

THE ZERO HOUR

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By Madeleine George

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**CHARACTERS** (2f, 1m)

O, 26, butch dyke, intense, unemployed, recovering WASP

REBECCA, 29, corporate femme, educated, graceful, Jewish

THE THERAPIST, 45

THE LONELY NAZI

THE EAGER NAZI

THE TENDER NAZI

...all played by the actor who plays O

RAE WILCOX, 59, O's mother

LILY HIRSCHORN, 64, REBECCA's mother

...both played by the actor who plays REBECCA

THE ALL-AMERICAN NAZI, a.k.a. "DOUG," 32

**PLACE**

Queens, New York.

**TIME**

January and February.

**NOTES**

- Sets should be minimal, suggestive of the urban spaces--both indoor and outdoor--that the play takes place in. The bedroom of O and REBECCA's apartment is always present on stage, and its borders are permeable; subway cars and therapists' offices and sports bars move fluidly in and out of its space.
- Costume changes are part of the action and should be made by the actors themselves on stage during scene shifts, in view of the audience. Perhaps the actors even help each other dress and undress. Costumes may be stored in the closets or drawers of the bedroom set for this purpose.

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled with the presence of the now.

Walter Benjamin, Thesis XIV,  
"Theses on the Philosophy of History"

**SCENE 1**

(The bedroom of a scummy sixth-floor walk-up, next to the elevated subway track.

No walls--black night and the lights of the low Queens skyline on all sides.

An oily, orange three-quarter moon hangs huge on the horizon.

O and REBECCA curled into each other. REBECCA asleep. A SUBWAY TRAIN approaches.

O wakes)

O

(quiet, thoughtful)  
I think my mother may just have died.

(The SUBWAY TRAIN grows louder, explodes past the bedroom window. REBECCA stirs, resettles on O's chest)

O (cont'd)

(quiet, mildly surprised)  
I think my mother may be about to die.

REBECCA

(asleep)  
Mmmmm?

O

Shhhhh...

(O strokes REBECCA's head. Lights shift)

**SCENE 2**

(The kitchenette. O and REBECCA.  
The onset of dinner. O with a  
Polaroid camera)

O

Let me see you with the tuna fish. Hold up the can.

(REBECCA poses ridiculously with a  
fork and an empty tuna can. O  
takes her picture--*flash!*)

O (cont'd)

"Rebecca Eats Tuna." Get it? Get it?

REBECCA

I get it. What is it with you and the snapshots?

O

Nothing. I'm just saving you up for later.

(In one motion, O kisses REBECCA,  
stows the camera and photo away,  
and sits down. They start to eat)

O (cont'd)

So how'd it go with Hitler today?

REBECCA

Great for him. Not so great for us. He's busy rising to  
power right now.

O

You're doing the before part, too?

REBECCA

Three parts: "The Growing Storm": Versailles, Beer Hall  
Putsch, death of Hindenburg, et cetera. Part Two: "Into

the Night," that's the blood and gore. Then "Lessons for the Living." They want me to end it very Hands-Across-America: "Six million Jews died during the Holocaust so be nice and don't call each other Spic and Kike."

O

And Fag. And Dyke.

REBECCA

That's right.

(REBECCA chews)

O

Are you gonna say that, though?

REBECCA

Fag and Dyke? I don't know.

O

You should.

REBECCA

I guess. It's seventh grade.

O

So? If they can see pictures of bodies being bulldozed into open graves they can see the word 'homosexual' on a page, I should think.

REBECCA

(totally noncommittal)  
I should think so.

(O considers REBECCA critically)

O

You're not going to put anything about all the gay guys that died in there, are you? You know, that's where the pink triangle *comes* from.

REBECCA

(weary)

I know, I know...

O

That sucks. Spookie? I think that sucks.

REBECCA

They want to sell it to schools all over the country. If you even *mention* sexuality half these Bible Belt districts go completely apeshit. It's just demographics.

O

You think it's okay for kids to learn some warped version of the truth just because Chicken Little Pamphleteers and Propagandists wants to sell more books to the Christian Right?

REBECCA

(irritated)

It's Mother Goose Educational Texts.

O

Do they know you're dating me?

REBECCA

What does that have--

O

(overlapping)

Do they know that you're living with a woman at work?

REBECCA

(attempt at levity #1)  
I'm not living with a woman at work.

(O squints at REBECCA  
unforgivingly. REBECCA rolls her  
eyes)

REBECCA (cont'd)

So what?

O

But they know you're Jewish, right?

REBECCA

So?

O

(triumphant)  
So, so, so!

REBECCA

*What?*

O

It just seems all very, all very convenient. All very  
dishonest.

REBECCA

We're a children's educational publishing house, O. It's  
irrelevant to the way I do my job. It's none of anybody  
else's business.

O

I'm out all the time. Out of respect for you.



REBECCA

You don't have a *job*! *Where* are you out? You're out when you go to unemployment?

O

I'm out every second of every day. I'm out at the Key Food. I'm out at the bodega.

REBECCA

You're not out at the bodega. I've seen you flirt with that guy for extra matches.

O

I'm out to my hygienist at Praise the Lord Dental.

REBECCA

(attempt at levity #2)

Well you're very fierce. I'm sure you'll get into Lesbian Heaven and I'll spend eternity trapped in some overheated room with 25 other closet cases, talking about our need to please our mothers.

O

(a shade vicious)

Serve you right if you did.

(REBECCA pulls back)

REBECCA

You're hard, you know, O.

(They pick at their plates for a second, listlessly)

O

(quiet)

Speaking of mothers...

REBECCA

Tomorrow at one. El Azteco on 53rd.

O

I assume you don't want me to...

REBECCA

Maybe next time.

(Lights shift)

### **SCENE 3**

(REBECCA downstage in writing light. She works on her textbook)

REBECCA

(evenly)

Building Your Vocabulary. Using construction paper, magic markers and brads, make a glossary of important Holocaust terms. Organize your glossary alphabetically, and begin with the basics. Allies. Anti-Semitism. Aryan. Atrocity. As you learn more about this period of history, add terms that are unfamiliar to you to your glossary. Illustrate your glossary with colorful pictures cut from magazines to help you remember what the new terms mean.

(Lights shift)