

Beau Jest

A Comedy

by James Sherman

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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CHARACTERS

Sarah Goldman
Chris, her boyfriend
Bob, her escort
Joel, her brother
Miriam, her mother
Abe, her father

PLACE

A one bedroom apartment in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago.

TIME

ACT I, Scene 1: An evening in spring
ACT I, Scene 2: Later that evening
ACT II, Scene 1: Two weeks later
ACT II, Scene 2: Later that evening
ACT III, Scene 1: Two weeks later
ACT III, Scene 2: The next morning

The play was developed as part of the Michael and Marianne O'Shaughnessy Playwright Development Fund.

BEAU JEST premiered at the Victory Gardens Theater on November 16, 1989, under the direction of Dennis Zacek. The set design was by Stephen Packard, the costume design was by Jessica Hahn, the lighting design was by Larry Schoeneman, the sound design and stage management were by Galen Ramsey. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

SARAH GOLDMAN Linnea Todd
CHRIS Peter Curren
BOB Michael Guido
JOEL Fredric Stone
Paul Rouffa, as of 12/19/89
MIRIAM Roslyn Alexander
ABE Bernie Landis

BEAU JEST, produced by Arthur Cantor, Carol Ostrow and Libby Adler Mages, premiered in New York at the Lambs Theatre on October 10, 1991, under the direction of Dennis Zacek. The set design was by Bruce Goodrich, the costume design was by Dorothy Jones, the lighting design was by Edward R F Matthews, stage management was by Jana Llynn. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

SARAH GOLDMAN Laura Patinkin
CHRIS John Michael Higgins
BOB Tom Hewitt
JOEL Larry Fleischman
MIRIAM Roslyn Alexander
ABE Bernie Landis

ACT I

Scene 1

AT RISE. SARAH and CHRIS are sitting on the couch.

CHRIS. I love you.

SARAH. I love you, too.

(The DOORBELL rings.)

SARAH. *(Getting up.)* Oh. That'll be my date.

CHRIS. I really hate this.

SARAH. I know. I know. I'm sorry. It's just for tonight. Will you get that for me? I've got to get ready. *(SHE exits to the bedroom)*

CHRIS. *(HE goes to answer the door.)* I hate this a lot. *(Opens door. BOB is there.)*

BOB. Hi. Uh ... Is Sarah Goldman here?

CHRIS. Yeah. Come on in.

BOB. Thank you. Hi. I'm Robert Schroeder.

(HE holds out his hand CHRIS takes it and shakes.)

CHRIS. Chris Cringle.

BOB. *(Not sure HE heard right)* I'm sorry?

CHRIS. Yeah, yeah. Like Santa Claus.

BOB. Oh. Will you know if I'm naughty or nice?

CHRIS. Damn right, I will.

BOB. Is Miss Goldman ...?

CHRIS. She's getting dressed.

BOB. Ah. Thank you.

(THEY stand for a moment.)

BOB. How 'bout those Cubs, huh?

CHRIS. Yeah.

BOB. Yeah. Well, it's early yet.

CHRIS. Yeah.

(THEY stand for a moment.)

CHRIS. Is this legal, what you do?

BOB. Oh, absolutely. We're licensed by the state. This isn't like looking in the *Reader* and calling some twenty-four hour service. No. No. Mostly, our clientele are elderly women who need an arm to hold onto when they go to the opera or ballet or something. I went to the opera last night. "Tristan Und Isolde." It was great. V'you ever seen it?

CHRIS. Can't say as I have.

BOB. Oh, well, it was great. Long, but, you know, great.

CHRIS. You do this a lot?

BOB. Well, let's see ... Counting last night at the opera ... This is my ... second job.

CHRIS. Oh. Was this a major career move for you?

BOB. Hmm? No. No, this is just something to fill in. A buddy of mine has been doing it for awhile. He got me into the agency. The only requirements are, "Do you speak good English?" and "Do you own a tux?" And you get to go out with a lot of nice ladies. Beats waiting tables.

CHRIS. Oh. So you're an actor.

BOB. *(Chuckling)* Heh. Yeah. Yeah, that's very good. Yeah, I'm an actor.

CHRIS. Have I seen you in any movies?

BOB. I don't know. Where do you usually sit? *(BOB laughs. CHRIS doesn't.)* Sorry. It's an old joke. No, I do theatre mostly. Have you ever been to Candlelight Playhouse?

CHRIS. I saw, whadyacallit, "Follies" there.

BOB. Oh, well ... I wasn't in that one. But I work there every so often. Sometimes I go out on the road. That's why this job is so good. I can work my own schedule and all that.

CHRIS. Good for you.

BOB. Thanks, yeah. What do you do?

CHRIS. I'm in advertising. Leo Burnett.

BOB. Oh. What department?

CHRIS. I'm an account supervisor.

BOB. Oh. Great. Well ...

SARAH. *(Enters.)* Hi. Sorry to keep you waiting. *(To Bob, holding out her hand.)* Hi, I'm Sarah.

BOB. *(Shaking hands.)* I'm Bob.

CHRIS. I'm outa here. *(HE goes for his coat.)*

SARAH. I'll call you later.

CHRIS. You're sure you want to go through with this?

SARAH. I'll call you as soon as the coast is clear.

CHRIS. You're sure you don't want me to ...?

SARAH. No.

CHRIS. I love you.

SARAH. I ... know.

CHRIS. I really hate this.

SARAH. (*Leading Chris out the door.*) I'm sorry. I'll talk to you later.

CHRIS. All right. All right. 'Bye.

SARAH. 'Bye.

BOB. Nice meeting you.

(*CHRIS exits. SARAH closes the door SHE turns to Bob.*)

SARAH. So ... Hi.

BOB. Hi.

SARAH. Can I take your coat?

BOB. Shouldn't we be going?

SARAH. No. No, we're having dinner here.

BOB. Oh. I knew it was for dinner. I thought we'd be going someplace.

SARAH. No, it's here.

BOB. Oh, well ... (*Looking at the apartment.*) This is very nice.

SARAH. Thank you. (*SHE takes his coat and takes it into the bedroom*)

BOB. What's the occasion?

SARAH. It's my father's birthday.

BOB. Oh, gee. I wish I had known. I would have brought him a present.

SARAH. (*Re-entering.*) I got him one from both of us. Listen, I'm really behind schedule. Would you mind helping me set the table?

BOB. No, not at all.

(*THEY set the table throughout the following.*)

BOB. Can I ask you a question?

SARAH. Sure. What?

BOB. Well, I was just wondering ... Why did you call an escort service? You and Chris seem pretty, um ...

SARAH. We are. We are. Basically. Only my family doesn't know about it. They did. At first. But my parents were so unhappy about it ...

BOB. Why? He seems like a nice guy.

SARAH. He is. But he isn't Jewish.

BOB. Oh. What, are your parents, like, Orthodox?

SARAH. No. They just want "what's best for their children." Which, translated, means I should only date somebody Jewish.

BOB. Oh.

SARAH. Which Chris obviously is not. So, we've been seeing each other on the sly for the past six months.

BOB. Wow. Forks on the left.

SARAH. What?

BOB. (*He's correcting her place setting.*) The silverware. Forks go on the left.

SARAH. Oh. Sorry.

BOB. It's okay. I used to do this for a living. So you and Chris have been doing "We kiss in a shadow."

SARAH. I know. The whole thing is so stupid. But my parents... Well, you know ... They're my *parents*. My dad was sick last year. My mother's been so tense. I just can't give them any grief right now. The worst of it was after I told them I'd stopped seeing Chris. They assumed I wasn't seeing anybody. So my mother kept trying to fix me up with sons of friends and relatives and—I don't know—strangers she'd meet on the street. I don't know *where* she found these guys. But my mother is determined to make me happy. Whether I like it or not. One time, I went to their house for dinner and she had clipped personal ads out of a magazine for me. Can you imagine? Looking down at your dinner plate and seeing brisket on one side and "S.W.M., mid-thirties, Jewish" on the other?

BOB. (*Grimacing.*) Ooh.

SARAH. Really, I mean, I know she means well, but ... So, anyway, just so they'd feel better a few months ago, I told them I'd started seeing someone. I just *invented* a boyfriend.

BOB. Oh. And that's ... (*HE points to himself.*)

SARAH. Right.

BOB. Wow.

SARAH. Well, my mother's been driving me crazy with "When are we going to meet him?" "When are we going to meet him?" I just couldn't put it off anymore. (*SHE places two Sabbath candlesticks on the table.*) She'll probably want to light candles. I thought about asking one of my friends to be my stand-in beau for the evening, but, frankly, I'm too embarrassed by the whole thing for anybody I know to know about it. So I called your agency. (*SHE looks at him.*) You must think this is extremely weird.

BOB. Well, I must admit, I expected you to be a little old lady who needed a dinner companion.... But this would have been my second guess.

SARAH. (*SHE remembers what has to be done.*) Oh, God. Listen. Pay attention. My father's name is Abe. He owns a chain of dry cleaning stores. My mother's name is Miriam. But I think you should call them Mr. and Mrs. Goldman. They live in Skokie on Kildare just off Dempster. And my brother'll be here, too. His name is Joel. He's a psychologist. He's divorced. He has two children. You and I have been dating since January. We met at the wedding of my best friend, Marilyn Dintenfass. You think you can remember that?

BOB. Yeah, I guess ... Only ... Wow.

SARAH. What?

BOB. Well, no, I guess I can handle it. Uh ... See, all I heard was "You're going out with a

Miss Sarah Goldman. You're going to dinner. Wear a suit."

SARAH. I'm sorry. I know this is crazy. It was all in kind of a rush. What do they say? "Desperation is the mother of invention?"

BOB. No. No, it's all right. I just think, uh ... What with your parents and all ... Maybe it'd be better if you had somebody who was Jewish.

SARAH. (*SHE freezes.*) What?

BOB. Well, from what you're telling me ...

SARAH. You're Jewish.

BOB. No, I'm not.

SARAH. Your name is Schroeder. That's a Jewish name.

BOB. Not to me. My father was Polish. My mother was Italian.

SARAH. I specifically asked the agency for somebody Jewish.

BOB. I guess they thought Schroeder was a Jewish name, too. (*HE holds his hands up in a shrug.*) Honest mistake.

SARAH. (*SHE goes white.*) OH MY GOD!!

BOB. I'm sorry. I didn't know.

SARAH. Oh, my God. I'm going to die.

BOB. I could call. See if they could find someone.

SARAH. No! No! There's no time. They'll be here any minute. Oh, God, I'm going to die.

BOB. (*Taking control.*) All right. All right. Look. It'll be all right.

SARAH. No. I'm going to die. They'll find the body. You explain it.

BOB. Sarah. Sarah. It'll be all right. Look ... I'm a good actor. I was going to have to do some acting here anyway.

SARAH. They'll know.

BOB. No, it'll be all right. I can improvise. I took classes at Second City.

SARAH. Oh, God.

BOB. Hey, lots of people think I'm Jewish. I'm taken for Jewish all the time.

SARAH. They'll know.

BOB. I once did a six month tour of "Fiddler on the Roof." Topol thought I was Jewish.

SARAH. No, they'll know. They'll know.

BOB. They won't know.

SARAH. They'll know! They can spot a Jew a mile away. It's like radar.

(*The DOORBELL rings.*)

SARAH. Uhhh! They're here. I'm going to die.

BOB. Sarah. Sarah. Take a deep breath.

(*SHE does.*)

BOB. One more.

(*SHE does*)

BOB. Okay. Answer the door.

SARAH. (*SHE moves to the door. SHE suddenly remembers one more thing and turns back to Bob.*) Oh! Your name is David Steinberg. (*SHE opens the door. Joel is there. Doing her best to act normally.*) Joel. Hi.

JOEL. (*Kisses her on the cheek.*) Hi. How are you?

SARAH. Fine. Fine. How are you?

JOEL. Fine. (*HE sees Bob.*) Is this ...?

SARAH. What? (*SHE turns and sees Bob.*) Oh! Yes! Joel, this is David. David, Joel.

BOB. (*Shaking Joel's hand.*) Hi.

JOEL. How are you?

BOB. Let me take your coat. It's nice to meet you.

JOEL. (*Taking his coat off.*) It's nice to meet you, Doctor.

BOB. Thank you. (*Behind Joel's back HE mouths the word to Sarah.*) Doctor?!

SARAH. (*SHE shrugs and mouths the words.*) I forgot to tell you.

JOEL. (*Turning back around, to Sarah.*) They're not here yet?

SARAH. No. No, not yet. Sit down.

(*JOEL goes to sit on the couch. SARAH sees Bob with Joel's coat. SARAH takes the coat from Bob.*)

SARAH. I'll take that. Sit down.

(*BOB goes to sit on the couch next to Joel.*)

JOEL. Well ...

