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## Sample Pages



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## CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

The cast comprises six actors (4 M, 2 F) playing 14 characters.

**PETE GELLER**, 49, Jewish. *There's a youthful energy about him. He's self-centered, sarcastic, and often rubs people the wrong way. But he's bright and can be charming at times.*

**ENGLISH WOMAN/LINDA**, middle-aged, a sharp, attractive professional in stylish business attire with a sharp sense of humor; British.

**DAVID**, 49, Jewish, an old friend of Pete's, professional-looking, intelligent, level-headed, opinionated.

**MA**, 40s, Pete's, mother. *Short, formidable, assertive. She speaks with a thick, comedic Yiddish dialect at first, then changes to unaccented English. She loves Pete and tries to deny his weaknesses.*

**DADDY**, Pete's father, Jewish, middle-late 50s and still looks healthy. *Short to average height, level-headed and kind, slightly above average intelligence, practical.*

**GARY**, Pete's brother, Jewish, nine years older, cynical, wise-cracking, clever, conservative in political beliefs and in dress. *Played by the actor who plays David.*

**SUSAN**, Pete's sister, Jewish, seven years older, quiet, peacemaker, conservative in political beliefs, demeanor and dress, unemotional. *Played by the actor who plays Ma.*

**TEENAGE BOY**, 16, any race, tough, lean but toned, a city kid, emotionally troubled, angry, at least 5'9".

**BARBARA**, 40s–50s, Pete's therapist, business-like, unemotional, stylishly dressed, has very little sense of humor. *Played by the actor who plays Linda.*

**PROF. GIORDANO**, 60s, Pete's former philosophy professor, brilliant, funny, warm, dresses professorially unstylish. *Played by the actor who plays Daddy.*

**PETER GARFINKEL**, 49, a well-regarded playwright who's gone through a life crisis easily. *He's the "real life" version of Pete Geller, but calmer, more in control. He may wear glasses, may have a mustache, may have neater hair, may have some gray in his temples. Played by the actor who plays Pete Geller.*

**SCARF LADY**, 50s–60s, eccentric, wears an ugly scarf and sloppy, ill-fitting clothes, speaks with a New York dialect. *Not the brightest bulb. Played by the actor who plays Ma and Susan.*

**ORION**, 21, Pete's former writing student, any race, smart, ambitious, well-spoken, friendly, and dressed in a button-down shirt and chinos. *Played by the actor who plays Teenage Boy.*

**BILLY**, Jewish, Peter's brother, nine years older, similar in personality to Gary but with a tiny bit more humanity. *Played by the actor who plays David and Gary.*

## SCENE BREAKDOWN

**WHERE:** New York, N.Y. • **WHEN:** the current year, A.D.

### ACT I.

1. *The monologue, which starts the whole thing off.*  
PETE GELLER
2. *The scene at Peet's Coffee, Washington Square, New York City.*  
PETE GELLER and LINDA
3. *The scene in N.Y.C.'s famous Theatre District.*  
PETE GELLER and DAVID
4. *The scene in Ma's kitchen, Brooklyn, New York.*  
PETE GELLER and MA
5. *The scene in Pete's old bedroom, also Brooklyn.*  
PETE GELLER and DADDY
6. *The scene in the cemetery.*  
PETE GELLER, GARY and SUSAN
7. *The scene on a street corner in midtown.*  
PETE GELLER and TEENAGE BOY
8. *Another scene at Peet's Coffee.*  
PETE GELLER and LINDA
9. *The scene in Barbara's office, upper east side.*  
PETE GELLER and BARBARA
10. *The scene in Prof. Giordano's philosophy classroom.*  
PETE GELLER and PROF. GIORDANO

### ACT II.

*The epilogue, which brings this all to its inevitable culmination.*  
PETER GARFINKEL, SCARF LADY, ORION and BILLY

*Peter Garfinkel is a famous playwright. Peter is writing a play about Pete Geller, a former actor who's also writing a play — about a character named Pete Geller.*

*Pete has developed a whole new theory of play writing:  
He makes it up as he goes along.*

*Pete, Pete and Peter are all hoping to find the decent fellow who's been hiding deep inside all these years. As both Pete Gellers aim to become a happier people, can Peter Garfinkel do the same?*

*A play within a play within a play ... within a play!*

*Sample pages begin on page 32 of the script.*

MA

Laying everything out there for the whole world to see. It's not like you. Are you having some sort of exigency, darling?

PETE GELLER

*[To audience.]* She's using words she couldn't possibly know. Now I'm gonna have to rewrite this scene, too.

MA

*Tatelleh*, are you going through one of those, what d'ya call it, mid-life "criseses" *[sic]*?

PETE GELLER

*[To audience.]* That's better. Yes, Ma, I think I am.

MA

Aw, you poor baby, talk to me.

PETE GELLER

Are you kidding? I'm not gonna discuss this with my mother.

MA

Why not? I happen to be a very good listener.

PETE GELLER

Yeah? Since what century? *[MA gives him a look.]* Oh, all right!

