

# THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Written and Directed by  
Ain Gordon and David Gordon

(PHIL WHEELS IN TWO RACKS, TALL ONE COVERS ANNIE, SHORT ONE  
BECOMES FUNERAL HOME COUNTER.)

MRS.W:Act three, scene one: the funeral home. (AS FUNERAL  
DIRECTOR) What was the name of the deceased?

PHIL:Annie Kinsman.

DIRECTOR:Annie for Anne?

PHIL:Excuse me?

DIRECTOR:Annie for Anna?

PHIL:I don't really know.

DIRECTOR:You don't know your mother's name?

PHIL:She was my aunt. My mother's sister.

DIRECTOR:You're not the son?

PHIL:No. There are no children.

DIRECTOR:But she was married?

PHIL:Yes.

DIRECTOR:Her husband is living?

PHIL:No.

DIRECTOR:A widow then?

PHIL:Well, yes and no.

DIRECTOR:Pardon me?

PHIL:She was married, then her husband died and she was a widow,  
but then her mother made her get a Jewish divorce by  
having her dead husband's brother spit in her face  
over the grave in case she needed to get married

again.

But, in fact, she never did get married again and she said she couldn't be buried next to her husband because of the divorce so I don't know. So I guess she's not a widow.

DIRECTOR:I never heard of such a thing.

PHIL:That's what I said. I always told her I never heard of such a thing and she always said "I'm only selling you what I bought."

MRS.W:(AS FUNERAL DIRECTOR) All people who leave the world are good, no matter how they lived their lives. Nobody is ever going to say about anybody just before they put the body in the ground that the person was no good. What would be the good to say a thing like that? No matter who anybody is or who they were or what they did, they undoubtedly did something that somebody will remember and anyway it's very hard to think very much about being good when you're old and sick and scared and dying like Mrs. uh...

PHIL:(STAGE WHISPER) Kinsman.

DIRECTOR:Kingman. And the only person who can still be good under those adverse conditions must be a saint and Jews don't believe in saints.

(MRS.W. AND PHIL TEAR BLACK CLOTHS. PHIL EXITS)

MRS.W:Scene two, Phil's apartment after Annie's funeral...

PAUL:(ENTERS) I'll do it.

MRS.W:I'm sorry Paul, I got used to running the show.

PAUL:That's okay. Scene two: Phil's apartment after Annie's funeral.

MRS.W:Where's your father?

PAUL:Parking the car. Who was that lesbian?

MRS.W:Where?

PAUL:At the funeral. Did you know I have a lesbian cousin?

MRS.W:She's not your cousin. She's your father's cousin.

PAUL:Okay. Did you know there's a lesbian in this family?

MRS.W:Well, I suppose I did. What about it?

PAUL:How come I never knew? I would like to have known.

MRS.W:Because she's a lesbian?

PAUL:No. Because she looks like somebody I might know.

MRS.W:Because she's a lesbian?

PAUL:No. It's like the funeral is in France...

MRS.W:In France?

PAUL:In France. And everybody there is French except her and me.

MRS.W:And you're not French because you're gay and she's a lesbian?

PAUL:No. I was born French but my parents didn't raise me French.

MRS.W:No Bar Mitzvah?

PAUL:Exactly. I can read French but I can't talk it. To me, she looks like a woman who also can't talk French.

We're both tourists in France. (TO AUDIENCE) I  
didn't even know she was a lesbian right away.

MRS.W:Well, if that's the case Paul, why wasn't the question  
"who was that other tourist?" -- instead of -- "who  
was that lesbian?"

PAUL:(EXITING) I'm going to lie down.

MRS.W:Don't you want to eat something?

PAUL:(MUFFLED OFFSTAGE VOICE) I'm not hungry.

PHIL:(ENTERS) You can't find a parking space to save your life.

I'm at a ten minute meter. Did you tell them what  
scene this is? Do you have quarters?

MRS.W:I have quarters. I told them the scene - actually your  
son told them. Phil, what are you two going to do  
now? And what happens to me?

