

MAKING SOME NOISE
A One-Act Play
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MAKING SOME NOISE

RUNNING TIME: 35-40 minutes (approximate)

CAST: 3 (3f)

JULES (f) (32) eldest of the three sisters, carefully preserving 9/11, lawyer

EMMA (f) (29), middle child; still trapped in 9/11; obsessively follows disasters, music teacher

NELL (f) (25) distanced from 9/11 but has never dealt with it; recent college graduate

TIME

September 9-10, this year

PLACE

Jules's sun room on Long Island

SYNOPSIS: Juliana, Emma and Nell see Nazis and terrorists around every corner. This is noted as the three sisters gather yet again for the anniversary of their mother's death on 9/11. What is the make-up of a life? Is it reduced to belongings and haphazard memories? They have been sitting shiva every September 11th since the 2001 terror attacks. Things are turned upside down when Nell returns home and no longer wishes to continue the grieving tradition.

NOTES:

The slashes indicate overlapping dialogue.

Music:

The piano piece on the tape and CD (by both the mother and NELL) can be original. If you have a license, "Rhapsody in Blue" or a tape of a piano concerto (preferably by a Jewish composer) can be used. (You would need to tape it.) You will need two tapes: one old tape of their mom playing and a new CD that features Nell. The music interludes are important. Take your time with it. Music is memory.

If doing a reading, have the person reading stage directions simply note the music and the title.

MAKING SOME NOISE

Scene 1, September 9, 8 p.m.

AT RISE we are in the sunroom of JULES'S Long Island home. A worn-out piano concerto on a tape is heard. Four to five pairs of shoes are in a pile. A cell phone is somewhere in that pile. The cellphone rings. JULES rushes in holding another 3-4 pairs of shoes, dumps them in the pile and frantically searches for her cellphone. She finds it, looks at the caller and cancels the phone call in disgust. She starts to arrange the shoes in a pretty circle when the doorbell rings. JULES turns off the tape and exits to answer the door. We hear squeals of delight. NELL and JULES burst through the sunroom. NELL has a small suitcase.

JULES

You were supposed to text when you landed! I've been obsessively checking my phone.

NELL

I know! It was just an impulse – the plane was late and I thought - grab a cab and get to Jules. Thought I'd surprise you and save you the trip.

JULES

You do travel light.

NELL

For now.

JULES

La Bella Nella!

NELL

Jule-la-la!

JULES

Let me look /at you!

NELL

/Don't look too closely! I've been up for thirty-six hours!

JULES

Beautiful. My baby sister is so beautiful -

NELL

Twelve hours on the plane and then another full hour waiting for a gate – Oh-my-God.
Not those effing shoes again!

JULES

Don't curse.

NELL

I didn't!

JULES

You remember the shoes?

NELL

I helped you pack them when you went to Cornell. I thought it was a little strange –
bringing your dead mother's shoes to college - but what did I know? I was a little kid.
Can't believe you /still have them!

(Overlapping)

JULES

/I thought/

NELL

/Who carries around their dead mother's shoes?/

JULES

/You might like them...

NELL

What?

JULES

I saved them for you – -they're a size five – you're the only one who could wear them.

(JULES holds up a glittery dancing shoe.)

NELL

No, thank-you. Don't wish to be freaking Cinderella.

JULES

Nell.....

NELL

What?

JULES

You must be hungry. Thirsty? Coffee? Water? Tea?

NELL

Alcohol?

JULES

Chicken soup?

NELL

Chicken soup with vodka?

JULES

Sorry. I only have Passover wine.

(NELL takes out little airline bottles of vodka from her purse.)

NELL

I'm prepared. You can't bring liquids on the plane but you can carry them off. Have any juice to go with it? I like to hydrate and dehydrate myself at the same time.

JULES

Grapefruit?

NELL

Works for me.

JULES

It's – really good to see you.

NELL

Same here.

(There is a brief smile of appreciation for each other. JULES exits as NELL looks at the shoes. She takes a long swig of vodka. JULES returns with the juice.)

JULES

Vitamin C to wash down the vodka.

(NELL downs her airplane size bottle of vodka.)