MA

Oh, good! *[Gets all ready to listen.]*

PETE GELLER

I feel ... I feel like I'm looking at myself in the mirror, really looking for the first time, and seeing blemishes I never knew I had.

MA

What are you talking? You have lovely skin. Just like Barbra Streisand. Even as a teenager, not one acne.

PETE GELLER

You call this being a good listener? *[To audience.]* And you wonder why I'm nuts.

MA

No, no one wonders, sweetheart.

PETE GELLER

Ma, people are tired of my bullshit. I'm sorry, but that's what it is. And they're telling me about it in no uncertain terms.

MA

Again he says it. Stop with that talk or I'm going to have to wash out your mouth with Palmolive soap!

PETE GELLER

Maybe it was cute when I was younger, but not now. Friends, acquaintances, that Karen on line at the post office. The entire world hates me!

MA

That's ridiculous. No one hates you. Listen to me. *[Squeezes his face.]* Look at me! You're my son, and there's nothing wrong with you. Look at this gorgeous face! How could there be anything wrong with a boy with such a *punim*?

PETE GELLER

Is this where you tell me they're all just jealous?

MA

Well ...

PETE GELLER

Not real helpful, Ma! Not when I was a child, and certainly not now.

MA

See what I'm telling you? I'm going to wind up the villain in this thing as sure as I'm standing here.

PETE GELLER

You're not standing there, Ma. You're standing here. *[Points to his head.]*

MA

So let me try to understand this: you've grown up to be a vain, self-centered narcissist ...

PETE GELLER

... semi-narcissist ...

MA

... and it's all my fault.

PETE GELLER

Nobody's blaming ... wait. Where did you get that from? "Vain, self-centered narcissist"?

MA

I have no idea. I don't even know what it means.

PETE GELLER

Well, don't give it another thought. No one's blaming you for anything. The fault is not in our stars, dear Brutus.

MA

Oh, Petey. You used to love those Popeye cartoons when you were little. So cute. Ohh — those were the days.

PETE GELLER

Ma. I have no idea where we are in this conversation.

MA

Petey, remember what Daddy used to say whenever you got in one of your ... moods?

PETE GELLER

Yeah, he said, "Go to your room and don't be such a Goddamn pain in the ass."

MA

No. He said, "Write it down."

PETE GELLER

He did?

MA

Petey, go find a yellow legal pad, like Daddy used to use for inventory. Then get a Scripto pen with that nice peacock blue ink cartridge I used to buy for you at Woolworth's and make a list.

PETE GELLER  
Of what?

MA  
A list of what's wrong with Pete.

PETE GELLER  
You're kidding right?

MA  
Try to look at yourself from the outside. Like you were writing about another person.

PETE GELLER  
Objectively, you mean. Yeah, Ma. That's not bad.

MA  
You might even have someone help you. Someone older and wiser.

PETE GELLER  
Yeah. I could build a whole two-person scene around it.

MA  
Again with the *farshunkteneh* play! Why can't you just write a nice unpublished short story? You know, like Ernest Hemming?

PETE GELLER  
Theatre is my passion, Ma.

MA  
I know it is, darling. All right. Go write the play if you think you have to. Just do me one favor.

PETE GELLER  
Whatever you want.

MA  
Don't let me see it. And don't you dare show it to your father. Allow us to rest in peace.

PETE GELLER  
O.K. I promise.

MA  
And don't worry so much about being this "Narcist" or whoever. You're fine just the way you are. I swear, all this nonsense, you're gonna drive me to an early grave.

PETE GELLER  
Too late, Ma. *[A kiss.]* I love you so much.

MA

Of course you do, Petey darling. I love you, too.

PETE GELLER

Oh, Ma, what's to become of me?

MA

You're gonna write your play and you're gonna be just fine. You'll get over whatever this is you're going through, just like you got over the whooping cough.

PETE GELLER

I wish this scene didn't have to end. I miss you already.

MA

I know. And I miss you too ... terribly.

PETE GELLER

[A beat.] Ma — what's it like?

MA

What's what like?

PETE GELLER

You know. Where you are.

MA

Oh. You mean "the undiscovered country."

PETE GELLER

[To audience.] Again, not a reference she would ever know.

MA

It's all right. It's not home without you, *tatelleh*, but it's not bad.

PETE GELLER

What's "not bad" about it?

MA

Well, I don't have arthritis in my hand anymore. Or high blood pressure. Or diverticulitis.

PETE GELLER

That's good.

MA

Which means I don't have to take all those *ferkockteh* pills. Food tastes so much better there. Even the frozen dinners are like gourmet meals. Every night I have supper with

Daddy and we watch television. He drives me *meshuggeh*, but it's nice to be with him again.

PETE GELLER

God, Ma! You're gonna make me cry!

MA

Well, Petey. I hate to say it but it's time to go. You'll be at the unveiling, yes?

PETE GELLER

Of course. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

MA

And your brother and sister?

PETE GELLER

Do I know?

MA

Well, they *better!*

PETE GELLER

I'd say it's a probable 12 to seven.

MA

Huh?

