

Joe and Betty

A Play by Murray Mednick

Joe and Betty was first presented at 2100 Square Feet Theatre, Los Angeles, California, on May 26th, 2001. It was directed by Diane Robinson and produced by Guy Zimmerman, with set by Jeffrey Atherton, lights by Rand Ryan, costumes by Bridget Phillips, original music and sound design by Robert Oriol, and the following cast:

Joe Brasman: John Diehl

Betty Brasman: Annabelle Gurwitch

Dotty Witscek: Shawna Casey

Stanley Witscek: Jack Kehler

Hilda: Dana Wieluns

Irv Brasman: Drago Sumonja

Mollie Kaplan: Sharron Shayne

Joe and Betty subsequently opened at the Jose Quintero theatre in New York City, on May 28th, 2002 under the direction of Guy Zimmerman and produced by Catherine Doherty. The set was by Jeffrey Atherton, lights by Rand Ryan, costumes by Bridget Phillips, and original music and sound design by Robert Oriol. The cast was identical to the Los Angeles production with the following exceptions:

Stanley Witscek: Tom McCleister

Hilda: Edith Fields

The production returned to the Kirk Theatre in New York on December 8th, 2002, with Claudia Catania producing, and Paul Morer Productions serving as general manager. The cast and designers remained the same except for the role of Hilda, now played by Andy Stein.

Characters

Joe Brasman *Handsome, physical man in his early thirties; works as a part-time truckdriver and as a weekend projectionist in the local movie theatre, the Lyceum.*

Betty Brasman *His wife, just a bit younger, the mother of six children.*

Stan Witsek ("Stosh") *Joe's friend, mid thirties, works as a plumber and janitor.*

Dorothy Witsek ("Dot") *His wife, same age, an acerbic blonde.*

Hilda *In her forties, works in the local school.*

Irv Brasman *Joe's younger brother.*

Mollie Kaplan *In her fifties, the landlady.*

The Scene

A slum apartment in a village in the Catskills, ninety miles from New York City. The door to Emile's room is in the audience.

Winter, 1951

Act 1

Scene 1

JOE and BETTY.

Betty Did you get paid?
Joe I got paid.
Betty Thank God.
Joe Sure!
Betty How much?
Joe Fifty bucks.
Betty Where is it?
Joe It's in my pocket.
Betty Take it out of your pocket.
Joe Where it belongs.
Betty And put it into my pocket.
Joe I'll give you thirty-nine.
Betty Where's the other eleven?
Joe I owed Stanley.
Betty Stanley?
Joe Stanley. "Stosh."
Betty For what?
Joe From before.
Betty From before what?

Joe When I borrowed before.
Betty How much?
Joe Five bucks.
Betty We can't pay the electric.
Joe Maybe they'll wait.
Betty They won't wait.
Joe Why won't they wait?
Betty They waited already.
Joe We'll pay some.
Betty Some?
Joe A part. I'll talk to them.
Betty Talk to the grocery, too, then. You talk.
Joe Why?
Betty Why? Because we owe them!
Joe I'll talk to Ritner.
Betty Sure, Joe. Talk to him.
Joe I'll talk to him. Next week I'll give him.
Betty From what?
Joe I'm working.
Betty Rubinstein?
Joe Sure, Rubinstein.
Betty Talk, but pay. Ritner won't wait.
Joe He'll wait.
Betty He'll wait, but we can't charge what to eat.
Joe You'll give him ten on account.
Betty He'll wait forever, but we won't have to eat.
Joe Are you deaf? I said ten on the account.
Betty Ten from the thirty-nine?
Joe We have to eat.
Betty We can't buy shoes.

Joe Next month maybe.
Betty Galoshes.
Joe Shut up.
Betty Snow and slush!
Joe I'll get galoshes.
Betty Where?
Joe Don't ask me where.
Betty The shul?
Joe Why not?
Betty What about the rent?
Joe Didn't we pay the rent?
Betty With what?
Joe I gave you the money last week.
Betty I paid the gas.
Joe What gas?
Betty The stove gas, Joe.
Joe For what?
Betty For gas heat, Joe.
Joe You don't cook.
Betty Then how does the food get hot?
Joe You heat.
Betty Shut up, Joe!
Joe How much was the gas?
Betty More than I got.
Joe How much?
Betty So they don't turn off the gas.
Joe And what?
Betty I paid for food.
Joe At Ritners?
Betty I paid for lunches.

Joe What lunches?
Betty Kids lunches.
Joe The school gives 'em lunches.
Betty What about *my* lunch?
Joe What do ya do with the money I give ya, Betty?
Betty What about the babies' lunches?
Joe What do you do with the money?
Betty I pay the bills. I feed the babies.
Joe Betty?
Betty I feed the kids. Six kids! I never had a life!
Joe You have chicken salad sandwiches.
Betty What did Solly pay ya, Joe?
Joe You have soda pop.
Betty Where's the money, Joe?
Joe You hide dollars in socks.
Betty We don't have money for rent.
Joe I gave ya the money last week.
Betty How we gonna pay the rent?
Joe What do ya do with the money I give ya?
Betty We're two months rent behind now, Joe.
Joe Why don't ya pay the rent?
Betty You don't give me enough money, Joe.
Joe What do ya do with the money I give ya?
Betty Where's the money?
Joe I gave ya the money last week.
Betty How much?
Joe I gave ya seventy-seven dollars.
Betty I have to pay the bills!
Joe Which bills?
Betty The telephone. What about the telephone?

Joe You didn't pay the telephone?
Betty With what? Where's the money?
Joe Let 'em turn the goddamn phone off.
Betty I don't care!
Joe Good.
Betty We can't live!
Joe Good.
Betty The money, Joe! Where's the money?
Joe Shut up. I'm workin' my ass off.
Betty We can't live!
Joe Every week I give ya money.
Betty It's not enough!
Joe What do ya do with the money?
Betty They take advantage.
Joe Who?
Betty Who? You ask me who?
Joe Who?
Betty Solly Rubinstein, that's who.
Joe He takes care of me, Sol.
Betty When?
Joe Wha'd'ya mean, when?
Betty When!
Joe I work hard all day.
Betty Gimme the money, Joe.
Joe I'll give ya thirty-nine.
Betty No!
Joe That's all I got!
Betty No!
Joe I owed Eddie.
Betty Where's the other six?

Joe I owed Stanley.
Betty For what?
Joe For the car.
Betty Stanley?
Joe For the car.
Betty Which comes first, the car or the rent?
Joe Why didn't ya pay the rent?
Betty With *what*?
Joe What did ya do with the money I gave ya?
Betty I don't have the *rent*!
Joe You buy cigarettes and candy.
Betty So *what*?
Joe Newspapers and magazines.
Betty I'm *entitled*.
Joe I'll have nothing in my pocket.
Betty For *what*?
Joe For myself.
Betty For *what*?
Joe I give the kids quarters.
Betty I'll scream.
Joe Go ahead.
Betty I'll *scream*, Joe.
Joe Start screaming.
Betty GIMME THE MONEY! GIMME THE MONEY!
GIMME THE MONEY!
Joe Good.
Betty Is that what you want? (*Pause*)
Joe It's cold in here and it's filthy.
Betty She turned off the heat.
Joe Who did?

Betty Wha'd'ya mean who did?
Joe Mollie Kaplan?
Betty MOLLIE KAPLAN TURNED OFF THE HEAT BECAUSE WE
DO NOT HAVE THE RENT.
Joe YOU SHOULD HAVE PAID THE GODDAMN RENT.
Betty We owe for three months rent.
Joe Three?
Betty I can't stand it anymore!
Joe Why can't ya clean up?
Betty I CAN'T STAND IT!
Joe Give her a month's rent, ask her to turn the heat on.
Betty GIMME THE MONEY!
Joe I'll take care of it.
Betty What are you doing with a car, you can't support
a family?
Joe Me, she'll listen to.
Betty A car!
Joe Shut up, Betty.
Betty You can't afford a car.
Joe I'll talk to Mollie, she'll return the heat.
Betty Big shot.
Joe Comb your hair for chrissakes.
Betty What do you need a car for?
Joe We live in the country now, Betty.
Betty You don't need a car.
Joe There are no subways here, ha, ha.
Betty I know that you sonofabitch.
Joe Don't act nasty.
Betty I never wanted to leave Brooklyn.
Joe Put on a clean dress why don't you.

Betty Shut up, Joe, or I'll start to scream.
Joe Scream.
Betty GIMME THE MONEY, JOE.
Joe Scream.
Betty I'LL GET THE NEIGHBORS! I'LL GET THE COPS!
Joe Okay.
Betty Big shot!
Joe Do something with yourself!
Betty It's so you can go and see your mother.
Joe What?
Betty It's so you can go and see your mother.
Joe Right, Betty.
Betty What does she care?
Joe What is that goddamn music?
Betty You can't support a family.
Joe Betty?
Betty That is colored people singing.
Joe Where?
Betty In Porky's bar.
Joe You can hear them from here?
Betty Do you hear them, or not?
Joe I heard them...
Betty So?
Joe Now I don't hear them.
Betty They stopped now.
Joe The Colored are moving in up here left and right.
Betty There are laws.
Joe All my life I'm fighting the Colored.
Betty I'll take you to court, Joe.
Joe First in Brooklyn, and now in the country.

Betty I'll take you to court.
Joe You and who else?
Betty I'll throw you in jail.
Joe Who?
Betty Who?
Joe Who?
Betty Me.
Joe You're a slob.
Betty I will.
Joe Who would believe you?
Betty The judge. Judge Corso.
Joe You can't fry an egg.
Betty He knows my situation.
Joe You can't wash a plate.
Betty He'll enforce the law.
Joe What law?
Betty Support law.
Joe That's a bunch of baloney.
Betty Six kids, Joe. I have rights.
Joe You don't comb your hair.
Betty We need relief.
Joe Good.
Betty I'm sick of the kids.
Joe Sure. You're not a mother.
Betty And I'm sick of you.
Joe You don't know what a home is. You don't know what clean is.
Betty Sick and tired of it.
Joe I didn't ask ya to have kids.
Betty It's *my* fault?

Joe Did I?
Betty You sound like your mother!
Joe What day is today?
Betty Why?
Joe What's today?
Betty Why?
Joe I'm just asking.
Betty Why?
Joe It's Jap day.
Betty Why?
Joe It's December 7, 1951. Pearl Harbor!
Betty Why?
Joe It's one month today. Let's kiss and make up.
Betty No.
Joe We can't do it today?
Betty No, we can't.
Joe I have my rights.
Betty We can't do it.
Joe Why not?
Betty NO MORE BABIES.
Joe Be quiet, will you?
Betty DID YOU HEAR ME?
Joe I heard you. Who else has to hear you?
Betty I'll get on relief.
Joe Put the thing in why don't you.
Betty No.
Joe Come on, Betty.
Betty No.
Joe It's okay today.
Betty Drop dead, Joe.

Joe You have problems in the head.
Betty Look who's talking.
Joe They'll put you into a mental institution.
Betty You'll go to jail.
Joe I'm warning you.
Betty Bye, bye.
Joe Who would believe you?
Betty The judge is on my side.
Joe Who would listen to you?
Betty He knows the whole story.
Joe What story?
Betty What you bring in. What I have to put up with.
Day and night.
Joe You?
Betty God is punishing me.
Joe That's a joke.
Betty What did I do?
Joe You must be kidding.
Betty To deserve this. What did I do?
Joe You're not a wife.
Betty I was born into this world.
Joe And your mother is a freak, too.
Betty I didn't ask to be born into it.
Joe That's why you're a freak.
Betty God hates me.
Joe You're not a mother.
Betty What you bring in. We can't live. A complete idiot,
everyone takes advantage.
Joe Who?
Betty You heard me.