JULES (cont'd)
You haven't touched the juice.

NELL
Give me a sec.

(And NELL pulls out another small bottle of vodka and adds it to the grapefruit juice.)

JULES
David thinks I should get rid of the shoes.

NELL
Build a bonfire.

JULES
Nell!

NELL
Yeah ... wrong thing to say. Got it. But it is creepy.

JULES
I look at it as – a memory enhancement.

NELL
Hoarding – what? Eight pairs of our dead mother's shoes for how many years? Definitely on the creep-a-zoid barometer.

JULES
But – tender-creepy -

NELL
/You don't have the hang of this "creepy" thing at all.

JULES
It's really good to see you. I missed you, Little Nell.

NELL
Ditto. David around?

JULES
No.

NELL
Fishing in Alaska?

JULES

Yes.

NELL

He does like avoiding this 9/11 celebration. Are Emma and Dad coming?

JULES

Emma was due here a few hours ago. Don't know what happened.

NELL

And you're worried.

JULES

No!

NELL

How many times have you texted her?

JULES

Only twice. Maybe three times.

NELL

She gets bogged down in stuff. I'll catch up with her tomorrow. And Dad. Surprised he's not here.

JULES

He – had a last-minute guest from out of town.

NELL

Anyone I know?

JULES

No. But he's free in the morning. You can stop by then.

NELL

Can I take David's car?

JULES

Of course. Would you care for some soggy strudel? I was making it for the gathering. It's not pretty - but it tastes good.

NELL

White flour, white sugar stuff?

JULES
Yes.

NELL
No, thanks.

JULES
But alcohol is okay?

NELL
As long as it isn't mixed with processed sugar.

(NELL takes a nice, long drink.)

Much better. Mom's blue robe – do you still have it?

JULES
Why would you think that?

NELL
Look around.

JULES
Shoes are different than robes.

NELL
I remember we would come home from school and you'd change into your jammies right away and put on her robe.

JULES
Dad got rid of it.

NELL
Well yeah! It was weird that you did that. I'd glance into the kitchen – see you in the robe and think – Mom? *Mom?* It was totally spooky. I still get goose bumps thinking about it.

JULES
I'll concede -it was sort of other-worldly.

NELL
Ghostly.

JULES
Jews don't believe in ghosts.

NELL

Emma does.

JULES

Emma says she can feel Mom's presence. The rabbi says no.

NELL

Depends on the rabbi. We have our dybbuks –

JULES

They're malicious - Mom would not have become a dybbuk!

NELL

Maybe she's an ibbur. Maybe she shows up to help us.

JULES

Then why don't I feel her? Do you?

NELL

No.

JULES

Could she be here? When we gather every September eleventh? Could she be in the room? Helping us?

NELL

Maybe – she's here now. Looking at the shoes ... wondering why Jules doesn't get rid of them. Wait! I think I see her - she's prowling around them ...lurking...concealing herself in the shoes! Maybe ... we should be careful about what we say. Maybe she is listening. Stay very still. See if you can feel her ... Mom? Are you here?

(And all is quiet for a moment. And suddenly there is the blare of the doorbell. Both sisters jump.)

JULES

Mom?

EMMA (Offstage)

JULES! Are you home?

(JULES exits to let EMMA in. We hear greetings. NELL listens. EMMA bursts through. She has an overnight bag.)

Nell-la-la! EMMA

Auntie-Em! NELL

Emma! We thought you were Mom. JULES

Don't be silly. Mom's not here. EMMA

Ever the "Mom-Whisperer." You're late. JULES

Sorry. School stuff. Music stuff. Lots to do. Busy busy! But I had to visit little Nell! I had to visit – oy! shoes! EMMA

Missed you. NELL

Ditto. EMMA

Which shoes do you care to visit? NELL

Not my size. EMMA

Not my circus. NELL

(And they sing-song, maybe even twirl or can-can.)

Not my monkeys! NELL and EMMA

Cue to the end of the musical interlude. JULES

Vodka? NELL

EMMA

Yes, please.

NELL

Straight up? Or grapefruit juice?

