

SHIVA

A full-length drama

By Barbara Bellman and Sheryll Bellman

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SHIVA -CAST OF CHARACTERS

GRETA (Early 60s)-Greta is the younger and more businesslike of the sisters. She's highly efficient and results-oriented, having spent her life in the workplace attending meetings and getting the job done. She is very controlled as a result of it and hesitant to show emotion. (An Allison Janney type)

SARI (Late 60s)-Sari is a very stylish, queenly presence that is highly judgemental and particular. She is the older sister and expects things to be done her way, so she's often disappointed and frustrated. (A Linda Lavin type)

BEN (90s)-Ben is an angry, self-absorbed wheelchair-bound 90 year old curmudgeon. He's always been a strong, dominant patriarch, but his body is in rapid decline and he's scared of dying, and of being helpless and vulnerable. He shows his fear by being angry.

BILL (50s)-Bill is a career caregiver who molds his persona to suit his clients. He's a manipulative slob - a know it all who pits family members against each other to make himself more indispensable.

EILEEN* -(40s) (Hospice Nurse) - is efficient but tired and bored with the job. She should be compassionate toward the family but after years doing this job, she has little patience for their drama.

DELIVERY PERSON* - (30s or 40s - could be male or female) - is more of a grunt, hauling equipment day in and day out to homes where there is little joy. This person has a blue-collar sensibility and philosophy that is pragmatic, if not terribly comforting.

AAMIDAH (30-40s) Aamidah is a Home Health Aide for hire who works in 8 hour shifts. She is a Muslim woman that wears a hijab to work, but underneath she's got a quick wit and sharp tongue.

MARIE* (30s) is a hair stylist who works with a lot of older women, doing their nails and hair. She's friendly and a good listener which is why she has a loyal clientele who will do (and pay for) whatever she suggests.

GABBY* is BEN'S East Coast granddaughter. She's flamboyant and naive, and in denial that her grandparents are dying. She is never seen. Only her voice is heard. - (All could be played by the same person)

*(These characters could all be played by the same person)

SETTINGS

The time is present day.

Stage is set with three areas that we see at all times:

--Living Room

--Living Room Alcove converted to a Hospice area

--Kitchen with breakfast nook

PRODUCTION NOTES

The action takes place from one area to another, being highlighted when active. The house should look like an aging person's house - once nice but now shabby with neglect, walls damaged from wheelchairs banging into it, kitchen table centerpiece filled with medications. The Alcove is set up for Hospice, with furniture moved aside to make room. The eat-in kitchen opens to the Living Room.

The parts of the Delivery Person and the Hospice Aide can be played by the same person.

SCENE 1: INTERIOR OF LIVING ROOM, DAY

Scene opens with a hospital bed being brought into the living room of a house in Phoenix, Arizona. GRETA (adult daughter) explains that the bed needs to be placed in an alcove of the living room. Adjacent to the living room is the kitchen. BEN (aging father) sits in his wheelchair at the kitchen table. BILL (middle-aged caregiver) sits at the table reading the newspaper. He has a Torah next to him - unopened.

GRETA

(To DELIVERY PERSON)

Put it there. Carefully! And don't touch the piano! (She points) *There*. Set it *there*! Next to the window. Or wait - maybe next to the -

BEN rolls himself into the living room to watch.

DELIVERY PERSON

Lady, just tell me where you want it, OK? I ain't decoratin'. I got a lotta stops to make today.

GRETA

I'm sorry, OK! It's not everyday I have to prepare my mother's final resting place, I mean, before she goes to her FINAL resting place. Why do they call it a resting place anyway?

DELIVERY PERSON

It's hard, I know. Not easy gettin' used to the end in sight. I see it all the time. Ya move in all this gear and then boom! They're gone with the wind. And then I come back, take all this shit outta here, and I'm off to the next place. I'm sorta the delivery guy that brings the props for the final act, know what I mean?

GRETA

Yeah, well I didn't mean to start an existential conversation. Just put it over there. (She points) *No, there!*

He sets the bed down and looks for a plug in wall. He holds up the plug, waiting for an answer.

DELIVERY PERSON

Where should this - ?

GRETA

Behind the chair.

He screeches the chair across the floor to find the outlet.

Don't scrape the floor!

Ignoring her, he plugs the bed into the wall and demonstrates how to use it.

DELIVERY PERSON

Use this button to raise it up. And this one to lower it. And this here's how you lift the side rails.

GRETA

Got it. Thanks. It's not brain surgery.

DELIVERY PERSON

You do it.

GRETA goes to show that she understands the rails and the up/down button.

GRETA

Do I pass?

DELIVERY PERSON

Well, poor choice of words, under the circumstances, but yeah. I'll go get the rest of the stuff.

He exits.

BEN is confused by the tumult.

BEN

(Angry)

What the hell is all this crap?

BEN turns to find BILL has gone
back into the kitchen.

Bill! God Damn it. Where are you?

BILL wipes his hands on his dirty
apron and reappears.

BILL

I'm right here BEN. Don't worry. I'm here.

BEN

What's all this about?

GRETA goes to her father. She
kneels down to speak to him gently.

GRETA

Hi Daddy. This is from the medical supply company - for
Mother. We're bringing her home from the hospital today.
Remember? I'm trying to get this all set up for her - make
her comfortable - for the - duration.

BEN

I don't like all this crap in here.

GRETA

We have to Daddy. There's no other place and - it won't be
for long.

BEN

Well I don't like it. Who's this *hom yonkel*?

GRETA

He's from the medical supply company.

DELIVERY PERSON returns with oxygen
tank and commode.

DELIVERY PERSON

Lady - where do you want the oxygen?

GRETA

Do we need it?

DELIVERY PERSON

I just deliver what's on the list.

GRETA

I don't know. There - put it in the closet. I've no idea how to use it.

DELIVERY PERSON

They'll explain it to you.

GRETA

Who's *they*?

DELIVERY PERSON

The Hospice nurses. Have they called yet?

GRETA

No.

DELIVERY PERSON

They will. What about the commode?

GRETA

The commode - Oh! I hadn't thought of that. She can't sit up. I doubt she'll need it.

DELIVERY PERSON

Well, you got it anyway.

GRETA

Ok. Leave it. We'll sort it out later.

BEN

What's this gonna cost me?

GRETA

Medicare pays for it.

BEN

You *think* so, but you'll see. They'll find a way to stick it to me.

DELIVERY PERSON

Where do you want the oxygen?

BEN

We're turning this place into a goddamned hospital! Why doesn't she just stay there 'til she gets better?

GRETA

She's not getting better Daddy. It's best we bring her home.

BILL

They're putting Ruth on *hospice*, Ben.

BEN

What the hell - ! Greta, what's this about?

GRETA shoots BILL an angry look.

GRETA

I wanted to tell you *myself*, Daddy, but - well - Bill here seems eager to do that for me. There's nothing more they can do. She had a massive stroke. (Beat) She won't recover. (Beat) So all we can do is try to make it comfortable for her *-here*.

BEN

Oh, god damn it. Don't start in. Always taking over. When did - ?

GRETA

Daddy, you know Mother had a stroke, don't you?

BEN

Ahhhh, she's always *khretzing* about something.

GRETA

Daddy, when she fell out of her chair last week, it wasn't because she was clumsy.

BEN

What's it gonna run me?

DELIVERY PERSON returns with
paperwork to sign.

DELIVERY PERSON

Not a dime! Hospice takes care of it. All you have to pay for is diapers, pads and gloves.

BEN

Lemme see that.

DELIVERY PERSON hands BEN papers to sign, but he can't read the small print and angrily tosses them to GRETA to sign.

GRETA

If we need extra care, we'll have to cover that.

BEN

I'm not Rockefeller. How long's this gonna last?

DELIVERY PERSON

Sometimes they go fast, sometimes slow. You never know. Flip of the coin. Sooner or later.

BEN

You like this job?

DELIVERY PERSON

It's as good as any.

BEN

Well get the hell outta here while ya still have it.

GRETA notices BILL'S pants are falling down.

GRETA

Bill, your *pants*! You're not a plumber.

BILL reaches to pull them up a bit, without much conviction.

Why don't you wear suspenders?

BEN

(To GRETA)

Knock it off, will ya?!

GRETA

(To BILL)

How difficult is it to pull up your pants!

BEN

Ya wanna start trouble?

BILL

It's OK Ben. I don't mind.

BEN

Gimme those papers. I wanna see for myself how they're gouging me.

BEN fumbles for his glasses and BILL hands them to him. He struggles with his hearing aids and frustrated, motions to BILL to fix them for him. BEN tries to read the papers but despite the glasses, he can't see and in frustration, he tosses the papers back to GRETA and throws his glasses to the ground. BILL picks them up and puts them back on the table.

Godammit!

BILL

(Whispers to GRETA)

Macular Degeneration.

BEN

What's it to you if he wears suspenders? It's none of your business. (Pause, looks around) Where is she, anyway?

GRETA

They're bringing Mother from the hospital any time now.

BEN

Who's going to take care of her?

GRETA

I can. And Sari is coming later.

BEN

Ohhh, another country heard from!

GRETA

Mother's going to need all of us now.

BEN

Ahhh, you can't take care of her. How long will you stay this time? Three days? A week? You got your own families to take care of. (Pause) Call someone. You kids can't do it.

GRETA

I've an open return ticket and Harvey can fend for himself for a while. In the meantime, Sari and I will help.

BEN

That'll be something. When's the last time you spoke to her?

GRETA

We're adults, Daddy. We'll behave. Besides, Bill will help too.

BEN

No, he won't. He's here for *me*. Not *her*. Call somebody else.

GRETA

I'll call the agency. How many shifts? One? Two? Round the clock?

BEN

What's it gonna cost?

GRETA

I don't know!

BEN

She'll need someone all the time. What if she wants something in the middle of the night?

BILL leans down to speak with BEN,
almost conspiratorially.

BILL

You *know* what hospice is, don't you Ben?

BEN

Yes, yes, I know.

GRETA

(To BILL)

I would have appreciated it if you'd let me talk to him about it first.

BEN

Don't start in -

GRETA

I'm just saying that -

BILL

Ben and I talk about a lot of things, don't we Ben?

GRETA

Oh, I'm *sure* you do!

BEN

What's that supposed to mean?

GRETA

Never mind.

BILL

We spend a lot of time together.

GRETA

So you're quite the confidant, is that right?

BILL

I try to be a good listener.

GRETA

Is that all? Maybe you pray together, too? Share passages from the Torah?

BEN

Knock it off, both of you.

BILL

Can I fix you some soup, Ben? I know you like that Cheddar and Broccoli.

BEN

Yeah. That sounds good. (To GRETA) Eat something.

GRETA

I'm not that - OK. Just a little. But first let me call the hospital and find out what's keeping them - and the home health agency.

GRETA exits.

BILL

Your daughters sure like to take over, don't they?

BEN

Ahhh -they've always been that way. Greta takes charge. Sari bosses everyone around with her fancy this and her fancy that. I don't know where they get it. (Beat) Don't let 'em get under your skin, Bill.

BILL

Don't worry about me, Ben. I've been dealing with your daughters for what, almost six years? I'm used to them. But they need to be reminded I work for *you*, not *them*.

BEN

Don't forget it, either. (Looks around) Where's that soup?

BILL brings the soup and sits down with BEN to eat. They sit in silence for a moment, then BEN flicks on the TV to watch the news and BILL picks up the newspaper to read - like an old married couple. GRETA returns.

GRETA

I called the agency. We'll have someone starting tonight, at seven. We need to discuss the contract - how long we want them, what skill sets they'll need, you know. Stuff like that. Oh, the transport left the hospital a few minutes ago.

BEN

Don't rush me! Lemme eat my lunch in peace!

GRETA

I'm just giving you an ETA.

BILL

(To BEN)

That means, Estimated Time of Arrival.

BEN slowly looks up from his soup.
Gives BILL a long look.

BEN

Ya don't say . . . ?

BILL

I just thought . . .

BEN

Well, stop thinking. (Beat) Where's her soup?

BILL goes to the stove to get it
and bring it back.

BILL

(Overly solicitous)

Sorry, Greta. Here you go. I kept it hot for you. Do you want
some crackers?

GRETA

No thanks. (Eats quickly) I think I hear the van.

GRETA gets up to open the door and
holds it open as a gurney is
brought into the house. GRETA
directs the transport team to where
to take MOTHER.

The bed is set up over there.

Leans down to MOTHER slumped on the
gurney.

Hi Mother. You're home. We've got everything set up for you.

Ben hollers from the kitchen.

BEN

Don't waste your soup! Goddammit!

GRETA

(To BEN)

Mother's here, Daddy!

