

"4 HELENS"

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY (1974) - DAY

A car pulls up to a curb. The road leads to a graveside funeral.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

This is a true story. Believe me, I couldn't make it up if I tried. Some of the names have been changed, but not the Helens. I'll get to that shortly.

The car door opens. MALE MOURNER NUMBER ONE is irritated. He gets out and walks toward the grave of JÁKOB, a self-absorbed windbag who spoke in non-sequiturs and smoked like a train. Male Mourner Number One mutters under his breath as he walks.

MALE MOURNER NUMBER ONE

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

That asshole ruined my Sunday.

Male Mourner Number One joins MALE MOURNER NUMBER TWO, another irritated man. They stand with the rest of the assembled mourners. JÁKOB'S RABBI leads the service. He's a loquacious and clueless man.

All of the assembled mourners seem bored and irritated as Jákob's Rabbi eulogizes Jákob. GREEN HELEN (70) is Jákob's wife. She's a buxom, histrionic redhead. She becomes increasingly hysterical as the funeral service progresses.

JÁKOB'S RABBI

Jákob was a thoughtful man. A man who lit up the room whenever he entered.

INT. APARTMENT (1955) - DAY - FLASHBACK

JÁKOB (late 50's) causes a fire when he lights a cigarette at the dining room table. A cigarette ash lands on a lace tablecloth and the tablecloth goes up in flames sending Green Helen and friends into a frenzy.

BACK TO PRESENT

A mourner coughs. Jakob's Rabbi continues his eulogy.

JÁKOB'S RABBI

A man whose eloquence left others speechless.

INT. APARTMENT (1969) - DAY - FLASHBACK

JÁKOB (early 70's) rambles on. Only burnt remnants of the tablecloth remain. Friends and family sitting at the table roll their eyes.

JÁKOB

We saw the moon landing. Jet propulsion. I was weightless once. At the beach when a wave dragged me under. Telemetry, thrust vector control and centrifuge. That's what saved me.

A relative gapes in disbelief. She misses her bite of cake. It falls off of her fork and makes a splash as it lands in a cup of tea.

BACK TO PRESENT

A mourner gapes in disbelief. Jakob's Rabbi finishes his eulogy.

JÁKOB'S RABBI

A considerate man, who always put others first.

INT. APARTMENT (1971) - DAY - FLASHBACK

JÁKOB (mid 70's) blows cigarette smoke in the face of a relative who has asthma. The relative gasps for air and struggles to reach his inhaler as Jakob puffs away.

BACK TO PRESENT

A mourner lights a cigarette as Green Helen shovels dirt on Jakob's casket. She screams and sobs uncontrollably.

GREEN HELEN

I'm going with you Jákob, I can't live without you. My poor sweet Jákob. I'm going with you, I'm going with you now.

MALE MOURNER NUMBER TWO

I wish you would.

An OBESE FEMALE MOURNER whispers to a skinny female mourner.

OBESE FEMALE MOURNER

I wonder what kind of food they're having at the shiva.

GREEN HELEN

I'm going with you, I'm going with you Jákob!

MALE MOURNER NUMBER TWO

So go already!

Green Helen jumps into Jákob's grave.

MALE MOURNER NUMBER TWO (CONT'D)

Quick, cover her up!

Green Helen throws herself on top of Jákob's casket, kissing and caressing it. Male Mourner Number One and Male Mourner Number Two look at each other. They are disgusted. They approach the grave and attempt to pull Green Helen out. She's strong and wild and she pulls Male Mourner Number Two into the Grave. When Male Mourner Number One reaches down and tries to pull Male Mourner Number Two out of the grave, he loses his footing and falls in. The FEMALE NARRATOR speaks.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

That's my great-great-aunt Green Helen. Twenty years earlier she threatened to jump into her first husband's grave. His name was Sam.

EXT. CEMETERY (1954) - DAY - FLASHBACK

Same exact scene as Jákob's funeral. Everyone looks younger. GREEN HELEN (50) stands at the edge of Sam's grave, yelling down to his casket.

GREEN HELEN

I'm going with you Sam, I can't live without you. My poor sweet Sam. I'm going with you, I'm going with you now.

BACK TO PRESENT

Male Mourner Number One and Male Mourner Number Two are out of the grave. They hold onto Green Helen's legs and try to yank her out of the grave as she clutches the casket tightly.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 But she didn't. Supposedly, Sam's body wasn't even cold when she married Jákob.

Male Mourner Number One and Male Mourner Number Two manage to yank Green Helen out of Jákob's grave. They quickly carry her to a car as she screams, cries and flails her arms wildly. The other mourners rush to their cars and drive away.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Green Helen was my great-grandmother's sister. The story really begins with my great-grandparents, Sara and Herman. They met on the boat coming over to America. Two Hungarians in search of a better life. They fell in love, married, and landed in a top floor apartment on East Seventy-ninth Street. It was known as Little Hungary. Sara eventually brought all of her siblings to America. Many, many siblings.

INT. HELEN WHITEBOARD - DAY

A female stick figure appears on a whiteboard. The name HELEN is written above it.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 For some bizarre reason, Hungarians love the name Helen. Maybe it was a lack of creativity on their part but the Helens kept coming, and they were all certifiable. The family needed a way to tell them all apart.

The whiteboard rapidly fills up with various female stick figures all named HELEN.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY (1906) - DAY

A chubby delivery man sweats profusely as he struggles to carry a large box down a hallway.

He reaches an apartment door and puts the box down. The words GREEN HELEN - HANDLE WITH CARE appear on the box. Sounds of screaming and sobbing come from the box.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sara's sister Helen was the first one over. Immigrants were called greenhorns back then, so the family called her Green Helen.

INT. BABY NURSERY (1907) - DAY

A label is wrapped around a newborn baby's wrist. The name MARKOVICH HELEN appears on the label.

A HANDSOME DOCTOR leans over to check the baby's pulse as she cries.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sara had a baby girl and named her Helen. Their last name was Markowitz, but all of the Hungarians pronounced it Markovich. So my grandmother was known as Markovich Helen. From the moment she was born, Markovich Helen had an interesting and unique way of expressing herself.

HANDSOME DOCTOR

Good morning little lady. You have a lot to say today. Are you trying to tell me something?

MARKOVICH HELEN

(crying baby, English subtitles)

Get me out of here you son of a bitch!

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT (1907) - DAY

SAMU is oafish, stupid, and cheap. He is a self-serving womanizer. He brings his quiet and timid wife SAMU HELEN to Sara and Herman's apartment to meet the family. Suddenly a hand comes out of nowhere and slaps a label on Samu Helen's breast. She is taken aback. The name SAMU HELEN appears on the label.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

The next one over was Sara's brother Samu, Hungarian for Sam.

(MORE)

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He married a woman named Helen.
 Everyone called her Samu Helen.

INT. HOSPITAL PSYCHIATRIC UNIT (1954) - DAY

GREEN HELEN (50) stands near the nurses' station as the nurses dole out meds. As Green Helen swallows her meds a black broken line appears and separates her into two halves. The name GREEN HELEN appears above the left half and the name JÁKOB HELEN appears above the right half.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 When Green Helen married her first husband Sam the family couldn't call her Sam's Helen because they already had a Sam's Helen. So they kept calling her Green Helen. When she married Jákob, half of the family started calling her Jákob Helen, which made things somewhat confusing.

The black broken line disappears and the two halves of Green Helen are consolidated into one. The name GREEN HELEN appears above consolidated Green Helen.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 After Jákob died, her new name went with him and everyone went back to calling her Green Helen.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY (1908) - NIGHT

HELEN HELEN rushes down a hallway. She is frantic and checks her watch obsessively. She wears a name necklace. The name HELEN HELEN is spelled out in big letters. She carries a suitcase and is extremely dorky looking.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT (1908) - NIGHT

Sara and Herman's apartment door opens.

Helen Helen breathes heavily. She tries to speak but can't catch her breath. The relatives gathered in the living room give Helen Helen the once over.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 The family decided that if another Helen came along they'd just call her Helen Helen.

Suddenly the door slams in Helen Helen's face.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
Fortunately, she never arrived.

INT. SECOND AVENUE COFFEEHOUSE (1910) - NIGHT

HERMAN is a handsome and bright man who spends his time discussing politics instead of working. He sits around a large table with a group of intellectuals. They smoke pipes, cigars and cigarettes and debate loudly into the night.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
Herman owned a cigar factory with a small shop in the front. He wasn't very good at making money. He was much more interested in espousing socialist ideology, often late into the night. This meant that he was too tired to get up in the morning to open the store. So the burden of making money fell on Sara, who took in boarders, cleaned and cooked for the local immigrant community.

HERMAN
The way things work here in America, it isn't right. Everyone working fourteen hour days for a little bread while a few flaunt their wealth around. We're suffering in New York under the inequities of the current system.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT (1912) - DAY

SARA is an attractive woman who is overworked and visibly exhausted. She serves breakfast to two boarders while trying to keep her young daughters occupied with toys.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
After Markovich Helen was born, Sara gave birth to my great-aunt Magda. My great-aunt Beatrice came next. Everyone called her Bibi. Sara and Herman had very little money and struggled to make ends meet. Sara continued to cook for the greenhorns and take in boarders to cover the rent.

EXT/INT. HERMAN'S CIGAR STORE (1914) - NIGHT

Gangsters smuggle guns into Herman's cigar store.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

The only time Herman showed up at his cigar store was to allow some gangsters to hide their guns under the floor boards. In exchange for this he was granted protection for his family.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gangsters deliver a piano to Sara and Herman's apartment.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

And a piano.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT (1920) - DAY

Sara cooks in the kitchen. AUNT BIBI (8) is a mischievous tomboy. JOSKA, Sara's brother, is a recent arrival. He's paunchy, balding and has no class.

AUNT BIBI (O.S.)

Mama, Uncle Joska won't come out of the bathroom. I gotta go!

SARA

Joska, come out already. You've been in there all morning.

JOSKA (O.S.)

I haven't taken a shit in a week! What do you want me to do?

SARA

Alright, already. Come have some coffee and hot cereal. It'll help you go.

Joska enters the kitchen. Aunt Bibi walks out. After a few moments Bibi yells from the bathroom.

AUNT BIBI (O.S.)

Oh my god! It smells like horse shit in here.

SARA

Bibi, no cursing.

JOSKA

The trip over from Hungary nearly killed me. I'm going to look for work today.

SARA

Good. We could use the money.

Bibi walks back into the kitchen. She scowls at Joska.

AUNT BIBI

I feel sick.

SARA

Stop being disrespectful and sit down.

GREEN HELEN (16) walks into the kitchen.

GREEN HELEN

I couldn't sleep with all that snoring. Did we have to take in that new boarder? He snores louder than Joska and Samu.

SARA

Well until your complaining brings in money feel free to scrub some floors.

JOSKA

Hopefully I can find a job and get my own apartment. I have a date tonight and nowhere to bring her.

GREEN HELEN

You've only been here two weeks and you've been on six dates already.

JOSKA

The lack of money has slowed me down.

SARA

Whatever you do, don't bring her back here. Breakfast is ready.

GREEN HELEN

Everyone gets dates around here except me.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT (1922) - DAY

MARKOVICH HELEN (15) practices the piano.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Despite financial hardship, Sara managed to squirrel away some money so my grandmother could take piano lessons. Sara loved music and wanted to hear her favorite melodies. The fact that the piano was stolen was not an issue. The music sounded just as good.

INT. GOLDBERG'S RESTAURANT (1924) - NIGHT

BÉLA SCHIFFMAN (late 20's) sits in a Kosher Hungarian restaurant. He is a short, dark and handsome man. He eats his dinner and talks with the owner, ARTIE GOLDBERG. Artie Goldberg's hideous daughter ROSE waits on tables. Rose looks ten years older than Béla. She's dowdy looking, hairy and sweaty.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

My grandfather Béla Schiffman was twenty-five when he arrived in New York. He followed his brother Isaák to America. Isaák was wild and uncontrollable, so my great-grandmother Nina basically told him to get the hell out of Hungary. Papa lived next door to Goldberg's Hungarian Restaurant and wandered in there one night, drawn in by the tantalizing smells of Hungarian cooking.

ARTIE GOLDBERG

Are you enjoying your meal?

BÉLA

It's delicious.

ARTIE GOLDBERG

It's not only me that cooks like this. My daughter Rose is a wonderful cook. Rose, come here and bring Béla some of your stuffed cabbage. Nobody makes it better than Rose.

Béla winces. Rose looks confused. She shrugs, goes into the kitchen and returns with stuffed cabbage. She places it on the table clumsily and spills some of it.

BÉLA

It's fine, it's fine. Don't worry about it.

Artie Goldberg gives Rose a dirty look. Béla cleans up the spill with his napkin and takes a bite of the cabbage.

ARTIE GOLDBERG

Were you in the army? You know, I was a Hussar in the calvary regiment.

BÉLA

Really? I was in the army, it was a terrible time. I almost died but the almighty saved me.

ARTIE GOLDBERG

I too was lucky more than once. I lost many friends. After the war I met my wife and we had Rose. Speaking of Rose, you must try her chocolate babka. It's out of this world.

Béla looks nervous. A bead of perspiration appears on his face. Artie Goldberg motions to Rose to get the babka. She looks embarrassed and goes into the kitchen. She speaks to a YOUNG CHEF.

ROSE

A piece of babka please.

YOUNG CHEF

Here. Your father baked it fresh this morning.

Rose returns with the babka and serves it to Béla.

ARTIE GOLDBERG

She makes the best babka in New York. Rose is a good girl, a good cook and she keeps a nice home. Please, enjoy. There's no charge. Rose will take care of you.

Artie Goldberg walks away to attend to other customers. Béla mumbles under his breath.

BÉLA

That's what I'm afraid of.

Béla leaves some cash on the table and exits quickly.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Papa realized that he would not be able to continue to dine at Goldberg's restaurant. He had to get away from Rose. A neighbor told him about a woman named Sara Markowitz who cooked dinner in her East Seventy-ninth Street apartment for a dollar twenty-five a head. She had daughters too, but he was willing to take a chance and dine there. Nothing could be worse than Rose.

EXT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING (1924) - NIGHT

Béla arrives at Sara and Herman's apartment building. He encounters a FAT UGLY HUNGARIAN WOMAN on the outside steps. She flirts with him.

