

Pizza Bagels

by
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nbo

LEO, 27

ABRAHAM, 27

JOSEPH, 60s

ELENA, 22

CARMELA, 50s

BLAKE, 50s

Abraham and Joseph are conservative Jews and wear kippot.

Leo, Elena, and Carmela are reform, atheistic, "high holy days" Jews, of Italian descent.

They are all white/Ashkenazi.

Blake is Black and non-religious, and recently married to Carmela.

This play takes place in Brooklyn in the present day.

“We like to think that we are responsible for who we are, where we’ve been, and where we are going, but sometimes, we are just passengers on someone else’s ship.”

- Yair Rosenberg

מידהו יהודי (trans. “Who is a Jew?”)

- Topic of a 10,000-word Wikipedia article

Part One

1

LEO and ABRAHAM, both 27.

A video call.

LEO

What's your favorite color?

ABRAHAM

I'm not sure.

Why do you ask?

LEO

I don't know.

Mine's green.

ABRAHAM

We're not twins.

LEO

I know.

ABRAHAM

There's no reason we would have the same favorite color.

LEO

You're right.

ABRAHAM

Other than coincidence.

LEO

Just making conversation.

ABRAHAM

Okay.

LEO

...

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

You live in —

ABRAHAM

Bushwick.

LEO

In the — is there a community out there?

ABRAHAM

A community?

LEO

Like, the — uh, insular —

You know, no outsiders kinda —

ABRAHAM

I'm not Hasidic.

LEO

Oh. Sorry.

ABRAHAM

No need to apologize. I just wear a yarmulke.

LEO

(beat)

I live in Park Slope.

ABRAHAM

Okay. Nice area.

LEO

It is. Grew up here too.

If you told me as a kid I'd be living fifteen minutes from my parents...

He chuckles. Abraham doesn't.

There's a bit of an awkward silence.

ABRAHAM

And you're a lawyer.

LEO

Hah. Well. I'd sure like to be.

I'm studying for the Bar.

ABRAHAM

What kind of law do you hope to practice?

LEO

My internships in law school were at, like, corporate firms?

Big Law? That kind of thing?

I have a return offer but — I'm taking time off because of my mom, and all this...

ABRAHAM
Hm. White collar.

LEO
Yeah. Well. It's where the money is.

ABRAHAM
(a bit judgmental)
And that's important to you?

LEO
I mean.
It's not *not* important.

ABRAHAM
...
I'm sorry.

LEO
It's okay.

ABRAHAM
I'm being — not myself.

LEO
I get it. This is weird.

ABRAHAM
I don't really know what to say.

LEO
I feel the same way.
I mean — I guess I want to say I'm sorry.

ABRAHAM
Why?

LEO
I don't know.

ABRAHAM
It's not your fault.

LEO
Sure.

ABRAHAM
It's not my fault. It's nobody's fault.

LEO
Well. I mean.
It's *somebody's* fault.

ABRAHAM
Some overworked nurse, whose name we'll never know?
She's a concept.
She's not a person.
We can't blame her.

LEO
She stole our lives.

ABRAHAM
Or she gave us our lives.

A long beat.

LEO
Hm.
You seem to be a very wise guy, Abraham.

Another long beat.

ABRAHAM
I'm sorry to hear about your mother.

LEO
Thanks. It was scary. She's okay now.
...
She's your mother too.

ABRAHAM
I've never met her.

LEO
... Yeah. Well.

ABRAHAM
Though I suppose I might have the heart condition she has.
The genetic predisposition.

LEO
Shit. That's right.
I'd get tested.

Another moment.
They still don't know what to say to each other.

LEO
Fuck.
This is so weird.

ABRAHAM
Yes. It is.

LEO
You already being in the system, what are the odds...
...
I always wondered why I never really looked like her. Or my dad.

ABRAHAM
You look like my father.

LEO
Do I?

ABRAHAM
Naturally.

LEO
What about —
my, your — mother?

ABRAHAM
...
She passed.

LEO
Oh.

ABRAHAM
Ten years ago.
Cancer.

LEO
Wow. I'm — so sorry.

ABRAHAM
Thank you.
I'm sorry.

LEO
...

ABRAHAM
...

LEO

...

... I don't know...

how much of it is mine, y'know?

ABRAHAM

What?

LEO

Whatever I'm feeling right now. About what you just said.

None of it. All of it...?

They sit in that for a moment.

Leo changes the subject —

LEO

At least we're both Jewish.

ABRAHAM

(smiles)

That did give me some relief.

LEO

And we're both Italian, right? I saw, on my results — that your family's Italian too.

ABRAHAM

Sure. My dad doesn't — it's not very important to us.

LEO

Still.

We're Pizza Bagels.

ABRAHAM

(smiles)

I've never heard that. That's funny.

LEO

Running joke in my family. Pizza Bagels.

They smile.

A nice moment.

LEO

I guess not everything was taken from us.

2

The Auerbach private laundromat.

The sounds of several washers and dryers chugging, chugging, chugging.

JOSEPH, 60s, burly and bearded, folds clothes, labored. Abraham enters.

ABRAHAM

Dad, I told you to wait.

JOSEPH

It's fine.

ABRAHAM

Did you load all of these yourself?

JOSEPH

You were on your call.

ABRAHAM

Dad, your back. I would've helped when I was off.

JOSEPH

Well, it's done. Mostly.

ABRAHAM

Let me —

Abraham takes over.

Joseph groans as he sits.

JOSEPH

I'm going to need your help tomorrow.

ABRAHAM

Of course. You do pay me.

JOSEPH

We're stretched to our limits.

ABRAHAM

Yeah.

JOSEPH

But that's good.

It's better to be tired and busy than rested and desperate.

We might even be able to hire more help soon.

ABRAHAM

Oh?

JOSEPH

Well, keeping it close to home.

Isaac's nephew is looking for a side job.

Just someone to help with all this manual labor.

DING. Joseph pulls out his cellphone.

JOSEPH

Okay.

The Wallaces in Greenpoint want pick-up tomorrow.

ABRAHAM

Is that convenient?

JOSEPH

We'll make it work.

Joseph opens up a laptop.

Abraham stands over his shoulder.

ABRAHAM

Am I doing pick-up or are you?

JOSEPH

I'll do it. Is that alright?

You're right about my back, I don't think I can lead the laundering.

ABRAHAM

Is it alright? Dad, you can do whatever you want.

JOSEPH

(referring to his laptop)

I think I can swing up to Greenpoint before picking up for the Riccardis in South Williamsburg, then head south towards Clinton Hill, then to Gowanus for the Grace Cohen girl.

ABRAHAM

That's a lot of driving.

JOSEPH

We go to where the customers are.

ABRAHAM

Why don't we focus on getting more customers on this side of Brooklyn?

JOSEPH

Because limiting yourself doesn't make good business sense.

ABRAHAM

You either destroy your back doing laundry here, or you destroy your back spending hours driving all over Brooklyn.

That doesn't make good business sense.

JOSEPH

Well, when you're running the business, you can do things differently.

Joseph stands. Stretches his back.

ABRAHAM
Oh, I will. Believe me.

JOSEPH
'That right?

ABRAHAM
I've got ideas.

JOSEPH
Ah! Okay.
Tell me about them.

ABRAHAM
What? No.

JOSEPH
Oh, since you have all these big ideas.
Why wait? Tell me.

ABRAHAM
(knows he's testing the waters of something difficult)
... Um.
Well.
I mean.
I guess the big one is...
I think the company should be operational on the Sabbath?

A long moment.

JOSEPH
I'm going to pretend like you didn't say that.

ABRAHAM
I'm not saying *I* work on the Sabbath.
Or *we* or anyone who doesn't want to.
We'll get some goyim or something.
It just makes no sense to have one day of the week where we don't accept customers.

JOSEPH
The *company* is Jewish.
We pick up these people's laundry, they look at us, they know we're Jewish.

ABRAHAM
Then we'll get Jews who don't observe the Sabbath, I don't know!

JOSEPH
Stop stop stop —

ABRAHAM
This is not a crazy idea —

JOSEPH
We will do many things to be successful, but that is where I draw the line, okay?

ABRAHAM
Okay!

JOSEPH
“Jews who don’t observe the Sabbath” — you know that’s a contradiction, yes?

ABRAHAM
Fine! Forget it!

JOSEPH
...

ABRAHAM
...

JOSEPH
... We have to be able to hold on to something, Abraham.
Our history.
What’s passed down.
What you’ve been given.
It’s important.
...
Our people have been slowly disappearing into the goyim’s world for centuries now.
We won’t. We have to be *proud*. You understand?

ABRAHAM
...
Yeah.

They stand there.

JOSEPH
What was your call?

ABRAHAM
Hm?

JOSEPH
Your call. Who were you talking to?

ABRAHAM

(hesitates)

Nothing.

Catching up with a friend from high school.

You don't know him.

3

The Caruso apartment. Sleek, bright.

Dinner time. The family sits around a table, eating from a big bowl of carbonara.

Leo and his sister ELENA, 22, their step-father BLAKE, 50s, and mother CARMELA, 50s.

The pace is frenzied and loud — this is a family who have been conditioned to believe that the loudest voice at the table is probably the right one.

ELENA

All I'm saying is if you look at the statistics, more women move to New York every year than men, /
Leo don't interrupt me —

LEO

That is just not true.

ELENA

Yes it is. It is true.

LEO

Cite your sources.

ELENA

/ Stop.

BLAKE

/ Leo —

CARMELA

/ Let her finish, Leo —

LEO

Okay, okay!

ELENA

So because there are more young women than young men new to the city, when a guy uses a dating app, there are so many good options. But when a girl uses a dating app, there are barely any.

This is just for men looking for women and women looking for men, of course —

BLAKE

Sure.

ELENA

I was talking to this girl who was a few years ahead of me in my sorority and she was saying she's been on *one hundred and four dates* since she moved to New York. In two and a half years.

CARMELA

Wow. / Who has the time.

LEO

She counted?

ELENA

I'm not even kidding.

How many second dates has she gone on?

BLAKE

Fifty?

ELENA

Seven.

SEVEN!

LEO

That sounds like a *her* problem.

Blake laughs.

ELENA

No, she's really smart, she's really discerning, I believe it, I really do.

BLAKE

I think your generation just needs to calm down.

You'll find the right person, even if it takes a while.

Blake and Carmela smile at each other.

Share a kiss.

ELENA

Awwwwwww.

Gross.

CARMELA

Weren't you seeing someone for a second, though, Elena?

ELENA

What? No.

CARMELA

Didn't you —
in the hospital?

ELENA

I don't think so.

CARMELA

There was someone who took you bowling and dropped the ball and — ?

ELENA

... I — yeah, that didn't happen, I didn't say that.

CARMELA

...

You said —

no, sorry, it's just hospital fog, the meds —

ELENA

I haven't dated anyone since graduation.

CARMELA

What am I thinking of?

ELENA

It's okay.

CARMELA

Ugh, my brain these days.

LEO

It's okay, mom.

Carmela looks at Leo.

Suddenly emotional. She wipes her eyes.

ELENA

Woah.

LEO

/ Mom —

BLAKE

Hey there.

Blake touches her shoulder.

Leo takes her hand.

ELENA

What's going on? Are you okay?

CARMELA

Yeah, I'm okay, I'm —

(takes a second, corrects herself)

There's a reason why I asked that we all have dinner together, Elena.

Why I made our favorite meal.

LEO

Oh, we're doing this now?

CARMELA

I can't just sit here and pretend like —

Yes, we're doing it now.

She looks between Leo and Blake. They both know what she's about to say.

Blake gives an encouraging nod.

ELENA

What is it. You're freaking me out.

LEO

Do you want me to say, mom?

CARMELA

No, no, I got it.

We were gonna get into this over dessert, but...

She can't quite say it. Finally, she defers to Leo.

LEO

Yeah. Um. So.

We found out something recently.

ELENA

Um. Okay...?

LEO

Remember how I —

I insisted we all take those Ancestry DNA tests? After the hospital?

ELENA

Yeah, those haven't come back yet.

CARMELA

They have.

ELENA

...

Okay?

LEO

I asked you to take one and mom to take one

because the blood work that they did on me at the hospital

when they were testing me for the heart gene thing mom has...

that test showed that

I wasn't mom's child.

ELENA

..... What.

LEO

Yeah, and I didn't believe it.

Like, obviously it was a mistake.

So we all took those tests and I had all the results sent to me and —

They confirmed it.

...

I'm not mom's biological child. I'm not your biological brother.

ELENA

I don't understand, what the fuck are you talking about.

LEO

/ Let me finish.

BLAKE

Let him finish, Elena.

ELENA

Okay! Okay.

LEO

Your and Mom's tests... pinged someone.

In the Ancestry DNA database.

Someone who had also done it — about a year ago.

And the system pinged that person

as mom's son.

ELENA

...

LEO

Mom's biological son is this guy named Abraham Auerbach.

I talked to him earlier today.

ELENA

You *talked* to him?

LEO

We have the exact same birthday.

Same day, same year.

And we were born in the same hospital.

At around the same time.

And... I don't know.

I guess there was a mix-up.

He went home with my biological parents.

And I went home with mom and dad.

Elena is shell-shocked.

ELENA

Um. Okay?

That's —

What the fuck?