Joe Look at yourself. Do you ever look at yourself?
Betty I worked like a slave for huh.
Joe Who? Your mother?
Betty I never had a youth.
Joe Don't blame me.
Betty Gimme the thirty-nine bucks.
Joe The whole world's against you.
Betty You sonofabitch.
Joe Even God hates you.
Betty Are you lying, Joe?
Joe Someone should kill you.
Betty Gimme the money.
Joe Put you out of your misery.
Betty Are you lying?
Joe Someone will come out of the future and strangle you.
Betty Let's see the money, Joe.
Joe One of your kids.
Betty Let's see it.
Joe Like a movie.
Betty Let's see the money.
Joe Will you put the thing in?
Betty What?
Joe The watchamacallit.
Betty It's a diaphragm.
Joe I know that, Betty.
Betty Do you think I'm a whoah?
Joe Forget it.
Betty One of your colored whoahs?
Joe You should wash your face.
Betty You make me sick.

Joe You should wash your mouth.

Betty (*Aside*) One thing on his mind.

Joe A movie. A kill the monster movie.

Betty The whole neighborhood knows.

Joe What a picture!

Betty "Matinee Joey." One thing on his mind.

Joe "Death of the Monster from the Deep."

Betty I never went to movies.

Joe Now *that's* a movie!

Betty Because I was never young.

Joe An action thriller!

Betty And then I met you.

Joe A whodunit!

Betty Mister "Matinee Joey."

Joe Murdered by one of her own. (*Pause*)

Betty Don't threaten me, Joe.

Joe I can see it coming now.

Betty I'll call the cops.

Joe Call 'em.

Betty Is that what you want?

Joe Call the cops.

Betty I will.

Joe Call 'em.

Betty Matinee Joey. His mother sees no wrong in him.

Joe *That's* a movie I wanna see! The monstah's chillun come back to stomp huh! (*Pause*)

Betty Is the money in your pocket?

Joe It's *my* money.

Betty What did I do wrong?

Joe "Children of the Monster."

Betty That I never had a life. What crime did I commit?
Joe Who cares?
Betty Because of you, Joe! (*Banging noise*)
Joe What's that?
Betty That's Mollie upstairs.
Joe (*Shouting at the ceiling*) Ah, shut up!
Betty We'll be evicted, Joe!
Joe What's she doing up there?
Betty We'll be out on the street.
Joe Good.
Betty Back with your mother. (*Banging*)
Joe (*Shouting above*) SHADDUP!
Betty Is that what you want?
Joe Who cares? (*Steps out*)
Betty That's what you want. I'm not going. I'm not leaving. I should never have left Brooklyn. That was my home. I had friends there. Here, I have nothing. (*JOE reenters.*) Did you hear me?
Joe Nobody's there. So who's banging?
Betty She's there, the stinker.
Joe She stopped now.
Betty Lousy stinker.
Joe Look who's talking.
Betty She's hiding.
Joe Is there anything to eat?
Betty Sure. Hand over the money and I'll get.
Joe We could try a pizza.
Betty I could throw up.
Joe You're a sick woman.
Betty Did you hear what I said? I will never leave my home here.

Joe You don't know what a home is. This is not a home.

Betty No matter what.

Joe Do something for your kids why don't you.

Betty I could *scream*, Joe.

Joe You do nothing. You are useless.

Betty I'LL SCREAM. (*Banging*)

Joe SHADDUP.

Betty What time is it?

Joe Why?

Betty What time is it?

Joe It's four o'clock.

Betty It's almost dark.

Joe Why?

Betty Already it's dark.

Joe It's the winter.

Betty Cold and dark.

Joe What's the matter now?

Betty Because the kids.

Joe What?

Betty They come home, Joe.

Joe Oh, for chrissakes.

Betty Ha, ha, ha. Wha'd ya think, Joe? Emile, Gilbert, Marie
and Lucien, they come home.

Joe Come home to what?

Betty Ha, ha, ha.

Joe You're not even a human.

Betty Matinee Joey. (*Banging above*)

Joe Shaddup!

Betty The Zorro idiot. He thinks life is a movie.

Joe What's to come home to?

Betty So gimme the money and I'll make a chicken.
Joe There's not even heat!
Betty (*Softly*) Do you have it?
Joe What?
Betty The money, Joe! The money! (*Banging above*) Goddamn it!
(*Blackout*)

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Scene 2

JOE, BETTY, STAN and DOT, playing cards.

Joe Shaddup, you'll wake the kids.
Dot How many?
Betty How many?
Stan How many, what? Kids?
Dot Cards, stupid.
Betty Five kids here, one is out.
Dot Where?
Betty In the other room.
Dot Emile.
Betty Emile is out. Where I don't know.
Joe Play cards, Betty.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Stan What?
Dot How many times?
Stan How many times what?
Dot Before the last one. Is it Jeannie?
Stan Yeah?

Dot Not you. (*To BETTY*) How many times you said that?
"The last one."

Joe Three cards.

Betty "Last one."

Dot "Last one."

Betty Four times. Believe me.

Dot So what happened?

Stan Bet, Dorothy.

Dot Two is plenty. It's all I can handle.

Betty Where are they?

Dot They're home.

Betty They're home?

Dot They're home. Where else would they be?

Betty Arlene?

Dot She's home, where she belongs.

Stan Are we playing poker, or not?

Betty What? Me?

Stan Who else could we be talking to?

Betty Joe. I thought.

Joe Who bet?

Stan Here's a dime.

Joe Let's play strip.

Betty Ha, ha, ha.

Joe (*To BETTY*) You don't know how to play poker.

Stan Are we playing?

Betty The kids are in the other room.

Joe So what?

Dot Stanley, did you bet?

Stan I'm waiting, Dot.

Dot Bet then, stupid.

Stan One dime.

Dot Are they all asleep?

Betty They better.

Joe Sure. Leave 'em alone.

Dot I'll see your dime, Stanley.

Joe They're sleeping, let 'em sleep.

Betty I don't wanna play this.

Joe You don't know how to play.

Betty Let's play rummy.

Joe It's the only game she knows.

Betty Shut up, Joe.

Stan Drink more beer, Betty.

Betty I don't like it.

Joe Drink some beer.

Dot *(To STAN)* So what've you got?

Joe What are we playing for?

Stan I bet a dime already.

Joe Make it a quarter.

Stan Good. *(Pause)* Dotty.

Dot What?

Stan Why don't you say something?

Dot I just said. I'll contribute.

Betty That's good, Dot.

Dot Put in a quarter, Betty. If you want.

Betty I don't. But here. *(Puts a quarter in the pot)*

Joe Okay, two pair.

Stan Aces up.

Betty I beat.

Joe What?

Betty Three twos.

Stan Take the money, Betty.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Joe Should we play strip?
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Dot "Matinee Joe."
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Dot You seen Eddie?
Joe Eddie who?
Dot Eddie Popolowski.
Joe Why should I see him?
Dot He works with you.
Joe Who told you that?
Dot A little bird told me.
Stan He don't.
Joe I never see him, Eddie.
Dot You don't work with him?
Stan He don't work.
Dot Who?
Stan He don't work.
Joe Sure. He works for the county. The County of Sullivan.
Stan Who cares?
Dot He's a plumber, I thought.
Stan So why should we work with him?
Joe We work for the Lyceum Theatre.
Dot Some job.
Stan Screw Eddie.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Dot Deal, Betty.
Betty I don't like this.
Dot You want a pizza?

Joe We got pretzels and beer and chips.
Stan We don't need a pizza.
Dot Drink a beer. It's good for you.
Betty I don't like it.
Dot You have to have some fun in life.
Betty You got a TV, Dot?
Dot Sure.
Betty We don't have one.
Joe We don't need one.
Betty I like to watch the pictures. That's fun.
Dot You can't be worrying your whole life.
Joe I work in the movie business for chrissakes.
Stan We both.
Joe I project. He sweeps.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Joe He's my best friend.
Stan I'm the janitor. He runs the fillums.
Joe I'm up in the booth of the Lyceum Theatre.
Betty *(Aside)* That's all he can think of—he's like a kid.
Joe I run the pictures.
Betty He has a weekend job.
Dot Then what?
Stan I still do plumbing.
Dot Not you.
Joe I work weekends in the booth, then with Sol, like before.
Dot Rubinstein?
Joe Correct.
Betty Ha, ha, ha,
Dot *(To BETTY)* Are you laughing? Why are you laughing?
Betty That's money?

Joe That's plenty.

Betty Don't wake the kids.

Joe Who's yelling?

Dot You work with Eddie?

Joe Who?

Dot Stanley.

Stan Maybe never.

Betty *(To DOT)* What do you watch?

Dot Programs.

Joe We see plenty of shows at the Lyceum Theatre.

Betty You see. Not me.

Joe I'm in the booth, so it costs nothing.

Betty Big shot.

Stan *(To DOT)* Why Eddie?

Dot Why?

Stan Are you deaf?

Dot Because I'm asking.

Stan Fuck Eddie. *(Pause)*

Dot *(To BETTY)* Tell us how you got married.

Stan Joe and Betty. That's a funny story.

Betty How many times, Dot?

Dot How many times?

Betty I told you? If I told you once.

Stan It's really funny.

Betty Joey lived across the hall.

Dot Where was this?

Betty On Gerry Street.

Dot Yeah?

Betty On Gerry Street, in Brooklyn.

Dot Yeah, go on.

Betty He lived across the hall, ha, ha, ha.
Joe Ah, who cares?
Dot So, he saw you there?
Betty He lived across the hall.
Joe I'm drunk.
Stan You had two glasses of beer.
Joe I'm drunk.
Stan You had two glasses of beer. How could you be drunk?
Dot We're not playing poker now?
Betty I don't like it, Dot. *(Pause)*
Dot So then what happened?
Betty Joey?
Dot Yeah.
Betty He goes to my mother.
Dot I get a kick out of this.
Stan Why?
Dot It's so much Joey.
Joe I feel drunk already.
Stan Pull yourself together, Joe.
Dot *(To BETTY)* Yeah, he goes to your mother, and...
Stan Where's your father?
Betty He's dead. My father's dead.
Stan That's right.
Dot Jeez, Stosh.
Stan I forgot. He died of cancer?
Betty T.B. He had T.B.
Stan That's right. Wake up, Joe.
Betty I was seven when he died.
Dot How old were you?
Betty I was seven when he died.

Stan You remember that, Joe?
Joe What?
Stan (*Aside*) He's at a matinee.
Dot (*To BETTY*) What'd he say to your mother?
Betty What?
Dot "What."
Betty He wanted to make love with me.
Stan You wanted to make whoopee, eh Joe?
Dot You remember, Joe?
Joe Nah. Baloney.
Dot So she said, marry her.
Betty Matinee Joey.
Joe Shush.
Betty Don't shush me.
Joe Baloney and salami. You'll wake the kids up.
Dot They all asleep in there?
Stan (*To DOT*) You keep asking.
Dot So?
Stan Why?
Joe Emile is not in there.
Betty He went out the window.
Dot What is he, twelve?
Betty He's eleven.
Joe He went out the window. Goodbye, Emile.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Joe How old's Arlene?
Stan Arlene is twelve.
Dot She's twelve.
Stan You can't keep him locked up.
Betty He'll get it from me.

