**Martini**

**A short play by**

**Nadav Ruziewicz**

**Premise**

MOTTI, a bartender, is getting ready to close up early at the pub ahead of Holocaust Memorial Eve (as per local custom), but when Holocaust survivor LEAH walks in and insists on having her Martini at 8pm on the dot, things start to get complicated.

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

**MOTTI**, 25 – The bartender, insecure and bit of a loser

**LEAH,** 85 – A lonely, childless Holocaust survivor.

**A deserted pub. Chairs have already been stacked up on the tables. Motti, the bartender is behind the bar tidying up, sorting and organising all sorts when suddenly, the door opens. Not looking up, he calls out –**

**MOTTI**: We’re closed! Pub’s shut tonight.

Enter: Leah, taking calculated steps.

**MOTTI:** I said we’re closed! Oi, Madam!

**She neither sees nor hears him, casually carrying on about her business, looking around until finally spotting the one chair that’s yet to be stacked on a table. She takes a seat. An irate Motti rushes over to her.**

**MOTTI:** Excuse me! Madam!

**LEAH**: Oh, hi there! Young man, you do serve Martinis in here, don’t you?

**MOTTI:** No we don’t, actually. I’m sorry madam, but we’re closed.

**LEAH:** What d’you mean, closed? It’s only seven o’clock.

**MOTTI**: Madam, it’s Holocaust Memorial Eve tonight.

**LEAH:** Oh gosh… yes. I suppose it is…

**MOTTI:** Sorry about that.

**He resumes going about his business.**

**LEAH:** And hold the ice.

**Motti stops and backtracks over to her.**

**MOTTI:** Madam, I’m sorry. We can’t do you a martini.

**LEAH:** Oh no, no; it has to be a Martini.

**MOTTI:** I’m not saying we don’t do them full stop; just that I can’t do you one tonight… cos it’s Holocaust Memorial Eve.

**LEAH:** Right… and…?

**MOTTI**: What d’you mean?! Pubs don’t open on Holocaust Memorial Eve!

**LEAH**: Why not?

**MOTTI**: I’m sorry Madam, I’m not being rude, but are you having a laugh?

**LEAH**: “A laugh?” Goodness me, never. It *is* Holocaust Memorial Eve. I just don’t see why you should be shut for the night.

**MOTTI**: What do you mean, “why”? Once a year, we all hit pause for the night and take a moment to honour the ones who were murdered.

**LEAH**: And what about the ones who weren’t murdered?

**MOTTI**: What, d’you mean the survivors?

**LEAH**: That’s right.

**MOTTI**: Them too.

**LEAH**: Right; so they too are honoured, are they?

**MOTTI**: Umm, yeah! Of course they are.

**LEAH**: Well then. In that case, I’ll have that martini now.

**MOTTI**: Sorry? What’s that even... Hang on… you a survivor?

**LEAH**: No.

**MOTTI**: Right, you’re really starting to do my head in! Were you or weren’t you in the Holocaust?

**LEAH**: I was.

**MOTTI**: Okay! That makes you a survivor, then!

**LEAH**: If you say so…

**MOTTI**: Right; look, I’m really sorry you had to go through all that; that must have been rough, but the fact is I’m not allowed to stay open tonight! I’m sorry but it’s not my fault, is it?

**LEAH**: The Holocaust?

**MOTTI**: What do you mean, “the Holocaust”? Of course it’s not my bloody fault!

**LEAH**: Well, whose is it then?

**MOTTI**: The Holocaust? Umm… the Germans, obviously?

**LEAH**: What about your God?

**MOTTI**: God? Umm… he uh… (Contemplates it) actually… where *was* God in the Holocaust?

**Leah Gestures at the kippah (skullcap) Motti is wearing.**

**MOTTI**: (Picking up his kippah ever so slightly when his penny drops): Oh, that? God no… that was just for show. The kosher food supervisor came round this morning.

**LEAH**: Did he now?

**MOTTI**: He did; Just following orders from upstairs…

**LEAH**: You mean, from God?

**MOTTI**: Guess so… I don’t really know much about all that…

**LEAH**: Could I have that martini then, please?

**MOTTI**: Look, madam… I’d love to do a martini right now… I would… but we have strict orders from the council saying we can’t stay open on Holocaust Memorial Eve! They’ve got enforcement teams out there!