What do you mean “mix-up,” what does that mean?

BLAKE

We think some nurse made a mistake.

ELENA

Who?

What nurse?

LEO

We don't know, we haven't talked to the hospital.

ELENA

You HAVEN'T?!

What are you waiting for?!

BLAKE

We're getting all of our ducks in a row.

LEO

It's complicated, who even knows what nurses were on staff then —

ELENA

*YOU WERE BORN IN A MAJOR NEW YORK CITY HOSPITAL.
HOW DID THEY FUCK THAT UP.*

CARMELA

It happens...

ELENA

“It happens?!” What, like —

You gotta run another test or something — right?

Like — how can you be sure?

BLAKE

We're sure, El.

LEO

Haven't you ever wondered why we look nothing alike?

ELENA

We look alike, what are you talking about?

LEO

I mean, I guess in the sense that all Ashkenazis look alike —

CARMELA

Don't say that.

ELENA

Wait, so his family's also — ?

LEO

Jewish? Oh yeah.

Like Super Jews. Kippah and everything.

ELENA

Oh. Okay. That's good, I guess.

LEO

What, you thought I'm actually a WASP?

Have you looked at me recently?

ELENA

I don't know! I don't know what I'm saying.

She gets up. Takes a lap around the room.

LEO

They're actually Pizza Bagels also.

BLAKE

Hah. There's a silver lining.

ELENA

This isn't funny, Blake.

LEO

Though we're more Pizza and they're more Bagel.

CARMELA

What — what do you mean by that?

LEO

I'm just saying.

They're like, observant Jews who happen to have ancestors from Italy.

Whereas we're sitting here eating carbonara and haven't done Shabbat in fifteen years and our last name is Caruso.

CARMELA

We're Jewish. You're Jewish.

LEO

I know, mom.

CARMELA

Why did we spend all that money on your bar mitzvah if you weren't Jewish?

LEO

No one said I wasn't Jewish. But I think it's a fact that we're *less* Jewish than he is.

CARMELA

Judaism comes through the mother.

If I'm Jewish and his mother's Jewish, you're just as Jewish as each other.

LEO

Mom. I know.

Blake gets a call.

BLAKE

(to Carmela and Leo)

This is him. The guy.

(leaving the room to take the call)

Hey. Jim.

He exits to another room.

ELENA

That's who?

LEO

Blake thinks there's a good lawyer at his firm for this.

Elena suddenly returns to the table.

ELENA

Wait. Does dad know?

CARMELA

I'm calling him in the morning.

ELENA

Damn. That's gonna be fun.

LEO

Should I be on that call...?

CARMELA

Just let me handle it.

LEO

Yeah, didn't think so.

He's gonna want even less to do with me once he learns this.

CARMELA

That's — Leo, please.

LEO

What? I'm not his genetic material, I won't even get birthday calls anymore.

CARMELA

Leo. Please.

LEO

...

... Sorry. Sorry.

There's a long silence.

CARMELA

The boy with the bowling ball.

That was me.

I was fourteen. He dropped it on his foot. I had such a crush on him...

God, my brain these days.

Another silence.

CARMELA

Nothing's changed, you two. Nothing really.

I'm still me and you're still you and we are what we are to each other.

I mean, we're gonna have to find a way to live with this, aren't we?

What's the alternative?

So can we please — *please* — lead with kindness?

Beat. Leo and Elena nod.

CARMELA

And I think I want to meet him.

LEO

What?

CARMELA

Abraham. I want to meet him.

LEO

You want to meet him. Okay.

(finding himself hurt)

Um. Why?

CARMELA

(turning squarely to Leo)

Leo.

Listen to me very carefully.

...

You are my son.

You are my son.

...

But you know the story — it was such a difficult birth.

I wasn't sure the baby was going to make it.

And when it was over —

I held him in my arms.

I kissed his head and told him he was loved.

And then I handed him to a nurse.

...

And I want to see how he turned out.

Okay?

There's another long moment.

LEO

(non-committal)

Okay.

Um. Yeah.

He seems busy, but, um...

Another long moment.

ELENA

What about you, Leo?

LEO

I've already talked to him. I said.

ELENA

No. Like —

Are you gonna meet your biological parents?

Silence. Leo hesitates, and —

Blake re-enters.

BLAKE

Okay.

He says he can see us end of the week.

But he says if anything's gonna move forward we need the other family on board.

Where'd you leave it with this guy, Leo?

LEO

I don't know. He — I don't know.

BLAKE

...

CARMELA

Let's just eat.

Can we eat?

Everyone just looks at each other.

CARMELA

Come on.

It's carbonara night.

Don't let it get cold.

Let's eat.

Slowly, everyone sits.

All the warmth out of the room.

They eat.

4

The balcony of the Caruso apartment.

Leo stands, looking out over the city, being in his brain.

Blake joins him.

Leo regards him for a second but doesn't say anything.

BLAKE

...

LEO

...

BLAKE

How ya doing, Leo?

LEO

... Okay. Yeah. I don't know.

BLAKE

...

LEO

...

BLAKE

... It's okay if it's not okay.

LEO

...

BLAKE

...

LEO

... I mean, whatever.

I'm not worried about me.

I'm fine.

This is like —

I'll be okay.

I'm worried about everyone else.

BLAKE

You don't have to be worried.

LEO

Not you.

...

No offense.

I meant Elena and mom.

BLAKE

I meant them too.

LEO

...

BLAKE

...

They love you.

Exactly as you are.

LEO

...

BLAKE

...

LEO

... Then why would she want to fuckin' meet him?

BLAKE

...

LEO

...

BLAKE

...

LEO

...

BLAKE

... The other day...

She was telling me...

About a trip she went on in her twenties.

She met a guy on a train to Vienna. They had quite the evening together, sounds like.

...

...

She's never been to Vienna, man.

...

...

I think she was confusing it with some movie she saw years ago.

LEO

... What are you — does she have fucking dementia? What are you saying?

BLAKE

She got a full scan at the hospital.

There's nothing up with her brain.

I called the doctor — it's not uncommon.

It's a blood flow thing.

The meds, the heart attack, the trauma, this news...

LEO

... Fuck.

BLAKE

I know you're going through it now also, Leo, but —

We need to all help each other.

Really — *reckon* with this.

Y'know?

LEO

...

BLAKE

We're not a normal family...

... but we are a family.

And we're gonna get through this.

LEO

... Yeah.

BLAKE

See where his head's at.

Promise?

LEO

... I'll email him. I promise.

5

A coffee shop.

Abraham waits, sipping an espresso.

Leo enters. Spots Abraham.

LEO

Hey hi.

ABRAHAM

Hey Leo.

Abraham stands to greet him.

An awkward beat.

Their first time meeting in person.

Do they shake hands? Hug?

They shake hands.

LEO

Hey.

Sorry.

They sit.

ABRAHAM

Do you want a coffee?

LEO

Yeah no, I'll get one later.

ABRAHAM

Okay.

LEO

Thanks for meeting in person.

ABRAHAM

Sure.

LEO

I have some things I'd like to talk about.

ABRAHAM

Me too.

LEO

Okay. You wanna go first or me?

ABRAHAM

Go ahead.

LEO

Okay, so.

I think we should all meet.

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

All of us.

My family and yours.

I think we should get dinner or something and drink wine
and just get it all out in the open.

ABRAHAM

Okay...

LEO

My mom wants to meet you,

she — it's a shock for her, I'm sure you understand, it's a shock for all of us.

I'm sure you're like us, you must've thought this was all a big mistake at first.

And then there's the question of whether or not I want to meet your dad —

My dad, your dad.

And I'm not sure. I mean, I'm curious, of course I'm curious.

But I don't know. I want to and I don't want to.

Because I — who knows if it'd mean anything, but — it feels like something I should do.

And I was thinking —

The way I'd feel most comfortable doing that,

meeting my biological dad,

is if we did it at the same time as my mom meeting you.

Rip the band-aid off, or something.

And as long as we're doing that —

I'm sure my sister would love to meet you.

My step-father Blake, he could be there too.

Do you have any siblings?

ABRAHAM

No.

LEO

Still.

Why shouldn't our families have a moment like that?

We're already so intertwined. More than we could possibly know.

Whoever — did this, they intertwined our lives.

So let's have one dinner to acknowledge that

and take it from there.

What do you think?

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

...

ABRAHAM

... I don't —
I don't think so, Leo.

LEO

Oh.

ABRAHAM

The thing I was gonna tell you
is that we need to go a lot slower than that.

LEO

Slower. Okay.

ABRAHAM

... Are you familiar with Tehillim?

LEO

With what? No.

ABRAHAM

The book of Psalms in the Torah.
Tehillim 37:23.
“Man's steps are established by God.”

...

Everything that happened was supposed to happen.
I believe that.
I have no interest in pretending otherwise.

LEO

Yeah. I mean. I agree?

ABRAHAM

However we enter each other's lives
needs to be done with the utmost care.

LEO

Sure.
Yes...

ABRAHAM

I only have an interest in meeting your mother.

LEO

Oh. Okay. That's — that's great, she'll be happy to —

ABRAHAM

And my dad can't know about this. For the time being.

Leo absorbs that. Silence.

LEO

Shit.

Is he — is he sick, is it a / health thing — ?

ABRAHAM

No, it's not that.

LEO

(doing the mental math)

... Okay. So...

ABRAHAM

Here's what I suggest.

We do this in stages.

We arrange a meeting between myself and your mother.

Assuming that goes well, we can discuss next steps.

LEO

(confused by this formality)

Um.

Yeah, man.

I mean —

Is everything okay?

ABRAHAM

Everything's fine. Why?

LEO

Your dad doesn't know about this? At all?

ABRAHAM

No.

LEO

What about the DNA test?

ABRAHAM

None of it.

LEO

Who *have* you told?

Abraham shrugs.

LEO
No one?

ABRAHAM
... It isn't important.

LEO
What? What are you talking about?

ABRAHAM
What does it change?

LEO
Everything!

ABRAHAM
We're not going to switch lives. What is there to be done?

LEO
(genuinely confused)
I guess nothing but —
Why did you respond to my initial email then?

ABRAHAM
Because I'd like to meet my mother.

LEO
But — I don't understand — I'm not *allowed* to meet my father?

ABRAHAM
You said before you weren't sure you wanted to meet him.

LEO
Well, would he want to meet me?

ABRAHAM
It's complicated.

LEO
What if I say I *do*? Want to meet him?

ABRAHAM
... He won't be ready to hear it, Leo, it's complicated —

LEO
Abraham. Dude.
What does that mean.

ABRAHAM

(getting a little testy)

It means that I know my father.

And you *don't*.

...

My dad and I are partners.

Our business, it's just him and me.

Our life, it's just him and me.

He's everything to me.

...

And I know what he's able to *hear*.

LEO

...

ABRAHAM

... Maybe this was too soon, maybe we should —

LEO

No.

ABRAHAM

I'm really sorry but I truly believe this is important, for all of our sakes —

LEO

Please, Abraham, just — wait.

ABRAHAM

... Okay.

LEO

We're going to sue the hospital.

ABRAHAM

Oh.

LEO

Yeah.

Recklessness and negligent infliction of emotional distress.

We're talking to a lawyer at my step-dad's firm.

ABRAHAM

It was so long ago. Is there an actual case?

LEO

I'm sure there is.

I mean —

The hospital has merged with other hospitals in the last ten years, has a different owner, I don't know. We're working on getting the names of the nurses on staff that night.

ABRAHAM

And you're asking me —

LEO

The whole thing only really makes sense if both of us are on board.

ABRAHAM

... I see.

LEO

We need to present a unified story of what happened and how it's affected us.

ABRAHAM

A unified story.

LEO

Yeah. So.

What do you think?

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

...

ABRAHAM

What do you hope to accomplish with this lawsuit?

LEO

Accomplish?

Um. I mean — winning? Like —

An apology. Money.

ABRAHAM

Money...

LEO

Yes, money. They fucked up!

We deserve some restitution for that, don't we?

ABRAHAM

My father and I run a small business.

We can't really afford to retain a lawyer.

LEO

Don't worry about that.

ABRAHAM

Don't worry about it?

LEO

The guy my step-father knows,
he's already said, as long as my family pays the whole retainer,
you could retain him with just a dollar.

ABRAHAM

...

Ah. I see.

LEO

What.

ABRAHAM

What do your parents do?

LEO

Excuse me?

ABRAHAM

What do your parents do for a living?

LEO

Why does that matter?

ABRAHAM

Your step-father's a lawyer.

LEO

Yeah.

ABRAHAM

Mom?

LEO

She does philanthropy stuff now but she was a lawyer.

ABRAHAM

Okay. And your biological father?

LEO

Don't you mean *your* biological father?

ABRAHAM

...

...

...

...

...

Yes. Fine.

LEO

He's an asshole.

ABRAHAM

That's his profession?

LEO

Why are you asking me this?

ABRAHAM

I like my life.

LEO

I never said you didn't.

ABRAHAM

I wouldn't switch it with yours, and I know you wouldn't switch it with mine.

LEO

Okay, is this about the retainer thing?

I didn't mean anything by it.

ABRAHAM

I'm gonna go.

LEO

No, c'mon, hold up.

ABRAHAM

I'll email you next week —

LEO

I hear what you're saying.

The thing in the Torah.

