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THE GRILLE ROOM

By Sam Forman

TO EDUARDO MACHADO:

For commanding me to write this play.

TO MY PARENTS:

For so many reasons.

CHARACTERS

JACOB MILLER

35 years old. A good looking Jewish man.

ROSE MILLER

Jacob's wife. 35 years old. Very pretty.

ALEXANDER MILLER

Jacob and Rose's son. 9 years old.

DICK ELIOT

60 years old. A little rough around the edges.

FRANCES 'FUDGE' KERNS ELIOT

Dick's wife. 55 years old. A handsome woman.

JIMMY

18 years old. An attractive, young black man.

SANDY GIBBONS

70 years old. A very well preserved Yankee gentleman.

SETTINGS

**The Grille Room at The Woodland Hills Country Club
Brookline, Massachusetts**

The Miller's Home

Newton, Massachusetts
The Eliot's Home
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TIME

Early Spring.

1957.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Lights up on the Grille Room at The Woodland Hills Country Club. DICK and JACOB are seated at a table together. DICK drinks a scotch. JACOB drinks a glass of seltzer water with a lemon wedge.

DICK

...You shoulda' heard the kid. On the eighteenth hole he says to me- didju' hear what the kid says?

JACOB

Which? The caddy?

DICK

Yeah. The kid. The caddy. Johnny McInerney.

JACOB

Johnny...right...

DICK

The balls on this kid...

JACOB

I didn't hear what he said.

DICK

He says...this is after I shanked that drive on the sixteenth-

JACOB

No but it was your day. We all said it. We knew it since you birdied the first par five.

DICK

Anyway, I'm standing there with this kid Johnny in the rough. And ya know- at this point I'm only two strokes up on Tucker. None of us knew he'd choke at the end there. So I was sweatin' it a little.

JACOB

Well sure.

DICK

Yeah, so I say to him: 'Damn it Johnny, we coulda' used a little protection on the lead there, huh?' And the kid says...very matter a' fact, ya know...he says: 'Mr. Eliot- I'm the youngest outta' nine children- and I wouldn't be handin' you your clubs today, if my father had ever worried for one minute about protection.'

JACOB

Not bad.

DICK

I'm tellin ya- they're pretty goddamn funny, these Irish kids.

JACOB

I know it...

DICK

Picture nine of 'em living in this tiny, little house in Southie. It's nuts.

JACOB

It is. It's awful.

DICK

We've got a fund now. For the caddies.

JACOB

Oh yeah?

DICK

We're gonna try to send some a' these Irish kids to college.

JACOB

Well ya gotta give a little back.

DICK

So Johnny McInerney says he wants to go to BC. First kid in his family to graduate High School.

JACOB

Ya know- I wanted to tell you again- thanks for everything the other day. It was a big help. Some a' the other places were really giving me the run around.

DICK

Well that's the insurance business for ya'. Ev'rybody's gotta be a big pain in the ass.

JACOB

I know- I said: "Look- I just want the basic plan and then I wanna be done with it." All of a' sudden they're tellin' me about *this package* and *that premium...*

DICK

Ya know, a lotta the members here are clients a' mine.

JACOB

I'm sure they are. You're very good.

DICK

Well it works out great for both of us. They're my friends. I see 'em here at the club- and then if they ever need cov'rage- they know they can come to me and I'll sell it to 'em. It's like they say, ya know, 'We have to scratch each other's backs sometimes- cuz there's always a couple little places there ya just can't reach all by yourself.'

JACOB leans in and speaks quietly to DICK.

JACOB

(Subtly motioning towards SANDY:)

Hey- that's the club President over there, right?

DICK

Sandy Gibbons himself. Very good friend of mine, Sandy.

JACOB

Should I be doing something?

DICK

No- you just keep on being yourself, Jake. That's all you gotta to do.

JACOB

Sounds good. I can definitely do that.

DICK

See- this is exactly why I brought you down here. Sandy always eats his lunch at 2 o'clock in the Grille Room.

JACOB

I see...

DICK

Listen- I'll tell you what we're gonna do. We're not gonna talk to him about your application at all today.

JACOB

We're not.

DICK

No, no, no- we're just here- we're having a good time, we're not trying to sell him on anything. Then he sees you sitting here laughing, looking like you already belong to the place- he's gonna say to himself: "Hey- I wonder who that young fella is over there with Dick Eliot?" Then bang- lookit that- you're in the door and you didn't have to say a word.

JACOB

I could tell him I voted for his cousin.

DICK

I know- it's a shame, isn't it? I think Chuck Gibbons woulda' made a helluva Guv'nor. Good Brahmin boy. Good Republican. *(Beat.)* I'm tellin' ya, Jake- this whole state's getting corrupt now. Ya got the Irish mob, ya got the wop mob...