BEN barely looks up from his soup.

The transport team helps MOTHER to the bed. GRETA stays close by and fakes cheerfulness as she arranges a comforter around MOTHER'S body and turns on music from a nearby CD player.

Mother? (Pause) I've fixed up this area for you with music and sunlight! Isn't it nice? You can look out the window at this pretty day. (Pause) Bill, bring my Dad in here to say hello.

BEN

I'll do that later. I need to lay down. It's not like she's going anywhere.

BILL wheels BEN out of the room.

GRETA

(To MOTHER)

Daddy's tired Mother but he'll be here in a little while. (Beat) Would you like to hear some Sinatra or Puccini, or (Beat) your favorite! Mario Lanza!

GRETA puts on a CD and turns up the volume so we hear Mario Lanza.

Remember when you used to play this when Sari and I were little girls and you'd dance around the room while we made a fort with blankets over a table? Remember? We used to love going underneath and feeling that it was our own little world, and we could hear the music playing all around us. I loved that.

GRETA hums to the music.

PHONE RINGS. GRETA lowers the volume.

GRETA

Hello? (Beat) Hi Sari. (Beat) When did you land? (Beat) She's here now. (Beat) Just a little while ago. (Beat) I'm waiting for the hospice nurse to arrive. Yeah. (Beat) I called an agency too. Daddy wants someone here all the time. (Beat) I thought so too, but I don't think they do that. (Beat) We'll talk when you get here. (Beat) Yes, of course I did that. (Beat) And that too. (Beat) That too. (Beat) Of course! Yes!

(Beat) Listen, just come already. You can micromanage better when you're here, in person.

GRETA hangs up phone, and organizes the area - putting the commode in a convenient place, bringing a vase of artificial flowers to a table, opening the curtain, fluffing pillows, etc. She pours water, puts in a straw and takes it to MOTHER, who won't drink.

Mother? Sari called. She's on her way. She wants to be with you. Won't that be nice? (Beat) Your favorite daughter is on her way.

BILL wheels BEN back into the room and over to the bedside. BILL speaks to MOTHER first, taking her limp hand in his.

BILL

How ya doing, Ruthie? They take good care of you in the hospital? We're glad to have you home to be with us.

GRETA

(Annoyed)

Let my *father* speak to her. (To BEN) Daddy, go say hello.

BEN gets a little closer, pulling his chair with his legs. He leans forward to get a good look at MOTHER. He takes her hand in his, and shakes his head, sadly.

BEN

Hi toots. How ya doing?

There is silence.

Poor dear. She doesn't even know I'm here.

GRETA

Sure she does, Daddy. Go ahead, say something. She can hear you, even if she can't speak.

BEN

You poor dear. (Beat) You look like hell.

There is more silence.
Bill, take me outta here.

GRETA

(to MOTHER)

Don't worry, Mother, Daddy's just not used to seeing you like this. But we'll fix your hair later - put on a bit of rouge for your cheeks - and you'll look just fine!

Sari arrives, coming through the door tired and hot with a big entrance.

SARI

What idiots! Now I remember why I moved away from here! The minute I got on the freeway, I got the Phoenix salute.

SARI gestures throwing a finger and throws her purse and sweater on a chair.

Will you get my bags, Bill?

She sees BEN and gives him an air kiss and a brief hug.

Hi Daddy. My god, you've gotten so bony! Aren't you eating?

BEN

Don't start in!

SARI nods to GRETA, who stands next to MOTHER.

SARI

Bill - my suitcase. Put it in the bedroom, will you? The *big* bedroom. You know I can't sleep in a small bed. (To GRETA) You don't mind, do you?

(To BILL)

Oh, my god! It's an oven in here! For gods sake, turn on some air! Open a window! This is suffocating!

GRETA

Sari!

BILL

We like it warm.

SARI

This isn't warm. It's a fucking steambath! Turn on the air for godsakes and (To BEN) wear a sweater if you're so cold!

BEN

(Agitated)

You haven't been in the house two minutes and already you're complaining!

SARI

Nice to see you too, Daddy. (Beat) Shit! You could grow tomatoes here.

BEN

I'm cold goddammit!

SARI crosses to MOTHER'S bed. She leans down to kiss her.

SARI

Hi Mother. I'm here. (Looks around) We need to turn this bed - it's facing the wrong way - you know, her feet facing toward the door and all - not good feng shui.

BILL returns from taking her luggage and stands by BEN.

Bill, come help me turn this bed.

GRETA

It's too hard to move. Leave it.

BILL

Would you like some cold water?

SARI

God, yes, thanks! I'm so hot.

BILL goes to get ice water, and returns with the glass.

BILL

Here you go.

SARI looks at the glass with disdain.

SARI

Do you have any lemon?

BEN

Oh fer cryin' out loud. Whatta ya think you are? Leona Helmsley? Just drink the damn water and quit your farshtunkenah bellyachin' about lemon and how hot it is and what bed you want!

SARI

Do you at least have a straw?

BEN

You're not the Queen of Sheba for chrissake.

SARI starts to respond angrily, but
GRETA intercedes.

GRETA

We'll do a shopping later.

SARI

How would you know what or who I am?

BEN

Oh, I know *full well* who you are. You're the queen bee. A member of the *royal family*.

GRETA interrupts to distract them.

GRETA

Sari, help me pick out some music for Mother. (To BEN) Daddy, I'll call you when the nurse arrives. Why don't you go lie down for a bit.

BEN grouses knowing he's been
dismissed, but goes anyway.

BEN

Ahhhh - Bill! Take me to the bathroom!

BILL

Yes, Ben. I'm right here, Ben.

BILL wheels BEN out of the room.

GRETA

He's been like that all day, only more so.

SARI

So what else is new?

GRETA

He's upset, as we all are. How was your trip?

SARI

Terrible. Those idiots at security broke the handle on my Louis Vuitton bag and I had to carry it like a sack of potatoes through the airport! You can imagine what I looked like. They didn't even apologize!

GRETA

I'm sure that was devastating.

SARI

How did we ever grow up in this heat?

GRETA

The only thing that saves me is a swim. Cools me down from the inside out.

SARI

Ruins my hair.

SARI fans herself with a magazine
and looks at MOTHER.

Speaking of hair, Mother, we've got to do something about yours. Or will Daddy have a fit?

GRETA

Do you think you can get through this without provoking a fight for once? It's hard enough without the drama.

SARI

I didn't provoke a thing, but I'm too old to take his shit anymore. No ma'am, he's not going to talk to me that way and get away with it. Not anymore. Not today. Not ever again!

SARI moves to the kitchen and tries
to open up every window.

GRETA

Why do you let him get under your skin? Let it go!

SARI

Maybe you like the taste of his shit, but I don't. (Pause)
God, I'm going to die here.

SARI looks back at MOTHER,
embarrassed and calls over to her.
Sorry Mother. But this heat's gonna kill -

DOORBELL RINGS.

GRETA

That must be the nurse. Try to hang on a little longer.

GRETA opens the door. It's EILEEN,
the hospice nurse, who hands GRETA
a card.

EILEEN

Hi. I'm Eileen. Your nurse, from Valley View Happy Meadow
Hospice.

GRETA

I'm Greta. One of the daughters. And this is my *older* sister,
Sari.

SARI gives GRETA a dirty look.
EILEEN crosses to SARI to shake her
hand.

EILEEN

I can see you're sisters. (Turns to Ruth) May I?

EILEEN moves to RUTH'S bed. GRETA
and SARI quietly stand by while
EILEEN introduces herself to RUTH
in a baby voice (up-talking)

EILEEN

Hello, Mrs. Golden. I'm Eileen, you're hospice nurse. My job
is to help make sure that you're comfortable. OK? I just want
to do a little examination, just to see where we are, OK?

EILEEN takes out her stethoscope and listens to RUTH'S heart. Then she checks her legs and feet, and her abdomen for any congestion.

Hmmm, feels a little tender in here Ruth. (To GRETA and SARI) I think she's a bit constipated. I think we should give her a suppository to help relieve that. (Back to RUTH) Ruth? We're going to give you something to help you move your bowels, OK? Our goal is to make you comfortable, so you're not in any discomfort, OK?

EILEEN goes to her bag, pulls out a computer and types into it. Then she gets out some supplies and turns to GRETA and SARI.

Would one of you help me turn her on her side?

SARI recoils. GRETA steps up to the bed.

GRETA

I'll help.

EILEEN pulls on surgical gloves and shows GRETA what to do to roll MOTHER to one side while EILEEN inserts the suppository. When done, she removes the gloves and throws them in a trash can. GRETA and SARI remain silent. EILEEN retrieves some paperwork from her bag.

EILEEN

I need to go over some things. Do you both live here?

GRETA

I live in Philadelphia. Sari's from New York.

SARI

Manhattan.

GRETA

Excuse me. *Manhattan!*

EILEEN

How long do you intend to stay?

GRETA

As long as necessary.

SARI

How long do you think?

EILEEN

It could be days - or weeks. Sometimes hours.

GRETA

We'll stay as long as we have to.

EILEEN

Then let me explain this to you. It's very important.

Hands them a big flyer.

Put this on your refrigerator so it's prominent. It's our hospice number and the ONLY number you call when you are concerned about anything, OK.? Anything at all. Do NOT call 911, ever. Call us and *only* us. Now that your Mother is on hospice, our goal is to make her comfortable at home until the end. If you call 911, they'll come and, well, let's just not do that. OK?

GRETA

Okay.

EILEEN hands GRETA a box.

EILEEN

This is the Comfort Kit. It's important. Your Mother won't be able to tell you if and when she's in pain - she can't - but as her body shuts down, it can be painful. You have to be proactive about her pain medication, OK?

Pulls out different bottles to show
what they are for.

This is to help her relax if she gets agitated. It's liquid morphine and -

SARI

Morphine! Are you trying to kill her? I'm not giving her morphine!

EILEEN

We're trying to keep your Mother comfortable. It's important that you not neglect that. You don't want her to suffer.

SARI

Don't patronize me! I'm not an idiot! I know what morphine does.

EILEEN

(To GRETA)

Do you have a problem with this?

GRETA

No, but I thought you people would be here to give her what she needs.

EILEEN

We'll check in with you every other day, and more frequently when the time comes. Do you have any other help?

SARI becomes nervous.

SARI

What other help? I thought you people took care of everything. You know, like Flora, Fauna and Merriweather. Floating about, humming songs, burning incense and stuff.

EILEEN

(Amused)

Oh. Well, Flora and Fauna are on vacation. And Merriweather quit. But I, or someone else from the Hospice program, will check in with you, and you can call us anytime. We also have a volunteer who stops by to do music therapy. She's a lovely person who plays the guitar. Hearing is the last of the senses to go, so we find that music can be very comforting.

GRETA points to the CD player.

GRETA

I've got Mother's music queued up.

EILEEN

That's thoughtful. And there's also a chaplain who'll stop by.

SARI

Well . . .we're Jewish.

EILEEN

He's non-denominational and the visits are to comfort you as well.

SARI

That won't be - What about physical therapy? Isn't she going to get some therapy?

EILEEN

We do have someone who can come and give your Mother a gentle massage.

SARI

That's nice, but I meant, you know, therapy to teach her how to move around again.

EILEEN

Move around, how?

SARI

I don't know. Sit, stand, - brush her hair?

GRETA

Brush her hair? She's practically in a coma and you're worried about her hair? Even if she were fully conscious, she wouldn't know how to hold a hairbrush. In her entire life, she never did her own hair.

SARI

That's beside the - .

(Whisper to GRETA)

If Mother knew what she looked like, she would die!

(To EILEEN)

When did you say the suppository would kick in?

EILEEN

It could be right away, or take a few hours. You never can tell. Are you planning to have any other help?

GRETA

I've lined up a home health service, but they won't be starting until seven tonight.

SARI

Seven? But it's only three now! What if she . . .?

GRETA

We'll deal with it.

EILEEN packs up her things to go.

SARI

So, Eileen. It's Eileen, isn't it?

EILEEN

Yes.

SARI

How did you get into this line of work?

EILEEN

I was an ICU nurse for twenty years and I saw the difficulties people had with letting go, and what few options there were for people transitioning.

SARI

Transitioning?

EILEEN

It's how we refer to it. It's less -

GRETA

Final. We get it.

SARI

So do you have kids?

EILEEN

Three. All grown.

SARI

Grandkids?

EILEEN

Four. Two of each.

SARI

Where do you live?

EILEEN

Mesa.

SARI

Are you married?

EILEEN smiles, closes up her bag
and stands.

EILEEN

I'm sorry, but I really do have to go.

SARI

But wait! I mean, what if she has a . . .what if she . . .?

EILEEN pats SARI'S hand.