PHIL:What do you mean? What time is it? I have to put a  
quarter in the meter. (EXITS)

MRS.W:What do you mean what do I mean? What does he mean what do  
I mean?

PAUL:(ENTERS) Why are you yelling?

MRS.W:I thought you were sleeping.

PAUL:If you thought I was sleeping why are you yelling?

MRS.W:I'm sorry. I'm upset.

PAUL:We're all upset. (EXITING) I just need a nap.

MRS.W:(CALLS AFTER HIM) I put a lot of work into this  
production.

PHIL:(ENTERS) Why are you yelling?

MRS.W:I'm not yelling. I'm talking loud.

PHIL:Loud to who?

MRS.W:To him. To you. To anyone who'll listen. What about the  
business? What about the show?

PHIL:What about us, Pearl? Oh, what time is it? (EXITING) The  
meter.

MRS.W:(CALLING AFTER HIM) "Us?" What about "us?" (TO AUDIENCE)  
What does he mean by "us?"

PAUL:(ENTERS) It's too noisy to sleep so I'm hungry. You must  
be hungry too. Is there a take out menu in this  
place? (MRS.W. AND PAUL SPEAK SIMULTANEOUSLY. SHE IS  
LOUDER THAN HE)

MRS.W:Listen, Paul, I ran the whole second act while you were  
gone and I acted in it and I think I did a damned good  
job. I don't want to be Rosie the riveter at the end  
of World War II. The men are back and I'm out on my  
ass.

PAUL:(TO AUDIENCE) Everyone in this city has four hundred  
thousand take-out menus shoved under their door  
everyday by every Chinese restaurant in a twenty block  
radius. There's a plague of take out menus in the  
world but somehow my father manages not to have one.

MRS.W:I need to know where I stand.

PAUL:(TO MRS.W.) Call the deli. I'll have what you're having.

I'm going to lie down. (EXITS)

MRS.W:Call the deli. Call the deli. Hello. Excuse me. Could you take my order? I would like two bagels cut in half, lightly toasted, without butter or cream cheese, and two large coffees, black, no sugar. Thank you. (LISTENS) Nothing, thank you. I want them lightly toasted ... wait a minute. I don't want these coffees. I don't want these bagels. I don't want to talk to you. You are a fucking asshole. (HANGS UP, PHIL ENTERS) Things are different. I want a career. I like acting. I've got an agent. I think I'm going to be very busy. What do you mean by "us?"

PHIL:Oh us? I don't know that I meant us. I don't know what I meant. Life can go on as usual. (EXITS)

MRS.W:(CALLS AFTER HIM) As usual? (TO AUDIENCE) What usual? His usual? His son's usual? It's usually not my usual.

PHIL:(ENTERS) As usual, Pearl, you're right. I hate plumbing. I never wanted to be a plumber. I wanted to be a songwriter. I still want to be a songwriter. I want you to pay the rent until my songs make money. Will you pay the rent until my songs make money? I'm going

to write songs for Paul's play. And you're going to sing my songs with that thin, warbly, lovely, little voice of yours.

MRS.W:I'm talking business and you're being sweet. That's so sweet. I need you Phil. I need you and Paul to write for me.

PHIL:We need you too.

MRS.W:So, this is a business deal?

PHIL:And a romance. Oh my god the meter. (STARTS TO EXIT.

MRS.W STOPS HIM.)

MRS.W:Wait Phil, I'll go. Then, let's get something to eat, I'll meet you at the diner. (PHIL STARTS TO KISS HER)

MRS.W:(LAUGHS) The meter, Phil. (EXITS)

PHIL:(CALLS PAUL) Paul? We're going to get something to eat.

PAUL:(OFFSTAGE) So?

PHIL:You want to come?

PAUL:(OFFSTAGE) No.

PHIL:Paul, we have to talk. I want to read your play.

PAUL:(OFFSTAGE) What for?

PHIL:I want to write songs for it.

PAUL:(ENTERING) Who says my play is a musical?