FAT UGLY HUNGARIAN WOMAN

Hello. You're new around here. Are you going to Sara's?

BÉLA

Yes madam, could you please tell me what apartment she lives in?

FAT UGLY HUNGARIAN WOMAN

Five D, but I'm a much better cook than Sara. I could make dinner for you. Maybe throw in a little something extra?

BÉLA

You're too kind, Sara is expecting me.

The Fat Ugly Hungarian Woman smiles at Béla and he notices all of her front teeth are missing. He is obviously repulsed.

FAT UGLY HUNGARIAN WOMAN

Why don't you stop by my apartment after dinner for some strudel?

BÉLA

I'm sorry but I'm really trying to watch my weight.

The Fat Ugly Hungarian Woman moves in closer, she's practically on top of Béla.

FAT UGLY HUNGARIAN WOMAN

This dessert won't make you fat.

Béla smiles nervously, bounds up the stairs and enters Sara and Herman's apartment building.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT (1924) - NIGHT

Sara opens the apartment door and welcomes Béla. He looks nervously behind him.

SARA

Ah, you must be Béla. I see you've met my downstairs neighbor. Please, come in.

BÉLA

Thank you Mrs. Markovich.

SARA

Please, call me Sara.

Béla walks with Sara to the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM

Sara introduces Béla to the other diners.

SARA

I'd like you all to meet Béla Schiffman, he'll be joining us for dinner.

A raucous group of diners sits around the dining room table. Sara introduces everybody to Béla. There are 4 Hungarian men including BUZI FABÓ, an overtly effeminate gay man, an Irish longshoreman named O'SHAUGHNESSY, a classically trained musician named SEBASTION, and KARCHI STEIN, a carpenter. MARKOVICH HELEN (17) and GREEN HELEN (20) are also seated at the table.

SARA (CONT'D)

Béla this is Buzi Fabó. You can take the seat next to him.

Béla sits next to Buzi Fabó. It immediately becomes clear to Béla that Buzi Fabó is physically attracted to him when Buzi Fabó leans over and whispers in his ear.

BUZI FABÓ
 (in Hungarian, English
 subtitles)
 You have a really nice ass.

Béla looks extremely uncomfortable. He squirms in his chair and turns away from Buzi Fabó.

SARA
 Sebastion's a musician, classically
 trained. He played with the Opera.
 I hear that you play the violin
 Béla.

Sara points to Markovich Helen.

SARA (CONT'D)
 My daughter Helen sitting over
 there, she plays the piano. Perhaps
 you two can get together some time
 and play some of my favorite
 Hungarian gypsy music.

Béla looks at Markovich Helen and smiles. He's attracted to her.

Sara points to Green Helen.

SARA (CONT'D)
 That's my sister Green Helen. We
 all came from a tiny village in
 Hungary. It's so tiny that you
 can't even find it on a map.

O'SHAUGHNESSY
 And I'm O'Shaughnessy. You're a
 fine looking lad Béla. I bet all
 the Colleens are chasing ya.

BÉLA
 They're chasing, but I'm not
 stopping. You'd be running too if
 you saw my Colleens.

O'Shaughnessy lets out a big belly laugh. Béla chuckles.

O'SHAUGHNESSY
 So you're a hungry too?

BÉLA
 Yes, I'm from Nagykálló, a small
 town in Northern Hungary.

O'SHAUGHNESSY

Well I'm from a little town called Dingle.

O'Shaughnessy glances at Green Helen.

O'SHAUGHNESSY (CONT'D)

I would have mistaken you for an Irish lass with locks as red as yours.

GREEN HELEN

Really? So you like them?

O'SHAUGHNESSY

I do lass.

GREEN HELEN

Hungarians are very passionate people. Especially red-headed Hungarians.

O'Shaughnessy leans back in his chair. He grins from ear to ear.

Sara glares at O'Shaughnessy. She's not pleased that he's flirting with Green Helen.

O'Shaughnessy looks back at Sara with feigned innocence.

Béla tries to make eye contact with Markovich Helen but she doesn't pay any attention to him.

Buzi Fabó leans into Béla and whispers.

BUZI FABÓ

I prefer your thick black hair.

Béla moves his chair as far away from Buzi Fabó as possible. He glances down at his crotch as he places a napkin in his lap. Sara brings food to the table. Everyone dines on Hungarian dishes like stuffed cabbage, goulash and cholent.

SEBASTION

Mmm, my favorite foods. If you don't mind the after effects. Béla, how long have you been playing?

BÉLA

Fifteen years. Some local musicians taught me melodies and I listened to a lot of Hungarian gypsy music.

SEBASTION

I'll bring my clarinet tomorrow,
perhaps we can play with Sara's
daughter Helen.

Béla turns to Markovich Helen.

BÉLA

I hear you're a wonderful pianist.
I'm impressed you can play
Hungarian gypsy music, it's
difficult.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I listen to the records on Mama's
Victrola. I have good ears.

There's an awkward silence.

BÉLA

Wonderful. Let's all plan on having
a cabaret night here tomorrow.

Béla and Sebastion thank Sara and say goodnight. They walk
downstairs together and run into the Fat Ugly Hungarian
Woman. She winks at Sebastion.

FAT UGLY HUNGARIAN WOMAN

(to Béla)

Would your handsome friend like
some streudel?

BÉLA

He's really stuffed. He couldn't
eat another bite.

Béla and Sebastion laugh as they walk out the front door of
the apartment building and disappear into the night.

INT. SARA AND HERMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The next night Béla, Markovich Helen and Sebastion play
Hungarian gypsy music in Sara and Herman's apartment after
dinner. It is an impromptu jam session. Sara listens and
smiles approvingly.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

After they realized they had some
musical chemistry, my grandparents
started gigging together. They
played mostly private affairs and
parties and got gigs through a
local Hungarian social club.

INT. APARTMENT (1926) - NIGHT

Markovich Helen plays the piano and Béla plays the violin. They play in front of a large group of people at a private twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration. People are talking, laughing and dancing.

Béla hits a clinker and has a very strident tone.

THE ANNIVERSARY HUSBAND is a tall, thin and dark man. He shoots Béla a dirty look. Markovich Helen leads Béla. She plays the melody to guide him.

Markovich Helen and Béla continue to play. Béla hits another clinker. It's even worse than the previous clinker.

THE ANNIVERSARY WIFE is a short and heavy set woman. She whispers to The Anniversary Husband as they dance solo in the center of the room. They sport forced smiles and grin at each other through their teeth.

THE ANNIVERSARY WIFE

What kind of musicians did you hire? I thought you were going to hire the best. Some anniversary, you're too cheap to pay for professionals?

THE ANNIVERSARY HUSBAND

They came highly recommended.

THE ANNIVERSARY WIFE

Recommended by whom, your proctologist? You can forget about that special anniversary gift I promised to give you later. You know what I'm talking about, the one you've been wanting for years.

The Anniversary Husband is irate and shoots Béla a murderous look. Béla's nerves are shot and he hits the biggest clinker of them all. The screeching is horrible, the guests are forced to cover their ears. The Anniversary Husband is startled. In the middle of attempting to do a dip with The Anniversary Wife, The Anniversary Husband throws his hands up and lets go of The Anniversary Wife. She flails her arms as she loses her balance, falls backward and hits her head on an antique table. She's knocked out cold after she falls to the floor. She lies unconscious with her dress up over her head and her girdle exposed.

Markovich Helen and Béla jump up and quickly head for the door. Markovich Helen and Béla are winded as they speak.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I hope he paid you in advance.

BÉLA

Naturally, he's got a bad reputation.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Papa wasn't the best violinist in New York. My grandmother had to save his ass on many a gig.

INT. FUNCTION ROOM (1928) - NIGHT

BÉLA (early 30's) and MARKOVICH HELEN (early 20's) dance a csárdás during a Hungarian social event.

BÉLA

I've wanted to dance with you for a long time Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Really?

BÉLA

You're a good dancer too.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Thank you.

BÉLA

What do you think of my dancing?

Markovich Helen answers flatly.

MARKOVICH HELEN

It's good.

BÉLA

Good? Just good? A lot of ladies like to dance with me. They say I'm a good dancer.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Do you want to find another lady to dance with now?

BÉLA

No, no I didn't mean that. You should go out with me sometime. We play well together. Maybe we can go to the beach?

MARKOVICH HELEN

What would we do at the beach?

BÉLA

What everybody does at the beach.
Get into a bathing suit and swim.
You do know how to swim, don't you
Helen?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Of course I know how to swim. I'm
probably better than you.

BÉLA

Well then we should go soon so we
can find out who's better.

Béla pulls Markovich Helen a little closer to him. Markovich Helen pulls back from Béla.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I just got this dress and I don't
want to crease it. Do you like it?

BÉLA

Yes, yes it's very nice.

Béla scans Markovich Helen's body. Markovich Helen tries to hide the fact that she enjoys the attention.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

I enjoy dancing with you Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I think Buzi Fabó would do anything
to dance with you.

BÉLA

Yes, but he doesn't play music. And
he's not as pretty.

MARKOVICH HELEN

True.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

In addition to Papa's violin gigs,
he also worked as a freelance
cantor. He traveled around the
northeast and never turned down a
gig, no matter where it took him.

INT. SYNAGOGUE (1929) - NIGHT

Rose has doubled in size. She's even hairier and uglier than before. She's dressed all in white. The groom is an unattractive schmuck. He's skinny and has buck teeth and greasy hair.

Artie Goldberg beams with pride. Rose's Rabbi officiates and Béla sings.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1932) - NIGHT

UNCLE PISTI is married to Aunt Magda. He is a bald and acerbic man. He plays a Hungarian card game with Béla, Samu, and Joska. There's a pot of nickels in the center of the table, next to a deck of cards.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

After Herman died the family moved en masse to the Bronx. They all lived on the same block and were spread out over three adjacent buildings. All the Markowitz sisters got married and started families. Papa started a weekly Saturday night card game with Samu, Uncle Pisti and Joska. It was sort of a cross between rummy and poker.

Béla draws a card from the deck. There's a slight pause. Then he discards another card from his hand and throws a nickel into the pot.

BÉLA

Kontra.

JOSKA

Thank god we moved from Manhattan. It was crowded and dirty and smelled bad.

UNCLE PISTI

Just like you.

Uncle Pisti draws a card from the deck and discards another card from his hand. He throws a dime into the pot.

UNCLE PISTI (CONT'D)

Rekontra.

SAMU

It's a lot nicer here. Did you see the redhead next door?

JOSKA

What redhead? I didn't see any
redhead.

Joska draws a card from the deck and discards another card
from his hand. He throws a quarter into the pot.

JOSKA (CONT'D)

Szubkontra.

SAMU

I think she likes me. She had a
funny look on her face last night
when I passed her in the hallway.

UNCLE PISTI

She probably had gas.

Béla and Joska laugh.

Uncle Pisti draws a card from the deck and discards another
from his hand.

UNCLE PISTI (CONT'D)

Hirskontra.

Uncle Pisti looks cocky and confident. No one raises the bet.

Samu, Joska, Uncle Pisti and Béla lay their cards down in the
center of the table. Everybody groans when Uncle Pisti wins.

Uncle Pisti smiles broadly as he collects his winnings. He
flaunts his cash and looks like a King pouring over his
treasure.

JOSKA

Pisti can I borrow some money?

UNCLE PISTI

Forget it Joska. You still owe me
for last week.

SAMU

What about me?

UNCLE PISTI

You? You owe me for the last three
weeks. You're not getting a dime
from me Samu.

SAMU

But we're brothers Pisti.

UNCLE PISTI

Ha! Some brother. Pay up!

SAMU

I'll pay you next week when I win.

Everybody laughs at Samu.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1935) - DAY

Béla, Markovich Helen and ARNOLD (3) have just finished breakfast. They've eaten Markovich Helen's foul, rude, homemade oatmeal. Markovich Helen clears the table and wipes it down.

Béla stands and removes tefillin blocks from their storage boxes. He performs the ritual of Tefillin.

EXT. WW1 HUNGARIAN BATTLEFIELD (1915) - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

At seventeen, Papa found religion on a World War One Hungarian battlefield. He fought against the allies, alongside the Germans and Hungarian peasants, who weren't particularly fond of Jews.

BÉLA (17) trembles in a foxhole as gunfire and the sound of exploding grenades surround him. He is too afraid to fire his gun and crouches protectively, his head lowered. Next to him is an ANTI-SEMITIC HUNGARIAN PEASANT who despises him. This peasant has a crazed, hateful look in his eyes as he looks out into the darkness and fires his gun like a madman.

During a brief lull in the fighting, the Anti-Semitic Hungarian Peasant crouches down, reloads his gun and notices Béla cowering in a corner of the foxhole. He is disgusted and speaks to Béla with utter contempt.

ANTI-SEMITIC HUNGARIAN PEASANT

If they don't kill you I will, you Jew bastard.

The fighting resumes and the Anti-Semitic Hungarian Peasant begins to fire at the enemy again. He pauses briefly and points his gun at Béla. Béla gets spooked and quickly scurries out of the foxhole as the fighting continues. Béla crawls on his stomach for a few feet. A grenade lands in the foxhole and detonates, causing a loud explosion.

Béla feels the force of the explosion as he throws his arms around his head. Debris, dirt and pieces of the Anti-Semitic Hungarian Peasant's body land all around and on top of him. Béla turns over and looks up at the sky in awe.

BACK TO PRESENT

Béla looks up at the ceiling as he finishes performing the ritual of Tefillin.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

After Papa got religion, he followed the Orthodox ways, which included the morning ritual of Tefillin.

He places the tefillin boxes back in their storage boxes and turns his head abruptly when he hears a cat screech. Arnold reaches over and pulls out one of the tefillin boxes. Arnold thinks they're toys and begins to tap them together to make beats and create fun sounds. Béla turns around and sees Arnold playing with his sacred tefillin. He is mortified.

BÉLA

What the hell, what did you do Arnie? Bad boy, you must never play with tefillin. You must be careful, these contain sacred prayers, the words of the almighty. These are not toys!

Arnold begins to cry. He is frightened by Béla's yelling.

MARKOVICH HELEN

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

What did you do Béla? He's only three, he doesn't understand.

