

YOU MARRY A PERSON

by MARK S. MERITT

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

STUART BENJAMIN, 35, the son

DIANNE BENJAMIN, 35, the daughter-in-law

TINA BENJAMIN, 29, the daughter

GARY BRODY, 32, the son-in-law-to-be

SIDNEY BENJAMIN, 66, the father

TIME: A Saturday evening, early autumn, the late 1980s.

PLACE: The living room of Stuart and Dianne's house in Middlebury, Connecticut.

SETTING: The living room is spacious, well-kept, contemporary, but has nothing which could be labelled extravagant. An exit at UR leads to the kitchen, and an exit at UL leads to the front entrance of the house. There is a love seat at R, a matching sofa at L, and an easy chair at C. A coffee table sits in front of the sofa.

(The curtain rises on STUART BENJAMIN, spraying the coffee table. He is tall, thin, 35, and not entirely unattractive. He wears new-looking jeans and a casual long-sleeved shirt.)

STUART

Dianne, I don't know if this is going to work.

DIANNE

(offstage)

Of course it will, Stuart. We use that stuff on the coffee table all the time, and it works fine.

STUART

I mean tonight. This whole welcome-to-the-family dinner thing. It's doomed from the start, you realize.

(DIANNE BENJAMIN enters from UR, carrying a tray of vegetables, crackers, and dips. She is 35, slender, and still striking. She wears slacks and a sweater.)

DIANNE

(putting down the hors d'oeuvres)

And why is that?

STUART

Tina hasn't told Dad.

DIANNE

What?

STUART

That Gary's Catholic.

DIANNE

What?!

STUART

I thought you should know before the festivities begin.

DIANNE

When did you find this out?

STUART

This morning.

DIANNE

Why the hell'd she put it off so long?

STUART

She tried telling him, a few times, but you know Dad.

DIANNE

(sighs)

Yes, I know Dad.

STUART

She asked me to tell you before Dad gets here.

DIANNE

Good. A whole hour to figure out how to act tonight. I mean, I was anxious to find out what your Dad would think of Gary when I thought he knew Gary wasn't Jewish. But now... This night is doomed from the start, you realize?

STUART

Mm-hmm.

DIANNE

I just hope Daddy's Little Girl can do some quick growing up in the Meantime's Little Hour.

STUART

She's plenty grown up. It's Dad more than her.

DIANNE

I know, I know.

STUART

Daddy's Little Boy left the nest long ago, but I still feel that eagle eye on me too. Carrot? (He grabs a stick from the tray.)

DIANNE

Thanks. (She bites the carrot from his fingers.)

(TINA BENJAMIN enters from UR in a minor tizzy. She is 29 and extremely attractive, with a pair of the best eyes on the Eastern seaboard. She wears a skirt and a blouse. Though she remains presentable, her state of mind makes the rest of her appear

somewhat tousled.)

TINA

The convenient store didn't have any cashews.

STUART

Did they have the Cool Whip and the teriyaki?

TINA

Yes, they had the Cool Whip and the teriyaki and the little hot dogs. But no cashews. So much for convenient. They had peanuts and walnuts and almonds and macadamia-

DIANNE

But no cashews. It's okay.

GARY

(offstage)

Where do you want the bags, Dianne?

STUART

(to GARY, offstage)

Hang on, Gary. I'll show you. (He exits UR.)

TINA

I just wanted everything to be as perfect as possible tonight. Dad loves cashews, and things are going to be awkward, and I just, I mean, cashews might have softened him up a bit. Jesus, I'm sorry I'm so panicky, but-

DIANNE

Stuart told me. It's okay. Calm down.

TINA

He told you. Good.

DIANNE

Thanks for giving me all this time for mental preparation.

TINA

I'm sorry. I just, I tried. He wouldn't listen. I've been trying all week, but every time I talked to him, he just couldn't hear. Mom would've listened to me.

DIANNE

At least now Sidney will be the only one who gets surprised tonight.

TINA

Uh, yeah.

DIANNE

So how do you plan to surprise him?

