

Singer Sister****

One Act

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ESTE

THE

DINAH

MIRIAM

RABBI

ZELDA

OWEN

MARSHALL

FRED

RHODA

HERBIE

RHENA

ELSIE

DOTTIE

MINNIE

SARAH

MARTY

FRAN RONNIE

ABBE

FOUR MEN - GRAVE DIGGER/MOBSTERS

SCENE 1 - INT. SYNAGOGUE

June 06, 1968. A synagogue in Queens. The women are packed like sardines in the balcony. It's sweltering hot.

THE RABBI 35, has his back to the congregation. He wears a black yarmulke, an overly elaborate colorful tallit.

THE RABBI

Please Rise.

All rises. The congregation a mish mosh of Jews. The Rabbi places his tallit over his head and begins to daven. The men, spread out on the main level, chant in dissonant tones the Mourner's Kaddish.

ESTE 30, DINAH 23, MIRIAM 16, stand in a pew. Head to toe black. Este stands perfectly still. Dinah's leg shakes uncontrollably. Miriam leans over the balcony, looks into the sea of men in black. She tries to use her (frumka/doily unsure of which) as a fan and drops it into the men's section. All three watch.

MIRIAM

What are they even saying?

DINAH

How should I know, the heat is making it harder to understand----

ESTE

--I'm trying to listen okay?

MIRIAM

You know what they're saying?

ESTE

Shush.

MIRIAM

You shush.

ESTE

No. I already said that, you can't repeat what I already said. It's lazy and boring--just shush. I'm being moved by Adonai.

MIRIAM

Ooooo. Because she's a mother now she has a magical connection to *ADONAIIIIII*.

*Miriam shakes her hand at the sky.
Impersonates any elder that has ever kvetched
in her life.*

MIRIAM

SHE HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY DIVINITY ABOVE AND IS NOW A SLAVE TO THE CONCEPT OF FEMININITY.

*Shushes emerge from every side of the
synagogue.*

DINAH

She has no idea what they're saying.

ESTE

I know what they're saying. Deep in my heart-

MIRIAM

What heart?

*Dinah laughs too loud and stomps her leg in
joy. Again, shushes emerge from every side of
the synagogue. Este punches Miriam on the
shoulder.*

MIRIAM

It's too hot--don't touch me--Ow. OW.

(whispered and overly dramatic)

...ow.

ESTE

Dinah. The leg, enough.

DINAH

You want me to shove this leg where the sun don't shine?

Enough. ZELDA

Did anyone pack snacks? MIRIAM

I have cashews-- DINAH

You don't need it. ZELDA

But-- MIRIAM

Do you see how good you look in that dress? You don't need it. ZELDA

For fuck sake-- DINAH

Language. ZELDA

MIRIAM
(whispers to Dinah)
 ...pass the nuts, I'm dying up here.

Dinah grabs a fist full of cashews out of her purse. Miriam shoves the cashews in her mouth.

THE RABBI

Please be seated. Shabbat shalom.

The Rabbi is revealed, his voice pings through the synagogue. The congregation talks over him.

MIRIAM
(through a mouth full of cashews)

Is the Rabbi...attractive?

No. ESTE Yes. DINAH

I'm married, not blind. DINAH

ESTE

I thought you and your band of freaks want all men to perish under the feminine fist?

MIRIAM--

No, no, no--just the ones who think we're delicate flowers, but also want to treat us like kitchen wenches with no functioning brain cells--listen, what if I wanted to become a Rabbi--I don't, God and I aren't on the best terms right now, even if I wanted to, I am a woman and deemed inadequate to learn Hebrew, let alone the prayers. I--we, WE, should know what these words mean, but somebody decided, that WE don't have the brain capacity to decode otherworldly cryptic messages with wonky symbols--why is it so hot?

DINAH

The women are essentially stuffed up here like sardines.

MIRIAM

I'm sweating my *tuchas* off in the balcony while they have roaming space, close to the door with fresh air, all the fresh in the world. Me and my band of freaks are fighting for fresh air, not to be sequestered like diseased cattle waiting for the slaughter.

ZELDA

I said, enough.

They give it a few seconds.

ESTE

Do you see what he's wearing?

MIRIAM

Well, I like him--it. I like it--I meant "it" and-and-aaaannd it shows his...

Miriam poses like a French Model and puts on a tacky French accent.

MIRIAM

...joie de vivre.

DINAH

Oh. She thinks she's hot shit because she can read. ---look at this line---feels funky

ESTE

Do you really want so much *joie de vivre* from a Rabbi?

The Rabbi clears his throat and tries to settle the congregation.

THE RABBI

PLEASE be seated.

He's ignored yet again. The chatter continues.

DINAH

I don't think anybody else likes his *joie de vivre*...

THE RABBI

(screams not in a painful way, but in a way...)

PLEASE BE SEATED.

The congregation freezes. Collectively breathes and sits.

MIRIAM

That was--wow.

ESTE

Are you kidding?

DINAH

Agreed.

THE RABBI

SHABBAT--oh. Shabbat Shalom.

THE CONGREGATION

Shabbat Shalom.

THE RABBI

We are gathered here today to mourn the loss of Abraham Yakov Singer.

A wail emerges from the crowd.

RABBI

A son of God, a man who loved his family, a man who loved his job, adorning the community with beauty and joy. A not so silent pillar in this community.

DINAH

God help her.

MIRIAM

Who was that?

ESTE/DINAH

Fran Ronnie.

MIRIAM

I don't think God can help her...

THE RABBI

He was loved by all. His soul was touched by so many...

Another wail erupts.

ESTE

It's a little much-

MIRIAM

You're judging her sorrow and pain?

ESTE

The whole congregation doesn't need to hear her sorrow and pain.

THE RABBI

He can feel your pain and sorrow. Abraham was a pious man...

All the sisters start to cackle. Zelda joins in. The Rabbi, gets frazzled at the sounds from the balcony. Rushes through.

RABBI

Uh, he was a man of action. Someone that people could turn to for a joke and a laugh. Abraham was a dutiful husband and beloved father to Este, Dinah and Miriam.

They all fall silent.

DINAH

He would have hated this shit.

RABBI

(now will only scream instructions)

PLEASE RISE FOR THE V'AHAVTA.

ESTE

Oy, my ears.

Miriam stands up right away.

MIRIAM

I'm kinda into it, it's his essence, it's his joi-

Dinah and Este rise.

DINAH

Joie de vivre my ass.

Este takes off frumka/doily and drops it over the balcony. Dinah takes off her frumka/doily. All three sisters look straight up to the heavens.

SCENE 2 - EXT. SYNAGOGUE

Outside the synagogue. OWEN 37, dressed in all black, his yarmulke still on his head. He holds the hand of MARSHALL 7, pushes a stroller back and forth as CINDY 3 (debating on age), cries and cries and cries. Marshall covers his ears.

OWEN

Please...please. Please think quiet thoughts. Please--

Marshall pulls his hand out of his father's hand. He puts his face inside the stroller. FRED 30, dressed in all black, smokes a cigarette and strolls over to see the commotion.

