



They Don't Have ***Earthquakes*** in the Bronx
(A serious comedy in Two Acts)
By
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They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

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.
- DEEDLY**.....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.

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ACT I

Scene 1

A couple of years ago.

Noon.

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 has a thick gray mustache, blue, buttoned sweater and is clutching a porcelain urn. The phone will ring throughout which HE will disregard. Whenever HE talks to CHARLEY the stage darkens and we hear "Kol Nidre" on a sad cello.

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.

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

You see all these wrinkles, Charley? I got so old lately... What 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.)

Except for you going bald, nothing ever changes, does it.

(Sings.)

"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 'Shiva' with you?

(Sits-gets up.)

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

I mean, you and Deedle looked as if your best friend died,

(Does soft shoe.)

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 you

(Laughs.)

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. Hmmm. 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

What do you mean, you'd rather not? Take it, he was your

(Tries push urn on Mendy)

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 all together.

(Forgets names.)

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 AN-Y-THING. Anything for a best friend. Name it and it's

(Looks at watch.)

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.

(exits)

I'm counting on you. I'm really counting on you... Later.

(Stage darkens and we see ZIFF, 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

a little later

DEEDLE and SOPHIE with suitcase enter and stare at ZIFF who, after staring at HIS reflection in frying pans, etc., examines HIS face, hands and especially mustache while clutching pouch. HE opens mouth to talk to pouch, but catches himself and shakes head, no, in response.

SOPHIE

(Talking to Ziff.)

Hello, Ziffy. Sorry about Charley. He was very special... I travel fifteen-hundred miles to pay my favorite brother-in-law a little respect and does he even give me a kiss? No-o-o.

ZIFF

(Remorseful.)

Hello Sophie.

(SOPHIE goes to KISS ZIFF, HE offers cheek. SOPHIE reacts. After a beat telephone rings. DEEDLE rushes into kitchen, on cue waving goodbye to ZIFF, SOPHIE follows. DEEDLE places clothes on chair and will ALWAYS answer in English accent.)

DEEDLE

(Into phone.)

Don't go anywhere, I'll be right back. At the sound of the beep, you will have thirty seconds, please speak distinctly and leave your name,...

(A despondent ZIFF waves goodbye to the air. Ashes spew as HE enters kitchen, sits on box and HE rests head on table. SOPHIE looks HIM.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

...telephone number and Dr. Ziff will return your call as soon as possible... Sometimes, a beep takes a long time...
Beep!

DEEDLE writes on pad. Clutching pouch, ZIFF will not respond.

SOPHIE

Deedle, ya know they have answering machines now-a-days. When are you going to stop? You've been beeping for thirty years. Enough with the beeping!... Hello Ziffy, remember me?

(ZIFF does not respond, DEEDLE returns to SOPHIE.)

SOPHIE (Cont'd)

DEEDLE, I remember exactly when I was here last, April 6th. It was very cold in Miami that week. With out me there, they sold 311 pairs of shoes. Maybe I should come to see you more often?

DEEDLE

I heard that story before, Sophie.

(Banging empty pipe, ZIFF removes HIS shoes and tosses them uncaringly as HE ambles.)

SOPHIE

Now I can see why you're going nuts. He used to be so neat. Everything had to be perfect.

DEEDLE

Now, look at him.

SOPHIE

Do I have to?

DEEDLE

YES!

SOPHIE

Did you see the big hello he gave me? What did I do? He was always so happy to see me.

DEEDLE

You know how much he loves you, Sophie.

(To Ziff.)

Are you looking for your slippers?...

(ZIFF grunts yes)

SOPHIE

...Better he should find his disposition.

DEEDLE

(To Ziff.)

Under the radiator in the living room.

(Ambling, ZIFF picks up frying pan and looks into it, as HE strokes HIS mustache. SOPHIE unwraps plate on table.)

SOPHIE

I'm famished, this smells "*delicious*."

DEEDLE

Everyone that's paid a *shiva* call, brought something. Roast CHICKEN, a little CHICKEN soup with MATZOH balls, CHICKEN fricassee, gedempt CHICKEN, CHICKEN salad, CHICKEN paprika, CHICKEN cacciatore, CHICKEN chow mein...

SOPHIE

...Don't tell me he started treating Frank Perdue?...

ZIFF

Not Frank Perdue, not even Colonel Sanders... Nobody big. Nobody.

DEEDLE

Ziffy, that was Mrs. Roselli on the phone. She's going to be a few minutes late. Why don't you get ready?

ZIFF

I don't want any patients. I have no patience for patients!
(Exits to bathroom.)

DEEDLE

He's so mixed up. My sweetheart is literally falling
(Whispers.)
apart... I heard him talking to Charley.

SOPHIE

Oh, don't be silly. He hasn't been a psychiatrist all these years for nothing. Ziffy's too smart to be talking to ghosts.

ZIFF

(From off stage screams,)

How can you say that Charley?"

DEEDLE

Did you hear him?

SOPHIE

No, only you heard him... I wonder what it means when you start talking to ghosts?

DEEDLE

Maybe he's tired of talking to me.

SOPHIE

(Laughs.)

I'm the only one that's tired of talking to you.

DEEDLE

Do you think he's talking to Charley because he's afraid of dying?

SOPHIE

He's not afraid of dying. He's just questioning his entire existence, that's all.

DEEDLE

Including me?

SOPHIE

Not you, not you and who's Mrs. Roselli?

DEEDLE

She said she absolutely had to see him. She's a patient that's been coming to him for at least 15 years.

SOPHIE

Treating the same person for 15 years. That's not saying too much for my favorite brother-in-law.

DEEDLE

Oh, stop with your favorite brother-in-law... What a week, since we're going to celebrate our fortieth, I made arrangements last week to have Ziffy's office redecorated and Charley dies. Nu?

SOPHIE

Poor Charley. he never had good timing. But don't change the

subject. Who's this Roselli and why has she been seeing your husband for so long?

DEEDLE

You should see her. She used to be some sex-pot, but she has luck I wouldn't wish on your worst enemy.

SOPHIE

Tell me more.

DEEDLE

I really shouldn't.

SOPHIE

But you will, won't you.

DEEDLE

Her new name she said was Mrs. Roselli. Must be at least two, two-and-a-half years since she was here. She's been married five or six times, who knows? She's a regular Zsa. Soon as I heard the desperation in her voice, I knew she needed an appointment.

SOPHIE

That *meshugeh*, huh?

DEEDLE

Oh, stop. I told him that she said it was an emergency, you know how dedicated he is. He's going to see her in the living room. She'll be here any second. Come, Sophie, we'll go to the store for a few things.

SOPHIE

I think I'd rather stay and watch him fall apart.

DEEDLE

Never mind, you're coming with me.

(ZIFF enters without mustache.)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

ZIFFY! YOU SHAVED YOUR MUSTACHE! YOU LOOK WONDERFUL! You look so young, so handsome.

SOPHIE

A regular Michael Douglas. You better be careful DEEDLE, every woman on the block is going to run after him. Especially that Roselli sex-pot.

DEEDLE

Oh, stop.

(Buzzer rings and DEEDLE answers it.)

DEEDLE

Who is it?

ROSELLI (o/s 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.

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

MRS. ROSELLI

Dr. Ziff, what happened to your stash? 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.

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

ROSELLI

So, I see you're getting your office redone. 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 goes to file cabinet, removes file and scans it.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

(Looks at note book.)

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

to get married to...

ROSELLI

(Smiles because Ziff remembers, then cries.)

Johnny.

ZIFF

Yes, Johnny C...

ROSELLI

NO, big Johnny R... I had two Johnnies in-a-row and neither of them were any 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, you should have cut that stash off years ago. 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 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 shiver on this box; which means I am in mourning.

ROSELLI

I got five dead husbands and he says he's in mourning.

ZIFF

After practicing in the Bronx for thirty five years,

(Holds pouch.)

these ashes are all that's left of my beset friend, Dr. Charles Green His ashes and six lines in the Post.

(sobs, holds two fingers together)

They were this big.

