



They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

(A serious comedy in Two Acts)

By

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Cast

- DR. ZIFF**.....60ish. Dedicated Jewish psychiatrist, who has spent his life, treating under-privileged people in the South Bronx. Upon the death of Charlie, his best friend and partner, HE goes through a hysterical and tumultuous midlife, identity crisis.
- DEEDLE**.....50ish. Ziff's loving and supportive wife.
- SOPHIE**.....50ish, Deedle's colorful and ballsy sister.
- MENDY**.....60ish. Ziff's oldest friend. Slick and devious, a big time Hollywood manager.
- ONI ROMANTICA**.....20ish. Puerto Rican taxi driver. handsome, the supposed next Elvis and very funny.
- MRS. ROSELLI**.....40ish. A patient of Ziff's for many years, over sexed, Italian Catholic, that never had an orgasm. Strong, comedic actress.
- JUDY ROSELLI**.....26, Mrs. Roselli's beautiful daughter.
- DAVID**.....30, friendly, funny.

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ACT I

Scene 1

There is one large common room on stage. The living room is stage left and the kitchen is stage right. A bathroom door is stage right. Furnishings denoted are of aged affluence. There's a large draped mirror, oriental rug, oil painting, two armchairs, photographs, end tables, lamps etc. A table with lots of food on it and a clock in the kitchen. ZIFF is wearing a blue, buttoned sweater and is clutching a porcelain urn. The phone will ring Throughout which HE will disregard. Whenever HE talks to CHARLEY as the stage darkens and we hear "*Kol Nidre*," the prayer of the dead on a sad cello.

A couple of years ago.

Noon.

ZIFF

(Stage is dark and we see ZIFF speaking to an urn.)

Charley, I still can't believe you're not here. How could you leave me, your best friend, your partner. You didn't even say goodbye. You just had a heart attack and "*pffft*." And why you wanted to be cremated, I'll never understand. Jews are not supposed to be cremated. And what do I know from sitting '*Shiva*?' Am I religious? 40 years ago my grandfather died. That was last time. Deedle got a wooden box for me to sit on and she covered the mirrors, and I'm taking the whole week off. I hope I'm doing it right, because you deserved it. More than anyone, you deserved it... And I know you would have done the same for me, not that I would want to be cremated... Too hot. I know how disappointed you were that Sophie didn't show up, but she couldn't catch a flight, and what are you making such a big deal for, she'll be here any minute... I was also surprised to see that big-shot, Mendy-the-Manager finally show up after all these years... When he drove us home in his stretch limo, for a second I thought he changed... until he cackled, "The smart pick L.A. and Ziffy picked the Bronx! Ziffy picked the Bronx while Mendy ate caviar. Caviar." and he laughed... You're right, Charley, even though you only got six little lines in the N.Y. Post, we did the right thing, didn't we Charley? I don't question the life we chose for a moment. Not a moment. Really, I promise... You didn't waste your life. You helped a lot of people. We helped a lot of people, didn't we...? Why am I crying? I don't know what I'm going to do with out you. You see all these wrinkles, Charley? I got so old lately... What

(Picks up frying pan and looks at his reflection in it.)

will people think if they see me talking to a ghost? Let them think what they want. Who cares...?

(Distracted, he finally notices phone ringing.)

What, what is it?

(Answers phone.)

Dr. Ziff speaking... Oh, hello Mendy... Yeah, Deedle went to Kennedy to pick up Sophie... You want to come up? All right, come up.

(Hangs up phone and resumes talkin' to Charley.)

You hear that Charley, we haven't seen that *chorlehrya* in three years and suddenly out of no-where he pops up and says he wants to sit a little 'Shiva' for you. Probably sit two minutes. What audacity, because I can assure you he won't cover all his mirrors and he definitely won't sit on a wooden box. "Too many splinters," he'll say. Remember when he use to call me his best friend...? You're right Charley, once a bullshit artist always a bullshit artist.

(Down stair door buzzer rings, ZIFF buzzes him in).

ZIFF (cont'd)

That's probably why he became the most successful manager in show-bizz. I wonder how many millions he has and what about his estate in Beverly Hills?

(There's a knock on the door, Mendy opens it and enters doing a soft-shoe.)

MENDY

I bet no one ever called you from a limo before, Ziffy.

(Looks at surroundings.)

Sings.)

Except for you going bald, nothing ever changes, does it. "*Mem'ries, la da da da da...*" I've been trying to reach you for hours, where were you? Didn't I tell you I wanted to sit a little

(Sits-gets up.)

'*Shiva*' with you? *Nu...*? That's enough for the '*Shiva*, don'tcha think?' So, did Mendy-the-Manager create a happening at the funeral parlor, or did I create a happening?

ZIFF

You certainly did.

MENDY

(Does soft shoe.)

I mean, you and Deedle looked as if your best friend died, so I did a little soft shoe and everybody lightened up, didn't we? That's a joke, Ziffy. You and Deedle looked as if your best friend died, is a joke. You also think that Charley died because he was so fat. Too much cholesterol, right, doctor? BULLSHIT! Anonymity was the destruction of our best friend. Anonymity, and if you don't wise up, it'll be your epitaph too.

ZIFF

(Feeling old and vulnerable.)

My epitaph? What makes you say my epitaph?

MENDY

Didn't I predict when I left for the coast nine million years ago, that eventually the Bronx would kill my two best friends...? Hey, that sounds like possibly a movie. Yeah, I can see it all now. Instead of "Death of a Salesman," this one'll be called "Death of a Bronx Psychiatrist." When

(Laughs.)

you go Ziffy, I bet you won't even get six lines in the Post...

ZIFF

(To urn. Holds two fingers together.)

...And I could hardly see them... I'm sorry they were so small, Charley.

MENDY

The payoff Charley received was disgusting, I mean it was embarrassing. You guys always said I was wasting my life pursuing fame and fortune. Well, who do you think's right, now,

(Looks at food on table.)

Ziff...? What, no caviar? The last time I saw you, you didn't have caviar either... So, uh, how is she?

ZIFF

Deedle's fine, thank you.

MENDY

Come on, not Deedle... you know who I mean, don'tcha?

ZIFF

You mean, Sophie, don't you. Hmm. She's a successful business woman. She has children's shoe stores all over South Miami. With all the famous woman you said you've dated, you still think about Sophie?

MENDY

So, how come she wasn't at the funeral? Not that I care.

ZIFF

She'll be here soon. Why don't you ask her yourself? You probably haven't spoken to her in 30 years. It's been along a long time, Mendy, a long time.

MENDY

Why don't you ask her yourself and talking about long times; how long has your adorable wife been putting up with your psychological B.S.?

ZIFF

Soon it will be forty years... and Charley almost as long.

MENDY

Six lines in the Post, Ziffy and you could hardly see them, remember? How many years have you donated to the poor, Ziff? And what did it get you or your beloved partner? Six lines in the Post? That's some payoff, don't you think?

(Sadly, ZIFF places two fingers together.)

MENDY (cont'd)

...That's going to be your payoff too, dummy, unless you...

(Sings.)

"Wake up, wake up you sleepy head. Get up, get up, get out of bed."

ZIFF

(To urn.)

You hear that, Charley. Suddenly he's become a song and dance man.

MENDY

Who ya talking to?

ZIFF

(Embarrassed, whispers)

Charley.

MENDY

Really?

(ZIFF coyishly nods yes)

MENDY (cont'd)

Ziff, are you all right?

(ZIFF, signals, so-so)

MENDY (cont'd)

Well then, give him my regards and make sure you tell him how much I miss him.

ZIFF

(Tries to give urn to Mendy)

Here, why don't you tell him yourself?

MENDY

(Uncomfortable with urn.)

No, Ziffy, please, I'd rather not.

ZIFF

(Tries push urn on Mendy.)

What do you mean, you'd rather not? Take it; he was your friend too.

MENDY

(Pushes urn away)

Forget it, will you please?

(The urn falls and shatters. Mendy finds it all very funny as ZIFF, in utter desperation rips open his tobacco pouch, dumps out its contents puts the ashes into it.)

MENDY

OOPS!

ZIFF

CHARLEY! I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. I'll put you in my tobacco pouch and I promise you'll be with me forever. Always.

MENDY

ZIFF, GET A DUST BUSTER! GET AN ORICK! GET THIS *SCHMUTZ* OUTAHERE! Don't tell Charley, but I think there's a little in the corner, near the window... Near the window. The near window. It's definitely a movie. Yeah, maybe Dinero. I'd say perfect.

ZIFF

Robert Dinero, really?

MENDY

They scatter his ashes in the romantic Bronx River. I bet Newman'll love it too.

ZIFF

You mean Paul Newman?

MENDY

No, Phyllis Newman. Of course I mean Paul Newman. At your age, you should be treating movie stars like Hoffman and Pacino.

ZIFF

Me treating Dustin Hoffman and Al Pacino?

MENDY

That's what you deserve, *boichic*, movie stars.

ZIFF

And what about Goldie Hawn?

MENDY

Who ever you want. I'm talking about twelve million *meshugeneh* stars that live in L.A. and I either manage or know them all personally... I can see it all now, Ziffy. Sitting at your pool munching on caviar and sipping pina coladas with sexy Deedle. Treating maybe five, six movie stars a week and you'll make a fortune.

ZIFF

Me, treating movie stars and I'll make a fortune?

MENDY

Who's better qualified, Mr. Genius? And in case you haven't noticed, like you baldy, the neighborhoods changed. I know a big developer and I mean BIG! Probably can get you a bundle for this old house. What do you need it for...? We haven't been best friends all these years for nothing... Ziffy, I don't know how to ask you this, but I need you to do me a favor... I wouldn't ask you if I didn't have so much riding on this kid. He's a brand new singer that has a voice, the greatest voice since Presley. I discovered him driving a cab when I was in town about eight or nine months ago.

ZIFF

It's been at least three years since I saw you and you were in town eight or nine months ago?

MENDY

Eight, nine, ten months. Who can remember? And how I discovered this kid is another movie
(Forgets names.)
all together. His name is Oni Romantica, uh, ladada, dadada, dadada. Typical, just typical. The prototype. A true blue, born-and-bred poor Spanish kid with a million names, a million names. Believe me; I know you'll help this kid sing again, 'cause who's better than you. Ziffy, I'm counting on you. I really need your help, this time.

ZIFF

I'd really love to help you and this Oni Romantica, but unfortunately I have to sit 'Shiva' for Charley on this box. Here, why don't you try it?

MENDY

A wooden Box...? I should sit on a wooden box in these Armani pants?

ZIFF

Besides, Deedle told me she made arrangements to have my office redecorated, tomorrow, so, it's out of the question.

MENDY

If you won't do it for yourself, do it for Deedle. Who loves you more than your wife and me? And like Charley, no one will ever know you existed... Pina coladas, Ziffy. Pina coladas. Don't you understand?

ZIFF

Pina coladas?

MENDY

And don't forget the caviar.

ZIFF

And don't you forget about Sophie.

MENDY

Do me a favor a drop the Sophie bit, alright? And on Wednesdays, just to make you feel at home, I'm sure I can round up all the poor Spanish kids you want to help. In the mean time, tell me when I can bring Oni over for a little of your magic? Do this one thing for me and I promise
(Looks at watch.)

AN-Y-THING. Anything for a best friend. Name it and it's yours. Listen, I got an appointment with Mayor Giuliani, so I have to run. I'll call you later about Oni Romantica... ladada,
(Hugs Ziff.)
dadada, dadada. You're the only best friend I have left, Ziffy. I'm counting on you. I'm really
(Exits.)
counting on you... Later.

(Stage darkens and we see ZIFF holding pouch as ashes drip, and hear Kol Nidre.)

ZIFF

You like the idea about treating movie stars Charley...? That's not true, that's just not true. Just because Mendy-the-Manager got all those movie stars, doesn't mean we made a mistake about living in the Bronx. You're not so sure anymore. Well, who did more good here than you, Mother Theresa...? They wrote a dozen books about Schweitzer in Africa and not a word about you... I'm sorry, I forgot about the six lines in the Post. Sure they count... No body cares about the Bronx, Charley? You really think so?

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 1

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ACT I

Scene 2

SOPHIE is stirring a pot of soup.
DEEDLE is busy drying her hands.
ZIFF is sitting at the table as HE proceeds to remove his shoes and tosses them uncaringly between him and the stove. Looking at the small but apparently full leather pouch, HE despairingly picks it up and walks into the bedroom leaving behind him a trail of ashes spilling out of the pouch. SOPHIE and DEEDLE notice the trail HE's left behind.

DEEDLE

He was always so meticulous, but since Charley passed, he's become nothing but a careless slop. Ashes, wherever I look, ashes.

SOPHIE

You mean he took Charley's ashes home?

DEEDLE

And he spills them wherever he goes; on the floor, on the table even in the toilet. *Oi*, its driving me *meshugeh*.

SOPHIE

Oh no. I thought I spilled a little pepper as I was setting the table and I think I threw it in.

DEEDLE

(Astounded.)

The soup?!

SOPHIE

Or, in the garbage. To tell you the truth, I'm not so sure... Ashes, pepper, what's a few ashes between sisters. Anyway, it's Ziffy's fault. Who told him to take his ashes home?

DEEDLE

He had to, Charley was his best friend and besides, even though he had so many patients, besides all the shop keepers that said they loved him, we were the only one that went to his funeral. Someone had to claim his ashes. If not Ziffy who?

SOPHIE

I thought you said their big-shot best friend Mendy-the-manager from California showed up?

DEEDLE

Sure he showed up. After it was all over, he walked into the chapel like he owned it.

SOPHIE

That sonofa... He's too smart. He didn't want ashes all over his mansion in Beverly Hills. Instead of Charley it should have him.

DEEDLE

Not only that. Ziffy told me he had to come to New York anyway. One of his new singers is supposed to go on some kind of promotional tour and you know what?

(Gloating.)

All of a sudden his singer can't sing.

SOPHIE

And?

DEEDLE

And Mendy invested a lot of money in him and he could lose it all.

SOPHIE

Ziffy still should have given that old conniver the ashes, anyway.

DEEDLE

He tried to. When Mendy came over to Ziffy with his hand outstretched, Ziffy thought that Mendy wanted to hold his best friend so he went to put the glass urn in Mendy's hand just as that no good wise guy pulled his hand away and started to laugh. Ziffy turned white as the glass urn fell to the floor and cracked. He didn't know what to do, but leave it up to good old Ziffy. He ripped open his only tobacco pouch, the one that you gave him when we got married and dumped out all of the tobacco. He then got down on his hands and knees and tried to pick up as much of Charley as he could. Ziffy wept as he told Mendy that Charley only got six lines in the Post. Then he pleaded with Mendy to take whatever is left of their best friend and bury him next to a big star out in California. Jolsen, Gable even Groucho, somebody, anybody.