MARSHALL

(matching Cindy's volume)

--THINK QUIET THOUGHTS.

Fred grabs Marshall's head out of the stroller and pushes him out of the way.

MARSHALL

I was helping, right?

Fred grabs his wallet and grabs three dollars.

FRED

You can help by grabbing a pack of Lucky Strike, eh maybe something nice for you and dear old dad. Got it?

*Marshall looks to Owen who gives him a nod.
Marshall runs offstage. He runs back on.*

MARSHALL

Where am I going?

*Owen walks away from the stroller, towards
Marshall. The cries stop as soon as Owen walks
away. All three look at the stroller.*

Owen gets down to Marshall's eye line.

OWEN

Go run down the block, make a left and the second store go in. Ask for Dean. Run straight back. Okay?

Owen kisses him on the forehead.

OWEN

Love ya kid, now go.

*He runs off stage. Fred taks a long drag, throws
his cigarette to the ground.*

OWEN

Don't touch my kid again...got it?

FRED

Touchy--touchy. How come you got both of them out here while she's in there? One might say she has you...

*Fred grabs his testicles and yanks them up.
Owen looks down at his balls.*

OWEN

Man, my kid is right there. She doesn't need to...see that.

FRED

She's two, how she gonna remember--

OWEN

Cindy's three . Plus we're outside of *shul*, you don't touch your balls so close to the Torah, it's perverse--

FRED

Ah, the protective type are we? My dear old dad never did anything for me, not a word of kindness. Fucking *alter kocker*. He didn't care, then he died. What a shame.

Fred spits on the ground in his memory. Este enters and listens in the corner.

OWEN

Well--mine, mine did. All he did was his best. Just a taxi driver in the Bronx, till the day he died and my God, he was the best. He'd do this thing where he'd keep umbrellas in his cab just in case someone forgot theirs. He should've been a real--

FRED

Alter kocker.

OWEN

He made it out of Gomel, that--that was--they just keep trying to take us out with no good reason why. His father was shot for fighting back, and his mother died days later. By the end of the week, the bodies were lined up like trophies for the Tsar, just to be burned and for what? Easier to clean for those sadists. But the way he talked, like he was desensitized, my father never looked back, what was he to do, die another way?

(impersonating his father)

“The stench of burning flesh can never leave my nose, we must move on, we must keep going. Eh, *azoy geyt es...*” The way he'd say that. Like a prayer that it was our destiny to keep moving.

FRED

This is the most I've ever heard you speak. I thought you only knew “Yes Este...No Este...Okay Este.”

Este walks towards them, about to go on the defense and go for the jugular.

OWEN

It works like a charm, you should try it with your own wife sometime.

ESTE

This creep occupied enough of your time...wait...where is he?

FRED

I needed cigarettes.

ESTE

We're going to be late for the funeral and you have my child running around like a *sheeny* bastard?

FRED

If you think the neighborhood cares about your kid buying ciggies after what just happened with your family?

Este gets right in Fred's face.

ESTE

You keep your mouth shut--Miriam doesn't know yet. Got it? Owen, get Marshall.

Owen gives Este a kiss on the forehead. Este pushes him away.

OWEN

Yes, Este.

FRED

All I'm saying...

OWEN

Eh, *that's the way it goes.*

Este flips off Fred and walks away. Fred searches for another cigarette and can't find anything. Throws his hands to the sky like his ancestors before him.

SCENE 3 - THIS SCENE WHAT THE FUCK IS IT

Miriam walks out of temple with MARTY 19, looks like a dirty hippie. His hair is curly, free and the definition of a revolution. Unabashedly Jewish.

MIRIAM

Do you have any grass? My mother went in on me over cashew consumption. Literally nuts, do you hear me? Nuts?!

MARTY

Dear cousin of mine, your family woes will disappear.

MIRIAM

Seriously?

MARTY

Oh--I'm appalled you think I didn't come locked and loaded.

MIRIAM

HERE HE IS WORLD! THE SAVIOR OF THE DAY, MARTIN JACOB WEINSTOCK!

MARTY

Call me Batman-stock, Bat-wein-man--

He pulls a metal case out of his yarmulke. He has 5 joints "locked and loaded".

MIRIAM

I'm not sure it belongs up there.

MARTY

Nobody is gonna touch my mop, so it's the safest place.

MIRIAM

The way your dad looks at it, I don't know man. He might take a pair of scissors in the middle of the night, cut off all those luscious locks and stick it on his bald spot.

MARTY

When I came home last semester, with the head of a revolutionary dental genius in the making, I thought Ma was gonna drop dead, nope not her, she was fine, Dad on the other hand. Fuck. He blew a fuse. "You turning into this unwashed beast is a disgrace to me, a disgrace to your mother, a disgrace to the flag, hell for what I fought for." Fuck. He's gonna shave my head in the middle of the night.

Marty pats his hair with care.

MIRIAM

Are you high right now?

MARTY

I snuck out before the V'ahavta.

MIRIAM

Sheeny bastard, you did it without me?

MARTY

Follow me into the dark pits of hell and my jazz cigs--

MIRIAM

That's what your dad--

MARTY

That is exactly what my dad calls them.

RHODA 39, steps out of the synagogue, wears all black. She dabs her eyes. Looks up to the sky, looks down at the pavement.

RHODA

You're probably down there. Right?

Miriam and Martin pretend to be in the Pink Panther. They get caught right away.

RHENA 47, follows Rhoda outside. Looks at the sky, winces at the brightness.

Followed by FRAN RONNIE 29. Sickly, slouched over. Head to toe black.

RHENA

Where do you think you two are going?

MIRIAM

Um, we--

MARTY

Miriam just wanted to show me the place where Mrs. Pinkowitz's Pomeranian--

MIRIAM

His name was Noodles. May he rot in hell.

MARTY

Where...Noodles jumped up and bit her on the nose.

FRAN RONNIE

Was?

MIRIAM

He died, not because of me. It was a car that I was not driving. I didn't kill the stupid dog with a stupid name.

FRAN RONNIE

That poor creature, he was probably so frightened and alone when the roaring tires ravaged his body, releasing his time on this earthly plane of existence.

They all look at Fran Ronnie like she's possessed by a demon.

RHENA

Frannie, why don't you follow them and say your goodbyes...to Noodles.

RHODA

Martin take your cousin.

MIRIAM

Oh no, she seems far too distraught to come with us. We were also going to talk about uh--

MARTY

Jazz--

MIRIAM

Jazz, yes, a Charles Mingus album just came out and that's not what you're into, right?

FRAN RONNIE

It's the right thing for me to do.

MARTY

(under his breath)

Shit.

They exit. Obviously not getting high...yet.

RHODA

Is she going to be okay?

RHENA

She's touched, we know this.

RHODA

Does she get help?

RHENA

She's not deranged--

RHODA

That's not what I'm saying, it's in fashion for some outside help. Could be the first time for our family to be in touch with the times.

RHENA

You want to use my daughter to be stylish?