EMMA

A little vermouth and an olive would be nice –

JULES

I'll get the juice. Overnight bag?

EMMA

I thought you might need help getting ready for the gathering. I took off tomorrow and of course - the eleventh so I'm free to brown the brisket. I'm your tool, Jules. Be kind.

JULES

Appreciated. One more juice coming up!

(JULES exits.)

NELL

What happened?

EMMA

What?

NELL

Stuff. School stuff. Music stuff. Sounds very non-specific. As if you're hiding something specific.

EMMA

It's – nothing. Well – swastikas.

NELLS

Swastikas are something. In fact – in this family – they're huge.

EMMA

I didn't want to worry Jules.

NELLS

We are all the best worriers. Why not give us something to do that we all excel at. Swastikas?

EMMA

On some of our classroom doors this morning.

NELLS

Do you know -

EMMA

- No clue. (Beat.) So – how’s Tel Aviv treating you?

NELL

Good. Lots of nightlife – you know – just a grand old Israeli college-party town.

EMMA

I worry.

NELL

Do you feel safe living in an apartment in downtown Manhattan?

EMMA

I’m in a five-story walk-up surrounded by taller buildings. A plane couldn’t hit my building even if it wanted to.

NELL

It could crash into the skyscraper next door - which could fall on your building –

EMMA

There hasn’t been a falling building in years – and I’m not there anymore.

NELL

Where are -

EMMA

- Not now. I want to hear about you. And school and how you stay safe.

NELL

Do we ever feel safe? We both see Nazis and terrorists around every corner. But guess what? It doesn’t matter anymore. I graduated. Home for good. Ta-da!

EMMA

That’s wonderful! Congratulations!

(JULES enters interrupting EMMA and NELL’S hug.)

JULES

Grapefruit juice chaser for Emma. Plain grapefruit juice for me.

(NELLS pours the vodka in the glass and gives it to EMMA who takes a swig.)

JULES (cont'd)

What's – wonderful?

EMMA

Nell graduated! And is staying stateside for a while.

JULES

Oh. How – celebratory.

NELL

Way to steal my thunder, Auntie Em. You're the first ones I've told.

JULES

Will you be staying with Dad?

NELL

Here. I thought I'd stay – here. You – have the extra room and won't be the anxious, parlor maid that Dad would be – waiting on me hand and foot, plying me with low-fat granola bars. He doesn't understand that some eyes are made for alcohol.

JULES

Do you drink that much?

NELL

In September.

JULES

Dad doesn't do the low-fat bars anymore. He's gluten-free.

NELL

Whoa! Dad without a cabinet filled with cinnamon granola bars. Does not compute. He's not – vegan, is he?

JULES

No.

NELL

Thank goodness – because that would have me questioning his sanity. Why the dietary changes? He's not sick or anything, is he?

JULES

No. But Rose is gluten-free.

JULES! EMMA

JULES
I shouldn't have said anything.

NELL
But since you did ... who is this Rose person?

JULES
Just – someone he's been seeing. Her son flew in from Seattle today and he's – meeting him this evening.

NELL
So ... Rose. Sounds serious.

JULES
Meeting the son does sound serious.

NELL
Sooooo, where do you keep the Passover wine?

JULES
Finish your vodka.

EMMA
His mental health is better than ever – the move to the condo was a good idea. He's moving forward. We should all take a page out of his book and not analyze his new life.

NELL
Agreed! Let's just get through the next few horrible days and then we can dissect Dad's new relationship. So, Jules – can I be a guest in the blue bedroom for a bit?

JULES
Since you asked so prettily.

NELL
It won't be for long. I've always had the knack of getting work that under-utilizes my abilities. Will David mind?

JULES
No. He's actually rather fond of you. (Beat.) To Nell and her homecoming.

EMMA
To Nell!

(And amid hugs and sweet congratulations, they clink their glasses as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 2, September 10, Noon

AT RISE EMMA is cleaning and starts to put the shoes in boxes. JULES arrives with groceries and some Chinese take-out cartons.

JULES

I have everything for the Brisket and the Halousky – I bought the savoy cabbage this time – makes the Halousky much tastier plus – what are you doing?