TINA

I don't know yet.

DIANNE

How about Gary telling him?

TINA

Gary? No, he couldn't do that, I mean, Dad, he's my father. I have to tell him. Dianne, how do I get through?

DIANNE

A megaphone maybe? I don't know. He's your father. Maybe you can get Stuart to whip up a quick PR package.

TINA

That's crazy.

DIANNE

Yeah. Maybe.

(STUART and GARY BRODY enter from the kitchen. GARY is 32 and good looking, with a boyish charm. His build is solid, but he's no weightlifter. He wears slacks, with a wintery-patterned sweater over a dress shirt. GARY also wears stylish eyeglasses.)

DIANNE

Hi, make out okay?

GARY

Hi, yeah. Everything's in the fridge.

STUART

I put up the hot dogs.

DIANNE

Thanks. Thanks so much for going out, Gary. (Looks at TINA.) Things here are getting crazier here by the minute.

GARY

No problem. Really. You live in a beautiful area. It was a

beautiful drive.

TINA
(moving to exit UL, looking out)

Beautiful.

STUART
I think her mind is still on cashews.

GARY
I don't blame her. I'm a little nervous about your Dad, too. I've heard a lot of... things about him.

STUART
You don't look too nervous, especially since Tina hasn't-

TINA
Gary!

GARY
(abrupt, almost scared)
What?!

TINA
Don't worry! Dad's gonna love you! Everything's fine!

GARY
(puzzled)
I hope so.

DIANNE
Gary, listen. As a fellow newcomer to the Benjamin family, let me give you some advice about Sidney. Laugh with him, agree with him, and take his financial advice, you'll be fine. (A few car horn beeps are heard.) And forgive him when he shows up early.

TINA
He's here?!

STUART
Now? (He exits UL.)

GARY
Tina, you didn't mention the financial advice.

DIANNE
So much for mental preparation.

SIDNEY

(offstage)

Stu! (Laughs.) It's good see you, Stu!

STUART

(offstage)

Dad, hi, how you doing?

(STUART and SIDNEY BENJAMIN continue to speak as they enter from UL. SIDNEY is 66 and little bit dumpy. His face is kind and expressive, and his eyes are piercing. He wears pants, a dress shirt, and a cardigan. TINA quickly checks her appearance, stiffens up, and smiles.)

SIDNEY

Fine, fine. Where's my... Baby!

TINA

Dad. (They hug. For a while.)

SIDNEY

Tina, oh, baby, it's so good to see you. How are you?

TINA

Just fine, Dad.

SIDNEY

I suppose you would be, heh? Dianne, hello!

DIANNE

(hugging him)

Hi, Dad. You look good, Dad.

SIDNEY

I feel great. Thank you, Dianne. And I suppose you're Gary.

GARY

Yes, sir, hello.

SIDNEY

So, you're in love with my daughter, heh?

GARY

(a little flustered)

Yes.

SIDNEY

Good. This is all that counts, right?

GARY

Well-

SIDNEY

Right! Of course! (He shakes GARY's hand firmly.)

GARY

So it's alright with you.

SIDNEY

What?

GARY

Tina and me getting married.

SIDNEY

You're a lawyer, you're in love with my daughter, you seem like a wonderful young man, and my daughter doesn't even need to change her monogrammed handkerchiefs. Why wouldn't it be okay? Where are my grandchildren?

DIANNE

Michael's at a birthday party and Jennifer's at a friend's house. They'll be back in about a half-hour.

STUART

We weren't expecting you so soon.

SIDNEY

Well, I just couldn't wait to see my baby and the man she fell in love with. I just wish your mother could have lived to see her daughter become a bride. Oh Rose, you should be here for this.

TINA

I wish Mom was here too.

GARY

(taking TINA's hand)

Me too. Tina's told me so many wonderful things about your wife, Mr. Benjamin.

SIDNEY

Call me Sidney.

GARY

Sidney.

DIANNE

Well, this is just wonderful. Everybody knows everybody now. Why don't we sit down? Here, there's carrots and celery and crackers, let's sit down.