JACOB

They're impossible...

DICK

You know, my mother was a wop.

JACOB

She was?

DICK

You bet your ass she was. Goddamn ball buster. Fresh off the boat. One hundred percent Eye-talian.

JACOB

No...I'm just surprised. You didn't seem ah...

DICK

Buddy- you don't even know the half of it. My parents were completely nuts.

JACOB

So your dad was...?

DICK

Yankee through and through. Yeah. No my father was sorta' like the black sheep a' the old Brahmin fam'ly. You know the story: Married this cute little Italian girl- had a couple kids...

JACOB

I never knew that.

DICK

Yeah, now my *wife*'s a whole diff'rent thing. She's the real deal. Mayflower on both sides.

JACOB

Both sides, huh?

DICK

Jake- that woman's about as goddamn Yankee as it gets. (*Beat.*) She came from one of these big, big old money families, ya know? They really don't make 'em like that anymore.

JACOB

I know. Those families are amazing.

DICK

Listen- I'll tell ya, kiddo- it used to be different when the Brahmins ran things. Now we got this Wop sonuvabitch Furcolo in the State House. We've gotta go through six unions and the goddamn zoning commission ev'ry time we wanna clean the pool. Makes ya really miss the old days.

JACOB

Cheers to that.

DICK

Here, here, my friend.

They toast. They drink. JIMMY enters wearing an apron with a bowtie.

DICK (cont'd)

Oh hey, Jimmy. How ya' doin'?

JIMMY

I'm great, Sir. Are you all doing okay so far?

DICK

We're fine. Jimmy- this is Jake Miller by the way.

JIMMY

How do you do, Sir?

JACOB

Nice to meet you, Jimmy.

DICK

Jake's applying to the club.

JIMMY

Oh good luck, Mr. Miller. It's a real friendly place.

JACOB

It's beautiful.

DICK

Yeah we found Jimmy here when he was just a baby. Isn't that right, Jimmy?

JACOB

Oh yeah?

DICK

Yeah just lyin' on the steps a' the pro shop. His little head was just poppin' out of a golf bag.

JACOB

Gosh. Is that true?

JIMMY

I think he's joking with you, Sir.

DICK

Yeah I'm just havin' a little fun with with ya, Jake.

JACOB

Hey- fun's good. I like fun.

JIMMY

And what are you having today, Mr. Eliot?

DICK

Well, Jimmy, let's see. I think I'll start out with the Beef Barley soup.

JIMMY

A cup or a bowl, sir?

DICK

How about a bowl. Jake- you like soup?

JAKE

Nah. I'm good, thanks.

DICK

Fine. So why don'tcha' just give us two BLT's- lotsa' mayo- and have em' do the bacon extra crispy, okay?

JIMMY

Well done bacon...

JACOB

What kinda bread is that on?

JIMMY

(To JACOB:)

What would you like it on, Sir?

JACOB

Well whadda ya got? You got rye?

JIMMY

Oh- I don't think so actually. I can go check.

JACOB

No- you don't have to do that-

JIMMY

Are you sure, sir?

JACOB

Yeah it's good. Don't trouble yourself. *(To DICK:)* Whadda you think for the bread?

DICK

Toast, Jake. I was thinking just plain old white toast.

JACOB

Perfect. White toast sounds great.

JIMMY

Very good, sir.

DICK

Oh and I'll take another Chivas, Jimmy. And not too much ice. You gotta tell 'em they're putting too much ice in the drinks.

JIMMY

I'm sorry about that, Sir. I'll be sure to tell them.

JIMMY exits.

DICK

So lemme ask you something: When I told you about the club last week in my office- was there something that just made you say: "Now that sounds like the a place that Jake Miller could really belong"?

JACOB

Oh sure. There're a ton a' good reasons to join. I told you about my son. Ya know, my wife and I wanna have somewhere we can take him in the Summer. Let him get a little fresh air. Run around a little.

DICK

Yeah. I've got two girls.

JACOB

I know. That's great.

DICK

Do you have a summer house?

JACOB

Oh I wish I did. I'm not quite there yet...ya know...*money-wise.*

DICK

Yeah we've got this place in Chatham. It's a big old house. Passed down through the family. Ya know. That sorta thing. Yeah we hardly ever go up there now.

JACOB

It happens. Your kids are grown up.

DICK

Our lives are here now.

JACOB

Sure.

DICK

All our friends are here. *(Beat.)* Say what kinda name is that? Miller?

JACOB

German. Actually. Used to be Mueller.

DICK

German, huh? Jesus. That's quite a group a' people you got over there.

JACOB

Oh...we weren't really a part of all that.