Stan He's too old already.
Dot He's in the fifth grade?
Betty *(Aside)* He'll get it.
Dot Then he's in the same class with Arlene.
Betty He's supposed to help his mother.
Dot The fifth and sixth, they meet together.
Stan You gotta let him out.
Betty He's supposed to help his mother with the kids.
Dot Miss Walker. She's the teacher. A spinster lady, with warts.
Betty Ha, ha. *(Pause)*
Dot *(To BETTY)* So Joey goes to your mother.
Stan "You wanna fool around with Betty, then marry her."
Right, Joe?
Joe Baloney and salami.
Stan Okay.
Betty I feel sick.
Stan Take some aspirins, Betty.
Dot On Gerry Street. In what, '38?
Stan What are you, a detective, Dot?
Dot I just wanna hear it.
Stan What for? You already heard it.
Dot Were you there?
Stan Where?
Dot At the time.
Stan No.
Dot So shut up. *(Pause)* Guys came back from the war, they applied to the G.I. Bill, they went to school. They bettered themselves. Where did you go, big shot?
Stan I had a war wound.
Joe He limps.

Stan They shot two toes off. Now I get payments. What do I need with the G.I. Bill?

Joe He got a purple heart.

Dot He could get an education.

Stan Not me.

Dot Why not?

Stan It's not for me, Dot.

Betty He gets checks, Joe. See? Because he went to the war.

Joe *(To BETTY)* So what do you want from me?

Dot *(To STAN)* Who shot off your toes?

Stan It's a war wound, Dot. On the sands of Iwo Jima.

Dot *(To the others)* He shot off his own toes. *(Laughter)*
Admit it, Stosh.

Stan The sands of Iwo Jima. Yeah.

Dot Come on, Stosh.

Stan Yeah.

Betty Joey never served at all.

Joe What? Are you kidding me?

Betty You never served.

Joe I went to the C.C. Camp, Betty. I worked my ass off.

Betty Because he has diabetes.

Joe I worked in the kitchen. I peeled potatoes.

Betty So he never served.

Joe At night I showed the fillums. Sixteen millimeter fillums. We set up the screen and the projector in the mess hall. With a two-reeler, you gotta run out the reel—slap, slap, slap goes the fillum. The guys are complaining and yelling. Then you throw on the second reel and thread it and finish the picture.

Dot *(To BETTY)* Where were you?

Betty Where was I?

Dot Am I talking to the wall?
Joe Yeah.
Betty I was in Brooklyn, on DeKalb Avenue. I told you, Dorothy.
Before.
Dot Me, I was here. Right here.
Stan I don't get it.
Dot I know you don't.
Stan Let's play a little casino.
Dot What a jerk. What a dope.
Stan Don't bug me, Dot.
Joe Come on, let's have a good time.
Stan *(To JOE)* You're awake?
Joe It's a party. Come on.
Dot What about your parents, Joe?
Joe Who?
Dot Your mother and father, Louis and Celia Brasman.
What did they think?
Joe Of?
Dot Your marriage.
Betty Ha.
Joe I don't know.
Betty Ha.
Joe They worried.
Stan Deal the cards, Dot.
Betty I can't get over it.
Dot What's that, Betty?
Betty I gave everything for my mother. *(Blackout)*

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Scene 3

JOE and BETTY.

Betty I wrote to my sisters.
Joe What for?
Betty I wrote twice now.
Joe You wrote a hundred. So what?
Betty They do not answer.
Joe They never answer.
Betty They want nothing to do with me.
Joe They don't wanna know you.
Betty They disowned me, their own sister, who slaved for them.
Joe I got to work today.
Betty I am dead as far they're concerned.
Joe I got a big delivery today.
Betty I might as well be dead.
Joe It's a nice day. (*Whistles a tune*)
Betty I was obedient. I was a good girl.
Joe Very good.
Betty Until I met you.
Joe Ha, ha, ha. Some joke.
Betty That's why they picked on me.
Joe That's right.
Betty I did what I was told.
Joe Big delivery, all by myself.
Betty On the truck?
Joe What'd I just say?
Betty You don't have help?
Joe I don't have a Colored today.
Betty You don't have Rufe?

Joe No.

Betty God hates the Colored.

Joe Because Rufe quit.

Betty And God hates me.

Joe Sure he hates you. If I were God, I would hate you.

Betty You're not God.

Joe I know that.

Betty You can't even make a living. *(He whistles)* Six kids.

Joe *(Sings)* "What a day this has been...etc."

Betty God. *(JOE sings)* It hurts me, Joe.

Joe What hurts?

Betty In the stomach.

Joe What?

Betty How they act.

Joe Who?

Betty My sisters. My mother.

Joe You don't hear from your mother?

Betty No.

Joe You sure?

Betty Never.

Joe She never sends you money?

Betty From where?

Joe From Brooklyn?

Betty What money?

Joe From her checks. Her Social Security?

Betty Who told you that?

Joe A little bird told me.

Betty Get outta here, Joe.

Joe I'm goin', believe me. *(Exits to bathroom)*

Betty *(To herself)* It's nobody's business but mine.

Joe (Off) What?

Betty Nothing. (*Sound of toilet flushing. Reenter JOE.*)

Joe You talk to yourself too much.

Betty Take back what you said.

Joe Ah, come on, Betty.

Betty You abuse me.

Joe I abuse you?

Betty Yeah.

Joe There's nothing to abuse.

Betty What?

Joe Nothing to abuse.

Betty I told you a hundred times.

Joe What?

Betty How my sisters.

Joe How your sisters what?

Betty How they took advantage.

Joe Okay.

Betty And my brother Milton.

Joe What's he got to do with anything?

Betty You never met him.

Joe I know that.

Betty He would go after me with a stick.

Joe He got that from his mother.

Betty He's in the Middletown institution.

Joe I know that.

Betty He was a mathematical genius.

Joe I know that, too.

Betty You never met him.

Joe My truck's outside, Betty.

Betty He would chase people with a stick.

Joe I'm not suprised.

Betty He hit me with it.

Joe Your mother hit him, so he hit you.

Betty She hit me, too.

Joe Sure she did. She's a hitter, so you're a hitter.

Betty You're not a hitter?

Joe Only when I'm mad.

Betty You don't get mad?

Joe Only when I got a reason.

Betty Your mother thinks you're hot stuff.

Joe So?

Betty I know better.

Joe No, you don't.

Betty He chased away my sisters' friends.

Joe You don't know shit.

Betty So she committed him.

Joe Who?

Betty My brother, Milton.

Joe Why can't you stay on one subject?

Betty He had a fit.

Joe Did you help him?

Betty What?

Joe Did you help him?

Betty What?

Joe Did you take care of him?

Betty How could I?

Joe You were such a good girl.

Betty I tried.

Joe I figured you would.

Betty He had a fit and fell down on the floor.

Joe The truck, it's warming up outside.

Betty They took him away in the ambulance.

Joe I gotta hit the road.

Betty My sister called them.

Joe Betty.

Betty This was in 1935. Before I met you. Roosevelt was in.
They put him in a straitjacket.

Joe Roosevelt?

Betty She did it, not me. That doesn't give them the right.

Joe The right?

Betty To disown me.

Joe I can't follow you. You don't make sense.

Betty Look who's talking.

Joe Your sisters?

Betty Look who's talking.

Joe Okay, what?

Betty That doesn't give them the right. They act like one of the
Four Hundred. Who do they think they are?

Joe Forget about it. Don't dwell on it.

Betty I never had a father, and now this.

Joe Clean the place up a little.

Betty With my sisters.

Joe Fix yourself up a little.

Betty Go to work, Joe.

Joe I'm going.

Betty Do you get paid?

Joe What do you mean, do I get paid?

Betty Do you get paid today?

Joe Sure I get paid today.

Betty Who said?

Joe Sol said.
Betty That's what he says.
Joe So long.
Betty Then bring home the money.
Joe I was going to.
Betty Bring me the money, Joe.
Joe Until you opened your mouth. (*Exits. Blackout*)

*

Scene 4

DOT and BETTY.

Betty I never had a father.
Dot You had one, Betty, but he died.
Betty That's right.
Dot My father's dead, too. He died of drink.
Betty My father never drank.
Dot He was an alcoholic miner.
Betty We don't drink.
Dot I saw you take a drink.
Betty I don't like it.
Dot I saw Joey drink.
Betty He don't like it.
Dot I like it.
Betty It's the Jewish people.
Dot I see. The kikes.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Dot They don't drink.

Betty They don't like it.
Dot Not the Polacks.
Betty That's right.
Dot Smoke?
Betty Only with a filter.
Dot What are those?
Betty Viceroy's.
Dot Oh, yeah. And Joey?
Betty Joey smokes Pall Malls.
Dot Emile?
Betty What?
Dot He smokes?
Betty He's only eleven.
Dot He smokes?
Betty I don't think he smokes. He's only eleven.
Dot Merle comes over. Arlene comes over.
Betty Eleven.
Dot They come over.
Betty I don't see them.
Dot They come through the window in the back.
Betty In the back?
Dot In Emile's room, in the back.
Betty I'll kill him.
Dot You don't have to kill him.
Betty What's he doing in there?
Dot They play ball in there. I don't know what else.
Betty Ball?
Dot Basketball. They put a hanger up in the door.
Betty Arlene?
Dot They use a hanger in the door and a spaulding.

Betty I'll kill him.

Dot You don't have to talk that way.

Betty All right.

Dot I was only asking, because of the smoke.

Betty I don't see it.

Dot You don't see it, you don't hear it.

Betty What?

Dot Never mind.

Betty Is it cold out?

Dot It's freezing out there.

Betty It's cold in here. By the alley.

Dot Yeah.

Betty Because she's stingy with the heat.

Dot Is it on?

Betty Certainly it's on. But it's freezing.

Dot Is it open all the way?

Betty Yeah, it's open. (*Kicks the radiator*) It's open. The lousy stinker.

Dot Raise the shade maybe. Let the sun in. (*BETTY does so: light floods the room*) Great view of the alley.

Betty Ha, ha.

Dot What are you doing for dough, Betty?

Betty Ha, ha, ha.

Dot Are you laughing?

Betty No. We got the government now.

Dot Relief?

Betty Are you kidding? Thank God. Do you think Joey?

Ha, ha, ha. Not Joey.

Dot Yeah, Roosevelt fixed it. If it wasn't for him—

Betty He was for the poor people.

Dot Not only the poor.

Betty The Colored.

Dot He was for the Colored.

Betty Before there was no relief. My mother didn't have it, so I had to go to work.

Dot What did you do, Betty?

Betty I sewed. I worked on garments.

Dot Why don't you do that here?

Betty How could I do that?

Dot You could sew.

Betty I can't sew no more. Where?

Dot You could work in the laundry.

Betty What're you talking about? I can't work in the laundry.

Dot Why not?

Betty That's for the Colored.

Dot Thank God for Roosevelt.

Betty I can't work in the laundry.

Dot He saved this country.

Betty I got six kids. I can't move.

Dot Now we got the Colored up here, working in the laundry.

Betty Certainly.

Dot And they drink and fuck around.

Betty Certainly. At Porky's bar.

Dot On top of everything else.

Betty How could I work there? In the laundry? Dot?

Dot Why did you move up here?

Betty Huh? I told you.

Dot Me, I grew up in Port Jervis.

Betty Because of Joey.

Dot Me, I have an excuse.

Betty He had to be near his mother.

Dot Oh, yeah. You told me.

Betty He had to be near his mother. He couldn't stand to stay in Brooklyn, where he had a steady job.

Dot In this godforsaken place.

Betty After the war, he worked for RKO there, in Brooklyn, delivering the fillum.

Dot Oh, yeah. *(Pause)* It's not like America here. In the winter there's no jobs. In the summer we get tourists. *(Aside)* One kind of tourist. From New York.

Betty I'm an American.

Dot It's the economic situation.

Betty If you're born here, you're an American. I was born here, and my mother also was born in this country.