SOPHIE

I'm sorry, I don't read the Post. I didn't know Dr. Green 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... 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

You know, without your stash, you make feel a little

(Dreamy.)

horny. 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?

**(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?

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...! 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 you, you sexy devil. Let's make a little hootchy-cootchy and maybe

(Purses lips and wiggles tongue.)

I'll finally have a...

ZIFF

MARIA! You must stop this immediately!

ROSELLI

I can't...

ZIFF

You must!

ROSELLI

I don't want to.

(Wiggles tongue and sings.)

"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 you know 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, CHICKEN chow mein. 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 me a... muh.

ZIFF

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

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

You want a little Frank Perdue?

DEEDLE

(Smiles because she love her sister.)

Maybe later... Ziffy?

ZIFF

What do you what 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.)

All right, all right, 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. Hot flashes.

SOPHIE

FLASHES?! I get the flashes, but I don't go around flashing my buhbies, do I?

DEEDLE

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

SOPHIE

We were just talking about flashing buhbies 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 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...

(Phone rings and DEEDLE answers it.)

DEEDLE

(Into phone, accent.)

You have reached Dr. Ziff... At the sound of the beep, please leave your name and telephone number and Dr. Ziff will return your call as soon as possible... Beep...! Wait, Mendy, don't hang up.

(ZIFF raises head.)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

...Yes, I'm really talking to you... That's right, in a few days we'll be celebrating our fortieth anniversary... Thank you, Mendy, it was nice seeing you, too. Hold on, I'll get your oldest and best friend.

(ZIFF hurries to phone and appears very excited.)

ZIFF

MENDY?

DEEDLE

Sit down, I'll bring you some kuhgle.

SOPHIE

For your information, I didn't come here to eat kuhgle. And what is she, one of those flashers? Don't tell me you've let this go on between them for fifteen years?

DEEDLE

Oh, stop...

ZIFF

Ah, ha...!

SOPHIE

And why does "HE" keep calling? I don't understand. Doesn't Ziff remember he hasn't seen him in years. They're not friends anymore. No one's his friend.

ZIFF

You're a real friend, Mendy. Thank you.

(Hangs up, returns excitedly, puts pouch on table.)

You should have heard him. Soon as he gets back to the coast he promised to sprinkle Charley's ashes between Charley Chaplain and Charley McCarthy. Three Charleys. Together forever...

SOPHIE

Mark my words. Mendy, will throw his ashes in the garbage can, just like your friendship.

ZIFF

Remember when I told you about his new singer? The one he signed up in the cab? He needs me to help him, sweetheart. How could I say no, to my oldest and best friend? This could be the opportunity I've been waiting for.

DEEDLE

You see, I told you things would get better.

ZIFF

This Oni Romantica, uh, something, says he can't sing anymore. Something about bongos.

DEEDLE and SOPHIE

Bongos?

ZIFF

Yeah, Bongos! I haven't got much time. He has to go on tour next month with Gloria Esteban...

SOPHIE

That's Estefan.

ZIFF

Yeah, what ever. Suddenly I feel wonderful. They're coming to see me this afternoon. He also asked about you, Sophie.

SOPHIE

About me? You have to be kidding. Why would he still ask about me?

DEEDLE

They're coming this afternoon? Without an appointment? And I thought you said you were going to sit 'Shiva?'

ZIFF

At two o'clock, and you know what else Mendy said? He owes me one. Anything I want. For a best friend, AN-Y-THING. And as far as me sitting 'Shiva,' I'm sure Charley will forgive me.

(Lights dim and we see only Ziff.)

I can't tell you what this means to me Charley... Wait a minute, wait a minute. Just because Mendy-the-Manager promised me an-y-thing, doesn't mean you're not included... Of course when they give me my star on Hollywood and Vine, your name's going to be right next to mine. You had to ask? We're still partners... Don't worry, soon as I start treating those big movie stars and I become famous, they'll all believe me. And Deedle will learn to like pina coladas. She has too. She just has too. And what do you mean you don't think Deedle and Sophie believe me about Mrs. Roselli's flashes? Why shouldn't they believe me...?

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 2

They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

ACT I

Scene 3

Preoccupied with self, down-
stairs buzzer rings and ZIFF
buzzes back. Again we hear
steps, familiar rap on door
and MENDY opens it with Oni
trailing, doing soft-shoe.
MENDY is wearing sun glasses
and Hawaiian shirt.

MENDY

You're sure she won't be here, because, after all these years, I'm just not in the mood to say hello. I'm just not in the mood...

(Forgets all last nameF)

And it's time to meet my number one protégé, Oni Romantica, uh, ladada, dadada, dadada. Why this schmuck has so many names I'll never understand, GODDAMNIT! NEVER!

ZIFF

Pleas make your self comfortable on the sofa, Mr. Romantica, or do you prefer Oni? I am very anxious to help you with your temporary and I mean temporary dilemma.

MENDY

(Looking at food.)

No caviar...?

ZIFF

Er, Oni, I like Stevie Wonder, do you like Stevie Wonder?

(ONI nods yes vigorously.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

What about Billy Joel? He's still a good singer, isn't he?

(Again ONI nods yes vigorously)

MENDY

Er, Ziff, I hate to interrupt this tête-à-tête you got going here, but, er, how the hell does she look?

ZIFF

Obviously you are referring to...

MENDY

...Sophie. Only because I'm a little pissed about how you "Implied" that I still dig her. After all the broads That I made with, I just don't understand you and you're supposed to be a shrink?

ZIFF

That was now implication and yes, as you so rudely put it, I am a shrink.

MENDY

I think Charley's six lines effected you more than it did him, because you are out of your snap, Dr. Shrink! You, are absurd, and I couldn't give two shits about her, because for your information, I made it with, Sharon, and Michelle and Liz...

ZIFF

...Liz, shmiz. I don't care. You don't have the honesty, the integrity to admit that you were wrong leaving Sophie, and that's it!

MENDY

That's it shit! You remember how I begged her, pleaded with her to move to L.A. with me, but she wouldn't live with me unless we got married. Well, I wasn't going to let her con me into getting married, no way, 'cause I always do what I want, remember?

ZIFF

Mendy, what are you doing here? The reason Oni isn't talking is because you're not giving him a chance. You have to leave. This, is unheard of.

MENDY

(Angry.)

Mr. Romantica! I got you this appointment with a great doctor. I'm trying to help you, Goddamnit! So, say something! Talk to him!

(ONI nods no.)

MENDY (cont'd)

All you do is nod your head, yes and no! What the hell's the matter with you?! I have a couple of million bucks tied up in you, don't you understand?!

(ONI points to draped mirror. MENDY rests foot on wooden box.)

MENDY (cont'd)

He's playing twenty questions, nu? Does it have to do with the draped mirror?

(ONI nods yes.)

MENDY (cont'd)

The draped mirror bothers you, right?

(ONI nods yes.)

MENDY (cont'd)

I knew, it, I knew it, I knew it. He wants you to undrape it, Ziff. So what are you waiting for?

ZIFF

I can't and for your edification mister, I'm supposed to be sitting "Shiva" on this wooden box.

MENDY

(Removes foot from box.)

Oops...

ZIFF

..."Shiva" is a Jewish ritual for the deceased, Oni. I'm sorry we're up here wheres there no privacy, but unfortunately my office is being renovated. I suppose you know that everything you say will be held in the strictest of confidence, that is as soon as our mutual associate leaves.

MENDY

Oh, I get it, I understand. I'm outa here. Just help this kid sing for me and every major star on the planet is yours for the asking, Ziffy. Every one... Listen, I gotta run. Lunch at the Friars, Sinatra's room. Oni, tell him everything and fast. You got a photo session in an hour. The limo will be back to pick you

(To Ziff.)

up in one hour. And Ziff, do me a favor and stop with the Sophie bit, already. That was a million years ago. To tell you the

(Looks at watch.)
truth, I don't even remember what she looks like. My, how times
(Exits.)
flies when you're having a good time. I got to run. Ciao.

ZIFF

Mr. Romantica, have you ever visited a psychiatrist before?