Arnold continues to cry as Markovich Helen argues with Béla.

BÉLA

The boy has to learn Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

He just wants to play.

BÉLA

I don't want him wasting time with foolishness.

MARKOVICH HELEN

He likes to tap on things, he
thinks he's making music.

BÉLA

Music? What music? It's noise.
Tefillin are sacred.

Arnold throws up all over the tefillin as Béla and Markovich
Helen argue.

MARKOVICH HELEN

You see what you've done Béla? You
upset Arnie and now I have a mess
to clean up.

Markovich Helen curses in Hungarian as she cleans up Arnold's
vomit. Béla grunts and leaves the room.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

My grandparents learned two very
important things that day. Poppy
was destined to become a drummer,
and creamy foods made him puke.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1939) - DAY

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

My grandmother didn't want Poppy
messing up her pristine home. She
was forever throwing him out of the
apartment.

Markovich Helen is fed up and frustrated. She's trying to
clean the apartment as ARNOLD (7) tosses a ball around.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Go to Bibi, go to your aunt. And
don't get into trouble!

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Telling Poppy not to get into
trouble was like asking Papa to eat
shellfish. It was never going to
happen.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Arnold goes outside and has a rock fight with some
neighborhood kids. A kid throws a rock at him and breaks his
nose. He runs toward Aunt Bibi and Uncle Henny's apartment as
he holds his face and screams.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - DOORWAY - DAY

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Uncle Henny always took Poppy to the hospital. He got him patched up over and over again, and had the unenviable job of returning him to my grandmother.

UNCLE HENNY is a tough, streetwise guy. He stands in the doorway holding Arnold's hand. Arnold's nose is completely bandaged, his eyes peer over the bandages nervously as Uncle Henny rings the doorbell. Markovich Helen answers the door. She is aghast.

UNCLE HENNY

Don't get excited Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

(in Hungarian)

Jaj Istenem!

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - DOORWAY - DAY

Uncle Henny stands in the doorway with Arnold. He holds Arnold's good hand. Arnold's other arm and hand are in a sling. Arnold looks mortified as Uncle Henny rings the doorbell. Markovich Helen answers the door. She turns red and drops a piece of fine china. As Arnold attempts to flee, Uncle Henny grabs him by the shirt collar and pulls him back.

UNCLE HENNY

Don't get excited Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

Stupid boy! What did you do? Damn it! You have the mental capacity of a sock. What did you do? What did you do Arnie? Stupid! Shut up!

Markovich Helen rants and raves in Hungarian as Uncle Henny and Arnold slowly inch their way backwards.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - DOORWAY - DAY

A BURLY FIREFIGHTER stands in the doorway carrying Arnold in his arms. Arnold's leg is in a cast. Various funny, cartoonlike drawings appear on the cast, along with some scribbles.

The Burly Firefighter rings the doorbell and speaks before Markovich Helen has a chance to react.

BURLY FIREFIGHTER

Some guy told me to tell you not to get excited Helen.

Markovich Helen totally loses it.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Poppy was devastated when Aunt Bibi and Uncle Henny moved to Massachusetts. Uncle Henny said it was a matter of self-preservation.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1942) - NIGHT

Weekly card game in the living room with Béla, Samu, Joska and Uncle Pisti. They smoke cigars and drink while they play.

Samu looks like the cat who ate the canary. He's obviously feeling smug and happy.

UNCLE PISTI

What are you so happy about? You always look like you just swallowed a mouthful of shit.

SAMU

(in Hungarian)

Punci.

(in English)

I have a new girl. We're going for coffee tomorrow.

UNCLE PISTI

Are you going to tell your wife? In case you haven't noticed, she's in the next room.

Samu grunts. Everyone lays down their cards.

JOSKA

You can never have enough punci Pisti.

UNCLE PISTI

Another saint speaks. How's Lenka by the way?

JOSKA

She's fine thank you. You're one to talk Pisti.

UNCLE PISTI
 (to Samu in Hungarian,
 English subtitles)
 You are so stupid! You can't even
 add. Why do you bother to play?

Samu is pissed off and scowls at Uncle Pisti. He rubs his own head, making fun of Uncle Pisti's baldness.

SAMU
 (in Hungarian, English
 subtitles)
 You think you're so great? At least
 I've still got some hair.

Samu Helen walks into the living room and looks at Samu. She motions for a cigarette.

UNCLE PISTI
 Hi Helen, are you having a good
 time back there?

The men exchange looks and appear awkward.

Samu nervously jumps up and takes out a cigarette for Samu Helen.

SAMU HELEN
 Oh, you know, the usual girl stuff.

Samu Helen waits and stares at Samu. She is obviously annoyed.

SAMU HELEN (CONT'D)
 Could you light it for me?

Samu takes out a match and lights Samu Helen's cigarette. He almost burns his finger because he stares at her guiltily and forgets to blow out the match. Samu Helen takes a drag and walks out of the living room.

BÉLA
 I just got in some fancy umbrellas
 like they sell at Saks Fifth
 Avenue. You could never get a deal
 like this anywhere.

UNCLE PISTI
 No thanks Béla, I know all about
 your deals.

BÉLA

This is top quality merchandise,
you could never buy it at Saks for
this price.

SAMU

How much?

BÉLA

For you, I'll make a deal that
you'll never see anywhere. I'll
give it to you for a dollar twenty-
five.

SAMU

I'll take it, so I can impress my
date tomorrow.

UNCLE PISTI

What woman would ever be impressed
by you? Forget about puncu. The
only thing you'll be getting
tomorrow is a crappy umbrella and
the check for a lousy cup of
coffee. I know you won't spring for
dinner, you're too cheap.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S BEDROOM

Markovich Helen, Green Helen, Samu Helen and Sara are in Béla
and Markovich Helen's bedroom. Markovich Helen is showing off
her new dress.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

My grandmother's favorite word in
the English language was layaway.
She was constantly putting dresses
on layaway plans behind Papa's
back. Her MO was to sneak a new
dress home and act as if she'd had
it forever. Papa sort of had a
clue, but he could never prove it.

SAMU HELEN

It's so pretty Helen.

GREEN HELEN

Yes, what a beautiful dress. Does
Béla like it?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Béla hasn't seen it yet, it's too
soon.

SARA

Too soon? Why too soon?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Mama, he doesn't know he bought it for me yet. I just finished paying for it on layaway.

SARA

Oh. In other words, he'll make you return it if he sees it now.

GREEN HELEN

So Béla doesn't know how generous he is?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Of course not, otherwise he wouldn't be so generous.

Markovich Helen opens the closet door, runs her hand along the row of dresses and pulls out a few more.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

I bought all of these too.

SARA

How can you afford to buy so many?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Mama, Béla doesn't notice a penny here, a penny there. I spread out the payments.

Markovich Helen reaches up and pulls out a new tea set from the top shelf. She passes the box around to all the women.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

And I bought this lovely tea set.

SAMU HELEN

Samu never lets me buy anything.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Neither does Béla, I just do it. I get whatever I want.

Markovich Helen looks at Sara with adoration and affection.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

Mama has such good taste, she taught me to love beautiful things.

Sara smiles back at her approvingly.

Béla yells from the living room.

BÉLA (O.S.)

Helen, come quick. Come here, I need you.

Markovich Helen is caught off guard and annoyed. She doesn't have time to change out of her new dress and back into her ratty housecoat. She has to go out to the living room to see what Béla wants.

INT. LIVING ROOM

BÉLA

What is that, you bought a new dress?

MARKOVICH HELEN

What, this old thing? I've had it for years Béla. Maybe if you paid some attention to me once in awhile you'd notice.

BÉLA

What the hell are you talking about Helen? I always notice your beautiful figure. I'm telling you that dress looks new.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Well then you need to go have your eyes checked because I always wear this worn out rag. You never buy me anything new. As a matter of fact, we have to go to a funeral tomorrow and I've got nothing to wear. It's time for a new dress. Maybe I'll get one this week. So what do you want? What are you yelling about?

BÉLA

The seltzer bottle's not working.

Markovich Helen is quite peeved.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Ask Arnie to help you, he's good with that thing and I'm busy back there. Mama needs help with some sewing.

Samu looks nervously away from Helen.

Markovich Helen leans in towards Samu and whispers in his ear.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

What's the matter Samu? Afraid your date might cancel for tomorrow?

Samu is totally freaked out and jumps back.

Markovich Helen sports a smug smile and heads back to her bedroom.

INT. COFFEE SHOP (1942) - NIGHT

Samu is out on a date with ANGIE, his "new girlfriend". She's buxom and low class. She wears too much makeup and dresses like a whore. Angie leans over and whispers in Samu's ear.

ANGIE

Sammy, you're so big and strong- I can't wait to see the rest of you. C'mon, let's get out of here.

Samu quickly motions to the waiter for the check. He pays the bill and leaves some change for a tip. When Angie turns around Samu picks up the change and puts it back in his pocket. They leave in a hurry.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Samu and Angie walk briskly to her apartment as a light rain falls. Samu carries his new umbrella.

SAMU

It's a nice summer night. I heard it might rain so I brought my new fancy umbrella from Saks Fifth Avenue.

ANGIE

Oh, you're so thoughtful Sammy. I had my hair done special just for you.

SAMU

You smell so good- you're driving me crazy An, Anika, Annuska, Ana?

Angie is obviously annoyed.

ANGIE

Angie. It's Angie honey.

SAMU

I'm sorry. You're so pretty. My mind is mixed up and I can't think.

ANGIE

It's okay sweetie, I'm not with you for your mind.

The rain picks up and it starts to pour. Samu proudly opens the umbrella and hoists it over his head. He suddenly realizes he's left Angie out in the rain. He awkwardly pulls Angie close to him so she is under the umbrella too.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Gee thanks. Can you walk any faster?

As they walk quickly under the umbrella the rain intensifies. The dye from the umbrella runs all over Samu's suit, as well as Angie's dress. They stop at a crosswalk waiting for the light to change.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Oh my god I'm getting soaked.

Angie looks down at her dress.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Holy shit Sammy, I'm purple! What the hell is going on?

Angie speaks in a mocking tone.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

It's coming from your fancy umbrella.

Samu's white shirt, jacket and pants are covered in purple dye. He's embarrassed and outraged at the same time.

SAMU

I'm going to kill Béla. I don't understand this An, Ani, Annu, Ah?

Angie is disgusted and screams at Samu as she walks away and crosses the street.

ANGIE

It's Angie, you moron! Saks Fifth Avenue my ass!

Samu throws the umbrella down on the ground and stomps on it as the rain continues to pour down all over him. He is a sorry sight.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Samu pounds on the apartment door as Béla, Markovich Helen, Green Helen, Jákob, Uncle Pisti, Aunt Magda and others are laughing, eating, playing music and dancing.

Béla opens the apartment door and finds a drenched and irate Samu. He's wearing a light colored suit that's covered in purple dye. Some of the dye is in his hair and on his neck and face. Samu holds up a mangled umbrella. It looks like it's been run over by a car many times.

SAMU

What the hell kind of umbrella did you sell me? Give me my money back, you thief!

Béla feigns innocence.

BÉLA

What the hell's wrong with you? That was an expensive umbrella and you got it for cheap. A beautiful piece of merchandise that you could never afford to buy. And for your information, I didn't make a dime on that sale. I lost money.

Samu is fuming.

SAMU

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

I lost pussy because of that piece of shit umbrella! That frigid bitch left me in the street, looking like an asshole!

BÉLA

Well I can't help it if you look like an asshole, you are an asshole.

SAMU

I look like an asshole? You're the asshole, asshole! I want a new umbrella.

BÉLA

Samu, we're family. Come in and have a drink and something to eat. Helen made pot roast, it's delicious.

INT. DINING ROOM

Samu raises his eyebrows and enters the apartment with Béla. There are different plates of food on the dining room table. A large pot roast is in the center of the table. It is burnt, charred and shriveled.

EXT. SYNAGOGUE (1943) - DAY

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Every Saturday morning Poppy went kicking and screaming to the synagogue with Papa. For Papa, religion was a way of life. For Poppy, it was his worst nightmare. A bolt of lightning never did strike Poppy dead for eating pork at a Chinese restaurant, but Papa put the fear of God in him nevertheless.

ARNOLD (11) and Béla walk up the stairs to the synagogue.

BÉLA

What the hell's wrong with you?
Pick your feet up, GOD can see you.

ARNOLD

I hate this. I want to play
baseball with Bobby. Can't I go
home?

Béla stops and turns to Arnold.

BÉLA

Listen to me. Forget about
baseball. Baseball will never save
your life.

Béla and Arnold open the exterior door to the Synagogue and enter.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

The Hungarian synagogue is filled with congregants. THE ORTHODOX RABBI is getting ready to lead morning Shabbat service. He is tall and wears a long black coat and prayer shawl with ornaments. A SEXTON stands to the side. His eyes are dark and piercing. He looks like a villain and scowls at everyone. AVRAM COHEN is sitting on a bench. He is a short, elderly man. He wears wire-rimmed glasses and has a white goatee. He holds a silver-handled black cane.

He is pious and scholarly. Congregants seek him out for his opinions on Torah, Talmud and Jewish law.

Béla instructs Arnold to sit down. Béla walks away for a moment. As Arnold takes his seat, Avram Cohen sits down beside him. Béla comes back and sits on the other side of Avram Cohen. Béla and Arnold tower over Avram Cohen.

BÉLA

Good morning Mr. Cohen.

Avram Cohen looks at Béla and nods.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

This is my son Arnold. I told him to be a good boy and pray to the almighty.

Béla looks at Arnold with a stern expression.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

Mr Cohen is a Tzadik, a real scholar and pious man. Show some respect!

Arnold looks bored and confused. The service gets underway.

The Orthodox Rabbi intones the morning prayers. Everyone has their prayer books open, reading along under their breath.

Béla lets out a thunderous fart that echoes throughout the synagogue. He immediately turns to Arnold and slaps him across the face. The Orthodox Rabbi stutters. The Sexton's eyes harden as he tries to pinpoint the culprit.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you? Can't you control yourself? Have you no respect for Mr. Cohen?

Avram Cohen looks like he's about to pass out. His eyes start to water and glaze over. Arnold starts to laugh hysterically. He loses control and lets out a big fart. Béla starts to laugh and lets out another big fart.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

Apologize to Mr. Cohen. You should be ashamed of yourself!

