A CONTRACT WITH GOD
And other tenement stories
by
Will Eisner
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PREFACE

Early in 1940, after an intimate involvement with the birth and burgeoning of the so-called comic book art form, I undertook a weekly series entitled The Spirit. This was to be a complete story to appear as a newspaper insert comic book every Sunday. It revolved around a freelance masked crime fighter in the heroic tradition and would, the distributing syndicate hoped, latch on to the growing national interest in comic books.

With all the self-assurance of youth, I plunged into the task without much real planning. It was not until I came up for air after the first fifteen weeks that I realized the full magnitude of this undertaking. In fact, I was delivering a short story a week to an audience far more sophisticated and demanding than the newsstand comic book reader. The reality of the task and the enormous perimeters of the opportunity were thrilling, and I responded with the euphoria and enthusiasm of a frontiersman. In the twelve years that followed, I thrashed about this virgin territory in an orgy of experiment, using The Spirit as the launching platform for all the ideas that swam in my head.

With hindsight, I realize I was really only working around one core concept—that the medium, the arrangement of words and pictures in a sequence—was an art form in itself. Unique, with a structure and gestalt all its own, this medium could deal with meaningful themes. Certainly there was more for the cartoonist working in this technique to deal with than superheroes who were preventing the destruction of Earth by supervillains.

I was not alone in this belief. In the middle 1930s, Lynd Ward explored this path in his remarkable attempts at graphic storytelling. He produced several complete novels in woodcuts. One of these books, Frankenstein, fell into my hands in 1938 and it had an influence on my thinking thereafter. I consider my efforts in this area attempts at expansion or extension of Ward's original premise.

At the time, to openly discuss comics as an art form—or indeed to claim any autonomy or legitimacy for them—was considered a gross presumption worthy only of ridicule. In the intervening years, however, recognition and acceptance has fertilized the soil, and sequential art stands at the threshold of joining the cultural establishment. Now, in this climate warmed by serious adult attention, creators can attempt new growth in a field that formerly yielded only what Jules Feiffer referred to as junk art. The proliferation of
stunning art and imaginative exploration is but an early harvest of this germination. For me, the years after I stopped producing The Spirit were devoted to the application of the comic book art form to education, instruction and other pragmatic directions. Satisfying and rewarding as these were, they were also demanding, and so there was little time available to pursue the experiments I set aside in 1951. Twenty-five years later, given the time and opportunity, I embarked on the effort which you hold in your hands; a harvest at last from seedlings I had carried around with me all those years.

In this book, I have attempted to create a narrative that deals with intimate themes. In the four stories, housed in a tenement, I undertook to draw on memory culled from my own experiences and that of my contemporaries. I have tried to tell how it was in a corner of America that is still to be revisited.

The people and events in these narratives, while compounded from recall, are things which I would have you accept as real. Obviously in the creation, names and faces were rearranged. It is important to understand the times and the place in which these stories are set. Fundamentally, they were not unlike the way the world of today is for those who live in crowded proximity and in depersonalized housing. The importance of dealing with the ebb and flow of city existence and the overriding effort to escape it never seems to change for the inhabitants.

In the telling of these stories, I tried to adhere to a rule of realism which requires that caricature or exaggeration accept the limitations of actuality. To accomplish a sense of dimension, I set aside two basic working constrictions that so often inhibit the medium—space and format. Accordingly, each story was written without regard to space, and each was allowed to develop its format from itself; that is, to evolve from the narration. The normal frames (or panels) associated with sequential (comic book) art are allowed to take on their integrity. For example, in many cases an entire page is set out as a panel. The text and the balloons are interlocked with the art. I see all these as threads of a single fabric and exploit them as a language. If I have been successful at this, there will be no interruption in the flow of narrative because the picture and the text are so totally dependent on each other as to be inseparable for even a moment.

Finally, I must confess to a certain sense of uneasiness at trying to explain what I’m about to present. I have always cringed with embarrassment when listening to an artist, writer, or musician preamble an offering with an explanation of what he or she is trying to do. It is almost as though one is begging the
audience to excuse the imperfections or—at the very best—seeking to influence the judgment that will surely come. Perhaps I, too, am a victim of this insecurity, because for me, this is a new path in the forest.

To colleagues who encouraged the effort, to my family who urged me to try, to Rose Kaplan, who edited this work, and the others who read the early drafts and offered advice—my thanks.

White Plains, New York
August 1978

**Addendum to the third printing:** In the years since *A Contract With God* was first published, the book has been translated into six languages, including, appropriately, Yiddish—a language in which I can think but cannot read or write. I have since written several other books in this medium. They are more polished technically but with this maiden work, a big piece of my heart remains.

Tamarac, Florida
January 1989

**Addendum to the fifth printing:** In the seventeen years that *A Contract With God* has remained in print, the enlarging field of fine graphic novels has reinforced my belief that there would be a continually growing audience for the literary pretensions of this medium. After many subsequent works, I can still look back at this maiden effort without embarrassment and I retain for it the special affection one has for a first child.

Tamarac, Florida
June 1995

**Addendum to the DC Edition first printing:** Now, at long last this book, my first graphic novel, will enter its seventh printing under the DC Comics flag. After 22 years of being "in print" it is assuring to know that its future will be in their strong and knowledgeable hands.
I want also to acknowledge my deep gratitude to Denis Kitchen who was responsible for its continued publication during most of those years.

Will Eisner
Tamarac, Florida
March 2000
INTRODUCTION

DENNY O'NEIL

When I agreed to do this article, I planned to cheat. Instead of actually assessing *A Contract With God*, I thought I'd pay tribute to the astonishing anomaly that is its author, Will Eisner: the creator of a self-described "middle-class hero" who has himself been a professional nonconformist; the rebel who has prospered working within that epitome of the Establishment, the Department of Defense; the hard-working, unpretentious deadline meeter who, nonetheless, produces his genre's best art. There is a major critical work to be written about Will Eisner and I had hoped to use this space to begin sketching at it, and, accidentally, to confess my own admiration for the man. (I have tried on at least twenty different occasions to write a "Will Eisner story" and I haven't yet come close.)

But I wanted to avoid dealing with *A Contract With God* because I didn't think I'd like it and I didn't care to publicly dump on a continuing source of enjoyment and inspiration; better to avoid the issue. I'd glimpsed the book at a lecture Eisner had given a week prior to publication and I wasn't impressed. It seemed that not even Eisner had accomplished what comics professionals are forever talking about: transcending the limitations of commercial comic books and using the medium for something other than simplistic morality tales, baby science fiction and, in the case of the undergrounds, scatological satire—which are the things comics have been at their best, and not to be scoffed at. Still, isn't there anything else?

The answer is yes, as of the publication of *A Contract With God*. After reading the book five times, I am convinced it needs no apologia. Goethe's critical dictum remains the best: the critic can only decide what the artist was trying to accomplish, and whether he succeeded. By that standard, *A Contract With God* is a near masterpiece.

