

The 2nd Book of Ruth

by

[Zalman Velvel](#)

A Play in Two Acts

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A Play in Two Acts

Cast Of Characters

Rabbi Yehoshua Gold (Yoshi) - 35, an Orthodox Hasidic Rabbi

Ruth Preston- 25, blonde hair and blue eyed, a convert

Ruth's Two- almost Three - Husbands, All Played By One Actor:

Husband #1 - David Greenberg - 28 – gynecologist

Husband #2 – Morty Diamond - 67 – retired wealthy salesman

Husband #3 - Artie Mentchnik- 45 – real estate guru

Time

The play takes place over 11 years, from 1992 until 2003, when Ruth is 25 - 36.

Place

The play takes place inside Bais Yaakov, a synagogue in New York.

The Set

The set is the office of Rabbi Gold inside synagogue Bais Yaakov. The primary details are a desk, chairs, a couch, and book shelves. The sanctuary section is offstage, rear. The entrance door to the office is stage right, with a back door stage left.

Summary of Scenes

ACT ONE

Scene One – 3 months before Ruth's 1st wedding, March, 1992. Ruth is 25, Rabbi 35.

Scene Two – Right before 1st wedding to David Greenberg, June 1992.

Scene Three – 3 years later, 1995. Ruth is divorced, and now engaged to marry Morty Diamond, 67, Husband #2.

ACT TWO

Scene One – 3 years later, 1998. Ruth is 31, Rabbi 41, before Morty's funeral.

Scene Two – 3 years later, 2001, a month after 9/11. Ruth is 34, Rabbi 44, and she meets future Husband #3, Artie Mentchnik.

Scene Three – 2 years later, 2003. Ruth is 36, Rabbi 46, before Rabbi's grandson's bris.

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ACT ONE

Scene One

(A radio is playing a newscast from March, 1992. Rabbi Yehoshua Gold is sitting at the desk in his office, busy writing a speech. He is dressed in a black Hasidic suit called a kaputa and a white shirt.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

It's 9AM, and this is News Radio 88 broadcasting from the top of the World Trade Center. In the national news, President Bush and Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton are the choices of their parties to run for President ... Bill Clinton was rumored to get 72% of the female vote, and pollsters are now trying to determine why.

RABBI

(turns off radio, stands up, and begins reading formally)

"I want to thank you for this award." ... No.

[THERE IS A LIGHT KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

"I'd *like* to thank you for bestowing this award upon me." ... No.

[THERE IS ANOTHER LIGHT KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

"I'd like to *sincerely express* my gratitude for *awarding me* this award."

... Oy vay! (looks up) A little help here would be appreciated.

(clears throat) "I want to thank you for this award." ... Yes, simple is better.

[THERE IS ANOTHER LIGHT KNOCK ON THE DOOR. RUTH ENTERS. She is dressed in a tight sweater, a short skirt, and high heels. The Rabbi ignores her, his back to her.]

RUTH

(Clearing her throat)

AHEM! ... Rabbi Gold?

RABBI

(Turns around, surprised) Yes.

RUTH

(extends her hand) I was told to speak to you about – what's wrong?

RABBI

Wrong?

RUTH

Why didn't you shake my hand?

RABBI

Because in our culture a man does not touch a woman other than his wife.
Now, is there something I can help you with?

RUTH

That depends ... are you allowed to *speak* to a woman "other than your wife?"

RABBI

(takes his glasses off)

Of course ... as long as the conversation is modest and among a permitted range of topics.

RUTH

So is my **conversion** to Judaism among the *permitted range* of topics?

RABBI

To *Orthodox* Judaism?

RUTH

Why do you look so surprised? Don't I look Jewish?

(She twirls around)

I bought everything at Bloomingdales – it's called contemporary JAP.

Am I disturbing you, Rabbi ... or would *noodging* be the more appropriate word?

RABBI

Well, as a matter of fact ... I have a speech to prepare.

RUTH

A speech for what?

RABBI

I'm receiving an award.

RUTH

Really? What kind of award?

RABBI

Outstanding Young Rabbi of 1992.

RUTH

Young Rabbi? How old are you?

RABBI

35.

RUTH

You're 10 years older than me and you're still considered young?
Rabbi, would you like help with your speech first, so we can then discuss my conversion?

RABBI

No, thank you.

RUTH

I might surprise you, Rabbi.
Between this plush blonde hair and these piercing blue eyes, lies a brain.
I can talk, I can think, and I can -

RABBI

And I can handle this by myself, thank you.

RUTH

Is this the Orthodox version of the "Take Away."

RABBI

The what?

RUTH

My father is the #1 salesman in his company.
He taught me 25 ways to close a sale. This looks like number 7 - the Take Away.
First, you show how good your product is ... then you act like you don't want to sell it.
But Rabbi, you have to be more subtle in your approach.

RABBI

I'm not trying to use any "Take Away" to *sell* you anything.
I'm just - I'm sorry. You are Mrs.?

RUTH

Ruth Preston ... and it's *Miss* Ruth Preston. That's why I'm here.
My fiancé wants me to convert before the wedding.

RABBI

How much time do you have?

RUTH

Three months. Rabbi, why are you sneaking looks at my stomach?
(she bursts out laughing) You think I'm pregnant!
No Rabbi ... David and I agreed to a June wedding.

RABBI

David?

RUTH

David Greenberg. *Doctor* David Greenberg.

RABBI

(Looking through a Rolodex)

The name is not familiar.

Does he attend services here?

RUTH

No, he goes to the synagogue on Central Avenue.

RABBI

(Rising and going to the door) Oh, he belongs to Beth El!

Yes, they have a very nice Rabbi over there - Rabbi Silverberg.

I've met him and he's very accommodating.

RUTH

I've already spoken with Rabbi Silverberg.

RABBI

He didn't want to perform your conversion?

RUTH

No, he did. In fact, he was a lot more eager than you. ***A lot more.***

But I wanted to shop around first. Isn't that what Jewish people do?

Shop around and try to get ***such a deal!***

RABBI

I don't know whether to laugh, or be offended.

RUTH

When you have that choice, choose laughter – isn't that what the Jewish sages said?

You really don't like talking to women, do you?

Who talks to the women in your congregation?

RABBI

My wife handles the intimate topics.

And there are some women many I enjoy speaking with.

RUTH

I'm just not one of them.

This is embarrassing ... you really don't want to do my conversion.

And now, I think I don't want you doing my conversion, either.

RABBI

Perhaps it is better that way.

RUTH

(at the door) Just out of curiosity, Rabbi, was your mother allowed to touch you?
Or did she carry you for nine months, pop you out, and then avoid all contact with you?

RABBI

No, of course my mother touched me!

RUTH

So your mother can touch you, and your wife can touch you.
Who else can touch you, Rabbi? What about your mother-in-law?

RABBI

My mother-in-law? Why would I want her to touch me?

RUTH

You should tack a list on your door.
It should say, "Let it be known to all who enter, I can only touch the following:"

RABBI

(The Rabbi walks to the door and opens it)

Well, I'm sure you'll enjoy studying with Rabbi Silverberg, Miss Preston.
He's a very understanding and *modern* Rabbi.

RUTH

(touches door, then turns around) Are you sure you're not doing the Take Away?

RABBI

Absolutely not.

RUTH

But you're making me want to convert with you, now.
I can almost feel it within reach, and then ... you're taking it away.
Excellent! Dad would be proud.

RABBI

Please understand something ... Orthodox Judaism does not need to be "sold."
It is very fulfilling ... but also very *demanding*.

RUTH

But I *want* demanding!
When I learned horseback riding, I studied with an Olympic Champion.
When I took ballet, I trained with a prima-ballerina.
If I'm going to learn Judaism, it's going to be from a blackbelt.

RABBI

A blackbelt?

RUTH

Sure, on you it matches everything else ... That was supposed to be funny, Rabbi.
I was comparing a conversion to Judaism to learning Karate ...
Never mind, when you have to explain a joke, it isn't funny.

RABBI

No, it isn't.

RUTH

Well, most people think I have a well-developed sense of humor.
(She sticks out her chest)
David just thinks I'm well-developed.

RABBI

Please! Miss Preston!

RUTH

(sits down) I'm sorry, Rabbi, if I embarrassed you.
It's David's fault. He upset me with this whole Judaism thing.

RABBI

Judaism *thing*?

RUTH

Yes, I liked the place I was at.
I was an independent woman, with a successful career in computers.
Then he hit me with this sudden need to convert ...and ...
Do you mind if I smoke, Rabbi?

RABBI

As a matter of ... well, now that you've already lit one, I'll open a window.

RUTH

I know smoking is terrible for your health, but it keeps the pounds off.
What's the use of living longer if you're fat and alone?
I don't mind scaling down my intellect to get a husband ... succumb to my primal urges -

RABBI

Please! Don't tell me about them.

RUTH

Rabbi ... please don't grip the arms of your chair like you're getting electrocuted.
It's not what you think.

RABBI

It's not?

RUTH

No. I **want** to be married ... have a lifelong companion.
The story book version ... nurturing one another through the ups and downs.
Someone who understands me, and who I understand.
Not completely, mind you. I want the mystery to be there, too.

RABBI

Of course. The mystery.

RUTH

I'm serious. Please don't mock me.
I don't want to be able to finish each other's sentences.
I just want to keep the surprise in the relationship, the good surprises.

RABBI

Yes, I think I understand.

RUTH

And I want to create life.
I want to hold a baby close, *my* baby, that came from *my* body.
Is that too much to ask, Rabbi?

RABBI

No ... what you want is a *traditional* relationship.

RUTH

Call it what you want.
I knew his basic attraction to me was my blonde hair and straight nose.
The shiksa Goddess thing.
But what pisses me off is that David's not even an observant Jew.
He **never** goes to synagogue. He's always working, even on your Sabbath.
He eats pork and shrimp ... sometimes together.
Then he has the nerve to ask me to convert because it would please the witch.

RABBI

The witch?

RUTH

His mother. I know what you're thinking, but believe me, I'm being kind.
Oh, I can just see it now!
I'll insist on an Orthodox wedding, the men sitting on one side, the women on the other.
That barrier between them – the mechitza.
Men dancing with men – women dancing with women. Her country club set will plotz!

RABBI

Plotz?

RUTH

Yes, plotz.

The only good thing the witch did was teach me these great Yiddish words.

I'm going to make David plotz *after* the wedding, too.

No more Red Lobster or bacon cheeseburgers at MacDonald's.

We're going to be strictly kosher. Super glatt.

And we're going to observe the Sabbath – to the nines.

No Friday Night Football.

And Saturday mornings, I'll get him up **at 7am** for synagogue.

And there'll be no sex for almost 2 weeks every month, until my fertile time.

Oh, I can't wait to see the expression on his face when I turn him down!

RABBI

So you want to punish David, and his mother, by becoming an *Orthodox* Jew?

RUTH

Punish them?

Wait a minute ... now that you mention it.

Yes! Yes, that's it! I do want to punish them!

I want to give them Judaism until it comes pouring out their ears!

If they can't accept me the way I am, then they deserve to suffer.

RABBI

Miss Preston, I do not convert people as an act of revenge.

RUTH

(takes a long time to think about that)

No, of course you don't.

Rabbi, I'm sorry to have bothered you once more with my primitive urges.

(Standing up, extending her hand)

RABBI

Miss Preston ...

RUTH

I'm sorry. I forgot about the touching.

Remind me, if we ever meet again, to ask you how a sister figures into this touching scheme ... and a daughter.