RHODA

That's not what I meant, Rhena you know that--

RHENA

She's my kid. Do I tell you to tame that beast of a son? He's clearly the one that needs professional help, unaware of what is going on--all of you live your wonderfully easy life away from us, me.

Rhoda starts to walk away.

RHENA

"Look I'm Rhoda, I got the husband, the house on Long Island, the perfect family with no woes in the world, la dee da--"

RHODA

You know the doctor just called me saying we need an in person conversation which probably means I'm going to die any day now and you're upset I got a house?

Zelda enters and ends the tiff.

ZELDA

Enough already.

RHODA

She's the one who started it.

ZELDA

Does it matter? We are all we have left. Jackie and Abel are dead. Abraham's side is long gone and you two are going after each other like alley cats.

RHENA

Zel, she was talking about the my girl--

HERBIE 42, dressed in all black, tries to link his arm with Rhoda.

ZELDA

How do you have the ability to make this day about yourself? Here's the truth, please do whatcha want with it. Your child needs a damn doctor, every time she speaks, a part of my soul dies.

HERBIE

Are we talking about Fran Ronnie?

Rhoda hits Herbie on the back of the head.

RHENA

The sun is too harsh, it's hurting my eyes.

RHODA

He's a putz, he didn't know--

RHENA

I'm just getting the kids, we'll meet you there okay?

Rhena exits.

HERBIE

What's her problem?

SCENE 4

Mount Carmel Cemetery. It is literally on the Jackie Robinson Parkway. Cars zoom past, curses are being shouted from the cars. Ain't no rest for the wicked.

FOUR MEN lower the casket into the ground.

MAN 2 loses his grip.

MAN 1

Ayo-careful they're all watching...

The Rabbi holds a shovel.

The family stands around the grave sight. A pile of dirt waits for them.

Behind her, stands Este holding Cindy in her arms, Marshall and ABBE 10, play slaps next to Owen, Dinah and Fred hold hands. Miriam stands alone.

The whole family stares. Rhoda and Rhena try to comfort her.

ZELDA

Get your hands off me.

They slowly back off.

With a thud, the coffin is in the ground. Este passes Cindy to Owen.

The Rabbi holds his arms out to the sky.

THE RABBI

May Abraham find peace from the Mitzvah of Burial. *Al mekomo yavo veshalom*. His body returns to the place from where we originate. His body, will nourish this world as is our right to provide from which we came. Amen.

ALL WOMEN

Amen.

THE RABBI

Now we let the family cover him in the dirt of his eternal resting. Zelda?

Zelda doesn't move. Este goes up and grabs the shovel from the Rabbi.

THE RABBI

“I know to you, it might sound strange
But I wish it would rain (Oh how I wish that it would rain)
Sunshine, blue skies, please go away...”

Este gets the shovel, digs for soil. Este looks at the Rabbi with daggers in her eyes. She passes the shovel to Dinah.

My girl has found another and gone away...
With her went my future, my life is filled with gloom
So day after day I stay locked up in my room-”

DINAH

Alright David Ruffin-stein, enough with the words.

HERBIE

I love The Commodores.

Miriam and Marty look at each other in confusion.

MARTY

Don't you mean The Temptations, Dad?

HERBIE

Don't talk to me until you get a haircut.

The Rabbi starts to hum. Dinah gets a shovel full of soil and does it three times.

Dinah passes the shovel to Miriam. Miriam digs in for the biggest amount of soil and slowly drops the dirt over the coffin.

MIRIAM

This isn't the most ideal spot, but for some last minute real-estate you do have a lovely view of the highway. Bye Daddy.

Miriam brings the shovel to Zelda. Zelda refuses the shovel.

MIRIAM

Ma, you have to do it.

Zelda doesn't budge. The Rabbi stops his song. Rhena grabs the shovel and continues the ritual.

MIRIAM

(the facade starts to crack)

Mom, come on...he has to go in peace, right? Somebody tell her that? Are you deaf? You can't--my God--you can't even look at me...

Rhena passes the shovel to Rhoda, she continues the ritual.

Nobody can watch Miriam.

MIRIAM

He has to rest and-and-and he can't unless we return him to the Earth. That's what we did, but not you right? What is wrong with you? Come on. Mommy. Just take it. Please? Please.

Rhoda squeezes Miriam's shoulder. She begins to cry (nobody needs to cry, but if the actor can, hot damn)

RHODA

Zelda, just do it.

Zelda walks forward and rips the shovel from Miriam's hands.

ZELDA

You better stop crying, before I give you something to cry about. Got it?

RHENA

It's not her fault Zel-

Rhoda embraces Miriam.

ZELDA

Tell me how to talk to my kid and you'll be the next one in the ground.

The Rabbi starts to intervene.

THE RABBI

This is a day filled with high tensions-

ZELDA/RHENA/RHODA

SHECK IT-

ZELDA

Leave. Go home, set up the apartment, go fly a kite--

Nobody moves.

ZELDA

I do not care, just go. Go. GO. Are YOU deaf? GO.

ESTE

Owen let's go.

OWEN

Yes Este.

DINAH

Fred?

Dinah extends her hand, Fred is reluctant to take it.

FRED

Fine.

The first to leave is The Rabbi. Everyone slowly filters out. The last to leave is Miriam, and Rhoda stays in the corner.

ZELDA

You're a real selfish prick, you know that? I can't look at anybody without feeling like I failed, when it was you who failed us.

Zelda starts to shovel, she never stops.

ZELDA

This is stupid. You were so stupid and now the reason I'm covered in dirt, you *shmuck*. You thought I wouldn't understand? Well, you'da been right, I would have you killed myself. The headline: Queens mother locked away for one hundred years after her idiotic husband loses everything to the goddamn Shylocks. Those creeps have been itching to see you lose it all, go off and slither to them, begging for a piece of your soul. You *sheeny* bastard, they had you eating out of the palm of their hands. You gave them the store, that was everything-**EVERYTHING** we worked for, we came from nothing and you're leaving me with nothing. Why couldn't you be an alcoholic like every other hateful person we know. Was a life with us so miserable you had to take us down too?

Zelda drops the shovel.

I always hated craps, it's people playing God with no good outcome. You were ravaged by the ridiculous sounds of dice, well I hate to break it to you, it's just manufactured plastic in the shape of a square. Nothing special. Were you just looking for miracles in your everyday existence? The pursuit of miracles is what every man-boy-coward craves to make it through the day. Women know better--I know better than to put my faith in ideas that'll lead to nowhere. I'm at a dead end, it's the end of the rope and now I'm trapped in this shit hole of a life. Abey you cursed us, you've doomed us to suffer at the hands of all men or destroy them where they stand.

Zelda stops. Rhoda approaches her and takes her by the hand.

RHODA

Enough.

Rhoda and Zelda exit.