EILEEN

You'll be just fine. Just keep Mom comfortable. That's the
most important thing.

SARI

For you maybe. But our mother was always so put together and
she'd be appalled if she knew she looked like this.

GRETA and EILEEN both just stare at
her. SARI glowers back at GRETA.

Well, it's true and you know it! I think we should call her
hairdresser and see if she'll come here. God knows Mother's
spent enough money over the years for her to make a house
call.

GRETA

(Sarcastic)

Don't forget her nails.

SARI

(Oblivious to the sarcasm)

You're right! Change that hideous color on her toes!

GRETA

I wasn't serious.

SARI

Well, I am.

SARI picks up her phone to dial.
She barely nods goodbye to the
NURSE. GRETA walks the NURSE to the
door.

EILEEN

Can I speak with your father?

GRETA

He's napping now.

EILEEN

This is going to be difficult for him. No matter how old
people get, death always takes the surviving spouse by
surprise.

GRETA

I don't think it's sunk in yet - for any of us.

EILEEN

Call us if you need us. But please don't forget to post our
number on the refrigerator - that's usually the one place
that everyone sees. And when the time comes, don't call
anyone but us. If you call 911, the paramedics will take her
to the hospital, and believe me, you don't want that.

GRETA

It's not what Mother wants. So don't worry.

EILEEN

I can tell you'll be the one to help your Mother.

GRETA

Yeah, my sister's a bit high-strung.

EILEEN exits and SARI returns to
the room.

SARI

I called Maria. She'll come by to do a comb out in the
morning. (To MOTHER) Mother? Maria is coming to do your hair
tomorrow and your nails. They're a mess! I mean, how could
you allow her to put wraps on your toenails? (To GRETA) No
one does that!

PHONE RINGS on SARI'S cellphone.
It's SARI'S daughter, GABBY,
calling from Chicago.

SARI

Hi. (To GRETA) It's Gabby. (Pause) How are the kids? (Beat, lowers voice) Well, it's terrible. Just terrible. (Beat) She looks just - awful. Her hair's a mess and her nails, well, I never - (Beat) I've arranged for her hairdresser to come tomorrow. Would you believe she had wraps on her toenails? Boy, they really saw her coming! I'm going to say something when she comes. (To GRETA) You're not the only one who gets things done! (Back to GABBY on the phone) No, she's not very communicative. In fact, not at all. (Beat) Honey, I don't think she'll respond to you. I know you're her favorite granddaughter, but even you can't bring her back from -

GRETA

(Loud whisper)

Sari! She can hear you!

SARI grimaces apologetically. GRETA busies herself - checks for new signs of dying.

SARI

(Into the phone)

Ok, we'll try - but don't expect much.

SARI holds the phone in front of MOTHER.

Mother? Mother, it's Gabby. Gabriele. She wants to say hello to you - on Skype.

SARI holds the phone in front of Mother and jabbars in a loud childish voice.

GABBY

Hi Grandma! How ya doing, Grandma? You look beautiful, as always! You're so beautiful, Grandma, but you need a little blush, you know. Grandma, can you hear me? Hey Grandma, I have a question. I've been thinking of getting a face-lift, and need to ask your advice. I mean, you've had three, right? I figured you would know who to recommend. Oh Grandma, you just have to get better! I need you!

(Pause) I love you Grandma. Please get better Grandma. Send me a picture so I can have it.

SARI takes the phone away to talk into it.

SARI

(Into the phone)

I don't know if she can hear you but they told us that hearing is the last of the senses to go. (Pause) A selfie? I don't know if that's such a - oh, all right. I'll try.

SARI holds the phone away from herself, pointing at Mother and SARI.

Greta. You too. Come here.

GRETA

I don't think that's -

SARI

Oh, come on.

GRETA reluctantly enters the frame. They both look up as the camera clicks.

SARI sniffs the air.

Oh, God. Son of a bitch.

GRETA sniffs too. They look at each other, stricken.

GRETA

The suppository worked.

SARI

Now what're we going to do? This is terrible! Just terrible. Goddamn that nurse. Why did she have to leave? I tried to keep her here.

GRETA

That was obvious.

SARI

I don't care. Like I give a shit about her life.

SARI grabs a tissue to hold to her nose.

Oh - I'm going to throw up!

GRETA

Don't!

SARI

What are we going to *do*?

GRETA

What we *have* to do.

GRETA comes to the bed and puts on latex gloves.

And you're going to help.

SARI

Oh, no. I can't. No, I think I'm going to vomit.

GRETA gives SARI orders on what to do next.

GRETA

Then vomit! But we're doing this together. I can't do it alone.

SARI

I don't know what to do! I'm not prepared. I've never done anything like -

GRETA

And I have? We're going to roll Mother to her side, and I'll remove the diaper. When I roll her in my direction, you hold her there while I change it.

SARI follows GRETA'S instructions as GRETA works with efficiency. SARI stiffly holds MOTHER in place, while she turns her head to not see.

SARI

Poor Mother. She must be mortified.

She looks up at GRETA who lifts her head and shows she's holding a wad of poop in her gloved hand.

SARI

Well - this is a bonding moment.

They both burst into laughter and can't stop, but try to suppress their laughter. BEN rolls into the room.

BEN

What the hell is going on here? What's so damned funny?

GRETA

Nothing Daddy. Nothing.

They keep trying not to laugh.

BEN

Show some respect, will ya?

GRETA

We're just finishing up Daddy. Give us a minute.

GRETA lifts the dirty diaper away from her body, using it as a flag to invite BEN to come closer.

Would you like to come visit with Mother now?

BILL

Let me roll you over there Ben.

BEN

Later. What's on the news?

BILL turns to wheel BEN into the kitchen but GRETA hands him the dirty diaper before he leaves the room. BILL looks insulted, but takes the diaper.

GRETA and SARI stare at each other in disbelief.

Lights down.

SCENE 2: INTERIOR, LATER THAT EVENING. KITCHEN.

SARI and GRETA sit quietly at the kitchen table, as GRETA pours each a glass of wine. SARI mops at her face while staring out the window.

SARI

Pretty sunset.

GRETA

Enjoy it quickly. When Daddy wakes up from his nap, he'll make us close all the shutters - afraid the neighbors can see in.

They clink glasses. SARI tastes the wine and grimaces.

SARI

This is terrible. Where did you find it?

GRETA

Under the cabinet. I figured it turned, but it's all I could find.

SARI pushes it away.

SARI

They never knew about proper storage of wines.

GRETA

They never knew *anything* besides Manischevitz.

SARI fans herself with a magazine.

SARI

No wine. No air. I'm going to faint in this heat. At least open a window. (Looks up) Does this fan work? I feel like I'm in a third world country.

GRETA gets up and flips on the fan and light, then opens a window.

SARI

Ahhh . . .that helps. A little. Since you're up, could you bring me some water?

GRETA pours SARI some water but
SARI looks at the glass and then at
GRETA, disapprovingly.

No lemon? No ice?

GRETA turns around and gets some
ice and hands the glass back to
SARI.

GRETA

No lemon. You'll have to slum it, Leona.

SARI

I think Leona got a bad rap.

SARI drinks. GRETA stares at her,
waiting for a thank you.

GRETA

You're *welcome*.

SARI

Oh. Yeah. Thanks. When is the caregiver coming?

GRETA

It's almost seven. She should be here soon.

SARI

What are we doing for dinner? Is Bill making anything or is he waiting for us to wait on him?

GRETA

I think he's going to pick something up - probably from Carvers.

SARI

Well, doesn't he eat well!

GRETA

He always orders lamb chops.

SARI

What's he going to do when this gravy train stops?

GRETA

Find another gravy train, I suppose.

SARI

He'll never have it so good again. (Sips) Oh, I forgot my eyelash curler. Do you have one?

GRETA

No. I don't use one.

SARI

How can you live without it?

GRETA

I don't know! It's a miracle!

SARI

Are you going to the drugstore?

GRETA

You mean, can I *fetch* one for you?

SARI

Well -

GRETA

Come to think of it, maybe Daddy needs something. More diapers . . .refills . . .

GRETA goes to a cabinet to check
DAD'S medications.

Sari, You've gotta see this!

SARI

What?

GRETA pulls out bottle after bottle
from the cabinet and reads each
label.

GRETA

Metoprolol. Metoprolol. Metoprolol. Look at all this - brand new bottles!

SARI

What's it for?

GRETA

Blood pressure.

(Continues reading))

May 2015, June 2015, July 2015 - October 2015. These go back months! Here's three bottles of Celebrex. And, one, two, three, four of Lasix! Synthroid, two bottles. Dilantin. Jesus Christ! None of this has been opened. What's going on?

SARI

Let me see.

GRETA gathers them up and dumps them all on the table, along with the pill sorter and receipts.

What about his pill sorter?

GRETA

It's full. Look at these receipts! My god, his co-pay is \$89 per on the Metoprolol alone. There must be thousands of dollars worth of medicine he's not taken!

SARI

He doesn't know where his money's going. Never did!

BILL wheels BEN back into the kitchen, up to the table.

BEN

What the hell is all this about? Bill, close the windows, will ya? I don't need every lookie-loo staring in at us. And turn off that damn fan. It's freezing in here.

SARI

It's stifling in here! I'm about to faint!

BEN

I said, turn it off for crissake! I'm not made of money.

SARI

Really? Apparently you are.

SARI holds up a handful of receipts.

BEN

What's all this?

GRETA

You tell us. Bill?

BILL

Oh, those are extras, in case your Dad runs out.

SARI

He won't live that long!

GRETA

Why are there so many unopened prescriptions?

BILL

I don't know. I just pick up the refills when CVS calls.

GRETA

But these haven't been used. Or opened! I don't understand? Why do you refill this when you know he hasn't used what he already has?

BILL

I just do what CVS tells me to do.

SARI

Oh my god. (Under her breath) He's an idiot!

GRETA

Bill, this is ridiculous! We have to have a better system here. I can't believe your judgement!

BILL

I've been taking good care of your Dad for six years! My judgment's just fine. You girls come swooping in here for a couple of days and think you can start pushing me around!

SARI

What?!

GRETA

Excuse me?!

SARI

What right do you have to talk to us like that? You forget your place!

BILL

I know my place, and it's by your Dad's side.

GRETA

Maybe if you'd been by my *Mother's* side, she wouldn't have fallen!

BILL

I can't be two places at the same time.

BEN

Knock it off! I don't need all this aggravation. (Beat) Bill, what's for dinner?

BILL

I thought I'd run out to Carvers. I know you like those lamb chops, Ben.

GRETA

You mean *you* like those lamb chops, Bill. How many nights a week do you order from Carvers?

BEN

Don't *you* start in.

GRETA

Daddy, listen. You aren't made of money. Look at all this waste! This isn't reasonable. You have to watch what you're spending.

BEN swipes all the bottles off the table onto the floor with an aggressive flourish.

BEN

Nobody tells Ben Golden how to spend his money! It's none of your goddamn business. You afraid there won't be enough left for you?

GRETA

That's not fair, Daddy, and you know it! We're not counting your money for *us*! We worry about *you*!

BEN

The hell you do.

GRETA

You have to watch your budget!

BEN

I don't need you girls getting into my business. I watch the money around here.

SARI

You don't even know what you're pissing way. (Points to drugs) Look at all that! You don't even know what you have. And you never did! You never had to! You've been picking off of Grandpa's money tree your whole life and there's not going to be anything left.

GRETA

Don't go there, Sari.

BEN

Just waiting to tell me off, aren't you! Go ahead - lay it on me. I can take it!

SARI

(To GRETA)

I told you he was losing it.

BEN

I've still got all my marbles. Enough to know that all you care about is what's coming to you. Well let me tell you Queenie, if my legs could hold me I'd haul off and show you what's coming to you.

SARI stands, shaking.

GRETA

Daddy -

BEN waves GRETA away.

SARI

Ohhh, don't you just wish you could. But you're never going to hit me again. Ever!

SARI bolts from the room.

GRETA

Daddy, you shouldn't have -

BEN

Ahhh, what the hell. Bill! Pick up this mess.

BILL

Yes, Ben. I will, Ben.

BILL bends down to gather all the bottles and put them back on the counter.

What would you like for dinner, Ben? A little salad? Some soup?

BEN

I don't care.

DOORBELL RINGS. GRETA gets up to answer. SARI meets her there.

GRETA

That'll be the nurse. Pull it together. All of you.

GRETA opens door. An attractive Muslim nurse stands there, her head covered (though not her face).

AABIDAH

Is this the house for Mrs. Ruth Golden?

GRETA

Are you from the agency?

AABIDAH hands her a card. GRETA reads.

Do you pronounce it Abidah?

