

A Jew From East Jesus

By Jim Shankman
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Place: The small town of East Jesus on Eastern Long Island. And Manhattan.

Time: 1936.

Cast

Rabbi Wolf (also plays) Smokey McGillicutty (also plays) Judge	Rabbi of East Jesus, old and wise and knows it The Editor of The New York Daily Noise A courtroom judge
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Louis Shvoois	Poet, philosopher, auto mechanic. Handsome and gawky in an endearing way, a cross between a Hasidic Jew and a New England farmboy.
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Rebecca Shabbes (also plays) Stella Rabble	A waitress at the East Jesus Kosher Kitchen A waitress in The Little Pinko Café
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Debbie Sunday	Star reporter at the New York Daily Noise
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Duvid Bronstein (also plays) Prosecutor	Louis' best friend A courtroom prosecutor
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Mickey	Bellboy at The Plaza (a Bowery Boy gone straight)
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Bedford Stuyvesant	A wealthy patrician lawyer
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Two actors to play:

Barnaby Heckle and Reggie Bickerswift	A pair of New York shyster lawyers.
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Sven Hooskerdoo and Jan Yoobetcha	A pair of Swedish immigrants
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Wilfred and Owen	A pair of hillbillies
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Mario and Luigi	A pair of Italian immigrants
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Yakov Lefkowitz and Itzak Reichsberg	A pair of alte kakers from East Jesus
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Everyone doubles as Townspeople of East Jesus and Manhattan where possible.

(There are many ways to divide up these roles. This one aims for economy.)

Note: All the New Yorkers have rapid-fire 1930's Hollywood accents, ala Jimmy Cagney, Pat O'Brien, the Bowery Boys. The Jews of East Jesus should probably sound like Jewish New Yorkers.

(At Rise. Louis Shvoois is sitting outside the synagogue all by himself after temple in the sleepy little village of East Jesus, Long Island. Louis is young and handsome in a gawky endearing way. He is dressed like a Crown Heights Jew in a shapeless black suit and a white shirt. He still has his prayer shawl draped over his shoulders. He sucks on a long straw. The Rabbi enters. He is old and wise and knows it. He addresses the audience)

RABBI

It is Once Upon A Time in the 1930's and the magical city of Manhattan is a land without Jewish people. That's right. No Jews in New York City. How could that be, you ask? No, don't ask. It wasn't my idea.

(He points up at the sky.)

Him. Yeah, Him. The Jews are to be found in the wilderness, beyond the Pale. In other words: outside the five boroughs. Where exactly? Well for your information, they are mostly up in New England. That's right. They're up in New England, which they settled in the 1600's. And way the hell out on the eastern tip of Long Island. They all came over from Holland on a little Dutch boat. Not many people know that. Well it's a big big world in the 1930's. People out here don't know New York from a hole in the ground. And people from New York don't know out here from a hole in the ground. Or as we like to say from a *lokh in der grund*. That's a little Yiddish for you. Don't get nervous. This is not on the test. Another little known fact. The name of the boat the came over on: The Mayfleiss. But that's another story. Who needs it? Now, as it happens, way out in Eastern Long Island, out by Montauk, (*pronounced Montaucchhhh*) there is a little village called East Jesus. Think of it as a shtetl. Well that's what it is. I ought to know. I'm Rabbi Wolf and this is my congregation.

(The Rabbi walks over and sits beside Louis.)

RABBI

Something is the matter, Louis?

LOUIS

No, Rabbi. That was a nice little story you told the congregation, really had their attention, but I think you got it wrong maybe a little bit.

RABBI

What? What did I get wrong?

LOUIS

'It is easier for a rich man to go through the eye of a needle'? I couldn't find it in Isaiah, Rabbi. I looked everywhere.

RABBI

You couldn't find it?

It wasn't in Isaiah, was it, Rabbi?

LOUIS

Nah, not really.

RABBI

It was Jesus of Nazareth, wasn't it, Rabbi?

LOUIS

Was it?

RABBI

I'm pretty sure it was, Rabbi.

LOUIS

Tell me something, Louis. Do you think they would have listened to me if I told them that?

RABBI

Ah.

LOUIS

Now could you please tell me why you are sitting here with a look on your face like your last cow died.

RABBI

My last cow did die.

LOUIS

Louis, you don't have cows.

RABBI

I used to. I used to have lots of cows.