SCENE 4 - ADD INTO S.D NEXT DRAFT -- MEZUZAH -- KISS MEZUZAH

*The Singer apartment. A sixth floor walk up, inevitably everybody is a little winded, if you're out of shape, a little more winded.**A book shelf is at the front of the entrance. with an A-Y Encyclopedia collection. The next shelf, photographs, Este and Dinah's sweet sixteen's. Zelda and Abraham's wedding photo. Este and Owen's wedding photo. A baby picture of Marshall and a baby picture of Cindy. A photo of all Zelda's siblings and Frieda, their Mother and Morris, their Father. A full body mirror lives right next to the shelving unit.**The hallway has two bedrooms a bathroom and a linen closet.****A muted pea green wallpaper adorned with gold paisley cover the apartment. A stained glass lamp lives in the corner of the room (too much). In the casual family room, a 1967 Sony television set lays against the wall that divides the kitchen. On the opposite side a lazy boy recliner A breakfront hides this room. It's lined with a mirror and filled with porcelain animals, dolls and "the good china" line the shelves.******The kitchen wooden cabinets with golden knobs. Two separate meat and dairy dishes. A giant cactus with spoons and forks stuck inside them.***

An open dining room with a backsplash wallpaper of umbrella, because doesn't that scream chow time? A crystal chandelier dangles above the table. The table a red cherry table with upholstered chairs of the same brown as the couch.

The formal living room had a giant brown velvet couch covered in plastic. Nobody should be comfortable. A white marble coffee table. A hi-fi record system, that was its own piece of furniture was across from the couch. Covered around the apartment, empty crystal candy bowls. -- I need to figure out what's important.

Dinah and Este enter the apartment. Este head straight for the linen closet. Dinah tries to get comfy on the couch. She checks the candy bowls...

DINAH

The one time you'd think she'd cave and put something in here...

No response.

DINAH

ESTE SHE'S SUCH A TEMPESTOUS MONSTER SHE DIDN'T HAVE THE DECENCY TO PUT CANDY OUT FOR US--

Este returns with multiple sheets. Passes one to Dinah.

ESTE

What do you expect, we're family, not company. We don't count, remember?

Este goes to cover every mirror in the apartment the last one is near the bookshelf near the missing Encyclopedia.

ESTE

Did you take the Z?

DINAH

Is that a new drug or something?

ESTE

No--the Z. It's missing from the bookshelf.

DINAH

Dad probably hid it, every time he looked at that letter he thought of his tempestuous monster of a wife, maybe that's why--

ESTE

--By the end of the day, I'm finding that book.

Este covers the mirror. Dinah looks in the mirror and fixes her lipstick.

Este starts to cover the mirror for Dinah.

ESTE

Are you kidding--

DINAH

Why didn't you tell me I had lipstick on my teeth.

ESTE

It's a *shonda*--

DINAH

Right now, our life is a *shonda*--

ESTE

So, just adding insult to injury is acceptable? Toi--
Also, it's not my job--you have a husband now. You have to train them to spot these things.

DINAH

See, in theory, I understand this--

ESTE

Open up, let me fix it.

Dinah shows off all her teeth.

DINAH

*(nobody understands what the f*ck she's saying.)*

But what if he doesn't respond well--

ESTE

Yuck.

She wipes Dinah's spit on the plastic couch cover.

DINAH

Sometimes he looks at me, like, I'm the mistake and his eyes glaze over to someone else. It's like everyone is delicious fried chicken and I'm chopped liver in the corner, just waiting, begging to be eaten. *Sheeny* bastard.

ESTE

That's just people, I think, wanting the next best thing.

DINAH

Has Owen ever looked for pieces of fried chicken?

ESTE

Owen wouldn't dare. He knows better...

DINAH

...Este?

ESTE

I noticed The Rabbi. Delicious fried chicken.

DINAH

NO.

They both sit on the couch and try to get comfortable.

ESTE

...oh yes. Not like I'm going to do anything. I mean a part of whatever rotting hole I have in my chest which was ripped out by Daniel, makes Owen feel...feel insignificant. It's not his fault.

DINAH

What happened with Daniel wasn't your fault--well I mean, you didn't have to yell at his Mother.

ESTE

That woman essentially wanted me to go back to *shtetl* days, shave my head and bow down to that man. Does it look like I could do that?

DINAH

Be careful, you're starting to sound like Miriam and her, oh oh what'd you call'em--yes
 "...band of freaks".

ESTE

Don't tell her she's right.

DINAH

I would never in good conscious build her up in such a positive way.

ESTE

Look. Daniel made me feel beautiful, but how could he have truly seen me if I was just
 bound to be a maid for him, and his fucking mother.

DINAH

Am I the one that died? You said fuck. AH. Say it again.

ESTE

Actually, I said fucking and I only reserve curses for truly cursed people.

DINAH

So what do you think about dad?

ESTE

He's rotting in hell for what he's done, and I never have to think about him again.

DINAH

Sounds healthy, isn't it so great we mourn for a full week? Help me find Zelda's candy
 stash, it'll help the healing process.

*Dinah kisses Este on the cheek. Este wipes away
 the lipstick stain.*

ESTE

Did you steal my lipstick?

DINAH

Not this one. Alright in the spirit of healing, do you remember when you were dating
 Owen and you were looking for your Cherry Red Revolver by Maybelline?

Dinah raids the kitchen cabinets.

ESTE

No...

DINAH

...oh yes. I broke it by trying to use it as blush. I flushed it down the toilet.

Este takes the crystal candy bowl and lifts it above her head.

ESTE

Give me your lipstick or I tell Mom you broke the bowl.

Owen and Fred enter the apartment with trays of food. They see the confrontation. They back out, not even being noticed.

DINAH

You wouldn't dare. We were so soft and tender moments ago, now you're going to betray me?

SARAH COOPER 57, DOTTIE COOPER 49, ELSIE COOPER 46, MINNIE COOPER 41, dressed in all black. Sarah barges in with Marshall and Cindy in hand. The other three have bags of bagels, lox, whitefish, kugel, cream cheese. The jew-ssentials.

Owen and Fred still haven't come back inside.

SARAH

You both scared your husbands away.

ESTE/DINAH

Good.

DOTTIE

You're gonna scare the kids.

DINAH

Let them see what their mother truly is. A vindictive woman who cares more about makeup--yes I said it--and takes pleasure in seeing her favorite sister suffer the wrath of an unhinged mother.

ESTE

Who said you were the favorite?

DINAH

WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU? Nobody should have more than three kids. EVER.

ELSIE

Put the bowl down.

MINNIE

Do you really want to clean up all the glass?

ELSIE

Please, spare the bowl. I brought the good chocolate from Moshe's.

DOTTIE

Miriam also has a stash of cookies in her room, but don't tell anybody I told you.

Cindy starts to cry.

SARAH

Oh, sweetie it's okay.

ESTE

Cindy, enough.

DINAH

You're freaking her out, hell you're freaking me out. It was just makeup.

ESTE

It's not the point. You've wanted everything that I've had. YOU WORE A TIARA AT MY WEDDING--

DINAH

WHERE IS THIS COMING FROM?!

Cindy is still crying.