Rabbi, I'm sorry to have taken up your time.

I'll go convert with Rabbi Silverberg.

RABBI

Miss Preston?

RUTH

Yes?

RABBI

There are some Jewish women with blonde hair and straight noses.

RUTH

Yes, I'm sure ... in Beverly Hills.

Shalom, Rabbi Gold.

RABBI

Shalom, Miss Preston.

[RUTH EXITS]

(Rabbi Gold shakes his head. He resumes writing.)

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

RABBI

Yes!?

[RUTH ENTERS]

RUTH

Rabbi, can we do this again? Only this time, the right way.

RABBI

How do you know we haven't already done it that way?

RUTH

Rabbi, do you think I'm making a mistake by converting?

RABBI

Well ... your reasons could be a little more ... spiritual.

RUTH

Do you mind if I sit? (lights another cigarette)

RABBI

Well, as a matter ... but now that you are already sitting ... and ... I'll open the window.

RUTH

My doubts are more than just converting. Lately, I've been having other doubts.

RABBI

Other doubts?

RUTH

About marrying David.
I know he's going to be a successful doctor and all that.
And Jewish men are supposed to make the best husbands.

RABBI

Really? Who told you that?

RUTH

Larry King ... I'm joking Rabbi.
My mother and all her friends say Jewish men make the best husbands.
And I've always been attracted to Jewish men. They bring out my maternal instincts.
I like the way you do that, by the way.

RABBI

Do what?

RUTH

Bring out the maternal instinct in me.

RABBI

I'm not aware of trying to do that.

RUTH

Well you do!
When I'm around Jewish men, they make me feel like ... like ... like ...
I just want to haul out a breast ... and let them suckle.

RABBI

Miss Preston, we do not talk about such things in mixed company.

RUTH

That's another thing. If I convert, and I have a son, there won't be any of that.

RABBI

Breast feeding?

RUTH

Topics that are off limits. I want my son to understand the women in his life ...
Rabbi, didn't you ever talk to your mother?

RABBI

Of course.
But some subjects are better discussed among men with men ... and women with women.

RUTH

(stands and wanders around his office) Is that a picture of your wife and your daughter?

RABBI

Yes.

RUTH

Your daughter is pretty. How old is she?

RABBI

She's ten.

RUTH

Where are the pictures of your other children?

RABBI

We have only been blessed with one daughter.

RUTH

I read Orthodox Jews like big families. Was having one child difficult for you to accept?

RABBI

It was ... in the beginning. Now we accept it as God's will.

By the way, my wife does counseling among the women in our synagogue.

If you'd like, I will see if she can meet with you.

RUTH

Counseling? Do I seem neurotic to you, Rabbi?

RABBI

No, you just seem like another *modern* woman.

RUTH

Why do you say *modern* that way, like someone offered you a pork rind.

RABBI

(looks at his watch) Please, Miss Preston.

RUTH

If you're going to convert me, you need to start calling me Ruth.

RABBI

(rising and going to the door)

Miss Preston, I still believe Rabbi Silverberg would be more suitable for you.

RUTH

No. It has to be you.

RABBI

Because of my ... black belt.

RUTH

Rabbi, please sit down ... please ... there's something else.

Rabbi, there was an Orthodox girl in my computer class at Barnard.
She was married, with two children, a third on the way, her belly round as a beach ball.
She wore an outdated wig, and her clothes were from Czarist Russia.
She had no friends in class. One day I went over to her and started a conversation.
I had to find out something.

RABBI

And what was that?

RUTH

Why she was the most content person in that room.

RABBI

You could tell this?

RUTH

It was a sense I got about her ... a look behind her eyes.
She had something the rest of us didn't. She didn't apologize for her *primal* needs.
She was proud of being a mother, and a wife, and ... and ... she found fulfillment in it.

RABBI

And you think I can give this to you in your conversion?

RUTH

Can you?

RABBI

(Takes a very long time answering) No.

RUTH

You are a *terrible* salesman.

RABBI

Did I ever claim to be otherwise?

RUTH

Then perhaps your wife can give this to me?

RABBI

No.

RUTH

You're really a *miserable* salesman. The absolute worst!

RABBI

I think only *you* can give this to *you*.
And only if *you* work at it.
Are you willing to do that?

RUTH

Yes.

RABBI

Then the rewards you want can be found in our Torah, our Book of Life.
I can help you understand them, but you have to do the heavy lifting.
You have to let the words and meanings enter your heart.
It's all up to you, Miss Preston.

RUTH

Please, call me Ruth.

RABBI

Very well ... Ruth ...
As I told you before, being Orthodox is not for everyone.
There are times it's not easy for me, and I was born into it.
(Rabbi Gold takes a pile of books and places them in front of Ruth.)
Here, begin by reading these. Call my secretary for an appointment after you-

RUTH

(Goes through the books and hands the first four back) No ... no ... no ... and no.

RABBI

Ruth, I said *you* have to do the heavy lifting.

RUTH

I've already worked out with these, Rabbi. I know about your holidays.

RABBI

Why did you refer to them as "your holidays?"

RUTH

Well, they're not mine yet, are they?
I mean, if I were to observe them, would I automatically be a Jew.
Isn't it the old "Forest and the Jew question."

RABBI

The old what?

RUTH

If a Jew falls down in the forest,
and there's no one around to hear him say, "Oy vay!"
Is he still a Jew? ... It's supposed to be funny, Rabbi.

RABBI

You shouldn't have to keep reminding me of that, should you?

RUTH

No.

(Goes through the remaining books)

And no ... no ... and no.

RABBI

You've read those, too?

RUTH

Of course. I know your laws on being kosher, family purity, and Shabbos.
What I am looking for is not in those books. They're filled with customs.

RABBI

Yes, you want something more. Some look you saw in a young mother's eyes.

RUTH

Are you mocking me, again?

RABBI

No ... well, perhaps somewhat.

RUTH

So, do you have anything of a more advanced nature?

RABBI

Advanced?

Hmmm ... Well, there's Kabbalah ... Jewish mysticism.

RUTH

Okay, then let's study that.

RABBI

Here, this book based upon the Zohar.
It speaks of what God was thinking when he created man.

RUTH

From what I've seen, He was thinking very dirty thoughts.

RABBI

Yes ... I know ... you're trying to be funny, again .

And here ... cover yourself with this prayer shawl.

And let me get you a tablecloth ... please put it around your waist.

In the future, and I'm not saying we will continue, but if we do ...

RUTH

Rabbi, I will bring my own tablecloth ... ketchup really isn't my color.

RABBI

Do you ever stop with the jokes?

RUTH

Okay, I understand.

Long skirts down to the ankles ... loose blouses buttoned to the neck ... no make up ...

The Mother Theresa look.

RABBI

Who?

RUTH

Your basic un-enticing.

RABBI

You are getting married to one man, for the rest of your life.

Is there anyone else you should be enticing to?

RUTH

Well, what if Paul Newman drops by. He's Jewish, you know.

RABBI

Could we please begin. Turn to page ... What's wrong now?

RUTH

There is one more thing I want you to do before we study together.

RABBI

(looking at his watch) What's that?

RUTH

Finish your speech. I want your mind to be clear when you teach me.

RABBI

You want *my* mind to be clear? Are you familiar with the word "chutzpah?"

RUTH

My future mother-in-law says it means big balls ... oh, I mean testicles.
Come on, Rabbi, read the opening line of your speech. You're starting with ... what?

RABBI

Ruth, I'm addressing 500 Orthodox rabbis. How could you possibly-

RUTH

Rabbi, people are people. And you're wasting precious time arguing.
Look, my father also taught me about public speaking.
He was positively mesmerizing in front of an audience.
Now what is your opening line?

RABBI (sighs)

"I want to thank you for this award. I want you to know this is an important-"

RUTH

Stop! The audience already knows why you're up there.
What was that fashtunkenah award for again?

RABBI

She taught you "fashtunkenah" too?

RUTH

How could I forget such a word?
Look, Rabbi, the audience has already heard every acceptance speech known to man.
Instead of spouting clichés, say something funny, right away.

RABBI

You want me to tell a joke!

RUTH

God forbid ... of course I want you to tell a joke, Rabbi.

RABBI

But I'm no good at telling jokes!

RUTH

So learn.
Rabbi, you have to know that award ceremonies are the most boring affairs.
Everyone sitting there wants it to be over, and as soon as possible.
Their chairs are biting them on their tuchuses.

RABBI

You know what a tuchus is, too?

RUTH

Of course I know a tuchus is. It's David's mother's favorite word.
She has blisters on hers from joyriding on her broom.
So, do you know any good jokes?

RABBI

Sorry, no.

RUTH

Okay, then start with the Comedian's Old Standby #1.

RABBI

I don't know any old comedians and what they standby.

RUTH

You say, "A funny thing happened to me on the way to this ceremony..."
Rabbi, you aren't writing.

RABBI

Okay ... I'm sorry ... "A funny thing happened to me on the way to this ceremony."

RUTH

"I met a Rabbi with a long gray beard, all the way down to his pupick."

RABBI

You know what a pupick is, too?

RUTH

Of course I know ... it's a belly button.
It's one of funniest sounding words in any language, that's why you're using it.
Can we continue?

"This old Rabbi said, 'When I a young Rabbi, over 50 years ago, I won that award, too.'
'Tell me, boychik, did they offer you some money with the award?'
I said, 'No.' "

RABBI

Yes ...

RUTH

"And he said, 'A half a century goes by, and they're still the same old cheap skates.' "

RABBI

(laughs) That's funny. Did you just make that up?

RUTH

My father-

RABBI

Don't tell me. He was also the funniest man alive.

RUTH

No, he loved to laugh. That's why he married my mother. She was the funny one.

RABBI

I think the joke is a little too bold for me. Do you have anything with ...

RUTH

Smaller testicles?

RABBI

Ruth!

RUTH

Oy vay, I'm sorry.

Rabbi, please, use the joke.

If you think that's bold, you should see the comedian's Old Standby #2.

RABBI

What's that?

RUTH

Here is a picture of my father doing it ...

RABBI

You carry around a picture of your father in his underwear?

RUTH

It's not just any underwear, Rabbi. They're boxer shorts that are 5 sizes too big.

RABBI

Yes, they certainly are large.

RUTH

And did you notice the design?

RABBI

You mean the big balloons?

RUTH

Here's what you do.

You get up there, and while you're speaking, your pants "accidentally" fall down.

Then you're standing there in these big oversized boxers with balloons on them.

It's *guaranteed* to get a laugh.

RABBI

You know ... there will only be men in the audience.

RUTH

Are you serious? You mean you would consider it?

RABBI

No ... I was just trying to be funny.

RUTH

(laughing heartily for the first time)

You got me.

RABBI

Maimonides said, "I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but I have learned the most from my students."

Perhaps you will teach me how to have a sense of humor.

RUTH

Then, I take it, I am accepted for conversion?

RABBI

Well, let's say you are on a probationary period.

The 2nd Book of Ruth

ACT ONE

Scene Two

(It is June, 1993, three months later. Rabbi Gold is sitting at his desk,
writing another speech)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good morning, this is News Radio 88 broadcasting to you from the top of the World Trade Center. In the national news, Vice President Dan Quayle went to an elementary school in New Jersey and erroneously corrected a student's spelling of the word potato by adding an 'e' at the end ...

RABBI

(turns off radio, stands up, and says out loud to himself)

"I felt honored when David asked me to make the toast at his wedding.