SOPHIE

He can fool you but he can't fool me. He wanted Mendy to take him to California, not Charley. One day Ziff will find out, that bastards a user!

DEEDLE

He used to be so meticulous but now he's become a total slop.

SOPHIE

You know how they say opposites attract.

DEEDLE

(Smiling.)

Maybe that's what keeps us together so long? I always thought it was his feet. Ziffy has the nicest feet. I love to *cuhtchy* them.

SOPHIE

(Taste soup and offers some to Deedle.)

Some find an educated slop with gorgeous feet, and some are not so fortunate. Here, taste it.

DEEDLE

(Tastes soup.)

As good as mama's was. Even better.

SOPHIE

(Beaming.)

Impossible! You really think so?

(DEEDLE picks up a plate of rye bread. SOPHIE takes the bread from DEEDLE.)

SOPHIE (Cont'd)

Go sit down. Let me serve this time. You worked all day answering that slave drivers phone and his making appointments.

ZIFF

(Enters annoyed, unaware what happened.)

Where are my slippers? Damn it!

DEEDLE

(Annoyed.)

Where you left them!

ZIFF

Now that's a brilliant answer. I know my slippers are where I left them, but where did I leave them?

(SOPHIE picks up the bread from the table.)

DEEDLE

Did you look under the bed?

ZIFF

That's the first place I looked.

DEEDLE

Did you look in the closet?

ZIFF

(Going to bedroom. - Exits.)

Who would put my slippers in the closet?

DEEDLE

(Loud.)

Sometimes my darling husband, you have been known to indulge, but don't worry, I won't tell anybody.

(SOPHIE rubs her spine as she places bread on the table.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Your, backs hurts you again?

SOPHIE

It's nothing.

DEEDLE

Should I get the heating pad?

SOPHIE

(Rubbing her neck. - Goes to stove.)

What's the use; I inherited mama's arthritis...

ZIFF

(Enters, standing in doorway.)

They're not there. I told you they're not in the closet. What about my slippers?

SOPHIE

When you find them, ask them to join us. There's plenty to eat.

ZIFF

(Walks to table and trips over his shoes.)

Who put my shoes over here?

DEEDLE

The same person that put your slippers away.

(SOPHIE applauds.)

ZIFF

(Rubbing his knee.)

After practicing in the Bronx for thirty-five years this is what you end up with. Even though Charley had rotten feet like me, he treated half the Bronx, we were partners, remember? And I treated the other half and all he got were a few lines in the Post and

(Finger gesture.)

you could hardly see them. It was this small. At least Mendy-the-manager made it big. He said he was definitely going to call me his best friend while he was in New York City. How could he not call? How many best friends does he have left?

(Confidently walks over to the radiator and from underneath it picks up HIS slippers and gloats.)

Charley was a genius. He had a pair of slippers under every radiator. He had such rotten

(Walks to table and sits down.)

feet, and what am I, twinkle toes?

(DEEDLE cuts slice of bread, butters it and puts it on ZIFF's plate. ZIFF takes a bite without with out acknowledgement of thank you. SOPHIE places bowl of soup for ZIFF and waits. ZIFF takes another bite of bread but does not taste the soup.)

DEEDLE

You're not eating Ziffy. What's the matter?

ZIFF

Nothing's the matter. I don't feel like chicken soup tonight, that's all.

SOPHIE

That's all? A lot of people say it's as good as mama's was. You always love my soup.

ZIFF

So, tonight I'm not in love, kill me.

DEEDLE

(Sympathetically.)

Ziffy, you're thinking about it again?

ZIFF

(Angry.)

Just because I don't feel like eating soup, something has to be bothering me? There's nothing bothering me.

SOPHIE

Alright, so it's not as good as mama's was. Don't you two start fighting about my soup. It's not so important.

ZIFF

(Angry. - To Deedle.)

Who's fighting? Tell her, are we fighting?

DEEDLE

(To Ziff.)

We're not fighting, we're not fighting. You want chicken?

ZIFF

(Smiling.)

Sings.)

What kind of question is that? You know how I LOVE Sophie's chicken... *"I'll take Sophie's chicken anyway, night or day."*

(SOPHIE happily gets the chicken and serves two pieces to ZIFF and one each for DEEDLE and HERSELF. ZIFF takes a bite and adds salt.)

SOPHIE

It needs more salt?

DEEDLE

Too much salt is no good for you Ziffy.

SOPHIE

(Pondering.)

I thought I put salt in. Maybe I forgot to... It can't be; Mama always put salt in right away.

ZIFF

What are you making such a big deal about salt for? The hell with all the salt in the world! And don't worry; I won't die from too much salt.

DEEDLE

(To ZIFF lovingly.
Since you're not dying, you want dessert?

(SOPHIE rises and goes to get dessert.)

ZIFF

(Wanting SOPHIE to hear.)
When a man is offered to eat the best stewed prunes in the whole world, no man in his right mind could refuse such a delectable offer.

(Smiling, SOPHIE places a dish of prunes first for ZIFF, then DEEDLE and HERSELF. DEEDLE notices that SOPHIE isn't eating.)

DEEDLE

You're not eating? Your stomach is bothering you again?

SOPHIE

(Dejectedly.)
All week, I've been running all week.

ZIFF

(Jokingly astonished.)
I thought you told me everything? You didn't tell me you started running. They say that
(Grins.)
jogging is very good for your health. But will it help cold, tired and rotten feet?

DEEDLE

(Laughing.)
Never mind about your feet. Right now we're concerned with stomachs and
(Flirtingly.)
backs. Your feet I will take care of later and I can't wait, can you?

SOPHIE

(Laughing. Starts eating and laughing.)
As long as we can all laugh... I'll still be able to eat.

ZIFF

(Knocks on table.)
If that's the case? Knock, knock.

DEEDLE

(Joining in.)
Who is it?

ZIFF

Key bon.

DEEDLE

(Almost sings.)

Key bon who?

ZIFF

(Laughs.)

Key bon laughing.

SOPHIE

(Starts laughing then eats.)

Key bon laughing, that's very funny.

(ZIFF laughs and DEEDLE laughs. HER eyes meet ZIFF's and they laugh even more. Eating and laughing SOPHIE starts to choke. DEEDLE touches ZIFF's hand unaware of SOPHIE's dilemma. ZIFF notices SOPHIE choking and rushes up to her. HE picks her up and places both arms around her and pushes fits into her stomach. SOPHIE coughs out a pit and gasps. ZIFF lingers holding SOPHIE.)

SOPHIE (Cont'd)

I thought I took out all the pits?

DEEDLE

Sophie, thank God you were with us and not all alone in your apartment.

SOPHIE

(To Ziff.)

Thank God for Ziffy. What can I say? You saved my life, and after all of my
(Smiling. Rubs stomach.)
complaining about you. Maybe that's why you gave me such a shot? Where did
(Laughs.)
You learn to throw a punch like that?

DEEDLE

He saw it on Johnny's show. What's his name? A nice man, Heim... Heimlich. The Heimlich hold, that's it. He figured out a way to save a person's life when
(Looks at Ziff with love.)
they are choking on something they ate. When Mama made Ziffy swear that he would always take care of the both of us for as long as he lived, she must have known that Ziffy was really Superman.

ZIFF

(Hostile.)

Can you imagine that?

DEEDLE and SOPHIE

WHAT?!

ZIFF

A nobody, comes up with a simple idea, by using a fist which everybody has, he becomes an overnight sensation. I can't take it. How many people do you hear about these days that are choking to death? You hear about mugging and robbery,

(Lights start to dim.)

but choking? On prime time too. I bet half the people in America know his name. And on top of that, I bet he makes a couple of million overnight.

(Screams as lights get darker and then come up.)

I can't take it! Instead of Hollywood, she picked the Bronx, she picked the Bronx!

(Buzzer rings and DEEDLE answers it)

DEEDLE

Who is it?

ROSELLI (o/s on intercom)

It's Mrs. Roselli.

(DEEDLE buzzes her in.)

DEEDLE

Dr. Ziff's waiting for you up here.

(After a beat MRS. ROSELLI enters.)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

Mrs. Roselli, it's been quite awhile... How are you? This is my sister Sophie. Well, we have to be going, goodbye and I'm sorry I didn't tell you the office is being renovated.

(DEEDLE and SOPHIE, eyeing Mrs. ROSELLI exit.)

ROSELLI

Dr. Ziff, I don't believe it but you look gorgeous. What a hunk.

ZIFF

Sorry for the inconvenience, Maria. Please have a seat on the couch.

(ROSELLI sits and ogles draped mirror as ZIFF ambles.)

ROSELLI

So, I guess we're here because you're getting your office redone, huh? Let me tell you, it needed it.

ZIFF

Unfortunately these plans were made before you made an appointment... How have you been these past couple years?

(ROSELLI makes so-so with hand. ZIFF picks up file and note book from table.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

(Gets note book and looks at it.)

Now, according to my notes... the last time you, you were about to get married to...

ROSELLI

(Smiles because Ziff remembers, and then cries.)

Johnny.

ZIFF

Yes, Johnny C...

ROSELLI

NO, big Johnny R... I had two Johnnies in-a-row and neither of them was any damn good... He lasted all of two years.

ZIFF

(Writing)

Big Johnny R. Two years. I'm so sorry, Maria. My condolences.

ROSELLI

I've had it with condolences up to here. I'm tired of wearing black. I'm tired of driving out to the cemetery. They all know me by my first name... Why do I keep getting married? I can't take it any more. And you, anybody ever tell you that you have some gorgeous lips. And what's with that wife of yours? I told her that I had to see you and she gives me this garbage that your office is under renovation, that's why we're up here and you're gonna be shivering the whole week. You look pretty hot to me, despite your shivering.

ZIFF

I'm not shivering. I am sitting *Shiva* on this box; which means I am in mourning.

ROSELLI

I got five dead husbands and he says he's in mourning. What am I doing the mambo?

ZIFF

(Holds pouch.)

After practicing in the Bronx for thirty five years, these ashes are all that's left of my
(Sobs, holds two fingers together.)
best friend, Dr. Charles Green His ashes and six lines in the Post. They were this big.

SOPHIE

I'm sorry, I don't read the Post. I didn't know your partner died, but if I was you, I'd put that thing away before there's nothing left. It's dripping. Ya know you just solved a major problem for me.

ZIFF

Really?

SOPHIE

I'm going to cremate the next, pardon the expression, sonofabitch, just like you did with your best friend... Who the hell wants to be bothered with making all those funerals arrangements and the expense, it costs a fortune, who needs it? Want to look at your notes or something? And why don't stop walking and sit next to me already?

ZIFF

I can only sit on this wooden box.

ROSELLI

Well, I'm getting a headache yelling across the room.

ZIFF

Would you like some Tylenol?

ROSELLI

No, but for some strange reason I think I'm getting a little...

ZIFF

...A little?

ROSELLI

(Dreamy.)

You know, you make feel a little horny. Guess you always have. Imagine that, me, Mrs. Proper just said "*Horny.*" Yeah, I never said "*Horny*" out loud before, but I sure like the way it sounds, "*Horny.*" I like the way it sounds, "*HORNY!*"

ZIFF

Transference! Merely imagination. Throughout history, many patients have been known to romanticize about their therapists.

ROSELLI

Exactly what I need, a little romance in my doctor's office, that oughta do the trick. After all, I can't think of anything more romantic at the moment, can you, handsome?

(SHE rises, unbuttons blouse and moves towards ZIFF, who backs off accordingly.)

ZIFF

MARIA! You have never reacted like this before. What's the matter with you? Try and understand that I've been faithfully married for almost 40 years.

ROSELLI

Well, I think it's time you sampled some native dessert, don't you, sexy?

ZIFF

It is entirely unethical for me to eat dessert with any of my patients.

ROSELLI

I don't give a damn about any of your patients! Just do it to me...! Nail me right now! Ain't it something how I just figured out why I've been coming to you all these years. "Coming," that's funny, me "Coming." Yeah, I like the way it sounds, "Coming." I want
(Purses lips and wiggles tongue.)
you, you sexy devil. Let's make a little hootchy cootchy and maybe I'll finally have a...

ZIFF

MARIA! You must stop this immediately!

ROSELLI

I can't...

ZIFF

You must!

ROSELLI

(Wiggles tongue and sings.)

I don't want to. *"This is the moment, I've been waiting for."*

ZIFF

My wife will be home any moment. Now, if you do not gain your composure and control yourself, I will have to ask you to leave.

ROSELLI

Leave huh? No way... I'll show you mine if you let me see yours...

ZIFF

MARIA! I don't know what's gotten into you, but I'm certain that you came here to discuss something more important.

ROSELLI

Don't try and change the subject. I'm wise to you mister. You're playing hard to get, because I told you I like it. It turns me on. How many times have you written that, doctor...? Tony, my first husband, may he rest in peace was like that until he finally conked out on me... I thought I was finally going to get my rocks off like all those young broads you read about in those girlie magazines and then he conked out on me.

ZIFF

Conked out... Please continue.

ROSELLI

We were only doing it, maybe one, I swear to Christ, the most, two hours. I should have believed him when he said he couldn't do it any more. I should have believed all those old bastards. Tony, Carmine, Murray, Johnny C, Johnny R.

ZIFF

Big Johnny R.

ROSELLI

(Dreamy)

But you know all that shit already. "*Shit.*" Don't you love the way it sounds? I probably told you this "*Shit*" a thousand times. I can't understand, Doc. They were all so big and strong. "*Shit.*"

ZIFF

And you think they were all playing hard to get.

ROSELLI

(Passionately.)

Always... Even though they all died, I got 'em. Those poor bastards left me a fortune, and now I'm going to get you and when I do... Come on, sit on your shiver box and for starters, I'll eat you all up...

ZIFF

(Ala Deedle)

If you're hungry, we have roast CHICKEN, a little CHICKEN soup with matzo balls, CHICKEN fricassee, *gedempt* CHICKEN, CHICKEN salad, CHICKEN paprika, CHICKEN cacciatore, And CHICKEN Chow Mein. My patients and some shop keepers

brought more chicken than Frank Perdue has. ANYTHING you want.

ROSELLI

I told what I want! Now, why don't I sit on your shiver box with you and we'll shiver together.

