

FAMILY PLOTZ
by
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FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Private room with a host of beeping and flashing machines. Tubes and wires from these machines snake into the various body parts of SARA FRANKEN (63) who lies in a semicoma.

DANIEL FRANKEN (33) sits beside the bed, his gaze flicking between Sarah and the various monitors.

Sarah's right hand rests atop the sheets. Daniel holds it gently, diligently avoiding contact with the point where the IV line penetrates the skin.

Sarah snaps awake with a gasp.

SARAH
Am I dead now?

DANIEL
God forbid.

SARAH
It won't be long before I do take
the big sleep, son.

DANIEL
Don't say that.

SARAH
It won't be long before it's
curtains. That better?

DANIEL
Not really.

SARAH
Let's cut to the chase, Daniel.
There are some things I have to
tell you and time is short. So put
your ears on.

DANIEL
I'm listening.

Sarah lapses into unconsciousness. Daniel watches her. NURSE SWANSON (46) slips into the room. She checks the monitors.

NURSE SWANSON
She could be like that for hours.
Go get yourself a coffee.

Nurse Swanson nods at Daniel as she leaves. He watches Sarah for a moment, then rises and heads for the door. Sarah snaps awake with a groan, her hands covering her eyes.

SARAH

Switch that goddamn light off.
Sheesh, that was close.

Daniel slumps down again. He takes hold of Sarah's hand. She grips his hand so tight his skin whitens.

SARAH

Daniel, you've got to have a dream.
Spinoza said, "If you don't have a
dream, how you gonna have a dream
come true?"

DANIEL

That was Mitzi Gaynor in "South
Pacific."

Daniel tries to remove his hand, but Sarah's grip is too tight. He is obviously in pain.

SARAH

Gaynor, Shmaynor. Do you have a
dream, son? What do you want from
life?

DANIEL

I...

Sarah lapses into unconsciousness, but her grip remains firm. Daniel tries to pull his hand free. No dice. His fingertips are pure white.

DANIEL

Mom? If you can hear me... please
let go of my hand.

He remains locked in Sarah's grip of steel.

DANIEL

Mom?

He tries to pry her fingers apart.

DANIEL

My dream is to one day work for
myself, okay?

Sarah snaps awake. She releases Daniel's hand. He rubs it vigorously. Sarah watches Daniel in silence for a moment.

SARAH
You got a pencil and paper?

Daniel fumbles through his pockets, but his right hand doesn't work properly, so he has to retrieve his note pad and pen with his left. It's awkward.

SARAH
Checking account. Eight-four-two-nine dash eight-eight-six-eight-nine. Savings... Write it down, Daniel, I may not live long enough to repeat myself.

Daniel tries to write, but he can't hold the pen. He suddenly shakes his hand.

DANIEL
Aaaah!

Nurse Swanson rushes in. Daniel waves his hand at her.

DANIEL
Pins and needles.

Nurse Swanson shakes her head. She strides out.

SARAH
Savings account. Three-two-nine...

Daniel scribbles down the numbers.

LATER

Daniel's hand is so cramped, he clutches the pen in his fist like a dagger. He drops his notes on the bed. Then rescues them and turns six pages. Starts writing again.

SARAH
... Tully and Berkowitz. Ask for Murray Berkowitz. He's got my will. You get everything. One thing though and you've got to promise me.

DANIEL
What?

SARAH
Promise me first.

DANIEL
I don't know what it is yet.

SARAH
 Promise me.

DANIEL
 Okay. I promise.

SARAH
 You'll bury me in Piskin's
 Cemetery.

DANIEL
 But Mom, dad is buried --

SARAH
 You promised.

DANIEL
 Just because you two are
 divorced...

SARAH
 Daniel. Every night of my married
 life that man snored like a chain
 saw. There is no way I am lying
 next to that for infinity. If you
 want your mother to rest in peace,
 you'll bury me in Piskin's
 Cemetery. Next to your grandma and
 grandpa.

DANIEL
 Okay, Mom. Sure.

SARAH
 Don't spend too much money on the
 headstone. Nothing fancy-schmancy.
 Just plain. With a nice
 inscription. Promise me.

DANIEL
 I promise.

Sarah grimaces, then lapses back into a semicoma. Daniel
 drops into a chair. He waits patiently by the side of the
 bed, massaging his hand.

LATER

Sarah lies in a semicoma. Daniel dozes in his chair. Nurse
 Swanson rouses him gently.

NURSE SWANSON
 Mr. Franken? Daniel?

Daniel awakens, instantly alert.

DANIEL
Is she okay?

NURSE SWANSON
She's slipped back into a semicoma.
It's better for her that way. Less
pain.

DANIEL
I should --

NURSE SWANSON
There's nothing you can do. Why
don't you go home and I'll call you
if anything changes.

Daniel hesitates. Nurse Swanson ushers him out of the room.

NURSE SWANSON
Go, go. I'll call you.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

Sarah lies in bed, unchanged. MIRIAM STEINBERG NÉE MARGULIES
(65) -- formidable -- sits by the side of the bed.

MIRIAM
... anyhow, he started it. Imagine
sending a postcard that said "Dear
Miriam."? "Dear Aunt Miriam," yes.
That's polite. That shows some
respect.

Sarah's breathing becomes irregular.

MIRIAM
But does your precious son
apologize? It's ten years and I'm
still waiting. That's why I can't
trust him to do the right thing.

Sarah silently enters her death throes. Her body quivers.
She grimaces. Her eyes widen, close, snap open again, then
finally close.

MIRIAM
Don't worry. When the time comes,
I'll personally go to Bergman's and
order you a headstone. A nice one.
Expensive.

(MORE)

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Not like that dreck your son bought
for his father. You leave it to me,
I'll --

Sarah emits her death rattle. The monitors burst into a
frenzy of activity.

MIRIAM

You got gas? That's good. Better
out than in, I always say.

Nurse Swanson rushes. She checks Sarah quickly.

MIRIAM

It was the gas. It must have set
off your machines.

Alarms beep. Monitors flash.

MIRIAM

She always made a lot of gas. Even
when she was a little girl.

A Doctor and other nurses rush in with the crash cart. Nurse
Swanson pulls the curtain around the bed.

MIRIAM

One bean and she could clear the
room.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Clear!

The defibrillator zaps behind the curtain.

MIRIAM

Yes, the whole room.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Clear!

The defibrillator zaps again.

MIRIAM

Broccoli, sprouts, radishes,
anything like that could set her
off. What you doing to my sister
in there?

The monitors stop beeping. Miriam rises. Tugs on the
curtain.

Nurse Swanson slips out. Guides Miriam back to her chair.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Call it. Eleven-oh-seven.

NURSE SWANSON
I'm sorry, Mrs. Steinberg, there
was nothing we could do.

MIRIAM
Did you try Beano?

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- LATER

Miriam talks into her cell phone.

MIRIAM
(into phone)
Cissie? Sarah's dead. And I was
with her at the end.

EXT. PISKIN'S CEMETERY -- DAY

Small urban cemetery.

GRAVESIDE

The mourners gather around the grave. CISSIE (50) and NORMAN (53) MARGULIES stand to the left of the grave. JACK (64) and RUTHIE (63) MARGULIES stand to the right. Daniel and Miriam and her dog, FLUFF stand at the head of the grave with the RABBI (40).

ISAAC PISKIN (69) leans against a backhoe, a respectful distance from the grave.

Miriam moans loudly. She throws herself on top of the casket.

MIRIAM
My sister! My Sarah's in there!

Miriam cries theatrically. The others turn away, embarrassed. The Rabbi shuffles, uncomfortable.

RUTHIE
Get a hold of yourself, Miriam. We
need to get on with the service.

Miriam quickly regains her feet. She stops crying instantly, turns on Ruthie.

MIRIAM

Don't be so quick to put her in the ground. She was my sister. I was with her at the end.

RABBI

I'd like to begin --

MIRIAM

It was gas.

Daniel gestures to the Rabbi, opens his mouth to speak.

MIRIAM

You can begin the service now.

The Rabbi steps forward. Opens his prayer book. The women cover their heads with scarves. The men place yarmulkes on their heads. Miriam takes a small yarmulke from her purse and places it on Fluff's head.

Fluff looks suitably awed by the moment. The Rabbi looks down at Fluff, then bites his lip.

A plain pine casket descends into the grave.

RABBI (O.S.)

The act of Kevurah, the shoveling of earth into the grave, is the last physical act performed by a loved one and helps the mourner on the way to acceptance and reconciliation.

GRAVESIDE

A shovel juts from a mound of earth by the edge of the grave. Daniel steps forward to pick it up, but Miriam beats him to it. She grabs the shovel, scoops up dirt on the back of it.

RABBI (O.S.)

It is often done with the back of the shovel to indicate the reluctance to perform this ritual.

Miriam heaves the dirt into the grave.

RABBI (O.S.)

Please??

MIRIAM

She was my sister.

DANIEL
She was my mother.

MIRIAM
Some son. I was with her at the
end. I didn't see you there.

DANIEL
I thought we weren't speaking?

MIRIAM
We're not. I'm speaking and you're
listening.

NORMAN
Miriam. Please give Daniel the
shovel.

Miriam sticks the shovel back into the mound of earth.
Daniel fights back his anger. He shovels earth into the
grave.

CEMETERY -- LATER

The funeral party heads back to their cars.

MIRIAM
We should talk about the headstone.

NORMAN
We just put our sister in the
ground, Miriam. We have eleven
months to buy a headstone.

MIRIAM
We'll see.

Miriam increases her pace and forges ahead.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL -- DAY

People mill around. Several attractive young women with
clipboards stop shoppers to interview them.

Daniel heads for the exit. LINDA SIMONS (31) -- feisty --
breaks away from the group to intercept him.

LINDA
Hi.

DANIEL
I wish I was.

Linda laughs.

LINDA
Me too.

There is an instant attraction. They stand off looking at each other.

DANIEL
Actually, I don't take drugs.

LINDA
Me too. I mean --

DANIEL
I know what you mean.

LINDA
Are you married?

DANIEL
Is this the survey?

LINDA
Kind of.

DANIEL
Are you married?

LINDA
I asked first.

DANIEL
Okay, on the count of three.
One... two... three.

No. LINDA No. DANIEL

LINDA
Do you want to get married?

DANIEL
I think we should date awhile
first.

Linda takes out a business card and scribbles on the back.

LINDA
My cell number. Call me.

Daniel pulls out his cell. Taps in a series of digits.

Linda's cell phone rings.

LINDA
Linda Simons.

DANIEL
Daniel Franken.

LINDA
Can't talk now, Daniel. I'm
working. Call me tonight.

She flips the phone closed. Puts pen to clipboard.

LINDA
Now, sir, do you drink soda?

DANIEL
Only to excess.

LINDA
Do you think soda bottles should
have longer necks and shorter
straws or shorter necks and longer
straws?

INT. RICK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Richly-appointed office. Expensive furniture.

Sign in the windows reads: "INDUSTRIAL EXPRESS RENT-A-MAN."
Beneath it, in smaller print: "WE PUT THE 'PERSON' IN
CONTRACT PERSONNEL SERVICES."

Daniel sits across from ALAN PETER RICK (45), a tall WASP in
an Armani suit and bad hairpiece.

Rick spins from side to side in his chair.

RICK
Since this is your first day, Mr.
Franken, I need to acquaint you
with the rules.

DANIEL
Fire way.

RICK
Excellent segue, Mr. Franken,
excellent, segue since breaking any
of the rules is a firing offense.

DANIEL
... oh.

Rick swivels around in his executive leather chair so he faces the window. A gold plate on the back of the chair reads: "A.P. RICK. CHAIRMAN & CEO."