Avram Cohen looks at both of them with contempt and moves to another bench. Béla and Arnold continue to laugh and fart. Other congregants start to move away from Béla and Arnold to avoid the stench. The Orthodox Rabbi struggles to hold it together.

The Sexton zeroes in on Béla with a look of disdain. He moves toward him but backs off when he gets a whiff of the foul stench surrounding Béla and Arnold.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Béla and Arnold sit at the dining room table with prayer books. Béla tries to teach Arnold Hebrew. He is frustrated by Arnold's resistance.

BÉLA

Repeat after me.

Béla reads Hebrew passage. Arnold butchers Hebrew passage when he reads it. Béla slaps Arnold over the head.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

You're not even trying.
Concentrate. You have to learn how
to speak Hebrew so you can be a Bar
Mitzvah.

ARNOLD

I don't care. I don't want to be a
Bar Mitzvah. I just want to go out
and be with my friends.

BÉLA

You will learn Hebrew. You will
read from the Torah. You will have
a Bar Mitzvah and you will learn to
respect the almighty.

ARNOLD

I think the almighty stinks!

BÉLA

That's it! I'm taking you to Rabbi
Levy to learn Hebrew. I'm afraid I
might kill you if I don't.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

So Papa dragged Poppy to Rabbi
Levy's Hebrew school. Poppy had no
idea what he was in for.

INT. RABBI LEVY'S HEBREW SCHOOL - DAY

RABBI LEVY'S HEBREW SCHOOL is an old candy store. It is dingy, oppressively hot and poorly lit. There is no ventilation. The school is located next to a dry cleaner. The floorboards creak.

There are several rows of old elementary school desks that open from the top. They are positioned three across on both sides of a narrow aisle. RABBI LEVY sits at a desk on a raised platform in front of an empty classroom. He is short, scruffy and disheveled. He wields a long stick in his right hand and has a heavy Yiddish accent. Béla drags Arnold up to Rabbi Levy's desk.

BÉLA

Good morning Rabbi Levy, this is my son Arnold.

RABBI LEVY

You will work hard and be a model student. You will perform well during your Bar Mitzvah. If you screw up, you'll never make it from the Bima alive. We want to be proud of you. You will pay attention, come prepared, be respectful and behave. And no playing what you call hooky.

BÉLA

Tell me if he causes any trouble. You have my permission to hit him with your stick if he doesn't behave.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Poppy knew there was no way out for him, so he tried to make the best of it.

INT. RABBI LEVY'S HEBREW SCHOOL - DAY

A full classroom of students sweat profusely in the sweltering heat. Rabbi Levy is in the middle of a lesson. STUDENT NUMBER ONE raises his hand.

STUDENT NUMBER ONE

(in Yiddish)

Ich darf gehn pishen.

RABBI LEVY

You're not going to the bathroom now.

The lesson goes on. Student Number One starts to rock back and forth. He moans and looks desperate as he speaks.

STUDENT NUMBER ONE

Ich darf gehn pishen!

Rabbi Levy points his cane at the door and Student Number One goes to the bathroom.

STUDENT NUMBER TWO waves his hand frantically and bounces up and down as he speaks.

STUDENT NUMBER TWO
Ich darf gehn pishen.

Rabbi Levy scowls. He points to the door and motions for Student Number Two to go.

Arnold stands up and speaks.

ARNOLD
Ich darf gehn pishen.

Rabbi Levy points to the door with his cane. Arnold starts walking to the door. Before Arnold can pass, Rabbi Levy stops him with the cane.

RABBI LEVY
Gehen pishen? If I catch you making
trouble you'll feel my stick!

INT. RABBI LEVY'S HEBREW SCHOOL - BATHROOM - DAY

Arnold sits on the floor playing penny poker with the other students.

STUDENT NUMBER ONE
Hurry up, what's your bet?

STUDENT NUMBER TWO
I bet three and I'm calling.

ARNOLD
Levy's gonna figure it out soon.
Two pair.

STUDENT NUMBER TWO
He's such a bastard! Damn, you beat
me.

Rabbi Levy comes flying into the bathroom swinging his stick.

RABBI LEVY
(in Yiddish, English
subtitles)
Pigs and little bastards!

INT. DRY CLEANER - DAY

Arnold and the other students escape through the dry cleaner. A black dry cleaning presser witnesses them running out of the bathroom and laughs.

CLARENCE

If the Rebbe done catch y'all he's gonna whip your little white Jewish asses.

ARNOLD

Help us Clarence, he's gonna kill us!

CLARENCE

Y'all on your own now.

Rabbi Levy continues to swing his stick as he chases the students around the dry cleaner.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rabbi Levy talks with Béla in the living room.

RABBI LEVY

I tell you the truth Mr. Schiffman, it ain't worth it for me to teach your boy. He's a troublemaker and he don't want to learn nothing. He plays cards with the other little bastards in the toilet.

BÉLA

Worry nothing Rebbe. I'll have a talk with him tonight.

INT. RABBI LEVY'S HEBREW SCHOOL - DAY

Arnold is in class. Student Number One motions to Arnold to go to the bathroom. Arnold shakes his head no. He rubs his ass, winces in pain and focuses his attention on Rabbi Levy.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Poppy finally settled down and started to learn. He realized that all the resistance wasn't worth the pain.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

ARNOLD (13) is on the bima. Béla beams with pride as Arnold becomes a Bar Mitzvah. Rabbi Levy sits next to Béla, clutching his stick.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1944) - DAY

Béla sits in the living room with Markovich Helen and drinks a cup of tea.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Papa's mother Nina died three days before Hitler invaded Hungary. When Nina was on her deathbed, Papa's eleven siblings refused to leave her side, despite repeated warnings to get out of the country. After Nina died, it was too late for anybody to leave Hungary.

There's a knock at the door. Béla answers and signs for a telegram. He sits down and reads the telegram. After a few moments he collapses.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

The news of Nina's death and subsequent invasion by Hitler was too much for Papa to bear. His heart was literally broken.

INT. HOSPITAL - BELA'S ROOM - DAY

Béla lies in his hospital bed, post heart attack. He is weak, medicated and fatigued. Various Hungarian relatives file into his room to visit.

Markovich Helen sits by Béla's bedside as Samu and Samu Helen enter the room. Samu is afraid of sickness, hospitals and death. He is visibly terrified. He pulls up a chair, lights a cigar and blows the smoke in Béla's direction. Béla coughs.

MARKOVICH HELEN

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

Put that out Samu, what's wrong with you? You're such an asshole.

Samu extinguishes his cigar in a cup of Béla's water. The cup sits on a night table next to his bed. Samu Helen jumps up, gives Samu a dirty look, dumps out the filthy water and rinses the cup.

Green Helen is hysterical and sobs uncontrollably as she enters Béla's hospital room.

GREEN HELEN

My poor Béla, so young and so handsome. You can't leave us now, not now.

Béla looks up with deep concern.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Calm down, Béla's going to be just fine. Don't worry him.

Green Helen takes out some tissues from her purse and blows her nose noisily. She can't stop crying. She speaks through tears but has trouble concealing her excitement.

GREEN HELEN

I thought there was going to be another funeral in the family.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Funeral? Maybe someone else's but not Béla's!

Aunt Magda and Uncle Pisti arrive with ETEL NÉNI. Uncle Pisti tries to guide Etel Néni. She is legally blind and holds a large pot of frankfurter goulash.

UNCLE PISTI

Szervusz Béla, we're here. Etel Néni insisted on making you a big pot of goulash, she wouldn't let me carry it.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Béla has to watch his diet now but I'll freeze the goulash for Jerry and Arnie.

Béla whispers.

BÉLA

Can I have a little taste?

UNCLE PISTI

One little taste, what could it hurt?

Etel Néni takes a heaping spoonful from the pot and with slow and shaky hands attempts to feed Béla. Béla opens his mouth. Just as Etel Néni gets near his mouth she misses and smears the food all over his face.

An AUSTERE NURSE comes into the room and admonishes the entire family for their irresponsible behavior. Samu is behind her, quietly aping her movements and gestures.

AUSTERE NURSE

What in the world is going on in here? Mr. Schiffman just suffered a major heart attack and needs to carefully watch his diet. He's on a low salt, low calorie diet now and needs to stay away from rich, fatty, smelly foods. He also needs his rest. All of you need to leave now!

The Austere Nurse exits the room. Everyone ignores her and stays.

A patient sleeps in the bed next to Béla. The curtain is partially drawn around his space. His lunch tray sits untouched on a tray table. Samu notices the roast turkey with mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and peas. He conspicuously makes his way toward the lunch.

The relatives talk amongst themselves and to Béla. They don't pay any attention to Samu. Samu steps behind the curtain and steals a bite of the sleeping patient's lunch. He likes it, takes a couple more bites and then devours the lunch quickly so he doesn't get caught. After he cleans the plate, he wipes his mouth with a napkin and rejoins the group. They haven't noticed that Samu's been missing. A FRIENDLY NURSE enters the room to check on the sleeping patient.

FRIENDLY NURSE

Very good Mr. Shapiro, you ate all your lunch. My my, we were hungry.

Samu belches as everyone gathers near Béla's bed. They're all laughing, cursing and yelling.

INT. UNCLE ISÁAK AND AUNT ZSUZSI'S HOUSE IN PHILLY - DAY

Béla, Markovich Helen, Arnold and JERRY, Arnold's kid brother, have just arrived from New York for a short visit. UNCLE ISÁAK is short and stout. He sits at one head of a rectangular dining room table. They are about to eat lunch.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

After his heart attack, Papa felt depressed. He thought a visit with his brother Isáak might cheer him up, so he packed up the family and they headed off to Philly.

(MORE)

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The doctor gave him permission to go, but warned him to take it easy and avoid stress.

UNCLE ISÁAK

You look good Béla, I'm glad you decided to come to Philly. How do you feel?

BÉLA

I got my appetite back, and it doesn't hurt as much to move. The almighty spared my life again, who am I to complain?

AUNT ZSUZSI walks through a kitchen swing door carrying plates of food. She's tiny and extremely thin. She places the food on the dining room table and takes her place at the other end of the table.

AUNT ZSUZSI

Eat everyone, enjoy. Béla I made your favorite foods: cholent, stuffed cabbage and chicken paprikash. Helen told me to go easy on the salt.

BÉLA

Thank you Zsuzsi, it smells delicious.

Uncle Isáak looks down at the food and makes a face.

UNCLE ISÁAK

What do you call this?

AUNT ZSUZSI

It's goulash, I tried a new recipe.

Arnold, Jerry, Béla and Markovich Helen start helping themselves to the food.

UNCLE ISÁAK

Goulash? Maybe you should feed it to the dog first. He likes eating garbage.

AUNT ZSUZSI

So now my cooking is garbage? There's nothing wrong with my cooking. The only garbage around here is you!

Arnold, Jerry, Béla and Markovich Helen quietly chow down on the food. They're not fazed by the arguing.

UNCLE ISÁAK
(in Hungarian, English
subtitles)
Hell should break you apart.

AUNT ZSUZSI
(in Hungarian, English
subtitles)
Kiss my ass.

ARNOLD
Ma could you pass me the potatoes
please?

UNCLE ISÁAK
(in Hungarian, English
subtitles)
Ha! You couldn't pay me enough to
get near that fat ass of yours.
You should burn up in your own fat.

Aunt Zsuzsi picks up a plate and throws it at Uncle Isáak like a frisbee. Uncle Isáak ducks. The plate barely misses him and crashes into the wall behind him.

Béla, Markovich Helen, Arnold and Jerry stop eating. They duck and take cover as Aunt Zsuzsi hurls dishes at Uncle Isáak.

Uncle Isáak jumps up from his chair and crouches behind Jerry.

Aunt Zsuzsi gets up, walks through the swing door into the kitchen and returns with a giant rolling pin. She glares at Uncle Isáak and growls. Uncle Isáak starts running. Aunt Zsuzsi chases him around the table with the rolling pin.

AUNT ZSUZSI
(in Hungarian, English
subtitles)
Be afraid, be very afraid.

Uncle Isáak lets out a high pitched squeak.

Aunt Zsuzsi and Uncle Isáak run around the table a couple of times and stop at opposite ends, gasping for air.

Markovich Helen stands up and walks over to Aunt Zsuzsi. She puts her hand on Aunt Zsuzsi's hand. It's wrapped tightly around the rolling pin.

MARKOVICH HELEN

What a lovely dinner. Can I have
your paprikash recipe Zsuzsi?

Aunt Zsuzsi smiles at Markovich Helen with appreciation and slowly lowers the rolling pin.

AUNT ZSUZSI

Thank you Helen, it's nice to know
that some people appreciate my
cooking. Of course you can have my
recipe.

Uncle Isáak, looking very relieved, slinks back down into his chair. The entire family starts eating again in silence. Silverware taps against plates and bowls. Aunt Zsuzsi keeps the rolling pin on the table directly in front of her.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Interestingly enough, that trip
really lifted Papa's spirits.

INT. PET STORE (1946) - DAY

Markovich Helen talks to a PET STORE OWNER and decides to adopt a pathetic bird with lice infestation. The bird only has two feathers.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

There were only two things my
grandmother was really passionate
about: going to funerals, and
saving animals. She liked animals a
lot more than people because in her
words: Animals are innocent and
helpless, and people, are mostly
full of shit.

MARKOVICH HELEN

(to the bird)

Don't worry, you're very handsome
tatala. You're coming home with me.

PET STORE OWNER

Are you sure you want this bird?
He's ridden with lice and in case
you didn't notice he only has two
feathers. I didn't think anyone
would want him.

Markovich Helen grabs a bag of bird seed, opens it and dumps a lot of seed into the cage.

MARKOVICH HELEN

You look hungry. Here have something to eat. You're too scrawny. I want you to grow up big and strong.

PET STORE OWNER

I'll ring up the bird, and the bird seed.

MARKOVICH HELEN

(whispers to the bird)

I'm gonna call you Chippy. Repeat after me Chippy: Baszd Meg, Baszd Meg.

BIRD

Baszd Meg, Baszd Meg.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Say goodbye to the nice man.