However, for me to appreciate Eisner's achievement I had to resolve two problems—which may bother you, too. The first was a preconceived notion of what a comic is. I've written over 700 comic book stories and read tens of thousands and so, despite the pretensions to perception and objectivity that accompany a reasonably fancy degree in English Lit, I pick up a comic with reflexive anticipations. Action, movement, extravagant locales, a certain kind of pacing and—may the ghost of Henry James forgive me—a broad drama of crime and punishment: those are my expectations from anything with pictures and word balloons, and they are catered to very little in *Contract*. 
The second difficulty is that, being from the Irish-Catholic Midwest, I am largely unfamiliar with the Jewish milieu that forms Will Eisner's memories. What he has given us here are those memories, as tales, and realized in a fusion of image and copy. They are simple and they are harsh; there are no easy morals to be gotten from them. The Good Guys don't win and the Bad Guys don't lose because there are no good guys and bad guys. Instead, there are lonely, frightened, and ambitious people, immigrants seeking relief from poverty, despair, and the dread that, unhappy as the present is, the future may be worse. A man remembering in that way is not likely to depict heroes and villains; rather, he will be compassionate toward everyone, winner and loser alike, and compassion is the pervading, unstated theme of Eisner's work. His sympathetic recognition of human frailty and folly is most evident in his representation of sex: not the smirking prurience that usually passes for the erotic in comics (and in many other arenas of popular culture) but the pleasures of the body as a palliative for misery and as manifestations of a raging libido—enjoyed, incidentally, by individuals not particularly beautiful.

Of course, such autobiographical reminiscence is common in modern writing; it is the raw material of the stories of Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and Isaac Bashevis Singer, to name three of dozens of Jewish writers. But Eisner's presentation is unique: with the fusion of image and copy I mentioned earlier he mimics the operations of memory itself, perhaps as well as they can be imitated on paper.

The prologue which relates the background of the Bronx tenement that is the setting of the stories and a brief digression explaining the plight of Jews in Czarist Russia correspond to the gestalt of the consciousness—information a bright child would acquire from his environment without anyone specifically teaching it. The scenes he could not actually be remembering, the scenes he was not present at, are the adult's attempts to make whole his childhood recollections, to fill in the gaps, a process akin to psychoanalysis. Eisner writes in the past tense, a departure from normal comics technique; these are, after all, past events. Yet his dialogue, presented in the familiar balloons, is present tense; one remembers words in the mode in which they were spoken. There is no contradiction here: Eisner is using the resources of the language exactly as a novelist uses them, to combine past and present into a single experience, and with the added resource of his artwork.
The pictures are Eisner’s special contribution and what lifts the book into its own category. I’ve heard casual readers complain that Eisner’s people are “cartoony” compared to his realistic cityscapes, and in his comic strips the contrast does take getting used to (though it is worth the effort); this may explain why his Spirit comics have not been as commercially successful as lesser, more conventional strips. However, in A Contract With God, the exaggerated features of the characters work for the whole. The child in us does not remember the adults we met as they actually were; he remembers them as archetypes—as caricatures, almost. He remembers them as Eisner draws them. Similarly, we do not recall every detail of the houses and streets we inhabited as children, as anyone who has ever visited a childhood neighborhood after a long absence will testify: we recall impressions, the sort of mnemonic sketches Eisner draws. The Bronx of A Contract With God is much less precisely rendered than the Central City of The Spirit, and that is surely a conscious decision of a thinking artist intent on introducing us to his private, interior experience instead of reproducing the world as most of us see it. Eisner even puts the ink the book is printed in to his artistic uses: it is sepia brown, a close approximation of the monochrome psychologists say is the color of dreams—and memories.

I realize I’m making A Contract With God seem very complicated. It isn’t. What Eisner has accomplished needs to be seen: once it is, everything is plain, and no explanation or elaboration is necessary.

The book fulfills Goethe’s criterion: it succeeds splendidly and uniquely in being what Eisner wants it to be.
A TENEMENT IN THE BRONX

At 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx, New York - not far from the elevated station - stood the tenement.

Like the others, it was built around 1920 when the decaying apartment houses in lower Manhattan could no longer accommodate the flood of immigrants that poured into the city.
These buildings—called "Tenements" after the 16th century legal term for a multiple dwelling that housed tenants—soon occupied large tracts of Bronx land.

By 1930 they were already part of the roots of a whole new group of first-generation Americans and their foreign-born parents.

Inside—in the "railroad-flat" layouts lived low-paid city employees, laborers, clerks and their families. They teemed with a noisy neighborliness not unlike the life-style the newcomers had left on the "other side." It was a kind of ship board fellowship of
passengers in transit—for, they were on a voyage of upward mobility. They were intent on their own survival, busy with breeding their young and dreaming of a better life they knew existed “Uptown.” What community spirit there was, stemmed from their hostility toward a common enemy—the landlord!

55 Dropsie Avenue was typical of most tenements. Its tenants were varied. Some came and went. Many remained there for a lifetime... imprisoned by poverty or other factors. It was a sort of micro-village—and the world was Dropsie Avenue.
Within its walls great dramas were played out. There was no real privacy—no anonymity. One was either a participant or a member of the front-row audience. "Everybody knew about everybody."

The following stories are based on life in these tenements during the 1930's...the dirty thirties! They are true stories. Only the telling and the portrayals have converted them to fiction.

Will Eisner
A CONTRACT WITH GOD
All day
the rain
poured
down on
the Bronx
without mercy

The sewers overflowed
and the waters rose
over the curbs of the street.
The tenement at no. 55 Dropsie Avenue seemed ready to rise and float away on the swirling tide. "Like the ark of Noah,"... it seemed to Frimme Hersh as he sloshed homeward.
Only the tears of ten thousand weeping angels could cause such a deluge!
And, come to think of it, maybe that is exactly what it was...
...after all, this was the day Frimme Hersh buried Rachele, his daughter.
Not so unusual, a father brings up a child with care and love only to lose her... plucked as it were, from his arms by an unseen hand — the hand of God. It happens to lots of people every day.
...to others, maybe.

C O U L D Y E R BE USIN' A LITTLE NOURISHMINT MR. HERSH? HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HOT SOUP? IT'LL DO YEZ GOOD AFTER THE FUNERAL AND ALL...

N O... T H A N K Y O U, M I S S I S K E L L Y!
...but not to Frimme Hersh.
And why not to Frimme Hersh ??

That's a fair question!
It should not have happened to Frimme Hersh

Because Frimme Hersh had a contract with God!
And a contract is a contract!
It was, after all, a solemn agreement of many years.
In 1882 Tsar Alexander II of Russia was assassinated and a wave of terrible anti-Semitic pogroms swept the country. In that year also, Frimme Hersh was born in a little village near Tiflis, named Piske. Somehow his family survived the massacre and Frimehleh, as he was lovingly called, grew up. By the time he was ten, it became clear that this boy was special. He was brilliant and seemed to acquire knowledge from-the-air. In a poor stetle like Piske, where survival was the main concern, how else?
Above all, Frimehleh was helpful and kind. After his parents died, he became the child of the childless in Piske.
In those years, this was said to him often for he performed many, many good deeds.

That was a brave thing you did, Frimmeleh... God will reward you.

One day, after a terrible attack, the surviving elders summoned him.

Frimmeleh, we have put together all that's left of our money to send you to America.

The next attack may wipe us out, so we have selected you to save, for we believe you are favored by God!
...And so Hersh obeyed. Two nights later on the trail deep in the forest...

Rebbe... is God just?

If justice is not in God's hands—where else would it be??

If I am good will God know it??

Why not?? Does it not say that God is all-knowing??
THEN I WILL MAKE A CONTRACT WITH GOD!

And that night in the cold forest, he wrote the contract on a small stone.
And with the little stone tablet in his pocket, Frimme Hersh settled in New York City where he found shelter in the Hassidic community. There he took religious instruction and devoted himself to good works.