DICK

Right, Jake...whatever you say...

JACOB

No my great-grandfather came over about a hundred and fifty years ago. Eighteen-oh-something. I was the first person in my family to leave Chicago. When I moved out here a year ago to start my business they all said 'Why are you going to Boston?' They thought the East Coast might as well have been another planet.

DICK

So tell me- wha'd your great-grandfather do? Over there in Germany?

JACOB

I dunno. I think he worked in a bank. I never really knew him.

DICK

We've got a lotta bankers here. Kip Hatch runs the Shawmut Bank.

JACOB

Right. I know. He's the President.

DICK

There're a lotta future customers here for you.

JACOB

I'm sure.

DICK

Ya know we never had that stuff. When I was a kid.

JACOB

What?

DICK

The wall to wall carpeting. Nobody did that.

JACOB

No. It's kinda just taking off.

DICK

Yeah we just had rugs. Couple oriental rugs. That's it.

JACOB

Well we sell those too.

DICK

You must be making a fortune.

JACOB

Ya know...we could always be doing a little better. But. Who knows?

JIMMY enters carrying a bowl of soup on a tray.

DICK (cont'd)

Oh! Well wouldja' look at that? The soup's here.

JIMMY

Here you are, Sir.

DICK

Looks lovely, Jimmy. Nice and hot.

JIMMY

Very good, Sir.

DICK

And I ordered another scotch.

JIMMY

I'll be right back with it, Sir.

DICK

All right. Sounds good, Jimmy.

JIMMY exits. DICK begins eating his soup.

DICK (cont'd)

We're like a family here, Jake. You'll see that once you join. Everybody's watching out for everyone else. It's a real community.

SANDY enters and walks toward DICK and JAKE.

DICK (cont'd)

(Conspiratorially:)

Hey- don't turn around- but Sandy Gibbons is coming over here right now. I'm telling you- whatever you do- just act natural.

SANDY reaches the table. DICK stands to greet him. JAKE follows suit.

SANDY

Dick Eliot- you're looking like a new man today. You must've just made out like a bandit.

DICK

Well it's like Ike said after we won the war, right? "There's no victory at bargain basement prices." Ya gotta gamble if you wanna win.

JACOB

He mopped the floor with us. We're still reeling.

DICK

Jake- this is Sandy Gibbons. Sandy- Jake Miller.

SANDY

(Shaking JAKE'S hand:)

Nice to meetcha', Jake.

JACOB

Very good to meet you, Sir. Your club's beautiful.

SANDY

How do you like that, Dick? He sounds pretty pleased for a guy who just lost his shirt.

JACOB

Oh I'm just happy to be here, Sir. It's a heck of a place to lose a shirt.

SANDY

So I'm sure Dick here's given you the old sales pitch by now. They say the man could sell ice to an Eskimo.

JACOB

He's taken enough of my money for one day.

JIMMY enters with a glass of scotch on a small tray.

JACOB

Now that's a good looking glass a' scotch.

SANDY

Well Gentlemen- it was nice chatting with you. I'll let you get back to your lunch. Dick-pleasure as always.

DICK

Good to see you, Sandy.

JACOB

Nice to meet you, Sir.

SANDY

You too, Jake.

SANDY exits.

JIMMY

Your drink, Mr. Eliot.

DICK and JACOB sit back down. DICK takes the drink from JIMMY.

JACOB

I think that went well.

DICK

Jake, that went very well. Didn't I tell ya? Ya gotta let him come to you.

JACOB

He seems like a great guy.

DICK

(Looking down at his drink:)

Hey- Jimmy, lookit this: What'd I tell ya about the ice? I just need one or two cubes, all right? I dunno why they're givin' me all this crap.

JIMMY

Would you like me to bring you another, Sir?

DICK

No- just tell 'em to remember next time. This is ridiculous.

JIMMY

I'm sorry, Sir. It won't happen again.

JIMMY exits.

DICK

I'll tell ya- that's the only problem with this place, Jake. Sometimes they'll Jew ya a little with the liquor. But I'm keepin' an eye on it. We'll have these fellas pouring real drinks pretty soon. Just you wait.

JACOB

Yeah well...good luck with that.

DICK takes a large sip- almost polishing off the whole scotch.

DICK

So like I said- I think we gotta hold off for the right time to tell Sandy about you. You wanna do it when you've got the guy's full attention.

JACOB

Whatever you think is best.

DICK

But this is good- cuz now you met him and he liked you- I could tell. So now ya just gotta fill out that application and then we'll take it from there.

JACOB

I'll do it tonight. Thank you.

DICK

Ya gotta promise me one thing though, Jake.

JACOB

Yeah?

