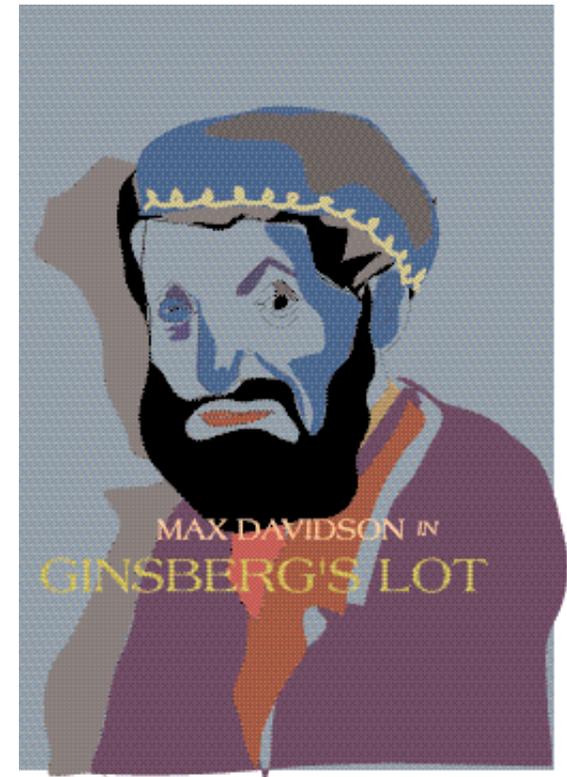


Chapter Seven

Ginsberg's Lot





See that altar kocker sitting alone at that table? He just pinched me. Who does he think he is? If he didn't have one foot in the grave I'd slap him.



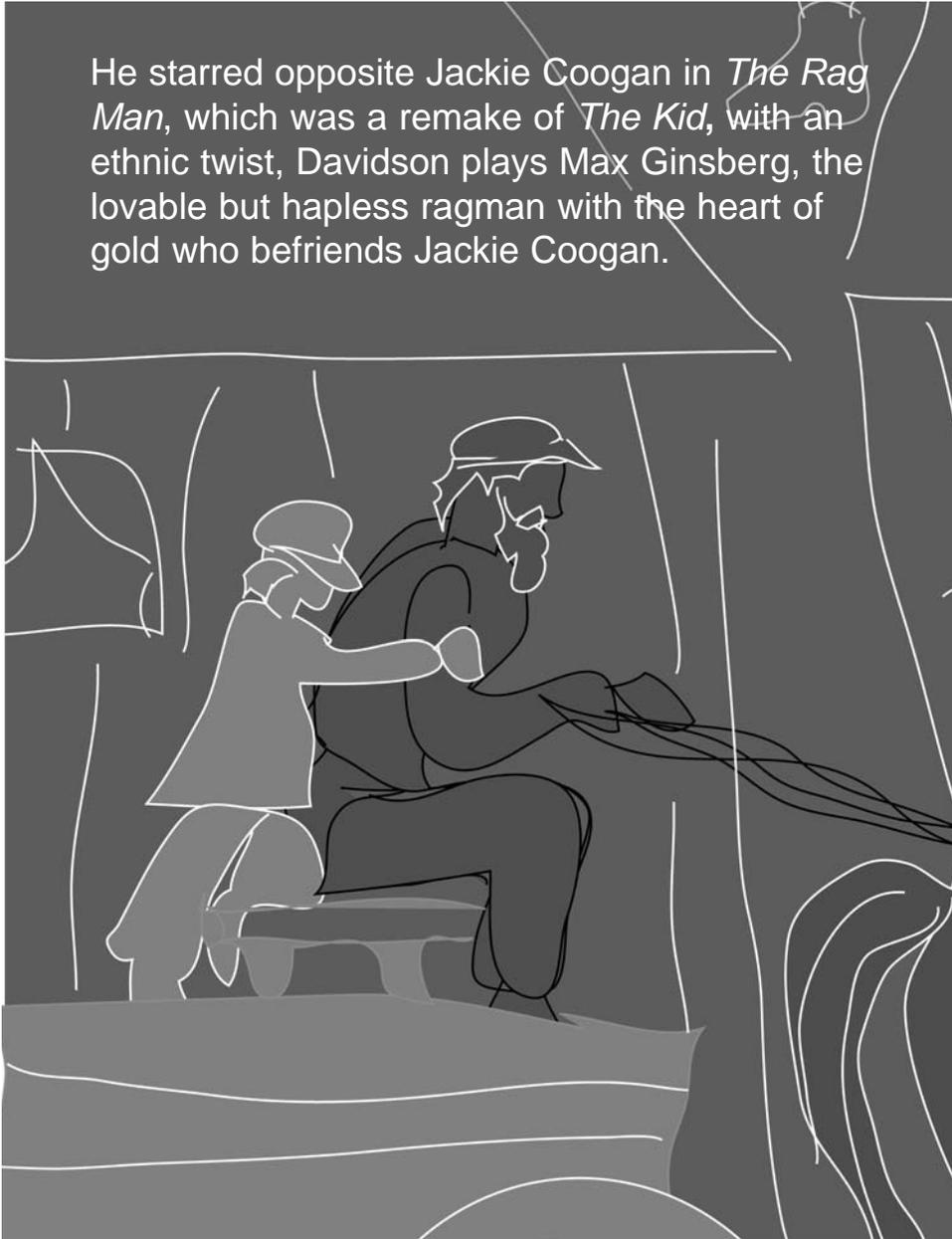
That altar kocker is Max Davidson, one of the greats of Yiddish Theatre and silent movies.



