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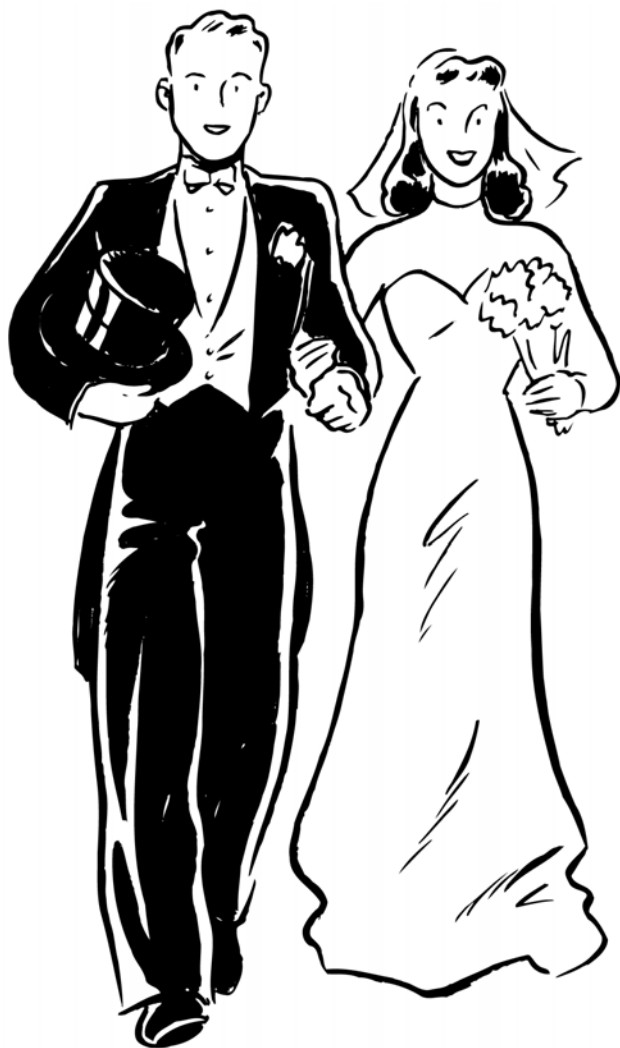
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Family Plays

MAMA, SAY "I Do"

Comedy/Drama by
Samuel Birnkrant



MAMA, SAY "I DO"

"A very funny piece of professional work. Mr. Boroff has announced his intention to take it to New York—where it ought to be a natural—after the run ends here. However, judging from the audience reactions, the trip will be delayed a while." (*Los Angeles Times*)

*Cast: 4m., 3w. Mama, Say "I Do" (under the title A Whisper in God's Ear) premiered at the prestigious Circle Theatre in Los Angeles where it ran for 60 weeks (a record) and then moved to off-Broadway. Later it was revived in Los Angeles for a second and a third production. The story revolves around the efforts of Howard Mayer, a 27-year-old fledgling writer, to marry off his widowed mother, whose possessiveness is about to ruin his own hopes for marriage. A local marriage-broker produces Joseph Goldman, a real diamond in the rough. Mama loves to dance; Goldman thinks dancing is for 16-year-olds. "He and mama find the road back to romance a rocky one and Mr. Birnkrant finds it a perfect pretext for some zestful dialogue," said the *Times* reviewer. Recommended for professional and nonprofessional theatre, including high schools and colleges. A real money-maker for community and dinner theatres. For family audiences. One int. set. Costumes: modern. Approximate running time: 120 minutes. Code: ML6*

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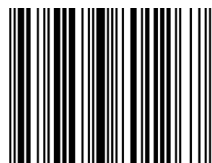
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Mama, Say "I Do"

Mama, Say 'I Do'

(Formerly titled "A Whisper in God's Ear")

A Comedy in Three Acts

By SAMUEL BIRNKRANT

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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SAMUEL BIRNKRANT

UNDER THE TITLE "A WHISPER IN GOD'S EAR"

NEW MATTER © 1977 by SAMUEL BIRNKRANT

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(MAMA, SAY "I DO")

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“Produced by special arrangement with
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

MAMA, SAY 'I DO' was first presented under the title "A Whisper in God's Ear" at the Circle Theatre in Los Angeles from May 20, 1960, to July 16, 1961. It was produced and directed by George Boroff; setting and lighting by Kay D. LicKlider; associate producer, Rita Morrison. The cast was as follows:

Bess Mayer	Lillian Adams
Joseph Goldman	Herman Rudin
Ben Solomon	Shimen Ruskin
Howard Mayer	John Shaner
Phoebe Robbins	Francine York
Sam Lefko	Gene Benton
Ethel Lefko	Raynor Robyns

The play was later produced at the Cricket Theatre in New York City, Gwen Dilman, producer; Ira Cirker, director; sets and lighting by Joseph Stell. The cast was as follows, in order of appearance:

Howard Mayer	Alan Alda
Phoebe Robbins	Linda Seff
Bess Mayer	Lillian Adams
Ben Solomon	Shimen Ruskin
Joseph Goldman	Herman Rudin
Ethel Lefko	Lenore DeKoven
Sam Lefko	Michael Granger

THE CAST

Howard Mayer, *just out of college, a tour-guide for the New York Times*

Phoebe Robbins, *his fiancée*

Bess Mayer, *Howard's mother, a widow*

Ben Solomon, *a matchmaker*

Joseph Goldman, *the match*

Ethel, *Bess's daughter*

Sam, *Ethel's husband, a successful businessman*

Place: The living room of a modest apartment
in a Brooklyn Heights hotel

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: A Friday afternoon in late August, this year

Scene 2: Sunday afternoon, two days later

Scene 3: Friday, five days later

ACT II

Scene 1: Saturday, two weeks later. Six p.m.