**LEAH**: They’ve issued this order, have they?

**MOTTI**: Yes! Exactly. They have.

**LEAH**: I see… then you’re just following orders, are you?

**MOTTI**: That’s right. Don’t want to get the sack, do I? So I do as I’m told.

**LEAH**: you do as you’re told… just a cog in the machine…

**MOTTI**: That’s it… cog in the machine… that’s me.

**LEAH**: Mhmm… SS Soldiers also used to say that a lot…

**MOTTI**: Hang on! Did you just call me a Nazi?!

**LEAH**: I did no so such thing! I was only commenting how I’d heard that said before.

**MOTTI**: Madam, you are well out of line! Coming into *my* place of work and calling me a Nazi… and on Holocaust Memorial Eve of all days!

**LEAH**: You forbid me to drink

**MOTTI**: It’s not my bloody decision! I couldn’t give a lesser shit.

**LEAH**: About the Holocaust?

**MOTTI**: What?! Hang on… Of course I care about the Holocaust! What are you like?! My granddad was in the Holocaust?

**LEAH**: Oh! Was he? Where was that?

**MOTTI**: What do you mean, “where?” Europe! Where else?!

**LEAH**: Well I didn’t think you were talking about the Nigerian Holocaust, did I? … what camp was he in?

**MOTTI**: Oh… right… Umm, actually, his stories were always such a mood kill so I’d always kind of tune out if I’m honest… Hang on, gimme a sec, it’ll come to me… Er… no, it wasn’t Buchenwald… hmm… nope, wasn’t Sobibor either… one of the more grim ones…

**LEAH**: A grim death camp… fancy that…

**MOTTI**: (The name comes back to him. He jumps for joy.) Dachau! It was Dachau! That was the camp’s name.

(Realises that came out a little too cheery and applies a more sombre tone)

**MOTTI**: He was in Dachau.

**LEAH**: Dachau… pfft… not much of a camp, is it? … it was no Auschwitz; I’ll tell you that much.

**MOTTI**: Well yeah; Auschwitz’s like next level awful. I’ve also been.

**LEAH**: Ah, you’ve been to Auschwitz, have you? Do you know a Tzilla Goldblatt?

**MOTTI**: I wasn’t there for the actual Holocaust.

**LEAH**: You don’t say…

**MOTTI**: It was a school trip to Poland.

**LEAH**: Right… and how was that?

**MOTTI**: It was alright, I guess… it was important and all that.

**LEAH**: Important, was it? Oh my. And what was so important about it? Please; do tell.

**MOTTI**: I dunno… seeing all those places and umm… you know, getting a feel of what it was like.

**LEAH**: And what was it like?

**MOTTI**: I mean, it wasn’t too bad … a bit miserable, but pretty good actually.

**LEAH**: Well that’s good, then. I’m delighted to hear you’ve had such a lovely time.

**MOTTI**: Hang on, I didn’t mean it like that… It wasn’t like I went for a laugh. It was just that… there was a whole group of us there… you know what it’s like.

**LEAH**: Ah yes, I do. We also had our own “group” there at first… seemed to get a lot smaller after a while…

**MOTTI**: (Flustered) Right; I’m really going to need you to leave now. Madam! My train’s going to be here any minute.

**The coffeemaker’s steamer which Motti had started earlier as he was tidying up starts letting off a lot of steam… a moment reminiscent of train steam which doesn’t go unnoticed by either of them. Motti quickly switches it off.**

**LEAH**: Young man, I’m going to need you to listen to me. I have to have this martini, and I have to have it at eight o’clock, on the hour. Serve me my drink and I’ll be on my way. One way or another, I’m not leaving without my martini.

**MOTTI**: Right, that’s it…

**A fed-up Motti starts pushing her chair with her still in it towards the door.**

**LEAH**: What are you doing?! Scallywag! Let go of me!

**Loud banging on the front door coming from outside. Motti lets go of the chair and quickly dives down on the floor, cowering in hiding next to Leah.**

**MOTTI**: Fuck, fuck, fuck! It’s the council. They catch me in here and I’m a dead man.

**More knocking.**

**LEAH**: Aren’t you being just a little…?

**MOTTI**: Shh! Be quiet! They’ll hear you!

**More knocking. Motti is panting and sweating profusely.**

**MOTTI** (Whispering): If they find me in here, it’s an on-the-spot 500 shekel penalty. Just like that.

**He snaps his fingers.**

**LEAH**: I see…

**She goes through her handbag.**

**MOTTI**: What are you doing? Why are you getting your phone out?! No! No way; fuck that! You’re not tweeting this. I’m not getting piled on, on social media cos of you! How is that fair, eh?! How d’you think it’s going to look? “Pub waiter bullies Holocaust Survivor…” they’ll rip me to shreds! It’s like all those photos from Gaza of all them kids stood in front of those massive tanks. Fine! Whatever, I’ll do you your bloody mart--…