RICK

The first rule is in regard to the contractors' checks. Always mail the checks, Mr. Franken. Repeat that for me, will you?

DANIEL

Always mail the checks. But what if --

RICK

No buts, Mr. Franken.

Rick spins around to face front.

RICK

Buts are for rams and goats, Mr. Franken and you're neither of those, correct?

DANIEL

Correct.

RICK

Under no circumstances will you keep the checks in the office. Repeat that for me, Mr. Franken, please.

DANIEL

Under no circumstances will I keep the checks in the office.

Rick spins his chair back to the window.

RICK

No matter how much the contractors beg and plead.

DANIEL

Why is that, Mr. Rick? The last place I worked --

Rick spins around quick as a flash.

RICK

This is not the last place you worked, Mr. Franken. You've come up in the world since then.

DANIEL

Yes, sir.

RICK

This is Industrial Express Rent-a-Man. The best. Repeat that, Mr. Franken, if you will.

DANIEL

The best. I still don't see what harm --

RICK

We are not insured to keep the checks on the premises.

DANIEL

Really?

RICK

Besides, we don't want to encourage laborers and carpenters and the like coming in the office with their dirty boots and trudging their muck on the carpets.

DANIEL

Fine. Is that it?

RICK

That's Rule Number One.

Rick spins his chair back to the window.

RICK

There are nineteen more.

EXT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP -- DAY

A sign outside the office reads: "HERSCHEL BERGMAN & SONS -- MONUMENTS."

SUPER: "Six Months Later."

Miriam and Fluff inspect a host of different headstones. Fluff yips.

MIRIAM

What, darling? You don't like the headstones? Don't you worry. Mommy'll find a nice headstone for your Auntie Sarah.

EXT. MEMORABLE MONUMENTS -- SIMULTANEOUS

A sign outside the office reads: "MEMORABLE MONUMENTS."
Daniel hesitates and then strides inside.

INT. MEMORABLE MONUMENTS -- LATER

Daniel sits across from MOE COHEN (56), a stocky man in a mismatched suit coat and pants. Cohen puffs on a stogie as he watches Daniel flip through the catalog.

DANIEL

All these headstones...

COHEN

We got a big stock, huh? Bergman's got nothin' compared to us here at Memorable Monuments.

DANIEL

They're very fancy.

COHEN

Bergman's?

DANIEL

The headstones.

COHEN

Modern style. Cherubs and seraphs and such.

DANIEL

I bought my father's headstone here. That was very plain. I'd like another like that.

Cohen looks at Daniel with disdain.

COHEN

Plain, huh?

EXT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP

Miriam and Fluff inspect headstones. ELLIOT BERGMAN (46) stands by their side. He wears dust-covered overalls.

ELLIOT

He sprays, you pays. Company policy.

MIRIAM
My Fluff does not "spray"!

ELLIOT
Whatever. You looking for
something special?

MIRIAM
I know you. You're one of Herschel
Bergman's sons. Aren't you
Michael?

ELLIOT
That's my brother. I'm Elliot.

Miriam looks him over.

MIRIAM
So this is how you turned out. You
were always a mouthy little brat.
And your nose was always running.

Elliot automatically takes out his handkerchief to wipe his
nose.

MIRIAM
I need a headstone for my sister
Sarah. Show me some samples.

INT. MEMORABLE MONUMENTS

Daniel and Cohen sag a little.

DANIEL
Plain, plain, plain. Just like my
father's, okay?

COHEN
You remember the model number?

Daniel fishes out a creased and folded piece of paper from
his pocket. He unfolds it reverently.

DANIEL
AT twenty-nine.

COHEN
We haven't made one of those in ten
years. You should get with the
times. Go for the cherubs and
seraphs. Very popular.

DANIEL
Did you replace AT twenty-nine?

COHEN
Told you already. People want cherubs.

DANIEL
My mother wants plain. It was her dying wish.

COHEN
Why didn't you say?

DANIEL
So, can you make a plain one?

COHEN
Make anything. But it'll cost you more. Special order, see.

DANIEL
Shouldn't I pay less?

COHEN
What about one cherub, then? Kind of discrete like in the corner?

EXT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP

Elliot, Miriam and Fluff stand by an expensive-looking headstone. Elliot looks drained. He watches Fluff closely. Fluff yips.

ELLIOT
Remind me again. I can't tell the difference anymore. Is that a yes or a no?

INT. MEMORABLE MONUMENTS

Cohen's tie hangs loose from his collar.

DANIEL
I could always go to Bergman's...

COHEN
Plain it is, then.

They shake hands.

INT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP -- OFFICE

Elliot sits in front of a computer pecking at the keys with the index finger of each hand. Miriam sits across from him with Fluff in her lap.

ELLIOT
Name of deceased?

MIRIAM
Franken. Sarah Franken. Her
maiden name was Margulies. Same as
mine.

Elliot pulls out a handkerchief, wipes his nose.

ELLIOT
Now, when did your, er, loved one,
er, pass away?

MIRIAM
September tenth last year.

Elliot pecks at some keys.

ELLIOT
And you're the sister?

Miriam nods vigorously.

MIRIAM
I was with her at the end.

ELLIOT
Are you the only living relative?
Did she have children?

Miriam immediately puts her hands over Fluff's ears.

MIRIAM
Yes. And no. Okay, a son. If you
can call him a son.

Elliot wipes his nose.

ELLIOT
But if she has a son, then
shouldn't he --

MIRIAM
Why do you think I'm here? He's a
divorced man. How can you expect
him to do his duty and buy a
headstone?

ELLIOT

What's --

MIRIAM

Even if he did, he'd end up buying some piece of dreck like he did for his father. Well, his father was his father. But his mother was my sister. So take this down. "In loving memory of Sarah Franken, née Margulies..."

INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Cissie -- overdressed and overweight -- pushes her cart along the aisle, adding items.

SUPER: "Three Months Later."

Daniel trails behind her.

FROZEN FOODS

Cissie regards Daniel's almost empty cart.

CISSIE

Did we have the walk-in deep-freeze last time you came to the house? Because we've had it six months already.

Cissie drops several quarts of frozen yogurt into her cart.

CISSIE

Fewer calories than ice-cream.

DANIEL

Uh-huh.

CISSIE

I'm on the Atkins now.

She twirls.

DANIEL

I can tell.

She adds a pint of chocolate ice-cream to the cart.

CISSIE

For Norman.

DANIEL

I suppose you've been wondering...

CISSIE

About the headstone? Not at all.
Well, it is almost eleven months...

DANIEL

You can tell everyone I've ordered
the headstone. From Memorable
Monuments. The same place I got my
father's.

They move down the aisle.

CISSIE

Very nice. You'll come for dinner.
Sunday. You can tell them all
yourself.

DANIEL

Not Miriam.

CISSIE

Now, Daniel, bubeleh, isn't it time
you two --

DANIEL

Not Miriam.

CISSIE

Okay already. Not Miriam.

DOG FOODS

Cissie adds several cans of turkey-flavored "Chunkie Chops"
to her cart.

CISSIE

It's for Fluff. Miriam's dog. You
know I like to stock up on
everyone's favorites.

DANIEL

Okay, the dog can come. But Miriam
will have to stay in the yard.

CHECKOUT

Daniel is ahead of Cissie in the checkout line. His cart is
still almost empty. Cissie's cart overflows with food and
cleaning materials.

CISSIE
 ... a divorced orphan. You
 shouldn't be alone like that.

He and Cissie advance online. The CASHIER smiles at him.

CISSIE
 It's nothing to be ashamed of.
 Plenty, hundreds of people are
 divorced.

DANIEL
 Thousands.

CISSIE
 One of Adele's friends is divorced
 now. I could --

DANIEL
 I took a survey a while back. It
 told me I'm fine as I am.

EXT. PISKIN'S CEMETERY -- NIGHT

The moon illuminates the gravestones. An eerie rattling
 sound (O.S.).

An off-key male voice hums something that might be the theme
 from "Jurassic Park."

Silhouetted by the night sky, a backhoe lumbers across the
 horizon. It stops. Raises its shovel maw to the sky. Then
 snaps its jaws open and closed like a T-Rex baying at the
 moon.

PISKIN (O.S.)
 The mighty Backhoe-a-saurus stomps
 the Earth anew.

The backhoe trundles back and forth raising and lowering its
 "head."

PISKIN (O.S.)
 (growls)
 Arrrrr! Urrrrr! Arrrrr-urrrrr!

The backhoe approaches a yard stocked with gravestones. The
 head dips down. Grabs a gravestone in its teeth. Raises it
 to the sky. Shakes it around.

BACKHOE

Piskin sits at the controls. He shakes the gravestone.

PISKIN

The mighty Backhoe-a-saurus devours
the puny gravestone people like
Chiclets.

The gravestone slips from the teeth and flies across the
graveyard.

PISKIN

Oopsie-woopsie!

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

Miriam and Fluff stroll along the sidewalk.

MIRIAM

Are your bowels open yet, my little
angel, my little fluff ball?

Fluff yips.

MIRIAM

No hurry, my little darling, my
little spongecake. Just tell mommy
whenever you're ready.

Fluff yips.

MIRIAM

I love you too, honey. You're the
only one that's honest, the only
one I can trust. Everyone else is
a liar. "Are you in good health?"
I asked him. He just nodded.

Miriam smiles bitterly.

MIRIAM

Then he dropped dead.

Fluff looks up.

MIRIAM

On our wedding night.

They pause at the corner. Turn around. Head back.

MIRIAM

I should have checked his pedigree,
like I checked yours.

Miriam sighs the sigh of one with a heavy burden.

MIRIAM

It's what you get for marrying
late.

Fluff yips.

MIRIAM

I know, honey-bunch, you're not
going to die on me. You're going
to outlive Mommy. Yes, you are.

Fluff whines.

MIRIAM

No, no, Fluff, darling. You must
promise me you'll get on with your
life. Find a new mommy. Be happy.

Miriam stops walking. She crouches down close to Fluff.

MIRIAM

Promise me. Promise.

Fluff yips. He licks Miriam's nose.

MIRIAM

Thank you, darling.

INT. MEMORABLE MONUMENTS -- DAY

Cohen sits at his desk, arms folded firmly across his chest,
face set in a stoic frown.

COHEN

Do you eat out?

DANIEL

I don't see how that's got any
relevance to --

COHEN

I eat out.

DANIEL

You're buying me lunch?

COHEN

I'm giving you a for example.

Cohen places his hands flat on his desk.

COHEN

I go into Brother's Deli. I've not been there in ten years. I ask for the Danny Kaye.

DANIEL

The Danny Kaye?

COHEN

The Danny Kaye. I ask for the Danny Kaye. The waiter says, sorry sir, that sandwich is no longer on the menu.

DANIEL

Very subtle.

COHEN

The waiter says we can give you the Michael Richards. It's like the Danny Kaye, but it comes on pumpernickel.

DANIEL

This sounds like bad news.

COHEN

I say, no, pumpernickel is too fancy-schmancy for me. I like a plain rye. The last Danny Kaye I had came on a plain rye. Mr. Cohen, the waiter says, the Danny Kaye --

DANIEL

Which you're delivering very late in the day.

COHEN

-- is no longer on the menu.

DANIEL

Where can I get the Danny Kaye?

Cohen shakes his head sadly.

COHEN

No one makes the Danny Kaye any more. It's not economical.

Daniel sags.

COHEN

Like I keep telling you, the Michael Richards is the closest we got. The closest anyone's got. You can check around.

DANIEL

Seems I have no choice.

INT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP -- DAY

Daniel sits across from Elliot. Elliot wipes his nose, then looks at Daniel like he's crazy.

ELLIOT

The Danny Kaye? The Michael Richards? I have no idea what you're --

DANIEL

Forget it.