Scene 2: The next day

ACT III

Scene 1: The next day, early afternoon

Scene 2: A few hours later

NOTES ON THE PLAY

MAMA, SAY 'I DO' (under the title "A Whisper in God's Ear") received four professional productions prior to publication, premiering at the prestigious Circle Theatre in Los Angeles. Critics unanimously declared it a smash hit:

"A warm, shrewd, mirth-ridden comedy.... It will be a long time before producer-director George Boroff has to look for a new tenant for his playhouse."—Los Angeles *Examiner*. "The humor of this simple little play, bristling with Brooklynese and homely gems from the Talmud, will make friends in Hollywood."—Los Angeles *Mirror*.

"A very funny piece of professional work. Mr. Boroff has announced his intention to take it to New York—where it ought to be a natural—after the run ends here. However, judging from the audience reactions, the trip will be delayed a while."—Los Angeles *Times*.

"A deserved and substantial hit"—Hollywood *Citizen-News*.

The predictions were right; the play ran 60 weeks, a record for the Circle Theatre.

The New York production at the off-Broadway Cricket Theatre received similar raves: "I'm still laughing"—*Journal-American*. "Warm-hearted...amusing"—New York *Times*. "Delightful! Birnkrant has a good ear for dialogue." — *World-Telegram*. "Heartwarming!" — *New Yorker*.

It was revived in Los Angeles for a second and a third production.

"The principal charm in this warm, tender, and very funny comedy lies in Birnkrant's exceptional ear for pungent, often hilarious dialogue," the *Citizen-News* reporter wrote.

"It is alive with observations of human nature, with delicious quirks of the human mind. There is not a superfluous line of dialogue, not a moment of obvious contrivance," said the *Examiner* reviewer.

The story revolves around the efforts of Howard Mayer, a 27-year-old fledgling writer, to marry off his widowed mother, whose possessiveness is about to ruin his own hopes for marriage. A local marriage-broker produces Joseph Goldman, a real diamond in the rough. Mama loves to dance; Goldman thinks dancing is for 16-year-olds. "He and Mama find the road back to romance a rocky one and Mr. Birnkrant finds it a perfect pretext for some zestful dialogue," said the *Times* reviewer.

"Birnkrant has written a fast-moving and enjoyable play," wrote the reviewer for *Theatre News*. "Glancing at the audience during the play's performance, it was apparent that the turns of phrases and the social attitudes expressed were striking a responsive note. People can laugh at themselves, and it is to author Birnkrant's credit that he has held up such a highly polished mirror into which they can look."

Across the gateway of my heart
I wrote "No Thoroughfare,"
But love came laughing by, and cried:
"I enter everywhere."

—Herbert Shipman

PROPERTIES

Set and Trim Props

Sofa, with three throw pillows
 Coffee table or end tables
 Upholstered armchair with loose seat cushions
 Round dining table
 Four dining chairs
 Cupboard
 Desk or telephone table, with chair
 Stereo console
 Side tables, lamps, etc., as needed
 Telephone on telephone table
 Plates, cups, saucers, silverware, glasses, placemats, napkins — in cupboard
 Bottle of blueberry wine, 2 liquor decanters, half-full bottle of brandy, wine & cocktail glasses — cupboard
 Bowl of fruit (including apples) — cupboard
 Phonograph records in stereo cabinet
 Curtains or drapes for window
 Six potted plants on window ledge
 Additional set and trim props as desired

ACT I, Scene 1

2 half-empty cocktail glasses	
2 crumpled cocktail napkins	coffee table
Overflowing ashtray	

Hand Props

ACT I, Scene 1

HOWARD
 Towel
 Notebook and pencil — in hip pocket
 Shoeshine kit — in closet
 PHOEBE
 Handbag
 BESS
 Wristwatch
 Purse
 2 bags of groceries or packages
 Door key
 SOLOMON
 Small package of birdseed
 Photo of stout girl — in coat pocket
 Social service folders—in various coat, vest, and trouser pockets

ACT I, Scene 2

On dining table:
 2 placemats
 2 napkins
 silverware: knives, forks, teaspoons, soup spoons
 2 plates, 2 cups and saucers
 4 tumblers
 bowl of fresh flowers
 pot of tea
 sugar bowl
 cream pitcher
 tray of sliced bread
 Large rhinoceros plant with bright ribbon — obviously a new gift—on window ledge with other plants

ACT I, Scene 3

Ribbon should be removed from rhinoceros plant
 Fresh bouquet of flowers on table — or other decoration replacing fresh flowers of Act I, Scene 2