Fate, whatever.

But have you considered that, like —

Maybe —

This?

Us meeting?

That was supposed to happen?

Beat.

Abraham returns to the table.

ABRAHAM

So you want from me...

What.

A buddy?

LEO

I don't know.

ABRAHAM

A co-plaintiff?

LEO

Whatever about that. I'm sorry for springing that on you.

ABRAHAM

... I'll think about it.

LEO

...

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

It's been weird, at home.

My mom's memory has been — off, ever since she found out.

She's been, like — confusing her own memories.

Making up stuff that didn't happen, thinking her own memories are something my sister told her.

I don't know —

I'm worried — that something in her has broken.

...

And my step-father, they've only been married for three years,
he doesn't know what to do.

My mom told my biological dad this morning, apparently he said,
"Jeez, what a bummer."

and that's it.

He's lead counsel at a microchip company, by the way, he lives in Arizona with his new family...

...

...

My sister's freaking out.

...

...

...

So I guess all I need to know right now is...

Am I completely alone?

...

What does it mean,

your dad won't be ready to hear this?

There's a long silence.

Abraham looks at Leo, then looks away.

ABRAHAM

I never thought it was a mistake.

LEO
... Hm?

ABRAHAM
The DNA results. You said you thought it was a mistake?
I knew. In my gut. They were right.
I didn't know exactly *how*, until you messaged me, but...
You have a parent that comes from a Swedish background?

LEO
Uh. Yeah, distant. My dad's side, I think...

ABRAHAM
My father — he knows his lineage. Precisely.
Has the whole family tree in this Excel file.
No one ever got close to Sweden.
...
Israel to Latvia to Italy.
To here.
...
I knew, the second I saw Sweden in my results.
Somehow, some way... I wasn't his.
...
I knew it because he can trace it all back.
The traditions. The history. The blood.
He cares about all that.

LEO
... Okay. So...

ABRAHAM
(*really doesn't want to say this*)
... Leo, please —
you have to trust me on this one.
This is delicate, I'm trying to spare your feelings too —

LEO
Spare *my* feelings?
What, are you — will he — think I'm not *Jewish* enough or something?

ABRAHAM
...

LEO
...

ABRAHAM
...

LEO
... Oh.

ABRAHAM
...

LEO
...

ABRAHAM
... I'm sorry, Leo, he's just very traditional, it's complicated —

Leo gets up.

LEO
Alrighty then.
I'll email you about my mom.

He exits.
Abraham sits there.

6
The Caruso apartment.
Blake pouring four glasses of wine.
Elena making a cheeseboard.

ELENA
I haven't been sleeping great lately.

BLAKE
Me neither.

Silence.

ELENA
(checking the fridge)
Are we out of brie?

BLAKE
Unfortunately yes.

ELENA
Oh fuck yeah, you got the smoked salami again.

BLAKE
I know you love it.

Elena crafts the charcuterie.
Awkward silence. Tension between these two.

ELENA

I'm amazing at making cheeseboards.
Seriously, if the whole consulting thing doesn't work out
I should find some way to make a living out of doing this.

Beat. Blake slides a glass of wine over to her.

BLAKE

Listen, you gotta be gentle with her when she gets back.

ELENA

I know.

BLAKE

Therapy's new for her, she's probably in a very raw place.

ELENA

She's done therapy.

BLAKE

Solo therapy I mean.
Not with your dad.

ELENA

Also, like — I know I have to be gentle with her.
When am I not gentle with her?

BLAKE

I'm just giving you a reminder.

ELENA

Well, *thanks*.
Genius alert over here.

A tense silence. Blake rubs his hair.

BLAKE

...

...

... Listen, Elena.

I know you're still not used to having me around —

ELENA

Hah. Okay.

BLAKE

— and I know things are tough right now,
but I am doing my best.

ELENA

I am too.

BLAKE

I know you are. I'm just saying —

I'm doing my best.

...

I know what I must seem like to you.

You're off at college, your mom starts dating again,

the first time you meet me is Christmas,

the next time you meet me is at the wedding.

I get it. It's weird.

ELENA

It's not weird. People get married.

BLAKE

Well, then it's weird to me!

Do you think I expected to get married for the first time at my age?

And I know the clichés, I've seen the movies.

I'm not asking you to call me dad.

I'm not asking you to go with me to a *ballgame*.

I'm not asking you to do anything you don't want to do.

All I'm asking for

is the assumption that *I'm doing my best*.

Can you do that for me?

ELENA

... You weren't the first "nice guy" to come along, Blake.

(pointed)

And we don't celebrate Christmas.

The door opens and Carmela comes in.

More chipper than the last time we saw her.

CARMELA

Hey hey sorry I'm late.

Florence called me on the way back and you know her.

Once she gets going...

She sheds her coat, her shoes.

BLAKE

How was it?

CARMELA

Oh you know.

She yaps and yaps and yaps —

BLAKE
Not Florence.
The appointment.

*Carmela stops.
Looks at Blake, then Elena.*

CARMELA
Oh that, we'll talk about that later.

BLAKE
Why not talk about it now?

CARMELA
Because Elena doesn't want to hear about that.

ELENA
It's fine, Blake.
I mean, you're not supposed to talk about details anyway.

CARMELA
It was good, okay?
He's a very nice man.
Asks good questions.

BLAKE
Okay. Good.

Carmela comes over and takes a glass of wine from Blake.

BLAKE
... Did you talk about —

CARMELA
— Yes, we talked about it.

Silence. The three of them sip wine. Pick at the cheese board.

CARMELA
Anyway, anyway, anyway.
How was your day, Ellie-Bear, how's work?

ELENA
Good. Fine. Slide decks.
Back out to Philly tomorrow.

CARMELA
Good, excellent.
And you, Blake? Work good?

BLAKE

Work was fine. Nothing big to report.

Silence.

CARMELA

Why is everyone so tense?

C'mon!

BLAKE

What are you talking about?

CARMELA

Nothing's changed!

Let's just be normal.

Let's talk like we usually talk!

ELENA

This is how we usually talk.

CARMELA

No it isn't!

Beat.

Carmela wipes an eye.

BLAKE

Honey.

CARMELA

Please. I just want everything to be normal.

Blake rubs her shoulders.

She stifles her emotions.

Elena watches in sadness.

Blake can only think of one other way to help.

BLAKE

... Jim's excited to meet with us tomorrow.

CARMELA

Oh, that...

BLAKE

Said they're making headway on naming the nurses on call that night.

ELENA

Good.

That's good.

BLAKE

I think the plan would be to use the firm's private investigator to try to put together a timeline.

(she's giving him nothing)

We'll get some justice out of a terrible situation.

(still, nothing)

Okay?

CARMELA

(looks around)

... Where's Leo?

BLAKE

I'm not sure. He should be here.

CARMELA

Elena?

Where's Leo?

ELENA

Um. No idea.

Last I heard he was, um, meeting up with Abraham.

But that was hours ago.

CARMELA

Does Abraham want to meet me?

ELENA

I don't know.

BLAKE

Did he say anything about the lawsuit?

ELENA

I haven't heard from Leo, Blake. I'm texting him now.

CARMELA

I'm, um — I'm gonna go lie down.

She gets up.

BLAKE

Do you want me to come with you?

CARMELA

Why?

BLAKE

I don't know.

Should we talk?

CARMELA

No. I've done enough talking.
I want to be by myself.

She exits towards the bedroom.

Blake and Elena stand there. Together, but alone.

7

A dive bar.

Leo, at a table, drinking a beer, two empty bottles in front of him.

Elena enters in a buff and slaps him in the back of the head.

LEO

OW!

ELENA

What the fuck, dude?

LEO

Jesus!

What the fuck yourself?!

ELENA

We were supposed to meet at mom's.

LEO

How did you know where I was?

ELENA

Find My Friends, jackass.

Mom had therapy, you talked to Abraham.

We were all supposed to meet up.

LEO

Team huddle...

ELENA

Did you forget?

LEO

(snig of his beer)

Nope.

ELENA

Oh?! That's all you have to say?!

LEO

I couldn't make it.

ELENA

Yes you fucking could, we had a plan.

LEO

No, Ellie.

I literally couldn't make it.

I came here.

Sat at this table.

And when it came time to leave,

I literally couldn't get up.

Beat. Elena comes over and punches his knee.

He yelps and jumps up.

LEO

DUDE!

STOP!

ELENA

You seem fucking fine to me!

LEO

Jesus. I'll explain. Can we just sit?

Elena sits at the table. Leo joins her.

LEO

(re: beer)

Want one?

ELENA

Nah. I had to awkwardly have, like, four glasses of wine with Blake while we waited for you.

Thanks for that.

LEO

You gotta fucking chill with him, dude.

Elena looks at him. Decides not to get into it.

ELENA

So?

You gonna explain yourself?

LEO

Look, I'm sorry.

He wants to meet her. Abraham.

I'll set it up.

ELENA

Yeah?

Well, that sounds like good news, doesn't it?

LEO

Yeah, no, it is...

ELENA

A heads up would've been nice.

That apartment's like a fucking cauldron these days.

I need your help.

LEO

You feeling lonely?

Imagine how I fuckin' feel.

ELENA

...

LEO

...

ELENA

(sees he's upset)

What is it? What happened?

Leo takes another swig of beer.

Wipes his eyes.

LEO

He said, um — no.

To me meeting my dad.

ELENA

Huh?

LEO

For now. But...

I mean, he doesn't even fuckin' know about me, apparently.

ELENA

When's Abraham gonna tell?

LEO

He didn't say.

ELENA

Is it a health thing?

LEO

Nah, I asked that.

ELENA

So what is it, then?

LEO

...

Abraham thinks I'd disappoint him.

ELENA

What? He said that?

LEO

Kinda.

ELENA

Jesus. What a fuckin' prick.

Is that even legal?

Barring you from seeing your biological dad?

LEO

I don't know.

ELENA

You're a lawyer. Look it up.

LEO

It's not about the law, I wouldn't even need a P.I., I could find this guy in like a day.

But it's not the point. There are boundaries.

ELENA

What boundaries?

LEO

What am I supposed to do, bum-rush the guy? Risk freaking him out, alienating Abraham?

This is really fucking knotty.

ELENA

You don't have to blow the secret, you could just... run into him. Meet him.

LEO

It just feels like a crappy thing to do.

ELENA

Crappier than this Abraham guy, what, *refusing* to introduce you?

LEO

"This Abraham guy." He's your brother.

ELENA
No he isn't.

They look at each other.

LEO
Maybe it's for the best. Abraham's right.
I probably will be disappointing to him.

ELENA
Why would you be?
You barely know anything about him.

LEO
I know he's devoutly Jewish.
I know he runs a pick-up drop-off laundry service.
I know he's apparently perfectly happy with the son he has.

ELENA
Yeah, and you're a successful-as-fuck, Harvard-educated JD.
What are we talking about here?

LEO
I don't know. None of that really matters to him, probably.

ELENA
"Probably."

LEO
It just feels like he really — *believes in things*.

ELENA
You believe in things.

LEO
I don't know that I do, El.

ELENA
I just feel like you're not gonna stop thinking about it until you meet him.

LEO
I wasn't even sure I wanted to, earlier today.

ELENA
Yeah and now you do.
I just feel like not doing anything is the worst thing to do here.

LEO
You're such a fucking consultant.

ELENA

Thank you.

They sit there.

LEO

All I'm saying is...

My life's not my own, El.

It'll never be my own again.

ELENA

...

(laughs)

You're such a drama queen.

LEO

(smiles)

Don't fucking laugh at that.

ELENA

What does that even mean?

LEO

You know what it means.

ELENA

I really don't, actually.

Let's not pretend like the life you got isn't pretty fuckin' sweet, all told.

Let's not pretend like you don't have a family that fuckin' loves the shit out of you.

Let's not pretend like you haven't made the most of your advantages.

LEO

Whatever. I owe it all to — what — some sleep-deprived nurse?

ELENA

What, you feeling guilty about that? That you ended up in the family with the money?

LEO

Oh, it's not guilt.

ELENA

What is it then?

LEO

It's sadness.

That *that's* what we worship.

They sit there.

Elena, a bit stung by that.

ELENA

Well.

If you wanna go to synagogue more often, go for it.

LEO

That's not what I'm saying.

ELENA

We're not hollow, spirit-less people, Leo.

LEO

I never said that —

ELENA

We don't worship money.

They stare at each other.

LEO

I'm just...

so sad.

That I'm disappointing another father...

just by being who I am.

He starts welling up.

Elena looks at him with sympathy, holds his hand.

8

A Jewish cemetery in Queens.

Abraham and Joseph, in front of a headstone, a few bags at their side.

Joseph, wearing a talit, recites the Mourner's Kaddish.

Abraham does not.

Joseph finishes.

JOSEPH

— Amen.

ABRAHAM

Amen.

JOSEPH

... Alright, let's clean it off.

They clean the headstone.

They grab brushes from the bags they've brought.

They sweep dirt and leaves out of the way.

Abraham tosses wilted flowers into a trash bag, replaces them with fresh flowers.

It's a delicate routine, one that takes maybe a minute.

Once they're near the end —

JOSEPH

You didn't recite the Kaddish with me.

ABRAHAM

Oh?

JOSEPH

You haven't the last couple times we've been here.