Dot Is that so?

Betty And you're entitled to relief.

Dot I get it.

Betty Your father?

Dot What?

Betty He was what?

Dot I just told you about that.

Betty He was a miner.

Dot Right.

Betty He was born here?

Dot Damn right he was born here. *(Pause)* And yours?

Betty Oh.

Dot Your father. Where was he from?

Betty I think from Lithuania.

Dot Where the hell is that? *(Pause)* Betty?

Betty You want some coffee or a soda now?

Dot No.

Betty Sure? I got orange.

Dot Yeah, I don't want any. Save it. *(Pause)*

Betty She killed him.

Dot Who?

Betty My father couldn't stand it anymore.

Dot Your mother?

Betty He couldn't stand it anymore, so he died.

Dot Do you take after her?

Betty Who?

Dot Your mother? Do you take after her?

Betty Who, me?

Dot Who am I talking to? I don't see anybody else here.
Jeezis. Watch it, Betty.

Betty How can I?

Dot Well, pay attention.

Betty Thanks, Dot.

Dot Don't thank me. *(Pause)* Clean up a little more, maybe.
Go out once in a while.

Betty It's freezing, Dot.

Dot Look at me. I walked over here. The sun is shining.
It's good for you. Listen—

Betty I try. I do the best I can.

Dot If Arlene comes over—

Betty There's a limit.

Dot If Arlene comes over.

Betty What?

Dot Tell her to go home.

Betty I never see her.

Dot No?

Betty She never comes over. Merle comes over. Through the alley.
Dot Just in case.
Betty No smoking.
Dot That's right. She's too young.
Betty All right.
Dot Okay?
Betty All right, Dot. If I see her, I'll tell her.
Dot Watch out for her. (*Long stare*) Betty?
Betty Yeah.
Dot You have company now.
Betty All right.
Dot Don't stare.
Betty I'm staring?
Dot Yeah. Are you thinking?
Betty I'm thinking.
Dot What are you thinking?
Betty If he does it again, I'll kill him.
Dot Joey?
Betty Emile. If he does it again, I'll kill him.
Dot If he does what?
Betty You know.
Dot What?
Betty Never mind.
Dot Don't think like that.
Betty It was the Depression, Dot.
Dot What was?
Betty The cause of all my troubles.
Dot You were poor before that.
Betty When my father died.
Dot That's what I'm saying.

Betty My mother was furious.
Dot It wasn't the Depression.
Betty That's why Milton.
Dot What?
Betty No father there.
Dot That's right, Betty. (*Crying, off*)
Betty I never have a moment's peace.
Dot Too many kids.
Betty Too many damn kids.
Dot Too much Joey.
Betty Too much damn Joey. When can I rest? (*Pause*)
Dot Well, what were we saying?
Betty When can I watch a show?
Dot Get a TV.
Betty I wanna get one.
Dot You should get one.
Betty I want a TV, so I can have some peace and pleasure in life.
Dot You deserve it.
Betty Do I?
Dot Everybody should have a TV.
Betty I love the TV!
Dot Sure.
Betty I love those shows!
Dot Okay.
Betty That way I could have some peace and satisfaction.
Dot Don't forget what I said.
Betty Arlene.
Dot Arlene.
Betty I'll kill him.
Dot Never mind that.

Betty I swear.

Dot Kill Joey, not Emile.

Betty I feel like it sometimes, believe me.

Dot I believe you.

Betty I could kill him.

Dot Emile's a good kid. He plays with Merle. Basketball with a hanger and a Spaulding. They have a good time.

Betty I don't want him with his grandmother.

Dot Why not?

Betty I don't want him with his grandmother. (*Crying, off*)

Dot Take care of the kid.

Betty He'll grow up like his father.

Dot No, he won't. Not like Joey. Ha, ha. There could never be another Joey.

Betty One is enough.

Dot Ha, ha, ha. He's a riot.

Betty She blames everything on me.

Dot Who does? Your mother-in-law?

Betty She blames it all on me.

Dot That's how they do, mothers-in-law.

Betty Her son Joey can do no wrong.

Dot Oh, well.

Betty They won't have nothing to do with me.

Dot Oh, well then. (*Pause*) Betty?

Betty I'm so glad I have a friend.

Dot You mean me?

Betty I'm so glad.

Dot You be my friend, I'll be yours.

Betty I'm your friend, Dot.

Dot We both need help with the men in our lives.

Betty I'm your friend.

Dot Stan's no good and Joe's no good. Stanley, he can't pick his friends. Joey and Eddie Popolowski. Polacks. They can't figure it out.

Betty Thanks for coming over.

Dot It's a joke. When I was a kid, I used to be optimistic. I had a good time. We should do that.

Betty How can I? With the kids? With Joey? Where is Emile? School is out, and he should be here helping his mother.

Dot I thought things would be different. Dick and Jane. But we married young and we married poor, so who cares. Born poor, poor you will stay.

Betty There was Roosevelt. Now what?

Dot Roosevelt did not help us. It takes money to make money. Like certain people I won't mention.

Betty Now what?

Dot It was the war. Now the war is over.

Betty We have the Korean War now.

Dot It's not the same. (*Big sigh*) What we need is men with money.

Betty That's right.

Dot But the poor stay poor. It's in the cards.

Betty Thank you, Dot.

Dot Don't thank me. I didn't do nothin'.

Betty Thanks for coming over. Advice, ha, ha.

Dot Nothin' a little money won't cure, that's what I say.

Betty Money is right!

Dot But I wouldn't bet on it.

Betty Money is right!

Dot Remember, keep an eye out. (*Exits. Dim out*)

*

Scene 5

BETTY and HILDA.

Betty She wants to take my kids away.
Hilda Who?
Betty His mother.
Hilda All?
Betty What do you mean, all?
Hilda I mean, all the kids.
Betty The kids!
Hilda How many.
Betty I don't know how many. Why?
Hilda I'm just asking.
Betty She's an anti-Semite.
Hilda Who?
Betty In my opinion.
Hilda Your mother-in-law? That's impossible.
Betty Not her. Ha, ha. Dorothy.
Hilda Who is Dorothy?
Betty My friend Dorothy, who is not my friend. Dorothy. Dot. She's an anti-Semite. She tells lies against the Jews.
Hilda I knew you couldn't be talking about your mother-in-law.
Betty You don't know everything, ha, ha, ha.
Hilda What don't I know?
Betty I'm talking about the war against Hitler and the Japs.
Hilda Which thank God we won.
Betty The brothers, they came home with medals and women.
Hilda Thank God.
Betty The Brasmans, they have to stick it.
Hilda Excuse me?

Betty They got it from their father, Louis. Eleven kids, he had.
Hilda So? And?
Betty He goes around, Louis.
Hilda How come Joey never served?
Betty He has diabetes.
Hilda Oh. You give him insulin?
Betty He gives himself. With a needle.
Hilda You have to watch that, Mrs. Brasman.
Betty They put him in a C.C. camp. I was glad to get rid of him, but he came home every week. In five years I had four kids.

Hilda Impossible, that much I know.
Betty I'm telling you.
Hilda How much is four times nine? It's thirty-six. Four times nine is thirty-six. Oh.

Betty He nearly killed me.
Hilda You didn't have a break.
Betty That's what I'm telling you. He tried to kill me. They should have taken him to the war. I wish he went to war, and left me alone.

Hilda Then you had two more?
Betty Two more. The babies. Lorraine, and the other one... what's-her-name...

Hilda And now?
Betty Marie. Let him go kill Germans. I thought.
Hilda Do you...uh...you should...
Betty I try to keep him away from me. I try, believe me.
Hilda You have to do it, Betty.
Betty He wants to kill me.
Hilda No. Don't say that.

Betty What does he care?
Hilda And then, of course, you have to take precautions.
Betty I use contraception.
Hilda Thank God.
Betty Six is enough.
Hilda Of course, it's more than enough. These days—two is enough. Three is plenty.
Betty One is enough. Emile would be enough.
Hilda What a nice boy.
Betty She wants to take him.
Hilda He's such a nice boy.
Betty Over my dead body.
Hilda He gets along with the family?
Betty What do you mean?
Hilda He gets along with the Brasmans?
Betty They stay out of my business.
Hilda She wants to take him, Celia.
Betty She can't have him.
Hilda It would ease some of the pressure maybe.
Betty I need him to help his mother.
Hilda It's not good for a kid.
Betty So forget about it.
Hilda He has a lot of responsibility.
Betty We're poor.
Hilda For his age.
Betty That's how it is for the poor.
Hilda He's just a kid.
Betty The poor stay poor.
Hilda She would take some of the load off.
Betty God help us.

Hilda Then you'd let him?
Betty What?
Hilda Go to her. Emile. To his grandmother.
Betty No.
Hilda She doesn't think you can...uh...that you don't know how...Betty? *(Pause)* Of course, you would have to give permission, Betty.
Betty I know that!
Hilda It would be strictly a family matter.
Betty I'll take her to court!
Hilda No, you would have to give permission.
Betty Okay!
Hilda The permission would have to come from you, of course.
Betty Okay! *(Pause)*
Hilda I saw Emile over the weekend. He's walking to his grandmother's. We passed him on the road.
Betty On Saturdays. One day a week I let him.
Hilda He seems to like to go there.
Betty Certainly. She spoils him!
Hilda He seems happy to go there. He walks up there and back by himself. He has a good time doing it. He's such an intelligent boy.
Betty Her and her darling Joey!
Hilda I mean, Emile.
Betty Who can do no wrong!
Hilda It's too bad he's not doing so well.
Betty He can't support a family.
Hilda Emile, Betty, not Joey.
Betty We're on relief, now.
Hilda You're on relief?

Betty So I'm on relief! It's not a crime!
Hilda I don't think it's a crime.
Betty Some people criticize.
Hilda They don't know any better.
Betty They don't have to worry!
Hilda I'm all for it.
Betty Who are they to criticize?
Hilda That's right. I voted for Wallace, myself.
Betty Now we got Truman in there, he attacked the Koreans.
(Pause)
Hilda Well, did you hear my proposition?
Betty Yeah?
Hilda Celia could take Emile, and I could take one of the girls.
Of course, Ben doesn't know this yet. I think it would be
a help to you.
Betty No.
Hilda I'd like to take Marie.
Betty Marie?
Hilda She's very sweet.
Betty She's feisty.
Hilda She's also feisty.
Betty She's tiny, like Emile.
Hilda I think it's the food.
Betty What food?
Hilda Never mind. I mean nutrition. You know what I mean.
Betty It's the school!
Hilda Never mind.
Betty You should do something.
Hilda I will. I'm trying.
Betty It's *your* school.

Hilda It's not *my* school, Mrs. Brasman. I just work there.
Betty Ha, ha, ha. Their grandfather is also small. Louis Brasman.
Hilda This is true. Smallness could be hereditary.
Betty That's what I'm saying.
Hilda Is it cold in here?
Betty Goddamn it.
Hilda What happened to the heat?
Betty She did it again.
Hilda The heat?
Betty She turned it off.
Hilda What happened?
Betty Mollie Kaplan. The landlady. She turned the heat off again.
Hilda She's not allowed to do that. Is she?
Betty She did it again. When you came over, it was warmer.
Am I right?
Hilda I think so, Mrs. Brasman.
Betty Then she turned the heat off.
Hilda I would sue her, myself.
Betty Mollie Kaplan!
Hilda Maybe we should all move to Florida.
Betty Ha, ha, ha.
Hilda It's so cold up here, it gets into the bones.
Betty I'll take her to court, the lousy stinker.
Hilda (*Preparing to leave*) Well, Betty. Mrs. Brasman.
Betty And then this Dorothy starts telling lies about me.
Hilda Dorothy?
Betty Dotty Witschek. My so-called friend. She's married to Stanley Witschek. They live up by Praegers.
Hilda Oh, yeah.
Betty Polacks.

