

Memory Palace

By Maura Campbell

A Family Drama

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Nancy, mother of three daughters

Anna, the oldest daughter

Young Anna, 10

Emily, the middle daughter

Robin, the youngest daughter

Gia, a Visiting Nurse

Daniel, Nancy's husband

Young Daniel, 20s

Sylvia, 16, Robin's daughter , also plays Young Anna

Kevin, Robin's husband

Isaac, also Boy, Franko and Percy, 10

NOTES

Except for Isaac, Young Daniel and Young Anna, the characters play themselves as various ages. For clarity, here is a time line of the family history.

TIME LINE:

Nancy and Daniel get married	1950
Anna and Isaac are born	1955
Emily is born	1960
Robin is born	1963
Isaac dies	1965
Anna graduates from high school	1973
Emily gets married	1985
Robin and Kevin get married	1988
Sylvia is born	1992
Jesse's bar mitzvah(end of Act 1)	2003
Sylvia's graduation	2010
Daniel's death	2012
Open House	2014
Sale of house	2015
Art Show	The Present, a few years after 2015

SETTING

1950 to present. The home of Nancy and Daniel Fischer. Time is fluid and moves between the present and memories of the past. Lighting and incidental music are helpful for audiences to grasp time and place transitions.

Act 1

PROLOGUE

(Young Daniel enters with Young Anna and Isaac. He lights a memorial candle and they recite the Kaddish.)

SCENE 1

(Robin addresses the audience.)

ROBIN

Thank you, yes... my father painted from a photograph of my mother.. I'm their daughter, Robin... most of them, uh huh... well, my mother teaches - taught - piano, she still plays... you can see the kitchen in the background. She loved the fact that the piano room was just off there. Four kids, she needed to keep one eye on her student and the other eye on us. Of course, we all took lessons.

(Nancy sits at the piano. She speaks to an unseen student.)

NANCY

Imagine! Only seven notes in music and they make an infinite number of sounds. The alphabet has twenty-six! Let's start with a scale...

ROBIN

I think she was twenty-five in that painting-

NANCY

Sit up straight... now, where is middle c?

ROBIN

That's Isaac and Anna in the playpen... yes, they were twins...

NANCY

There it is! Sing it with me, do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-

ROBIN

The piano was sold with the house last year. Somehow Dad got it in but there was no getting it out!

(Musical transition. Light on Daniel and Nancy. It is 1950.)

DANIEL

Now open.

(She opens her eyes.)

NANCY

Oh!

DANIEL

What do you think?

NANCY

It's... oh!

DANIEL

You hate it.

NANCY

No! I'm just taking it in.

DANIEL

It's a little rough, I know. But the lot is big. It's a double lot. It's goes all the way to the hedge on that side and the barn on the other. It's not our barn, unfortunately.

NANCY

I can't believe it.

DANIEL

And it has room for your piano. I'm thinking you can give music lessons, see? After a little while you won't even have to work, you'll just give music lessons.

NANCY

I don't mind working.

DANIEL

I know. I know. But I'm planning ahead, see? There's two bedroom upstairs, finished, and two more we can convert from the attic. If we need them.

NANCY

Can we go inside?

DANIEL

Well, I don't have the key. But I can lay it out for you. See, there's an entrance hall. A big one. I mean, a kid could ride a bike up and down it. Two kids! And the kitchen is to the right-

NANCY

Is the kitchen at the front or the back?

DANIEL

Well, the back-

NANCY

Is there a back door?

DANIEL

Um-

NANCY

Because it's better for bringing in groceries if there's a back door.

DANIEL

I'll put one in.

NANCY

You're an artist, not a carpenter.

DANIEL

My brother will put one in.

NANCY

That's all right. And where is the bathroom?

DANIEL

Two bathrooms.

NANCY

Two bathrooms?

DANIEL

One upstairs and one downstairs. Well, half a bath downstairs.

NANCY

That's fine. A half a bath downstairs!

DANIEL

The dining room isn't very big but I think we can expand it. I think, you see there's a little room, I think it might have been a summer kitchen once. If we knock out that wall-

NANCY

Your brother will know?

DANIEL

Sure, sure he will. He knows everything about construction. We'll knock out that wall-

NANCY

Only if it's safe. What if the house falls down?

DANIEL

Oh, that will never happen.

NANCY

And what's the kitchen like?

DANIEL

The kitchen?

NANCY

Is it very big?

DANIEL

Not too big, not too small.

NANCY

But how many cupboards?

Several. DANIEL

You don't know, do you? NANCY

I- DANIEL

NANCY
Because the kitchen is the most important room in the house. It's where we'll make most of our memories.

DANIEL
I was kind of hoping that would be the bedroom.

NANCY
Daniel!

DANIEL
Do you like it? Do you like the house? Because if you don't, I think I'll die.

NANCY
Then I definitely like it.

DANIEL
Don't say that just because I said that.

NANCY
I love the house. Just like I love you.

DANIEL
Now you've got me worried.

NANCY
When we first met I thought to myself, with a little bit of work, this man could make a fine husband.

DANIEL
What was wrong with me?

NANCY

Well, everything! You dressed kind of funny, you laughed at your own jokes, you drank too much...

How did I dress funny?
DANIEL

Well, those bow ties.
NANCY

I don't wear bow ties?
DANIEL

Not anymore.
NANCY

I put them on when I get to school.
DANIEL

You do not!
NANCY

Look at the bright side. It'll keep the co-eds from flirting with me.
DANIEL

It didn't stop me.
NANCY

No, it didn't.
DANIEL

I guess you're still a work in progress.
NANCY

Want to peek in the windows?
DANIEL

Can we?
NANCY

DANIEL

I don't think anybody's at home. Come on... See? That's where your piano can go. Right against that wall. I think this room will have morning sun.

