

Richard Farber

TEARS

a Backstage Melodrama

The cast:

- Udi - An actor at least 40 years old
- Ralph - The director, probably under 40
- Christa - An actress well over 40 years old
- Joe, the pianist - He does not speak, only plays

[The roles of Udi and Christa could well be played by very mature actors, 60 +]

Locations:

Udi's dressing room

The rehearsal room

The director's room

Christa's dressing room

Onstage during opening night performance

Backstage

Notes . . . the play within the play, a quasi turn-of-the century melodrama should be played tongue-in-cheek. A lot of what Udi says is paraphrased text from the quasi turn of the century melodrama. It's the job of the actor playing the role and his director to decide what is part of the play within the play and what is part of Udi's real life.

SECCO means dry or matter-of-fact. It also means without musical accompaniment.

vi= =de indicates a possible cut.

[JOE THE PIANIST MAY BE SEEN DURING THE SONGS -- AND ALSO DURING THE PLAY WITHIN THE PLAY IN ACT TWO.]

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ACT 1

[AS AUDIENCE ENTERS, THE PIANIST PLAYS SELECTIONS FROM TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY MELODRAMATIC PIANO MUSIC]

[LIGHTS DIM, PIANIST SEGUES TO OVERTURE] [OVERTURE IS VERY MELODRAMATIC.]

[DURING OVERTURE, A SPOT FADES UP ON Udi ALONE IN HIS DRESSING ROOM. HE IS FACING THE AUDIENCE THROUGH A MIRROR FRAME]

[Udi IS SILENTLY SOBBING]

[PIANIST REACHES CLIMAX AND ABRUPTLY STOPS]

[SIMULTANEOUSLY LIGHTS UP FULL ON STAGE]

Udi: OVERACTED She's dead . . . dead

PIANIST PLAYS AGAIN

Udi: OVERACTED Oh . . . oh me . . . what can I do?
 Oh, oh no, no . . . she's dead!
 Oh my God!
 And him . . . he's dead too
 And my brother . . . no!
 Oh . . . oh my God . . . no!
 Mommy . . . oh oh . . . what can I . . .
 Dear God,
 All of them . . . what can I do?
 What can I do?
 Oh . . . oh no . . . dead . . . all of them
 All of them . . . they're all dead!
 Dead . . . dead . . .
 Dead . . . they're all dead!

[HE CRIES ALONE FOR ANOTHER 20-30 SECONDS]

[Udi SUDDENLY STOPS. HE EXAMINES HIS TEETH]

Udi: SECCO They're getting yellow again . . . Goddamn it
 I must get to the dentist before the premiere

[CRIES AGAIN]

Udi: OVERACTED They're dead . . . oh no . . . no . . . no
 My mother . . . my brother

Udi: SECCO Tighten throat
 Wrinkle forehead
 The face of tragedy . . . yes . . . get the mask right

Udi: OVERACTED Oh God what can I do . . . what can I do

Udi: SECCO Pause . . . yes . . . and moan [A MOAN]

[Udi BEGINS CALLISTHENICS]

Bend two three stretch two three
Bend two three stretch two . . .

[LIGHTING CHANGE. THE DIRECTOR AND ACTRESS ARE DRINKING TEA]

Ralph: You'll be having the opportunity to play opposite Udi Jacobs.

Christa: Oh yes . . . fine . . . fine . . . a great actor . . . I mean, I've never had the opportunity, you know, to work with him . . .

Ralph: Yes?

Christa: But I've seen him of course . . . in numerous roles . . .

Ralph then I'm sure we'll be able to achieve a rapport.

vi= [LIGHTING CHANGE.] [WE ARE IN Udi'S DRESSING ROOM.]

Udi: Bend two three . . .
Who the hell do they think they are casting me opposite that
overrated sex-pot
Bend two three
Stretch two three

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [BACK TO DIRECTOR AND ACTRESS]

=de

Christa: His Pozo a few years ago

Ralph: Yes

Christa: And Willie Lowman in Death of a Salesman
. . . and that Orsino
What an Orsino,
It must have been 15 years ago.
I can remember it as if it were yesterday.

Ralph: More like twenty? Thirty?

Christa: He was so young, so vibrant, so sexy

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [WE ARE IN Udi'S DRESSING ROOM]

Udi: . . . three
Bend two three
Stretch two three

Bend two three

[THE PIANIST HAS PICKED UP THE RHYTHM AND LEADS INTO THE SONG.] [JOE THE PIANIST MAY BE SEEN DURING THE SONG.]

Udi: SONG

The craft of acting,
The playing of a role
Being what you're not,
No soul.
A mirror to what real is
Dissembling not feeling,
Music that tear jerks and
Lines that don't rhyme,
Play it again Joe, play it again. [2nd time say again with
Cockney accent in order to
rhyme with rhyme.]

Riffs licks jazz
Glycerine stage biz.
Vaudeville's appealing with
Lines that titillate,
Words that don't grow old,
Playing who you're not,
No soul.
Joe understands,
Strike up the band.
Play it again Joe, play it again.