SIDNEY

Yes. This is a good idea. What do we have- what, no cashews? (TINA tenses a little.) Eh, I'll live. But just this once, Dianne.

DIANNE

Sorry, Dad. They were out.

SIDNEY

That's alright, that's alright! So Gary, you wear these glasses all the time?

GARY

On and off.

SIDNEY

Naturally! (STUART and DIANNE laugh with SIDNEY, the same way they've laughed every time he made that joke.) Nothing serious, I expect, yes? I'd have you switch to my practice, Gary. Family discount. But I'm sure Tina told you I'm retiring.

GARY

Yes.

SIDNEY

Yes, well, I enjoy my work and I make a very comfortable living, but I think it's time I took some time for myself, yes? So. Enough of me for now. You studied law at NYU, yes?

GARY

Yes, that's right.

SIDNEY

I'm impressed. I'm definitely impressed. And you're an Amherst man, yes, Gary?

GARY

Mm-hmm, Amherst.

SIDNEY

When Tina said small, Massachusetts, liberal arts, I'd pegged you for Brandeis, but Amherst, well now. That's certainly an accomplishment. (Pause.) Tina went to Harvard Law.

GARY

I know.

SIDNEY

Yes, I suppose you would know this. Yes. Harvard. Stick to your dreams. That's what I always told my kids, right, Tina?

TINA

Right, Dad.

SIDNEY

You stick to what you want, you get what you want. Yes. So how's she doing, Gary? As a lawyer, I mean. You've been in the business a couple of years, yes? How's Tina doing?

GARY

Tina? I think she's great. Always organized, ready for her case. Good arguments, good presentation, she's a great lawyer. A real pro. I'd have her present my case any day.

SIDNEY

Good. Good.

(SIDNEY takes a cracker, and there is a short lull.)

TINA

Gary just won a case he's been working on for a while.

SIDNEY

Really? Tell us about it.

GARY

Well, I didn't really win the case, but, uh, okay. It was a custody battle. This couple got divorced, and there were two children. Cutest kids. Both parents wanted them, naturally, and they just wouldn't give up. I was representing the father, and that's always tough. The father usually loses, but this one, he had a chance. Really. He was just as good as the wife, but the father usually loses if he's only just as good. It was a toss up for a long time, lots of harsh remarks, and one day, they said they were getting back together. They just dropped the case. That was it. But I guess I won, since the father did end up with the kids. I guess he didn't mind sharing.

SIDNEY

I should hope not. Children are amazing things, and they're even more amazing when you share them with somebody. You want to have children, yes?

GARY

Oh, absolutely. But not right away.

SIDNEY

Wonderful. Wonderful. Nothing would thrill me more than a few more beautiful grandchildren. Jennifer and Michael are so beautiful. You know, I didn't remember how fast children grow up. Every time I see them, they're bigger and more beautiful than before. Before I know it, Jennifer will be in high school, and Michael will become bar mitzvah, and- Some people skimp out and don't have their sons become bar mitzvah. You wouldn't skimp out, right?

(TINA holds her breath.)

GARY

Well, if it's a boy, no.

SIDNEY

Naturally. Good.

(TINA lets out a huge sigh of relief.)

SIDNEY and GARY

Tina, you okay? (Recognizing the coincidence, they each laugh a little.)

TINA

Fine. Fine.

(DIANNE takes a carrot, and there is another short lull, as everyone stop laughing, keeping smiles on their faces. STUART's eyes tell TINA to say something, but TINA's eyes tell STUART's eyes to shut up.)

STUART

Well, what do you know. How long have we been talking, five minutes? And we've already hit two of the taboo conversation topics, politics and religion. I guess the only one left is sex, right?

DIANNE

We can pass on that one, Stu.

SIDNEY

No, I have a nice little sex story.

TINA

Dad!

SIDNEY

Well, it's a romance. Not really sex, you understand. Actually, it's a romance and religion story.

(TINA gets a little uneasy again.)

STUART

Ooo, two taboo topics in one.