NANCY

Nope. Afternoon.

DANIEL

Afternoon sun then. Where are you going?

NANCY

I want to see the kitchen... Oh.

DANIEL

You hate it?

NANCY

The walls are orange.

DANIEL

Peach.

NANCY

Tangerine.

DANIEL

We'll paint them.

NANCY

Wallpaper.

DANIEL

Wallpaper!

NANCY

I don't know.

DANIEL

Don't know what?

NANCY

I just don't know.

(Nancy starts crying.)

DANIEL

Dear God, Nancy, what's the matter? I thought everything was all right. What have I done!

NANCY

Nothing...

DANIEL

I shouldn't have brought you over, I just wanted to surprise you. I'm sorry.

NANCY

I just don't know how I'll ever be happier than I am at this moment.

(Daniel exits. Musical transition. Nancy closes and then opens her eyes. She takes off her hat. It is 2014.)

NANCY (cont'd)

Hello?...

(The sound of her voice echoes. A beat. She touches the table top.)

Hello?...

(Anna enters. She carries a box.)

ANNA

This is the last of it.

NANCY

What is that?

ANNA

Some of Dad's old papers, I guess. I found them in the attic. My final walk through.

NANCY

Let me see that... Oh, yes.

ANNA

I'll sort through them later and give you anything that's important.

NANCY

I don't suppose anything is at this point, do you? But I don't want to leave the table.

ANNA

What? You have to leave the table. You sold it.

NANCY

I know I did. I'll give them the money back.

ANNA

Mom, you can't fit this into your apartment.

NANCY

It will fit in the living room.

ANNA

Where are you going to watch TV?

NANCY

I don't care about TV.

ANNA

We bought a nice new table and chairs.

NANCY

I don't like them. They don't go with anything I have.

ANNA

They go with everything you have.

NANCY

Not my chair.

ANNA

We put your chair in your bedroom.

NANCY

They don't match. Call them on your cell phone. I don't see why I have to be ripped from my home and everything I own. I've changed my mind. I'm not going to the closing. You'll just have to tell them I changed my mind. Blast it all, I can't think straight when I'm under pressure. Yes, you put me under pressure. You made me sign those papers. I never wanted to move. I'm not going.

ANNA

All right. All right. All right. I'm tired of arguing. Emily and Robin will be here in a minute. You can tell them.

NANCY

Emily is coming here?

ANNA

You had dinner with her last night. She's here from Chicago.

NANCY

Oh, yes. I remember. She gave me that book to read. Memory something-or-other. Where did I put it? It's supposed to help me in some way. What did she say about it?

ANNA

I don't remember.

NANCY

Maybe you should read the book. Should we go?

ANNA

We're waiting for Emily and Robin and then we're going to the closing.

NANCY

Oh, I'm not selling the house. We'll tell the buyers to forget it. Those nice people.

ANNA

Maybe they can live in your apartment.

NANCY

With that baby and those dogs? No, we'll have to find them another house.

ANNA

Maybe we can just cut the table down.

NANCY

That table? That table is an antique! A Sears and Roebuck antique! My parents gave it to us when I married your father!

ANNA

What do you want to do, Mom?

NANCY

I don't know. You're always rushing me. I've got to think.

ANNA

If we're not going to the closing, I have to make a phone call.

NANCY

Anna...

ANNA

What?

NANCY

Anna... there's something I have to tell you about Isaac.

ANNA

What?

NANCY

It's about Charlie. Isaac's Charlie. I found him. I found him dead. And I buried him in the backyard. We can't leave him. We have to dig him up and take him with us. Isaac would never forgive me if he knew.

ANNA

Mom, you're talking about a crow.

NANCY

I know just where he is. Over in front of the hedge. Fifteen paces from the elm tree.

(Nancy goes to the window.)

Look. Just there.

ANNA

Mom... Mom... that tree died in the blight. That tree has been gone for thirty years.

NANCY

Nonsense. It's right there. Come here and look. It's even still got your swing on it! Right under that swing. That's where Isaac found Charlie!

(Anna comes to the window.)

NANCY (cont'd)

Do you see it? Fifteen paces from that tree. In front of the hedge where I grow my roses.

ANNA

Where are you going?

NANCY

I just want to see...

(Nancy goes outside. The Boy walks to her.)

BOY

Hello.

NANCY

Why... hello.

BOY

I'm selling pasta to raise money for the Cub Scouts. See, there's happy birthday shaped pasta, Christmas tree shaped pasta and cheerleader shaped pasta. Why someone would buy cheerleader shaped pasta, I do not know.

NANCY

Well, I... I would very much like to buy some pasta.

BOY

It's for a good cause. The profits go to equipment, events and to offset the cost for needy families.

NANCY

I think that's fine.

BOY

We have sixteen ounce and thirty-two ounce packages.

NANCY

Well, let's see. How about ten packages all together?

BOY

Wow! That's a big order!

NANCY

That way I'll have enough until next year. Will you still be selling it next year?

BOY

I don't know. I don't know the future.

NANCY

I might be moving.

BOY

Very far away?

NANCY

Maybe. I don't know yet.

BOY

Well, if you give me your address, my mom and I can bring the pasta to you when it arrives.

NANCY

Can you do that?

BOY

My mom's a cub scout leader so she has to do everything.

NANCY

I'll go into the kitchen and get my purse so I can pay you. Just come on in... my daughter, Anna is there. Don't worry about her. She's grumpy sometimes...

(Nancy "returns".)

NANCY (cont'd)

Hand me my purse... there's this sweet little boy and I have to give him some money.

ANNA

Mom...

NANCY

Well, I thought I had twenty dollars in there. Do you think he'll take a check?

ANNA

Do I think who will take a check?

NANCY

The little boy. He was standing right out there by the elm tree. I'm going to get pasta. He's selling it for the cub scouts.

