





"Darling, I wish I could, but I can't," he says.

She looks at him blankly. Then she looks at us. "Oh, don't worry about your friends. I'll get people to drive back here and pick them up too."

Shlomo puts his hand on top of her car and leans over to the open window. "That's very sweet darling, but listen," he says. "The whole thing is, you know on *Shabbos*, I'm not permitted to travel."

"Oh I know about that," she says. "But what you've got to realize is that there are over 300 people at the temple waiting to see you. We planned a long time for this." Her voice is filled with seriousness and responsibility and worry.

I lean over and make eye contact with her. "How far away is it?" I say.

"It's far," she says.

"How far?"

She leans over and looks at her odometer. The lights gleam faintly in the interior of her car. "It looks to me like 27 miles."

"Wow! That's quite a hike!" says Cathy. Everyone else is silent, digesting this information.

"Let me get you there," she says to Shlomo. "It's a *mitzvah* for you to be there for all those people."

Shlomo exhales and shakes his head. "I wish I could," he says.

"27 miles," I say to no one in particular. "At three miles an hour that's, let's see, nine hours. At four miles an hour, that would be a little under seven. So we're talking about getting there somewhere between three and five in the morning."

The black sky looks like it's starting to cloud over. Shlomo is looking down at the street. I can hear him take a deep breath. A car goes by.

"Listen darling," he says softly, "you've got to do me the greatest favor in the world. If I got in the car with you now, it would be very cute and sweet and maybe we'd have a nice time singing, but it wouldn't really be *Shabbos*." Ellen is looking at him. We're all looking at him, and at her.

"You know, we live in a world where people want everything instant, everything easy. Instant gratification. Fast food. But you know, in their *kishkes*, people are hungry for more than fast food. We all are. And our kids aren't stupid. They know the difference. They're hungry for real soul food. Imagine, tonight the people in your temple

have a chance, maybe some of them for the first time, to taste, to *mammash* taste, the sweetness of *Shabbos*."

He talks to her about asking them to wait there until four or five in the morning, or maybe go home and sleep a little and then come back. She's skeptical at first, but he gradually wins her over. She turns off the engine, gets out of the car, and joins us on the sidewalk.

We all start getting excited. Ellen gets excited. We talk about what we'll need. Plenty of wine for *Kiddush*, plenty of *hallah* to make the blessing over the bread. Lots of food. A room arranged so lots of people can gather around with us in circles. That means getting out of the sanctuary and into the rec hall. Ellen promises to get it all set up.

She tells us there's a Denny's about six or seven miles up Sepulveda, and it would make a good place for us to stop and get something to eat along the way. Shlomo explains that we can't do any commercial transactions on *Shabbos*. She offers to get us some sandwiches to take with us. I explain that we can't carry anything. She sighs and shrugs. I exchange glances with Efraim and Sonny and Yosepha. 27 miles with no food.

"But darling, there is one more favor you can do for me," Shlomo says.

Ellen is smiling. "Sure Shlomo, what do you want?"

"Maybe you can ask all the people at the temple to invite their friends to join them? We can have a *mammash* great celebration!"

Ellen laughs and says she will. Shlomo gives her a hug. Then he smiles, gives her a "V" sign, and turns to start walking. She goes to her car.

I go with her. Efraim is with me. "You know, there *is* a way to feed Shlomo and us on the way," I say.

She looks at us, curious. "How?" she says. We have to be careful about how to say this, because it's not permitted to ask a fellow Jew to violate *Shabbos*, even if they're already doing it. I explain that if the temple had already made arrangements with the Denny's before *Shabbos*, either paying them before or promising to pay them later, then Shlomo could probably sit down and have a cup of coffee, and maybe find something kosher enough to eat. I look over to Efraim for confirmation. He shrugs, smiles and looks up. Ellen smiles and nods. I don't need to say more. She hugs Efraim, then me, and gets in the car.

Two hours later we're crowded into a couple of booths at Denny's, feeling the relief of sitting on the soft benches covered in

dark red plastic, drinking coffee and eating English muffins and tuna sandwiches. The rest and food revive us.

Two or three hours later, it's after 1:00 AM. We've settled into a steady walking rhythm. Shlomo's pace is surprisingly fast.

"I just felt rain," Sonny says. "Does anyone else feel rain?"

"No way!" says Yosepha.

"I felt something," says Karen. "Just a couple of drops."

"You know something?" says Cathy. "He's right! It is raining!"

The rain gets stronger. Shlomo stops walking, holds out his hands and looks up at the sky. We all stop, feel the rain, look at each other. It's raining hard and we're starting to get wet. I can feel the raindrops trickling down my face and starting to soak through my shirt.

An hour later it's still raining hard. We're soaked, walking fast, singing and laughing. Fortunately the night is warm. Everyone is in a good mood.

A car pulls up alongside us, and moves forward slowly, to keep pace with our walking. This is a big car, not Ellen Katz. Shlomo is curious and walks up to the car. The front window on the passenger side comes down. A man sticks his head out. Under the street light I can see his shock of curly black hair, tinged with grey, tied back in a little pony tail. The driver sitting next to him is looking back and forth between us and the road.

"Who's this?" Shlomo says.