LOUIS

Yes?

RABBI

She died ten years ago. Ten years ago today.

LOUIS

Your last cow?

RABBI

LOUIS

No Rabbi, my mother. My mother died ten years ago today. And my father died eight years ago next month.

RABBI

Ah ha.

LOUIS

And what have I got to show for myself, Rabbi. Nothing. I have nothing. I haven't got a pot to piss in.

RABBI

And...

LOUIS

And I love her and I want to marry her, but I can't even afford to say hello to her.

RABBI

Who, Louis?

LOUIS

Rebecca Shabbes.

RABBI

She works in the diner?

LOUIS

I'm head over heels, Rabbi. She's the sweetest little... Oh sorry sorry.

RABBI

No that's ok. I was head over heels once.

LOUIS

With who, Rabbi?

RABBI

My wife.

LOUIS

Oh. Yeah.

RABBI

The sweetest little....

LOUIS

Uh... sweetest little... uh... girl?

RABBI

I see.

LOUIS

It's not for me, Rabbi. It's for her. I don't need money. I'm perfectly happy writing my rhymes for the ad agency, but a man can't make much of a living selling rhymes to the ad agencies.

RABBI

You got a good one I ain't heard it yet, Louis?

LOUIS

Ah ha. Yes I do, Rabbi. I got a real corker right here in my pocket. Listen to this.

I know he's a wolf
Said riding hood
But Grandma dear,
He smells so good
Burma-Shave

RABBI

That's mighty fine, Louis.

LOUIS

They only pay ten bucks a slogan. I can't get started.

RABBI

So Louis, you don't have to be rich man to fall in love. 'But Grandma dear, he smells so good. Burma-shave.' I love it.

LOUIS

Ah, come on, Rabbi.

RABBI

So you want to be a rich man, a big shot.

LOUIS

That's life, Rabbi. That's how they keep score.

RABBI

Louis, the rich man lives in fear for his fortune. That's Proverbs. You could look it up. You want to live in fear everyday of your life that someone's gonna take it away from you and you don't even need it, you don't even want it in the first place? What kind of life is that? Feh.

LOUIS

I don't know, Rabbi. I don't know nothing. Except I know a good rhyme when I see it.
Let's see:

The poor man tries
The rich man doesn't
Don't turn your Isn't
Into Wasn't

BOTH

Burma-Shave.
(Pause.)

RABBI

I don't get it.

LOUIS

Me either.

RABBI

Such a smart boy. You would make a good rabbi, Louis. There is comfort in the contemplation of higher things. Elohenu El Shaddai. Think about it.

LOUIS

That's not for me, Rabbi. I want to be a man of the world.

RABBI

Louis, listen to me. The world is full of shit, but the universe...is a beautiful thing.

LOUIS

Thanks, Rabbi.

RABBI

Nah, don't mention it.

(They exit together. Two men in suits, Barnaby Heckle and Reggie Bickerswift, appear on the street.)

BARNABY HECKLE

Will ya look at this berg.

REGGIE BICKERSWIFT

Little piece of heaven, ain't it.

(He sees something offstage.)

Hey you hey fella. Keep away from that car.

BARNABY

Ain't it just.

(Someone passes.)

Excuse me, ma'am could you tell me how I might find ---

(She is gone.)

REGGIE

Well how do you like that?

(Someone else passes.)

Excuse me, sir, I'm looking for the house of ---

(He is gone.)

BARNABY

Hey what gives here?

(He looks offstage again.)

Hey pal I'm talking to you. Hands off the merchandise.

(Another passerby.)

Excuse me ma'am I'm looking for 10 Commandments Street.

REGGIE

Hey what the heck is with this berg?

BARNABY

Is there something wrong with my face? Am I talking funny? Am I foaming at the mouth?

REGGIE

Hey pal how many times we gotta say it?

BARNABY

Hey you hey pal. Come here a second. Can I ask you a question?

(Louis enters.)

LOUIS

Sorry fellas, I was just admiring the chariot. What is it?

BARNABY

It's a Lincoln Zephyr.

LOUIS

No it isn't.

REGGIE

Yes it is. It's got a V-12 engine.

LOUIS

No it don't.

BARNABY

Yes it does and it does 45 miles an hour on a clear day with a running start.

LOUIS

You don't say.

BARNABY

I do say.