BOB. Well ... I've heard a lot about you.

JOEL. I've heard a lot about you, Doctor.

BOB. Oh, please, call me um ... (*HE thinks for a moment.*) ... David.

JOEL. David.

BOB. How are your children?

JOEL. Fine, thank you. I don't get to see them as much as I'd like.

BOB. It's a ... boy and a girl, right?

SARAH. (*Makes a guttural sound.*) Huhnuhnuhnuh.

BOB. (*Trying to correct himself.*) Two boys ... Two girls ... Two boys.

JOEL. Two boys.

BOB. Two boys. Right. (*As if HE's trying to remember.*) Their names are ...?

JOEL. Daniel and Benjamin.

BOB. Right. Daniel and Benjamin. Sarah talks about them all the time.

JOEL. She does?

SARAH. So ... Have you talked to Mom?

JOEL. I tried an experiment. I went nine whole days without talking to her.

SARAH. What happened?

JOEL. Well, the National Guard was called out, of course. I mean, nine days. I had to have been laying in that gutter she's always talking about. Have you talked to her?

SARAH. She only called me four times. Today.

JOEL. Did you hear about Dad?

SARAH. What?

JOEL. He's closing the Jackson Park store.

SARAH. (*Surprised.*) No! Why?

JOEL. He got held up again.

SARAH. (*Gasps.*) Huh!

BOB. What happened?

SARAH. Is he all right?

JOEL. He's fine. But with what it does to his insurance premiums, it's just not worth it anymore.

BOB. Did they catch the guy?

JOEL. Yeah. Turns out he's out on parole. He'll be doing some serious time.

SARAH. And Dad's all right?

JOEL. Dad is Dad.

SARAH. I wish they would tell me these things.

JOEL. Shouldn't they be here already?

SARAH. They're probably looking for a parking space.

JOEL. (*To Bob.*) You haven't met them yet, right?

BOB. No. But I feel as if I know them already.

JOEL. (*To Sarah.*) Did you get Dad a present?

SARAH. A tie.

BOB. A tie. Yeah. We shopped and shopped

...

JOEL. The best you could come up with was a tie?

SARAH. What did you get him?

JOEL. Oh, I gave it a lot of thought.

SARAH. And you bought him ...

SARAH & JOEL. (*In unison.*) A tie.

(*The DOORBELL rings.*)

SARAH. (*Gasps.*) Oh!

BOB. (*Cheerfully.*) That must be them! (*To Joel.*) I've been so looking forward to this.

(*SARAH opens the door. MIRIAM and ABE enter. ABE is carrying a casserole dish and a paper bag with a loaf of bread in it*)

MIRIAM. Hi.

SARAH. (*Kisses Miriam.*) Hi.

MIRIAM. Sorry we're late.

SARAH. (*Kisses Abe.*) Hi.

ABE. For an hour, we looked for a parking space.

JOEL. (*Kisses Miriam.*) Hi, Mom.

MIRIAM. You couldn't wear a jacket and tie?

JOEL. We're not going out.

MIRIAM. I hate that sweater.

SARAH. Let me take your coats.

JOEL. (*Kisses Abe.*) Hi.

ABE. Hello. For an hour, we looked for a parking space.

MIRIAM. It wasn't an hour.

SARAH. You could take a cab.

MIRIAM. From where can we afford cabs?

SARAH. You can afford to take a cab.

ABE. Next time, I said, we park the car at home and walk here.

SARAH. You *could* take a cab.

MIRIAM. So ... So where is he?

BOB. (*Steps forward.*) Hi.

SARAH. (*SHE takes a deep breath and makes the introductions.*) Mom. Dad. This is David.

BOB. (*HE turns to Abe and shakes his hand.*) Mr. Goldman.

ABE. How do you do?

BOB. (*HE goes to Miriam and shakes her hand.*) Mrs. Goldman. Very nice to meet you.

MIRIAM. Oh! So handsome! ... Jewish, you don't look.

BOB. (*Laughing.*) Oh! Everybody tells me that.

MIRIAM. What are you, Sephardic?

BOB. No. No, I'm Jewish.

MIRIAM. (*With a knowing smile.*) Oh! I know what you mean.

SARAH. So ... Why doesn't everyone sit down? (*Gesturing towards a seat for Bob.*) David?

BOB. Thank you, Sweetheart.

MIRIAM. Oh! Listen how he calls her Sweetheart.

BOB. Well, ever since that day when we met at Madeline's ...

SARAH. Marilyn.

BOB. Marilyn's wedding, I've felt like the luckiest man on earth.

SARAH. David—Sweetheart—Let's not go overboard.

MIRIAM. Abe, where's the dish?

ABE. (*Rhetorically.*) Where's the dish?

SARAH. I got it.

MIRIAM. (*Giving Sarah the casserole.*) Here. Put this in the oven at three-fifty.

SARAH. I'll put it in the microwave.

MIRIAM. Don't put it in the microwave.

SARAH. It'll take two seconds.

MIRIAM. Don't put it in the microwave.

SARAH. Everything else is ready.

MIRIAM. Sarah, please!

SARAH. All right.

MIRIAM. It doesn't taste right from the microwave. Put it in the oven.

SARAH. All right.

MIRIAM. Please.

SARAH. I'll put it in the oven.

MIRIAM. And here. I got you a challah like you like from Kaufman's.

SARAH. (*Going to the kitchen.*) Kaufman's is still surviving?

MIRIAM. They'll be there forever.

BOB. What's the matter with Kaufman's?

MIRIAM. Oh, you don't remember. Oh, it's a long time already. They had that thing with the salmonella.

BOB. Oh! Right. Of course. How could I forget?

ABE. You're a doctor. You know about these things. What causes that? That salmonella?

BOB. Oh, well, um ... That's very interesting, actually. Not many people know this ... Salmonella is caused by a rare bacteria that gets into the, uh ... salmon.

SARAH. (*Entering from the kitchen, carrying the challah.*) You made kugel. You didn't have to bother.

MIRIAM. For a special occasion, I make my special lukshen kugel.

BOB. Oh, right. Mr. Goldman, happy birthday.

MIRIAM. (*Dismissing him.*) Oh, pooh. The special occasion is meeting you, David. David, you like lukshen kugel?

BOB. Oh! Every chance I get.

MIRIAM. Well, you've never had lukshen kugel like my lukshen kugel.

BOB. I'm sure of that.

ABE. We're going to talk about it? Or we're going to eat it? Let's eat.

JOEL. Let's eat.

BOB. Let's eat!

(*EVERYONE moves to the table, SARAH gestures to indicate to Bob where he should sit ... Next to Miriam.*)

SARAH. (*To Miriam*) Do you want to light candles?

MIRIAM. Oh! Let's light candles.

(*SARAH gives kippahs to the men. SHE prepares the candles.*)

MIRIAM. (*During the preceding action, to Joel.*) Joel, you couldn't bring the boys?

JOEL. It's not my weekend.

MIRIAM. For a special occasion, you couldn't bring them?

JOEL. It's not my weekend.

MIRIAM. I hope you'll bring them to my funeral. God willing, it should be on your weekend.

SARAH. Joel, you want to open the wine?

BOB. I'll do it.

MIRIAM. No. No. Let Joel do it.

BOB. I don't mind.

MIRIAM. Joel'll do it.

JOEL. Joel'll do it. (*HE opens the wine and pours a glass for each person.*)

MIRIAM. (*To Bob.*) You have to save your hands for your surgery.

BOB. Surgery! Right! I'm a surgeon, aren't I? Boy, you never know when I'm going to have to operate on someone.

JOEL. (*To Bob*) I notice you're not wearing a pager.

BOB. No. No. I left it at home. I didn't want to be disturbed.

JOEL. You left it at home?

BOB. Yeah, well ... It's my day off.

JOEL. What if there's an emergency?

BOB. Well, I got a guy covering for me.

MIRIAM. You're at what hospital, David?

BOB. Oh, um ... *(Turning to Sarah.)* Didn't you tell them, Sweetheart?

SARAH. Yes, I did, Sweetheart. *(To Miriam)* I told you, Mother. He's at Northwestern Memorial.

MIRIAM. *(To Bob.)* Oh! Do you know Dr. Frankel? My neighbor went to him for her hypertension.

BOB. *(As if HE's trying to place the name)* Dr. Frankel ... Dr. Frankel ... An older man, yes?

MIRIAM. Yes.

BOB. Oh, yeah. Oh, well, if you're tense—especially if you're hypertense—you can't do better than Dr. Frankel.

SARAH. *(Ready with the candles)* Shall we?

MIRIAM. *(Elated.)* Oh! I've got my family together for Shabbos. *(To Bob)* Where is your family, David?

BOB. My family? Oh, they're ...

SARAH. I told you, Mother. David is an only child. His parents live in Florida.

MIRIAM. *(To Bob)* Where in Florida?

BOB. Miami Beach.

SARAH. North!

BOB. North! North Miami Beach. Of course. North. Completely North.

MIRIAM. I'm sure they're very proud of you.

BOB. If they could only see me now. They'd be very impressed.

SARAH. *(Moving along)* May I? *(SHE says the blessing over the candles)* Baruch Atoh Ha-

Shem Elokenu Melech Ha-Olom Asher Kidishanu Bemitzvotah Vetzivanu Lehadlik Ner Shel Shabbat.

EVERYONE BUT BOB. Amen.

BOB. Amen.

MIRIAM *(To Joel)* Joel, say the Ha-Motzee

(JOEL breaks off a hunk of challah and passes it so that each person takes a piece. BOB starts to put his piece of challah in his mouth SARAH catches his arm and stops him just in time)

JOEL. Baruch Atoh Ha-Shem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Ha-Motzee Lechem Min Ha-Aretz.

EVERYONE. Amen. *(THEY eat the challah)*

MIRIAM. *(To Bob.)* David, would you like to say the brucha for the wine?

SARAH. No! David doesn't want to do it. *(To Abe.)* You do it, Daddy.

BOB. No. No, I'll do it. It's my pleasure.

(EVERYONE picks up a glass of wine BOB rises in place)

BOB. *(Flawlessly)* Baruch Atoh Ha-Shem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Boreh Pire Ha-Gofen.

EVERYONE. Amen.

(EVERYONE drinks SARAH looks at Bob, awestruck)

BOB. *(To Sarah, HE sings.)* To life ... To life
... L'chaim.

ABE. Let's eat!

BLACKOUT

ACT I

Scene 2

AT RISE: EVERYONE is sitting around the table, having coffee, finishing birthday cake.

ABE. I got to tell you a story. Monday night, we're watching Carson. Alan King comes on ...

MIRIAM. It was Tuesday night.

ABE. It was Monday night.

MIRIAM. We didn't watch Carson Monday night. Monday night, we went to look at carpet.

ABE. It was Monday night.

MIRIAM. It was Tuesday night.

ABE. It was Monday night. We went to look at carpet Sunday night.

MIRIAM. Where do you go to look at carpet Sunday night?

ABE. Where we went, we looked at carpet Sunday night.

MIRIAM. You don't know what you're talking about.

ABE. *(Rhetorically.)* I don't know what I'm talking about.

MIRIAM. Sunday night, we were home. Monday night, we went to look at carpet. Tuesday night, we saw Carson.

SARAH. Anybody want more coffee?

ABE. Can I finish my story?

SARAH. I'm sorry. Finish your story.

ABE. We're watching Carson. Alan King comes on ...

MIRIAM. It was *Tuesday* night.

JOEL. Will you let him tell his story?!

ABE. Alan King comes on. He says, one morning, his grandfather comes into the house, he's limping. They soak the foot in Epson salt. They wrap it in a bandage. They take him for tests ... x-rays ... everything. Finally, his Uncle Herman comes over. He's smarter than all the doctors. He doesn't look at the foot. He looks inside the shoe. In the shoe, the old man had left a sock rolled up from the night before. *That's* why he was limping!

(BOB laughs.)

BOB. That's very funny.

ABE. *I* thought it was funny.

SARAH. Now. More coffee, anyone?

MIRIAM. Not for me.

ABE. *(Holding out his cup.)* Please.

MIRIAM. You had enough coffee.

ABE. *(To Sarah.)* It's de-caf, no?

SARAH. Yes, it's de-caf.

ABE. (To Miriam.) See? (To Sarah.) More coffee.

SARAH. Joel?

JOEL. Half a cup.

SARAH. David?

BOB. No, thank you, Sweetheart. I'm fine.

MIRIAM. (To Bob.) So, David, I want to hear more about your work.

SARAH. Mother, enough already.

BOB. No, that's all right. I don't mind.

JOEL. I'd like to hear more about David's medical practice.

BOB. Oh, um ...

MIRIAM. What kind of surgery do you do, David?

BOB. Surgery? Oh, you know ... Whatever comes up. Hearts ... Brains.