Pop in a tear,
All the worn shticks,
The sleight of hand,
The vaudeville tricks.
Pop in a tear,
Strike up the band
Play it again Joe, play it again.

[SONG FINISHES WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.]

[KNOCK ON DOOR]

Christa: [OPENING DOOR] The director wants us

Udi: Good morning love

Christa: Good morning . . . sorry . . . must be forgetting my manners

Udi: Pressure of work. Forget it

Christa: Are you coming?

Udi: Yes, of course, be right there
[ASIDE WHILE LEAVING DRESSING ROOM] Be right there.
Well, yes I've got to do it . . . I've been in the business now
for over twenty years and have never turned down a part
because I was afraid of it . . . no, never have and won't do it
now

[ACTOR ENTERS REHEARSAL ROOM]

Ralph: Good morning

Udi: G'morning

Christa: Good morning to you all

Udi: Sorry I'm late

Ralph: Four minutes . . . but that's all right

Udi: I forgot about the time. I've been in the theater an hour
doing my warmup [ASIDE] and thinking

Ralph: Yes, we heard you . . . shall we . . . ?

Christa: Where did we leave off reading yesterday?

Udi: Page 42 more or less . . . towards the end of the second act

Ralph: Udi

Udi: Yes?

Ralph: Sorry you couldn't come out with us last night . . .
we had an excellent dinner

Udi: We couldn't find a babysitter

Ralph: Ah yes, a son isn't it?

Udi: That's right, he'll be two soon

Ralph: Egg rolls and wonton soup

Christa: Shanghai style beef

Ralph: Crispy duck, oysters, stirred fried noodles
a very jolly evening

Christa: LYING It was really so nice

Udi: Yes

Christa: Really . . . and how is your son?
[PAUSE] You said something about the flu

Udi: He'll be O.K.

Christa: Good

Ralph: But back to work now . . . right?

Udi: Of course

Ralph: Ah yes, I forgot, how about tonight . . .
we were thinking of that new Japanese restaurant
Sushi, Taramiyaki

Christa: Tirami-suki

Ralph: I've heard it's exquisite

Udi: No, I'm sorry. I'm afraid that he's
coming down with something

Christa: Poor baby

Udi: . . . last night . . . well . . .
I'm just sorry but . . .

Ralph: Yes of course . . . now . . . um . . . yes . . . of course . . .
the final scene and its underlining dramatic intent

Udi: Yes . . . that's page . . . ?

Ralph: And your lovely wife . . . um?

Christa: Esther

Ralph: Yes, yes . . . a really lovely girl

Udi: [ASIDE] I'm glad somebody appreciates her

Ralph: She's the tall redhead, isn't she?

Udi: No Ralph, that's my cousin

Christa: Udi's wife Esti is about my height with long dark blond hair

Ralph: Ah, I remember
And how is she?

Udi: Fine . . . yes . . . yes . . . fine thank you . . .
[LYING] she sends her regards

Christa: You really should bring her around more often,
she's something special

Ralph: Yes, lovely girl. We really must get together again.
Yes, ah . . . Well . . .
um . . . where were we?

Christa: The final scene, Ralphie dear

Ralph: Thank you darling

Christa: You're welcome love

Ralph: O.K. let's . . . um . . . read through the final scene please.
Now I don't want any acting . . .
just say the lines with a modicum of intelligence . . .
a simple read through . . . please . . .
just to get the meaning . . . the sense of the scene.
Please let's . . .

Udi: [TO HIMSELF] No acting

Ralph: And no acting. Did you say something?

Udi: Me? No

Christa: From what page darling?

Ralph: Page 43 from the bottom love

Christa: Yes, I found it

Ralph: No, on second thoughts, let's take it from the middle of the scene.
Start on 46 at the top

Udi: Right [PAUSE] you start

Christa: Oh sorry

Udi: [ASIDE] Let's just get on with it

THEY BEGIN BY READING SIMPLY AND "STRAIGHT" GRADUALLY THEY SLOW DOWN AND OVERACT.

Christa: Oh darling dearest

Udi: Oh dearest darling

Christa: My love, I know that you'll stand beside me forever

Udi: Always my love

Christa: But how shall we live?

Ralph: You'll move downstage right

Udi: I'll find work . . . even if I'm a sensitive artistic person

Christa: But darling

Udi: I'll work in the fields

Christa: But my love

Udi: I'll work in the mines

Christa: But my own . . .

Udi: [ASIDE] I'd even work in television

Christa: What about the depression?

Udi: The depression, alas.

Christa: There are no jobs to be had
Udi: Oh my love, what shall we do?

Ralph: The doorbell rings, stage left

Udi: Ding dong

Christa: The door

Udi: Ah, who can it be?

Christa: Yes, who can it be?

Ralph: Deus ex machine . . . God comes to solve the problem flown in on a lift or crane . . . a technique of the French theater of Louis Quatorze, Moliere, Lully . . .