SIDNEY

Yes. Well. This is my romance-religion story. It's about you, Tina. (TINA tries to cover up some more uneasiness with a smile.) I walk into my office on Monday, and I say to my secretary, Jane, today I'm a happy man. Today I begin the first day of my last month as an optometrist, and today I begin the first day of the rest of my life as a man with a son-in-law. This is the day after you told me, Tina. So I tell Jane that my baby is getting married, and she says this is such a coincidence. Her son is getting married. Her son gets engaged the very same weekend as my own daughter. This I find unbelievable, because we've talked many times about how our children are so wonderful and how they deserve a happy marriage and how they are killing us by waiting so long-

TINA

Dad-

SIDNEY

Fun. We just like having a little fun, this is all, Tina. But we've talked about it just the same. One day she said, maybe we should get our kids together sometime, and I say this is a good idea! But then we stopped the fun and say we know it wouldn't work out because my her son is Protestant and my baby is Jewish, and look what happens! The very same weekend, her boy finds a Protestant girl, and my baby finds a nice Jewish boy, and everyone is in love and everyone is happy-

(TINA cringes, DIANNE raises her chin, and STUART inhales, all anticipating what's about to happen.)

GARY

What?

SIDNEY

You. What? My baby's nice Jewish boy.

What? GARY

What? SIDNEY

Tina didn't tell you? GARY

Tina didn't tell Gary? STUART and DIANNE

Tell me what? SIDNEY

Gary- TINA

I'm Catholic. Tina, I don't believe you didn't tell him. GARY

Gary, I tried, I promise you, I tried- TINA

You're what? SIDNEY

Dad- TINA

You're what? SIDNEY

I'm Catholic. GARY

What about the bar mitzvah? My grandson. SIDNEY

Tina and I decided that our sons would get bar mitzvahed and our daughters didn't have to get bat mitzvahed. Tina, why did you wait so long to tell him? GARY

I tried. Dad, I tried to tell you. Every time we talked, I tried to tell you, but you wouldn't let me. TINA

SIDNEY

Whoever heard of a Gentile named Berkowitz?

STUART and DIANNE

Berkowitz?

GARY

Tina told you my name was Berkowitz? It's Brody. Tina, I can't believe you told him that!

TINA

Gary, I told you, I tried to explain, over and over, and finally I just said what he wanted to hear, because that's what he was hearing anyway. I told you how he is.

GARY

Yeah, you did. (To SIDNEY:) But I can't believe, this whole time we were sitting here, you actually thought my name was Berkowitz!

SIDNEY

And what's wrong with Berkowitz, heh?

GARY

Nothing. It's just not my name.

STUART

Dad, you okay?

DIANNE

Do you want a glass of water or something, Dad?

SIDNEY

I'm fine.

TINA

He's gonna have another heart attack, I know it.

SIDNEY

No, I'm not going to have another heart attack. My heart is broken, but it hasn't stopped. This is such a shame. Berkowitz would have been such a perfect name for a law firm partner.

(DIANNE laughs, but holds it in.)

GARY

I'm not quite a partner yet-

SIDNEY

I wasn't talking about you. Tina, today I'm not a happy man.

DIANNE

She still doesn't have to change her monogrammed handkerchiefs.

GARY

Listen, S-

SIDNEY

Mr. Benjamin.

GARY

I was going to say, Sir.

SIDNEY

Good.

GARY

Sir, I-

SIDNEY

Boston.

DIANNE

What?

SIDNEY

Boston has always been an important city in my life. For a New Yorker, I'm very concerned with what happens in Boston. It's where my daughter's fiance came from, my daughter, my baby, went to Harvard Law School, my son went to Boston College and fell in love-

STUART

Boston University, Dad.

SIDNEY

Boston University. What did I say?

DIANNE

You said Boston College, Dad.

SIDNEY

Boston College. Heh. A Catholic school. Look at me. I forgot where my own son went to college and fell in love.