DICK

If they let you in here- I don't wanna see any wall to wall carpeting in the Grille Room, all right?

JACOB

No. I think that would be a little presumptuous of me.

DICK

Yeah. I mean there's nothin' wrong with a little new blood. But let's not get carried away.

JACOB

No...I won't...

DICK

Cuz for my money...ya know...at the end of the day...this club's really all about one thing.

JACOB

What's that?

DICK

Tradition.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

Lights up on JACOB and ROSE in the Miller's kitchen, later that night. ROSE is clearing the table from a Passover Seder. The application for the club sits somewhere in view of the audience. ROSE toasts JACOB with a Kiddush cup.

ROSE

Next year in Jerusalem, Baby.

JACOB

You know- it might be not be the biggest Passover in town...

ROSE

I like to think of it as intimate-

JACOB

I was gonna say- it's not the size of the guest list that counts...

ROSE

No- it's the quality, right?

JACOB

Hey- what can I tell ya'? You throw a helluva Seder, Baby. Seriously- if Elijah was here, the man would stand up right now and applaud.

ROSE

You thought the brisket was good? I tried to make it more tender this time.

JACOB

Honey- that brisket was perfect! You've single-handedly mastered the art of Semitic cuisine.

ROSE

You've gotta let it marinate in the onion soup. That's what gives it the flavor. That's your mother's secret, you know? She showed me that.

JACOB

Listen- I say this to you in the strictest confidence, okay? But my mother's brisket doesn't hold a candle to what you just did in here.

ROSE

God- I think that's the sweetest thing you've ever said to me.

JACOB

Yeah- now if we can just figure out something to do with that gifelte fish- I think we're gonna be all set.

ROSE

I dunno. Maybe I'm nuts. I really like that gifelte fish.

JACOB

Yeah- I think it's that clear jelly I just can't quite get my mind around. The horseradish isn't bad though. It's got a little bit of a kick to it, you know? I like that.

ROSE

I know- I love it. It always clears out my sinuses.

JACOB

I've gotta say though, I've never been a huge fan of the matzo. I dunno what you're supposed to do with that stuff. It's like eating sandpaper.

ROSE

I do make a very good matzo brei. You've gotta give me that.

JACOB

Don't you ever wish we were Italian? The holidays come around- ev'rybody's eating meatballs and veal and spaghetti- now that's some food you can really celebrate with.

ROSE

What's wrong with matzo?

JACOB

Oh great- we get to eat a big cracker. Let's have a party.

ROSE

I bet they didn't have a lotta matzo at the club.

JACOB

I tried. I said: Two BLT's, please. And can you make 'em unleavened?

ROSE

...I can't believe you asked if they had *rye bread*...

JACOB

I know. I don't think the guy's ever met a Jew before. He didn't know what the hell I was talking about.

ROSE

We shoulda' had him over for Pesach. Let him recite the plagues.

JACOB

Seriously- he musta' had about five drinks while we're sitting there. He thought my father was a Nazi.

ROSE

Well you don't exactly look like a Lubovitcher, Sweetie. You're one of the most Goyish looking Jews I've ever seen.

JACOB

Yeah I was thinking of going in there wearing the payas and the big black hat- but I was afraid it might tip me off.

ROSE

Now that's an image I woulda' liked to have seen. Whatever you paid for the insurance would've been worth it- just to see that.

Beat.

JACOB

You know Dick gave me the application, Honey. He said he's gonna try to get us into the club.

ROSE

Oh my God- you're kidding...

JACOB

No...this could be big, Sweetie. This is good.

ROSE

Yeah I'd like to see what happens when he finds out who you are.

JACOB

Why does he have to find out about it?

ROSE

Oh so what are you gonna do? Keep on lying to them?

JACOB

I wasn't lying. I just didn't go outta my way to bring it up. I don't think that's technically a lie.

ROSE slams down a serving dish. She crosses away from the table.

ROSE

No. You know what? I'm sorry.

JACOB

What? This is good news. I thought you'd be happy.

ROSE

Honey- you know I love you- but this is not one of your best ideas here. I hope you realize that.

JACOB

C'mon! It's exciting!

ROSE

No, no it isn't. This is definitely what we'd call dangerous.

JACOB

Where's your sense of adventure? C'mon, *Rose!*

ROSE

God- why do you have to say *Rose* like that? You always sound so angry.

JACOB

What? I'm just saying your name! I love your name! It's beautiful!

ROSE

Well maybe I'm not ashamed of my name. *Jacob*.

JACOB

Listen: The kid's upstairs, all right? I don't wanna start fighting with you.

ROSE

Who said anything about fighting? I'm talking to you.

