



Almost Midnight
by
Richard Alan Spiegel

Please attribute
this publication to
Richard Spiegel

Ten Penny Players, Inc.

Almost midnight. I won't give in
to despair. The dog on the floor
raises his head as I move by
the clutter of clothing, papers,
and furniture to find my way
to the laptop on the table cluttered
with books, papers, pens
candlewax, walnuts, apples, candy,
batteries and paper clips.

Rascal opened the door.
Yitzhok sat
at his kitchen table.
Draw pebbles, said Yitzhok.
Pebble after pebble,
and a mountain will rise.

In the park, they shared a bench.
Go get me one of these -- nezboym
said Yitzhok. He pressed
a maple seed on Rascal's nose.

What are you doing?
asked Yitzhok.
I'm digging a hole
to China, said Rascal.
That's a lot of work, said Yitzhok.
Remember to take a break for lunch.

*What did you mean, Heidi asked,
by grey limbo of elusive time?
You desperately need to laugh.
You take the world too seriously.*

*The last time I was here,
said Rascal, a fight broke
out during a robbery.
We sat at our table
and watched a thug
attack the manager.*

The man at the corner table,
hiding behind the newspaper
is Allen Black, a poet.
When people approach, he growls
and they turn away. He sits alone
every day and reads the newspapers.

*Lost in the wild moment, I break bread
with absurd angels feasting on fear.*

--- A. Black

*Jeremy! Come join us, Heidi called out.
You need to read Rascal's play. It's three acts:
Going Away Party, Subway, and Cards.*

When did he write it? Jeremy asked.

Over the weekend. Heidi said.

If it's too talky, it won't work on stage.

*But, there's a suicide in the bathroom,
a long subway ride, and an endless war.*

*Heidi looked over Jeremy's shoulder.
Directing is more than blocking the action.
There's a social responsibility
to engage the audience.*

*Jeremy wanted an archetypal
theater experience, Which came first --
the ritual or the audience?*

The performers, friends from the cafe,
arrived at the church in the Village.
The theater seated thirty.
At the end, a critic stood up
to denounce Jeremy's staging.

4

The Arts Lab printed
Rascal's *Brittle Boots*
and *Army Ants*. He hawked the chapbook
in Central Park and along Broadway.

On Saturday mornings,
he read his poetry at the English Pub
across the street from Carnegie Hall.

We were the baby boom.
The passionate bomb dropped
at the end of the war, detonated
to explode twenty years later:

*our shout of moral outrage resonated
from Morningside Heights to Telegraph Hill,
flooded the streets of BedStuy,
Motown and Watts.*

After the abortion, Heidi
choreographed a dance
to Rascal's poetry.

*Seek a path in heaven
Return a pebble to the beach
Name a child among the multitude*

Rascal, in a wide brimmed hat
and long overcoat, cast a shadow
beneath the street lamps
as he walked home
from East to West Fourth Street.

Autumn oppressed.
Yitzhok called in a panic
and said, *You're*
the only one I can count on.
Please don't let me down.

Rascal slowly ascended
the dark, narrow stairwell
and climbed the three flights.

Yitzhok sat by the heat of the stove,
withdrawn from the world.
He fingered his pictures
and meditated on the patterns.

*

Misty morning sun rises
on a foggy Staten Island.
WQXR plays Chopin.
The dog's fond muzzle
touches my knee.

Words twitch and turn.
Electricity flows about me.
Memories are stored in bytes.
A storm approaches —
in rain and wind I wait.



©2014 Ten Penny Players, Inc