ANNA

I don't see anybody.

NANCY

Look out back there. I'll run back outside-

ANNA

Mom-

NANCY

I thought I'd get the Happy Birthday shaped pasta. But Emily might like the cheerleader pasta. She was a cheerleader, remember? Wait. I always keep some money in the cookie jar. Well, that's funny.

ANNA

We cleaned out the cupboards. You're moving. Remember? We just stopped by to pick up a few things. We're on our way to the closing. You're going to live in a new apartment. With neighbors and activities and a dining room. We talked all about this.

NANCY

I can't leave. I can't leave. I've ordered Happy Birthday pasta and the little boy won't be able to find me.

ANNA

Mom-

NANCY

Do you know this kitchen used to be orange?

ANNA

I do know. I remember when it got painted.

NANCY

I didn't like the orange at first. But it grew on me. The people that lived here. They lost all their money. And they painted the kitchen bright orange because they thought that would

help it to sell. I hated that orange but it seemed cruel to paint over it after they tried so hard to make the kitchen bright.

ANNA

I'll have Emily and Robin stop and pick up some lemon cake. Your favorite. We'll sit and talk. I'll call the lawyer and tell him we'll be a bit late. Everything will be all right.

NANCY

I usually leave these kinds of things to your father. But go ahead and call anyone you like. It will be nice to see everyone again.

SCENE 2

(Lights up on Isaac. He recites his report for school. Isaac hams it up.)

ISAAC

"Memory Palace, by Isaac Abraham Fisher. The Memory Palace was invented in ancient Greece. A poet named Simonides was eating a banquet and the building fell down. He was the only one to escape. Because the crash was so terrible, nobody could identify the bodies except Simonides who knew where they were all sitting. Now we can make our memory better the same way but hopefully not with crashed buildings. For example, let's say your teacher wants you to memorize the countries in Africa. Hopefully, you will never have to do this. But you can mentally place each one in a route in your own house. I recommend putting the countries in alphabetical order to make it easier. So Algeria could be on your front porch. Angola could be in the entry hall. My favorite country is Madagascar. I just like the name. Madagascar. Madagascar is in my secret place under the stairs. You can use the Memory Palace to remember just about anything. Because memories are what makes us who we are. When we have nothing else to do, we can always remember."

(As he leaves he yells- "Madagascar!"
Offstage, Daniel sleeps in a chair. It is
1970.)

NANCY (CALLING TO HIM)

Daniel, wake up. Daniel, wake up.

DANIEL (OFF STAGE)

Huh?

NANCY

It's eleven o'clock.

DANIEL (OFF STAGE)

Oh, wow. Want to watch the news?

NANCY

No, I do not want to watch the news. There's leftovers on the counter. I'm going up.

(The sound of a crash. Nancy stops in her tracks. Daniel enters. He's a little wobbly and carries a broken vase.)

NANCY (cont'd)

What did you do?

DANIEL

God damn it all, what was this doing out! Where's Robin!

NANCY

In bed, on the moon- she put flowers in every vase we own including... this one.

DANIEL

I'm sorry.

(Nancy starts to leave.)

DANIEL (cont'd)

What time's dinner?

NANCY

You slept through dinner.

DANIEL

Oh. I wasn't hungry.

NANCY

Good night.

DANIEL

What time is graduation tomorrow?

NANCY

What?

DANIEL
Graduation.

NANCY
Graduation was today.

DANIEL
Huh?

NANCY
Graduation was this morning. There were six hundred people in the auditorium. Your daughter gave a speech. Your youngest daughter disappeared, we didn't know where until it was over.

DANIEL
Did I go?

NANCY
Yes.

DANIEL
Oh.

NANCY
Yes. You did. Whatever you could ask, the answer is yes. You did it.

DANIEL
I wasn't going to ask anything.

NANCY
Anna lost her speech. She didn't have it. She tried to make one up and more or less. She felt completely humiliated. That was the day Anna had. That was her big day. That was the biggest day of her life.

DANIEL
Look, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Where is she? I'll talk to her.

NANCY
She's not here! It's graduation night. She's at a party. Hopefully. Hopefully having a good time. She deserves it.

DANIEL

I don't know what happened. I had a beer this morning.

NANCY

Oh, so you remember that!

DANIEL

I swear I only had a beer. Or two. I've had a bug, I think I've got the flu.

NANCY

You were drunk! You were loud! You embarrassed your daughter and you embarrassed yourself.

DANIEL

I woke up this morning... I woke up this morning and I was thinking about... Isaac... I was thinking that today... would be his day, too.

NANCY

You think you are the only person in this family who feels that way? What about Anna? Do not make Isaac responsible for what you did!

DANIEL

I didn't. Look, I... yes, of course. I remember. I was dreaming... something. Anna did fine. She made a speech. Everything is all right.

NANCY

She had something planned. For you. For us. For our whole family.

(Robin, 10, enters.)

NANCY (cont'd)

Go back to bed.

ROBIN

I don't want to.

DANIEL

Dad broke a vase. That's all.

ROBIN

Isaac's vase?

DANIEL

You should never have touched it! It was in the wrong place.

ROBIN

I was just trying to make everything pretty.

NANCY

Accidents happen. What are you going to do tomorrow?

ROBIN

I don't know. It's Sunday. I don't know. Can I have the vase? Maybe I can glue it together.

NANCY

I don't think so. I think it's kaput.

(Robin takes the broken vase. Nancy exits.)

ROBIN

Are you and Mom fighting?

DANIEL

We were talking.

ROBIN

That always means fighting.

DANIEL

Fighting is when there's a difference of opinion. Your mother and I are of the same opinion. That I'm a dunderhead.

ROBIN

I'm the dunderhead. I touched the vase.

