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TODAY I AM!

**Five Short Plays
About Growing Up Jewish**

By

SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

One Foot After Another
David's Star
The Heart of Buchanan
Wrestling With Angels
Frank and Stein



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(TODAY I AM!
Five Short Plays About Growing Up Jewish)

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For Rabbi Jack Paskoff
and Temple Shaarai Shomayim—
congregation, family and friends

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TODAY I AM!

Five Short Plays About Growing Up Jewish

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These five plays may be performed individually, or in any combination as an evening of one acts. Casts may double in more than one play for even greater flexibility.

Total playing time: about 75 minutes.

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TODAY I AM was further developed through a workshop arranged by Amie Brockway-Henson, Producing Artistic Director of The Open Eye Theater, Margaretville, N.Y. A public reading was held at the Skene Memorial Library, Fleischmanns, N.Y., on Saturday, November 19, 2005, with the following directors and casts:

One Foot After Another
Directed by Amie Brockway

BARRY COHEN Luke Beemer
ALMA ROSEN Marie Palko
PAM Mary Small
KEVIN Thomas Hafner
Stage Directions Garrett Fairbairn

David's Star
Directed by David J. Turan

CARA MATARASSO Mary Small
SAM Thomas Hafner
DAVE Erwin Karl

TAMMY Katie Lehn
Stage Directions Jessica Olenych

The Heart of Buchanan
Directed by David J. Turan

SARAH Alex O'Melia
TRACI Cassie Schmitt
DEE DEE Mary Small
MRS. GOLDSTEIN Jessica Olenych
MOLLY Barbara Morrow
Stage Directions Erwin Karl

Wrestling With Angels
Directed by Amie Brockway

JACI Cassie Schmitt
JOSH Luke Beemer
ISAAC Garrett Fairbairn
BECKY Alex O'Melia
MRS. COHEN Marie Palko
Stage Directions Mary Small

Frank and Stein
Directed by Melissa Cooperman

BEN STEIN Garrett Fairbairn
SIDNEY Alexa Abrams
MOM Sharon Abrams
DAD David J. Turan
Stage Directions Brandon Hargrove

David's Star

AT RISE: *SAM, wearing pink rubber gloves and a frilly white apron over his black chinos and white shirt, is kneeling behind the counter beside a bucket of soapy water, sponging off the counter shelves. CARA enters UL, wearing a waitress's uniform several sizes too big for her, gathered in at the waist with an apron like SAM's. She's carrying a tray of clean sundae dishes. She almost drops them as SAM stands up.*

CARA (*laughing at his outfit*). Sam! What on earth—?

SAM (*not unkindly; he grins at her, but he's truly annoyed at the indignity of his chore*). You think this is funny? Try scrubbing these shelves for a while. (*As they converse, they go about setting up for the afternoon rush: putting cones in a holder, arranging the sundae glasses and other supplies.*)

CARA. You think our mighty manager never asked *me* to do that? Every time it gets slow in here, he finds some rotten chore for me to do.

SAM. But we're supposed to be *waiting tables*.

CARA. You've only been here a couple of weeks. You want to keep this job? Don't make waves!

SAM. Maybe that's the problem: Nobody around here makes any waves. If we all asked for changes together—signed a petition or something—we might be better off.

CARA. Or out of work. Maybe you don't need the money, but I do. My dad's been laid off from his job.

SAM. You think I'm here for the pretty outfits? I've got another year of college and then medical school.

CARA. Medical school! I'm impressed. I just hope I make it to college.

SAM. You'll find a way.

CARA. That's what my dad says.

SAM. Well, look, I did it.

CARA. But the bills never stop.

SAM. True. If they did, I'd be long gone from this place.
(As he yanks the apron from around his neck, he reveals a necklace with a Jewish star hanging from it.)

CARA. I've been meaning to tell you, I like your star. It's very pretty.

SAM. Thanks. It's a *Mogen David*. A Star of David—

CARA. I know.

SAM. Oh. Okay.

CARA *(moves away from him and speaks softly)*. I'm Jewish.

SAM. Really? With a name like Cara Matarasso, I figured you were Italian. And Catholic.

CARA. Everyone does. Our family is Sephardic—Spanish Jews.

SAM. Oh, right—so you eat, like, stuffed grape leaves instead of matzo-ball soup.

CARA. You know about that?

SAM. I've read about it. The Spanish Inquisition. 1492. Columbus set sail for the New World, and the Jews were tossed out of Spain.

CARA. Or forced to convert.

SAM. Yeah. You're the first Sephardic Jew I've ever met.

CARA (*nods*). I'm not surprised. My family's different from everyone around here—even the other Jews! So I don't advertise it. (*Pulls a tiny Mogen David necklace out of her collar and shows it to him.*) My grandmother gave me this.

SAM. It's beautiful!

CARA (*tucking the star back into her collar*). Thank you.

SAM. Why are you hiding it? *Let it shine!*

CARA (*shaking her head "no"*). Only when I'm at my grandmother's house.

(She turns away quickly to end the discussion as TAMMY enters UL and saunters past them with a tray piled high with napkins. She's wearing the same uniform as CARA, but it fits her and she even looks sexy in it. SAM and CARA are obviously noting this as they stop their discussion to watch her walk by.)

CARA. Hi, Tammy.

TAMMY (*greeting the two of them without much interest as she sets down her tray*). Oh. Hi, you two.

SAM (*to TAMMY, who's barely aware of him*). How's it going?

TAMMY. Okay, I guess. (*She busies herself filling napkin holders.*)

CARA (*to SAM, as they arrange sundae dishes on the counter*). How can anyone manage to look *that* good in *this* uniform?

SAM. Beats me.

CARA (*fussing with her own apron*). It's supposed to be "one-size-fits-all"—and we're not allowed to alter them.