

Angels in America Pt 1: Millennium Approaches

Written by Tony Kushner

DRAMA

Characters: *LOUIS (A clerk working for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals)*

PRIOR (Louis' boyfriend. Occasionally works as a club designer or caterer, mostly lives modestly off a small trust fund)

Same day. Louis and Prior outside the funeral home, sitting on a bench, both dressed in funereal finery, talking. The funeral service for Sarah Ironson has just concluded and Louis is about to leave for the cemetery.

LOUIS: My grandmother actually saw Emma Goldman speak. In Yiddish. But all Grandma could remember was that she spoke well and wore a hat. What a weird service. That rabbi...

PRIOR: A definite find. Get his number when you go to the graveyard. I want him to bury me.

LOUIS: Better head out there. Everyone gets to put dirt on the coffin once it's lowered in.

PRIOR: Oooh. Cemetery fun. Don't want to miss that.

LOUIS: It's an old Jewish custom to express love. Here, Grandma, have a shovelful. Latecomers run the risk of finding the grave completely filled. She was pretty crazy. She was there in that home for ten years, talking to herself. I never visited. She looked too much like my mother.

PRIOR: *(Hugs him)* Poor Louis. I'm sorry your grandma is dead.

LOUIS: Tiny little coffin, huh? Sorry I didn't introduce you to...I always get so closety at these family things.

PRIOR: Butch. You get butch. *(Imitating)* "Hi Cousin Doris, you don't remember me I'm Lou, Rachel's boy." Lou, not Louis, because if you say Louis they'll hear the sibilant S.

LOUIS: I don't have a...

PRIOR: I don't blame you, hiding. Bloodlines. Jewish curses are the worst. I personally would dissolve if anyone ever looked me in the eye and said "Feh." Fortunately WASPs don't say "Feh." Oh and by the way, darling, cousin Doris is a dyke.

LOUIS: No. Really?

PRIOR: You don't notice anything. If I hadn't spent the last four years fellating you I'd swear you were straight.

LOUIS: You're in a pissy mood. Cat still missing.

(Little pause.)

PRIOR: Not a furball in sight. It's your fault.

LOUIS: It is?

PRIOR: I warned you, Louis. Names are important. Call an animal "Little Sheba" and you can't expect it to stick around. Besides, it's a dog's name.

LOUIS: I wanted a dog in the first place, not a cat. He sprayed my books.

PRIOR: He was a female cat.

LOUIS: Cats are stupid, high-strung predators. Babylonians sealed them up in bricks. Dogs have brains.

PRIOR: Cats have intuition.

LOUIS: A sharp dog is as smart as a really dull two-year-old child.

PRIOR: Cats know when something's wrong.

LOUIS: Only if you stop feeding them.

PRIOR: They know. That's why Sheba left, because she knew.

LOUIS: Knew what?

(Pause.)

PRIOR: I did my best Shirley Booth this morning, floppy slippers, housecoat, curlers, can of Little Friskies; "Come back, Little Sheba, come back..." To no avail. Le chat elle ne reviendra jamais, jamais...

(He removes his jacket, rolls up his sleeve, shows Louis a dark-purple spot on the underside of his arm near the shoulder)

See.

LOUIS: That's just a burst blood vessel.

PRIOR: Not according to the best medical authorities.

LOUIS: What?

(Pause)

Tell me.

PRIOR: K.S., baby. Lesion number one. Lookit. The wine-dark kiss of the angel of death.

LOUIS: *(Very softly, holding Prior's arm)* Oh please...

PRIOR: I'm a lesionnaire. The Foreign Lesion. The American Lesion. Lesionnaire's disease. **LOUIS:** Stop.

PRIOR: My troubles are lesion.

LOUIS: Will you stop.

PRIOR: Don't you think I'm handling this well? I'm going to die.

LOUIS: Bullshit.

PRIOR: Let go of my arm

LOUIS: No.

PRIOR: Let go.

LOUIS: *(Grabbing Prior, embracing him ferociously)* No.

PRIOR: I can't find a way to spare you baby. No wall like the wall of scientific fact. K.S. Wham. Bang your head on that.

LOUIS: Fuck you. *(Letting go)* Fuck you fuck you fuck you.

PRIOR: Now that's what I like to hear. A mature reaction. Let's go see if the cat's come home. Louis?

LOUIS: When did you find this?

PRIOR: I couldn't tell you.

LOUIS: Why?

PRIOR: I was scared, Lou.

LOUIS: Of what?

PRIOR: That you'll leave me.

LOUIS: Oh.

(Little pause.)

PRIOR: Bad timing, funeral and all, but I figured as long as we're on the subject of death...

LOUIS: I have to go bury my grandma.

PRIOR: Lou?

(Pause)

Then you'll come home.

LOUIS: Then I'll come home.