JOEL. What's your specialization?

BOB. Oh ... I guess I'd say ... Hearts. Yeah, hearts. I love hearts.

JOEL. Where'd you go to med school?

BOB. Harvard.

ABE. (Rising and moving to sit in the living room area.) You should listen to my heart.

BOB. (Following ABE.) Oh, gee, I'd like to. But I don't have my, uh ... black bag and stuff.

ABE. Blood pressure, one-twenty over eighty. Every time, perfect!

BOB. That's wonderful.

MIRIAM. Now, it's wonderful. Last year, he had his T.I.A., it wasn't so wonderful.

BOB. Oh, you had a T.I.A.

JOEL. What is a T.I.A.?

BOB. T.I.A. stands for Transient Ischemic Attack.

JOEL. And what causes that?

BOB. Well, it's usually caused by a partial blockage in the carotid artery that supplies blood to the brain. Studies have shown that taking aspirin can reduce the chances of a recurrence. (To ABE) Did your doctor prescribe aspirin for you?

ABE. One a day.

BOB. That should be all right. Who's your doctor?

ABE. Doctor Haid in Highland Park.

BOB. (With conviction) Good man.

MIRIAM. I bet he's not as good as you. I just hope you weren't the one who operated on Sylvia Klein.

BOB. I don't believe so.

MIRIAM. Good. She died.

ABE. Who died?

MIRIAM. Sylvia Klein.

ABE. She didn't die.

MIRIAM. Of course she died.

ABE. I don't think she died.

MIRIAM. Have you talked to her lately?

ABE. I never talk to her. You talk to her.

MIRIAM. Not anymore. She died.

ABE. She didn't die.

MIRIAM. You don't know what you're talking about.

ABE. (*Rhetorically*) I don't know what I'm talking about.

MIRIAM. We made a condolence call.

ABE. When?

MIRIAM. Last summer. At her daughter's. You know The one with the mouth. In Buffalo Grove.

ABE. *That* was for Sylvia Klein?

MIRIAM. Yes.

ABE. What happened?

MIRIAM. She died!

BOB. Who was her doctor?

MIRIAM. I don't know. Some dummy.

BOB. Well, we may just have to check him out. We can't have nice people like Sylvia Klein dying on us. You have any friends who need help, you tell Sarah. I'll take care of them.

MIRIAM. I'm sure you don't need me for business.

BOB. Well, they keep me pretty busy down at the old hospital

MIRIAM. I bet you don't have any free time.

BOB. Well, any free time I have, you know, I like to spend it with Sarah.

MIRIAM. She tells me how busy you are.

ABE. So business is good.

BOB. Oh, are you kidding? People are dying to get into that hospital. (*HE realizes what HE just said.*) I mean, uh ...(*To Abe.*) How's your business?

ABE. Oh! My business ...

MIRIAM. (*To Bob*) You don't want to hear about dry cleaning.

BOB. No, I do. (*To Abe, as if remembering*) How many stores do you have?

ABE. Right now, six.

BOB. Right now?

ABE. I'm looking at opening up another one.

JOEL & SARAH. (*Overlapping*) Another one?

ABE. On Armitage. Near Clybourn.

JOEL. Dad, you're supposed to be taking it easy.

ABE. This store'll pay for itself. They're building up the area. They need a dry cleaners.

SARAH. (*To Miriam*) Mom, he's going to work himself into the ground.

MIRIAM. Go talk to him.

SARAH. (*To Abe.*) You've got to take care of yourself.

ABE. I take care of myself.

MIRIAM. In dreyrt, he'll take care of himself.

ABE. Krich nit arein in de bayner, (*Don't crawl into my bones*) all right?

MIRIAM. Do arbest tzu shvayr, Avramel. (*You're working too hard, Abraham.*)

ABE. Loz mich aleyn. (*Leave me alone.*)

MIRIAM. Do vest zich der hargenen! (*You will kill yourself!*)

ABE. Enough!

(*Silence for a moment.*)

BOB. (*To Abe.*) Speaking of dry cleaning ... How did you get into the business?

ABE. Oh! That's a very interesting story ...

MIRIAM. It's not so interesting.

ABE. 1938, my family came to this country. My father didn't have a dime in his pocket. But, he had his sewing machine. He couldn't afford a shop. He would set up his sewing machine on the street corner and send me running up and down the street to ask people if they needed a tailor. In the old country, my father's family was all tailors. Before the war, my uncle was the most famous tallis maker in all Hungary.

SARAH. Which uncle?

ABE. My Uncle Yossel.

SARAH. I never knew that.

MIRIAM. We told you that story.

SARAH. I never knew that. (*To Joel.*) Did you know that?

JOEL. I remember hearing something once about a tallis.

ABE. My Uncle Yossel ...

MIRIAM. Abe, shah (*To Bob.*) David. You and Sarah have plans for the weekend?

BOB. We haven't really talked about it. (*To Sarah.*) What would you like to do this weekend, Sweetheart?

SARAH. Whatever you want to do, Sweetheart.

BOB. No, no. Whatever you want to do, Sweetheart.

SARAH. (*With teeth clenching.*) We'll do what you want to do, Sweetheart.

MIRIAM. Oh, Sarah! Tomorrow on the radio is "La Boheme" with Pavarotti.

BOB. Oh! I love "La Boheme."

MIRIAM. You like opera?

BOB. I love opera. I was at the opera last night.

MIRIAM. Last night? (*To Sarah.*) You didn't tell me you were at the opera last night.

BOB. Oh, no. I didn't go with Sarah. I went with my, uh ... my aunt.

MIRIAM. Who's your aunt?

BOB. I don't think you know her.

MIRIAM. What's her name?

BOB. Her name is, uh ... Sylvia Klein.

MIRIAM. Another Sylvia Klein?

BOB. Amazing, isn't it?

MIRIAM. So what did you see?

BOB. "Tristan Und Isolde." It was great.

MIRIAM. Wagner?

ABE. Anti-Semite bastard.

SARAH. Daddy.

MIRIAM. (*To Bob.*) You liked it?

BOB. Well, it was long, but, you know, great ... For an anti-Semite bastard.

MIRIAM. Oh, I love the opera. For forty years, I'm listening to Saturday afternoon "Opera on the Air."

BOB. Do you ever go?

MIRIAM. No, I don't go. Abe wouldn't sit through it.

BOB. Oh, you really should see it sometime.

MIRIAM. No, I don't think I'd enjoy it. I just like to imagine what it looks like.

BOB. I'd be happy to take you sometime.

MIRIAM. No.

BOB. Really. It would be an honor for me to escort you to the opera. Tell you what, I'll give you my card.

SARAH. Bob! *(Catches herself.)* Dave! *(Covering herself.)* Dave-Bob.

BOB. *(To Joel.)* Dave-Bob. It's kind of a nickname. My full name is David Robert Steinberg. I answer to either one.

SARAH. *(Announcing.)* Will you look at the time?!

MIRIAM. What? It's not so late.

SARAH. Daddy, you're going to work tomorrow, aren't you? You need your rest.

ABE. *(Rhetorically.)* I need my rest.

(SARAH turns to Bob for help.)

BOB. We didn't do presents yet.

ABE. Presents?

SARAH. Oh, presents. Joel, where's your present?

JOEL. *(Getting up.)* It's in my coat.

SARAH. *(Rushing to the bedroom.)* I'll get mine. *(SHE stops and turns back.)* Uh ... Ours ... Both of us ... It's from, uh ... *(SHE exits.)*

ABE. For me, you don't have to get presents.

BOB. Of course, we got you a present. Sarah and I shopped and shopped ...

JOEL. *(Handing Abe the present.)* Here, Dad. Happy birthday.

ABE. Thank you.

MIRIAM. Oh! From Field's!

ABE *(Opening present)* What have we got here? *(Removes tie.)* Well, that's very nice.

MIRIAM. Isn't that nice?

ABE *(To Joel)* Thank you.

(ABE and JOEL kiss)

JOEL. You're welcome.

SARAH. *(Hands her gift to Abe.)* Here, Daddy. Happy birthday. From me and David.

ABE Thank you.

BOB Bet you can't guess what it is.

ABE. *(Removes the tie)* A tie.

MIRIAM. Isn't that nice?

ABE That's very nice. Thank you.

(ABE and SARAH kiss)

BOB. *(Extending his hand.)* Many happy returns of the day, Mr. Goldman.

ABE. *(Shaking Bob's hand)* Thank you.

MIRIAM. Happy, we get from our children. *(To Abe)* Abe, take a picture. You brought the camera?

ABE I got it in the coat.

BOB *(Getting up)* Sit. Sit. I'll get it.

MIRIAM So helpful.

ABE. *(To Bob.)* In the inside pocket.

BOB. I got it. *(Handing camera to Abe)* Here you go.

MIRIAM. Take a picture of the children.

SARAH. You always have to take pictures.

MIRIAM. When I have my children together, it's special. Sit together. You, too, David. Go and sit.

(SARAH, JOEL and BOB sit.)

ABE. *(Looking through the camera.)* Give a smile. *(HE clicks the camera.)*

BOB. Now let me take one of all of you.

MIRIAM. Of me, I don't need a picture.

BOB. Come on. One of the whole Goldman family. Mr. Goldman, get in there. *(HE looks through the camera)* Give a smile. *(HE clicks the camera.)*

MIRIAM. Now one of Sarah and David.

SARAH. That's enough pictures.

MIRIAM. I want one of the two of you together.

BOB. Come on, Sweetheart. We hardly have any pictures of the two of us together. *(HE sits next to Sarah)*

ABE *(Looking through the camera.)* Get in close.

BOB. How close would you like?

JOEL. How close can you get?

BOB. You want a real pose?

ABE. Sure. Why not?

(BOB takes Sarah and kisses her on the mouth. SARAH is surprised, but goes along with it. ABE takes the picture. BOB releases his embrace.)

BOB. *(To Abe.)* I'd like a copy of that one, please.

MIRIAM. Abe, let's go.

ABE. So let's go.

MIRIAM. Let's go. I'm tired already.

BOB. Going so soon?

MIRIAM. Joel, let's go.

SARAH. You don't have to go. I'll get your coats.

MIRIAM. Abe, you got the presents.

ABE. I got them.

SARAH. *(To Miriam.)* You want the dish from the kugel?

MIRIAM. I don't need it. You'll bring it next time you come by us.

SARAH. All right.

MIRIAM. Call me tomorrow. You'll call me tomorrow?

SARAH. I'll call you tomorrow.

MIRIAM. Joel, you'll call me sometime? I shouldn't think you're lying in a gutter somewhere?

JOEL. I'll call you. I'll bring the boys next weekend.

MIRIAM. (*To Bob.*) Now, don't be a stranger. I want we should see a lot more of you.

BOB. We'll see what we can do. It was very nice meeting you.

MIRIAM. Oh, my absolute, complete pleasure.

BOB. (*Extending his hand.*) Mr. Goldman.

ABE. (*Shaking hands*) Nice to meet you.

BOB. Pleasure meeting you. (*Extending his hand to Joel.*) Joel, see you again.

JOEL. (*Shaking hands.*) I'll look forward to it.

SARAH. (*Kissing each parent as THEY exit*) Goodnight.

MIRIAM. Goodnight.

ABE. Goodnight.

SARAH. Drive carefully.

JOEL. (*Kissing Sarah*) Goodnight.

SARAH. Goodnight.

JOEL. Thanks for dinner.

SARAH. Give my love to the boys. Goodnight.

BOB. (*Waving.*) Goodnight.

MIRIAM. (*One more, from the hallway*) Goodnight!

(*SARAH closes the door SARAH and BOB look at each other for a long moment.*)

BOB. You could have *told* me I was a doctor.

(*THEY break up laughing*)

SARAH. I don't believe I did that!

BOB. I couldn't believe it! I almost lost it all right there!

SARAH. I am so sorry. You were amazing.

BOB. Oh, I don't know. I don't think Joel was buying it

SARAH. No. He was. He was.

BOB. He kept *watching* me.

SARAH. He's a therapist. He does that to everybody. You were just amazing.

BOB. I was racking my brain trying to think of all the doctor stuff I know.

SARAH. How did you know what a T.I.A. is?

BOB. *My father had one.* It's the one medical thing I know. If they had asked me how to stop a nosebleed, I would've been screwed!

SARAH. You were perfect I was the one who almost lost it.

BOB. No. No, you did great.

SARAH. The way you said the blessing for the wine. I couldn't believe it.

BOB. I heard it doing "Fiddler." It just came to me. Like an old song lyric.

SARAH. You laughed in all the right places. You ate everything like you knew what it was ...

BOB. What *was* that stuff of your mother's?

SARAH. Kugel? You never had it?

BOB. No. It was delicious. I loved it. I've got to get the recipe.