(SHE runs after ZIFF who evades her)

ZIFF

You must try and control yourself. Mrs. Roselli! I'm warning you for the last time!

(Embarrassed, she sits on couch)

ROSELLI

I must be losing my mind. I'm sorry, I just deluded myself into thinking that maybe... You could make me have a... a...

ZIFF

A...?

ROSELLI

A... *muh*...

ZIFF

A... *muh*...?

ROSELLI

A... *muh*...

ZIFF

What's a *muh*?

ROSELLI

Even Halley's Comet comes once every 76 years. What about me? Why you know more about me than anybody. I know you can give ma a... *muh*.

ZIFF

Tell me, what's a... *muh*...?

ROSELLI

A *muhgi* a *muhgi*.

ZIFF

What the hell is a *muhgi*?

ROSELLI

A *muhgi* is an or... I can't say it.

ZIFF

You must tell what a *muhi* and an or means! I demand it!

ROSELLI

Orgasm, all right orgasm and I never had a one!

DEEDLE (o/s)

(From behind door.)

I hope he's finished with Mrs. Roselli.

(ZIFF runs to door, opens it and DEEDLE and SOPHIE enter with packages.)

ZIFF

Deedle, I thought I heard you and Sophie. Let me help you with the packages.

DEEDLE

Is she gone?

ROSELLI

(Buttoning blouse.)

Hello and goodbye Mrs. Ziff. I was just leaving... Shivering huh?

**(DEEDLE and SOPHIE stare at her as she exits, buttoning her blouse.
SOPHIE rubs spine.)**

SOPHIE

Even though we have all that chicken, I'm in the mood for franks and beans.

DEEDLE

(Smiles because she loves her sister.)

Maybe later... Ziffy?

ZIFF

What do you want now?

DEEDLE

Why was she buttoning up her blouse when she ran out of here?

ZIFF

You're asking me? You know I never discuss my patients with you.

DEEDLE

Ziffy? Ziffy?

ZIFF

(Comes up with answer)

Alright, alright, I'll tell you... All of a sudden Mrs. Roselli seems to get these hot flashes and she panics. Yeah, that's why she was buttoning up her blouse. You remember when you got the flashes.

SOPHIE

FLASHES?! I got the flashes, but I didn't go around flashing my *bubbies*, did I?

DEEDLE

Taste the *kuhgle*, I'm telling you it's delicious.

SOPHIE

We were just talking about flashing *bubbies* and you're still with the *kuhgle*? What's the matter with you?

DEEDLE

Sophie, I'm begging you. Please forget it.

(There is an awkward silence.)

ZIFF

Soon, you'll be sitting on this box for me because I'm dying. Did you hear that, Deedle? Slowly but surely, rotten feet and all, I'm dying.

DEEDLE

(Serves *kuhgle*.)

Eat the *kuhgle*. I'm sure no one ever died eating *kuhgle*.

ZIFF

Even if I did, who would know? And don't say you would know and you would care. That's not enough... Deedle, I don't want to end up like... and only get six lines in the Post and that's if I'm lucky.

DEEDLE

I know I know Ziffy my darling. Come, let's go upstairs. No one else is coming. You'll take your shoes off and I'll rub your feet and you'll tell me everything that bothers you.

ZIFF

And a glass of tea.

DEEDLE

And a glass of tea.

(LIGHTS dim, spot lights ZIFF.)

ZIFF

Is that what mankind has been reduced to, having a *muhzhi*? And if you don't have a *muhzhi*, does it mean you no longer exist? You no longer matter...? At the end, how much loving and giving, caring and sharing one did are the only things that matter? Truer words, Charley, truer words. I guess that's why you were the greatest. You sure knew how to be a friend. My friend. My best friend... Remember that time you pushed me out of the way of that car as we were crossing Claremont Parkway? You saved my life in more ways than one. There are those that go through life a nobody. Am I a nobody too? You think I'm really important? To who? Besides Deedle and you, to who? All right, Sophie too. By the way, Sophie told Deedle that she was very sorry missing your... What was it you used to say? The reason why people become overly concerned with death is because they're not having a good time in life. Well don't worry about me not having a good time, because with all the movie stars I'll be treating soon, life is definitely for the living. And when Deedle taste that Pina colada, **(Sings)** we'll be off... *"Open up those golden gates, Cal-for-nia here I come."*

End of Scene 2

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT I

Scene 3

Later.
Living room.

**SOPHIE rises from couch and
straightens her dress.**

SOPHIE

And it's not enough that you saved my life last week! When are you going to tell me something? All these years, pushing on the subway from Brighton Beach to the Bronx, hoping, praying, and waiting for the day that you will tell me something. Anything.

ZIFF

It is not for me to tell you anything. I have told you a thousand times. You must come to your own conclusions. I, I only help you hear what you say.

SOPHIE

Mama always said, may she rest in peace that I have very good ears because I listened to everything she said.

ZIFF

I'm delighted Sophie because you are truly my favorite.

SOPHIE

Hmm, some compliment. How many patients do you have left?

ZIFF

((To pouch. - Glances at his watch as he feigns tying shoe.))
One time, Charley and I had half the Bronx coming to us, and where did it get him?

SOPHIE

What are you tying? You're wearing loafers. I know what you did!

ZIFF

I'm afraid it's that time, Sophie.

SOPHIE

(Pleading.)
Can't you give me another five minutes? Who's going to know? I swear I won't tell another living soul.

ZIFF

I can't.

SOPHIE

Why not? Just this time. I promise that I'll never ask you again... Why not?

ZIFF

Okay.

SOPHIE

You mean you will?

ZIFF

I mean I will tell you why I can't. When you become a great psychiatrist, you take the Hippocratic Oath. Forty-five minutes, no more and no less. And I'm certain that includes...

SOPHIE

(Pleading.)

...Favorite sister in-laws. I know. You almost seemed like you were going to tell me why I always dream I'm drowning every night.

ZIFF

I'll see you next week Sophie. We'll talk more.

SOPHIE

You're not getting rid of me that fast. I think I'll stay and help Deedle cook supper. She must be exhausted, you slave driver!

ZIFF

She's tired and I'm not? That's what you think? What about me? I'm the one that's listened to you and all those *meshugehnehs* all these year...

SOPHIE

You just listen and half the time with your eyes closed I think you're sleeping. Deedle not only listens, she talks and not just for forty-five minutes, either. We talks sometimes for hours and she doesn't ask me for a red cent. One day I'll show you. The night I stop drowning, that's the last day you'll see my face, because I won't need you any more. And just for that I'm not going to cook you dinner.

(Knock on door.)

ZIFF

(Sternly.)
Who is it?

(WE hear DEEDLE.)

DEEDLE

(Almost singing.)
Guess who...

ZIFF

(Angry.)
I am too busy to start playing games. Who is it?!

SOPHIE

(Whispering.)
It's Deedle, it's Deedle. Say it's Deedle.

ZIFF

NO!

SOPHIE

Why not?

ZIFF

(Screaming.)
Because I'm too busy to play games!

(SOPHIE exits and whispers something to DEEDLE who enters.)

DEEDLE

What did you say to my sister?

ZIFF

Nothing, I swear. Would I say anything to her? Now tell me, what are you making for supper, sweetheart?

DEEDLE

(Annoyed.)
David is here. He's a few minutes early. He seems very upset. I hope he still has his job teaching. What's the matter with all those principals? What do they have against such a fine, young man?

ZIFF

(Chanting.)

I can't take it. I can't take it. I cannot take it! I help them but do they help me? NO!
And after all I have done for them! Did they make me rich or famous? NO! Alive, I
remain anonymously poor. And when I die, who knows how many lines I'll get? Who
will remember?

DEEDLE

(Meekly.)

I will.

ZIFF

Who will know about all the years I have been working on my treatment for
schizophrenia?

DEEDLE

I will.

ZIFF

I'm sixty years old and I'm going to be joining Charley soon. I can feel it in my poor
aching feet. Doesn't anybody care about me and my feet?

DEEDLE

(Touches Ziff tenderly.)

I care. Your patients care.

ZIFF

Don't talk to me about my patients. It's their fault and yours. Deedle, my beloved wife
(Dracula pose. Menacing.)
and my trusted assistant. I knew it all the time. You are the culprit.

DEEDLE

Well, you what they say.

ZIFF

What?

DEEDLE

There's nothing like a culprit that is your wife, mother, secretary, your personal wash
cloth rubs and your feet and at the very same time.

ZIFF

Don't try to make up with me. You were wrong and you know it!

DEEDLE

And you won't let me forget it for a minute.

ZIFF

Never!

DEEDLE

I remember. How I remember. We were finally getting our visas to come to America. You gave me the choice of two places to settle in. The Bronx, which in those days had fine brownstones, beautiful parks and a grocery store on every block. If I wanted to, I could shop at a different one, every week. Good schools for the children we were never

(Smiling.)

blessed to have. But we never stopped trying in those days, remember, Ziffy? Those were the days. You also picked Los Angeles with fast cars and movie stars that didn't stay married for more than six months. That kind of life I didn't want us to be a part of. Besides, in those days fame and fortune was the last thing on your mind. You were so dedicated. You wanted to help people. You said that was what you wanted to do more than anything else when you came to America. You asked me where we should settle, so I picked the Bronx.

ZIFF

(Chanting.)

She picked the Bronx! She picked the Bronx! She picked the Bronx!

DEEDLE

I picked the Bronx! I picked the Bronx! I picked the Bronx! So what do you want to kill me for that?

ZIFF

(Feigning Dracula.)

Yesss I dooooo.

DEEDLE

(Mimicking Dracula.

Closes eyes and puckers lips.)

I now pronounce you man and wife. You may now kiss the bride.

ZIFF

Do I have to?

DEEDLE

Yesss, you must kiss the bride.

(THEY kiss.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

(Aside.)

Just think. In three weeks we will be married forty years. Maybe there is one couple that has stayed married for almost forty years in Los Angeles, but I don't think so.

ZIFF

(Ranting.)

Not only have they not allowed me to become a somebody; half of them never paid me. *"I lost my job and I don't have the money to pay you."* And I believed every one of those *gonnifs*. It was almost like a conspiracy. I was treating more patients than any

(Sings.)

doctor in the Bronx and I was going broke. Did I say going broke? *"Brother can you spare a dime!"*

DEEDLE

If anyone deserved to be... To me it doesn't matter. All I know is that you are truly a remarkable dedicated human being.

ZIFF

(Nods agreement.)

Before it's too late... Before I have to say goodbye.

DEEDLE

Right now it's my time to say goodbye and for David to say hello. He's such a pussycat and so funny; good looking and a high school teacher. One day, with yours and Gods help he will make some nice girl a fine husband. Ziffy, he needs your help.

ZIFF

If I told you once, I told you a thousand times. Never call me Ziffy in front of my patients. When I am at work you call me Dr. Ziff.

DEEDLE

And when I rub your feet should I call you Dr. Ziff or Ziffy?

ZIFF

Now you want to tell the whole world you rub my tired, rotten feet? That's private. That's between you and me. Some things are supposed to remain at home.

DEEDLE

This is my home! Where do you think you are? We live upstairs and we work downstairs. If I wasn't so careful I could get a heart attack running up and down trying to remember what I should call you. It's always the wrong place or the wrong time. Whatever I say or do is always wrong.

ZIFF

Okay, okay, okay! What are we having for dinner?

DEEDLE

When you come upstairs Dr. Ziff, that's when you will find out. Should I tell David, that sweetheart to come in?

ZIFF

What are you waiting for?

(DAVID enters and makes a funny face and DEEDLE smiles.)

DEEDLE

Isn't he funny? Such a funny man you are, David. Maybe you'll stay for dinner? We
(Eyes Ziff.)

have more than enough. My sister Sophie just cancelled. I'm going to make... Oh, I'm sure you'll love it. Maybe will play a little Monopoly and we'll laugh together like we always do. And don't worry, if it's not this school there will be another.

DAVID

And we'll have a good time. I know, but we have to stop meeting like this. People are beginning to talk about us.

DEEDLE

It's probably been two months since you ate here. Once in awhile a home cooked meal is good for even you.

ZIFF

It's about time you took Deedle up on her offer. She's beginning to think that you don't like her cooking. Why don't you tell him what you're preparing for supper sweetheart? I'm positive he'll be unable to resist you this time.

(DEEDLE whispers in DAVID's ear.)

DAVID

Oh, I'd follow you anywhere. I just love eating...

(DEEDLE puts her finger to her mouth and DAVID repeats the same action. THEY wink to each other and BOTH say "Shhhh.")

ZIFF

A patient must never keep secrets from his doctor if he has any intentions of being helped. The whole idea is to rid yourself of the burden of carrying a secret! David, what are we having for supper? I'm starving. You must tell me!

DAVID

I always tell you everything and you don't tell me anything. I don't think that's fair.

DEEDLE

Neither do I.

DEEDLE and DAVID

So There!

ZIFF

Did you come here to discuss the menu or do you have something important to talk about?

DEEDLE

I hope that you stay for dinner, David. And don't you worry about a thing. One day you will meet a nice girl and you will get married and become a father, and she will clean for you and cook for you.

ZIFF

But will she tell you what she's making for dinner?

DEEDLE

(Exits.)

NEVER!

(DAVID sits on couch.)

DAVID

I'm losing everything again. Sally moved out and left me a note saying if I ever learn to stay serious for longer than five minutes and if by some chance she was still available, she would love to get serious with me. Sounds serious, doesn't it? You know, in a way I'm glad she left. It was getting harder and harder to make her laugh. I really don't understand it. I mean I used some funny lines. Peterson threatened me again. Not only wasn't he going to grant me tenure and have me transferred like the rest of the schools. He was going to try and get me fired. He immediately ordered me to allow all of my students to go to the john whether or not they knew the secret word of the day. I didn't want to look for a new school again so I tried to explain that because of the way I teach my students have the highest grades in the entire school system. He said, "*They also have the highest rate of kidney problems in New York City.*" I begged him to give me one more chance. I told him that I'd swear on the Bible and do just as Moses had ordered; I would let my students go. His face turned red like a juicy Macintosh apple. He said he would get me fired if it was the last thing he did as a principal. He was screaming as he went into his office saying everyone knew all about me.

ZIFF

That is fantastic. You should be proud of yourself. I thought it was impossible.

DAVID

What?

ZIFF

Becoming famous in the Bronx.

DAVID

(Smiles.)

Yeah, I guess I am sort of famous.

ZIFF

(Aside.

Chants.)