Hilda You say they have two kids?
Betty Arlene and Merle. They play over here. He's a Polack. And she, I don't know what she is. A Gentile.
Hilda Aren't they both...Do they have the same father?
Betty Aha! Ha, ha, ha.
Hilda Oh.
Betty Two different fathers!
Hilda I know who they are now.
Betty So, anyway. Blah, blah, blah.
Hilda Lies about what?
Betty About me. She's a two-face.
Hilda What lies?
Betty A hypocrite.
Hilda Concerning the kids?
Betty I don't take care! I don't watch out! I don't give a look!
Hilda Oh. *(Pause)* Is it true, Betty?
Betty How could it be true? And her! Look who's talking!
Hilda I see.
Betty Look who's talking here! With Arlene!
Hilda I see.
Betty With Eddie Popolowski! Another Polack!
Hilda *(Wanting to leave)* Well, Betty. Mrs. Brasman.
Betty Okay? Now you know.
Hilda It's too bad about Celia, that's all I can say.
Betty And they drink! What's too bad?
Hilda Just that it's too bad about Celia, because she has a heart.
Betty She has a heart?
Hilda About all this. It's nobody's fault...
Betty She'll never get my kids!
Hilda I'll speak to her. Would you like me to speak to her?

Betty As long as he stays on his mothah's side, and not on the side of the Brasmans. And not on her side, who hates and blames me, his mother.

Hilda Well, fine and good.

Betty All right. *(Pause)* He should be home now. He should help his mother.

Hilda I'll go now, Betty.

Betty Irving? I won't say anything. But they had problems here.

Hilda Problems.

Betty Because of the war. Irving is in the Navy. His wife is here. Maybe she has a boyfriend.

Hilda I heard that rumor.

Betty It was the war.

Hilda But was it true?

Betty I wouldn't say. Not me.

Hilda Fine and good. Don't say things without proof.

Betty I'm not saying.

Hilda I'll go. Do something about the heat, Betty.

Betty What can I do? I'll bang on the ceiling.

Hilda You don't want to get sick. You don't want the kids to get sick. Do you?

Betty I'll bang on the radiator. *(Takes off shoe)*

Hilda Is that the way?

Betty She's up there. I'll bang. That's all I can do.
(Bangs on the radiator)

Hilda Wait a minute.

Betty I'll bang more.

Hilda Wait, Betty.

Betty The lousy stinker.

Hilda Wait, I'll speak with her.

Betty (*Shouting*) TURN ON THE HEAT YOU BITCH!
Hilda Mrs. Brasman! (*Babies crying*) Betty!
Betty I'LL KILL YOU!
Hilda Don't do that! (*Return banging from above*)
 Stop it now!
Betty You see? You see what I have to put up with?
Hilda Yes, Mrs. Brasman. Don't bang the ceiling.
Betty Every winter!
Hilda Please.
Betty Lousy stinking bitch!
Hilda I'll speak with her, Betty.
Betty Thank you.
Hilda I'll speak with her.
Betty Thank you.
Hilda So I'll go now.
Betty (*Breathless*) Okay!
Hilda Try not to worry.
Betty Okay!
Hilda Bye, bye.
Betty Goodbye! Hilda! (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 6

BETTY to EMILE (unseen).

Betty Listen to me, Emile. Listen to your mother. Your father's family is against me, who has suffered and put up with a lot. As you know. I don't have a husband who does right,

I don't have a father, my sisters have disowned me, you're all I have. You're all I have, Emile. I never wanted to move here from Brooklyn, where I had a life, but your father insisted, he made me do it, and here we are, in the freezing cold, with nothing. I've lost touch, I've lost contact. With my life. Which was in Brooklyn. With my mother on DeKalb Avenue, with my Aunt May, my Uncle Bill, and the other people there. But Joey had to be near his mother. Your father had to be near his mother. Why? Because he's retarded, and she looks out for him. He's not retarded like your brother. Your brother Gilbert is brain-damaged. He was born that way. Something happened to your father. You can tell he's not bright. He fell on his head. But that's not what's wrong with him. It's not his head. He never read a book in his life. He doesn't know anything but movies. Movies and the truck. Movies and the truck. That's all he knows. At least I read. Once in a while I read a book. You know that. I taught you to read, if you remember. Now I want a TV so I can have some peace and entertainment in my life. We should have what other people have. I fought to get a phone, if you remember. Now you can call your friend, your friend can call you. I fought for that. If it wasn't for me, you would have no phone. If it was up to your father, you would have nothing. They don't realize, so they're against me. But at least I have you. I have you, and they can't take you away from me. Do you understand what I'm getting at? Do you understand, Emile? Are you listening to your mother? (*Dim out*)

*

Act 2

Scene 1

JOE and BETTY. JOE sits at the kitchen table holding a knife. BETTY is off in the bedroom left.

Betty *(Off)* What are you doing in there?

Joe I'm sitting here.

Betty Go to bed.

Joe I have a knife.

Betty What knife?

Joe A kitchen knife.

Betty What are you doing with the knife?

Joe I'm holding it.

Betty Where?

Joe At my chest. *(Pause)*

Betty Good.

Joe I'm going to kill myself.

Betty Good. *(Pause)*

Joe I'm not kidding, Betty.

Betty I'm tired. I'm exhausted.

Joe My mother was all I had. My mother.

Betty Is that what you want?

Joe What?

Betty You want to kill yourself?

Joe I can't go on.

Betty Then do it.

Joe Fifty-one years old and she's gone.

Betty I'm sleeping now.

Joe Who cares?

Betty So stop talking.

Joe My mother died. I'm supposed to care if you sleep or not?

Betty It's a big tragedy.

Joe I don't care if you never sleep.

Betty A Sunday drama for the Lyceum theatuh.

Joe I don't care if you sleep forever.

Betty A picture for a Sunday night.

Joe She's gone. I can't go on living.

Betty If that's what you want, Joe.

Joe Without her. Without her.

Betty Turn out the light and go to bed.

Joe Mama! Mama!

Betty She can't hear you, Joe.

Joe Mama!

Betty Don't wake the kids.

Joe They'll wake up without a father.

Betty Please.

Joe They'll wake up without a father.

Betty They have a father?

Joe I'll kill you and then I'll kill myself.

Betty Go ahead and try it.

Joe I'll kill you first.

Betty Try it.

Joe And then I'll kill myself.

Betty You're wasting electricity, Joe. And for what?
(JOE bangs the table) What are you doing?

Joe I'm banging the table.

Betty Stop banging the table!

Joe I'm expressing my feelings!

Betty Stop it!

Joe I'm expressing my grief!

Betty Who has to listen to this?

Joe My mother died today.

Betty Who has to hear it?

Joe Mama!

Betty It's late, you'll wake up Mollie.

Joe I don't care.

Betty That's all we need now.

Joe Mama! I'm coming with you!

Betty A visit from the landlord.

Joe What difference does it make? *(Knock on the door)*

Betty Now look at what you did. *(JOE stands)* It's Mollie.
I knew it. *(Knocking)* Let her in. *(JOE opens door.)*
Enter MOLLIE)

Mollie Joe! I heard! I'm so sorry! It's a catastrophe! I said to myself, He's awake, I'll go down, who cares what time it is, he wouldn't mind the company! Here, I brought a piece of cake, some candles, here, a little schnapps, it'll do you good! *(JOE sobs)* Joey! Are you crying? You poor boy! What a shame! What a catastrophe! Where's your wife? Where's Betty?

Betty *(Off)* I'm in bed!

Joe She's in bed.

Mollie Oh, I see.

Betty I'll be right out.

Joe She'll be right out.

Mollie (*To BETTY*) Don't get up! Don't bother! It's only me! I brought a piece of cake, and then I'll go! (*To JOE*) It's a catastrophe. Have a drink.

Joe My mother.

Mollie Poor woman.

Joe What a woman.

Mollie She was a saint.

Betty (*Off*) Now she's being friends with us!

Mollie She died for the family, Joe!

Betty The hypocrite.

Mollie It's a terrible loss—what are you doing with the knife? Put down the knife. You'll hurt yourself.

Joe What difference does it make?

Mollie Are you crazy? It's blood is the difference! Are you stupid? Your mother gave her life for you! So you should sit there and play with knives? No!

Betty (*Entering*) He's only acting.

Mollie (*Ignoring her*) She wanted your son, your Gilbert, to be able to go to school, to have a place, to learn! For this she suffered and died!

Betty He sees too many movies.

Mollie Right there in the middle of a PTA meeting, she's screaming and yelling, she suffers a heart attack and keels over! I'm telling you! Be a man, Joe! (*BETTY laughs*) Hello, Betty. I'll only be a minute. I was just saying.

Betty He's up in the booth. He's acting.

Mollie What booth?

Betty The projection. Where he works. The movie theatre.
The Lyceum.

Mollie Oh. I never go there. Anyway, I was saying—

Betty Is the heat on?

Mollie Of course the heat is on! Why would the heat not be on?

Betty I don't know why. There are people living here.
There are six children and two adults here.

Mollie *(Aside)* Where are the adults? I don't see adults.
(To BETTY) Take the knife away from him.

Betty Gimme the knife, Joe. Joey.

Joe No.

Mollie Give her the knife.

Betty *(To JOE)* Is this what you want?

Joe Leave me alone.

Betty *(To MOLLIE)* You see what I have to put up with?

Mollie *(Aside to herself)* Where do they all sleep? Are they all in
one room?

Betty Emile is in the back.

Mollie Who?

Betty Emile sleeps in the back.

Mollie Oh, I see. He must be awake. Is he awake?

Betty He has to have some privacy, or he has a nervous breakdown.

Mollie At his age?

Betty He has to have privacy, so he sleeps in the back there.

Mollie Does he have heat?

Betty Ha, ha, ha.

Mollie And all the rest in one room?

Joe Who cares?

Betty Two rooms.

Mollie And you? Excuse me for asking.

Betty He sleeps with two, I sleep with three.

Mollie *(Stunned)* Wait a minute. Just a minute. *(Aside, to audience)* When I was a girl in Warsaw, we lived in a basement, it was worse than this. A frying pan, a kerosene lamp, a pail for a bathroom, no running water, no electricity, filth. Five children in one bed. To get to the Jewish quarter you went through an alley, you stepped over garbage and slop. Never did I see my mother with clean hands, with a smile on her face. My father was a porter. Do you know what a porter was? An animal, a donkey. A carrier of loads. Huge boxes he shlepped, bent over. Jake. He thought there was gold on the streets of America.

Betty Ha, ha, ha.

Mollie I'll go now. I brought some cake. I brought some shnapps. And now I'll go.

Betty There's four rooms in the apartment. Stop crying, Joe.

Mollie I never thought...Excuse me. *(Turns knob on radiator.)* There, you hear the heat? The heat is on. Do you know about the knob? On the radiator? Sometimes you have to turn the knob on the radiator. You know that? You turn the knob. So, I'll go. I'm sorry for the catastrophe. Joe, you'll go to bed, get some sleep. Tomorrow's a new day.

Joe What's the point?

Mollie There's no point. You just do it.

Betty I'm glad we have heat.

Mollie Of course you have heat! Why shouldn't you have heat? On a night like this!

Joe It doesn't matter.

Mollie Shah! I knew your mother, may she rest in peace. She would not like this kind of talk. She was high-strung,

I'll grant you, but she never quit! You hear me, Joe?
Your mother was a fighter, Joe.

Joe That's what killed her.