ELLIOT

If you're hungry, there's a deli on third and --

DANIEL

I'm not hungry.

Elliot wipes his nose.

DANIEL

You have a cold?

ELLIOT

Cold? No. I don't have a cold.

Elliot wipes his nose.

DANIEL

So?

ELLIOT

And?

DANIEL

Can I buy a plain headstone from you? No seraphs. No cherubs. No adornments whatsoever. Just plain. Plain, plain, plain, plain, plain.

They sit in silence for a moment. Elliot wipes his nose.

DANIEL
Allergies?

ELLIOT
No...

DANIEL
You keep --

ELLIOT
I got some budget-priced headstones
with just one cherub.

DANIEL
It's not the price.

Elliot wipes his nose.

ELLIOT
They don't make plain headstones
any more. Maybe years ago --

DANIEL
When there was the Danny Kaye
sandwich.

ELLIOT
-- when it was economical.
Sandwich?

DANIEL
Am I to understand that no one
makes a plain, unadorned headstone?

Elliot thinks for a moment.

ELLIOT
Maybe the Goyim make one? Who
knows what they do? But here at
Bergman's Monuments, even our
cheapest headstones have at least a
Star of David on them.

DANIEL
It's not the price.

MONTAGE -- DANIEL SEEKS A PLAIN HEADSTONE

-- Daniel strolls hopefully into HOROWITZ HEADSTONES, MODERN
MASONRY and HAIMISCHE HEADSTONES, then shuffles out of each
one shaking his head.

EXT. PASTA PRIMAVERA -- NOON

Daniel and Linda stroll hand-in-hand to the trattoria. They look very relaxed with each other.

DANIEL

I feel like Jason searching for the Golden Fleece.

LINDA

Bergman may be right. Why don't you try a non-denominational monument shop?

Just as Daniel speaks, construction work kicks in and drowns out his words. Linda cups a hand to her ear.

LINDA

Say what?

They raise their voices to be heard above the noise and other raised voices.

DANIEL

I don't think it's allowed.

They stop at the door.

LINDA

This is, though.

She kisses him. He responds.

LINDA

I was thinking...

DANIEL

I'm not that hungry either.

The MAITRE D' approaches. The construction noise stops suddenly.

LINDA

Let's go back to my place. That kiss made me real horny.

The MAITRE D' grins.

MAITRE D'

I'll cancel your reservation.

INT. MIRIAM'S LIVING ROOM

The room is clean, but full of the same dark furniture bought in 1956. Miriam relaxes in an armchair. She talks on the phone.

MIRIAM

I've told you five times already.
I have no idea where the scarf is.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

A lighter room; more contemporary and full of all the tchotchkes of the newly rich. While she speaks, Cissie dusts a bookshelf that does not need dusting.

CISSIE

I can't think where else it can be.
I'm sure I left it at your place.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Fluff pads up to Miriam. He carries a blue, fringed cloth in his teeth.

MIRIAM

What're you, deaf? Didn't I just
tell you --

Fluff stops, looks up at Miriam. Miriam smiles, ruffles Fluff's head.

Cissie dusts.

CISSIE

Hello? Miriam?

Miriam takes hold of part of the cloth.

MIRIAM

Does Fluffy-wuffy want to play a
game? Does my little Fluffy-wuffy
want --

CISSIE

Pardon me?

MIRIAM

Is your name Fluffy-wuffy?

CISSIE

... no.

Miriam and Fluff begin a tug-of-war.

MIRIAM

Then speak when you're spoken to.
Now, is that all you called me up
about?

CISSIE

No, no. Well, part of it, sure.
Sarah left me that scarf. It was
special. Her favorite.

MIRIAM

I know that. You think I don't
know that? I was the sister, don't
forget. You were only the sister-
in-law.

Cissie dusts even harder.

Miriam's tug-of-war with Fluff continues.

MIRIAM

I was with her at the end. I
didn't see you there. Or that son
of hers.

Cissie strikes the bookshelf with the duster.

CISSIE

Change the record already, Miriam,
please. Forget about the scarf,
okay. I also called to invite you
to dinner Sunday.

MIRIAM

Good, because I want to get the
family together. We need to
discuss the headstone for Sarah,
may she rest in peace.

Cissie snaps the duster against the bookshelf. She continues
to dust with the remaining piece.

CISSIE

My point exactly.

Miriam tugs extra hard, but Fluff hangs on.

MIRIAM

Your point?? Your point??

Cissie pokes at the bookshelf with the broken duster.

CISSIE
I bumped into Daniel in the
supermarket and --

Miriam tugs so hard, she jerks Fluff off his feet.

MIRIAM
I don't want him there!

CISSIE
You can't ignore him forever.

MIRIAM
Forever isn't long enough in my
book.

CISSIE
It's his own mother, Miriam...

MIRIAM
Am I talking to myself here??

Cissie dusts so hard, she dislodges three books.

CISSIE
Okay, already. No Daniel.

Miriam's tug-of-war continues. Fluff regains his footing.
While Miriam is distracted, he pulls extra hard on the cloth.

The cloth rips into two pieces. Miriam inspects the piece in
her hand. Fluff holds the other piece in his mouth. He
cocks his head at Miriam. Miriam reaches a hand out to
retrieve the cloth from Fluff.

Fluff backs away. Miriam places the phone in her lap.

Cissie neatens the books.

CISSIE
Miriam? Did you hear what I said?
Miriam?

Miriam reaches out a hand to Fluff. He steps toward her,
hesitates.

MIRIAM
It's okay, honey. It's okay,
darling.

Miriam strokes Fluff's head gently. He responds.

MIRIAM
It's only a game, darling. It's
not your fault.

Miriam retrieves the phone.

CISSIE
Miriam?

MIRIAM
When I come, you'll make me fish
fingers.

CISSIE
I was thinking maybe chicken for a
change?

Miriam sits quietly.

Cissie grips the duster so hard, her knuckles turn white.

CISSIE
Fish fingers, sure.

MIRIAM
And you've got for Fluff, the
Chunkie Chops?

Fluff's ears prick up.

CISSIE
Turkey flavor.

Miriam reaches down to pet Fluff. She takes the torn cloth
from him.

MIRIAM
Here, darling, give that to Mommy.

Miriam folds the two pieces of blue cloth together.

MIRIAM
When I come Sunday, I'll bring your
scarf.

CISSIE
You found it after all?

MIRIAM
I never lost it.

Cissie snaps the duster like a pencil.

INT. ELEVATOR

Daniel and Linda ride up in the elevator. His hand brushes hers. She takes it. Squeezes.

The elevator arrives at floor #3. It bumps to a stop. The bump jostles Linda into Daniel's arms. He pulls her close. They kiss and grope each other. The elevator doors open. They stumble out, still locked in a tight embrace.

An elderly couple stand at the elevator. As Daniel and Linda leave the elevator, the OLD MAN reaches out a hand to keep the door open. He and the OLD WOMAN watch Daniel and Linda stumble down the corridor. They look at each other, a definite twinkle in their eyes.

The Old Woman removes the Old Man's hand from the door. She intertwines her fingers in his, then leads him down the other side of the corridor.

They stop. She fishes around in her purse, brings out a small pill box. She removes a blue pill, then places it in his hand. He smiles. Pops it in his mouth.

They set off down the corridor again, shuffling a tad faster. They both do a little hop together.

INT. CORRIDOR

Daniel and Linda scramble along the corridor, still locked in their embrace. They pass two doors. Stop at the third: apartment #312.

Linda turns around in Daniel's embrace so she faces the door. He slips his arms around her waist. Hugs her to him. She nuzzles the back of her head against his face. She fishes around in her purse. Finds the key. Opens the door.

INT. THRESHOLD OF LINDA'S APARTMENT

Linda takes a single step into the apartment, taking Daniel with her. Then she does a 180 and turns to face him. She places a hand against his chest. Pushes him back. Gently but firmly.

Daniel registers surprise. Concern. Linda smiles. But when she speaks, she's serious.

LINDA

I want you to court me today.

DANIEL

How?

LINDA

You'll think of something.

DANIEL

Don't go anywhere.

INT. OUTSIDE LINDA'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Daniel holds a bouquet of flowers and a bottle of wine. He catches his breath, then RINGS the bell. The door opens to reveal Linda dressed in a raincoat and nothing else.

INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT

Daniel stands in the corridor, mouth open. Linda opens the raincoat. Then drops it to the floor. Daniel drops the flowers. And the wine.

INT. MIRIAM'S LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Miriam picks up the receiver and taps out a number.

MIRIAM

(into phone)

Bergman and Sons? Get me Elliot Bergman. Elliot? Miriam Steinberg née Margulies. Is my headstone ready yet? Then hurry it up. And make sure you get that inscription right. Read it to me again...

INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- LATER

Daniel and Linda lie in bed in a post coital embrace. The flowers sit in a vase on the bedside table, a little bruised but trying their best.

LINDA

Daniel Franken, you should be ashamed of yourself, leading an innocent woman astray like that.

DANIEL

I just suggested the journey. You were the one with the map.

LINDA
Which you followed perfectly.

Linda bites his nipple.

LINDA
However, there is more than one
route to the summit.

DANIEL
Then I suggest we get back on the
path.

They kiss. Passionately.

KITCHEN -- LATER

Daniel wears one of Linda's larger T-shirts. Linda wears
sweats. The microwave PINGS. Daniel removes pizza.

DANIEL
Italian food, as promised.

LINDA
I have to warn you. Pizza makes me
horny.

Daniel adds an extra slice to her plate.

I/E. DANIEL'S CAR -- DAY

Daniel drives along suburban streets, cell phone to his ear.

DANIEL
(into phone)
Daniel Franken this end.

RICK (V.O.)
Where are you, Mr. Franken?

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

Rick sits at his desk, wearing an audio headset. He ruffles
through a pile of phone bills. A number of entries are
highlighted in yellow.

DANIEL (V.O.)
On my day off.

RICK
We need to talk.

INTERCUT -- DANIEL AND RICK

Daniel checks the buildings as he drives by.

DANIEL
 (into phone)
 We are talking, Mr. Rick.
 (to himself)
 Two-two-three-seven... Two-two-
 three-nine...

Rick runs a finger down the list.

RICK
 (into phone)
 You've broken Rule Twelve, Mr.
 Franken... and Rule Twelve... and
 Rule Twelve... and Rule Twelve --

DANIEL
 Two-two-four-one... Two-two-four-
 three.
 (into phone)
 Those are all the same rule, Mr.
 Rick.

RICK
 (into phone)
 Yes, Mr. Franken. You've broken
 Rule Twelve...

He counts.

RICK
 (into phone)
 ... seven times. And each time is
 a firing offense, Mr. Franken.
 What do you have to say about that?

DANIEL
 Two-two-four-five. Aha!

Daniel pulls into the driveway of T. REYFE MASONRY, INC.

DANIEL
 (into phone)
 It would help if I knew which rule
 that was, Mr. Rick.

INTERCUT -- T. REYFE MASONRY AND RICK'S OFFICE

Daniel pulls into the parking lot. Switches off the
 ignition.

RICK
(into phone)
Twelve, Mr. Franken. Rule Twelve.

Daniel takes a deep breath.

DANIEL
(into phone)
Let's pretend that I can't remember
what rule twelve is, Mr. Rick.

Rick scrunches his face in anger.

Daniel looks around the yard. All the headstones seem to have immense crosses or angels -- hands clasped in prayer -- or other ornaments.

DANIEL
(into phone)
Just a hypothetical, Mr. Rick,
since forgetting what the rules
mean is probably a firing offense.

Daniel starts the engine. Then he spots a plain headstone over in one corner.

DANIEL
(into phone)
In a case like that, what would
rule twelve be?

Daniel switches off his engine.

