

ARI stands alone in darkness. Enter LUTHER and  
NORA.

ARI

The Akedah.

LUTHER/NORA

The Binding of Isaac.

ARI

I stand before an altar, a knife in my hand.

ARI stands center stage, beholding an impressive  
ceremonial dagger. LUTHER steps into position,  
standing above ARI as ARI suddenly drops to his  
knees.

ARI

And a voice calls to me. It asks:

LUTHER

Where is your tithe?

ARI

I have nothing save what the Lord hath given me.

LUTHER

And so you refuse me nothing.

ARI

Be it well with thee?

LUTHER

It is well with me.

ARI

(to the audience) But I'm still holding the knife. My hands are clammy; it's sharp. If I'm not  
careful, I could—

NORA

Blessed be Ariel, numbered among the chosen.

NORA steps into position opposing LUTHER, a  
devil.

ARI

Who speaks?

NORA

Pledge thy tithe to me. Thy labors shall be thine, thy fruits thine own, and glory be to his hand who crafted the work.

LUTHER

Glory be to He that gave the gift; Ariel is writ on my palms in blood, and in blood have I crafted those hands.

NORA

Thou art blessed.

LUTHER

Blessed in my name; thy labors are mine, and the same for thy fruits, for all are one in me.

ARI

I am blessed.

ARI raises the dagger.

NORA

He'll kill you, you know.

ARI

I know.

Lights out as the dagger comes down.

ARI / NORA / LUTHER

May his memory be a blessing.

The lights fade in. The sermon begins.

ARI

Abraham, the man who once bartered with HaShem, the Holy Father, to save thousands of strangers, at one time raising not a single objection at the command to slaughter his only son.

LUTHER

We see a juxtaposition in this, a contradiction that plants seeds of doubt in the faith.

NORA

Do we question and reason, or act and obey?

ARI

The Lord who reasons cannot command, for are His words truly commanded if they are not absolute? Are they not, rather, suggestions to be discussed between man and HaShem, just as the rabbis interpret the Torah?

NORA

He reasons even as a man reasoneth one with another face to face.

Beat. LUTHER and ARI look at her.

NORA

Doctrine and Covenants, Section 50. Mormon book.

ARI

But art- art is ex nihilo, from nothing. Art does not possess a form capable of deliberation or dictation, it simply is. The feelings of the artist are his law, and so I am, ruled by no deity but by the coursing torrents of inspiration itself.

NORA

The nature of the artist is to forge his path in quick-settling sand.

LUTHER

He only knows the step he takes. He forgets what comes before and marvels at what comes after.

NORA

Only to forget again.

ARI

And then—

The *shofar* sounds in the distance. Only ARI hears.  
LUTHER and NORA exchange glances, waiting for  
ARI to pick up his line.

ARI

There's a painting.

The front room of a two-bedroom apartment in LA.

It's half art-studio, half sitting space, half  
whatever-we-need-it-to-be. The heart of a home.

There's a pathetic kitchen full of cups; paint water  
cups or drinking water cups, no one knows. Brushes  
and palettes and plates and silverware all mingle  
together in the sink. The walls and floor are covered  
in drooping, splattered tarps. Canvases, frames, and  
portfolio holders lean against the walls. There are  
three easels, two with half-paintings, shoved into

this space, along with a futon and a small television. The doors to the bedrooms are labeled “NORA” (in a pop-art style, the door covered in destination postcards) and “Dream Team!” respectively. A Wednesday night in autumn, shortly before *Rosh Hashanah*.

Enter ARI with purpose, NORA following behind. Holding her phone, she shuts the door, watching as ARI, still in a department store uniform, marches to the art half of the room and tacks up a falling corner of some hanging butcher paper.

Dayenu!

ARI

I beg your pardon?

NORA

I love your mind.

ARI

ARI grabs a piece of charcoal and begins sketching aggressively. An explosion, a light surrounded by darkness. NORA scrolls through her phone.

Many do.

NORA

ARI doesn’t seem to have heard her, possessed by his drawing. NORA stops scrolling and frowns. She starts typing.

I love your beautiful mind.

ARI

ARI slams his hand against the wall and turns to NORA, who jumps. ARI doesn’t notice.

Look! You see it?

ARI

Absolutely.

NORA

(exasperated) Nora-bug, you’re killing me. Look, look, it’s like you were saying, it’s-

ARI

ARI takes NORA by the hand, pulling her to the wall. His hand guides hers over the bold lines.

NORA

Visceral.

ARI

Yeah. Yeah! I want- I want textures with this, like- like this gritty, expressive-

NORA

Jagged?

ARI

Yes! It's sharp but it's joy, it's joy so big it's explosive, it's- it's caustic, it *hurts*, you know?

NORA

Mhmm.

ARI

Something going on with work?

NORA

Just my lameass supervisor.

ARI

It's happy but it's broken. Happy because it's broken and now- now everyone can see it.

