

Meet the Birnbaums

by Phillip W. Weiss

Pilot for a sitcom with character breakdowns

Episode 1: Dickie wants to go to a baseball game

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The principal characters are the Birnbaums:

Jerome “Jerry” Birnbaum – male, age 66 – the father

Ethel “Ettie” Birnbaum (nee Farbstein) – female, age 34 – the mother

Richard “Dickie” Birnbaum – boy, age 9 – the son, aka Champ

**Michelle “Mickie” Birnbaum – girl, age 6 – the older daughter,
aka Sweet Cakes**

**Victoria “Vickie” Birnbaum – girl, age 4 – the younger daughter,
aka Dumpling**

The sitcom is set in the year 1964. The Birnbaum’s live in a large upscale three bedroom apartment on the Eastside of Manhattan. Jerry and Ettie have been married for ten years. This Jerry’s second marriage (his first wife died in 1953). Jerry and Ettie are secular Jews. That is, they are Jewish but are not observant. Nevertheless, in conformance with social convention, they attend synagogue on major holidays. Jerry knows Yiddish but never speaks it at home.

Character breakdowns:

JERRY: Jerry owns a garment factory in Manhattan. He employs thirty-seven workers. Jerry is a workaholic. He devotes little time to his children and his sole preoccupation is with his business. Jerry is gruff but loveable. Although bossy at work, at home he is a pushover, a trait that his children fully exploit. Jerry has little formal education; he is primarily self-taught. Jerry was born in 1898 “somewhere in central Europe.” He came to the United States when he was one and half years of age and grew up in lower Manhattan. Jerry completed the 7th grade. He was never a sports fan but admires Honus Wagner and Lou Gehrig based on a mistaken belief that both were Jewish (neither in fact were Jewish). Jerry refuses to believe that they were not Jewish. Jerry served in the Army during World War One; during the war he was stationed at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn where he was assigned to the commissary. Jerry is very proud of his military service. Although Jerry makes an excellent living and is able to afford an upscale apartment, he is frugal with his money, frowns on ostentatious displays of wealth and constantly complains about how money is “so tight.” In short, Jerry is a penny pincher. Jerry knows Yiddish but never speaks it at home. He is the family’s sole breadwinner; however, he defers management of the household finances to Ettie who has placed Jerry on an allowance. When dismissive of someone or something, Jerry will often exclaim: “Go blow your nose!” or “Tell it to the mayor!” Other “Jerryisms”:

Go take a plunge!

Stick it in your sock!

Go pet a bear!

Go twiddle your fork!

Go find your brain!

I'm not the pope!

Four strikes and you're out!

That's better than a two-point touchdown!

I'd rather be in Yakima!

Sit on a bun!

You're dumber than my thumb!

Don't make me sing!

Go paint your car!

You're jumpier than a mouse!

Are you a moose or a mouse?

Jerry owns a 1953 DeSoto Powermaster. To Jerry, the DeSoto is a family heirloom but to everyone else it is a hunk of junk on wheels.

ETTIE: Ettie was employed as a receptionist and model at Jerry's business, which is where they met. Before marriage, Ettie was slim, attractive and sexy, qualities that Jerry noticed and liked. She is also an excellent cook. When frustrated or angry, she eats. Since getting married Ettie has gained 75 pounds and is becoming obese. However, Ettie still considers herself graceful and beautiful. She complains that the children behave like "hooligans" and demands that Jerry, as the father, "do something" to bring the children under control. Ettie constantly scolds the children, but is ignored and often laughed at. Ettie was born and raised in Newark, NJ. She graduated from high school and then attended the Hoboken Academy for Secretarial and Administrative Sciences for six months, earning a certificate which, for Ettie, is equivalent to having a college degree. Whenever the subject of college comes up, Ettie is quick to point out that she went to college too. At home, Ettie constantly wears a worn house dress and

an apron. Ettie is Jewish. She is not observant but when excited or annoyed uses Yiddish words. Ettie enjoys playing cards with her girlfriends Bertha Zimmer and Louise Rothblatt. Her favorite card games are casino and pinochle. She plays cards once a week but never in her apartment because she does not want the children to see their mother "gambling." Ettie manages the day-to-day household finances but leaves the "big-ticket" decisions up to Jerry. Ettie is obsessed with the TV show "Ben Casey" and from time to time exclaims that she is in love with the star of the show, Vince Edwards. When annoyed with Jerry, she often exclaims, "Why can't you be like Ben Casey?" or "I wish I was married to Dr. Casey!" Her ex-boyfriend is a longshoreman, Frank "Frankie" Siciliani.

DICKIE: He is nine years old and the oldest of the three children. He attends public school and is in the 4th grade. Although very smart, he finds school boring and is a low-achiever. His primary interest is sports. He is an avid sports fan. His favorite teams are the New York Yankees and the New York Football Giants. He idolizes Mickey Mantle and Y. A. Tittle. He can recite the starting line-ups of both teams. Dickie is a good-natured boy with lots of friends, He routinely disobeys his parents and constantly gets into minor trouble. Jerry's nickname for Dickie is Champ.

MICKIE: She is the second oldest child and the older daughter. She is in first grade; at home and at school she is a precocious prima donna. She is already flirtatious with boys. She enjoys playing with dolls and fantasizing that she is an actress and starlet. She is cute-looking and craves attention. Jerry's nickname for Mickie is Sweet-cakes.