Christa: The police or the tax collector

Udi: The rent collector, alas

Ralph: Udi, you go just off stage left, count to three, say the line, open the prop door, wait one two three, and close it yourself

Udi: Open the door, 21, 22, 23. No, it's a messenger with a message of truth, a telegram. 21, 22, 23, close the door

Ralph: The telegram will be set for you on the prop door
WRITING I'll make a note.

Christa: What does it say?

Udi: . . . Life will go on. Stop. Money is coming so have no dread. Stop. You can have your baby, comma, 'cause your mother's dead. Stop

Christa: Hurrah we're saved

Ralph: Good

Udi: But my love

Christa: Yes

Udi: What about me?

Christa: What about the inheritance?

Udi: It's not so simple my love

Christa: But dearest

Udi: I'm so sad

Christa: But it was my mother who died

Udi: I know my love but . . .

Christa: We're free to marry, hurrah!

Udi: But my love I'm only half a man [LOOKS AT HIS BALLS]

Christa: You look so well to me my love

Ralph: Pause for audience laugh

Christa: I haven't noticed

Udi: I am crippled with a deep emotional scar

Christa: Tell me about it

Ralph: You come downstage to her

Udi: Coming down stage, I say . . .
It's about my past, my love, and my mother's dying

Christa: Oh dearest

Udi: I'm so sad, my mother dying and all

Christa: Oh darling

Udi: I must tell you everything

Christa: [HER READING IS MORE AND MORE STAGY]
Oh darling Charles, I'm so very glad that you've finally
decided to confide in me

Udi: How can I not but confide in you dearest?
[ASIDE] I wouldn't trust her with a telephone book

Christa: Your trust . . . our love

Udi: [ASIDE] My stupidity

Christa: Our passion for life

Ralph: Could we just read the lines please. No acting

Christa: But Ralphie, that's what I'm doing

Ralph: Yes dear, of course. Shall we continue?

Christa: Your passion for life

Udi: They all point to our salvation

Christa: Oh darling let me embrace you

Ralph: At this point you embrace her. Is that clear?
You don't have to do it now

Udi: Pity. [ASIDE] Stupid cow smells of garlic and whiskey

Christa: He embraces me, Oh dearest darling

Udi: I embrace her, Oh darling dearest

Christa: Oh dearest darling darling

Udi: Oh darling darling dearest

Christa: Oh dearest darling darling dearest

Udi: [ASIDE] Keep this up and the audience will cry

Ralph: At this point you kiss her

Udi: MOCKING Where ?

Ralph: Downstage right

Christa: POINTS AT HER CHEEK Here

Udi: Right! What a wonderful . . . [stage direction]

Christa: Can you not confide that final confidence in me?
Give me that token of your love?

Udi: Anything my dearest darling love

Christa: Show me your love !

Show me the hidden face of your personality !!
Show me your tears !!!

Udi: [ASIDE] It's good she doesn't want to see my bank statement

Ralph: Good. Yes. Good. Now at this point you begin the final monologue
Just read it through quickly please

Udi: My mother is dead
She would have been so happy to have you as her daughter, my dearest

Christa: Oh darling

Udi: And to hold our future baby in her arms

Christa: Oh dearest

Udi: But she's gone . . .

Christa: Oh darling

Ralph: Stop improvising

Christa: Oh dearest

Udi: and left me alone.
Left me an incomplete person . . .

Christa: Oh dearest darling dear

Ralph: Please !
Incomplete in that I cannot cry.

Christa: Then show me your tears !!!

Ralph: Double time . . . come on

Udi: But my love I cannot. I could not cry then, nor now

Ralph: Faster

Udi: My beloved grandfather died ten years ago and all my family wept bitter tears . . . all of them, they cried . . . then my brother . . . God . . . how sorry, so depressed . . . we . . . he died . . . and she . . . and everyone died . . . yes . . . they all . . . my infant brother . . . eleven months old . . . oh God . . .

.
help
all

to be able to pray . . . to be able to . . . no . . . oh . . . oh . . .
alone . . . I just . . . and she . . . and my father . . . God
me . . . she died . . . oh . . . God . . . please . . . oh . . . it's
. . . I can't . . . Oh Lord . . . I . . . oh . . . oh . . . oh . . .

Ralph: Good . . . very good.
Now I think it should be clear that by the end of the piece
tears will be pouring down your cheeks . . .
Is that clear?

Udi: Yes sir, but of course . . . I hope so

Christa: Ralphie

Ralph: Yes love

Christa: Do I get to cry?

Ralph: No my dear, not this time

[PAUSE] [PIANIST PLAYS SHORT BRIDGE]
[LIGHTING CHANGE] [SPOT ON ACTOR]

Udi: The rehearsals progressed from the first reading through the
blocking . . . the staging of the piece . . . ah yes, the piece,
the play, a mediocre no-account turn of the century
melodrama, middle-of-the-road, sentimental. A piece of
garbage but a good vehicle for my acting talents . . . two
acts, two actors, a good chance at a long run . . . but not
too long to make it boring . . . in short . . . a play. And
for me . . . good part, good pay . . . but for one difficult scene . . . a
piece of pie.