Faithfully and piously, he adhered to the terms of his contract with God.
In time he became a respected member of the Synagogue, trusted with money and social matters. So it was not surprising that it was on Hersh's doorstep that an anonymous mother abandoned her infant girl. What could be clearer? To Frimme, this was part of his pact with GOD.
Since no one wanted a child born of God-knows-what kind of parents, Frimme Hersh adopted the baby himself. He named her Rachele, after his mother, and devoted himself to her with all his love.
So, she grew up blossoming in the warmth and nourishment of Frimme's gentle heart and pious ways. She was indeed his child and the joy of his years. Then one day—in the springtime of her life—Rachele fell ill. Suddenly and fatally.

MR. HERSH—
YOUR DAUGHTER IS DEAD!
No!
Not to me... You can't do this... We have a contract!!!
That night Frimme Hersh confronted God...

YOU VIOLATED OUR CONTRACT!

...and the old tenement trembled under the fury of the dialogue.
IF GOD REQUIRES THAT MEN HONOR THEIR AGREEMENTS...

...THEN IS NOT GOD, ALSO, SO OBLIGATED??
I ask you...were the terms not clearly written?

...Did I ignore even one tiny sentence—or perhaps a single comma?
ENOUGH
All during the days of mourning that followed the funeral, the rain fell without pause. Friends came—each offering Hersh the usual words of comfort which he accepted in stony silence.
At the end of the days of Shiva in the dawn of the eighth day, the sun rose in a clear sky and Frimme Hersh said the morning prayer... for the last time.
Then... with deliberation... he shaved off his beard...

... and walked to the 196th Street Bank.

So, Mr. Hersh you want to buy the parcel on Dropsie Ave...

Yes... you know it—the tenement at No. 55
WELL, NOW... IT'S AN EXPENSIVE PIECE OF PROPERTY.

WHAT E-X-P-E-N-S-I-V-E? PLEASE, MR. JOHNSON, I KNOW YOU FORECLOSED ON IT TWICE!

SO, FOR THE MORTGAGE I'LL BUY IT!...BELIEVE ME IT AIN'T WORTH IT...BUT IT'S A START!

HMPFF... WELL, NOW I THINK WE CAN MAKE A DEAL! ...WHAT IS YOUR FINANCIAL WORTH?
Bonds, I got—no cash... so can you loan me on these?

They'll do fine... ample equity there. —Mr. Hersh, we have a deal!
For the first time, Frimme Hersh lied. For the first time, he committed an act which formerly was unthinkable. The bonds were not his; they had only been entrusted to him for safekeeping by the synagogue.

...So, what was so hard about that?... Ha! What a yold!

...And besides, who am I hurting?! In a year I'll buy back the bonds... so, a big tsimmis!!
So, Frimme Hersh became the new owner of 55 Dropsie Avenue.

You know, Mr Hersh—
From when you was a tenant here—I was always with the owner... I'm a loyal super!

Raise the rents 10% Mr Cragg!!

But what about Missus Kelly? She's on a widow's pension from Ireland!?

No exceptions!
You will also cut down on steam heat 10% from now on. The tenants will make their own repairs... I don't want to know from no complaints!

Ach... these Jews... yesterday a poor tenant, today the owner! ...how do they do it?!
Within a year, Frimme Hersh gleaned enough out of the property to acquire the one next door. Within the next three years, he accumulated the beginning of a real estate empire.

His success appeared to be as much the result of uncanny luck as anything else.

They're going to pull down the EL. Now your property will triple in value.

Remember that garbage dump you were stuck with last year... now the city wants it for a garage... they'll pay well!
Before long he took a mistress, a 'shikseh' from Scranton, Pa., and took up a lifestyle he felt more appropriate to his new station.

He traded buildings like toys. But one building he never sold - the tenement on Dropsie Ave. At least once every week he would come there...just to look at it.
WHY DON'T YOU SELL THOSE CRUMMY BUILDINGS FRIM?!

WHY DON'T YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!!

Y'KNOW, FRIM, YOU GOT, LIKE, A BLACK HOLE INSIDE O' YOU!

YOU DON'T DRINK... YEAH, THAT'S IT-HAVE A DRINK! MY FATHER USED TO SAY IT FILLED THE BLACK HOLE INSIDE HIM... COME ON, BABY, TRY IT!
TRY... COME ON.

AAAH... YR HOPELESS!

...WE NEVER GO NOWHERE, FRIM! WHAT KIND OF LIFE IS THIS? YOU'RE SO RICH YOU CAN BUY ANYTHING YOU WANT... SO, BUY IT!!

WE DON'T EVEN GO TO NO CHURCH...
HEY! Y'WANT I SHOULD BECOME JEWISH?

FRIM? FRIM? NOW, WHAT DID I SAY WRONG?
One evening Frimme Hersh walked from his penthouse uptown all the way to the old synagogue.

There he called on the wisest of the elders.

Do you remember me?... I'm Frimme Hersh.

We remember you.

I am very rich now. Everything I touch turns to gold - as they say.
A FEW YEARS AGO I USED THE CONGREGATION'S BONDS AS COLLATERAL. NOW I CAN REPAY YOU.

SO, I'M RETURNING THEM, WITH INTEREST! WE ARE ALL GRATEFUL.

NOW, I NEED SOMETHING FROM YOU! FROM US? ...WHAT CAN WE GIVE A WEALTHY MAN?
YOU CAN WRITE FOR ME A NEW CONTRACT BETWEEN ME AND GOD!!

Carefully, Hersch recounted the history of his former contract.

...AND SO, WHEN GOD VIOLATED THAT CONTRACT I THREW IT OUT THE WINDOW INTO THE ALLEY!
THAT CONTRACT WAS WRITTEN WHEN I WAS A CHILD—SO, WHO KNOWS, MAYBE IT WAS POORLY WRITTEN!

BUT MR. HERSH, THIS IS A PRIVATE MATTER BETWEEN YOU AND GOD!!

YOU ARE LEARNED IN THE WORD OF GOD—AND IF YOU KNOW HIS WORD YOU KNOW HIS WILL!!
IF YOU WILL HELP ME IN THIS, I WILL ALSO DONATE TO THE SYNAGOGUE THE TENEMENT AT 55 DROPSIE AVENUE -- THIS WILL PROVIDE A GOOD INCOME, BELIEVE ME!

And so the three old men pondered the request.

WHAT RIGHT DO WE HAVE TO BE A PARTY TO THIS...

... ON THE OTHER HAND, IF NOT US - WHO THEN? ARE WE NOT AFTER ALL LEARNED IN THE LAWS OF GOD ??
BUT, REBBE, WOULD IT NOT BE A BLASPHEMY IF WE SHOULD DEVIATE FROM THE LAW?

WE WILL NOT DEVIATE! WE WILL ABBREVIATE!
IS NOT ALL RELIGION A CONTRACT BETWEEN MAN - AND GOD?

SO, WHAT IS HERSH ASKING FOR, AFTER ALL??...HE IS ASKING US TO PROVIDE HIM WITH A GUIDING DOCUMENT - SO THAT HE MIGHT LIVE IN HARMONY WITH GOD... CAN WE TRULY DENY HIM THIS??
So in the days that followed, the elders toiled, interrupted only by the Sabbath and certain days of prayer. At last they presented the document to Hersh.

-YES...
-YES...YES
-AHA
-YES, YES!

