

A Jew and a Muslim Walk into a Comedy

by

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This play is dedicated to Alan Kurdi and Nilüfer Demir

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And without the incomparable Zelda Dean there is nothing!

Playwright notes

The commission was to “write a comedy about a synagogue that sponsors a Muslim refugee family.” It would have been so much easier to write a drama. Comedy unsettles people. There was a letter of complaint to the synagogue about the script before it was even written. Comedy is scary, but it is also music heard by everyone around the world. Therefore, for many snowy days in Victoria and Vancouver I interviewed people who are involved in the process; interpreters, over stretched government organization workers, leaders in the community, refugees, amazing volunteers and two Rabbis. I decided on “edgy with a touch of farce”. I started to focus on two central words *humanity* and *insanity*. And I allowed myself to fictionalize this story.

Pain plus time equals comedy, that’s the formula. Even the refugees, who escaped the most gruelling circumstances imaginable, sat in the living room of one of the amazing women who brought them here and laughed and laughed. As I sit here now sifting through all the interviews panning for the little golden nuggets, I see their faces – all examples of wonderful human beings trying their best in a world gone mad.

Not to put my story on the same plane as a refugee, I however empathize with what it means to be an immigrant. I remember the cultural bumps I had arriving from England. You might think there would be no linguistic challenges and you would be wrong. I was ridiculed and teased but those situations are funny to me today. I think we have all found ourselves living lives that are somehow preposterously interrupted with ludicrous, outrageous moments that have a sense of the comic surreal. Looking back somehow, we survive our humiliations, our misunderstanding and we laugh, and we move on. After all we are all just primates on this blue marble trying to figure it out.

So, enjoy, laugh! It’s okay, you’re allowed. They haven’t made it illegal yet.

Love, Caroline

A Jew and a Muslim Walk into a Comedy 060220 Caroline Russell-King

Time: Sept 24th 2016, during the visit of Prince William and Kate.

(Note, the play should run straight through without intermission)

Setting: Beth Shalom Synagogue, Victoria, BC, Canada. The social hall has been turned into a black box theatre. On the stage is the set from the past production of the play *Palliser Suite*, or *California Suite* or any suite---an upscale hotel room. There is the prerequisite bed and side table with a light on it, a desk and two chairs with wheels, a door leading off to a bathroom, a closet (containing a few shirts and a hanger of ties) and the main entrance to the room. There are also sliding doors, which leads to the balcony. On the balcony are a collection of potted palms.

Characters: **Miriam** Purim f 65+
Connie Lipchitz f 55+
Rabbi Ben Levin m 45+
Morty Lipchitz m 55+
Ali Hassen aka John **Rambo** m 32

(Note the live voice of the CIA should be live and not recorded and can be done by either the actor that plays Connie or Miri, all other voices can be taped)

Notes on the text – cut off
 ... trail off (a public thought that goes private)
 "" in this case represent lines from the movie *Rambo, First Blood*
 / lines said simultaneously

(At rise Connie is on stage packing up small props into boxes. Morty rushes over to Connie)

Morty Good show! Good Show! Are you going out for drinks with the cast?

Connie No, we did that last night. Where's your mum?

Morty She's in the car waiting already-

Connie Her flight leaves in an hour-

Morty I have to -

Connie Run-

Morty I'll pack up the lights later-

Connie Go already!

(He kisses her affectionately on the cheek and exits as Miri enters carrying two plastic glasses and a bottle of wine from the dressing rooms)

Miri The cast gave us a bottle of kosher screw top.

Connie Want to split it?

Miri Tempting, but no thanks. I'm beat.

Connie You've had a crazy week and what with your husband's amputation...

Miri He'll be playing pool from his wheelchair even before they get the prosthetic fitted.

Connie I know Mort will want to get together with him soon. I love it when those two get together it gives me a breather. Retirement! I know he can be difficult sometimes but he has a heart of gold.

Miri Difficult, oy.

Connie Even though I can't even talk about the refugee family or any of the fundraising or anything... You know how he feels...

Miri If I'd lost family in Israel, I might feel the same –

Connie Still he donated and set up the lights for all six shows-

Miri He's a mensch-

Connie I'm just glad the crazy ol' bat is going back tonight. Imagine flying thousands of miles to visit your son the same week as Prince William and Kate arrive. Royalists! I don't understand 'em and the island is clogged with 'em.

Miri It's good for local business-

Connie But what about the costs? Extra policing? Fireworks in the harbour cost a fortune...

Morty (Rushes back in) Parkour!

Connie What?!

Morty I just turned around the corner and I saw, there's this guy on the roof again doing his parkour thing with a skateboard.

Miri You go. I'll call the police, you'll miss the flight.

Connie Morty you get that woman on a plane back to England.

Morty I'm off... (He runs out)

Connie This is not good for a hundred and fifty year old synagogue.

Miri Yes, that's what's wrong with this. (Pulls out her cell) Hi, I'm calling from the synagogue we have a skater on our roof again.-- No, this is not a prank call -- If we had a violinist on the roof, I would say said we have a fiddler on our roof. -- Yes. Very funny. I wish I were rich man also -- If you could just send someone to get him down so he doesn't break his neck-- Just move him on, don't book him. (Clicks off)

Connie (Looking into the drawer beside the bed, pulls out a Gideon's bible.) What is this doing here?

Miri What is it?

Connie Bible.

Miri Ours or the sequel?

Connie Maybe the set designer thought it added authenticity to the hotel room.

Miri No the cast. Every performance they set things in the drawer for the other to find, in order to try to break the other – one day it's false teeth, porno postcards, last week it was mouse traps...

Connie Yep all still in here...

 (Rabbi enters Connie quickly hides the book behind her back.)

Connie Hi, Rabbi Ben!

Rabbi Shalom. (The Rabbi goes to and unlocks a glass display cabinet behind the black drapes. Connie puts the book back in the nightstand.)

Miri Rabbi.

Rabbi Nu?

Miri Show closed.

Rabbi It was good? You raised the final chunk?

Connie We're well over our forty-five thousand now.

Rabbi Mazel Tov.

Miri Rabbi Ben, did you come in the back way? Did you see the chalk on the sidewalk outside the sanctuary?

Rabbi It wasn't anti-Semitic.

Miri It wasn't?

Rabbi No. It said 'thanks for having us' with a big purple heart!

Miri Aw!

Rabbi One of the kids from *Inn From The Rain* must have put it there. (He surveys the mess.)

Miri (Noticing his look) Tonight this social hall will be back to normal like there was never a show here. Tomorrow we'll be ready for yoga, the new Aikido classes and the Bat mitzvah next week.

Rabbi I'm looking forward to the Aikido.

Miri *You* do martial arts?

Rabbi Yes.

Miri Aren't Rabbis supposed to be pacifists?

Rabbi Aikido is all about harmony and looking for peaceful resolutions to all conflict.

Miri By fighting?

Rabbi You learn about centering yourself, balance, non-aggressive demeanour and how to protect yourself in a fall. All without landing a single punch or kick.

Miri Oh, cool.

Rabbi Come at me with a punch.

Miri I'm not going come at you with a punch.

Rabbi Go ahead, hit me.

Miri No.

Rabbi No I want you to.

Miri I can't.

Rabbi It's okay.

(Connie comes in with a hit he gently takes her wrist and steps out of the way, making her off balance)

It's great for when confrontations become physical. Been doing it for years. I used it during a protest that got out of hand when I was working in solidarity with ACT UP in San Francisco in the 80s...

Connie/ You were in San Fran in the 80s?

Miri/ You were in ACT UP in the 80s?

Rabbi It's important to stand with those who are oppressed.

Miri That's why he supports the San Francisco Giants!

Rabbi Go Giants! (He checks his watch) And go Rabbi. (He picks up the Torah)

Miri Where are you taking the Torah?

Rabbi This one's non kosher, it's going on loan to the Royal Museum's new interfaith exhibit.

Miri You ship around a lot of interesting things at night, a Torah in one hand, a leg in another...

Rabbi You should see me juggle them on the Harley.

Miri You should have seen the surgeons' face when I told him to keep the leg since it has to be buried because we keep our bodies intact.

Rabbi Most of them are used to it-

Miri When I told Bill you were coming to pick up his leg today, he said he was one foot in the grave. And when the doctor told him that his diabetes had advanced and he'd lose his leg below the knee, he looked down and said, "Now I'll never be able to ride a skateboard again". The doctor said- "You're 88- you ride a skateboard!?", and he looked up with a smile," "No, but now I won't be able to."

Rabbi Gallows humour.

Miri Bill's brave. I saw *House MD*, I understand why that man chose 8 seasons of Vicodin addiction over amputation...

Rabbi Well-

Miri I can't handle operations, vivisections, bio 10 frog cutting...

Rabbi Not all of us-

Miri I'm not good in hospitals...

Connie She doesn't even like stage blood-

Miri I don't even like stage blood-

Rabbi You're doing fine.

Miri Bill once took me to a war film I passed out right there in the theatre.

Connie She did the same with me! Face down in the popcorn, got a kernel stuck up her nose...

Rabbi Peh, I lived in Israel...

Miri I don't want to hear

Rabbi I saw a lot of bombings, bloodshed (happily) I once got hit with an ear—

(She is going faint, Connie swoops in and catches her.)

Sorry, sorry.

Miri It's okay. You really are the coolest Rabbi, and the kindest. Thank you for all your support. I know the money is going to the Muslim refugee family and not the Shul.