I told him this was usually done by the best man, and he said:

'Rabbi, you're the best man I know.'

I said, 'David, please, you're embarrassing me.'

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

"Ruth, on the other hand, told me to be myself ... only funnier.

[THE KNOCKING GETS LOUDER ON THE DOOR]

That's like asking a midget to be himself ... only taller."

[THE KNOCKING GETS EVEN LOUDER]

Yes! Come in already!

[DAVID GREENBERG ENTERS. He has been drinking.]

DAVID

Rabbi Gold?

RABBI

David! Come in! Come in! How splendid you look!

DAVID

This Hasidic suit was Ruth's idea.

I wanted a tux.

Now I feel like a shmuck.

Hey, that rhymes!

Rabbi, I don't belong here.

I feel like ... like ... I have this feeling of ... of ... of ... help me out, Rabbi.

RABBI

Joy? My best advice is to not to stifle it. Let it come out.

DAVID

No. That's not it. It's more like ... like ... like ...

RABBI

Anticipation? Don't worry, the honeymoon will be here before you know it.

DAVID

No Rabbi, you're not even close.

It's more like a feeling of ... of ... of ...

Come on Rabbi, I can't be the only one who has ever felt like this.

RABBI

David, I've run out of guesses.

DAVID

Rabbi, it's a feeling of ... how can I put it ... doom.

Terrible *impending* doom! Like the ground is going to swallow me up.

There, I finally said it out loud.

Whew! What a load off!

RABBI

Well, I guess that feeling can also be normal for some grooms.

Perhaps you're worried about being vulnerable ... about opening yourself up.

DAVID

No, that's not it at all. I'm not afraid of being vulnerable around women.

My mother divorced young, I had four sisters. I was the only male in my family.

Not only am I used to being around women, I *like* being around women.

No, I *love* being around women. I love everything about women.

I love the way they let their emotions show, how they live for their feelings.

To me, there is no such thing as an ugly woman. They are all beautiful inside.

When they're not feeling stable, I want to make them feel whole and balanced again.

I want to ease their souls.

RABBI

So you became a *gynecologist*?

DAVID

Oh, others think it's funny, and we joke amongst ourselves at the hospital ...

but we OBGYN men know the truth.

RABBI

What truth is that, David?

DAVID

For a man, gynecology is the toughest field in medicine.

RABBI

It is? I would have thought something like cancer, or brain surgery -

DAVID

Yes, oncology and neurology are *intellectually* demanding ...
but nowhere near as challenging emotionally.

Very few men can withstand that range of women's feelings ... it's like a tsunami.
And their bodies! Men like women's bodies from a distance, not up close and personal.
For ten minutes, maybe a half hour per night, men are swollen with desire.
But 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, up to your elbows in women's problems?!

RABBI

Excuse me!

DAVID

Oh, I'm sorry, Rabbi. I didn't mean that the way it sounded.
You know, that's funny.
"Up to my elbows."
I'll have to tell it to the staff at the hospital.

You know, Rabbi, we men are blissfully simple, but healthy and functional.
Women are complicated and delicate higher beings.

RABBI

There are some Kabbalists that have said that also, David.

DAVID

Then they were on the right track, those Kabbalists, whoever they are.
God had to make women smarter than men, to cope with their anatomy.
I wonder what God was thinking when he designed Eve.

RABBI

Yes, I've often wondered that myself.

DAVID

Rabbi, I'm going to tell you something I've never told another man.
I understand women. I mean I really understand them - from the inside out.

RABBI

Now, was that supposed to be funny, too?

DAVID

No. But now that you mention it, it is funny – "from the inside out."

DAVID (Cont'd)

I need to write that down, along with "up to my elbows."
Let me borrow your pen, Rabbi ... and some paper ...
They're going to love this in the operating room ... because it's so true.
And we're just scratching the *cervix* ... I mean surface ... hey, that's also funny.

RABBI

David, I think we've had enough humor for now.

DAVID

But I wasn't trying to be funny, Rabbi.
What I have been trying to tell you is ... all this leads to one inescapable conclusion.

Rabbi, as sure as I am standing here, or weaving here, **this marriage is a mistake.**

It has no chance of lasting a year, two at best. I thought you should be the first to know.

RABBI

David, please sit down. Can I get you a glass of water? Maybe a cup of coffee is better?

DAVID

Don't you have anything stronger, Rabbi?

RABBI

You've already had too much of something stronger.
Didn't I mention you're not supposed to drink until *after* the wedding ceremony?

DAVID

But I always drink before impending doom.

RABBI

David, perhaps you should concentrate on how lucky you are.
Ruth is a beautiful young woman, very smart, and quite funny at times.

DAVID

Of course she is! Don't you see it, Rabbi?
That's the problem. She's too much woman for me.
You studied with her. You should know.

RABBI

Sure, she's, well ... somewhat high spirited.

DAVID

Somewhat high spirited? She's a bucking bronco on steroids.

RABBI

And sometimes she's a bit demanding.

DAVID

A bit demanding? She's like a loan shark ... when you're behind 3 payments.

RABBI

And perhaps a little head strong.

DAVID

A *little* head strong? She makes Dirty Harry look like Mr. Rogers.

And ... you know what, Rabbi? You know what really scares me?

RABBI

I'm afraid to ask.

DAVID

What really scares me is not the character traits she has shown up to now,
but the surprises she's saving for later.

Women do that, you know. Hide things from us.

RABBI

David, at a time like this, it's better to be joyful about her good points.

DAVID

Joyful? I can appreciate that. Let's get joyful.

Let's have a drink together and toast L'Chaim.

Come on, Rabbi. I know you people like to throw a few back.

RABBI

Maybe after the wedding ceremony is a better time.

DAVID

Rabbi, the way I feel right now, there may not be any "after the wedding."

(takes a flask from his pocket)

That's okay, I happen to have an emergency supply right here in this flask.

Look what it says, "In case of impending doom, unscrew cap, open mouth, and tilt."

Come on, Rabbi. Not even a small one? L'chaim!

RABBI

David, we only have ten minutes before the ceremony.

DAVID

Yes, and then I'm doomed! Doomed!

Rabbi, help me! Please help me. What's the right thing to do here?

RABBI

You would benefit by a more spiritual approach, David.

Think of yourself as a vessel, and this is your time to receive blessings.

DAVID

A vessel, huh? Okay, let's toss another down into the vessel and see what happens.

No, I feel the same.

You know, Rabbi, a few blessings wouldn't be so bad. But this many?

She wants one husband, two sets of dishes, and twelve children.

She wants too much of everything.

I wonder if she'll feel the same way about sex?

(stops and thinks about it.)

No, I should be so lucky ... Rabbi, are you sure you don't want to join me?

RABBI

David, please ... you've had enough.

DAVID

(Slaps himself) No, not quite. I can still feel pain.

Think of it as anesthesia before surgery.

You're about to preside over the removal of a nice Jewish boy's soul.

Rabbi, can I speak to you man to man?

RABBI

I thought we were.

DAVID

No, you're acting like a Rabbi.

Take off your yarmulke for a minute, and talk to me like a big brother?

RABBI

Take off my yarmulke? No, I can't leave my head uncovered.

DAVID

Why not?

RABBI

It's a reminder there's Someone above, Someone greater, looking down and judging us.

DAVID

Yes, she's upstairs in the ladies' room ... with her bridesmaids.

Come on, Rabbi. Be a mentch!

RABBI

(opens draw, takes out Yankee cap, puts it over his yarmulke) How's this?

DAVID

Rabbi, I didn't know you were a Yankees fan.

RABBI

Do you feel more comfortable talking to me now?

DAVID

Wait minute. Put your arm around me ...

Now give me a little zetz on the shoulder ... not too hard ...

Now look at me like you're *almost* my father ...

No, that's too judgmental ...

Yes, now put a little smile on your face ... a little condescending, but not pompous ...

Perfect! That's the look.

Now promise you won't get mad at me?

RABBI

Why would I get mad at you now?

DAVID

Just promise!

RABBI

Okay, I promise.

DAVID

I really wanted the Ruth I first met ... the sweet little *shiksa*.

The blond haired, blue eyed Scandinavian.

Someone who would cater to me, comfort me, wrap her life around mine.

I wanted a two-fer kind of life.

Two kids, a boy and a girl, two pets, a dog and a cat, two Mercedes, his and hers.

Two sets of dishes, china and ... Corelle.

But now, I'll be coming home to Ruth, the Super Jew.

I never should have listened to my mother about this conversion thing.

RABBI

But isn't it better to share our customs with a Jewish wife, David?

DAVID

Yes, but *so* Jewish! Who bargained for this much Jew? I didn't.

If I were half a man, I'd call the wedding off.

RABBI

David you really shouldn't talk like that. Someone might hear.

DAVID

I don't care if anyone hears me. Hey everyone! I want to call off the wedding!

RABBI

David!

DAVID

Rabbi, give me one good reason why I shouldn't.

RABBI

Because you love women?

DAVID

Yes? And ...

RABBI

And not only do you love women, but you understand women.

And you understand Ruth.

Perhaps not from the inside out, just yet. But you will, I'm sure, with time.

DAVID

Wait a minute! What does loving Ruth have to do with anything?

Of course I love her. How could any man not love her?

That's not the problem.

RABBI

It's not?

DAVID

Of course not! The problem is how do I live with her!?

RABBI

You could live with her very happily, David, if you make up your mind to.

DAVID

You think all I have to do is make up *my mind* to be happy, and I'll be happy?

RABBI

That's the essence of Kabbalah, David.

Concentrate on all you have to be thankful for ...

Can I take off this Yankee cap now?

DAVID

No, not yet! Let me ask you one more question, my older brother.

You taught her for what, three months?

RABBI

Yes.

DAVID

Have you ever seen anyone learn so much, in so short a time?

RABBI

Well, now that you mention it ... she was a joy to teach. Her questions ... what a delight!
I had to call experts around the world to get her some answers.

DAVID

Yes, she was a wonderful student, wasn't she?
Don't you see it? When the lessons were over, who changed more, her or *you* ?

RABBI

I never thought about it in those terms.

DAVID

Well, think about it now.
You'll see that she not only absorbed your teachings, she absorbed your personality.
Then, any gaps she found, she augmented with *her thoughts*.
A year from now, whatever is unique inside me will be gone. It'll be replaced with:
"Yes, Ruth. No, Ruth. What do you think I should do, Ruth? Anything you say, Ruth."
She'll be picking out all my clothes ... telling me who I should be friends with, and who I
should avoid. **And she'll be right every time.**
Take a good look at me now, big brother. I'm mutating as we speak.

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

[RUTH ENTERS. She is wearing a wedding dress.]

DAVID

I thought it was bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding?

RUTH

There's *not going to be a wedding*.

RABBI & DAVID

There's not!?

RUTH

David, could you excuse us ... I want to talk to the Rabbi alone.
Rabbi, why are you wearing a Yankee cap?

DAVID

I most certainly will not excuse you, Ruth!
Anything you can say to me, you can say in front of the Rabbi.
Or is it the other way round?

RUTH

David, have you been drinking?

DAVID

(Hiccups) Absolute ... ly!

RUTH

That's seals it. Now I definitely won't marry you.

DAVID

Yeah, but I definitely wouldn't marry you *first*.
Tell her, Rabbi. Tell her I was the first to call off the wedding.

RABBI

Perhaps I should leave the room and let you two talk this over.

DAVID & RUTH

No!

DAVID

If anyone is going to call off this wedding, it's going to be me!