NORA shoves the cellphone into her back pocket. ARI has begun assembling a palette of yellows and reds. He has a small brush in his mouth (red) and a big brush in hand (yellow), painting the drawing on the wall with big strokes. NORA goes to the kitchen and checks the fridge. Finding nothing of interest, she opens the cabinet and pours herself some white wine.

NORA

Not telling on yourself at all, champ.

ARI

Whatever could you possibly be implying?

NORA

Cheers to living broken on purpose.

I'll drink to that.

ARI

ARI and NORA clink glasses, ARI having grabbed one from the coffee table. They drink. ARI coughs and spits the liquid back into the mug. NORA cackles.

Like you haven't drank paint-water, Nora.

ARI

I prefer turpentine.

NORA

ARI returns to painting. Enter LUTHER with a portfolio bag, a backpack, and a laptop bag.

Y'all're home early.

LUTHER

Ari was feeling inspired.

NORA

LUTHER rolls his eyes and kisses NORA on the cheek in greeting. He puts his bags down just inside the Boys' door. He shrugs off his jacket.

They give doctors' notes for that?

LUTHER

(sarcasm) Don't worry, his shift is *super* flexible.

NORA

LUTHER tosses the jacket into the bedroom and shuts the door.

Yeah, I bet the cashier girl covering for him is super flexible, too.

LUTHER

Gross.

NORA

(to ARI) Hey.

LUTHER

ARI jolts, streaking paint across the wall.

Damn it-  
ARI

He whirls on LUTHER, still wielding the  
paintbrush.

ARI  
One more time, Luther, I told you, you sneak up on me one more time-

LUTHER  
I can't walk into my own house?

ARI chases LUTHER with the paintbrush, over  
stools, around easels, over the futon, behind the TV.

ARI  
You come in here while I'm working? You're in *my* house.

LUTHER  
But you're *not* working-

ARI  
I am so!

NORA sips her wine. LUTHER trips on a tarp, and  
ARI crashes into him, trying to paint his face.  
LUTHER wrestles his arm, barely keeping ARI's  
paintbrush away.

LUTHER  
Ashley from retail is working.

ARI  
I get my hours in, she gets paid, everyone wins.

NORA  
If you can afford to split your check with her, you can afford your share of rent.

LUTHER and ARI continue to struggle.

ARI  
She doesn't mind!

NORA  
Check's not the only thing you're splitting.

LUTHER/ARI

Gross!

NORA

Time! I meant you were splitting your time, what did you— In this good Christian house, too, did you know this was a God-fearing home?

ARI

Is that Christo-normativity I hear?

LUTHER uses the opportunity to flip their positions, pinning ARI- and his paintbrush -to the ground.

LUTHER

What was that about it being your house?

ARI

You know what? This? This is anti-Semitism.

LUTHER

How?

ARI

The Christian majority ganging up on the little guy yet again. I should have known better than to trust the likes of you.

NORA

Gonna flee to the desert about it?

Tension.

LUTHER

Yeah, okay, that's enough.

LUTHER clears his throat and gets up, helping ARI to his feet.

NORA

It was a joke.

LUTHER

I said that's enough.



ARI gives LUTHER a look; *Please don't push this issue*. LUTHER backs down; he avoids ARI's eyes.

NORA

You're so weird.

NORA exits to the kitchen, checking the fridge.

LUTHER

Sorry.

ARI

It's okay.

LUTHER

You shouldn't let her talk like that./

ARI

/It's not your responsibility. (Beat) I appreciate the effort, but—

LUTHER

Boundaries?

Beat. NORA returns, pouring herself more wine.

NORA

*Brr*. What's for dinner?

LUTHER begins fussing in the kitchen. ARI troubleshoots how to fix his sketch.

LUTHER

Dishes.

NORA

Chinese?

ARI

Yes.

LUTHER

Are you paying?

NORA

We can afford Chinese.

Yes.

ARI

Really?

LUTHER

What's that supposed to mean?

NORA

You've got the wine out, he's using the Windsor & Newtons—

LUTHER

Let's just have a nice night, okay?

NORA

It's Wednesday, Nora, you're drinking on a Wednesday./

LUTHER

/Are you gonna call the police?

NORA

How much have you had?

LUTHER

Excuse me?

NORA

/Lu, come on.

ARI

You're being irresponsible.

LUTHER

Am I a child?

NORA

/Don't do this, you guys—

ARI

Answer the question!

LUTHER

You've got your panties in a twist because Ari's seeing someone else./

NORA

ARI

/Nora!

NORA

/Got tired of your fucking Queen Mab behavior and now you're taking it out on me!

LUTHER

What?

NORA

Queen of the *fairies*.

LUTHER

Oh, so we're checking both casual racism *and* homophobia off the bingo card tonight?

NORA

What is up with you today?

ARI

(To NORA) Nora, don't–

NORA

Don't what? You two have some weird shit going on and I have to deal with it, well, I'm dealing!

Beat.

LUTHER

You're done for the night.

NORA

Like hell.