SARAH. There is no recipe. It's a secret formula. Handed down for generations.

BOB. You should franchise it. Like Mrs. Field's cookies. Mrs. Goldman's Kugel. You'd make a fortune.

SARAH. My mother's going to be walking on air for days, talking about you. You're sure you're not Jewish?

BOB. I guess I've picked up a few things along the way. I still have a lot to learn. You guys get together like this every week?

SARAH. If it was up to my mother, we'd all still be living in the same house.

BOB. Fine. Kugel. Everyday.

SARAH. You were absolutely brilliant.

BOB. Well, I'll tell you one thing. This is going in *my* diary.

SARAH. Well ... You were great.

BOB. You were great, too.

SARAH. Well ...

BOB. Can I help you clean up?

SARAH. Oh, no. No, that's all right. I should let you go.

BOB. You sure?

SARAH. Oh, yeah. That's all right. Thank you. I'll get your coat.

BOB. I know where it is.

SARAH. Well, let me just, um ... (*SHE gets her purse and removes a checkbook.*)

BOB. Oh, hey, no, listen. This one's on me.

SARAH. Don't be silly. You earned it.

BOB. Well, it was my pleasure.

SARAH. The pleasure was mine. And my parents (*Referring to the check.*) How do I make it out?

BOB. The Heaven Sent Escort Agency. (*HE gets his coat and returns*) I don't know how I'm going to fill out the report on this one. Can you get arrested for impersonating a Jew in this state?

SARAH (*Handing him the check*) Here.

BOB (*Looking at the check*) Oh, wait This is too much.

SARAH. I insist. You earned it. I just wish I could give you an Academy Award to go with it.

BOB. I don't think there's a category for this.

SARAH. (*Seriously*) You really saved my life tonight.

BOB. Glad to be of service. Well ...

SARAH. Well ...

BOB. Well, listen. If you ever know anybody who needs an escort ...

SARAH. You will be highly recommended.

BOB. Thanks. (*HE starts to go and stops.*) Oh, don't forget Tomorrow afternoon. "La Boheme" with Pavarotti.

SARAH. Got it.

BOB. It was nice meeting you.

SARAH. Very nice meeting you.

BOB. So, uh ... Goodnight.

SARAH. Goodnight. And thank you.

(*BOB exits. SARAH closes the door and goes to clear the table. SHE laughs a little. SHE sings, "To life, to life, l'chaim." The DOORBELL*)

*rings SHE goes to the door and opens it
CHRIS is there SHE looks at him)*

CHRIS Hi
SARAH. Hi

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 1

*AT RISE SARAH and CHRIS are sitting on the
couch CHRIS hands Sarah a present.*

CHRIS. Happy anniversary.

SARAH. *(Takes it.)* Thank you. *(SHE puts it
aside)* You have to go now.

CHRIS. Would you, at least, open it please?

(SARAH begins to unwrap the gift.)

CHRIS. You remember where we were one
year ago tonight?

SARAH. Yes. We went to that horrible concert
and then we went for seafood where you got sick
from a bad clam.

CHRIS. It was the greatest night of my life.

SARAH. *(Opens the gift and removes a small
black object)* What is this?

CHRIS. It's an automatic speed dialer. You
can program it to hold up to eighty separate phone
numbers. You just hold it up to your telephone,
push a button, and it dials for you. I've already
programmed the first number. You push number
one and you get ... me.

SARAH. Thank you. I'm sorry I didn't get you anything. I've been so busy. Getting ready for the seder.

CHRIS. All I would like for our anniversary is for us to be together.

SARAH. Chris, please, I'm under enough pressure.

CHRIS. You know what I wish?

SARAH. What?

CHRIS. You want to know what I wish?

SARAH. (*Slightly impatient*) What?

CHRIS. I wish we could run away together to some exotic, tropical island and live on coconuts and sea anemones.

SARAH. Just like that?

CHRIS. Just like that.

SARAH. Leave work?

CHRIS. Leave work.

SARAH. Leave the Kellogg's account?

CHRIS. Okay, here's another idea. Tell your parents about us. Say, "Parents, Chris and I love each other and we're going to be together and if you don't like it you can lump it." Or something. I can get Bruce or somebody to help you with the copy.

SARAH. You're pressuring me, Chris. Don't pressure me.

(*The DOORBELL rings.*)

SARAH. You have to go now.

CHRIS. I really hate this.

SARAH. I'm sorry. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

CHRIS. Sure. My stand-in is here. Only I'm left out in the cold and my stand-in gets to do all the fun bits.

SARAH. This is *not fun!* (*SHE opens the door. BOB is there.*)

BOB. Hi.

SARAH. Hi. Come on in.

BOB. (*Enters and sees Chris.*) Chris, hi.

CHRIS. (*On his way out, to Sarah.*) Talk to you later.

SARAH. I'll call you tomorrow.

CHRIS. Right. Good Yontif.

(*CHRIS exits. SARAH closes the door.*)

BOB. "Good Yontif." What is that?

SARAH. It's like "Happy Holidays." You might want to drop it to my parents when they get here.

BOB. Uh, yeah. Sarah, listen. I've been thinking and ... I don't think we should do this.

SARAH. What are you talking about?

BOB. We pulled it off once. I don't think we can get away with it again.

SARAH. They're going to be here in a minute.

BOB. I know. Look, couldn't you tell them I had a medical emergency come up?

SARAH. I told them that *last* night. I told them you had emergency heart *and* brain surgery to do.

BOB. See, that's what I'm talking about ...

SARAH. Bob, please ...

BOB. I don't know how we can ...

SARAH. We can! We can. Please. You don't know what I've been through the last two weeks. My mother talks about you like you're a combination of Albert Schweitzer and Alan Alda.

BOB. Is Alan Alda Jewish?

SARAH. Part Jewish, I think. I don't know. My mother likes him so, to her, he must be, at least, part Jewish.

BOB. I just hate to keep fooling them.

SARAH. I know. I know. Please. Just this one more time. You should've seen my mother last night. She was so heartbroken when I told her you couldn't come to her seder. She set a place for you anyway. It was so pitiful. There was a cup of wine for the prophet Elijah and gefilte fish for you.

BOB. Well, I guess, at least, one of us should show up tonight.

SARAH. Thank you. Just this one more time, I promise. Did you get a chance to look at the Haggadah I sent you?

BOB. Yeah, kind of. I'm not real clear on the order of what happens when.

SARAH. Just watch me. Everything is announced before you do it anyway. (*SHE places the Seder Plate on the table.*)

BOB. This is the Seder Plate?

SARAH. Right.

BOB. There's a space empty.

SARAH. That's for the haroset.

BOB. Haroset. Symbolizing the mortar used by the Jews in building the pyramids of the Pharaoh.

SARAH. (*Impressed.*) You did your homework

BOB. I'm a quick study. So where's the haroset?

SARAH. My mother brings it. You eat it on a little piece of matzah.

BOB. (*Excited*) Ooh! Like kugel?!

SARAH. No. But it's sweet. You'll like it.

BOB. And you really drink four whole glasses of wine?

SARAH. Depending on how closely my father decides to follow the script.

BOB. You guys must get really wasted.

SARAH. Well, it is one of our festive holidays. (*With a straight face*) Don't I look festive.

(*The DOORBELL rings*)

SARAH. You ready?

BOB. On with the show. I had my vocal coach go over a couple of the songs for me. I really like the one about the goat.

(*SARAH opens the door. MIRIAM, ABE and JOEL enter*)

SARAH. Hi.

ABE. For an hour, we looked for a parking space.

MIRIAM. (*Handing two parcels to Sarah.*) Here. Here's the haroset. And put this on the stove.

SARAH. I'll put it in the microwave.

MIRIAM. Don't put it in the microwave!

(*SARAH takes the parcels to the kitchen.*)

MIRIAM. (*Seeing Bob.*) David!

BOB. Good Yontif!

MIRIAM. Good Yontif. So nice to see you.

BOB. Nice to see you. I was sorry I couldn't make it last night.

MIRIAM. We missed you, too.

BOB. (*Extending his hand to Abe.*) Mr. Goldman.

ABE. (*Shaking Bob's hand.*) How do you do?

BOB. (*To Joel.*) Joel.

JOEL. Hello.

(*THEY shake hands.*)

BOB. Nice to see you.

JOEL. How did the heart *and* brain surgery go?

BOB. Oh, well, that was really something. They brought this guy in ... There was a whole team of surgeons ... You ever watch "St. Elsewhere"?

JOEL. Yeah.

BOB. It was just like that.

SARAH. Everybody want to sit down? We'll start?

BOB. I'll tell you about it later.

(*EVERYBODY moves to the table. SARAH hands out Hagaddahs and kippahs for the men.*)

MIRIAM. Such a beautiful table. (*To Joel.*) Joel, you couldn't bring the boys?

JOEL. I had them at your house last night. Barbara has them at her parents tonight.

MIRIAM. They make a seder?

JOEL. I don't know.

MIRIAM. The boys should be at a seder tonight.

JOEL. I don't know if they're doing a seder.

MIRIAM. Call them and ask.

JOEL. I'm not going to call them.

MIRIAM. Joel.

JOEL. I just remembered. They're doing a seder. All right?

MIRIAM. All right. (*To Bob.*) David, don't you know any nice girls to go out with Joel?

JOEL. Mother ...

BOB. Well, let's see ... For Joel, it would have to be somebody very special. I know one girl who's single, but ... no. She's ... meiskeit.

SARAH. (*Surprised.*) She's what?

BOB. You know, Sweetheart. Homely. Meiskeit.

BOB. (*To Miriam.*) I'll give it some thought.

JOEL. (*Sardonically.*) That's all right.

MIRIAM. Abe, start.

ABE. Without the boys?

MIRIAM. So you'll do a little.

ABE. I'll do a little

(*EVERYONE opens the Haggadahs*)

ABE. Open the Haggadahs. First ... We do a Kiddush. (*Raising his wine glass.*) Baruch Atoh Hashem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Boreh Pirie Hagofen. Amen.

ALL. Amen.

(*EVERYONE drinks. BOB watches closely and follows along ABE downs his drink and says, "Ah" BOB does likewise*)

ABE. (*Turning the page*) Next ... We do Karpas Give me the parsley. Everyone take some parsley.

(*ABE takes a sprig of parsley and dips it in the salt water, as do the OTHERS*)

ABE. Baruch Atoh Hashem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Boreh Pirie Ha-Adamah. Amen.

ALL. Amen

(*EVERYONE eats the parsley.*)

ABE. (*Turning the page.*) Next ... The Afikomen. Give me the matzah. (*HE takes a piece of matzah, breaks it apart, and wraps one half in a napkin.*)

MIRIAM. (*To Bob.*) David, will you and Sarah steal the Afikomen?

BOB. (*Not sure.*) Uh ... Maybe.

ABE. Next ... Give me the plate. (*HE picks up the matzah plate and reads.*) "This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt." We open the door.

(*JOEL rises and opens the front door.*)

ABE. "Let all who are hungry enter and eat; let all who are needy come to our Passover feast."

(*JOEL closes the door and returns to the table.*)

ABE. "This year we are here; next year may we be in the land of Israel. This year we are slaves; next year may we be free men."

BOB. Amen.

ABE. (*Turning the page.*) Next ...

(*The sound of a BEEPER is heard. BOB opens his coat and reveals a pager hooked to his belt.*)

BOB. Oh, excuse me. I'm sorry. That's my beeper. (*To Joel.*) I'm on call.

MIRIAM. On Pesach?

BOB. I'm sorry. I'll have to call in. I hope it's not too serious. Please, go ahead without me.

MIRIAM. We'll wait. We'll wait. Make your call.

BOB. Excuse me. (*HE goes to the phone and dials.*) I just hope it's not too serious. (*Into phone.*) This is Dr. David Steinberg. Did you page me? ... Uh-huh ... Uh-huh ... Oh, dear. Wait a second. (*To Miriam.*) I'm afraid it is serious.

MIRIAM. Oh, you don't have to go.

SARAH. (*Imploring.*) Please, David ... Don't have to go.

BOB. (*HE looks at Sarah. Into phone.*) This is Dr. David Steinberg. I'd really rather not come in. Who's the resident on call? ... Well, he should be able to handle it. If he has any problems, tell him to call me ... (*Angry.*) Now, look! I told you the resident can handle it! Tonight is a sacred holiday of my people and I would like to spend it with my loved ones! ... All right ... That's all right. Don't worry about it ... Goodnight. (*HE hangs up the phone and returns to the table.*) I'm sorry. It is so hard to get good help. (*HE sits down.*) So ... Should we take it from the top or can we pick up where we left off?

SARAH. No, we can pick up where we are. (*To Abe.*) Daddy?

ABE. (*Looking in the Haggadah.*) Next ... The Four Questions. Who does the Four Questions?