ABRAHAM

Huh. I hadn't realized.

JOSEPH

Next time, let's say it together, please?

Abraham says nothing.

They finish cleaning.

JOSEPH

I know you never met her, but
there will always be a connection here.
Just — keep trying to feel it. Okay?

Still, Abraham is silent. Tense.

JOSEPH

Hey. Come here. Give me a hug.

He goes over to Abraham.

Wraps his arms around him.

After a moment, Abraham relaxes in his embrace.

JOSEPH

You were her last gift.
You are the last thing she gave the world.

Abraham rips out of the hug.

Turns away.

Wipes his nose.

JOSEPH

...

ABRAHAM

...

JOSEPH

What is going on with you, Abe?

ABRAHAM

Nothing.

JOSEPH

Since when are we not saying things to each other?

ABRAHAM

I'm fine.

JOSEPH

You're not saying the Kaddish for Mom.

You want to work on the Sabbath.

ABRAHAM

Stop.

JOSEPH

Stop?

ABRAHAM

You're reading too much into things.

JOSEPH

... Look.

Doubts are normal.

I just want to know what's changed.

ABRAHAM

Nothing's changed.

JOSEPH

... No?

ABRAHAM

...

JOSEPH

Just remember, you *are* Jewish.

That's not a switch you can turn on and off.

If you *are* having doubts, a crisis of some kind, we can talk to Rabbi Morley —

ABRAHAM

— Maybe I should move out.

JOSEPH

... Move out?

ABRAHAM

Yeah. Maybe it's time for that.

JOSEPH

... Okay. Sure. You *are* twenty-seven.

ABRAHAM

Yeah. I —

And I'm not quitting,

I still want to continue with the company.

But... I don't —

Maybe it's
time.

JOSEPH

...

Abraham, that's fine.

I never brought it up because I thought you liked living at home.

And it's just easy living in the same building as the laundry machines.

But if that's not the case, of course —

...

Is that really all that's going on?

ABRAHAM

...

JOSEPH

... Son, be your own person. By all means.

But wherever you live, I just ask — don't run away. Okay?

I — I love you very much. Our community — it loves you very much.

Your mother loved you very much.

Believe me, I see it — you really are the best of her.

ABRAHAM

How?

JOSEPH

How what.

ABRAHAM

How am I the best of mom?

How could I be?

She died giving birth.

JOSEPH

You're thoughtful. You have a disposition towards kindness.

Not everything is nurture.

ABRAHAM

Some things are genetic.

That's what you're saying.

That's what makes me her son.

JOSEPH

I mean —

yes, but not entirely.

I just mean that... life is so strong.

Life is so strong that death cannot stop it.

Your mother lives on.

She lives on in me, and she lives on in you.

And I don't mean that as a metaphor.

I mean it literally —

She is around us.

Making sure we're okay.

Protecting our bond.

Guiding you, even if you can't feel her.

ABRAHAM

How does she know it's me?

JOSEPH

What?

ABRAHAM

She never met me.

How would she even know it's me, that I'm her son?

Beat. Joseph steps forward.

Puts his hand on Abraham's heart.

JOSEPH

She knows.

They look at each other. Joseph pats him on the back.

JOSEPH

You ready to go, son?

ABRAHAM

... Can you give me a second?

JOSEPH

... Of course.

He exits. Abraham stands there, at the grave, stoic.

Lights shift and the scene melds into...

9

A park.

Carmela enters, fanning herself. It's hot out.

She sees —

CARMELA
Abraham.

Abraham turns. Still stoic.

ABRAHAM
... Carmela?

CARMELA
..... Oh my god.
Hi.
Hello.

She comes over.
A moment.
They hug.

CARMELA
How are you?

ABRAHAM
I'm fine.
I'm fine.

CARMELA
...

ABRAHAM
...

CARMELA
... Do you want to sit?

ABRAHAM
Sure, yeah.

CARMELA
(re: his conservative button down and slacks)
Are you hot?

ABRAHAM
A little.

CARMELA
We can go somewhere else.

ABRAHAM
I'm fine here.

CARMELA

Okay.

... How are you?!

ABRAHAM

I'm fine. It's been a weird few weeks.

CARMELA

You and me both.

ABRAHAM

How's your health?

CARMELA

Oh god, that was so embarrassing.

I'm much better now, thanks.

Like, a heart attack! — *me!* — I dunno.

ABRAHAM

I was tested, I don't have the gene that you have.

CARMELA

Oh phew, that's good, that's a relief.

...

What'd you end up deciding? About Leo coming?

ABRAHAM

(softens, smiles)

Can I be honest?

CARMELA

Please.

ABRAHAM

I told him to swing by in ten minutes.

In case this was tremendously awkward.

They laugh.

CARMELA

God.

Y'know, I had the same thought.

ABRAHAM

You did?

CARMELA

Yeah. Whatever social anxiety you have, you definitely got that from me.

ABRAHAM

I just thought it might be typical Jewish neuroses.

CARMELA

Well, it's that too, but —

Do you wanna hear something?

About our family history?

ABRAHAM

...

(smiles)

Yeah.

I do.

CARMELA

Well, my mom's dad, my grandfather, name was literally Luigi, no joke —

ABRAHAM

Luigi...

LEO

No joke!

Born and raised in Sicily. Came over Nineteen Hundred, on the dot.

Fleeing the mafia, is the story.

ABRAHAM

Wow.

CARMELA

He had — I don't know — made some joke that offended a capo, or something.

But now he's here, in New York.

He opens a pharmacy on Delancey Street. Real American Dream stuff.

And he was convinced, to his dying day, that the Cosa Nostra was sending someone to kill him.

They weren't, spoiler alert.

But he slept with a handgun under his pillow, convinced one day he'd have to use it.

He died with that handgun under his pillow...

Now that's anxiety.

ABRAHAM

God. Yeah.

They laugh. Then, silence.

Carmela is seriously broken up.

CARMELA

... I, uh — feel like I should apologize or something.

ABRAHAM

Apologize for what?

CARMELA

For not recognizing you.

...

When they brought you back to me, in the hospital.

I mean, when they brought Leo to me, I guess.

I'm your mother, I shoulda recognized you...

ABRAHAM

Oh. Carmela.

Don't be sorry about that.

CARMELA

I mean, what kinda mother doesn't recognize her own child?

ABRAHAM

You'd just given birth, Leo tells me it was a hard birth —

CARMELA

It was. God, it was.

...

I never questioned it.

That the child they handed me wasn't the child I gave birth to.

Never questioned it, not then, not in the years after.

Not until Leo told me his test results, after my heart attack.

...

... I mean, how can you ever forgive me?

ABRAHAM

I've had a great life.

I love my life.

I love my father.

There's nothing to forgive.

Carmela smiles through emotion.

She touches his face.

CARMELA

You got my mom's smile.

ABRAHAM

Oh. Really.

CARMELA

Yeah. Just like Elena, your sister.

Abraham pulls away slightly, almost a gut reaction.

ABRAHAM

... Sorry.

CARMELA
God. Yeah.
What is she to you?
I'm sorry.

ABRAHAM
Don't be. It's a —
I don't quite know how to *be*, yet.

Silence.

CARMELA
I love your kippah.

ABRAHAM
Thanks.

CARMELA
It's a lovely color.

ABRAHAM
It's a family heirloom.

CARMELA
Ah yeah? From who?

ABRAHAM
My great-grandfather.

CARMELA
No way — what's his story?

ABRAHAM
Oh it's — we don't know much about him.
He died in the Shoah.

CARMELA
...
Oh my god.
I'm so sorry.

ABRAHAM
Thank you.
There weren't a lot of Italian Jews in the Shoah, comparatively.
But my great-grandfather was one of them.

CARMELA
That's terrible.

ABRAHAM

...

CARMELA

...

ABRAHAM

But my biological family —
all came over before the war?

CARMELA

Yeah. Generations before.
We were very, very lucky.
No one on our family tree even got close to the Holocaust.

ABRAHAM

That's good.

CARMELA

...

ABRAHAM

...

CARMELA

Y'know, I went once.
To Auschwitz.

ABRAHAM

I've never been.

CARMELA

This was like thirty years ago.
I was more into Judaism in college than I am now.
And I was there with my classmates.
And some of 'em — they were down on their knees, in the dirt. Bawling their eyes out.

ABRAHAM

Naturally.

CARMELA

Course. But —
And I was sad, don't get me wrong, I was sad —
It's a beautiful museum, powerful space, but...
I didn't have any tears.
I couldn't feel what other people were feeling.
My parents were living comfortably in midtown Manhattan in the forties, maybe that's it...
It's not in my blood.

ABRAHAM

...

CARMELA

...

ABRAHAM

Well.

Maybe not *that* trauma.

But you're Jewish.

Go far enough back, trauma's *somewhere* there.

CARMELA

Hah. Yeah.

You ever heard the joke...?

That every Jewish holiday can be boiled down to

"they tried to kill us, we won, let's eat!"

They laugh.

ABRAHAM

I have. It's a good one.

The laugh dies.

A comfortable silence.

ABRAHAM

I kind of have a similar story.

CARMELA

Oh yeah?

ABRAHAM

I mean, it's different, but...

I've never cried at my mom's grave.

CARMELA

Oh jeez. Leo told me that, about your — his...

I wish I could've met her.

I'm sure she and I'd have a lot to talk about.

Where's she buried?

ABRAHAM

Out in Queens.

CARMELA

Beautiful.

ABRAHAM

I don't think I've cried there once.

I used to think it was because my dad's pretty closed off, *he'd* never cry in front of *me*, but...

Now? I think it's because of what you said.

I never even met her, y'know.

So I always *felt* the sadness of her loss, intellectually, but...

It's not in my blood.

Carmela nods, understanding... then, realizing —

CARMELA

So... you never met her you say.

ABRAHAM

...

CARMELA

Leo said — that you said she died ten years ago — of cancer, so.

Abraham looks at her.

Caught.

ABRAHAM

Um.

A long moment.

Carmela reads his face.

Puts it together.

CARMELA

... Giving birth to Leo?

Beat. Abraham nods.

CARMELA

Oh god.

ABRAHAM

... Can you —

hold off on telling Leo?

Not yet? Please?

Leo enters.

LEO

Tell me what?

A brief silence, then —

Carmela covers.

CARMELA

Oh darn, Abraham was just helping me brainstorm presents for you.
Since your birthday's coming up.
And I suppose yours too, Abraham!

ABRAHAM

Hah. Yeah.

CARMELA

There goes the surprise, too bad.

LEO

... I didn't hear what you said.

CARMELA

Oh yeah, great!
So I guess the surprise is still on.

Leo is of course not buying this, and is a bit confused by the mystery.

CARMELA

Sit, Leo, sit!
Abraham and I were having a nice chat.

*Leo sits on the bench next to his mom.
A bit of an awkward silence.*

ABRAHAM

... Leo, that story about your great-grandfather fleeing the Sicilian mafia is crazy.

LEO

... What story?

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

...

CARMELA

You know the story, Leo,
your great-grandfather Luigi!
Thought the mob was gonna kill him 'til his dying day even after he fled Sicily?

LEO

... My great-grandfather was named *Luigi*?

CARMELA

You knew that.

LEO

I did not know that.

You never told me any of that.

CARMELA

Maybe I didn't but I'm sure I did.

LEO

Your memory hasn't really been state-of-the-art recently, mom.

Is that from a Godfather movie or something?

CARMELA

(offended)

No, Leo. It's not from a Godfather movie, it's our family history.

LEO

Well, I'd never heard it.

CARMELA

(turning to Abraham)

My memory's doing a lot better recently, Abraham.

ABRAHAM

Good.

That's good to hear.

CARMELA

Some of these heart meds can slow blood flow to your brain, it's just a bit of fog, really.

ABRAHAM

Good.

Good.

Another awkward silence.

Carmela works up some courage.

CARMELA

Abraham...

... tell me if this is too soon, but —

You should come over for dinner.

LEO

Mom, Jesus, I told you, he doesn't want to do that —

ABRAHAM

I'd love that.

Leo looks at Abraham.

LEO
What?

ABRAHAM
Well, as I said, Leo —
I wanted to see how this first meeting went before determining next steps.
And this has been —
Nice.
I'd love to come to dinner.
Meet Elena.

CARMELA
Oh my god, amazing.
My new hubby Blake can be there or not be there, whatever you want.

ABRAHAM
Sure.

CARMELA
And how about your dad?
Could he make it?

ABRAHAM
(looks to Leo, then back at Carmela)
... Not this time, if that's okay.

Leo shakes his head.
This is sitting incredibly poorly with him.
Carmela notices.

CARMELA
What do you think, Leo?

Leo looks at them.
Defenses go up.

LEO
Um. Yeah, sounds great.
Let's do it.

ABRAHAM
(unconvinced)
Leo, we can —

LEO
(smiling)
It's fine! Let's do it.
(off their looks)
Seriously!

Everyone nods at each other.
Awkward silence.
Carmela turns back to Abraham.

CARMELA
 It's a plan!

10
Leo's apartment.
He sits on his couch, leg tapping nervously.

He sits there for a long moment.
 BZZ. *The buzzer rings.*

Leo doesn't move at first.
Frozen in his nerves.

BZZ. *It rings again.*
Leo finally jumps up.
He presses the talk button.

LEO
 Come on up.