Rabbi It's our duty to help the persecuted get out of camps eh?

(He deposits her into a chair and picks up the Torah)

Rabbi (Checks his phone) Oh, I have to get to the hospital... (Looks over to see red and blue lights) Why are the police here?

Miri Parkour guy is back again.

Rabbi I'll make sure they treat him well and don't arrest him. (He rushes off)

Connie I have a confession. You know what's awful?

Miri What?

Connie I keep having this one dream over and over, that our committee brought in our refugee family and it's the ONE family in the whole of North America that turns into a sleeper cell, full of terrorists.

Miri Connie. Rachel. Lipshitz!

Connie I know!

Miri What is wrong with you?

Connie What *is* wrong with me?!

Miri You vote NDP.

Connie Why do I keep having this nightmare? Every night for weeks-

Miri For *weeks*?

Connie I dream that I walk in and find the guy has kidnapped and murdered my friends and family. Last night I'd had the dream so much, that in the middle of it I KNEW I was dreaming and I thought 'hey what can I do in my dream to get away? I can fly!' And I'm in this room flapping my arms because that's how I start to fly- (She demonstrates slowly moving her arms which ends up in a wild flap.)

Miri Are you going to pack up the rest of the props or are you just going to stand there flapping?

Connie (Stops flapping. Indicating boxes.) Almost done. I left the costumes hanging in the closet for Wardrobe to pick up on Monday. (She points to the shirts and ties hanging in the closet) This is Wardrobe's sewing kit?

Miri No, it's Stage Management's, leave it.

Connie I don't think our family is ever going to get here now that they've lowered the travel ban in Turkey. Poor bastards, imagine getting that far and then boom! No more, we've reached our quota-

Miri I just can't imagine escaping for my life with a one year old. Can you imagine?

Connie No.

Rabbi (The Rabbi enters again holding a hideously decorated skateboard. It is green and has a monster face and pot leaf motif.) He took off and left this. Miri, can you put this in the office, on the off chance that he'll come back for it? I really have to be at the hospital (Checks his phone) -gotta go-

Miri Why, is something a foot?

(The Rabbi rushes out.)

Miri Wait you forgot- (She indicates the Torah on the table, he is gone.) (To Connie) Always rushing around...

Connie (Looking at her phone.) Such a busy guy.

Miri Yes.

(Connie gasps)

Connie I turned off my phone during the play –

Miri As you should –

Connie Oy Gevalt! 17 text messages!

Miri Everything okay?

Connie It's Hope!

Miri What?

Connie Not what, who.

Miri Who?

Connie Hope! Hope from the Intercultural Association. The ICA!

Miri Our case worker is Monica. After she found out no more refugees were getting out, she went on vacation, the woman deserves it she was working 16 hours a day looking after 40 families—

Connie Hope is Monica's assistant.

Miri What?

Connie *They got out!*

Miri What?

Connie They. Got. Out!

(Pause, they look at each other)

Miri But the travel ban...

Connie Must of squeaked in right under-

Miri NO!

Connie YES!

Miri Nonononono-

Connie Yesyesyesyesyes!

Miri Where are they? En route to Toronto, Ottawa?

Connie YYJ!

Miri *Here?*

Connie *Yes.*

Miri *Now?*

Connie Now.

Miri Right now?

Connie Right now.

Miri At. The. Airport.

Connie At the airport...

Miri Oy-

Connie Gevalt- (she checks her phone) Hope is with the family, they just cleared customs and immigration.

Miri NO!

Connie YES!

Miri But...

Connie I'm going to tell her to bring them here- (She texts)

Miri But, but-

Connie It's only you and me, everyone else on the committee is-

Miri We gave up their apartment!

Connie When we heard they were going to be delayed-

Miri The rent was going to cost us for an unoccupied apartment, it didn't make sense-

Connie I know.

Miri It didn't make sense-

Connie I *know!*

Miri But -

Connie I. Know!

Miri We were going to greet them at the airport, balloons, banners, flowers- You were going to make cupcakes!

Connie I was going make icing with little Syrian flags but as a result of the civil war there are currently two governments claiming to be the official one and each uses a different flag. The incumbent government led by Basher al-Assad and the Ba'th party are using the red-white-black United Arab Republic flag while the Syrian Interim Government seeking to overthrow Assad readopted the green-white and black Independence flag. It's all in the food colouring! Then I thought- Canadian Maple leaves-

Miri FO-CUS.

Connie Good hosting is all in the details.

Miri We can't talk about cakes right now. What are we going to do with this family?

Connie I don't know!

Miri Why can't they stay at your house?

Connie Mine?

Miri Your mother-in-law just left?

Connie Morty's sympathies don't run that deep.

Miri But...?

Connie You want I should stay married?

Miri But...?

Connie Why not your condo?

Miri Mine?

Connie Bill's in hospital, you have two bedrooms-

Miri In a heartbeat, but everything is ripped out for the renovations to make everything wheelchair accessible. It's complete chaos.

Connie Complete?

Miri I've got a stair lift going in, wheelchair ramps-

Connie So?

Miri Power tools and sawdust everywhere.

Connie So we pick up a playpen for the one year old at Walmart, it's open 'til 11 we can just make it-

Miri We're boycotting Walmart-

Connie You're boycotting Walmart, I shop at Walmart.

Miri They have unfair labour practices!

Connie We'll pick up a playpen made in Canada!

Miri And what if they're all made in China?

Connie This is an emergency...

Miri You can't have a product for a one year old that was assembled by a 12 year old.

Connie You're driving me crazy.

Miri Ethics are difficult.

Connie So we'll build a pillow fort around him.

Miri Not at *my house*.

Connie Why not?!

Miri I've had to rip out the entire bathroom to accommodate a wheelchair and bath-lift. I don't even have walls right now.

Connie We'll hang the blacks...

Miri What?

Connie We'll take the black *curtains* from the theatre and we'll hang them for privacy.

Miri I don't even know if the plumbers have pulled out the toilet.

Connie Where were *you* going to shower and pee?

Miri I have an arrangement with Joan in number 27 but I can't impose a whole other family on her...

Connie (beat) The Rabbi's house-?

Miri You were with your Mother-in-law when we decided to empty the apartment...

Connie I know...

Miri (She pulls out her phone and frantically scrolls) The Rabbi's is where we're storing all the donated furniture and stuff for the apartment to save on storage funds.

Connie He's a mench.

Miri He has boxes stacked floor to ceiling in the living room, right now there's only a path from the kitchen to the bedroom. (Back to scrolling) OHMYGOD. There are almost no availabilities!

Connie Probably because of the Royals...

Miri Who?

Connie William and Kate, the visit! That's why there are more tourists than usual and all the press, security...

Miri So far all I have is a B n B in Souk or the Empress at five eighty five a night.

Connie No!

Miri We just need a bed for tonight- (Flops down on the bed, beat, sits up looking around, looks at her. Pause)

Connie No!!

Miri Why not?

Connie No!!!

Miri They slept in the *forest* for 6 nights before they got to the UN camp, this will seem like the Shangri-La!

Connie I don't think *that's* politically correct-

Miri We just won't tell your husband. No one has to know-

Connie What are we going to do, hide them here?

Miri It's the right thing to do-

Connie How?

Miri People hid the Jews we have to return the favour-

Connie Muslims didn't hide Jews... atheists, Catholics-

Miri Whatever!

Connie I don't know-

Miri No one has to know-

Connie What do I tell them?

Miri "Welcome to Canada?"

Connie If Mort finds out-

Miri He won't!

Connie What about the Rabbi?

Miri He doesn't care. He's a progressive, loving man but if he is asked directly did he let them into the Shul, he won't have to lie, it's a mitzvah.

Connie What we're doing is a supposed to be a mitzvah.

Miri This is one messed up mitzvah.

Connie This is crazy. Meshuga.

Miri Meshuga mitzvah...

Connie Miri!

Miri We have a kitchen, bathrooms... the parents can have the bed... we can set up the yoga mats for the one year old.

Connie There's no shower or bath...

Miri (Uncertain) There's the Mikvah...

Connie No-

Miri (slow smile) The Muslim, crazy, good-deed bath-

Connie -Go ahead I know you want to.

Miri (giggles) The Muslim meshuga mitzvah Mikvah!

Connie You think you're funny.

Miri It's verbal schtick, it's funny!

Connie Oh yeah, I want to read that in the press-

Miri Who's going to tell the press?

Connie "First thing Jews do is take Muslims to the synagogue and for conversion-"

Miri No one would have to know-

Connie We can't.

Miri If he takes a bath he won't automatically become Jewish! I had to take classes and...

Connie NO!

Miri All right! But we have beds, we have food, toilets, with hot and cold running water, they didn't have that in the camps. We have coffee, water, ice, food in the kitchen, a 24 hour Tim's across the street. It's only really for a few hours until morning, there's nothing booked in the social hall. We're taking a few hours until morning. We get them out before the kids come in for daycare in the morning...

Connie You want them to wake up to the hushed presence of 20 women in downward dog?

Miri We'll get them out by then. We'll give them an early wake up call.

Connie They've traveled 7 billion miles in the worst circumstances known to mankind and you want to give them an early wake up call?

Miri I don't see a lot of other choices here!

Connie I know!

Miri How much sleep are they going to get if we are running them all over the island looking for B n B's.

Connie Okay!