RUTH

Okay, fine! You go out there and tell the three hundred people your mother invited from *her country club* that the wedding is off.

DAVID

I will, you know! I'm going to go out this door and tell everyone to go home.

RUTH

So go ahead.

DAVID

I'm going to shout: "Our marriage is a mistake and we're calling off the wedding!"
Oh my God! I can't do that!
My mother will kill me!
We have 200 pounds of chopped liver we can't send back.
This wedding cost more than my medical school.

RUTH

Rabbi, let's get serious.
Ignoring the 200 pounds of chopped liver, do we have the slightest chance for happiness?

RABBI

I don't think that's up to me to decide, Ruth.
(There is a long dramatic silence.)

RUTH

David?

DAVID

Yes, Ruth.

RUTH

I want you to know ...
That even though we both know we're making the worst mistake of our lives ...
that I really do love you.

DAVID

You had to say that, didn't you?
Do you see it now, Rabbi?
Do you see how I'm doomed either way?

RABBI

Does that mean you are going forth with the wedding?

DAVID

Well I will ... if Ruth will.

RUTH

How's that for a declaration of undying love? *I will if Ruth will.*

DAVID

Well, will you?

RUTH

David, could you please leave us now.

DAVID

Leave? Ruth, are we going through with this ... or not?

RUTH

I'll let you know after I talk to the Rabbi. Privately.

RABBI

Ruth, I'm uncomfortable with the position you've put me in. Very uncomfortable.

DAVID

Welcome to the club, Rabbi.
Okay, I'll see you both later ... maybe.

[DAVID EXITS]

RUTH

Rabbi, please ... take off that silly cap.
Thank you.

RABBI

Ruth, are you going to go forward with this wedding?

RUTH

What do you think I should do?

RABBI

As I've already told you, this is your decision, not mine

RUTH

Okay, then what is your recommendation?

RABBI

My recommendation is that you make your own decision.

RUTH

What, no wisdom or advice to impart here?

RABBI

The only advice I would give is to consult your heart, and then your wisdom, intellect, and understanding. A marriage is a lifetime occupation.

RUTH

Occupation?

RABBI

Yes, there are times that being married is like a career.
Each partner in the marriage has their duties and responsibilities.

RUTH

Where is passion and love in your equation?

RABBI

Exactly where it needs to be ...
another item on the list of a hundred things needed for a successful lifelong relationship.

Ruth ... please think carefully ... you've learned the right answer.

The 2nd Book of Ruth

ACT ONE

Scene Three

(A Radio is playing a news broadcast from 1995. It is 3 years later. Rabbi Gold is sitting at the desk in his office. Once again he is busy writing a speech.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good morning, this is News Radio 88 broadcasting to you from the top of the World Trade Center. In the national news, famed guitarist Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead died of an overdose of heroin ... while in drug rehab? Locally, the weather is ...

RABBI

(turns off the radio, stands up, and reads out loud)

“We are here today to remember Harvey Blumberg, a devoted husband, loving father, and doting Grandfather. Harvey loved to do many things, among them ...”

Where did I put the notes that Zelda Blumberg gave me?

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

Yes, here it is. He liked to sit on the couch and *watch the radio*?

Come on Zelda, I need something better than that.

Let's see ... what did he do for a living, at least?

[THE KNOCKING ON THE DOOR GETS LOUDER]

A security guard ... at a sewage treatment plant?

Oy vay!

[THE KNOCK ON THE DOOR GROWS EVEN LOUDER]

RABBI

(still absorbed in writing)

Yes?

[**DAVID GREENBERG ENTERS.** He looks successful in an expensive three piece suit, carrying a designer briefcase, sporting a mustache.]

DAVID

Rabbi Gold?

RABBI

David, come in. Come in.

DAVID

(shaking hands)

How have you been, Rabbi? You look well.

RABBI

Baruch Hashem.

And how have you been? How has life been treating you, David?

DAVID

Aside from this situation, very well.

RABBI

I've heard from friends in Boca – they say you're quite in demand.

DAVID

Yes, we have a 4 month wait for an appointment.

Rabbi, I don't want to be rude, but could we speed this up a little?

I would like to finish before she gets here. This could turn into a scene.

RABBI

Ruth? Make a scene? But if you wish, I'll get the papers out.

DAVID

We should have never gotten married in the first place.

I had to get drunk to make it through the ceremony, if you remember?

RABBI

Yes, I remember.

DAVID

And then afterwards ... the honeymoon was a disaster!

RABBI

Oh?

DAVID

Did you know, when she studied for her conversion, she locked me out of our bedroom, and made me sleep on the couch? I said, 'Ruth, come on. We've been sleeping together for a year. Our sexual relationship has been grandfathered in.'

RABBI

Here, David. Sign here ... and here ...

DAVID

Then, on our wedding night, I fell asleep, dead drunk.
I woke up the next morning with a world class hangover.

RABBI

Sign here too, please.

DAVID

Ruth stayed awake, all night, watching me sleep, crying her eyes out.
Do you know what it's like to wake up with a splitting headache, Rabbi,
and have to listen to a woman crying hysterically?
And *that* was the one of our better nights.

RABBI

Of course, if you would rather not talk about it, then-

DAVID

I don't know why we stayed together.
Probably because we were so embarrassed at how unhappy we were, and so quickly!
There was never a fulfilling moment ...
never a night when I closed my eyes and said, "What a nice day."

RABBI

Again, if you would rather not talk about-

DAVID

She finally threw in the towel and moved out of the house 6 months ago.
No phone call, no letter, no words of explanation. Nothing.
One day she was there, the next day her closet was empty ... along with *her-half of mine*.
Instead of remorse, I felt liberated.
Then the wormy looking guy served me papers ... and here I am.

RABBI

You have one more paper to sign, and the "Get" is completed.
Before you sign it, David, Jewish law requires I ask you something.

DAVID

What's that?

RABBI

Are you sure you want to sever this marriage?

DAVID

Am I sure? As sure as a Rabbi wants to sever a foreskin.
I don't know why she insisted on this Get thing.
We have a legal divorce in Florida waiting for her signature.

RABBI

This is the way our people have been divorcing for over 3,000 years.

DAVID

Rabbi, I feel like I've been *married* for 3,000 years.

I can assure you, there has never been another woman like our Ruth.

The problem was exactly like I said it would be ... I wasn't good enough for her.

RABBI

Oh?

DAVID

She was a wonderful wife: she cooked like a culinary chef, was an immaculate housekeeper, and as a bed companion - well, 2 out of 3 ain't bad, right?

I'm kidding. She was also affectionate in the bedroom ... for two weeks every month.

Rabbi, like I said, Ruth needs a better man than the one sitting in front of you.

RABBI

It's very mature of you to think that way.

DAVID

There is no ego problem here. I told you, I understand women -

RABBI

-you don't have to say it-

DAVID

- from the inside out.

RABBI

I guess you had to say it.

DAVID

In fact, I have a very lovely woman waiting in my car for me right now.

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

DAVID

(whispers) I told you we needed to speed things up.

RABBI

(whispers) Would you like to go out my back door?

[THE KNOCKING GROWS MORE INSISTANT]

DAVID

(whispers) She sounds angry. Yes, maybe the back door is better.

RABBI

(shaking hands, whispering) David, have a good life.
When you get back to New York, please look me up.

[RUTH ENTERS. She is wearing a stylish, clinging jogging outfit.]

RUTH

Rabbi?

RABBI

Ruth.

RUTH

How are – oh it's you.

DAVID

(whispers) Hi, Ruth.

RUTH

Sneaking out the back door?

DAVID

(whispers) I didn't want any-
(in a loud masculine deep voice now)
I mean ... I didn't want any confrontations.

RUTH

Would you like me to go back out and pretend this didn't happen?

DAVID

Could you?

RUTH

No, David. We have been pretending for three years. How about this, instead?
(Ruth goes over to David, shakes his hand, and kisses him on the cheek)
Have a good life David. I wish you all the happiness you couldn't find with me.
(David shakes her hand, as if in a trance, while he stares at the Rabbi, then
Ruth, and then back again several times.)

DAVID

That's very kind of you, Ruth. The same goes double here.

RABBI

Would you like to leave by the front door now, David?

DAVID

Yes. Bye, Ruth ... Bye Rabbi.

[DAVID EXITS]

RABBI

It is said, "If you live long enough, you will see everything."

RUTH

Oh, he's going to see everything, too, Rabbi.
Lots and lots of ... lawyers.
The bimbo waiting in the car is going to take him to the cleaners ...
and she'll be taking him in *his* Mercedes ... like I should have ... but didn't.

RABBI

So sit, Ruth. Can I get you something? I'm having coffee.

RUTH

Rabbi, what's this on your desk? Am I keeping you from writing another speech?

RABBI

I was just putting the finishing touches on a eulogy.
I don't like giving them. It's difficult to start out with a joke, like you taught me.

RUTH

No, at a funeral, it's best to say something heartfelt.

RABBI

It's hard to say something heartfelt when you barely know someone.

RUTH

Why don't you start with the truth?

RABBI

You think I should say, "Here likes Harvey Blumberg, a nebbish.
He never did anything except sit and watch the radio."

RUTH

Watch the radio? Are you serious?

RABBI

Now you see what I am up against.
Ruth, why don't you have a seat and we'll go over the legalities.
(she proceeds to sign papers for the Rabbi)

RUTH

Okay. And then we'll go over your funeral speech ... just like old times.

RABBI

No, that's not necessary.

RUTH

Are you sure? My father was-

RABBI

Don't tell me. He was the best funeral speaker the world has ever seen.

RUTH

Well, he was a deacon in his church.
When he gave a eulogy, there wasn't a dry eye in the chapel.
Rabbi, I taught you how to make an audience laugh.
Would you like to learn how to make them cry?

RABBI

Ruth, I want to try this one on my own.

RUTH

Suit yourself.
(under her breath) Three years and he's still acting just like a man.

RABBI

I heard that.

RUTH

Well, it's true!
Speaking of the truth, go ahead, and say it already.

RABBI

Say what?

RUTH

I see the way you are looking at my clothes.
Come on Rabbi, give me the lecture again about being a *modern* woman.
I haven't heard it in three years, and I feel nostalgic.

RABBI

Would you like a big mug of coffee, or a regular cup?

RUTH

Don't change the subject. Come on, speak your mind. You're among friends.

RABBI

Well, I was hoping you would be dressed more *modestly*.
I guess you've decided which of our laws you will keep, and which you will throw out.

RUTH

Rabbi, dress codes are not laws, they're customs.

RABBI

And when customs are followed long enough, they become laws.

RUTH

Rabbi, please allow that the student has grown up and has a mind of her own.
And a regular cup of coffee will be fine.

RABBI

Perhaps on this subject, we will agree to disagree. Milk and two sugars, right?

RUTH

You remembered?

RABBI

Why do you find it odd that I remembered how you take your coffee?

RUTH

Rabbi Gold, is it your personality, or a Rabbinical thing?

RABBI

Is what my personality?

RUTH

Answering questions with questions.

RABBI

And a Rabbinical thing? What do you mean by that?

RUTH

You're doing it again.

RABBI

Yes, I am.
I find, as I become more experienced as a Rabbi, it's better to state less, and ask more.
It's good politics.

RUTH

Politics?

RABBI

It's so easy to offend people ... it's safer to get people to answer their own questions,
which is what most people will do if I ask the right questions.
But enough of me. How are you? How is Florida?