JACOB

I dunno what you wanted me to do. I'm sitting there with the guy- he's telling me how great I am- he's saying how the club needs some *new blood*-

ROSE

Blue blood?

JACOB

Oh- what're you, Jack Benny now?

ROSE

Sorry I made a joke. I won't do it again.

JACOB

Look- this could be a very good thing, okay? You have no idea what these people can do for us.

ROSE

It just makes me incredibly nervous.

JACOB

We both said we wanted somewhere to take the kid in the summer-

ROSE

What about the summer camp? He was so excited about it.

JACOB

That camp's gonna cost me a fortune.

ROSE

It's not half as much as the club.

JACOB

Yeah but the camp's only for two months. And I'm telling you- seriously- the place is beautiful. You should see it. They've got the golf course, they've got the big pool...

ROSE

I dunno if it's really worth abandoning my religion for private swimming lessons.

JACOB

Oh...your *religion*...that's good...

ROSE

Yeah I'm Jewish, Jacob. I'm a Jew.

JACOB

Yeah and you were born a goddamn Unitarian- and suddenly you're Theodore Herzl, ya know? So I'm just trying to figure out the hell's going on here.

ROSE

Oh my God- I refuse to talk about this again...

JACOB

Hey I'm just constantly surprised by the depth of your commitment to my people, Honey, that's all.

ROSE

Oh- are they *your* people now?

JACOB

What? You want em- you can have em!

ROSE

Well who asked me to convert?

JACOB

My sonuvabitch father, that's who asked you.

ROSE

No- it was you, Jacob. It was definitely you who started that.

JACOB

Well I created a monster. (*Walking stiffly like Frankenstein's monster:*) You're like *Jewenstein!*

ROSE
Oh good...I'm a monster now...

JACOB
Frankenjew...

ROSE
It's funny. I thought I was just being a good wife.

JACOB
Well I never gave a damn about any of it!

ROSE
No-no-no you said 'My fam'ly wants me to marry a Jewish girl. It'll be easier when we have a kid.'

JACOB
Look how easy it is!

ROSE
Yeah so I went to the torah study and I learned how to read Hebrew and I joined the temple and it was *ten* years ago-

JACOB
I know. You made my insane father very proud.

ROSE
So don't you dare take all that work I did and throw it in my face here, okay? Because I worked hard for this. And when you tell me you don't give a damn about our religion I find it very, very insulting.

JACOB
Rose, I'm not trying to-

ROSE
No it is, Jacob. It's insulting to me, it's insulting to your *parents*- when I've tried for years to earn their respect and I've been perfect- and you know that!

JACOB
No- you know what? That's fine. We'll do it your way. That's good. Our son can go swim in the Dead Sea. Cuz that's the only place they're gonna have us if you keep this up.

ROSE

Maybe I just don't like all those country club kinds of people quite as much as you do. Maybe I like being Jewish, is that such a crime?

JACOB

I just want you to be my wife and back me up a little here. That's all I'm asking you. I'd appreciate it if you tried to be on my side for once and give these people at the club a shot before ya just write em' all off.

ROSE

Fine. I won't say a word. Whatever you want.

ROSE turns and starts to walk out.

JACOB

Where're you going?

ROSE

I'm gonna go upstairs and read a story to our child. Is that okay with you?

JACOB

Well I dunno, Honey. What're you gonna read him?

ROSE

Something with a moral.

ROSE exits. JACOB picks up the application for the club and stares at it for several moments in silence. He sits down, takes a pen from his briefcase and begins to fill it out. Blackout.

SCENE 3

Lights up on the Grille Room. FRANCES and ROSE are seated together at a table. FRANCES drinks a Martini. ROSE drinks a Tom Collins.

ROSE

Well they're definitely taking their time down there.

FRANCES

I'm sure it's a good sign.

ROSE

I hope so. I've never seen my husband so excited about anything.

FRANCES

Men love their little clubs.

ROSE

I know. Jake's been getting ready for this interview since five o'clock this morning.

FRANCES

Yeah well if it goes all right down there today- you can tell him he won't really have to worry. The board just has to like him enough to recommend him to Sandy Gibbons, and then Sandy says okay and then you're in. It's a pretty simple process. They just like to make it sound complicated. Adds to the whole mystique.

ROSE

Seriously- you woulda' thought he was going off to testify in front of some Senate committee or something. I just hope they're not too tough on him.

FRANCES

Well is he a Communist?

ROSE

No- he's a Republican.

FRANCES

Relax, dear. I'm just teasing you. I'm making a little joke.

ROSE

Oh that's good. I love jokes. *(ROSE burps)* Ooh I'm sorry. I think I might be getting a little drunk.

FRANCES

Good for you. You go get drunk, Sweetie.

ROSE

Well fine then. I will.