ACT II, Scene 2

Move telephone chair to dining table

ACT III, Scene 1

Return chair to telephone table

ACT I, Scene 2

HOWARD
 2 bowls of borscht — from kitchen
 BESS
 Tray with bowl of borscht, napkin, silverware — from kitchen
 GOLDMAN
 Box of candy, gift-wrapped
 Cigarette case, with cigarettes
 Lighter

ACT I, Scene 3

BESS
 Needle and thread, sewing basket
 GOLDMAN
 Diamond bracelet in velvet box, gift wrapped
 Paper money
 Cigar lighter
 HOWARD
 Several expensive-looking cigars

ACT II, Scene 1

BESS

Packages

Purse — the diamond bracelet is inside; on second entrance, she wears bracelet

SAM

Electric razor

Jeweler's loupe

SOLOMON

Strudel box

Slice of strudel

GOLDMAN

Pack of cigarettes (high-priced brand) or cigarette case

Lighter

Glass of Brandy

Stapled sheets with typewritten lists of dividends

HOWARD

Door key

Box apparently containing an electric razor — from bedroom

PHOEBE

Handbag — handkerchief inside

ACT II, Scene 2

SAM

Legal document (marriage contract)

Full highball glass (2nd entrance)

HOWARD

Pack of cigarettes

Lighter

ACT III, Scene 2

HOWARD

Door key

Engagement ring — in pocket

SOLOMON

Bird cage with canary

★

COSTUMES

Costumes are modern, befitting the character. Special requirements are as follows:

ACT I, Scene 1

PHOEBE

Tight-fitting yellow sweater; matching skirt or slacks

ACT I, Scene 2

GOLDMAN

Conservative, expensive, but tasteless suit, not well worn. Perhaps a diamond ring and stickpin

ACT II, Scene 2

PHOEBE

A different yellow sweater

2nd entrance — attractive dress

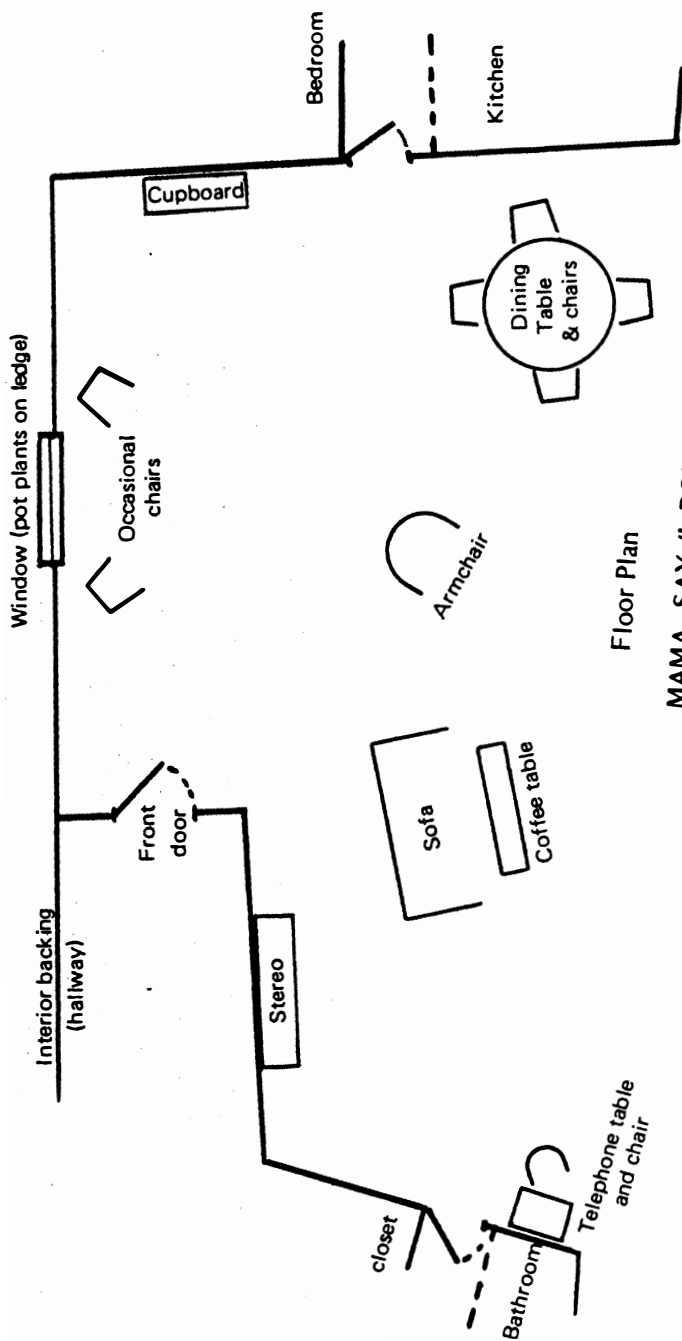
ACT III, Scene 2

GOLDMAN

Gaudy, youthful blazer and slacks, loud sport shirt

Exterior backing

(Perhaps a view of the Brooklyn Bridge)



Floor Plan

MAMA, SAY 'I DO'

PRODUCTION NOTES

Absolutely essential to a successful production of *MAMA, SAY 'I DO'* are warm, zestful characters full of good humor and affection. The author feels that "Bess must not lose her bite and zest; she must not become grim and tragic."