**She carries on rummaging through her handbag; getting an ancient flip-phone out in the process which she places on the table. Motti goes silent. She gets her purse out and takes out 500 shekels in banknotes which she then leaves on the table.**

**LEAH**: *Now*, can I have that Martini?

**Motti is rendered speechless.**

**MOTTI**: No way! I can’t take your money.

**LEAH**: My dear, I’m beginning to wonder whether you have what it takes to run a pub.

**MOTTI**: Me? Run a pub? What are you on about? I’m just the bar staff and probably not for much longer at this rate.

**LEAH**: Nonsense. Why would anyone ever fire a darling boy like you?

**MOTTI**: Everyone drops me sooner or later, sweetheart. Ellie too; that’s my girlfriend; said she was going to chuck me if I got the sack again cos that would mean I wasn’t taking myself seriously enough for her or whatever…

**LEAH**: Well… that girlfriend of yours… she sounds a bit daft, really.

**Motti laughs**.

**MOTTI**: Nah… I love her to bits.

**LEAH** (Turning a bit contemplative): Ah, well that is a different story …

**Motti goes over to the bar, mixes Leah’s martini and brings it over to her table.**

**MOTTI**: Here you go.

**LEAH**: What about those tiny umbrellas? Surely, you have one of those.

**MOTTI**: An umbrella? You having a laugh?

**LEAH**: Do you do them here?

**Defeated, he goes over to the bar to fetch one.**

**LEAH**: The red ones!

**He obliges and brings one over.**

**LEAH**: And if you wouldn’t mind dimming the lights a little…

**MOTTI**: Madam, I really have to…

**LEAH**: Just a little bit.

**Motti gets up and dims the lights ever so slightly. He goes back to her. She takes a record out of her handbag and hands it over to him.**

**LEAH**: And would you be a dear and play this for me?

**MOTTI**: (Laughs) What am I supposed to play this on, a millstone? This thing’s like a 100 years old.

**Leah’s face drops.**

**LEAH**: Does that mean you can’t play it?

**MOTTI**: No. Sorry. Got nothing to play it on.

**Leah turns sad. Motti clocks that. He considers the situation for a moment and then says.**

**MOTTI**: But I’ll bet we can find it on YouTube.

**LEAH**: And you wouldn’t mind just quickly popping over there, would you?

**Motti laughs**

**MOTTI**: YouTube’s not a place; it’s online… on the internet.

**LEAH**: It isn’t a place?

**MOTTI**: No. Not a place.

**LEAH**: But you *can* keep things there, can you?

**MOTTI**: Well, yeah… I mean, it sort of is a place but not like a “place-place,” like here… you can’t like touch anything or whatever… you just watch stuff or listen to whatever you like…

**LEAH**: Like a memory…

**He gets his phone out and starts looking.**

**MOTTI**: What d’you say the name of the band was?

**LEAH**: (Annoyed at his ignorance) The name of the band… They’re ‘The Andrews Sisters’.

**MOTTI**: Cheers…

**Motti looks them up on YouTube and finds them.**

**MOTTI**: Shall we have a listen then?

**LEAH**: (Moved) Oh, yes! Please.

**He plays the song. Music plays in the pub.**

**LEAH**: And I’ll need you to sit right here.

**She gestures at the chair next to her. Motti obliges. He is way past protesting.**

**LEAH**: Only for a little while. I promise. I won’t bother you anymore after this.

**Motti sighs, resigned and sits at her side. She takes a flat cap out of her handbag and puts it on his head.**

**LEAH**: Goodness me… you are the image of him with this on.

**MOTTI**: Who?

**Leah puts a pair of glasses on him.**

**MOTTI**: Erm… what are you…?

**LEAH**: Oh, Menachem…

**MOTTI**: Eh? Menachem? … Madam?

**LEAH**: Leah… it’s Leah.

**MOTTI**: Leah?

**LEAH**: Your Lulu…

**MOTTI**: Madam, I literally have no idea what you’re talking about…

**LEAH**: I was the one who ordered the coffee and you; sitting there behind me, suddenly turned around; gave me a right talking to.