Miri You want I should check them in at the Empress and say goodbye to six hundred bucks? Besides we check them in there, it's going to depress them for the rest of their lives living in an apartment with donated, mismatched furniture-

Connie I so wanted everything to be perfect for our family.

Miri We're not supposed to call them "our family" it's in the protocol book. It's too proprietary or colonial or something...

Connie Okay.... Another text from Hope.

Miri She really shouldn't text and drive, how is that modeling good behaviour?

Connie She had to pull over on the side of the road...

Miri Good.

Connie Apparently the man hasn't slept in three days, he dropped off in the passenger seat, then woke up and started screaming

Miri Nightmares? Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Connie No, we drive on the other side of the road, he woke up to the car going 80, went to grab for the steering wheel but there wasn't one.

Miri Well that would be disconcerting.

Connie It's these little things that are going to trip us up-

Miri Tripping? What tripping? We've got this-

Connie Er Miri, (she looks at her phone reading the text), a heads up-

Miri What *now*?

Connie The boy isn't one.

Miri What?

Connie The boy isn't one!

Miri One what?

Connie One!

Miri One *what?*

Connie Years old!

Miri What?

Connie The son isn't one.

Miri Do they have the right one?

Connie Of course they have the right one!

Miri Huh! Not one!

Connie The paperwork was one digit off.

Miri One digit off...

Connie He's One Zero

Miri Ten!

Connie Ten.

Miri But we have 50 boxes of baby clothes, diapers, a rubber duck!

Connie Not necessary any more.

Miri Oy.

Connie Makes the playpen redundant.

Miri Oy vey.

Connie I know, I know, but what can we do? I'll donate the baby stuff, maybe the charity shops will do a trade—

Miri He's coming here and we have no toys for him. (beat) There's the daycare!

Connie We are not stealing from the daycare!

Miri Stealing? Who said stealing?

Connie He's ten. There's nothing age appropriate.

Miri We have to welcome him with something.

Connie We can give him the skateboard...

Miri Yes, we'll give the Muslim kid a skateboard with a monster face decorated with pot leaves –

Connie Maybe he won't notice?

Miri His parents will!

Connie He'll probably think it's cool-

Miri What. Will. The. Parents. Think?!

Connie You want we should give him a rubber duck?

Miri Of course not.

Connie My son has an old x-box, I'll bring that tomorrow-

Miri We can stop by Toys are Us and give him a gift certificate, it will seem like Christmas...

Connie *Christmas?*

Meri You know what I mean.

Connie I have coloured pens and a sketchbook in my bag. Once an art therapist always-

Miri You are *not* going to get him to draw his trauma in felt pens!

Connie I'll get him to draw aspirational pictures of what he wants to do in our fair city-

Miri What does he know of our fair city? It's dark out and he's only been in it 20 minutes?

Connie He'll know it's by a beach, who doesn't like the beach?

Miri Poor kid.

Connie And I have Nanaimo bars in my car-

Miri You have Nanaimo bars in your car?

Connie I made them. I was going to bring them for closing night before everyone took off.

Miri They're going to need more than Nanaimo bars.

Connie Of course, but as a treat. He can have them all. What kid doesn't like baked goods? It goes across culture-

Miri Fine.

Connie He's a kid, only you would reward a 10 year old boy for staying alive in a warzone with a carrot stick-

Miri What's the son's name again?

Connie He was born Amadi but Hope tells me he wants to anglicise his name.

Miri So what is it now, it seems more pertinent now that I know he can speak...

Connie Hope says when she got the dossier on the family from ICA, she learned they owned three American movies and they played them over and over to learn English.

Miri Aw, that's resourceful.

Connie Hence the son now wants to be called Clark – Kent.

Miri Super.

Connie Oh man.

Miri I get wanting to change your name... Miriam Purim who wants to grow up with that name?

Connie I went from Lipski to Lipchitz... (Looks at her phone) They are minutes away--

Miri And Ali made his money as a tailor in Syria...

Connie You are not having that man make costumes for your next show-

Miri Who said --?

Connie I know how your mind works-

Miri I put stuff together and make things happen. That's how shows get put on, that's why we now have a family arriving any minute we're not prepared for.

Connie It's not like the Intercultural Association is going to ship them back-

Miri I know, I know.

Connie Oh god another text! Bit of an emergency-

Miri *More* than what we have right now?

Connie Amandi aka Clark Kent has a toothache.

Miri I've heard of this before.

Connie They arrive with tons of dental problems because they've had no access—

Miri And you wanted to feed him Nanimos bars...

Connie What Nanimos bars?! They've been in a Turkish refugee camp!

Miri Poor kid, can they go to emerge?

Connie I have a friend... I'll make a call, he'll meet us at his office.

Miri That's a *big* favour.

Connie We dated a million years ago, lives in Esquimalt, he owes me...I'll meet them at the door and I'll go with the mum and Amandi Clark to the dentist. You can welcome Ali. I'll bring the mum and kid back here when we're done.

(As Miri runs off and returns with a big file box)

Where are you running off too?

Miri I have all the paperwork from the Intercultural Associations in the guidelines somewhere. It recommends that we visit in pairs-

Connie We'll just have to break the rules, extenuating circumstances-

Miri For two smart women we sure are screwing this up-

Connie Extenuating circumstances.

Miri We racked up a million hours in committee meeting minutes, papers from government officials, not to mention all the bookkeeping and fundraising, which resulted in two feet worth of legal papers, contracts, handmade thank you cards for donors-

Connie Get to the point-

Miri We were so prepared and now-

Connie We're in this, it's real, it's happening. In 30 seconds our refugee family is going to be pulling up and this is the *new* plan. Not the plan we planned, but the improvised plan. It's like theatre, we wing it, we adapt and the show goes-

Miri Okay!

Connie You don't sound sure.

Miri No, it's fine.

Connie They're here! (She exits)

(Miri is nervous. She straightens the comforter on the bed, fluffs pillows, goes to her purse to put on lipstick, thinks better of it. Connie enters with Rambo who looks like a tall teddy bear, a *very* tired bear)

Connie I just found out that when Ali and his wife found out they were coming to Canada in addition to English, Ali studied-

Rambo Bonjour!

Connie Miri this is Ali Hassen, Ali - Miri.

Miri Bonjour, welcome to Canada! I'm so glad you are here. I'm afraid I don't understand much French.

Rambo Hello. Thank you for sponsoring me.

Miri (Almost bursting into tears) Oh!

Rambo I don't mean to...?

Miri No, I'm just so happy you are here. I'm sorry your son is in pain but my friend Connie will take good care of him-

Connie (As she exits) I'm on it.

Miri If it's one thing we Jews know it's doctors... Oh, I wasn't going to bring up the Jewish thing. I'm so sorry we weren't at the airport to meet you. I'm so sorry you've traveled so far over so many time zones and I can't image what you've been through and what you've seen, oh dear I wasn't going to mention that either, I really am blowing it. I guess I'm nervous. I'm sorry...

Rambo Why Canadians say sorry so much?

Miri (On purpose) Sorry.

 (An awkward laugh)

 Wow, you're really here! I can't believe it. You got into Canada just as the proverbial doors closed.

Rambo I do not comprendre, proverbial doors closed?

Miri Oh, it's just a saying.

Rambo (practicing) Proverbial doors closed.

Miri Yes.

Rambo Are you nervous?

Miri A little.

Rambo I am gentle man. A man of peace.

Miri Oh! Of course you are. And I am your host. This is going to sound funny but this is your resting place I mean place of rest, I mean for the evening and tomorrow we will take you to see your apartment.

Rambo Thank you Mary.

Miri It's not Mary, it's Miri, short for Miriam. Miriam Purim – I know, I know people make fun of my name

(He doesn't really understand.)

I go by Miri.

(They shake hands)

Rambo Merry.

Miri Close enough. Anyway, I'm your main contact person. I'm so glad you're here, that you are safe.

Rambo I heard Canada was a safe place.

Miri Yes! Relatively speaking-

Rambo Thank you.

Miri Well, welcome Mr. Ali Hassen. I hope you'll be very happy here.

Rambo Please call me John now.

Miri John.

Rambo John Rambo.

Miri Oh!

Rambo But I have not the (He mimes muscles) I am just a simple (He mimes sewing)

Miri Tailor! You sew clothes...Schmates....

Rambo Nothing, everything is fine.

Miri (Beat, lets it go trying to get back on track) And is your wife Lois Lane?

Rambo No, that was our dog.

Miri Oh. And your wife?

Rambo Leia.

Miri Oh, okay...

Rambo Princess Leia.

Miri I can guess the three movies you own.

Rambo *Superman, Rambo, First Blood and Star Wars.* I watched over and over to learn English and then I practice French from the CDs as well. *Rambo you have no chance drop your weapon we'll order a chopper and we'll fly you back to...hold your fire! Hold your fire! Think about what you're doing... the building perimeter is covered there are no exits there are a lot of men out there and a lot of F16s.... it's over Johnny. (As Rambo) Nothing is over! It wasn't my war. You asked me I didn't ask you. And I did what I had to do to win!*

Miri Oh okay.

Rambo I know every word in English and French. *J'ai fait ce qu'il fallait faire pour gagner!*

Miri That's really Impressive. I don't know if I could learn Arabic from *When Harry Met Sally, Moonstruck* and seven seasons of *Sex in the City*.

Rambo I don't know what to say.

Miri Did you have *Sex in the City* in Syria?

