

the beginning of

A TROLLEY NAMED TSURIS (from **OY!**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(**OY!** is published and licensed by Playscripts, Inc. www.playscripts.com)

Place: A tenement flat in New Orleans.

Time: The late fifties.

Characters: STANLEY, a common and earthy man
STELLA, his wife, a world-weary woman
RHODA WIKOFF, older, a yente

Before the play begins, we hear (optional):

NARRATOR (v.o.)

Many Jewish actors have adopted non-Jewish stage names. John Garfield was born Julius Garfinkle. Tony Curtis was born Bernie Schwartz. Shirley Temple was born Shirley Synagogue. A lesser known fact is that playwright Tennessee Williams was also Jewish, and that his real name was Tennessee Williamsburg. Among the papers discovered at his death was a new play exploring his Jewish heritage, which we are pleased to present tonight: A TROLLEY NAMED TSURIS.

The kitchen/dining area of a New Orleans tenement flat. STELLA is ironing. She wears a worn housedress. From the courtyard, we hear:

STANLEY (o.s.)

Stella!!!!!!

Stella winces. STANLEY enters, wearing a sweat-stained undershirt and work pants. He's in a hurry.

STANLEY (cont'd)

No time to eat. They moved up the bowling tournament an hour. Where's my bowling shirt?

Stella points to a bunch of shirts hanging on a doorknob. Stanley extracts his bowling shirt. It's stiff as a board.

STANLEY (cont'd)

The five-and-dime have a special on starch?

STELLA

No.

Stanley grabs his bowling bag, takes out his bowling ball.

STANLEY

What'd you do to my bowling ball?

STELLA

I buffed it with Lemon Pledge.
Doesn't it look clean and shiny?

STANLEY

Bowling balls should not smell like fruit!

STELLA

Don't yell. Our new neighbor'll hear you.

STANLEY

I don't care. I'm sick of this, Stella. Every year
'round this time, you start doing stuff like this.

STELLA

Mistakes happen, Stanley.

STANLEY

Then how come you've never forgiven mine?

STELLA

Your mistake was tragic and unforgivable.

STANLEY

I bought you flowers.

STELLA

They were wilted.

STANLEY

It's New Orleans. Everything's wilted.

STELLA

When will you be home?

STANLEY

After I've bowled, had a few beers, played poker,
and given my shirt some new sweat stains.

Stanley storms out. Stella begins to cry. There's a knock on the door.
Stella collects herself as best as she can.

STELLA

Door's open.

The door opens. RHODA WIKOFF enters, holding a measuring cup.

RHODA

Excuse me. I know this is a long shot, but...
Do you have any matzo meal?

Stella bursts out crying.

RHODA (cont'd)

It's no big deal. I'll make a noodle kugel.

Stella cries some more.

RHODA

Are you all right?

STELLA

I have no idea who you are. I, I shouldn't
burden you with my troubles.

RHODA

Darling... burden.

STELLA

Sometimes I think life is a cruel joke perpetrated
by a sadistic God. I suspect this not only because
my life has been a series of unending disappointments,
but also because God always lets you become
aware of beauty and fineness before flooding
your life with degradation and disgust.

RHODA

Let's go shopping.

STELLA

I can't. I'm busy wallowing in despair.

RHODA

I used to wallow in despair, but it
gave me heartburn. Now I shop.

STELLA

Do you think that'll help?

RHODA

Trust me. We'll buy some tchochkehs,
and you'll feel fine in an hour.

STELLA

What's a choch-key?

RHODA

Have you ever been in a store, picked
something up, and thought, "I have
no idea what this is for, but it's cute."

STELLA

Uh-huh.

RHODA

That's a tchochkeh.

STELLA

Oh. If you don't mind me asking, who are you?

RHODA

Oh, I'm, I'm your new neighbor, Rhoda Wikoff.

STELLA

Okay, Rhoda, let's go shopping.

RHODA

Good idea.

STELLA

My sister Blanche once said, "I have always
depended on the kindness of strangers."

RHODA

My sister Shirley once said, "People will always
respect you if your shoes and handbag match."