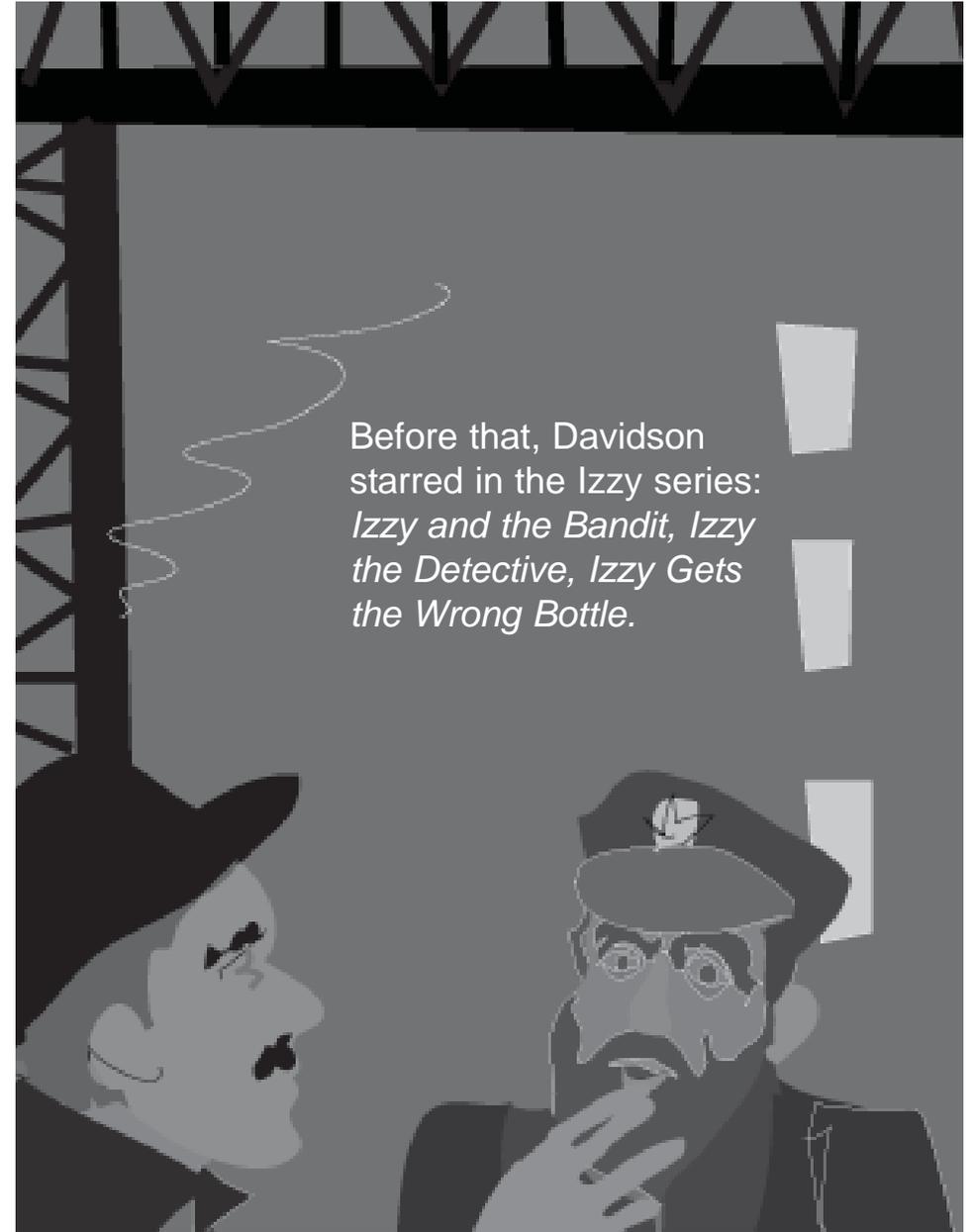
Max Davidson was a fine actor. He played the Ginsbergs, Goldsteins, Silvermans, Litskys, Levis and Cohens. He played pawnbrokers, gamblers, shylocks, junk dealers, tailors, rabbis and bankers. For the silent film industry, Davidson was the bumbling Jew.