He presses the button to unlock the front door.
He walks over behind the couch, and pulls out —
Two laundry bags, full.

He waits.
Finally, there's a knock at the door.

Leo takes one deep breath. Two.
Then goes to the door, and opens it.
There stands Joseph.

JOSEPH
 Hello, hi, Mister Stein.

LEO
(a bit frozen, stiff)
 It's —
 Leo.
(beat)
 It's nice to meet you.

JOSEPH
 You too.
 Thanks for thinking of us for your laundry needs.

LEO
Yeah.
Of course.

JOSEPH
Lemme take those.

LEO
Sure, yeah.

Joseph takes the bags and notices something over Leo's shoulder.

JOSEPH
Can I ask how you heard about me?

LEO
Oh — what?

JOSEPH
I just see you have a laundry machine back there. So just curious how you came to us.

LEO
Oh, that's broken.

JOSEPH
Ah, that's terrible.
What's wrong with it?

LEO
Um. Yeah. No clue.

JOSEPH
Huh. Were you referred?

LEO
Referred?

JOSEPH
We don't usually get a lot of customers on this side of Brooklyn unless they were referred.

LEO
Oh. Yeah, I was referred.

JOSEPH
Terrific. By who?

LEO
...
Yeah, I don't know, I think I read about you online.

JOSEPH
Okay. Okay.
Well anyway —

LEO
Do you fix laundry machines?

JOSEPH
Hm?

LEO
My laundry machine.
Could you fix it?

JOSEPH
I know my way around those machines, but it's not my primary focus.
I think you'd be better off calling a professional.

LEO
I think it's a simple fix. Don't want to bother with getting someone else.
...
A hundred dollars. When you bring the laundry back tomorrow.
If you're okay with that.

JOSEPH
...
... Sure. Yeah.
I can take a look.

LEO
Thanks.

JOSEPH
No problem. And you're paying cash? No card on file?

LEO
That's right.

JOSEPH
Alright then.
I'll see you tomorrow, Mister Stein.

He turns to leave.

LEO
Chag sameach, by the way.

JOSEPH
Hm?

LEO

It's — Sukkot soon, isn't it?

Chag sameach.

JOSEPH

(correcting his pronunciation)

Chag sameach.

LEO

(smiles)

Yeah.

JOSEPH

Same to you.

He goes.

Leo stands there.

Smiling to himself.

He turns and walks off-stage.

Towards where Joseph referenced the laundry machines.

A moment.

We hear a loud CLANK.

Leo comes back on stage.

With a pipe from the back of the washer in his hand.

He sits on the couch.

...

His phone rings.

He looks at the caller ID.

His eyes widen.

After a long, scared moment, he answers.

Abraham appears, elsewhere.

LEO

Hey. Abraham.

ABRAHAM

Listen. Leo.

I could tell the other day upset you.

LEO

(wary, how much does he know?)

It didn't upset me.

ABRAHAM

It's just — before the dinner tomorrow at your mom's —
I want to try to explain to you
whatever you need to know.
About what I'm saying. What I'm going through.
I want to try, at least.
If you'd be open to that.

LEO

... Sure, yeah.

A moment.

ABRAHAM

... Do you smoke weed, Leo?

11

Later that evening.

Abraham has joined Leo's apartment.

They share a joint.

LEO

I didn't know Judaism allowed this.

ABRAHAM

Oh it doesn't.

Not really.

LEO

Really?

ABRAHAM

Yeah, my dad wouldn't be thrilled.

LEO

How long you been smoking?

ABRAHAM

(coughs)

Since high school.

I was in with the bad influences for a bit.

LEO

Did you go to Jewish school?

ABRAHAM

Nope. Public school.

Joining a clique was the only way I wouldn't get the shit kicked out of me.
For wearing a yarmulke.

LEO
... Jesus.

ABRAHAM
Yeah. No fun.
I got my act together after a bit, but —
This is what stuck.

LEO
... But you kept wearing the yarmulke? The whole time?

ABRAHAM
Of course.

LEO
...

ABRAHAM
...

LEO
So. You like...

ABRAHAM
What?

LEO
Like — *God*.

ABRAHAM
... Yes.

LEO
...

ABRAHAM
...

LEO
... Huh.

ABRAHAM
What?

LEO
It's just interesting to me.

ABRAHAM
I was raised in my parents' tradition.

LEO

But neither of *my* parents are religious. At all.

ABRAHAM

So?

LEO

How did it take hold for you?

ABRAHAM

Belief in God isn't genetic.

LEO

It isn't?

ABRAHAM

Why would it be?

LEO

I don't know. Brain chemistry?

I don't know.

Abraham doesn't know how to respond to that.

He gets up, looks around Leo's apartment, taking in how nice it is.

ABRAHAM

How long have you lived here?

LEO

Just a couple months. I only graduated from law school recently.

ABRAHAM

Where'd you go?

LEO

Harvard.

ABRAHAM

... Good for you.

LEO

It was fine.

Once you're inside of something, it's not really anything anymore, y'know?

Abraham keeps walking around. Leo watches him.

LEO

I'm postponing taking the Bar.

All of this has been really fucking with my concentration.

Beat. Abraham keeps studying the walls.

ABRAHAM

Why do you want to be a lawyer anyway?

LEO

I don't know. Every adult in my life is a lawyer.

ABRAHAM

Ah, so it's like God? Being a lawyer is genetic?

LEO

Honestly?

Sometimes it feels that way.

They both laugh. They pass the joint.

LEO

You know, can I be honest?

ABRAHAM

Sure.

LEO

I've been asking myself that question.

Why I'm doing this to myself.

ABRAHAM

Doing this to yourself?

LEO

... I honestly don't really know if I wanna be...

doing what I'm doing.

(a moment of real vulnerability)

... I actually had a pretty low moment one semester during law school.

I was really depressed.

And I went back to my applications.

The applications that I wrote to get in.

And I re-read them, and...

...

Wow, I BS-ed my way in there.

I didn't recognize myself at all in those essays.

I tell a good story about myself, I'll give myself that.

...

But I guess the real truth would've been too depressing?

ABRAHAM

What do you mean?

LEO

... I was not an easy newborn, apparently.
 Had some, y'know, developmental set-backs.
 Basically didn't sleep through the night until I was... way older than I should've been.
 And my biological dad — your biological dad — *our* biological dad?
 Whatever.
 He... couldn't handle it. He couldn't handle *me*.
 And then mom got pregnant with Elena — not planned.
 And he left her pretty quickly after she was born.

ABRAHAM

... That's horrible.

LEO

(nods, then)

And there's a part of me... if I'm *so real* with myself.
 That thinks that maybe everything I've ever done.
 Is just to get him to... not hate me anymore.
 Like if I... am a *certain person*, then...

...

But now? I don't know what to think.

...

I don't know why I said all that.
 I guess I felt like you should know it.

ABRAHAM

...

LEO

...

ABRAHAM

... He sounds like an asshole.

Beat.

Leo smiles. Abraham smiles.

They pass the joint.

A more comfortable silence.

LEO

Y'know, I don't know if we would've been friends. Outside of all this mishigas.
 But I am enjoying this.
 Smoking. Shooting the shit with you.

ABRAHAM

Same here.

Leo smiles. Nods.

ABRAHAM

... You know “mishigas.”

LEO

Oh yeah. All the Yiddish words. I know ‘em.

Mishigas.

Schtick.

Chutzpah.

Bupkis.

Tchotchke.

ABRAHAM

Mazel tov.

LEO

Yeah!

Mazel tov.

See?

I’m basically fluent.

They laugh.

Then... silence.

Leo works up courage.

LEO

Alright man. Lay it on me.

(off Abraham’s look)

You wanted to try to explain stuff to me.

What does me “not being Jewish enough” ... look like.

Just — what would he say.

When he meets me finally.

As his son.

ABRAHAM

What do you mean, “as his son”?

LEO

(catches himself)

Just when he meets me. When he knows everything.

What would he

y’know

say.

ABRAHAM

I don’t know if I could tell you what he’d *say*.

I’m able to tell you what he’ll be *thinking* when he says whatever polite thing he does say.

LEO

Okay. Sure.

ABRAHAM

...

You have to understand, he's been doing this laundry business for like thirty years, the things that have been said to him — by Jews and non-Jews alike —

LEO

I hear you. I can take it.

Abraham adjusts in his seat.

Trying to figure out the best way to say this.

ABRAHAM

So, he meets you, he knows the whole story.

He'll be polite, be courteous, ask you about your life.

But behind his eyes, while you're talking, he'll be looking you up and down, and thinking...

... that Judaism is not a membership card you can pick up and put down whenever it's convenient.

He'll be thinking that

Reform Jews like yourself who've moved away from our traditions to assimilate

are part of the problem for what conservative and Orthodox Jews are facing these days.

He'll be thinking that —

being a “high holy days” Jew, a “cultural” Jew, is to be not really a Jew at all.

LEO

... Huh.

ABRAHAM

He won't look down on *you*, personally, but...

It *will* break his heart.

That this is what his blood has become.

Silence.

Leo sits there.

Wipes his nose.

LEO

Okay then. Thank you.

They pass the joint.

LEO

You don't think those things, though? About me?

ABRAHAM

(shakes his head)

I don't.

LEO

Good. I don't judge you either.

ABRAHAM

My Judaism is not about the same things that my dad's is.

LEO

Maybe it's your Caruso gene, poking through.

ABRAHAM

Maybe. It does explain a lot.

LEO

What does?

ABRAHAM

Why do you think I took an Ancestry DNA test in the first place?

When my dad has our whole family tree mapped out?

I felt there was a disconnect. Of course I did.

I never expected *this*, but...

LEO

... Huh. I never did. Feel a disconnect.

ABRAHAM

No?

LEO

If anything, I'm feeling the disconnect now more than I ever did before I knew...

They sit there for a moment.

ABRAHAM

The feeling that
there's something more out there
than what your family believes?

LEO

(looks at him)

Yeah. Exactly.

Another moment.

ABRAHAM

Like there's this — distance...
this cushion of air...
between you and — everyone else.

LEO

...

Your skin isn't your skin, your brain isn't your brain.

Abraham nods. They pass the joint.

ABRAHAM

I am glad I have someone to talk to about all this.
I've been holding onto it for a long, long time.

LEO

You told no one?
I know not your dad, but —

ABRAHAM

No one.

LEO

You can talk to people, it's okay to talk to people —

ABRAHAM

Who? Everyone in my life, it'd get back to my dad —

LEO

A therapist?

ABRAHAM

(gives him a look)

Man.

LEO

No therapists. Got it.

ABRAHAM

It's okay.

I can take care of myself.

It is what it is.

They pass the joint.

ABRAHAM

... I'm moving out from my father's apartment end of the month.

LEO

Oh?

ABRAHAM

(nods)

It's time.

A friend on the other side of Bushwick has a sublet.

LEO

Cool man.

ABRAHAM

I'm thinking that —

The week before I move...

...

I'll take him to our favorite deli.

Pastrami on rye with mustard. The works.

Then I'll bring him to our temple.

Pray with him.

And then —

there's this bench outside, looking out at the park.

There are these azalea trees out there, he loves looking at...

...

I'll sit him down.

And I'll tell him.

Tell him everything.

...

Tell him I need this distance but I'll always be his son.

That his biological son really is a good guy.

That I'll always love him.

...

That's the plan.

...

I know this boundary has been unfair to you, Leo, but...

...

Will you grant me that time?

LEO

...

...

... Okay.

They nod at each other.

They pass the joint.

Leo looks over off-stage, towards the broken washing machine.

End of Part One.

Part Two

12

The Caruso apartment.

Carmela sits at the table, hunched over a pad of paper, which she frantically scribbles on.

The front door opens and Blake enters.

BLAKE

Honey —

CARMELA

Blakey, honey — I'm putting together the menu for dinner tomorrow night —

BLAKE

Carm, I have news —

CARMELA

Yeah, lemme just finish this thought. So we're doing the carbonara for main course, which is fine but now that I'm making it for five instead of four I need to scale up the recipe, and I know what you're gonna say, we always have leftovers, the recipe for four will work for five, but I don't wanna take that chance — plus we love having leftovers, leftovers are part of the whole deal — so I'm gonna need to factor that in to prep time. I was already planning on leaving the office early, taking a half day, so I can come home and prep the arancini so it's ready for our happy hour at five, that's when Abraham said he was coming, but I also need to swing by the deli and pick up the cannolis, and I know we're becoming, y'know, stereotypes of Italians but I figured for Abraham's first family meal, we'd serve the family hits. Basically what I'm trying to say is that tomorrow is gonna be crazy for me, it's gonna be a crazy afternoon, so I need you to delegate the cheese plate to Elena and take care of the wine on your own, take ownership of it, you don't need to run anything by me because I'mma have a whole lot else on my plate.

(breathes)

'Kay?

BLAKE

... Yeah. Honey.

Of course, that's fine.

I was planning on doing all that anyway.

CARMELA

Okay.

Thanks honey, I know I'm going crazy —

BLAKE

Carmela, there's another case.

CARMELA

...

What?

BLAKE

There's another case.

Against this same hospital.

These girls out in Bay Ridge were swapped, like two years before Leo.

They found out the same way we did, also recently.

Jim heard about it today, they're filing the suit next week through Steinway Shaw.