RUTH

Comfortable.

When David became success he was destined for, I got used to comfortable.
What I couldn't get used to was being was a neurotic jealous wife.

RABBI

You? Jealous?

RUTH

Oh, so the neurotic works, but not the jealous?

Yes, our David became quite the Casanova.

I hired a private detective to follow him. He quit after three days.

RABBI

Nothing to report?

RUTH

No, Rabbi. He ran out of film.

David had sex with five different women.

Well, six, if you include me. But I didn't count ... obviously.

RABBI

He did say he loved women. I never guessed how much.

RUTH

But that wasn't the worst part.

No, I could tolerate his philandering if it was a temporary aberration,
but the "*patch switch*" was the last straw.

RABBI

Patch switch? It sounds like another sales closing your father taught you.

RUTH

No, I was speaking about a real patch, the kind that slowly releases medicine.

David applied one to my arm – said it was to help me stop smoking.

I thought something was wrong with me – I was still smoking like a chimney.

When David was away at a medical convention, I went to have it changed.

Imagine my shock when I found out it was an experimental birth control patch.

David didn't want to have children with me, either.

RABBI

Ruth, I'm sorry. I misjudged you and your reasons for getting divorced.

RUTH

Apology accepted.

RABBI

So is there anything else you want to talk about?

RUTH

Not on the subject of David.

RABBI

If you don't mind my saying say, you look troubled.
Are you sure there isn't something else you want to talk about?

RUTH

Do you think you can fix every problem by asking questions, Rabbi?

RABBI

Sometimes the right question can bring about the right answer to a problem.

RUTH

Oh really? Do you find you have that power, to fix everything, with just words?

RABBI

God made the world by uttering words, Ruth.
He said, "Let there be light ... and there was light ... and it was Good."

RUTH

That was God.
I haven't found any men, or women, on this planet able to do that same miracle.
They use words like a knife, to cut the heart out of people.

RABBI

Ruth, what's wrong?

RUTH

Well ... ah ... no ... I really don't want to discuss it.

RABBI

Of course, if that is what you prefer.

RUTH

And Morty is waiting outside in the limo.

RABBI

Oh? Who is Morty?

RUTH

Husband number two. He wants to meet you.
I should warn you. Morty's not very religious.

RABBI

I see.

RUTH

Why is it so hard to find a religious man who is a good match for me?
Then again, maybe I'm no prize package. Am I Rabbi?

RABBI

You're a special person, Ruth.
I have high hopes for you as a Jewish woman and mother.

RUTH

I'll go get Morty.

[RUTH EXITS]

(Rabbi Gold shakes his head and returns to his desk. He resumes writing.)

[THERE IS A LIGHT KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

RABBI

Yes!?

[RUTH ENTERS WITH MORTY. Morty is an older man, with a completely bald shaved head. He is dressed in clothes of the same style and color of Ruth's and looks like the picture of health.]

RUTH

Rabbi Gold, let me introduce you to Morty Diamond. Morty, say hello to-Morty, you're not supposed to hug Rabbis like that.
Morty, please put the Rabbi down.

MORTY

I'm sorry, Rabbi. I didn't mean to ruffle your tzitzis.
But I can't help it. I love you for what you've done for my Ruthie.
Rabbi, what's your first name?

RABBI

Yehoshua.

MORTY

Yeho what?

RABBI

Joshua in English.

MORTY

Joshua? Josh ... Rabbi Josh ... No, that name doesn't feel right for you.
How do you feel about Yoshi?

RUTH

Morty, you don't call Rabbi's by their first names.

RABBI

Actually, Ruth, that was my nickname in Yeshiva.

MORTY

Great! Then Yoshi it is!

RUTH

How about Rabbi Yoshi?

MORTY

Rabbi Yoshi ... hmmm ... Rabbi Yoshi ... Rabbi Yoshi ... Yeah, I guess it sounds okay.

RUTH

As you can see, Morty is somewhat of an extrovert.

MORTY

Somewhat? I'm the best damn salesman that ever came out of Bronx.
Show me a salesman that isn't an extrovert, and I'll show you a salesman with skinny children ... think about it.

RUTH

Morty is a third generation salesman.
Everyone in his family is selling something, to someone, at some time, for some reason.

RABBI

Sound like someone familiar to you, Ruth?

MORTY

What does he mean, Ruthie?

RUTH

Nothing. I'll tell you later.

RABBI

Morty, you're Jewish I take it?

MORTY

From this big hook nose, down to the tip of my schmeckle.

RUTH

Morty!

RABBI

(laughing) Ruth, leave him be.

It's charming when someone doesn't apologize for who they are, especially if -

MORTY

Apologize?

Listen, Rabbi Yoshi, I just sold my bathrobe company for 100 million dollars.

Why did I get a 100 million dollars? Because I made it worth a 100 million dollars!

Me, Morty Diamond from the Bronx, the junkman's kid, with a nine figure bank account, and a limo that takes me everywhere. Who woulda thought?

RABBI

Did you use the old "Take Away" when you sold your company?

MORTY

He knows about the Take Away? Hey, I really love this guy, Ruthie.

Come here, you!

RUTH

Morty, please put the Rabbi down ... let him catch his breath so he can talk.

RABBI

(struggling for air) Okay ... we have ... established ... that you're ... Jewish.

MORTY

Right down to my-

RUTH

Yes, we get the picture.

RABBI

Tell me, Morty, are you observant?

MORTY

Rabbi, I got my eyes wide open all the time.

RUTH

The Rabbi was referring to keeping kosher and honoring the Sabbath.

MORTY

Nah, I didn't grow up with all the extra Judaism stuff, Yoshi.

My parents went to synagogue twice a year, and we did a Passover seder at home.

On Sunday mornings, we had bagels and lox. That's it.

But whatever Ruthie wants, count me in - all the way.

I'll wear a beanie, eat kosher, and not work from Friday night to sundown Saturday.

Whatever this little shiksa wants.

RUTH

Morty, I'm not a shiksa!

MORTY

With a nose like that, and for *free*, you'll always be a shiksa in my heart.

Rabbi, how does someone keep these skullcaps on with no hair? It keeps falling off.

RABBI

They have yarmulkes that cover your head, Morty.

(takes out a box of yarmulkes)

Here, try this one.

MORTY

Hey, I like this one. Fancy shmancy.

RABBI

Keep it as my gift.

Now Morty, did Ruth explain about waiting 90 days before remarrying?

MORTY

Rabbi, I've been waiting 67 years for this woman.

I can do another 90 days like falling off a blintza.

(stops and looks in Ruth's eyes)

And I'm going to be around for a long time, just loving her.

I may look like an alta kocka, Rabbi, with this egg of a head,

but inside I feel like a teenager.

I lift weights three times a week. Feel this bicep. Go ahead. It won't bite.

RABBI

Impressive.

MORTY

And look at these calf muscles.

(lifts up his running pants and places his leg on the Rabbi's desk)

I jog five miles every morning. Go ahead, feel it.

RABBI

On that, I'll take your word for it, Morty.

MORTY

I'm in the best shape of my life, Rabbi. And I feel like I'm going to live forever.

67 years I've been waiting for the love of my life, and here she is.

RUTH

What can I say, Rabbi, he loves me. (Morty hugs her) Morty, not so tight. I can't breathe.

MORTY

Sorry, honey.

RUTH

Morty, would you do me a favor? There's something personal that I forgot to discuss with the Rabbi. Could you excuse us for just five minutes?

MORTY

Sure, honey doll. What ever you want. I'll wait out in the limo. Take your time. Rabbi, it was a pleasure.

RABBI

Morty, you hug ... great.

MORTY

Hey, Rabbi Yoshi. Anyone who's a friend of my Ruthie, is a friend of mine.

[MORTY EXITS]

RUTH

He's an original, isn't he?

RABBI

No doubt about it.

(after a very long uncomfortable pause)

So Ruth, what is it you want to discuss?

RUTH

Rabbi, there's something I would like you to do.

RABBI

If it's in my power.

RUTH

(struggling inside herself)

No, forget it. It was a foolish idea.

RABBI

(when she is at the door)

Ruth, I'm concerned about you. Really ... if there's anything I can do ...

RUTH

Well, okay Rabbi. Remember, you said *anything*....

[The lights go down and the stage goes completely black]

[INTERMISSION]

The 2nd Book of Ruth

ACT TWO

Scene One

(A Radio is playing a news broadcast from 1998, 3 years later. Rabbi Gold is sitting at his desk. There is now gray in his beard. Once again he is busy writing a speech.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good morning, this is News Radio 88 broadcasting to you from the top of the World Trade Center. In the national news, this day in 1998 will be set down in the annals of American History because it is the first time a sitting American President admitted to having an extra-marital affair – after denying it for almost a year.

RABBI

(clicks off radio, stands up, and says out loud)

He was a devoted husband, a good friend, and an honored member of the community -

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

He had an illustrious career, as many of you know,

[THE KNOCKING GROWS LOUDER]

He was gifted in the art of people, and he used that gift for everyone's benefit.

[THE KNOCKING ON THE DOOR GROWS LOUDER STILL]

Yes? Who is it!?

[RUTH ENTERS. She is dressed in all black.]

RUTH

Rabbi?

RABBI

Ruth?! What are you doing *here*?

RUTH

It's standing room only at the funeral. Everyone is asking where the Rabbi is.

RABBI

What did you tell them?

RUTH

I said, knowing the Rabbi, he's putting the finishing touches on his eulogy.

RABBI

You know me too well.

RUTH

(moving nervously around, stopping at a picture)

That's another beautiful picture, Rabbi. Your daughter is growing prettier with each year. How old is she now?

RABBI

She just had her sixteenth birthday.

RUTH

Your wife looks happy.

RABBI

Yes, Baruch Hashem, I think she is.

RUTH

And you?

RABBI

I feel blessed.

RUTH

So you're happy?

RABBI

I don't think of my life in terms of being happy or unhappy. My life is full, and I think of a good life as one that is full.

RUTH

Full of what?

RABBI

The things that matter ... a good marriage, a good family, a good career, good friends, a good place in this world ... and I should have mentioned it first ... a good relationship with God. That is a full life, and a good life, to me.

RUTH

I just asked a simple question, Rabbi, are you happy?

RABBI

And I answered you ... without asking a question back, like a good Rabbi is supposed to.

RUTH

You sounded like you were full of something else.

RABBI

Yes, there was probably some of that, too.

(there is a long silence, and then they both start laughing)

RUTH

(studies the picture of the Rabbi's family)

I also want a family, Rabbi. But here I am, married twice, and still childless.

You know the crowd at the funeral home is smirking behind my back.

RABBI

Smirking? Why would they be smirking at you, Ruth?

RUTH

Because I'm 31 and Morty was 75.

RABBI

75? I thought he was 70.

RUTH

Morty lied. He wasn't 67 when he married me, he was 5 years older.

But 72 sounded too ancient, so he lopped off a few years.

He thought it would make a difference to me, but it didn't.

How could it? Morty was a lifelong teenager, who woke up one day, and there was a 100 million dollars in his checking account to play with.

Do you know what I overheard some alter kocker saying at the funeral home?

(like an old man with a Yiddish accent)

"I heard she shtupped him to death."

His friend, another alter kocker, nodded his head and added,

"Nu, what a way to go!

The mortician worked all through the night to get the fashtunkenah smile off his face."

RABBI

Who said that?

RUTH

Nobody. It's an old joke ... but I figured you wouldn't know it.

