What you have said convinces me I was right. Since you could not control your terrorist groups, it was necessary for the Israelis to destroy their capacity to fight before there could be peace.

PRESIDENT

(HE strikes the floor in anger.)

No! No! If you did not oppress the Palestinian people, steal their land, and massacre the innocent, there would be no need for such organizations. Justice would be followed by peace.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE looks around the cage)

What good does it do to disagree? We are no longer in control of anything.

PRESIDENT

I am so tired. So weak, nothing matters. Take all of Palestine. Beat the Palestinian people into the sand. Build furnaces and throw them in, if it makes you happy. I can't fight any longer. I have no hope left.

(The PRESIDENT struggles to get comfortable.)

PRIME MINISTER

Don't give up.

PRESIDENT

There is one thing you can do for me.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes?

PRESIDENT

Will you call to the women for me? I cannot shout so loud.

PRIME MINISTER

Certainly.

2-2-85

(Turning toward the curtain break.)
Hello out there. Will someone come?

(There is a brief pause and PALESTINIAN-1
appears at the curtain break.)

PALESTINIAN-1
Someone called?

PRIME MINISTER
Yes, I called. The president wants to speak to someone but
is too weak to call himself.

PALESTINIAN-1
(SHE moves closer to the cage.)
What is it?

PRESIDENT
Will be so kind as to tell me which way is Mecca so I can
pray properly?

PALESTINIAN-1
It has taken you a long time to pray.

PRESIDENT
I have been praying. Believe me, I have been praying.

PRIME MINISTER
Yes, I have seen him. We both have been praying.

PRESIDENT
If I know the direction, I can do it properly.

PALESTINIAN-1
I see no harm in that.
(Thoughtfully, she rotates her body
slightly, trying to ascertain the
direction.)
It is that way.
(SHE points toward a wall.)

PRESIDENT
Thank you. Allah will remember this kindness.

ISRAELI-2

(SHE peers through a curtain break, and speaks to PALESTINIAN-1.)

Ah, here you are. A message is waiting for you. Can you come?

(SHE has walked near PALESTINIAN-1.)

PALESTINIAN-1

Yes, I can leave here.

(PALESTINIAN-1 hurries out.)

ISRAELI-2

Do you want something?

PRIME MINISTER

(HE moves to the wall near her.)

If I was freed, I could provide you with a substantial expression of my gratitude.

ISRAELI-2

Indeed, you probably could. However, the mothers are all one in the same. Any gratuities would have to be shared.

PRIME MINISTER

If it was presented that the six of you freed us from captors who were about to kill us, that would bring gratitude from the entire nation. There would be enough gratitude to insure that all six of you could live in comfort for the rest of your lives. Just think of it, your own villa on the coast.

ISRAELI-2

Don't waste my time with your foolish game. Any expression of gratitude for your freedom will more appropriately be directed to your cell-mate there. It is he that you should be bribing if you wish to be freed. You insult us with your feeble attempt.

PRIME MINISTER

I understand.

(HE raises up a hand to motion that that is enough, and curtly turns away.)

2-2-87

ISRAELI-2

Is that it?

PRESIDENT

I have one question, if you don't mind.

ISRAELI-2

Please don't embarrass yourself, as the PRIME MINISTER has done.

PRESIDENT

No. As you can see, I am very weak. When I die, will I be given a proper burial?

ISRAELI-2

The cage will not be opened unless one of you spares the other. Otherwise, we will direct the authorities to this place when you both are dead.

PRESIDENT

I understand. I had to ask.

PRIME MINISTER

(Shaking his head in disbelief)

How can you be so cruel to a dying man?

ISRAELI-2

Who worries about proper burials for those blown into bits and pieces too small to recognize by your bombs and missiles?

PRIME MINISTER

You are impertinent!

ISRAELI-2

Oh? Is it possible to be impertinent to caged warmongers?

PRIME MINISTER

(Throwing up his hands.)

Ahh!

PRESIDENT

I have no more questions.

2-2-88

ISRAELI-2

Fine. I leave you to your dying. The others will be pleased to know they may be able to return to their families soon.

(SHE exits through the curtain break.)

