



Sample Pages

Pete Gellman knows that there's a decent fellow down there somewhere inside him. As he goes through a mid-life crisis, he decides it's time to find him. Pete is writing his very first play in hopes that it will help him mature and be a happier person. Through encounters with his best friend, an old school chum, his brother and sister, his deceased parents, his therapist and his old college professor, Pete learns how to find that decent guy deep inside.

But the truth is, Pete Gellman is really a character in famous playwright Peter Greenbaum's latest play, and the characters in Pete's play are drawn from real people in Greenbaum's life. What's more, Greenbaum is going through the same mid-life crisis that Gellman is in Peter's play. See? A play within a play within a play ... within a play.



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Character Breakdown

PETE GELLMAN/PETER GREENBAUM, 49, looks younger, Jewish. There is a youthful energy about him. He's extremely self-centered, sarcastic, and often rubs people the wrong way. But he's also very bright and can be charming when he wants to be.

ENGLISH WOMAN (LINDA), middle-aged, a sharp, attractive professional wearing stylish business attire, wicked sense of humor, originally from London with a dialect to match.

DAVID, 49, Jewish, an old friend of Pete's, preppy-looking, intelligent, level-headed, opinionated, doesn't suffer fools.

MA, 40s, Pete's, mother. She's not a tall woman, but formidable and 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, a peacemaker, conservative in political beliefs, demeanor and in dress. Played by the actor who plays Ma.

TEENAGE BOY, 16, any race, tough, lean but toned, a city kid, emotionally troubled, angry, should be 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.

DR. GIORDANO, 60s–70s, Pete's former philosophy professor, brilliant, funny, warm and an extrovert. He dresses in a sloppy, professorial way. Played by the actor who plays Daddy.

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

ORION, 25, Pete's former writing student, any race, smart, ambitious, well-spoken, friendly, and dressed in a button-down shirt and chinos or jeans. Played by the actor who plays Teenage Boy.

BILLY, Jewish, Peter's brother, nine years older, dressed very casually and perhaps a bit too youthfully for a man his age, similar in personality to Gary but with a tiny bit more humanity. Played by the actor who plays David and Gary.

The cast comprises six actors playing 13 characters.

Scene Breakdown

WHERE: New York, N.Y.

WHEN: the current year A.D.

1. The Prologue

PETE GELLMAN

2. The Scene at Peet's Coffee

PETE GELLMAN AND LINDA

3. The Scene in the Theatre District

PETE GELLMAN AND DAVID

4. The Scene in Ma's Kitchen

PETE GELLMAN AND MA

5. The Scene in Pete's Old Bedroom

PETE GELLMAN AND DADDY

6. The Scene at the Unweiling

PETE GELLMAN, GARY AND SUSAN

7. The Scene on a Street Corner

PETE GELLMAN AND TEENAGE BOY

8. Another Scene at Peet's Coffee

PETE GELLMAN AND LINDA

9. The Scene in Barbara's Office

PETE GELLMAN AND BARBARA

10. The Scene in Dr. Giordano's Classroom

PETE GELLMAN AND DR. GIORDANO

11. The Epilogue

PETER GREENBAUM, SCARF LADY, ORION AND BILLY

(Sample Pages begin with p. 23 of the script.)

4. The Scene in Ma's Kitchen

Lights up on a 1970s-looking kitchen in Brooklyn, N.Y. All avocado and harvest gold appliances. MA, 40s, wearing a house dress and apron, is preparing dinner. She's not a tall woman, but formidable and assertive. She loves Pete and tries to deny his weaknesses. She speaks with a thick, comedic Yiddish dialect.

MA

Petey, *tatelleh!* You're home right on time! Six-seventeen! So, how was Hebrew School at Temple Beth Shalom today?

PETE GELLMAN

Ma, you don't have to be so heavy-handed with the exposition. You're not the chambermaid in some 1925 drawing-room comedy.

MA

I'm just saying the lines in the script, darling. You want subtle, *write* subtle.

PETE GELLMAN

Oh. They had dramaturge classes in your *shtetl*, did they? I'm impressed!