RICK
(into phone)
Rule Twelve relates to phone time
spent with contractors, Mr.
Franken.

DANIEL
(into phone)
It's all coming back to me now.

Daniel slips out of the car and heads for a sign that reads:
"OFFICE."

DANIEL
(into phone)
Thou shalt not -- Sorry, I mean,
you should not spend more than five
minutes on a call with a
contractor.

RICK
(into phone)
If you know the Rule, why did you
break it seven times, Mr. Franken?

DANIEL
(into phone)
Well, and this is my fault so I can
only apologize and throw myself on
your mercy, Mr. Rick, there are
times when it's difficult to give a
contractor the details of the job,
get them to agree to do it and give
them directions to the location in
five minutes.

RICK
(into phone)
I can do it.

DANIEL
(into phone)
That's because you are A.P. Rick,
sir.

Rick puffs up with the "compliment."

RICK
(into phone)
Then strive to be more like me, Mr.
Franken and we shall hear no more
about this.

DANIEL
(into phone)
Thank you, sir. I am moved.

As Daniel walks through the door, he passes a worker coming
out.

DANIEL
Where's your bathroom?

INT. T. REYFE MASONRY, INC. -- OFFICE

TERENCE REYFE IV -- 35 and every inch the blue blood -- looks
cool and calm, almost casual as he scans the computer screen.
Daniel's leg bobs nervously while he waits.

REYFE
Let me see here. Yes. Hmmm.

Reyfe turns his gaze on Daniel.

REYFE

Seems you are correct, Mr. Franken.

DANIEL

I'm right? You do --

REYFE

But you are also incorrect, if you see what I mean?

DANIEL

I don't. See what you mean.

Reyfe coughs a short, nervous laugh; almost a tiny bark.

REYFE

Quite simple really. You mistook an unworked block of granite for a plain headstone.

DANIEL

Silly me.

REYFE

Please, don't blame yourself. It's a mistake anyone can make.

DANIEL

Unworked? Does that mean it can be worked? Made into a proper headstone?

REYFE

All our headstones are proper, Mr. Franken. We pride ourselves on that fact.

Daniel tries to contain his rising excitement.

DANIEL

So I could buy that block of granite and you could turn it into a headstone?

REYFE

It's what we do, Mr. Franken. It's what we do.

DANIEL

And it could just be plain? No ornaments? No angels? No nothing?

REYFE

If that is your wish. Though,
normally, we --

DANIEL

That is my wish. And if I gave you
the inscription, you could do that
too?

REYFE

Of course. A headstone without an
inscription is like, well, a shoe
without a sock.

Daniel digs out a piece of paper from his pant pocket. Hands it to Reyfe. Reyfe scans the paper. His unflappableness momentarily flaps.

EXT. PISKIN'S CEMETERY

Piskin sits aboard the backhoe. He positions it next to a plot of ground marked out with stakes and rope.

PISKIN

The Backhoe-a-saurus spots his
lunch.

Piskin lowers the head and then flicks it up and down above the marked out plot as if it sniffs the ground.

PISKIN

Smells yummy.

He positions the head at an angle; drops its jaw.

PISKIN

Okay, let's eat.

The jaw bites into the earth.

INT. T. REYFE MASONRY, INC. -- OFFICE

Reyfe scrutinizes the paper.

REYFE

This is Hebrew, if I'm not
mistaken.

DANIEL

You're not mistaken.

REYFE

Forgive me for asking, but why would you want Hebrew lettering on your mother's --

He stops, obviously embarrassed.

REYFE

Not that we don't want to do business with you, but wouldn't you be better served by going to Bergman's or someone like that?

DANIEL

I've been to Bergman's... and all the others. None of them want to make a plain headstone.

REYFE

We may have to charge you a little more because of the Hebrew lettering.

DANIEL

It's not the price.

EXT. PISKIN'S CEMETERY

The backhoe continues to eat the ground. Suddenly a tooth snaps off. And then another. And another.

Piskin yanks the head out of the grave, then rests it delicately on the ground beside the plot. He stops the machine. Jumps from the cab and into the grave.

Emerges moments later with the three teeth. Pats the backhoe's head.

PISKIN

Don't you worry none, Mr. Backhoe-a-saurus. Me and Mr. Superglue will fix you right up.

EXT. SARAH'S GRAVESIDE

Daniel stands at his mother's grave. A small flag at the head of the grave reads: "BC 66."

In the distance, a backhoe sits with its shovel resting on a mound of earth.

DANIEL

... so here's the deal. I've found
you a plain headstone.

He shuffles. Coughs. Takes a breath.

DANIEL

Only thing is... the stonemason is
not Jewish.

(quickly)

All the Jewish places had ornaments
and whatnots and anyway so long as
the inscription is in Hebrew that's
all that matters, right?

He pauses. Looks at the grave.

DANIEL

I miss you.

He wipes a tear.

DANIEL

Anyhow, that's what I decided is
best. Tell me if you think I did
the wrong thing.

He waits.

In the distance, a man approaches the backhoe and begins
doing something to the shovel.

Daniel looks at his mother's grave, nods, then turns and
strides away.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The room is neat, tidy and spotlessly clean.

A dining table that runs down the center of the room almost
sags under the weight of a banquet-like spread.

Norman sits in his Lay-Z-Boy reading the newspaper. Every so
often he winces and waggles his feet.

A football game plays on the TV.

Cissie bounces into the room from the kitchen carrying a tray
laden with more Saran-wrapped food. She places this on the
table. Cissie wears an apron over her day dress. Her hair
looks freshly coiffured.

Norman automatically glances at Cissie as she passes him.

Cissie nods at the TV.

CISSIE

You'll have to switch that off when Daniel comes. It's rude to watch TV when you have visitors.

Cissie moves stuff around on the table to make more room.

NORMAN

Daniel's not a visitor, he's our nephew.

CISSIE

You'll still switch it off. You never know who might turn up.

NORMAN

Tell me you've not invited Miriam.

Cissie rearranges the lamp on top of the TV.

CISSIE

Did you move this lamp?

NORMAN

Cissie? What have you done?

CISSIE

It's about time those two called a truce.

NORMAN

Miriam agreed to this?

CISSIE

She will.

NORMAN

Sure. When haircuts are back to a dollar a pop. She knows Daniel's coming?

CISSIE

You think this lamp is okay here? Maybe we should put Adele and Ira's wedding photo...

(off Norman's look)

It'll be a surprise. For both of them.

NORMAN

Oy!

CISSIE
I meant well.

NORMAN
You always mean well.

Cissie escapes into the kitchen.

NORMAN
You got any more surprises for me?

Norman surveys the food.

NORMAN
Like maybe you've invited the
entire Forty-niners offensive line
for example?

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE

Daniel holds the phone to his ear.

DANIEL
(into phone)
I can't do that, sorry, it's
against company rules.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Maybe I didn't explain my situation
properly?

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE

Busy site. JIMMY (25) -- built like a side of beef -- stands on the framework of a house. He holds a large saw in one hand and a cell phone to his ear with the other.

DANIEL (V.O.)
I understand your problem. I just
can't hold your check.

Jimmy tightens his grip on the saw.

INTERCUT -- DANIEL AND JIMMY

Daniel winds and unwinds the phone cord around his finger.

JIMMY
 (into phone)
 My wife, sorry, my soon-to-be ex-
 wife, knows the exact day my check
 comes.

DANIEL
 (into phone)
 I get it, Jimmy, honest, I do.

JIMMY
 (into phone)
 Then get this. She'll go get it
 and spend it on make-up and any
 other crap she can just to bust my
 balls.
 (calls O.S.)
 One minute, okay?
 (into phone)
 I gotta get back on the job.
 Please, I'm begging you now. Help
 me. Do the right thing.

DANIEL
 (into phone)
 I...

JIMMY
 (into phone)
 I'm coming in the office on pay
 day. I know you'll do what's
 right.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

The TV sits silent. Cissie vacuums the carpet.

Norman tries to read his newspaper.

As Cissie vacuums close to the bookshelf, she notices
 something and switches off the vacuum.

Cissie picks up a book. She moves it from one position to
 another.

CISSIE
 Have you been messing with these
 books?

NORMAN
 I read one, I'm sorry.

Cissie surveys the room.

Cissie appears at the kitchen door.

CISSIE
Maybe they'll start to come around?

NORMAN
You put Miriam and Daniel in the same room and the only thing that'll come around is World War Three.

EXT. SERVICE STATION

A mid-size American sedan sits next to a gas pump A dog yips from inside the car.

MIRIAM (V.O.)
Seventy dollars to fill my tank!
No, I don't blame you. I blame Moses. If that schmuck would've turned left instead of right, they'd've gotten the oranges and we'd've gotten the oil wells.

Fluff yips.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

Norman stands the living room door, hand on the knob.

CISSIE (O.S.)
Did you put the paper down?

NORMAN
Aw, Cissie... .

CISSIE (O.S.)
We don't want people dragging dirt all over our brand new carpet.

NORMAN
Can't you put the paper down?

Cissie appears in the kitchen doorway.

CISSIE
Keep them talking.

Norman rushes into the hallway.

Cissie takes the newspaper from the Lay-Z-Boy and spreads the pages out over the carpet. She makes one path from the living room door to the table and another to the couch.

EXT. PISKIN'S CEMETERY

Piskin superglues more teeth back onto the backhoe.

PISKIN

We may have to buy you dentures.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

The newspapers form the requisite pathway. Norman returns to the room, followed by Jack and Ruthie

RUTHIE

(to Jack)

... so it was in the Jewish Chronicle. The obituary. Hymie Plotnik. Dead. You remember him?

JACK

(to the floor)

She's asked me this a million times already.

RUTHIE

So I'll ask it a million and one. It won't kill you.

JACK

How do you know? This could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. I could suddenly keel over with an aneurysm from being over-asked.

RUTHIE

Make sure you fall on the paper. Don't spoil Cissie's new carpet.

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

Rick spins around and around in his chair. Daniel stands by the desk and watches.

RICK

Remember Rule One, Mr. Franken. I explained it to you on your very first day.

DANIEL
But this guy --

Rick faces front. He stops spinning and waves a finger.

DANIEL
I know. No buts. Do the right
thing, Mr. Rick. Give this guy a
break.

RICK
Rules are not meant to be broken,
Mr. Franken, that is the right
thing.

Rick spins the chair around to face the window. His hand
appears above back of the chair in a gesture of dismissal.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

Jack and Ruthie sit on the sofa. Norman sits upright in his
Lay-Z-Boy.

The doorbell RINGS.

RUTHIE
You want me to get the door?

Cissie appears at the kitchen door.

CISSIE
Norman will get it.

NORMAN
Somebody sure will.

Norman heads for the front door.

CISSIE
Let it be Adele, let it be Adele.

The phone RINGS.

NORMAN
All right already! I'm coming!

CISSIE
That was the phone, honey.

NORMAN
You want me to get that too?

CISSIE
I'll answer it.

Norman shuffles out of the room as Cissie picks up the phone.

 CISSIE
 (into phone)
Hello? Oh hello Adele, darling. Is
everything... Poor baby... Sure,
sure... Of course, darling... Bye.

FRONT DOOR

Norman opens the door. Daniel stands on the threshold, cell phone to his ear. He holds his hand up to Norman, signaling "five minutes."

Norman nods. He steps back into the

LIVING ROOM

Everyone looks at Norman, expectantly.

 NORMAN
It's Daniel. He'll be five
minutes.

 CISSIE
He's afraid to come in? What did
you say to him? Did you mention
Miriam?

 RUTHIE
Miriam's coming? They'll be in the
same room?

 JACK
Oy!?

FRONT DOOR

Daniel paces at the threshold. He shifts the cell phone from one ear to the other.