PRIME MINISTER

They are impossible.

PRESIDENT

I have another favor to ask of you.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes?

PRESIDENT

When I die, will you turn my body so I face Mecca? And cover me, if you don't mind?

PRIME MINISTER

If the time comes, and I am still able, I will do it. I feel my strength draining also. There is no way to know who will go first. You may yet stand over me.

PRESIDENT

No. I am almost too weak to stand. Will you help me to my knees? I should like to pray.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes, of course.

(The PRIME MINISTER helps the PRESIDENT assume the Muslim prayer position facing Mecca.)

PRESIDENT

I am grateful. Now I will pray.

PRIME MINISTER

What is it you pray for ?

PRESIDENT

I intend to enter into a bargain with Allah. I will ask

2-2-89

that his hands free me; in turn, I will promise to build the biggest mosque the world has ever seen to honor Him.

PRIME MINISTER

I wish you better success than I just had with the woman.

PRESIDENT

(HE bows to the floor and the PRIME MINISTER leans against the cage wall deep in thought. BOTH remain quiet for about a minute, and suddenly, the PRESIDENT struggles to raise his head and sits.)

PRIME MINISTER

(HE rushes to the PRESIDENT'S side.)

Is something wrong?

PRESIDENT

No. I just started praying and a plan came into my head.

PRIME MINISTER

A plan? A plan for what?

PRESIDENT

To get us out of here, of course.

PRIME MINISTER

There is no way to escape. You know what happened when we tried. I have looked at everything. Over and over.

PRESIDENT

I have a plan. Will you listen? There is no time to waste.

PRIME MINISTER

(Skeptical)

Yes, I will listen. What is your plan?

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT II

Scene 3

SETTING: The cage approximately two hours later.

AT RISE: The PRIME MINISTER is leaning against the wall and the PRESIDENT is sitting on the floor.

PRIME MINISTER
(The PRIME MINISTER moves near the cage door and begins examining the lock.)

PRESIDENT
What are you doing?

PRIME MINISTER
Checking the lock.

PRESIDENT
We already did that.

PRIME MINISTER
I know, but it pulls at me like a magnet. It's not the best of locks. It can probably be forced open with a metal rod a meter or so long. However, the key would be better. It's such a small thing that keeps us from our freedom.

PRESIDENT
I remember the voice of the one who has it. Do you remember how they joked about who should keep it?

PRIME MINISTER
Vaguely. You remember the voice?

PRESIDENT
Oh yes. It's one of the Israelis. When I was blindfolded, I paid attention to everything I heard. Shortly after I took the sack from my head, I heard the voice again. She was the one who screamed for you to stop choking me.

PRIME MINISTER

I admit, at that moment, I was too upset to be paying attention. It was a shock to find myself beside you. For a moment, I thought you were behind the kidnaping.

PRESIDENT

If we get out, is it your intention to try to kill me?

PRIME MINISTER

(Cautiously.)

If your plan works, I will be obligated to reconsider.

PRESIDENT

(HE throws up his arms.)

Still, he answers like a politician.

PRIME MINISTER

Let me be clearer. If we get out and then you go back to unleashing your terrorists, I have no choice. I have a sworn duty to defend Israel. On the other hand, if you are no longer the president, I have no interest in seeing you dead.

PRESIDENT

He still believes I control the terrorists. I have been talking to the walls. I have a country that is not a country, and control that is not control. I plead with you to believe I am not the puppet master you think.

PRIME MINISTER

Look, some of what you have said is believable. But it does not matter. If you claim to be the leader of a country, then you must accept responsibility for what goes on there.

PRESIDENT

Yes, I have wasted my breath. It is you who does not accept responsibility for the provocations. Does not someone who throws petro on smoldering coals have any responsibility for the conflagration that follows?

PRIME MINISTER

(HE scratches his head while thinking.)

PRESIDENT

You know, if you were no longer the prime minister, it would not be your decision as to whether I should be killed.

PRIME MINISTER

To be perfectly clear, I would consider the possibility of stepping down, were it not for Jerusalem.

PRESIDENT

Jerusalem?