TINA

Dad, I knew how you'd take it, and you're taking it that way right now, but Dad, Gary and I are deeply in love with each other, and the religion difference doesn't bother us, so it shouldn't bother anyone else, and that includes you. So please, Dad. Listen to me. Please try and look past it. We're engaged. We've made a

commitment to each other, and we don't plan on breaking it.
(Pause.)

GARY
So what were we talking about, politics or sex?
(SIDNEY is silent, staring into space. Pause.)

DIANNE
Did I mention the new bussing rules?

SIDNEY
What? Why do you bring this up? What is this?

DIANNE
Public school was the most secular thing I could think of off the top of my head.

SIDNEY
I refuse to let you marry him, Tina.

TINA
Dad-

SIDNEY
I won't let you marry him.
(A bell is heard offstage.)

DIANNE
The hot hors d'oeuvres. I'll get them. (She exits UL.)

TINA
You can't do that, Dad. You can't stop me from marrying Gary.

SIDNEY
You're right. In that case, I refuse to give you my blessings.

GARY
Mr. Benjamin-

DIANNE
(entering with tray, offering to
SIDNEY)
Pig-in-a-blanket?

SIDNEY
No.

DIANNE
But you love these.

SIDNEY
I know, but they're not kosher.

DIANNE
Neither are you.

SIDNEY
I know, but I'm feeling extremely Jewish right now. Tina, this is not going to work.

(DIANNE gives up hostessing for the night, and tosses the tray down on the coffee table. She eats a pig-in-a-blanket.)

TINA
Yes, it is-

SIDNEY
No, it isn't. He's not good enough for you.

TINA
How can you say that?

GARY
Mr. Benjamin, that's not fair. You don't even know me.

SIDNEY
I know enough. You've never been to an Ivy-

GARY
Neither has Stuart!

STUART
Thanks.

GARY
Sorry.

SIDNEY
You're a divorce lawyer. How could I possibly want my baby to get married to someone who spends his life helping other people get divorced, heh?

GARY
I'm a lawyer, not a homewrecker. Mr. Benjamin, Tina's a big girl. If she thinks I'm good enough for her, shouldn't that be enough for

you?

SIDNEY

No.

GARY

You never would have said any of this if I was Jewish, and you know it. (As if quoting:) Hath not a Catholic hands?

SIDNEY

(pause)

Oh, you're clever. And you're right. But you being Catholic is a good enough reason for my daughter not to marry you.

GARY

I'm not good enough for the Chosen People?

TINA

Gary-

SIDNEY

Don't insult a religion-

GARY

That's what you're doing-

SIDNEY

No. I'm discriminating. I'm not insulting.

GARY

Which is worse?

SIDNEY

Look, Gary. I'm not on a high horse. This isn't the case at all. I don't believe that Jews are better, or that anyone is better. I just want what's best for my family, and that means keeping in the faith.

TINA

Dad, it's not that easy anymore. You grew up in a neighborhood where almost everyone was Jewish. I'd be hard-pressed to find enough Jews in my apartment building for a game of tennis.

SIDNEY

You only need two.

TINA

(exasperated)

Doubles.

SIDNEY

You work in a law firm. There must be plenty of Jews, and you pick the one Catholic.

GARY

Oh my God.

SIDNEY

This from a Catholic. Oh my God. Ever hear of the Ten Commandments?

DIANNE

They were our commandments long before they were anyone else's, Dad.

GARY

Tina and I love each other. That's all that counts. You said it yourself.

SIDNEY

Things are different now.

GARY

No they're not.

SIDNEY

Look, I'm an optometrist. I help people see better. All my life, this is what I do, so trust me. Tina you're Jewish, and Gary you're Catholic, and because of this, it can never work.

GARY

You're looking through Catholic-colored sunglasses. You look at me and all you see is the religion. With all respect, Sir, I think you need a new prescription.

STUART

(abruptly)

Selling Gary Brody to a Skeptical Audience. The World's Shortest and Least Thought-Out Public Relations Campaign.

DIANNE

Oh my God.

TINA

He's crazy.