AND NOW, I WILL LIVE UP TO MY BARGAIN—HERE IS THE LEASE TO THE TENEMENT—IN THE NAME OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

FRIMME HERSH, YOU ARE A MAN OF YOUR WORD!
All that night Hersh sat reading the contract. Again and again...he studied every word with great care. It was bona-fide without question!

AT LAST-I HAVE A GENUINE CONTRACT WITH GOD!
I will make a new life, I will give... I will do charitable work again...

...and, and after all—I am not too old to marry. I shall have a daughter... and I shall name her Rachele, yes, yes!!
THIS TIME, YOU WILL NOT VIOLATE OUR CONTRACT!

THIS TIME, I HAVE THREE WITNESSES!

THIS TIME, I...

ULP MY CHEST, A PAIN IN...

GLAK!
At the exact moment of Hersh's last earthly breath... a mighty bolt of lightning struck the city... Not a drop of rain fell.... Only an angry wind swirled about the tenements.
On Dropsie avenue the old tenements seemed to tremble in the storm. It reminded the tenants of that day, years ago, when Frimme Hersh argued with God and terminated their contract.
ÉPILOGUE
Around midnight, fires started on the roof of a Dropsie Avenue tenement. Soon the flames, spreading quickly, consumed all the old buildings on the street.

All.... except one! Miraculously the tenement at 55 Dropsie avenue was unharmed.
And it happened that a boy, Shloime Khreks was the hero of the day.
Shloime was a New Boy ....
And because he was so different, he became the object of much bullying. One day, not long after the fire he was trapped in the alley of number 55 by three toughs.
Hey Moif... Look, it's the new kid! Let's give him a nice e-nee-shay-shun.

That's Shloime Kreks. He's a hassid-haw.

Hey, he wears a funny hat!

Hey, he's fightin' back!

Hey, look out! He's throwin' rocks back at us... owch.

Let's get outta here.
...THERE IS WRITING ON THIS STONE

IT'S A CONTRACT A...A CONTRACT WITH GOD!

I WILL KEEP IT!
...And that evening on the stoop of the tenement, Shloime Khreks signed his name below that of Frimme Hersh... thereby entering into a contract with God.
THE STREET SINGER

During the early 1930s, at the depth of the Great Depression, there appeared in the alleys of the tenements, STREET SINGERS. These wandering street minstrels sang popular songs and segments of operatic arias which in the acoustics of the place, sounded surprisingly professional.
On warm summer afternoons, these victims-of-the-hard-times entertained their unseen audience who rewarded their efforts...
No one knew much about them...
KNOCK KNOCK.

YES... I'M COMING I'M COMING!
YOUR NOTE—IT SAID FOR ME TO COME UP?!

YES...YES, COME IN...

...DO COME IN, PLEASE! OH, WE HAVE SO MUCH TO TALK ABOUT.
YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE A GOLDEN VOICE - HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED A PROFESSIONAL CAREER?

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF DIVA MARTA MARIA THE SOPRANO?

YOU GOT SOMETHING TO EAT? THIS FRUIT IS WAX!

I... AM... DIVA MARTA MARIA!!
I trained with the great Madame La Shtimme... Of course you heard of her!?

Pass the salt.

For years I sang in concert halls and with opera companies all over the world...

...then, I married!!

My husband was a drunkard—he beat me! He was insanely jealous... often he was sick! I stopped singing and gave lessons so I could take care of him.
Finally... in Hoboken one winter he died - at last!

I tried to return to my career - but it was too late!!... there was nothing left but the dream of what I might have been.

But, today... when I heard your voice I knew that a new career lay before me... ours!! Your career and mine!!... you will sing and I will be your coach.
FIRST... WHAT IS YOUR NAME ??... OH, NEVER MIND, I'LL GIVE YOU A NEW NAME. HMMM, LET ME SEE...

RONALD BARRY!!! YES, THAT'S IT, YOU'LL BE RONALD BARRY THE GOLDEN BARITONE!

YOU LOOK LIKE QUALITY! Y'KNOW YOU RESEMBLE JOHN BARRYMORE. HMMM, NO... MORE LIKE RONALD COLEMAN! YOU ARE VERY ATTRACTIVE... WITH YOUR VOICE AND LOOKS... AND MY EXPERIENCE... WE'LL MAKE IT TO THE TOP... TOGETHER!!
AND YOU'LL BE MY LOVER....

TOGETHER WE WILL CREATE THE GOLDEN BARITONE....

...ANOTHER 'SHIEK OF ARABY' YOU WILL BE A STAR... OH GOD A STAR.
YOU'LL SEE... IT WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS.

AND NOW, MY DEAR, WE MUST START ON OUR CAREER—YOU WILL NEED MANY THINGS... CLOTHES, VOICE LESSONS, BOOKINGS!
Here is some money - buy yourself a new suit! In this business you must look prosperous!

Tomorrow you'll begin singing lessons - with me!

Come back tomorrow at nine o'clock... We start in the morning early... Oh, it will be hard work, a lot of discipline and I shall be a hard taskmaster!

- Until tomorrow morning then... RONALD!
SO MUCH TO DO

Hello, Max? This is Marta Maria...

Oh, you know who... that's my stage name remember? It's Sylvia... Sylvia Speegel!

Wait—Don't hang up!!!

Listen, I have a new protege... a golden baritone. Ronald Barry. Of course you never heard of him... but you will!

I'm going to coach him—Max, get him a booking... a start, anywhere—weddings, a bar mitzva, a wake... anything... Max, don't talk dirty, he's my protege... please, so much depends on this... Max... Max...
MAX ... I'M BEGGING MAX ... PLEASE

... YOU'LL DO IT? ... OH, GOD BLESS YOU MAX ... THANK YOU ... I ... HELLO HELLO!

AT LAST

WE ARE GOING TO BE ON TOP AGAIN!
Hey, Joe... It's me, Eddie.

You again?

Here y're. Y'got money this time?

Plenty!
SO, EDIE, YOU
BUM, YER HOME
EARLY... SMATTER
YER VOICE GAVE OUT
...I HOPE!
All that whiskey would kill a horse! Eddie, you gonna drink yourself into the grave!

Shaddap shut that kid's mouth!!
YOU'LL KILL MY BABY!
-MURDERER!! DRUNKARD!

SHADDAP

WHERE'D YOU GET THE MONEY FOR ALL THAT WHISKEY... I NEED MONEY FOR THE DOCTOR... YOU KNOW I'M PREGNANT.

SHADDAP

HMPF... IS THIS ALL?? YOU SPEND 20 DOLLARS ON WHISKEY AND YOU GIVE ME ONLY 5 BUCKS.
HOW CAN WE LIVE ON THIS ?!
LOOK AT ME...I WAS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DANCER... I GAVE UP A CAREER TO MARRY AN ACCOUNTANT!

SHADDAP

BUT NO... HE DON'T WANT A STEADY JOB—HE'D RATHER SING IN STINKIN' ALLEYS FOR PENNIES.

SHADDAP!

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO SING. YOU DIDN'T EVEN WHISTLE BEFORE YOU MET ME!

SHADDAP

BUM BUM

SHADDAP
HALP, HE'S KILLING ME AND MY BABY

WAH

SHADDAP
SHADDAP
SHADDAP

WAHH

WAH WAH

I'M GOIN' TO BED...

...YOU BROKE MY BOTTLE...
EDDIE... IT'S NOON ALREADY—PLEASE, GO OUT AND LOOK FOR A JOB.... PLEASE!