These are some of the factors that drew praise from the critics:

Patterson Green, Los Angeles *Examiner*: "Essential in the comedy are the cheerful Jewish realism and the trenchancy of Jewish speech that cuts abruptly through the irrelevant to the true. But it is by no means a play for Jewish audiences alone."

A reviewer of one of the later productions: "If the players will just get rid of the mailed fist beneath the velvet glove, and wear only the velvet glove, [the play] will again be the lovable and perceptive comedy of human foibles that it originally was."

The New York *Morning Telegraph* praised the characters' "warmth and compassion." Another critic lauded the cast for performing with "an infectious and irresistible gusto."

Hollywood *Citizen-News*: "It is to the credit of Birnkrant that he skirts the potentially distasteful mother-son relationship with such good-humored skill.... He employs the inimitable folk-cadences of the locale with finesse and to fine effect."

Critics praised these qualities in individual characters and actors:

BESS. "No-nonsense attitude"..."plump and pretty"..."expressive of feature"..."mingles sharpness of mind with coquetry, idealism with ruthlessness, obstinacy with charm"..."rather refined" [in contrast with Goldman's crudeness]..."comic force, maternal possessiveness, and mature charm"..."delightful mixture of tenderness, loneliness, brashness, and timidity"..."a possessive mother, but she isn't grim and suffering in the toils of an Oedipus complex"..."young at heart, very attractive"..."sentimental, romantic, and possessive (but not fiercely so)."

GOLDMAN. "Self-made rich man with bad table manners"..."Herman Rudin is funny, powerful, and sometimes touching, never emerging from the frame of honest characterization"..."crude but honest"..."ruggedly masculine"..."delicate balance of comedy and seriousness"..."as a widower immersed in business, the personable Mr. Rudin has the sparkle of a diamond in the rough, and the way he acquires his polish is completely disarming"..."amuses with his bluster and awkwardness."

SOLOMON. "Nervous, anxious, benevolent matchmaker"..."a fountain of intuitive knowledge of human behavior"..."adroit"..."an artless delight"..."tip-toed into the audience's heart at the start of the play and never left it"..."the sweet, gentle warmth of ceremonial wine"..."foxy"..."the old-fashioned Yiddish marriage broker with heart and deep insight into the soul of his fellow men"

HOWARD. "Twinkle of good-natured affection that made his conspiracy against Mama a jolly affair"..."underplays to just the degree that saves him from being an obvious weakling and gives credibility to his emancipation"..."Howard must not appear "resentful and brow beaten, and therefore spineless."

PHOEBE. "Comeliness and charm"..."mercurial freshness"

ETHEL. "Hard-headed sister"

SAM. "Loud-mouthed husband"..."habitually enraged husband"..."ulcerous"

BLOCKING AND GENERAL APPROACH. "The whole event is as unpretentious and gladdening as geraniums in the window"..."The dialogue stirs laughter without straining for it, and it has moments that merge into the serious without waxing sentimental"..."generally sunny climate"..."brisk pace"..."warm, tender, and very funny"

MAMA, SAY 'I DO'

ACT ONE

Scene 1

[The living-dining room of a modest apartment in a Brooklyn Heights hotel. The front door is at up right. A door, left, leads to the kitchen and bedrooms. Another door, right, leads to a closet and a bathroom. Comfortable furniture is neatly arranged. Several pot plants decorate the window-ledge at up center. Through the window, perhaps, can be seen the lights of the Brooklyn Bridge, like a distant harp.]

It is a Friday evening in late August. Remains of a twosome party are evident: half-empty drink glasses, filled ashtrays, crumpled pillows on the sofa, etc.

At rise, HOWARD and PHOEBE are standing beside a record player in the middle of a passionate kiss.]

PHOEBE: *[Breaking]* No, no more, Howie.

HOWARD: No more? We haven't even started yet.

PHOEBE: And we're not going to. What if your mother barges in?

HOWARD: She won't, Phoebe. It's only five o'clock.

PHOEBE: But what if she gets off work early?

HOWARD: Relax, will you? She's at a union meeting. She won't be back till seven. We've got over an hour, honey. *[He attempts another embrace.]*

PHOEBE: *[Rejecting him]* A whole hour worrying about your mother walking in on us!

HOWARD: What can we do? We can't go to your apartment. One of your roommates is always meditating.

PHOEBE: We could go to *our* apartment — if —

HOWARD: *[Quickly, alarmed]* Honey, I've got a brand new album! *[Dashing toward record player]* It's got a fresh arrangement of —

PHOEBE: Howie, why must you always change the subject? *[Sighing]* I never should have left Ohio. All my friends back there are married now, raising families. And where am I?

HOWARD: With the man you love — in the best hotel in Brooklyn! *[Pause]* Well, isn't it?

PHOEBE: *[Sardonically]* Sure . . . a perfect place for a son to bring up his mother.