Rambo I don't know what to say.

Miri (She tries to cue his recognition by doing a little dance move and humming the first three bars of the intro. He looks at her with uncomfortable politeness and horror)

Miri *Sex in the City!* (Suddenly realizes what she has just said) Oh! No I meant... it's a TV show.

Rambo Oh!

Miri Oh dear.

Rambo It is okay.

Miri Look it's perfectly fine. I'm sure there are going to be a few language problems and cultural missteps. It's to be expected! It happened to the other family that got sponsored by a Synagogue in Winnipeg. The first day they all showed up with bagels and it was the first day of Ramadam. First day of fasting... Bagels for Ramadam!

Rambo Dan. *Ramadan*.

Miri Dan. *Ramadan*.

Rambo (Saving her embarrassment) We did not have TV shows but we also took lessons in the camps French and English, for a long time.

Miri That's why your English is so good, I didn't think you could learn all that from three movies.

Rambo But the three movies we watched over and over until we lost the electricity in the house.

Miri You lost the electricity in your house...

Rambo At first and then we lost the house.

Miri I see.

Rambo There was much (He mimes a plane going over dropping bombs)

Miri Air strikes.

Rambo Yes much strikes!

Miri It must have been terrifying.

Rambo Hit whole buildings where we lived. We were lucky because our house had lower level underground. This is where we lived for weeks. Only going upstairs to go get supplies. I think this saved us.

Miri Amazing and terrifying.

Rambo But now no house, no shop. Just one backpack now.

Miri I can't imagine condensing everything in my life into a backpack.

Rambo I have nothing to give you for bring us here but we was met by the Red Cross in Too Ront Tow who gave us this (He shows her a little Canadian flag which he waves) and sandwiches. And I took extra so that I could bring you a gift to merci.

(He gives her a wrapped sandwich)

Miri Oh how kind! (Looks at it)... ham and cheese-

Rambo It is not much but-

Miri So kind. (More to herself) Technically we could eat it in the office...

Rambo I don't understand...

Miri (Letting it drop) I'm afraid I don't have anything to give you. Everything for your apartment is packed up.

Rambo I hope you do not mind I ask question?

Miri Anything. We are your resource people anything from medical, to housing, language, bill payment, intercultural liaison, daycare, ESL classes, job training- (She pulls out the big paper box.) We did a welcome to Canada sheet with photos of the committee- this is Me and Connie... but you had a question...?

(She hands him the photo, he takes it and looks at her)

Rambo Why did you do this?

Miri Oh! Um...

Rambo Why are you so special?

- Miri Oh, um, well, er the truth is, is I was pretty um, ignorant, I didn't know what was going on in the world. I mean I *knew*. I saw it on the news but... it was the photo really. (She shows him the image on her phone) The little boy on the beach who drowned...
- Rambo Alan Kurdi. I know this photo.
- Miri Yes! I saw that, I was sitting across the street in the Tim's with Connie and saw in the paper, well it was his little red shirt and his shoes actually, my son had those same shoes and I thought- I told Connie we had to do something and a year later – here you are.
- Rambo I have two more urgent questions-
- Miri Yes?
- Rambo Yes. Where can I – (he mimes washing his hands)
- Miri Oh! Just over there, washrooms are over there.
- (Rambo bolts)
- Miri (Leaving a voice message) Connie don't forget when you get this, phone your husband and tell him to come tomorrow not tonight. I don't have Morty's cell number. This guy needs to sleep he looks like he's been awake for a month.
- Rambo (Enters) What *is* this place?
- Miri Right! How would you know? Assumptions! This is the Shul,
- Rambo Shawl?
- Miri No, the Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue. This is the corner of Ophir and Church Street. And this is the social hall turned black box theatre.
- Rambo I don't understand.
- Miri This whole building is like a mosque but for Jews!
- Rambo You are Jewish?
- Miri Yes! You didn't know that the people sponsoring you are Jewish?

Rambo If you had six heads and ten noses we would be just as thrilled.

Miri Oh.

Rambo I did not know and this is where you pray. (He takes off his shoes.)

Miri You don't have to take off your shoes.

 (Rambo has already done so)

Rambo I want to be respectful. Sandwich?

Miri (Stalling) I, er... what do you like to eat?

Rambo Yalanje, molokheya, kepeh..

Miri (She is none the wiser) Oh.

Rambo (He helps her out) Lamb, rice, potato, bread, cake...

Miri (Can't help herself) That's a lot of carbs. (Has an idea.) Oh, wait!

 (She grabs the bottle of wine Connie had with the two glasses, Rambo unwraps an egg salad sandwich and sits at the desk on one of the two chairs)

 In celebration of your arrival!

Rambo (Now he is stalling) I, er...

Miri (She opens the bottle and pours into two plastic glasses she hands one to him and toasts) L'chaim!

Rambo I-

Miri It means to life!

Rambo (Changing the subject) I have seen so much death-

Miri (Sudden realization) Oh! I'm so sorry! You don't drink.

Rambo (Relieved to be off the hook) Not alcohol, no.

Miri I'm so sorry.

Rambo (Making a joke) Of course, you are Canadian.

Miri Are you okay if I...?

Rambo Yes, of course.

Miri (Drinks) It's been a week. Well, not like your week. I didn't exactly flee a war torn... I should stop talking now.

Rambo You can talk and ask questions also.

Miri I don't want to traumatize you.

Rambo What?

Miri The literature says that people fleeing worn torn situations might have PTSD.

Rambo What is PTSD?

Miri Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. You might be really bothered talking about your past situation. I don't want to...

Rambo No, we talk about it all the time, what it was like, we are proud to have left, and happy.

Miri Oh, okay. What was it like before you left?

Rambo There were 22 of us in the apartment. We kept taking in family, friends...

Miri That's not much privacy...

Rambo It was not the first concern.

Miri Of course.

Rambo Then the strikes it was not safe there was a big what do you call it in the roof (He mimes split or separation)

Miri There was a crack in the ceiling?

Rambo Yes much crack. It was not safe. And then the things that carry the water (He mimes)

Miri Pipes?

Rambo With the shaking from the bombs, they broke. The pipes broke, no water, much—

Miri Waste products?

Rambo Merde-

Miri (automatically) Good show.
(He is confused, she is recognises the absurdity of the situation and ploughs on)

Rambo Much goodsho

Miri Sorry no, that's not the word...

Rambo How you say in English?

Miri Shit.

Rambo Much shits. Shits everywhere.

Miri Though it's not a polite word.

Rambo What is the polite way to say?

Miri I don't know. Poo?

Rambo Poo. There was cracked pipes and much poo.

Miri You mentioned the air strikes was there a lot of fighting in the streets?

Rambo Some but we had no guns. I stay awake for nights listening to all the fighting. One time I not sleep for days and I started to see like a mirage in the dessert.

Miri You were hallucinating from lack of sleep. I did that once during college...

Rambo You can not trust what you see.

Miri Like LSD.

Rambo LSD?

Miri Never mind. Moving on. Tell me about getting out-

Rambo There was much rubble, many bricks and rocks. Some of the teenagers throw rocks at the tanks but... After the roof we know we're going to be buried alive, so we had to leave there. We pack up and leave in the night.

Miri Just the three of you.

Rambo All 22 of us, adults, children and babies. It was a long walk and we had to cross the border at night and we had to not get notice by the soldiers.

Miri How tense! How did the crying babies not alert the border guards?

Rambo My friend was a person who sells pills to people—

Miri Let it be a pharmacist-

Rambo Yes. His store got bombed but he had some how you say for sneezes. (He pulls out a handkerchief and shows her a half a dozen pills)

Miri Cold medicine?

Rambo Allergies.

Miri Oh! Antihistamines.

Rambo Yes! Antihistamines, they make you sleepy. We had to (He mimes crushing in his palm) and put very little in drink for babies so they not cry when we cross border.

Miri Oh dear, that's not good.

Rambo Better than dead. (He dumps the pills into the empty plastic glass) I not need any more. (Folds up the handkerchief on the table beside it)

Miri You are so brave.

Rambo No I am not.

Miri You are a hero.

Rambo No I am not. It is you who rescued us. You are my hero.

Miri Oh!

Rambo Heroess?

Miri Heroine.

Rambo You are my heroine.

Miri I still think what I did was easy, what you did...

Rambo What choice did we have?

Miri I can't image having to leave Victoria and escape on foot across the border to live in a camp in Oregon.

Rambo You would if you had to.

Miri I suppose.

Rambo I will miss Syria. Before the troubles. I will try to remember the good times. The last celebration I had was with sister, her birthday. (He goes to his backpack and pulls out four small frames) My wife and son, my parents, my sister...

Miri Your family is beautiful.

Rambo Yes.

Miri And your son looks so happy with his dog.

Rambo We had to leave the dog behind. It was a very sad day and he has not been happy since.

Miri I can't imagine how difficult that was-

Rambo I told him to be strong like Superman. You think it is not good that I let him call himself Clark Kent but I told him that the Kents teach Clark he must use his powers to do good. Be brave.

Miri I understand.