LUTHER

Frankly, we all should be.

ARI

It's game night!

LUTHER

Do you need to get wasted to play a game?

ARI

No, but–

NORA

One glass.

ARI gives LUTHER a look. An exchange.

LUTHER

...One glass.

ARI

Mazel tov!

LUTHER

If you swear not to get “inspired” tomorrow.

NORA

I haven’t missed a single day of work!

LUTHER

You’re not supposed to be home for another three hours!

NORA

/Will you get off my case for five minutes?

LUTHER

/How is this not missing work?

ARI

Ming Garden hits their dinner rush in twenty, delivery is gonna be hell.

Beat.

NORA

Ari-bee, what do you want?

ARI

Sweet and sour chicken, please.

NORA

Luther? (beat) Lu, baby, what do you want?

LUTHER

We still have the, uh. The lasagna.

ARI

I ate that!

NORA

Beef and broccoli it is. And I’ll be having the ham fried rice, anything else? Wait– I’ll do egg, for leftovers.

You can get ham.

ARI

What about tomorrow?

NORA

I've never had it before.

ARI

...You do realize ham is from pigs.

NORA

It's food, right?

ARI

LUTHER and NORA exchange a look.

I... 'll get the egg. Cholesterol and whatnot.

NORA

Eggrolls?

ARI

No, you never eat all of them.

NORA

Lu will split with me.

ARI

Yeah...

LUTHER

Okay! I know it's a Wednesday...

NORA

And you have work tomorrow...

LUTHER

Ah, ah, I do not, for I have been given mandatory vacation time.

NORA

Mandatory?

LUTHER

NORA

Manager's cutting my hours 'cause I did too much overtime last month. If I'm getting screwed anyway, I may as well get screwed up, so what are we doing?

ARI

We could play—

LUTHER

Did we not, literally seconds ago, agree on one more glass for the night?

ARI

We'll cap her at one.

LUTHER

Absolutely not.

ARI

It'd lighten the mood.

LUTHER

I have school tomorrow, and work, and—

ARI

No time for a little fun?

LUTHER

We are not playing strip-painting on a Wednesday night, it's not even— it's not even seven.

NORA

Aw, you scared?

LUTHER

Scared of live figure-drawing with a hangover? Yes.

NORA

You're still upset about last time.

LUTHER

There's nothing to be upset about.

NORA

No?

LUTHER

It's not up for discussion.

NORA

Oh, we're discussing.

ARI

Nora, don't.

LUTHER

You're drunk.

NORA

I've literally had half a glass of wine.

LUTHER

You're self-medicating.

NORA

Are you a doctor now, too?

ARI

So we're gonna argue all night, then.

LUTHER

...Fine. Strip painting.

ARI

Luther—

LUTHER

It'll be fun. Whatever.

NORA

You never relax, you know, it's not healthy.

LUTHER

Mhmm.

ARI stands alone in darkness. Enter NORA and  
LUTHER.  
ARI kneels.

NORA

He hides, for he is naked.

ARI

Cowering.

NORA

Without kippah.

LUTHER

Who told thee that thou wast naked?

NORA

Without tallit.

ARI

I cannot speak the holy words.

NORA

Without tefillin.

LUTHER

Thou hast partook of that which is forbidden.

ARI

I cannot commune with HaShem, the Holy Father.

LUTHER

For this, thou art cast down.

ARI

Please.

NORA

You liked it. The taste, I know you did.

Lights out.

ARI/NORA/LUTHER

Blessed is the True Judge.

Lights fade in. Sermon.

ARI

The HaShem who commands cannot be reasoned with. Our God is a jealous God; there shall be no idols set before Him in the hearts of His people.

NORA

He destroys those who fail to obey, as the Nephites of Moroni's day.

LUTHER

His word is absolute and true and unchanging. It needs no subtraction, reduction, or addition.



NORA

My works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. (Beat) ...Moses 1:4. Pearl of Great Price.

ARI

But if HaShem can reason...if HaShem can change His mind, and all He speaks is truth, cannot the truth, then, change, if HaShem can?

NORA

The prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball, extended the priesthood and all associated blessings to men and women of African descent in 1978.

LUTHER

Reversing a decision made by Brigham Young in 1852, which revoked communion from black folk, as well as the right to get married under the church and the right to salvation.

NORA

It was a different time.

LUTHER

If God changed with the times, Nora, He wouldn't be God.

NORA

His ways are not our ways; we're not always going to understand why things change, but we have to have faith.

LUTHER

The only word changing is what y'all keep adding to it.

NORA

We were just— unworthy of a higher law at the time. All will be made right in the end, so— Forgive us our trespasses.

LUTHER

To forgive is commanded of all men, but I tell you what: we never forget.

ARI

Stars burst before my eyes and I'm painting and I'm painting and blood works the canvas to liberate me, spare me from Mashhit, that destroying angel.

NORA

It comes.

LUTHER

It comes for Israel and all her sisters, her brothers, her youth.