Mollie And not only for her own, for you and for your kids, but for others also. (*Aside*) It's the kids I'm worried about.

Joe She fought and they killed her. She's finished. No more.

Mollie No, now she's gone, may she rest in peace, the turmoil is over. Betty, you'll take care. Something's the matter, pick up the phone.

Betty We don't have a phone.

Mollie You don't have a phone? Oh. Okay. Don't bang on the ceiling. You'll come up the stairs and you'll knock on my door. Don't bang on the ceiling. I'll say good night. (*Light comes on in EMILE's room, right*) That boy is awake. He must be awake.

Betty Turn off the light and go to bed, Emile!
(*The light goes off*)

Mollie Look in on him, why don't you? Good night. (*Exits*)

Joe (*To BETTY*) What do you care? (*Pause*) You don't give a damn. (*Pause*) You're the most selfish person on the face of the earth.

Betty Shut up. (*Noise from EMILE's room*)

Joe What is that noise?

Betty That must be Emile.

Joe What's he doing in there?

Betty He must be rocking. He must be rocking himself to sleep.

Joe Stop it, Emile! (*The rocking ceases*) Oh, my poor mother.

Betty Your poor mother.

Joe I know you. You're glad she died.

Betty (At EMILE's door) Emile? (Silence)
Joe (To BETTY) You can't fool me.
Betty We better leave him alone.
Joe Not me.
Betty He'll have a nervous breakdown. (Rocking sounds.
JOE starts singing "Irene, Good Night." Dim out.)

*

Scene 2

JOE, IRV and STAN. They wear dark clothes and yarmulkes.

Irv The kids. They're French?
Joe Whose kids?
Irv Your kids. They all have French names.
Stan Ha, ha. French.
Joe She gets it from books.
Irv She reads?
Joe Sure. The names she got from books. Where else could she get 'em?
Stan The pictures.
Joe Nah, what pictures?
Stan It could be *Look*.
Joe She likes *Look*.
Irv Uh, Stan?
Joe You know Stan? My friend, Stan.
Irv Sure, I know him.
Stan We've met.
Joe My kid brother.

Stan I know.

Irv Can I talk to ya for a minute?

Joe Sure.

Irv *(To STAN)* Excuse me.

Joe You can talk in front of Stan.

Irv I don't know, Joey.

Joe Sure. It's freezing out. Don't worry about it.

Stan At least she turned on the heat. Mollie.

Joe Sure, 'cause it was a funeral today. So she allowed herself.
(To IRV) Don't worry about it.

Irv It's hard to organize an existence. A decent life. To organize and maintain it. It's difficult. *(Pause)*

Joe So what?

Irv Your wife. I was just saying. Should we talk now?

Joe Talk.

Irv She doesn't know. Betty. It all fell on her. She doesn't know what happened. It's frightening. She doesn't know about children. There's hate there? She doesn't understand about it. She has no idea about raising children. What to do, how to be. Nothing. How is that possible?

Joe She doesn't know nothin'. She never learned. Because her own mother.

Stan She should get out of the house. She's always complaining. Like my Dorothy.

Joe Sure. She never does anything. Dot.

Stan They should do things. Like bingo.

Irv People want to be entertained.

Stan They need that.

Joe People need entertainment. That's why we have shows. Motion pictures. Vaudeville. Burlesque.

Stan They make plenty of money. Actors, performers, comedians.
Joe Sure. Are you kidding?
Stan How much does he make? Watsizname. Your pal.
Joe Who?
Stan Zorro.
Joe Which one?
Stan Which one?
Joe There's more than one. You mean Douglas Fairbanks?
Stan Yeah, him. Douglas Fairbanks.
Joe He was the best. The champeen.
Stan The man was an athalete.
Irv He was athletic.
Joe I could do that.
Irv You were not an athlete, Joe.
Joe Whatsamatter with you? I could swordfight. Like him.
Douglas Fairbanks.
Stan And he could act.
Joe What an actor!
Stan *(To JOE)* You could swordfight?
Joe Fencing! I took fencing! Whatsamatter with you?
Stan When was this?
Joe In school.
Stan When in school?
Joe In the ninth grade.
Irv Where was this?
Joe Where?
Irv Where?
Joe In Brooklyn, New York. Where else would it be?
Stan You got to the ninth grade?
Joe Certainly.

Irv That's not what I recall.

Joe Certainly. I could fence, and I was a runner. I was a trackman. I was a fast runner.

Stan A hundred thousand dollars.

Joe What?

Stan A year. Zorro.

Joe At least.

Irv Where were you a trackman, Joe?

Joe I told you. Where I was, which was Brooklyn. Deep Brooklyn. Ha, ha.

Irv I didn't know that.

Joe There's a lot you don't know, pal. *(To STAN)* He was just a kid.

Stan Ha, ha, ha.

Joe I was a very good trackman. Fast.

Irv Naturally that means fast.

Stan Did you graduate?

Joe Who, me?

Stan Who am I talking to? Am I talking to the wall?

Irv No, he didn't.

Joe I had to work.

Irv He was going to the movies. Right, Joe?

Joe Naaah.

Stan He was in love with the movie pictures.

Joe Naah.

Irv So many kids in the house, nobody was the wiser.

Joe I played hooky. Ma didn't like it.

Stan I don't think he made it to the ninth grade.

Joe I used to go to the Brooklyn Paramount, downtown. What could she do?

Stan That's where he learned fencing.
Irv Not in school.
Stan Running he learned on the street.
Irv Chasing girls.
Joe Ha, ha, ha.
Irv Right, Joe?
Joe Nah.
Stan Now he's running the pictures himself.
Joe In the booth.
Stan In the booth.
Joe The projection booth. I always wanted to be that.
Irv Is it steady?
Joe Weekends it's steady. It's steady weekends. Summer's full time, including matinees.
Irv Can you support a family with that?
Joe Sure! Are you kidding?
Irv I'm not kidding.
Joe I work with Sol. I drive a truck fer chrissakes.
Irv Sol who?
Joe You know Sol. Rubinstein.
Irv What does he pay you?
Joe Two bucks an hour! I can make seventy, eighty dollars a week with him.
Stan When he works.
Irv When he has business.
Joe Certainly.
Irv So you're on relief.
Joe Betty went to the government, we're on relief.
Stan Roosevelt brought it in.
Irv And the kids?

Joe What?

Irv Nothing. Now that Ma is gone...how's Emile doing,
for instance?

Joe I'm trying to teach Emile the machines.

Irv The machines.

Joe Up in the booth. He can't do it. He don't like it.

Irv He's a quiet kid.

Joe He can do the dot.

Stan The dot?

Joe Not your dot, ha, ha.

Irv What dot?

Joe On the screen. It tells ya when to switch the machines.
The reels. Otherwise, he has trouble with the fillum.

Irv He's silent.

Stan He never says nothing.

Irv What's wrong with him?

Joe He has trouble putting the fillum in.

Irv No, I mean—

Joe It's not for him.

Stan He should talk more. He should say something.

Irv He scowls.

Joe He liked his grandmother. He loved her.

Irv Don't start crying, Joe. The funeral is over.

Joe So what?

Irv Forget about it.

Joe So what if the funeral is over?

Irv Calm down.

Joe So what?

Stan *(Taking off his yarmulke)* Irv. *(Pause)* So you're going back
to Florida?

Irv No, I'm moving.

Stan Who wouldn't want to live in Florida?

Irv Nobody.

Joe Where are you moving?

Irv I'm moving to California. I'm relocating.

Stan California here I come!

Irv Santa Barbara.

Joe I've heard of that.

Stan Right back where I started from!

Joe You'll see movie stars there.

Irv You bet.

Joe Watch out for movie stars!

Irv Are you from California?

Stan Are you kidding? Scranton, P-A.

Joe Give 'em my regards, Irv!

Irv I'll do that.

Joe Is whatshername going?

Irv Judy.

Joe Judy.

Irv No.

Joe She's not going?

Irv We're separating.

Joe You don't say?

Irv I do say. All for the best. Good-bye and good luck.

Joe You don't say.

Stan What do you do, if you don't mind my asking?

Irv Cars.

Joe He's a millionaire!

Irv No, I'm not. I'm a salesman. I sell Pontiacs. *(STAN whistles)*

Joe *(To STAN)* What'd I tell ya?

Irv I make a living.
Stan I'm very impressed.
Joe We should all move to California.
Stan You've never been out of New York State, Joe.
Joe I'd like to live on Sunset Boulevard.
Stan Why Sunset Boulevard?
Joe That's the main street there in Hollywood. Give them my regards.
Irv I'll do that.
Joe Tell 'em Joey Brasman sent you!
Stan Ha!
Irv It's just ordinary people in California. Trying to make a living.
Joe Give 'em my regards.
Stan Come on, they have another kind of life there.
Irv Who has?
Stan People in California.
Irv They live like people.
Stan Warm, with oranges.
Irv They live the way people live everywhere.
Stan How's that, Irv?
Irv By hook and by crook.
Joe Betty Grable. (*Whistles*) Give my regards.
Irv The most important thing is putting bread on the table.
Joe You don't say?
Irv The next thing is to control the appetites.
Joe You eat too much.
Irv You know what I mean.
Joe (*To STAN*) Irving is an eater.
Stan We all eat. Everybody eats.

Irv There's not only food. There's also other things.

Stan Beer and dope.

Irv Like beer and dope.

Joe I don't like beer and I don't like dope.

Irv You like to fool around.

Stan Even movies could be bad for you.

Irv It could be a bad habit.

Stan Too many movies.

Joe Don't give me advice, I'm older than you. *(To STAN, of IRV)* Wiseguy. *(STAN starts to go)* Where you goin'?

Stan Home.

Joe Hey, Stosh!

Stan Bye!

Joe So long, Stosh.

Stan I'll see ya around, Joe. *(Exits)*

Joe My friend, Stosh, but he's always in a bad mood.

Irv I gotta go, too.

Joe He got shot in the war.

Irv Long trip ahead of me.

Joe Yeah, sure. Watch out because it's dark now. Here it gets dark early.

Irv Thanks, Joey. *(At the door)* What are you driving?
What is that thing out there?

Joe That's a Hudson!

Irv Okay. Don't be insulted.

Joe That's a Hudson, '46!

Irv Great, Joe. Good luck to ya.

Joe Stay in touch.

Irv I will.

Joe From California.

Irv I'll be in touch. (*Exits*)
Joe Yeah, sure, Irv! (*Dim out*)

*

Scene 3

DOT and BETTY.

Dot Eddie Popolowski. The whole town knows.
Betty With Arlene?
Dot With Arlene. What have I been just saying?
Betty About Arlene. I know.
Dot I'll have him arrested.
Betty The cops?
Dot No, not the locals. They don't know anything, they don't do anything.
Betty There's a law against it.
Dot The Sheriff's Department, or the State Police.
Betty You could try the judge. Judge Corso.
Dot Why him?
Betty He'll take care.
Dot Corrupting a minor. I'll have that Polack animal arrested. Then he goes in front of the judge, not before. (*Pause*) You understand what I'm saying?
Betty Sure, Dot. Look, again it's snowing.
Dot Turn up the heat why don't you.
Betty I can't.
Dot Turn the radiator knob.
Betty It's her, the landlady, Mollie Kaplan.

Dot It's ridiculous.

Betty The coffee's boiling.

Dot Let it perk.

Betty About time.

Dot Let's have the cake I brought.

Betty Very good, Dot. The cake.

Dot Should I? I don't know what to do.

Betty You mean with the cops?

Dot That's what I'm saying. Arlene, I'll lock up myself. She'll never see the world again.

Betty He's a good-lookin' fella. Eddie. That's why. A blonde.