HOWARD: What can I do? Can I help it if she can't fall asleep unless I'm under the same roof? If I go away for a weekend, she cries all night.

PHOEBE: For Pete's sake, there's only 5,000 other people in the hotel!

HOWARD: But they're all strangers!

PHOEBE: My God, Howie, you're twenty-seven years old! It's about time you started worrying about your own life! What about us?

HOWARD: Honey, one of these days my stories will start selling. Then we can —

PHOEBE: Why do we have to wait for that? You've got a steady job.

HOWARD: Guiding tours through the *New York Times*! Big deal.

PHOEBE: But, Howie, I'd have a job, too.

HOWARD: Maybe so, but —

PHOEBE: Oh, why don't you admit it? It's all a bunch of excuses. You don't really want to get married!

HOWARD: Of course I do. Just as soon as —

PHOEBE: Your mother gets used to the dark! *[Pause]* God, when I think of the day when I first met you! You were so wonderful, so sure of yourself!

HOWARD: Honey, my mother needs somebody to look after her.

PHOEBE: Why didn't she get married all these years instead of hanging on to you like a bumper sticker?

HOWARD: *[Angrily]* She's not hanging on to me like a bumper sticker!

PHOEBE: *[Starts toward door]* Oh, I give up. *[Opens door, then to Howard]* As soon as I finish my exams, I'm taking the plane home. I can teach there as well as here.

HOWARD: Give me a little time, honey. We'll work things out.

PHOEBE: *[Pause]* Howie, I don't think you'll ever leave her.

HOWARD: *[Determinedly]* Listen, I'm going to have a serious talk with her. I'm going to tell her all about us. I'll let her know just how things stand! *[On second thought]* Maybe we ought to face her together.

PHOEBE: I'm willing.

HOWARD: All right, we'll do it! *[Taking her hand]* C'mon, honey, you don't have to go yet. *[Starts to close door; then, paling]* Oh, God!

PHOEBE: What's the matter?

HOWARD: My mother's coming up the hall! Quick! *[Locks door; pulls her toward the bedroom]* In here! You can go out the bedroom door!

PHOEBE: I thought you wanted us to talk to her?

HOWARD: *[Frantically pushing her into the bedroom] Later!!*
[Slams bedroom door. There are three quick knocks at front door, followed by a musical, sing-song voice.]

BESS: *[Offstage]* Sonny, it's mother! Open up!

HOWARD: *[Glances frantically around at the mess in room – lip-sticked cigarette butts, ashtrays, etc., and dives in trying to clean up]*
Just a second, I'm – shaving! *[Dashes into bathroom with ashtrays]*

BESS: Mazeltov! I'm standing holding packages.

[HOWARD dashes back into room, leaving open the bathroom door. Nervously gathering up the glasses, he drops and breaks one.]

BESS: What happened? You dropped the shaving lotion?

HOWARD: Yeah! One second! One second! *[Unbuttons his shirt, crosses to door and opens it]* I thought you had a union meeting.

BESS: *[Entering, carrying packages]* I didn't stay. What's that I smell? Perfume?

HOWARD: *[Quickly]* It's my shaving lotion!

BESS: *[Dubiously]* Yeah? *[Putting down packages]* You should use a different brand. It's too sexy for a man.

HOWARD: Maybe you're right, Mom.

BESS: I'm glad to see you're getting ready for Temple.

HOWARD: *[Startled]* Temple?

BESS: You forgot it's Friday?

HOWARD: Ma, we went to Temple last Friday.

BESS: *[Unwrapping a package]* Never mind last Friday. If all the Jews in the world observed two Sabbaths in a row, the Messiah would come!

HOWARD: *[Smiling]* I don't want to stop the Messiah from coming, Mom, but I can't go to Temple tonight.

BESS: You got a date with the yellow sweater? I've yet to see the girl in a regular dress. Every time, she's wearing a yellow sweater. What's she, trying to let you know she has bosoms? Next thing you know, she'll be talking about marriage.

HOWARD: She might.

BESS: *[Not taking this seriously]* I feel sorry for the girl. A boy who doesn't believe in money. Who would believe it this day and age?

HOWARD: Who said I don't believe in money? I believe it's the root of all evil.

BESS: Idealist of the family! Money isn't important!

HOWARD: Money can't make you immortal.

BESS: No. But believe me, it can make you a lot more mortal!

[HOWARD regards her for a moment, then laughs and whips out a small notebook and pencil from his hip pocket and jots something down.]

BESS: [*Pleased*] Thank God, you got something to write down. Author!

HOWARD: [*Scribbling*] Sometimes you say the damndest things, Mom.

BESS: [*Undecided*] That's a compliment?

HOWARD: [*Returning notebook and pencil to pocket*] Sure, Mom. But look, suppose I was going to marry Phoebe?

BESS: Never mind the joking.

HOWARD: [*Soberly*] Suppose I'm not joking?

BESS: [*Pause, staring at him*] I wouldn't be surprised. They say a joke is half a truth. [*She goes to chair and sinks down. She holds her head, then gingerly pats her stomach and grimaces.*]

HOWARD: [*Alarmed*] What's the matter, Mom?

BESS: [*Weakly*] I had a little cocktail with the girls before the meeting.