(ONI nods yes.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

May I ask, how many times?

(ONI raises ten fingers.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

You've visited ten different psychiatrists?

(ONI nods yes.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

Extraordinary and you're so young.

(ONI nods yes.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

Would you like me to continue asking you questions?

(ONI nods no.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

I see... Do you have a mother and father?

(ONI nods so-so)

ZIFF (cont'd)

Does that mean you have a mother?

(ONI nods no.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

I'm sorry. What about your father? Would you prefer to speak about him?

(ONI waves later.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

Fine, we'll discuss your father later... Any sisters and brother?

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

ZIFF (cont'd)

You have three sister and two brothers?

(ONI nods no.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

Then you have three brothers and two sisters.

(ONI nods no.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

(Annoyed, hold up three and two fingers.)

Well then, what does this mean?

ONI

(Spanish accent.)

Fi sisters...

(Holds up three fingers on left hand.)

Tree older...

(Two fingers on right hand.)

...and two junger.

ZIFF

Any of your sisters have any talent like you?

ONI

My sister Carmen is a dancer and she would be real good too, but...

ZIFF

Please continue.

ONI

She has flat feet.

ZIFF

I can assure you that your sister Carmen's flat feet has nothing to do with your temporary and I mean temporary dilemma.

ONI

I mean she's a real good dancer and she was just about to make it too, but, when you least expect it, flat feet. It's always something, ain't it? She had to have flat feet.

ZIFF

Would you like to tell me why you are here?

(ONI nods yes.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

You may begin.

(After a beat, ONI gulps.)

ONI

I really don't understand, Doc. Soon as I start to sing, it feels like somebody's using my tonsils as bongos. I can't figure it out. It used to be the other way around. Because of my accent, whenever I tried to talk in school or in public, I was so embarrassed that I'd die. But singing always made me feel real good.

ZIFF

The way you sound, that is very understandable. I can see why you were happy when you sang.

(ONI nods yes and points to kitchen.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

And you want to be happy again and sing as soon as possible, don't you?

ONI

(Nods yes and points to draped mirror.)

Even though that thing gives me the creeps, it sure smells pretty good in here. You sure have a lot of food, amigo. Are you gonna have a party or something?

ZIFF

When you sit "Shiva," people come and pay their respect. Uncomfortable with death, they don't know what to say, so they bring food and stuff their mouths.

ONI

Hewish people are berry smart. Instead of carrying on like we do
(Spanish crying mantra.)

when somebody dies... Ju cover jour mirrors, ju sit on a box and have a feast. What a great idea. What do ju think? Maybe I should become Hewish like you and my manager?

ZIFF

I don't think so. We got enough "Tsores" with out you/ Now, would you like to continue?

ONI

Ju want me to start with my Poppi?

ZIFF

Poppi sound fine.

ONI

The day I was born, he told all his amigos that I was going to be the next Elvis. That's why I was Christened, Oni Romantica Jose Elvis Garcia.

ZIFF

Did you say Elvis?

ONI

Yeah, you see, Poppi had this grande visones that I was gonna make him rich. That's why he called me Elvis. Since I was his only son to carry on the Garcia name, he was determines that I would become rich and famous, because he always thought "He" should be rich and famous... Soon as I opened my mouth and went to el banyo, he made me sing. I guess that's the least I could have done for him, no? My Poppi is quite a guy., isn't he? When he heard I was a dribbing a cab, he wrote he was too embarrassed and he wouldn't tell his amigos until I make it. Only then should I write him... I wish I could his face when he reads that I'm going on tour with Gloria Estefan.

ZIFF

I hear she's quite famous.

ONI

She's berry famous and Mendy says I'm gonna be bery famous too.

ZIFF

I'm sure soon as you start to sing, you will become very famous, Oni, because if Mendy-the-manager says you got it, you got it.

ONI

Now, I don't want you to get the wrong impression about my Poppi. He just feels me, his only son and "him" deserve more. That's the reason he wants me to make it bery big.

ZIFF

Would you tell me what you were doing the moment before you lost your beautiful voice?

(ONI yes.)

ZIFF

Well, what are you waiting for?

ONI

I think it happened right after I ate Cheerios.

ZIFF

Cheerios, I see. Hmmmm.

ONI

Or maybe it was after I had Chinese. You know with those noodles and that hot mustard. I love Chinese.

ZIFF

Noodles and mustard. How interesting.

ONI

I saw Larry King on C.N.N.

ZIFF

Larry King... Extraordinary... Mmmm.

ONI

(Looks at watch.)

Now, I can't even sing in the chower. Bongos man, bongos. Look at time. The limo must be waiting for me. Dey gonna take my picture.

ZIFF

I can try and help you sing again, but I must see you as soon and as often as possible.

ONI

I know you gonna help me sing real soon, 'cause I wanna make it real bad. Yust when my sister Carmen was gonna make it... flat

feet. Ai Chihuahua, it's always something, ain't it. And even though I went to all those doctors, it's the first time I ever opened up and it felt muey bueno, Doc. I would love to see you tomorrow morning.

ZIFF

Wonderful. Tomorrow morning sounds just wonderful.

ONI

But I can't. How's about dinner thee day after?

ZIFF

I've never had a patient over for dinner before, but since you are a client of my best friend, I think I can make an exception.

ONI

(Does street handshake with Ziff.)

Muchas gracias amigo. I'll be here. You can count on it, 'cause I could us a little rice and beans. Yust remember, I don't like the rice too soft.

(There is a knock on door and DEEDLE enters carrying slippers. SOPHIE's with her.)

ZIFF

Come in...

DEEDLE

Oh, hello. I'm Dr. Ziff's assistant, Deedle.

ONI

Like Deedle Dee, Deedle dum? That's a mighty fine name; Deedle Dee, Deedle Dum. Sure sounds pretty. Like a little bird.

DEEDLE

Why thank you and this is my sister Sophie.

SOPHIE

What's the matter? Sophie's not good enough for you?

ONI

No, no senora. My tia's name is Sophie, only she's muey grande. Not like you. You are que linda.

SOPHIE

Well in that case, you can stay a while.

ONI

That's funny. The limo's waiting and I can stay awhile. See you

(Exits.)

for dinner el Doctor. *Hasta lluego.*

DEEDLE

So that's Mendy new rock star. To me he looks like a regular...

SOPHIE

...Elvis has left the building.

DEEDLE

Ziffy, are you hungry?

ZIFF

Hungry, hungry? What do you think I forgot?! You're the one that picked the Bronx and don't think I forgot! I could have been in Hollywood with Mendy and she picks the "Fa cockta" Bronx. Pina coladas, Deedle. Ina coladas...

SOPHIE

...What's all this B. S. about the Bronx and pina coladas?

ZIFF

(Fondles pouch.)

You wouldn't understand. No one does... Only Charley.

SOPHIE

Deedle, forget this yutz. We'll eat later. Get the Scrabble. After I straighten up we'll have a game... Hey gorgeous and I use that term quite loosely, how'd you like to join us?

ZIFF

I have no time for games. I'm a doctor, a dedicated psychiatrist like, Charley was.

SOPHIE

You better pull yourself together and fast, because you don't know what you're doing to my sister. Shit happens, so get over it. Now, up-'n-at-em! Hup, two, three, four! Hup, two, three, four!

(Marching to hup, two, three, four, DEEDLE brings dish to ZIFF, who clutches pouch, mouths Charley and catches himself.)

DEEDLE

(Sort of singing.)

I made Ziffy's favorite, 'stewed prunes' and I took out all the pits. Feh, ashes. Where ever I look, Charley's ashes.

SOPHIE

(Feigns tasting ashes.)

Is that what's all over this place? Hmmm, tastes just like pepper. Here, try it.

(DEEDLE pushes SOPHIE away.)

SOPHIE (cont'd)

Who told him to take Charley's ashes home anyway?

DEEDLE

Who else? Charley had no family. Besides, do you think he would have given them to Mendy?

SOPHIE

(Trying to remember.)