I'M SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT, SOPHIE.

THAT'S OKAY, EDDIE! GO, HONEY... DON'T SING TODAY—GET A JOB!
JOE, GIMME A HAIR OF THE DOG. \textit{Cough!} HAD A ROUGH NIGHT. BEAT IT, EDDIE! YR CREDIT STINKS.

ONLY TEMPORARILY! JOE, YOU ARE LOOKING AT THE NEW PROTEGE OF THE GREAT DIVA MARTA MARIA - THE INTERNATIONALLY FAMOUS SOPRANO!

DIVA WHO?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD OF MUSIC...?!

IT'S THE BIG TIME... LOTS OF MONEY... RESPECT, TRAVEL - THE BIG TIME, JOE! NOTHIN' BUT THE BEST!

WHY IS THIS DIVA GONNA DO ALL THIS FOR YOU?
She recognizes my singing talent..... besides she's sweet on me.

Y' see... my plan is let her promote me... then when I'm on top I'll go back to my wife and kid... a singing star... not a crummy accountant.

See... you, you understand Joe?... c' mon Joe....

Okay, here... boy, Eddie, you're all heart.

Say, where does this... diva live?

Oh, my God!
I...don't know where...I didn't think to write down the address! I sing in so many alleys—they all look alike!

No...no...wait—I'll show you—she must be in the phone book!

Nothing...she's not listed.

You conned me outta a drink again!

Joe...she really...I'm not lying...

Get out!
Street Singers played a tenement only once.

There were, after all, plenty of alleys...
The tenement was like a passenger ship anchored in a sea of concrete. In its bowels lived the captain. He was called the SUPER.
The super at 55 Dropsie was Mr. Scuggs.

Mister Scuggs, when you gonna fix the hall steps? What kinda building you runnin' ha??

Nobody really liked Mr. Scuggs.
I'm running this building, Mr. Lewinsky! And I'll decide when things need to be fixed!

In fact they were a little afraid of him... why, who knows?
Perhaps it was what they didn't know that fed the fear.

TENANTS... PTFOY!!
YAh!... Back in ChErmany things is different. There, they haf respect! Yah, there nobody talks like that to the super!

SOOn, SOMedAY wE wILL have DISCIPlINE here too! Yah, it'S coming ... orDnung!
After all, he was the landlord's man—the enemy.
So, between replying to bitter complaints, the nagging and the muttering behind his back, he was left with little else but remoteness to defend his dignity and promote his authority.
His job was not an easy one.
"GA!! GA!!"

"CLANG CLANG"

"ARF ARF"

"ARF RUFF"

"CLANG CLANG"

"GRAR"

"CLANK CLANK"

"SHADDAP MISSUS FARFELL!!"

"STOP KNOCKIN' ON THA PIPES, MISSUS FARFELL. I KNOW YOU AINT GOT HOT WATER - I JUST STARTED UP THE BOILERS."

"ARF ARF"
Jews... all the time they complain!

Knock knock

Who is...?

It's me, the super, missus farfell! Notcha knockin' on the pipes for??

I ain't lettin' you in with that dog, scuggs!
HE WON'T HURT NO ONE.

MY NIECE IS TAKIN' A BATH IN ICE-COLD WATER! YOU WANT SHE SHOULD CATCH NEW-MONIA?

SO, SEND UP HOT WATER

OK, OK!

...
YOU WANNA ??
A nickel?

Okay... okay

For a nickel, just one look

That's enough... gimme!
CAN I GIVE YOUR DOG A CANDY?

HERE'S YR NICKEL!
...Y'WANNA COME DOWN AGAIN T'MORRA?... I'LL GIVE YA A DIME!

WAIT... LEMME SEE THAT NO ONE IS OUT THERE....

HEY... YOU TOOK MY MONEY BOX!
GET HER
HUGO!

HUGO
SHE POISONED
\text{\textit{Hugo}}

AGGRRAH

SLAM

\text{\textit{Hugo}}

\text{\textit{Hugo}}
AAGGRR

IF YOU HIT ME... I'LL TELL ON YOU!
ROSIE WHAT'S GOIN' ON DOWN THERE?

STEAM HE DON'T SEND UP... BUT LITTLE GOILS - HE BEATS UP!

WHY, THAT'S MR. SCUGGS!

LEGGO THAT KID - YOU - YOU ANIMAL!

HALP... CALL THE POLICE, SOMEBODY, THE SUPER IS KILLIN' ROSIE!!
MURDERER!

ANIMAL!

I NEVER TRUSTED THAT SUPER... HE'S A SEX MANIA!

DID HE HOIT YOU DOLINK?
OPEN UP SCUGGS
THIS IS THE POLICE
CAREFUL... HE'S GOT A GUN!

NO ONE COMES IN HERE!!
THIS IS MY ROOM!
I AM THE SUPER HERE!

GO AWAY... OR I SHOOT

BREAK IT DOWN FLAHERTY
STAND BACK EVERYBODY

BAM!
WHAT HAPPENED??

MR. SCUGGS KILLED HIMSELF!!

HE WAS CRAZY?

GOES HIM RIGHT- HE NEVER GAVE GOOD STEAM IN WINTER!

WHO KNOWS WHY?

DID HE EVER MOLEST YOUR NIECE... ER... YOU KNOW I MEAN??

P.L.E.A.S.E. OFFICER- NOT IN FRONT OF HER!!! SHE'S ONLY 10-YEARS OLD... OF COURSE NOT!! GOD KNOWS WHAT HE HAD IN MIND?!!
When, at last, winter relaxed
its imprisoning grip, summer
arrived and life oozed from
inside the tenements onto the
streets. The new freedom of
movement gave the
tenant's lifestyle
a new cadence.
Now communications became easier between the tenants. A new status developed...the vacationers.


ey goin to a **Cookalein** again this year, Fannie?

Have I got a choice? We're goin' to Fegel's farm up in the mountains.
For some tenants it was time to harvest the yield from a year of doing-without.

Fannie... you're a wonder! How'd you put together $75 on what I bring in?

How else? 2-day old bread, yesterday's milk and hand-me-down clothes from my sister's kids...if I left it to you we'd have nothing!

What are we gonna do this summer, ma?
Well you're not goin' to hang around the streets this summer with those rotten kids!

So, where we goin', Ma?

Hey, Pa! What's a Cookalein??

It's a hotel! Where y' mother does the cooking herself?

We're goin' to the country! Now go to bed!

We only get a room to sleep in... that way it's cheaper than in a reg'lar hotel! Now go to sleep, Pete Y!
BE PATIENT, FANNIE! NEXT YEAR IF WE HAVE A GOOD SEASON, I'LL START MY OWN LINE!

HAH! YOU'LL FAIL LIKE YOU DID BEFORE!! OY, YOU COULD EARN A GOOD LIVING AS A HOUSEPAINTER ... BUT NO - YOU GOTTA BE A FURRIER!

SO, WHY DID I MARRY YOU?? DID I HAVE A CHOICE? ... A NEEDLE WORKER IN A HAT FACTORY WITH NO EDUCATION...

... LIVING LIKE A SLAVE IN MY SISTER'S HOUSE ... CLEANING AND WASHING ... SO, YOU TOOK ME OUTTA ONE MISERY-INTO ANOTHER!!

ENOUGH, ALREADY! I'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE! LET ME SLEEP TOMORROW. I GOT A BIG DAY IN THE SHOWROOM!