Markovich Helen grins as she exits the pet store with Chippy. The Pet Store Owner stares at them and shakes his head.

PET STORE OWNER

Buzz Meg?

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1949) - DAY

Markovich Helen walks into the apartment holding two stray cats that she has just rescued.

Béla looks extremely unhappy.

BÉLA

What the hell!

MARKOVICH HELEN

Never mind what the hell, they were starving.

BÉLA

Soon we'll be starving because of all these animals you keep bringing home. We live in a zoo Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Well you don't need to eat so much. Remember, it's bad for your heart.

Reggie the cat waddles into the living room. He is enormous.

BÉLA

Look how fat Reggie is. He looked like a rat when you first brought him home. Now look at him. You'll probably kill him Helen. Me you starve, then you feed.

MARKOVICH HELEN

That's because they're nice.

Markovich Helen picks up one of the stray cats and strokes her.

EXT. STREET (1966) - DAY

Markovich Helen walks up to a HISPANIC WOMAN WEARING A FUR COAT. She points a finger in the woman's face and screams at her.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

My grandmother became an animal activist in her later years, sort of.

MARKOVICH HELEN

You disgusting bitch! They should kill you and make you into a coat!

The Hispanic woman wearing a fur coat looks at Markovich Helen like she's crazy.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

What's the matter? You got nothing to say for yourself?

HISPANIC WOMAN WEARING A FUR COAT

(in Spanish, English subtitles)

Ay, crazy bitch! Get away from me!

The Hispanic woman wearing a fur coat runs away from Markovich Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Yeah, that's right. Run away you miserable piece of shit!

A woman on the street hears Markovich Helen and tries to avoid her.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)
 (to woman on the street)
 Can you believe the nerve of that
 woman?

EXT. CEMETERY (1946) - DAY

All the relatives gather at the cemetery for Joska's funeral.

ÖDI is cheap and self-serving, like his brothers Joska and Samu. He whispers to Samu.

ÖDI
 I can't believe we have to pay for
 Joska's funeral. Our bastard
 brother said he would leave all of
 his money to us. It turns out we
 all have to chip in to bury him
 now, he doesn't have a dime.

SAMU
 What can we do? We have to put him
 somewhere ÖDI.

ÖDI
 I know where I'd like to put him.
 I'd like to shove him up cousin
 Irmuska's ass.

SAMU
 Cousin Irmuska? She's four hundred
 pounds and nasty.

ÖDI
 Exactly.

JOSKA'S RABBI is a funny looking man. He's short and has a
 big nose. Large owlish eyes peer behind thick glasses. He's
 about to start the funeral service when a MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
 shows up. She is gorgeous and has large breasts. She's in
 tears and can barely speak. Nobody knows who she is.

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
 Joska. My poor Joska. My beloved
 husband and soul mate.

All of the relatives are stunned, especially LENKA, Joska's
 naive wife.

LENKA
 You poor dear. You're so
 distraught.
 (MORE)

LENKA (CONT'D)

I'm afraid you're at the wrong funeral. You've got the wrong Joska.

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN

The wrong Joska? Isn't this the funeral of Joska Guber? Who are you people anyway? Joska told me he was all alone in America. He left his family behind in Hungary.

LENKA

All alone in America? What are you talking about? I am Joska's wife, we've been married for many years. And these are all of his brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces. Maybe you need to ask the funeral director, you must be mistaken.

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN

I think you're the one who's mistaken. My Joska was a dear, sweet man. He was married to me, and only me. He would never lie or cheat.

LENKA

Really? I wouldn't call my Joska a dear sweet man but I am his wife.

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN

Well I happen to know that my Joska had a heart shaped birthmark on his penis. It was red.

Lenka gasps and looks horrified. The mourners are silent. Samu whispers to Ödi.

SAMU

That's Joska alright. Women loved that thing. He used to brag about it all the time. Remember when he lost that bet? He got that tattoo when he was 16. I should have gotten one too. Lucky dog.

Lenka is outraged and humiliated.

LENKA

(to Mysterious Woman in Hungarian, English subtitles)

Whore!

WIFE NUMBER THREE is also attractive. She suddenly pipes up.

WIFE NUMBER THREE

The two of you are lying because I
am the real Mrs. Guber.

BÉLA

How many wives can one man have?

WIFE NUMBER FOUR is pretty, but sounds shrill as she speaks.

WIFE NUMBER FOUR

I'll tell you how many, he married
me too. What a louse! Who here
isn't married to Joska?

JOSKA'S FRIEND answers. He's a heavy set, unkempt man with a
thick beard and wrinkled clothing.

JOSKA'S FRIEND

Well I'm not married to Joska. At
least I think I'm not.

Joska's Rabbi is surprised. His jaw drops. Mourners shake
their heads in disbelief.

Lenka screams at Joska's casket.

LENKA

(in Hungarian, English
subtitles)

Whores' dick! Go to hell!!!

Tears stream down Green Helen's face. She blows her nose as
she tries to calm Lenka down. Joska's Rabbi attempts to start
the service.

JOSKA'S RABBI

We need to begin the service now.
Unless we're expecting more wives?

WIFE NUMBER FIVE is slender and unassuming. She stands at the
back of the crowd. She raises her hand. An UNIDENTIFIED MALE
RELATIVE quickly pulls it down and whispers.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE RELATIVE

Think about it, do you really want
to be wife number five?

Wife Number Five thinks about it for a second and leaves.

JOSKA'S RABBI

We're here today to mourn the
passing of our beloved Joska.

(MORE)

JOSKA'S RABBI (CONT'D)
 He leaves behind his lovely wife
 Lenka of thirty years.

Joska's Rabbi looks at Mysterious Woman.

JOSKA'S RABBI (CONT'D)
 His second wife?

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
 Éva.

Joska's Rabbi looks at Wife Number Three.

JOSKA'S RABBI
 His third wife?

WIFE NUMBER THREE
 Jolánka.

Joska's Rabbi looks at Wife Number Four.

JOSKA'S RABBI
 His fourth wife?

WIFE NUMBER FOUR
 Dorottya.

JOSKA'S RABBI
 And any other wives we don't know
 about. Yet.

Markovich Helen dabs her eyes and whispers to Green Helen.

MARKOVICH HELEN
 This is the best funeral we've ever
 been to. They just keep getting
 better.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Samu, Béla, Ödi and Uncle Pisti play cards and complain about
 Joska's funeral. Ödi deals.

UNCLE PISTI
 It's a shame we lost Joska.

SAMU
 But Ödi's a much better player. And
 at least he has a few cents, which
 is more than we can say for Joska.

UNCLE PISTI

Are you still mad about having to pay for Joska's funeral?

SAMU

Of course I'm mad! Five wives, can you believe that? He spent all of his money on women and left us with the funeral bill.

Samu cups his hands under enormous, imaginary breasts.

SAMU (CONT'D)

That wife named Éva, did you see her? I tried to talk to her but she ignored me.

UNCLE PISTI

I wonder why?

INT. BELA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1946) - DAY

A letter arrives from Béla's nephew, a Holocaust survivor. Béla signs for it and walks into the living room. He sits down on the couch near Markovich Helen, opens the letter and starts to read. His eyes fill up with tears. He looks up at Markovich Helen who listens intently.

BÉLA

My nephew Sanyi survived Auschwitz. He's alive Helen, my sister's son is alive.

Béla scans the four page letter and looks up at Markovich Helen again.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

It's all here, the whole story.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Papa's entire family was wiped out during the Holocaust. He lost everyone, including eleven brothers and sisters. Considering Sanyi's story, his survival was truly miraculous.

INT. AUSCHWITZ - STARK GRAY ROOM (1944) - NIGHT

An SS GUARD pushes SANYI, a tall, thin and blonde man into the room. The SS Guard closes the door and sits down at a table with two chairs.

He has a small package wrapped in cloth under his arm. He lights a candle on the table, points a gun at Sanyi and speaks.

SS GUARD
Sit down Jew.

Sanyi walks over to the chair and cautiously sits down. The SS Guard lights a cigarette.

SS GUARD (CONT'D)
You told me you're an amateur chess champion. Let's see how good you are. The rules are simple. Win and you get to live another day. Lose and I send you to the gas chamber.

Sanyi looks at the SS Guard with a calm confidence.

SANYI
How good are you?

SS GUARD
Good enough to beat a Jew.

Sanyi smiles slightly.

SANYI
Don't get your hopes up, I'm the best. I'm going to be around for a very long time.

The SS Guard locks his gaze on Sanyi. He seems furious. After a few seconds he relaxes and smiles back.

SS GUARD
Set up the board.

MONTAGE - CHESS GAMES

- The SS Guard and Sanyi play chess.
- The SS Guard and Sanyi play chess. The SS Guard has put on weight while Sanyi looks thinner.
- The SS Guard and Sanyi play chess. The SS Guard has a beard. Sanyi looks emaciated and weak.

INT. AUSCHWITZ - STARK GRAY ROOM (1945) - NIGHT

The SS Guard is increasingly frustrated and nonplussed.

SANYI

Check mate.

SS GUARD

I will beat you, you know. You're just a Jew.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

He never did.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1949) - NIGHT

ARNOLD (17) tries to get Béla to loan him a suit.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Papa still hadn't made much money by the time Poppy reached his teens. Consequently, the only clothes Papa could afford to buy for Poppy were at the Army/Navy store. Poppy was forced to wear sailor bottoms in high school. It was humiliating.

ARNOLD

Pop, I need to borrow your suit.

BÉLA

Borrow my suit? Why the hell do you want to borrow my suit?

ARNOLD

Cousin Linda is fixing me up with her friend at school. She gave me her number and I called this girl up. We've spoken a few times and I finally got up the nerve to ask her out on a date. But, I have nothing to wear.

BÉLA

What do you mean? I buy you nice clothes, what's wrong with them?

ARNOLD

Pop, she's from a wealthy family. I can't show up in a sailor suit.

BÉLA

Wealthy? A Jewish girl, right?

ARNOLD

Of course she's Jewish. We're about the same size, I really need your tan suit with the white shirt. I need to borrow your shoes too.

Béla goes to his closet and returns with the suit. He pulls out a nice tan jacket, tan pants, a white shirt with white patterns and a fancy pair of cuff links from the garment bag. He lays out the clothing on the dining room table and fusses with it.

BÉLA

This is a beautiful suit, my only suit. I'm telling you now- if anything happens to the suit I'll kill you.

ARNOLD

I'll be really careful, I promise. Nothing will happen to the suit. Please Pop, I need a few bucks too. I want to take my date to the movies, but I'm broke.

BÉLA

The suit's not enough? Now you want money?

ARNOLD

Please just a few bucks, I'll pay you back. This girl's father is a doctor and I need to impress him.

BÉLA

A doctor? Alright, but you better pay me back. Remember it's my only suit, and this will be the only date you ever go on if anything happens to it. And take an umbrella.

INT. MARILYN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Arnold is greeted at his date's apartment door by a man servant. He shows Arnold to the living room, where a beautiful girl is seated.

BEAUTIFUL GIRL

My sister will be ready in a minute.

Arnold smiles shyly at the girl. He mutters quietly to himself.

ARNOLD

I hope my date looks like her
sister.

An attractive girl with an amazing body skips into the living room. Arnold's eyes pop out.

MARILYN

Arnold, I'm so happy to finally
meet you. I'm really looking
forward to our date.

MARILYN is stunningly beautiful. She stands with her back to her sister, who is still sitting on the couch. Marilyn licks her lips and winks suggestively at Arnold. Arnold starts to tremble and turns slightly red.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Arnold and Marilyn sit in the back of the movie theater. The screen reflects off their faces. Arnold doesn't know what to do. Marilyn grabs Arnold's hand and gently caresses his hand and fingers. She puts her arm through his and nudges her breast closer to his arm. She whispers.

MARILYN

Arnie?

Arnold is nervous.

ARNOLD

Hmm?

MARILYN

Do you find me attractive?

ARNOLD

Uh huh.

MARILYN

I think you're very handsome. I
love your red curly hair. It does
something to me.

ARNOLD

It does?

MARILYN

Mmm hmm.

Marilyn puts her head on Arnold's shoulder and they watch the rest of the movie. Arnold puts the popcorn container between his legs and hides his crotch.

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT

Marilyn and Arnold sit at a table and share a large sundae.

MARILYN

I just love musicians. Maybe you can play your trombone for me sometime?

ARNOLD

Sure, I'd be happy too.

Marilyn takes a small scoop of ice cream and licks the spoon suggestively. She stares sensually at Arnold.

MARILYN

I bet you have a really nice bone.

ARNOLD

Well it's not mine actually. I rent it through the school.

MARILYN

I'm sure you play beautifully. I love all kinds of music, especially Swing, jazz and Broadway. I love to dance too. After we finish our ice cream, let's go back to my apartment and put some records on.

ARNOLD

Great.

INT. MARILYN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marilyn and Arnold are back in Marilyn's living room. There's no sign of her sister or her parents. She puts a record on the record player and beckons Arnold to dance. As they dance she kisses Arnold's neck and holds him tightly. They start kissing and as their kissing becomes more heated Marilyn leads Arnold to the couch. Arnold starts kissing Marilyn's neck. They give each other hickeys. Arnold and Marilyn make out feverishly. Arnold kisses Marilyn's breast. Marilyn rubs Arnold's genitals over the suit and he ejaculates. He looks down and sees that there's a giant stain in the crotch of the suit. Arnold imagines Béla yelling at him.

BÉLA

I'm going to kill you!

Arnold is horrified. There's an awkward pause. Marilyn giggles as Arnold jumps up and hurries for the door.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY

Arnold passes a mirror in the apartment hallway and notices that the white shirt collar has lipstick stains all over it. Arnold imagines Béla in the mirror yelling at him.

BÉLA

Kill you!!!

EXT/INT. AUTOMAT - NIGHT

Arnold walks to the Automat across the street from Marilyn's apartment building. He buys a cup of coffee and a prune Danish. As he walks toward a table a drunk staggers into him and his tray flies in the air. The coffee spills all over the suit jacket and pants. The prune Danish is smashed all over the front of the jacket and white shirt. The suit is trashed, there are stains everywhere. Arnold is stunned and stumbles to a table. He talks to himself.

ARNOLD

Think. Think. I need time to think.
What the hell I am gonna do? I'm
dead, he's gonna kill me!