MIRIAM. Sarah.

SARAH. Can we skip the Four Questions?

ABE. Skip the Four Questions.

MIRIAM. Do the Four Questions.

ABE. Do the Four Questions.

SARAH. Daniel did the Four Questions last night. I'm too old to do the Four Questions.

MIRIAM. Excuse me, Miss Grown-up. (*To Bob.*) David, when Sarah was a little girl, she loved to do the Four Questions.

SARAH. Mother ...

MIRIAM. Even when she was so little she couldn't say the words. But she knew it was something important. She always wanted to be so helpful. We'd tell her to do the Four Questions and she'd sing "Happy Birthday" instead.

BOB. That's a great story.

SARAH. Don't encourage her. She'll bring out baby pictures.

BOB. That reminds me of a story from when I was little.

JOEL. Does it.

BOB. When I was a small boy, there were a few gentile families in the neighborhood. And I always heard my little gentile friends talk about Santa Claus bringing them presents. And one Passover, I said to my father, "If Elijah comes, will he bring presents like Santa Claus?" And my father said, "If Elijah comes, he'll bring the greatest present of all. Peace." And I said, "But Santa Claus brings presents to my friends every year. When will Elijah come with his present?" And my father said, "We don't know. But we

hope he'll come soon. That's what we Jews do. We hope."

MIRIAM. (*Clutching her chest with emotion.*)
Oh!

SARAH. That's beautiful.

ABE. That's a beautiful story.

MIRIAM. So beautiful. You know, I heard a story just like that on the radio today.

BOB. (*Incredulous.*) No!

MIRIAM. David, will you do the Four Questions?

BOB. Uh ... All right.

SARAH. No! I'll do it.

BOB. I'll do it, Sweetheart.

MIRIAM. Do it together?

SARAH. I'll do it!

BOB. No, that's a good idea. We'll both do it. (*To Sarah.*) Sweetheart, do you want to do it in Hebrew or in English?

SARAH. (*SHE catches on.*) Oh! (*Calmly.*) Why don't I do the Hebrew, Sweetheart?

BOB. All right. I'll do the English.

SARAH. All right.

ABE. Do the Four Questions.

MIRIAM. Do the Four Questions.

SARAH. (*Reading.*) "Ma nishtanah hallaylah..."

MIRIAM. Sing it.

SARAH. (*SHE glares at Miriam and then turns back to the book. SHE sings.*) "Ma nishtanah hallaylah hazeh mikol halaylot ... Mikol halaylot."

(*SHE stops*) All right. That's enough. (*To Bob*) Your turn.

BOB. (*Reading.*) "Why is this night different from all other nights?" (*To Sarah*) Need we ask. "For on all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night only unleavened bread? On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs; why on this night only bitter herbs? On all other nights we need not dip our herbs even once; why on this night must we dip them twice? On all other nights we eat either sitting up or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?" Good questions.

ABE. (*Turning the page.*) "We were slaves." (*Turning the page More emphatically.*) "Then we were free." (*More emphatically.*) Let's eat!

MIRIAM. Abe, read a little bit.

ABE. (*Reading.*) "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought us forth from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And if the Holy One, blessed be he, had not brought our forefathers forth from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children would still be Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt." (*Leafing ahead*) The four sons ... (*Leafing ahead.*) "And he went down into Egypt ..." (*Leafing ahead.*) "And the Egyptians considered us evil ..."

JOEL. Where are you?

ABE. Page ...twenty-nine.

MIRIAM. Do the Ten Plagues.

ABE. (*Leafing ahead.*) The Ten Plagues. Page thirty. (*Reading*) "These make up the ten plagues which the Holy One, blessed be he, brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt, and they are these ...

(*EVERYONE reads the Ten Plagues with Abe, responsively. As THEY read each plague, THEY dip the handle of a spoon in the wine and touch it to the plate.*)

ABE. (*With each one repeated.*) Dom ... Tsifardeah ... Keeneem ... Arov ...

(*BOB realizes HE is using the bowl end of his spoon and ladling wine into this plate. HE flips the spoon over and continues.*)

ABE. Dever ... Shecheen ... Borod ... Arbeh ... Choshek ... Makas-Bikoros.

(*EVERYONE licks their spoon handle BOB does likewise.*)

ABE. (*Leafing ahead.*) Next ...

MIRIAM. Sing a little "Dayenu."

ABE. "Dayenu."

MIRIAM. Everyone.

EVERYONE. (*Sings.*) Eloo Hotzi-Hotzianu Hotzianu Meemeetzraim, Hotzianu Meemeetzraim, Dayenu. Day-Dayenu. Day-Dayenu. Day-Dayenu. Dayenu. Dayenu. Dayenu. Dayenu. Dayenu.

Day-Dayenu. Day-Dayenu. Day-Dayenu. Dayenu. Dayenu.

BOB. (*One too many.*) Dayenu.

ABE. (*Leafing ahead.*) Next ... The matzah. Give me the matzah. (*HE lifts up the matzah and reads*) "This matzah which we eat, what is the reason for it? Because the dough of our fathers had not yet leavened when the King over all kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them. As it is said: And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals.

MIRIAM. Joel, you read.

JOEL. (*HE picks up the horseradish and reads.*) "These bitter herbs we eat, what is the reason for them? Because the Egyptians made the lives of our forefathers bitter in Egypt. As it is said: And they made their life bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the fields; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigour."

MIRIAM. (*To Bob.*) David.

BOB. (*HE reads. And as HE proceeds, HE becomes involved in the meaning of the words.*) "In every generation let each man look on himself as if he came forth out of Egypt. As it is said: And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt."

(EVERYONE lifts their glass.)

“Therefore, we are bound to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, honor, bless, extol, and adore Him who performed all these miracles for our fathers ... and for us. He has brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to holiday, from darkness to great light, and from bondage to redemption.” *(Moved.)* Wow. *(HE continues reading.)* “Let us then recite before him a new song: Hallelujah.”

ABE & MIRIAM. Hallelujah.

(EVERYONE replaces their glass.)

ABE. *(Leafing ahead.)* Next ... The second cup.

(EVERYONE raises their glass.)

ABE. Baruch Atoh Hashem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Boreh Pirie Ha-Gofen. Amen.

EVERYONE. Amen. *(EVERYONE drinks.)*

ABE. I wash my hands. *(HE doesn't move.)* Baruch Atoh Hashem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Asher Kidishanu Bimitzvotah Vitzivanu Al Nitilas Yadayim. Amen. Take a piece of matzah. *(He takes a piece of matzah, breaks off a piece, and hands the rest around the table.)* Baruch Atoh Hashem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Ha-Motzie Lechem Min Ha-Aretz. Baruch Atoh Hashem

Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Asher Kidishanu Bimitzvotah Vitzivanu Al Ahkeelas Matzah. Amen.

EVERYONE. Amen

(EVERYONE eats the matzah.)

ABE. Maror. Take the haroset.

(EVERYONE makes a little sandwich with haroset and horseradish on a piece of matzah.)

MIRIAM. *(To Bob.)* David, wait till you try this chrain.

BOB. *(Not understanding.)* I'm sorry?

(MIRIAM holds up the horseradish and hands it to Bob.)

MIRIAM. Chrain.

BOB. Oh! *(To Miriam.)* Looks great.

MIRIAM. Freshly grated. Not from the jar, horseradish.

ABE. Baruch Atoh Hashem Elokenu Melech Ha-Alom Asher Kidishanu Bimitzvotah Vitzivanu Al Ahkeelas Maror. Amen.

ALL. Amen.

(EVERYONE eats their sandwich. The horseradish hits Bob and HE gasps and coughs violently.)

BOB. (*Trying to catch is breath*) Whoa!
 MIRIAM. You all right?

(*BOB nods, unable to speak*)

ABE Next ... Shulkan Orekh. Let's eat.
 JOEL. Let's eat.
 BOB. (*Gasping.*) Let's eat.

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 2

AT RISE SARAH and BOB are standing at the door, waving goodbye

SARAH. Goodnight.
 BOB. Goodnight. Drive carefully.
 SARAH. Goodnight.

(*SARAH closes the door. THEY collapse and sit on the couch*)

BOB. You got anything to drink in this place?
 Besides wine?
 SARAH. Vodka?
 BOB. Perfect.

SARAH. Straight up or on the rocks?
 BOB. How 'bout the bottle and a straw?
 SARAH. You got it. (*SHE starts to get up and has trouble moving.*)
 BOB. Wait. Wait. I'll get it. I used to do this for a living.
 SARAH. Vodka's in the freezer. Glasses are above the sink.
 BOB. (*Exits to the kitchen.*) Can I get you one?
 SARAH. Please. Thank you.
 BOB. You just relax.
 SARAH. Relax. What a concept.
 BOB. Tense times, huh?
 SARAH. Nah, I've always been tense. When I was in high school, I went out for the swim team. They used me for the diving board.
 BOB. (*Enters.*) That's very funny. (*HE hands her a drink.*) Here.
 SARAH. Oh. Bless you.
 BOB. Is there a brucha for vodka?
 SARAH. Drink it. Drink it. Cheers.
 BOB. L'chaim.

(*THEY drink.*)

SARAH. So where'd you get the beeper? That was pretty clever.
 BOB. That was for Joel's benefit. I borrowed it from a buddy of mine who does a lot of commercial work. I had him call me in case I wanted an excuse to leave in a hurry.
 SARAH. Thank you for not leaving.

BOB. I'm glad I stayed.

SARAH. Me, too.

BOB. That was funny the way your dad whipped through the Haggadah.

SARAH. My father has a very particular view on life. He treats business matters religiously and religious matters like business. (*SHE lets her head drop.*) I'm exhausted.

BOB. You could use a massage.

SARAH. Careful. You might break your fingers.

BOB. Trust me. I used to do this for a living. (*HE gives Sarah a neck rub.*)

SARAH. You've done a lot of different things, haven't you?

BOB. Hi-Diddly-Dee. The actor's life for me.

SARAH. (*Responding to the neck rub.*) Oh!

BOB. Too hard?

SARAH. No. It's perfect.

(*As the massage continues.*)

BOB. What do you do?

SARAH. I teach kindergarten.

BOB. No kidding. I remember kindergarten. I got straight A's in sandbox.

SARAH. I have one little boy who likes to play in the sandbox. His father is an architect. He hires the other children to build sandcastles for him.

BOB. Kindergarten is your preference?

SARAH. You sound like my mother. She always says, "Sarah is so smart. They should let her teach a higher grade."

BOB. (*Pressing down on her shoulders.*) Relax.

SARAH. Yes. Kindergarten is my preference. I don't have to spend all my time on academics. I can give them more individual attention. Work on their emotional development. So maybe they won't end up as screwed up as the rest of us.

BOB. You think we're all screwed up?

SARAH. I don't know. I look at the children in my classroom. They're so open. So ... free. I don't remember ever being that free.

BOB. What would make you feel that free?

SARAH. I don't know. If I could do *one* thing that was just for me. Without worrying about how my parents will feel about it. That would be ... (*SHE can't find the word.*) ... God.

BOB. I think your parents are great.

SARAH. I love my parents. They sacrificed their whole life for me. But they expect me to sacrifice my whole life for them.

BOB. You know the story I told before? The one that was on the radio?

SARAH. Yeah.

BOB. I *wish* I had a father like that. My father and I never got along. He hated that I wanted to be an actor. We used to have these awful bust-out, knock-down arguments. But you want to hear something wild? (*HE stops the massage and sits on the couch.*) Whenever my dad and I would

have an argument, the next time I saw him ... he'd have bought me a new pair of shoes. Just like that. I'd see him and he'd say, "Here. Here's some shoes." And the bigger the argument, the more expensive the shoes. It used to drive me crazy. I could never figure out ... Why shoes? It finally occurred to me that it was his way of telling me that he, no matter what, he still loved me and that everything was okay. But, boy, you should see my closet. One suit and twenty-seven pairs of wingtips.

SARAH. Where *are* your parents?

BOB. *North Miami Beach.*

(SARAH laughs.)

BOB. No. Both my parents are dead.

SARAH. Oh, I'm sorry.

BOB. That's why I envy you. The only family I have is whatever people I happen to be working on a show with at any given time. My life is very ... transitory. *(HE touches Sarah's shoulder.)* How're you doing?

SARAH. That was great. Thank you.

(THEY drink.)

SARAH. You know, I was going to tell you, a woman I went to school with is the casting director for Milwaukee Rep. Have you ever worked there?

BOB. No, but I'd like to.

SARAH. I'll tell her to look out for you.

BOB. Appreciate it.

SARAH. My pleasure. *(Pause.)* I'd like to see you perform sometime.

BOB. You have.

SARAH. I mean, in a show.

BOB. Right. Well, I'm between engagements right now.