DANIEL

You were- come here. This is not your fault. Should we have something to eat? How about a piece of cake?

(This lightens the mood.)

ROBIN

You can't really help being a dunderhead because you're a male. I heard Cindy's mother talking when I was there last weekend? She said males don't have enough blood in their heads.

DANIEL

That explains a lot.

ROBIN

Are you waiting up for Anna? Cause I don't think she's coming home until the morning. I heard her telling Emily.

DANIEL

I'm not worried about Anna.

ROBIN

I'm sorry about everything.

DANIEL

What are you sorry about?

ROBIN

I don't know. About the graduation. Mom couldn't find me and she worried through the whole thing. I just felt sorry for that man sitting by himself. His granddaughter was graduating but he didn't have a ticket so he had to sit on the bleachers. What I think is that if you're old, you should get a seat. I offered him mine but he didn't take me up on it. I couldn't just leave him there by himself. He lives in the Palm Tree Palace. He has a kitchenette and they even have a pool. When I told him that Anna was graduating he knew who I was because he remembers when Isaac died. I told him I didn't really remember Isaac and he said not to worry because he's probably reincarnated by now. That's when you get a new body. I already knew about it because Emily's friend Jennifer's mother was reincarnated from Egypt. That's where they have camels.

DANIEL

I see.

ROBIN

I don't know if I believe him but I acted like I did. I don't think anybody really knows. But I didn't want to hurt his feelings. He kind of reminded me of Grandpa. He smelled like him. Like, kind of like whiskers.

DANIEL

How did you happen to smell him?

ROBIN

Well, we were crammed in there. Dad?

DANIEL

What, honey?

ROBIN

Anna's going to kill me.

DANIEL

Kill you? Why would she kill you?

ROBIN

I read her speech and forgot to put it back so she had to make it all up. She left out the part that she wrote for you and Mom. I know because I read it. And she didn't say the important part. When she comes home she might kill me. Sometimes she says that.

DANIEL

Well, she doesn't mean it. She loves you. Where is the speech now?

ROBIN

I hid it.

DANIEL

Do you want to give it to me?

ROBIN

Are you going to tell Anna?

DANIEL

I don't know.

(Robin gives her father the speech.)

ROBIN

The first two pages are all about blah blah blah.

DANIEL (READING)

Mm hm.

(A beat.)

ROBIN

It's that last part.

(The sound of a door opening.)

Anna's home.
ROBIN (cont'd)

Go on up to bed.
DANIEL

You won't tell her?
ROBIN

Go on.
DANIEL

((Robin leaves, but continues to spy. Daniel stands up.))

Anna?
DANIEL (cont'd)

SCENE 3

(Emily addresses the audience. Daniel paints at an easel.)

EMILY
His abstract phase, my mother didn't like it. She thought he was being passive aggressive, isn't that a riot? She thought one day some art historian would figure out it was his way of saying he was unhappily married. Looks like water, doesn't it? And sort of a Marc Chagall angel- you don't see it? Actually if you look at it sideways...

DANIEL
It doesn't mean anything. Why does everything have to mean something? God made the world, that is enough!

EMILY
Actually, this is one of the last paintings he made before he died. He never used this palate before, yellows and pinks and light blues. There's something beautiful in that water, don't you think?

(A wedding cake sits on the table, frosted with bright yellow frosting. Isaac enters. He

dips his finger into the frosting at the bottom edge, licks them and runs out of the room. Kevin enters. He wears work clothes and a yarmulka. He studies the wedding cake. Robin enters. It is 1980.)

ROBIN
When did the cake arrive?

KEVIN
I don't know.

ROBIN
Well, what are you doing?

KEVIN
I came in to see you.

(They kiss wildly for a moment, then Robin pushes him away.)

ROBIN
You can't do that! What if my father say us? And what's that on your head?

KEVIN
I figured I should wear it for Harold's grandmother.

ROBIN
Oh, did you get her to her room?

KEVIN
Carried her up three flights of stairs.

ROBIN
You're a mensch.

KEVIN
Is that like a munchkin?

ROBIN
It means human being. In a nice way.

(Emily enters.)

KEVIN
The blushing bride!

EMILY
Where's Mom?

ROBIN
At the florist. What's the matter?

EMILY
Nothing's the matter.

ROBIN
You're making that face.

EMILY
I'm not wearing any makeup. Nice to see you again, Kent.

KEVIN
Kevin.

EMILY
Oh, sorry. Somebody stuck their finger in the cake! Look!

(Kevin holds his hands up.)

EMILY (cont'd)
It's a sign.

ROBIN
What's a sign?

EMILY
Everything. The rain, the cake- did you get Harold's grandmother in her room?

(Kevin pantomimes carrying someone on his
back.)

EMILY (cont'd)

You're a... you're such a...

KEVIN

Munchkin!

EMILY

You're a doll.

(to Robin)

Too bad he's not Jewish.

(to Kevin)

Harold's grandmother's from the old country. It's the sabbath. She's too old to climb stairs and she can't use the elevator.

KEVIN

Good thing I'm not Jewish.

EMILY

Those poor boys out there working in the rain!

ROBIN

They're mostly drinking beer.

EMILY

Drinking beer? What if they forget to pound in a stake?

KEVIN

I'm going.

(Kevin exits.)

EMILY

He is so cute! What do you think of Harold?

ROBIN

You're getting married tomorrow, is this a trick question?

EMILY

Yes, no... I don't know!

ROBIN

Cold feet. It happens to everyone. Everything will be all right.

EMILY

You don't like him.

ROBIN

I don't know him very well. His brother is hunky.

EMILY

But you don't like him.

ROBIN

I hardly like anyone. Okay? So I'm not the best one to- and what are you doing, anyway? You are such a drama queen. Harold's entire family flew here for the wedding.

EMILY

They look down on me. They think it's gauche that the reception is here. I overheard Harold's mother on the phone last night.

ROBIN

This is a Vermont country wedding!

EMILY

It's charming, right?

ROBIN

Do not let these people make you feel inferior just because they're from Chicago.

EMILY

I didn't want Mom and Dad to go into debt for my wedding. Besides, they've still got you and Anna to worry about. Is that a hickey on your neck?

ROBIN

Where?

EMILY

Who- are you and Kevin-

ROBIN

It's just a sex thing. We're not going out.

EMILY

You're having casual sex? Oh my God, I don't know anyone who does that!

ROBIN

Well, now you do.

EMILY

\What's it like?

ROBIN

Well, I've had better.

EMILY

How many?

ROBIN

Ten or so.

EMILY

Ten?

ROBIN

Or so.

EMILY

Twenty?

ROBIN

Maybe.

EMILY

I've only had Harold!

ROBIN

Oh, come on.

EMILY

Serious!

ROBIN

I thought you were the town pump in high school.

EMILY
Town- what?

ROBIN
You made out with everybody!

EMILY
Made out is not doing the town pump thing! Twenty?

ROBIN
Or so.

EMILY
Thirty?

ROBIN
You've found Mr. Right. Right? How is Harold in bed?

EMILY
Harold? He's... I don't know how to describe it.

ROBIN
Hot?

EMILY
Hot? No, not... organized. He's very methodical.

ROBIN
That can work.

EMILY
I just feel like I need to have a fling, you know? Do something- anything.

ROBIN
Well, Kevin and his frat brothers are outside.

EMILY
And you don't hate yourself? Because I sometimes, even with Harold...

ROBIN
What have you got on under that shirt?

EMILY

This? A tee shirt. Why-

(Robin starts unbuttoning Emily's shirt.)

EMILY (cont'd)

What are you-

ROBIN

God gave you this figure. I want you to go outside and offer the boys some iced tea. Really swing those hips.

EMILY

This is ridiculous.

(Anna enters with flowers.)

ROBIN

A little crazy, right?

EMILY

A little.

ROBIN

Where's Mom?

ANNA

I dropped her off at the caterer's. Wow, look at the- who stuck their finger in it?

ROBIN

Mom can fix it.

ANNA (TO EMILY)

What's with you?

Emily takes off her sweater and sticks out her bust

EMILY

I was just going out to see if the boys wanted anything.

(And bravely, Emily exits.)

ROBIN

I met Harold's brother. He drove here. I guess he's checking out Boston. Thinking of moving there.

ANNA

Oh?

ROBIN

He's cute.

ANNA

Uh huh.

ROBIN

He's taller than Harold. More- masculine. Brad. Played football in college. *Tres* sexy. Best man, maid-of-honor... Could be a match!

ANNA

He lives in Chicago.

ROBIN

For now!

ANNA

I invited Steve.

ROBIN

The junior accountant?

ANNA

He's got his CPA!

ROBIN

He describes himself as a junior accountant. And he lives with his mother.

ANNA

We're just friends.

ROBIN

Good. Because Emily's bridesmaid Eileen would be perfect for him. And you - with a little help from me - can have a wild time with Mr. Muscles.

(Daniel enters. He looks out the window.)

DANIEL

What's Emily doing?

ROBIN

Taking iced tea orders.

DANIEL

You mean they finished the beer?

ROBIN

It's hot out there. Wet, but hot.

DANIEL

Where's your mother?

ANNA

At the caterer's. I have to pick her up. And your suit at the dry cleaner's.

DANIEL

My wedding suit. I wear it every couple of years when someone gets married. Do me a favor, you two, and have a double wedding. I hate that damned suit.

(Emily enters, glowing.)

EMILY

They all want some iced tea! Hi, Daddy! And I think the rain has stopped!

(She kisses him. Grabs some glasses and a pitcher of iced tea from the fridge and exits.)

DANIEL

This is one of those days when a cold beer would taste, really, really good.

ROBIN

You can't have a beer, you're an alcoholic.

(Stunned silence. Daniel abruptly exits.)

ANNA

You've got a big mouth!

ROBIN

We're not having any booze tomorrow.

ANNA

Emily's having champagne-

ROBIN

Did you hear what he just said?

ANNA

Yes, I did. And if he gets drunk and makes a fool of himself, we'll drag his ass out. But it's her wedding and she's going to have the day she has dreamed of. I'm going to pick up Mom and you stay out of trouble!

(Anna exits. A few beats. Robin sticks her tongue out at her. Kevin enters.)

ROBIN

Now what?

KEVIN

Now... I came in to get a glass of water. And a kiss.

ROBIN

Men don't have enough blood in their brains!

(Robin exits.)

KEVIN

Hello, Mr. Fisher.

DANIEL

Kent.

KEVIN

Um. Kevin.

DANIEL

Kevin.

KEVIN

Um, I just wanted to introduce myself. We haven't formally met.

(Kevin extends his hand. Daniel reluctantly takes it.)

KEVIN (cont'd)

Robin and I have known each other for a couple of years.

DANIEL

Thanks for helping out today.

KEVIN

Oh, my pleasure. Completely. I love weddings and tents. And carrying little old ladies up stairs.

DANIEL

Uh huh.

KEVIN

You know, there's some sodas outside. Coke, Orange, things like that. If you want I can grab one. I just thought since Robin and I are friends we should, I should tell you a little about myself. I'm studying architecture. I like design and building. Residential. I'm from Portland. Oregon, that is. It's beautiful there, too. Have you ever been?

DANIEL

No.

KEVIN

Oh, yeah. Skiing, mountains, swimming, even has the desert. Not Portland. I mean, the whole state. Diverse. But I thought, why not try the east coast. So I came to UVM. I grew up Mormon. But I'm not religious. That is, I'm very open to other people's religions.

DANIEL

What little old lady?

KEVIN

Harold's grandmother.

(A beat. Daniel starts to understand that
Kevin is more than a friend.)

DANIEL (CALLING)

Robin!

KEVIN

She told me a very interesting story about living in Ukraine. She was speaking in Yiddish but I followed most of it.

DANIEL (LOUDER)

Robin!

KEVIN

Before you say anything to her, I want you to know that I respect your daughter, she's funny, she's smart, she's totally honest. You always know where you stand with her. I know that I'm not Jewish and you don't know me, but I come from a very close family and for my money, it's the most important thing in the world. If Robin and I- end up together- like forever-

DANIEL

Robin!

KEVIN

-I want you to know you could call on me, on us, for anything. Because I know that Robin's the same way. She's totally devoted to you all. And that's what I'm looking for. Someone who has the same values. Someone I can build a life with.

(Robin enters.)

ROBIN

What!!

DANIEL

What time is the rehearsal dinner tonight?

ROBIN

You dragged me all the way in here to ask me that? Six o'clock.

(A beat.)

DANIEL

Call the restaurant and tell them we'll have one more in our party.

ROBIN

Why, who else is coming?

DANIEL

See you tonight, Kevin.

(Daniel exits. Kevin kisses Robin.)

ROBIN

What did you say to him?

(He kisses her again.)

SCENE 4

(Sylvia gestures to a painting.)

SYLVIA

My grandfather didn't talk about it much, but most of his German relatives died in the Holocaust. Except for his Uncle Herschell and Aunt Rose. They left before Kristallnacht. They moved to England and had six kids. Their six kids had - between them - fourteen kids. And on and on it goes. Of course, no one can count the children that never will be born.

Everyone thinks this is Jesse, this painting. My cousin. Mr. Perfect. Ha-ha. I love him. Grandpa would never confirm or deny. "It's a painting!," he'd say. "How can it be somebody?" You see all these faces behind the boy? They look really creepy, I know. But it's kind of like, all this pain and sorrow and here is a boy reciting the Torah. If you look closely, like here- behind this old man's face - there's the face, the same face of the boy. He's here, he's gone, he's never gone. My grandfather's religion was in his paintings. Life and death were never far away from each other. God made the world, that was enough.

(Lights up on Kevin as he sings and paints the kitchen. It is 2000.)

ROBIN

God, would you listen to that rain? I hope the plane can land. What are you doing?

KEVIN

What?

ROBIN

Painting that wall? You can't paint that wall! That's the wall with all the measurements on it!

KEVIN

I thought that was the idea. Paint over the ruler marks.

ROBIN

It's the history of our family on that wall!

KEVIN

I'm sorry. I just assumed that if I was painting the kitchen, I was painting the whole kitchen.

ROBIN

Except that one wall!

KEVIN

Well, now what do you want me to do?

(Daniel enters.)

DANIEL

What's all the fuss?

ROBIN

Look. Just look.

DANIEL

You painted over the ruler marks. Oh, my God.

ROBIN (TO KEVIN)

You see?

DANIEL

How am I going to tell your mother?

KEVIN

I've spent the entire weekend painting the kitchen. Nobody said anything about the ruler marks.

ROBIN

We figured you'd know. Dad, you should be sitting down. If Gia sees you on your feet, there will be hell to pay. Sit down. Kevin, hand me his sweater. Your hands are freezing. Let's put a blanket over your lap.

KEVIN

How about the splatted bugs all over the ceiling? Should I have left those, too?

DANIEL

You're treating me like an old man.

ROBIN

I'm treating you like an old man who has pneumonia.

DANIEL

Had pneumonia.

ROBIN

You're not officially out of the woods. We'll see what Gia has to say. What are we going to do about that wall?

KEVIN

Think of how excited she'll be to see her kitchen painted. Finally! Not to mention the new toilet I put in. Not to mention the new carpet in the living room. How about, Kevin! Nice work in three days.

ROBIN

I smell cigarettes.

DANIEL

What?

ROBIN

You've been smoking.

DANIEL

It's just this sweater.

ROBIN

Don't bull shit me. What are you thinking?

DANIEL

One cigarette. One half cigarette.

ROBIN

Are you crazy? Dad, you almost died! Oh my God. Where are they? Where's the pack?

DANIEL

There's no pack. I just found one crumpled up little cigarette and I had a few puffs. No big deal. Don't you dare say anything to your mother.

ROBIN

Kevin, say something.

KEVIN

Smoking is a really bad idea.

DANIEL

All right, all right. I'm sorry. It was just one goddamned cigarette!

ROBIN

Do you know what I hate about my life? Being a policeman. Yes, I have to watch both of you like a hawk. (To Daniel) You're a menace to yourself and you! (to Kevin) you ought to know better!

(Robin, very upset, exits.)

KEVIN (CALLING AFTER HER)

Better than what?

DANIEL

She doesn't mean it.

KEVIN

Wow.

DANIEL

She needs a nap.

KEVIN

I need a nap! She goes off like that. Over nothing.

DANIEL

You're telling me. I raised her.

KEVIN

Sylvia's no better. Just like her mother. Between the two of them? All day. At me.

DANIEL

It's hormones.

KEVIN

Don't... (then whispers) Do not say hormones! We went to a therapist. You know. One of those people you pay that take the side of your wife.

DANIEL

Oh, one of THOSE people.

KEVIN

I suggested - gently - that Robin might, you know-

DANIEL

Need a shot.

KEVIN

Right? Big mistake.

DANIEL

Robin was the smoker in the family. Sixteen I caught her. I had quit - I mean really quit - twenty years ago. And I find a pack of Marlboros in the mud room. So I smoked them!

KEVIN

They were hers?

DANIEL

Damned right they were hers. I grounded her for a month.

KEVIN

But you smoked them.

DANIEL

You never get them out of your system. No matter what you do. No matter what books you read. Mind over matter, it's all bull shit. Hell, I even tried a hypnotist once. No luck. They're fatal.

KEVIN

Daniel, you've got to figure out a way to stay off cigarettes.

DANIEL

Cigarettes? I'm talking about women!

(The doorbell rings. Kevin opens it. Gia enters.)

KEVIN

Hi!

GIA

Good afternoon. I'm Gia- hi, Mr. Fisher!

DANIEL

Just in time!

GIA

Sorry I'm late. The driving is really bad out there. I hate rain in February! And it's starting to thunder and lightning.

KEVIN

Let me take your coat.

GIA

Oh, thanks. I love the kitchen! (To Kevin.) Did you paint it?

KEVIN

I did.

GIA

I love the color! Robin's egg blue? It's really soothing.

KEVIN

Yes, we're very soothed around here.

GIA

How are you Mr. Fisher?

DANIEL

Better than nothing.

GIA

Oh, come on.

DANIEL

Can you believe this girl's not married, Kevin?

KEVIN

No, I can't.

GIA

You shouldn't be in here, Mr. Fisher. The fumes are not good for your lungs.

KEVIN

I used a water-based paint. It's a surprise for Nancy. She's in Chicago at her grandson's bar mitzvah. We were all supposed to go but-

DANIEL (TO GIA)

Gia wouldn't let me. It's all her fault.

GIA (TO DANIEL)

Let's go in the other room and have a listen to those lungs. Remember what I taught you.

DANIEL

Nose over toes!

KEVIN

What's that?

GIA

A safe way to get up when you're a bit unsteady.

(Daniel gets up carefully. He begins to cough. Robin enters.)

ROBIN

You okay, Dad? (To Gia.) He smoked a cigarette!

DANIEL

You've got a big mouth!

(Daniel and Gia exit. He continues to cough more and more and more.)

ROBIN

We shouldn't have painted the kitchen. I can't stand to listen to him cough.

KEVIN

Honestly, the water based paint shouldn't irritate him. He's doing too much. He should be in bed.

ROBIN

I try. He's impossible.

KEVIN

Maybe you should have a talk with the nurse. About his smoking.

ROBIN

How can I control it if he finds a butt? I suppose I should go through his office.

KEVIN

I think it's more than a butt.

ROBIN

What? Why?

KEVIN

I didn't want to say anything.

ROBIN

What? What do you mean?

KEVIN

The smoking. He's been smoking all weekend.

ROBIN

Why are you just now telling me this?

KEVIN

I don't know.

ROBIN

Jesus Christ, he's got pneumonia!

KEVIN

I know. I know. I talked to him about it-

ROBIN

Like that's any help!

(Robin sees out the window.)

ROBIN (cont'd)

They're here. Don't say anything to upset my mother. Just finish painting. Finish the wall.

KEVIN

Look, I'm sorry...

ROBIN

Don't touch me.

KEVIN

I'm sorry! What am I sorry about? God!

(Emily enters.)

ROBIN (ALL CHEERY)

Emily! How as the bar mitzvah?

EMILY

Hell. Heaven and Hell. Where's Dad?

ROBIN

Upstairs.

EMILY

How are you, Kevin? So good to see you! Thanks for staying with Dad. Both of you.

ROBIN

I just wish, you know-

EMILY

I know. What are you going to do? He's sick, he's sick. That's life. Thank God, I'm here!

(Emily exits. Nancy and Anna enter.)

NANCY

Well, the house is still standing, that's a good sign. What did you do?

ROBIN

Surprise!

ANNA

It's blue.

ROBIN

Do you like it?

ANNA

It's blue.

NANCY

Where's your father?

ROBIN

Upstairs with Gia.

NANCY

Gia? Oh, right.

(Nancy exits.)

ROBIN (CALLING AFTER HER)

Your welcome!

(to Anna)

She hated the orange.

ANNA

What's this?

ROBIN

Dad's pills. He knocked them over. I was in the midst of reorganizing them while I was helping him in the bathroom and supervising Kevin.

ANNA

Where are the bottles? How am I supposed to know what's what?

ROBIN

I know what's what. The blue pills are beta-blockers. Dad takes one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The yellow ones are for high blood pressure and the white ones with the stripes are insulin.

ANNA

What white ones with the stripes?

ROBIN

Right there.

(The following conversation overlaps.)

KEVIN

I think I'll probably head out.

ANNA

He got anything good in there?

ROBIN

Like what?

KEVIN

You need anything else?

ANNA

Valium, pain killers? Just curious. Just wondering what I have to look forward to.

KEVIN

Where's Sylvia?

ANNA

We dropped her off at Chelsea's- she has a project due tomorrow. You're supposed to pick her up.

ROBIN

No Valium but he's got Trazadone. I think it's an antidepressant.

KEVIN

So if there's nothing else...

ANNA

Dad's depressed?

KEVIN

I'll just jump in my spaceship-

ROBIN

They help him sleep for some reason.

KEVIN

Pick up Spiderman-

ANNA

What, he takes them at night?

KEVIN

Sylvia's always wanted to learn how to scale a building at night.

ROBIN

He's been on them since he stopped drinking, didn't you know that?

KEVIN

So I'll just let myself out. Say good night to Emily for me.

ANNA

But is it addictive? I mean, what's the use of trading one addiction for another.

KEVIN

If you need me, Sylvia and I will be at Peter Parker's later. He's in the book.

ROBIN

They're not addictive. I told you, they're anti-depressants. They affect the part of the brain that gets depressed, wherever that is.

(Kevin exits.)

ROBIN

Good night!

ANNA

Well, I guess if it helps.

ROBIN (cont'd)

It does help him. Now, for me it was like taking LSD. Colors, weird noises. I cannot take medications. The side effects have side effects, you know what I'm saying?

(A knock on the door. Franko enters.)

FRANKO

Hello.

ANNA

Hi.

FRANKO

Is Mrs. Fischer home?

ANNA

She is home. But she's kind of busy right now.

FRANKO

Okay.

(Franko walks over to the piano and takes some sheet music.)

FRANKO (cont'd)

In case you're wondering, my name's Franko.

ANNA

I was wondering.

FRANKO

My real name is Frankie O'Reilly but people call me Franko for short. I left my recital music here.

ANNA

Okay.

(Franko looks at the cake on the table.)

FRANKO

That's a very nice looking cake.

ANNA

It's strawberry.

FRANKO

I prefer chocolate. But strawberry is awfully nice, too.

ANNA

Would you like a piece to take with you?

FRANKO

Sure.

ANNA

What will your mother say?

FRANKO

Oh, right. Better make it two pieces.

(Anna give him two pieces.)

FRANKO (cont'd)

Thanks!

(Franko exits.)

ROBIN

So...

ANNA

So... what?

ROBIN

What about Emily and Harold! How are they doing?

ANNA

Hard to tell. Like I said, it was really busy.

ROBIN

But they're living under the same roof?

ANNA

Seem to be. Although...

ROBIN

What?

ANNA

I don't know. There was some woman hanging around. Every time I saw Harold he was talking to her.

ROBIN

I knew it!

ANNA

There's nothing to know. They're in counseling. I don't think Emily wants to talk about it. You noticed her face?

ROBIN

What about her face?

ANNA

Can't you see the swelling?

ROBIN

Did Harold hit her?

ANNA

Oh, for God's sake! She had a face lift. Don't bring it up. She's sensitive about it. She confided in me but she didn't want to tell you.

ROBIN

What? Why?

ANNA

Because you'll make fun of her.

ROBIN

So why are you telling me?

ANNA

Because you'll notice it. So don't notice it. She's trying to save her marriage.

ROBIN

I never trusted Harold.

ANNA

Harold's a nice guy. Just a little anal.

ROBIN

First time I ever met him? He tongued me.

ANNA

What?

ROBIN

Kissed me on the lips. And slipped me a little tongue.

ANNA

Eww! That's disgusting. I'm disgusted.

ROBIN

I'm going to tell Emily.

ANNA

Do not say anything to her! She's exhausted. She just put on the biggest party of her life. And she had to deal with Mom, me, and Sylvia for the past three days.

(Gia enters.)

ROBIN

How is he?

GIA

He's settled down for the night. But he does have a fever. I think he's been doing too much. Painting the kitchen probably wasn't a good idea. His lungs sounded better last week when I saw him. Your mother is going to call his doctor in the morning. I think he should be seen. If you can keep the cigarettes away. I know it's hard. He's stubborn. But he's lucky to have so much family around. Often I see patients and it's pretty obvious they're alone. I mean, really alone.

ANNA

Of course. Thank you.

GIA

I'm on call for the next few days. So if you need anything...

ANNA

We will.

GIA

Good night.

ANNA

Good night.

ROBIN

Good night.

ROBIN

You want a drink? I found Dad's stash in the basement. It's been down there for years.

ANNA

God, I hate scotch. Pour me a double.

(They drink.)

ROBIN/ANNA

L'chaim!

(Emily enters.)

EMILY

Pour me one of those? I didn't dare drink all weekend. I am so glad that it's over! And the kids. They move like a cloud of locusts, eating and destroying everything in their paths!

ROBIN

Well, you look great. Considering everything you've been through.

EMILY

Thank you.

ROBIN

I mean, really great.

EMILY

I've been up since three o'clock this morning, so I'll take that as a compliment. God, this stuff is terrible!

ANNA

I know, right?

EMILY

How did Dad ever drink this?

(Anna refills Emily's glass.)

ANNA

The second one's a breeze.

ROBIN

So how's Harold?

EMILY

Harold? Great.

ROBIN

Uh huh.

EMILY

You know we've had some problems.

ROBIN

Right. What was her name?

EMILY

It was just an emotional affair. Dalia.

ANNA

Dalia? Short for dalliance?

ROBIN

Harold would be a fool to trade you in. With that face? You don't look a day over thirty. Really. Nice and tight.

Anna! EMILY

She guessed! ANNA

I did. Not. What do you mean getting a face lift! ROBIN

Who said I had a face lift? EMILY

You did. ANNA

It's a life style lift. Totally different. They just stretch the skin at the neck and pull it behind your ears. EMILY

God! No! Don't tell me! Ugh! ROBIN

I like it. I look ten years younger. If anything - else - happens to Harold and me, I'll have to put myself back on the market. And have you seen the available men our age? What a joke! Every now and then some short, fat bald guy flirts with me and I have to tell him, I've got one of you at home! EMILY

(They roar. Emily's phone rings. She looks at it.)

Harold? ANNA

Uh huh. EMILY

Aren't you going to answer it? ANNA

Nope. EMILY

ROBIN

I'll talk to him.

EMILY

No, you won't!

(She drops the phone in her scotch glass.)

ROBIN

Oh, that's permanent. There's no coming back from soaking in scotch.

(Nancy enters.)

EMILY

How did you do it, Mom? How did you and Dad manage to stay together all these years?

NANCY

Well, we love each other.

EMILY

Oh come on, answer the question.

NANCY

It was too much trouble to get a divorce. How's that?

EMILY

Really?

NANCY

No. I don't know. Who's getting a divorce?

ANNA

Harold's having an emotional affair.

NANCY

With the caterer?

EMILY

What about the caterer?

NANCY

Nothing!

EMILY

What about the caterer?

NANCY

Anna and I were just talking about the caterer. How friendly she was.

ANNA

You have a big mouth.