EMMA

Oh – sorry. I thought – shouldn't they be put away? Unless you want them on display.

JULES

Of course not. I'll do it. Later.

EMMA

I don't mind – really.

JULES

I'll do it.

(Pause.)

EMMA

All is vacuumed, dusted! Bathrooms are clean! I washed the blue china.

JULES

The blue china?

EMMA

You always do the blue – sorry – if you want to do other dishes -

JULES

- No, the blue china's fine. I didn't realize – how predictable I was. Since you did so much – why don't I reward you? We can go into town for manicures.

EMMA

No, thank you. Manicurists yell at me. I bite my nails. Nail-biters put them out of business.

JULES

I'll try to think of something else. You did do a lot. I appreciate it. Oh! Here's lunch.

(JULES puts down the little cartons of Chinese food and takes the groceries to the kitchen. EMMA sneaks a peak at the food.)

EMMA

Beef and broccoli – love the combo. Chicken fried rice – another favorite. Shrimp toast?
Juliana! Shrimp toast!

(JULES comes running in.)

JULES

Is something wrong?

EMMA

Shrimp toast?

JULES

I thought you liked it.

EMMA

Love it. But you – you keep a kosher home – the dairy and the meat utensils are separate!
How could I not know you were a cheater?

JULES

Mom ate it. Outside in the garden.

EMMA

I know. But you have this life where you one-up Mom on everything.

JULES

What?

(We hear NELL entering.)

NELL (offstage)

Hi, Honey! I'm home!

(NELL enters.)

NELL

Best. Morning. Ever. Dad looked great! He didn't ask if I changed my major! He didn't go over an individual life's plan for me! He – just – greeted me. Like I was a real person.

JULES

What did he say when you told him you finally graduated?

NELL

I didn't tell him *that* - didn't want him to think I'd gone all-respectable. No mention of Rose.

EMMA

I wouldn't think so. Not on this weekend.

NELL

Whoa - shrimp toast! Mom's forbidden fruit from King Yum. There is a God!

EMMA

So, you eat shrimp, too.

NELL

Love the illegal, bottom feeders. There aren't a lot of Chinese take-out places in Tel Aviv that offer shrimp toast. Thank-you for bringing banned substances into my first day back. You surprise me – didn't think you would bring home illegal food!

JULES

I eat bacon, too. Once in a while. Not at home – but out.

EMMA

Mom did, too. She told me that if bacon and shrimp toast were in the Garden of Eden – Adam and Eve would have succumbed to its charms on the first day. There never would have been all that fuss about an apple.

JULES

I'll get plates.

(JULES exits. EMMA checks her phone.)

NELL

Expecting something?

EMMA

There was an accident near my school yesterday – I saw a stretcher. I was just checking to see if anybody died.

NELL

And your phone will tell you that?

EMMA

I - follow the accident reports from a few police stations. And hate crimes. And fires.

(JULES returns.)

JULES

Lunch is served!

NELL

Anything?

EMMA

No. That's good. It means nobody died.

JULES

Who died?

EMMA

No one.

NELL

Emma follows dead people on her phone.

JULES

On that note ... shall we eat?

(NELL throws a coverlet over the shoes.)

NELL

Don't want Mom's shoes watching me eat shrimp. (Beat.) So, what's the plan? Are we going to sit shiva every September eleventh for the rest of our lives? Isn't the point of sitting shiva is that there's an end date?

EMMA

That's what I love about you, Nell. Don't lead up to anything – just blurt.

JULES

It was important to Grandma and Grandpa -

NELL

- who are gone. How morbid is it that we gather together to celebrate Mom's death?

JULES

Not a celebration. It's – a gathering. Like Shoah – a commemoration.

NELL

Grandma and Grandpa didn't have a gathering for Shoah. They didn't "commemorate" the Holocaust.

EMMA

Because they were there. They didn't want to remember.

JULES

But Mom did – she went to shul every Shoah. We're doing for Mom what she did for Grandma and Grandpa.

NELL

Maybe what we're doing is another way of being dead. We're practicing. In case.

EMMA

In case what? We die?

NELL

We're all going to die. We've been marching towards death since birth. Nobody knows that better than us.