LOUIS

Do ya?

BARNABY

I do.

LOUIS

Well ain't that something. Now what was your question?

REGGIE

We're looking for Number Ten Commandments Street. Can you help us out?

LOUIS

You fellas ain't from around here, are ya?

REGGIE

How can you tell?

LOUIS

Well look at you. You're dressed very fancy. You got that fancy car. You drive around in it on the Sabbath.

BARNABY

It's Saturday.

LOUIS

That's what I mean.

REGGIE

Sabbath is Sunday.

LOUIS

Yeah, that's what I thought. You're a pair of them New Testament fellers, aren't ya.

Never read it.

BARNABY

No?

LOUIS

No

BARNABY

You one of them a-theists?

LOUIS

Can't say that I am.

BARNABY

Well then what are you? If you don't mind my asking.

LOUIS

He's a lawyer.

REGGIE

And so is he.

BARNABY

Well I'll be darned. I wanted to be a lawyer once.

LOUIS

No kidding fella, can you tell me where to find it?

BARNABY

Find what?

LOUIS

Number 10 Commandments Street.

REGGIE

Well certainly. It would be my pleasure. Ok now first of all. You want the easiest way, you want the fastest way or you want the best way.

LOUIS

You sure you ain't a lawyer?

BARNABY

Yep yep. Pretty sure. I think I'd know it if I was a lawyer. Wouldn't I?

LOUIS

BARNABY

Not necessarily.

LOUIS

How do you figure?

BARNABY

Before I answer that, I wonder if you could tell me the *best* way to Number Ten Commandments Street.

LOUIS

Why certainly certainly. Now here's what you want to do. You see that corner with the brand new stop light, see that there with the green yellow red, look at that, watch that, see how it changes, green, yellow, red, just like that? Aint' that something.

REGGIE

Yeah we see it.

LOUIS

Well sir. Now there is a considerable body of opinion says that the best way to get to Number Ten Commandments Street, you go up to that stoplight and make a right and walk down the street aways till you come to a three way fork in the road and then you bear right, not the hard right cause that'll take you out to Sam Slivovitz' farm here he's got a milk white cow with three horns, which is by the way quite a thing to stop and see if you were passing that way which you ain't cause you want the easy right, just ease to the right at the fork and go down that road and if you do that eventually you will come to Number Ten Commandments Street more or less. But that ain't the best way to go, no sir, in spite of what some folks says who go shootin their mouths off even though they haven't really studied the matter like they should.

BARNABY

Is that right.

LOUIS

You have to study the matter. Use your noggin.

BARNABY

Uh huh.

LOUIS

Now I know this town. I lived here all my life.

REGGIE

Don't say.

LOUIS

Do say. Now on the other hand, if you want to know the best way to go, it gets kind of complicated to explain so maybe you fellas ought to just follow me out there cause that happens to be where I am going myself.

BARNABY

It is?

LOUIS

Yes it is. It's kind of a funny coincidence but I happen to live over there at Number Ten Commandments Street.

REGGIE

You don't say.

LOUIS

I do.

BARNABY

And who might you be?

LOUIS

Name is Louis. Louis Shvoois.

BARNABY

Well now that is another funny coincidence, isn't it?

LOUIS

Why is that fellas?

BARNABY

Because the reason we are looking for Number Ten Commandments Street is that we would like to speak to Mr. Louis Shvoois.

LOUIS

Don't say.

REGGIE

Do say.

LOUIS

Well then you don't have to follow me down to Number Ten Commandments Street to find me. You can talk to me right here if you care to. I am at your service, gentlemen. What's your pleasure? Here's my card. Louis Shvoois: poet, philosopher, auto mechanic.

BARNABY

Well, pleased to meet you Mr. Shvoois. My name is Barnaby Heckle and this right here is Mr. Reginald Bickerswift..

REGGIE

Call me Reggie.

LOUIS

(Louis sees a car go by.)

Hey. Holy Moses! Look at that! Holy jumpin jiminy. That is a 1934 Cord --- Hey mister!

(He runs off.)

Hey hold up there! Holy Moses jumpin jiminy look at that beautiful hunk of machinery!

BARNABY

You want to get some lunch? This could take awhile.

(Barnaby and Reggie step into the East Jesus Kosher Kitchen and sit at the counter. The waitress, Rebecca Shabes, comes over.)

