

EXCERPT FROM THE FULL-LENGTH COMEDY-DRAMA STAGE PLAY MOSES. Moses Beckerman is an African-American man in his seventies who is in the early stages of dementia. He has lived a full and rewarding life; up until his retirement Moses was a science teacher in both the Detroit and Farmington Hills school systems and finally retired as Vice Principal at North Farmington High School. A widower, he lives with his son Maurice, his daughter-in-law Vivianne, and their teenaged daughter Danni. Moses drifts in and out of reality: Most weeks he's fine. Then there are those times when he honestly, truly believes he is the Moses of the Old Testament, leading the Jews out of slavery into the Promised Land of Israel. He even goes so far as to dress the role, i.e., long flowing robes and sandals. Maurice's way of dealing with the situation is more than not to deny the disease's growing and undeniable presence. This denial puts him at serious odds with his wife Viv. And then there is Laurel Hollingsworth, a Caucasian woman and newly retired teacher who has known Moses for years and has for years loved him without letting on as much.

MAURICE: (Without looking up from his newspaper) Hi, dad.

MOSES: "Dad." What is this "dad" you speak of?

MAURICE: Tha'd be you. Remember? "Dad" is just another way of saying "father."

MOSES: (Nodding his approval) "Dad." I do find a strange comfort and familiarity with the sound of this "dad". And I am this "dad" that you speak of?

MAURICE: Mm hm. Yes, you are. That you are. (Beat) So. Good day or what? Have a seat. Tell me about your day.

*Hesitantly, Moses takes a seat in the wing-backed chair near his son.*

MOSES: (Impressed by the chair) This is truly the seat of the pharaohs! A seat worthy of kings!

MAURICE: (Without looking up from his newspaper) Ethan Allen.

MOSES: And this Ethan Allen--he is a pharaoh? A king?

MAURICE: Viv seems to think so. But just for the record, I'm the only king around here. At least I was when I left this morning. It's a day-by-day thing.

MOSES: You are most certainly a benevolent king by offering such accommodations to a shepherd such as I.

MAURICE: Thank you. Tell the wife and kids that, will ya?

MOSES: But be thyself humble as even the lowliest amongst you, for all kings of this earth and the nations they rule are but mud and dust beneath the feet of the Lord thy God for He is King of Kings. The Master of Masters. Let whatever power you wield be in service of the One. What sacrifice have you offered the Lord thy God today?

MAURICE: Forty-five minutes on East Bound I-696 at seven-thirty this morning. And a lot of smiling and nodding in agreement with seriously dumb people in between.

MOSES: All sacrifices at the foot of the Lord are appreciated and remembered.

MAURICE: Yeah, okay. Cool. So. Good day?

MOSES: (Sighs. Shrugs.) All days in service of the Lord are good days, my son. (Beat) I—I just wish, you know—I just wish they didn't complain so much. It's a desert, for heavens sakes! It's gonna get hot! Schvitsing is what you do in a desert! I can't do anything about that! One man—I can't remember his name—brick and mortar guy on the first pyramid—I should be able to remember his name-- I courted his sister, what—fifty?—sixty?—years ago? Well, anyway I hear him say, (mocking tone) "Maybe it wasn't so bad being a slave. At least we had food and shelter. And beer! All the beer we could drink in the evening!" Well, of course they gave you beer, you idiot! How is an inebriated man supposed to calculate with a clear head and execute with a sound body his escape from the cruel clutches of his slave masters! Answer me that! (Beat) It's just—I don't know—it gets to be too much sometimes.

MAURICE: Yeah, I hear ya.

*Maurice folds up his paper, tosses it on the coffee table in front of him and picks up his tablet computer. He begins scrolling. From the kitchen we hear VIVIANNE yell—*

VIV: (Off Stage) Dinner in ten minutes!

MAURICE: N'okay!

MOSES: The woman. She's yours?

MAURICE: Come on, dad. You know—

MOSES: Vivianne! Yes! Of—of course. I'm sorry. Vivianne. (Beat) She's your wife.

MAURICE: There ya go.

MOSES: She's—beautiful. A good woman.

MAURICE: She can be. Depends on the moon, the tides and the thermostat.

MOSES: Mother to my grandchildren—my—

MAURICE: You can do it—

MOSES: Their names are—

MAURICE: You can do it, dad—

MOSES: Daniella and Michael!

MAURICE: OutSTANDING!

MOSES: (Nodding approvingly) Daniella and Michael.

The two men are silent for a moment. Maurice is scrolling through his iPad.

MOSES: Smells like lamb.

MAURICE: Ironic, huh?

MOSES: (Looking at Maurice's iPad) What's that?

MAURICE: My iPad. A tablet computer. I can check stocks, stream movies—

MOSES: A tablet? (Beat) I ever tell you about the tablets I—

MAURICE: Yes, dad. You told me about the tablets. *And* the burning bush. And speaking of burning bushes, you have any idea how hard it is to explain to the Farmington Hills fire department how that mulberry in back caught fire?

MOSES: The Lord speaks in many mysterious ways—

MAURICE: Yeah, well, I don't think the Lord uses lighter fluid. No more burning bushes, okay, dad?

MOSES: (Embarrassed) Yes.

MAURICE: No more burning bushes.