JULES

Can we not do the death talk?

NELL

It's why we're here. I must say we do have the sitting shiva perfected.

JULES

This is not a shiva! I don't cover the mirrors. There's no pitcher of water outside for guests to wash their hands.

NELL

I'll concede. Cause of the shoes. Wouldn't do to have all those leather shoes around during a shiva. That's just wrong. So not a shiva – just a Sad Brisket Day we hold every September eleventh. Because Mom died.

JULES

Stop the death talk!

NELL

It's hard to do when we're gathered here to *commemorate* Mom – being dead. We talk about the Holocaust. Then we talk about 9/11. We eat the same brisket off of the same china year after year. All that's missing is the tape of Mom playing the piano.

(JULES gets up and turns on the tape. We hear piano music.)

NELL

Now I can get into the gloom and doom of tomorrow. I wonder how long the tape will last.

JULES

I should have it made into a CD – before it wears out.

NELL

Or we can – let it go.

JULES

No.

EMMA

This was what Mom played to calm herself down after a fight with Dad.

NELL

It's – her fight song. Maybe Mom went down fighting.

JULES

God, Nell.

NELL

Wrong to thing to say. Got it.

EMMA

But – I wish ... that was a possibility – that she had a moment to fight. Who knows/

JULES

/We have the answering machine placing her in the tower just before the plane hit.

NELL

And I bet we still have the tape of that.

JULES

It's - packed away.

(Pause.)

NELL

Dance, Jules.

JULES

Don't be silly.

NELL

You used to dance to this. All the time. Mom would play and you – would dance.

JULES

A lifetime ago.

EMMA

You were so good. We thought you were going to go all the way – New York City Ballet Company – here you come!

JULES

More like Martha Graham. But it wasn't practical.

NELL

So you became a poli sci major at Cornell. Like Mom.

EMMA

Mom was a music major at Cornell. Before she quit to marry Dad.

JULES

She wanted to be a writer –

EMMA

Concert pianist. (To Nell.) What do you remember?

NELL

Kind of before my time – before all of our times.

JULES

Maybe she majored in both. Doesn't really matter. She didn't stay past freshman year.

NELL

Looks like she got more practical when she went back to school.

EMMA

Didn't you switch from journalism to political science?

NELL

Sophomore year.

JULES

I thought you majored in psychology!

NELL

Junior year. And my first senior year. (Beat.) Mom was pretty good, wasn't she?

JULES

I remember – even as a toddler - you would sit with Mom and play chords. The music stuck with you. You were the only one who continued lessons through high school.

NELL

All I remember was playing “middle C” a lot. Mom would wink at me and then I'd plunk my thumb down on middle C.

EMMA

Didn't Mom always step on the pedal for that?

NELL

Yes! That's why the sound reverberated. I thought I was amazing. That my one little note flew around the room.

EMMA

Mom was pretty clever.

NELL

I can still find middle C with my eyes closed.

(NELL presses an invisible middle C and intones it. EMMA plays an invisible chord – it works with the music.)

NELL (cont'd)

All that's missing is Emma playing the guitar. Do you still play?

EMMA

Of course. I use it in my classes.

NELL

Do you teach them “Both Sides Now?”

EMMA

Yes. I do a quarter on folk music.

NELL

Somehow that makes me happy. (Beat.) Oh! This is the part! I just love this! This is where we would all dance – Jules was always first – come on - make your entrance.

Stop. JULES

Just a few steps. NELL

(NELL does a few steps and holds out her hand. JULES doesn't take it but EMMA does. They dance a few steps. It's sweet and close. EMMA and NELL both hold out a hand for JULES who finally takes it. They do a few steps from a long-ago dance they once did together – possibly at a recital. They are not bad. JULES abruptly breaks away.)

This is backwards – we're going back in time. I can't do that. JULES

We go back in time every time we come together on September eleventh! NELL

We're remembering. JULES

Shoes. You're remembering shoes. Come on, Jules. Dance the way you used to. It's happy – remember happy? NELL

(NELL tries to coax JULES who is conflicted. NELL and EMMA dance and JULES abruptly turns off the tape. JULES exits as NELL hums some of the music. She turns into EMMA's arms and they hold the dance pose as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 2

(Later that night. EMMA is sitting checking her phone. NELL enters.)