Mendy... Ya know it's been so long since I've seen that sonofabitches face I don't remember what he looks like. Tell me he's fat and wrinkled.

DEEDLE

(Remembering.)

Oy, what could have been, could have been.

SOPHIE

Coulda been, shmoulda been. Dumping him was the best thing that ever happened to me. Look, I'm rich, I still got my figure and men... need I say more?

ZIFF

(Clutches pouch, mouths Charley.)

At least my best friend Mendy made it big, but who will remember me?

DEEDLE

I will, sweetheart.

SOPHIE

She will, too. Some people never learn and what about that Roselli broad?

ZIFF

Roselli? What do you know about Mrs. Roselli?

SOPHIE

We know plenty. We ain't saying anything, but we know plenty.

ZIFF

Trying to find out why people in the Bronx are more depressed than anywhere else in the world, I've dedicated my entire life and who will know?

DEEDLE

I will darling.

ZIFF

Deedle, I'm so confused. I don't know what's happening to me. I shaved my mustache off because I thought it made me look old...

SOPHIE

...You still look old...

ZIFF

...I still look old. I've wasted my entire life, and I've always been in control. What's wrong with me? Doesn't anyone care?

DEEDLE

I care sweetheart, Sophie cares, your patients care.

ZIFF

Don't blame it on my patients! There's only one person to blame! You picked the Bronx! You picked the Bronx! You picked the Bronx! There, you are the original culprit!

DEEDLE

(Angry, face to face.)

How dare you call me a culprit?! For almost 40 years I've been your wife, secretary and personal answering machine, because you were too damn cheap to buy one and culprit is the thanks I get? You have the audacity to me a culprit?

ZIFF

Don't try to make up with me, it won't work.

DEEDLE

Don't worry, I won't!

ZIFF

Sweetheart, please listen to me. Mendy knows a big developer.

SOPHIE

Is that what they call "*Them*" these days, "*Developers*?"

ZIFF

He says he could get us a fortune for this old house. Let's get rid of it and move to L.A> Let's start over again. What do you say, honey? They say they have a million movie stars and says they're all a little "meshugeh." What are we waiting for? Stars Deedle. Just a few stars, is that asking so much?

DEEDLE

You mean like Cary Grant?

ZIFF

Exactly.

DEEDLE

And Billy Crystal?

ZIFF

He would be perfect, just perfect.

DEEDLE

And what about Mel Brooks?

ZIFF

The greatest of them all? I'd give anything to treat that "*Meshugeneh*."

DEEDLE

And what about your favorite, Goldie Hawn?

ZIFF

I love her. You know I love her. Why are you torturing me like this...? Can we go see Goldie, sweetheart? I'm begging you. Let's sell this "*fahschtunkeneh*" house.

DEEDLE

You want me to sell my house because Mendy-the-manager told you. And if he told you to jump off the roof, would you do it too?

SOPHIE

And since when did you start believing anything he says?

ZIFF

Mendy says I could be treating movie stars. Think about it, sweetheart. Sitting, around our pool sipping pina coladas. Pina coladas Deedle, pina coladas, and palm trees, darling. When was the last time you saw palm trees?

SOPHIE

When she visited me last year and for your information, my sister hates pina coladas and so do I.

ZIFF

I'm almost there Deedle. Don't you think I deserve more than six lines in the Post? And you could hardly see them. They were

(Shows closed fingers.)

this big.

DEEDLE

I promise you more than six lines. More than six lines and

(Spreads arms.)

they'll be this big!

SOPHIE

Stop with the six lines already. I'm getting a headache from your six lines.

ZIFF

And so the dedicated Dr. Ziff remains anonymous. On my tombstone, make sure it says, "All he needed was a few stars."

SOPHIE

Enough with the stars, too. If you want stars, spend a buck cheapskate and visit the planetarium. They got a million stars for nuts like you. I promise.

DEEDLE

All of a sudden you want to go to Hollywood, you want movie stars? Have you forgotten the reason why you set up your practice in the Bronx? You wanted to help poor under-privileged people.

(Becomes melancholy.)

In those days, becoming famous was the last thing on your mind. You were so dedicated and I couldn't have been more proud of you. And what was so bad? We were both born in the Bronx, weren't we? The Grand Concourse was so beautiful. Trees, lovely homes, a grocery store on every other block and the finest schools... Who knew I couldn't have children? I'm so sorry...

SOPHIE

Again with the children? That's yesterday's newspaper. I'm more interested in... what's her name again?

(BUZZER sounds and DEEDLE answers it.)

DEEDLE

(Catches herself and laughs.)

At the sound of the... who is it?

ROSELLI (o/s)

It's me, Mrs. Roselli and I have to see Dr. Ziff, so let me in.

SOPHIE

Speaking of the devil.

DEEDLE

(Buzzes her in.)

Mrs. er... I don't believe you have an appointment, but alright, come up.

SOPHIE

Does she have timing, or does she have timing?

ROSELLI

(Knocks and enters in a huff.)

The names Roselli, Deedle and I'm sorry about the intrusion but, I got problems, lots of problems.

SOPHIE

(Sside.)

Tell me something I don't know.

DEEDLE

I'm sorry you have problems, but Dr. Ziff is not available.

ZIFF

It's okay, Deedle. I'll see her.

DEEDLE

Really. Come Sophie, I think it's getting a little stuffy in here. Besides, I believe Dr. Ziff would like some privacy.

SOPHIE

Shall we go?

DEEDLE

I thought you'd never ask.

(SOPHIE and DEEDLE exit)

ZIFF

I don't believe it, but I don't know where I out Charley?

ROSELLI

When the hell is you office going to be finished? I want some privacy. That's what I'm paying for, ain't it?

ZIFF

(Annoyed.)

Two sessions in one day? This is quite unusual. The only reason I am allowing you to stay is you seemed quite disturbed this morning, but I want you to understand Mrs. Roselli, I do not want

(sad, doubts self)

a repeat of your last performance. I am in morning... Perhaps I am not the right doctor for you. As you are aware, I've never been able to really help you.

ROSELLI

Well. you may have failed in the past, but you better help me get through this Sunday.

ZIFF

Sunday? What are you doing this Sunday?

ROSELLI

What all good little Catholic girls do. I'm getting married. Again, can you believe it, again.

ZIFF

You've decided to get married since this morning. Mrs. Roselli, Maria, think about it. Is that what you really want to do?

ROSELLI

(Desperate, she sobs.)

Remember when I told you about my father? How I used to love him more than anything... When I was little girl he used to take me to the zoo and laugh, when he said I was the prettiest swan in the whole world. I was this fat blimp but he still said I looked like a swan... He called me his princess. Nobody ever made me feel like that.

ZIFF

Mrs. Roselli, this morning you said a word. I need to ask you about it. What is it?

ROSELLI

What's what?

ZIFF

What's A...?

ROSELLI

A...?

ZIFF

A... muh?

ROSELLI

A... muh?

ZIFF

Go on, go on. A... muh...

ROSELLI

(Coy.)

You know.

ZIFF

I don't know, but I assure you that it is very important that I do know. Now what is a muh?

ROSELLI

A... muhzi. A muhzi.

ZIFF

A... muhzi. Very interesting. What's a muhzi.

ROSELLI

(Coy.)

You know... It's another word for... orgaaa.

ZIFF

Say it, Maria! You must say it!

ROSELLI

It's an orgaaa... an orgaaa... Orgasm! I never had an orgasm!
(Dreamy.)

ORGASM, ORGASM! All right, are you happy now?! Orgasm... Even though I never had one, I like the way it sounds... Yeah, orgasm.

ZIFF

I've treated countless women who have never had an orgasm.

ROSELLI

You have?

ZIFF

In the Bronx it'd quite common.

ROSELLI

Even Haley's comet "Comes" once every 76 years. What about me?

ZIFF

There are tens of millions of women that have never had an orgasm. The next time you make love, stop trying to have a muhzhhi. Don't think about it. Just be in the moment and enjoy it.