- Rambo And so we all took on these to survive. These American heroes. John Rambo, Superman and Princess Leia. It helped us.
- Miri This makes sense to me now. You're breaking my heart.
- Rambo (Concerned) Your heart is broken?
- Miri It's an expression, English and French are easy, it's the expressions that will trip us up.
- Rambo On the plane the sky- waiter kept asking Clark if he would like pop. I say no just give him a coke and he laughed and laughed... but when I told him we didn't understand because we are from Syria he gave us all free chocolate and much pops!
- Miri If Connie has anything to do with this he will get lots of chocolate and pops. It's bad for his teeth of course.
- Rambo In my culture the wife takes care of the children but I think maybe we should have stayed together. There will be pain for him-
- Miri It will be okay, you will see them soon and we will spoil him. We will have toys for Clark, of course, lots of toys but in the meantime, maybe he can fly around on this, inappropriate artwork aside.
- (She gives Rambo the skateboard, whose eyes register the pot leaves but he graciously takes it. There is an awkward moment Rambo stands the photos up on the desk)
- Miri You have one frame with no picture in it-
- Rambo My brother, I took it out when he died, it made m- my wife - too sad.
- Miri I'm so sorry for your loss.
- Please don't think you have to tell me about everything but if you need to speak of it, or things, I'm here or there are counselling services at the ICA...
- Rambo I am fine.
- Miri Of course.

Rambo I know it's not your job to fix all of our problems, I do not want to be a burden. Soon, soon I will be working...

Miri You have funding for a year, there's no rush.

Rambo But I want to work

Miri You have a trade. They will be assessing all the refugees trades at Camosun. I got you a sewing machine from Used Victoria.

Rambo Camosun? Used Victoria?

Miri You can sew again. When the guy dropped it off and heard it was for a Syrian refugee family he didn't take the \$75. So now you have your own sewing machine.

Rambo I used to have three, my shop, all the scissors sharpened everyday and hang on the wall. (He jesters by size)

Miri You are a professional; it's how you made your living.

Rambo Yes. Much buttons and (he touches his clothes to indicate what he means)?

Miri Fabric.

Rambo Fabric. A soldier come into my shop to steal they do not know I am there. I know they will kill me if they find me, but I am a man of peace so I can do no harm .

Miri What did you do?

Rambo I surprise him. I take the fabric and I jump from behind (He demonstrates) I wrap them up and I use cord to how you say?

Miri Restrain them?

Rambo Yes! Much peaceful. I had to leave them there until they were found. It is a while until his friends come and find him, I had to give him water, because of the heat.

Miri That's very considerate of you.

Rambo What can you do? I am a man of peace, I do not like suffering. I had to leave my shop that day. I took all the scissors, I could have bartered or sold but I buried them in the dessert so no one could use as weapons...

Miri That's very principled of you.

Rambo I used to make such beautiful clothes but now I think I learn, how you say, new trade.

Miri Oh. Why?

Rambo My brother... (Pause) is it safe to tell you?

Miri You can tell me anything.

Rambo He was (Pause) a fancy man and he wanted me to make him special clothes, and I didn't want to, but I love my brother and – he likes to sing and well-

Miri Oh no!

Rambo And I feel it is my fault he is dead, maybe if he was not in these clothes I made—

Miri Oh, I'm so sorry. (Recognition she has just apologised again.)

Rambo I don't know why you are sorry, you did not push him off the roof.

Miri (Lost for words) I- You will make lots of fancy clothes here, it's theatre, it's Canada. We will get you lots of work here for theatre and drag shows—

Rambo What is drag show?

Miri Where the fancy men sing, the ones who dress up.

Rambo It is a place for soldiers?

Miri This is a port, more like sailors, but whatever. Your brother would be proud... we can go to shows...

Rambo My brother was a soldier, he wanted a fancy uniform.

Miri Oh! *Uniform*. (Beat) So no singing?

Rambo With the other soldiers at the camps...

Miri Well we just narrowly averted a potentially embarrassing field trip...

Rambo I do not understand.

Miri It's okay.

Rambo My other brother was a great man in the army, he still alive did very good (gestures and makes explosion noises).

Miri Explosives? He blows things up.

Rambo Yes blow, he very smart when he first made, all the captains stand around in big circle and give him the clap.

Miri (gently correcting him) They clapped.

Rambo Yes, what I said.

Miri So he was an expert in his field.

Rambo Not field, desert.

Miri Oy, no "in his field" is an expression.

Rambo In his field...I was good in my field but now I think maybe now I will drive cab here.

Miri Oh. You want to do this?

Rambo I would like to know I can leave whenever I want to. Take my family to safety.

Miri I understand.

Rambo I have one more questions. Important. When Hope drove us from the airport in her car-

Miri Yes?

Rambo Where I come from territories and markings with flags very important. It is important to know who has what land, when... I see many strange flags in Canada not red and white with leaf-

Miri Oh yes, the British flags are everywhere - it's crazy but it's because the prince is here and it's the all the tourist-

Rambo (Alarmed) *You* have tourorists?!

Miri They're everywhere!

Rambo I thought I left that all behind!-

Miri They are staying not far from here. (She points to the direction of the hotel.) Security is everywhere. They blockaded the streets yesterday... I couldn't even get down this one.

Rambo (Very concerned) I had no idea they were here, it wasn't on the news in Turkey-

Miri It's all over the news here, The Prime Minister came out to-

Rambo He is here?

Miri He's gone back to Ottawa now, it was *a big hairy deal*. And now the Press are everywhere, tracking their every movement!

Rambo There are a lot of tourorists?

Miri We are overrun with them, they've taken over the whole island.

Rambo This is bad...

Miri Especially for you right now...

Rambo The British have taken over...

Miri The British are everywhere. The harbour is swarming with them.

Rambo I did not even know!

Miri Connie got one back on a plane but what are you going to do? With family it's complicated.

Rambo (Sigh) Same problem Syria.

Miri Funny, I wouldn't think that was a real destination...

Rambo It's a hot spot-

Miri It pretty hot right now here too.

Rambo I should have stayed with my wife and son.

Miri There are in Esquimalt.

Rambo S Why Malt...

Miri They will be fine, it's not far.

Rambo (Nods understanding) Things change fast. But we are here, I will protect you Merry.

Miri (Confused) I don't need protecting...

Rambo You western women, eh. I say eh. Does it make me sound Canadian? I want to blend in.

Miri Sure blend in...

Rambo I have survival skills. I will help. Do you want to stay here?

Miri Do I want to stay here? Oh, no I'm going to go home and pick you up in the morning. We can not go to the hotels, because of -

Rambo They have taken over, I understand. It is nice you bring me to this place. (Pause) You worship here? You are lucky it has not been blown up.

Miri Just some graffiti really... Periodically there are bomb threats we evacuate until the all clear, what are you going to do? Usually it's kids. But we have to be cautious. We had one synagogue that was firebombed in Vancouver. All but one of the Torahs were saved.

Rambo Torah's were saved? This is people?

Miri Holy scripture. Like a Koran. Very precious and valuable. – like this one (She indicates the one the Rabbi forgot to take)

Rambo I will be vigilant. I will protect it. (He looks around) So, this is where you pray...

Miri Well, we pray in the sanctuary, I can show you— here you need this, (She goes to grab a nearby basket with kippahs in it.)

Rambo Merci.

(He takes a white one and wipes his mouth, Miri tries very hard not to giggle)

Miri No, it's for your head...

Rambo (realizes, mortified) OH Pardon! I-

Miri It's okay. This is just for the sanctuary.

Rambo (Straightening out the kippah with respect) I know this word sanctuary. It is one of the first words I learn, sanctuary. It is what I seek for my family from the war. Now you bring me to sanctuary!

Miri Yes well, the sanctuary is just over there, this is the social hall, over there is the kitchen, there's food in the fridge, ice is in the free-

Rambo (So startled he drops the kippah) ICIS?

Miri (Pointing) Over there.

Rambo This is *very* bad.

Miri I KNOW, I wanted it to be so different-

Rambo Rambo is here now. (Calculating) So the harbour is swarming and ICIS is north...

Miri You're very versed on compass points.

Rambo (matter of fact) I have to know which way is east.

Miri Of course.

Rambo Do you have a map?

Miri There's one in your welcome package along with bus schedules-

Rambo When do we set out?

Miri So you will stay here one night, well a few hours-

Rambo And then we will be on the move again.

Miri What are you gonna do?

Rambo We will survive. You are brave.

Miri Me? No, I am not *brave*. I'm resourceful, tenacious maybe, a good director... *You* are brave.

Rambo Can we go to the mountains?

Miri Er, maybe not right away.

Rambo What do you think is best?

Miri Let's just take it one step at a time.

Rambo Yes, you are very wise. One step at a time is how we made it before.

Miri Right.

Rambo I am just tired. I have not slept in ...

Miri Yes, you need to rest. Look if you need me here is the office cell.

Rambo It is a phone?

Miri Yes cell phone we call them cell for short.

Rambo Cell for short.

Miri Just cell.

Rambo Just cell.

Miri Cell.

Rambo Okay.

Miri It's all programmed you just push one button and it will call my personal cell. Say "call Miriam Purim".

Phone Calling Miriam Purim

(She shows him and her phone rings in her pocket she turns it off)

Miri Or if in the future, If I'm not available and you need anything you can call The Intercultural Association, the ICA and they will deal with *all* your needs everything you want. It will link you. You can speak to people who speak French or Arabic.

Rambo I will practice my English

Miri Okay. They will help you. Say "Call ICA"

Rambo ICA

Miri I'll let you get some rest-

Rambo Yes, I am very sleeper.