 DANIEL
 (into phone)
No, Mr. Rick, I do not wish to lose
my job... Yes, Mr. Rick, I will do
the right thing.

Daniel SNAPS his cell phone off. He composes himself. Strides across the threshold and into

LIVING ROOM

Daniel moves hesitantly into the room. He acknowledges Jack and Ruthie.

Cissie rushes to Daniel and hugs him. She escorts him to a chair.

CISSIE

Here. Sit. Adele just called. That was her on the phone. Ira's come down with the 'flu and she's looking after him.

RUTHIE

He can't look after himself?

CISSIE

They're newly-weds. They don't go anywhere without each other.

DANIEL

Like mother like daughter.

Cissie and Norman smile.

CISSIE

I know what Daniel wants. A nice cup of coffee, am I right?

Daniel nods. He looks around the room.

DANIEL

Is everyone here now?

CISSIE

What makes you ask?

Daniel surveys the food.

DANIEL

This is a major spread, even by your standards, Cissie.

CISSIE

Who else could be coming? Miriam may turn up.

DANIEL

Why?

CISSIE
You never know when she can make a
surprise inspection.

EXT. MIRIAM'S CAR -- MOVING

Miriam's car drives through a suburban neighborhood. She makes a left onto Cyprus Avenue.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

An uncomfortable silence shrouds the room.

 CISSIE
... she's returning my scarf. The
blue one your mother gave me and
she could drop it off at any time
and...

 NORMAN
Yes, she's coming.

 DANIEL
I must be going.

Daniel shakes Jack and Ruthie's hand in turn.

 DANIEL
Jack. Ruthie. Nice to see you.
Sorry it's been so long and so
short.

The doorbell RINGS five times.

Cissie and Norman exchange glances.

 DANIEL
That sounds like Miriam's ring.

Jack nods his head, wisely.

 JACK
And the truth shall set you free.

 RUTHIE
Where do you dig these things up
from?

The doorbell RINGS another five times.

DANIEL

You'd better answer the door before
she puts her shoulder to it.

The doorbell RINGS again.

Norman dithers briefly, then heads for the door.

RUTHIE

You remember him, Cissie? Hymie
Plotnik? He had a bit of a hump
and a glass eye.

CISSIE

(to Daniel)

I didn't mean any harm. I just
thought --

DANIEL

Maybe it's for the best. I need to
tell Miriam first-hand about the
headstone so there's no
misunderstanding.

CISSIE

You're a real mensch.

DANIEL

The night is young.

MIRIAM (O.S.)

Are you deaf? You left me standing
on the stoop.

NORMAN (O.S.)

We don't have a stoop, Miriam. We
haven't had a stoop since --

Miriam stomps into the room holding Fluff to her chest.
Norman trails behind.

CISSIE

I'll make some coffee.

Cissie retreats to the kitchen. Miriam sees Daniel. She
clutches Fluff tighter. Fluff yips.

MIRIAM

Cissie!

Cissie peers around the kitchen door.

Miriam points a disparaging finger at Daniel.

MIRIAM
What is that??

CISSIE
I thought --

MIRIAM
Don't think, Cissie. It's not your strong point.

JACK
Behave yourself, Miriam or they'll send you home without your dinner.

MIRIAM
You should show some respect. I'm older than you.

JACK
Purely an accident of birth.

Cissie slips back into the kitchen. Daniel strides into the kitchen with her.

NORMAN
Listen, Miriam... maybe you could put Fluff in the yard?

Fluff yips.

MIRIAM
It's okay, my little spongecake, pay no attention.

Miriam glares at Norman.

MIRIAM
You'll stay here with Mommy.

KITCHEN

Cissie busies herself opening cans of dog food while Daniel watches.

CISSIE
Thank God I got the turkey flavor.

DANIEL
And the fish fingers for Fluff?

Cissie opens her mouth to speak, then gets the joke. She smiles. Then she grows serious.

CISSIE
And the house?

DANIEL
Looks nice. Especially that print
design on the carpet.

CISSIE
Print? No, that's newspaper
because... you're pulling my leg?

DANIEL
Yes, Cissie.

CISSIE
And the headstone?

DANIEL
All taken care of.

CISSIE
Miriam will be pleased.

DANIEL
Then my life's work is done.

LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Fluff eats his food from two bowls set out on a newspaper by
Miriam's side. One bowl contains some chicken soup and the
other contains the Chunkie Chops.

The family sits around the table. Jack stares into his bowl
of soup.

CISSIE
Eat your soup, Jack, before it goes
cold.

JACK
You forgot my cornflakes.

RUTHIE
Jack, please, don't embarrass
yourself.

JACK
But I always have cornflakes in my
chicken soup. Cissie knows that.

RUTHIE
 I told her not to. You'll go
 without for one day. It won't kill
 you.

Jack rises. He heads for the kitchen.

JACK
 Everything you know. What if my
 body is so attuned to the
 combination of chicken soup and
 cornflakes that it actually needs
 it to sustain life?

RUTHIE
 Jack, please?

JACK
 I feel faint.

RUTHIE
 (to Daniel)
 You'll have to excuse him.

Jack disappears into the kitchen.

RUTHIE
 You remember him, Norman? Hymie
 Plotnik? From the neighborhood.
 He had meningitis as a kid.

NORMAN
 Doesn't ring a bell.

RUTHIE
 Miriam? You must remember Hymie
 Plotnik. You've got a memory like
 an el -- You've got a good memory.

MIRIAM
 I'm eating here!

JACK (O.S.)
 Enough already, Ruthie. Nobody
 remembers this Harry Plotkin.

RUTHIE
 Hymie Plotnik.

Jack returns with a box of cornflakes. He sits at the table,
 looks directly at Ruthie, then sprinkles cornflakes into his
 chicken soup.

JACK

I just hope it's not too late or you'll be reading about me in the Jewish Chronicle and not that whassisname?

RUTHIE

Hymie Plotnik.

CISSIE

Jack was in the Jewish Chronicle?

RUTHIE

God-forbid-a-million-times.
(spits)
Ptuh-ptuh-ptuh!

CISSIE

Who, then?

RUTHIE

Hymie Plotnik. Daniel? You must --

MIRIAM

Enough already with this Plotnik person. Nobody remembers him. We should talk about Sarah's headstone.

DANIEL

That's why I'm here.

MIRIAM

And set a date for the unveiling.

DANIEL

August fifteenth. I thought we'd all meet at nine-thirty and then --

MIRIAM

The unveiling will be on the twenty-second.

DANIEL

Didn't I just say the fifteenth?

MIRIAM

(to Norman)
It's settled then. The twenty-second it is.

She begins to eat.

DANIEL
(mumbles)
The fifteenth.

Miriam looks around.

MIRIAM
What's that noise?

NORMAN
Behave yourself, Miriam. The boy's
arranged for the unveiling. It's
his mother.

MIRIAM
And my sister. I was with her at
the end.

Miriam looks at each one in turn.

MIRIAM
Were you with her at the end? Or
you? Or you? Or you? Or you,
Jack?

JACK
With who? Mrs. Plotnik?

MIRIAM
Sarah, you imbecile. None of you
were with her at the end, so you
don't know what her final words
were. She asked me. She begged
me. She pleaded with me. "Miriam,
don't let my son get me a piece of
dreck headstone like he did for my
late husband. You, Miriam, you.
You I can trust. You get me a
headstone."

CISSIE
I didn't know that.

Daniel takes a deep breath.

DANIEL
Because it's not true.

NORMAN
That does sounds a little far-
fetched, Miriam, even for you.

MIRIAM
You calling me a liar?

Daniel sucks in a humongous breath.

DANIEL

I'm the one that's calling you a liar.

MIRIAM

Apologize! At once! Immediately!

DANIEL

For the truth? The nurse said my mother was in a semicoma when you arrived and never came out of it.

MIRIAM

Except that one time when she pleaded with her eyes. "Don't let my son shame me anymore, Miriam. Get me a decent headstone. Make sure I can rest in peace."

JACK

Give it up, Miriam.

NORMAN

You imagined it.

DANIEL

You bought a headstone, didn't you? I'm sorry. I must be a little slow today. That's why you talking about August twenty-second. You bought a headstone. You've arranged an unveiling.

MIRIAM

I should leave it to you?

JACK

Yes.

RUTHIE

Of course.

CISSIE

You shouldn't interfere.

NORMAN

He's the son. He did his duty.

DANIEL

(calm)

Where did you buy this headstone?

MIRIAM

Not from that dreck bin Memorable Monuments, that's for sure. I went to Bergman's. The best.

DANIEL

You'll cancel the order.

MIRIAM

You should live so long.

DANIEL

I bought a headstone already. It's on order.

MIRIAM

Bergman's said nothing about it.

DANIEL

I didn't order it from Bergman's.

MIRIAM

I knew it! You went to that cheapskate Moe Cohen at Memorable Monuments.

DANIEL

I didn't order from there either.

Miriam looks from one to the other, then at all the family. Except Daniel.

MIRIAM

Where exactly did he order the headstone from, if he did order a headstone in the first place, which I don't think he did?

The family look at each other. Each one shrugs in turn. They look at Daniel.

CISSIE

So, bubeleh, where did you order the headstone from?

DANIEL

You know my mother asked me to get her a plain headstone? It was her dying wish.

CISSIE

I never knew that.

NORMAN
Her dying wish? Really?

JACK
You should do it. You have to honor a mother's dying wish.

RUTHIE
It's a mitzvah.

MIRIAM
It's a meisseh. A story. It's fiction.

CISSIE
Why would the boy --

DANIEL
It is not fiction.

MIRIAM
Were you there, Cissie? Were you, Norman? Jack? I was there. I was with her at the end. She never said anything to me about a plain headstone.

DANIEL
Because she was in a semicoma. She probably didn't even know you were there.

Miriam stamps her foot. Fluff yips.

MIRIAM
What would you know, Mr. Postcard-Writer?? Of course she knew I was there. She was my sister.

NORMAN
If she was in a semicoma like Daniel says --

MIRIAM
Besides, if she wanted a plain headstone -- which I doubt -- she would've asked me. She made no dying wish, believe me, only with her eyes. With her eyes, her eyes, she said --

JACK
 Miriam? Give it a rest. So
 Daniel... where did you order the
 headstone?

DANIEL
 Don't forget, she wanted a plain
 headstone. She made me promise.

NORMAN
 Her dying wish. We know.

DANIEL
 And plain headstones are very hard
 to find. A lot harder than you
 would ever imagine.

RUTHIE
 Yes. So? Where already?

DANIEL
 There was only one place I could
 go.

Jack jumps up and down in his chair eagerly. He raises his
 hand like a kid in class.

JACK
 Me. Ask me. I know the answer.

RUTHIE
 Okay. Where?

JACK
 Where else?? Herschel Horowitz.
 Horowitz Headstones. I'm right,
 Daniel? Am I right or am I right?

Daniel shakes his head, no. Jack slumps in his chair.
 Lapses into a reverie.

NORMAN
 Then where?

MIRIAM
 Why are you wasting your time? I
 told you already. He never ordered
 a headstone.

DANIEL
 ... T. Reyfe Masonry. They were
 the only ones that --

MIRIAM
T. Reyfe? Never heard of 'em.

NORMAN
I...

MIRIAM
What?

NORMAN
I...

CISSIE
What, Norman? You, what?

MIRIAM
Spit it out already!

NORMAN
I've heard of them. They're --

MIRIAM
What? Cheap? Expensive? Probably
cheap.

NORMAN
Gentiles.

Miriam clutches her heart. The rest of the family receive Daniel's news with solemn disapproval. Except Jack. He smiles wistfully, deep in his own world.

MIRIAM
Goyim!? Your precious nephew has
ordered a Christian headstone for
my sister!