STUART

(quickly)

Situation analysis. The daughter of a close-minded Jew has engaged

herself to a Catholic. The couple is in love and has no doubts of the happy life ahead. Most everyone is open-minded enough to accept the daughter's fiance, regardless of religion, except her father. Objective. To convince the father that religious differences can be overlooked and the whole family can live in harmony. Strategies - oh this is tough-

SIDNEY

Well let me make it a little easier for you. You can sell all you want, but I'm not buying. And from my own son! My son, the traitor.

DIANNE

Traitor? Come on, now, Dad-

STUART

I'm not a traitor, Dad. I was just sitting here listening to you, and I got a little fed up. You're not getting anywhere, and you're not listening to them. I mean, you're listening, but then you stop them and there's nothing to listen to.

SIDNEY

My son the traitor. Stuart, I'm hurt. This hurts me, to hear you speaking against me. My only consolation here is that, regardless of how you act for your sister, you married in the religion.

STUART

I think I would have married Dianne anyway.

SIDNEY

You-

STUART

At least, I hope I would have. I mean, I hope I would have had the guts to stand up for the girl I loved, even if you didn't approve. Like Tina's doing now. Tina, no matter how things end up, I admire you for doing something I don't know I could have done.

TINA

Gee, thanks.

SIDNEY

You would have married out of the religion, Stuart? Is this what you're telling me?

STUART

Yeah, I think so.

SIDNEY

Rose, if you weren't dead, tonight would kill you.

TINA

You're not gonna have a heart attack, are you, Dad?

SIDNEY

I certainly hope not.

DIANNE

Dad, Stuart's not trying to upset you. (STUART thinks about saying something.) He's just trying to help out.

SIDNEY

Well he's not helping me, I can tell you.

DIANNE

Tina and Gary aren't in the easiest position right now. Forget about religion. It's hard to get used to a new family. You did, I did it, and now Gary's trying to do it. When I first met you and Mom, I liked you. Don't get me wrong. But you're different from my parents. Every family has it's own little quirks that make it hard for someone to join in. It was hard for me. And it was hard for Stuart with my family. Just try and forget religion for a while. Get to know Gary first. I've been spending a lot of time with him today, and I think he's great. Give him the chance you gave me. Gary and Tina don't need any extra problems.

SIDNEY

Dianne, you're absolutely right. They don't need any extra problems. And if Tina had gotten engaged to a Jew, there would not be any extra problems.

TINA

(sarcastically)

Thanks, Dianne.

DIANNE

Tina, I'm sorry, I didn't-

SIDNEY

Wait. What is this? What is this apology? Dianne says one little thing that doesn't work for you and she's done something wrong? Nobody's on my side. Why does everyone attack me? Am I a criminal for wanting the best for my daughter? Yes. I'm a criminal. I'm the defendant, and one small piece of evidence got past the prosecutor at the trial. I can't believe this. In one day, my own daughter shatters the world as I know it by telling me she's engaged to a Catholic, and then she brings me to court.

TINA
(abruptly)

The Jewish People versus Gary Brody, the honorable Judge Sidney T. Benjamin presiding. The court-

GARY

Tina-

SIDNEY

What? What is this?

TINA

Dad, I'm bringing you to court. Just like you said. But I'm not the prosecutor. And you're not the defendant. (pause) You stick to what you want, you get what you want. Like you always said. Well I want Gary. And I'll get him. Dad, you're the judge. No robe, no gavel, but you're the judge. You always have been. And now I'm going to hold you to it... Your Honor.

STUART

Tina, this is-

TINA

Just as ridiculous as a PR campaign, Stuart.

STUART

Thanks a lot. I wasn't going to say that. I was going to say it's unnecessary.

TINA

It's the only way I know how.

SIDNEY

Alright, counsel. What's the crime?

TINA

The crime. Gary Joseph Brody is accused of not being good enough for Tina Benjamin.

SIDNEY

In that case, he's guilty.

TINA

No. Not yet. Innocent until proven guilty. You're going to hear me out, Dad. You can't get around it this time.