FRANCES

Dick likes to drink. And so do I. I'm unapologetic about it at this point. I dunno what the problem is. It calms me down. Keeps me loose. The boys are downstairs at the interview. We can have a little drink. It's nice.

ROSE

It's a treat. I don't usually drink in the afternoon.

FRANCES

Welcome to the club.

ROSE
(*Laughing:*)

Oh, you *are* funny!

FRANCES

Thank you.

ROSE

You're welcome!

FRANCES

No but Dick said he really likes Jake. He said he's a real 'stand-up fella'. Those were his words.

ROSE

Well he's really gone out of his way for him. It's very kind.

FRANCES

It makes him feel young again. Helping out the new guy. He gets to feel like a big shot. And there's nothing Dick likes more than feeling like a big shot, lemme tell ya.

ROSE

It's good to have someone on your side. I know he really appreciates having him down there.

FRANCES

My family belonged to the club already. When we first applied. So did my grandparents so it wasn't so tough for us. You know how it is. The network. (*Beat.*) Have you had a chance to see the pool?

ROSE

Oh sure. It's lovely.

FRANCES

They say it's as big as the one they have in the Olympics.

ROSE

Really? That's amazing.

FRANCES

I don't imagine we'll be hosting the Olympics here any time soon though.

ROSE

No. I couldn't really see that.

FRANCES

Now that would really be something wouldn't it? All those different people, here at the club. Playing together.

ROSE

I wouldn't think the board would approve.

FRANCES

All those big German boys swimming in our pool.

ROSE

It's quite a picture.

FRANCES

They're good swimmers over there. They were all trained. In those youth groups.

ROSE

Right...

FRANCES

Three years old, they just toss 'em into the pool and tell 'em to start swimming.

ROSE

Oh I wouldn't've liked that when my son was three. That would've made me a little nervous.

FRANCES

They'll make you nervous. Those Nazis.

ROSE

Gosh. I'm getting a little tipsy. I don't even know what we're saying.

FRANCES

A couple more drinks and maybe we'll both go jump in the pool, huh? We'll see if we float.

ROSE

(After a beat:)

So your kids are all grown up now- isn't that right? Two girls?

FRANCES

Sally starts teaching at Smith in the Fall. English literature. And Gail lives in New Canaan with her husband.

ROSE

I always wanted a daughter I could take shopping. I thought that would be fun.

FRANCES

Oh but you could still try, couldn't you? You're just a baby.

ROSE

I had some trouble when I was pregnant. It was a little complicated.

FRANCES

Well thank God you've got a healthy boy.

ROSE

I know. We wanted to have another kid. But. I guess I'm all done.

FRANCES

(Raising her glass to toast.)

Me too. Here's to being all done. Let's get drunk.

They clink their glasses and drink.

FRANCES (cont'd)

We had a son.

ROSE

Oh. I didn't know that.

FRANCES

Dicky died in the war.

ROSE

Oh, I'm so sorry.

FRANCES

I was just nuts about him. He was such a beautiful boy.

ROSE

Well he had a wonderful mother.

FRANCES

Oh you're very sweet.

ROSE

God, you seem so strong. It's amazing.

FRANCES

Well what else can you do? We've got two healthy girls. I said to Dick- one day I finally said- either we can fall apart over this, or we can straighten up and try to carry on with our lives. And I want to be happy. So goddamnit, let's try to be happy!

ROSE

I don't think I'd make it. I think about that sometimes.

FRANCES

Well I sound strong now. Believe me, it took a year or so before I could even take his ski trophies down. I've got everything in a box now. There's a big box in our basement. With all his little things. *(Beat.)* Don't you find it strange that you can fit a person's whole life into one cardboard box? *(Beat.)* I take it out sometimes. I open the box. I poke around. I cry a little. And then I close it back up. Cuz what else can you do? I can't bring him back. It's just memories. *(Beat.)* But everyone at the club was so wonderful. It was a real lifesaver, having this place. I make fun of it- but I think a person needs somewhere to go where they can just be themselves.

ROSE

Of course.

FRANCES

And some of the other members lost their boys- so we've felt very safe here.

FRANCES dabs her eyes with a napkin.

ROSE

Hey are you all right? Do you need anything?

FRANCES

Oh I'm fine. It feels good to talk about him. I don't cry much anymore. I was really spending a fortune on mascara. And nobody likes a Gloomy Goose, right? Doesn't make you very popular at luncheons.

ROSE

Yeah- I know what you mean.

FRANCES

God I'm sorry...you get me talking- I'll be crying all day.

ROSE

You can say whatever you like.

FRANCES
(To ROSE:)

Hey- get a couple more martinis in me and watch out, honey!