ESTE

All I ever wanted was a normal quiet life, but I was born into this selfish, loathsome family with no regard for anybody, but themselves. That was mine. My color that made me feel special. I took care of you and Miriam when Mom stopped caring or when Dad was out till who knows when destroying our lives. I've given up pieces of myself to so many of you and what have I gotten in return?

Este puts down the bowl and grabs Cindy's face.

ESTE

You better stop crying or I will give you something to cry about.

Cindy stops. Marshall hides behind Minnie's legs.

A part of Este has morphed into Zelda.

DINAH

You can have the lipstick, it's yours, you can have all my lipsticks--except my Maroon Madness--the rest, yours. Want me to give it to you now?

ESTE

Do you know Owen and I gave him money to fix this situation. He lost all of it. He didn't care about us, he just took and took and took. I have nothing left to give.

*Este walks down the hallway to Miriam's room.
Slams the door.*

Sarah walks out to the hallway.

SARAH

Come on you two, you can't stay out there forever, even if it's for your own safety.

Elsie starts to eat the good chocolate.

ELSIE

I need this for my own safety.

Dinah picks up Cindy.

DINAH

Mommy's just going through a hard time--

CINDY

I know. She's always going through a hard time.

Owen and Fred enter. Owen takes Cindy.

OWEN

Este idolized him, he betrayed her, what did you all expect?

DINAH

Not for her to pull a quote out of the Zelda Marder handbook of mothering. That's for Goddamn sure--

OWEN

Language, please. Marshall, come on, let's bring some ice cream back for Mommy, okay?

They exit.

DOTTIE

Maybe I'm biased, but Zelda's much kinder since we've come into her life.

FRED

The display at the funeral was kinder?

DINAH

Oh yes. Who'd you think did all the beatings, Dad? Nah, he was--well he's kind of like Owen...

Dinah takes the chocolate, takes some for herself, fills up all the candy bowls.

DOTTIE

The first time we met your mother. You all just moved into the building so this had to be what, ten?

SARAH

No, at least fifteen--

MINNIE

Yes, yes, because I just moved in and I was dating--

ELSIE

--oh I hated him--

MINNIE

--he was such a *shmuck*--

DOTTIE

You two done? Where was I?

SARAH

Fifteen years ago--

DOTTIE

Yes! When your family moved in, your mother wanted nothing to do with us. She thought we were all heathens, which we were, well are. What? Because we worked like dogs, and dated like whores didn't mean we couldn't have nice things? She was furious we lived in the penthouse apartment, but we weaseled our way under her skin.

MINNIE

Remember when she got pissed when she found out we could all drive? If looks could kill, we'd have all dropped dead on the spot.

ELSIE

Who knows what she said to your father, but the next day he shows up with a Romano Family hearse. You heard me. All day Abraham prayed to God that that car wouldn't take him to an early grave, but he taught your mother how to drive--

MINNIE

Swear on my mother's grave you could hear the cursing all the way down Northern Boulevard. The day Zelda passed her driver's test, they came back with Brüt and they were plastered.

SARAH

All you gotta do is get her drunk and she's as sweet as pussy cat.

MINNIE

Oy. Who's going to make our Brandy Alexander's?

ELSIE

I've been in this apartment, for what, five minutes and you Singer's already got me turning to the bottle. What the hell is wrong with all of you?

DINAH

Are you allowed to drink at a *shiva*?

SARAH

That's only way to get through them.

DOTTIE

Where's your Mother anyway?

DINAH

Oh, she lost her mind and told us all to leave while she shoveled all the dirt into the grave. Rhoda probably taking care of her and Rhena we'll stay for the food.

Elsie goes to the bar cart and pours everyone in the room a drink.

What are you making?
DOTTIE

A Singer special--straight whiskey.
ELSIE

No, I can't--
DINAH

Today you can.
MINNIE

Sarah passes the glasses. They all take.

To Abey and the stupidity of men. *L'chaim*.
DINAH

Miriam enters.

L'chaim/To Abey/The stupidity of men/Let them rot.
MINNIE/DOTTIE/ELSIE/SARAH

The death of humanity. Women.
FRED

What a caveman like perspective. Me-get-upset-over-mean-mean-dumb-dumb-words. *Shmucks* like you think it's their God given right to everything. Just you wait. The revolution is here. Oh yes, you should be afraid of women Fredrick, be very afraid.
MIRIAM

She exits to her room. Rhena and Fran Ronnie enter the apartment. They stay in the doorway.

Thirty minutes ago she looked like a lost puppy that got kicked out of her home and now she's going to burn her bra, looking for fresh blood to spill.
DINAH

The resilience of youth.
MINNIE

You two wanna come in or just block the draft?
SARAH

No, we're not staying for much longer. It's been a long day for this one.
RHENA

Miriam re-enters the living room.

FRAN RONNIE

The sun was too bright as the celestial orb ascended the sky, I felt my right retina begin to burn. The blistering heat made it impossible to stand, attending the funeral was never obtainable. Such a stunning day for a dour occasion seems like a shame...

MIRIAM

Not to interrupt Edna St. Vincent Millay over here, but, um, why is Este crying? I didn't know her tear ducts even worked.

ESTE (O.S.)

I AM FINE.

RHENA

That is our cue, too many unmanageable emotions today. We're just grabbing some food. Okay?

SARAH

Are you sure you don't want a drink? In Abey's honor.

RHENA

I've done enough in the name of Abraham Singer today. Fran grab a cinnamon raisin with some cream cheese and wrap it in a napkin. Oh, and whatever you want sweetie.

DINAH

She's like that with all of us, you know that right?

RHENA

Of course I know, I've known her longer than you. Abey made her human for some reason. He was her snake charmer, coaxed her, gave her a reason to live her life. You know how they met?

MIRIAM

Do you think they wasted time on sentimentality?

RHENA

Alright, buckle up kids. Grandpa Morris used to have a drugstore in Fort Greene, around Greene and DeKalb. Every night, your mother would finish her shift at the U-bets chocolate factory down in Brownsville. I know, the idea of *shlepping* from Williamsburg to Brownsville? Listen, she did it every day, Morris made her work like a dog. The way that woman would *kvetch* and moan? Rightfully so--where was I?

Oh right, every day she'd go to the shop to get your Uncle Jackie and Uncle Abel, walk back to the place on South 3rd street and scrounge something up for dinner. That day, she was covered head to toe in crusted chocolate. Abraham's brother, your Uncle Benjamin was the delivery man for the shop. Well, Abey was waiting for him to finish up, sitting at the counter with his egg cream and this woman walks in exhausted. She looked like a dessert herself so what did Abey do?

Zelda, Rhoda, Marty, Herbie and Abbe walk into the apartment.

RHENA

He went behind the counter, grabbed the whipped cream canister, sprayed it on top of her head. That man was bold with a capital B, he took one finger, stuck it straight into the cream and said "How delicious you are." Zelda laughed, apparently it was like a damn opening wide inside of her. That day forward, he'd walk them all back home slithering his way in.

ZELDA

I should have slapped him instead.

RHENA

And that's our cue. Fran you got the food?

Fran Ronnie has four bagels wrapped in napkins.

RHODA

You're leaving?