Arnold imagines Béla strangling him. Arnold grabs a few napkins and tries in vain to remove the coffee stains.

INT. AUTOMAT BATHROOM

Arnold goes into the men's room. He wets some paper towels and tries ineffectually to remove the coffee, prune Danish and lipstick from the suit. He trashes the suit even more.

INT. AUTOMAT

Arnold is back at the table. He sits with his head lowered in his hands.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Arnold slowly opens the front door and quietly steps inside the apartment. He finds Béla waiting for him with all the lights on. Béla starts ranting and raving.

BÉLA

What the hell happened to you? What kind of an animal did you go out with? What did you do?

Arnold is embarrassed and terrified. He can't speak.
Markovich Helen enters the room.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Shut up Béla, it's two in the morning.

BÉLA

What the hell! My suit, my suit, my beautiful suit. It's ruined. I should make you wear it every day for the rest of your life Arnie.

Béla starts undoing his belt.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

You'll pay for this. You owe me for a suit.

Arnold runs out of the living room and Béla chases after him with the belt.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - DAY

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Papa couldn't get over the suit, he was furious. He decided to banish Poppy to the Catskills to work as a children's waiter for the summer. Papa worked with a couple of guys who owned a hotel up there. Papa's plan was to take all of the money that Poppy earned and buy a new suit. He had it all figured out, or so he thought.

MOSHE GREENBLATT, the head waiter, is bug eyed, fat and short. He speaks with a heavy Yiddish accent. He leads Arnold into the Chicken Coop as feathers fly all around them.

MOSHE GREENBLATT

Here's where you'll sleep. Put your things under there in that box. The job pays twenty-five a month plus tips. Don't steal the food. You start every morning at five and work till I tell you to stop.

(MORE)

MOSHE GREENBLATT (CONT'D)

Wear a clean shirt, and don't get
into any trouble. Or else.

Moshe Greenblatt leaves the Chicken Coop as another
children's waiter enters. He's a smart ass named HAROLD.

HAROLD

Ah, so you're the new guy. Welcome
to hell. There are ten of us
sleeping in this shithole. You'll
meet the rest of the guys later.
What's your name? My name's Harold.

ARNOLD

Arnie.

HAROLD

Well Arnie, it's going to be a
long, hot summer. And just so you
know, they don't really feed you
here.

ARNOLD

What do you mean they don't feed
you?

HAROLD

We get scraps and leftovers from
the kitchen. Some of it might be
chicken, but I can't be sure. We're
always starving, but I'll show you
the ropes. This is my second year.
The main thing is to watch out for
Moshe, he's a real pain in the ass.

ARNOLD

Yeah, a real stand up guy.

HAROLD

I'll introduce you to the guys
later Arnie. Nice to meet you.

Arnold and Harold shake hands.

ARNOLD

Same here, thanks.

INT. CATSKILLS HOTEL - CHILDREN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

A FAT OLDER WOMAN waves to Arnold. She sits with a chubby
young boy. Arnold walks over to their table to take their
order.

ARNOLD

Good morning. May I take your order?

FAT OLDER WOMAN

(Heavy Yiddish accent)

It's about time, my grandson is wasting away here.

ARNOLD

I'm terribly sorry madam. What can I get for you this morning?

FAT OLDER WOMAN

We'll start with some orange juice. Then we'll have cold cereal, hot cereal, eggs, potatoes, toast, pancakes and hot chocolate with whipped cream.

ARNOLD

Very good madam. I'll be back soon with your juice and cold cereal.

FAT OLDER WOMAN

And don't forget the whipped cream.

As Arnold walks away he gags and mutters to himself.

ARNOLD

Oatmeal, butter and whipped cream. I think I'm gonna puke.

Arnold brings cold cereal and juice to the Fat Older Woman and her grandson Herschel.

Arnold brings out the next course of oatmeal, eggs, potatoes and toast.

FAT OLDER WOMAN

I want you to eat every bite Herschel. Don't waste nothing.

Herschel finishes all of the food in front of him. He belches loudly and holds his stomach. He can't eat another bite.

Arnold brings out pancakes and hot chocolate. The pancakes are smothered in butter and syrup. Herschel downs the pancakes. He is slightly green and looks visibly ill. He gulps down his hot chocolate.

Arnold returns to clear the dishes. Herschel looks wobbly as he stands up. He leans over the table and proceeds to vomit violently. Arnold proceeds to vomit too.

Moshe Greenblatt walks over to the table and yells at Arnold.

MOSHE GREENBLATT
Clean this mess up now!

INT. KITCHEN

Arnold goes into the kitchen and finds a dishwasher. He begs the dishwasher to go out to the dining room and clean up the vomit.

ARNOLD
Please man, I'll give you
everything I have. I can't handle
creamy foods or vomit. You've got
to go out there and clean up all
that puke for me. I'm gonna be sick
again.

The dishwasher holds out his hand. Arnold gives him a couple of bucks.

The dishwasher walks out. Arnold goes to the sink and washes his face.

The dishwasher returns and gives Arnold the thumbs up.

INT. CHILDREN'S DINING ROOM

Arnold returns to the Fat Older Woman's table. There's a new tablecloth, new plates, new silverware and new glasses.

FAT OLDER WOMAN
Now, we'll start again. We'll have
orange juice, cold cereal, hot
cereal, eggs, potatoes...

INT. CATSKILLS HOTEL - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Moshe Greenblatt talks to all the waiters as they finish their work day.

MOSHE GREENBLATT
We have a wealthy client who asked
me to keep an imported salami in
the refrigerator. I'm warning you
all, stay away from the salami! If
anyone goes near it I'll have your
head.

Moshe Greenblatt prepares a sign after the kitchen closes. He takes the salami out of the refrigerator, attaches the sign to the salami with a long string and puts the salami back in the refrigerator.

INT. CATSKILLS HOTEL - KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

The refrigerator door opens. A hand removes the salami. After a few seconds the same hand places the salami back in the refrigerator. A quarter of the salami is missing.

INT. CATSKILLS HOTEL - KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The refrigerator door opens. Another hand removes the salami. After a few seconds this other hand puts the salami back in the refrigerator. About half of the salami is missing.

INT. CATSKILLS HOTEL - KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

A different hand puts the salami back in the refrigerator. Most of the salami is missing. There's just a small end left.

INT. CATSKILLS HOTEL - KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning Moshe Greenblatt runs to the refrigerator to check on the salami. When he opens the refrigerator door he discovers the sign with the words "DUNT TUCH" attached to the long string. The salami has vanished. Moshe Greenblatt is livid and turns crimson red. He picks up a meat cleaver.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - DAY

Moshe Greenblatt bursts through the chicken coop door wielding the meat cleaver. He screams at the top of his lungs as the young waiters scatter out of their beds and run for their lives.

MOSHE GREENBLATT

I'm going to chop you all to bits.
I'll turn you into supper and serve
you to the pigs in this hotel.

HAROLD

Hurry up let's get out of here.
Moshe's on the warpath, he's gone
mad!

MOSHE GREENBLATT

Mad, you think this is mad? You haven't even begun to see mad. I'll show you mad. Come here you little thieves!

As Moshe Greenblatt chases the young waiters around the chicken coop with the meat cleaver, the HOTEL BAND LEADER bursts through the door. He looks harried and his bow tie is crooked. He has a really bad comb over.

HOTEL BAND LEADER

Hey!

Harold is on the floor. Moshe is standing over Harold with the meat cleaver. Moshe and the young waiters are totally surprised by the hotel band leader's interruption.

MOSHE GREENBLATT

What is it? Can't you see I'm busy here?

HOTEL BAND LEADER

Can anyone here play drums? Our house drummer broke his arm hitchhiking and we need someone to fill in tonight. We're desperate.

Arnold waves his hand to get the hotel band leader's attention.

ARNOLD

I'm a drummer. I can do the gig man.

HOTEL BAND LEADER

Great! Meet me in an hour and I'll go over the charts with you.

The hotel band leader rushes out of the chicken coop. Moshe Greenblatt is still standing over Harold with the meat cleaver. Everyone stands frozen.

EXT. CHICKEN COOP - DAY

The chicken coop door flies open. Harold, Arnold and the rest of the young waiters run out of the chicken coop in their underwear.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Poppy hadn't taken a single drum lesson in his life, but opportunity knocked at the perfect moment and literally spared his life.

(MORE)

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That night, Poppy picked up a pair of drum sticks for the first time and played as if he'd been playing for years. He found a new profession, and a passion that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Unfortunately for Papa, he never got a new suit. Poppy took all of his summer earnings and bought a new drum set as soon as he got home.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Béla reads a Hungarian newspaper in the living room.

INT. ARNOLD'S BEDROOM

Arnold plays drums in his bedroom.

Mr. Ludzack lives directly above. He is annoyed by the noise and jumps up and down on his floor. Arnold hears the stomping and looks up at his ceiling.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arnold walks into the living room to talk to Béla.

ARNOLD

That asshole Ludzack is jumping up and down on the ceiling again. What a schmuck, I can't practice. It's only seven.

BÉLA

Ignore him, nobody cares about Ludzack. He's always going to management to complain about someone or something. Play as loud as you want and let him complain. No one listens to him anymore.

INT. ARNOLD'S BEDROOM

Arnold resumes his drum playing which grows increasingly louder.

Mr. Ludzack stomps even louder.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Béla continues to read his newspaper, despite the racket. As the noise increases some plaster dust falls onto his newspaper. He brushes it off, looks mildly irritated and continues to read.

INT. ARNOLD'S BEDROOM

Arnold sweats and pounds away on his drums in a frenzy. The stomping increases in intensity.

INT. LIVING ROOM

A large chunk of plaster falls from the ceiling and hits Béla's newspaper. The newspaper is forced out of his hands and onto the floor. Béla is very annoyed. He gets up and looks at the ceiling.

BÉLA
What the hell?

INT. ARNOLD'S BEDROOM

Arnold is beet red and on the verge of collapse. The noise is deafening.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Béla picks up the newspaper. He brushes it off and resumes his reading. Half the ceiling comes crashing down all over him. There's plaster and dust everywhere. Mr. Ludzack's fat foot is caught in a floorboard.

BÉLA
What the hell!!! You fat moron!!!

Arnold rushes into the living room as Markovich Helen enters the apartment. Markovich Helen surveys the scene in a silent fury. She doesn't say a word and walks out of the living room. A moment later she returns holding a heavy cast iron skillet.

BÉLA (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Jaj Istenem.
Wait Helen, don't do anything
crazy!

INT. MR. LUDZACK'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Markovich Helen rings Mr. Ludzack's doorbell. There's an icy calm about her. Mr. Ludzack opens the door. He looks enraged but isn't able to utter a word before Markovich Helen clobbers him over the head with the skillet. Mr. Ludzack looks dazed and drops to the floor.

Markovich Helen looks down at Mr. Ludzack for a second, then calmly turns around and starts walking away. Béla is frantic and yells at Markovich Helen.

BÉLA

Oh my god Helen, what did you do? I think you killed him!

MARKOVICH HELEN

Death would be too good for him.

INT. MR. LUDZACK'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Mr. Ludzack has a bandage wrapped around his head. He carries a box out of his apartment.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mr. Ludzack looks cautiously to his left and to his right before he scurries down the hallway.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Mr. Ludzack moved out two weeks later.

INT. FUNCTION ROOM - NIGHT

Arnold, Béla, and Markovich Helen have finished playing a gig. They've packed up all their instruments.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Since Papa never got a new suit, he decided to take advantage of Poppy's new drum playing skills. He dragged Poppy to a lot of gigs and made him pay after all.

ARNOLD

I gotta go now Pop or I'll end up taking a leak on your shoes. I've been holding it in since that last csárdás.

BÉLA

So go already before you owe me for
a new pair of shoes too.

Arnold walks away. Markovich Helen walks up to the BRIDE'S
FATHER to collect the gig money. He's a bit of a hondler.

BRIDE'S FATHER

It's all there, you can count it if
you want.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Listen you cheap son of a bitch,
you robbed us the last time we
played. Remember? At your other
daughter's wedding.

BRIDE'S FATHER

What are you talking about? Arnold
ate three dinners tonight! We're
even!

MARKOVICH HELEN

He had to eat three. The portions
were so chincy.

BRIDE'S FATHER

Ha! It's all there. Pleasure doing
business with you as always Helen.

Markovich Helen whispers under her breath.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Asshole.

Markovich Helen returns with the money and Arnold comes back.
They start to leave with their instruments. Arnold pushes his
drum kit on a cart.

THE GROOM screams at the HEAD WAITER.

THE GROOM

You cheap bastard, you stole my
liquor!

HEAD WAITER

How dare you. I'm no thief.

THE GROOM

You were the only one with access
to the liquor. You're a liar.

Arnold hears the commotion and turns around as he walks
toward the exit with Béla and Markovich Helen.

ARNOLD

What the hell is going on over there?

Sounds of clinking glass emanate from the drum cases.

BÉLA

Don't say a word, keep walking!

Arnold is shocked. The screaming gets louder in the distance. Arnold opens his mouth to say something and Béla interrupts him.

BÉLA (CONT'D)

Keep walking. Don't say a word.

They walk faster. The clinking gets louder as they rush to the exit.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Good. Now we're even.

INT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT (1950) - NIGHT

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

The following summer Poppy got a gig with a hotel band in Jersey. That's where he met my mother Hedy, who was vacationing with family. Mom couldn't care less about Poppy. She had her eyes on a handsome waiter. Plus, she couldn't stand Poppy's red hair and thought he was an idiot. But Poppy didn't give up. He was funny and charming and eventually won Mom over. After he popped the question, Poppy took Mom home to meet his crazy Hungarian family.

Markovich Helen, Béla, ARNOLD (18) and JERRY (12) stand in the living room with HEDY (17). She's very attractive and witty. Hedy seems nervous. Jerry pulls her aside to tell her something in private.

JERRY

You know Hedy, Hungarians are very clannish. I'm going to teach you how to say it is the greatest honor to meet you. You'll make a great impression if you can speak a little Hungarian.

HEDY

Oh thank you so much Jerry, I'm a little nervous. Hungarian is such a difficult language.