CARMELA

(stunned)

Jesus. What do we — what does that mean?

BLAKE

Well so, here's the thing.

That case, they're going to the press at the same time — the day they file the suit.

And Jim wants us to join that article. In the Times.

Talk about the pattern, the systemic problems, say that our suit is forthcoming.

I spoke with the reporter today, she's in, she said she wants to speak to us this weekend.

So we need to get our ducks in a row.

CARMELA

Ducks, okay —

BLAKE

This thing is about to go turbo-speed, honey.

We need an answer from Abraham.

Whether he's in or he's out.

We need to ask him tomorrow, at dinner.

CARMELA

Tomorrow?

BLAKE

We can't wait.

There's a lot of strategy, Jim says, that's contingent on having Abraham on board.

CARMELA

I've — never even met his father, Blake.

Can we save it 'til another time? Even the day after?

I don't want to ambush him.

BLAKE

There was a time for us to take this slow, but that moment has passed.

These things have windows, you know they do.

We have to ride the coattails of this other case to get the maximum payout.

CARMELA

Payout.

BLAKE

Yes.

We need to get Abraham on board, tomorrow.

CARMELA

I just don't think tomorrow is the best time.

BLAKE

It's the only time.

The reporter wants to talk this weekend, I said that.

CARMELA

I'm not talking about months, I'm talking about days.

It's a family dinner, his first family dinner —

BLAKE

You don't have to say anything, I'll make the pitch —

CARMELA

We can't overwhelm him —

BLAKE

How is it overwhelming? Leo already told him we're doing this, right?

CARMELA

Blake. Listen to me.

I'm just saying he needs to come to trust us.

We can't harass him, his first time meeting the family.

BLAKE

Jesus — harass? Is that what you think I'm—?

If his answer's no, his answer's no, and we move on — but it won't be no.

Why would he say no to this? It's the most slam dunk of slam dunk cases.

Every case like this settles for a ton.

CARMELA

It's not about the *money*.

BLAKE

Why are you making me sound like some callous jerk?

CARMELA

I'm not!

BLAKE

You are! Ambush, overwhelm, harass?

CARMELA

This is delicate, honey, it's *raw* —

BLAKE

Why am I the only one who seems to care about this?
 Why do *I* of all people have the biggest sense of urgency about this suit?
 Why am I doing all this?

CARMELA

I really don't know, Blake!

BLAKE

...

CARMELA

...

BLAKE

What is that supposed to mean?

CARMELA

...

BLAKE

...

CARMELA

Honey.

You've taken the lead on this, and that's great.
 It's helpful, it'll be good, in the long run.

...

But you're not my lawyer.

You're my husband.

Not my lawyer.

...

Can you talk to me like a husband?

Please?

BLAKE

I

feel like I'm talking to you like I always talk.

CARMELA

That's what I'm saying, Blake.

That's the exact point I'm trying to make.

BLAKE

(offended)

What.

That I'm some —
 unfeeling legal robot?

CARMELA

(*careful, emotional*)

No.

Honey.

No.

You are an incredible

incredible

man.

You are responsible

and loving

and sweet

and exactly what I needed in my life when we met.

A companion.

For these, our waning years.

BLAKE

Don't say that —

CARMELA

I know all of it is still new to you.

This kind of companionship —

I know that it's not something you wanted for a long time.

It's a change, a big change.

BLAKE

Because I fell in love with you.

CARMELA

And I know it.

And I know this is how you express your love.

This

expertise

this skillset, you've built up over decades.

Knowing the answer, being certain of the answer.

That's how you express your love.

...

But I am certain of *nothing* right now.

And you haven't really acknowledged that.

You want me to be *better*.

BLAKE

What, you think I haven't been there for you enough?

I may not be your lawyer, but I'm also not your therapist.

I've given you my life, I can't give you anything more.

CARMELA

You're not listening to me.

BLAKE

I don't know how else to help you!

*That lands with the weight of a sad truth.
They stand there.*

CARMELA

I'm trying to tell you

that

you don't need to know how to help me, Blake.

I'm trying to tell you

that

I want you to be able to sit with me, and say nothing.

And not have an answer.

I want to be able to tell you

that I feel like

someone has

drilled into me

removed something

core to me

to who I am

and everything I thought was solid

has disintegrated

and

and

and

(composes herself)

I was so close to death. That heart attack.

I would've never known. About any of this.

...

And time —

it's slipping away.

And I know you'll say that means we need to move quickly but

I need one night.

With this person I gave birth to.

And after that night...

We will build something solid again.

And we'll do it together.

And we'll find justice

and retribution

and compensation, all that legalese.

But I'm begging you

to let it be a fucking mess for just one more night.

Let's wade through that shit together, okay?

BLAKE

...

(looks down)

... Elena still doesn't like me.

CARMELA

...

BLAKE

...

CARMELA

Honey...?

BLAKE

Gives me weird looks, makes weird comments.

God, y'know, I think she hates me. Doesn't trust me, at the very least.

...

I want to belong with you, Carm. I want to belong in your family.

But it's been a few years now and I still don't know that I do.

And I feel

too old

to feel like I don't belong.

CARMELA

(heartbroken)

Oh, Blakey...

BLAKE

Will Abraham? Will Abraham belong?

Because you're all

Pizza Bagels

will he feel like he belongs quicker than me?

CARMELA

...

BLAKE

... We'll have our beautiful mess of a night tomorrow.

Make your son feel welcome.

But after that, as we're building our solid thing...

We need to have some honest conversations about how to do the same for me.

CARMELA

...

Blake turns to go to the bedroom.

Stops. Turns back.

BLAKE

I suppose this is what they mean

in the vows

about commitment.

The good times and bad.

CARMELA

... Yeah.

BLAKE

(smiles to himself)

Huh.

I get it now.

He leaves.

Carmela stands there.

13

Leo's apartment.

Leo sits on the couch.

Clanking off-stage.

LEO

How's it looking?

JOSEPH *(off)*

How did this pipe fall out?

LEO

No idea!

Clanking.

Leo sits there.

He picks up a book sitting with all of Joseph's stuff.

LEO

What's this you're reading?

JOSEPH *(off)*

What?

LEO

What are you reading?

JOSEPH *(off)*

Do you know Hebrew?

LEO

Um. No.

Joseph comes in. Wiping sweat off his brow.

JOSEPH

It's a pocket Torah.

LEO

Oh. I should probably recognize that.

JOSEPH

I'm almost done over there, can I have a glass of water?

LEO

Course.

Leo exits to the kitchen.

Joseph looks around at Leo's apartment.

JOSEPH

It's a nice place.

Leo comes back with a glass of water.

LEO

Thanks.

Yeah. I like it.

Joseph sips. They stand there.

LEO

So you just, um —

Read the Torah?

JOSEPH

(smiles)

Well, not exclusively.

It's the holiday coming up, remember?

LEO

Hah. Yeah.

...

I have no idea what Sukkot is, to be honest.

Like, I *know*, I went to Sunday School.

I know the, uh — the huts.

JOSEPH

Sukkah.

LEO

(embarrassed)

Yeah. But beyond that?

(makes a vague gesture indicating "nothing")

Yeah.

(a unconscious admission)

I'm a bad Jew.

JOSEPH

... Wanna know?
What Sukkot is all about?

LEO

Yeah. Sure.

Joseph takes the Torah.

JOSEPH

I'm rereading the book of Kohelet before services.
Familiar at all?

LEO

No. Sorry.

JOSEPH

Don't apologize.
It's an odd section of our scripture.
Very pessimistic. Dour.
It begins with the line —
havel havalim bakol havel.
Which is most like —
"Futility of futilities, everything is futile."

LEO

Woah.
That's — bleak.

JOSEPH

Believe it or not, I take a lot of comfort in that line.

LEO

Oh sure.
Really?

JOSEPH

(pointing)
Look at these two words.
havel
and
bakol.
The word for "futility" and the word for "everything".
havel is *bei, beit, lamed.*
bakol is *bei, kof, lamed.*
One letter different.

LEO

Hm.

JOSEPH

But not even that.

beit and *kef* are one pen-stroke different.

One little smudge,

between “everything” and “futile”.

Fullness and emptiness. Happiness and sadness.

...

Seeing that veil, and celebrating it.

That’s what Sukkot is all about.

That we’re all *close* to the void, but we’re not in it.

We’re here.

We’re *here*.

And we’re closer to each other
than we’ll ever know.

...

You see?

LEO

Yeah.

I like that.

JOSEPH

I do too.

My rabbi explained it to me in that way after my wife passed.

LEO

... I’m sorry for your loss.

JOSEPH

Thank you.

It was nearly thirty years ago.

A moment.

Leo, doing some math in his head.

JOSEPH

I’ll finish up.

Almost done.

Before he leaves —

LEO

How did she pass?

...

Woah. I’m sorry.

That just came out.

JOSEPH

It’s okay.

LEO

You don't have to tell me.

JOSEPH

It's okay.

She passed giving the world one final gift.

Our son, Abraham.

LEO

...

...

She died in childbirth.

JOSEPH

...

(nods solemnly)

If you keep working with us, you'll meet Abraham.

He actually does the pick-up and drop-off more often than I do these days.

Joseph turns and gets back to work.

Leo, in shock.

14

The Caruso apartment.

Abraham and Elena.

Picked-through cheeseboard and wine in front of them.

A long silence starts the scene.

ELENA

... You ever wanted a sibling? Growing up?

ABRAHAM

Sometimes.

You definitely get a little sick of it, hanging out with your dad all the time.

ELENA

Yeah. Totally.

ABRAHAM

...

ELENA

...

ABRAHAM

How about you and Leo?

ELENA

What, did I ever wish I *didn't* have a sibling?

ABRAHAM

(smiles)

No, just, do you and he get along?

ELENA

Yeah, y'know, we do.

I mean, he can drive me fuckin' crazy, but...

He's not bad.

ABRAHAM

He seems like a good guy.

ELENA

He is, he is.

ABRAHAM

...

Carmela tells me you go back and forth to Philadelphia often.

ELENA

Yeah, I work there. I do consulting.

ABRAHAM

Who's your client?

ELENA

Ready for this?

(leans in, dramatic)

"I can't tell you."

They laugh.

ABRAHAM

You enjoy it.

ELENA

Love it.

You're basically being paid to be smart.

It's a lot of work but I have a blast with it.

ABRAHAM

Sounds great.

ELENA

How about you? You enjoy what you do?

ABRAHAM

I do.

Everyone needs their clothes laundered.

ELENA

Amen.

ABRAHAM

My dad always says,

“If we make people’s lives even one percent easier, that’s a good day.”

ELENA

It’s a mitzvah.

ABRAHAM

Well, maybe not a mitzvah, we do charge people.

ELENA

Hah. Sure.

ABRAHAM

But yeah, that’s the spirit.

Be there for people.

Give them one less thing to worry about.

...

I’m gonna take over for my dad one day.

ELENA

Yeah?

ABRAHAM

I think so.

Will have to hire some other employees at some point.

Change our outreach strategy.

...

There’s a lot I want to change.

ELENA

Turn it into a laundry empire?

ABRAHAM

Something like that.

ELENA

I could help. Turn it into an empire.

ABRAHAM

Yeah? With your consulting skills?

ELENA

Hell yeah. I mean, how difficult could it be?

Silence. Abraham turns away slightly.

ELENA

Shit. I'm sorry, I didn't mean that.

ABRAHAM

It's okay.

ELENA

I was trying to make a dumb joke.

I know you work hard as fuck.

You definitely work harder than me.

God, that was so stupid.

ABRAHAM

It's okay.

Carmela enters, holding a massive bowl of carbonara.

CARMELA

Dinner time!

Abraham and Elena come around to the table.

ABRAHAM

Smells good.

CARMELA

Surprise, Abraham! Secret entrée is the famous Caruso carbonara.

Do you have a specific place you want to sit?

ABRAHAM

Um.

Don't think so.

CARMELA

Elena and Leo have sat in the same spots since they were babies.

Elena there, Leo there.

ELENA

He can sit wherever he wants.

CARMELA

Okay okay, just asking. Is Leo still not here?

ELENA

He's still not here.

CARMELA

Can you call him?

ELENA

I already did, he didn't respond.

CARMELA

Well, don't you have him on Find My Friends?

ELENA

He made me disconnect it last time I stalked him.

CARMELA

"Stalked him."

Abraham, we must be coming off like total psychos.

ABRAHAM

No, I don't —

CARMELA

BLAKE!

BLAKE (*off*)

Yeah! One sec!

CARMELA

Elena, can you call him again?

The carbonara's gonna get cold.

ELENA

It just came out of the kitchen, mom, I really think it's fine —

CARMELA

Ellie?

Please?

ELENA

Okay. Okay.

Elena goes off to make a call.

CARMELA

I'm sorry, Abraham.

ABRAHAM

(bashful, overwhelmed)

It's really — fine.

CARMELA

Do you and your family ever have meals like this?

ABRAHAM

Sometimes. Shabbats, at the synagogue, can get pretty —

CARMELA

Rowdy?

ABRAHAM

Well, that's one way of putting it.

Wine flows, that's for sure.

CARMELA

God. Yeah. Tell me about it.

ABRAHAM

(noticing something)

Hey Carmela, what's this meat?