AABIDAH

No - Ah Ah bidah.

BEN

(Out of sight)

Who the hell's there?

GRETA

Ah Ah bidah.

SARI

You're the nurse?

AABIDAH

I am, unless you keep me standing here on your porch all night.

GRETA

Sorry. Come in. Um . . .put your things down in here. My Mother's over there and my father's here.

Aabidah turns first to the kitchen
to come face to face with BEN.

AABIDAH

Are you Mr. Golden?

BEN extends his hand and is
surprisingly polite.

BEN

What's left of me.

AABIDAH

I cannot shake your hand, sir, but peace be with you. Salaam.

BEN

Salaam. Shalom. Same difference. Nice to meet you. (To himself) I need this like a loch in kop.

AABIDAH

Don't get shpilkes Mr. Golden. I'm here for Mrs. Golden.

BEN

You speak Yiddish?

AABIDAH

A bisel.

AABIDAH turns to see them all
staring.

AABIDAH (CONT.)

I worked for another old Jew who spoke Yiddish. I picked up a few words. I like seeing the looks on faces like yours.

(Pause) Now, Mrs. Golden?

GRETA walks her over to MOTHER.

GRETA

Mother? There's a nurse here to help you with - . Her name is Aabidah. Pretty name, don't you think? Aabidah, this is our mother, Ruth.

AABIDAH leans down and pats MOTHER on the hand.

AABIDAH

Hello Mrs. Golden. My name is Aabidah. Don't be afraid. I'm here to take good care of you. Now, how would you like a nice warm sponge bath? Would that sound good? Sure it does.

AABIDAH turns back to GRETA, SARI, and BEN. They are surprised.

If you'll show me where you keep your towels, soap, and supplies, I'll take it from here. Is there a chair I can use?

GRETA

Oh, sure. Of course. Use this one. Just tell me what you need and we'll get it for you. Would you like some water?

AABIDAH

No thank you. I brought my own.

GRETA

Something to eat?

AABIDAH

No thank you. I brought my own. Halal.

GRETA leaves the room to get towels, and returns with the items.

There is silence.

BEN

(Under his breath)

A bisel? Shpilkes? Well, Abba dabba dabba dabba dabba dabba dabba - said the monkey to the -

They all suppress laughter.

Bill, go to Carvers. I'm hungry.

(To GRETA and SARI)

Order whatever you want. They make a good prime rib. And the lamb chops are -

GRETA

We know.

SARI

I guess I'll have them too.

GRETA reaches into her purse for money and hands it to Bill.

GRETA

Bill, would you pick up some red wine on your way back? We could use it.

BEN pushes her hand back.

BEN

Put it away. Your money's no good here. I can still pay for dinner while I'm in charge. Bill, put it on my card. And get some of that bread I like, will ya?

BILL

Sure Ben. I'll take care of it.

(To GRETA)

What kind of wine?

GRETA

Merlot.

SARA makes a disapproving tsk sound.

GRETA

What?

SARI

Merlot's just so -

GRETA

Get the Cabernet, Bill.

BILL exits.

SARI

I'm going to sit with Mother for a while. Call me when the food's here.

SARI leaves the table. BEN turns to
GRETA.

BEN

Look. Take care of this CVS thing for me, will ya? Bill doesn't know what he's doing. But what can I say when he's around? He's all I've got.

GRETA

You have us.

BEN

I know you girls mean well, but you have your own lives. And you're thousands of miles away.

GRETA

We could find you someone else.

BEN

Just leave it alone. I don't want to start with someone new. Not now. I've got enough to worry about.

GRETA

He's a slob, Daddy, and you and Mother made him feel he's got a place at the table. The family table! And what's with the Torah he carries around with him. Have you ever seen him open it? He's a phony and we don't trust him. Look at all this waste with the prescriptions! What else will we find?

BEN

I know, I know, I put up with his mishugas. His pants falling down, his laziness - and I know he's eating me out of house and home. But what am I going to do? It's not that easy to find somebody to wipe your ass when you can't.

GRETA

Daddy, there has to be some accountability. You can't just let him take advantage of you because you're grateful. He's staff, not family. He's got no boundaries.

BEN

Look, I need you to help me keep things together, just a little longer. You've got a good head. You get things done. I don't know what to do anymore. And I sure don't know what's expected of me now. I've never had to deal with this before. Your Mother always drove me crazy with her running to this doctor and that doctor - always something - so when she fell, I thought, there she goes again. Always something. I feel terrible that I didn't take it seriously. I thought, it's just another of her stunts. And now - I feel so . . .

GRETA takes his hand.

GRETA

Don't blame yourself, Daddy. You didn't know.

BEN

But I shoulda known! (Beat) Wheel me over there, will ya?

GRETA pushes him in to see MOTHER.
SARI sits quietly, head bowed,
holding onto MOTHER'S hand while
Aabidah finishes the sponge bath.
Aabidah exits the room with the
towels and tub, etc.

BEN

Give me a minute alone, will you girls?

SARI and GRETA move away, back to
the kitchen, and motion to Aabidah
to stay out of the room for the
time being. BEN remains by MOTHER'S
bed, and takes her hand in his. He
brings her hand up to his lips to
kiss and starts to weep.

Poor dear. You poor dear. I'm so sorry. I've been such a
bastard. (Weeps) You didn't deserve this.

SARI hears that and bolts up,
angry.

SARI

You're damn right she didn't deserve it. Any of it.

GRETA tries to stop SARI. BEN
swivels around in his chair,
furious.

BEN

What the hell do you know about anything?

SARI

I know everything I need to know. I've seen how you treated
Mother all these years and the only thing we agree on at this
moment is that she never deserved any of it.

BEN

Ahhh, what the hell do you know? You think you're so smart.

GRETA

Don't do this now, please! Not in front of Mother -

SARI

I'm smart enough to know that I watched how you belittled her
every day! All she wanted from you was a little kindness - a
little love - but you gave her nothing! Nothing! Every nice
thing that ever happened for her was because someone else,
anyone else, tried to compensate for your coldness.

GRETA

Stop it! She can hear you!

MOTHER makes a slight grunt, but
they talk over her.

BEN

You don't know what you're talking about! I took good care of
her. She never had to work a day in her life! But she spent
money like water. Her beauty shop - she didn't care. Just
like her Mother - wishing and hoping -/

SARI

/Wishing and hoping you would be nicer to her. And the beauty
shop? That's the only thing she ever did for herself, and you
begrudged her even that! Why wouldn't she go every week? At
least every Wednesday she had someone who would touch her,
care for her, make her feel pretty - once a week! And why?

Because you treated her like shit. Always criticizing her - how she looked, that she was stupid - and she wasn't stupid - just insecure - but she couldn't look to you for any love or comfort. No, not Mr. Ben Golden. You called all the shots. Why, even when you went out to dinner, she didn't bother to look at the menu, but waited for you to order and she took her portion from your plate, like she took her life. From YOUR plate! You never cared about what she wanted. And after all these years, as she lays there dying, you don't care about what she wants now!

GRETA

Stop it! Both of you! She can still hear you!

BEN

Ahhh, get me outta here. Where the hell is Bill?

SARI

That's right. Cut and run. Does the truth hurt?

GRETA goes over to BEN to remove him from MOTHER'S side.

BEN

The truth? Maybe you don't want the truth. Oh, it's so easy to come in here from your fancy New York apartment and tell me about what I did or didn't do, but for sixty seven years I did something right. For sixty seven years I made a home for her. For sixty seven years we traveled, we had a family, we went to the opera. Maybe I wasn't lovey dovey, but after sixty seven years, who is? But I'm here, and I was here every day for sixty seven years! (Beat) Maybe I wasn't the best husband, according to you, and maybe I wasn't the best father either, but I - ahhh, god-damnit - I don't know why I bother to convince you of anything! You believe what you want to believe.

GRETA

Both of you, calm down. There's too much stress here already. Take it down a peg, for Mother's sake.

SARI exits to the kitchen, sits down and puts her head in her hands. Aabidah tentatively enters the room and returns to MOTHER.

She starts to hum close to MOTHER'S face, stroking her head, holding her hand.

GRETA wheels BEN into the kitchen.

BILL enters, bringing dinner. He pulls a bottle of wine from the bag.

BILL

Hope it's OK.

GRETA

I'll drink anything about now.

GRETA looks for the bottle opener, and aggressively pulls out the cork. She looks like she wants to just drink from the bottle, but she finds glasses and pours. Standing, she takes a sip from her glass and stands there quietly while BILL gets everything out of bags. BEN sits silently, head down, at the table. SARI sits silently, her arms crossed. GRETA gives her a glass of wine, and sets one in front of BEN. It's drinkable. Bill, you want a little wine?

BILL

Sure. Thank you, Greta. That would be nice.

BILL sets plates in front of everyone, and sits down with the family to eat. No one speaks. Finally GRETA lifts her glass to the others.

GRETA

L'Chaim.

Lights down.

SCENE 3: INTERIOR ALCOVE, NEXT MORNING.

GRETA gives MOTHER some morphine and sits quietly by her bedside. She holds MOTHER'S hand. Aabidah is asleep in her chair. Her head scarf has slipped down, revealing hair that has been dyed different colors. GRETA notices a large bruise on Aabidah's neck, in the shape of a hand.

SARI enters and opens up the shutters to let in the day and some fresh air. She sits down as GRETA quietly joins her in the kitchen.

SARI

I barely slept last night. This heat - how can you stand it?

GRETA

I've got a fan in the bedroom. It helps.

SARI

That's what I need. Can you get me one?

GRETA

You mean, *fetch* Greta? (Beat) Daddy's right. You are Leona.

SARI

He doesn't know shit. Pour me some coffee, will you, please? And I'd like some cream. Is there any cream?

GRETA

Sari, do you even hear yourself?

SARI

Please don't start on me this morning. What time did you get up?

GRETA

I got up early and sat with Mother - I'm still on Eastern time.

SARI

Any change?

GRETA

She's not eating. She's not taking fluids. Her diaper was dry and her heels are starting to mottle. All the signs. She seemed a little agitated this morning so I gave her some morphine.

SARI

Morphine! What are you trying to do?!

GRETA

(Sarcastic)

Kill her, of course. What do you think? (Beat) I'm trying to make her comfortable - that's what we're supposed to do.

SARI

How much morphine did you give her?

GRETA

Not enough. (Beat) I never realized how ugly dying was. It's ironic - all her life Mother's been such a vain woman. If she knew that this is what she'd look like at the end she would have killed herself.

SARI

Marie will fix her up.

GRETA

Sari - it won't help.

SARI

Maybe a piece of Sees candy will give Mother some appetite.

GRETA

She'll choke.

SARI

Maybe a pinch of the raspberry cream filling would be a pleasant sensation.

GRETA

To counter the choking?

SARI gets up to open the freezer to look around.

SARI

Mother always has - had a box stashed away - unless Bill ate it.

GRETA gets up to pour them both cups of coffee and brings them to the table. They sit quietly for a long minute.

SARI

Thanks. Is he up yet?

GRETA

No. And I don't expect he'll be up soon. You were hard on him last night. It was unkind. He's got enough to deal with without your drama.

SARI

He needs to hear it.

GRETA

Not now, he doesn't. He's not going to change, and you're not going to get a happy childhood. Get over it. I have. They sucked at being parents. Boo hoo.

They continue to sit in silence,
sipping their coffee.

You know, I sat with Mother for an hour this morning, just staring into her face, waiting patiently for a sign, a look - something. I tried to find a way to connect with her - to say something - anything - that would make either of us feel better - but I just couldn't find the words. It's funny, but you always think about what you'd say to someone dying to help them along - to make them feel like their life mattered or that they'll be missed and remembered. Something. Or that the person dying would look up into your eyes and say something kind or loving or redemptive - but I just stared at her. And I guess she stared back - but neither of us could communicate. I just looked at her, dying. Her face getting sallow by the hour. Her eyes looking more vacant and resigned. I wanted to lean over and tell her I loved her, but it seemed so strange to say something like that now, when I never really felt it *for* her - or *from* her. You know? You always had a connection, but Mother and I both shared this unspoken lie where she pretended to love me, and I pretended to believe her - but we both knew the truth.

SARI

She loved you - in her way.

GRETA

I never knew what that way was. (Pause) You feel something. But I *can't* - and I wish I could. (Beat) A couple of years ago when I came out here for a visit, I took her to the grocery. I was helping her out of the car and she just stopped and looked up at me. She tilted her head just a bit as if she just thought of it and said, "I don't know why I've always been so mean to you. You didn't really deserve it!" (Beat) What could I say. Here was a perfect opportunity to have some sort of reconciliation and I just didn't know what to say. I couldn't find any words. I wanted to cry but I couldn't. I accepted what I took was as close to an apology as I'd ever get but when I tried to speak, nothing came out. Nothing. (Beat) And the moment was gone. So, boo hoo.

SARI

At least she said something to you. I never got anything from Daddy but an "Ahhhh" - fill in the blanks with some nasty response du jour.

GRETA

What do you want him to say? He's an old man.

SARI

Why do you always defend him?

GRETA

I don't.

SARI

You do! You always give him a pass.

GRETA

I feel bad for him. Here's this former lion of a man and now, well, there's just what's left of him, as he said. There's something so vulnerable and sad about him, compared to the man he used to be, and it makes me - . Don't you have any empathy? Even a little?

SARI

No, I don't. And case in point? Mother's in there dying and he doesn't give a shit.

GRETA

Yes he does. But what's he supposed to do? He didn't expect she'd go first and he doesn't know how to deal with this any better than we do. (Beat) He's probably wondering which one of us will be doling out the morphine when it's time for him.

SARI looks over to where Aabidah is sleeping.

SARI

Why is that woman sleeping? We're not paying her to sleep! Shouldn't she be doing something? Changing a diaper or something?

GRETA

Leave her alone. I think she was up most of the night, though doing what, I don't know.

SARI

What's with her hair?

GRETA

I know! I always wondered what was under that veil of secrecy. Now I know. But I saw that she's got a bruise the size of a hand on her neck.

SARI

Really? I wonder what *that* story is. Is she married?

GRETA

I don't know anything about her except that she drops a Yiddish word or two for effect. But why don't you interrogate her - you're good at that.

Aabidah wakens. She hurries to MOTHER'S side to check her vitals and calls for SARI and GRETA. Her head is uncovered.

AABIDAH

Come! COME!

GRETA and SARI hurry from the kitchen to MOTHER. GRETA is the first to approach and stares down at MOTHER.

SARI slowly approaches the bed,
gently takes MOTHER'S hand, sits
down and buries her head into
MOTHER'S hand. She weeps. GRETA
remains standing, unmoved.

GRETA
(To Aabidah)

When?

AABIDAH
I don't know. I'm not sure. I was up with Ms. Ruth most of
the night, trying to keep her calm. She was very restless. I
sang to her. But I fell asleep. I'm very sorry, I -

GRETA
Don't worry. I won't report you to the agency.

AABIDAH
I'm so -

GRETA
Forget it. It's not like this was unexpected. I need to call
hospice.

GRETA goes to the phone to dial.
Just then BILL wheels BEN into the
room. GRETA freezes with the phone
in her hand. BEN looks even more
forlorn but he continues to be
gruff. He sees AABIDAH without her
head scarf.

BEN
If I did that to my hair, I'd cover it too.

AABIDAH
If you had any hair.

Embarrassed, AABIDAH hurries to put
her scarf back on.

BEN
Don't get smart with me.

AABIDAH

That would be difficult.

BEN

What's all this? Who died?

GRETA

Mother's gone, Daddy.

BEN

Gone where?

GRETA

She's gone, gone.

BEN mocks her, not fully
comprehending.

BEN

Gone gone gone gone gone . . .What the hell are you talking
about?

BILL

I think she means that . . .

BEN

Who cares what you think? Roll me over there.

BILL

But Ben . . .

BEN

I said, take me there, god-damnit! I wanna see my wife!

SARI slowly lifts her head and
stares at him, coldly. She stands
up, seething with rage. GRETA
absently hands the phone to
AABIDAH.

SARI

What for? So you can make sure she's really dead?

GRETA

(To AABIDAH)

Here. You call. The number's on the refrigerator. Tell them she's . . . passed. Ask them what we need to do.

AABIDAH looks startled, frozen.

NOW!

AABIDAH takes the phone and moves into the kitchen to call. GRETA turns back to SARI.

Sari please - this is not the time -

SARI steps aside to make room for BEN to approach the bed. He stares at MOTHER, tentatively reaching out to touch her hand and brings it to his lips to kiss. There is silence.

GRETA moves into the kitchen, reluctantly, and takes the phone from AABIDAH to call the funeral home.

AABIDAH

Hospice nurse is on her way.

AABIDAH stands to the side. She doesn't know where to be so she remains still.

GRETA

Good. Now the funeral home. (She dials) Hello. This is Greta Golden. I'm calling about my mother, Mrs. Ruth Golden, who just passed away. (Beat) Golden. (Beat) G-o-l-d-e-n. Christ! GOLDEN. (Beat) I'm not yelling. I just can't understand how, if you're a Jewish funeral home, you don't know how to spell *Golden*. (Beat) Well you might want to familiarize yourself on the spelling of Jewish names. (Beat) Yes, she just died. (Beat) 6711 Camelback Road. . (Beat) Don't you people have GPS? (Beat) Between sixty-eight street and Goldwater. Across from the Mall. (Beat) Jesus, just send the hearse or whatever you call it. All right? (Beat) Fine. (Beat) Ok. Thanks.

GRETA hangs up the phone,
frustrated and mocks the stupidity
of the person at the funeral home.

"I'm sorry for your loss." That's what she said at the end.
"I'm sorry for your loss." She should have said, "I'm sorry
for your loss of time dealing with such a moron!" Where do
they find these people?

SARI joins GRETA in the kitchen.

SARI

It's better than "Have a good one!" (Beat) What day is it?

GRETA

Friday. Why?

SARI

That means she won't be buried until Sunday.

BEN

And that means they'll charge us time and a half for labor.

GRETA and SARI look at each other
in disbelief.

SARI

Too bad Mother didn't time it better!

GRETA

I'll start making a list of things we have to do - who to
notify - get a caterer.

SARI

We'll need a cake for the Shiva. I'll call Tammy Coe.

GRETA

She's way too expensive.

SARI

It *has* to be a Tammy Coe. Mother would have wanted that.

BEN turns the wheelchair around to
face SARI.

BEN

What do you know about what she wanted? What do you really know about her at all?

SARI

I know she would have liked to be remembered.

BEN

We're not having a goddamned Shiva.

SARI

It's what Jews do!

BILL

The Torah says -

SARI, BEN AND GRETA

Shut up, Bill!

BEN

(To SARI)

Leave it to you to tell me what Jews do! Well, over my dead body.

SARI

It should have been.

GRETA

Sari - !

BEN

No one will come.

SARI

How do you know?

BEN

She had no friends.

SARI

Who's fault is that?

BEN

Don't pin that on me! The few she had are either dead or wish they were - rotting in a nursing home or too far away.

We might get a few shnorrers and some farshtunkenah shirt-tail relatives, but that's all. Don't expect anything. You're making this into a big deal. She wasn't that way. She wanted simple things.

SARI

She wanted nice things.

BEN

She drove a Mercedes.

SARI

She deserves to be remembered.

BILL

I'll remember her.

They all turn to look at BILL
again.

BEN

She will be, but we're not sitting (makes air quotes) *Shiva* - whatever that means - and that's that. We're not that Jewish - so drop it. Always wanting us to be something we're not!

SARI

And you're always trying to deny who we are! Except for the jokes and the Yiddish slang, you could be a Muslim for chrissake!

GRETA

Sari! (Motions to Aabidah) Aabidah! (To Aabidah) She was just making a point - no offense intended.

SARI

Schmuck, putz, gonnif, shnorrer - but Shiva? That too Jewish for you?

BEN

Kish mere tuchas! It's not important.

GRETA

(Mock solemn)

Shall we pray on it?

SARI

It's important for *me*. (Taps her chest) *ME!*

GRETA

You won't be able to use your eyelash curler.

BEN

Why? Because you're such a Super Jew? Who you tryin' to impress?

SARI

She would have done it for you!

GRETA

You have to sit on hard chairs.

BEN

You can't wait for me to die, can you?

GRETA

Cover the mirrors.

SARI

You're already -

DOORBELL RINGS. BILL answers. It's EILEEN. BILL brings his hands together, to his chest, as if in grief.

BILL

We've lost her.

SARI

What the hell . . . ?

EILEEN

I'm sorry. I thought we'd have a little more time.

EILEEN greets everyone, pulls out a stethoscope, checks MOTHER.

SARI

(to GRETA, under her breath)

It's not *his* loss - it's *ours*.

GRETA

Be a little charitable.

SARI

He's not family!

BILL

(To SARI)

Your Mother was very special to me.

SARI

(Sarcastic)

Well, remind me to get you a sympathy card.

GRETA

Sari - !

SARI

Some things are going to change around here.

EILEEN puts down the stethoscope, checks for pulse, then stands silently by MOTHER'S side for a moment before gently closing MOTHER'S eyes. She folds MOTHER'S hands across her chest.

SARI

Please close her mouth. She would be so -

EILEEN closes her mouth.

EILEEN

She lived a long life. Now she's at peace with the Lord.

SARI AND GRETA

Who's Lord?

EILEEN

Everyone's. (Beat) Where are all her medications?

GRETA

Why?

EILEEN

We have to destroy them. All of them.

GRETA

Why?

EILEEN

It's the law. We have to collect them after -

GRETA

(Under her breath)

I'm keeping the morphine.

EILEEN

I didn't hear that.

EILEEN crosses to BEN. His head is slumped onto his chest. She kneels by his side and takes his hand.

EILEEN

Mr. Golden? I'm Eileen, the hospice nurse. I'm sorry for your loss.

BEN

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

EILEEN

.....

BEN

I was supposed to go first.

EILEEN

.....

BEN

Poor dear.

EILEEN

She's at peace now. I hope that can be some comfort to you.

BEN

.....

DOORBELL RINGS. It's MARIE, the hairdresser. BILL goes to answer, but SARI elbows him aside.

SARI

(Under her breath)

Get the fuck . . .

SARI opens the door.

MARIE

(Sweetly)

Hi. I'm Marie.

SARI

Oh my god - I forgot to cancel.

BEN

Who's there?

SARI

It's Marie, Mother's hairdresser.

BEN

Of all the crazy, cockeyed things to happen now.

SARI

I completely forgot! (To MARIE) I'm so embarrassed!

MARIE

Am I too early?

BEN

You're too late!

MARIE

Are you one of the daughters?

SARI

I'm Sari.

MARIE

Ooooh! I've heard all about you.

SARI

I hope good things!

MARIE

Some. Mostly.

SARI
Mostly? Oh - well -

GRETA
I'm Greta.

MARIE
Ooooh.

GRETA
I know. You heard all about me, too.

MARIE
I been doing your mother's hair and nails for fifteen years I think.

SARI
Really! So are you the one who talked my mother into getting wraps on her toenails?

MARIE
(Laughs)
Oh, ha-ha. Mrs. Golden wanted it. So I do it. I always give her what she wants. Very sweet lady. She's a good tipper.

SARI
Was.

MARIE
Was what?

SARI
Was a good tipper. She died early this morning. I'm sorry I forgot to let you know in time. I could have saved you a trip. But let me pay you for your time. (Reaches into her purse). Here's twenty five, OK?

MARIE
Ah, poor Mrs. Golden. I sure going to miss her. Sweet lady. Every Wednesday, rain or shine. (Pause) I charge seventy-five.

SARI
Seventy five? That seems a bit - well I'm not going to haggle - not today.

SARI reaches into her handbag to get more. BEN comes to the door.

BEN

Let me handle this. Bill, bring me my wallet.

BILL hands BEN his wallet. BEN pulls out a hundred dollar bill and hands it to MARIE.

Here. Take it. Thank you. Goodbye.

BEN closes the door.

SARI

I was going to pay her.

BEN

I'm sure you were. You've got nothing but money.

SARI storms off.

AABIDAH clears her throat for attention.

AABIDAH

Mr. Golden?

BEN

You still here?

AABIDAH

I'm going now. I just wanted to say, I'm sorry.

BEN

Yeah, yeah.

AABIDAH

It was wrong to insult you.

BEN

I've heard worse.

AABIDAH

I didn't mean me - though I'm sorry for my insolence. I meant your daughter. She speaks in anger. Maybe she will one day forgive. It will heal her pain.

BEN

What do you know about her pain?

AABIDAH

I know pain. Anyway, I'm sorry for your loss.

BEN

Can't anyone be more creative? I'm sorry for your loss. I'm sorry for your loss. What do any of you know about my loss? Married sixty seven years and a life just goes by - poof - like a dream. Sixty seven years and the funeral home takes her away. Poof. And she gets buried. Poof. And everything's gone. But I'm still here. And it wasn't supposed to be this way.

AABIDAH

It's not too late.

BEN

For what?

AABIDAH

To heal the distance between you and your daughter.

AABIDAH takes out a piece of paper
and hands it to BEN. He reads it
while she speaks.

I have a little poem - it's based on an old Islamic fable. I wanted you to have it. Maybe it'll bring you a little peace.

BEN looks up.

BEN

That's nice. (Beat) How much is this gonna cost me?

AABIDAH smiles and exits.

Lights down.

SCENE 4: INTERIOR, LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

GRETA sits with a legal pad going through details. She's been making calls, lists, organizing again. She is alone.

The sheets have been stripped from the hospital bed and all the equipment is piled together for pickup.

GRETA

(On phone)

Somebody will be here. (Beat) We need this picked up today though. (Beat) Great. Thanks.

GRETA terminates the call, checks off that task. Picks up phone and dials.

Sari - when will you be back? (Beat) I have things to do too. (Beat) I don't know. Maybe enough for twenty five? I've no way of knowing. (Beat) That's the number I gave the caterer. If we run out we'll get more. If not, we'll be eating cold cuts for rest of the week, if we're still here. Or the burrito I've got hidden in the freezer - so don't touch it. (Beat) I've already called them. They're coming soon to collect the equipment. (Beat) They'll be here sometime today. (Beat) They didn't give me a firm time. We weren't a scheduled pickup. (Beat) Yes, the papers are all signed. (Beat) This is all too much for Daddy. He and Bill are napping. (Beat) Yeah, like a man and his dog. Together. (Beat) Listen, would you mind picking up some

DOORBELL RINGS. GRETA looks out the window.

Oh - good! They're here for the equipment! *That* was fast! (Beat) I'm so happy for you! Your life is complete now. I know not having the eyelash curler was a hardship. (Beat) Of course I'm being sarcastic. I gotta go.

GRETA terminates call and opens the door. It's the same DELIVERY PERSON that brought the equipment.

DELIVERY PERSON

Seems like just yesterday I was here.

GRETA

It was yesterday.

DELIVERY PERSON

Yeah. Sorry for your loss.

GRETA

I'm so tired of hearing those words. There must be a better way to express condolences.

DELIVERY PERSON

Yeah, well, it's what we say. Sort of a one-size-fits-all - you know what I mean?

GRETA

We didn't touch the oxygen. In fact, we barely used any of this at all.

DELIVERY PERSON

Yeah, seems she went fast. That's a blessing, I can tell ya. Believe me. I mean, sometimes they hang on forever and - /

GRETA

/Please, can we skip this part? Just take the stuff away?

DELIVERY PERSON

Oh, you bet. Didn't mean to -

GRETA

Just take it. Please.

GRETA turns at the sound of BEN
rolling in. He seems confused.

BEN

What's all this - ?

GRETA

Picking up. Did you sleep?

BEN

I never sleep. I was up all night. Where's your sister?

GRETA

She had to get out of the house. Where's Bill?

BEN

He went to the store. (Beat) Your sister said some ugly things.

GRETA

This is a tough time.

BEN sits in silence for a long moment, looking around.

BEN

It's so quiet in here. (Beat) Seems we have nothing BUT ugly things to say to each other.

GRETA

It takes two.

BEN

I don't know what it is. She always has to have the last word.

GRETA

Like someone I know. She means well.

BEN

What's eating *you*?

GRETA

I'm an orphan. Well, half an orphan.

BEN

Now comes the melodrama. (Beat) What's with that - Alibaba - or whatever the hell her name was?

GRETA

You mean her hair? Yeah, that was unexpected.

BEN

I didn't think they had *spunk*, underneath it all.

GRETA

I don't know what they have but I noticed a huge bruise on her neck. Makes you wonder if that's why they cover up - to hide that kind of shit.

BEN

Ahhh, too bad. Funny how you just never know people.

GRETA

Everyone's a stranger.

BEN

I don't know what you girls want from me.

GRETA

It's not *me*. But Sari's hungry for something from you.

BEN

You know I love both my girls.

GRETA

Like Mother loved me.

BEN

Your mother felt threatened. You were too competent.

GRETA

A major character flaw.

BEN

Don't get cute. (Beat) You were always so independent. What could she offer you that you couldn't get for yourself?

GRETA

Affection would have been nice.

BEN

She loved you.

GRETA

So she said.

SARI enters the kitchen. She puts a very elaborately decorated layer cake in the center of the table.

She's proud of this cake - like
bringing home a trophy.

SARI

Now THAT'S a Tammy Coe cake.

GRETA

Wow! Impressive! And festive! VERY festive!

SARI

It's all I could get on such short notice. It was on display.
You have to order her cakes weeks in advance.

BEN examines the cake closer.

BEN

Is that gold?

SARI

Yes, and edible too. Nice touch, don't you think?

BEN

What's wrong with a simple cake?

SARI

I figured you'd say that, but it is what it is. Use it as a
centerpiece. (To GRETA) Did you call the caterer?

GRETA

I already told you.

BEN

What'd this set you back?

SARI

Never mind. I paid for it, so don't let it melt in this oven.
Tomorrow we're cranking the air conditioning up. (To BEN) You
can borrow mother's fur coat.

BEN

How much?

SARI

Forget it.

BEN

God-damnit. How much?!

SARI

Fifteen hundred.

GRETA and BEN are both incredulous.

BEN

DOLLARS?

GRETA

Seriously?

SARI

You shouldn't have asked.

BEN

And you think I'm free with my money? What could possibly be worth fifteen hundred dollars?

SARI

Tammy Coe cakes are works of art! Each one a masterpiece Everyone will know it's hers.

BEN

How can I enjoy eating a cake - a CAKE for crissake - that costs - ? This is obscene! It's disgusting how you throw your money around. Who pays such an amount?

SARI

I wanted to do something special for mother.

BEN

Who're you kidding? This isn't about your mother. It's about you - flaunting! Miss high and mighty - buys fifteen hundred dollar cakes because she can - and she won't let you forget it.

SARI

There's nothing I do that pleases you. There never has been.

BEN

Maybe you try to hard.

SARI

And you don't try at all. (Beat) You were a terrible father - and a horrible husband to that poor sweet woman who had the misfortune to love you, despite you being such a bastard to all of us all these years.

BEN

You think you can speak for her? What do you know about us? (Beat) Someday you're gonna wonder why *your* kids don't know who *you* really are. And you know why? Because kids don't give a shit. Oh, they'll visit once in a while, do some peremptory survey of your life, *eat* your food, *rearrange* your furniture, *criticize* what you eat and *how* you spend your days, and go *home*. That's how it is. I won't be around to see it, but mark my words, it'll happen.

GRETA

It's a really pretty cake.

BEN

Doesn't look like you can eat it.

GRETA

What flavor?

SARI

I think vanilla but I don't know. It's all they had. Who cares, anyway? It's paid for! By ME! And it damn well better be served on china. (To BEN) Or maybe you're saving the good dishes for something special? Like *your* funeral?

BEN

When I go, I don't care what you use.

SARI

Good! I'm thinking chips and dip. (To GRETA) We need hardboiled eggs. Peeled. And water to wash. Do we have enough chairs? You need to dust off the patio chairs and bring them in. You ordered beverages, right?

GRETA

Stop ordering me about! Greta, fetch this. Greta, fetch that! There are two of us in this you know!

BEN

Cut it out, both of you!

GRETA

Sorry Daddy. (Beat) I sent Emails to everyone on our list. And I wrote the obituary. Who do you think will come?

SARI

My friends are coming.

BEN

So this IS about you. I knew it.

Ben shakes his head and scowls.
Next you'll want a Rabbi to say a few words.

SARI

Of course I do!

BEN

Stop trying to be what we aren't.

SARI

This isn't about you! We didn't do it for Grandpa and I felt bad for him. He was so loved, and no one had a place to come and pay their respects - to sit with the family. That was wrong!

BEN

Your mother and her bunch wouldn't know the difference!

SARI

Well, I do!

BEN

I guess this is as good a time as any to get a few things off my chest. If you're waiting for a big check to come your way after I'm gone - it's not going to happen.

Silence. SARI and GRETA look at each other.

GRETA

That's not why we're here!

SARI

I don't expect anything from you. Not money, not respect, not . . .

Except this: We're burying Mother tomorrow and god-damnit, we're sitting Shiva, and I expect, yes, EXPECT that you'll be there, even if I have to drag you in there myself..

BEN

Always trying to show me up, aren't you?! Ahhh, I'm fed up with the whole lot of you. Who are you to tell me how to live my life? You, with your designer clothes and expensive jewelry. Miss know-it-all and have-it-all.

SARI

I can't take this anymore.

SARI angrily exits. GRETA goes after her.

Alone in the Kitchen, BEN stares at the cake. He shakes his head in disbelief, as he slowly pulls it to him so he can get a better look. He pauses to admire it from all angles, and then plunges, head first, into the cake. As he chomps a huge bite, his face is covered with frosting and cake and for the first time in the play, we see him smile.

Lights down.

SCENE 5: NEXT DAY, AFTER FUNERAL - INT. KITCHEN

BILL, SARI, BEN and GRETA enter the kitchen, having just returned from the funeral for MOTHER. They are all quiet. The kitchen table is set with trays of cold cuts, etc. The smashed cake sits in the middle of the table.

They all sit - nobody talks. Every so often they notice the cake but nobody says anything.

BEN has his head bowed. GRETA looks over the food, but is not interested.

BEN

It was a nice service.

SARI

Nobody came.

BEN

It was short notice.

SARI

I think some people might come to the house.

GRETA

For the food no doubt.

SARI

Where are the eggs?

GRETA pulls out a bowl of hardboiled eggs. BEN looks up and scowls. GRETA cuts him off.

GRETA

Don't start.

Silence.

BEN

The flowers were a nice touch.

SARI

You're welcome.

BILL

We'll miss her.

SARI and GRETA exchange looks.

SARI

Yes, WE will!

BILL

Your Mother was very special to me.

SARI

Oh, I'm sure.

BEN

Don't start in - not today. (Beat) I never imagined this is how it would be. (Beat) How long are you girls going to stay?

GRETA

I don't know. Maybe til the end of the week?

BEN

(To SARI)

And you?

SARI fans herself.

SARI

Maybe I can last until the Shiva is over.

BEN

Are you still on that jag?

SARI

This jag? You mean the Shiva? Yes, and for the next eight days, I'll remain on this jag. Greta, you have to stay until it's over.

GRETA

I'll leave after that.

Poor dear.

BEN

I don't mind.

GRETA

I meant your Mother.

BEN

Sorry.

GRETA

I never imagined this - being without her. It's like a dream - something that's not real. I look at you sitting in her seat and I want to say, move over. That's her chair, but she's never going to sit there again. And here I am. Stuck in this chair - unable to go or stay or move without someone pushing me from room to room. (Beat) I never thought -/

BEN

/I should think you'd be relieved.

SARI

Is that what you think?

BEN

All you did was argue.

SARI

I suppose that's what it looked like to you girls.

BEN

Is there another explanation?

GRETA

It wasn't always - oh forget it. I'm tired. Bill, I want to lie down.

BEN

Sure Ben.

BILL

You can't - people are coming over.

SARI

BEN

No one's coming.

DOORBELL RINGS.

SARI

See? Someone's here!

GRETA answers the door. It's
AABIDAH.

AABIDAH

May I pay my respects?

GRETA

Come in! Daddy, we have a guest. Aabidah. You remember?

BEN

I'm not senile! Of course I remember.

AABIDAH follows GRETA into the
kitchen.

Eat something! It'll go to waste.

AABIDAH stands.

AABIDAH

Thank you but I'm fine. Hello Mr. Golden. I just came to say
-

BEN

Yeah, I know. Salaam. Peace. I paid the bill.

AABIDAH

You don't have to be so angry.

BEN

What the hell - ?

AABIDAH

You don't have to carry all this resentment.

BEN

Who let her in?

GRETA

Listen, Aabidaba, or whatever your name is, this isn't the right time to -

AABIDAH

You still have time to let this go. This bitterness.

BEN

What do you know of bitterness?

AABIDAH

Everything. Nothing. Like all of us.

BEN

Look, just have a salami sandwich and get the hell outta here. I'm tired.

AABIDAH

I don't need a sandwich. I just came to see you and tell you that you don't need to hold onto such sadness anymore. You can put it down - let it rest.

SARI

I think you're -/

GRETA

/This is completely -

BEN

You don't know anything about us.

AABIDAH

No. But I know about hanging onto old wounds.

BEN

You're what, thirty? Forty?

AABIDAH

How old do I have to be to know from wounds?

BEN

Like the one on your neck?

AABIDAH

Yes, like the one on my neck. But physical wounds heal fast. It's the ones we don't see that take time.

But we have to want them to heal too, or they continue to hurt us. In my culture, old wounds get passed from father to son, generation after generation, and after a while, we no longer even know the source. We just hate. And that hate consumes us. But I see that it's not just our culture that does that. Yours does too. And yet, I see that there is also love. I just came by to tell you that. I see love - too.

BILL

In the Torah, it says -

SARI, BEN AND GRETA

(Whisper)

Shut up Bill.

BILL retreats.

BEN

How about an egg? Sari, give her an egg.

SARI hands AABIDAH the bowl of eggs. AABIDAH takes the egg.

BILL

It's written that -

EVERYONE gives him a look to keep out of the conversation.

AABIDAH

The egg. The beginning of life. I understand. Thank you. (Beat) We're not so different, our cultures, after all.

SARI

I don't know about that.

AABIDAH

Our tribes are separated by fear, but not by blood.

GRETA

I don't mean to pry, but, are you OK? I mean, the bruise. On your neck.

AABIDAH reflexively touches her neck.

AABIDAH

This. Yes. I'm fine. My brother. He became angry when he saw that I died my hair. (Beat) Well, angry doesn't quite describe it. But he became upset when I did this - and threatened me. It happens. He is more traditional than the rest of us.

GRETA

We can relate to that.

AABIDAH

It's just that, he misses our culture - where we're from. And all this is too new for him. Too modern. He hasn't adjusted yet to these freedoms to - dye your hair red, for example.

GRETA

But won't he do this - ?

AABIDAH

Again? Maybe. But I don't think so. I broke his arm in three places.

AABIDAH smiles.

I love this country.

She takes a bite out of the egg.

BEN starts to laugh. He slaps his leg.

BEN

Come, sit down. This I gotta hear. Bill, bring her something to drink. (To AABIDAH) You want something? Water?

AABIDAH

That would be nice, yes. (To SARI) Even without lemon.

BEN laughs again. Then he reaches out and pats her hand. She doesn't pull away.

BEN

That was a nice poem you gave me. Thoughtful.

AABIDAH

I wanted you to have it. And I hope it brings you some peace.

BEN

I don't know about that, but it was nice.

SARI

Can I read it?

GRETA

What does it say?

AABIDAH

It's just a little something about forgiveness. Of others. Of yourself. Especially on a day like today.

GRETA

We buried our Mother this morning.

AABIDAH

I know. I'm sorry.

SARI

Nobody came.

AABIDAH

You were there.

SARI

Yes, but -

AABIDAH

No one else matters.

BEN

Bill, take me to the bathroom.

BILL takes BEN out of the room.

GRETA

Three places, huh?

AABIDAH laughs.

AABIDAH

Oh, yes. I don't think I need to worry about him for a while. He was surprised.

SARI

But won't he -

AABIDAH

Try again? I don't think so. My father told him that if he ever touched me again, it would be the last time he touched anyone. Or anything. My father can be very persuasive. Along with the broken arm. (Beat) I know something about family violence. But I also know that if you continue to be angry about the past, it continues to hurt you - over and over. That's what I wanted to say to Mr. Golden - and to you. (To SARI) I understand. (Beat) I must go.

AABIDAH gets up from the table.

Saalam. Shalom.

AABIDAH exits. GRETA and SARI sit in silence for a long moment. GRETA gets up from the table and goes to the refrigerator. She forages around, but can't find the burrito.

GRETA

Well, that was interesting.

SARI

Who knew?

GRETA

I'm famished, but I don't want any of this.

SARI

Who's going to eat it?

GRETA

I don't want Shiva food. I want my burrito.

Her search becomes more aggressive.

Her voice is tense.

Where's that fucking burrito?

SARI

It's just a burrito. Chill out.

GRETA

I've been looking forward to that burrito all day. Where is it? I put it here myself. It didn't just up and walk away!

SARI

Eat something else!

GRETA

I'm not crazy! I know it was here. I specifically put it right here so I could have it and now, it's NOT HERE! Who ate it?!!

SARI

I did. Big deal.

GRETA wheels around from the freezer.

GRETA

Big deal? Yes, it IS a big deal.

SARI

What's so special about a goddamned burrito for chrissake?

GRETA

It was MINE! MINE!

SARI

Well I ate it. Sue me!

GRETA

What right did you have to eat it? (Screams) What right??!

SARI

Don't be so dramatic! For a two dollar burrito, when we have all this going on? What are you, an infant?

GRETA

How dare you call me that? What do you know about me at all?

SARI

Well, don't you think you're overreacting? A little?

GRETA

Don't you think you're patronizing, a lot?

GRETA scoops some of the smashed cake up in her hand and shoves it toward SARI'S face. The argument escalates.

Oh, I know a two dollar burrito doesn't mean anything to YOU, Mrs. Got Rocks - buying a cake that no one will eat just to show you CAN! But it's the principle - but what would you know about principle? If it didn't come wrapped in a Louis Vuitton or Prada or -

SARI

You're jealous!

GRETA

Jealous? Of what?

SARI

Jealous of my taste!

GRETA

Don't make me laugh. If it doesn't have a label attached to it, you wouldn't know style if it hit you in the head.

SARI

You think you have style? What kind of designer department do they have in those thrift shops you frequent?

GRETA

I don't have your money.

SARI

You don't have my style!

GRETA

I don't want your style!

SARI

Of course not! Why would you? Everything you are is self-contained. Tight. Controlled.

GRETA

You bet I'm controlled. You don't want to know what'll happen if I ever let my true feelings out.

SARI

You mean for anyone else but Daddy?

GRETA

What's that supposed to mean?

SARI

I see how you are - how you've always been where he's concerned. So attentive - so lovey dovey.

GRETA

Lovey dovey? Are you crazy?

SARI

Clipping his toenails - massaging his legs and his ego?

GRETA

It's what one does for the people they love. For god's sake, who do you think changed Mother's diaper?

SARI

Well -

GRETA

I think YOU'RE jealous!

SARI stands up to face off with
GRETA. The table is between them.

SARI

Of what? That he paid for your college tuition and your house and your temple membership because you always pleaded poverty? I would have rather lived in a cardboard box on the street! Damn right I'm jealous, but I can look myself in the mirror and know that I never took a dime from him - not that he'd ever give it.

BEN hears the argument and BILL
brings him into the room.

BEN

All right. I knew this was coming. Lay it on me!

SARI

(Exaggerated)

I - ate - Greta's - burrito!

GRETA

Fuck the burrito. We all know what this is about. (To BEN)
Sari doesn't think you love her, isn't that right, Sari?

BEN

Goddamn, what's this all about?

GRETA

She thinks that you played favorites.

BEN

What's this bullshit?

SARI

Goddamn you Greta.

BEN

Why do you pick now? Your Mother's not been in the ground but
a few hours and you want to dig up your problems? Well, I
don't give a good goddamn. I've had it. Up to here!

SARI

What difference does it make? Mother was dead to you years
ago! And replaced by Greta! How sick is that? She just
disappeared into the background every time Greta was around.

BEN

Is that what this is about?

SARI

I would never kowtow to you like she does.

GRETA

What about how I've had to kowtow to you - all my life! How I
had to grovel to just get an audience with you - and maybe -
maybe get to enter your sanctum sanctorum with your white
bedspreads that I wasn't clean enough to sit on, and your
mahogany furniture my fingers were too grimy to touch. And,
wait - remember how I had to kiss the mole on the bottom of
your foot to just gain entrance for a few minutes while you
cleaned out your drawers and emptied them of stray paper
clips and hairpins and you let me have them! It was easier
than reaching for the trash, because I WAS the trash, wasn't
I - to you. And I took it because spending time with you,
watching you, trying to be like you was/

SARI

/I hated your copying me! Always dipping into my flavor!/

GRETA

/Always calling the best cut of the meat!

BEN

Next thing you'll do is run from the table to your room and
slam the door./

SARI

/And you'll follow me down the hall to beat me up!

Long silence.

GRETA

Oh for chrissakes, we're not teenagers anymore! Any of us -
grow up!

SARI

You mean, now that you've had your tantrum about the burrito?

GRETA

OK. That was stupid. But listen to us!

They all are quiet for a long
moment. SARI turns to BEN.

BEN

I know I'll never get 'father of the year' in this family but
I did what I could.

SARI

Is that your excuse?

BEN

Ahhh - whatta ya want from me?

SARI starts to cry but quickly
wipes the tear away.

SARI

I want you to -/

BEN

/What did I know about being a father? I was just a kid. We were both kids, your mother and I. And we were stupid. Selfish. And scared.

GRETA

We're not judging you, Daddy./

BEN

/Oh, yes you are. But I bet I can do a better job of layin' on the guilt. (Pause) Let me tell you something girls. When you come to the end of your lives, you'll look back on everything you did like it was written on a legal pad and there it all is. The good and the bad. And you'll wish you could go back and erase the things you're ashamed of, the times you hurt people, or made a fool of yourself. All your regrets will seem to fill the pages of your life.

BEN looks at SARI who is staring at him with her arms folded.

What? You want me to say I'm sorry? OK. Sure, I'm sorry. (Pause) But does it change anything?

BILL enters.

BILL

Can I fix anybody something? Anything?

BEN gives BILL a long look.

BEN

We've got a table full of food that nobody's touched and you want to fix us something?

GRETA

No thanks, Bill.

SARI reaches for her purse. She pulls out some money and hands it to Bill.

SARI

Please go out and buy some more burritos, will you?

BILL

I need to -

SARI

We can manage without you for a while. Please. Go get them.
Buy a dozen!

GRETA

You don't need to do that.

SARI

Yes, I do.

BEN

Your mother used to say we're just alike, you and I.

SARI

Was that supposed to be a compliment?

BEN laughs.

BEN

More like a curse.

BEN turns to BILL.

BEN

Bill, hand me my sweater, will ya?

(To SARI)

I'm always so cold.

BILL wraps the sweater around BEN'S
shoulders.

SARI

I don't get it. It's 104 degrees today!

BEN wheels himself over to the fan
and turns it on. SARI is surprised
at the gesture and enjoys the
breeze.

SARI

Ahhh - that feels so good.

BEN

Bill, next time you go to the store, get a coupla lemons.

BILL

I'll get some today. I'll pick up some salmon for dinner.

BEN

Again? We had that already this week. Find something else.

BILL

How about chicken Parmesan?

BEN

OK. Don't make a federal case of it. I just don't want salmon again. Besides, you burn all the flavor out of it.

BILL exits. BEN and SARI sit together quietly for a moment. Out of nerves, SARI gets up to get a glass of water.

SARI

I need some water.

As SARI stands, BEN turns to touch her arm, but she doesn't see the gesture and she's just out of his reach. He brings his hand down, looks like he wants to say something, but just lowers his head to his chest.

SARI notices that BEN'S sweater has slipped down and she starts to put it back around his shoulders, but GRETA enters, sees it and goes to do it. Just as GRETA is about to fix the sweater, she steps back to let SARI do it. BEN looks up to thank GRETA but realizes it's not her he has to thank, and slowly turns to SARI to see her hands on his shoulder. He reaches up to bring her hand to his lips. SARI is moved, but the DOORBELL RINGS. SARI sees that some people have arrived for the Shiva and she pulls her hand away to answer the door.

SCENE 6: INTERIOR LIVING ROOM, LATER THAT NIGHT

SARI, GRETA, BEN and BILL are in the living room. BEN has just finished telling a joke and they are all laughing. BEN pantomimes the ending of the joke by cupping his hands as though holding melons.

BEN

So Morty says, she was really built, huh? Nah, Saul says. Arthritis.

Everybody laughs even though they've heard the joke before.

BILL

You need to record your jokes, Ben.

BEN

Ahhh - what for? Nobody wants to hear these old jokes anymore. (Pause, looks around) Whatta we gonna do with all this stuff?

SARI

Estate sale.

GRETA

What do you think, Daddy?

BEN

Your Mother's books. Who's gonna want 'em?

GRETA

Donate them to the library.

BEN

What? You think they'll jump at the chance to have the complete collection of Jackie Collins or Danielle Steele?

SARI

That's not all she read.

BEN

And she didn't read those, either. But she had to have every book that came out.

SARI

She loved her books.

GRETA

Ironic that she lost her vision. Like an episode of the Twilight Zone.

SARI

Oh right! The one with - ?

BILL

Burgess Meredith.

GRETA

That's the one.

SARI

You're a wealth of trivial information, aren't you, Bill?

BILL

I'm a fanatic for Twilight Zone. I've seen every episode at least twenty times. I even have the original poster signed by Rod Serling sent to me to thank me for starting a fan club when I lived in Marin County, and then -.

Everyone looks at him as if to say
"enough."

ALL

Shut up, Bill.

BEN

What do we do with all this chaserai? Tell me.

SARI

I can't do this now. Mother just died and now we're expected to pick over her bones?

BEN

When else are we gonna do this?

SARI

I don't know. I just - I'm not ready to divide the spoils of war. We've barely had a chance to get used to the fact that she's gone.

BEN

She'd want you to have something and I don't know what to do.
Pick something! You girls decide.

BILL

If it were me, I'd -

ALL

Shut up, Bill.

GRETA

It was nice that some people came to pay their respects.

BEN

More than I expected.

SARI

You had low expectations.

GRETA

Who was the guy with the photo? I never saw him before.

SARI

I know! Who was he?

BEN

Some lurick, related to your Aunt Bella.

SARI

He seemed nice.

BEN

Another momzer out of the woodwork.

SARI

I didn't think -/

GRETA

/I'll take the piano.

SARI

But -/

GRETA

I said, I'll take the piano. If you're serious about giving
stuff away, that's what I want.

BEN

OK. It's yours. (To SARI) What about you? Anything you want?

SARI

(To GRETA)

But you don't even play!

GRETA

Neither do you.

SARI

But it's a Steinway!

GRETA

I know.

BEN

It needs tuning.

GRETA

I'm sure it needs a lot of work. It's never been played. The only reason mother had it was for show.

SARI

Mother wanted to learn.

GRETA

Yeah, and she wanted to be a brain surgeon, too. Come on! She never made any effort to learn anything. At least I'll take lessons.

SARI

But it's a Steinway!

GRETA

And your point is -?

SARI

Well I -

GRETA

I'm taking the piano. Pick something else.

SARI

There's nothing else of any -

GRETA

Value?

BEN

OK. Knock it off. Both of you. She wants the piano. Take it. What do you want? Jewelry? Maybe you'll find something there. Bill, take me back to the room. I wanna get the jewelry.

BILL wheels BEN out of the room.

SARI

I'm not ready to pick over Mother's things. It's too soon. I just can't -

GRETA

Daddy wants us to. It's his way of tying up loose ends. Just go along.

SARI

But how am I supposed to choose?

GRETA

I'm sure you'll find a way.

SARI

What's that supposed to mean?

BEN returns with the jewelry box. He puts it into the middle of the table. BILL hovers nearby. BEN waves him away.

BEN

(To BILL)

Don't you have something else to do?

BILL

Oh, sure Ben. I'll put the clothes in the dryer.

BILL exits. BEN looks over his shoulder to make sure BILL is gone.

BEN

He doesn't need to know what we have here.

BEN opens the box. No one wants to be the first to look in.
Go on. Take a look. Maybe there's something you would like to have. For sentimental reasons, of course.

Together, both SARI and GRETA pull the box closer.

SARI
How much of this is real?

BEN
Don't worry.

SARI picks up a diamond dinner ring to admire it.

GRETA
Pick what you want. I won't argue.

SARI
I expect not! You got the piano. (Beat) Why didn't mother ever wear any of this? I never saw her -

GRETA
It's like the piano - never used!

BEN
Your Mother was uncomfortable wearing any of this. Every birthday, every anniversary I had to do something, knowing full well she would never wear it. Any of it. But she had to have it! (Pause) I guess she just never wanted to show off. (To SARI) I don't think she wanted to compete with you. Anyway, look through it. Take whatever you want. I can't use it. And maybe it'll get some use.

BEN calls BILL to take him to bed.
Bill. BILL!

BILL
Yes, Ben? I'm here.

BEN gestures that he wants to go to bed.

BEN

Take me to bed, will ya?

BILL

Sure thing, Ben.

BEN

And pull up your goddamned pants, will ya?

BILL reaches for his pants to pull them up but they just go right back down as he wheels BEN back out of the room.

SARI

I wonder why Mother never wore any of this. There are some nice pieces here!

GRETA

I'm surprised you didn't know. You two were so close I would have expected her to give you the crown jewels - or at least, first dibs.

SARI

I thought so too. (Picks up a bracelet) These are emeralds!

SARI and GRETA continue to peruse the contents of the box, pulling out the individual pieces and laying them out on the table.

GRETA

Let's see if these are real.

GRETA rubs the pearls together.

I learned this in China. Rub them together. If there's a little friction, they're real. (Rubs) They're real!

SARI reaches out to see them.
Bounces them in her palm.

SARI

They're heavy! (Pause) Not my color, but they'll do!

GRETA reaches in for more and sees the false bottom to the box.

She pulls up the tab and pulls out
a large stack of letters.

GRETA

Hey - what's this? A false bottom! (Pause) Letters!

SARI holds her hand out to see them
but GRETA pulls back to first read
what they are.

SARI

Who're they from?

GRETA

(She reads)

They're to Mother. (Pause, opens letter) From Daddy! Dated
1942 - when they were courting! (She reads one of them)
They're love letters! God, look at his handwriting! I never
would have recognized it.

GRETA passes some of them to SARI,
and they quietly read. SARI looks
up, astonished.

SARI

He was so insecure in these letters - afraid she wouldn't
think he was enough! Listen to this. (She reads) "Darling, I
don't want you to think less of me because I'm not in
uniform, but I tried."

GRETA

He told me he tried five times to enlist but each time they
sent him home. He never got over that.

SARI

Was it his shoulders?

GRETA

No. I think it was the seizures. He's been on Dilantin since
he was three.

SARI

Listen to this: "My dearest Ruthie" -

Behind a scrim we see two young
lovers dancing.

The music playing in the background
is Moonlight Serenade as SARI
continues reading.

- "I intend to be so much in love with my wife, that I won't care about anything else. Now this is how it goes - I want a sweet Jewish girl for a wife. To get down to bedrock, even though we are having a hell of a time with it, we know, at least I do, that if we should make the grade, it will be like 14 carat gold! Do you agree?" (GRETA stops, sighs, and wipes a tear) He's pouring out his heart to her! (She continues to read aloud) "My life is a flop so far, and a good wife can make or break me." He was insecure even then! (She reads) "Do you love me? Will you help me get to my goal? Will you be a true, loyal wife? Can you overlook various faults? Most of all, can you get along with my overbearing parents? If you can understand the magnitude and importance of each thing, you can see what a wife of mine would have to put up with. More than just going to bed together, isn't it, honey?" Wow! Puts a lot of things into perspective, doesn't it? (Reads more) Oh, god. This is where he goes for the close. (Reads) "I'm afraid to say I love you because if it were not the truth, you would suffer. But I'm more in love with you now than I've ever been at any time, if what I feel is love and not loneliness. I would come to you this week but we don't get our gas ration until next month. But please know that I think of you every waking moment, and hope that you aren't forgetting my arms around you, sweetheart, as we danced in the moonlight." Wow. (Pause) WOW!

The couple dance off and the music
fades.

GRETA and SARI sit in silence for a
moment, in shock.

SARI

He loved her!

GRETA and SARI are silent while
they read one letter after another.

GRETA

He *adored* her! We have to save these. (Pause) But Daddy can't know we've read them!

SARI continues to read others.

SARI

This shatters all my illusions of their marriage. (Pause)
Hard to think of Daddy this way. (Pause) What happened?

GRETA

Guess he was soft, before life made him hard.

SARI stares at GRETA.

SARI

Did you read that off the cover of a self-help book?

GRETA

Just sayin' - he was tender.

GRETA reaches for the next group of
letters.

She saved these too!

SARI

What?

GRETA

Your letters. From camp. You were what, thirteen?

SARI

They're MY letters. I get to see them first.

SARI begins to read some of them,
and laughs.

Oh my god. These are hilarious!

SARI hands some of them to GRETA,
and GRETA reads. She looks up at
SARI.

GRETA

This is when we went to camp. (She reads) How sweet! In every
letter you talk about *me*. (Reads, laughs) Listen to this:
"Greta wore her blue plaid capris, and another bigger plaid
blue blouse and it clashed something awful! She won't take my
advice. She should wear matching clothes and shorts in the
day and capris at night or she won't have any friends."
(Laughs) Can't believe you were so concerned about my
wardrobe!

SARI

I wanted you to be popular.

GRETA

Even then. It's funny but I don't remember even *seeing* you at camp. (Reads) "Greta had KP tonight and she had our table. Poor Greta, she made so many mistakes! I could have cried, I felt so sorry for her!" (Pause) How *cute*. I never knew you noticed me at all.

GRETA reaches out to touch SARI'S hand but it's clear that SARI is uncomfortable with the sentimentality and pulls her hand away. GRETA withdraws to continue reading.

SARI

I always noticed you.

They look at each other without speaking. GRETA resumes reading.

GRETA

"Greta looked cute tonight but she got her dress dirty. UG!!!" (Looks up) That was worth three exclamation points. (Reads) "Please hurry and send her some decent shoes!!!" (Looks up) More exclamation points. (Beat) I must have been some ragamuffin!

SARI

Well, you weren't into clothes like I was.

GRETA

I'm not sure if you were embarrassed *for* me or *by* me. (Pause) But it's really sweet of you to care - back then.

SARI

You don't get my sense of humor.

GRETA

Then or now?

SARI

Ever. (Pause) You don't really know me at all.

GRETA

Do families every really know each other? Do you know me? I mean, you accused me of trying to replace mother in Daddy's eyes. You think that's an accurate assessment?

SARI

Well, maybe not, but you always took his side and were strong and - practical. Business like.

GRETA

Yeah. And -?

SARI

Well, I always felt you were trying to be the son Daddy never had.

GRETA

But was it true? No.

SARI

It sure looked that way. But you never really understood me either.

GRETA

I saw what you projected.

SARI

Can't you tell when I'm joking? That it was all an act?

GRETA

If it's an act, it's a good one because you've been playing the role of Diva your entire life!

SARI

I don't know where it stops and the real me begins.

GRETA

Did you really pay \$1500 for that cake?

SARI

Of course not. I just said that to -/

GRETA

/Rub Daddy's nose in your prosperity. (Points to cake) Well, you see how that worked out.

SARI

I don't know why I said that. I mean, of course Tammy Coe cakes are pricey, but not *that* pricey! I just couldn't help myself. When he asked what I spent I just - I don't know - I just need to -/

GRETA

/Show off - because you know he flips out at your extravagance. (Pause) Why is it so important that you remind him of your lifestyle?

SARI

I want him to know I'm doing well - in spite of him.

GRETA

He knows, believe me. But he doesn't have a clue who we really are. Why do you keep trying so hard to irritate him?

SARI

I want him to know I married someone who takes care of me in a way he never could. Someone who makes me feel loved. No matter what I did, what I accomplished, who I was, he never acknowledged me. Never.

GRETA

That's not who he is. It's not who he ever was! Maybe *you* never acknowledged *him*!

SARI

That's not my job. It's his job to love his daughters so that they grow up feeling good about themselves.

GRETA

In an ideal world. But only you can make *you* feel good about yourself.

SARI

You know what I mean.

GRETA

Yeah, I do - more than you think.

SARI

I blame him for my never feeling confident.

GRETA

He never felt confident! You know, Sari, the difference between us is that you always wanted something Daddy simply didn't have the capacity to give. And neither did Mother. It took me a lot of years and a lot of therapy to finally figure that out and just accept what I got - or didn't get.

SARI

You're stronger than me.

GRETA

I choose to be. You need to let go of "happy family" if you want to be sane!

SARI

Why couldn't he show me - ?/

GRETA

/Affection? He doesn't know how to do that. He's afraid to be vulnerable - to show that he's not in charge, not tough enough. He's got to maintain control. Or look like it. Don't you see how scared he is? Anyone who has to keep up that pretense has a whole lot of shit to protect. (Pause) You think I take his side, but the truth is that I understand what's inside him. And I feel this (points to her heart) incredibly deep sadness for him, like I'm feeling his pain on such a visceral level. I felt it for Mother too, at times, but then she'd turn on me with her fear and suspicion and I just had to disconnect from her.

SARI

It's the opposite for me. I always felt I needed to stand up for her.

GRETA

I know. Maybe we need to stop being surrogates for their relationship and work on ours.

GRETA proceeds to clear the table.
She moves the chairs away,
unconsciously placing them in a
configuration to make a fort.

She brushes the crumbs off the
tablecloth.

SARI goes to the CD player and puts on Mario Lanza. Both stand quietly, listening.

GRETA smiles and drapes the tablecloth over the chairs to make a fort and crawls underneath to listen.

SARI joins her. GRETA comes out from under the cloth and grabs the cake. While underneath we hear them laugh like little girls, humming to the music, like old times.

SARI

You forgot forks.

GRETA

Just use your fingers, Leona.

BEN hears the noise and wheels himself into the scene, looks around and realizes the women are under the tablecloth, like old times. He sits quietly, smiling, and slowly rests his chin on his chest - then his head falls. He dies.

Lights down. End of Show.