[LIGHTING CHANGE.] [NO PIANO BRIDGE.]
[THE ACTRESS IS ALONE IN HER ROOM.]
[THE ACTRESS IS LEARNING TEXT.]
[AFTER A MOMENT SHE STOPS AND LOOKS AROUND.]
[SHE LISTENS.]
[AS SOON AS SHE IS SURE THAT NO ONE IS ABOUT
SHE TAKES A BOTTLE OF BRANDY FROM A
DRAWER.]
[SHE TAKES A SWIG STRAIGHT FROM THE BOTTLE.]
[SHE'S PENSIVE.]

Christa: Oh Udi . . . Udi

[THE PIANIST LEADS INTO THE SONG]

Udi: Yes

Ralph: The casting

Udi: Well?

Ralph: Well, you're right . . . it isn't fair . . . an actor of your caliber
. . . opposite an actress of . . . well how to say . . .
limited range

Udi: Yes?

Ralph: But I would appreciate your helping me . . . the production of
course . . . by being . . . shall we say . . . patient with her.

Udi: Uh huh

Ralph: And even more important, finding a balance in the ensemble
. . . not overshadowing her . . .

Udi: Uh huh

Ralph: [HE SMILES] steal the show
. . . you know what I mean.

Udi: Yes

Ralph: It will be better for the theater if we have a
Balanced production

[PAUSE. NO ANSWER]

I mean after all we've already started and . . .

[PAUSE. NO ANSWER]

Well in any case that's what the artistic director wants

vi = [LIGHTING CHANGE]
[CHRISTA ALONE IN HER DRESSING ROOM]

Christa: Udi . . . Udi . . . Who would think that after all these years of
admiring him that fate would finally cast me together
[SUDDENLY THEATRICAL] Oh Udi . . . I . . . I [QUIET
AGAIN] it's a pity that . . . that . . . well it
didn't happen 10 or 15 years ago when he was a little younger
= de

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [PIANIST PLAYS SHORT BRIDGE]
[Udi IS BACK IN HIS DRESSING ROOM]

Udi: [EXTREMELY ARTICULATED AND FAST]
The quick fox
The quick brown fox
The quick brown fox jumped
The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog
The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog
The quick red-brown fox jumped over the lazy dog
My grandfather died and left me alone
My grandmother died and left me alone
My father died and left me alone
My mother died and left me alone
My brother died and left me alone
My sister died and left me alone
My uncle died and left me alone
My aunt died and left me alone
My mother had long flowing blond hair
[REPEAT THREE TIMES SLOWING DOWN].
She let her hair flow free in those happy times.
I didn't remember my mother's hair until I met you,
Yes, until I met you . . .
An acting starter [HE SIGHS] ah yes, an acting starter
My mother had flowing long blond hair
My mother had flowing long blond hair
My mother

[CUT] [LIGHTING CHANGE]
[CHRISTA WITH RALPH IN HER ROOM]

Ralph: Do you know love, I want to compliment you . . . your . . .
how to say . . . patience, yes, that's a fine word, patience . . .
What I mean to say is, is that it's not so easy playing with
such an uncooperative partner

Christa: Oh, but no he's

Ralph: No of course I'm

Christa: It's an absolute pleasure for me

Ralph: He was a great actor and he still has great technique but
emotionally . . . and in the work process . . .

Christa: No its . . .

Ralph: That's really loyal of you

Christa: But

Ralph: No, the artistic director and I want to thank you for your
patience and understanding, and trust that we'll continue
to have your cooperation

[PIANIST PLAYS SHORT BRIDGE]
[LIGHTING CHANGE] [IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM]

Ralph: Udi

Udi: Yes sir

Ralph: Now to feel the underlying dramatic motivation for this scene
I think I'll ask you . . . if you don't mind . . . when was the
first time you, Udi Jacobs, the person, not the actor,
really cried?

Udi: I don't remember

Christa: He doesn't remember

Udi: The first time? . . .
Actually I seem to remember crying all the time,
when I was a child

Ralph: Well of course that was a stupid question.
I mean what I really should have asked you is the first time
you cried as an adult

Udi: Well . . . I mean . . . crying? Tears of feeling . . . yes . . .
when I sing, yes, then I cry [ASIDE] romantic exaggeration

Ralph: Really?

Christa: I've seen him do it at a party

Udi: Well, yes . . . sometimes, when I sing, my eyes well up . . .
brim to overflowing, overripe feeling
[ASIDE] I can't stand to hear myself sing out of tune.

Christa: His wife accompanies on the piano and the tears just
roll down his cheeks

Ralph: Yes? But do you really ..?

Udi: Yes, I think so.

It's not just needing my deviated septum corrected, I mean, I really cry

Ralph: Do it please

Udi: Now?

Ralph: Yes, right now

Christa: It's a pity that Esti's not here . . . we have a piano

Udi: [STANDS UP AND CLEARS HIS THROAT.]