SIDNEY

Fine. Do you want to approach the bench or something?

TINA

This'll be just fine. (To STUART and DIANNE:) If you haven't guessed it, you're the jury, so listen carefully. And be as impartial as you feel like. (She collects herself.) Your Honor, the man who sits before you, my client, is a man adamant in desire, sincere in intention, and deeply in love. Gary Joseph Brody is accused of not being good enough for me, but I say he is innocent. I say he is good enough. This man's only crime is being in love. And is that a crime? Maybe. Maybe it is, but it shouldn't be. Love should never be a crime. Now. What is the basis for this accusation so wrongly made? What evidence is there against my client? He's Catholic. A religion was passed onto him, assigned to him before he was even born. Should a man be condemned for something he inherited? Something he had absolutely no control over? No. He should be taken for his true self, for the qualities which make him unique, not the things which lump him into a huge, anonymous category with millions of others.

SIDNEY

Objection.

TINA

(she gets more emotional as she speaks)

You're the judge, Dad, you can't object. (She collects herself from the distraction.) Now, what is the evidence in favor of my client? Exhibit A, intelligence. Mr. Brody has his degrees, not Ivy League, but from excellent schools nevertheless. Exhibit B, ambition. He had the drive to succeed in his studies and in his chosen profession which led to: Exhibit C, a good job. Mr. Brody practices lawyer, a noble profession indeed, and would be a good provider. D, he's good looking. This isn't the most important thing, but it's a plus. Generosity. He gives whatever he can. Kindness. Gary wouldn't hurt anyone if he could help it. And finally, most important, he loves me. He cares about me. He worries about me, he wants to spend the rest of his life with me. (Pause.) He loves me, Daddy. Why isn't that enough?

(Pause.)

DIANNE

I think we have a decision.

TINA

Daddy?

SIDNEY

Guilty.

TINA

What does it take, Dad? I found my Mr. Right. How can that be wrong?

SIDNEY

Mr. Right? This is unlikely. Almost nobody is so lucky to find a Mr. Right or Miss Right. Most of us have to settle for Mr. Sufficient, and Gary's isn't even that.

TINA

Sufficient for who, Dad? For me? Or for you?

SIDNEY

For both of us.

GARY

What do I have to do to be good enough for you?

SIDNEY

Convert.

TINA

What?!

STUART

No, Dad.

GARY

No.

SIDNEY

And why not?

TINA

It wouldn't solve anything, Dad.

SIDNEY

It would solve everything.

TINA

Just because Gary converts, he becomes a totally different person? It doesn't work that way, Dad.

GARY

Tina and I talked about this a long time ago, and we decided that neither of us would convert. I don't want to, and Tina doesn't want me to. Because she loves me, and she wouldn't make me do something I didn't want. It doesn't matter if we get married by a justice of the peace instead of a rabbi. The only thing that

matters is that Tina wants to marry me, and that should be okay with you, because you're supposed to love her too. Share her with me. Please.

TINA

It would be just as easy for me to convert to Catholicism, Dad.

SIDNEY

What?! Tina, you-

TINA

I didn't say I was converting. It's just that, well, why would Gary have to be the one to convert? You'd never want me to do it, so how do you think Gary's parents would feel if he did? You think they're in love with the idea of their baby boy marrying a JAP? (DIANNE laughs.) It goes both ways, Dad. Everything.

SIDNEY

Yes. You're right. I understand this. If someone converts, someone is hurt. Either way. I understand this. But this only works for individuals. If Gary converts, people are hurt, but Catholicism isn't.

TINA

Dad, you marry a person. Not a religion.