Miri You are very sleepy. A slipper is footwear –

(He looks confused)

Never mind-

Rambo I am very tired, hard to sleep in the camps they are so near the borders. I have traveled so far, walked many miles, slept in the forest, lost my friends and family. There were strikes and snipers. I have lost my home, this morning I was in Turkey and now I am in Canada, where I thought I would be safe-

Miri We're going to figure it all out. You need to rest now. Connie will bring your- Leia and Clark and we'll bring breakfast. Now sleep—

Rambo Thank you Merry. Merci.

Miri (As she grabs her coat and purse and leaves) Yes, very good, bon. Bon soir!

Rambo (Calling out) Bon soir!

(Rambo is alone. He surveys his surroundings. He takes out the little maple leaf flag and kisses it and sets it up on the desk. He sees the photo of Miri and Connie and sees the scissors. He cuts the photo to fit the last little frame. The last remaining molecules of energy leaving him he sees the yoga mat and gets down on it to kneel in prayer but he is so tired he rolls over and sleep overcomes him. A noise at the door, a few moments later Morty enters, tool kit in hand. Confused Morty crosses to Rambo.)

Rambo (Waking to see Morty standing over him) I'm sleepy...from Turkey.

Morty Every Thanksgiving mate.

Rambo Pardon?

Morty Are you here to take back the flats we borrowed for the production?

Rambo I don't understand.

Morty Are you from U Vic?

Rambo Idlib.

Morty (Suddenly suspicious) You're not a theatre volunteer...

Rambo I just need to sleep here *one* night-

Morty *Sleep* here?

Rambo One night-

Morty (See the skateboard and puts two and two together) That *your* skateboard?

Rambo No, it is Clark Kent's.

Morty Oh, a wise guy-

Rambo I am not so wise.

Morty You have no business being here-

Rambo I am, Merry-

Morty I don't care how happy you are- I know what you guys like to smoke.

Rambo I do not smoke-

Morty (references the skateboard motif) All evidence to the contrary.

Morty And you're homeless?

Rambo Homeless?

Morty Without a home?

Rambo Of course.

Morty I thought so.

Rambo Yes. I sleep here now. I am sleeper.

Morty Look the synagogue participates in Inn from the Rain one day a month, you can sleep here then but not tonight see?

Rambo I don't understand.

Morty You people. You need a real job.

Rambo I will get one soon. I promise.

Morty 'Some friendly advice, get a haircut and take a bath'

Rambo I have travelled far and I-

Morty Well it's time to leave now.

Rambo What? You can stay here too.

Morty What? You think *I'm*... (one of you)

Rambo Privacy okay, I once shared a 2 bedroom apartment with 22 people.

Morty I'm sure you did.

Rambo Yes!

Morty 'Er whots your name?

Rambo Je maplelle, John Rambo.

Morty Nice try. 'Let me see some ID' What's your real name?

Rambo Ali Hassen.

Morty And you're Quebecois?

Rambo I am Muslim.

Morty Aren't you a little old to be doing this parkour?

Rambo Parkour, pardon?

Morty How did you even get in?

Rambo (Proudly remembering the phrase) I got in just as the proverbial doors closed.

Morty I thought as much. You must have had a home once why did you leave?

Rambo I left because of the crack-

Morty You were in a crack house?

Rambo Yes.

Morty Terrible

Rambo Yes. You too?

Morty They are hell holes.

Rambo Poo everywhere.

Morty So I hear.

Rambo How did you know?

Morty I watch PBS specials.

Rambo Yes, it was hell, deserted buildings, broken pipes and rocks everywhere.

Morty That's very dangerous behaviour...

Rambo Yes?

Morty You're lucky to be alive.

Rambo I know.

A Jew and a Muslim Walk into a Comedy 060220 Caroline Russell-King

Morty Did you do other stuff besides crack?

Rambo Other stuff?

Morty Like needles?

Rambo (Proud) Of course, I am a professional, it was how I make my living.

Morty (appalled) So you sold?

Rambo (proud) I made-

Morty You cooked.

Rambo No my wife cooked.

Morty And where is she?

Rambo We made it out alive but she is not here.

Morty Are you using now?

Rambo What?

Morty Are you using needles now?

Rambo (obviously) Not at this moment...

Morty When?

Rambo At my old home...

Morty Are you clean now?

Rambo Am I clean?

Morty Yes.

Rambo Well it's been about 72 hours... (Since I had a bath)

Morty Well that's a start.

Rambo Yes.

Morty So you don't have a job.

Rambo No, but soon. I promise.

Morty In my day we started out working for the family. My brother gave me my first job.

Rambo My one brother died.

Morty I'm sorry.

Rambo And my other does blow jobs in the field.

Morty I'm sorry I asked.

Rambo He is very good!

Morty I'm sure he is.

Rambo The other men stand around in a circle and clap.

Morty All right! TMI

Rambo TMI?

Morty (beat) You don't look as skinny as some of them.

Rambo I used to be (He mimes bigger)

Morty How did you get here?

Rambo Hope drove me.

Morty No, I mean physically, how did you get here?

Rambo My heroine?

Morty (Exasperated) You just told me you were clean!

Rambo I am sorry I am not clean.

Morty Alright, get your bag I'll take you to a shelter-

Rambo No. I have to wait here. I cannot be moved, my family is coming *here*.

Morty This building is closed-

Rambo If this building is closed, why are *you* here?

Morty Not that it's any of your business but I'm here to strike the set-

Rambo (Alarmed) Strike!?! I left because of the strikes! You will not strike anything!

Morty I will.

Rambo I am so tired of all the strikes.

Morty Too bad

Rambo *You* will leave now.

Morty Look, I'm just here to take the lights-

Rambo You will not steal-

Morty Not steal, take-

Rambo You have to leave, I said I would protect--I will stop you-

Morty I don't think so mate-

Rambo You will not strike or take anything...

Morty Now you Mr. Rambo can parkour your ass out of here voluntarily or I'm calling for backup-

Rambo Backup!

Morty Look I'm not afraid, (He casually takes off his coat to reveal a shirt that says "My mum visited from England and all I got was this lousy T-shirt" with a big union jack on it)

Rambo (Really alarmed) You! I thought you were one of us, you are one of them!

Morty What?

Rambo You are British tourist!

Morty I live here now mate this is my home-

Rambo What is *your* name? Comment appelez-vous?

Morty Je suis Mort.

Rambo Vous êtes *Mort* ?! *Mort* !?

(Rambo looks around and grabs the sheet off of the bed and dives at Morty to pin him down with it. Morty throws off the sheet. There is a scuffle which ends up with Rambo getting his sleeve ripped and his red undershirt pokes through. Rambo ties Morty to the wheel chair with the gold curtain tieback.)

Rambo I am a man of peace!

Morty Stay away!

(Morty begins to try to roll off the set using his feet. Rambo sees this and rolls him back, looks around opens the closet door and secures him)

Rambo You stay there until I call Merry to find out what to do next (Into phone) Call Miriam Purim.

Phone Calling Mirror Emporium.

Machine Thank you for calling Mirror Emporium voted Victoria's number one custom glass and mirror specialist. Your great taste is a reflection of you! Our office hours are nine to five Monday through Saturday, closed Sundays. Leave a message we will call you back before the next business day. (Beep)

Morty Help! Help a crazed Muslim broke into the synagogue and is holding me hostage...

(Rambo grabs a kippah from the box and stuffs it into Morty's mouth. It is red satin doubled in half it looks like a muppet drag queen.

Rambo Merry! It's Rambo I need to tell you, a bad man called Death broken in and threatened to strike the sanctuary, and he wished to steal the lights.

(Rambo grabs a red tie from the hanger and Morty thinking he is going to be strangled doesn't resist, Rambo secures the kippah in place with the tie)

I, Rambo, and a man of peace, I did not harm you. Thank Allah, peace be upon Him.

(Morty has opens the closet and tries to wheel away, Rambo gets him takes him back to the closet)

But I have tied him up until you get here. I leave it to you if we call police. I don't know if you can trust police. He wears the flag of the invading tourist and I don't know what to do. I have no bribes for police, I have no Canadian largent. But I have protected your Jewish sanctuary and the Torah. All is well. (beat) Thank you for sponsoring me.

(Morty spits out the Keppah.)

(Morty tries to roll out again Rambo catches him and taking one of the ties from the hanger secures Morty to the curtain rod so that he is trapped.

Morty How long are you going to keep me tied up? The yogis are coming in the morning.

Rambo I did not hurt you.

Morty I haven't had anything to eat or drink!

Rambo I have a ham and cheese sandwich?

Morty Of course you do.

Rambo I only have wine (he holds up the bottle)

Morty Kosher!

Rambo Infidel!

(Rambo pours the wine into the glass that has the antihistamines in it and gives it to Morty)

(Rambo holds the drink for him to drink, takes the glass back to the table, does a double take when he sees the handkerchief, looks back at Marty)

Rambo (resigned) Well we both need to sleep. I have to be ready to collect my family and head to the mountains. If I don't soon I will hallucinate like LSD.

Morty Druggie!

Rambo (shrugs) It is you who accidentally took the drugs.

Morty You drugged me!

Rambo Sleep well.

(He sees that his sleeve has been ripped, spots the stage managers sewing kit and begins to thread and needle and sew up his arm 'Rambo style'. Morty stares at him. Rambo closes the door.

Rambo goes to put the needle back in the case when a noise startles him the pins go all over the rug behind the bed.