Look, Rabbi, I'm trying to be serious, but it's difficult.

Whenever I got serious, Morty started telling jokes.

He loved to laugh. When he walked into a room ... suddenly it was *Showtime!*

If Morty were here now, he would be telling funeral jokes.

RABBI

Ruth, honestly, there was a time I questioned why you were marrying him.

RUTH

You should have asked me.

RABBI

And if I did, what would you have said?

RUTH

I needed someone like him after David. Someone who could make me laugh. Someone who's only thought was to make me happy.

RABBI

Ruth, can I ask you another question?

RUTH

Only one? Are you on some sort of a question quota now?

RABBI

Did you love him?

RUTH

Did I love him? Someone is taking liberties with our relationship, Rabbi.

RABBI

You're right. Consider the question retracted.

(there is another long silence)

RUTH

In the beginning, I adored him. At the end of our three years together, yes, I loved him. Do you know what that means, Rabbi?

RABBI

I asked you if you loved him, and you said yes.

RUTH

There are many types of love, Rabbi. I loved him like a father ... that I could shup.

RABBI

Ruth, *please*.

RUTH

Okay, like an uncle.

RABBI

Ruth.

RUTH

He really did die making love to me, you know.

RABBI

Ruth.

RUTH

Do you want to hear about it, Rabbi? The neighbors did ...
You can start out your funeral speech with a detailed description of it.
It'll make a great opener. Here's what you say:

"On the last day of his life, Morty came pole vaulting into their bedroom."

Then you turn toward me and say:

"Ruth was lying in their bed sound sleep.

The next thing she knew, Morty was making love to her.

Then he grabbed his heart, gave out a yell, and died in her arms."

Then you turn to the audience, totally deadpan, and you say:

"Good old Morty - he came ... and then he went ... in that order."

RABBI

Ruth!

RUTH

What? It'll get a big laugh ... but that's not how you write a funeral speech, is it?

RABBI

No it isn't.

RUTH

I told you to start all your funeral speeches with the truth, didn't I?

What was the name of that alter kocker you were burying when we discussed it?

RABBI

Harvey Blumberg ... the night watchman at the sewer treatment plant.

RUTH

Well, if you're going to be honest about Morty, you can start out by saying;

"The truth was, Morty was past his prime when it came to sex.

He stopped working ... in that department ... before Ruth married him."

RABBI

Ruth ... please. This conversation is making me very uncomfortable.

RUTH

"But Ruth married him anyway - because he loved her with all his heart.

Morty may have lied about his age, but he never lied about being able to father children.

RABBI

If you knew, and it was so important to you, why did you go through with the marriage?

RUTH

Morty agreed we would adopt.

He said, “Ruth, there is no shortage of kids needing love in this world. You just pick out a little boy, a special little boy that opens your heart, and we’ll take him into our home and love him like no one else can.”

RABBI

So what happened?

RUTH

I had a feeling, an intuition, deep inside of me, that told me to wait.

So instead, Morty secretly set up an orphanage in Israel.

He named it after me. He called it Bais Ruth – the house of Ruth.

RABBI

Yes, I know. I helped him pick out the location, and the people to run it.

RUTH

So he was a man full of secrets ... But the one thing he didn’t keep secret was loving me.

RABBI

Ruth, would you do me a favor?

RUTH

Do *you* a favor? Rabbi, who’s the poor suffering widow here?

RABBI

Help me write his eulogy.

RUTH

Oh, *now* you want me to help you!?

RABBI

Yes. I need your help with this.

RUTH

Are you willing to say the truth, Rabbi?

RABBI

Yes, of course.

RUTH

No, you say you’re willing, but you’re not. You’re a crowd pleaser, and always will be.

RABBI

No, Ruth. I want to give a eulogy that will stand out in the annals of funeral speeches.
I want to make people laugh, and make them cry.
I want to shake them up, leave changed and improved.
I want people to think about it whenever they go to another funeral.
To say: "Rabbi Gold's eulogy for Morty Diamond? Now *that* was a eulogy!"

RUTH

They don't give out academy awards for these things, Rabbi.

RABBI

I'm not looking for awards.
I want to give testimony to a once-in-a-lifetime unique individual.
He was the most joyful man I ever met, and we Hasids believe joy is the path to God.

RUTH

Rabbi, I'm warning you. You don't want my help with that speech.
You get into trouble.

RABBI

Trouble? Why trouble?

RUTH

Because I'll say I shtupped him to death ... and your congregation will fire you.

RABBI

They can't fire me.

RUTH

Oh, and why not?

RABBI

(points to a frame on the wall behind him)

While you were rummaging around my things, you missed that.
It's the deed to the synagogue – in my name - I had it framed.

RUTH

Oh, really? Look who is the rich man now!

(singing from Fiddler on the Roof)

"If I were a rich man ... bubba bubba bubba biddee bum."
Tell me, Rabbi Rothschild, when did that happen?

RABBI

Last year.

RUTH

You should have called me – we would have had a party.

RABBI

I assumed Morty would tell you. He bought it for me.

RUTH

He what?

RABBI

One day, he just walked in – unannounced - like usual.
He gave me one of his big bear hugs, then he handed me a paper.
He said, “Read it Rabbi.”
It was the deed to the synagogue ... with my name on it.
Then he said:

(like Morty)

“Yoshi, I don’t want there should be any politics between you and God.
A Rabbi is going to say or do righteous things, from time to time,
that will make his congregation want to run him out of town.
Any Rabbi that doesn’t do that, well he isn’t much of a Rabbi.
And the Rabbi that leaves ... well, he isn’t much of a man.”
“Yoshi,” he said to me, “I want nothing to stop you from being a righteous man.”

Ruth, help me ... help me give testimony to a ...

(he starts tearing up)

I’m sorry, Ruth. I can’t help it. I loved him. And I will miss him.

RUTH

Look what you have me doing, Rabbi. You made the poor widow cry.

RABBI

He was the kind of guy who really got to you, wasn’t he?

RUTH

Yes ...
Well, there you have it.

RABBI

Have what?

RUTH

Your opening line. Write it down.
Say, “Morty Diamond was kind of the guy that really got to you.”

RABBI

Yes, that’s true.

RUTH

Rabbi, the funeral starts in ten minutes and you’re not writing.
Now add, “When he hugged you, you knew you were really being hugged.”

RABBI

Yes.

RUTH

And then you drop your pants.

RABBI

Ruth! You set me up.

RUTH

You said you wanted to write a speech people would talk about for a long time.
I guarantee, you drop your pants at Morty's funeral, *ten generations* will remember it.
By the way, I'd still go with over-sized boxers with the big balloons, like my father used.
Jockey's wouldn't be as funny.
Come on, Rabbi, lighten up. I don't expect you to do it.
But when you think about it, it was the kind of thing that Morty would do.
Yes, if Morty was burying someone he truly loved, he would drop trou.

RABBI

Yes, **he** probably would. But that doesn't help **me**. Come on, Ruth, help me out here.

RUTH

Rabbi.

RABBI

Yes.

RUTH

Rabbi, look at me ... Okay, a glance will suffice.
Look, you're older now. Isn't that some gray in your beard?

RABBI

There is a lot of gray in my beard.

RUTH

What are you 45, 48, *fifty*?

RABBI

You know very well I'm only 41.

RUTH

Well, then, at 41 isn't it time to be your own man, like Morty wanted?
I'll meet you at the funeral home. Don't take too long.

[RUTH EXITS]

The 2nd Book of Ruth

ACT TWO

Scene Two

[It is three years later, October 2001. Rabbi Gold is sitting at the desk.
There is more gray in his beard. He is busy writing a speech.]

[A LOUD SIREN WAILS. THEN THERE IS A SPOTLIGHT ON THE RADIO]

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good afternoon. This is News Radio 88 broadcasting now from the top of the Empire State Building. It has been a month since the World Trade Center was destroyed, and New York City is still picking up the pieces. Locally, Mayor Giuliani-

RABBI

(switches off radio, stands up, and says out loud)

“My fellow congregants, I usually start my sermons with a joke. I was taught this technique by a very special person.

[THERE IS A LIGHT KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

But no matter how I tried, I could not fit in a joke ... because this is not the time for it.

[THE KNOCK ON THE DOOR GETS LOUDER]

RABBI

Each night, I go down there, after the cameras have left, and the news people have gone home. I go there and I pray ... and in my prayers I beseech the Holy One, Blessed Be He, to not give up on mankind ...

[THE KNOCK GETS EVEN LOUDER]

RABBI

Yes? Who is it already!?

[RUTH ENTERS. She is dressed in Army fatigues. Her face has dirt smeared on it and she has been sweating profusely.]

RUTH

Rabbi?

RABBI

Ruth?! Come in, come in!

RUTH

I'm sorry I look this way, but I didn't have a chance to change.
(after looking at each other a long time)

Rabbi?

RABBI

Yes, Ruth.

RUTH

There are two people in this room that haven't seen each other for three years.
And these two people are very fond of each other. Aren't they?

Yoshi ... tell me it doesn't feel natural to hug now?

RABBI

Perhaps it might feel that way ... to *some people*.
In that case, *some people* should address me by my clerical title.

RUTH

Okay ... *Rabbi*.

RABBI

Why do you insist on trying to change me?

RUTH

Why do you insist on being unchanged? The only thing consistent in life is change.
After what we've seen at the World Trade Center, you should know that.

RABBI

Man changes. Ha kadosh baruchoo, The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not change.

RUTH

You don't know that, Rabbi.
God may be evolving with us, as we work out the problems of the human condition.
But enough of this seriousness ... I've had enough seriousness to last a lifetime.
(she looks at a photograph)
Look at your daughter. She's turned into a beautiful young woman. How old is she?

RABBI

She's 19.

RUTH

Then she will be thinking of marriage, soon.

RABBI

I hope so. Her wedding is in three months.

RUTH

Well, congratulations!

RABBI

Thank you.

RUTH

Do you know what that means?

There will be babies ... and you will be a grandfather!

I wonder how it will feel to be a Zaidey at, what are you now ... *fifty* ... *sixty*?

RABBI

You know very well I'm 44. Now please sit down and stop touching my things.

RUTH

I'm sorry. I thought it was only married men I'm not allowed to touch.

RABBI

Would you like some coffee, or a soda?

RUTH

How about something stronger?

RABBI

Ruth.

RUTH

Sometimes a shot of whiskey helps.

Especially at night, when the house is quiet ... and I can't sleep.

RABBI

Ruth, you're smart ... you're rich ... you're a good person-

RUTH

Don't forget the plush blonde hair and piercing blue eyes.

RABBI

Yes ... as you so modestly point out.

Ruth, don't let this terrible event define how you live your life. Don't give in to fear.

RUTH

Fear? Rabbi, what are you talking about?

RABBI

The World Trade Center, of course.

RUTH

I was speaking about being lonely.

RABBI

Oh ... I thought you came here today because of a sense of ... helplessness ...

RUTH

Well, yes, I feel that, but it wasn't the reason for this visit.
I have someone waiting outside who wants to meet you ...
and whom I would like you to meet ... let me go get him.

RABBI

Ruth!

RUTH

Yes?

RABBI

Please, no surprises. First, tell me who he is.

RUTH

He's someone I met down at the World Trade Center.

RABBI

Yes, and?

RUTH

And, well, he's sort of famous, but you probably wouldn't know him.

RABBI

Yes, and?

RUTH

And he's Jewish.

RABBI

Yes, and?

RUTH

You should hear him speak in front of a crowd. He's riveting.