JERRY

Don't worry Hedy, they'll be overwhelmed and speechless. Now repeat after me, Baszd Meg az anya. Go ahead, try it.

HEDY

Buzz mek iz onya.

JERRY

Almost, very close. Ba, like ba ba black sheep, not bu as in butter. Baszd Meg, not mek. Then az like in Wizard of Oz and anya, similar to onion. Try it again.

HEDY

Bahz Meg oz onya.

JERRY

Perfect! They're going to love you Hedy.

HEDY

I hope so Jerry. Wish me luck.

JERRY

You'll do great!

The doorbell rings. Hedy opens the door and greets Green Helen and Jákob.

HEDY

Bahz Meg oz onya.

Green Helen is outwardly shocked and reveals a crooked smile as she whispers to Jákob.

GREEN HELEN

(In Hungarian, English subtitles)

Did she just tell me to go fuck my mother?

Jákob smiles awkwardly. He nods his head and doesn't say a word.

Jerry runs up to the door.

JERRY
 (in Hungarian)
 Szervusz.

Jerry whispers to Hedy.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 They're overwhelmed, just like I
 told you. Keep going.

Green Helen and Jákob enter the apartment.

Samu and Samu Helen arrive. They enter the apartment while
 the door is still slightly ajar.

Samu calls out to everyone loudly and throws his coat over
 Samu Helen's arms.

SAMU
 Szervusz!

HEDY
 Bahz meg oz onya.

Samu raises his eyebrows. Samu Helen is very quiet.

SAMU
 Huh?

JERRY
 Hello Samu Helen, let me take that
 coat from you.

Jerry leans over and whispers to Hedy.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 They're shocked Hedy, your
 Hungarian is so good. They can't
 believe you're an American girl.

The doorbell rings. Hedy answers the door excitedly for Aunt
 Bibi, Uncle Henny, Aunt Magda and Uncle Pisti.

HEDY
 Bahz meg oz onya.

Uncle Henny lets out a thunderous laugh. Aunt Magda puts her
 hand over her mouth and Aunt Bibi starts to chortle. Uncle
 Pisti grins widely. Markovich Helen overhears what Hedy is
 saying and runs to the door.

MARKOVICH HELEN
 Jaj Istenem! Such language!

Hedy looks at Jerry suspiciously. Jerry leaves the room quickly.

Arnold runs up to Hedy.

ARNOLD

What the hell have you been saying to all my aunts and uncles?

HEDY

Bahz meg oz onya. It means it is the greatest honor to meet you.

ARNOLD

Bahz meg oz onya? Where the hell did you learn to say that?

HEDY

Your brother Jerry taught me. That was nice of him, wasn't it?

ARNOLD

Nice? You've been telling all my relatives to go fuck their mothers!

Hedy looks mortified and turns beet red.

HEDY

What? What? I would never use such obscene language.

ARNOLD

Well you just did Hedy. I'm gonna beat the shit out of Jerry.

Arnold walks out of the living room.

ARNOLD (O.S.)(CONT'D)

Where the hell are you?

AUNT BIBI

Don't worry Hedy, this whole family is crazy.

Jerry screams in the background as Arnold beats him up.

INT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT (1951) - NIGHT

Arnold and Jerry whisper as they lie in single beds in Jerry's room.

JERRY

Arnie?

There's no response.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Arnie?

ARNOLD

What is it Jerry? I'm trying to sleep.

JERRY

I bet you can't sneak into Hedy's room without Pop catching you.

ARNOLD

Don't be stupid. Of course I can.

Jerry speaks in a teasing, mocking tone.

JERRY

I bet you can't.

ARNOLD

How much?

Jerry's eyes dart to the bedroom door because he sees Béla's flashlight shining under the door. Jerry has a shit eating grin on his face because he knows he's going to win the bet.

JERRY

Five bucks.

ARNOLD

You just lost five bucks Jerry.
I'll be as quiet as a mouse.

INT. HEDY'S ROOM

Hedy sleeps in Arnold's room.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY

Béla polices the apartment with a flashlight.

Arnold slithers on his stomach like a snake around the apartment. He's unaware that Béla is walking around the apartment with a flashlight.

INT. HEDY'S ROOM

Hedy wakes up when Béla walks past her room and shines the flashlight under her door.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY

Arnold makes it all the way to Hedy's room. He smiles triumphantly as he turns the doorknob and enters the room.

INT. HEDY'S ROOM

Arnold knocks his drum set and cymbals over. The noise is deafening. He's shocked and shaken.

ARNOLD
Oh Shit! God damn it!

Hedy screams as she hears the drums come crashing down.

Arnold makes more noise as he lies on the floor and tries to clear drums and cymbals out of his way.

Béla runs into the room.

BÉLA
What the hell? What the hell is
going on in here Arnie?

ARNOLD
Nothing. I forgot something in my
room.

BÉLA
What did you forget? It's three in
the morning. I knew you would try
to sneak in here with Hedy. Get
out!

INT. JERRY'S ROOM

Arnold is out of breath from running. Jerry lies in his bed, laughing hysterically. Jerry holds his hand out.

JERRY
You're a fucking poor mouse now.
Five bucks please.

ARNOLD
Fuck you Jerry!

Jerry continues to laugh.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY

Béla continues to police the apartment. He opens Hedy's bedroom door and shines the flashlight into the corners of the room. He then shines the flashlight in Hedy's eyes, blinding her. Satisfied, he closes the door.

INT. HEDY'S ROOM

Hedy is exhausted. She sits up and mumbles quietly to herself.

HEDY

Uncle Eddie warned me not to marry a Hungarian. I probably should have listened.

INT/EXT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Markovich Helen makes coffee for everyone the following morning. Arnold, Jerry, Hedy and Béla are still asleep. She sticks her head out the kitchen window when she notices garbage men towing Arnold's car. She screams and curses uncontrollably. Samu stands near the garbage men and smokes a cigar. He watches as the men hook up Arnold's car to a tow truck.

MARKOVICH HELEN

You fucking assholes, you sons of bitches! I'm gonna come down there and kick your asses.

The garbage men shrug their shoulders and continue to hook up Arnold's car for towing. Samu shrugs his shoulders too and continues to watch.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

You fucking bastards, you're garbage men. The garbage you leave, but my son's car you take, right?

INT. JERRY'S ROOM

Markovich Helen runs into Jerry's room. She rips the covers off of Arnold and hits him over the head with a pillow.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Get your ass out of bed Arnie! You overslept!

Arnold is in a stupor as he stumbles out of bed in his ratty boxer shorts. He clumsily searches for his pants.

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

Those sons of bitches are towing your car! I warned you to move your car last night. The car's a piece of shit, but it's the only car you can afford right now.

INT/EXT. KITCHEN

Markovich Helen returns to the kitchen window. She sticks her head out and continues to be verbally abusive to the garbage men. She ignores Samu, who stands around like a dolt, smoking his cigar.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I'm coming down there right now to kick your asses. I'm gonna beat the shit out of all of you!

Markovich Helen throws several coffee mugs out the window. The mugs barely miss the garbage men and smash into pieces on the street.

The garbage men are visibly shaken. They look at each other in disbelief and immediately start to release Arnold's car. A STOCKY GARBAGE MAN yells out to the other garbage men.

GARBAGE MAN

Fuck this shit! They don't pay us enough to put up with lunatics like her.

Hedy walks into the kitchen. She is bleary eyed.

INT. JERRY'S ROOM

Arnold struggles to get his pants on. He trips and falls on his face.

INT/EXT. KITCHEN

HEDY

Mom, what's going on? Why are you yelling out the window?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Those god damn garbage men. I told those sons of bitches I'd kick their fucking asses if they towed Arnie's car. Fucking assholes!

The garbage men duck for cover as they hurry back to their garbage truck and speed away.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Up until this point, Mom thought my grandmother was a refined, sophisticated, soft spoken woman. It was a rude awakening.

INT. HOTEL - ARNOLD AND HEDY'S WEDDING (1953) - NIGHT

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Mom and Poppy got married on a sweltering night in June. Sara had a stroke and passed away two months before their wedding.

Guests say their goodbyes to HEDY (20) and ARNOLD (21) at the end of their wedding reception. Samu lurks around an empty table. He scopes out a swan ice sculpture centerpiece. Samu opens his jacket slightly and glances at the ice sculpture.

Samu walks up to Hedy and Arnold. The ice sculpture protrudes from his jacket. One wing sticks out and pokes Arnold in the ribs as Samu hugs him.

ARNOLD

Ouch. What's that?

SAMU

What?

Arnold stares at the ice sculpture wing sticking out of Samu's jacket. Samu looks sheepish.

ARNOLD

Is that one of our ice sculptures under your jacket?

SAMU

Yeah. I thought it would look good in my house. I can keep it, right?

ARNOLD

I don't care, but how are you getting it home?

SAMU

On the subway, how else?

ARNOLD

It's hot as hell out there.

SAMU

Right, so I better get going.
Thanks for the bird. Nice party.

Arnold rolls his eyes as he watches Samu waddle up to Samu Helen. Markovich Helen walks up to Arnold and Hedy.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Mama would have loved this.

Green Helen sobs as she runs past Markovich Helen, Arnold and Hedy with a wad of tissues in her hand. Samu waddles out of the room with Samu Helen.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Samu has difficulty getting through the turnstile with the ice sculpture. Samu Helen is waiting on the other side of the turnstile, embarrassed and disgusted.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

Train doors open. People file out and stare at Samu as he boards the train with the wing sticking out of his jacket. A couple whisper to each other. Samu Helen sits as far away from Samu as she can.

Samu takes the ice sculpture out of his jacket and places it on the seat next to him. He pats it proudly. The train doors close.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SUBWAY TRAIN

A) The train stops at eighty-sixth street. Samu sits next to the melting ice sculpture.

B) The train stops at a hundred and sixteenth street. The ice sculpture continues to melt and is visibly smaller. The conductor is inaudible as he speaks through an antiquated PA system.

C) The train stops at east a hundred and forty-ninth street. Samu looks dejected as he sits next to a puddle with a tiny wing sticking out of it. He stands up and stares at the puddle.

D) Samu Helen looks at Samu with contempt.

INT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

When my grandmother came down with pleurisy, Mom helped my grandparents out. She was a dutiful akásadaughter-in-law, despite their madness.

Hedy finds Etel Néni in the kitchen cooking a giant pot of frankfurter goulash. Her back is to Hedy.

HEDY

Hello, I'm Hedy, Helen's daughter-in-law.

Etel Néni stares blankly at Hedy and continues to stir the goulash.

ETEL NÉNI

(in Hungarian)

Fakanál!

HEDY

Excuse me?

Etel Néni moves close to Hedy. They are almost nose to nose as Etel Néni shouts.

ETEL NÉNI

Fakanál!

Hedy is startled and jumps back a little. She looks at Etel Néni as if she's insane.

Etel Néni feels around the kitchen counter and picks up a wooden spoon.

ETEL NÉNI (CONT'D)

Fakanál!

Hedy is uncomfortable and starts nervously drying dishes from the dish rack. Jerry walks into the kitchen.

HEDY

Thank god you're home. Who is that strange woman? I think she just cursed at me in Hungarian.

JERRY

That's uncle Pisti's aunt, Etel Néni. She pretty much raised him. What did she say to you?

HEDY

I hate to repeat it Jerry, it sounds so vulgar.

JERRY

C'mon, just tell me.

HEDY

Something like get me fuckin' all.

Jerry laughs as he picks up a wooden spoon.

JERRY

She said fakanál Hedy. It's Hungarian for wooden spoon.

HEDY

What a disgusting language.

Etel Néni cuts up a bunch of frankfurters and throws them in the pot. She stirs the contents of the pot.

Jerry gives Etel Néni a kiss on the cheek.

JERRY

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

Hi Etel Néni, it's Jerry. What are you making?

ETEL NÉNI

Frankfurter goulash.

JERRY

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

I'm glad you finally met Hedy, Arnie's wife. She wants to give you a hand with dinner. She doesn't speak Hungarian so maybe you can talk to her a little in English. I'm gonna go check on Ma.

Jerry leaves the kitchen.

ETEL NÉNI

Hedy please you go Yankel. Get more frankfurters.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S BEDROOM

Hedy walks into Béla and Markovich Helen's bedroom. Jerry sits in a chair by Markovich Helen's side. He prepares some medicine for her.

Hedy makes air quotes as she speaks.

HEDY

Etel Néni asked me to go Yankel get more frankfurters.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Tell Yankel the butcher to give you the meat from the back, not what's in the case up front.

HEDY

Okay Mom.

INT. YANKEL'S BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Hedy walks into the butcher shop. Bells ring as the door swings open and closed.

Hedy walks up to the meat counter and waits for someone to come out from the back.

YANKEL is a big, heavy-set man. He has beady, suspicious eyes. He walks up to the counter.

HEDY

Good afternoon, I'm Helen Schiffman's daughter-in-law.

Yankel nods his head slowly. He looks mildly annoyed.

YANKEL

Yes. I know her well.

HEDY

She's not feeling well today and asked me to pick up some frankfurters.

Hedy speaks softly.

HEDY (CONT'D)

She told me to tell you to get them from the back of your shop, she doesn't want the ones in the case.

Yankel leans in slowly as he speaks.

YANKEL

If I'll have it, you'll have it. If
I ain't got it, you wouldn't see
it.

Yankel walks into a room at the back of the store.

Hedy waits nervously.

After a minute, Yankel returns with a pound of frankfurters.

Hedy smiles nervously. She pays Yankel for the frankfurters.

YANKEL (CONT'D)

Give my best to your mother-in-law.

INT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Hedy walks into the kitchen and gives Etel Néni the pound of frankfurters.

ETEL NÉNI

(in Hungarian)

Köszönöm.

Hedy smiles hesitantly.

HEDY

Yes?

Etel Néni cuts up the pound of frankfurters and adds them to the pot. She stirs, pauses for a moment and shakes her head no.

HEDY (CONT'D)

What's the matter, did I get the
wrong kind? They're kosher.

ETEL NÉNI

More frankfurters.

HEDY

More? Really?

ETEL NÉNI

Igen. More frankfurters, you go
back Yankel get more.

INT. YANKEL'S BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Hedy smiles awkwardly at Yankel.

YANKEL

Back so soon?