PRIME MINISTER

Yes. If the others who might follow in my footsteps insisted that Jerusalem not be divided, I could sleep comfortably. Right now, I am the only one who fights to keep it whole. It rightfully belongs to the Jews.

PRESIDENT

Perhaps it must be reduced to rubble again before peace can come.

PRIME MINISTER

Are you threatening?

PRESIDENT

No. I just know that there are enough explosives on both sides to do the job. And hot tempers to ignite them.

PRIME MINISTER

I am reminded of the story of King Solomon and the two mothers who both claimed the baby. Do you know the story?

PRESIDENT

Vaguely. I heard it as a child. He threatened to cut the baby in half to appease their claims. One of the mothers renounced her claim so that the baby would not be killed. Solomon recognized her as the mother and gave her the baby.

PRIME MINISTER

That's the story. Who will give up his claim on Jerusalem so she survives?

PRESIDENT

I do not see any similarity in the situations, other than

that they deal with disputes. There are cities divided between states throughout the world. If Jerusalem is divided, it will not die. From my point of view, it is more likely to die if it is not divided. It has been leveled by wars many times over the centuries. That is a fact, not a threat.

PRIME MINISTER

There is some truth in what you say. I guess it's the wisdom of Solomon that eludes us.

PRESIDENT

I would step down if you would do the same. If we let ourselves get caught in this trap, maybe we don't deserve to go on.

PRIME MINISTER

It is hard to accept that I have lost my chance. Maybe it is time for another to try for a settlement. If only I could consult Solomon.

PRESIDENT

(HE rubs a cramp in his arm vigorously.)
You think about it. You have stirred up my blood. We should act now before it quiets. It's my own fault I'm so weak.

PRIME MINISTER

You can't blame yourself.

PRESIDENT

I should have eaten some ham sooner.

PRIME MINISTER

Well, it was a hard decision for you.

PRESIDENT

I made it appear hard. I confess, I had no breakfast before the women captured me. I was trying to trick you into giving me some water. I tried to stir up your appetite with my stories so you would bargain for some ham. I had no tea, nothing to drink all day.

PRIME MINISTER

Ah, so that's why you are so worn down. Your honesty

touches me. Regretfully, we can't go back and start over.

PRESIDENT

You understand that we cannot roll back history a few days, and yet you try to roll it back thousands of years. We both have our blind spots.

PRIME MINISTER

(HE ponders the thought for a moment.)

Yes, let's move.

PRESIDENT

I am going to pray first.

PRIME MINISTER

I will pray too. Do you need some help?

PRESIDENT

I can do it by myself. The blood is starting to run faster through my veins. I intend to ask for Allah's hand in making the plan succeed. If you don't mind, you could ask your God for some of Solomon's wisdom.

PRIME MINISTER

It would be a welcome gift.

(Struggling, the PRESIDENT positions himself and begins to pray. The PRIME MINISTER faces a wall and leans against it with his head bowed in prayer. After approximately a minute in prayer, the PRESIDENT sits back against the wall. Moments later, the PRIME MINISTER comes and stands at his side.)

PRIME MINISTER

I will call them when you are ready.

PRESIDENT

(HE manages to struggle to his feet.)

We should stand side by side.

(The PRESIDENT and PRIME MINISTER move to the cage wall facing the curtain break serving as the entrance for the MOTHERS.)

PRESIDENT

Call now.

PRIME MINISTER

(Shouting loudly.)

Hello out there. Will you come? We have decided.

(They watch the curtain break.)

ISRAELI-3

(SHE peers through the curtain break.)

You called?

PRIME MINISTER

Yes. We have made our decision.

ISRAELI-3

Wait. I will get the others. All must hear.

(SHE exits.)

(A few moments later, all six MOTHERS file through the break and stand together near the cage intently gazing at the two prisoners.)

ISRAELI-3

You are ready?

PRESIDENT

Yes, ready.

ISRAELI-3

Quickly then. Whose life do you wish spared?

(The PRIME MINISTER and PRESIDENT speak in unison.)

I beg of you to spare the life of the PRESIDENT/PRIME MINISTER.

(The MOTHERS look at one another in silence as the lights fade.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY