

ZEV

Written by

Michael L. Fawcett

1861 9TH STREET, UNIT B
Los Osos CA 93402
mfawcett@calpoly.edu
(805) 534-1229

FADE IN:

A stone building set among trees.

INSERT: SIGN, which reads "HILL & DALE COUNTRY CLUB"

INT. CLUB ROOM - DAY

Four ancient Jewish comedians sit at a round table. They relish their longevity, savor their Jewishness.

Herschel Lifshitz, 85, ill-humored, grumpy, doesn't like anything.

Buddy Roman, 82, intelligent, still quick. Smokes a cigar.

Irving Holtz, 85, losing it a bit. Smokes a cigar.

Benny Burstein, 82, favors the insult, but is at heart a sweet man.

BUDDY
He calls himself Zev.

IRVING
The kid from Brooklyn?

HERSCHEL
Zev who?

BUDDY
Only uses the one name.

BENNY
Zev.

BUDDY
Zev. Do I need to say it again?

HERSCHEL
Kids today want it short and sweet.

IRVING
Are we talking the Jewish kid with the rising star from Brooklyn?

BUDDY
(trying for patience)
We are.

BENNY
Try to keep up, Irving.

HERSCHEL
You saw him?

BUDDY
Great timing. Works clean.

HERSCHEL
I gotta see clean to believe it.
The comics these days. What mouths
they got.

IRVING
Pure shmutz.

BENNY
Not to mention sex, sex, and sex.

BUDDY
The Brooklyn kid's clean as a new
tablecloth.

IRVING
What's his schtick?

BUDDY
Same old stuff but different.

IRVING
Like we did in the Catskills?

BUDDY
But young, with an updated rhythm.
(leans into table)
Rumor has it he's joined the Hill &
Dale.

The three are glad to hear the news.

IRVING
The kid with just one name. Zev.

BENNY
(to Herschel)
Woulda changed your name you'd
still be workin'.

BUDDY
Spare us, Benny.

HERSCHEL
I'm closer to wearing Pampers than
standing on a stage again.

BENNY

Herschel Lifshitz? Are you kidding me?

HERSCHEL

In my day no one heard the 'shit' in Lifshitz.

BENNY

That's a good line, Herschel.

HERSCHEL

Did the Catskills for twenty-five years. Not to mention a lotta presentation houses in New York.

BENNY

Yakov Moshe Masa?

BUDDY

Jackie Mason?

BENNY

Jackie Mason. Rolls off the tongue. Allen Stewart Konigsberg?

HERSCHEL

Woody Allen.

BENNY

Woody Allen. Rolls off the tongue. Leonard Alfred Schneider?

HERSCHEL

Lenny Bruce.

BENNY

Lenny Bruce. Rolls off the tongue.

BUDDY

All right already.

HERSCHEL

I didn't like Lenny Bruce.

IRVING

He blazed new trails.

HERSCHEL

I don't care. He was a God-damned junkie.

BENNY

Nathan Birnbaum.

IRVING
(proud of self)
George Burns.

BENNY
Don't plan on going far, Irving.
You only got a quart left in the
tank.

BUDDY
(doing Benny)
George Burns. Rolls off the tongue.

BENNY
Melvin Kaminsky.
(beat)
Mel Brooks.

BUDDY
You made your point.

HERSCHEL
I like Melvin Kaminsky better.

BENNY
Last one. Jack Roy.

IRVING
Haven't heard that name in years.

BUDDY
Jack Roy, Jesus.

HERSCHEL
Dangerfield shoulda stuck with Jack
Roy you want my opinion.

BENNY
So this kid from Brooklyn where'd
he hone his chops?

BUDDY
Beats me. Suddenly he's doing the
Vegas clubs. Like Venus risen from
the sea.

IRVING
Who rose from the sea?

HERSCHEL
I'm nineteen. Lied about my age.
Did a show five nights a week at
the Tamarack.

BENNY

I'm a liar too. Eighteen I'm doing
a routine at Grossinger's.

IRVING

Remember the brisket at
Grossinger's?

HERSCHEL

First I remember Jennie Grossinger
bless her heart. Second I remember
the brisket.

BUDDY

Shecky Besser played the Catskills
for fifteen years. Gained eighty
pounds.

IRVING

Remember Martin and Lewis?

HERSCHEL

Dean would sing a love song while
that spastic kid ran around the
club knocking plates and glasses
onto the floor.

BUDDY

Grossinger's has sat empty for
thirty years.

HERSCHEL

Ziggy Shor's son drove up there
last summer. Said mother nature's
taking the old place down.

IRVING

It's sad.

BENNY

(to Buddy)

You almost married that shiksa used
to stay at Grossinger's.

BUDDY

That shiksa had a name. Diane
Belmont. We don't talk about her.

BENNY

It was sixty years ago for cryin'
out loud.

BUDDY

I don't care if it was a hundred.

IRVING

Benny, it bothers Buddy when you
revive the memory of Diane Belmont.

HERSCHEL

I remember her well. The blonde.
Quite a looker.

BUDDY

Maybe I should get my photo album.

A waiter, 60, comes to their table carrying a tray.

He sets a cup and saucer and a small tea pot in front of
Herschel.

BENNY

Your daily cup of hot water?

HERSCHEL

Coffee makes me jittery. Tea's got
no flavor.

The waiter sets a glass and a can of soda in front of Irving.

WAITER

Mr. Holtz, when I was ten my father
took me to your show at the
Concord. I still remember it.

Irving is touched anyone remembers him.

IRVING

You are very kind. What did you say
your name was?

WAITER

Terry. Terry White.

IRVING

Thank you, Larry.

WAITER

Terry.

IRVING

Terry.

The waiter leaves.

Irving looks off into the distance as if recalling the
Concord and his show all those years before.

He wipes a tear.

BENNY

Don't go schmaltzy on us, Irving.

Irving looks around at the other three men.

IRVING

Christ, it was another world we came outta.

HERSCHEL

Hell of a better one than we're in now.

BENNY

It's all relative.

BUDDY

(sarcastic)

Yeah, right. Today we got painless dentistry, computers, and cell phones.

HERSCHEL

I don't own a cell phone.

BUDDY

Hersch, you trail blazer.

BENNY

His trail leads back to the crash of '29.

An employee greets someone who has just come in.

CLUB EMPLOYEE (O.S.)

Mr. Zev, how nice to see you.

ZEV (O.S.)

Nice to be here.

(beat)

Say, this is old L.A.

Buddy looks in the direction of the voice.

He looks back at the three men and jerks his head.

BUDDY

Zev. In the flesh.

Zev walks in the direction of their table.

The proverbial nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn in a dark suit.

He pauses as he passes their table.

ZEV

Gentlemen.

IRVING

We know who you are.

ZEV

(surprised)
You do?

IRVING

I'm Irving Holtz.

BENNY

Benny Burstein.

BUDDY

Buddy Roman.

HERSCHEL

Hershel Lifshitz.

ZEV

Oh, my God, I've heard of all of
you. You started in the Borscht
Belt in the 1950s!

The four men are amazed, even Herschel, that Zev knows who they are.

ZEV (CONT'D)

If I'm gonna be a stand up comic I
feel I should know some stand up
history.

BUDDY

I caught your act at the Pink
Elephant in Vegas.

ZEV

I hope I didn't disappoint.

BENNY

Be a mensch and give us a minute's
worth.

Without pause Zev gives the four a slice of his routine.

His voice is crisp, his moves almost pantomimic, his timing on the nose.

ZEV

An Arab guy and a Jewish guy cross
paths on a public street.

(MORE)

ZEV (CONT'D)

Jewish guy asks 'How are ya?' Arab
guy says 'Falafel.' Jewish guy says
'Salami tell you how I feel.'

He shifts his pose.

ZEV (CONT'D)

Guy stops me on the street and
asks, 'Are you Jewish?' I say,
'Does gefilte fish come in a jar?'

He shifts his pose.

ZEV (CONT'D)

A doctor is the only man who can
tell a woman to take off all her
clothes and then send a bill to her
husband.

He shifts his pose.

ZEV (CONT'D)

Why is there so little honey in
Brazil?

(pause)

There's only one bee in Brazil, for
Pete's sake.

He shifts his pose.

ZEV (CONT'D)

Sheldon was visiting mama and papa.
He said: 'Finally, I've found my
bashert. Just for fun, I'm going to
bring over three women and you
guess which is The One.' Mama and
papa agreed.

(pause)

The next day he brought three
beautiful women who sat on the sofa
and chatted with mama and papa over
a little cake. After they left, he
challenged, 'Okay, guess which one
I'm going to marry?'

(pause)

'The one in the middle with the red
hair,' his parents replied
instantly.

(pause)

'Right! But... how did you know?'
asked Sheldon, amazed.

(pause)

Mama said, 'Simple. Her, we don't
like.'

He shifts his pose.

ZEV (CONT'D)

A Jewish mother sent her son two neckties for his birthday. A month later when she came to visit, the son thought it polite to wear one of the ties when he picked her up at the airport. When she saw the tie, she asked, 'So you don't like the other one?'

He shifts his pose.

ZEV (CONT'D)

An old man is dying. He smells something wonderful. He says to his son, 'Aaron, Aaron, what is that wonderful smell?' Aaron says, 'Ma is baking a honey cake.' The dying old man says, 'Oh, Aaron, go tell Ma I want a piece of honey cake.' Aaron runs off. He comes back a few minutes later and says, 'It's for after.'

Zev makes a shallow bow.

Impressed, the four men clap.

BUDDY

Boffo, young man. I felt as if I were back at Grossinger's.

ZEV

You honor me, gentlemen. It was comics like you created the Borscht Belt. I created my career by riding horseback on what you created.

(beat)

Have a good day. And we'll see one another from time to time, I hope.

He salutes the four men and continues on his way.

The four comics sit in silence for a long beat.

IRVING

I feel less over the hill than before.

BENNY

True, Irving. But a bad metaphor.

IRVING
What's a metaphor?

HERSCHEL
The kid is good. He's clean. Knows
where he's coming from.

BUDDY
Want another hot water, Hersch?

HERSCHEL
Don't mind if I do.

Buddy turns his head to look for the waiter.

IRVING
Waiter's name is Larry.

BUDDY
Terry.

BENNY
Try to keep up, Irving.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END