SIDNEY

If people marry people, religions have children. (Pause.) You see? Being Jewish, it's in the mentality, not the blood. That's why converting would solve everything. You have the mentality. Gary would have the mentality. My grandchildren would be raised with that Jewish mentality, the Jewish identity. When they grew up, you could explain to them how their father wasn't always Jewish. You could say that he became Jewish out of his love for their mother, out of respect for his father-in-law, and out of concern for his unborn children. This I wouldn't mind. It's not important. But that my grandchildren should know who they are, where they came from, that is important. A Christian becomes Jewish, the minority grows stronger. We survive a little longer, fight a little longer. A Jew becomes Christian, what happens? The big majority gets a tiny marble tossed on the pile. It's lost. It doesn't help the Christians any, but every lost Jew hurts. Kills the religion. It hurts us to lose someone. And yes. Individually, it hurts the Christians to lose, but for the good of the religion, our religion, Gary, this is all I ask.

TINA

That's all you ask? That's a lot, Dad.

SIDNEY

Tina, I understand what you are thinking. You think your father is old fashioned and you wonder why won't he bend, why won't he change? I'm not ignorant. You are right to think these things. But you were not alive during the Holocaust. I was. I couldn't count all the aunts and uncles and cousins I lost. I never once met them, but I cried for them. Each of them. But when I cried, I was crying for all the Jews. The Holocaust, it was a very terrible thing. And if millions of Christians had died instead, it would be no less terrible. But the Jews almost died, Tina. The religion was almost wiped off the Earth. I was never in Europe, my whole life I was never in Europe, but I am a survivor of the Holocaust. You are a survivor. Your children will be survivors. We have to keep the Jews alive, and there are only two ways I know how to do that. Yes, I plant trees in Israel. I do this to support the state. But more importantly, I can make sure my children marry in the faith. If my children don't do this, then I am the last of a long line of Jews, and I have dealt a blow to the religion, I am an accomplice in its killing. (STUART laughs once.) What? What is funny about any of this?

STUART

No more hands.

DIANNE

What?

STUART

Dad's got no more hands. Like "Fiddler on the Roof." Tevye's daughter wanted to marry out of the religion. And he kept weighing everything, he kept saying on the other hand this and on the other hand that. And he finally decided he didn't have any more hands.

TINA

Dad didn't have the hands to start with.
(Long pause.)

GARY

Okay.

TINA

Okay what?

GARY

I'll do it.

TINA

Do what?

GARY

Convert. I'll convert.

TINA

No, Gary! We decided! Nobody was going to-

GARY

I know. But there were no hands. Right from the start. But I've got more allegiance to you than to the Pope. I love you.

TINA

(becoming a little hysterical)

I love you too and I don't want you to do anything you don't want to-

GARY

Shh. I know. But if converting is the only thing that's going to keep peace in this family, I'll do it, because I love you.

TINA

(crying, collapsing into Gary's arms)

Gary-

DIANNE

(getting up)

I'll check on dinner.

STUART

(getting up)

I'll help.

SIDNEY

You'll both stay.

(DIANNE and STUART sit down.)

TINA

(still crying a little)

Daddy, if you loved me you wouldn't make Gary do this.

SIDNEY

I'm not making him do anything.

TINA

(after a pause, collecting herself, approaching SIDNEY)

You're right. You're right, Dad. I'm wrong. You've beaten your children again. The father wins. But maybe you failed, Dad. Maybe you didn't instill that goddamn mentality into us enough so

we wouldn't think about marrying out of the religion in the first place. When you found out, maybe that should've been the first thing you thought, Dad. Maybe you lost, Dad.

(TINA walks away from SIDNEY. GARY goes to her, holds her.)

SIDNEY

Tina-

TINA

You're not the only one hurting right now, Dad.

(Long pause.)

SIDNEY

Gary?

GARY

What?

SIDNEY

Let me get some things straight.

GARY

What?

SIDNEY

You don't want to convert.

TINA

Of course he doesn't want to-

SIDNEY

I asked Gary. Gary, you don't want to convert?

GARY

No.

SIDNEY

And Tina doesn't want you to convert?

GARY

No.

SIDNEY

But for whatever reason, you're willing to convert anyway. This is right?

GARY

Yes.

SIDNEY

And you and Tina are deeply in love with each other?

GARY

(He looks at TINA, then at SIDNEY.)

Yes, Mr. Benjamin.

(Pause.)

SIDNEY

Call me Sidney.