He starred opposite Jackie Coogan in *The Rag Man*, which was a remake of *The Kid*, with an ethnic twist, Davidson plays Max Ginsberg, the lovable but hapless ragman with the heart of gold who befriends Jackie Coogan.



Before that, Davidson starred in the Izzy series: *Izzy and the Bandit*, *Izzy the Detective*, *Izzy Gets the Wrong Bottle*.



Directors who worked with Davidson; D.W. Griffith, Hal Roach, Tod Browning, Cecil B. DeMille all agreed, he was the consummate professional. And he was funny. But they did not know what to do with him.



Davidson's most well know film was *Call of the Cuckoos*, or maybe it was *Pass the Gravy*. But as legend has it, his greatest film was never released. There is much speculation and innuendo as to why it never was released, but I'll leave that to your imagination.

In this talkie, Davidson reprises his role of Max Ginsberg the beleaguered rag picker with a heart of gold. However, this time the picture revolves around Max's dealings with his three vivacious daughters, intertwining Sholom Alechem's *Tevye* stories with *King Lear*.

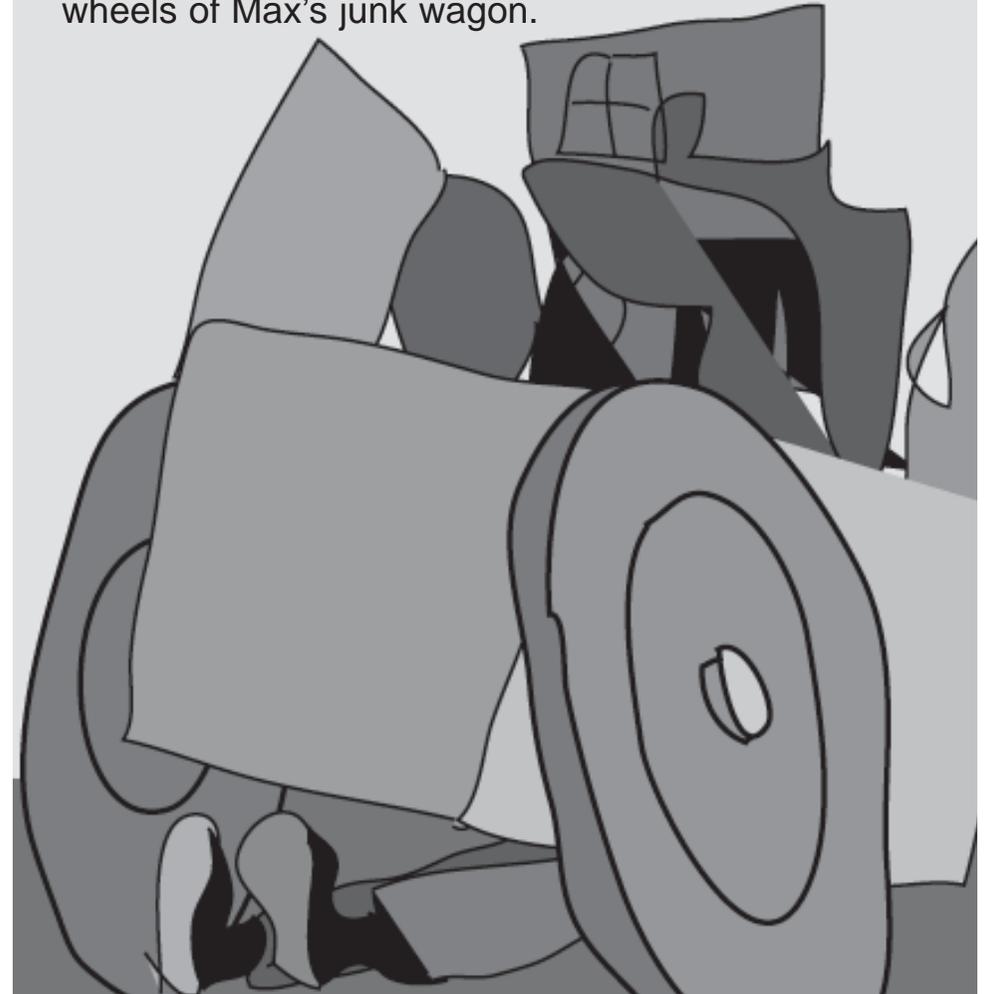


It is Ginsberg's lot as the long suffering father to always be a step behind life's vicissitudes as well as the capricious passions of his three daughters.