SARAH. Will you let me know next time you're in something?

BOB. Definitely.

SARAH. I'd love to come see you.

BOB. I'm very good.

SARAH. I'm sure you are.

(BOB downs his drink.)

SARAH. Would you like another drink?

BOB. No, thank you. One vodka and four glasses of wine is my limit. *(Pause.)* I guess I should be going.

SARAH. Oh. Yeah, well ... Let me get my checkbook.

BOB. No, no. Sarah. Seriously. I can't.

SARAH. I have to pay you.

BOB. No, you don't. You allowed me to spend Passover with you and your family. It was wonderful.

SARAH. You're sure?

BOB. Absolutely.

SARAH. Well, thank you.

BOB. And thank you for the dinner. I don't expect to be hungry 'til Tuesday.

(HE gets his coat, puts it on, and THEY walk to the door.)

BOB. Well ...

SARAH. Yeah.

BOB. I hope everything works out for you.

SARAH. Thanks. You, too.

BOB. Thanks. Listen, would it be all right if I gave you a call sometime? Just to keep in touch?

SARAH. Sure. You have to let me know when you're in a show.

BOB. Right ... Right ... Well ...

SARAH. One thing I wanted to ask you.

BOB. What?

SARAH. Um ... How did you know "Miss-Kite?"

BOB. *(Correcting her.)* "Meiskeit."

SARAH. Right. "Meiskeit." Thank you.

BOB. I did "Cabaret" once. There's a whole song called "Meiskeit."

SARAH. You're amazing.

BOB. Yeah, well ...

SARAH. One other thing I wanted to ask you.

BOB. Sure.

SARAH. The first night you were here ... when my father took our picture ... and you kissed me?

BOB. Yeah?

SARAH. Was that a David kiss or a Bob kiss?

BOB. Oh. That was a David kiss.

SARAH. Oh.

(THEY look at each other.)

BOB. This is a Bob kiss.

(THEY kiss.)

BOB. Listen, uh ... Last week I escorted a very nice elderly lady to the theatre. I really love going to the theatre. May I, some evening, escort you to the theatre?

SARAH. I'd like that.

BOB. I'll call you during the week.

SARAH. Okay.

(THEY kiss.)

BOB. I'll call you tomorrow.

SARAH. Okay.

(THEY kiss.)

BOB. I'll call you when I get home.

SARAH. Okay.

(THEY kiss.)

BOB. Why don't we talk about it now?

SARAH. Why don't you take off your coat and stay awhile?

BOB. Okay.

(HE drops his coat. SHE takes his hand and leads him back into the apartment. SHE stops and looks at him.)

SARAH. *(Suddenly remembering.)* You're not Jewish! *(SHE laughs.)* Oy!

BLACKOUT

ACT III

Scene 1

AT RISE: The PHONE rings. SARAH enter from the bedroom, wearing a robe and a towel around her hair. SHE picks up the phone.

SARAH. Hello? ... Hi ... Well, I'm kind of busy right now ... I know. I want to talk to you, too ... No, I don't think that's such a good idea ... I just think it's better if we don't see each other for the time being ... Chris, I don't know what else there is to say ... I know I did most of the talking. Chris, look, you have every right to be angry ... Well, you have every right to be whatever you are ... Chris, I have to get ready. My family's coming over ... Yes, and Bob ... Don't say, "Ah-hah." There's no reason to say, "Ah-hah." ... Chris ... *(SHE stops.)* Shoot. Wait a minute. I have another call. Hold on. *(SHE presses a button.)* Hello? ... Hi ... No, he's not here yet ... No, I have everything here. Where are you? ... I've got dessert ... Pie ... I've got ice cream. *(The sound of a "DING" is heard from the kitchen.)* Mom ... Mom, I got to go take the roast out ... No! It's in the oven ... Mom, I got to go. I'll see you soon, all right? 'Bye. *(SHE hangs up the phone and runs into the kitchen. After a*

moment, *SHE runs through the room and goes into the bedroom. Silence for a moment.*) Shoot! (*SHE runs into the room, goes to the phone and dials.*) Chris, I am *so* sorry. That was my mother. She's driving me crazy. I can't talk to you now ... Don't. Don't call me later. My parents will be here ... And Bob ... Chris, that's not ... Chris ... I'll talk to you tomorrow. Believe me, I want to talk to you. It's just things are very complicated right now ...

(*The DOORBELL rings*)

SARAH. (*Into phone*) Hold on. (*To door.*) Who is it?

BOB. (*From outside.*) It's me.

SARAH. Just a second. (*Into phone.*) Chris, I have to go ... Yes ... Yes ... 'Bye. (*SHE hangs up the phone SHE takes a breath SHE goes to the door and opens it.*)

BOB. (*Enters*) Hi.

SARAH. Hi.

(*THEY hug.*)

SARAH. Oh, God, I'm so glad you're here. Come on in. I'm getting dressed. (*SHE exits into the bedroom*)

BOB. I got your message. Did you get my message that I got your message?

SARAH. Yes. Thanks for coming.

BOB. You're parents are going to be here?

SARAH. Yes.

BOB. Joel?

SARAH. Yes.

BOB. What's the occasion?

SARAH. (*SHE appears in the doorway.*) We're engaged.

BOB. What?!

SARAH. Sorry. (*SHE disappears.*)

BOB. Congratulations. Wish I could've been there.

SARAH. Don't worry. You were wonderful.

BOB. When you say we're engaged, I take it you mean you and Dr. Steinberg are engaged.

SARAH. I'm sorry. It just happened. My mother was giving me the "you're not getting any younger" speech and I just blurted it out. (*SHE appears in the doorway.*) You should've seen the look on her face. I've never seen her so happy. I just didn't think this would get so ... I just ... didn't think. You don't mind playing doctor one more time, do you? (*SHE disappears.*)

BOB. No, I guess not. I had an audition yesterday. I look at the script. I'm auditioning to be a doctor. I said, "I can do this."

SARAH. (*Enters, dressed.*) They want to see us tonight to "celebrate our engagement." Can you help me set the table?

BOB. Sure.

(*THEY proceed to set the table.*)

SARAH. At least you get to have some more lukschen kugel.

BOB. Great. Is there anything I need to know? When's "the big day?"

SARAH. I promise you it won't go that far.

BOB. Oh?

SARAH. I'm trying to think ahead for a change. What do you think of this? Next week, I'll announce that you're going to a medical convention in San Francisco. While there, you'll run into an old girl friend who is now an OB-GYN at the Mayo Clinic. You'll come back, we'll fight, you'll move to Minnesota, send me a Dear Jane letter, and that'll be the end of David Steinberg.

BOB. Uh-huh. So fade out on Sarah and David. Now what about Sarah and Bob?

SARAH. We can keep seeing each other. I mean, do you want to?

BOB. Very much.

SARAH. So do I.

BOB. We just can't tell your parents.

SARAH. Not right away, okay?

BOB. Then we're back to the beginning. Only with a slight shift in casting. This time, I'll be the odd man out. I don't think I like that arrangement.

SARAH. Just give me some time, okay? (*SHE touches her hair.*) I have to dry my hair.

(*SHE exits into the bedroom. After a moment, we hear the WHIR of a hair dryer. BOB is alone onstage. The PHONE rings. The call is*

intercepted by an answering machine. After the BEEP, we hear CHRIS's VOICE.)

CHRIS. Sarah, I know you're there. You don't have to pick up the phone. I don't want to be a pest ... I just wanted to say ... I know you're going through a difficult time right now and I just want you to know ... I'm here for you ... I love you and ... I wish we could keep seeing each other and ... I love you and ... I'm here ... 'Bye. (*HE hangs up.*)

(*SARAH has entered to hear the last two lines. SHE looks at Bob.*)

BOB. You haven't told him about us.

SARAH. No. I didn't want him to think I broke up with him just because of you. I don't want to hurt him.

BOB. Sarah. By the time this whole thing is over, chances are somebody's going to get hurt.

SARAH. I'm sorry I got you into this.

BOB. I'm not. You know, when I got your message to come to dinner, I was thinking it was so we could introduce me—the real me—to your family.

SARAH. I wish we could, but this ... Monster I've created. I don't know how to get around it.

BOB. All right, look. The problem you had with Chris ...

SARAH. Is exactly the same problem I have with you.

BOB. Sarah, in my own quiet way, I have been falling in love with you. You know that.

SARAH. Yes. I just need a little time, okay? Over time, I can break the whole thing to them gently. How about that?

BOB. Well ... I don't want this to sound like a threat or an ultimatum or anything, but ... I'm not going to do that.

SARAH. What do you want me to do?

BOB. Sarah. Write this in ink. Chisel it in stone. Embroider it on a doily. "There's the truth. And then there's everything else."

SARAH. I don't know.

BOB. Sarah, Sarah, look. Here's the thing. I've been thinking.

SARAH. What have you been thinking?

BOB. You're parents are crazy about me, you know.

SARAH. They're crazy about Dr. Steinberg.

BOB. So what's in a name?

SARAH. What's in a name? Let's not forget what happened to Romeo and Juliet.

BOB. Romeo and Juliet concealed their love. That was their mistake. Let's not do that. (*Grandly.*) "Call me but love and I'll be ... Judaized." I think we should go public.

SARAH. How?!

BOB. Well, here's the thing. This is what I've been thinking ...

(*The DOORBELL rings.*)

SARAH. Excuse me. Hold that thought. (*SHE goes to the door and calls out.*) Who is it?

JOEL. (*From outside.*) It's Joel.

SARAH. (*Opens the door.*) Joel. Hi. You're early.

JOEL. I know. I wanted to talk to you before Mom and Dad get here.

BOB. Joel. Hi.

JOEL. Dr. Steinberg. So nice to see you. (*To Sarah.*) I hear you're engaged.

BOB. Yep. It's official. You're gaining a brother.

JOEL. Who *are* you?

BOB. We've met. I'm David.

JOEL. (*To Sarah.*) You want to tell me what's going on here?

SARAH. What do you mean?

JOEL. I finally called Northwestern Memorial.

SARAH. You what?

JOEL. There actually is a Dr. David Steinberg there. Only he's eighty years old and works in Orthopedics. Now what's going on?

(*SARAH looks at Bob. BOB nods.*)

SARAH. (*To Joel.*) Remember Chris?

JOEL. Chris. (*Remembering.*) Yes.

SARAH. I told everyone I'd stopped seeing him, but I didn't stop seeing him. I invented Dr. David Steinberg to tell Mother about so she'd quit trying to fix me up all the time. Dave ... Bob is an actor I hired to play the part for you all.

JOEL. Oh my God. (*To Bob.*) You're an actor?

BOB. Bob Schroeder. Hi.

JOEL. (*To Sarah.*) And you set this whole thing up because you didn't like the guys Mother fixed you up with?

SARAH. She wanted to see me with the perfect boyfriend. I gave her the perfect boyfriend.

JOEL. And you're still seeing Chris.

SARAH. Well, no actually. Not anymore.

JOEL. So how long is this going to go on?

SARAH. Well, now it gets kind of complicated.

JOEL. *Now* it gets complicated?

BOB. Sarah and Dr. Steinberg are breaking up. Sarah and Actor Bob are just beginning.

JOEL. Wonderful.

SARAH. Just let me handle it, all right?

JOEL. Handle it? How are you going to handle it?

SARAH. I'm working on it.

JOEL. I don't suppose honesty has occurred to you as an option, has it?

BOB. We were just discussing that.

SARAH. I can't tell them about Bob anymore than I could tell them about Chris.

JOEL. I don't see how ...

SARAH. Bob isn't Jewish either.

JOEL. (*Taken aback, to Bob.*) You're not Jewish?

BOB. Not officially, no.

JOEL. No wonder I was so confused. I had a feeling there was something phony about Dr. Steinberg. It never occurred to me that *everything* was phony about Dr. Steinberg.

BOB. I'm sorry. We really didn't expect it to go this far.

JOEL. You put on a hell of a performance.

BOB. Thank you. Thank you very much.

SARAH. (*To Joel.*) I was just trying to make them happy, you know?

JOEL. I see.

SARAH. If Mom and Dad weren't so bent out of shape about me dating someone who isn't Jewish, none of this would have happened.

JOEL. There are other issues here besides who you choose to date.

SARAH. Oh, please. Don't be a therapist. Don't start psychoanalyzing.

JOEL. I'm not psychoanalyzing. I'm just saying the problem here isn't simply about interfaith relationships.

SARAH. No. The problem is they want to control my life.

JOEL. They're just expressing their opinions about what they think will make you happy. Granted, they have a very strong set of values about how we should live. But you don't have to let another person's values control your life.

SARAH. Why are you taking their side?

JOEL. I'm not taking their side. I'll support you one hundred percent. Just tell me what you

want me to support. What do you want right now? This moment?

SARAH. You're talking like a therapist.