HOWARD: You know you're not supposed to touch alcohol!

BESS: I needed a little relaxation. All day long listening to those 42's insisting they can get into 14's.

HOWARD: For God's sake, I have to watch over you like a baby!

BESS: I'm just tired out, Sonny. I couldn't sleep last night again.

HOWARD: Why not? I was here.

BESS: But you didn't come in till after three. Your sister was the same way. [*Sudden thought*] Tell me, did you write your sister? One sister he's got and he doesn't write.

HOWARD: I'll write to her.

BESS: Promise?

HOWARD: On my honor! As a boy scout! So help me.

BESS: Go, boy scout, dress.

HOWARD: I told you, I'm not going to Temple.

BESS: You want to stay home tonight and write? You're in the mood, is that it?

HOWARD: I have to see Phoebe.

BESS: The sermon's over early. You'll call the girl up and meet her later.

HOWARD: She expects me, Mom. We'll go next week.

BESS: They've got a wonderful sermon on tonight. A guest rabbi, all the way from Savannah, Georgia. A very cultured man. Comes from real Southern aristocracy.

HOWARD: Ma, I've got to see Phoebe.

BESS: [*Pause*] Would I ask you, Sonny, if I didn't feel dizzy? I'm honestly afraid to go alone.

HOWARD: Can't we go next week, Mom? [*BESS looks faint.*] All right, I'll call her. But remember, I'm leaving the minute the sermon is over. I've got to be somewhere at ten.

BESS: Be ready in half an hour. *[HOWARD nods.]* I want to look in on Mrs. Jensen a minute. Her arthritis is bothering her something terrible again. When I come back, I expect you to be all dressed. And for once, give your shoes a real high polish.

HOWARD: Yeah, okay.

BESS: I want you to look like you just stepped out of a band-box. You notice how nice Liberace looks on television? Take a lesson from him! *[She goes out.]*

HOWARD: *[Grimly]* Okay! *[Claps palm of his hand against his head in gesture of desperation]* Peace! It's wonderful! *[He sits down, exhausted. Then rises, goes to closet and brings out shoeshine kit. Sits and polishes shoes. A moment later, a tentative knock at door]* Just a minute. *[Opens door]*

[BEN SOLOMON stands in doorway. He is a spry, shrewd, garrulous seventy. He holds a small packet in his hand.]

HOWARD: Oh, Mr. Solomon! Gee, I don't have time to shoot the breeze right now. I've got to dress.

SOLOMON: *[Entering, closing door]* It'll take, maybe two minutes.

HOWARD: *[Taking off shirt]* Don't make it an hour like last time, will you?

SOLOMON: Two minutes, that's all. I'll put down the seeds. *[Puts packet on table]*

HOWARD: *[Noting the packet]* How is the old girl?

SOLOMON: Rebecca? All right, only she still won't sing.

HOWARD: Not yet, huh?

SOLOMON: Maybe she was happier in the store. But Marty, Moe, Max, they're full of pep . . . swimming around like they're training for the Olympics. *[Down to business]* Howie, you still got the same job?

HOWARD: Yep, I'm still Mr. Tour-Guide . . . *[Miming]* "And now, folks, step this way, and if you're lucky you'll see the world-famous drama critic —"

SOLOMON: New York Times, a good firm . . . no slack seasons. *[Appraising him]* Hmm, college boy, handsome . . . smart mama. Why not?

HOWARD: Who're you talking to, me or yourself? What've you got up your sleeve?

SOLOMON: Don't push, wait! A minute-and-a-half I still got.

HOWARD: Who're you playing cupid for this time?

SOLOMON: Howie, I got a girl for you . . . a princess! Just moved in with the mama last week.

HOWARD: Oh-oh! I could see it coming!

SOLOMON: I got her picture right here. *[Fumbles in pocket]*

HOWARD: You don't waste any time, do you?

SOLOMON: *[Feeling his pockets]* This time I got a winner. A real beauty! *[Finally discovering the photo in one of his many pockets]* Ah, here! Take a look. *[Hands photo to Howard, watches him shrewdly]* A little diet, she'll slim down.

HOWARD: *[Looking at photo]* Wow! She must put sugar in her calories! *[Returning photo]* Thanks, I've got a girl.

SOLOMON: All right, don't get mad. I only thought, you're single, such an opportunity, I'd give you first chance. *[Starting toward door]* All right, I'll find her somebody else. *[Opens door]* In the hotel there's plenty boys looking . . .

HOWARD: *[Who has been looking at Solomon, transfixed; suddenly:]* Wait! Just a minute!

SOLOMON: *[Smiling, re-entering]* Ah, you changed your mind? Smart! I'd fool you, Howie? I tell you, a little massage, a steam bath . . . she'll end up skinny yet!

HOWARD: *[Laughing excitedly]* No, no! I don't mean the girl . . . not for me.

SOLOMON: Not you? You know a boy for her? Just any nobody is no good. You know, the mama's a fine woman, just like your mama —

HOWARD: That's who I mean!

SOLOMON: You want the girl's *mama*?

HOWARD: No! I mean somebody for *my* mother.