MA

We didn't have *shtetls* in Paterson, New Jersey, darling.

PETE GELLMAN

You're funny, Ma.

MA

Oh, sure. I'm a regular Fran Drescher. If Mussolini was wearing a frowsy house dress and talked like this, he'd be funny, too. Eat, *mein kindeleh*. Eat.

[PETE GELLMAN laughs uncontrollably.] What? What's so funny? You're laughing *with* me or *at* me?

PETE GELLMAN

Oh ... at you. Definitely at you.

MA

Stop laughing. *Stop laughing!* All right, *don't* stop laughing. Petey darling, I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to play this ridiculous character. This isn't "The Ed Sullivan Show" and I'm not Jackie Mason.

PETE GELLMAN

But it's funny as hell, Ma. [*Suddenly tough.*] And it's in the script.

MA

Well, the script needs work. Your mother doesn't have a Jewish accent. I *never* had a Jewish accent. You want a scene with your dear old Ma, you make me a three-dimensional flesh-and-blood person, not a vaudeville character. Otherwise, I'm outta here. I refuse to play Molly Goldberg to your Chandler Bing.

PETE GELLMAN

That was the worst mixed metaphor I ever heard.

MA

Forgive me. I'm not a big shot playwright like yours truly.

PETE GELLMAN

[*Laughing.*] No, Ma, *you're* "yours truly."

MA

I'm a big shot playwright? I should be so lucky. I didn't have parents who worked and slaved so I could go to a fancy-schmancy college like you did.

PETE GELLMAN

I know, Ma. Three 12-hour shifts every day, just to pay my tuition and put bread and bottled water on the table. All right. Fine. Lose the dialect.

MA

What is it?

PETE GELLMAN

Just be you. Be Ma. *[MA looks at him questioningly.] You don't have to do the accent anymore!*

MA

Geloybt Gat! [Without the dialect.] I mean, thank you, Petey! I think it's best, don't you? This way, when we start getting into the heavy stuff, the people out there will take me more serious.

PETE GELLMAN

There isn't going to be any heavy stuff. At least I don't think so. This is a light-hearted romp, remember?

MA

I remember nothing. You only started writing me two pages ago.

PETE GELLMAN

Gosh. Look at you! You really were pretty at this age. I don't think I ever noticed.

MA

I wasn't always a *kvetchy* old lady in sensible shoes, you know. In fact, I'm probably younger than you are *now*.

PETE GELLMAN

Yeah. Weird, huh?

MA

By the way, you've aged very nicely. Oy, not like your father, may God rest his beautiful soul. You still have a very shapely figure.

PETE GELLMAN

Well, I never got diabetes and throat cancer, thank God. And it's a physique, Ma, not a figure.

MA

Antschuldigt mir. Potato, potato ... who gives a damn? So, Petey darling, tell me something: why do you have to write this play? You've never written one before.

PETE GELLMAN

I don't *have* to, I *want* to.

MA

And why is that, if I'm allowed to ask?

PETE GELLMAN

I like being creative. And I think I've got something to say.

MA

You just don't know what it is yet.

PETE GELLMAN

How do you know that?

MA

A little birdie told me. So couldn't you maybe keep a diary instead? That nobody ever has to see *ever*?

PETE GELLMAN

Why does this bother you so much?

MA

Who says it bothers me?

PETE GELLMAN

Ma! I have eyes! *Why does this bother you?*

MA

Because! I know what happens with these things. All of a sudden the parents are the bad guy. It's like when you were seeing that analyst when

you were a kid, that awful Mr. Fernberg. It was always me and your father who was to blame for your being so fucked up.

PETE GELLMAN

Ma! You never, ever used that word!

MA

I know! I'm sorry. That was very much "off-brand," wasn't it. Ugh, there I go again! "Off-brand." "Fucked up." Shows you how upset I am. *[A beat.]* Or *you* are.

PETE GELLMAN

Me?

MA

Laying everything out there for the whole world to see. Are you having some sort of exigency, darling?

PETE GELLMAN

[To audience.] I'm gonna have to look this scene over again. She's using words she couldn't possibly know.