Udi: SINGS
 Mother,
 Your blond hair is flowing
 Mother
 I love you dear
 Mother
 I'm happy to be knowing
 That you are always near.

Ralph: Yes, good, real tears

Udi: [BLOWS HIS NOSE]

Ralph: Ah . . . yes, that was um . . . yes interesting.
 I wonder if . . . please let's try saying the words of the song
 without singing. See if the tears come

Udi: SPOKEN
 Mother
 Your blond hair is flowing
 Mother
 I love you dearest
 Mother
 I'm so happy to be knowing
 Mother
 That you love me . . . or something
 ASIDE
 SPOKEN
 SINGS
 Never could remember words out of the context of a play
 For
 M.O.T.H.E.R. spells Mother,
 Mommy dear . . .
 SPOKEN
 Or something like that.
 I can't remember the words of a song
 Out of the context of a play.

Ralph: And you didn't cry . . . did you?

Udi: Well actually not. [ASIDE] of course not,

Ralph: Sing again please

Christa: He doesn't remember the words.
And it doesn't work without the music

Ralph: Darling, if you don't mind, it's the feeling that's important

Udi: SINGS
Mother
Your blond hair is flowing
Mother
I love you dearest dear
Mother

Ralph: The tears are there again

Udi: [SNIFFLING] Must be a physiological response

Ralph: Maybe you can't stand to hear yourself sing out of tune

Udi: I beg your pardon?

Ralph: Excuse me, it was just a joke

Udi: Not very funny

Christa: I thought it was

Udi: Indeed

Ralph: But it doesn't help us to find the starter you need
For the final scene of the play

[SPOT ON Udi] [LIGHTING CHANGE] [PIANIST PLAYS A SHORT BRIDGE]

Udi: Starter . . . that memory or that chain of words which allows
me the reexperience of a strong emotion. An acting starter. It
can be the memory of a color, or a smell, a particular thought
or physical feeling

My mother had long flowing dark blond hair.
Her hair flowed free in those happy times
That might be an acting starter for me. I mean by thinking
these words I may recall a complex set of emotions. By
saying these words I may feel and bring these emotions into
the scene I'm acting

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [RALPH IS ALONE IN HIS ROOM]

[HE IS WORKING ON LIGHTING PLAN]
 [HE IS NOT AT EASE]
 [HE CROSSES HIS LEGS]
 [HE MOVES ABOUT IN HIS CHAIR]
 [HE TAKES A HOMOSEXUAL JOURNAL OUT OF HIS
 DESK.] [THE AUDIENCE SEES THE COVER]
 [HE BEGINS TO MASTURBATE]

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [UDI IS ALONE IN HIS ROOM]
 [HE DOES NOT CRY]

Udi: She's dead . . . dead . . . she's gone and left me alone . . .
 alone . . . alone . . . she's left me alone with my memories.
 Oh dear God . . . dear God . . . her blond hair . . .
 dark blond . . . flowing . . . Oh shit. I don't feel a goddamn thing

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [CHRISTA WITH RALPH IN HER ROOM]

Ralph: Christa darling, about your part love . . .

Christa: My part?

Ralph: Well dear, I wanted to . . . shall we say
 Help you in arriving at your potential

Christa: Anything Ralph . . . for the sake of the theater

Ralph: Your role's relation to the other character

Christa: Yes . . . beautiful, trusting, straightforward, kind, generous

Ralph: Yes

Christa: Simple . . . flowing . . . expressive . . .
 All of those qualities that I can give to the part

Ralph: Yes dear . . . but

Christa: But Ralph . . . I'll fill those simple words with a personality . . .
 I'll fill them with myself

Ralph: I was thinking that . . .

Christa: Thinking?

Ralph: Yes, that perhaps we could do an acting exercise or two
 To deepen you portrayal

Christa: Anything, simply anything,

Ralph: Well I . . .

Christa: . . . for theater

Ralph: Yes . . . um . . . well, perhaps we could . .

Christa: My history . . . the traumas . . . my past . . .
How about my first husband ?
How cruel he was to me . . .
How he would strike me and torment me . . .
Deprive me of love and serenity . . . would you like that one?

Ralph: Well dear on second thought,
It might not be necessary . . . I mean,
Your natural purity and radiance will shine through the part.

Christa: How about my first years on the stage . . .
Hunger . . . passion . . . the upward thrust to stardom . . .
The joy . . . the agony and ecstasy . . .
The paramount achieving of a woman's goal in the
Fascist male-dominated world of theater

Ralph: Male-dominated?

Christa: Or compassion . . . feeling love between fellow man and
Actor . . . understanding self-sacrifice . . . Love, compassion
man and director. Love, if you . . .

Ralph: No . . . no . . . no dear, not sacrifice, perhaps . . . um . . .
Let's just

Christa: Depression . . . anxiety . . . fear of failure . . .
My first role when I was four years old in
Elizabeth's nursery school and my mommy laughed at me!!
She laughed at me! Laughed. Laughed.