(ROSELLI touches ZIFF'S face endearingly.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

I can't tell you how sorry I am. All these years I didn't know about muhzhhi. I thought death was what was troubling you... I've been trying to show that death is normal... You are going to die and one day, unfortunately, so will I.

(Saddened, ZIFF is motionless as MRS. ROSELLI nears HIM.)

ROSELLI

No, I don't want you to die. Angelo, Carmine, Murray, Johnny C., Johnny R... All my husbands died, but you can't. You can't leave me too.

(O/S WE hear DEEDLE and SOPHIE.)

DEEDLE (o/s)

I wonder if Dr. Ziff is still working?

(Compassionate, MRS. ROSELLI innocently kisses ZIFF just as DEEDLE opens door and sees kiss. Before SOPHIE can see what has happened, DEEDLE slams door)

DEEDLE (o/s)

Oy...! I see Dr. Ziff is still busy. We'll come back later.

(WE hear Kol Nidre as spot light ZIFF.)

ZIFF

Is that what mankind has been reduced to, having a muhzi?
And if you don't have a muhzi, 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 Act I

They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 1

6:30 P.M. same day

SOPHIE is setting table and
DEEDLE is near stove.
ZIFF is wearing Hawaiian shirt
and pacing. Less ashes drip.
There is a knock and DEEDLE opens
door and finds ONI with suitcase.

SOPHIE

First his mustache and now a Hawaiian shirt. What's next, he'll
change his name to Mendy?

DEEDLE

I'm asking you.

(Buzzer sounds and DEEDLE answers it.)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

Who is it?

ONI (o/s)

It's Oni.

(DEEDLE buzzes him in. After a beat HE enters.)

DEEDLE

Why hello, Oni. How nice to see you.

ONI

Hello Deedle dee, Deedle dum. I just love your name. Que
linda.

ZIFF

I see you have your suitcase. Any particular reason?

ONI

Mendy told me to pack my suitcase, 'cause I'm moving in with
you. He says he doesn't want to have anything to do with me
until I start singing again. So, I guess it's up to you how

long I stay amigo.

SOPHIE

Typical. That sonofabitch pawned Oni off on you.

DEEDLE

I'm sure Mendy's not serious about Oni living with us. He probably had to leave town for a few days. I'm sure he'll be back, because Oni Romantica is his number one protégé, aren't you, buhbaleh?.

ONI

I don't think I'm numero uno any more. This time he was really P.O.'d.

DEEDLE

Never mind. If you have to stay with us for a few days, nu, it could be worse.

ZIFF

Absolutely not! A patient does not move in with his doctor!

DEEDLE

This is still my house too, remember?!

SOPHIE

I'm glad I'm going home in a couple of days. No offense, Oni.

DEEDLE

Are you hungry?

ZIFF

I'm starving.

DEEDLE

Not you.

ZIFF

Did you buy the rice and beans?

DEEDLE

What do you need rice and beans for? We have so much food.

ZIFF

No? How can you say no? Oni wanted rice and beans and not too soft. Didn't you hear what I just said? And not too soft.

(ZIFF and DEEDLE face to face)

DEEDLE

I'm not listening to you anymore, TOO!.

ZIFF

Anything else you're not going to do any more, TOO?

DEEDLE

I'll tell you what else I'm NOT going to do, TOO; I'm not going to dust, I'm not going to sweep, I'm not going to shop anymore for your lean corned beef, your salt free rye bread, sugar free candy, and "your" special double edged razor blades! And from now on you'll have to find your own slippers which reminds me, if you want tobacco, you know where the store is and you can forget the Epsom salt for your sick feet, TOO.

ZIFF

Not my feet too-oo.

DEEDLE

Right now, I hate you and your rotten feet.

ONI

(Touches feet.)

I got flat feet too. Yust like my sister.

DEEDLE

Not your feet Oni. You have lovely feet, and a lovely smile. Are you hungry?

(ONI rubs stomach.)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

Would you like some chicken soup with matzo balls? I made them myself.

ONI

Matzoh balls? No thank you. I'm a vegetarian.

DEEDLE

(Laughs.)

Vegetarian? Oh, you're so funny... Come, try it, you'll love it. Or, how about some gefilte fish?

ONI

I think I'd rather have the matzo balls.

ZIFF

Leave him alone with matzo balls. Matzoh balls... Better he should sing. He has some beautiful voice.

ONI

How do you know?

ZIFF

Mendy told me.

SOPHIE

Mendy told him. Did you hear that, Deedle, Mendy told him.

DEEDLE

I'd love to hear him sing. Wouldn't you, Sophie?

ONI

You know, if I would sing for anybody, it would be for you, Deedle dee, Deedle dum and you Dr. Ziff. See, you're not the first shrink Mendy brought me to. He took me to see the best. Fifth Avenue, Beverly Hills He says he spent over a hundred grand on doctors and, I still can't do it, I can't sing. Mendy says there's no more shrinks left, but, you really care...you're the first one that had me over for dinner... I guess you're my last hope doc, my last hope.

ZIFF

I'm not your last hope, but I will try and help you sing again.

DEEDLE

Dr. Ziff's a wonderful doctor...

ONI

I know, I know. Don't you see Doc.? I really need you, because I know you can help me sing again.

SOPHIE

You really think so, huh?

ONI

Muchas gracias for letting me stay, Deedle Dee, Deedle Dum. Muchas Gracias.

DEEDLE

Come, Sophie, let's go to the grocery store.

SOPHIE

What do you need in the grocery store?

DEEDLE

(Whispers to Sophie.)

Rice and beans.

(THEY start to exit.)

ZIFF

AND DON'T FORGET THE RICE AND BEANS!

SOPHIE

What is he a mind reader?

DEEDLE

(Whispers to Oni.)

That's not the only thing he is. You stay and talk to Dr. Ziff, sweetheart.

(THEY exit. ZIFF, holding pouch that will drip less ashes is looking for slippers.)

ZIFF

(Looking at notes.)

So, you told me you lost your voice when you were eating Cheerios.

ONI

I don't remember.

ZIFF

Would you tell me what you do remember?

ONI

I remember a...

ZIFF

A...?

ONI

A... muh...

ZIFF

A... muh? What's a muh?

ONI

A museum.

ZIFF

A museum... Very interesting.

ONI

When I was about twelve, my Poppi took me to the museum to see the dinosaurs.

ZIFF

Did you like them?

ONI

Not really.

(Buzzer sounds and ZIFF buzzes back. After a beat, MENDY enters.)

MENDY

She's not here, right?

ZIFF

She just left...

MENDY

(To Oni.)

Thank God. The reason I came by was to give you this letter. I accidentally opened up, but who can understand it. Here, knock yourself out.

(ONI takes and opens letter.)

MENDY (cont'd)

Ziff, I brought him here so you would help him sing again. I sure hope that means he's singing again. Well, is he? You're my last hope, boichic.

ONI

(Reads letter and cries out in Spanish.)

A yude me, Jesus! A yude me! etc...

MENDY

Don't play games with me Ziffy. What's going on with my number one protégé? Why doesn't he just hum a few bars for me? HUM, GODDAMNIT, HUM!

(ONI cries out and runs off.)

MENDY (cont'd)

Would you please tell me what just happened? Why did he run away? Ziff, I got a couple of million bucks tied up in that kid. What should I do? Ziffy! Caviar! This kid's my caviar.

ZIFF

Unfortunately, we can't do anything... These things take time.

MENDY

Time...? Time? I have no time. The tour's starting in a couple of weeks. I need him, Ziff... I really need HER!

ZIFF

...HER!?

MENDY

Her? What her? I didn't say her... I said him.

ZIFF

Him? You didn't say him. I distinctly heard you say, her.

MENDY

You did not hear, 'Her.' Him, her... what's the difference?

ZIFF

Very interesting...

MENDY

What's very interesting?

ZIFF

You, and Sophie.

MENDY

You, my good man are out of your snap.

ZIFF

Oy, what coulda been, shoulda been.

MENDY

(Remembers.)