ABBE

Mommy, can I have a bagel?

RHODA

In a minute. Rhena, come on stay for another hour.

ABBE

Mommy--

ZELDA

She has to take of herself. This is exhausting, I'm exhausted. It's okay, really I'll see you tomorrow.

Rhena kisses Zelda on the cheek and Fran Ronnie waves goodbye with her hands filled with bagels. They exit.

Rhoda and Abbe make a plate of food

SARAH

What is wrong with them?

DINAH

The list is too long.

RHODA

Does anyone else want food? I'm up.

ELSIE

When did this place turn into a drive-thru?

ZELDA

Stop. She showed up, she dealt with me, the debt is paid. Let them have their bagels in peace.

HERBIE

I'll take a cinnamon raisin with cream cheese. Some kugel too?

Zelda proceeds to sit on the couch. Miriam gestures to Marty to escape the apartment.

ZELDA

Who filled up the candy bowls?

DINAH

Me, it was me. I thought I could count as company considering I don't live here anymore.

ELSIE

It's the good stuff from Moshe's. It's emotional support candy.

MIRIAM

Pass the good stuff?

ZELDA

You don't need it.

MIRIAM

Mom--

ELSIE

That's not true, she's distraught, emotionally damaged. Miriam needs this.

ZELDA

One.

Miriam grabs a handful of chocolate.

MIRIAM

Just one can't fix the gaping hole in my heart. Marty, can we?

HERBIE

What are you two doing?

MIRIAM

I'm about to introduce Martin to "To The Women of the New Left", I guess force him join the relentless fight for equality and liberation of women everywhere! Screw the physical expectation of women and hold them to a higher mental level--

HERBIE

Oh, you're being honest--

FRED

Marty don't let Miriam scramble your brain.

HERBIE

His brain needs a good kick in the head. Fix him up Miriam.

MARTY

Dad, I--

MIRIAM

I'll do my best Uncle Herbie.

Miriam gives a salute. Miriam and Martin exit.

HERBIE

He's a good boy, but right now he's just lost--his hair makes him look a pansy. Martin's the first one of us to go to college--

DINAH

Didn't we all go to my college graduation? I'm a Social Studies teacher, I got a degree and everything.

RHODA

Well, Martin is going to Cornell.

ZELDA

Do you know how hard it was to even get you into college? Your father had to pull every string in the book to get you into a decent program. You barely got into Hofstra.

ELSIE

Not again--

SARAH

Somebody pass the goods--

DOTTIE

If we're going down this road, I need the hard stuff, I'm going for the lox.

The Cooper Girls disperse.

DINAH

Let's not forget, my plan didn't involve college, it involved dropping out of high school and getting far away from this shit show. Dad knew what I wanted, but you, you pushed and you fucking pushed Ma--

ZELDA

Language.

Este emerges and starts looking for the missing Encyclopedia.

DINAH

--the plan was to go to Cosmetology school, get my own place, close to Zabar's, preferably--live my life away from you--from all of you. I'm just a blob, taking up space being unremarkable in this existence. All I do is make kids feel unremarkable, perpetuating this stupid cycle. People aren't made the same--Miriam is brilliant, she absorbs like a sponge, with all that information, swimming in her head, her brain might implode in her skull, but that's what she craves. Look at Este, she didn't need to go to college. She's enough without the validation of a piece of paper. She's a shark surrounded dingy clown fish. She can look at the situation assesses, moves head first without a care in the world. Imagine if she was a man, she'd own the store, Dad would be alive and she'd made all of us millions. What do I have to offer this demolished family? I'm not the brightest bulb in the tanning bed, I'm not a gorgeous person--all I ever wanted was to make people feel beautiful and now--now, I'm still talking--I'm getting a bagel and then maybe a lobotomy.

FRED

Can you get me a bagel too, since your up?

Dinah walks toward the bagels. Everyone looks at Fred. Until Dinah returns, the conversation is said in hushed tones.

FRED

What?

MINNIE

Give her a hug.

FRED

But I'm comfortable--

RHODA

She just spilled her guts out on the floor and you ask for a bagel? *Shmuck*. Get your *tuchas* over there.

FRED

She's okay, I saw no tears, she was just asserting herself--

Owen, Marshall and Cindy enter with ice cream.

HERBIE

Your marriage will be long if you don't bite the emotional bullet. Get your ass over there--

RHODA/ZELDA

Language.

HERBIE

--kiss your wife on the cheek and tell her "it's gonna be okay...". Doesn't matter if it's actually gonna be okay. It's not the point.

FRED

Women--

RHODA

Nope. It's not that. Don't you ever just want a hug and for her to tell you "it's gonna be okay..."

HERBIE

Do it kid.

Fred reluctantly gets up, embraces Dinah.

OWEN

Not to be this guy, but I don't like that guy.

DOTTIE

Join the club.

ZELDA

I think she just got married so she didn't have to live here.

Este stops her hunt to confront her mother.

ESTE

Obviously, you took her freedom away and so she found her own, locking herself in a new cage, mind you, but she won't see it, not yet at least. He's got money. He's funny enough, but how long can that last?

Este walks to Owen and kisses him on the cheek.

OWEN

I got the goods baby. Premium stuff that will melt your brain and "forget your troubles come on get happy--"

A knock comes from the door. Everyone looks at the shut apartment door.

ZELDA

Kids, go play in Miriam's room. Now.

SCENE 5

Marty and Miriam sit on the sidewalk. They're blitzed. Marty holds the joint.

MIRIAM

Fred's an *alter kocker* in the making, he's just an overcooked egg noodle. Boring. Thinks he's overly important because he's what makes a kugel good--

MARTY

Yeah man.

MIRIAM

Owen's like Chow Mein. Consistent. He'll--he'll take care of Este even when she's being a raging B. I. T. C. H, I'm trying to not curse about other women.

Bella Abzug once said taking down other women is detrimental to the cause...or she said something like that. I think. Am I high yet? I think it hit me. The hits have hit me.

MARTY

This is supposed to turn your brain off, how come yours is in hyper drive? After classes, my roommate and I will take a walk to the edge of campus and just kill a joint. Marcus, he's from West Virginia...

(best southern accent)

...he talks like he's chewing on all of his words. When he gets high, it gets slower and slower and slower, like he got kicked in the head by a mule. He said when we first met, "I've never met a Jewish before, can your people drink?"

(back to normal)

Slow it down Singer...be like Marcus and slow it down...

MIRIAM

...and be an anti-semite?

MARTY

No no, he's not an anti-semite. Just an idiot.

They both cackle.

MARTY

It's not his fault he probably has a member who's in the klan.

MIRIAM

You mean the one with three k's?

MARTY

That's the one.

MIRIAM

Wow, they'll really let anyone into the Ivy League's nowadays.

MARTY

Hey, I worked really hard to get there, and well, Marcus's daddy is really rich.

Miriam grabs the joint.

MIRIAM

So do you like Marcus or do you like his money.