That's life for you. He's getting famous and I do all the work. I can't take it, I can't take it. I cannot take it!

DAVID

Did you say something?

ZIFF

I am sorry David, but it's that time.

DAVID

(Angry.)

Can't you tell me something instead of just sitting there? I know you only help me hear what I say. Well that doesn't help a damn bit. Sure I understand why I thought my mother only loved me when I made her laugh. It was because no matter how busy she was with house, she would always stop what she was doing and give me a hug whenever I made her laugh. When she died I moved in with her brother, Uncle Jack. I thought he really loved me but after awhile he stopped laughing and the next week I was living with Aunt Rose who I knew didn't love me because she hardly ever laughed. You know I'll never understand my Aunt Rose. She never asked me to move. She just sent my clothes and me to my grandfather and told him she couldn't take it anymore. Some people don't know how to laugh and show their love. They don't even say goodbye. They just shuffle you off and instead of my relatives it's Peterson's turn to shuffle.

ZIFF

Unfortunately, you can pick your friends but not your relatives. I'm afraid it's that time, David. We will continue our conversation tomorrow. Now, let's go upstairs and eat. I'm absolutely famished. So tell me David, what is my darling wife cooking for us?

(Curtain.)

End of Scene 4

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT I

Scene 5

Later.

Kitchen.

Are you hungry?

DEEDLE

I'm starving.

ZIFF

Good. Where's David?

DEEDLE

(Defensive.)

He changed his mind. He has a right to change his mind.

ZIFF

It seems contagious.

DEEDLE

What's contagious?

ZIFF

First Sophie and now my David.

DEEDLE

You're right. Not everybody gets hungry at the same time, or loves your cooking like I do, so let's eat before I starve to death.

ZIFF

(Touches pouch and becomes sad. DEEDLE walks to oven to get dinner.)

What am I going to do?

ZIFF

DEEDLE

(Wipe ashes on table. Places bowl of soup on table.)

Eat the cabbage soup. No one ever died while eating cabbage soup.

ZIFF

Even if I did, who would know? And don't say you would know and you would care. That's not enough. Deedle, I don't want to end up like... Let's move to California. They have stars, a million stars out there and they all need me. Let's take out all the money from the bank and LET'S GO!

DEEDLE

What money? There is no money. Whatever we had is long gone. Besides, I'm too old to start looking for a new park to sit in. I have everyone and everything I need right here

(Aside.)

and you do too! Most men go through their midlife crisis at forty, but Ziffy was so busy helping his patients, he didn't have time for himself until now. But I know it will pass.

ZIFF

(Sadly touches pouch.)

And so the dedicated Dr. Ziff remains anonymous. Deedle, on my gravestone make sure

(Puts head on table and sobs.)

it says, "*All he needed was a few big stars.*"

DEEDLE

(Desperate.)

You mean like Clark Gable?

(ZIFF nods with head remaining on table.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Dustin Hoffman?

(ZIFF nods yes.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Barbara Streisand?

ZIFF

(Lifts up head. Puts head down. This action continues throughout.)

Yes.

DEEDLE

Marilyn Monroe?

ZIFF

YES, YES, YES! Why are you torturing me like this?

DEEDLE

And what about Mel Brooks?

ZIFF

The greatest of them all? I would give anything for the chance to treat him.

DEEDLE

Is almost a star good enough?

ZIFF

That depends.

DEEDLE

Does it matter if he's not married?

ZIFF

Absolutely not. Who is it?

DEEDLE

(Almost singing.)

Guess who?

ZIFF

(Angry.)

I'm dying and she wants to play games. I have no time for games! I'm...

DEEDLE

Stop dying, stop dying. Your dying is killing me. It's David!

ZIFF

What the hell does David have to do with me?

DEEDLE

Ziffy my darling, this fantasy you have about movie stars. I have the perfect solution. Think of David, he should have stayed for dinner.

ZIFF

(Touches pouch.)

David eating dinner is the perfect solution? Did you hear Charley? No six lines for me.

DEEDLE

David seems a little happier than before and that's because of all the wonderful help you have given him. So today he seemed a little upset. We all have little setbacks sometimes. So if he has to find a new school, he'll be a teacher a day later. But I know one day he'll get married. So you see what I mean about David? You have helped him and now, indirectly he can help you. Say to yourself that I know someone that is funnier and has more talent in his little cute nose than all of them put together. So what if he hasn't been discovered. Talent is talent, no matter where it is. I just love him. He makes me laugh so much. And you never can tell. Maybe your best friend will call this time. Let's see how much he really cares about *'His Best friend.'*

ZIFF

What do you think I'm some kid that doesn't understand? David is a school teacher. Sure he makes you laugh. He tries to make everyone laugh. That's his problem. And as far as Mendy is concerned, I'm too smart for him this time. Friend or no friend, he wouldn't call anybody unless he needed something and what could he need from me?

(The phone rings and DEEDLE answers it.)

DEEDLE

Dr. Ziff's office. After the beep, please leave your name and telephone number and Dr. Ziff will call you as soon as possible. BEEP! Wait, it's Deedle. Don't hang up I'm really talking to you. Yes it's almost forty years. It was nice to see you too Mendy.

(Hearing 'Mendy' ZIFF perks up.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Hold on I'll get your best friend for you.

(ZIFF hurries to the phone.)

ZIFF

I'm glad you called... Yeah what are best friends for? I'm glad you feel that way, Mendy. Of course, I knew you would call. We were just talking about you being my best friend and all. Sure I know we can always count on you. I always knew it... All you think you can do is maybe sprinkle Charley's ashes between Gable and Lenny Bruce? Sure they were both very famous but that Lenny guy was pretty dirty. What about Benny and Monroe? Gee Mendy that sounds terrific. You really mean it...?

(Holds mouth piece on phone and excitedly tells DEEDLE.)

He wants me to help that singer that I told you about. Sweetheart, this is the chance I've been waiting for.

DEEDLE

(Smiling.)

I told you not to blame it on the Bronx.

ZIFF

(Into phone.)

He says he can't sing anymore, I see... It has to be something psychological because he has the best voice you've ever heard, I see... The first time you heard him sing he was driving you in from Kennedy and you signed him up right in the cab. Sure I understand, you were only in for a couple of hours last month and didn't have the time to call. Yeah, business. I haven't got much time because Oni has to go on tour... And you also hate his name, I see. You're positive that I can get him singing again. Gee thanks Mendy. Sure I can see Oni tomorrow at twelve. You better make that eleven. After all we don't have much time... Sure, you owe me one. Anything I want, great... Never, you would never forget me. Not an old friend. Wonderful... Eleven sharp, great. Yeah, she is the greatest. Almost forty year. You're right; I don't know what I would do without her.

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 5

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT I

Scene 6

10 A.M.
The following day.

ONI is dressed in jeans, a sweater, holds a coin holder and appears uneasy sitting on the couch. ZIFF, excited by his change of luck, is walking as few ashes fall from seemingly empty pouch.

ZIFF

(Aside.)

To me he looks just like a cab driver, but if Mendy says Oni is a real star, who am I to say he's not? I never treated a big shot before, so how would I know how they really look in person? What a chance! I have to find out why all of a sudden he says he can't sing anymore. And just when he's about to make it real big too, Mendy says.

(ONI notices ZIFF feigning tying his shoes as they both look at their watches. ZIFF think, 'He hasn't said a word for twenty-two minutes. All he does is nod yes or no and this could take forever.')

ZIFF (Cont'd)

I am sure you are aware that everything you tell me is held in the strictest of confidence. Would you like me to help you?

(ONI nods yes.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

Do you have a mother and father?

(ONI nods yes.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

Sisters and brothers?

(ONI holds up three fingers on left hand and two fingers on right hand.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

You have three sisters and two brothers?

(ONI nods no.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

(Certain.)

Then you have three brothers and two sisters.

(ONI nods no.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

(Annoyed.)

Holds up three fingers on left hand and two on right.

Well then what do you have? And tell me in English what...means.

ONI

(Crying, with heavy Spanish accent.)

Fi sisters...

(Holds up three fingers on left hand.)

...*Tree older...*

(Holds up two fingers on right hand.)

...*And two junger.*

ZIFF

(Aside.)

And he's supposed to be the next Presley? Mendy must know what he's doing. You

(To ONI.)

can't be such a big shot with all those movie stars unless you know what you're doing.

(Holds up both hands.)

Any of your sisters have any talent?

ONI

My sister Carmen dances and she would be real good, but...

ZIFF

But what/

ONI

She has flat feet.

ZIFF

Don't waste your time talking about your sisters. I am certain that they are not the cause of your temporary dilemma and I mean temporary. Believe me; I will help you sing again. I know that the tour starts in three weeks and this is the chance you have been waiting for all your life. As much time as you need will be available to you day or night and you will go on this tour if it is the last thing I do.

ONI

I like you. For the first time since I can remember I feel comfortable talking. Ya know, you remind a little of my manager.

ZIFF

(Excited.)

I DO?

ONI

The only difference is that I feel you really care about me and not my voice or how much money I can make for you.

(Smiling, ZIFF hold up both hands.)

ONI

I have been waiting to be discovered and go on tour since I was *un poco bambino*, six years old. I can finally make enough *dinero*, money to bring *toto la familia*, my whole family over and what happens? I can't sing anymore.

ZIFF

(Aside to pouch.

Confident.)

If he doesn't sing, I hope I get six lines, Charley. Maybe I won't even get that. I know I'll get him to sing, he just has to. We know it's not laryngitis because he can talk, not so good but he can talk.

ONI

(Sad.)

But soon as I try to rehearse, it feels like someone is playing the bongos on my tonsils. It's really weird. It was always the other way around. I used to die whenever I tried to talk English. Singing always made me feel real good.

ZIFF

(Aside.)

The way he talks, who wouldn't want to sing?

ONI

I can see them all sitting around the TV, Popi bragging how all his hard work is finally going to pay off, thinking, soon they would be hearing his son's first record which he knew wasn't going to be on the radio for at least five or six months. Still the same old Popi. I wrote him that he was definitely wrong about me wasting my time *dribing* a cab after all the years he spent trying to make into a Puerto Rican Sinatra. I told him that I signed with a big time manager who happened to hear me sing only because he was sitting in my cab. He had to admit that he was capable of making a big mistake. I wish I could have seen the look on his face when he read that Mendy the manager was going to lay out his own money, mucho *dinero*, big bucks, and record a video of the whole tour and that he just managed to put me on the same bill as some famous comedian named Pickles.

ZIFF

You mean Don Rickles?

ONI

Pickles, Rickles, all I know is that he's one of the most famous comedians in the world. Mendy says that my record will be on the radio in two months after I finish the tour and I will have all the money I ever dreamed of. Popi wrote me a letter that he was too embarrassed to tell all his friends that I was *driving* a cab after telling them all how he was sorry but he had to say *adios*, because his son Oni who is living in New York City was going to be so rich that he could not turn down his son's offer to buy him the biggest private house in the Bronx. He just loved to make all his friends jealous of him... We

(Holds up both hands.)

would all sit around the radio in a circle holding hands. Popi and my sisters looked as if they were waiting for the Messiah to come. Sinatra, or Darin, or Presley would finish whatever song they were singing and then everybody's eyes would focus on me. The first song I laid on my family almost got me killed. *'Blueberry Hill'* by the great Fats Domino. My Popi slammed me across the room. He said I sounded like a black sex maniac. How was I supposed to know he didn't like sex? He had six kids, didn't he? Even though he couldn't support one, he had six *bambinos*. Even though he said he a bad back and couldn't do any heavy work he was always trying to keep busy, so I guess he did what he seemed to best; make children. He said that the least he could do for his *familia* was to make sure that I make it big since he couldn't with his bad back and all. They wouldn't hear his Oni talking with accent, because he said they would call me another poor, desperate P.R. trying to get ahead.

ZIFF

When you sing no one will know.

ONI

As soon as I would open my eyes I would see him standing over me. I would jump out of bed and start singing on my way to *el banjo*, the john. Popi never said a word to me because he didn't want me to waste my time talking when I could be singing. He would be at my side even when I was peeing just to make sure I didn't miss a note. I was his prodigal son and one day with his help I would make enough money to buy the biggest house in the Bronx and bring my whole *familia* over to live with him. He loved Puerto Rico but he said he deserved to live in more than a one bedroom *casa*.

ZIFF

No one should live in a one bedroom house.

ONI

I know, but what can I do?

(ZIFF starts tying his shoes as he looks at his watch.)

ONI (Cont'd)

What are you tying your shoes for? You're wearing loafers. My cab is at a meter. I know it's going to take me a lot longer to bring Popi over here *dribing* a cab but what can I do? I can't sing anymore.

ZIFF

(Holds up both hands.)

You have to. Even if it feels like bongos. Popi and your five sisters are depending on you.

ONI

(Sobbing.)

I know... I know.

ZIFF

Well, what are you going to do? Drive a taxi while your family is all squeezed up in that one bedroom house? Besides being someone that really cares about you, I am your doctor and I know if you can speak and it doesn't hurt your bongos, then you can sing and your bongos will be fine. Singing is only talking to some music. Singing, talking is all the same.

ONI

You know being a singer was Popi's second choice for me. The day I was born, he told all his friends that his son was going to be the first big time Puerto Rican T.V. announcer. He waited until I was two years old until he put those marbles that he bought just for me in my mouth. I talked with those marbles in my mouth until I was almost seven. He made me talk to all his friends and show them how I didn't have a poor, Puerto Rican accent and all his *amigos* would shake his hand and say *feliciadados*, congratulations. Every time I spoke my sisters would applaud. One day they kept applauding so much that I swallowed one of my marbles just as Popi walked in with the Padre from our church. He wanted me to show the Padre how beautifully he taught me how to speak. I tried to shake my head no, but Popi insisted. When I tried to talk with one marble I sounded like...

ZIFF

I know, another poor Puerto Rican slob trying to make it.

ONI

It wasn't his fault. I'm the one that swallowed the marble. Wouldn't it be something if I can only sing while I'm *dribing* a cab? That reminds me, I'm at a meter. I got to go. What am I gonna do?

ZIFF

You can come as early as you would like tomorrow.

ONI

I have to return my cab at six. The earliest I can be here is around seven.

ZIFF

(Smiling.)

Just in time for dinner. You're a pretty smart cookie.

ONI

If it's okay with you're your *mujer*, your Mrs., it's okay with me. I could use a home cooked meal.

(Lights start to fade.)

ZIFF

Marbles... He's not the only one that lost his marbles.