CISSIE
Did you, Daniel? You didn't, did
you?

DANIEL
It's not a Christian headstone.

MIRIAM
You bought it from a Jewish shop?

DANIEL
It doesn't matter where I bought it
from.

Miriam pounces.

MIRIAM
Maybe to you!

CISSIE
She's right, Daniel. Your mother
shouldn't have a Christian
headstone.

NORMAN
Cissie's right.

RUTHIE
Norman's right. It's not
respectful.

DANIEL
It is not a Christian headstone.
It doesn't have a cross or --

Miriam almost dies on the spot.

MIRIAM
God-forbid-a-million-times!
(spits)
Ptuh-ptuh-ptuh!

The others "spit" too.

CISSIE
Daniel, bubeleh... whatever
possessed you to do that?

MIRIAM
I knew it. I knew I couldn't trust
him to do the right thing. Oy,
Sarah-Sarah-Sarah, it's lucky you
have me for a sister. It's lucky I
bought you a headstone already.

DANIEL
It was the only place I could get a
plain one.

RUTHIE
Plain-shmain, they'll never unveil
that headstone. The Rabbi will
never allow it.

CISSIE
I agree. It's not...

DANIEL
What?

RUTHIE

Kosher.

NORMAN

It's not kosher.

MIRIAM

It's a slap in the face for poor Sarah. That's what it is.

NORMAN

She's right.

DANIEL

Listen to me, everyone, please.

Miriam turns her back on him.

MIRIAM

The Postcard-Writer?? The Christian-Headstone Buyer?? What can you have to say??

Norman holds up a hand.

NORMAN

Let the boy speak.

DANIEL

Thank you. I loved my mother.

MIRIAM

You weren't with her at the end. Me? I was --

CISSIE

Miriam? Please?

Miriam "zips" her lips.

CISSIE

Go ahead, bubeleh. Speak your piece.

DANIEL

A headstone is neither kosher nor treyf. It's granite. It's not subject to the laws of Kashrut.

Ruthie opens her mouth to speak. Daniel holds up a restraining hand.

DANIEL

It's a piece of rock. The inscription makes it Jewish.

Everyone looks at everyone else.

NORMAN

That makes sense.

CISSIE

Sounds logical.

RUTHIE

So long as the Hebrew lettering is on the headstone, then --

CISSIE

And the Mogen Dovid?

DANIEL

There's Hebrew lettering. I wrote it down for them.

RUTHIE

The Goyim? They can make Hebrew lettering?

DANIEL

Of course.

NORMAN

And the Mogen Dovid? They can do that too?

DANIEL

I promised my mother a plain headstone. I gave her my word.

Miriam watches and waits.

RUTHIE

A book, maybe? The open book is very popular for women and --

DANIEL

Not plain.

NORMAN

There's plain and there's plain. You got to have something?

DANIEL

She said plain.

RUTHIE

So long as there's a Hebrew
inscription, I suppose plain will
be okay.

Everyone nods. Except Miriam. And Jack, who is still lost
in a world of his own. The family looks from one to the
other. Finally, Norman steels himself.

NORMAN

Miriam? You're very quiet.

MIRIAM

Bishul Yisroel.

The family exchange glances. Shrugs all around.

CISSIE

Is that good?

Norman looks at Miriam's stony face.

NORMAN

It's not good.

MIRIAM

In certain circumstances, a Jew,
who is required to keep kosher,
must be involved in the preparation
of the item in order for it to be
kosher.

DANIEL

Have you been cramming for today?

MIRIAM

The Talmud views all non-Jews as
idolaters. Therefore --

Miriam wags a finger in the air.

MIRIAM

-- if the headstone is not prepared
by a Jew, it's not kosher.

DANIEL

Wait. Isn't that only for food?

MIRIAM

Food, yes. So if food is treyf
when prepared by a Goy, imagine how
much worse it is for a headstone?

DANIEL

But --

MIRIAM

It's a blemish on my blessed
sister's memory and I will
not allow it.

DANIEL

(to himself)
No "buts." I'm not a ram or
a goat.

Miriam claps her hands: one-two-three.

MIRIAM

End of subject.

RUTHIE

Maybe she's right?

MIRIAM

Of course I'm right.

CISSIE

She has got a point.

NORMAN

We could all chip in. Buy a Jewish
one from --

DANIEL

It's not the price.

MIRIAM

I got one already.

DANIEL

It's my place to --

MIRIAM

You lost your place.

Just as Daniel opens his mouth to speak, Fluff cocks his leg,
then pees on Daniel's foot. It dribbles onto the carpet.

DANIEL

Then I -- Geezus!

CISSIE

There's something wrong with the
chicken soup?

DANIEL

The goddamn dog peed on my foot.
(to Miriam)
Did you train him to do that!?

Miriam smiles. Daniel takes one of the pieces of blue cloth. Cissie notices the blue cloth but does not react yet. Daniel ducks down. He dabs at his foot and the carpet.

CISSIE

Not on my carpet too!

Cissie rushes around to Daniel. She takes the blue cloth from him, starts dabbing frantically.

NORMAN

That's it. He's going in the yard.

MIRIAM

Not while I'm here.

NORMAN

You're welcome to join him.

Norman rises. He strides over to Fluff.

DANIEL

Allow me.

Daniel picks Fluff up by the scruff of his neck and strides out of the room, holding the dog at arm's length. Fluff yips mournfully. Cissie realizes what she's using to soak up the urine.

CISSIE

This... This is my scarf.

MIRIAM

It's a shmatte now.

CISSIE

There's only half of it here.

MIRIAM

Then it's half a shmatte.

CISSIE

Where's the rest of it, Miriam?
Where is it?

Miriam hands over the other piece of blue cloth. Cissie holds up the urine-soaked cloth and the dry cloth side-by-side. She fits them together. Cissie becomes very calm.

CISSIE

(calls)

Daniel. Don't bother putting the dog in the yard. Miriam's taking him home.

MIRIAM

I haven't had my fish fingers yet
and Fluff's not finished --

Cissie raises a warning finger, which she places against her
lips. She takes the scarf into the

KITCHEN

and spreads it out on the work top. She empties a plate of
fish fingers into the dry half, then wraps the scarf around
them. Daniel returns from the backyard with Fluff. He
follows Cissie as she strides back into the

LIVING ROOM

with her package. She empties the Chunkie Chops into the
urine-soaked piece, then wraps that up. She hands both
pieces to Miriam.

CISSIE

There you are, Miriam. Fish
fingers and Chunkie Chops to go.
And so are you. Now get out of my
house.

Daniel places Fluff on the floor.

MIRIAM

I'm going home now. I've done my
duty. Don't forget. The twenty-
second.

Daniel sags.

DANIEL

Okay, okay, okay. I'll get another
headstone. A kosher one, all
right?

CISSIE

You're a good boy.

RUTHIE

He's a mensch.

NORMAN

A good son.

DANIEL

The unveiling is arranged for August fifteenth already. Nine-thirty.

RUTHIE

You can get another headstone by then?

NORMAN

If Daniel says he'll do it, he'll do it.

MIRIAM

Sure. If you believe him. But when they unveil the empty plot, don't forget the proper unveiling is on the twenty-second.

DANIEL

No! I, will unveil my mother's headstone on the fourteenth.

NORMAN

You'll get a different one by then?

DANIEL

I'll unveil the one I have already.

MIRIAM

The Christian one.

DANIEL

The plain one. You're all welcome to attend.

MIRIAM

And commit a big sin.

JACK

Maybe the boy is right. After all, a rock does not have a religion.

Miriam spins on Jack.

MIRIAM

We should listen to you, Jack? A man who eats cornflakes in his chicken soup. Suddenly, you're an expert on religion?

JACK

On religion, no. On, rocks, yes.

Miriam looks around the room, glares at everyone, then strides to the door.

MIRIAM
Go ahead. Unveil your precious
rock on the fifteenth.

DANIEL
I intend to.

Miriam glares at Daniel.

MIRIAM
But you, Mr. Smarty Pants, are in
for a big surprise.

Fluff yips. Miriam steps out into the street.

Norman SLAMS the front door behind her. He returns to the living room.

CISSIE
So which is it, the fifteenth or
the twenty-second?

DANIEL
The fifteenth.

RUTHIE
What about Miriam's headstone?

DANIEL
I'm going to cancel it.

Daniel taps 4-1-1 into his cell phone.

The family gather around.

DANIEL
(into phone)
Sunnyvale. Bergman. It's a
monument shop.

CISSIE
I'll make some coffee.

Cissie disappears into the kitchen. The others rubberneck Daniel.

INT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP -- OFFICE

An empty office. The phone RINGS off the hook. After a moment, Elliot rushes in and snatches up the phone.

ELLIOT
 (into phone)
 Bergman's.

LIVING ROOM

Daniel gives everyone the "thumbs-up."

DANIEL
 (into phone)
 Who am I speaking with?

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION -- DANIEL AND ELLIOT

Elliot sits on the edge of the desk.

ELLIOT
 Elliot Bergman. But we're
 officially closed.

DANIEL
 Elliot, this is Daniel Franken.

ELLIOTT
 The Danny Kaye sandwich.

DANIEL
 Miriam Steinberg's nephew.

Elliot's nose starts to run. He pulls out a handkerchief.

DANIEL
 Elliot. I need your help. There's
 been a mix-up and my aunt ordered a
 headstone for my mother by mistake.
 You see --

ELLIOT
 Mistake? Your mother's not dead?

DANIEL
 No, no. My mother is dead. See, I
 bought a headstone for her already
 and --

ELLIOT
 Not from me. I checked when --
 (wipes nose)
 -- she came in.

DANIEL
I bought it from Memorable
Monuments and --

ELLIOT
She said you were cheap.

Daniel takes the phone into the hallway.

DANIEL
Listen here. I bought my father's
headstone from Memorable Monuments
because both of my parents are the
same in my eyes.

ELLIOT
Dreck for one, dreck for the other.

DANIEL
Elliot, please? We can't unveil
two headstones for my mother.

ELLIOT
What's your point?

DANIEL
You need to cancel my aunt's order.

Elliot wipes his nose.

ELLIOT
There's no way I can do that. You
cancel your order.

DANIEL
I'm the son.

ELLIOT
But she was with your mother at the
end.

INT. BERGMAN'S MONUMENT SHOP -- OFFICE

Elliot turns to leave. The phone RINGS. He snatches up the
receiver.

ELLIOT
(into phone)
What now?

INT./EXT. MIRIAM'S CAR -- MOVING

Miriam glares at the cell phone in her hand.

MIRIAM
 (into phone)
 Just who do you think you're
 talking to, young man??

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION -- MIRIAM AND ELLIOT

Elliot slumps down in his chair.

MIRIAM
 This is Miriam Steinberg née
 Margulies.

Elliot's nose starts to gush. He takes out a box of tissues and plugs his nose. He speaks like he has a cold.

ELLIOT
 Sorry-sorry-sorry. Hello, Mrs.
 Steinberg. How --

MIRIAM
 You sound funny. Are you picking
 your nose?

ELLIOT
 No, I --

MIRIAM
 I've decided to make a change.

Elliot snorts out the tissues.

ELLIOT
 The headstone's already cut.

MIRIAM
 Not to the headstone, you schmuck.
 To the date of the unveiling. It's
 going to be on the fifteenth and
 not the twenty-second. The
 unveiling's set for nine-thirty,
 but I want you to deliver the
 headstone to Piskin's at eight
 o'clock...

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

The family sits around the dining table.

NORMAN

What if we just boycott Miriam's
unveiling altogether?

JACK

If there's an unveiling of the
headstone, we have to be there,
otherwise...

NORMAN

What?

JACK

I think it's a sin. A big one.