Ralph: No . . . no no no no . . . no thank you,
Absolutely not necessary

[CHRISTA COMES OVER TO HIM, RUNS HER HAND
THROUGH HIS HAIR . . . ALONG HIS BACK . . . ETC . . .]

Ralph: Ah yes . . . ah where were we? Going to dinner? At that
Cambodian . . . the Mongolian milky bar?

Christa: No Ralph, let's go to your room . . . or mine

[LIGHTING CHANGE] [PIANIST PLAYS SHORT BRIDGE]
[Udi ALONE]

<p>Udi:</p> <p>light grey Watch with You're concrete, twilight understand what acting is, you do, so . . . relax. window. Now look out of The sky very you're looking east. If that to me. light grey across the light Good. grey sky scattered dark because it's imagination. A grey depressed.</p> <p>depressed and You are doing. And becoming A A appears. The sun comes out. small perfect rainbow and you small perfect rainbow and the blue sky is now turning grey sky is becoming dark grey,</p> <p>the enough . . . enough. Sit ..</p>	<p>think now. well, is light late grey, blue</p>	<p>I watch the clouds dark grey float across the light grey April sky. Its now and I am in the theater, a theater without windows. The clouds dark grey floating across the April sky is a vision in my mind. It can be yours. me. You are lying in your bed in your own room. looking out of the window. Not just any window, be of one specific window. The sky is light grey. It's Just imagine. If you want to then you must, it's futile unless Close your eyes and imagine that the window any window as long as you are specific. grey. It has rained off and on during the day. It's afternoon, the sun's gone and means anything to you, I mean looking east, it does Now then. Late afternoon, looking east, the sky is and there are scattered clouds slowly floating the clouds are darker grey. Do you have that? Because you must. Window light grey clouds. And now you are feeling sad . . . grey outside. Grey skies outside in your feeling inside you in your reality. You are slightly You want a cup of coffee. The sky tells your being that you want a cup of coffee. You're tired and you're you want a cup of coffee. Don't you dare get up. acting now. You are now feeling. You are now you'd better be, because . . . but no . . . the sky is lighter. It's becoming blue. A beautiful thick luscious blue. almost as deep as a sapphire. Isn't that wonderful. rainbow small and perfect You smile. Do you see? The smile. Of course you do. The light blue sky. You pause. The again. The blue has faded. The you see it through your square window world. It's a goddamn shame isn't it? The blue has gone and rainbow's gone. You're sad. But up straight, sit up, take a deep breath . . . in . . . out . breath in again . . . out and relax.</p> <p>Those are two of my acting starters. Two of the ways I can shape my inner reality, darken or brighten my inner glow on the stage. And let me tell you my friends, that changing inner glow is worth a lot of money, especially on television.</p>
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[LIGHTING CHANGE] [PIANIST PLAYS SHORT BRIDGE]

Ralph: Look now Udi, I don't like to do this, but we're going to dig down deep into you , we're going to find a real justification for your acting in the final monologues

Udi: [ASIDE] Of course you don't want to do it, it's too much like hard work
[TO RALPH] Yes sir

Ralph: I'm going to ask you about death in your family.

Christa: But Ralphie darling, isn't that . . .

Ralph: Christa!

Christa: Yes Ralphie love?

Ralph: Take a break now

Christa: Alright. If I must

Ralph: Yes you must.
I want to work with Udi alone for an hour or so.

Christa: No problem . . . I'll go learn my lines

Ralph: We'll meet for lunch, same place as yesterday

Christa: Well ta ta everybody

Udi: Goodbye Christa.
[SHE LEAVES] [PAUSE]

Ralph: Now then, death in your family.

Udi: Yes, death

Ralph: I don't want to pry

Udi: [ASIDE] Yes you do

Ralph: But I must
Udi: I understand.

Ralph: Are your parents alive?

Udi: Father alive mother dead [ASIDE] ah yes

Ralph: Tell me about it

Udi: Alright,

Ralph: Yes . . . please

Udi: if I must
[PAUSE]

Ralph: We simply must get the final scene right.
You realise that don't you?

Udi: Yes of course

Ralph: Alright then

Udi: [ASIDE] Alright then what?

Ralph: Well?

Udi: I can always fake it

Ralph: That's not the way I want to do theater

Udi: [ASIDE] No, but what about me?
Alright [SIGHS]

Ralph: Then look,
We'll begin by finding a real emotional starter for you . . .
A starter for your grief

Udi: Alright [ASIDE] it's my job isn't it?

Ralph: Good . . . then we'll begin

Udi: May I take a break first please

Ralph: Can we begin?

Udi: [SIGHS] Alright

Ralph: Good, then let's say um . . . yes . . .
The correct emotional starter for personal loss or tragedy

Udi: Do I have to . . . ?

Ralph: Yes begin

Udi: [ASIDE] Anthropophagos, body eater,
From the Greek. Anthropos, body and phagos, eater.
Well?