Oh high alert now, Rambo responds. He sees the hanger with the ties gets an idea takes the black tie and ties it around his head. He is Rambo now. Hearing the approach, he slithers into position to watch as he ducks behind the potted plants on the "balcony".

Rabbi Ben enters in his motorcycle leathers and helmet the helmet is black with many stickers on it, some with Hebrew writing and on the back a huge San Francisco Giants team skull with the word "Giants" written on it.

He is in a rush, he had a package in a black plastic bag under one arm he sees the Torah. Besides the Torah he sees the skateboard. He picks up the skateboard and has an idea. He takes out his cell phone and presses record and then he lifts his visor-)

Rabbi (into his phone) Bill this is for you-

(The Rabbi takes the leg out of the black bag. Cut from just below the knee it is wrapped in clear medical plastic. He places the leg on the skateboard and pushes it across the floor. It travels under a black light and now glows an eerie luminescent green. The Rabbi continues to video it on his phone.

Rambo pops up in time to see the leg on the skateboard his hands go to his face in despair.

He watches as the Rabbi goes over towards the Torah and puts it under his arm.

Rambo makes a split second decision he jumps up towards him.

The Rabbi is surprised and drops the phone.

Rambo looks at the leg

Rabbi looks at the leg

Rambo looks at the Rabbi

Rabbi looks at Rambo)

Rambo (Growls like Rambo)

Rabbi Ah!

Rambo Ah ha!

Rabbi Who are you?

Rambo Who are you?

Rabbi Rabbi-

Rambo (points to himself) Rambo.

Rabbi How did you get in?

Rambo How did you?

Rabbi Look, I won't press charges, I can take you to a shelter—

Rambo Is that what you told this man?

(Rambo grabs the other silk cord from around the curtain)

Rabbi I can explain-

Rambo I see what you did-

(He steps on the rug with the pins)

Arugh! I am on pins and needles.

Rabbi I'm apprehensive too.

(Rambo advances with the cord)

Rabbi Wait! I come in peace...

Rambo No! / come in peace!

Rabbi I mean you no harm- (uses an Aikido move to thwart the cord)

Rambo I mean *you* no harm!

Rabbi I can explain, I am the Rabbi (Pronounced Rebbi)

(Rambo tries to grab the Rabbi and ties his hands. Each is equally matched in their terror of each other. The Rabbi goes to get the leg, slips on the skateboard and swings the leg which missed Rambo. He views this as aggression and goes for the sheet move to cover the Rabbi. This is misunderstood and the Rabbi employs another Aikido move. The sheet not working Rambo opens the drawer beside the bed, goes to grab the book realizes what it is , throws it up in the air like a hot potato. The bible hits the Rabbi who also reacts)

Rabbi Oy vey!

(Rabbi now puts the leg back in the bag slips on the skateboard again and bumps his head. Physical misunderstanding after misunderstanding each one is not trying to harm the other. Rambo sees the scissors, the Rabbi follows his gaze. Rambo picks up the scissors to plunge them into the dirt in the potted plant. This move is misinterpreted by the rabbi...The Rabbi tries to deflect in a spectacular move which results in the funniest non-violent fight scene ever, two pacifists fighting...)

Rambo (As the commander) *"Rambo you have no chance drop our weapon we'll order a chopper and we'll fly you back... hold your fire! Hold your fire! Think about what you're doing... the building perimeter is covered there are no exits there are a lot of men out there and a lot of F16s.... it's over Johnny. (As Rambo) Nothing is over! It wasn't my war. You asked me I didn't ask you. And I did what I had to do to win!"*

Meanwhile Morty has woken up opened the closet door with the back of his hands still tied to the chair and seeing the struggle closes it again.)

Rabbi Look! I just came to get the Torah-

Rambo Have you no respect! This is a sin a gog!

Rabbi I know it is!

Rambo I am a man of principle and a man of peace-

Rabbi I am a man of peace-

Rambo Pa! (He indicates the leg)

Rabbi It's not what it looks like-

Rambo You are a very violent man and a thief, you come in the night to steal this (He picks up the Torah and holds it Rambo style like a machine gun)

Rabbi The Torah! (He recoils) Please put it down.

(Rambo realizes that the Torah has value and the man will recoil so he uses it like a gun to gesture the Rabbi into the chair. The Rabbi sits down and Rambo secures him to the chair. He opens the closet-

Morty (Muffled) Rabbi!

Rabbi (Surprised) Morty!

Rambo Ah Ha! (You two know each other!)

Rabbi Look, I am a man of God-

Rambo That they all say.

(He snaps down the visor and rolls him into the off stage bathroom. Goes back to the closet pulls down the gag from Morty-

Rambo What is your real name Mr. Death?

Mort Lipshitz.

Rambo (under his breath) So rude (corrects him) Poo-

A Jew and a Muslim Walk into a Comedy 060220 Caroline Russell-King

Mort -you don't know who you're fooling with. I'm a big Makkah-

(He puts the gag back in and closes the door, paces, pulls out the cell phone)

Rambo (Pulls out his phone) Call CIA.

Phone Calling CIA.

Voice Central Intelligence Agency, is this an emergency?

Rambo Yes, we are under occupation-

Voice Identify yourself-

Rambo I am Ali Hassen, from Syria, I am a Muslim - I am here with two terrorists broke
in to strike and steal...

Voice What is your present location?

Rambo I am holed up in a Jewish Sin a gog Victoria Beesea

Voice Mr. Hassen you are a Muslim with two other terrorists and you've taken over a
synagogue in down town Victoria British Columbia-

Rambo It is *British* Columbia!? I came to Beesea - I'm confused!

Voice I'm patching us through to CSIS-

Rambo ISIS-?!

Voice ISIS! Mr. Hassen is anybody there hurt?

Rambo (indicating the leg) Well, it's probably too late for this guy.

Voice One dead, confirmed. Who is with you?

Rambo I, Rambo, man of peace, Reby and Big Makkah.

Voice So five?

Rambo What?

Voice (Reading back from notes) You, Rambo, Man of Peace, Rebbi and Big Makkah...
And you have hostages?

Rambo What?

Voice You have people, you've forcibly detained?

Rambo What?

Voice Tied up?

Rambo (Proud) Yes!

Voice How many?

Rambo Two!

Voice Confirming two hostages. This can end peacefully. Mr. Hassen.

Rambo (Wave of tiredness) Can it? Can it please? Yes, I want peace.

Voice What are your demands?

Rambo (Confused) I don't have demands...

Voice What is it you want?

Rambo What do I want? (Suddenly confused he answers tiredly and honestly) I want peace in Syria...

Voice Surely, you realize that even the CIA as powerful and far reaching as it is can't guarantee that, in return for-

Rambo I wanted to notify you, Merry said.... I want to (Pause) sleeper-

Voice You are sleeper...? Oh! You have a cell!?

Rambo (Confirming) I am a sleeper, (Looks at phone) I have a cell...

Voice You are a sleeper cell that's been activated.

Rambo What?

Voice You are now active...

Rambo It's been a very busy night.

Voice Are there more of you?

Rambo Two in S qui Malt.

Voice Do you know their specific location?

Rambo No, and I'm very worried... They will pull it out there, there will be much pain...

Voice Can you give me details?

Rambo The whole thing is rotten, there will be much tears-

Voice You have armaments there?

Rambo I do not understand...

Voice What are you packing?

Rambo (Confused referring to his bag) The usual...

Voice Are you representing some group?

Rambo What?

Voice Are you affiliated with any say, army?

Rambo No my brothers were in the army, I went underground.

Voice You are an underground sleeper cell with four others, who has two hostages tied up and armaments and you want peace in Syria.

Rambo I don't know what you are saying...

Voice Did you kill the man?

Rambo (Referencing the San Francisco skull logo on the Rabbi's helmet) NO! Rebbby, the one with the big skeleton on his head.

Voice Okayyyy. Can I speak to him?

Rambo No, he is tied up now.

Voice Okay, stay on the line-

Rambo No. (Pause) I am confused, this is not helping. I am very tired. Tomorrow, I wait for Merry we are going to escape to the mountains. (He clicks off)

(He takes the leg and in a symbolic gesture of burial, covers it reverently with a sheet on the bed.)

(Fireworks go off in the distance. Not traumatized by this his response is more "Typical!")

(He takes the Torah and goes out onto the balcony crouches between the potted palms. He is vigilant for a moment but sleep overcomes him and slumped against a palm tree he falls asleep.)

(Miri enters an open pack of Tim bits in her hand, thinking he is sleeping she crosses to the bed)

Miri Ali? John? John Rambo? They're not healthy but (she opens the little box lid to show him) we got you-

(Confused she pulls back the cover and sees the leg, screams. Rambo on hearing his name, wakes now with dirt on his face, tie still around his head, holding the Torah like a gun staggers out from behind the potted plants Rambo pops up Timbits fly everywhere. She goes to faint Rambo drops the Torah and scoops in and prevents her from falling on all the pins and needles on the floor beside the bed)

(Connie enters cheerful, with coffees and a large box under her arm. She looks around not seeing anyone. Then she sees Timbits, then Miri being held or held up by Rambo)

Miri?!

Rambo She faint.

Connie Why? What happened?

(Before she can go to Miri there is a noise from inside the closet she puts down the coffee and box.)

Rambo For your safety don't look in the closet.

(She ignores him and opens the door to see a tied up sleeping Morty)

Connie Oh God!