The phone RINGS. Everyone looks at it. Norman checks the
caller ID.

NORMAN

It's Miriam.

RUTHIE

Is someone going to answer that?

Cissie picks up the phone.

CISSIE

(into phone)

Listen here -- The fifteenth?

(to others)

She's changed her mind. The
unveiling's on the fifteenth.

Norman shakes Daniel's hand.

NORMAN

She must have canceled her order.
Mazel tov.

I/E. JACK'S CAR -- LATER

Jack rubs his chin as he drives.

RUTHIE

You thinking what I'm thinking?

JACK

The minute we get home I'm calling
Horowitz Headstones.

INT. CISSIE'S LIVING ROOM

Cissie and Norman are alone in the house. Cissie cleans the remaining food and drink from the table. She shuttles back and forth between the living room and the kitchen.

Norman scuttles around on all-fours collecting newspapers and trying to put them in order.

CISSIE

We can't let Daniel erect a
Christian headstone.

NORMAN

I can't find page twenty-seven,
twenty-eight.

CISSIE

Did you hear what I said?

NORMAN

Did you hear what he said?

CISSIE

Forget about page twenty-seven,
twenty-eight. We're going to throw
that paper out anyway.

NORMAN

Why throw it out? It's a perfectly
good paper and I haven't finished
reading it yet.

CISSIE

We can't let him unveil a Christian
headstone.

NORMAN

He said it was okay.

CISSIE

Do you believe that?

NORMAN

He believes it.

CISSIE

Sarah was your sister.

NORMAN

Can we do it in time?

Cissie hands Norman the phone.

CISSIE
If we start now.

Norman punches in a series of numbers. Cissie moves up close, her head next to his.

NORMAN
I need a number for Modern Masonry.

Cissie hugs Norman.

CISSIE
We're doing the right thing.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Daniel sits behind his desk working at his computer. Jimmy stands in the doorway. His tool bag hangs loosely in his hand.

JIMMY
Did you do the right thing?

DANIEL
It's here, waiting for you.

Daniel opens his desk drawer. He rummages around. Then he rummages some more. He checks the next drawer. And the next.

Jimmy opens his tool bag.

JIMMY
Three minutes.

Daniel checks his desk.

DANIEL
It was here. Three minutes?

Jimmy pulls out his saw.

JIMMY
Two minutes forty-five seconds.

Daniel concentrates on his search. He empties each drawer in turn onto his desk, rummages through the contents, then moves on to the next.

He scrabbles through the stuff on his desk.

Jimmy turns the wooden visitor's chair on its side. Saws one of the legs off.

DANIEL
It's definitely here somewhere.

Daniel checks the same stuff he checked moments ago. He's desperate now.

Jimmy sees another leg off.

JIMMY
Two minutes.

He works on another leg.

Daniel looks up.

DANIEL
What the hell you doing??

JIMMY
My job. One minute forty-five seconds.

DANIEL
You can't do that!

Jimmy holds up a chair leg.

JIMMY
I just did. One minute.

Jimmy cuts off another leg.

DANIEL
I can't find your check.

JIMMY
Forty-five seconds.

He saw off the last leg.

DANIEL
Forty-five seconds for what?

JIMMY
Not for what. To what.

DANIEL
To what, what?

Jimmy stands. Moves around the desk to Daniel. Grabs his shirt. Hauls him to his feet.

JIMMY
To when I saw you in half.

He propels Daniel backwards until he hits the wall.

JIMMY
Which is now.

DANIEL
Take it easy!

He places the saw against Daniel's throat.

JIMMY
One quick cut or lots of small ones?

RICK (O.S.)
Mr. Franken. Surely you know fraternizing with the contractors is against Rule Ten. Now unless --

Rick steps into the office. Notices the severed chair.

RICK
This is coming out of your salary, Mr. Franken.

JIMMY
I-want-my-check!

RICK
You must be Jimmy. Your check is in the mail, per company policy.

DANIEL
In the mail??

JIMMY
In the mail!?

RICK
I saw -- if you'll excuse the pun-- I saw to it myself.

DANIEL
You took it out of my drawer.

RICK
You know the rules, Mr. Franken.

JIMMY
Side to side or down the middle?

DANIEL
Wait-wait-wait. You have a joint account, right. Just cancel it, then --

JIMMY
Not enough time.

Daniel touches the saw blade.

DANIEL
You could go to jail for this.

JIMMY
I go to jail... she gets no
alimony...

He lowers the blade a tad, then raises it again instantly.

JIMMY
Sounds like a plan.

DANIEL
No-no-no. It's not a plan. Here's
a plan. We cancel the old check
and write you a new one. Mr. Rick?

RICK
That's against company policy, Mr.
Franken. One man, one check.

DANIEL
You're killing me, here.

RICK
You put yourself in this situation
when you broke the rules.

DANIEL
Okay... Jimmy... What if I wrote
you a personal check?

JIMMY
That would work.

DANIEL
Then you can cancel the old check,
Mr. Rick and make a new --

Rick shakes his head.

JIMMY
You're doomed, kid.

DANIEL
Let me think, okay?

JIMMY
Ten seconds.

DANIEL

There must be some other way you
can stop you're ex from getting her
hands on the check?

JIMMY

Saw them off?

DANIEL

Change the locks.

JIMMY

Change the locks?

DANIEL

Check was mailed today. Won't
arrive until tomorrow. You can
change the locks today.

JIMMY

I never thought of that.

Jimmy lowers the saw.

JIMMY

(to Rick)

This guy's a keeper.

Jimmy puts the saw away. Picks up his tool bag.

JIMMY

Don't worry about the chair. I'll
make you a new one.

Jimmy strolls out. Daniel and Rick stand off looking at each
other.

Daniel takes a cardboard file box. Empties the contents on
his desk.

RICK

You realize you've committed two
firing offenses, Mr. Franken.

Daniel puts his personal stuff back in the cardboard box.

DANIEL

No they're not. You know why?

Rick opens his mouth to speak. Daniel picks up the cardboard
box. Marches to the door and out the office.

DANIEL (O.S.)

Because I quit.

INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT

Linda and Daniel sit at her dining table drinking coffee.
Daniel runs a hand through his hair.

DANIEL
Do you really think it's okay to
unveil that headstone?

LINDA
Definitely. I went on the
Internet. A rock's a rock.

DANIEL
That's a weight off. Now all I
have to worry about is being out of
work.

LINDA
What an asshole.

DANIEL
None bigger. Now I have to find a
Plan B.

LINDA
I'll help. But first, we need sex.

DANIEL
We do?

LINDA
I'm horny again and I need to have
a clear mind to help you find Plan
B. Ergo...

Daniel rises.

DANIEL
Ergo it is, then.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND -- DAY

Linda pushes Daniel on the swing.

DANIEL
Before my mother died...

LINDA
You're doing the right thing.

DANIEL
She quoted Mitzi Gaynor from "South
Pacific."

LINDA
So what is your dream?

DANIEL
To be my own boss.

LINDA
Then do it.

Linda slows the swing down.

DANIEL
Dismount!

Linda opens her mouth to speak but Daniel is already off the swing. He hits the ground. Takes two steps, then stops and stands, hands in the air like an Olympic gymnast. Linda rushes to him. Pulls him into her arms.

LINDA
A perfect ten.

DANIEL
Just like you.

They switch around and he pushes her.

LINDA
Up high. I want to go up high.

He pushes her. Her swing gains arc.

DANIEL
I need clients.

LINDA
Poach his.

DANIEL
That's unethical.

LINDA
They wouldn't be his if it wasn't
for you.

DANIEL
So they're really my customers.

LINDA
There you go.

DANIEL
I'll start with Jeff Devereux.
He's always liked me.

LINDA
Higher.

DANIEL
Any higher and you're gonna need a
spacesuit.

INT. JACK AND RUTHIE'S CONDO -- DAY

It's as if there is an invisible dividing line down the center of the living room. One half is extremely neat and tidy. The other half is a mess.

Ruthie perches on a chair in the neat section. Jack slouches on the couch in the messy section.

They both wear their "cemetery" clothes.

RUTHIE
Maybe we shouldn't mix in.

JACK
Honey, the horse has bolted and
taken the stable with it.

INT. CISSIE'S HOUSE

Norman wears his cemetery suit. Cissie fusses with her dress. She twirls.

CISSIE
I look okay?

NORMAN
Nobody will hold a candle.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT

Linda watches Daniel as he stands at the door. He wears the suit from the burial.

DANIEL
I look okay?

LINDA
You look like you're going to an
unveiling.

DANIEL

You sure you won't change your mind?

LINDA

It's better if I don't come.

DANIEL

You'll be here when I get back?

LINDA

Of course.

She busses him on the cheek.

LINDA

Now, go already.

EXT. GRAVESIDE -- LATER

A single shrouded monument sits at the head of the grave. Miriam approaches with Fluff in tow. She sneaks a look beneath the shroud and smiles.

LATER

Miriam and Fluff stand guard behind the headstone. Daniel, Norman and Cissie stride over to the headstone. The Rabbi approaches, followed by Jack and Ruthie.

RUTHIE

(to Rabbi)

He had a hump and a glass eye? I think he had a club foot also.

RABBI

I can't place him.

RUTHIE

He had consumption and high blood pressure, always red in the face and couldn't catch his breath.

The Rabbi looks around nervously.

RABBI

Can we move on?

RUTHIE

He had prostate cancer or was it colon cancer?

RABBI
Is everyone here? Shall we begin?

LATER

Everyone congregates around the grave with downcast eyes. The men all wear yarmulkes. Miriam leans down to place a small yarmulke on Fluff's head.

The ROAR of a large vehicle and WHINE of a truck engine sound in the distance. Everyone except the Rabbi look in the direction of the noise.

RABBI
... so as we gather here to unveil and dedicate this headstone and resting place to our beloved Sarah Franken, we acknowledge that the mourning cycle of nearly one year comes to an end.

The Rabbi unveils the headstone.

RABBI
(recites)
May the blessings of God rest upon you.

Everyone looks at the headstone. It is very ornate, with cherubs and seraphs and gold filigree lettering. They all mouth the inscription. It reads: "IN LOVING MEMORY OF SARAH FRANKEN née Margulies. Sadly missed by her sister Miriam Steinberg née Margulies, family and friends."

Norman and Cissie look at each other. Jack and Ruthie exchange glances. The Rabbi frowns. Miriam smirks. Fluff yips. Daniel slumps.

NORMAN
What the hell kind of an inscription is that??

RABBI
It is somewhat unusual.

JACK
Somewhat?? It's a travesty,

RUTHIE
A travesty.

CISSIE

It's no less than I would expect
from the woman who stole my scarf.

MIRIAM

I didn't steal no scarf. It was
mine by right.

The Rabbi lowers his prayer book. Drums his fingers against
his thigh.

RABBI

Ladies... gentlemen...

The ROAR and WHINE grow closer.

RABBI

Moving right along --

DANIEL

We can't "move right along."

The Rabbi slumps.

DANIEL

This is totally the wrong
headstone.

CISSIE

Don't worry, bubeleh, we'll unveil
the right one.

Cissie nudges Norman. Ruthie digs Jack in the ribs.

JACK

We certainly will.

The Rabbi looks from one to the other. He lowers his prayer
book.

Miriam simply smirks. She makes a "hurry up" sign to the
Rabbi. He raises his prayer book.

At that moment, the ROAR and WHINE grab everyone's attention
as the backhoe trundles over the rise, followed by a truck
with a covered flatbed. The mourners watch as the two
vehicles stop several feet from the graveside.

RABBI

There's obviously another unveiling
going on here, so let's finish our
dedication and --

DANIEL

There's another headstone. Not
this one. A different one.