**(Motti suddenly morphs into Menachem)**

**MENCHAEM**: You do realise we’re in a pub. You don’t go to the pub for coffee, do you? … could you be anymore Middle class?…

**Leah shrugs him off and carries on speaking to Greta who is sitting beside her.**

**LEAH**: Some people think the sun rises and sets on them.

**Menahem shows up at her side holding a Martini.**

**MENACHEM**: You’ve got to try this. They call it a ‘Martini’. Have you ever had one of these?

**LEAH**: Will you please let me be?

**Leah turns her head the other way but he’s not having it. He shows up in front of her and repeats himself.**

**MENACHEM**: Go on… just a sip. You won’t regret it. You have my word…

**LEAH**: Sir, if you don’t mind…

**MENACHEM** **(Laughs):** Sir?! Who, me? Do I look like a ‘sir’ to you? Menachem Baum, at your service.

**LEAH**: I require none of your services, thank you.

**MENACHEM**: Right, tell you what… you don’t even have to give me the time of day, but at least let me buy you a Martini… just the one… it really is the bees’ knees… you’re going to love it.

**Leah takes the glass and throws the drink in his face, yelling**.

**LEAH**: Enough already!

**They both fall silent**.

**LEAH**: Oh, my goodness. I’m so sorry. I can’t believe I did that. I’m so terribly sorry.

**He starts to laugh. She grabs a handful of napkins and starts drying him off. Meanwhile, he licks the martini drops trickling down his lips.**

**MENACHEM**: This is really good stuff! You’ve got to try some of this.

**Leah starts laughing. He watches her, mesmerised.**

**LEAH**: Then, we started talking and poor Greta got bored and left, which I barely even noticed. And you were telling me all about your family and your dream of becoming a photographer because time always goes by so quickly and someone’s got to catch up to it; and we carried on talking and then this song came on and you said…

**MENACHEM**: Come on then!

**LEAH**: But I can’t dance.

**MENACHEM**: You and me both!

**He pulls her off the chair and they start to dance. As they dance, she continues recounting…**

**LEAH**: And I didn’t know yet. That tingling sensation all over my body; this warm feeling at the pit of my stomach, none of it made sense yet; I was just a girl trying to order a coffee at the pub.

**MENACHEM** (To the bartender) can I get a Martini, please?

**He takes the glass with great care.**

**MENACHEM**: Promise not to throw this one at me as well?

**LEAH**: How could anyone throw anything at a face so lovely?

**MENACHEM**: I may sound like a madman cos, umm… we’ve only known each other a couple of hours but, erm… I think you’re… no, actually, I don’t think; I *know* you’re…

**She can only look at him, smiling all over.**

**MENACHEM (Smiles):** Here’s to us?

**LEAH**: Suddenly, they came in; screaming, pushing and shoving; barking in Heine’s German; bastardising the language I loved so much. I could also see the fear in your eyes; and as they were dragging you away, you still managed to mouth this at me:

**MENACHEM**: (In Yiddish) Wait for me with this Martini. (Warten vor mir mit die Martini)

**LEAH**: Still somehow managing a smile through your terror…

I could hear their van’s grumbling and growling… as if it were digesting the prey it had just been fed and then… the sound of it driving away until it disappeared. I just sat there, in silence. And before you knew it, it was business as usual; there was laughter, glasses clinking… only my silence got louder and louder.

So I waited.

Even when the young man who offered me a hand and helped me off the boat asked me to come live with him; I waited.

Even when the soldier I was nursing in hospital later brought me flowers, I waited.

Even at my retirement party, when the insurance man asked me to join him on holiday in Prague, I waited.

But Menachem; I have to be honest with you… I can’t wait any longer. I’m sorry.

**She clinks her glass with his.**

**LEAH**: Here’s to us.

**She takes a sip of her Martini and screws up her face.**

**LEAH**: Good God, this tastes like floor bleach!

**Leah returns to her seat. A stunned Motti removes the flat cap and glasses; collecting himself.**

**LEAH**: Thank you.

**The nationwide Holocaust memorial siren goes off. Leah collects her handbag and slowly makes her way out of the pub. Motti stands there solemnly, observing the national minute of silence, , watching her with his gaze.**

THE END