BECKY

What'll it be, boys?

REGGIE

A cheeseburger and a cup of coffee.

BECKY

Funny.

REGGIE

What's funny?

BECKY

What, you don't read plain Yiddish? Says East Jesus Kosher Kitchen.

REGGIE

Oh yeah? That's nice. You got a nice cheeseburger?

BECKY

Oy fellas. Cheeseburgers ain't kosher. Where were you brought up, in a manger?

BARNABY

Manhattan, miss.

BECKY

No foolin.

BARNABY

Born and bred.

BECKY

What, they don't keep kosher in Manhattan, god forbid?

REGGIE

Miss, we got just about everything under the sun in Manhattan. We got skyscrapers, subways, Yankees, Giants, Dodgers, breadlines. But we don't got any kosher.

BECKY

You don't get kosher. You keep kosher.

BARNABY

How do you keep it if you don't get it first?

BECKY

I never thought about it.

BARNABY

Well maybe you should.

BECKY

Maybe I will. In the meantime the matzoh ball soup is very tasty.

REGGIE

Oh yeah? What's in it?

BECKY

It's soup with a matzoh ball in it.

REGGIE

No foolin. I'll try it.

BARNABY

Little piece of heaven.

REGGIE

Aint' it just.

(Becky gives him a bowl. He reaches for the salt. She slaps his hand.)

Hey!

BECKY

Feh. What are you doin'?

BARNABY

He's putting salt in his soup.

BECKY

You don't put salt in matzoh ball soup. It's made of salt.
(Reggie tastes his soup.)

REGGIE

Oh wow! It's very, uh....

BECKY

Salty?

REGGIE

Yes.

BECKY

Thank you.
(Louis comes in huffing and puffing.)

LOUIS

Wow. Holy moses. Did you see it, Becky? Hi fellas. Becky, did you see that thing?

BECKY

Hi Louis. Did I see what?

LOUIS

1934 Cord drophead Phaeton with a straight eight, a coffin nose hood, a pair of pontoon fenders and a boattail fin. Holy Moses, did you see it? You fellas here for lunch?

BARNABY

Yeah we were just enjoying ---

LOUIS

First time I ever saw one in the flesh. Boy wouldn't I like to get under her hood and fiddle around. Boy oh boy oh boy.

BARNABY

Young man if you will sit down for five seconds, I have some very important news for you.

LOUIS

What kind of news?

BARNABY

You are about to become a very lucky young man.

LOUIS

Well excuse me gentlemen but I am already a very lucky young man if you don't mind my saying so.

BARNABY

No you don't understand.

LOUIS

No you don't understand. I got a ten bucks in my pocket. I got my health. I got the nicest girlfriend a guy could ever want.

BECKY

Louis, hush.

LOUIS

Well it's true. Look at her. Look at that face.

REGGIE

It's a nice face.

BARNABY

I didn't say it wasn't.

BECKY

(To Louis.) Hey!

LOUIS

Can't blame a guy for being proud. What else could a man ask for? I ask you.

BARNABY

How about twenty millions dollars in stocks and bonds.

LOUIS

Well ok all right. Ya got me there. But where am I gonna get twenty million dollars in stocks and bonds?

BARNABY

From your Uncle Fikey.

REGGIE

He made a fortune.

BARNABY

In flannel underwear.

And then he died. REGGIE

He left you twenty million. BARNABY

You're rich. REGGIE

You're a millionaire. BARNABY

Times twenty. REGGIE

(Pause.)

What do you make of these guys, Becky? LOUIS

Practical jokers? BECKY

Hey. How's about you and me go down to the picture show tonight and see what's playing. LOUIS

Clark Gable I think. BECKY

Yeah I like him. Vey natural. Very believable. LOUIS

I liked that last one he did. BECKY

Which one was that? LOUIS

Him and the girl. In Africa. BECKY

Hong Kong. LOUIS

Africa. BECKY

Africa? LOUIS

Hong Kong? BECKY

The blonde? LOUIS

No not the blonde. Yeah the blonde. With the thing. BECKY

Oh yeah the thing where she looks at him funny. LOUIS

And he gets mad. BECKY

And then he laughs. LOUIS

Yeah that one. That was good. BECKY

Yeah it was. LOUIS

(Pause.)