CARMELA

In the carbonara? Guanciale, top-shelf.

(winks)

I have a guy.

She laughs. Abraham doesn't. He hesitates.

Carmela furrows her brow.

ABRAHAM

Um. It's okay. I can eat around it.

(off her look)

I, um. I keep kosher?

CARMELA

(suddenly dismayed)

Oh.

Oh no.

ABRAHAM

It's fine, I'll —

CARMELA

I'm an idiot.

ABRAHAM

No, please —

CARMELA

I'm an idiot.

I just wanted this to be special.

Blake enters.

BLAKE

I am so sorry.

I have this colleague on Tokyo time, it's a whole thing —

(noticing Carmela's upset)

Everything okay?

ABRAHAM

Everything's fine, I'll just —

Elena re-enters.

ELENA

He didn't answer.

CARMELA

(rubbing her face)

Shit. Shit shit shit.

Okay, now I'm worried.

ELENA

Don't be worried, mom —

BLAKE

He's probably just running late.

ELENA

He's actually a pretty prompt person, Blake.

CARMELA

Elena — get off Blake's back, okay?

ELENA

I am not on his back.

CARMELA

Just relax.

ELENA

I didn't say anything!

BLAKE

Honey, it's fine.

ELENA

Can we just sit?

CARMELA

We're not sitting until we figure out what happened to Leo.

The front door opens.

Everyone turns.

Leo enters.

LEO

... Hi.

ELENA

You're late.

LEO

(re: the food)

Seems like I'm just on time.

CARMELA

We had a whole happy hour and wine and everything.

LEO

Well, sorry.

But now I'm here.

He comes over.

Vibes are off.

Leo slaps Abraham on the shoulder.

LEO

How ya doing, Abe.

He sits.

After an awkward beat, everyone else does too.

Carmela begins serving with a shaky smile.

Everyone's feeling tense, off.

CARMELA

Alright, Abraham, let me get you a chunk without much pork.

(awkward laugh and smile towards the others)

Dumb me, should've...

(moving on quickly)

This is my grandmother's carbonara recipe.

Family favorite.

ABRAHAM

(self-conscious but trying)

Grandmother... married to Luigi?

CARMELA

Hey! Good memory!

ELENA
Who's Luigi?

CARMELA
Your great-grandfather! You know this!

ELENA
I did not know my great-grandfather was named Luigi.

Leo chuckles, too loud, not making eye contact with anyone.

CARMELA
Well, I don't know what you two are on about because I've definitely told you about my grandpa.

*She finishes serving. They all dig in.
Leo stares at his plate as he eats, stewing.
Silence...
Abraham is very overwhelmed but keeps trying to make an effort.*

ABRAHAM
Really delicious, Carmela.

CARMELA
(relieved)
Oh thank you. Thank you, dear. We can't get enough of carbonara.
Kids, how often did we eat it growing up — once a month? Twice?

ELENA
Something like that.

CARMELA
What'd you say that one time, Elena —
That this was the best carbonara you've ever had, outside of Rome?

ELENA
Hah. Yeah, um — when I was studying abroad in Florence,
I got carbonara at some hole in the wall on a weekend trip to Rome.
And, all due respect to the family recipe,
but that was the best one I've had.

CARMELA
I'll take number two in the world, I really will!
You ever been to Italy, Abraham?

ABRAHAM
No, I've actually only ever left the country once.

CARMELA
Oh yeah? Where to?

ABRAHAM

Israel. I spent a summer there.

A brief, slightly awkward silence.

Everyone takes a bite of food.

CARMELA

That's a beautiful country.

ABRAHAM

You've been?

CARMELA

Oh yeah, I worked a case there for years.

There was a bank based out of Tel Aviv
that the DOJ was looking into, my firm was defending them.

I mean, just as a place, just as a country —
Beautiful.

ABRAHAM

Absolutely. I spent my summer on a kibbutz.

Working a farm.

It was magical.

Another silence.

Everyone eats.

Abraham doesn't quite know how to react to the awkwardness.

ABRAHAM

Elena, have you ever been? Israel?

ELENA

Um.

Yeah.

I went on Birthright.

ABRAHAM

What did you think?

ELENA

(evasive)

Yeah —

it was — good.

Met some cool people.

Had a good time.

Silence.

They eat.

ABRAHAM

See, because I actually have a lot of problems with Birthright.

ELENA

(relieved)

Ohmygod, me too.

I didn't want to get into all that.

ABRAHAM

For all they claim, they're not actually encouraging a connection to the homeland.

Birthrighters are tourists.

You don't get to truly understand a country by spending one week there.

ELENA

(beat, careful)

Yeah.

Sure.

ABRAHAM

Was that your experience too?

ELENA

...

Um.

No?

I was talking more the

um, propaganda they foisted / on us —

CARMELA

Elena —

ELENA

— but now we're wading into dangerous territory,

old arguments between my mother and I,

so maybe we should change the topic.

CARMELA

Yes, please.

They eat.

Abraham can't help himself —

ABRAHAM

I think we might agree on the propaganda part more than you think.

ELENA

... How so.

ABRAHAM

Well, I mean, Elena —

I get it.

This vision Birthright paints of Israel —

As this perfect land?

No. It's a country.

Like any country.

And it is by no means a perfect country,

with by no means perfect leadership,

but people on the ground there are complicated

and across the ideological spectrum

and many are working for peace.

And I really think if you spend more time there, like your mother,

be amongst your people —

You'd see the complications I'm talking about.

ELENA

...

Abraham, no offense and I honestly don't want to talk about this, but —

There is no chance I ever go back to Israel.

There is no chance I give money to that economy.

CARMELA

Ellie, stop.

ELENA

I mean, I'm trying to not even get my *tax dollars* sent there.

But we should really stop talking about this.

Silence. They eat.

Abraham stabs a piece of guanciale. Flicks it to the side.

Again, he can't help himself.

ABRAHAM

... I just think that's a bit short-sighted.

ELENA

Oh yeah?

ABRAHAM

Without international support, Israel will be a sitting duck.

Hostile forces on all sides.

For all its flaws, is that what we want?

ELENA

Hm.

I wonder if anyone else in that area knows what it's like to have hostile forces on all sides.

CARMELA

Abraham, can you pass the —

ABRAHAM

Look, to be clear. I'm pro-two-state-solution.

ELENA

Sure you are.

ABRAHAM

I just don't think sympathy for what's been done to the Palestinians should negate the complexity of the Israeli people and our history. That's all I'm saying.

ELENA

I'm not pulling stuff out of my ass here.

ABRAHAM

I never said you were.

ELENA

I understand the complexity.

I'm not making any grand proclamation about solving the Middle East.

I'm just saying, as an American Jew, I don't want my tax dollars sent to Israel.

ABRAHAM

Can you accept that you're in the minority on that amongst American Jews?

ELENA

No, I can't, Abraham, because you say Israel isn't a perfect country, but American Jews are certainly raised to believe it is.

ABRAHAM

But how is that the fault of the average Israeli?

Whose family has been there for generations?

Why does that human being not deserve our support, to create change from inside?

ELENA

I didn't even want to talk about this.

ABRAHAM

I really think it's important for people like us to talk about this.

CARMELA

I agree, but —

ABRAHAM

We in our position have to be able to denounce the government while believing in the Zionist goal and supporting the individuals on the ground.

BLAKE

(can't help himself either)

Individuals on the ground don't want a two-state solution, Abraham.

CARMELA

Blake.

BLAKE

And believe me, I know my history.

Settlement expansion has happened under all Israeli governments, right and left.

Domination and eradication have been the ultimate goal since at least sixty-seven.

ABRAHAM

So what — we just give up?

Israel doesn't deserve to exist?

Let all the Jews be killed?

CARMELA

No one's / saying that —

ELENA

Why are you getting so worked up?

ABRAHAM

You are all so proud of your Italian heritage.

Italy also turned sharply towards the right.

You calling your senators about that?

Marching in the streets?

Does Italy no longer deserve to exist?

ELENA

(shaking her head)

Not even remotely the same thing.

ABRAHAM

Why not?

Because one country has all the Jews?

LEO

(finally looking up)

— So when exactly are we going to tell your dad, Abraham?

About me?

Silence.

That stops the fight dead.

Everyone looks at Leo.

LEO

Oh yeah, has he not mentioned that yet, everyone?
He hasn't even *told* his dad about me.
His dad still thinks Abraham's his son.

ABRAHAM

(seriously thrown)

I, uh —

Leo, like I said, I still need a bit more time.

LEO

Yeah yeah, end of the month, I heard ya.
But what day.
Specifically.

...

Like, if I were gonna put it in my calendar.

...

I'd like a sense of that, I think it's only fair.

CARMELA

Leo.

LEO

What?

Isn't it a fair question?

ABRAHAM

Look, Leo, I'm not —

Is everything okay?

It's gonna be a difficult conversation, it's —

LEO

Because I'm not Jewish enough, mom.

That's what Abraham said.

It's gonna be a difficult conversation because I'm not Jewish enough.

We're not Jewish enough.

CARMELA

Leo, that's enough.

LEO

C'mon, you got up my ass when I made a *joke* about them being more Jewish than me!
He said it! For real!

CARMELA

Leo. Chill.

A horrible silence.

LEO

(to Carmela)

Did he tell you that
I killed my mother?

Another horrible silence.

LEO

Yeah. She died in childbirth.

...

Because he sure as shit didn't tell me.

...

Cancer, man?

Silence.

Abraham is frozen.

Everyone is.

ABRAHAM

... Leo, I —

...

It's the worst pain.

...

I didn't know
how to give that pain to you.

LEO

Yeah, well then, you should've done a better job getting your story straight with your dad.

ABRAHAM

...

... What does that mean?

LEO

It means that I needed to get my fucking laundry done.

Abraham stares at him.

ABRAHAM

Did you tell him.

LEO

Who gives a shit if I did.

ABRAHAM

Did you tell him, Leo.

LEO

... No.

*Abraham gets up and storms out of the apartment.
The door slams behind him.
Silence...*

LEO
(to his mother)
You did know.
Didn't you, Carmela.

CARMELA
...
... Leo —

*Leo stands loudly and goes out onto the balcony.
Elena, Carmela, and Blake sit there.*

*Carmela starts breathing heavier.
She grasps her chest.*

CARMELA
Um.
Guys? Guys —

BLAKE
Carmela.

ELENA
Mom?

15
*The Auerbach laundry room.
Joseph is working, laundering, when —
Abraham bursts in.*

JOSEPH
What are you doing here?
I thought you were out with friends tonight.

*Abraham is stoic, but is finding it hard to breathe.
He stares at his dad.*

JOSEPH
Abe?

ABRAHAM
I took a test.

JOSEPH
What?

ABRAHAM

I took a test.

JOSEPH

What / test?

ABRAHAM

I'm not yours.

I'm sorry.

JOSEPH

What are you talking about?

ABRAHAM

I love you

and

and

and

I'll always be your son.

But

I'm not yours.

JOSEPH

Abraham, come here.

ABRAHAM

I'm not who you think I am.

I don't know who I am anymore.

If I'm not mom's gift,

if I'm no one's gift,

then — who am I?

JOSEPH

Please, Abraham — sit.

ABRAHAM

If I told you, if I made it real —

Everything. Who I am would not longer be —

(hyperventilating)

I'm trying to believe.

I'm so sorry, I'm trying to, but —

I've never belonged here. But I don't belong there either.

I don't belong anywhere.

JOSEPH

Abraham, you're scaring me —

ABRAHAM

(starting to get manic)

Tehillim 37:23.

“Man’s steps are established by God.”

Everything that happened was supposed to happen.

Everything

everything that —

everything

everything —

Joseph comes over and hugs Abraham.

Abraham doesn’t hug back, his hands limp at his side.

But it shuts him up.

*And when he relaxes a little, Joseph gently strokes his head
and sits him down in a chair.*

Joseph kneels next to him and waits for him to speak.

ABRAHAM

... I’m not your son.

JOSEPH

...

ABRAHAM

Biologically. I found out last year.

Got my DNA tested after a fight we had about mom.

JOSEPH

Abe.

That’s ridiculous, of course —

ABRAHAM

And then a few weeks back

I get an email.

That my DNA matched someone new in the database.

And I learned that

in the chaos after mom’s death

there was another mother also having a difficult birth.

And she survived

and someone got confused

and we were swapped.

There’s a long, horrible silence.

Joseph is inscrutable.

Then —

He gets up, goes over to his work station.

Folds laundry.

ABRAHAM

Dad?

JOSEPH

I have a lot of work to do tonight.

ABRAHAM

Dad...

JOSEPH

I was already planning on doing it on my own, since you were out.

ABRAHAM

Dad, please...

I'm trying to tell you something —

JOSEPH

I don't want to talk about this.

I don't know why you're saying this to me.

ABRAHAM

I'm telling you the truth...

JOSEPH

I told you not to run away, Abraham.

ABRAHAM

That's — not what this / is —

JOSEPH

You tell me you're not my son and then you tell me that's not running away?

ABRAHAM

I'm not running away, Dad!

JOSEPH

You're moving out of our neighborhood, you're working on the Sabbath, then this —

If you want to leave the community behind, just do it.

I won't give you permission if that's what you're looking for.

ABRAHAM

I don't want to leave the community behind!

But we have to accept the truth!