JIMMY enters carrying an empty tray.

JIMMY

Can I bring you ladies anything else from the bar today?

ROSE

No thank you. I think I'm good for now.

FRANCES

Are you trying to get me drunk again, Jimmy?

JIMMY

No, Ma'am. Not at all.

FRANCES

You wanna go dancing with me? I'm sure you're a helluva dancer, Kid.

JIMMY

I'll just take your drink order, Mrs. Eliot.

FRANCES

Oh sure. That's what they all say, Sweetie.

JIMMY laughs a little uncomfortably.

FRANCES (cont'd)

No we were just having a little girl talk. Very sensitive stuff. Nothing you'd be interested in, Jimmy.

JIMMY

That's good, Mrs. Eliot. Do you need anything else?

FRANCES

I'm just fooling with you.

JIMMY

I know, Ma'am. You're very funny.

FRANCES

You've gotta have a sense of humor in this world, Kiddo. It'll get you far.

JIMMY

Mr. Eliot says the same thing.

FRANCES

I bet you were a good son, weren't you, Sweetie? Your mother must've just adored you.

JIMMY

I think so, Ma'am.

FRANCES

Do you wanna get another drink, dear?

ROSE

No- I think I'll wait until they get here.

FRANCES

Oh, come on...have another. A little cocktail never killed anyone.

ROSE

Well two might kill me...but...okay. I guess I'll have another Tom Collins.

FRANCES

That's good, dear. And I'll take another Martini. Our husbands will be joining us very soon, Jimmy.

JIMMY

That's nice, Mrs. Eliot.

FRANCES

It's your last chance to run away with me.

JIMMY

I don't think Mr. Eliot would like that, Ma'am.

FRANCES

No, Jimmy, I don't imagine he would. But...what can ya do?

JIMMY

So I'll come back to take your lunch orders when they get here. How's that sound?

FRANCES

Sounds perfect.

JIMMY exits.

FRANCES

I get a real kick outta that kid.

ROSE

He seems very sweet.

FRANCES

We've got a rapport.

ROSE

You're very funny with him.

FRANCES

Dick's got a good sense of humor too. It's been good to have him around. After everything we've been through- he can still make me laugh. *(Beat.)* God- why am I telling you all this? You barely even know me. You must think I'm nuts.

ROSE

No- I'm glad you feel like you can talk to me. It's good.

FRANCES

Well that's very kind of you, dear.

ROSE

Hey- do you mind if I talk to you about something for a second...um...Frances?

FRANCES

Fudge. Please. Everybody calls me Fudge. Less formal.

ROSE

Oh. Fudge. That's cute.

FRANCES

We've all got nicknames, don't we? Us Yankee girls. Who knows why?

ROSE

Well. That's actually what I wanted to talk about. Fudge.

FRANCES

Is what, dear? I'm not following.

ROSE

Well we're not really exactly Yankees. My husband and I.

FRANCES

You're not.

ROSE

No. Ya know- as long as we're opening up- I felt like I should tell you that.

FRANCES

Well what are you? Irish?

ROSE

No. We're not Irish.

FRANCES

Are you Italian? My husband's half Italian. Didju' know that?

ROSE

No...I...

FRANCES

Well he is. He's half-Italian. Although I'm sure he likes to pass it off like he's a pure-bread Brahmin...

ROSE

God- I'm feeling a little flushed. I really shouldn't be saying this. He's gonna kill me.

FRANCES

We won't let anyone kill you, dear. Relax. *(Beat.)* So you're not Italian, you were saying...

ROSE

No. Fudge. We're something else.

FRANCES

Well I'm stumped. Do you want me to try to keep guessing? Are you colored?

ROSE

No...we're actually Jewish. Me and Jacob. *Jake.* We're Jews.

FRANCES

Your whole family?

ROSE

Yep. Our child is Jewish too, Fudge. So...that's the big secret. I probably shouldn't've said anything.

FRANCES

No. I just think it's sort of unusual. I've never really known any Jews before. It's interesting.

ROSE

I converted right before we got married. Jacob was born Jewish. I thought you could tell.

FRANCES

No- I really had no idea. You seemed very sweet. I always thought Jews were supposed to be tougher.

ROSE

Well...here I am.

FRANCES

I just feel a little taken advantage of. I'm sure you understand.

ROSE

No I don't actually. I'm sorry.

FRANCES

Well I mean here I was- practically falling apart in front of you. Which now I'm getting pretty embarrassed about I have to say. And then suddenly- after I've been completely honest with you since we sat down- you tell me you've been holding in this big secret-

ROSE

It's not-

FRANCES

Excuse me- and I feel a little violated. I do. That's just not how a friendship works- in my experience. Of course I guess we've all got different ideas about what's appropriate. Maybe I'm old fashioned.