Coulda been, shmoulda been... We sure used to have good times together, didn't we? It's funny, for some strange reason, I feel sort of nostalgic. Remember when we all used to go to beach ten at Orchard Beach? You used to bring the salami

sandwiches and those Kosher pickles. Thank God your father owned that Kosher deli or we would all have starved to death. Your father was quite a guy, it was your mother that I wasn't too crazy about. She sure was tough.

ZIFF

Joe Louis wouldn't fight her... And Charley would bring his portable radio and a few beers. We'd all Lindy, Deedle, Sophie, Charley...

MENDY

Charley, that poor bastard... And what did I bring? Don't tell me you forgot? Sunflower seeds, halvah, Tootsie rolls. Boy, Sophie sure liked my Tootsie roll, didn't she?

ZIFF

So, why don't you talk to her. What are you waiting for... 'til it's too late?

MENDY

(Looks at watch.)

I gotta fly, partner. But if it makes you feel any better, say hello to Sophie for me. Give her my best.

(MENDY exits as stage darkens.)

ZIFF

Can you believe it, Charley? Mendy says 'her' and he says he said 'He.' I think he still loves her but won't admit it. I think he still loves her... Of course I love Deedle. Why shouldn't I admit it? But I'm not sure how much she loves me. She's still ignoring me... Why...? Why, why, why? I told you ten times already. I don't know why she stopped talking to me. Maybe she doesn't want me to become famous.? Who knows? Maybe she's jealous and maybe you're jealous. What's the matter, afraid I'm going to get more than six lines in the Post? I can assure you, when I go, I'll get a full page in the Times. And just when I'm about to start a whole new career, everybody deserts me. Even you... Why, why, why? Again with the whys? Listen Charley, friends or no friend. When you calm down, we'll

(Walks away then returns.)

talk. Can you imagine, Charley? Mendy drops off Oni at our door like an abandoned child. He must feel terribly alone... You think I can help him, Charley? If I can only get him to sing, I'd become the most successful psychiatrist in Beverly Hills... Psychiatrist to the stars, and then I'll build the Charles Green Foundation. That's what I like about you,

Charley, you always give me such confidence.

(Lights.)

End of Scene 1

They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 2

Late at night.
Two days later

DEEDLE and SOPHIE, wearing bathrobes, enter living room, which is in a mess.

DEEDLE

(Upset.)

Look at what they did!

SOPHIE

(Sarcastic.)

Beautiful. Another two days and it will...

(holds hand above HER head)

...be up to here. Then, maybe you'll come to your senses.

(Pleads.)

Come home with me. Right now you need that Romantica, like a hole in the head. What's the matter, you don't like palm trees, you don't like to look at the ocean anymore? You always said

(SOPHIE rubs HER spine.)

it was your ocean.

DEEDLE

Your back still hurts?

SOPHIE

Why didn't you make him eat in the cafeteria?... Tomorrow's the last day of shiva. What other excuse are you going to give yourself, then? Nu, should I make reservations?

DEEDLE

(Remorseful.)

Sophie, he doesn't know what he's doing, or else he wouldn't have...

SOPHIE

Does he have to hit you over the head before you wake up? Did he even ask why you slept in my room? To explain, to apologize? Should I start packing?

DEEDLE

It's the first time we haven't slept together.

SOPHIE

You think he's any different than Mendy was?

DEEDLE

Mendy? How can you compare my Ziffy to Mendy?

(There is silence.)

SOPHIE

Can you imagine? After all these years, he asked about me?

DEEDLE

(Knowing her sister.)

I couldn't believe it myself-- neither could Ziffy.

SOPHIE

(Recalling love affair with Mendy. Dreamy.)

There was a time, when he used to bring me flowers everyday. When he used to sing to me and we danced all the time. I was the only thing that mattered, remember?

DEEDLE

Do I.

SOPHIE

That's when I loved him more, and I trusted him more, and I wanted him more... When he left me. It killed me in more ways

(Almost sobs but catches HERSELF.)

than one... And now, I wouldn't even take the time to spit on him, although, just out of curiosity, I'd like to show him what

(Shakes hips.)

he missed out on.

DEEDLE

You'd show him alright. You look beautiful.

SOPHIE

Go on, you're just saying that because you love me.

DEEDLE

Do I... I can't believe he would do such a thing... And just before our fortieth anniversary.

(Very emotional.)

Forty years is almost forever, isn't it?

SOPHIE

You think he'll remember your anniversary, when he hasn't even remembered to say he's sorry? None of them ever say they're sorry.

DEEDLE

There's NOTHING to be sorry about?

SOPHIE

Is that why you closed the door in my face, so we wouldn't see "NO-THING?" When are you going to stop being Miss Goody-Two-Shoes? And what about that Oni guy moving in? Isn't this still your home? Your husband's making you sneak around your own home. And you want me to believe that SHE was sitting shiva on his lap?

DEEDLE

I'm sure I made a mistake. I didn't see anything. Nothing happened, absolutely nothing.

SOPHIE

Nothing huh? You said you saw Ziff and that spider woman kissing and that's nothing huh?

(DEEDLE makes hands to forget it.)

SOPHIE

A psychiatrists suddenly goes around talking to Charley's ashes and I suppose that's nothing huh? Well I call your nothing, ridiculous. Everything, all of you.

DEEDLE

Why, because Ziffy wants to make a change, it's ridiculous? What's ridiculous is not getting married and having a family.

SOPHIE

Family? I never wanted to have kids, that was you, remember? So, would you please tell me what you're talking about?

DEEDLE

Well, at least I have a husband.

SOPHIE

Well, don't be too sure..

(After beat.)

DEEDLE

Oh, Sophie, I'm so sorry. I'm just upset about Ziffy, that's all.

SOPHIE

(cries and laughs)

It's all right just don't start with the family bit, again.

DEEDLE

It's just that I couldn't and I always hoped that you would...

SOPHIE

It's alright, Dee... After Mendy, I just couldn't bear the thought of settling down and having a family with anyone.

DEEDLE

Not even with Charley.

(SOPHIE sadly shakes head, no.)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

He always wanted you...

SOPHIE

Don't I know.

DEEDLE

So, why...?

SOPHIE

No chemistry.

DEEDLE

Oh, Sophie.

(THEY embrace as buzzer sounds)

DEEDLE (cont'd)

It's two o'clock in the morning. Who could that be?

(Answers buzzer.)

Who is it?

ONI (o/s)

It's me, Oni.

DEEDLE

Oh, it's Oni. Come up sweetheart, come up.

ONI

(Enters.)

Hello, Deedle dee and hello Sophie. I'm sorry if I woke you. I had no place else to go.

SOPHIE

You didn't wake us, we were up.

DEEDLE

Where were you? I hear Dr. Ziff was worried about you. We all were.

ONI

I guess too much on my mind.

SOPHIE

Want to tell us about it?

ONI

I really don't understand it and it seems nobody else does either. I've been to a million shrinks and... This is my big opportunity and... How could this happen. How could this happen to me? I can't sing, I can't sing...

DEEDLE

You poor thing. You poor, poor thing. You'll sing. I promise.

SOPHIE

You'll sing, and you'll survive. We all do.

DEEDLE

Could I interest you in some chopped liver?

ONI

No, but I wouldn't mind some more matzo balls. They were really 'delicioso.' You know, Deedle Dee, Deedle Dum, you remind so much of my mother. She tried to feed me all the time, too. She was a wonderful lady, yust like you.

SOPHIE

Hey, Deedle, I think I'm beginning to like this kid.

ONI

Jou mean you're not sure?

DEEDLE

Would like to tell us about your mother?

ONI

She was the nicest person I ever met. Everybody loved her. When I was a little bambino, she used to sing to me all the time.

SOPHIE

I guess that's why you became a singer, isn't it?

ONI

When she got sick, the only thing that made her feel better was when I sang to her... She would have been proud of me... So proud.

DEEDLE

I'm sure Dr. Ziff will help you sing very soon.

SOPHIE

It might take you fifteen years, but don't worry kid, you'll sing... And if I was you, I'd watch my back. You'll sing and Mendy will have it for lunch.