But here's the rub. One of Ginsberg's daughters - Heyele - is disowned by Max for shacking up with her shaigitz boyfriend. She falls into a life of prostitution. Instead of honorably committing suicide or dying of consumption, she becomes one of the richest and most powerful women in New York, a consort to politicians, ballplayers and actors.



At the end of the movie she uses her money and influence to arrange for the acquittal of her father who had been charged with the murder of a powerful industrialist (modeled on Henry Ford) who had slipped under the wheels of Max's junk wagon.

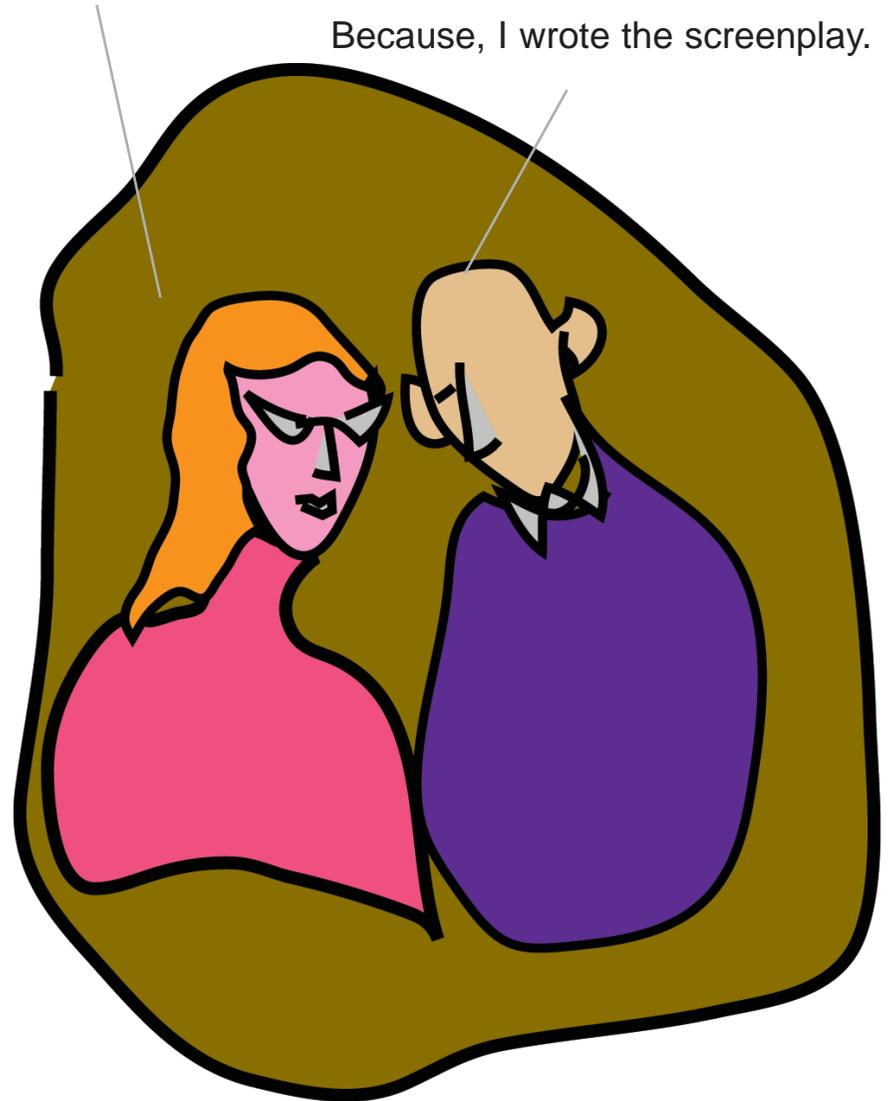


All this was too much for the newly created Hayes Commission whose job it was to monitor morality in the motion picture industry. At least, that is what I was told. *Ginsberg's Lot* was never released.



Yitzhak, how do you know so much about a film that never was?

Because, I wrote the screenplay.



And there sits Max Davidson in anonymity.  
His acting career continued, but it never  
really took off. *Ginsberg's Lot* would have  
made him a star.