A new accident? NELL

EMMA

Reading about the Holocaust. I don't know why. I have those stats tattooed in my brain. Six million Jews, two to three million Soviet prisoners-of-war, two hundred and twenty thousand Romani, fifteen thousand gay people –

NELL

EMMA!

EMMA

World War Two total: seventeen million dead.

NELL

Stop wrapping yourself around dead people!

EMMA

I need to constantly remind myself of this stuff.

NELL

It's morbid.

EMMA

It's self-preservation. If I know about everything – if I know who, if I know what and where – if I can fixate on where my worries should be placed each day, I can worry it away. Worry it – so it bounces off of me.

NELL

So you worry – to ward it off.

EMMA

Terror-knowledge is my worry-vaccine. I keep feeding my body the knowledge of world events and when terror comes close – I'm like kryptonite. Impermeable.

NELL

But you're not.

EMMA

I'm tricking my mind into not being terrified every day. These things happen – daily. And now – the hate crimes are right here at home.

NELL

Swastikas.

EMMA

They've made a comeback.

NELL

I buy travel insurance. That's my worry-vaccine. Advisors say – it's the most useless thing you can spend money on while traveling. But in the seven years of going back and forth to Israel, I cannot get on the plane without traveler's insurance. It's my Saint Christopher's medal.

EMMA

The Catholic's have a leg up on us in the protection industry. How do we stop this? Where does this end?

NELL

It doesn't end, Auntie Em. It goes on. And we do.

EMMA

But we don't. Every year, 9/11 has us floundering in quicksand. We try to swim out. It takes a full year to get on solid ground and before you know it – wham! The quicksand's back. We're never out of it.

NELL

No! We've escaped the quicksand. We're the grandchildren of survivors – the generation that wasn't supposed to be/

EMMA

/which is why I thought we were safe! Our family suffered enough. I thought the gods of hate would pass over us. *It was someone else's turn. How stupid was I?* I'm growing bitter – am I a hater? That's the first step to being able to kill – right? You hate. You think – these people are vermin. It's easy to eliminate vermin.

NELL

Emma?

EMMA

And then I hate myself – for not being forgiving – but it's getting harder. You'd think it would get easier – every year we're further away from 9/11. But it festers. I'm not just afraid of “them” - I'm afraid – of me. Or I'm afraid if I let go of the hate, I let go of Mom.

(Pause.)

NELL

Emma, does Mom really visit?

EMMA

Yes.

NELL

And you know that – absolutely, from your bones, from your blood, no-holds-barred, cross-your-heart-and-hope-not-to-die - know that?

EMMA

Yes.

NELL

Why you? Why not Jules? Or me? Why just you?

EMMA

I think she visits all of us. But you miss the visit. So she comes back to me.

NELL

I – want to feel her.

EMMA

Be careful what you wish for. It can be a little spooky.

NELL

Is she – a ghost?

EMMA

No!

NELL

Then, what?

EMMA

When I saw the swastika on my door – I thought I would pass out. And then there was the scent of lilacs ...

NELL

Mom filled the home with lilacs ...

EMMA

Every May.

NELL

Why does she stay? Does she feel guilty/

EMMA

/No! Worried. She worries. About us.

NELL

But – we're fine. Usually.

Are we? EMMA

Is she here – now? NELL

No. Sorry. EMMA

So, she skips town around 9/11. NELL

Yes. EMMA

I want to skip town on that day, too. I so effing want to do that. NELL

(NELL exits. EMMA checks her phone.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3, September 11, Midnight

(We hear EMMA offstage.)

You were supposed to text. Not wake everyone in the house up! All right. Thank-you. EMMA

(EMMA enters with a pizza. JULES enters.)

Sorry! I'll go eat in my room. The delivery guy was supposed to text me on my cell. EMMA

Pizza? In the middle of the night? JULES

Pffft. Just after Midnight. I am looking for a carb-induced coma. I'll just take it – EMMA

No way are you eating that alone. Sit. JULES

(NELL enters.)