Dot Betty?

Betty He charmed her.

Dot He took her for rides. He broke her in early, the sonofabitch.

Betty Like with Matinee Joey.

Dot Joe?

Betty He was a good-lookin' fella. He comes over. What did I know?

Dot This is not the same situation here.

Betty He grabbed me in the hall. He took me to the movies.

Dot Arlene is not old enough for this.

Betty I was seventeen.

Dot I don't think it was my fault at all.

Betty People have desires.

Dot Her father won't do shit. He doesn't hear a word about it.

Betty They can't help it.

Dot The sonofabitch.

Betty One thing leads to another.

Dot Yeah, you should know.

Betty Excuse me?

Dot Never mind.

Betty He was handsome.

Dot Joey?

Betty Ha, ha. Now he's got the diabetes.

Dot She's ruined.

Betty He can't help himself. That's why my sisters disowned me.

Dot White trash.

Betty Up in the booth, he makes passes at them.

Dot Joey?

Betty Certainly, Joey.

Dot He can't help himself.

Betty They visit him in the booth, they kiss hello, he puts his tongue in.

Dot Your sisters?

Betty I don't know. I heard.

Dot Is he sick?

Betty Matinee Joey. *(Noise off)*

Dot Emile?

Betty He won't come out.

Dot How long?

Betty Emile! *(Pause)* He won't come out.

Dot Maybe he went through the window.

Betty The window?

Dot That's what I said.

Betty *(Calls)* Emile!

Dot Take a look. *(BETTY goes. DOT hums)* *(Aside)* Idiot.

Betty What?

Dot Nothing, never mind.

Betty Have coffee, it's perked.

Dot Is he there?

Betty He's not in there, unless he's hiding in the closet, ha, ha, ha.
Dot What's wrong with school?
Betty I should look in the closet, ha, ha.
Dot Did you hear what I said?
Betty I'm making the coffee.
Dot Thank you.
Betty And we'll have cake. Very good.
Dot Why isn't he in school?
Betty He won't go.
Dot He has to go.
Betty He stays home.
Dot Why?
Betty Since the funeral.
Dot He went out the window, Betty. *(Pause)* What happened at the funeral?
Betty What happened?
Dot What happened.
Betty It snowed on the funeral. The Brasmans.
Dot The Brasmans?
Betty You know what I mean.
Dot I haven't the faintest idea.
Betty Oh.
Dot Betty.
Betty The relatives.
Dot Yeah?
Betty And Emile's not talking.
Dot Is he silent?
Betty He hides.
Dot I heard of that.
Betty Excuse me?

Dot Catatonic.

Betty What?

Dot Catatonic. Be careful.

Betty I lost my temper.

Dot When they don't talk.

Betty I lost my temper.

Dot I seen that. They stare.

Betty I couldn't help it.

Dot You could be hospitalized.

Betty Me?

Dot Be careful.

Betty They took my brother. Because of that. Milton.

Dot What?

Betty He would hit.

Dot Your mother hit him?

Betty My mother. Yeah.

Dot You should watch that.

Betty Do you?

Dot What?

Betty Hit.

Dot When I have to. Stan, sometimes.

Betty I lost my temper.

Dot Emile?

Betty Emile, everybody. *(Pause)*

Dot Well...the Brasmans?

Betty Yeah?

Dot You mentioned. At the funeral.

Betty Oh. They wouldn't give me a look. Me, who puts up with their Joey, I don't exist for them.

Dot So it goes.

Betty The snow was falling. On the hair, on the kerchiefs, on the yarmulkes, on the black hats. The feet were freezing. They brought in a Rabbi, he talked in Hebrew. I couldn't hear anything, it was so cold. Everything was black and white. *(Pause)* But no more.

Dot No more?

Betty I'm putting my foot down. *(Stomps)* There! You see?

Dot I think so, Betty.

Betty You understand me.

Dot I try.

Betty You try! *(Pause. Big sigh)*

Dot This is a small town, everybody knows everybody's business. *(Pause)* Galavanting around in that green Buick. Eddie's. People notice that shit. I'm thinking we should move. Get out of town.

Betty Me?

Dot No. Us.

Betty Me, I'd like to go back to the city, where you can live a life.

Dot I was speaking for myself.

Betty Bye, bye, Catskills.

Dot Bye, bye is right.

Betty Bye, bye blackbird.

Dot Betty?

Betty Nothing. Pennsylvania, ha, ha, ha.

Dot What's the blackbird?

Betty I don't know, ha, ha, ha. A blackbird.

Dot Same old shit. But at least there's no Sheeneys there. Ha, ha, ha.

Betty Oh.

Dot But what the hell do you care?

Betty Oh.

Dot Talk about blackbirds, beards and noses.

Betty It was a song I was thinking of. (*Sings*) "Bye, bye, blackbird..."

Dot Yeah, I get it.

Betty A song.

Dot (*Going to the door*) Same old shit anyway. So fuck it. You don't know your ass from your elbow. And you beat up on your kids. But who knows? Maybe I should have belted Arlene a few times. Get the man shit out of her. Beat it out of her. She's thirteen years old for chrissakes. Eddie Popolowski. They know how to take advantage. Here and everywhere.

Betty They take advantage.

Dot That's right, Betty. They take advantage. (*Pause. Blackout*)

*

Scene 4

JOE and BETTY.

Betty I thought you told me you work this week.

Joe So what?

Betty So what?

Joe So what if I told you? I am not God.

Betty I was counting on it, Joey.

Joe I can't control the weather. I can't control the stock market.

Betty The stock market?

Joe I'm not the boss.

Betty What you said, Joe.

Joe I don't own anything.

Betty You can't not work, Joe.

Joe I don't own shit.

Betty Joe.

Joe I'm not in charge.

Betty What am I going to do now?

Joe Go jump off the Brooklyn bridge.

Betty You told me, you said...

Joe Are you God?

Betty You lied to me.

Joe Am I going to hell now?

Betty God? I need a miracle to live through this.

Joe You won't get it.

Betty That much I know, Joe.

Joe Because you don't deserve it.

Betty Why? Why? Why?

Joe Why?

Betty Why don't I deserve it?

Joe You need me to tell you?

Betty Tell me, Joe.

Joe You're asking me why?

Betty How could this happen to me?

Joe You're asking me how?

Betty Why?

Joe Because you don't know how to act.

Betty Look who's talking.

Joe You don't know your ass from your elbow.

Betty What do you know? Are you any different? Big shot!

Joe I know about fun. I know about having a good time.
I have a good time. I sing. I dance. I play the piano.

Betty You never played the piano in your life, Joe.
Joe I sing. I dance. I play the piano. (*Whistles a tune*)
Betty You never so much as seen a piano.
Joe I whistle a happy tune.
Betty Except in the movies.
Joe I have a few laughs. I have some fun in life.
Betty Until now you hang around with the Colored.
Joe Who, me?
Betty You heard me. Where's the money coming from?
Joe What money?
Betty To sing and dance in Porky's bar.
Joe I never go there.
Betty With the piano. With the Colored.
Joe Who told you that?
Betty A little bird told me.
Joe I never go in there.
Betty You go somewhere, Joe.
Joe Why should I come home?
Betty Why?
Joe Why?
Betty Don't bother.
Joe I won't.
Betty You're nicer to Stanley than you are to me.
Joe Does this surprise you?
Betty You're nicer to Stanley.
Joe Who is a friend of mine.
Betty Unless you want something.
Joe Why don't you shut up for a minute?
Betty You're never nice to me unless you want something.
Joe I wanna talk to my son now. (*Exits to EMILE's room*)

Betty That's a laugh.

Joe *(Off)* The car? I told ya. You gotta do one thing with your feet and one thing with your hands and watch the road.

Betty All of a sudden he has a son.

Joe *(Off)* I said, you gotta do one thing with your feet and one thing with your hands and watch the road.

Betty All of a sudden he's trying to be nice.

Joe *(Off)* All at the same time. *(Reentering)* I thought he wanted to drive. I thought he wanted to learn how to drive.

Betty He's too young to drive.

Joe So what? You can't do it in bed. You can't learn how to drive in bed. You can't stay in a room and drive.

Betty Leave him alone now.

Joe It's the same with the fillum: You should just follow the sprockets, which are the holes in the fillum. But he can't do it. He can't follow the holes. He's stiff.

Betty Leave him alone.

Joe He doesn't even go to school for cryin' out loud.

Betty He'll get over it.

Joe He's stiff. Me, when I was a kid, I ran around, I was loose. Do the kids come over?

Betty What kids?

Joe Merle. Does he come over to play?

Betty Merle and Arlene?

Joe Merle.

Betty No.

Joe Why not?

Betty How should I know? Ask your friend, Stanley. "Stosh," ha, ha.

Joe Emile. What a name. Is he supposed to be French?

Betty Leave him alone.

Joe No, you leave him alone.

Betty Don't talk to him.

Joe I can converse with him if I want. He's my son.

Betty You're a bad influence.

Joe You can't tell me what to do.

Betty Talk to your friend, Stosh.

Joe Did you say talk to Stanley? Okay, good. I will talk to Stanley. Otherwise, don't open your mouth.

Betty You're nice to Arlene.

Joe Garbage is all that comes out of it.

Betty The little slut.

Joe Look what comes out of your mouth.

Betty You heard about Eddie?

Joe Eddie who?

Betty Don't act innocent. Eddie the plumber. Eddie Popolowski.

Joe What about him?

Betty Bye, bye.

Joe You have a dirty mind.

Betty Bye, bye, Eddie.

Joe What?

Betty He sees her.

Joe What?

Betty He sees her. They go for rides.

Joe In his Buick?

Betty No, in an airplane. Ha, ha, ha. *(Pause)* A thirteen-year-old.

Joe You want Emile to hear this?

Betty Close the door.

Joe Why should the kid hear this?

Betty You must be kidding me, Joe.

Joe Why is that?

Betty Because.

Joe Because why?

Betty Because they hear everything already. There is nothing they have not heard, the kids, all of 'em, they hear.

Joe He should be in school.

Betty Dorothy, she's gonna have him arrested. Eddie.

Joe Good.

Betty She's gonna have him arrested.

Joe Good.

Betty You don't care?

Joe Why should I care?

Betty Watch out, Joe.

Joe Are you threatening me? (*Pause*)

Betty I told Arlene, I don't want her coming over here.

Joe No, you didn't.

Betty I did.

Joe Why?

Betty What did you think?

Joe Nothing.

Betty I know what you thought.

Joe Nothing.

Betty I know what you thought.

Joe You're dreaming, Betty.

Betty I told her.

Joe That was stupid.

Betty The anti-Semite.

Joe That was unfortunate.

Betty Your friend.

Joe That's all I get around here, aggravation.

Betty Don't put Marie on your lap.

Joe She's my daughter.

Betty Don't put her on your lap.

Joe Marie?

Betty You'll go to jail.

Joe Not me!

Betty You'll go to jail, Joe!

Joe Not me!

Betty I'm warning you. Like Eddie Popolowski.

Joe What are you? You are never happy. I know how to be happy.

Betty Remember Celia, Joe.

Joe Don't mention her name.

Betty She will turn over in her grave.

Joe Don't mention my mother.

Betty If she knew what you do.

Joe Keep my mother out of this.

Betty You are not happy.

Joe You're not alive. You're miserable. You don't have fun.
You sit and stare. You groan and moan. It's not the money.

Betty I'll fix you, Joe. Don't worry.

Joe Who would listen to you?

Betty I'll fix you.

Joe All you do is complain. Me, I have fun. I keep myself
clean at least. (*JOE whistles and sings*)

Betty I'll call the cops.