End of Scene 6

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT I

Scene 7

**The following day.
10 A.M.**

ZIFF is walking barefoot and searching.

ZIFF

(Smiles.)

I can't take it. I finally get my chance and where is he? I'm dying and he's *dribing* a cab. I know he can still sing, marbles or no marbles. He will go on Mendy's tour if it's the last thing I do. And if he says he needs me to go along, can I say no to my last remaining best friend? Deedle can take care of things while I'm on the road. From now

(Touches pouch and no ashes fall.)

on it's going to be my time. I'm not going to end up like...

DEEDLE

(Gives slippers.)

I found them under the radiator, and your favorite patient is here Dr. ZIFF.

ZIFF

(Takes slippers, is excited.)

Tell Oni I will be right down.

DEEDLE

It's not Oni.

ZIFF

Who is it?

DEEDLE

(Almost singing.)

Guess whooo?

ZIFF

It's the biggest chance of my life and she's still playing games. I have no time to play games. Oni is the only person that has an appointment today. I refuse to see anyone without an appointment. Who is it?

DEEDLE

(Almost singing.)
Guess whooo?

ZIFF

I just told you I'm too busy! Your sister, Sophie.

DEEDLE

Not even close.

ZIFF

Not Mrs. O'Leary?

DEEDLE

Try again.

ZIFF

I told you I'm too busy. David?

DEEDLE

How did you guess? He's supposed to be in school. Do you think he got fired again? He's such a nice young man and so dedicated. Why does he always lose his job just when he seems to begin to like it? How will he pay his rent and what will he eat? Maybe he'll stay for dinner this time. Not like last week. How can I tell that sweetheart to come back at four?

ZIFF

Oni said he'll be here as soon as he opens his eyes.

DEEDLE

Don't hold your breath.

You know what they say about those people in show biz. They wake up when everyone is going to sleep because they stay up all night. My David is here now. If he didn't need you this minute he would have come at his regular four o'clock appointment. I don't understand how he can tell me such funny jokes when I can see how upset he is. How can he be so funny all the time? He made me laugh so hard about your *facockte* slippers that I almost lost my balance as I was bringing them to you.

ZIFF

Let him make fun of me... I'll show them all.

DEEDLE

He got down on one knee and said I was his Cinderella. To prove he was really my prince and not a phony, he said he was prepared to drink from my glass slipper. He took a look at your slippers, held his breath and said he really wasn't meant to be my prince and would I settle on the court jester? That's when I almost fell from laughing so hard.

ZIFF

It's all a conspiracy. You know what he's going to tell me again. "*I lost my job and I don't think I'll be able to pay you.*" He's just like the rest of them. He loses his job and he's not the only one that goes on vacation while I work like a dog and I kill myself. What does he or any of them care that I'm going broke.

(ZIFF touches pouch and no ashes fall and DEEDLE notices it.)

DEEDLE

They've laid off so many teachers lately. Who knows when he'll get another job in this economy? I'm worried about him... What else can he do besides teach, be a comedian...? You know? That's not a bad idea. To me he's funnier than all those comedians we see on T.V., and that includes that wise guy, Mel Brooks that you like so much.

ZIFF

Mendy took a nobody that doesn't even have all his marbles and the first time out got him on the same show with Don Rickles. Oni doesn't know how lucky he is to be with Mendy-the-manager, my best friend. And who did my best friend turn to for help?

(Bows.)

None other than *his* best friend.

DEEDLE

(Coy.)

When a best friend says he owes you a favor, does that mean anything you want?

ZIFF

That's what best are for.

DEEDLE

Then ask him to talk to my David.

ZIFF

Mendy owes me a favor not *YOUR* David. Besides, what the hell is Mendy going to talk to David for? He's a manager, not a doctor. He manages very talented people.

DEEDLE

There is no man alive that's half as funny as David, and I bet would bet that if your best friend saw how funny he is, with a little coaching I bet he would make him into a star. If you are in Mendy-the- manages hands as you and Charley used to say, *'you'll make a lot of money and get a lot of publicity and you can rest assure that so will Mendy.'* That's how he became a big shot, making money off of other people's talent. All David needs is his help.

ZIFF

(Aside. HE has revelation.)

If Mendy got his hands on David he would turn him into another one of his big stars. All I know is he would make a bundle and where would be? That no good best friend I have has enough already. I discovered David. Why should I give David to him? I'm the one that will make into a star. Mendy said anything I want; well I'm going to tell him I want to do for my David what he did for his, Oni whatever the hell his name is. Bongos or no bongos Oni will sing again. He hates the way he talks, what he need is a good elocutionists that specializes in marbles. That Oni just has to sing, not for me but for *my* David.

DEEDLE

Should I tell David that you will see him soon as you have time, Dr. Ziff?

ZIFF

Are you crazy? That wonderful young man has come to me for help and you want him to come back later? He needs me NOW! Tell him to come in this very moment because he needs me NOW!

DEEDLE

I knew you would see him. That's why you're the greatest. What would you like for supper Mr. Greatest?

ZIFF

(Exits to bathroom.)

Surprise me darling.

DEEDLE

After all these years I still can't figure him out. One minute he hates surprises, the next minute he loves them. One second he doesn't want patients, the next second, he's running to help them in his bathrobe no less. He doesn't know what he wants. Thanks God Ziffy still likes my David and doesn't blame him like the rest of his patients. Forty years. You see Mama, forty years.

(Lights off and on.)

ZIFF

David, what a nice surprise. I love surprises.

DAVID

You do?

ZIFF

Give me a surprise anytime. It cuts right through the malaise, the ennui, the boredom. You seem a little trouble.

DAVID

Just a little?

ZIFF

I don't know. You tell me.

DAVID

I did it.

ZIFF

You know that you did it and now I know that you did it. Now, what exactly did you do?

DAVID

I got myself fired again.

ZIFF

(Excited.)

You got fired again?

DAVID

Dismissed. Discharged. Eliminated. Fired.

ZIFF

You mean unemployed, don't you?

DAVID

How am I going to live? How will I pay my rent?

ZIFF

And what about eating? How will you be able to buy food?

DAVID

Thanks for reminding me that I'll probably starve to death.

ZIFF

It's all, your principal's fault. I always suspected that Peterson was a Nazi. They hate every comedian. What do they know or care how much talent it takes to make people laugh. Did you ever see Hitler or Mengele laugh? Never!

DAVID

Thanks for the history lesson but it's not Peterson's fault. I'm there to teach, not to make my students laugh. I have no one to blame but myself.

ZIFF

What are you picking on yourself for? You are a comedic genius. The new Mel Brooks. What did you do?

DAVID

I'll tell you what I did. I was giving a lesson and in walks, Peterson with someone from the Board of Ed. They both sat down in the back of the classroom. I knew they were out to get me. I felt it start immediately but somehow I managed to control myself.

ZIFF

(Excited.)

Go on go on. Don't waste time.

DAVID

I was doing okay when all of a sudden one of the kids that finked on me to his parents asked to go to the john. As I was saying, "*Say the secret word,*" I saw Peterson and that observer start to smile. I knew it was a set-up. I caught myself just in the nick of time and said, "*Win fifty bucks.*" Well all hell cut loose in that classroom. You never heard such a commotion in your life. They started screaming every word they could think of. I guess fifty bucks meant a great deal to those kids, because they were frantic. The observer from the Board of Ed was after the money too. She started yelling louder than the kids. I had them all eating out of my hands. I haven't felt so much love since my Bar Mitzvah.

ZIFF

(Excited.)

Go on go on. And then?

DAVID

And then Peterson got into the act. He started screaming too. '*ENOUGH ENOUGH!*' he said and started running straight at me. That sonofabitch guessed the secret word. And it looked like he knew it. I looked in my wallet and all I had was twenty-seven bucks. I told him I would give him the rest on Monday. All he did was start screaming again that he finally had a witness. I tried to tell him that I don't welsh, but I guess he didn't believe me. He told me to pack my belongings and get out; I was through as a teacher forever.

ZIFF

What do those Nazis know? That was one of the funniest pieces of material I ever heard. I told you they don't appreciate humor. That was hysterical. I love it I love it!

DAVID

You really think it was that funny? I knew there was a reason why I liked you so much.

ZIFF

With so many teachers unemployed, who knows when you'll get another position? I'm sure you know how well connected I am in show biz. Comedians make a fortune provided they have the right person guiding their career. If you told that bit on Johnny's show just one time, you would then do the Merv show, Saturday Night Live, Sesame Street. I bet that you would win an Oscar, or at least a Tony.

DAVID

They give Emmys for T.V.

ZIFF

Then you'll get an Emmy.

DAVID

I always wanted an Oscar.

ZIFF

Then you'll get an Oscar, whatever you want. You'll make a fortune. Everyone will know all about you. Your timing is terrific and that is something all great comedians are born with. All we have to do is work on some new material. You *must* stay for supper. Deedle will really appreciate that, but first let's have lunch. After all, we can't let a friend starve to death when he's just about to start a new career.

DAVID

Why not? Instead of getting fired all the time, I'll use my sense of humor too.

ZIFF

...Be a sensation! They will eat you up!

(Lights.)

End of Scene 7

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT I

Scene 8

DEEDLE hurriedly sews pouch and rushes to bathroom. Smoke seeps through bathroom door and we hear someone coughing and finally throw up. **DEEDLE** open door of bathroom and peeks out and then **SHE** rushes over to pantry and puts something in it. **SHE** then proceeds to set the table and pours three cups of coffee. **ZIFF** and **DAVID** are sitting.

ZIFF

(Enters.)

That was Oni on the phone. He's ready to listen to whatever I have to say. Anything to sing again. He really sounded desperate and I couldn't be happier because he really wants to make it. I told him not to be late for dinner tomorrow night because you

(Sings.)

make the most delicious rice. Move over Mendy because here comes, Ziffy.

DEEDLE

The last time I heard you sing was when we were getting... You said you were the happiest man in the world.

ZIFF

And I'm going to be happy again and sooner than you think. I may be a poor unknown but I'm nobody's fool.

DEEDLE

Not only fools are happy. We used to be happy. Just being together, used to make you happy. Soon it will be forty years, Ziffy. Have I changed that much?

ZIFF

Nothing's changed nothing's changed.

DEEDLE

Nothing? David, your three and a half minute poachies are ready, and don't forget about your coffee. It's getting cold. That David needs someone to take care of him.

ZIFF

Now it's just someone? What happened to that nice girl?

DEEDLE

After taking care of him, I'm not so sure I would wish him on such a nice girl. Now I would settle on any girl for him.

(DAVID comes out of bathroom with little pieces of toilet paper on his face.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Oi, you cut yourself?

**DAVID
(Grabs Deedle.)**

No, I'm wearing the sign of surrender. Leave him and run away with me. Better yet, we'll take cab. Why run when you can ride. Or if you're in a daring mood will grab a rickshaw. Oh, I just remembered that *Fongshunun* went on his honeymoon to Shanghai. We'll just have to neck until he returns.

DEEDLE

(Laughs.)

Sit down and eat. Everything's getting cold.

DAVID

An amazing phenomenon.

ZIFF

What's that?

DAVID

Soon as you sit down nothing gets cold.

(DEEDLE laughs and ZIFF nods approval.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

This coffee is fit for Elixahente himself.

(DEEDLE grins and ZIFF nods approval.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

The poachies are poachiefecto!

(DEEDLE grins and ZIFF nods approval.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

But the toasties...

DEEDLE

What's the matter with the toasty?

ZIFF

(Playing along.)

Tell her what's wrong with the toasties Mr. Funnyman of the year, Tony and Oscar winner.

DAVID

On the contraire. The toasties were tanned and spread to perfection. He's trying to start

(Sings.)

trouble between us. I think he's "*Jealousy, why do you torture me?*"

DEEDLE

(Mimicking David. - smiles.)

On the contraire. It was Dr. Ziff's own idea.

ZIFF

(Nervous.)

What great idea are you talking about, sweetheart?

DEEDLE

David.

ZIFF

(Hugs Deedle.)

I have to give credit where credit is due. It was really my beloved Deedle's idea.

DEEDLE

You did it for me and him. Having David live with us is like having the son we were never blessed to have. Like Sarah who had a baby at ninety, I knew sooner or later my prayers would be answered one day. God sometimes doesn't answer immediately but HE always answers.

DAVID

Maybe you can ask HIM something for me?

DEEDLE

What's that?

DAVID

What the daily double is gonna be at Yonkers tonight.

ZIFF

You see what I told you about your timing? I'm never wrong.

DEEDLE

And you're trying to help my David start a new career, because he can't teach anymore. I always told you were genius, but this time...

ZIFF

...Go on...

DEEDLE

...Show biz, what a natural. Yes you're a real genius and my hero.

DAVID

(To Ziff.)

Well, if you're such a genius and you want to be my hero, maybe *you* can tell me the daily double at Yonkers Raceway? Tonight, tomorrow, take your time.

(DEEDLE laughs and ZIFF nods.)

ZIFF

Yeah, it's all in the timing. Mendy told me he thinks Oni loves rice, and he quit his job

(Grins.)

dribing a taxi. I say give the man rice!

(Lights fade.)

End of ACT I

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 1

DEEDLE is staring out the window as
ZIFF enters elated.

ZIFF

Do I know about timing or do I know about timing? That was some rehearsal! Six hours. We are getting very close. Deedle my love, what's cooking? We are starving!

(Looks at stove.)

You didn't make the rice? I told you that Oni was coming for supper. What's the matter with you lately?

DEEDLE

You ask what's the matter with me?

ZIFF

What am I going to tell Oni?

DEEDLE

Blame everything on me. Tell him I'm not coking anymore!

ZIFF

What are we going to eat?

DEEDLE

Whatever you want. Help yourself.

ZIFF

What did you do all day while I was killing myself helping David with his new career?

(Pleading.)

Nothing! You didn't cook the rice! You're like all the rest! Even you are against me.

(Pleading. Notices DEEDLE staring out the window.)

I don't deserve this fate. Didn't you hear what I just said?

DEEDLE

I'm not listening to you anymore!

ZIFF

(Angry.)

You're not listening any more. You're not cooking any more. Anything else you're not doing anymore?

DEEDLE

I'm not going to wash and iron for you. I'm not going to clean this house for you. I'm not going to shop for food, your underwear, razor blades and Epsom salt for you to soak your feet in. Your feet... I'm not going to do a thing for you or your rotten feet! That also includes that no good lazy slop that doesn't want to go to work. He's not so funny anymore. Why doesn't he go back to being a teacher and move out? And look at you, you, you're not a doctor anymore. You've become a manager; obsessed with movie stars becoming like a Mendy. You once told me that movie stars don't stay married very long. I can see you were right.