Rambo (Gently setting the passed-out Miri on the floor with a pillow under her head) He is a tourist. But I accidentally drugged him, he is fine, he sleeper. His friends the yogis will find him when they come in this morning.

Connie What have you done?

(Before she can untie Morty there is another noise from the "bathroom")

Rambo Don't look in there big skeleton man in closet.

(Connie rushes over to see a tied up Rabbi)

Connie Rabbi!!! (to Rambo) *You tied up the Rabbi!?!?*

Rambo (modestly) He attack me but I resisted!

Connie Is he drugged too?

Rambo No! But he attack me.

Connie What did he attack you with?!

Rambo With this, (he gestures to the leg)

(She sees the leg.)

Connie Rambo! What did you do?!

(She looks around then pauses and begins to wildly flap her arms)

Rambo What are you doing?

Connie I need to fly!

Rambo Yes, we need a chopper!

Connie I can see you already chopped...

Rambo We need food and supplies, (He begins to pack up the Timbits) We will head to the mountains

Connie I'm a retired art therapist who has very vivid dreams!

Rambo Is this some kind of trauma, are you having STDs

Connie I *am* dreaming, I am *dreaming*...

Rambo You are not!

Connie Pinch me!

Rambo No.

Connie Hit me!

Rambo No, I am a man of peace, I tell everyone, no one listens!

(Rambo picks up a Timbit sniffs it and then eats it)

mmmmm

Miri (Coming round sees Rambo) Don't eat too many, the sugar will kill you!

Connie And she's back!

Miri Connie get a grip! Stop flapping!

Connie But, but...

Rambo (Trying to help out) Connie STOP FAPPING.

Connie Oh, dear-

Rambo She has STD and is fapping all the time.

Miri (giggles) la la

Rambo La La no time for singing. We have to get my family and head for the mountains!

Connie Hope is bringing them here! Miri Look what he did!

Miri It's Bill, I'd recognize those toes anywhere (To Rambo) My husband.

Rambo (To Rabbi) Her husband! You are a *very, very bad man!*

Connie Nooooo!

Miri /Rambo it's okay/

Connie /Rambo, what did you do?/

(Miri makes Connie physically stop moving her arms)

Rambo I didn't do anything.

Miri But why?

Rambo "They drew first blood."

Miri What happened?

Rambo Where is Clark Superman and Princess Leia?

Connie That sounds like a bad sequel. You've got to go back to calling them by their real names-

Miri After the dentist, Hope took them back to her house. We will meet them later at the apartment.

Rambo (Referring to Morty) "All I wanted was somewhere to sleep and something to eat but the man kept pushing it sir", I mean Madame.

(Miri lifts the visor for the Rabbi)

Rabbi Nu?

Miri Busy night?

Rambo What are you doing?

(Miri unties Rabbi Ben)

Rambo This is bad man?

Connie He's the Rabbi!

Rambo He told me this.

Miri He's like a holy man –

Rambo Holy man?

Connie Like an Imam.

Rambo Imam!

Connie A Jewish Imam-

Rambo I tied up the *Imam* of the synagogue?

Miri (giggle again) Yes.

Rambo Begging your forgiveness...

Rabbi It's okay really.

Miri Sorry. So, so sorry.

Rambo A thousand pardons!

Rabbi You must be Mr. Hassen, our Syrian refugee – (He extends his hand and Rambo takes it)

Rambo Yes.

Rabbi I'm glad you got here safely.

Rambo These are not tourorists...

Miri You've mixed up terrorist and tourists -visitors.

(Rabbi gently takes the Torah out of his hands then goes to get the leg back in its bag during the following)

Rambo Has Britain invaded the island?

Miri No.

Rambo Is this part of Columbia now?

Connie No.

Rambo (To Rabbi) Did you kill this man?

Rabbi No. I'm on my way to *bury* his leg-

Rambo I am so sorry I do not know your customs and rituals-

Rabbi Well, that wasn't standard practice with the Chevra Kaddisha...

Rambo So much I don't understand. You had big skull on your...

Rabbi I'm a Giants supporter.

Rambo You are a giant supporter of what?

Rabbi Not a big supporter, a Giants supporter.

Rambo Like the Incredible Hulk?

Rabbi No...

Rambo (To Miri) Does he know giants aren't real?

Miri (Having fun) Don't tell him that.

Rambo (Misunderstanding) Oh! Is it part of his religion?

Miri It kinda is...

Rabbi Miri don't confuse the man. It's baseball.

Miri You need to reach out when you don't understand. Why didn't you call me – ?

Rambo I did! And I called-

Rabbi The CIA-

Miri *Oh no!*

Connie This is my husband, he's a *good* guy. (She starts to untie him)

Rambo Pa! (Then it dawns on him. He is mortified) Husband?!

(She takes his gag off, Morty wakes up)

Morty They're not coming over for Shabbat.

Connie They will too Morty Lipshitz. That's enough out of you.

Rabbi Under family reunification Israel is taking in Syrian children.

Morty We don't even know if he's Sunni or Ismaili?

Rabbi He's human, and (grins) he told us a man of peace.

(Morty crawls into bed and pulls up the covers)

Miri Aw. Yes, when Bill gets out of hospital you will meet him. You'll come over I'll serve you good food.

Connie Good food, very healthy food, and you'll come to my house and I'll serve the GOOD food.

Rabbi We are all here to help you. We wish that you cry with all your heart, eat with great relish, love completely, dance with abandon.

Rambo Thank you so much. Thank you for sponsoring me. Us.

Miri That's okay you don't have to thank us all the time.

Rambo But I want to...

Morty Okay, let's go home.

(Rambo crosses to Morty and shakes him gently)

Rambo I am sorry, Death

Morty I go by Mort.

Connie We are going to sit down and have coffee.

(She hands Rambo a coffee)

Rambo I love coffee! (Takes a sip) and whatever this is, is nice too.

Miri We call it a double, double.

(Morty falls back to sleep)

Connie (Looking at the mess) Meshuggah!

Rambo Three packets please.

Connie (picks up a Timbit, eats it) Crueller

Rambo I did not mean it.

Connie Not you the Timbit... (she points) Honey dip, chocolate glaze, dutchie...

(There is a banging off)

Loudspeaker This is Corporal McKay with the RCMP, the SWAT team is here and the building is surrounded. (Morty wakes up. There is a beat,)

Connie *What did you do now?*

(Connie slowly raises her arms. Miri lowers them gently)

Rabbi He called the CIA...

Miri Oh no!

Rambo Are you going to put Rambo in jail?

Morty Maybe.

Connie NO! Morty.

Rambo "It's not my fault"-

Morty It kinda is-

Rabbi Morty at this synagogue we support human rights, day shelters *and* refugee families.

(More banging)

Rabbi I got this (He exits, Morty lies back down again to sleep)

Rambo What will happen to me?

Miri It's The RCMP...

Rambo ICA CIA PTSD LSD PBS TMI...

Miri Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Rambo With the red coats and horses?

Miri With the black coats and guns.

Rambo Here. Now?

Connie Relax you're mispocheh-

Miri Family-

Connie Sure you caused some Tsuris-

Miri Heartache

Connie But it's bupkes –

Miri -nothing

Connie When I first saw everything I could've just plotzed-

Miri Collapsed-

Connie But it's going to be alright! Mazel Tov!

Miri Congratulations!

Connie You can give your family the whole speil-

Miri Story-

Connie Then we'll get some nosh-

Miri -Breakfast

Rambo Thank you for translating.

Miri Welcome.

Rambo Connie, how is my son?

Connie He's fine now. Completely. He drew me this picture-

(She holds up a pastel drawn picture of a 10 year old boy facing away playing on the beach in a red sweater building sandcastles. Miri does a sharp intake of breath in recognition.)

Connie I think I'll frame it.

Miri Speaking of frames – look at this (she shows the photo of her and Connie in the picture)

Rambo You are my family now.

(The women kvell/squee)

Connie (To Rambo) Your son told me all about having to say goodbye to Lois Lane.

Miri You got a... ?

(Connie goes to the box and brings out the cutest puppy known to humankind and presents it to Rambo who sits down with it overwhelmed, with the emotion, lack of sleep he uses the puppy to surreptitiously wipe a tear)

Connie It's a Shitz Tzu.

Rambo Poo Zoo?

A Jew and a Muslim Walk into a Comedy 060220 Caroline Russell-King

Connie No, *Shitz Tzu* it's the breed.

Rambo You are Lois Two.

Connie Not to be gender normative but she's a he...

Rambo Maybe *he* should be called Rambo--

Miri So now you have your family out, safe, an apartment filled with lots of stuff and a group of support people who will help you navigate all this.

(Rambo contentedly picks up a Timbit and eats it, the sugar going over his beard or surprised by the filling that gets over his face)

Miri Your first morning here (She picks up a stray Timbit and joins him to eat) RCMP and Timbits! Welcome to Canada.

(Rambo takes the little flag as if to have it held by the puppy and waves it on his behalf. The Rabbi enters)

Connie Morty wake up, I'll drive us home.

(Morty wakes up)

Rabbi It's going to be fine, I explained everything, they just want statements. And guess who else showed up – CBC.

(Rambo looks to Miri for the explanation)

Miri Media. TV News.

Rabbi They want you to do an interview on camera. (Looks at Rambo) Oh, you have a little shmutz-

Rambo (correcting him) Shih Tzu.

Morty (Laughing, friendly now) Schmuck.

Miri (References the exchange to Connie) Shtick!

End