HMPF... BIG SHOWROOM MOCHER... WHILE YOUR FAMILY HARDLY HAS WHAT TO EAT,
SO, SAM—I HEAR Y’R Sending Fannie and the kids to the country this year!

Yeah, she’s, goin’ to Fegels. It’s a Cookalein.

Las lap! My wife’s gone to the country. Hooray.

So, now we can have th’ pinochle game at your house, Sam.

SO, GOLDIE... WHEN DO YOU START ON YOUR VACATION?

TOMORROW MORNING! ...BOY, I CAN HARDLY WAIT.
GOLDIE!! DID YOU CALL COHEN ABOUT THAT SKIN SHIPMENT ... I NEED 'EM!

I'M DOIN' IT, MR. PINKUS! I'M DOIN' IT!

SO, GOLDIE, Y'BOUGHT YOUR NEW CLOTHES ALREADY?

... SPENT ALL MY SAVINGS ON TWO NEW OUTFITS... REAL CLASSY—WITH GOOD LABELS!

THIS YEAR I'M GOING TO GROSSMANS—THREE OF MY GIRL-FRIENDS FOUND HUSBANDS UP THERE... I'M GONNA FIND MYSELF A RICH MANUFACTURER!

HOO-BOY, F-A-N-C-Y! GONNA COST YOU A PENNY!

HELLO... THIS IS PINKUS FURS—ASK MR. COHEN WHEN WE'RE GONNA GET THE SKINS!?

MR. COHEN—PINKUS WANTS THAT SKIN SHIPMENT!

WOT'S HE NOOJINK ME....?!
Tell Pinkus we can't ship today. Benny, our cutter is goin' on vacation! Yes, Mr. Cohen.

So, Benny I hear you're gonna quit cutting.

This year, Max I'm goin' to Grossmans. Gonna find me a rich girl!

It was a time to come to a reckoning with dreams—time to climb over the invisible walls and escape.

'Bye, Goldie, this year come back with a husband.

'S'long, Ma! I'll try. Momma, I'll try.
Benny! Are you meshooga? You can't afford a car!

Ha ha ha! I rented it ma... I'm goin' to the mountains in style.

...A taxi??

Goldie... what's wrong with the subway?

Girls with class use a taxi, mom!!

Boy, Willie, lookit that neat car goin' down the block.

Looks like a... a Studebaker or somethin'.

Come on, kids, we're leaving! We'll be late, Willie.
FANNIE... THIS YEAR TRY TO HAVE A GOOD REST

IF THE KIDS DON'T GET SICK AND MY ACID CONDITION DON'T START UP... I'LL TRY, SAM... I'LL TRY!! WHO AM I DOING THIS FOR?? THE KIDS!

Noo?? So where is the Catskill train?

Not so loud, Fannie!

Track & lady!
I'LL SEE YOU ON THE WEEKEND, FANNIE!

WILLIE... Y'GOT THE SANDWICHES?
G'BYE, SAM!
DON'T MESS UP THE HOUSE!

WILLIE!
...MOVE THE SEAT BACK
SO WE CAN SIT TOGETHER.

I'LL DO IT, MA!
Hey, wave to Pop... he looks sad!

Hah... some sad... now he's free to 'Hillyah' around with his 'Trumbehnik' friends-bums, all summer!!!

Hmph... I think I don't know yr father... a big nosh! The minit I'm away he's gonna grab a shikseh from the showroom... petey, sit still - it's a long trip... you want a bannana or somethin?
HERE Y'ARE... I'LL TAKE MY BAGS NOW

THANK YOU MA'AM

GOOD-BY' FANNIE!

...AHEM...
See how she brushed him off... very classy!

Not bad... she came by taxi - must be one of those rich kids from West End Avenue!

Can I help you?

Oh, that's sweet of you... I can manage this myself. Thank you!

I'm Harold Shmutzik, wanna play cards?

Sure, I'm Mersch, pleased t'meetcha!
Y'GOT THE ROYAL BRUSH OFF. HA,HA, WANNA JOIN US??

SORRY...I'VE GOT SOME READING TO DO!

WHAT ARE YOU...A DOCTOR OR SOMETHIN? ALMOST...I'M AN INTERN.

WHERE Y' STAYING?

I'M GOING TO GROSSMAN'S! I'M BLOWIN' A SAX IN THE BAND...IT'S A FREE VACATION AND LOTS'A TIME TO STUDY.

I'M WAITING ON TABLES - LOTS'A TIPS!

AHH THE TRAINS PULLIN' OUT - WE'RE ON TIME.
KUGEL'S MOUNTAIN LODGE

GROSSMAN'S HOTEL!

OBRIEN'S HOLLOW, HERE!!

HILLTOP FARMS, HERE!

WILLIE, THERE'S FÉGELS!
...STAY WITH THE TRUNK, I'LL GET HIM TO HELP LOAD US!
SO, MISTER FEGEL... YOU CROWDED THIS SIZZIN'?... IS MISSIS FEGEL EXPECTING ME?

YEP!! ALL THE COTTAGES IS TAKEN... YOU GOTA STAY IN THE MAIN HOUSE.

WELCOME FANNIE - WE SAVED YOU A BIG ROOM - MY, HOW YOUR KIDS ARE GROWING! WILLIE IS NOW OVER 15! ALREADY A MAN, EH?

YES, YES, SO SHOW US THE ROOM, MISSUS FEGEL!
SO, WHERE CAN I PUT MY THINGS, MISSIS FEGEL?

WE GIVE YA A CUPBOARD JUST FOR YOU—THE STOVE, YOU SHARE WITH THE OTHER LADIES...

WELCOME

I START COOKIN' EARLY.

HEY...WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR AROUND HERE, MR. FEGEL??

WAL...THIS YEAR WE GOT ENTERTAINMENT...I BUILT A CASINO OUTTA THE OLD BARN...Y'CAN DANCE WITH THE OLD LADIES...HAHA...SO, WE AINT GROSSMANS!
Welcome to Grossmans

HyA Folks... Welcome to Grossmans Haha

Danny, you here again this year?

Danny, the Toomler, is now the social director.

Activity Activity Activity
Lotsa action...
...Tango Lessons
...At three - Missus Goldfarb!

Oy... What a devil!
GET SETTLED KIDS! AFTER SUPPER WE GOT WHOOPIE IN THE CASINO! SEE YOU LATER!

...AHM! HI, GOLDIE.

ER...AHM... S-SURE IS A... A BEAUTIFUL NIGHT

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?

...LOOKED IT UP IN THE HOTEL'S REGISTER... MINE'S HERBIE, WE MET ON THE TRAIN!

REALY?
LOOK, SINCE I EAT WITH THE HELP— I WON'T BE IN THE DINING ROOM WITH YOU... SO, MAYBE LATER—AFTER THE DANCING, WE COULD HAVE A SODA, OR...

OH, SO YOU'RE ONE OF THE HELP?
...WELL... ER, I'M SORRY, I'LL BE—ER— BUSY!! YES, I GOT TO WASH MY HAIR!
AW, COME ON... WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

OH, IT'S NOT YOU... IT'S JUST WELL... I MEAN SOCIALLY WE'RE NOT EQUAL. I DIDN'T COME UP HERE JUST TO MEET A-A SAXOPHONE PLAYER!

LOOK... YOU'RE A NICE BOY—LOTSA NICE WAITRESSES OR CHAMBERMAIDS WOULD LOVE TO MEET YOU...

OKAY—HAVE IT YOUR WAY—SEE YA AROUND!