MARTY

Now that's anti-semitic--
We're like aliens to them. Still. We're in our little Jewish bubble up here, but when an outsider looks in...all they see is a world of chaos. Choosing to cackle at our own suffering, instead of being crippled by whatever tried to destroy us.

MIRIAM

Look at your Mom, she's not--

MARTY

My mother, she feels everything. It stops her where she stands and it feels so *goyish to me*. She dotes on me and Abbe because of your mother. Blame Zelda for making her feel...

MIRIAM

What...loved? Ah, so she is capable of it, just not with her own kids? It's like a power trip, like my God, she can just make you feel so small...but fat at the same time.

Miriam starts to twirl Marty's hair.

MARTY

Can I help you?

MIRIAM

I love your hair.

MARTY

You're getting sentimental on me.

MIRIAM

Drugs have stripped away my Jewish sensibility. You're making a stance, a want for change, you want to be part of the solution. Like you don't see me as a whiny brat, screaming into the void. You hear me.

MARTY

Listen, I do my part. On campus I go to sit-ins, I chant and I curse. The war is shit. Nixon is shit, I know my Dad voted for him, he liked Ike and by proxy Nixon. A military man must mean he's an honorable man. Bullshit. You see what they're doing over there. Honorable my ass. The way he thinks--it's like he's stuck in time and space.

MIRIAM

Are you nervous you're gonna go bald like Uncle Herbie?

MARTY

Do you hate me?

MIRIAM

Of course not, but knowing you're form of protest is long hair and then POOF. It all falls off. Can I iron your hair?

MARTY

Won't it burn off?

MIRIAM

Now you're thinking like a woman, trippy right? The idea of beauty being tied to our worth. It's crap, a giant load of it. You know one day, I'm gonna chop off all of my hair and I won't care one bit, not one bit.

MARTY

Herbie's gonna want you as a son.

Three men enter the Singer apartment building.

MIRIAM

No no no, I'm going to all the protests, chant my troubles away. Fight the good fight. Ooo, maybe I'll even get arrested.

MARTY

Your mother is gonna love that.

Marty takes the joint back.

MIRIAM

I'm gonna love being far away from my mother. Maybe I'll go to UC Berkley or even Smith? Follow in Freidan's footprints exactly. Eh, my mother probably wouldn't let me go that far, so I'll just end up going to Cornell with you. That college fund is my ticket off this floating island, although, my life isn't destined for dentistry, would you hate me if I tailed you next year? Marty?

MARTY

Shit.

MIRIAM

What?

MARTY

I promised I wouldn't say.

MIRIAM

Say what? Marty--

MARTY
No, I'm high and vulnerable.

MIRIAM
Perfect time to tell me--

MARTY
My mom is going to kill me.

Miriam grabs his ear.

MARTY	MIRIAM
Ow. Ow. OW. OWWWWW. NO STOP PLEASE. MERCY--MERCY!	You better tell me what the hell happened or I'll burn your hair off with a match. Don't tempt me--I WILL DO IT.

MARTY
Your dad gambled, um, well your dad was a gambler. We know this, we went to the
tracks with him, we saw Guys and Dolls with him, which for a musical he had very
strong opinions about the show--

MIRIAM
Get to the point--

MARTY
It's all gone.

*Miriam walks into the apartment with the joint
in her hand.*

MARTY
THE WEED MIRIAM. Shit.

SCENE 6 -- I THINK IT NEEDS ONE MORE STORY OF ABEY AND THE GIRLS

*Back in the apartment, nobody has opened the
door.*

ZELDA
If they knew, us they'd have known just to walk in.

SARAH
You don't think--

MINNIE
They wouldn't right?

ELSIE
What if they didn't get the money.

DOTTIE
I'm calling Tony--

ELSIE
He still owes them more money?

Another knock, it's harder than before.

DINAH
I'm just gonna get it--

ALL WOMEN
NO!

DINAH
OKAY, WE'LL JUST LET THEM BREAK DOWN THE DOOR, I GUESS.

ISAAC (O.S.)
We can hear you, if that makes a difference.

ZELDA
You can't even give us the decency to grieve?

ISAAC
Ma'am, I'm just the messenger, but I will shoot something if need be.

*Miriam barges in past the men behind the door
with a joint in her hand. Marty follows.*

MIRIAM
Mom, what is happening?

MARTY
Aunt Zelda, you got some super scary men on the other side of that door.

ZELDA
Ignore the men outside--

HERBIE
Is that a jazz cigarette--

MIRIAM
Yes.

HERBIE/RHODA
MARTIN?!

MARTY
I told her to put it out--

HERBIE
So you're high at your Uncle's *shiva*?

MARTY
Not as high as Miriam.

RHODA
She at least has a good reason!

MIRIAM
What happened to Dad? Somebody tell me what happened to my dad.

ISAAC (O.S.)
He still owes money--

ESTE
Shut up or I'll come out there--

OWEN
Please don't, I'd like to have a wife by the end of the day.

MIRIAM
Who do we owe money to?

ALL WOMEN
The Shylocks.

THE THREE MEN (O.S.)
Hello.

MIRIAM
Like the gangsters?

ZELDA

I should have married Meyer Lansky.

RHODA

Such a nice boy, you know he was in love with your mother. Is Esther doing okay--

MIRIAM

But he's just another gangster--

ZELDA

But at least we'd be rich.

MIRIAM

Wait. Did they kill Daddy?

ISAAC (O.S.)

Not to my knowledge young lady.

DOTTIE

Tony's coming--

MIRIAM

SOMEBODY TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.

ZELDA

Your father had a problem. Apparently, three months ago--

ISAAC (O.S.)

Four months ago.

ZELDA

Fine. Four months ago, your father thought he'd bounce back like he always did, this time he became destructible. His luck ran out and God knows I could have started working at the store--Abey--your father thought I'd be humiliated, but this is humiliation, Este and Owen gave him some money as a band-aid, but what did he do? Wasted it. Este--I am--to find that my daughter covering for his mistake? How could he have done this to you, to all of us? I can't do this--I can't tell her.

Dinah walks over to Miriam.

ESTE

Miriam--Daddy took the shotgun from the store, took it into the bathtub--

MIRIAM

No no no, he didn't do it--

DINAH

Listen to her, I know, trust me I know.

ESTE

He ended it, thinking that it would protect us.

MIRIAM

Does he not know how debt works?

DINAH

Apparently not.

MIRIAM

Were you never going to tell me?

ZELDA

Would knowing make you hurt less?

MIRIAM

I had a right to know.

ISAAC (O.S.)

We're sorry for your loss ladies.

THE SINGER WOMEN

Thank you.

SARAH

So gentlemen, I don't think it's appropriate for you to be here, especially on the first day of *shiva*.

MINNIE

We can make you a nice lox platter and you can tell your bosses to come back another day.

MIRIAM

They're not getting the good smoked fish? They're the reason he's dead.

ZELDA

He chose to die, they just pushed along the process.

Another knock at the door.

TONY

Dottie, it's me.

TONY 51, he looks like a mobster, because he is. He takes his hat off in respect. He's adorned in jewelry, specifically a wedding ring. Dottie gives him a kiss.