MA

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

PETE GELLMAN

[To audience.] That's more like it. *[To MA.]* Yes, Ma, I think I am.

MA

Tateleh! Talk to me.

PETE GELLMAN

[A beat.] I can't. I can't discuss this with my own mother.

MA

Why? I happen to be a very good listener.

PETE GELLMAN

Really? Since what year? Oh, all right! Here goes nothing! I feel like I'm looking at myself in the mirror for the first time and I'm seeing blemishes I never knew existed.

MA

What are you talking about? You have lovely skin. You always did. Even as a teenager I used to say ...

PETE GELLMAN

[To audience.] And you wonder why I'm nuts.

MA

No, darling, they don't wonder.

PETE GELLMAN

Ma: people are tired of my bullshit. And they're telling me about it.

MA

Don't say "bullshit," sweetheart. It makes you sound crude.

PETE GELLMAN

Maybe it was cute when I was younger, but no one seems to like it now. And it's not just my friends. Agents, actors, strangers on the subway. Everyone.

MA

Now you listen to me. You're my son and there's nothing wrong with you. *[SHE squeezes his face.]* Look at this face! How could there be anything wrong with a boy with such a *punim*?

PETE GELLMAN

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

MA

Well ...

PETE GELLMAN

Not real helpful, Ma! Not when I was in seventh grade, and certainly not now. No wonder I'm so fu ...

MA

Uh-uh-uh ...

PETE GELLMAN

... *farblonjet*.

MA

See? This is what I'm telling you. I'm going to wind up the villain as sure as I'm standing here.

PETE GELLMAN

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

MA

So, let me try to understand this: you're a vain, selfish narcissist and it's all my fault.

PETE GELLMAN

Nooo ... Wait. Where did you get that from?

MA

What? "Vain, selfish narcissist"? I don't know. It just popped out of my mouth. To tell you the truth, I don't even know what it means.

PETE GELLMAN

Well, don't worry, Ma. No one's blaming you for anything. Except maybe that "they're all just jealous" thing. That's gotta go.

MA

Petey, remember what your father always said whenever you got in one of your moods?

PETE GELLMAN

Yeah. He said, "Go to your room and be sure and lock the door."

MA

No! "Write it down," he used to say. "Put it on paper." Petey, darling, go buy one of those yellow pads, like Daddy used to use in the store, and a Scripto cartridge pen with that nice peacock blue ink that you always liked so much, and make a list.

PETE GELLMAN

A list.

MA

"What's Wrong with Pete."

PETE GELLMAN

[*To himself.*] Hey. That'd make a great title.

MA

Try to look at yourself from the outside. Like you were talking about someone else.

PETE GELLMAN

Objectively. Yeah. That's very good, Ma.

MA

See? We learned a few things back in the *shtetl*. You could maybe even have someone help you. Someone older and wiser ...

PETE GELLMAN

Yeah. I could build a whole scene around it.

MA

Again with the *ferkockteh* play?

PETE GELLMAN

It's my passion, Ma.

MA

Passion, shmassion. Go and write the goddamn thing if you absolutely have to. Just do me one favor: don't let me see it. Allow me to rest in peace. Your father, too. And don't worry so much about being this Narciss [sic] or whoever. You're fine just the way you are. I swear, all this *mishegoss*, you're gonna drive me to an early grave.

PETE GELLMAN

Too late for that! [*A beat.*] I love you, Ma.

MA

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

PETE GELLMAN

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

MA

Of course you miss me. I miss you too ... terribly ...

Lights down except for PETE GELLMAN.

PETE GELLMAN

[*To audience.*] Don't even say it: Act Three of *Our Town*, I know all about it. All that's missing is "... the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the mind of God." Don't forget, this is my first stab at playwriting. And what do they always tell you? "Write about what you know." Well, I played Joe Crowell in high school and Simon Stimson in college and I know *Our Town*. Still — all that back there with Ma, that was all kinda ... warm and familiar and yet unsettling at the same time. I'm just glad my father didn't show up. That would *really* be ...

END OF SCENE 4

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