"Rabbi Carlebach?" the man says. His voice is deep, forceful.

"Yes . . ."

"This is Ron McCoy, the Night Owl, from radio station KFI," he says. He's talking like he's on the air. He's host of a late-night radio show, and he's here to check us out. Shlomo keeps walking and the rest of us follow. McCoy's car moves forward smoothly, keeping pace with Shlomo.

"Tell me something," Shlomo says. "How did you know we were here?"

"The Night Owl learns from many messengers," he says, sounding like a Beatnik reading poetry. "This one was a lady from the temple."

Shlomo turns around, flashes us a "V", and smiles. "Holy Ellen!" he says.

"Rabbi, do you mind if I ask you some questions for our listeners?" says the Night Owl. He is holding a microphone.

"Do people really listen so late?" says Shlomo. "How many listen?"

"Rabbi, they're out there, right now, in every corner of L.A.," he says in his deep Beatnik voice, with great conviction. "They've got their radios on, they're awake, and they're listening to every word we're saying."

"Listen my friend," Shlomo says. "I'm happy to talk to you and your listeners, but can we maybe do it while we're walking?" He moves his hand over his face to wipe away the water. I wonder if he's going to wring it out of his beard.

The Night Owl agrees. We walk. Shlomo walks by the curb, fast. The car cruises at his pace. The water has formed a river in the street by the curb, almost up to the edge. The car's tires cut into the water, like a jeep in a swamp. The Night Owl leans out the window holding his microphone. "Rabbi, let me begin with the obvious question: Why are you and your friends walking 27 miles in the rain?"

Shlomo nods and thinks a moment. "Let me put it like this," he says. "We live in a world of doing. There's so much to do, right? When we're children, we're going to school. Then when we're older, we go to college, and then maybe we go to graduate school. Then we're getting married, working, having children, trying to be successful. So when we're tired and we want to rest, what do we do? We take a vacation, right? We call the travel agent, buy plane tickets to Paris, or take a cruise to Bermuda. It's all very sweet, but it's all about doing."

We come to a street corner. The traffic light is red, surrounded by red raindrops. Shlomo keeps walking. The car hesitates, then follows him. The rest of us follow too. I wonder if he even sees the red light. The streets are empty of everything except us and raindrops.

"There's such a thing as doing, and then there's such a thing as joy. So what brings us joy? Imagine I'm on a date with a beautiful girl, and I'm very taken with her, and I ask her what she wants to do. And let's say she tells me, first she wants to see a big Broadway show, then she wants to go out to a fancy restaurant, then she wants to go dancing at an expensive club. So, how does that make me feel? I better check with my wallet, right? Then I'll tell you how I feel!" He laughs. Yosepha, who's walking to his right, looks up at him and laughs. Shlomo flashes her a "V".

"Okay. But seriously, imagine if I ask her, and what she says to me is: 'It doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter, because what I really

want is to be with you.' Greatest thing in the world, right? That's joy." Cathy and Karen are walking on my right. Karen is squeezing water out of her hair, while looking curiously at the Night Owl, who winks at her. Cathy looks over at me, smiling. Strands of wet hair are plastered over her forehead. She looks radiant and shy, like a schoolgirl.

"You know, sadly, what kind of relationship do we have with ourselves? Honestly, what do we tell ourselves? I'll be happy later, right? When I make a million dollars. Or when I get the house clean. Or when I write a great book, or win the Nobel Prize, or win the Miss America contest.

"What kind of relationship do we have with God?" Shlomo continues. "You know, most so called religious people are relating to God on the doing level. If I do all the right things, God will be very impressed and make a list, and let me into heaven. And if I made out a big check to the synagogue, then maybe I'll get a front row seat with the angels, right?" Shlomo smiles at Sonny and flashes a 'V'.

"But you know, in our tradition, in the Torah, in the Old Testament, there's six days, so to speak, where God is doing, creating the world, and one day where God is just being. This is so deep. Our Rabbis say that when God chased Adam and Eve out of *Gan Eden*, out of paradise, that they had to live in the world of doing. But the level of *Shabbos* is that, we can go back in. We can literally go back to paradise. You know, it says in our prayers, *Yism'hu b'malkhuskha shomrey Shabbos*. Whoever is holding onto *Shabbos* is filled with joy, the joy God's world, the joy of paradise.

"Okay, listen now, open up your heart. What is God saying to us? Just be with me. Just be with the whole world. Simple as it is. Imagine if I could be on the level, just for one day, just for one *minute*, to see myself through God's eyes, to see how beautiful and perfect I already am."

Shlomo turns his head to look at us. His hair is soaked, and his *kippah* is hanging a little on one side. He smiles at Yosepha. "Imagine if I could really see how beautiful every person is. Imagine if I could feel how beautiful and perfect the *whole world* is. Just to be the way I am, for everything to be the way it already is. Just to be."

Cathy is clasping her hands together and smiling. I look up at the sky. I feel the muscles aching in my legs, the wet shirt on my back, the night air in my lungs, the rain on my face. A dozen wet people are walking in the middle of the night through the rain on an empty street in the middle of Los Angeles, with a single car following. For a moment, with his shaggy head of black and grey hair sticking out of the car window into the rain, even the Night Owl is silent. The world