Ralph: Tell me how your mother died

Udi: [ASIDE] Jesus
All right

Ralph: Then begin . . . I won't interrupt

[PAUSE] [NO RESPONSE FROM Udi]

Ralph: Listen, Udi, you've got to do this.
Not for me . . .
Not even for the play we're doing . . .
For yourself

Udi: Ralph please . . . I'm a pro . . . as in professional

Ralph: I didn't say you weren't

Udi: Alright then

Ralph: No, it isn't alright . . .
It isn't just a question of the audience and what we're doing.

Udi: [CYNICALLY] Yes the audience

Ralph: Udi, we both know the artistic value of the play we're doing.

Udi: We agree on something

Ralph: Alright then, you tell me, why are we doing this piece?

Udi: Because the artistic director wants it done

Ralph: No, I asked why we, you and me, are doing the play

Udi: To make a living

Ralph: Be serious

Udi: I am

Ralph: Then Goddamn. If that's all you've got to say, you can . . .

Udi: Ralph, I'm sorry . . . Ralph

Ralph: I don't appreciate that tone . . .

Udi: I'm sorry
I didn't mean it that way.
What I should have said is . . . what I really think . . . what I
really feel is that . . . well . . . I'm an actor . . . it's my
job . . . the way I live . . . on the stage . . . in rehearsal

Ralph: Yes, and this is the way you rehearse,
The way you prepare your role . . .

Udi: What role? What play . . . ?
The garbage that we're working on now . . . ?

Ralph: You've missed the point Udi

Udi: What point? This play?

Ralph: No Udi, the actor . . . you . . .

Udi: It will be a success don't worry . . . the acting will be fine . . .
the right timing, the right facial expression . . . heaving
shoulders . . . a tear or two of glycerine running
down my anguished cheeks. The audience will love it

Ralph: [SIGHS] You've missed the point my friend . . . or maybe I
have. [QUOTING] The play is the thing wherein to catch the
Conscience of the king

Udi: [ASIDE] . . . wherein I catch the conscience of the king
Alright then

Ralph: Yes, 'alright then' . . . we'll do the exercise that I want you to
do . . . because it's the exercise that should be done . . .
and you'll do it, because I'm director. But you'll do it,
way unfortunately, in your own way. [PAUSE] Yes . . . you're
. . . not the way I want it done, but let's try . . . cruelty or not

Udi: I don't have to.

Ralph: Yes you do. And you will. Begin

Udi: With what?

Ralph: Your mother's death . . . take your time . . . just relax . . . yes
. . . take it slowly . . . and tell me the story

- Udi: Alright then, I'll tell you something about myself . . .
about my own loss . . . for the theater . . . for my art
- Ralph: Please, begin
- Udi: My mother died, I mean . . . she passed away.
No. My mother . . . died [SIGH] . . . yes [SIGH] . . .
She died eleven years ago and I didn't, I couldn't cry.
My grandfather died four years ago and my entire family,
all of them . . . they cried . . . yet I, I couldn't, I didn't [SIGH]
cry . . . no. My brother . . . God we were all so sorry, so
depressed. He died and everybody . . . yes . . . they all . . .
but I couldn't . . . I couldn't. And my son . . . eleven months
old . . . no . . . [HE SNIFFLES] I couldn't . . . then . . .
no . . . not cry . . . no . . . I . . . couldn't . . . but now . . .
- Ralph: That was a pretty good paraphrase of the final monologue.
But what about your own story.
You can't just always escape into the text
- Udi: Sorry, I got carried away.
It is easier to say someone else's words
Than to feel your own emotions
[ASIDE] I even had me believing for a while
- Ralph: No, seriously, look . . . listen . . . either we're going to do this
or we're not going to do this. And if we're not going to do
this, you're either going to leave this production or else the
artistic director is going to have to find a new
director.
- Udi: [ASIDE] They do this every time
Yes sir . . . I'm sorry. Seriously, I'll try now. I really will.
I promise.
- Ralph: Will you please do the acting exercise ?
- Udi: [ASIDE] He wouldn't leave the production, he's making too
much money
- Ralph: Just in your own terms, tell me about it . . . alright?
- Udi: Can I take a break first?
- Ralph: Get on with it
- Udi: [ASIDE] Jesus Christ
Alright then I'll begin. PAUSE

My mother died on a Sunday
 Sunday child . . . sunny child
 My uncle died on a Sunday too
 Sunday child
 I didn't care when I was young . . . this aunt died, that uncle
 died. My mother was the youngest daughter. Her mother
 was 46 when she was born
 Sunday child . . . sunny child
 I loved my mother more [SIGH]
 My father took her to the Greek islands for a vacation . . .
 recuperation . . . Easter time . . . spring in the
 Mediterranean. It was supposed to do her wonders . . . put
 the color back in her cheeks, the vim and vigor back
 into her
 Sunday
 goes
 life. She died of course . . . suddenly. Easter
 among strangers, in a drizzling rain in Ionia. So it