SOLOMON: *[Light dawns]* Your . . . *mama*?

HOWARD: Why not? Didn't you fix up Mrs. Greenwald?

SOLOMON: *[Slowly, the idea coming hard]* Your *mama* . . . wants to get married?

HOWARD: Well, not exactly.

SOLOMON: Not exactly? Marriage you gotta know *exactly*!

HOWARD: I know exactly, but she doesn't know yet. I just thought if you could introduce her to somebody . . . you know, somebody who could see that she sticks to her diet, doesn't drink wine and all that . . . you know, so she could sleep nights?

SOLOMON: Why not? I heard worse reasons to get married.

HOWARD: Look, Mr. Solomon. My mother wants to get married, she just doesn't know it, see?

SOLOMON: If you don't know, in life, you don't get!

HOWARD: She's never thought of it because she's got *me* to take care of her. Don't you see?

SOLOMON: Ah! Doctor Solomon sees!

HOWARD: How about it? Know anybody?

SOLOMON: For your *mama*? Husbands, they'll come running. East and west! I guarantee.

HOWARD: But one thing we've got to understand. She mustn't know a thing about it. Okay?

SOLOMON: I should talk? Half a word wouldn't fall out of my lips.

HOWARD: Wonderful! Anybody in mind?

SOLOMON: Doctor Solomon carries the right medicine. For emergencies. *[Fishes folder from coat pocket]*

HOWARD: What's that?

SOLOMON: *[Fishing several more folders from various pockets in his suit and trousers; punctuating his speech by waving them]* We don't beat around the mulberry bush. Here . . . husbands by the gross . . . all kinds . . . fine men . . . lonely . . . just waiting to take your mama into the house.

HOWARD: Where did you get those lists?

SOLOMON: I got an arrangement with established firms . . . all kinds. Here, listen: "Select social service opposite Macy's." *[Nodding]* A good location. *[Reading on]* "Special appointments arranged for your daughter without her knowledge."

HOWARD: Social services! I thought you'd know somebody in the hotel. Some nice, lonely man. On the intelligent side.

SOLOMON: In the hotel what is there? A lot of old fogies! Not for your mama! And with a matchmaker, something's wrong? Who do you think introduced Adam to Eve? God, the first matchmaker! Three times I marched to the altar — each time with a different woman — each time a different matchmaker. Believe me, without the matchmakers we'd still be in the lost ages.

HOWARD: I don't know . . . isn't there a better way of doing this?

SOLOMON: What kind of better? She's not getting a blind article. You'll see the man first, you'll give him an interview . . . if you don't like — *out!*

HOWARD: I don't know, Mr. Solomon . . .

SOLOMON: We'll take a look. We don't have to buy.

HOWARD: Okay, go ahead.

SOLOMON: *[Reading]* "Dignified widower, very early fifties, partner profitable chain of high class millinery stores" . . . *[Shakes his head in negative]*

HOWARD: *[Amused]* Why not?

SOLOMON: The millinery business isn't what it used to be . . . *[Waving a hand]* Twenty years ago, maybe . . . *[Looking down the list]* Here's one . . . "Gentleman, fifty-nine, established. Owner four big supermarkets. Tall."

HOWARD: *[Looks at Solomon, amused]* Well?

SOLOMON: *[Shakes his head no]* Why should a man with four

supermarkets go out of his way to let you know he's tall? [*A wave of his hand*] He must be a midget! Here's one — bachelor, snappy dresser, jolly disposition, seventy-four. [*Critically*] Now he's ready to give in! [*Suddenly*] Howie, I've got it!

HOWARD: What is it?

SOLOMON: Howard, what do we have to bother with *strangers*? I've got just the man!

HOWARD: You have?

SOLOMON: A regular diamond! I know him like a brother. Fifteen years I cut ties for him. We never had an argument. The man must gross at least a hundred thousand a year!

HOWARD: Look, just because the man's got money doesn't mean —

SOLOMON: He's one in a million! Rides around in a Cadillac all day long. What more does a woman ask?

HOWARD: Yes, but what kind of a man is he?

SOLOMON: You don't listen? A *king*!

HOWARD: I mean, what kind of person is he? Would they have anything in common? Is he kind? Intelligent? Is he an educated man?

SOLOMON: Educated enough! They'll have in common, don't worry. And tell me, there's harm in it if a man owns a few pieces of property?

HOWARD: Not at all. If my mother cares for him. Next time you see him, go ahead and arrange something.

SOLOMON: Next time? How long does it take for a man like him to meet another woman? Why should somebody else have the benefit? [*Picks up the phone*] Agnes? This is Solomon . . . yeah, Solomon. Agnes, give me 369-1042. [*To Howard*] You should see the man's home A malted milk machine in the kitchen. [*Imitating buzz of malt machine*] Bzzzzzz! . . . Hello, that's the maid? The boss is home? This is Solomon. Does he know me? Hah! Thirty years already he knows me! I used to be partners with him. In those days — he's where? [*Turning to Howard as he hangs up*] He's in Philadelphia. We strike while the iron is burning. [*Clicks receiver*] Agnes? Give me long distance. Philadelphia. The Benjamin Franklin. [*Pause*] The hotel. What else? [*To Howard*] There's another kind of Benjamin Franklin? [*Into phone*] Party-to-party. Joe Goldman, they'll know him, don't worry . . . you'll take care? [*Hangs up*] She'll take care. Four buildings he's got in Bay Ridge that I know of. [*Door opens and BESS enters.*]

BESS: You're not ready yet? [*To Solomon*] What are you bothering him for, Solomon? The boy has to get dressed if we're going to get to Temple.