Say, how do you make a fortune in flannel underwear? BECKY

Maybe he never went out. LOUIS

Hey you're funny. BECKY

Yeah. So what do you think, I'll stop by around 7. LOUIS

Yeah you do that. And I tell you what. Every newspaper man in New York will be there to meet you. BARNABY

REGGIE

You're in the papers, Louis.

BARNABY

You're gonna be famous.

REGGIE

A major celebrity.

LOUIS

Hey you two are like a pair of six guns. How about just one of you at a time.

BARNABY

(Barnaby takes a very official set of documents out of the inside pocket of his coat jacket and spreads them on the counter.)

Mr. Louis Shvoois. You are hereby informed that your attendance is required at the Law Offices of Mr. Bedford Stuyvesant situated at 350 Fifth Avenue suite 7900, New York New York on Monday June 14th at 11am for the reasons stated forthwith and hereinafter notwithstanding anything to the contrary to wit: and so on and so forth, etcetera etcetera etcetera.

(Barnaby places the document in Louis' hand. Louis is about to examine it when he hears something in the distance.)

LOUIS

Holy jumpin jiminy is that a....?

(Louis runs to the window.)

Holy Moses I must be seeing things. That is a '33 Eagle Sports Roadster with a rake back radiator and hydraulic brakes.

(And he is off again.)

BARNABY

What do you say we hop in the car and go home?

REGGIE

We done our best. Nobody could say otherwise.

BARNABY

You know there's some folks in this world just ain't cut out for great wealth.

REGGIE

It chokes in their craw.

BARNABY

They can't keep it down.

Makes a real mess. REGGIE

And who cleans it up? BARNABY

We do. REGGIE

They don't pay us what we are worth. BARNABY

They never could. REGGIE

Amen. BARNABY

(They exit. Becky cleans up. She picks up Louis' document and puts in on the counter. Louis comes back panting again. He sits at the counter and picks up the document and examines it.)

Hunh. LOUIS
(Becky comes out from behind the counter and sits with him.)

Hunh. BECKY
(She takes the document.)

Hmmm. (She hands it back to Louis.)

Hmmm. LOUIS

You got any pie?

BECKY
Sure we got pie. We always got pie. You want some pie?

LOUIS
I don't know.

BECKY
Then why'd you ask?

I don't know. LOUIS

You don't know much. BECKY

Hunh. LOUIS

Hmmm. BECKY

Can I buy you a coke? LOUIS

It ain't kosher. BECKY

Sure it is. LOUIS

No I mean them two. Them and their documents. BECKY

Hunh. LOUIS

Hmmm. BECKY
(Louis gets up.)

Where ya going? LOUIS

Thought I'd go for a walk. BECKY

Where to? LOUIS

I don't know. BECKY

Stop saying that. LOUIS

Sorry. I was thinking I might go to New York. See those folks. Have a look around.

You coming back?	BECKY
Sure I am.	LOUIS
Really?	BECKY
I guess that depends on what they got there.	LOUIS
They got a lot.	BECKY
Ever been?	LOUIS
I seen pictures.	BECKY
What'd ya think?	LOUIS
Mighty big.	BECKY
Hunh.	LOUIS
Louis?	BECKY
Yeah?	LOUIS
That's a ton of money, isn't it?	BECKY
Yeah.	LOUIS
You think maybe too much?	BECKY

LOUIS

Hope not.

BECKY

Me too.

LOUIS

A fella could do a lot with that kind of money.

BECKY

Or: that kind of money could do a lot to a fella.

LOUIS

Jeez. One minute you're chasing a drophead Cord next minute a shadow passes over.

BECKY

I'm scared, Louis.

LOUIS

Nah, nothing to be scared about if you go in with your eyes open.

BECKY

Yeah.

LOUIS

Yeah. Think I'll go chew the fat with Duvid.

BECKY

Yeah.

(The Rabbi appears.)

RABBI

Little story. The city of Manhattan is built on bedrock. They been building skyscrapers here for half a century now. Blast a big hole down in the bedrock so they can have a foundation and then they build a skyscraper out of steel to reach up into the sky. But here's the funny thing: the bedrock they blast out of the ground weighs more than the steel girders they put up in its place. So every time they put up one of them skyscrapers, the island of Manhattan gets a little bit lighter. Some day the whole damn thing is gonna float away into Atlantic Ocean. Why do I mention this? I don't know. Sue me.