PHIL:Maybe we wouldn't have to be plumbers. I changed the name of the business to Phil and Paul Inc. I made you Associate Director.

PAUL:You made me?

PHIL:Okay. I'm sorry. Would you like to be?

PAUL:No.

PHIL:Okay, Paul, I didn't come home when Annie fell.

PAUL:And when you did come home you said thank you. Thank you is bullshit. This job wasn't my job.

PHIL:You're angry because I left you holding the bag. I didn't know you would end up doing it.

PAUL:Who else? You didn't ask me if I could do it and I'm angry with myself for being so goddamned accommodating.

PHIL:Listen, I thought about Annie and you every day. That's why I couldn't come back. OK, I was wrong.

PAUL:Look at me! I've been pulled apart and put back together. I'm covered in tiny Swiss scars. I have a right to be angry.

PHIL:I give up. If you want some other kind of damn life why the hell don't you get out of here?

PAUL:Like you did?

PHIL:No, do it better and do it sooner.

PAUL:You're daring me?

PHIL:I'm daring you. Are you afraid?

PAUL:Afraid? In this family? You want to know what's in my play? Once upon a time, a million years ago in the pogrom ridden "old country" a Mister Chaim Fear courted and married a Miss Rivkah Discomfort. They crossed the ocean in steerage and landed at Ellis

Island where their name was changed from Fearandiscomfort to Smith. The Smiths moved into a tenement with a broken toilet in the hall. He fixed the toilet, she got pregnant, and they both learned to say "be careful" and "watch out" in English. Together, they started this frightened, uncomfortable, angry family and this fucking business and lived relatively unhappily ever after. Thanks for saying you were wrong.

PHIL:(PAUSE) Funny. You are really funny. You make what haunts me funny.

PAUL:"You make what haunts me funny." Sounds like a song.

PHIL:You want to eat something or what?

PAUL:Who's paying?

PHIL:I'll pay if you come.

PAUL:I'll come if you pay. You go ahead. I'll meet you there.

PHIL:O.K. Kid, but don't take too long. Pearl is waiting, I'll see you there. (EXITS)

ANNIE:Tatellah. (PAUL IS STARTLED) Tatellah I'm here.

PAUL:Unbelievable. (LOOKS AROUND, ANNIE IS NOT VISIBLE TO HIM)  
How did you get here?

ANNIE:That's a way to talk?

PAUL:We buried you. You are not supposed to come here.

ANNIE:I finished doing what I'm supposed to do. Now I can do  
what I'm not supposed to do. I can do whatever the  
hell I want.

PAUL:What do you want?

ANNIE:I didn't tell you I'm sorry. I went in such a hurry.  
That last aide..what was her name?

PAUL:Henrietta.

ANNIE:Yeah, her. She talked me to death. So, you're okay?

PAUL:I'm okay.

ANNIE:And you don't hate me?

PAUL:I don't hate you. I even miss you.

ANNIE>You don't have to miss me, I'm here.

PAUL:No. I want to miss you. Go away Auntie Annie.

ANNIE>You don't want me to go. Listen - I wanna tell you the  
world isn't round.

PAUL>You don't say.

ANNIE:I do say. That Columbus, or whoever, was a lying S.O.B.  
It ain't flat and it ain't round.

PAUL:Why do you do that? Why make "whoever" an S.O.B.?

ANNIE:I have my way. You have your way. That's what I'm  
telling you.

PAUL:What are you telling me? Where are you? Are you here?

ANNIE:I'm up here. I'm over there. I'm all over the place.

PAUL:Okay, and where am I?

ANNIE:That's it.

PAUL:What's it?

ANNIE:Look! When I started to die I got scared because I didn't know where I was going. I thought I was leaving everything. I was crying for Manny, for my sister, for my mother, where were they? Where were they?

PAUL:Where were they?

ANNIE:Shut up for a minute, I'm telling you. Something was telling me, except I couldn't see nobody, don't be crazy Annie. Where do you think they are Annie? They're with you Annie. That's what it's like, tatellah.