HEDY

I'm afraid I didn't get enough frankfurters.

YANKEL

Ah. I'll go get you some more then. From the back, I know.

INT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hedy returns with the latest batch of frankfurters. She gives them to Etel Néni, who cuts them up and throws them in the pot. Etel Néni stirs the pot and scrunches her eyebrows.

ETEL NÉNI

More frankfurters.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Mom realized that something wasn't right after she made two more trips to Yankel's, and Etel Néni kept asking for more frankfurters.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S BEDROOM

Hedy finds Jerry, who continues to dote on a sleeping Markovich Helen.

HEDY

Can I ask you a question Jerry? Exactly how many people are coming for dinner?

JERRY

Just you, Arnie, me, Mom, Pop and Etel Néni.

HEDY

You've got to be kidding. Etel Néni made enough frankfurter goulash to feed all of Budapest. I just don't understand this.

JERRY

Well Etel Néni's practically blind Hedy, she can't see how much food she's cooking.

HEDY

Oh, I'm glad somebody told me. I wonder how many times you would have let me go to Yankel's before you said something? Only in this family would a blind relative cook dinner.

Jerry looks at Hedy and laughs.

INT. DINING ROOM

The family sits at the dining room table. Hedy dishes out the frankfurter goulash.

HEDY

I hope you all love frankfurter goulash because you'll be eating it for the next three years.

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1955) - NIGHT

Béla teaches Arnold how to play the Hungarian card game.

BÉLA

Now that Uncle Pisti has passed we need another player. Pay attention, it will take you years to become good. You're lucky I'm your teacher, I'm the best.

Arnold speaks in a sarcastic tone.

ARNOLD

Sure Pop, years.

Béla and Arnold play a quick hand.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

I think I just won Pop!

Béla seethes with anger.

BÉLA

Wait let me check.

ARNOLD

Why do you have to check? I won fair and square. You're not a sore loser are you?

Béla continues to seethe.

BÉLA

What sore loser? Beginner's luck,
that's all.

ARNOLD

Ok, let's play again.

Béla and Arnold play another hand. Arnold wins again.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Ha! I win again. So much for
beginner's luck.

BÉLA

Maybe you cheated.

ARNOLD

You shuffled the cards, how could I
cheat? You just can't admit that
I'm better than you. Can you?

BÉLA

You think you're better? You've
only played two games.

ARNOLD

But I'm unbeaten. You've never
beaten me.

BÉLA

Shut up and deal. It's your turn.

Béla and Arnold play one more hand. Arnold wins again and
scoops up the pot of money. Béla overturns the card table.
All the cards and coins go flying in the air.

ARNOLD

Thanks Pop, this was a lot of fun.
I must be some kind of idiot savant
or something. It's funny how it
only took me one night to beat you.

BÉLA

Get out!

Arnold laughs as he jumps up and heads for the door. He
shouts back at Béla.

ARNOLD

Let's double the pot next time. I
need a new suit!

INT. RESTAURANT (1965) - NIGHT

ARNOLD (early 30's) and HEDY (early 30's) go out with the relatives to celebrate Arnold's big job promotion. They can't understand what he does for a living. Markovich Helen is extremely skeptical.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Poppy played four gigs every weekend while attending city college. After he graduated, he landed a job as the central supply manager for a major New York City hospital. He continued to gig on weekends and did a stint as an army medic. This piqued his interest in medicine. He couldn't afford medical school. Instead he worked his way up from the central supply room to the executive boardroom. After he got his Master's he was promoted to Deputy Director of a large hospital in the Bronx. Somewhere in between all of this I came along. My sister Sammi arrived three years after me.

SAMU

(to ARNOLD)

So what a you do? You're not a doctor?

BÉLA

Arnie is better than a doctor. He's the boss of the doctors.

SAMU

The boss of the doctors?

ARNOLD

I run the hospital Samu. I'm a hospital administrator, a deputy director. I oversee everything and everyone, including the doctors.

SAMU

Yeah? I have a pain in my side. Can you get me in for free? I'm family.

Arnold laughs at Samu.

ARNOLD

Are you picking up the tab for dinner tonight?

Samu looks horrified and doesn't say a word.

HEDY

We're all very proud of you Arnie.
You've worked hard and you really
deserve this promotion.

Markovich Helen whispers to Hedy.

MARKOVICH HELEN

So what's the real story mamala?

HEDY

Arnie got a big promotion. He's a
deputy director and runs the
hospital now. That's the real
story.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Yeah, but mamala, what's the real
story?

HEDY

Arnie, show Mom your ID badge.

Arnold proudly takes out his ID badge from the hospital and hands it to Markovich Helen. Markovich Helen peruses the badge with open skepticism.

MARKOVICH HELEN

This is you? It doesn't look like
you Arnie.

ARNOLD

It's me Ma. You don't know what I
look like?

MARKOVICH HELEN

You've got red hair, and this man
has brown hair.

Arnold grabs the ID badge out of Markovich Helen's hand.

ARNOLD

It's clear where the insanity comes
from in this family. It's a black
and white photo Ma. What's wrong
with you?

Ödi returns to the table.

ÖDI

So what does Arnie do? He's not a
doctor?

INT. BÉLA AND MARKOVICH HELEN'S APARTMENT (1966) - NIGHT

Various relatives visit in the living room. Samu pretends he's a monster and chases LISA (5) around the apartment. Lisa is terrified and runs to Arnold and Hedy in tears.

Arnold admonishes Samu.

ARNOLD

What's wrong with you Samu? Why must you frighten her?

SAMU

It's just a game. She knows I'm not a real monster.

ARNOLD

Are you sure?

Samu walks up to Lisa and pinches her cheeks.

SAMU

Come here Lisaka. Pichi, pichi, pichi, pichi. Uncle Samu loves you, it's just pretend.

Arnold and Hedy console Lisa. Lisa trembles and cries.

Arnold gives Samu a dirty look and mutters under his breath.

ARNOLD

(in Hungarian, English subtitles)

Moron!

MARKOVICH HELEN

It's time for cake and cookies. Who's having coffee and who's having tea?

MARKOVICH HELEN (CONT'D)

(to Lisa)

Pussycat, I have chocolate milk for you.

Markovich Helen, Béla, and the rest of the family have dessert and coffee. Three fat cats patrol the living room for crumbs. The UGLY SCRAWNY BIRD is perched in his cage.

Samu glances at the bird.

SAMU

You should get rid of that disgusting thing. He's scaring the children.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I'd rather get rid of you. You're the one scaring the children.

UGLY SCRAWNY BIRD

Bazd Meg Samu!

One of the fat cats saunters over to Markovich Helen. Markovich Helen picks the cat up, pets her and gives her a piece of a cookie.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Pussycat, pussycat come here mamala. I have a piece of cookie for you.

ÖDI

Helen, if you feed that cat one more bite she's going to blow up.

MARKOVICH HELEN

I want to make sure she eats enough. She could waste away if I'm not careful.

ÖDI

Waste away? I hate to tell you this Helen but that cat is one bite away from apoplexy. What she needs is a diet.

The other fat cats are sprawled out on the rug.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

The relatives who gathered at my grandparents' apartment scared the shit out of me, except for Aunt Bibi, Uncle Henny, Aunt Magda and Uncle Pisti. Aunt Bibi and Uncle Henny were my favorites. They were a lot of fun. Aunt Magda was beautiful and refined, and she always brought the Hungarian pastries. Samu looked like a beast, and he acted like one too. I really thought Aunt Ludmilla was a witch. The resemblance was uncanny.

(MORE)

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She constantly tried to bribe me with money, but I was having no part of it.

AUNT LUDMILLA is thin, frail and unattractive. She has wirey gray hair, a sallow complexion and a wrinkled face. Her arms and hands are bony. She tries to bribe Lisa with a quarter.

LUDMILLA

Lisa give Aunt Ludmilla kiss and Aunt Ludmilla will give you quarter.

Lisa turns away and runs to Hedy.

LUDMILLA (CONT'D)

Please Lisa, give me kiss and I give you quarter.

BÉLA

Lisi, go and give your Aunt Ludmilla a kiss. Don't you want a quarter?

Hedy whispers to Lisa.

HEDY

It's okay honey, Aunt Ludmilla loves you. Why don't you give her a kiss?

Lisa mocks Aunt Ludmilla by imitating her Hungarian accent. She puts her hands on her hips as she speaks.

LISA

I not give you kiss and I don't want your quarter.

LUDMILLA

Jaj Istenem.

All of the relatives chuckle.

Lisa stares at Aunt Ludmilla's arm and notices her tattoo. She tugs at Arnold's sleeve and whispers to him.

LISA

Daddy, why does Aunt Ludmilla have green numbers on her arm?

Arnold picks Lisa up and whispers back.

ARNOLD

Aunt Ludmilla has a tattoo honey.

LISA

But ladies don't have tattoos, only men get tattoos.

ARNOLD

Well this is a very special tattoo. Only special ladies from Hungary have this tattoo. Your Aunt Ludmilla is very special.

LISA

Oh.

Lisa stares curiously at Aunt Ludmilla. Aunt Ludmilla smiles back at her with gentle eyes.

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

After Poppy told me that Aunt Ludmilla was special she didn't scare me quite as much. It wasn't until many years later that I found out she was a hero in Auschwitz. She offered herself to Nazi guards so they wouldn't rape the young girls in her bunk. She also smuggled in raw potatoes so they had something to eat. The face that had scared me as a young child was a face scarred by pain and degradation. But as an adult, I saw the face of an incredibly brave woman. And I always gave her a kiss.

EXT. STREET (1967) - DAY

Markovich Helen walks down a small alleyway. A STRUNG OUT JUNKIE approaches her and tries to steal her alligator bag. The bag handles rest in the crook of her right arm. The Strung Out Junkie wrestles with Markovich Helen and tries to get the bag away from her. Markovich Helen keeps her right arm bent and close to her body.

MARKOVICH HELEN

You god damn son of a bitch. Get your hands off my alligator bag!

Markovich Helen holds onto the bag with all her might. She kicks the Strung Out Junkie in the shins, stomps on his foot and punches him in the face with her free hand.

STRUNG OUT JUNKIE

You're crazy lady!

MARKOVICH HELEN

You better let go before I murder
you!

Markovich Helen grabs the Strung Out Junkie's arm and pulls it toward her so she can bite it. She reveals a hideous fang-like tooth. It's discolored and looks mostly green and black. The Strung Out Junkie recoils and lets go of the bag.

STRUNG OUT JUNKIE

Damn lady! Stay the hell away from
me!

The Strung Out Junkie flees as Markovich Helen collects herself and examines the bag for damage. She looks relieved when she determines that the bag is fine.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Fucking asshole, no one gets my
good alligator bag!

Markovich Helen continues on her way as if nothing has happened.

INT. GROCERY STORE (1968) - DAY

Béla is in the produce section. He picks out a bunch of grapes and gets in line to pay the cashier. The line is long and moves slowly. Béla's stomach growls. He pops a couple of grapes in his mouth as the line crawls. The bunch of grapes gets smaller and smaller as Béla pops more grapes in his mouth. When he reaches the cashier he tosses an empty stalk on the counter.

BÉLA

Weigh this up for me, will ya?

The cashier is furious. He looks at Béla and points to the door.

INT. MARKOVICH HELEN AND BELA'S APARTMENT (1970) - NIGHT

The family gathers for a night of music, dancing and food. Markovich Helen plays the piano and Béla plays his violin. Green Helen and Jakob, Aunt Bibi and Uncle Henny, Samu and Samu Helen, Ödi and Ludmilla and other relatives dance in the living room.

After the music ends, everybody sits around eating and talking.

SAMU

László isn't looking so well. I think I'm in his will.

ÖDI

Cousin László? You think he's going to leave you money?

SAMU

Well, we almost look alike. If he leaves me out of the will I can go to the bank and pretend to be him. I can get his money.

ÖDI

You don't look like László Samu. He's got a full head of blonde hair. He's also shorter than you and he limps.

SAMU

I can limp. Watch.

Samu practices limping and accidentally steps on Béla's foot. Béla yelps in pain and yells at Samu.

BÉLA

Watch where you're going you idiot!

Samu barely notices and continues to limp around the living room.

Hedy sits across from Béla and initiates conversation. LISA (9) and SAMMI (6) play a game on the floor next to Hedy.

HEDY

Do you know the story of Diogenes?

BÉLA

No who was he?

HEDY

He carried a lantern in search of an honest man.

BÉLA

So?

HEDY

So, do you know what happened when he got to Hungary?

BÉLA

No. What happened?

HEDY

He had to search for his lantern.

Béla makes a face.

Samu continues to limp around the living room.

Jerry sits on the couch next to Aunt Magda. He yells over to Markovich Helen, who sits across the room.

JERRY

Ma. We're going to a Broadway show tomorrow. It's a matinee. You wanna go?

MARKOVICH HELEN

Oh Jerrila. I have to get dressed and get out of my housecoat. It's so much work.

The phone rings. Jerry gets up and walks out of the living room to answer it. He yells out to Markovich Helen.

JERRY (O.S.)

Ma, Mr. Farkas died today. The funeral's tomorrow morning.

MARKOVICH HELEN

Great! What time should I be ready?

Ödi yells at Samu and tells him to sit down. He tells Samu he has a better plan for stealing László's money.

ÖDI

Samu sit down. You look like a stupid ape. You're never gonna get László's money that way. Come over here and listen to me. I have a better idea.

Hedy moves over to a chair near Markovich Helen. Markovich Helen overhears Samu and Ödi scheming. She leans over to tell Hedy something.

MARKOVICH HELEN

You know what Mamala? They're all full of shit.

As Samu and Ödi argue, Béla starts playing his violin and various relatives get up and start dancing. Markovich Helen takes her place at the piano and accompanies Béla.

FEMALE NARRATOR

So that's my crazy Hungarian family. Everyone lived well into their eighties and nineties, despite their many hardships and struggles. And all that rich food. When Samu was on his deathbed he asked everyone for forgiveness. They told him Baszd Meg. When Samu died he didn't leave anything to anyone, except for me. Turns out I was his favorite. He left me five hundred dollars, and I went down to forty-eighth street with Poppy and bought my first guitar. I guess I can't escape the Hungarian gypsy in me. It's in the blood.

FADE OUT.

The End