JOEL. I'm not talking like a therapist. (*To Bob.*) Am I talking like a therapist?

BOB. Yeah.

JOEL. (*To Sarah.*) Okay, I'm talking like a therapist. So indulge me. Even if it's something you're sure Mom and Dad would be very unhappy about. What do you want most for yourself right now?

SARAH. (*After a beat.*) I want to be with Bob.

JOEL. Okay.

SARAH. Oh, I have your permission? Well, thank you very much.

JOEL. Why do you have to have someone's permission?

SARAH. Because that's the way I was raised, okay? I was raised to be sensitive to other people's feelings. We always have to be "nice." Everything has to be "nice." God forbid anybody's feelings should be hurt.

JOEL. What about *your* feelings?

SARAH. I have no time to consider my feelings. I spend my whole life worrying about *their* feelings.

JOEL. Hey, I'm concerned about their feelings, too, but ...

SARAH. Oh, really? You weren't so concerned about their feelings when you got divorced. They were traumatized.

JOEL. I was concerned about their feelings. But I took responsibility for my own actions.

SARAH. Oh, well, forgive me for not being as self-actualized as you.

JOEL. Look, whatever resentment you have towards me ...

SARAH. Is nothing compared to the resentment I have towards them!

JOEL. Oh. Well, now we're getting somewhere.

SARAH. I just want to live my own life.

JOEL. So who's stopping you?

SARAH. They are.

JOEL. They are?

SARAH. Yes.

JOEL. Well. Can I just say one thing about that? ... Baloney.

SARAH. I don't need this right now.

JOEL. The only one who's keeping you from living your own life is you. But when you consider your own feelings, it's scary, isn't it? Feelings are scary. Because then you have to take responsibility for yourself.

SARAH. Therapist!

JOEL. Yes! I'm a therapist! I can't not be a therapist. And you can't expect Mom and Dad to not be parents. That's who they are. They're not going to change. If you want your relationship with them to be different, you're the one who's going to have to change.

SARAH. They won't let me.

JOEL. Oh, well, then it's all their fault and you can blame them for all your problems. Everyday, I have clients in my office going on and on about how their parents screwed them up.

SARAH. And what do you say to them?

JOEL. Get over it!

SARAH. I can't have this conversation with you.

JOEL. You're never going to be comfortable with them until you're comfortable with yourself.

SARAH. All right.

JOEL. They're behavior isn't going to change until you change your behavior.

SARAH. All right!

(The DOORBELL rings.)

JOEL. *(Referring to the door.)* So you're going to tell them?

SARAH. Don't you tell them.

JOEL. I'm not going to tell them. Are you going to tell them?

SARAH. I swear to God, Joel. Don't you say anything.

JOEL. I am not going to say anything.

BOB. Kids? They're here.

(BOB opens the door MIRIAM and ABE enter.)

MIRIAM. *(Giving Bob a big kiss on the cheek.)* Hello, David. Mazel Tov.

BOB. Hi. Thank you.

ABE. For two hours, we looked for a parking space.

MIRIAM. Abe, shah. Oh, I'm so excited. We have so much to talk about. *(SHE sees Joel.)* Joel, you're here already? *(Handing Sarah the casserole dish.)* Sarah, here. Put this in the oven at three-fifty.

BOB. *(Shaking hands with Abe.)* Mr. Goldman.

ABE. You call me "Dad" now. Welcome to the family.

BOB. Thank you.

ABE. "Thank you, Dad."

BOB. Thank you, Dad.

MIRIAM. Come, children. Sit. Sit. We have so much to talk about. Have you decided on a date? Where do you want the wedding? Wherever you want. You decide.

ABE. Oh, this is going to cost me.

MIRIAM. There's so much to do. We have to get a room. We have to call a caterer. I have to find out who was the caterer for the Silverman wedding. Him, I wouldn't call.

SARAH. Mom. Dad. There's something I have to tell you.

MIRIAM. That's why we're here. To talk about the wedding.

SARAH. There's something else we have to talk about first.

MIRIAM. So talk. Have you decided on the date?

SARAH. No, um ... There's something you have to know.

MIRIAM. What? Whenever you want is fine by us.

SARAH. I'm not talking about the wedding.

MIRIAM. What's there to talk about besides the wedding?

SARAH. Will you let me talk and I'll tell you?!

MIRIAM. Excuse me.

SARAH. (*Bracing herself.*) I know you're not going to be happy about this, but ... The truth of the matter is ... (*Collapsing.*) David has to go to a medical convention in San Francisco.

JOEL. Sarah.

BOB. Sarah.

SARAH. It's not worth it. Let's just do what we're going to do?

MIRIAM. What are you going to do?

SARAH. We're getting married.

JOEL. You're not getting married.

MIRIAM. You're *not* getting married?

BOB. We're not getting married in the way you think we're getting married.

MIRIAM. How many ways are there to get married?

BOB. We'll get married any way you want us to get married.

SARAH. (*To Bob.*) What are you talking about?

BOB. That's what I was trying to tell you before.

MIRIAM. Abe, what are they talking about?

ABE. I don't know. (*To Sarah and Bob.*) What are you talking about?

(*The DOORBELL rings.*)

SARAH. (*Getting up.*) Now, what?

MIRIAM. You invited somebody else?

SARAH. No. I don't know who ... (*SHE opens the door. CHRIS is there.*) Oh my God.

CHRIS. May I speak with you for a moment?

SARAH. This is not a good time.

CHRIS. I have something to say to you, Sarah, and I really think you should hear it.

SARAH. I promise. I'll call you tomorrow, all right?

CHRIS. (*Barges in.*) I'm not putting this off any longer. (*HE sees everyone.*) Oh. Forgive me for barging in like this. But perhaps it's just as well that all of you are here. (*To Sarah.*) Sarah, there comes a time when a man has to stake his claim. (*HE looks at Sarah and then turns and moves to Abe.*) Mr. Goldman. I am fully cognizant of the fact that you don't approve of me. But, I think, if you got to know me, you would discover that, in spite of the fact that I work in advertising, I am a very decent human being. I love your daughter very much. And while it is the source of some conflict for her, I believe that she loves me. I would like to dedicate my life to making her happy and providing for her in every way I possibly can. So with your permission and, hopefully, with your blessing, I

am going to ask your daughter for her hand in marriage.

ABE. (*HE considers him and then turns to Sarah.*) Who is this?

SARAH. You remember Chris?

MIRIAM. Chris?

SARAH. The man I was seeing who I told you I wasn't seeing anymore?

MIRIAM. (*After a beat.*) Santa Claus.

CHRIS. An unfortunate sobriquet. But it will not dissuade me from my purpose (*HE turns to Sarah.*) Sarah ... Will you marry me?

BOB. Whoa! Wait a minute! Excuse me, please. (*To Chris.*) We're all very moved by your efforts here. But, you see, the family has gathered to discuss wedding plans for Sarah and me. I just haven't had the chance to do my part. (*To Sarah.*) Sarah. When it's right you know it. Will you please marry me?

CHRIS. What?!

MIRIAM. You already asked her. (*To Sarah.*) Didn't he already ask you?

CHRIS. (*To Sarah.*) You've only known him for four weeks.

ABE. Four weeks?

MIRIAM. No. They met at Marilyn's wedding.

SARAH. We didn't meet at Marilyn's wedding.

MIRIAM. You met at somebody else's wedding?

SARAH. No. I mean ...

BOB. (*To Miriam.*) I don't actually know Marilyn.

MIRIAM. (*To Sarah.*) You said you met your new boyfriend at Marilyn's wedding.

SARAH. He's not my boyfriend.

BOB. I'm not your boyfriend?

SARAH. Yes, you're my boyfriend.

ABE. He's your boyfriend or he's not your boyfriend?

CHRIS. That's to be determined. Sarah, you have two offers on the table.

MIRIAM. She's marrying David.

SARAH. I'm not marrying David.

MIRIAM. He's not good enough for you?

SARAH. No! I mean, yes. He's good enough.

MIRIAM. So it's settled.

SARAH. It's not settled! Nothing is settled! (*Sighs.*) All right. All right. Look. This isn't going to be easy to explain so, uh ... just bear with me on this. (*To Miriam and Abe.*) Mom. Dad. This whole thing is because I care about how you two feel.

MIRIAM. What thing?

SARAH. This thing. This whole thing here.

MIRIAM. Abe, what is this thing?

ABE. How should I know? It's her thing. (*To Sarah.*) What is this thing?

JOEL. This "thing" is your's and Sarah's relationship.

SARAH. Joel, please.

MIRIAM. Our relationship?

SARAH. Our relationship is ... It's very important to me. And I would never ... All right, look. Remember, after Marilyn's wedding, I told you all about this wonderful man I met?

MIRIAM. (*Fawning over Bob*) And he is wonderful.

SARAH. This isn't him. I mean, it is him. But it's not him the way you think it's him. (*SHE takes a deep breath.*) This is Bob Schroeder. After I told you I'd stopped seeing Chris, I kept on seeing him and made up David to be my boyfriend.

MIRIAM. (*Confused.*) Abe?

ABE. (*To Sarah.*) Made up? What do you mean, made up?

SARAH. I mean, he doesn't exist. There is no Dr. David Steinberg. I made him up because I wanted you to think I had a boyfriend you'd be happy about. I hired Bob to portray David. To portray the boyfriend you thought I had.

ABE. Portray? Like an actor?

BOB. Exactly like an actor.

MIRIAM. Joel, you knew about this?

JOEL. Only just recently.

MIRIAM. Sarah, how could you do such a thing?

SARAH. I'm sorry. I didn't want to hurt you.

ABE. So you make up a story? You lie? You don't lie to your parents.

SARAH. I did it to make you happy.

ABE. Lying should make us happy?

SARAH. Well, you weren't crazy about the truth. You say you want me to be happy. But I'm only supposed to be happy with what makes you happy. I have to live my own life.

ABE. So who's life are you living? Mine?

SARAH. Yes. In a way.

ABE. So don't do me any favors.

SARAH. Daddy ...

JOEL. Dad ...

BOB. Mr. Goldman, please. I'm partially responsible for what's going on here. I wouldn't have gone along with it except that it was obvious to me that Sarah put herself into this situation because of how much she cares about you and Mrs. Goldman. And I wouldn't be here now if I hadn't grown to care for you myself as I have grown to care for Sarah. Okay. So I'm not really a doctor. So I'm not really Jewish ...

MIRIAM. You're not Jewish! Oh! Abe!

ABE. Let's go, Miriam.

BOB. Mrs. Goldman. From Sarah and me, you and Mr. Goldman will have Jewish grandchildren. Not only because their mother is Jewish. I'm prepared to convert.

CHRIS. Me, too!

(*EVERYBODY looks at him.*)

CHRIS. I was going to say that.

SARAH. We'll talk about it later.

ABE. Talk about it now! We're leaving! Miriam!

SARAH. Daddy, please ...

ABE. It's all right. You live your own life. You work out your own problems. (*With emphasis.*) But if you did what we told you, you wouldn't have these problems.

JOEL. You're not helping the situation.

ABE. I'm helping. Leaving is helping.

BOB. Mr. Goldman, please stay.

ABE. I'm not staying here. I don't stay anywhere I don't want to stay.

SARAH. Will you just talk to me?

ABE. You don't lie to your parents!

SARAH. I'm sorry.

MIRIAM. Abe ...

ABE. You want to know from lying? I'll tell you when you lie. You lie to the man who tells you you can't come into his country because you don't have a sponsor. You lie to the man who says you can't go to his school because you have a name that sounds funny. You lie to the kid who comes into your store and holds a gun to your head and wants to take your life from you.

MIRIAM. Abe ...

SARAH. Daddy ...

ABE. Goodbye! Good luck! Gezunterhayt!

MIRIAM. Abe ...

ABE. I'm not staying here! I don't stay anywhere ... (*HE gasps for breath. HE clutches his chest.*)

MIRIAM. Abe!

SARAH. Daddy!

JOEL. Dad!

(*JOEL, BOB and CHRIS rush to Abe and help him to sit*)

JOEL. Sit down. Sit down.

MIRIAM. Abe!

ABE. I'm all right.

SARAH. Daddy!

ABE. It's nothing. I'm all right.

SARAH. Mom?

MIRIAM. Call 9-1-1.

ABE. Don't call 9-1-1.

MIRIAM. Sarah, call 9-1-1.

ABE. I'm all right.

(*SARAH goes to the phone and dials*)

BOB. Joel, loosen his tie.

ABE. I'm all right.

CHRIS. What are we supposed to do?

JOEL. (*To Bob.*) You couldn't be a doctor now, could you?

BOB. You're more a doctor than I am.

JOEL. I'm a therapist. You want me to ask him how he *feels* about being sick?

SARAH. (*Returning from the phone.*) They're on their way.