(He starts to go. Stops.)

No seriously. Think about it. The next time you go digging around in the ground, you might come up with a handful of nothing. Hey what can I say. I'm deep. That's why they call me Rabbi.

(Lights up on the editor's office of The New York Daily Noise. Smokey McGillicutty, the Editor, chomps on a cigar. Debbie Sunday is sitting on his desk with her skirt hiked up as she adjusts her stockings. He could care less. She lights a cigarette. They are quintessential New Yorkers, brassy and full of it.)

SMOKEY MCGILLICUTTY

Debbie, I want to know everything there is to know about this kid. Who is he, what is he, where's he from, what's he like and how'd he get that way, what does he eat, what does he wear, who's his favorite ball player, does he love his momma --

DEBBIE SUNDAY

Momma's dead. Papa too.

SMOKEY

The kid is an orphan? THE MILLIONAIRE ORPHAN....

DEBBIE

That stinks.

SMOKEY

Where's he work, what's he do. Does he go to church --

DEBBIE

Kid's a jew. He goes to temple, synagogue.

SMOKEY

Synagogue? What the hell kind of word...?

DEBBIE

Who knows.

SMOKEY

We got an overnight millionaire he's a jew? I gotta plaster his puss all over my newspaper, the kid is Jewish?

DEBBIE

It's a free country.

SMOKEY

Tell me about it. Tell me about it.

DEBBIE

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal --

SMOKEY

All right. All right. Don't rub it in. Listen to me. I want to know what makes him tick. I need an angle. Every paper in the city's gonna print a story on this kid. Why should joe blow read mine? Get something on him. Anything. Use your feminine wiles. Get inside his head.

DEBBIE

I'll butter him up and I'll eat him for breakfast, Boss. And then I'll write you up a culinary review.

SMOKEY

That's my girl. That's my Debbie Sunday. Always got her nose in the news. Always knows where the story is lurking.

DEBBIE

I'll sniff him out and if I don't I'll make it up as I go along.

SMOKEY

That's right. Is he naughty, is he nice, does he ever think twice? Maybe he's a hitman for the mob. Maybe he's a commie, a hothead, a bolshevik.

DEBBIE

Boss

SMOKEY

What? Half of 'em are, you know.

DEBBIE

Half of who?

SMOKEY

The Jews, Deb. They're pinkos. It's part of their religion. Lenin was a jew.

DEBBIE

Trotsky, Boss.

SMOKEY

There you go. What is he doing with all that money? It's un-American is what it is. It's fraught with danger. That kind of concentration of wealth in the hands of a private citizen? Millionaire Commie Sends Fortune to Uncle Joe in Stalingrad.

DEBBIE

Boss, boss.

SMOKEY

What? What?

DEBBIE

Before you go making the whole thing up, lemme see what I can do. You know truth can be stranger than fiction sometimes. You'd be surprised.

SMOKEY

So surprise me.

DEBBIE

Remember that firechief went out ten below zero to put out a fire and the firehose burst and he was encased in ice when they found him?

SMOKEY

FIREMAN FREEZES AT FOUR ALARM FIRE. You made that up. I know you did.

DEBBIE

Boss. I'm good, but I'm not that good.

SMOKEY

It happened?

DEBBIE

More or less.

SMOKEY

I want more. Forget about less. So where is he now?

DEBBIE

They put him up in a penthouse at The Plaza.

SMOKEY

Get over there, Debbie and get me a story.

DEBBIE

And what if I do? What's in it for Debbie Sunday.

SMOKEY

What do ya want from me, Deb. This ain't Vanity Fair. This ain't The Ladies Home Journal. This is a newspaper. You want to be rich, rob a bank, get married, start a revolution. If I was a girl with legs like yours would I be sittin' here dickering with the boss when I could be out --

DEBBIE

Wait a minute. Wait a minute. What did you say?

SMOKEY

I said, if I was girl with legs --

DEBBIE

Before that. Before that. "You want to be rich..."

SMOKEY

Rob a bank. Get married.

BOTH

Start a revolution.

DEBBIE

Yeah. Yeah

SMOKEY

Oh, Debbie. What is going on in that bad little brain of yours?

DEBBIE

Nothin', nothin'. I was just thinkin'.

SMOKEY

Do I pay you to think? Do I pay you to solve the mystery of life? Get out a here. Get me a story.

