A Rehearsal Collapses

"You should not make graven images."

A theater ensemble wants to meet the next Saturday after a rehearsal. The actor playing "Andri" in "Andorra" by Max Frisch is Jewish. His colleagues did not know about this, until he says: "I cannot do this on the Sabbath, I do not travel on Saturdays."

Student texts:

I actually didn't want to say it at all, but it slipped out, that I cannot come on Saturday because of the Sabbath. From the first, it felt peculiar to play this role, but I must admit that it fascinated me. At any rate, there was this moment of silence and at that time, I wished I had remained quiet. No, we simply didn't leave that way. In the end, one of them again pursued the subject and asked if I were really Jewish. Their utter surprise and doubt was obvious; they did not know how to react. Okay – I also did not know how to behave. It was liberating, when Pia suddenly candidly said: "I find that totally fascinating." She was right. We had all just decided to do this play by Max Frisch and no one had really thought about how it really had been. No one had thought that one member of the ensemble could be Jewish. And when I was cast in the lead role, I reflected where it would lead me. Even though I was a Jew, I was cast as a non-Jew whom no one believed

was really not a Jew, which caused his murder in the play. I wondered how this would affect the others. We had all already dealt with the contents of the play; how far would we possibly encounter hostility and misunderstanding. We now had a situation that would allow us to really understand the play. We no longer only had to rehearse playing the part of this person, but could really live it. It occurs to me that when I say "we," I, of course, mean the others. They could contemplate and ask themselves, what do I really think and feel about the question of anti-Semitism — where are my intellectual limitations. I think it was good that they learned the truth. This play, with this cast and this experience, will be very special, even though I do not think that it will be easy.

The cast wants to meet on Saturday. Andri cannot because it is Sabbath. He had just said Sabbath, but would rather have mumbled it. He felt increasing shame, rage, a mixture of anger and despair. He was upset by what he had done. Why hadn't he mentioned this earlier? There had been occasions to have discussed this in the ensemble. When the director and the dramatic adviser had spoken about the historical essence, about the Holocaust, the Shoah, he simply could have said: "I also see this or that in the following way, perhaps you do not know that I am a Jew." Or when he personally spoke with Barblin about anti-Semitism, he could simply have said: "Listen, I really can't speak about it like that, I am a Jew." Chances missed, why had he now created this asinine situation? Or when they spoke about casting specific roles four weeks ago? But now it dawns on him: Why did they actually suggest him? Why me? Perhaps they sensed or knew that I am a Jew. He tried to reconstruct it more precisely. What had Volker said? "Sure, Andri could be played by … he is the only one" or Giselle had clowned about: "Yes, you must play Andri, you are the right type for the role." Had they already all had their prejudices while they kept silent?