JOSEPH

...

ABRAHAM

...

JOSEPH

You think a DNA test tells me who's my kin?

Do you think that little of me?

ABRAHAM

...

JOSEPH

...

This is an excuse.

For something else you're feeling.

Say it to me, or give me the room, please.

Joseph gets back to work.

Abraham stands there, heartbroken.

He stares at his dad.

But Joseph doesn't look back.

ABRAHAM

Dad...

Joseph looks at him.

Is he going to say something?

Abraham doesn't.

So Joseph gets back to work.

...

Abraham's phone rings.

He goes to a private space. Answers.

Leo appears, elsewhere.

He's distraught.

ABRAHAM

Leo —

LEO

Mom's in the hospital.

ABRAHAM

What?

LEO

Her heart, she's back in the —

(suddenly overcome with emotion)

You need to come here now.

Black.
Noise.
Shouting. Crowds.
The chug-chug-chug of a train.
Laughter.
The droning beep of a heart monitor.
Joseph's voice reciting the Mourner's Kaddish.
A cacophony, a wall of sound.
The world falling apart under its own weight.
The soundscape grows, louder and louder, until —

16

Morning.
A hospital room.
All the noise we hear now is that droning beep of a heart monitor.
Carmela lies in bed, asleep.
But she's alive.

Leo, in a plush chair in the corner of the room. Also asleep.

Elena and Blake sit side by side in plastic chairs near the foot of the bed.
Staring into space, exhausted.

ELENA

...

BLAKE

...

ELENA

(quiet)

What's, um —

what's the name of the procedure she had again.

BLAKE

... Cardioversion.

It, um

treats arrhythmia.

She had it last time too.

ELENA

Okay.

Okay.

BLAKE

...

She was only under about an hour last night.

Short acting sedative.

But she still might be a little groggy whenever she's up.

ELENA

...

BLAKE

...

They said last time — it's a safe procedure.

The cardioversion.

Most people, no problems.

ELENA

...

BLAKE

Obviously not something you want to do often, though.

ELENA

...

BLAKE

...

Elena looks at Blake.

Sees he's emotional.

ELENA

...

I appreciated the

um

back-up.

Last night. At dinner.

BLAKE

(smiles tearily)

Well, y'know.

ELENA

... We're both Comrades, huh.

BLAKE

(manages a chuckle)

Hey, I mean.

You talk a big game.

But I was a Comrade back in the days when it meant something.

ELENA

(smiles)

Fair enough.

BLAKE

I know I don't seem it. A radical. Fighting the good fight...
But — it's what I did, back in the day.

...

I dunno. It all calcifies, eventually.

They sit there.

ELENA

What's gonna happen with the case? Against the hospital.

BLAKE

...

... Not up to me.

We'll get some money, whenever they decide to do it.

They sit there.

Blake's leg bounces, up and down.

BLAKE

Y'know. Um.

This is the reason.

ELENA

Hm?

BLAKE

The reason I didn't...

Want this. For so long.

Marriage...

...

This

fear.

ELENA

... She's gonna be okay, Blake.

BLAKE

Yeah. But that's not even what I'm really talking about.

It's more that... I always felt like...

I'd be intruding on other people's lives. By being around.

That'd I'd always just be
making things harder.

ELENA

You're not intruding on our lives.

BLAKE

I sometimes feel like I am with you, Elena.

ELENA

...

...

(nods thoughtfully, then)

At least you care.

Some of her previous boyfriends?

Not to mention my dad?

They didn't care about her. Not really.

You care. You try to make things better.

BLAKE

Solve things.

ELENA

Yeah.

I have that same instinct too.

BLAKE

I'm not good with uncertainty.

ELENA

Me neither.

They sit there.

BLAKE

It's a thin line, I think.

Between

being an intruder

and

being

family.

Elena nods.

They sit there.

The door opens and Abraham enters.

Holding a tray of coffees.

Elena and Blake smile with thanks at him as he hands them each of a cup.

The noise causes Carmela to stir.

CARMELA

Leo...

BLAKE

Honey.

Hey there honey.

ELENA
Hi mom...

*Blake and Elena go to her.
But she's looking right at Abraham.*

CARMELA
Leo...?

They look over at Leo, still asleep in the corner.

ABRAHAM
Um.
No, Carmela —
It's Abraham.

CARMELA
Leo, come here.

BLAKE
Carm, that's Abraham.

CARMELA
Have him come here...

*She raises her hand, points directly at Abraham.
No mistaking it.
So Abraham walks over, and grabs her hand.*

CARMELA
It's Friday, isn't it, Leo?

ABRAHAM
That's — right, Carmela.

CARMELA
The Sabbath...

ABRAHAM
... Yeah. That's right.

CARMELA
We should
do Shabbat
tonight.

ABRAHAM
...

CARMELA

I know we haven't done it in a
long time.
But I just
want Abraham
to feel welcome...

ABRAHAM

...

CARMELA

They probably won't
let me out of here
today but
we could do it here.

...

Ask Abraham if
he wants to come tonight
here, to the hospital
and do Shabbat with us.

*Abraham doesn't know how to respond.
Leo finally stirs. Watches...*

CARMELA

... Will you ask him?

ABRAHAM

Yeah. I'll ask him.

CARMELA

I'm sorry, Leo.
About lying to you...

*Now Carmela sees Leo watching.
She looks to Abraham, confused.*

CARMELA

oh...
oh...

ABRAHAM

It's okay, Carmela. It's okay —

*Carmela waves him off, shifts, and goes back to sleep.
A beat, then —*

LEO

Ask me what?

ABRAHAM

Um. Shabbat. Tonight.

...

If I'm welcome.

Leo stares at him.

Elena and Blake look at each other.

BLAKE

I'm gonna find a
toothbrush or something.

ELENA

Same.

They smile at Leo and Abraham and leave with their coffees.

Leo and Abraham.

Abraham hands Leo a coffee.

LEO

Thanks.

ABRAHAM

Yeah. Course.

Thanks again for calling last night.

LEO

She'd

want you here.

They both look at a sleeping Carmela.

ABRAHAM

... Leo —

LEO

No. Dude.

I can't.

Not right now.

I just can't.

Abraham nods.

A beat.

ABRAHAM

If we have some time today.

Do you wanna, um.

Meet me somewhere?

Leo looks at him.

Lights shift.

Carmela stays on stage in her hospital bed, sleeping.

But now we are in —

17

The cemetery in Queens.

The headstone.

Abraham stands there. Leo walks over.

They stand in front of the grave.

They stare at it, for a long, long moment.

LEO

What do you do here.

Usually.

ABRAHAM

... My dad and I

we clean it.

Sometimes he says a few prayers.

LEO

I can help clean it.

ABRAHAM

He and I have a specific routine. Materials.

Don't worry about it.

LEO

...

Leo is suddenly finding it a bit hard to breathe.

LEO

(touches his own chest)

You've

had this feeling

for your entire life?

Beat.

Abraham nods.

LEO

I didn't know

I was capable

of this kind of feeling.

ABRAHAM

You get used to it, after a while.

LEO

Goddamn, man.

ABRAHAM

It's hard not to feel guilt.

But you shouldn't.

LEO

But I do.

ABRAHAM

You didn't ask to be born.

My mother wanted to have children.

Desperately, my dad tells me.

She would've rather you lived than her.

LEO

... I know I should've respected your boundaries.

...

... But you should've told me, man.

Beat. Abraham nods in agreement.

A long, long silence.

Leo feels an urge within him.

He reaches out

and touches the tombstone.

He's stoic. No tears.

Just reaching out and touching a slab of rock.

Abraham watches him.

And then he feels a similar urge.

He reaches out

and touches the tombstone also.

They stand there,

both of them with their hands on the tombstone

for a long moment.

And then

Abraham starts crying.

It's like a dam burst. Nothing to everything, all at once.

He drops to his knees.

Everything getting released.

A waterfall of emotion.

*Leo looks down at him.
He's not crying.
Both of their hands still on the tombstone.*

*Leo rubs Abraham's back
as he cries
and cries
and cries.*

*After a long moment of this,
Joseph enters from behind.
He's holding the bag of cleaning equipment
and flowers.*

*He watches Leo and Abraham for a moment.
Finally, Leo notices him out of the corner of his eye.*

LEO
Oh.

*Abraham looks back and jumps to his feet.
Hiding his emotion.*

Leo looks back at him, then looks to Joseph.

LEO
Hi, I'm —

JOSEPH
You.

Leo extends his hand.

LEO
Leo.
I'm
Leo.

*Joseph shakes his hand.
Putting it together.*

JOSEPH
Stein?

LEO
Caruso.
Leo Caruso.

They stare at each other.
Joseph, inscrutable.

Abraham stands apart, trying to stop his tears.
Leo starts to wilt under Joseph's silent gaze.

LEO
 I'll, um —
 Look, I'm.
(beat, centers himself)
 It's okay.
 I don't —
 If you don't want this, it's okay.

JOSEPH
 ...

LEO
 But I just wanted to —
 ...
 Um. Thank you.
 For giving me
 life.
 And —
(turns back to the headstone)
 I'm
 sorry.
 I'm
 really
 sorry.

JOSEPH
 ...

Leo looks back at Abraham.
Who isn't looking at his dad.
Leo looks at Joseph one more time. And exits.

Joseph comes over and stands next to Abraham.
Places the bags on the ground.
Joseph lowers his head and recites the whole Mourner's Kaddish.
From beginning to end.

Abraham just stands there. Not joining in.
Too frozen to move.
Finally, Joseph ends the prayer.

JOSEPH
 Amen.

He looks at Abraham.

JOSEPH

Abe. C'mon.

Abraham finally turns and meets his eye.

Beat. Abraham goes to the bag of cleaning supplies.

And they clean the headstone.

Again, this is a long process.

Maybe a full minute.

After many seconds of working in silence...

ABRAHAM

... I don't know if I

...

believe

...

in the exact same way you do, Dad.

JOSEPH

...

...

... Okay.

ABRAHAM

...

You're not

disappointed in me?

Joseph doesn't respond.

It kills Abraham.

They keep cleaning.

Then, Joseph stops. And Abraham stops.

JOSEPH

... I'm sorry that I —

That I don't

move as fast as

(gestures vaguely around him)

all this.

Son.

Abraham wipes tears from his eyes.

Nods.

Joseph goes back in to keep cleaning. Abraham joins him.

They clean...

They stay on stage, cleaning, as lights shift back to...

18

The hospital room.

Evening now.

Carmela is up and sedatives have fully worn off.

She's a little slow but mostly with it.

Elena and Blake are there, setting up the necessities of a Shabbat seder on a rolling hospital tray.

Electric candles and grape juice on a small white table linen.

ELENA

Guys. Visiting hours end in like ten minutes. Where the fuck is Leo?

CARMELA

Hey. No cursing.

This is a hospital.

ELENA

There's no rule about cursing in hospitals.

BLAKE

C'mon, El/ena —

CARMELA

Just basic respect, Ellie!

ELENA

I'm just saying. He said he'd be twenty minutes.

How long does it take to get a fucking challah in fucking Brooklyn?

Leo enters, challah in hand.

LEO

Um, it takes a bit, Elena,

when you're doing this shit last minute and all the good bakeries are out.

CARMELA

Guys!

There are other people in this hospital and they're all gonna think we're y'know

potty mouths!

LEO

(to Elena)

What is she talking about?

ELENA

No clue.

Leo puts the Challah in a cloth and places it on the tray.

Elena pokes it.

ELENA

Jesus. Leo, where'd you get this from, Whole Foods?

LEO

Um. Yes?

ELENA

It's stale as hell.

LEO

Next time mom throws an impromptu Shabbat for the first time in fifteen fuckin' years, you get the challah, okay?

ELENA

I got the electric candles.

LEO

The authenticity is taking my breath away.

ELENA

Yeah, let's light a fire in the fucking ICU, Leo, real smart —

CARMELA

Leo, have you heard from Abraham?

LEO

I told him to come around now.

(off Carmela's look)

What do you want me to say?

If he comes, he comes.

ELENA

(checking the time)

Let's just do this, they're gonna kick us out.

I already pissed off one nurse earlier today.

CARMELA

No, let's give it five.

He'll come.

LEO

He hasn't returned any of my texts since this morning.

CARMELA

He'll come.

A beat. They wait.

No one enters.

On the other side of the stage —

Abraham and Joseph have finished cleaning and are sitting in front of the headstone.

ABRAHAM

Dad?

Do you maybe wanna do something different for Shabbat tonight?

Joseph looks at Abraham.

The Carusos look at the door.

CARMELA

He'll come, won't he, Leo?

LEO

(looks at her, then)

Yeah.

He'll come.

Everyone, suspended.

Lights snap to black.

After a moment —

Music.

Strings. Mournful, and melancholic.

Lights slowly rise again on —

A tableau.

Leo, Abraham, Carmela, Blake, Elena, and Joseph, around a Shabbat table.

Not in the hospital.

Some liminal space.

Real candles.

A glorious loaf of challah.

Carbonara, guanciale on the side. Cannolis. So much wine.

A full meal.

Joseph recites a prayer we cannot hear.

Everyone's eyes are closed and heads are bowed.

Is this a premonition?

A fantasy?

Music builds and lights grow brighter.

The family is engulfed in light.

The end.