RABBI

Yes, and?

RUTH

And he's rich, so he doesn't need my money.

RABBI

Yes, and?

RUTH

And he's a certified sperm donor.

RABBI

Who certified him?

RUTH

I don't know, but he made regular deposits there.

RABBI

Now where were we?

RUTH

You were "yes, and – ing" me to death.
Are you sufficiently prepared now?

RABBI

Yes, please invite him in.

[RUTH EXITS]

[**RUTH ENTERS WITH ARTIE MENTCHNIK.** He is 45, also dressed in Army fatigues, but **clean**. He has long red hair tied back in a pony tail.]

RUTH

Rabbi Gold, I want you to meet Artie Mentchnik.

RABBI

Hello Artie.

ARTIE

(shakes hands) Hello Rabbi.

Ruth has told me so many nice things about you, and insisted on my meeting you.

RUTH

Yes. He's met all my ex-husbands ... I'm sorry, that didn't come out the right way.
Rabbi, it's not polite to stare.

RABBI

I'm sorry. Was I staring?

RUTH

Yes, at Artie's hair.
And yes, it's real ... and yes it's his natural color.

RABBI

I'm sorry. It's rare to see a Jew with such red hair.

RUTH

And so much of it, too.
I like to play with the pony tail ... Giddy up, horsey!

ARTIE

Ruth! Please ...

RUTH

That's his trademark.
"Let the redhead give you blackheads," or something like that.

ARTIE

It's "Let the redhead put you in the black."

RUTH

I knew it had something about black in it.

ARTIE

Rabbi, I thought I read somewhere that King David had red hair.
And his great grandmother, whose name was also Ruth, was a convert, wasn't she?

RABBI

Yes, showing God has a special place in his heart for the convert.

RUTH

Someone noodge me when the Jewish history lesson is over.

RABBI

Okay, everyone. Sit, sit.
Artie, can I get you some coffee or a soda?

ARTIE

No, I don't put any poisons in my body, Rabbi.

RABBI

I was offering you a Coke, not hemlock.

ARTIE

Caffeine and sugared drinks are just hemlock without Socrates. I'm a Vegan.

RUTH

I thought it meant he was from a different galaxy – like a Vulcan.
It turned out Artie's very health conscious.

RABBI

That's one of the good things to come out of your generation.

ARTIE

Our generation? If you don't mind my asking, how old are you, Rabbi.

RABBI

I'm 44.

ARTIE

Well, I'm only a year older than you. You're a part of "our generation."

RUTH

No ... the Rabbi's world is from 300 years ago.

RABBI

And further back than that.

ARTIE

So you must agree, even in your world, Rabbi, the healthier you are, the longer you live,
and the better life is?

RABBI

Except we believe how long you live, and when you die, are acts of God, not man.
We've had great sages who lived only 30 or 40 years, yet accomplished wonderful things.

ARTIE

And I want to do the same - accomplish a great deal in a short time.

RABBI

Yes, but it seems to me your generation's goal is to gather as much money as you can, as
quickly as you can, and then retire to a gated golf community ... or something similar.

ARTIE

What's wrong with that?

RABBI

In other words, the ultimate goal is a long life of uselessness.

ARTIE

No, a long life of leisure and pleasure.

RABBI

That already failed, 2,000 years ago with the Romans.
Please explain to me, Artie, why anyone would want to do nothing for the rest of their life except play golf or walk along the beach?
For a few weeks on vacation, it might be pleasant ... but for a lifetime?
You may find that as a Jew, you cannot succumb to such a life –
God placed too much of a hunger in our soul to improve the world. Tikoon olam.

RUTH

Well, it's obvious he doesn't watch your infomercials, Artie.

RABBI

Infomercials?

RUTH

Artie is the King of Late Night TV. His company runs ½ hour shows that seem like they give out information, but they're really one long commercial.

RABBI

Information on what?

ARTIE

Growing wealthy in real estate.

RUTH

And Artie shows them how to do it with no money.

ARTIE

No money *of their own*.

RABBI

This, I would like my congregants to learn.
They have just the right requirements – no money of their own.
At least that's what they tell me when I ask them to give for special projects.
But Artie, how can your company stay in business catering to people with no money?

ARTIE

We charge them for the *training* that teaches them how to do it.

RUTH

And that training costs a *lot of money*.

ARTIE

And it's worth it.

RABBI

But if they have no money, how can they pay you?

RUTH

Enter the greatest invention of the 20th century.

RABBI

The electric light bulb?

RUTH

No, even more useful.

RABBI

The computer?

RUTH

No, something that is near and dear to Jewish woman everywhere –

Drum roll please ... Master Charge and VISA.

They borrow on their credit cards for his courses.

ARTIE

Which they pay off from their profits.

I'll tell you what, Rabbi. Here, take my card.

Call my office and tell them to set up a *complimentary* class for your congregants.

When they learn our easy system, they will grow rich and contribute millions to your special projects ... We have synagogues all over the world doing it ...

No ... wait a minute ... Maybe it's better we don't mix business with friendship.

RABBI

(to Ruth) Was that the Take Away?

RUTH

Bingo. And perfectly executed. Beware of Mentchniks bearing free gifts, Rabbi.

ARTIE

Ruth can be quite sarcastic at times, can't she Rabbi?

RABBI

Oh yes. And at the same time, Ruth is also a very special woman, Artie.

ARTIE

On that we both agree, Rabbi.

RUTH

Well, we have to be getting back.

Our help is needed ... or at least my help is needed sifting through the ashes.

Artie spends the whole day talking to reporters.

ARTIE

About rebuilding ... about creating life from those ashes.
I'm giving motivation, and giving motivation is giving energy,
and energy is all you need to start making good things happen ... right Rabbi?

RABBI

Energy placed in the right direction can make great things happen.

ARTIE

(Artie talks to the audience like Tony Robbins, a motivational speaker)

We have the energy to change life.
We have the energy to improve life.
We have the energy to become rich and happy again all through life!

I can show you how to transform this terrible event into a new life for yourselves.
We can do it together ... using my simple system ...
Let the Red Head show you how to turn these ashes into a bed of roses.

RUTH

I hate to interrupt this little "motivational seminar," but if motivation is all you need,
how come I'm dirty and sweaty, and smell like a goat,
and Artie, you look like a red-headed Mr. Clean, and smell like men's cologne?

Come on, Artie ... Let's let the Rabbi get back to his work, and we'll get back to ours.
Good bye, Rabbi.

ARTIE

It was a pleasure meeting you, Rabbi.

RABBI

The same here, Artie. Ruth?

RUTH

Yes, Rabbi.

RABBI

Can I see you for just a moment ... privately?

RUTH

Artie would you mind waiting for me out in the Hummer?

ARTIE

Glad to, sweetness.

(Artie goes to kiss her, and she pulls away)

RUTH

Artie, not in front of the Rabbi.

[ARTIE EXITS]

RUTH

So, what do you think?

RABBI

What do I think? What do *you* think?

RUTH

I mean, I know he's not religiously observant, but he promises he will follow our customs inside our home. Outside, he wants the freedom to do otherwise.

RABBI

So he's willing to be a hypocrite? What kind of message will that send your children?

RUTH

Rabbi, he's Jewish and he can make babies. That's what I need right now.
So, I gather you don't like him?

RABBI

Do *you* like him?

RUTH

Yes. Do you think he'll make a good husband?

RABBI

Do *you* think he'll make a good husband?

RUTH

Can't you answer a question?
You don't have to play politics, Rabbi.
I am your friend, and as a friend I asked your opinion.

RABBI

And as your friend, I have chosen not to answer.

RUTH

Why?

RABBI

Because your answers are the only answers that really matter, here.

RUTH

You are the most infuriating man! Good bye, Rabbi Gold.

RABBI

Shalom, Ruth.

[RUTH EXITS]
[THE RABBI'S CELLPHONE RINGS]

RABBI

Rabbi Gold ...

Yes, Doctor ... thank you for seeing my wife on such short notice ...

So what were the results of the ...

Oh ... oh ... oh (like a whisper)...

You're sure? ... Is there anything we can do ... anything? ...

Could you hold on a minute, Doctor?

(Rabbi Gold takes out a handkerchief and wipes his eyes)

How long? ...

Doctor, please ... if it were your wife ... wouldn't you want to know?

Three months? That's all?

(Rabbi Gold stomps his foot down and his face contorts with pain)

Of course we will keep her as comfortable as possible ...

No, we will take care of her at home ... Yes, there will be help there ...

Doctor, thank you for all you have tried to do ...

Yes, she's in God's hands now ... as we all are ...

(Rabbi Gold lays his head down, and cries)

The 2nd Book of Ruth

ACT TWO

Scene Three

[It is 2 years later, 2003. Rabbi Gold is sitting at his desk. There is even more gray in his beard. Once again he is busy writing a speech.]

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good afternoon, this is News Radio 88 broadcasting to you from the top of the Empire State Building. In the financial news today, Artie Mentchnik, the real estate guru known as the “redhead who puts you into the black,” has fled the country with millions of dollars of OPM, other people’s money – right before hearings with Federal prosecutors

RABBI

(Turning off the Radio, standing up, and reading out loud)

Good afternoon, my esteemed guests. I want to thank you celebrating this simcha with us. My daughter and son-in-law have set out a wonderful spread and my grandson is sleeping peacefully in his father’s arms.

Soon, we’re going to wake up my grandson and have him go through a 4,000 year old ritual - a circumcision. He’s probably going to think, “Even with all this delicious food, being Jewish is no picnic.”

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

This is both a landmark, and a bittersweet time for me. It is a landmark because I am now a grandfather, a Zaidey. I can see the child of my child, as my family goes from generation to generation.

[THE KNOCKING ON THE DOOR GROWS LOUDER]

When I look at our new edition, I see he has his father’s eyes, his mother’s nose, and ... his grandmother’s smile. And that is why there a tinge of the bittersweet to this, that his grandmother, his Bubbe, my wife, is not here with us. But I’m sure she’s looking down, smiling – kvelling - at her first grandson, and telling all the other grandmothers, “Such a genius he is, and only eight days old.”

[THE KNOCKING ON THE DOOR GROWS EVEN LOUDER]

RABBI

Yes? !

[**RUTH ENTERS.** She is dressed in a business suit.]

RUTH

Rabbi?

RABBI

Ruth! Come in, come in! How are you?

RUTH

(holds up legal papers)

You should have asked before I answered this *subpoena* in front of the Grand Jury.

RABBI

Yes, I heard about Artie on the radio.

But what did they want from *you*?

RUTH

They wanted to make sure Artie didn't give me any of the money he stole.

RABBI

How much did he take?

RUTH

Around two hundred million dollars.

RABBI

I couldn't say it before, but I will now - I'm glad you didn't marry him.

RUTH

Oh really?

(after looking at each other a long time, both being nervous)

Rabbi?

RABBI

Yes, Ruth?

RUTH

Once again, there are two people in this room that haven't seen each other for a while.

RABBI

About two years ... I believe.

RUTH

And these two people are very good friends, are they not?

RABBI

Well .. yes, they are.

RUTH
Rabbi, doesn't a hug feel right here?

RABBI
Ruth ... no. This is not the right place.

RUTH
(she pursues him around his desk while he moves away nervously)
Come on ... open your arms!

RABBI
Ruth ... please ...

RUTH
Rabbi, I'm starting to feel like the spider and the fly.

RABBI
Easy for you to say ... you're not the fly.