Joe (*Exiting*) So long. (*Pause*)

Betty Did ya hear? Did you hear that? Did you hear, Emile?
What he said? What he did? (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 5

JOE speaks into the stage right bedroom to EMILE, unseen.

Joe

I dreamed someone was chasing me. I was running between these two buildings, between where Novick and Kantrowitz live. Over there on the hill. It's icy, it's cold, I see my breaths. And I come to these two doghouses, one has a white dog tied up to it, and the other has a colored guy tied up to it. The white dog is barking at me, he won't let me pass. The white dog and the colored guy are tied up with leashes and a collar. A collar. Each one has a collar. Then the colored guy comes out of his doghouse and he says, "Where are you going?" So I says, "I have to go. They're chasing me." "Well," he says, "you can go then, I'll let you go." *(Laughs)* Me, and the Colored. All my life. *(Pause)* Rufus Williams, he's got big muscles, he can lift a ton. Me, I'm as strong as an ox, diabetes and all. I gotta get up to the booth and splice the fillum. Come up and see the picture. Barbara Stanwyck is in it. With that other guy, whatisname. We'll practice changing the machines. Remember: The little dot in the upper right-hand corner, we pull the lever, we change machines, we rewind the reel and we splice. *(Exiting)*
So long. *(Dim out)*

*

Scene 6

BETTY and HILDA.

Betty I tell Emile, don't take no shit from nobody. Defend yourself. Somebody picks on you, attack. Don't take shit.

Hilda So, he does.

Betty He fights.

Hilda He has a lot of fights.

Betty He fights for himself. No one can pick on him.

Hilda Does he have enough to eat?

Betty What?

Hilda He is small and thin.

Betty He eats what the others eat.

Hilda What do they eat?

Betty They eat what they eat.

Hilda What? They're small. Marie is small. Gilbert is small.

Betty Gilbert is brain-damaged. He didn't come out right.

Hilda I know, Betty. I'm just saying.

Betty Are you accusing?

Hilda I'm not accusing, Betty.

Betty You're accusing.

Hilda I'm asking.

Betty Whose side are you on?

Hilda I'm on nobody's side. I'm on the children's side.

Betty The Brasmans.

Hilda The children's.

Betty You're causing problems for me.

Hilda I'm sorry. How?

Betty By bringing it up.

Hilda I didn't bring it up.

Betty Who brought it up?

Hilda His teachers are concerned, Betty.

Betty Who?

Hilda I've told you several times: They go to the principal, the principal comes to me. *(Pause)* Where is Joe today?

Betty I don't where he is, where he goes. It's too cold. The weather freezes up, he don't work.

Hilda I'm glad you have heat today.

Betty I told her. I told her you were coming over. Mollie Kaplan.

Hilda I see.

Betty So there's heat.

Hilda I see. And the relief?

Betty They don't give me enough.

Hilda What I'm trying to get at is—

Betty It's not enough.

Hilda Do you have a budget?

Betty It's not enough.

Hilda So much for food, so much for rent, and so on.

Betty How can I have a budget?

Hilda You plan ahead.

Betty I am being persecuted.

Hilda Never mind.

Betty You have no idea.

Hilda Okay. *(Pause)*

Betty None.

Hilda Okay. *(Pause. Coughs)* I'm trying... *(Coughs)*

Betty It's never enough. *(Pause)*

Hilda I don't know what to say. *(Radiator noise)* What's that?

Betty That's the radiator. She's giving heat.

Hilda Oh.

Betty Thank God, because you're here. *(Pause)* Otherwise we could freeze to death.

Hilda Listen to me. *(Pause)* Betty?

Betty Yeah?

Hilda You want your children to be happy?

Betty Hannukah gelt. Ha, ha, ha.

Hilda What?

Betty This will make them happy.

Hilda Of course.

Betty Let 'em come up with the dough.

Hilda I see.

Betty Gelt.

Hilda We should talk about other things now.

Betty Some people have all the luck.

Hilda Betty.

Betty They have everything. Everything is taken care of. They don't have to worry.

Hilda Let's talk about that.

Betty Other people have nothing, and God hates them.

Hilda Is that luck?

Betty What can you do?

Hilda I don't know what to say. *(Coughs)* You work hard in this country, you'll do well.

Betty *(Offering a cough drop)* Have a Vick's.

Hilda Thank you. You can succeed here, whatever your background.

Betty No luck...

Hilda Luck has nothing to do with it.

Betty Then why?

Hilda I told you. It starts with school. The first thing is to do

well in school. *(Pause)* Don't you want your children to, uh...succeed?

Betty

Certainly!

Hilda

Let's speak about that.

Betty

They should take care of their mother!

Hilda

Betty, he has lice.

Betty

Who?

Hilda

Emile. Actually, all three of the ones in school, they have lice. Emile, Marie, Lucien, they all have lice.

Betty

It's nits.

Hilda

Nits are the eggs.

Betty

I wash their hair with kerosene.

Hilda

Okay. *(Coughs)*

Betty

It doesn't do any good.

Hilda

Okay, you can smell it.

Betty

What else can you do?

Hilda

You can be clean.

Betty

What?

Hilda

Clean, Betty.

Betty

You talk like them now.

Hilda

Like who?

Betty

The Brasmans. His mother. May she rot in hell.

Hilda

You shouldn't say those things.

Betty

Why not? She put a curse on me.

Hilda

No, she wouldn't have done such a thing.

Betty

But that's what she did.

Hilda

Listen, you can smell the kerosene. In school. The other kids smell it, Betty.

Betty

Kerosene?

Hilda

And not only kerosene.

Betty It's the nits. I told you, I comb the hair with kerosene.

Hilda Okay. (*Coughs*) And he has a rash. I'm speaking of Emile. He's scratching himself in class.

Betty It's eczema! I put a salve on it!

Hilda Okay. (*Coughs*)

Betty What else?

Hilda He gets into fights.

Betty I taught him, me, his mother, I gave instruction: Somebody insults you, you should punch them in the mouth. Immediately.

Hilda That's what he does. So he gets into fights.

Betty Emile. Somebody makes a remark, you don't like it, don't stand there and take it—slug him!

Hilda He could end up in reform school.

Betty Over my dead body.

Hilda He could get himself crippled.

Betty I taught him to stand up for himself. You don't take shit from nobody.

Hilda It's causing problems.

Betty I send him to Hebrew school! Every day after sixth grade he goes. I insist! He could help his mother, but I insist! Why?

Hilda Okay, why?

Betty Because I want him to learn Jewish. His grandmother wasn't the only one, I too want this for him. And who's going to pay for it? Not his father!

Hilda The synagogue pays for it.

Betty Oh.

Hilda There's a fund.

Betty Oh.

Hilda We are Jews, after all. We try to take care. *(Pause)* There are things we believe in. *(Pause)* They tried to exterminate us and we are still here. *(Pause)* We are not vermin. *(Pause)* We are not animals. *(Pause)* We believe in the Commandments. *(Pause)* We believe in cleanliness of body and soul. *(Pause)* Betty?

Betty He should be forever grateful. To his mother. *(HILDA stands)* Are you going?

Hilda Yes, I'm going now. Betty... uh...

Betty Joey had a job delivering the fillum. RKO distribution. Regular. But he had to be near his mother. He had a good job. In those days I had Emile and Marie. But I was pregnant with Gilbert. Joey wanted to be in the booth, running the pictures. He's like a kid. He doesn't know anything but the movies. He wanted to be near his mother, who protects him and defends him. He took advantage. I was only seventeen. What did I know? *(Pause)*

Hilda Betty?

Betty He goes to my mother. He says, "Missus, I want to have sex with your daughter." My mother says, "If you want her, marry her."

Hilda That's what happened?

Betty That's it.

Hilda I'm sorry.

Betty My mother.

Hilda I'm sorry.

Betty A mouth to feed.

Hilda Is she alive?

Betty She's in Brooklyn, on DeKalb Avenue. We lived there. Me and Joey, we had our own apartment. Three blocks from

her. Downstairs they had pushcarts. Downstairs was a fruit and vegetable stand. In the summer, you could smell the fruit. Trolley cars went by in front of the building. You could hear the bells and the electrics. A few streets away was the train. DeKalb and Kosciusko. You could hear the train, the El.

Hilda Goodbye, Betty.
Betty The El.
Hilda I'll be in touch. (*Exits. Dim out*)

*

Scene 7

JOE and BETTY.

Betty They're coming to get ya, Joe.
Joe Naah. I don't think so.
Betty Bye, bye, Joe.
Joe Not me.
Betty Matinee Joe, last call.
Joe Forget about it.
Betty They're on their way.
Joe For you, Betty, they're coming for you.
Betty Go to jail, Joe.
Joe For you, Betty.
Betty Go directly to jail.
Joe Because you hurt your kids.
Betty Do not pass Go.
Joe You're a psychopath.

Betty Who is?
Joe You heard me.
Betty Who is, Joe?
Joe Your kid don't talk no more.
Betty Who?
Joe He does nothing.
Betty My kid?
Joe Emile.
Betty That's my fault?
Joe He don't talk. Why?
Betty It's a stage. Leave him alone.
Joe No. You leave him alone.
Betty He helps his mother.
Joe The other one, Gilbert, he can't add two and two together.
Betty Can you?
Joe He's still pissing in his pants.
Betty He can't help himself.
Joe He should be over it. It stinks in here.
Betty He can't get over it.
Joe Why can't he?
Betty He's retarded, like you. He gets it from you.
Joe Why don't you do something around here? I would like to have a clean house to come home to.
Betty Then hire a maid.
Joe What?
Betty You heard me. Hire a maid.
Joe I'll do that.
Betty When you get to prison.
Joe I'll do that.
Betty Hire a maid, ha, ha, ha. In jail.

Joe I'll do that.

Betty You're a baby, Joe.

Joe They hide in closets. They hide under the beds.

Betty Who does?

Joe Your kids.

Betty Your kids, Joe.

Joe From you, not me.

Betty Bye, bye, Joe.

Joe Sure. Then what?

Betty Then let the government.

Joe The monster of the deep.

Betty Judge Corso.

Joe They're not clean.

Betty Who is to blame for that?

Joe Not me.

Betty Not you?

Joe Not me.

Betty (*Sings*) Matinee Joe he don't know...

Joe You're a sick woman. (*Pause*) Hello?

Betty I had a fit and fell down, Joe.

Joe Betty?

Betty Get away from me.

Joe You hear what I said?

Betty Get away from me.

Joe That's why.

Betty Hire a little nurse, Joe.

Joe Are you kidding me?

Betty Hire a maid, a nurse, and a twelve-year-old.

Joe You're a crazy woman.

Betty Hire a twelve-year-old nursemaid, ha, ha.

Joe A psychopath.

Betty When you get to Sing Sing.

Joe Nobody can talk to you.

Betty Twelve years old.

Joe Because you can't hear nothin'.

Betty Your own little twelve-year-old nurse.

Joe Because you're out of your mind. You need to be committed.
Twenty-four hours a day.

Betty I'm not going anywhere, Joe.

Joe Only they won't be so nice.

Betty You are.

Joe They do shocks. They do operations.

Betty No one can do that to me.

Joe They'll take the bugs out.

Betty Least of all you.

Joe They'll do a lobotomy.

Betty You are not an adult.

Joe You don't say?

Betty That's right.

Joe That's what you think. *(Pause)*

Betty I didn't mean it, Joe.

Joe What?

Betty It's not what I meant.

Joe They'll give you treatments.

Betty No.

Joe Betty? *(Long silence)* Betty? *(Long silence)* Betty?

Betty No.

Joe Betty? *(Long silence)*

Betty No. *(Slow dim out)*

The End