ABE. Don't call 9-1-1.

MIRIAM. (*To Sarah.*) Get him something to drink.

ABE. I'm all right.

BOB. What else can we do?

JOEL. (*Hovering over Abe.*) Is there anything else we can do for you?

ABE. Why don't you all crowd around so I don't get too much air?

JOEL. (*Moving everybody back.*) All right. Give him air. Give him air.

MIRIAM. Abe ...

BOB. It's all right. He's going to be all right.

BLACKOUT

ACT III

Scene 2

AT RISE: It is the next day. SARAH is sitting on the couch, lost in thought. BOB and CHRIS are at the table, opposite each other. THEY are fast asleep. The PHONE rings. BOB and CHRIS sit up with a start. SARAH picks up the phone.

SARAH. Hello? ... Joel, hi. How's Dad? ... What did the doctor say? ... Uh-huh. You think he will? ... Right. How's Mom? ... Yeah, it's here ... Okay ... Yeah, I'm all right ... Yes, they're still here ... Okay. 'Bye. (*SHE hangs up the phone.*)

CHRIS. So what did the doctor say?

SARAH. He told my father he has to take it easy. I'll believe it when I see it. Anyway, it could have been a lot worse. They were able to rule out an M.I.

BOB. Rule out a what?

SARAH. Myocardial Infarction.

BOB. What's that?

(CHRIS glares at Bob.)

BOB. (*To Chris.*) I gave up my medical practice.

CHRIS. It's a heart attack.

SARAH. They said it was a warning this time. They released him already. Joel is taking them home. He just has to stop off here on the way. Mom left her purse here last night. (*Pause.*) I am so afraid of losing them

BOB. Sarah, you're dad's going to be fine.

SARAH. I look at my parents. All I see are parents. I've never seen them as two individuals. Two people who I love and care for so much.

BOB. Can I get you something to eat? You haven't eaten all night.

SARAH. I'm not hungry.

CHRIS. Something to drink?

SARAH. No, thank you.

(BOB and CHRIS watch her for a moment.)

CHRIS. (*To Sarah.*) You know, I meant it when I said I was willing to convert.

BOB. Cut her some slack, will you?

CHRIS. I'm just trying to take her mind off her troubles.

BOB. Yeah, well, I'm willing to convert, too, so you get no points for that.

CHRIS. But I'm willing to become Orthodox.

BOB. Oh, yeah? Well, I'm thinking of becoming a rabbi.

CHRIS. You are not.

BOB. All right, I'm not. But I am thinking I want to have a Bar Mitzvah.

CHRIS. I'm thinking of changing my name.

BOB. To what? "Cringle-stein?" My name already sounds Jewish.

CHRIS. I'm willing to get circumcised!

BOB. *(Taken aback.)* You're not circumcised?

CHRIS. No. Are you?

BOB. Certainly.

CHRIS. Well, it's not a law.

BOB. It is if you're Jewish. Show's how much *you* know.

SARAH. Would you guys please ...?!

BOB. Would you like us to leave?

SARAH. No, I don't care. *(SHE looks at them.)* I do appreciate your staying with me.

(The DOORBELL rings. SARAH goes to the door and opens it. JOEL is there.)

JOEL. Hi.

SARAH. Hi.

(MIRIAM enters behind Joel.)

SARAH. Mom. Are you all right?

MIRIAM. I'm all right. I'm all right.

SARAH. Where's Daddy?

MIRIAM. He's in the car.

JOEL. He won't come up.

SARAH. Oh, God. *(To Miriam.)* You didn't have to come up. Joel could bring you your purse.

JOEL. She says she has something to say to you.

MIRIAM. Where's my purse?

SARAH. It's right here. *(SHE goes to get the purse and brings it to Miriam.)*

BOB. How you doing, Joel?

JOEL. Hi.

CHRIS. Is everything all right?

JOEL. All things considered.

MIRIAM. *(Takes her purse from Sarah.)* Sarah, whatever we did to make you so unhappy, we apologize.

SARAH. You don't have to apologize. I want you to treat me like an adult, but I haven't been acting like one.

MIRIAM. Whatever you want to do, you do.

(SARAH and MIRIAM hug.)

SARAH. You know what I'd like to do? I'd like us to get to know each other.

MIRIAM. We don't know each other? I talk to you every day.

SARAH. We talk, but what do we talk about? We talk like a mother and daughter. I'd like you to tell me about your life. And I could tell you things about my life you wouldn't believe. (*SHE gets an idea.*) How about having lunch together tomorrow?

MIRIAM. Tomorrow, I go to the cemetery. It's yahrzeit for Papa.

SARAH. May I go with you?

MIRIAM. No, you don't want to go.

SARAH. Yes. I would like to go.

(*The DOORBELL rings. SARAH goes to the door and opens it. ABE is there.*)

SARAH. Daddy ...

ABE. Miriam. I'm in the car.

MIRIAM. Abe, come in.

ABE. I'm not coming in.

SARAH. Daddy, please?

ABE. I don't come in where I'm not welcome.

SARAH. Dad, come in, please. I'll make you some tea.

ABE. You don't have to make me tea.

SARAH. I know I don't have to. I want to. Please. Come in. We'll sit. We'll talk. I need to talk to you.

MIRIAM. Abe. She needs to talk to you.

ABE. What do you want to talk about?

SARAH. Would you come in, please?

(*ABE takes one step in.*)

ABE. I'm in.

SARAH. Would you please sit down?

MIRIAM. Abe ...

SARAH. (*Stopping Miriam.*) Mother. (*To Abe, more dynamically than we've ever heard her.*) Sit down!

(*ABE sits.*)

SARAH. (*To Joel.*) Joel, would you put up the teapot, please?

(*JOEL exits to the kitchen.*)

SARAH. Dad. I love you. Sometimes, I've been so afraid of losing your love that I've acted stupidly and thoughtlessly and didn't treat your love with the respect it deserves. I sat up all night thinking, "What is the best way for me to express my love for you?" From now on, I want to be honest with you. And I want you to be honest with me.

ABE. I'm honest.

SARAH. Not always. Not completely. You didn't tell me about your being held up.

MIRIAM. We wouldn't want you to worry.

SARAH. Exactly.

(*JOEL enters from the kitchen.*)

SARAH. We're always so worried about having somebody worry about us. Trust me, all right? I want to know what's going on in your life. Let me decide whether or not I should worry. And I promise I'll let you know what's going on in my life.

ABE. What is going on in your life?

SARAH. Oh. Excuse me. *(To Chris.)* Chris. You are the kindest, sweetest man I have ever known. You've given me more support and understanding than I deserve and I will always love you for that. But I'm not going to marry you.

CHRIS. I see.

SARAH. *(To Bob.)* Bob. I'm not going to marry you either.

BOB. Okay.

SARAH. Not right now.

BOB. Okay.

SARAH. I don't know why you came into my life at this particular time ...

BOB. You called.

SARAH. I'm very glad I did. And I would like you to be my official and very conspicuous boyfriend.

BOB. I can do that.

SARAH. That would make me very happy.

CHRIS. Well, I guess I'll, um ... *(HE starts to go.)*

SARAH. You don't have to go.

CHRIS. No, I think I will. *(Saying goodbye.)*
Mr. Goldman. Mrs. Goldman. Joel. *(To Bob.)*
You ... Be good to her.

BOB. Count on it.

CHRIS. Sarah.

SARAH. Thank you.

(CHRIS exits.)

BOB. Well, I think I'll make my exit here myself. I'm going to go to the escort service ... and resign.

SARAH. Wait a minute.

BOB. Spend some time with your family. I'll call you later.

SARAH. *(Insistent.)* Wait a minute. *(Takes Bob by the hand.)* Mom. Dad. Joel. I would like you to meet my boyfriend. This is Bob Schroeder.

BOB. Hi.

MIRIAM. "Schroeder?"

BOB. It's not. I checked. *(To Sarah.)* Now, if you'll excuse me ... *(HE starts to go.)*

MIRIAM. *(To Abe.)* Abe ...

ABE. *(To Bob.)* David ...

BOB. *(To Abe.)* Bob.

ABE. Whatever. *(HE considers Bob.)* From acting you make a living?

BOB. Sometimes.

ABE. Oy. *(HE continues.)* You're out of town a lot?

BOB. Not if I have a reason to stay home.

ABE. Is there *anything* we've heard about you that's true?

BOB. Two things. I really love opera. And I really love Sarah.

ABE. (*Referring to a chair.*) Sit down.

BOB. Thank you.

SARAH. (*To Abe and Miriam.*) Have you eaten? I still have all the food from last night.

MIRIAM. (*Referring to Abe.*) The doctor says he has to watch what he eats.

SARAH. How much cholesterol can there be in kugel?

ABE. (*HE smiles*) Not too much.

SARAH. I'll throw everything into the microwave. It'll take a second.

MIRIAM. Don't put it in the microwave. It doesn't taste right from the microwave.

SARAH. Mother. We agree we aren't going to hold things back from each other, right?

MIRIAM. Right.

SARAH. Good. So sit down, relax, and I'm going to go zap the kugel.

ABE. Let's eat!

JOEL. Let's eat!

(*EVERYONE moves to the table*)

MIRIAM. (*To Bob*) So, Bobby. What kind of acting do you do?

BOB. Oh, you know ... Whatever comes up. Stage. Screen.

MIRIAM. Are you in anything right now?

BOB. Not right now. But this summer, I'll be working at the Candlelight Playhouse. They're doing a revival of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

MIRIAM. Oh, I love *Fiddler on the Roof*.

ABE. *That's* a good show.

MIRIAM. Which part are you playing?

BOB. Perchik, the student.

ABE. You're playing a Jew?

JOEL. Who'd believe that?

(*SARAH has brought out food and sits next to Bob.*)

MIRIAM. (*To Bob.*) Maybe you could get us a couple of tickets?

SARAH. Mother.

MIRIAM. We'll pay for them.

BOB. I can get you a couple of tickets.

ABE. Last time we saw *Fiddler* was at the Candlelight Playhouse.

MIRIAM. It was the Drury Lane.

ABE. It was the Candlelight.

(*LIGHTS start to fade.*)

MIRIAM. We saw *Fiddler* at the Drury Lane.

ABE. I don't think it was the Drury Lane.

MIRIAM. We saw *My Fair Lady* at the Candlelight. We saw *Cats* at the Marriot. We saw *Fiddler* at the Drury Lane.

ABE. We saw *Cats* at the Drury Lane.
MIRIAM. We saw *Cats* at the Marriot.

(*Fade to BLACK*)

End of Play

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

James Sherman has proven to be one of the most popular playwrights to emerge from Victory Gardens Theater. His writing is both funny and universal in its approach. *Beau Jest* is a play in which Judaism might be considered to be a major theme and yet, I think the play is far more concerned with the behavior that exists between parents and their children. The central focus in the initial production was Sarah Goldman's "Coming of Age."

The script is written in a three act form, and as such, it has a somewhat classical structure. We, the audience, are presented with a situation, a complication, a climax, and a denouement. We experience a disordered world which is returned to order and Sherman allows the audience to experience mirth without taking a pejorative attitude to any particular character or characters.

It has been suggested that theater style in Chicago is a cross between Stanislavski and Second City. Chicago theater artists are concerned with honesty of emotion and also tend to feel comfortable with the process and results of improvisation. James Sherman is no exception to this; as a member of The Second City Company, he was conditioned to "write on his feet." Consequently, his work is humorous, immediate, and designed to be only as long as the writer's objective requires.

Since Sherman is a man of the theater, his plays are often balanced between "theatrical" characters and viewpoints and those of the "real world." The pleasure of *Beau Jest* is in viewing Bob, an actor, making the best of a difficult situation while, at the same time, seeing him share in the joyous contribution of Jewish culture—L'chaim.

Dennis Zacek
Artistic Director
Victory Gardens Theater

June 1990

COSTUME PLOT

SARAH

ACT I

Burgundy silk jacquard blouse, burgundy and navy jacquard pleated skirt, navy pumps, taupe hose, gold hoop earrings, gold watch

ACT II

Magenta and white, 2-piece dress, navy pumps, taupe hose, silver earrings

ACT III, Sc 1

Lt periwinkle terrycloth robe, blue towel, grey bunny slippers

ACT III, Sc 2

Navy blue knit turtleneck dress w/matching belt, navy pumps, gold hoop earrings, gold watch

MIRIAM

ACT I

Royal blue print sweater w/matching skirt, half slip, mink jacket, black heels, taupe hose, gold ball earrings, gold wedding rings, black purse

ACT II

Floral print georgette dress w/black patent belt, lt grey trench coat w/burgundy lining, silver earrings

ACT III

Red and blue print dress w/matching belt, same trench coat as Act II, gold and pearl earrings, pearl necklace