 Sunny child . . . Sunday child
 How was it to be alone among strangers with the body of all
 that he really loved? I mean, I for all that I am, for him I was
 just a projection of her, and my brother and my sister. My
 mother for him, yes, I was a pale projection that really only
 shined in her light. That's all we were . . . for him. It was
 impossible not to love her. To love her was so easy . . . so
 among
 inclusive . . . and then to be with her silent form
 strangers . . . alone . . .
 God, to be able to pray . . . to be able to cry . . . to be able . . .
 No, I couldn't cry then, not one single tear. Not one tear. I
 just picked up the telephone and dialled one relative after
 another . . . my mother is dead in the Greek Islands . . .
 Easter Sunday . . . Goodbye. My mother is dead. Sunday.
 Goodbye. My mother dead. Goodbye.
 [PAUSE] No tears. Not then, not now
 I hate myself for being a cannibal of my own emotions. I live
 from my sorrow, I lust for my grief. Security . . . emotional
 security is not the stuff of my art. Be careful what you do or
 am
 say or you'll end up in my play. Yes, I say that to others. I
 the Anthropophagos and I will live my victim's grief,
 regurgitate it for you every evening on the stage
 I didn't cry then
 I am the body . . . I am the soul, I am the grief and the love,
 all those emotions that I have taken from my victims in
 order
 acting.
 to leaven my art, in order to practice my craft of

 Sunday child, sunny child.
 Oh God [SIGH] but I wish I could pray [PAUSE]

 Ralph:
 Udi, are you finished?

Udi: Yes

Ralph: . . . I see . . . you didn't cry then

Udi: No, nor now.

Ralph: That won't help us to find the starter for the final scene.

Udi: No it won't.

Ralph: Well, then I guess we have to rely on your technique.

Udi: Yes, my technique
[PAUSE]

Ralph: [ANGRY] Can't you simply cry . . . Goddamn it

Udi: But I . . .

Ralph: Jesus, you're supposed to be an actor. Can't you just . . .

Udi: I can give you anything you want.
Do you want tears, anguish, laughter, depression:
I know which muscles to move . . . how to breathe . . .
I can give it to you, if you'll just be specific

Ralph: I want you to feel

Udi: I'm an actor . . . I act !
I don't have to bring my dirty underwear on stage to show
people that I shit. I'm an actor . . . and I can act.
I don't simply have to feel.

Ralph: Alright Udi . . . alright. Maybe I was a little . . . no Goddamn
it . . . no. You think that because you've got a degree from
some actor school

Udi: Ralph, I've been on the stage for thirty years now and I . . .

Ralph: Alright, you are an actor . . . you've acted in God knows how
many productions and you have made you living doing it.
You're God's gift to the stage. You've cornered the art.

You know everything there is to know about feeling . . .

Udi: Ralph, can't we just . . .

Ralph: I know what you think of me.

Udi: I beg your pardon.

Ralph: No, it's written all over that smug face of yours.

Udi: I, but . . .

Ralph: Don't interrupt me. No. You think that just because you're an actor only you have all the insights into emotion. That only you know everything about feeling and that I'm just an over-inflated gas bag.

Udi: I didn't say anything.

Ralph: But you thought . . . yes. It's written all over that blank plastic baby face of yours. Its as clear as day what you think of us and of our art. Well let me tell you something about this play. It's about grief. Grief. Yes and that's something that only real people feel. Not strutting parading cockatoos. Or stuck-up stars. No . . . just real people and real feelings. And if I haven't gotten through to you yet . . . I mean, in all these weeks of rehearsal. Well alright then . . . alright. I don't give a damn. You can go out and just do whatever you want to on the stage . . . I mean if I can't get through to you . . . it's simply that I'm no goddamn good as a director

Udi: I . . . I didn't

Ralph: Yes, we'll continue . . . I'll arrange the mise en scene, I'll help you with your timing, make sure that your famous technique works . . . no . . . don't worry . . . there'll be no problems, none at all . . . we'll do everything your way . . . I mean after all you are the experienced actor and

Udi: Ralphie I . . .

Ralph: No, no my friend, and dear colleague, it will be much easier this way, much much easier

Udi: If that's how you want it Ralph

Ralph: Yes Udi, that's the way that I want it . . . and that's the way it's going to be . . . I mean if . . . no . . . alright then, we'll break now. It's a little early but there is no need to continue, this way, the way that . . .

Udi: But Ralph, I didn't . . . (mean to . . .)

Ralph:

[DURING THE NEXT SPEECH HE GATHERS HIS PAPERS,
PERHAPS PUTS ON HIS JACKET. AT THE END OF THE
HE'S OUT]

I'm so goddamn good . . . I'm no goddamn good . . . no . . .
and no good as a friend either. God knows how I want to
get through to you, to . . . to try to help you but no . . . no
. . . there will always be technique . . . your famous
technique

[SPOT ON Udi ALONE FOR A LONG MOMENT]

[BLACK OUT]

[THE PIANIST MAY PLAY SELECTIONS OF
MELODRAMATIC MUSIC AS THE AUDIENCE EXITS.]

END OF ACT ONE You have read just the first act of the play. For a complete copy and
information about performance rights please contact me or Mr. Guido Huller at Drei Masken
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