DEEDLE

Soon as Oni starts to sing again, I'm sure Mendy will help him become very successful. He does it for everybody.

SOPHIE

Successful maybe, but happy?

ONI

Maybe being happy is up to me.

SOPHIE

It always is, kid. Take it from someone that knows.

DEEDLE

You can say that again.

SOPHIE

Listen, it's very late.

DEEDLE

I am a little tired myself. Maybe we should all go to bed? Well, good night, Oni.

SOPHIE

Nighty night, kid.

ONI

(starts to exit)

Good night Deedle dee and good night Sophie. Muchas gracias for listening to me...

DEEDLE

Aren't you going to go to sleep?

ONI

No, I think I want to think awhile.

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 2

They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 3

The following day.

ZIFF is wearing Hawaiian shirt and sun glasses, and stares out living room window. As he examines self for wrinkles. HE pounds his empty his pipe and mutters. Buzzer sounds as ONI enters.

ONI

You gonna get that buzzer or what?

ZIFF

Where were you last night? Where were you?

ONI

I was dribbling my cab around. Wow, you wouldn't believe the things I saw. And you won't believe what my Poppi wrote.

(Waves letter.)

I can't believe he don't love me no more. He don't love me no more.

ZIFF

I'm sure he still loves you. Perhaps you'd like to talk about it?

(Buzzer sounds and ZIFF buzzes back. After a beat MRS. ROSELLI enters before ZIFF can open door.)

MRS. ROSELLI

(Concerned.)

Excuse the interruption Dr. Ziff, but, I have to see you about this Sunday.

ZIFF

Mrs. Roselli, as you can see I am busy.

ROSELLI

Please. Pretty please.

ZIFF

I'm sorry, but I'm with another patient. You'll have to leave. Please call Deedle for an appointment.

MRS. ROSELLI

Absolutely not.

ONI

I gotta get going, so why don't you let her stay?

MRS. ROSELLI

Thanks a lot, kid.

ONI

Denada. My name's Oni Romantica Jose Elvis Garcia.

MRS. ROSELLI

Did you say Elvis? He was my secret muhzh. My name's Maria Dambrisi, Marino, Slimowitz, Carlucci, Roselli. Five dead husbands and none of them were any damn good.

ONI

(Waves letter.)

Dr. Ziff. Remember my sister Carmen?

ZIFF

That great dancer with the flat feet.

ROSELLI

Flat feet?

ONI

...Yeah, she gonna be rich too. She's getting married to Juan Miguel Jose Roberto Luiz Alfredo Rivera, next week.

MRS. ROSELLI

All at the same time? Too bad I never thought of that.

ZIFF

Congratulations.

ONI

Juan Miguel happens to own the largest hotel in San Turce, and he just gave Popi and my sisters two suites for life.

MRS. ROSELLI

Sweets for life. Mmmm... How sweet.

ONI

I know, now Popi says that he loves Juan Miguel Roberto
(sad)

Luiz Alfredo Rivera as much, as if he were his own son. I
thought I was his only son. I'm telling you, he don't love me
no more. He don't love me.

ZIFF

You can love more than one son at the same time, Oni.

ONI

Now, all of a sudden Popi says, it's okay with him if I spend
the rest of my life dribing a cab. You see, he don't love me no
more. He don't love me.

ZIFF

Do you really want to spend the rest of your life driving a cab?

MRS. ROSELLI

Just, look outside kid. Cab drivers are a dime a dozen, but you
can sing and that makes you different.

ZIFF

That's right. You're a gifted singer with a beautiful voice,
and you were born to sing. So, sing. Let me hear your
beautiful voice. Just one time. Please.

MRS. ROSELLI

Do you really have a beautiful voice?

(ONI nods yes.)

MRS. ROSELLI

Go on, I don't believe it.

(ONI nods yes, vigorously.)

ZIFF

He's as good as Elvis.

(ONI nods yes, excitedly.)

MRS. ROSELLI

YOU'RE KIDDING! I love Elvis. I just saw him. Do it for me,
kid. I know you can do it.

ZIFF

Being a singer, fame, it's what you've always wanted, isn't
(Has understanding.)

it?... Or do you think that's what your Poppi always wanted?...
 Is that it?... You want your Poppi to love you, whether or not
 you become a famous singer. That's it, isn't it?

(ONI whimpers.)

ZIFF (cont'd)

I assure you, your Poppi loves you, and you won't be fulfilling
 his vision if you sing and become famous, only your own. What
 ever you do now, is for yourself, not Poppi. Don't you really
 want to be happy? So sing, sing.

MRS. ROSELLI

(Sings.)

"You ain't nothing but a hound dog, cryin' all the time."

MRS. ROSELLI

*"You ain't nothin' but a hound
 dog, cryin' all the time.
 Well, you ain't never caught
 a rabbit, you ain't no
 friend of mine."*

ZIFF

(sings scales)

Do...

Re...

Me...

Fa... Sol... La

(ONI is bursting until he finally sings.)

*"Let's rock, ev'rybody let's rock. Ev'rybody in the whole cell
 block, was dancin' to the Jail House Rock."*

(ALL hug, then ONI reads letter.)

ONI (Cont'd)

(shows letter)

Hey, it says my kid sister is getting married this Sunday. I
 better get moving. I gotta make reservations.

**(HE shakes ZIFF's hand and kisses MRS.
 ROSELLI and starts to exit.)**

ONI (Cont'd)

Thanks for everything Doc, and especially you, Mrs. Roselli.

(Kisses her hand, laughs and opens door. Exits.)

I'll never forget you. Muchas gracias, amigos and Zai gezunt.

ZIFF

(Remorseful because Oni left him.)

It looks like Elvis has left me flat...

MRS. ROSELLI

(Seeing Ziff help Oni has elated Roselli.)

That was great Dr. Ziff.

ZIFF

What's so great?

MRS. ROSELLI

You, the way you helped that kid. Besides being my favorite doctor, I think you're quite a guy.

ZIFF

Thank you Maria, I think you're quite special yourself.

MRS. ROSELLI

(Happily surprised.)

Ya really think so, huh?

ZIFF

You must always remember, married or not, you are still a warm, intelligent human being;

ROSELLI

Now, I know I like you.

ZIFF

Unfortunately, you've had a penis fixation...

MRS. ROSELLI

(dreamy)

...PENIS FIXATION? "*Penis fixation.*" Yeah, I like the way it sounds. "*Penis fixation.*" Yeah.

ZIFF

Maria, perhaps one day you will discover that marriage in it's self, may not be the answer. But perhaps liking and trusting yourself is.

MRS. ROSELLI

(Has revelation.)

Thanks to you, I just figured it out... What a strunz. Tens of millions of chicks never had a muhzhi and they make it, right Doc.? It's not the end of the world. Ya know my wedding this

Sunday? Forget it. Suddenly, I don't wanna get married. Who the hell needs it? Dancing. The Mambo. Yeah, I'm gonna MAMBO

(Sings.)

tonight. "Hey mambo, mambo Italiano. Go, go, go..." Hate to
(Exits, dancing and singing.)
run, but this girl doesn't mambo everyday, you know.

ZIFF

Let 'em go, let 'em all go... You don't have to rub it in, Charley. Of course I miss Deedle, but I wouldn't tell her... You think I should?... I know how I feel, don't I? I know how I feel. And I've become so absent minded. I don't even remember where I put you, Charley... With out you, I'm all alone...

(SOPHIE enters.)

ZIFF

SHE sent you, didn't she?

SOPHIE

Deedle's taking a nap. She doesn't know I'm here.

ZIFF

Then, what are you doing here?

SOPHIE

All she does is stare out the window.

ZIFF

Then let her stare. She said she doesn't want to do anything for me, soon, she won't have to. And did I bother her, did I ask her for anything? What does she want from me?

SOPHIE

Try honesty.

(ZIFF looks around for pouch.)

ZIFF

When I lost Charley, I lost everything.

SOPHIE

Charley's gone and if you're not careful you'll lose the best friend you ever had; my sister.

ZIFF

(Sad.)

She left me.