DEBBIE

I want a byline and a raise. I want a column on Saturday. I want off the beat. I want to put my feet up and write like a lady.

SMOKEY

Oh no, don't go soft on me, Deb. When you're old and gray I'll put you out to pasture. Until then, I want a horse race.

DEBBIE

Ok, look, here's what I know for sure. He's a good kid. He lives alone. He's a poet or something. They call him Walt Whitman.

SMOKEY

WALT WHITMAN IS A HITMAN.

DEBBIE

Jesus, Boss.

SMOKEY

I'm thinkin' out loud. Excuse me for livin'.

DEBBIE

He's from Long Island. Way the hell out there. A town called East Jesus.

SMOKEY

They got Jews on Long Island?

DEBBIE

They live in little tiny groups. They keep to themselves. You hardly know they're there.

SMOKEY

We got Jews in Manhattan?

DEBBIE

Some. A few.

SMOKEY

I'll be damned. What else about him?

DEBBIE

I went out there. Everybody who know him loves him. They can't say a bad word about him. It's like a great big chocolate malted and you gotta chug it whenever they start talkin' about him. He's the Jewish equivalent of an alter boy. Whatever that is.

SMOKEY

Find out. Talk to his whatchamacallit, his uh, his uh...

DEBBIE

Rabbi?

SMOKEY

Yeah, rabbi. What else?

DEBBIE

They are very big with social consciousness.

SMOKEY

Oh yeah?

DEBBIE

On account of they've been kicked all over the world and they've seen it from all angles.

SMOKEY

Zat so?

DEBBIE

Lot of empathy for the little guy.

Sounds pinko to me.

SMOKEY

It's older than pinko.

DEBBIE

Sounds like Marx.

SMOKEY

Nah it's Moses.

DEBBIE

How come you know so much about these people?

SMOKEY

I'm nosy. I ask questions. It's my job.

DEBBIE

Come on, Deb. There's gotta be something. Nobody's perfect. If God wants perfect we're all going to Hell. Maybe he's a mad scientist. All these mad scientists are Jews. Newton was a Jew.

SMOKEY

Einstein, boss.

DEBBIE

There ya go.

SMOKEY

A column and a raise and my picture on the byline. Or I go lookin' somewheres else.

DEBBIE

Debbie Sunday, you make me crazy. You get me an exclusive, I'll make you famous, you can write your own ticket.

SMOKEY

You give me your word.

DEBBIE

You get me a story, I'll give you my word.

SMOKEY

(Crossfade to a penthouse suite at The Plaza. Duvid Bronstein is sitting at a desk with a pencil and a piece of paper.)

DUVID

Ok. Listen to this. Twenty million invested at 5 percent earns fifty thousand a year per million.

LOUIS

Dollars?

DUVID

Fifty thousand dollars times twenty, one for each little million, that's a million dollars a year. In interest. If you don't spend a million dollars a year you got more money on December 31st than you had on January 1st. One million divided by three hundred days a year assuming you take off for shabbes and your national holidays means you got to spend.... 300 into a thousand is 3, so a thousand minus 900 leaves 100, bring down the zero, 30 into 1000 is 3, so that is roughly 3, 333 dollars a day.

LOUIS

What?

DUVID

3, 333 dollars a day.

LOUIS

That can't be right. Lemme see that.

DUVID

3,333 dollars a day.

LOUIS

Duvid, I can't think. I can't seem to get my breath. What am I gonna do, Duvid?

DUVID

Stop thinking, you think too much.

LOUIS

What would Rabbi Wolf do?

DUVID

He would consult the Talmud

LOUIS

You think the Talmud has an commentary on what to do with twenty million dollars?

DUVID

There isn't that much money in the whole Bible.

MICKEY

Hey you been around haven't ya?

DUVID

No I was just looking at this menu here so I put two and two together.

MICKEY

And what'd you get?

DUVID

Twenty million.

MICKEY

Say are you the fella who inherited the dough, pardon me if I'm being nosy?

DUVID

No he is.

MICKEY

Well pleased to meet you sir. Mr. uh... Mr. uh....

LOUIS

Louis Shvoois.

MICKEY

Come again.

LOUIS

Louis Shvoois.

MICKEY

Yeah that's what I thought you said. Yeah I read all about you Mr. "Shvoois," just didn't know how to pronounce it is all.