DOTTIE

Tony everybody, everybody Tony.

TONY

Sorry for your loss Mrs. S, your husband was a good man--

ZELDA

Eh, debatable.

TONY

Abey was always good to me, first pick on the gems, covered my ass, introduced me to this beautiful creature.

ESTE

DINAH

Gross.

Hot.

TONY

Your father covered for us when the Feds came sniffing around our bookie. Hid stuff in his store for me, I owe your family one.

MINNIE

Dottie, he's talking about Dottie.

MIRIAM

For the fucking mob?

ZELDA

LANGUAGE--

MIRIAM

I thought you were an accountant for high profile people and you eat the grapes at the grocery store without paying for them.

TONY

Oh, that's a good idea--

DOTTIE

It's a healthy little snack while you shop and after you just hide the stems in your bra.

SARAH

Do you want a bagel?

ELSIE

We got the good lox, the good chocolate--

MINNIE

I ate it--

ELSIE

All of it?

MINNIE

I was getting anxious.

ESTE

We got the Shylocks, The Mob, all we need is the French Connection and we can play gangster bingo.

ZELDA

We don't want to owe you anything.

TONY

This is to square us away. Boys, how much does he owe you?

ISAAC

Three grand.

ESTE

Still? My God.

TONY

May I?

Zelda nods. Tony opens the door and lets The Shylock Men in.

TONY

I'll give you five, but you must never bother these fine women again. If you do, I'll send my boys after you. Got it?

THE THREE MEN

Sounds good boss/Alright by me/Yup, can do.

Tony thumbs through his wallet and gives him fifty, hundred dollar bills.

TONY

Such hospitality. Get your bagels. Get the hell out.

ISAAC

Ma'am, if I knew you were tied to--

ZELDA

You heard the man, get your food and go.

The Shylock Men quickly move. Get their bagels and get the hell out.

TONY

Now, I'm gonna put a gun in their face to drive the point home. Ladies. Thursday, Dottie?

DOTTIE

You know it baby.

Tony exits.

ZELDA

That means all of you. Gather your children and go.

Miriam starts to walk out the door. Rhoda goes to get the children.

ZELDA

Not you smart-ass--

The Cooper Girls kiss every Singer woman on the cheek, before they exit.

ZELDA

Thank you Dottie. I owe you--

DOTTIE

Trust me, you don't.

SARAH

Abey's the reason she's not in stripes.

MINNIE

Very unflattering for a woman of her stature.

What, like you'd look better?

DOTTIE

The Cooper Girls exit. Rhoda gets up from the couch, struggles.

Herbie?

RHODA

Herbie helps her off the couch.

Rhoda knows how to miss a good time. She should have taken some more food...

RHODA

You want a bagel for the road?

ZELDA

No. But I'll bring Chinese tomorrow?

RHODA

Perfect, more will come, so the more food, the better.

ZELDA

Miriam.

MARTY

He passes her the silver cigarette holder.

With my life.

MIRIAM

Rhoda, Herbie, Marty and Abbe exit.

Fred, let's grab the cars--CINDY. MARSHALL. We're going.

OWEN

Come here you two, give your Grandma a kiss.

ZELDA

Zelda embraces Cindy and Marshall.

She never said that to us.

ESTE

She never loved us.

DINAH

MIRIAM

She saved it for them.

ESTE

Lucky them.

DINAH

Miri, we're gonna go, okay? You're gonna be okay?

MIRIAM

Yeah I'm just gonna sob my eyes out. I have some cookies--

ESTE

I ate some, when I sobbed my eyes out--

DINAH

Again, who knew you had it in you?

MIRIAM

Wait, you ate my cookies?

ZELDA

Alright *Yentelehs*, go.

Zelda kisses every one of them. Este, Owen, Cindy and Marshall exit. Followed by Dinah and Fred.

MIRIAM

Did you eat?

ZELDA

No, not yet.

MIRIAM

Is it okay if I take the bagel to my room?

ZELDA

Go.

MIRIAM

Thanks Mommy, I love you.

Miriam doesn't wait for the response, she goes into her room.

ZELDA
Love you too.

A knock comes from the front door. Zelda opens the door. The Rabbi appears.

ZELDA
Come in, please.

THE RABBI
Where is everyone?

ZELDA
Gone. Too much joy and laughter.

Silence.

ZELDA
My husband was the funny one, I just scared the company into laughing. Would you like me to wrap you up a bagel to go?

THE RABBI
I'm leaving? Uh yes, a bagel would be lovely. Sesame and whitefish and some onion would be great, thank you.

Zelda makes him his to-go bagel order.

ZELDA
What is the purpose, besides showing your respect?

THE RABBI
Well--

ZELDA
Can I just say what a lively ceremony for a dead man. What a unique touch.

THE RABBI
Uh, thanks I think, Abey came to see me, which was a shock, considering he showed up to Shul maybe once a year. He, uh, he left something with me the day he died, his request was to make sure only you had it.

ZELDA
I'll trade you.

They swap items.

ZELDA

I shouldn't say this, but my youngest thinks you're very handsome.

MIRIAM (O.S.)

I CAN HEAR YOU FROM IN HERE!

The Rabbi exits.

Zelda opens up the package. It's the missing Z Encyclopedia with ten thousand dollars and a note.

"I'm sorry."

-Love Abey

ZELDA

Sheeny bastard.

END OF ACT 1

*****ABANDONED THOUGHT PAGE

Este and the Rabbi make out? Pushing the divide between Owen and Este?

OWEN

She didn't get to me-

I got a little girl. My God, she's perfect. She should be okay in this world. Shmucks like think it's their God given right to everything. Things are changing. They're thinking of hiring a woman at the pharmacy, you know? A

Thank you for the reminder why I never have the

-

MIRIAM

Listen, I--we should know what these words mean, but because we're--I'm a woman, I obviously don't have the brain capacity to decode the cryptic messages with wonky symbol. We're packed up here like canned fish, where I'm sweating my tuchas off and they get freedom and ample space. Sorry if what me and my band of freaks are fighting for offends you.

Things are changing. Did you vote?

FRED

Of course I did--

MIRIAM

For Shirley Chisolm?

FRED

Mir, come on, you're setting me up for head to land on a spike.

Assembly Woman Chisolm, she's a nobody from Brooklyn, but hot dog, she overtook the republican seat with over eighteen thousand votes. Giving benefits to the homeless and the unemployed.

-

ESTE

Do you know Owen and I gave him money to fix

-

ZELDA

It's not about whatever Rhena, she was a baby when Mom died, you gotta let this go. Blame Morris--it's not her fault you were left in that house.

All three spit on the ground in his memory.

RHENA

When you got married you took her with you--you left me alone--

RHODA

--they didn't want another mouth to feed. I would have been starving, probably left for dead if they didn't take me in. Stop taking all your issues out--

ZELDA

Your husband left you with nothing, I've just joined the club, stop *kvetching*, it's tiresome. Rhoda, your life is too good right now, so I need--we need you to just be there, hug my kids and be what I cannot.