SOPHIE

You made her leave. She told me what you did with that Roselli, Zsa of yours. If you want to save your marriage, you better explain yourself to her, and fast!

ZIFF

The world's crazy. Explain my doctor-patient relationship, never!

SOPHIE

Well, you better start explaining something. Deedle knows all about the affair you've been having with that Roselli sex-pot.

ZIFF

Me? Having an affair? Is she crazy?

SOPHIE

She saw you kiss that spider woman.

ZIFF

WHAT? Me, kiss Mrs. Roselli? So, that's why she stopped talking to me. Sophie, I swear I never touched her.

SOPHIE

Don't tell me, tell her.

ZIFF

(Looks around.)

I don't know where I put Charley.

(Walking to radiator, SOPHIE removes pouch from pocket and feigns picking it up.)

SOPHIE

Here, I found your Charley.

(HE shakes empty pouch.)

ZIFF

Charley's gone.

SOPHIE

And if you don't do something quick, Deedle will be gone.

(ZIFF looks at SOPHIE. HE shakes empty pouch. Stage darkens and we see only Ziff.)

ZIFF

Even though I got him to sing, I'm not the greatest Charley. You were... And you think I helped Mrs. Roselli too? I hope you're right, partner. Because it's been 15 years...

(Caressing empty pouch.)

Deedle needs me, Charley? Tell you the truth, I need her even more. I always have... I know I've been deluding myself, but no more. Ya see, sooner or later, even an old fool like me has to face reality... In life, you were my best friend, and in death I turned to you, because I was afraid of dying. I guess that's why I started talking to you; I was afraid of dying. But not any more. Not any more. I guess this means goodbye, dear friend. Auf veider zein, Charley. Yeah, see ya around. Not too soon I hope, not too soon.

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 3

They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 4

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?

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.'

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.

MENDY

Oh, would you?

SOPHIE

On second thought, not a chance.

MENDY

Please, give me another chance...

SOPHIE

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

MENDY

Is that all you have to say after all these years? Insurance? You know, I didn't need you then and I sure as

(exits)

hell don't need you now. See ya around sister.

SOPHIE

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

(Lights fade.)

End of Scene 4

They Don't Have *Earthquakes* in the Bronx

ACT II

Scene 5

At night, the
following day

In total darkness we hear
ZIFF and DEEDLE entering
kitchen.

DEEDLE

I believe you, I believe you.

ZIFF

It was the only time since we've been married. I swear, I
couldn't help it. She kissed me but, 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.

(Lights come on and we see Ziff struggle as
HE carries DEEDLE over threshold into
kitchen. The living room has been restored as in
Scene 1. A banner is hanging stating, "HERE'S
TO FORTY MORE. GUESS WHO?" Champagne and
glasses are evident. The wooden box is gone.
The mirror is undraped. DEEDLE looks at banner.)

DEEDLE (Cont'd)

You remembered.

ZIFF

Would I forget?

DEEDLE

Never, you never forget anything.

ZIFF

A toast to you, my beloved.

(THEY drink entire glass.)

DEEDLE

(Laughs.)

You know how I start laughing from one glass.

ZIFF

That's what we've been missing around here, a good laugh. Now, how about a toast to our next forty together?

**(HE fills glasses and THEY drink it all.
There is a knock on door and DEEDLE reels
as she goes to answer it.)**

ZIFF

(Answers door and returns.)

Sweetheart, allow me.

DEEDLE

Who was it?

ZIFF

(Sings.)

Guess who?

DEEDLE

Oni?

ZIFF

Not even close. Guess again.

DEEDLE

(Playful.)

I have no time to play games! Don't you know, this is my anniversary?

ZIFF

(gives her ruby wedding band)

I'm glad you reminded me, I almost forgot.

DEEDLE

Oh, Ziffy... A ruby wedding band.

(ZIFF blows her a kiss and goes to door and ushers in SOPHIE.)

ZIFF (Cont'd)

Introducing, my...

SOPHIE

...Favorite sister in-law. HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

(THEY all hug and kiss)

ZIFF

Shut up and start drinking. You have a lot of catching up to do.

(ZIFF gives SOPHIE champagne.)

DEEDLE

Drink it in one shot, look.

(DEEDLE downs champagne and laughs harder. SOPHIE follows suit and ZIFF refills glasses.)

ZIFF

There's plenty more where that came from.

(Affected by the champagne ZIFF sways to refrigerator.)

DEEDLE

He's like a changed man.

SOPHIE

No he isn't, he's still my favorite brother-in-law.

DEEDLE

Are you definitely leaving tomorrow?

SOPHIE

I have to, business calls.

DEEDLE

What's your rush? Sophie, I don't know what I would have done without you.

SOPHIE

You would've done just fine.

(THEY embrace as ZIFF returns with more champagne and glasses.)

SOPHIE (Cont'd)

It certainly took you long enough.

(ZIFF pinches HER cheek.)

ZIFF

You know what I like about you Sophie?

SOPHIE

What?

ZIFF

I don't know, but, give me a minute.

**(THEY laugh. There is a knock on door.
ZIFF weaves HIS way to door and opens it.
ONI and enters. ALL laugh.)**

ZIFF

Oni! I'm so glad you could come.

DEEDLE

(Laughing.)

Have some champagne. You have a lot of catching up to do.

ZIFF

(Pours champagne.)

I propose a toast.

ONI

Toast is fine, but personally I could go for one of Deedle Dee's matzo balls.

SOPHIE

So could I. With a cup of coffee and I'm in heaven.

(Pinches Oni endearingly.)

ONI

(To Ziff.)

Dr. Ziff, I don't know how to tell you this, but, I'm really grateful for everything you've done for me, and thanks to you, I don't think anyone will ever play the bongos on my tonsils again.

ZIFF

I'm very happy for you.

DEEDLE

And so am I.

ONI

I know.

(Hugs them both, then starts to exit.)

Deedle dee, I had to come back to say *muchas gracias* for making me feel welcome and a part of your family. I'll always miss your matzo balls.

DEEDLE

And I'll miss you.

SOPHIE

So will I.

ONI

Thanks for reminding me of my mama. I'll never forget you.

(DEEDLE and ONI embrace.)

ONI

(Takes Deedle in his arms, waltzes and sings.)

"I could have danced all night. I could have danced all night. And still have begged for more. I could have spread my wings,..."

DEEDLE and ONI

(Singing.)

"And done a thousand things, I've never danced before..."

**(ONI steps on DEEDLE's toe, then kisses it.
We will hear laughter throughout.)**

ONI

(To Ziff.)

I heard about your rotten feet, so don't expect the same treatment. Deedle Dee's my Cinderella.

ZIFF

(Laughing.)

Never mind "your" Cinderella, here's to "my" Cinderella, whom I'll always love; My Deedle.

ONI

I got to go. Mendy's waiting for me in the limo downstairs. Any way, thank you Dr. Ziff, muchas gracias and zai gehzunt.

(HE exits laughing, as ZIFF and DEEDLE kiss.)

ZIFF

I wonder why Mendy didn't come up? Anyway, let's make another toast.

(THEY lift glasses.)

ZIFF, DEEDLE and SOPHIE

The Bronx!

(Through the laughter, SOPHIE gets two presents and gives them to DEEDLE and ZIFF.)

SOPHIE

A little something for your anniversary.

ZIFF

Sophie, you shouldn't have.

SOPHIE

You're probably right, but I did anyway.

**(ZIFF unwraps present shows new tobacco pouch.
DEEDLE displays answering machine)**

ZIFF

(Smells tobacco.)

A tobacco pouch... with my favorite tobacco. How thoughtful. Thank you, Sophie.

DEEDLE

A telephone answering machine. Oh Sophie, I don't know what to say.

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 (cont'd)

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, fifth row center. Now, we are even-steven, partner.

(looks at SOPHIE)

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

(Hiccups, then touches heart.)

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

(laughs.)

(Hiccups.)

go. 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

(Laughs.)

you'll never regret a thing. Because, they don't have earthquakes in the Bronx. Never.

(Curtain.)

THE END