LOUIS

And this is Mr. Bronstein, Duvid Bronstein.

MICKEY

My name's Mickey. Pleased to meet you. Wow wow wow.

LOUIS

Mickey what?

MICKEY

Just Mickey. You fellas ever need a leg up I'm your man.

LOUIS

Is that right?

MICKEY

Right as rain.

LOUIS

So what is this room service all about?

MICKEY

Room service? Well it's like this. I take your order like you're in a fancy restaurant. They cook it up in the kitchen like you're in a fancy restaurant. And then I serve it to you right here in your room like you're in a fancy restaurant. Only you don't got to go out and deal with the crabby maitre d's and the snooty headwaiters, the wiseass cabbies and the general meandering hoi polloi like you would in a fancy restaurant.

LOUIS

Is it a kosher kitchen?

MICKEY

Ahhh, You want to run that by me again.

LOUIS

What, a kosher kitchen?

MICKEY

Wait a minute wait a minute wait a minute. Wild guess here. You fellas Jewish?

LOUIS

Yes.

MICKEY

No kidding. I heard about this from my uncle once. Jewish huh? Wait'll I tell the wife. She probably won't believe me.

LOUIS

Oy. You never met a Jew before?

MICKEY

Nah. You don't get much of that in New York City. No kidding. Both of you?

DUVID

Yep.

MICKEY

Son of a gun. What do you speak Hebrew and everything?

LOUIS

Oy. And Yiddish.

MICKEY

What's that? I never heard of that?

LOUIS

Gehegen da schmendrick, Duvid? Nicht haben de Juden?

DUVID

Zat so. Gehegen da puzzilla.

MICKEY

Whoa. What was that? Was that Hebrew?

LOUIS

Yiddish.

MICKEY

No kiddin. I love it. Say something else.

DUVID

Mickey, my good man, could you please bring us up a couple of pieces of pie?

MICKEY

Sure sure sure. What kind of pie?

DUVID

We'll leave it to you, Mickey.

MICKEY

You want a couple of egg creams with that?

LOUIS

Egg cream? Oy. What's that?

MICKEY

No you can't be serious. They ain't got an egg cream in your religion?

LOUIS

I don't know. Does that sound kosher to you, Duvid?

DUVID

Egg and cream? Well now let's see, you got....

MICKEY

Hey if an egg cream ain't kosher, then I don't know about this kosher business.

DUVID

It don't sound right to me, Louis.

LOUIS

Oy.

MICKEY

What is this, "Oy?"

LOUIS

It's a word. "Oy". It means like, "Oy!" Oh my god.

MICKEY

"Oy." I like it. "Oy"

DUVID

Oy oy oy.

MICKEY

"Oy oy oy?"

LOUIS

You're very good with languages.

MICKEY

It's on account of I'm very observant and naturally curious.

LOUIS

Mickey, we will try the egg cream.

MICKEY

Excellent. I'll be back in no time. Hey I got a better idea. You fellas want a beautiful piece of pie and a truly magnificent egg cream? I know a little joint down in Greenwich Village, the pie they got down there will knock your socks off. The egg cream is perfection.

LOUIS

Is it kosher?

MICKEY

Highly unlikely. Since I never heard the word before and I am very observant a naturally curious.

LOUIS

Duvid. No kosher food in Manhattan. What would the rabbi say?

DUVID

He would consult the Talmud.

MICKEY

What is that, like a boy scout manual?

DUVID

More or less.

LOUIS

And what would he find there?

DUVID

Starvation.

LOUIS

What do you say we throw away the manual?

MICKEY

Now you're talking. Here's what you do....

(Mickey escorts Louis and Duvid out of the room. He returns and makes a phone call.)

Hey Debbie. Hi it's me Mickey. Yeah hi. Listen I just sprung 'em loose. They're on their way down to a little joint in the Village, The Little Pinko Café, for a piece of pie and an egg cream. Yeah.. Remember me in your will.

(Louis and Duvid are on the street outside the hotel. The sound of traffic rises. Bright lights, big city.)

LOUIS

Holy Moses will you look at all these beautiful machines. Hey look at that. And that. Is that a beauty or what.

DUVID

(He is dazzled by the skyscrapers.)

Louis wait. I can't... I can't.... I feel so small. They just go up forever.

LOUIS

Hey, it's ok. Take a deep breath.