

**ABRAM AND SARAI: MY SISTER, MY WIFE**

A Short Comedy

by

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In Genesis, Abram passes his wife Sarai off as his sister, to avoid being killed by men who desire her. How would a contemporary Sarai react?

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## Cast of Characters

<u>Voice of God:</u>	A striking, deep, charismatic voice., male or female.
<u>Sarai:</u>	The Biblical matriarch (20s - 60s), reborn as a strong-minded contemporary woman from Brooklyn, with accent and outfit to match
<u>Abram:</u>	The Biblical patriarch (30s-70s), whose attitudes have not advanced very far, although he wears a leisure suit or trendy shirt and has a shepherd's crook or Biblical sandals. He also has a Brooklyn accent and a tough persona. HE talks and listens to God throughout the play.

## Scene

In their kitchen at home. Sarai peels vegetables into a bowl. Abram observes. He keeps watch over a basket of treasures, containing silver, shawls, jewels.

## Time

Something like the present, but strongly connected to Biblical times.

The stage is dark.

VOICE OF GOD (O.S.)

Listen, people! I said this three times - three times - in Genesis! "There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt because of the famine. When he was near entering Egypt, he said to Sarai, his wife, 'Behold now, I know thou art a fair woman to look upon. And it will come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, they will say: This is his wife, and they will kill me, but thee they will keep alive. Please tell them thou art my sister, that it may go well for me for thy sake, and my soul may live because of thee. And so it came to pass that when Abram was in Egypt the Egyptians beheld the woman, and saw that she was very fair. The princes of Pharaoh saw her and praised her, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he dealt well with Abram for the woman, and Abram had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants and maid-servants, and she-asses and camels.'" Well, I could shorten this a bit. I know you people don't like sitting in the dark without anything happening. After that I plagued Pharaoh and his house - no, no, not *those* plagues - I really made things bad because of the way they handled Sarai. And then Pharaoh said to Abram, why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say she is your sister? I took her to be *my* wife! And he gave her back to Abram with a ton of stuff. So now you know the story. But in every generation, well, people change, you know. And you people, you keep acting like you're totally in the dark... oh, never mind. Let's take a look at what's going on in Brooklyn. Nowadays.

LIGHTS COME UP.

ABRAM and SARAI look at each other with passionate hatred. Only husband and wife, or extremely close siblings, could feel so intensely. The way SARAI peels those veggies and holds that bowl tells us how upset SHE is. ABRAM may use his basket of treasures as a security blanket, or read a newspaper in anger.

(A SILENCE.)

SARAI

You are a very peculiar man.

ABRAM

There's nothing peculiar about wanting to stay alive. I could tell they were completely immoral. They never heard of God, of law and order, of take-out even.

ABRAM (CON'T)

It was Egypt, Sarai - be reasonable. It's a pit of immorality. I wish we didn't have to *shlep* all the way there every time there's a food shortage..

SARAI

So you told them I'm your *sister*? I'm your wife, you nincompoop! Something must've happened to you when you were a child...

ABRAM

Well...

SARAI

I don't even want to know! It's no wonder you were willing to leave your family behind.

ABRAM

That's not fair. Actually it was very hard to leave them. Some day, somebody's gonna realize that. I'm basically a kind person.

(SARAI snorts in disbelief)

SARAI

You made me leave, too.

ABRAM

You're my wife - you're supposed to come with me, wherever I go.

SARAI

As your wife, not your sister, you clown!

ABRAM

(Whispering)

Well, I know you don't like talking about this, but in Genesis, chapter 20, it says we had the same father, so we're half-siblings...

SARAI

That's fake news! Fake news! When are these reporters gonna get it right?

ABRAM

I'm sorry. I know you don't like to talk about that.

SARAI

Who wants to walk around with a cloud of incest over their head? It's disgusting. Anyway, don't distract me. Your behavior was disgusting!

ABRAM

But Sarai - these people - they were scary.

SARAI

So it's okay to leave me to their schemes? You're thinking they're going to kill you to take your beautiful wife - you get yourself out of the way so they can rape me - but at least you'll stay alive if I'm your sister? This is okay by you?

ABRAM

Rape? Rape? Who said anything about rape? He wanted to *marry* you. End of story.

SARAI

End of story? He "took me." Do you know what that means?

(Awkward silence)

ABRAM

I'm sorry. I don't want to know.

SARAI

I'm not a piece of meat.

ABRAM

He was a prince, a well-born person. Look at all this stuff they gave us, now that it's all sorted out.

SARAI

What about what *I* want?

ABRAM

What about it? I don't understand what you're so upset about. Nothing happened. That's what you said. Nothing happened.

(SARAI silently reacts)

SARAI

You never heard of a white lie?

ABRAM

But you said...