ZIFF

I'm always right! And if you're not going to do a damn thing around here, who, the hell needs you too? Sophie thought I needed her rotten thirty dollars a week, too. I showed her! I didn't starve did I?

DAVID

(Enters walking like Groucho.)

The natives must be restless. Can't you hear their stomach growling in the wind? It smells like they're going to have to have...

ZIFF

...Nothing!

DAVID

(Whispers to DEEDLE.)

Impossible! That's like saying Pike didn't peak. Tell me what you made. You know I can keep a secret... Alright, if you won't tell me, then run away with me!

DEEDLE

(Crying. - Exits to bedroom.)

I'll run away someday, but not with you.

DAVID

What's the matter with Deedle? What did you say to her?

ZIFF

What did I say to her? Ask her what she said to me and after what I gave her all these years.

DAVID

Okay, what did she say to you?

ZIFF

You won't believe me. You'll say not Deedle. I swear on whatever I have left of my life, she said it!

DAVID

Stop making excuses and tell me what she said.

ZIFF

She said she wasn't going to cook anymore. That's not all. She said that she's not going to buy Epsom salt for my... Don't forget about my razor blades either. I don't know what's gotten into her?

DAVID

Not my Cinderella. That's impossible.

ZIFF

You see, I knew you would say not Deedle. I suppose you are asking yourself how Dr. Ziff who has been cooped in the Bronx possibly call someone as famous as Mendy-the-manager his best friend?

DAVID

You know what they say; if you can't trust your own doctor and personal manager, who can you trust?

ZIFF

My proof will be here any minute. Oni is Mendy-the-manager hottest new singer and my best friend begged me to work with him on his singing. He's placing Oni's entire career in my hands. You know what that means for us? An open door to who knows where? All you need is a few more bits and lots of rehearsal. I promised him a home cooked meal and she decides to go for a walk. Remember what I told you about time? She never had it, but I still gave her everything I had.

DAVID

(Sadly.)

Poor woman.

ZIFF

I worked day and night and she spent every penny! Deedle thinks I don't know she's been sending money to that orphanage every month in Poland. Let her keep all the money. We will make a fortune together and she'll come running back.

(There is a knock on the door.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

(Charming almost singings like Deedle. Annoyed.)

You see? She's back. She went to buy some rice. Who is it? WHO IS IT?! I have no time to play games! Oni, please come in. I was just talking about you.

(ONI enters holding throat.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

Oni, I was just talking about your new career to. This is David a brilliant new comic that is staying with me. He's putting a new act together.

DAVID

(Places arms around ZIFF and ONI ala fight referee.)

Now I want a fair fight.

Feigns punching ZIFF.)

No rabbit punches.

(ZIFF playing along staggers.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(Feigns hitting ZIFF in groin.)

And no hitting below the belt.

DAVID (Cont'd)

(Places arms around ZIFF and ONI ala fight referee.)

At the bell, come out fighting. The winner gets two beautiful perfectly round sour balls that I got as a going away present in that jar, but no marshmallows.

ZIFF

Is he funny or is he funny?

(ONI smiles.)

DAVID

Still not talking, huh? Well that goes for you too!

(Feigns punching ONI in the groin and playing along doubles up.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

And don't forget about how I hate anyone that throws a rabbit punch.

**(DAVID feigns rabbit punching ONI and accidentally hits HIM on the chin
And ONI goes sprawling.)**

ZIFF

He's a singer and you hit him right on his bongos. Maybe if you changed your

(Apologetic.)

underwear less and rehearsed more this wouldn't have happened. He's only a newcomer. He didn't mean to hurt you. He was only trying out one of his new bits. I have to tell the two of you the truth that was really funny. Together the both of you are a natural. What a team, like Martin and Lewis. Why not? That Dean guy was a terrific singer and Oni is even better. Jerry Lewis was a comedic genius and with enough rehearsing David will be even funnier.

DAVID

(Cups hand ala megaphone.)

Say it again! One more time for the boys in the back of the bus!

(ONI applauds.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

More, more! What can I tell you, I'm a sucker for a standing ovation. By unanimous

(Raises ONI's hand.)

decision, the winner and new champion of the world. Don't go anywhere, I'll be right

(Goes and removes two sour balls from jar on counter and returns.)

back. I know how much this championship must mean to you.

(Gives ONI two sour balls. ONI nods thank you and puts sour balls in mouth. DAVID applauds and uses spoon as microphone.)

How does it feel to be the new champion of the world, champ?

**(With cheeks bulging, ONI confidently takes the spoon from DAVID as
Speaks distinctly as a newscaster.)**

ONI

I have to thank my trusted manager for giving me the opportunity to be here. I also want

(Smiles to ZIFF and DAVID.)

to thank my two best friends, Dr. Ziff and David for standing by me. But most of all I have to thank my Popi for making me what I am today.

(ZIFF is happily astounded.)

DAVID

(Takes spoon from ONI and uses it as microphone.)

Ladies and gentlemen, brought to you through the miracle of television, you have heard the first words uttered by our new world champion.

ZIFF

(Aside.)

And what beautiful word. Now that he is speaking without his accent that he and his Popi hate so much, its goodbye bongos and hello Mendy.

ONI

(Brazen.)

Where's that delicious home cooked meal you promised me?

DAVID

We're starving!

ZIFF

(Aside.)

Did you hear the way he spoke with those marbles in his mouth? His Popi was right, he could have been some announcer, but singers make much more. I should thank all those teachers for giving David those sour balls as a going away present... Charley only got six lines.

DAVID

(To ONI.)

If we're going to survive around here, we better take things in our own hands or we may starve to death. You cook and I'll dry.

(ONI goes to refrigerator, takes out some eggs, finds a bowl to scramble them and proceeds to make an omelet.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

That reminds me; did you hear the story about these two chickens, Veronica and Mabel? Veronica was in one of her boasting moods and she says to Mabel, watch this. Veronica starts pushing real hard and then she lets out an *eh, eh, eh* and out pops this big egg. Mabel asks Veronica how much does she get for that egg? Veronica proudly replies that she gets five cents for all her eggs. Veronica watches as Mabel gets set to lay her egg. Mabel nonchalantly goes *eh* and out pops a tiny little egg. Veronica starts to laugh as she asks Mabel how much does she get for her eggs? Mabel replies three cents. "*Why don't you try a little harder*" Veronica asked. Do you think I'm going to break my ass for two cents?

(ONI laughs as he flips omelet.)

ZIFF

Now that's what I call material.

S Goldberg

Earthquakes

1-1-63

ONI

(Holding frying pan.)

And this is what I call a good old Spanish omelet coming up.

(DAVID runs to get plates and set the table.)

ZIFF

Who has time for a Spanish omelet when you have to rehearse!

End of Scene 1

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 2

Late afternoon.
The same day.

MENDY opens door and is stunned when he confronts SOPHIE. For a moment, time stands still. They BOTH go back thirty-five years ago when they were in love.

MENDY

Oh, my god, Sophie? I don't believe it. Is that really you...?

SOPHIE

You can't tell? Don't tell me I've changed that much.

MENDY

Changed, what changed? You look wonderful... Damn near delectable... Gorgeous, just gorgeous.

SOPHIE

You don't look so bad yourself, Mister.

MENDY

Thanks, thanks a lot... Gee, Sophie, it's sure great seeing that beautiful face of yours, again.

SOPHIE

What about all the wrinkles?

MENDY

What wrinkles? You're more beautiful than ever. I swear.

SOPHIE

What a line. I guess that's why I fell for you thirty-five years ago.

MENDY

I always thought it was my body, sexy...

SOPHIE

Maybe it was. But, it's been so long, who can remember?

S Goldberg

Earthquakes

1-1-65

MENDY

I remember, Sophie.

SOPHIE

(flirtatious)
Everything?

MENDY

(flirtatious)
Everything, I mean everything.

SOPHIE

That weekend at the Concord?

MENDY

(Flirtatious.)
Every moment.

SOPHIE

Remember when we used to go dancing at the Paladium every Wednesday night?

MENDY

We sure use to love to mambo, didn't we?

SOPHIE

Tito Puente...

MENDY

(Holds out arms as if to dance.)
Cal Tjader. May I have this dance?

SOPHIE

There's no music.

MENDY

(Takes Sophie in arms and sings.)
"I have dreamed that your arms are lovely. And I have dreamed what a joy you'd be..."

SOPHIE

Oh, Mendy.

MENDY

Aw, Sophie, please don't cry. Please, I'm begging you. You should be happy. What are you crying about?

SOPHIE

Why do you think I'm crying?

MENDY

Maybe you're crying 'cause you're still hung-up on... what might have been. Well, I've been hung-up once or twice myself about what might have been these past couple of years.

SOPHIE

Only once or twice?

MENDY

Okay, a thousand times; are you happy now?

SOPHIE

Ecstatic.

MENDY

Ecstatic, huh? You're not the only one that regrets what happened... I, I've missed you Sophie.

SOPHIE

(Whimpers.)

Why'd you come here, Mendy? Why'd you come back and ruin everything? Why?

MENDY

(About to say he came to see her, he can't admit it so, he catches himself.)

I, I,... I came to see, I came to see y... I had to sit '*shiva*' for Charley, didn't I? I have to help Ziff get through this, don't I? After all, a fella needs a best friend.

SOPHIE

(Sobbing.)

You said I was your best friend and look what happened.

(After a beat.)

MENDY

You never forget, do you? Give me a break. We all make mistakes, don't we?

SOPHIE

You made a mistake alright, but "I" paid for it, Mister.

MENDY

What do you mean, you paid for it? Don't you think it still hurts me too?

SOPHIE

Because of you, I've been in pain my whole life and it 'hurts' you?

MENDY

Because of me, what did I do? You left me! I was the one that was hurt. I asked you to go with me to L.A., didn't I...? I never thought I would say this but, I've always cared about you, Sophie. Like what made Sammy run, like a fool, running after success I ran away from...you.

SOPHIE

You ran away from me alright. Do you remember what I did, just before "you" left for the coast? Before "you" left me behind in quest of fame and fortune?

MENDY

(Trying to remember.)

Remind me.

SOPHIE

I went to Philadelphia to take care of some business.

MENDY

Business? I told you I would take care of you and you left me for business. Why'd you go, Sophie... Why'd you leave me? You didn't even say goodbye. I was so hurt.

SOPHIE

(Emotional.)

I didn't say goodbye, because I hated you.

MENDY

Hate? I always thought you loved me.

SOPHIE

You thought right, Mister. I did love you. I guess that's why I was so happy when I became...

MENDY

When you became what?

SOPHIE

(Hesitant.)

When, I became pregnant with your baby for the first and only time it would happen in my life... Our baby was a girl. I would have called her Rebecca, after my favorite aunt. Instead, I got an abortion...

MENDY

WHAT? You went to Philadelphia to get an abortion with my child... How could you?

SOPHIE

(In tears.)

If I knew then what I know now... I would have had the baby. Back then, not being married and having a baby was impossible, because it was a '*Shanda*,' a shame.

MENDY

And Ziff and Deedle knew about this?

SOPHIE

I never told your best friend or my sister... I've never told a soul, until now. I've shared everything with my sister except telling her about the most traumatic experience in my life.

MENDY

(Stunned.)

Are you crazy? I wanted to have kids, more than anything. You knew that. Why? Why didn't you tell me you were pregnant? We could have gotten married in L.A... I always wanted kids. I told you to come with 'cause I was gonna make it big. I told you I would marry you, soon as I got established, didn't I?

SOPHIE

And I thought marriage was getting established. If you wouldn't marry then, you wouldn't have married when you became 'established.' And that's exactly why I didn't tell you. I wanted you to marry me because you loved me, not because I was pregnant with your child. I wanted you to love me... More than anything, I wanted you to love me... And do you know how much I wanted to have children? More than anything, but how could I have had a child in those days without being married? How could I do that to my parents? Besides, I was too proud too shame you into marrying me... After the A.B., I could never have children again... He was a butcher. He scarred my tubes, that's why my back hurts me every month. He was a butcher. An out an out butcher. And because of my love for you I never gave Charley a chance.

MENDY

Oh, Sophie, I'm so sorry. How can I make it up to you?

SOPHIE

How about making me the beneficiary to your life insurance and make sure I collect real soon.

MENDY

(Laughs.)

That's what I always liked about you, Sophie, what a sense of humor... What can I say? I'm sorry. Please, I'll do anything to make it up to you, to us. What do you say about dinner at the Four Seasons, tonight? I could cancel my flight, if you want me to.

SOPHIE

Maybe I'll think about it.

S Goldberg

Earthquakes

1-1-69

Oh, would you?

MENDY

On second thought, not a chance.

SOPHIE

Please, give me another chance...

MENDY

I'll give you another chance, when I collect on your insurance policy, and that can't be soon enough.

SOPHIE

Is that all you have to say after all these years, insurance? You know, I didn't need you then
(Exits.)
and I sure as hell don't need you now. See ya around sister.

MENDY

I'll see around all right, in hell. Sonofabitch!

SOPHIE

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 2

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 3

The kitchen shows signs of neglect. ONI is wearing DEEDLE's apron and is frying an omelet and WE see that HE has to go to bathroom. DAVID is in the bathroom gargling to the tune of "*Splish Splash*," pausing at the end of each beat to spit. ZIFF is shoeless and is searching for something.

ONI

(Responding to each spit.)
Splash!... Bath...! Saturday night!

ZIFF

(Searching.)
Am I getting warmer?

ONI

It's probably just the flashes.

ZIFF

TELL ME!

ONI

(Runs to bathroom door.)
I really have to go and I'm getting nauseous from that song!

(DAVID continues to gargle.)

ONI (Cont'd)

If you don't open this door I'm going to throw up and make in my pants!

(DAVID opens door and enters as ONI dashes in and slams door.)

DAVID

It's okay with me as long as you clean up the mess and while you're at it, why don't you
(Ala Jimmy Durante.)
clean the rest of the place? Just look at this mess you made. *Come back Cinderella,*
wherever you are.

ZIFF

Where did you hide them?

DAVID

Would I do that to my own manager? Did you look under your bed?

ZIFF

That's the first place I looked.

DAVID

Did you look in the closet?

(ZIFF looks at DAVID in disgust and goes into his bedroom. ONI enters.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

You know I'm getting tired of looking for his things.

ONI

Me too and please do me a favor and drop the bathroom *shtick* from your act. I think I'm
developing kidney problems.