RUTH
Rabbi, you're not married anymore ... aren't you allowed to touch now?

RABBI (sighing)
Yes ... but not here ... with my whole congregation outside.

RUTH
So we won't let anyone else in.
(locks the door)
Now they can't see anything.

RABBI
Now it's worse ... a Rabbi and a woman not his wife ... meeting behind a locked door.

RUTH
Well, then we'll compromise. I'll unlock the door.

RABBI
There is no choice here, Ruth.

RUTH
So what will it be? Locked or unlocked?

RABBI
RUTH!
UNLOCK MY DOOR!

(This is first time an angry word has ever been said between Rabbi Gold and Ruth, and it shocks both of them)

RABBI

Please, Ruth, do not test me now ... you will find me lacking.

RUTH

Do you want to talk about it?

RABBI

No.

RUTH

What's the matter? Can't the Rabbi be human?

RABBI

I've asked you to stop testing me.

RUTH

Will you talk to me then?

Did I forget to mention that under this blonde hair and blue eyes lies a heart?

RABBI

(smiling) I believe you refer to your hair as "plush" and your eyes as "piercing."

RUTH

That was only for people who notice.

RABBI

And you think I didn't notice?

Ruth ... there is much we need to say to one another ... but not here ... and not now.

RUTH

Well, if I can't give you a hug ... is it okay to give you a present?

RABBI

A present?

RUTH

Yes ... here ... go ahead, open it.

RABBI

Perhaps later.

RUTH

No ... you need to open it now.

RABBI

Why now?

RUTH

You might need it today. You'll see ... heere, I'll do it for you.

(she opens the gift and holds up a large pair of boxer shorts)

They were Dad's ... but he's too old for them now.

He wanted to pass them on to someone who could really use them.

Here ... try them on ... over your pants.

RABBI

Over my pants I can do ... so what do you think? Funny?

RUTH

Hilarious.

RABBI

As funny as your father?

RUTH

I don't know. My Dad had very funny looking legs.

Well, so now what can we talk about? Any new books ... photographs?

I see you have a picture of your daughter's wedding.

Everyone looks happy ... except you ... didn't you have a good time?

RABBI

If you had been there, you wouldn't have to ask.

RUTH

Is that what this is about?

RABBI

What?

RUTH

This anger you have towards me.

RABBI

I'm not angry at you.

RUTH

Yes you are.

RABBI

No I'm not.

RUTH

Yes you are.

RABBI

No I'm not.

RUTH

(singing) Oh yes you are! ... yes you are! ... yes you are!

RABBI

I SAID I AM NOT ANGRY AT YOU!

RUTH

Did you hear yourself?

RABBI

Yes.

RUTH

And how do you sound?

RABBI

Like someone who is ... angry.

(They both laugh)

But the Rabbi is not angry. The man inside the Rabbi is.
He's upset because you didn't come to his daughter's wedding.
Why didn't you?

RUTH

It was too soon after your wife's funeral, Yoshi.
It would not have looked right.

RABBI

What ... you were a friend visiting a friend.
And that friend, who was marrying off his only child, was at the lowest point in his life.
I needed you then. I wanted to talk to you.

RUTH

I couldn't. It would have been embarrassing.

RABBI

Embarrassing?

RUTH

Yoshi, all anyone had to do was look into my eyes
I'm still embarrassed ... right now ... and still afraid.

RUTH (cont'd)

But I had to come here today to find out ...

Yoshi, please look into my eyes ... no, not a glance ...

RABBI

No.

RUTH

Is it for the same reason you couldn't kiss me when I asked you?

RABBI

I thought we agreed to never mention that again.

RUTH

No, you agreed to never mention it.

Before I married Morty, you told me to ask you for anything,
and the anything I wanted ... was ... to know what it was like to kiss you.

RABBI

Once again, our conversation is making me uncomfortable.

RUTH

It took me a long time to understand, but I finally figured it out.

RABBI

Figured what out?

RUTH

That I am in love with you ...

RABBI

Ruth, please.

RUTH

Tell me you didn't know.

RABBI

I was a married man ... with a family.

RUTH

And I'm a convert.

Now would you look at yourself.

I'm giving myself to you, and you continue to do nothing.

RABBI

I'm doing nothing for a very good reason.

RUTH

And that is?

You're not in love with me?
Yoshi, answer me!
Are you in love with me?

RABBI

Do you know I discussed this with my wife?

RUTH

Please ... not now, Yoshi.

RABBI

It was one of our last discussions before the pain medication made discussion impossible.

RUTH

Please, let's not talk about your wife, now, at this moment.

RABBI

No, we need to discuss this now. It is relevant to right now.
Believe it or not, she told me to marry you, after a respectable amount of time.

RUTH

Yes, like about 200 years.

RABBI

I'm serious, Ruth. Please don't make jokes about this.

She told me I would not be happy alone, and she did not want me to suffer after her.
She said I was a man who needed companionship.
She guessed about my feelings for you, women are difficult to hide these things from.
She just requested that I wait a respectable amount of time, so it did not profane the time
she and I had together.

RUTH

Now I wish I had met your wife. I think I would have liked her.

RABBI

I think you would have, too.
But today ... as I waited for you ... and grew more and more nervous ...
Yes, I am probably as scared as you ... maybe more so ...
I saw there was another problem ... something I didn't see before.

RUTH

I hope you're not going to tell me two years is not respectful.

RABBI

No ... but I see now there is a different kind of respect ... a kind of respect that I need.

RUTH

And that is?

RABBI

After you and I walk into that room, together, in front of my whole congregation, I don't think anyone will ever listen to me again as a Rabbi.

There will be gossip. The vicious kind.

RUTH

And what will they say that is so terrible?

RABBI

It wouldn't be kind to say it.

RUTH

No, go ahead. Say it.

RABBI

They will whisper, "That's the Rabbi's new girlfriend. She's a convert and she was married three times before."

RUTH

That's twice, almost three times.

I didn't, you know.

RABBI

Didn't what?

RUTH

Sleep with Artie.

I wouldn't before we were married. And he wouldn't marry me until we did.

RABBI

Either way, I will be the object of ridicule.

RUTH

So you're implying that they're right, and *I'm not good enough for you*.

RABBI

Ruth, I believe you're a wonderful match for any Jewish man. I am proud to have assisted in your conversion, and proud you are a part of the Jewish people.

RUTH

But I'm not good enough for you.

RABBI

I didn't say that.

RUTH

Please tell me the truth.

RABBI

The truth is I love being a Rabbi.

Ruth, I know what you're asking for, and I will answer you.
Can you just be patient and hear me out first?

Thank you.

Like I said, I love being a Rabbi.
And I love being a Rabbi here, in this synagogue, with this congregation.
I love making speeches.
And maybe those speeches don't change the civilized world as we know it, but maybe they change a little bit of what my congregation carries inside them.
Maybe it makes the souls of the people I am entrusted to, just a little more peaceful, and that is important to me.

Ruth, a Rabbi is more than just a Jewish man.
He's a spiritual leader, and his example has to be better.

RUTH

So you love being a Rabbi?

RABBI

Yes, I love being a Rabbi. And I'm too old to change that which I love being.

RUTH

And the bottom line is, you love being a Rabbi more than you love me?

RABBI

If you must put it that way, then ... yes.

RUTH

Are you finished?

RABBI

Yes.

RUTH

Do you know what my father would say at this point?

RABBI

I'm afraid to ask.

RUTH

He would say, "The sale begins when the customer says, 'No.' "

RABBI

No, I'm afraid this sale has ended.
And now I have a speech to give.

RUTH

No, wait! Sit back down, you!

RABBI

I would rather not.

RUTH

I SAID SIT BACK DOWN!
SIT BACK DOWN!
NOW!

RABBI

Ruth, please. There is no need to shout. I'll sit if you insist.

RUTH

Would you like to hear some beautiful words, Rabbi Gold ?
You like words. "God made the world by uttering words."
Isn't that what you told me? Well, didn't you?

RABBI

Yes, I said that.

RUTH

Well, let me repeat to you some words from 3,000 years ago

RABBI

Ruth, please.

RUTH

No, listen to me!

RABBI

Ruth ...

RUTH

Listen ... sheket!

(she takes a long time to gather herself)

RABBI

Ruth, there are a lot of people waiting.

RUTH

Here ... it goes like this.

“Where you go, I will go.

Where you live, I will live.

Your people are my people,

And your God ...”

Go ahead, you know what goes next.

RABBI

“Your God is my God.”

RUTH

“Where you die ...”

RABBI

“I will die.”

RUTH

“And there I will be buried.

Thus may God do to me, and more. For only death will separate me from you.”

RABBI

Yes, they are beautiful words.

RUTH

They were not from a closing my father taught me.

It came from a book that we read together.

RABBI

Yes. A great book.

RUTH

Now what are you thinking?

RABBI

I was wondering if you are finished.

RUTH

Yes.

RABBI
Are you sure?

RUTH
Yes.

RABBI
Can I stand up now?

RUTH
Yes.

RABBI
(at the door)
Ruth, I would like you to join us ... *after* I make my entrance.

RUTH
(starting to cry)
Yes, *Rabbi*.
I will respect your position, *Rabbi*.
I will make my entrance after a respectable time, *Rabbi*.
No one will think of me as your “girlfriend,” *Rabbi*.

RABBI
I’m sorry, Ruth. I wish it could have been different. I’ll see you inside.

[RABBI GOLD EXITS]

RUTH
Not as sorry as you will be, Yoshi.
You should have listened to your wife.
She knew what kind of man you are.
[Ruth gets down on her knees and prays. **The stage goes dark and there is a spotlight on her.**]

RUTH
God, help me understand..
God, help me convert the love that is in my heart,
and place it somewhere else where it will do some good.
[Ruth remains kneeling on the floor now, crying, and praying silently.]
[RABBI GOLD ENTERS. Ruth does not hear him.]

RABBI
(kneeling down) Ruth? ... Ruth? ... Ruth ...

RUTH
Rabbi?

Ruth, are you all right?
RABBI

You're touching me.
RUTH,

Yes, I am.
RABBI

Why?
RUTH

Because ... well ... Ruth, I was wondering ...
RABBI

Yes?
RUTH

Could we do this again? Only this time, the right way.
RABBI
(with painful humility)

I don't understand.
RUTH

I would be honored ... *yes* honored ... if you'd accompany me inside.
Please take my hand and walk beside me.
(he helps Ruth stand up)
RABBI

Yoshi?
RUTH

Yes, Ruth.
RABBI

Why are you smiling?
You're not thinking of using my Dad's underwear *today*, are you?
RUTH

[RABBI GOLD AND RUTH EXIT together to the Celebration Hall]

THE END

YIDDISH WORDS USED

<u>Word</u>	<u>Approximate English Meaning</u>
oy vay	oh boy!
noodging	disturb, interrupt
shiksa	a non-jewish woman, gentile
plotz	fall down in exhaustion
glatt	a vey high standard of kosher food
mechitza	barrier in synagogue separating men and women
Torah	the Old Testament, 5 books of Moses
tuchus	backside, rear end
chutzpah	nerve, guts, audacity
fastunkenah	lousy
pupick	belly button
Hasid	belonging to a Hasidic sect, ultra orthodox
mentsch	a good human being
tzitsis	fringes on a prayer shawl
schmeckle	penis
yarmulke	skullcap
alta kocka	old person
shtup	have sex
zaidey	grandfather
tikoon olam	to fix or improve the world
sheket	shut up, be quiet (Hebrew)