(ABRAM takes in what this means. HE looks ready to murder, begins to wail.)

(SARAI is almost hysterical as well)

SARAI

It's bad enough to lose myself. I don't need to lose you too. You'd better calm down. Too late to do anything.

(ABRAM gradually wills himself to calm down)

ABRAM

(Talking with an invisible GOD)

It'll be okay. It'll be okay? It'll be okay. I'll get you a nice shawl, with all that silver. A cleaning lady, even. I saw this ad, about Hagar somebody. You know, he's mad at me - says I shouldn't have treated him like that. Shoulda just told him we was married.

SARAI

I tend to agree with him.

ABRAM

You lied to him too. You said you was my sister!

SARAI

Because you *insisted*. Like a two-year-old you are. I wish I hadn't listened to you.

ABRAM

But you're my wife. Of course you listened to me. You have to.

SARAI

That's the problem. We need to change up all the rules. I guess it's gonna take time.

ABRAM

What rules? Things are just fine the way they are. Come on, shmoozle...

SARAI

You have a screw loose. Maybe two. I'm telling you, if we ever have children...

ABRAM

Ha! I'm going to be the father of a great generation, a great people - I feel it in my bones. God told me.

SARAI

He seems to love to talk to you. Me, not so much.

ABRAM

Of course not, you're a woman.

SARAI

Yes, I'm a woman, your wife, your helpmate - I'm not chopped liver!

ABRAM

Of course not! You're Sarai, wife of Abram, who left Ur, and made his way to Canaan, accompanied by his brother's son Lot and ...

SARAI

Would you stop believing your own PR, just for a minute? I'd like to be heard. Me. Just me. My voice.

ABRAM

I don't know what you're talking about. Have I not provided flocks of sheep - do you know what it costs to park sheep in Brooklyn, and if they make a mess, you get a citation - and we have servants, silver - and, since this unfortunate incident, we have even more -

SARAI

You don't get it! You want a sister, bud? Keep going like this, we may never have children.

ABRAM

I'm your husband. You can't withhold your affection from me.

SARAI

Is that so?

ABRAM

Come on, now. You're my shmoozle, shwoozle.

(ABRAM tries to help with the vegetables. SARAI  
beings to soften, but then gets mad again)

SARAI

You can make yourself believe that nothing happened?

ABRAM

I have to. Or I can't live. Did something happen?

(Working on himself to gain the nerve)

Was he - better than me?

SARAI

You idiot! You think I wanted to - you're missing the point!

ABRAM

Did something happen?

SARAI

Nothing happened. As you said, he was a "prince." A real gentleman. Not that I  
couldn't have shown him a thing or two. I am a married woman, after all.

ABRAM

Sarai, you're killing me.

SARAI

Good.

ABRAM

What can I do?



SARAI

To start with, you could help me around the house a little more. People show up, no notice, you go running out to wait on them, hand and foot, foot washing, what is with the foot washing - you don't even do that for me!

ABRAM

I thought they were angels.

SARAI

Honey, when are you gonna wake up? How many angels do you think there are in Brooklyn?

ABRAM

I know it's been tough here, and those Italian guys...

SARAI

I'm not complaining about that. But, could we have a little, what-cha-ma-callit? Romance? You know, like a date night once in a while.

ABRAM

Dates? I'll get you all the dates you want. And myrrh and frankincense, too.

SARAI

Oy! You don't know from nothing.

ABRAM

I know you're my woman, Sarai. Let me help you with that. Do you have another peeler?

(ABRAM muscles his way into helping her.  
SHE reluctantly lets him)

SARAI

I'm thinking of changing my name.

ABRAM

What's wrong with Sarai?

SARAI

What's wrong with you? All you do is listen to God, morning, noon and night! You run to do God's bidding like there's no tomorrow. Can't you be married and listen to God at the same time?

ABRAM

(Conferring with God)

I can. I will. We don't believe in no celibacy. Even the thought - it gives me the creeps.  
What a waste.

SARAI

Well then, you gotta listen. To me.

ABRAM

I am married. To you. I do listen.

SARAI

Is that so? One of these days, you're gonna make the wrong choice. You've got to give me some respect.

ABRAM

I do respect you. You're an amazing woman. One day, everybody's gonna talk about you.

SARAI

Just remember that. I want you to succeed, to be a leader, a great leader even. But I'm a person too.

ABRAM

Maybe we should both change our names. This whole thing - it has been pretty embarrassing.

SARAI

Not yet. I'm sure something will come - and then we'll make that decision. Jointly. You and me. Okay?

ABRAM

Okay.

(SARAI hands him a potato to peel. He digs in. SHE looks at him with love and wonder)

SARAI

And I'd like to be more involved with the sacrifices. You know, go along with you, on these trips into the mountains, instead of your always leaving me behind. I could help.