PAUL:What's what it's like? You're telling me you're always going to be with me? I hope you're not telling me you're always going to be with me.

ANNIE:First of all forget always. And not like it was. You invite me. That's how come I'm here and I'm not really here. Tatellah, it's like God.

PAUL:What are you talking about?

ANNIE:God is not a person and neither am I except I was and God never was.

PAUL:I did not think God was a person.

ANNIE:Not even like a person. For instance, you can't meet God.

PAUL:Oh good.

ANNIE:Everybody talks to God like a person who lives in the sky. I always did that. I always looked up and said

"God, ya see what just happened?" "God, don't do this to me." "God help me."

PAUL:What does this have to do with the shape of the world?  
And I didn't invite you.

ANNIE:Not the world you're standing on, putz. The world in your head, the world in your heart mister brilliant playwright. You tell me you want me to go away but you talk to me like I'm really here.

PAUL:A ghost.

ANNIE:That's a cockamamie word for what you can't forget.

PAUL:I'm not supposed to forget.

ANNIE:Forget about remembering because it's your job tatellah, you'll remember.

PAUL:What about lighting candles?

ANNIE:What about lighting candles? It's a nice thing.

PAUL:What about not lighting candles?

ANNIE:Not so nice but don't be guilty.

PAUL:So I can do whatever the hell I want?

ANNIE:Who's stopping you?

PAUL:Ohhhhhhhh.

ANNIE:Ohhhhhhhh. Don't say I never gave you something.

PAUL:Does this mean you're alright and I don't have to worry about you?

ANNIE:Yeah, tatellah, being dead ain't so bad.

PAUL:It's not bad? I don't think I ever heard you say something

was not bad.

ANNIE:So bad. When you're dead you don't have to worry about dying and you don't have to worry about no funeral.

PAUL:When did you start worrying about a funeral?

ANNIE:I was twenty five. My mother bought thirty-two graves and I started to worry.

PAUL:Stop worrying.

ANNIE:I have to worry. What's happening with your show? Did you make money yet?

PAUL:Not yet.

ANNIE:Always not yet.

PAUL:I'm gonna be fine. I'm fine. I can take care of myself.

ANNIE:Don't be so independent.

PAUL:That's some advice coming from you.

ANNIE:Don't do what I did, do like I tell you. What is that?

PAUL:Do as I say not as I do...

ANNIE:A person should get married.

PAUL:How come if nothing is for sure, it's for sure I should have a wife? I don't think I'm going to get married and I don't think you think I'm going to get married.

ANNIE:Whatever, a person shouldn't be alone, Paul. Take it straight from the horse.

PAUL:The horses mouth.

ANNIE:Whatever. You have someone?

PAUL:Yes.

ANNIE:Good. I don't need to know about it. You eat yet today?

PAUL:Yeah, I had...

ANNIE:Don't lie! You and your father never eat. Ikey and  
Mikey. Two peas from a cloth.

PAUL:Pod. From a pod. We're two peas from a pod.

ANNIE:Get outta here. Your father's waiting with that Pearl.

PAUL:If you're not here when I get back, don't worry, I'll talk  
to you.

ANNIE:Put it in writing. Be nice to Pearl, the two of you, and  
I wish all of you luck with that show -- but my advice  
is don't give up the family business. Because after  
all, Paul, who would want to see a thing like this?  
Button your coat. Watch out. Be careful.

(PAUL EXITS. PHONE BEGINS TO RING AS ANNIE CLIMBS DOWN LADDER  
AND MRS.W. CHANGES SET TO OFFICE. PHONE RINGS SIX  
TIMES BEFORE MACHINE CLICKS ON.)

MACHINE>Hello and thank you for calling. You have reached the  
voice mail for "Phil, Paul, and Pearl, Inc." For Phil  
Smith, press one. For Paul Smith, press two. For  
Pearl Wonder-Smith, press three. To leave a message  
for all three, wait for the tone. Thank you.  
BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP.

(BLACKOUT)