SOLOMON: } I asked him a favor.

HOWARD } I had to borrow his shoe polish!

BESS: Go get dressed. [*HOWARD goes into bedroom. To Solomon*] How's your Rebecca? Does she sing yet?

SOLOMON: Not yet. She's a little shy.

BESS: Six years and still shy.

SOLOMON: [*Looking her over for the first time, appraisingly*] Every time I see you, Mrs. Mayer, you're looking younger. Pretty as a picture.

BESS: [*To Howard*] Put on the nice tie I bought you. And don't forget the tie-clasp I got you for Father's Day. It's very smart.

HOWARD: [*Emerging from bedroom, at door*] Ma, do we have to go to Temple?

BESS: [*To Solomon*] Seven years I sent him to Hebrew School. He was Bar-Mitzvah, just as if his dear father was alive. You'd never believe his grandfather was a Talmudic scholar.

SOLOMON: [*With an approving wave toward Howard.*] And he isn't a scholar?

BESS: Did you ever see him pick up a Bible? Never! You know what they say: "A blind horse makes straight for the pit!" [*To Solomon*] That's from the Bible. Sonny, why don't you take a course in the Bible? It would do you good. Take it! Try it! It would help you socially, too, make you popular.

HOWARD: [*Protesting*] Ma . . .

BESS: I won't say another word about it. "A wise man hears one word and understands two." [*To Solomon*] That's also from the Bible. [*Looking at her wrist-watch*] My God! Services will be starting soon! [*To Howard*] Go, put on your coat. [*Going toward door*] I'll ring for the elevator. And don't forget to wear the sweater underneath, so you don't catch cold. Remember, your health comes first! [*She goes out.*]

HOWARD: Where's that hero of yours? Isn't he ever going to call?

SOLOMON: He'll call.

HOWARD: Y'know, Mr. Solomon, he sounds perfect.

SOLOMON: [*Pleased*] You mean the four buildings — ?

HOWARD: No. [*Grins*] The malted machine in the kitchen. [*Imitating Solomon*] Bzzzz!

SOLOMON: [*Smiling*] Go, the mama's in a hurry. I'll wait for the telephone.

HOWARD: Okay. Good luck! [*He starts out. As he opens the door, the telephone rings. He quickly closes the door and steps back inside.*] That must be him!

SOLOMON: Go, the mama might come in.

HOWARD: *[Nervously]* Okay, just don't lay it on too thick!

SOLOMON: Leave it to me. *[As HOWARD lingers]* Go ahead. *[HOWARD goes out. SOLOMON picks up phone.]* Hello? All right, operator, put him on. Goldman? Listen, I found you somebody! *[Beaming]* A real jewel!

Quick Curtain

Scene 2

[The same room. On dining table are dinnerware, napkins, and a bowl of fresh flowers. On window ledge stands a large rhinoceros plant. It is Sunday, two days later. At rise, the stage is empty. After a moment, the phone rings. HOWARD emerges from bathroom, knotting his tie.]

HOWARD: *[Picking up receiver]* Hello. Mr. Solomon? When is — . . . He's there right now? *[Joyfully]* For God's sake, don't let him get away! *[Pause]* She's down the hall with Mrs. Jensen. She'll be back in a few minutes — no, don't bring him now! If she finds him waiting here she might catch on. Make it five minutes — no, ten to be on the safe side. Right, Mr. Solomon! *[Hangs up; paces nervously]*

BESS: *[Entering]* Poor Mrs. Jensen, her arthritis is in full bloom. We've got to eat right away if we're going to Radio City.

HOWARD: *[Kisses her cheek]* Happy birthday, Mom! How would you like a malted milk machine in the kitchen?

BESS: A malted milk machine? Who has a malted milk machine in the kitchen? *[Suddenly]* Don't tell me you went out and spent money for —

HOWARD: *[Quickly, covering up]* No, no . . . I was thinking, maybe next year.

BESS: I love the plant you gave me. Just what I need. A rhinoceros! Go, Sonny, get the borscht. *[HOWARD goes into kitchen. BESS, at cupboard, sees a bottle of wine.]* Sonny, you know what would be nice to celebrate my birthday? *[Taking the wine bottle down]* Some nice blueberry wine.

HOWARD: *[Returning from kitchen, carrying two bowls of borscht]* Not for you.

BESS: *[Bringing the bottle to table]* "Wine maketh glad the heart of man." That's from —

HOWARD: The Bible. Okay. But no dice. Doctor's orders. *[Sits at table]* Go ahead, start.

BESS: *[Sitting opposite him]* I hope tonight's picture is as good as the one I saw with Mrs. Jensen last week. Marvelous. All the actors wore beards. You know, you ought to try one.