NELL

Do I smell – *pizza!* Pepperoni?

EMMA

Mushrooms.

NELL

Right. Don't mix dairy with meat. I thought since we already had shrimp toast ...

JULES

Let's not upset the kosher cart too much.

EMMA

Sorry about waking you.

NELL

I was awake. – be grateful. You never could have finished an entire pizza on your own.

EMMA

Wanna bet?

NELL

Oh! It burned the roof of my mouth! I love it this hot. Thanks, Auntie Em!

EMMA

Your welcome, Little Nell!

NELL

So, Jules when are you losing the shoes?

EMMA

And there ends the golden minute of peace by pizza.

JULES

She wore these on her twenty-fifth anniversary. Remember?

(She holds up a pair of the black, strappy, high heels. EMMA takes them.)

JULES

That time she wore that black, strapless dress that shocked Nell – because it showed cleavage.

NELL

What are you doing?

JULES

Remembering. Here. The only flats she ever owned! She ran the Daisy 10K – just before..

NELL

- she died. This is sick! *Shoes!* Imagine – a pile of shoes from everyone who died in the towers/ *Shoes! Piles of shoes outside the gas chambers! They're not gentle memories, Jules. They're death!*

JULES

They're keepsakes!

NELL

Not to Jews! They're reminders of murder! *Right up there with gas chambers and swastikas and effing yellow stars!*

(NELL throws the shoes into a pile.)

NELL (cont'd)

Here's your death pile, Jules! Your commemoration to Mom! You've finally outdid her! Every time I come home – there's less of Jules. You're shriveling into some sort of adoration statue of what you think is Mom. But it's not Mom. It's Mom made of wax /

JULES

/Mom would never be wax! *I* would never be wax! Carrera marble maybe – but never wax!

(EMMA bursts out laughing.)

JULES (cont'd)

There's nothing funny going on here!

EMMA

Arguing about whether you've built a statue of Mom made out of wax or marble/

NELL

/Every time I come home, more of Jules is missing and is replaced with – Mom's shoes!

JULES

I don't do that!

EMMA

You do, Jules. I don't know my sister anymore. All I get from you is Mom's shadow.

JULES

I keep the home fires burning. I'm the torch-bearer for this family.

NELL

You're the vault-keeper. You built a shrine. Made out of shoes.

JULES

I hold on to things. Because we lived without heirlooms. Our past starts with Grandma and Grandpa. They had nothing – *nothing!* Don't you think they wish they had a prayer shawl or a menorah from home?

NELL

We have the prayer shawls, the menorah, the china and the photos. *We don't need the shoes!*

JULES

I do!

NELL

I grew up in a memorial vault. Everything was a memorial to Mom. No mom. But a ton of mom-stuff.

JULES

STOP! It's done. It's over. I didn't bring out the shoes for you to remember that day – they were to remember Mom!

NELL

But I do remember that day! I remember the day more than I remember Mom! It's been written into our DNA just like the Holocaust is written into our grandparents!

(Pause.)

EMMA

Remember Mom's Memorial Service?

JULES

By heart.

EMMA

Do you remember Sandy talking about the night she drove Dad up to Cornell and Mom sneaked out with them – I mean she totally sneaked out of the dorm past curfew in her jammies! And Sandy drove them around Ithaca for an hour so Mom and Dad could make-out in the back seat. Mom was part renegade.

NELL

I totally got the renegade gene! That's amazing for those days. Think: How did they plan that? There were no cell phones, no Facebook messaging.

EMMA

To do something illicit!

NELL

Mom was freaking amazing.

EMMA

Exactly.

NELL

So, what the hell are we doing gathering ever September eleventh – eating sorry brisket? We should be drinking ourselves silly and telling stories of Mom’s escapades! We should have been Irish. They know how to celebrate at funerals.

EMMA

I’m opening some wine.

JULES

/We don’t do that! (Beat.) Nell, did you even love Mom?

EMMA

Whoa. Easy, Jules.

JULES

You come home and belittle every tradition – every –

NELL

I don’t have the eight extra years that you had with her! The Mom I remember is all music and middle “C!”