Cissie and Norman exchange glances. Ruthie looks at Jack.
The two couples turn to face Daniel.

 CISSIE
How did you know?

 NORMAN
How did you know?

 RUTHIE
How did he know?

 JACK
How did he know?

 RABBI
What other headstone?

 MIRIAM
What other headstone?

Daniel looks at everyone in turn.

 DANIEL
My headstone, of course.

 MIRIAM
The Christian one?

 RABBI
The deceased wasn't Jewish? But
didn't I officiate --

 DANIEL
Of course my mother was Jewish, you
putz. The only place I could get a
plain headstone -- like my mother
asked me to with her dying wish --
was to go to a Christian masonry.

 MIRIAM
Rabbi, he can't dedicate a
Christian headstone. That's
sacrilege.

 DANIEL
I downloaded everything from the
Internet for them. They put all
the proper inscriptions on the
stone.

 RABBI
In Hebrew?

 DANIEL
No. In Swahili. My mother
converted just before she died.

RABBI
I deserve that.

DANIEL
So let's remove this... this
monstrosity and unveil the proper
headstone.

MIRIAM
He can't --

RABBI
Actually, he can. There is nothing
in Jewish law says the headstone
has to be prepared by a Jewish
mason. After all, it's just rock,
it's not food.

This time it's Daniel's turn to smirk.

RABBI
The sooner we get started...

Daniel looks over at the backhoe. Sees Piskin.

DANIEL
(calls)
Mr. Piskin. Can you bring my
headstone from the --

Piskin points to the backhoe.

PISKIN
Backhoe-a-saurus is on the job.

DANIEL
Back what?

Piskin gives Daniel the thumbs up. Pats the side of the
cabin.

NORMAN
You can unveil two headstones?

RABBI
Technically, I can unveil as many
as needs be to satisfy the family's
emotional and spiritual needs,
though it is customary...

Jack and Ruthie nod in silent agreement.

JACK

By all means, let's unveil Daniel's headstone. He did his duty.

He looks pointedly at Miriam.

JACK

And the son is more important than the sister.

MIRIAM

By you! The Cornflakes King!

DANIEL

Mr. Piskin, please remove this headstone.

MIRIAM

Over my dead body!

Daniel looks heavenwards, then at Miriam.

DANIEL

Well, that didn't work.

The backhoe lumbers closer, then stops close by Miriam's headstone. Daniel steps up to the backhoe. Everyone watches to see what will happen next.

PISKIN

The Backhoe-a-saurus opens its mighty jaws.

NORMAN

What's he talking about?

CISSIE

Just humor him.

JACK

Senile dementia.

MIRIAM

You would know.

Piskin directs the jaws of the backhoe over Miriam's headstone. Then he grips it tightly and extracts it like a bad tooth.

MIRIAM

Sure, go ahead, desecrate my sister's grave. But remember... the Almighty is watching you.

DANIEL

He may be watching me, Miriam, but
He's got you on a timer.

For a moment, nothing happens. Everyone stands in awe. Then the headstone slips out of its socket... POP!

PISKIN

Nothing can resist the mighty
Backhoe-a-saurus.

The uprooting of the headstone seems to uproot Miriam. She suddenly snaps into action, rushes the rising headstone and wraps her arms around it. The backhoe groans, then kicks into lower gear.

RABBI

This behavior is totally uncalled
for. Mrs. Steinberg! Mr. Franken!
I can no longer be a party to this
nonsense.

The Rabbi turns to leave. Jack places a restraining hand on his arm.

JACK

Stay. Please? We're going to need
you again in just a minute.

The Rabbi shucks off Jack's hand but does not move. Miriam rises with the headstone.

CISSIE

So, Miriam, I see you're going up
in the world.

NORMAN

Cissie, that's not funny.

RUTHIE

Yes, it is.

They all chortle. The Rabbi hides a smile. Miriam bridles. Fluff yips. The backhoe WHINES and GROANS but continues to pull the headstone and Miriam into the air.

Fluff runs around beneath the suspended headstone, jumping up and yipping. The headstone slips a notch in the backhoe's teeth.

A tooth snaps off. Then another. Then another.

PISKIN

Oopsie-woopsie!

The headstone ratchets down another notch. Miriam loses her grip. She slips off the headstone, drops to the ground, rolls over, then rights herself with as much dignity as she can muster. Fluff yips beneath the headstone, jumping up and trying to bite it.

Freed from Miriam's weight, the backhoe rears upwards, jerking the headstone out of its teeth. The headstone plummets to the ground, heading directly for Fluff.

Piskin attempts to snatch the headstone out of the air with the backhoe's jaws. They snap impotently. All its teeth break off.

Everyone freezes as they watch the seemingly slow motion of the descent of the headstone and Fluff's similarly slo-mo rise to meet it.

Daniel breaks free, dives at Fluff, grabs him, then rolls them both out of the path of the headstone with centimeters to spare.

SPLAT!! The headstone hits the ground, scattering sods and dust. Fluff yips. He licks Daniel's face. Miriam rushes over, grabs Fluff from Daniel.

MIRIAM

My baby, my poor baby.

Miriam and Daniel stand off looking at each other. Miriam's face conveys a range of emotions, each one fighting the other for dominance. Finally, her face settles into a weak smile.

MIRIAM

... thank you.

DANIEL

Pardon me.

MIRIAM

Thank you.

DANIEL

You're welcome.

Both of them become aware of the silence. They look at the others, then what the others are looking at.

It's Miriam's headstone. It's landed in the ground, slightly askew, to the left of where it was before.

Daniel points to Miriam's headstone.

DANIEL
Mr. Piskin? If you'd be so kind?

The backhoe lumbers forward. The Rabbi holds up his hand.

RABBI
It's a sign.

MIRIAM
It's b'shairt.

RABBI
Since it's here already...

DANIEL
No. My mother wanted me to buy a plain headstone.

RABBI
Did you?

DANIEL
Of course. It's in the --

RABBI
Then you did the right thing.

RUTHIE
He did the right thing.

DANIEL
I did the right thing.

He looks at Miriam's headstone.

DANIEL
Let's do it. Let's unveil both headstones.

The Rabbi nods. Daniel points to the hole in the ground.

DANIEL
Mr. Piskin?

The driver of the truck -- a SCRAWNY YOUTH about 19 -- hops into the truck bed. He sets a covered headstone upright and Piskin clenches it in the backhoe's jaws.

PISKIN
Stand clear. I'm going to gum it.

Norman and Cissie and Jack and Ruthie go into two separate huddles.

Daniel and Miriam -- with Fluff in between them -- watch Piskin at work. Fluff yips. They both reach down absently at the same time to pet him.

LATER

Daniel's headstone is in position. The Rabbi opens his prayer book. He glances at Miriam's slanted headstone and pauses.

DANIEL
I'll get it.

JACK
I'll help.

RUTHIE
Jack, please. Not with your bad back.

JACK
You forget... I have cornflakes power.

Norman steps up.

NORMAN
It's better with three of us.

The three men straighten Miriam's headstone. The Rabbi opens his prayer book. Ruthie nudges Jack.

JACK
Er, Rabbi... When you said you could dedicate more than one headstone, did you have a number in mind?

RABBI
One is ideal, six is meshugge. Somewhere in between perhaps?

Ruthie nudges Jack again.

JACK
Daniel, no disrespect. I hope you don't mind but...

Jack signals at Piskin.

JACK
If you would...

Daniel stares in disbelief as the Scrawny Youth sets a second shrouded headstone upright. He watches as Piskin manipulates it over to the grave site, then stops.

JACK

We're going to need another hole.

PISKIN

Leave it to the Backhoe-a-saurus.

NORMAN

You bought a headstone?

Jack and Ruthie look at the ground.

NORMAN

You didn't have faith that Daniel would do the right thing?

RUTHIE

You know, with the Christian headstone and the time passing and everything...

Jack looks over at Daniel. The backhoe scrapes a hole in the ground.

DANIEL

You should've said something.

RUTHIE

We... were wrong. We're sorry.

She nudges Jack.

JACK

I apologize for doubting you.

Ruthie shrugs.

RUTHIE

But what's done is done is done.

DANIEL

Does it have cherubs?

JACK

No cherubs. Just, you know, the open book. It was hard to find a plain headstone.

A moment of silence. A moment of tension. Then...

DANIEL
Three's the charm.

Piskin just manages to maneuver the backhoe over the hole as the headstone slips from its grasp. It drops into the hole.

PISKIN
Two points!

LATER

The three headstones form a ragged arc with Daniel's in the middle, Miriam's to the left of it and Jack's to the right of it. The Rabbi officiates once again.

RABBI
... so as we gather here to unveil
and dedicate these three headstones
and resting place to our beloved
Sarah Franken, we acknowledge --

Cissie nudges Norman.

RABBI
-- that the mourning cycle --

Norman coughs.

RABBI
-- of nearly one year --

Norman coughs louder.

DANIEL
Spit it out, Norman.

NORMAN
Well, I was --

Cissie nudges him again.

NORMAN
-- we were thinking, Cissie and I,
that, well, three is kind of an odd
number and since there are the four
of us, you know, you and me and
Jack and Miriam and --

MIRIAM
My name should've been first. I'm
the eldest.

DANIEL
Go on, Norman.

NORMAN
Well, you know...

CISSIE
We thought there should be four
headstones.

NORMAN
Since there are already three.

DANIEL
You want to go buy a headstone now?

The Rabbi looks at his watch.

RABBI
I have another unveiling to attend
and --

CISSIE
As it so happens...

NORMAN
Mr. Piskin...

DANIEL
Et tu, Norman? You didn't trust
me, either?

NORMAN
Of course we trusted you. This is
our... our...

JACK
Gift to our sister.

Daniel looks from one member of his family to the other. He
smiles.

DANIEL
Can the Backhoe-a-saurus eat more
dirt, Mr. Piskin?

PISKIN
There's still life in the old girl
yet, Mr. Franken.

BACKHOE

Ruthie talks to Piskin as the backhoe digs a new hole.

RUTHIE

... Plotnik? The hump? The glass
eye? The consumption? The blood
pressure? The prostate cancer?

PISKIN

Of course I remember Hymie Plotnik.
What about him?

RUTHIE

He died.

PISKIN

Hymie Plotnik's alive and in
perfect health. You're thinking of
Henry Plasnik. Him, I put in the
ground last week.

Ruthie sighs. Piskin sighs even louder as he surveys the
scene at the graveside.

GRAVE -- LATER

Now there are four headstones forming a half-circle. The
Rabbi's collar is undone and his tie hangs loose.

RABBI

... be thou her possession and may
her repose be peace. Amen.

Everyone repeats "Amen."

RABBI

On the count of four. One...
two... three --

Miriam jumps the gun on "three" and unveils her headstone.
Fluff yips.

RABBI

-- four!

Daniel unveils his headstone. Jack unveils his headstone.
Norman unveils his headstone.

CEMETERY -- LATER

As the family makes its way out of the cemetery, Daniel hangs
back. He approaches Piskin.

DANIEL

Thanks for everything today.

PISKIN
I'm just glad it's over.

DANIEL
I couldn't help noticing you're a tad short-handed here.

PISKIN
Kids want to work on construction sites. Build something up. Not put something down.

DANIEL
I'm starting my own temp agency. Laborers. Backhoe operators. People you can use for emergencies only.

PISKIN
Sure. I'm in. Backhoe-a-saurus and me are getting way too old for this.

Daniel hurries to catch up with his family. An idea seizes him.

DANIEL
Listen... why doesn't everyone follow me home? I'll put some coffee on and we can all catch up. Plus... there's someone I'd like you to meet.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Linda parades around the empty room dressed in nothing but Daniel's jacket.

The key turns in the lock. Linda plants herself in front of the door.

FADE OUT.

THE END