ZIFF

(Enters.)

They're not there!

DAVID

Let's see. The last time you were looking for your slippers they were under the radiator.

(ZIFF sheepishly goes to the radiator and finds them.)

ONI

I thought I was going to tell him where they were this time. Breakfast is now being
served.

DAVID

Quick, I have to sit down!

ZIFF

May I ask why?

DAVID

(Drinking coffee.)

Because I can't stand eating his food and by the way, do you really call this coffee?

ONI

That's it, I've had it! Nothing I do is good enough. Tomorrow we are going to see how you like holding it in while I gargle to "La Traviata." Let's see how good your kidney is.

(There is a knock on the door.)

DAVID

I hope its Cinderella.

ZIFF

I knew she'd come back.

(ROSELLI and her daughter Judy enter.)

ROSELLI

(Sizes up situation.)

The door was open downstairs. What the hell happened to this place? Where's Deedle?

ZIFF

I told you never to come back here! Did Frankie...?

ONI

Make yourself comfortable. How about some coffee, *senora*?

ROSELLI

We didn't come here for coffee, thank you.

DAVID

Well, if it's the rent you're after? See my manager. He takes care of all my finances.

(JUDY smiles faintly.)

ROSELLI

Let's go to your office, I have to talk to you.

ZIFF

No! You are not going to get me alone, again.

ROSELLI

It's important!

ZIFF

NO!

ROSELLI

Please, I must speak to you privately.

ZIFF

No, no, no and final NO!

ROSELLI

Well, you leave me no choice. I guess everyone will just have to hear what I've got to say.

ZIFF

Wait, wait. I didn't know it was that important. My office is a mess but let's go for a walk..

(Ushering ROSELLI by the arm THEY exit.)

ONI

Nice lady, your mother?

(JUDY just looks at ONI.)

DAVID

What are you, the inquiring photographer? You are such a pest! Can't you see the lady
(To Judy.)
doesn't feel like talking? How about a game of gin rummy? Here's your chance to make a big killing. I always loose to beautiful women.

(Judy chuckles.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(Responding to Judy's chuckle.)

Did I hear something?

ONI

(Looks around.)

I think it came from somewhere over here.

(JUDY laughs.)

DAVID

(Looks under kitchen table and notices JUDY's beautiful legs.)

I heard it again... I think I'm getting warm.

JUDY

(Laughing she looks under table.)

Scat, scat. The both of you are lunatics. What are you some kind of team?

ONI

How'd you guess?

DAVID

Oni plays first and I do the pitching.

JUDY

(Alluring.)

And quit well I might add. I'm also certain I've never met such a cute first baseman before.

DAVID

Cute is for kids but a woman of such beauty deserves someone handsome, me.

(DAVID takes one step forward and ONI does the same throughout. THEY continue to take steps until THEY pass JUDY and then do an about face in perfect sync and bump into each other.)

ONI

I guess this means...

DAVID

...This kitchen ain't big enough for the both of us...

ONI

...There's only one way...

DAVID

...We'll have to choose...

ONI

...Three takes it...

DAVID

...ODDS...!

ONI

...I always pick odds.

DAVID

Okay, if that's the way you want it? We'll choose who gets odds.

DAVID and ONI

ODDS!

JUDY

(Laughing.)

It sure feels good to laugh again, but if you make me any harder I will...

DAVID

...Pee in my pants.

ONI

Don't take it personal, he does it to me all the time.

JUDY

(Laughing harder.)

I mean it.

DAVID

So do I. Everything I have is yours, just say that you will.

JUDY

(Laughing.)

I will what?

DAVID

(On one knee.)

Will you tell me your name?

JUDY

Yes.

DAVID

Yes is the most positive name I've ever heard. Yes, yes I like the way it sounds. I guess I always did? Since I was a kid everything I wanted depended on *YES!* At long last I have found you, my yes.

JUDY

(To David.)

I have to get out of here. Do you want to go for a walk with me or something?

DAVID

Yes, yes.

S Goldberg

Earthquakes

1-1-76

JUDY

By the way, the name is Judy.

DAVID

Yes Judy. What a name and what beautiful eyes you have.

End of Scene 3

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 4

The same day.

SOPHIE's living room. DEEDLE is staring out the window. SOPHIE is aimlessly turning the pages of a magazine. There is absolute silence except for the ticking of an old Grandfather clock that is getting louder and louder.

SOPHIE

I never wanted to take it. Even as a baby I remember hating that clock and you always loving it. But Mama made me. It was her idea... If it was up to her she would have taken half of Europe with us. Remember how I carried all that chicken soup on board? My arm still hurts me... How long are you going to stare out that window? What's so nice looking at garbage? Ziffy is not coming. You want him to come after the way he treated you?

DEEDLE

(Faces Sophie.)

Only if he wants to.

SOPHIE

Then he's not coming. He's too busy playing manager.

DEEDLE

Let's see how long he'll be able to keep the house clean.

SOPHIE

Do you think he'll even notice?

DEEDLE

When he gets hungry, that's when he'll notice.

SOPHIE

Mama told me he would amount to no good even though he swore to her that he would take...

DEEDLE

(Interrupts.)

...Mama. To Mama no one was good enough for her daughters.

SOPHIE

(Sighing.)

Mama. We left and she died.

DEEDLE

After Papa died she was never the same. Mama was sick for years. We couldn't help her. There was nothing we could do for her. She wanted us to go to the *Goldeneh land*.

SOPHIE

I didn't want to leave Mama.

DEEDLE

And you think I did?

SOPHIE

(Sobbing.)

You were in love with him. All I ever had was Mama... Mama is dead.

DEEDLE

Sophie, you're crying like it was yesterday. It's over forty years

SOPHIE

(Cries.

Looks up.)

What's the difference? Nothing; I cried yesterday and I cry today. Mama, Mama I did everything you told me.

DEEDLE

(Caresses Sophie.)

Sophie, my darling sister, Sophie, Mama is gone and we are here. You can't live your life for Mama! Get rid of that clock once and for all!

SOPHIE

You think I should? I wanted to since...

DEEDLE

So?

SOPHIE

I will. One day, you'll see. Are you hungry? I'll warm up some soup for us and you'll feel better.

DEEDLE

We just ate lunch. Stop with the chicken soup already. Everyday chicken soup! I never thought that I could grow to hate a chicken I don't even know. My God, you can't be sick everyday of your life. It's Mama, that's the reason. I would bet Mamas the reason you...

SOPHIE

(Interrupting.)

Stop blaming Mama.

DEEDLE

I'm not blaming her but where do you think the chicken soup everyday and you drowning almost every night and everything else comes from?

(SOPHIE rubs her spine.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Why don't you go and lie down and I'll get the heating pad for you.

SOPHIE

(Walks into bedroom.)

Maybe I'll take a nap.

(DEEDLE follows SOPHIE into the bedroom. SHE comes out and closes the door, then rushes into bathroom and shuts the door. WE hear DEEDLE coughing and finally throw up. SHE then opens and closes the door trying to alleviate some of the smoke. SHE closes the door and rushes to the window as SOPHIE open bedroom door and enters.)

DEEDLE

You couldn't sleep?

SOPHIE

How could I sleep with all that tumult, you were making. It's because of him you threw
(Sniffs air.)

up. They say when you live with someone long enough you start to look like them. Well in your case you are starting to smell like him and he didn't call you even once just to see how you are doing.

DEEDLE

How can he call me? He doesn't even know where I am.

SOPHIE

What do you mean he doesn't know where you are? Like I said before, he doesn't care anymore about you or...

DEEDLE

(Starts to cry.)

And two weeks before our anniversary. I can't believe he would do such a thing.

SOPHIE

Mama always said nothing lasts forever.

DEEDLE

Forty years is almost forever, it's almost forever.

SOPHIE

It's all his fault! Who ever heard of a sixty year old doctor going into show business? He's a big baby, that's what he is and you expect him to remember your anniversary?

(Demurely.)

When was the last time he remembered your birthday or mine? He's just like that low-life.

DEEDLE

Who?

SOPHIE

Mendy, that sonofabitch!

DEEDLE

You still think of Mendy? I don't believe it

(Curtain.)

End of Scene 4

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 5

DAVID and JUDY sitting on a park bench.

DAVID

(Pointing.)

You see that big oak tree with the limb almost falling off?

JUDY

What about it?

DAVID

You see that squirrel on it?

JUDY

(Squinting.)

Barely.

DAVID

Well that happens to be the oldest living squirrel in the world.

JUDY

(Laughs.)

How can you tell?

DAVID

Trust me. I saw him deposit his Social Security check at the Chestnut bank. Smart cookie that old geezer. He's getting twelve-and-three-quarter nuts a year on his money.

JUDY

Ya know, you're nice and you're kinda nuts too but in a nice way. That's nice.

DAVID

That makes three nice in a row. 'Three blind nice, see how they run.'

JUDY

(Laughs.)

That reminds me. What time is it?

DAVID

(Looks at watch.)

I won't tell if you won't. It's one thirty.

JUDY

I can't believe it. We've been sitting here for almost three hours, just B-essing.

DAVID

COR-RECT! Give the woman with the most beautiful face in the world \$500! I would give her more, I swear but the sponsors won't let me.

JUDY

Do you ever stop? It must be hard always being on and thinking. I hate thinking too much. It can drive you 'Botso' if you're not careful.

DAVID

'Botso'? I used to drink 'Botso' and milk when I was a kid.

JUDY

You mean Bosco.

DAVID

But now I'm strictly a Ronzoni man.

JUDY

(Kisses DAVID.)

Maybe that will make you stop?

DAVID

(Kisses Judy.)

Who wants to stop? Want to go to my place And?

JUDY

(Shakes sexily.)

Too many people there. Want to go to my place And?

DAVID

I thought you'd never ask, *Yes*.

JUDY

(Aside.

Remorseful.)

Neither did I... I'm just like her. I guess what they say is true about how the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

DAVID

But what happens if the tree overhangs a river. An apple must learn to float in order to survive.

JUDY

Why?

DAVID

So that you can have some apple sauce with our potato latkes.

JUDY

Potato *latkes*?

DAVID

Latkes means pancake.

JUDY

How did you know? I, love apple sauce with potato *latkes*?

DAVID

(Stands and holds JUDY's face in his hands.)

I can see it in your eyes.

JUDY

Anything else you see in there?

DAVID

You're attracted to a very handsome ex-school teacher.

JUDY

What makes you so sure? And what's with this about you being an ex-school teacher?

DAVID

It's along story.

JUDY

I hope so. I could use a good mystery, Ellery.

DAVID

I mean it can days even seven years and you may get an itch that I'd love to scratch.

JUDY

What happened to weeks and months?

DAVID

You said you like a good mystery and mine will take a long time.

(THEY look into each other's eyes.)

JUDY

Well in that case I'll need your undivided attention.

DAVID

Take as long as you want *mamsoille*.

JUDY

Second, you'll have to fill me in on some background.

DAVID

(Romantic.)

I was right about your eyes.

JUDY

Third, what are you doing living at the circus?

DAVID

It's a tent over my head for me and my poor camel.

JUDY

(Sarcastically.)

Does your camel have one hump or two?

DAVID

My camel is so poor it has traveled the burning Sahara, thirsty and horny in search of that elusive hump.

JUDY

(Aside.)

His camel ain't alone.

DAVID

I'd walk a mile for a...

JUDY

...Save your energy and let's take a cab.

(THEY both rise and precede arm in arm.)

JUDY

You want to tell your ringmaster that you might late for dinner?

DAVID

No yes, to tell you the truth, I used to love eating there, but lately the food leaves something to be desired. Maybe I'll call him later.

JUDY

(Amorously.)

Want to bet? And just remember you said you always lose.

(Lights.)

End of Scene 5

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 6

A couple of hours later.

ONI is cooking. ZIFF is staring out the window and ROSELLI is pacing frantically.

ZIFF

Where the hell could she have taken him to?

ROSELLI

How do you know he didn't take her somewhere?

ZIFF

Impossible!

ROSELLI

Why is it impossible?

ZIFF

Because he's broke, he doesn't have a dime.

ROSELLI

And she's a rich, horny sonofabitch that's lost all her pride. Just because her 'Smiling Jack' kicked the bucket ain't no reason to keep on drinkin' and screwin' around like that. Where the hell does she get all that shit from? Not me! Jesus, I swear not me!

ZIFF

Maybe she took him to her place? Why don't you call and see if they went there?

ROSELLI

(Sexually moves towards to Ziff.)

She doesn't have a damn phone. She doesn't want to be interrupted when she's *busy*.

ZIFF moves away from ROSELLI trying not to make it obvious to ONI.)

ZIFF

(Whispers to ROSELLI.)

Are you crazy? STOP IT!

(Uses eyes to try and make her aware of ONI's presence. Both are moving.)

We made a deal. I would start to treat Judy, in between rehearsals and you promised that you would not come back unless...

ROSELLI

No deal! That "Cooz" didn't stay.

ROSELLI lunges at ZIFF who races to table and sits down just as ONI arrives with a frying pan. ROSELLI hastily sits.)

ONI

Smells that good, huh? There's no need to fight over seats, there's plenty for

(Serving.)

everyone. Lunch is now being served; the specialty of the house.

ZIFF

Again with a Spanish omelet? How about a plain old fashioned with a little cheese, once in awhile.

ONI

Okay, okay, tonight I'll put in some American cheese.

ZIFF

I'm used to eating the best. Ask anybody.

ONI

Well if you hate my cooking so much, why don't you ask your *mujer*, your wife to come back? You know you miss anyway.

ZIFF

I miss her? Are you crazy?

ROSELLI

(Pushes plate away.)

Admit it, you miss her...! What the hell am I doing here? I was never too crazy

(Stands and moves towards the door. Exits.)

about comets or omelets. Eat your heart out Ziff, I'm getting married tomorrow.

ZIFF

Where's David? Doesn't he remember we have a dress rehearsal tonight?

ONI

I guess he has something more important on his mind. Tell you the truth; I could go for a little action myself.

ZIFF

(Phone rings and HE goes to answer it.)

Action, you want action? I'll give you action. It's about time she called. Who is it...? Mendy, I was just talking about you. Yeah, Oni is just fine. You want to

(Hands phone to ONI.)

talk to him? Sure he's right here.

ONI

Hi ya Mr. Manager... You really think I sound terrific? Gee thanks. You sure were right when you said that Dr. Ziff was something else. Hey, stop worrying, I know it's less than two weeks. Yeah, I call you as soon as I'm ready to start rehearsing with the band. I know it's a chance of a lifetime. You don't have to tell me... Hold on, I'll put your best friend on.