PETE GELLER

It's from a play. Never mind. [*A beat.*] So, any parting words of wisdom? Something you've learned on the other side?

MA

Well ... I'm afraid they were right about too much sodium.

PETE GELLER

Shit.

MA

[*Gleefully.*] But ... they were dead wrong about doughnuts! Oh, and one more thing, darling.

PETE GELLER

What's that?

MA

Take the time to notice people. Look them in the eye. It all goes so fast.

MA exits.

PETE GELLER

[To audience.] Don't tell me. I know what you're gonna say: Act Three of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. All that's missing is, "Goodbye ticking clocks and Ma's heliotrope." Don't forget, this is my first stab at this, and what do they always tell rookie playwrights? "Write what you know." Well, I played Wally Webb in high school and Simon Stimson in college and I know *Our Town*. Still — that scene with Ma. It was all warm and familiar, and yet unsettling at the same time. I just hope my father doesn't show up now. That would *really* be ...

5. *The scene in Pete's old bedroom. also Brooklyn.*

*PETE's childhood bedroom, Brooklyn. DADDY is sitting on the bed. He's Pete's father, middle-late 50s and still looks vibrant. Short to average height, level-headed and kind, slightly above average intelligence, practical. He's wearing a pharmacist's smock.*

DADDY

Sonny boy! Come on over here. Take your shoes off and set a spell.

PETE GELLER

[To audience, indicating himself.] I need to Krazy Glue this mouth shut! [To DADDY.] Come on, Dad. "Set a spell"? Who are you, Jed Clampett?

DADDY

Not that I'm aware of.

PETE GELLER

One thing I've learned so far: this works best if you're just yourself.

DADDY

Who else should I be?

PETE GELLER

Dad, in nearly 6,000 years of history, no Jewish father has ever called his son "sonny boy." You think that's what Abraham said to Isaac? "Hey, sonny boy, why don't you hop up here on this altar?"

DADDY

Forgive me. I thought you were going for an Andy-Griffith-slash-The-Waltons kind of father.

PETE GELLER

Well, I'm not. I want *you*, Dad. The *real* you ... or so it would seem.

DADDY

Well, Pete, as long as we're going for truth here, I was never "Dad" to you kids, was I? I was always "Daddy."

PETE GELLER

Forget it! No way am I calling you "Daddy." Not in front of all these lovely people! It's embarrassing!

DADDY

Well, if you want to be honest in your craft and have verisimilitude ...

PETE GELLER

This is what I'm talking about. What do you know from "verisimilitude"? Be yourself!

DADDY

I'll tell you what: why don't you stop nit-picking at *me*, and let's focus on you. You're the one who wants to exorcise his demons by writing this god-forsaken play. By the way, that can be number one on your list. "Overly critical of family, friends and so forth."

PETE GELLER

So, you know about the list, huh? What am I talking about? It was your idea!

DADDY

Father knows best, am I right? Hey! How about *that*? I could be a Robert Young–Jim Anderson kind of daddy. I could ...

PETE GELLER

You could what? Sit around the house all Saturday in a tie and cardigan, smoking a pipe and being all gentile? No thank you, Dad. I want *you*.

DADDY

Fine. You want an old dead Jew, you got one.

PETE GELLER

Good. Jeez, Ma was right. You *are* aggravating!

DADDY

Like she should talk. Where the hell does she think *you* got it from?

PETE GELLER

I'm aggravating?

DADDY

Only on days ending in "Y." But you know what, son? I still love you.

PETE GELLER

I know, Dad. Like Perry Como loves to take a nap.

DADDY

Ha-ha-ha, you remembered!

PETE GELLER

How could I forget? You were always partial towards your fellow Pennsylvanians, weren't you? Perry Como, Arnold Palmer, Jimmy Stewart ...

DADDY

Paul Newman ...

PETE GELLER

Mister Rogers ... Wait. Dad, Paul Newman was from Cleveland.

DADDY

He was? Isn't that something. He always seemed like such a *mensch*. [A beat.] Petey, I think this scene is rapidly veering off topic.

PETE GELLER

Yeah. I must be trying to avoid the dreaded list.

DADDY

This is a good thing! Inner conflict is the lifeblood of drama. Even the Greeks knew that.

PETE GELLER

What do you know about the Greeks? Were you in the same dramaturgy classes as Ma?

DADDY

No classes. This is all coming from you, sonny boy. I'm just a useful tool. A stimulus to the story arc. [A beat.] See what I mean? Do I know from story arcs?

PETE GELLER

All right. Let's get this stupid list over with.

DADDY

Here's the pad.

PETE GELLER

Oh, you're all ready for me, huh?

DAD

And here's your pen ...

PETE GELLER

Where in the hell did you ever find an old Scripto cartridge pen? With peacock blue ink, no less.

DADDY

It's the magic of theatre, sonny boy. The "willing suspension of disbelief." That's Samuel Taylor Coleridge, by the way.

PETE GELLER

Oh, thanks, Dad. I never knew that.

DAD

All right. Stop procrastinating and start writing.

*END OF SAMPLE PAGES.*