HEY, LOOKA THE NEW ARRIVAL!

MUST BE A RICH MANUFACTURER... A'CLOAKIE'... LOOKA THAT NEAT CAR... HOO HA!

HONK HONK
BOY... TAKE MY BAGS AND PARK MY CAR... HA... BOY, I MADE IT FROM THE BRONX IN 5 HOURS!

HERE! WOW $$

WHICH WAY IS THE DESK?? THAT WAY!

THANKS... SEE YOU LATER BABY!

SURE

LEMMIE RING THE COWBELL TOO, JOEY!

DINNER TIME EVERYBODY!

CLANG
Hey, Shloim! Waiting tables again this year?

-Veh! It could be worse.

Who you sitting with this year?

Aha Missus Gold... I got for you the same table from last year...

Okay, pop. Where is the action??

Vell... I'll tell you... That goil on table 6... Oh, hoo l'o-a-p-ed... Her father is in diamonds... but she's up here with a nosy aunt...

Also... we got on table 8... a beauty... rich... I hear she's from the dress business...

Hmm... I'll take table 8... seat me there!

So, ok... not's your line?

I'm in furs... Benny Baum...! But keep it onna QT. - lotsa gold diggers, y'know!
STOP SINGING ABE, AND DILL THE CODDS... OY, BOYCHIK, I'M TELLINK YOU, IT'S A MEHIH... A WHOLE MONTH WE CAN PLAY PINOCHILE WIT NO WIMMEN TO BODDER US!

SAM, DO ME A FAVOR AND CLOSE THE WINDER... 'MON... PAY ATTENTION TO THE GAME!

MY WIFE WENT TO THE COUNTRY HOORAY HOORAY
ER... JUST GETTIN' SOME AIR!

SAM... C'MON YOU GONNA PLAY CODDS-udder ya gonna look out th' winder?
SAM!...WERE YOU GOIN'?... IT'S YORE PARTY SO, SIT ALREADY!

PLAY, PLAY... BE MY GUEST... ER-I GOTTA VISIT MY TANTE MINNIE... SHE GOT AN ATTACK TODAY... SUDDENLY...

KATHLEEN

SAM HONEY!

CHRIST, SAM, YOU AIN'T BEEN AROUND SINCE EASTER!

DON'T WORRY, WE GOT A MONTH TOGETHER.

MY WIFE'S GONE TO THE COUNTRY!
Lissen, Honey—it's three years we been like this... when are we gonna do somethin' about it??

About what? You know I got two kids, Kathleen!!

And what do I have?? Sam, leave your wife... tell her this weekend!

Oy, vey... it'll kill her... she ain't a well woman.

Sam... it's gettin' late for me... we ain't no chickens, y'know!

Okay, okay—so, I'll tell her when I go up on Friday!
IRVING ... I HEAR
YOUR WIFE IS 'HILLYNK'
UP IN THE MOUNTAINS!?
HA HA HA

HOW DID
YOU FIND
OUT?!

OH, WOII GETS
AROUND ... WANT MY
ADVICE ?? ... DROP IN
ON HER THIS WEEKEND
... AKSEDANTAL ...

HELLO, SAM ... IRVING MINKS,
Y'GOT ROOM IN THE CAR? I'M
COMIN' UP TO THE MOUNTAINS
THIS WEEKEND! ... THANKS!

HEY, SAM! ... YOU
GOT ROOM IN THE
CAR FRIDAY?

NO! ... I JUST PROMISED A SPACE
TO IRVING MINKS ... THAT FILLS
IT UP ... SORRY, I DON'T WANT
TO OVERLOAD--IT'S MY
BROTHER'S CAR!
...Lissen, Sam, drop me off at Grossman's...er I'll come up to Fegel's Cookalein later!...er don't tell anyone I'm coming, O.K.?

Sure, Irving! Y'gonna surprise Missis Minks?

Yeah!

Now, Willie...Poppa's coming up tonight...so you sleep in the barn...Pete, you're going down to Grossmans to stay with Aunt Rose...nizzle sleep with your cousin!

Aww 'wight I could sleep in the barn too!!

Okay!
HELLO, FANNIE!

SAM!!!
JUST IN TIME
FOR SUPPER
... WASH UP AND
COME TO THE
KITCHEN!

SO, HOW COME
YOUR HUSBAND
NEVER COMES
UP, MISSUS
MINKS?

HE'S ON THE
ROAD A LOT!
HE'S A
SALESMAN,
Y'KNOW!

TODAY WE
ARE HAVING A
DANCE IN THE CASINO
--- IN HONOR OF THE
HUSBANDS!

HOO, HOO
LOOK IT OUR
WILLIE DANCING
WITH MISSUS
MINKS... A MAN
ALREADY!

HFF... SHE
SHOULD KEEP
HER HANDS
OFF HIM... HE'S
ONLY 15!
HMMJ WILLIE, YOU ARE AVERY GOOD DANCER... ER... HOW OLD ARE YOU?

AH EM... IT'S GETTIN' LATE... WILLIE!

ER... AH... 19... AH GOIN' ON 20, MISSUS MINKS.

GOOD NIGHT, MISSUS FARFEL

WHERE'S WILLIE, FANNIE??

THAT WAS A NICE DANCE.

GOOD NIGHT!

GOOD NIGHT!

HE'S GONNA SLEEP IN THE BARN. C'MON UP TO BED, SAM!
FANNIE...

STOP SAM...THE WALLS ARE PAPER-THIN.

SO...?? WE'RE MAN AND WIFE...AIN'T WE??

HA...SOME MAN AND WIFE! YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR SHIKSEH??

MAYBE IF YOU WAS MORE INTERESTED IN SEX!!

SHHAAH, DON'T USE DIRTY WORDS!

LOOK AT ME...I'M FAT AND OLD...WITH AN UGLY BODY!! WITH HANDS LIKE SANDPAPER FROM TH' HOUSEWORK - I GOT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE ALSO...

SO WHAT DO WE DO?? A DIVORCE?

I AINT GIVING YOU NO DIVORCE! WE GOT KIDS TO THINK OF--YOU WANNA PLAY AROUND WITH YOUR SHIKSEH??...GO!! I'LL HIDE IT FROM THE KIDS SO THEY WON'T BE ASHAMED!
OH FANNIE
THIS IS NO
LIFE
TOGETHER...

...LISSEN SAM-IF YOU
WERE A BETTER
PROVIDER THEN YOU
COULD HAVE A
BETTER LIFE
WITH ME...

PSST
WILLIE...

M. MISSUS
MINKS...
I Brought you a blanket, Willie, in case you were cold...

TH-THANK Y-YOU

SURE is nice of you, Missus Minks!

Call me Maralyn... brrrrr now... I'm cold!

You gonna invite me in?

GULP! ER... YES, SURE!

Mmm... tee hee I can feel your you-know-what getting big... ahhh!

You smell so nice.

Willie darling... ahhh now, now... now... do it!... do-it-to-me
Ahhh How old are you **REALLY**, Willie?

Gee, Maralyn... guess I came too fast... sorry... I'm only 15!!

Nah, sweetie... that was pretty **MANLY** for someone your age... I'm going to teach you... by the end of the summer you'll be...

**Eek! Oh my God!!**

So... I mighta known... my Maralyn in the hay with a kid!! **Ha!**

Irving! How... when did you get here?!
I heard you were up to your old tricks... so, I came up to find out... ha! Someone in the house saw you go into the barn at this time of night??... ha! I figured out the rest!