(ONI hands phone to ZIFF and takes out a folded letter and looks at it And takes two sour balls from jar and puts in HIS mouth as ZIFF speaks on phone.)

ZIFF

(On phone.)

Of course he sounds great, what did you expect? And you can't wait to hear him sing... Anything you can do for me. That's very generous, Mendy. Sure I remember; you always knew you could count on your best friend. I appreciate that, I really do.

ONI

(Reading letter HE gulps the two sour balls, takes a deep breath and sings, "Just once in a lifetime.")

ZIFF

(Astounded hearing ONI sing.) On phone.)

Oh boy, you should hear him sing. Fantastic. You know how those temperamental artists have to be in the mood. Well Oni sure is in the mood, he sounds just gorgeous. Listen, Mendy I still have a lot of work to do with him... Great. I promise there's

(Hangs up phone.)

nothing to worry about... You too Mendy... Sure I'll give Deedle a kiss for you.

(To ONI

-

Aside.)

YOU SANG, THE BONGOS ARE GONE! Finally. Even though I can't find you Charley, I know you are listening. We're on our way, partner. There's no stopping us **(To Oni.)**

now. What's that song you were singing?

ZIFF and ONI

(Singing.)*“Just once in a lifetime...”*

ONI

(Happy, displays letter.)

Remember my sister, Carmen?

ZIFF

(Holds up both hands.)

That great dancer with flat feet?

ONI

Well flat and all she’s getting married to Juan Miguel Rivera who happens to own the largest hotel in San Turce. He just turned it into condos and as his wedding present to Popi he’s giving him one with four bedrooms. Popi also says that it’s okay with him if I want to spend the rest of my life driving a cab, because he no longer wants to come to the Bronx. He says he’s become the envy of all his *amigos* and he just couldn’t hurt them by saying *adios* now that he has a millionaire son in-law whom he loves as much as his own

(Reads letter.)

son. I can’t believe it, but my kid sister is getting married this Sunday! I better get moving. I have to make reservations. There’s so much I have to do. Thanks for

(Shakes ZIFF’s hand.)

everything, Doc.

ZIFF

What about...?

ONI

Popi? Yeah, he’s really something. Since I was a small *bambino*, a kid, I’ve been breaking my ass for this chance and now he wants me to drive a cab. After my sister’s wedding I’m going to tell him a thing or two. Maybe driving a cab’s okay for him but

(Opens door and sings.

-

Exits.)

not for me. *“A man knows a moment.”* Thanks again, Doc, *muchas gracias*.

ZIFF

(Remorseful, holds head.)

Don’t mention it. What about me? Let him go, let them all go! I don’t need anybody.

(HE rests his head on the table. Lights dim and then on. There is a knock on the door and ZIFF is pleasantly surprised as SOPHIE enters.)

ZIFF (Cont’d)

She sent you, didn’t she?

SOPHIE

She doesn't know that I came to see you.

ZIFF

Then what the hell are you doing here if she didn't send you?

SOPHIE

All she does is stare out the window.

ZIFF

Let her stare, who cares?

SOPHIE

You care and so does she.

ZIFF

If she cares so much, how come she left me?

SOPHIE

You made her leave. You drove everyone away, and why? Because you have this *meshugeneh* idea that it's important for you to become rich and famous. So, if one day you have a million dollars and a million people know your name, BIG DEAL! Do you think any of them will care about you the way my sister does? Go to her. Tell her that you made a mistake and that you're sorry.

ZIFF

Tell her I'm sorry? NEVER! She's the one that should apologize. She picked the Bronx, she picked the Bronx! She never made a correct decision in her life. She picked the Bronx, she picked the Bronx!

SOPHIE

(Crying.)

The only mistake she made was wasting her life on a low life like you. She's too good for you. You should have gotten someone like me. I would have fixed you good.

ZIFF

What are you crying about?

SOPHIE

What do you care?

ZIFF

If I didn't care, would I have spent so much time with you every week all these years? I broke every rule in my profession for you. If I didn't care would I have laid awake all

those sleepless nights trying to figure out why you've dreamt about drowning every night?

SOPHIE

(Drying eyes.)

You do care...

(ZIFF nods yes.)

SOPHIE (Cont'd)

So give up all this craziness and go to her and bring back to her home.

ZIFF

Will she come back?

SOPHIE

You won't know unless you try.

ZIFF

What about David's and Oni's careers? They're counting on me.

SOPHIE

Are they counting on you, or are you counting on them?

(ZIFF walks to the window and stares.)

SOPHIE (Cont'd)

Well aren't you?

ZIFF

We're so close. I can almost taste the success.

SOPHIE

(Exits.)

Alone, without someone to share there is no success.

ZIFF

(Staring out the window.)

It looks like it's just me and you, Charley.

(Curtain.)

End of Scene 6

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 7

JUDY's bedroom. DAVID and JUDY, are wearing pajamas in bed. It is one A.M. and JUDY sobs throughout.

DAVID

And just because your husband died last year doesn't prove a thing, except for the fact that it still hurts so much. Even if you wanted to you couldn't. There's only one person that can be your mother and there's only one person that can be you... And I bet you I'm going to stick around for a long, long time.

JUDY

(Whimpers.)

How do you know?

DAVID

My great, great grandfather live to be eighty-nine and my great grandfather lived to be ninety-seven, and my grand father lived to a hundred and four. All you have to do is give me a big hug and smile *AND...*

(JUDY kisses HIM.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

And?

JUDY

(Smiling.)

I think you're going to set a new longevity record and I want you to know that I'm happy

(Gyrates sexually.)

to be a part of as long as we...

DAVID

Without you I could never do it.

JUDY

David, I believe you could do anything you wanted to do. You are the kindest, the most perceptive human being I have ever met.

S Goldberg

Earthquakes

1-1-93

And?

DAVID

Sweet, intelligent.

JUDY

And?

DAVID

Sensitive.

JUDY

And?

DAVID

JUDY

And as far as *AND* is concerned, *if there was a race, you'd win by a long shot.*

DAVID

At last somebody recognizes a true champion.

JUDY

(Tenderly looks into DAVID's eyes and mimics him.)

At first I wasn't too sure about the apple sauce, but when I looked in your eyes and the saw the potato *latkes*, I knew my suspicions were unfounded. Yes, you were so positive that your yes was even more positive even though too many positives can become a negative. But don't get me wrong David Streeter; I fell for your whole act, squirrels nuts and all.

DAVID

I can't take it.

JUDY

Is that a direct quote?

DAVID

Stop it! What are you trying to do?

JUDY

(Caresses him.)

You said I can't be my mother and I certainly can't be yours.

DAVID

Please don't say goodbye to me. I need you Judy.

S Goldberg

Earthquakes

1-1-94

JUDY

How can you be so sure?

(DAVID kisses HER.)

DAVID

Anymore questions?

JUDY

I guess you really like it around here?

DAVID

When do I move in?

JUDY

You already have.

(THEY kiss.)

JUDY (Cont'd)

You know you sure rub off on a girl.

DAVID

Tell me more.

JUDY

Guess what I'm in the mood for.

DAVID

(Jumps out of bed and rushes to kitchen.)

Coming right up!

JUDY

There's no one like you David Streeter.

(DAVID returns with two glasses of milk and some cookies.)

JUDY (Cont'd)

(Aside.)

From bourbon to cookies and milk, and I don't care if she believe me or not.

(Holds up glass.)

Here's to breaking the record!

(Curtain.)

End of Scene 7

They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 8

In total darkness we hear ZIFF and DEEDLE coming up stairs.

DEEDLE

I believe you I believe you.

ZIFF

It's the only time since we've been married. I swear! I couldn't help it. She kissed me, I didn't kiss her back.

DEEDLE

What do I have to do to make you believe me that I believe you?

ZIFF

I'll show you.

DEEDLE

(Romantically surprised.)

Ziffy, Ziffy, what are you doing? Stop it! Ziffy put me down. Be careful or you will hurt yourself.

(Lights come on and we see ZIFF struggle to carry DEEDLE over the threshold. The kitchen has been restored to cleanliness. A banner stating, "Here's to forty more. Guess Who?" is hanging.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

(Loves the banner.)

You remembered it's our fortieth.

ZIFF

How could I forget? You know how important things like anniversaries are to me.

DEEDLE

After forty years, do I know? Everything looks the same, except where's my David?

ZIFF

He asked me to tell that he's never been happier. He's living with Mrs. Roselli's daughter, Judy in her penthouse on Park Avenue and he says he's madly in love. So you see, your prayers have been answered.

DEEDLE

They were answered forty years ago.

(They hear door bell ring downstairs.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

(About to answer it.)

I wonder who that could be.

ZIFF

(Leaving.)

Exits.)

Allow me. I'll be right back. Don't go anywhere.

(DEEDLE takes the pouch out of her bag, which appears full and doesn't drip ashes anymore and places it on the floor next to the radiator. ZIFF enters smiling.)

DEEDLE

Who was it?

ZIFF

(Almost singing.)

Guess whooo?

DEEDLE

My David?

ZIFF

I told you he was with Judy.

DEEDLE

Maybe it's Judy.

ZIFF

She's probably with David.

DEEDLE

Then who is it?

ZIFF

Alright, alright. I'll give you one clue, not that you ever gave me one. You sister, Sophie.

DEEDLE

My Sophie?!

(ZIFF opens door and helps SOPHIE carry in grandfather clock.)

SOPHIE

(Kisses DEEDLE.)

Happy anniversary and many more to come. So where are you going to put it?

DEEDLE

(Looks around and then walks to the wall next to the radiator.)

Right over here.

ZIFF carries grandfather clock and places it near radiator without noticing the pouch. HE returns to DEEDLE and SOPHIE and THEY admire it.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

Thank you my darling sister. I always loved that clock.

(SOPHIE nods understanding.)

ZIFF

It's perfect. I'm telling you that Deedle has some eye.

DEEDLE

Maybe it should be a little closer to the radiator?

ZIFF

(MOVES clock and still does not notice the pouch.)

Your wish is my command... How's that?

SOPHIE

Maybe another inch or two?

DEEDLE

I think you're right, two inches.

ZIFF

(Goes to clock. As he's moving clock the phone rings.)
What is this a conspiracy? Would you please answer it, Sweetheart? I'm a little busy right now.

SOPHIE

Nothing; no running, no Dr. Ziff will return your call as soon as possible, *gornisht*. From now on, your beeping days are over.

(The phone rings.)

DEEDLE

Wait, I'm going to beep for the last time.

(Into phone - High, slurs words.)

This is-- Ziffy's, office... At the sound of the beep-beep, please beep. MENDY! How did you know it was me?... You recognized my beep... Yes, forty more would be wonderful, just wonderful. How nice of you to remember...

(MENDY enters talking on cellular phone, holding two bouquets of flowers.)

MENDY

I'll be up in a second to pay off my best friend.

DEEDLE

You'll be up in a second to payoff your best friend? Mendy, you're actually here.

(MENDY goes to give flowers to SOPHIE, who turns away, so, he catches himself and gives them both to DEEDLE.)

MENDY

Bet you thought I forgot your anniversary.

(DEEDLE awkwardly takes flowers. MENDY goes to kiss DEEDLE but ZIFF steps in front and HE accidentally kisses ZIFF.)

ZIFF

Would you forget?

MENDY

Anyway, before I go back to the coast, I just had to give my oldest and best friend the great news. Thanks to you, Oni's singing up a storm again; sounds better than ever and he's raring to go.

DEEDLE

We know, he sounds wonderful.

ZIFF

Beautiful. And Mendy, how'd you'd like some caviar. We're celebrating, you know.

MENDY

(Looks at Sophie.)

Caviar, really...? I could've had someone better than caviar, but I was a schmuck. Any way, remember when I said, "Anything for a best friend?" ...Well, here it is, brother. Opening night,

(Looks at SOPHIE.)

fifth row center. Now, we are even-steven, partner. On second thought, I almost forgot about you, Sophie. Make that three seats.

SOPHIE

Don't bother. I already saw the show and I wasn't impressed.

(Diverting the hurt, MENDY turns and whispers to ZIFF, who responds, excitedly.)

MENDY

Impressed...? You'll all be impressed when I tell Ziffy who

(Whispers to Ziff.)

his next patient is...

DEEDLE

Who?

MENDY

He's been depressed since he started losing his hair, and he's gained an awful lot weight.

DEEDLE

Tell me who is it already.

MENDY

He doesn't think he's funny anymore and personally, neither do I.

DEEDLE

Are you going to tell me, or what?

MENDY

He needs your help and real fast. I made arrangements for you to treat him in the Beverly Hills Hotel this Monday at four. The honeymoon suite is yours and how does ten thou for the day sound? Plus expenses of course, and I figure at least ten or fifteen times year. The studios are

always having problems. Movie stars, they're all crazy. My driver will pick you up at nine A.M. sharp. And Deedle is more than welcome to join you pool side. I'll have two pina coladas waiting.

(ZIFF takes DEEDLE'S hand. MENDY is insecure.)

ZIFF

I don't think so Mendy.

MENDY

Why not?

ZIFF

We really don't like pina coladas, right honey? And I like helping people, here. Always have, always will.

(DEEDLE applauds.)

MENDY

Are you crazy? Have you forgotten already?!! All Charlie got was six lines in the post, Ziffy!... Why not? Tell me why not!

ZIFF

Too many earthquakes.

DEEDLE and SOPHIE

Earthquakes?

MENDY

(In disbelief.)

WHAT?!!!

ZIFF

They don't have earthquakes in the Bronx, Mendy. Never.

(DEEDLE and SOPHIE find "Too many earthquakes" to be terribly funny which, makes them laugh as THEY repeat, "They don't Have Earthquakes in the Bronx." There is lots of hilarity which adds to MENDY feeling defeated. ALL laugh and hug, echoing "They don't Have Earthquakes in the Bronx." Stage darkens and we see only ZIFF.)

ZIFF

(To audience- a little drunk)

Charley, my dear beloved best friend. I can still feel you here, right next to Deedle, because

(Hiccups, then touches heart.)

that's where you both belong; right here, forever, and I'm not letting either of you to go...

(Laughs - hiccups.)

Like it or not, drunk or not, and I do think I'm a little... you're staying right here, understand?

Thank God we did what we believed in, Charley. Do what you believe in and you'll never

(Laughs.)

regret a thing, because they don't have earthquakes in the Bronx-- Never.

(Curtain.)

THE END