ROSE

It's not a big secret-

FRANCES

You said it yourself. I'm quoting you, dear.

ROSE

Well that's why I'm telling you now. I don't feel like lying to you, Fudge. *(Beat.)* I think you're a nice person, okay? I was having a good time with you and I'm happy that you felt comfortable enough with me to open up like that. I appreciated it.

FRANCES

Well I sort of wish I hadn't now. I must say.

ROSE

Why? Because I said I'm Jewish?

FRANCES

No- because I'm having trouble trusting you, dear. Who knows what other big secrets you're all keeping from us.

ROSE

So what was I supposed to say? 'Hello, Mrs. Eliot. Nice to meet you. I'm a Jew.' I mean- I'm sorry- that's not how I usually relate to people.

FRANCES

It just seems pretty convenient to suddenly spring it on us now, doesn't it? After you've already suckered my husband into getting you an interview with the board.

ROSE

C'mon- if Jacob had said it from the beginning- we wouldn't've even gotten in the door. You know that.

FRANCES

I *don't* know that, dear. I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell me what I know, all right?

ROSE

I'm sorry- I guess I thought you would understand. For a minute there I thought maybe it wasn't such a big deal after all.

FRANCES

Who says it's a big deal? Go be a Jew for all I care. I just like a little honesty.

ROSE

So do I.

FRANCES

I guess I don't just do whatever I can to *get in the door*, you know? That's not how I operate.

ROSE

Well you don't need to worry about the door, you know? You already own the whole house.

FRANCES

Oh don't start blaming me now, Sweetie. It's fine. You lied a little. It happens. I was upset at first, but you have to allow me that, don't you? Nobody really likes being lied to. But I can forgive you. I'm a big girl.

ROSE

I'm sorry. I'm usually a very honest person.

FRANCES

See- you make it into a big deal when you lie about it. And then we have to spend ten minutes fighting and making up. And who knows what would've happened if you'd just been upfront? I'm sure it would've been fine. But it's a lesson for the future.

JACOB and DICK enter, laughing heartily together.

DICK

...Could you believe that crap?

FRANCES

Well look who's here.

DICK

I said 'Jesus Christ, Tucker, your kid's got Polio! How's he gonna play golf? He's in a goddamn wheelchair!' And he says- 'Well he's already got himself a pretty serious handicap'-

JACOB

The guy's unbelievable...

JACOB and DICK have arrived at the table.

FRANCES

Hi, boys.

DICK

So you've all been having a good time?

FRANCES

Oh sure. We're getting nice and tight.

DICK

Good, good. Glad to hear it.

JACOB

Honey, you look a little pale.

ROSE

I'm fine. I'm perfect.

JIMMY enters with another Martini and Tom Collins.

JIMMY

Here you go, Ladies.

ROSE

Oh God. Did I order this?

JIMMY

I'm afraid you did, Ma'am.

DICK

Fudgey's been getting you drunk, huh?

FRANCES

We've had some very juicy girl talk, Fellas. It's really been lovely.

DICK

Good. Good. Little drinkin' never hurt anybody.

FRANCES

(Presenting DICK:)

My husband, ladies and gentlemen.

JIMMY

Can I get you folks anything from the bar?

DICK

Whadda' ya say Jake? Champagne all around?

JACOB

Well- as long as you don't think we're gonna jinx it.

DICK

Jake- just trust me, okay? I haven't seen those guys get that excited about anybody in years. *(Beat.)* Hey- why don'tcha' gimme the good stuff, Jimmy? Four glasses. I'd like to make a little toast to my friends here.

JIMMY

All right, Mr. Eliot. Champagne it is.

JIMMY exits.

ROSE

I can't believe we're having more.

FRANCES

We're celebrating!

ROSE

What's the occasion?

FRANCES

Oh who cares? My husband just ordered champagne.

DICK

All right, folks- you wanna hear the good news? I'll tell ya.

FRANCES

That's wonderful. I love good news!

DICK

Well my man Jake here did such a bang-up job with the board down there that they've decided to recommend him to Sandy Gibbons on the spot.

FRANCES

Oh great! So you'll get to meet with Sandy, Jake. That'll be a real treat for you.

DICK

I told him it's just a formality. They make all the new members do it.

FRANCES

Well we'll all keep our fingers crossed.

JACOB

We'll see what happens...

DICK

(To JACOB:)

You already met the guy, buddy! He likes you. It's gonna be a piece a' cake.

JACOB

Well I hope so. And they said if it all goes fine after I meet with Mr. Gibbons, then apparently that's it.

ROSE

That's it, huh?

DICK

Then you're one of us, Honey.

Blackout.