Irving! I was just coming to get some fresh milk and this kid propositions me... hahaha! Imagine, he's only 15!

Liar

Irving: No! No!
IRVING, DARLING...
P.L.E.A.S.E.
YOU KNOW
HOW I AM...
HOW I NEED!

WOTSA MATTER ?!
I'M NOT ENOUGH
FOR YOU ?!

OKAY... SO
YOU'LL DO IT
WITH ME !

YES, YES...
LET ME TAKE
YOUR PANTS
OFF... OH, IRVING
YOU'RE SO... SO
SEXY...

OOOH... YESS, YESS.
DARLING OOOOH HHHH
AHHHH I LOVE IT... I.R.V.I.N.G....
Ooohh... Irving, darling, that was wonderful.

...No kiddin'? And he's only 15?!! Wow... ha ha ha ha.

C'mon... we're goin' up to your room!
Gee Hildie... it is pretty classy here at Grossmans!

How come your folks sent you down here to sleep with us, Petey??

'Cause Poppa came up and there was no room for me.

Your ma and pa wanna sleep together - you know why?

To talk private... or maybe to fight - I dunno!
DUMBELL!!
YOU DON'T KNOW NUTHIN'... HEE, HEE, HEE, HEE, HEE!!

HEY!!
LEGO THAT'S MY PEPEEE, HILDA!

YEAH, HAW YOU AINT GOT ONE! IT'S JUST A HOLE!

DUMBELL!!
GIRLS ARE DIFFERENT!

YOU MEAN YOU CAN PEE OUTTA THAT HOLE? GOSH!

HSST... PETEY...
WANNA WATCH THE GROWN-UPS DOIN' DIRTY THINGS?

YEAAH... IF WE WONT GET INTO TROUBLE!
SHHH DON'T MAKE NOISE AND COME WITH ME...

SHHH

THERE... Y'SEE??
WOW

PLEASE... BENNY... NOT LIKE THIS... I WANT YOU SHOULD RESPECT ME!

GOLDIE... GOLDIE! WE'RE GONNA GET MARRIED... SO WHY NOT DO IT NOW... I'M PROPOSIN', GOLDIE!
Okay... okay!!
So, we'll wait until we're married... but honey, let's do it right away!
This place is costing me a pretty penny!

But Benny, I thought you were...
I mean, you're a rich... that is, you are a manufacturer aren't you??

Well, to tell the truth Goldie, I'm not... I'm just a cutter! Oh, well, so your folks'll take me into the business... after we're married what's the difference?!
I'm not rich either... my folks are poor they can hardly support me!

You're not??!

Benny... if you love me nothing else matters! It doesn't make a difference! You earn a good living, don't you!!?
SAY SOMETHING, BENNY!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING BENNY!!?

BENNY... NO! NO! NO!
WHY YOU DO IT'S A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME NOW BABY!

NO STOP!
SEE... WHAT'D I TELL YOU!! C'MON LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!!

BENNY BEN!!

OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD!

OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD!

GOLDIE, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!!?
HE RAPE ME...OH, MY GOD!

SHH... IT'S OKAY NOW GOLDIE!

GET A DOCTOR

I'M A DOCTOR...
I KNOW WHAT TO DO!

YOU'LL BE OKAY...

Oooh... I'M A RUINED WOMAN!!
MY GOD... A TRAMP... A WHORE!
WHO WILL WANT ME
AFTER THIS!? OH MY GOD...

I'LL HAVE YOU GOLDIE... I
LOVE YOU... IT DOESN'T MATTER
TO ME WHETHER YOU'RE A VIRGIN
OR NOT... IT'S YOU I WANT!

SNFF YOU??... Y-YOU'RE
HERBIE... WE MET ON THE TRAIN... LATER
I SNUBBED YOU... I -
I'M SO ASHAMED...
HERBIE!
...you rest now, Goldie! No one need ever know, not even your parents! In a month or two, I'll be going into private practice. We'll get married—and that's that!!

get some sleep...I gotta play with the band—it's my job!

Herbie!

yes?

I like you... very much!

so, you're Ruthie Fein, the heiress

Oh Bennie; I hope you won't let my father's wealth come between us!

Benny!
Yeah?? Oh, ho... It's Herbie the Trumpeter! ...Look, I'm busy...

You might like to know that Goldie is O.K. Benny!

So?? Ha!!... That Phoney T'Mater! A cheap Secretary ... A nice body tho'.

You don't get it, Benny!

You didn't even penetrate... You are sick, Benny... I mean, sexually... You need medical help... Do you understand?
HOW DO YOU KNOW...?! I MEAN, HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT ABOUT ME??

I'M A DOCTOR, BENNY, BELIEVE ME, I KNOW!

WHY DON'T WE BOTH KEEP QUIET ABOUT THIS!...DON'T EVER MENTION GOLDIE'S NAME...EVER!

O.K.

O.K.

WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT, BENNY?

OH, ER.. SOME GUY WANTS ADVICE ABOUT HIS GIRL!

OH, BENNY, YOU MUST BE A REAL DEVIL WITH GIRLS.. YOU'RE SO SOPHISTICATED!

YEH... SO, WHEN AM I GONNA MEET YOUR FOLKS??
And so the summer ends... and like migratory birds the vacationers return to the sanctuary of the tenement where normal life resumes.
So, Goldie! You had a good vacation?

Yeah...I met a doctor...we're getting married in two months!

Well, Benny, back from the mountains?! How was it??

GREAT! I'm quitting this job! I'm marrying a girl her father is taking me into the diamond business!
NOO...WILLIE? VACATIONS OVER ALREADY!
SO, START GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL!!
THIS YEAR YOU'RE GONNA HAVE LOTS A
RESPONSIBILITY AROUND HERE... YOUR
FATHER IS.... ... GONNA BE AIN'T TRAVELLING
A LOT... SO, YIZZEL BE THE MAN OF
THE HOUSE NOW!... Y'HEAR ME
WILLIE... WILLIE?
the WILL EISNER LIBRARY
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Comics and Sequential Art
Graphic Storytelling
Will Eisner's career spans the entire history of comic books from the formative days of the 1930s, through the 1940s when he revolutionized narrative sequential art with his internationally famed series, The Spirit, to his mature work which, beginning in the 1970s, led the field in the creation of the contemporary graphic novel form. In addition to his award-winning graphic novels, he is the author of the influential study *Comics and Sequential Art*.

If you'd like to learn more about Will Eisner, visit his website at www.willeisner.com.
THE FIRST
GRAPHIC
NOVEL

Not only is Mr. Eisner regarded as a master sequential artist... but his graphic novels have made him the Eisenstein of the medium — his *A Contract With God* invented that genre with its publication in 1978. He is a graceful and consummate artist whose works offer... insight into the human condition...

Forward (New York)

*A Contract With God* is the collection of realistic illustrated stories with which Eisner put himself again in the vanguard of the new wave of comics... the latest installments in one of the most distinctive bodies of work in comics, and indeed any narrative literature.

The Guardian (London)

Will Eisner is the heart and mind of American comics.

—Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics*

Drawing on his memories of growing up in New York in the 1930s, Will Eisner has depicted the lives and dreams of the residents of a Bronx tenement in this first work in a new medium, the graphic novel. The famed creator of *The Spirit* in the 1940s, Eisner has revolutionized sequential art with the series of novels that began with *A Contract With God*.