EMMA

- handing out the wine –

NELL

I don’t reduce Mom to shoes and Brisket!

EMMA

Drinking the wine. In your corners. Drink.

(And they do.)

EMMA (cont’d)

I have an announcement. I was going to wait a few days but seeing as how we are already at each others’ throats – this seems like a good time. (Beat.) I’m moving to Germany.

JULES

Grandma and Grandpa are turning over in their graves.

NELL

As would Mom. If she had one.

EMMA

Shut up! Both of you. I'm taking a sabbatical for a year. To study 19th century German folk music at the University of Munich. It has one of the oldest, most revered music conservatories in Europe. The grant just came through.

JULES

Swastikas.

EMMA

Are here. They're banned in Germany. Nazis are apparently some "very fine people" in the USA. A Nazi salute is protected. Here. In Germany, you are arrested. The times they are a changing.

NELL

Dad's going to freak.

EMMA

Dad knows. I spoke to him before I applied. We'll talk about it after tomorrow is over. Let's just get through this. One last time.

JULES

Last?

EMMA

Last.

(Quiet. NELL puts a CD into a player.)
Beautiful sounds of piano music fill the room.)

EMMA

That's – not Mom.

NELL

No. Me.

EMMA

Nell?

NELL

My recital for my graduation. I changed my major my second senior year.

JULES
It's – you're - wonderful.

NELL
Thanks. I have two auditions coming up.

JULES
Wait! Where?

NELL
Can't say. Superstitious stuff.

JULES
Nell – this is so – it just – lifts my heart.

(NELL fades out the music.)

NELL
We're getting too sappy. And – I have an announcement. I put my name in for the lottery. To read Mom's name at 8 a.m. I'm going there. I'm going to the gathering at the Memorial.

JULES
But Dad –

NELL
- never wanted to go. I get that. I'm not Dad. I want – I need- to go. I want to see her name – I want to touch the Survivor Tree – I want to listen to the bells. I want to do it once. To tie the ends together. To close the circle – to -

EMMA
- tell her we're okay.

NELL
And to show her that we're not going to be 9/11 victims. Not anymore. If my name is picked, I'll be at the podium to say her name loud and clear. I will wish her godspeed. If I'm not picked, I will listen and say the Kaddish. Again and again.

Then, I'm making a rubbing of her name and I'm going to tie a string to it and fly it like a kite high over Battery Park. And *then* I will fashion it into a sailboat and send it into the Atlantic to sail the seven seas. Anyone with me?

EMMA
I am so effing there!

JULES

Emma!

EMMA

Come on, Jules. We have to do this! A final acknowledgement that we are no longer victims of 9/11.

JULES

But – the brisket?

NELL

You could – let it go.

JULES

Baby steps. I need to let go in baby steps.

NELL

Come with us. We'll be back in time for the brisket. Promise. But do know this – this is the last time I will do Sad Brisket Day - the last time that I will treat September eleventh as a High Holy Day. We've been doing this all wrong. We've been – quiet. We've made Mom quiet! The woman who sneaked out in the middle of the night to make out with her boyfriend! And – I'm so going to ask Dad about that tomorrow. She was not a quiet woman! She'd hate us tiptoeing around for years – treating her like a saint –

JULES

Jews don't have saints.

NELL

That's where we went wrong. We did. It's time to end the solemn gathering and make some noise. We're so riddled with guilt! Holocaust guilt! September eleventh guilt! Let's stop guiltling Mom out of our lives! You want to make good use of the shoes? Make them dance!

(NELL takes a pair of shoes and starts a percussion. EMMA joins in.)

We're her daughters! We're her celebration! What do we always say? "May their memory be a blessing." Mom blessed us with music. Let's put those memories to work. Down with sad brisket days! Up with music! Let's show Mom what we're made of!

(NELL turns on the CD to a faster, joyful track. Or it could all be percussion – but they will make some noise. NELL dances – EMMA joins her and soon JULIANA does. They take found objects and use them for

percussion. It builds and is joyful – and at the height of their joy, we go to blackout.)

END OF PLAY