VICKIE: She is the youngest child and the younger sister. Vickie attends pre-school in the morning. Unlike her brother and sister, she is much more reserved and tends to stay more to herself. She is the target of pranks both at pre-school and at home. When upset, Vickie screams. Jerry's nickname for Vickie is Dumpling.

Other recurring characters:

TONY: Tony is a two-year old cocker spaniel. The question of who is to walk Tony is a running gag. Everyone in the family expects Jerry to walk the dog. Jerry always claims he is too tired and does his best to finagle his way out of that task. Nevertheless, despite all his protesting, Jerry always winds up walking Tony.

ARNOLD "ARNIE" GREENBAUM: Arnie is a 68 year old single man, and Jerry's next-door neighbor, friend and confidante. Arnie has never been married. He was born in New York City, served overseas with the army during World War One and is a retired haberdasher. Arnie completed one year of college. Whenever Jerry is dealing with a crisis, he invariably talks with Arnie. Arnie is whimsical,

thoughtful and supportive of Jerry. However, whenever Jerry starts bragging about how he risked his life for his country while in the army, Arnie reminds him that the shoving match he had at the post-exchange in Brooklyn with Corporal Irving Schwartzbaum, who later becomes Jerry's chief competitor in the garment district, was not combat, and that Schwartzbaum was not a German spy.

MABEL BIRNBAUM: Jerry's older sister. Mabel is 69 years old, a spinster with whom Jerry was living prior to his marriage. Mabel blames Ettie for having to leave her brother (even though Jerry told her she could stay) and considers Ettie a shameless gold digger, even after ten years of marriage and three children.

MURIEL FARBSTEIN: Ettie's mother. Muriel, who is six years younger than Jerry, still believes that Jerry is a lecherous pervert who "ruined" her virtuous daughter (even though prior to meeting Jerry, Ettie had a series of boyfriends including one, Frankie Siciliani, who took her to the Catskill Mountains for a "relaxation" weekend). Muriel adores Guy Lombardo, Laurence Welk and Arthur Godfrey. She lives in Brooklyn and is terrified of the subway.

FRANK "FRANKIE" SICILIANI: A longshoreman, Korean War army veteran and an ex-boyfriend of Ettie's. Frankie occasionally calls Ettie to find out if she is now "available." Jerry complains about Frankie's calls but Ettie ignores his complaints, telling him to "stop kvetching."

MILTON BIRNBAUM and PAULA ABRAMOWITZ: Jerry's grown children from his first marriage. Milton is an accountant; Paula is a public school teacher. Both consider Ettie to be a tasteless low-class frump and boor. Neither visit Jerry. Instead, they maintain communication with Jerry via phone. Ettie refers to Milton and Paula as the "brats" or the "other children."

BERTHA ZIMMER and LOUISE ROTHBLATT: Ettie's friends from the old neighborhood. Like Ettie, they too are married and have children. Ettie meets them once a week to play cards. Bertha is not Jewish but is married to a Jewish man, Merle, who is a postal letter carrier. Louise is married to Al who owns a kosher delicatessen in Brooklyn.

Scene 1

Date: Spring, 1964

Time: Friday morning, 7:30 AM

Place: The kitchen in an apartment in Manhattan. The Birnbaum family is having breakfast. In the scene are four people: an adult female, Ettie, and her three children, Dickie, Mickie and Vickie. Ettie is at the stove frying eggs; the kids are seated at the table waiting to be served breakfast.

DICKIE

C'mon, mom! I'm hungry!

ETTIE

Stop you kvetching! I'm cooking as fast as I can! All you kids ever do is complain, complain and complain. I'm not a slave, you know!

MICKIE

Mommy! Don't I look pretty today?

ETTIE

(looking at the stove):

You look gorgeous, sweet heart. Just like Lana Turner.

MICKIE

Who's Lana Turner?

ETTIE

Someone I hope you grow up to be. Okay, who wants eggs?

DICKIE

Eggs? Yech!

ETTIE

Stop being a kvetch! I made eggs and you'll eat it!

MICKIE

(pouting):

I don't want eggs. Give them to Vickie. She'll eat them. (Mickie pulls Vickie's hair.)

VICKIE

Mommy! Mickie hurt me! (*Vickie starts crying.*)

ETTIE

(to Mickie)

Stop bothering Vickie.

MICKIE

I didn't do nothing, mom. She's just a cry baby.

ETTIE

That's because you and the genius brother over there keep teasing her.
That's no way to treat your sister.

DICKIE

Is she really our sister? Sometimes I think she's adopted.

ETTIE

Yes, Vickie is really your sister. Why would even ask such a question?

DICKIE

Because she's so goofy looking.

ETTIE

(sighs)

Oy vey. Give me strength. (to Dickie) Did you do your homework?

DICKIE

(lies)

Of course, I did. (*winks at Mickie*)

MICKIE

(giggling)

I did my homework too!

ETTIE

I'm proud of both of you. You gotta do your homework to get good grades in school. Then you can do anything you want, like become an actress like Sandra Dee or, if you're a boy, become a big time doctor like Ben Casey.

VICKIE

(stops crying)

I did home work too!

DICKIE

No you didn't, twerp! You don't even go to school.

VICKIE

Dickie called me a name! (starts crying again)

Jerry enters. He is neatly dressed in a business suit. He sits at the table.

JERRY

(annoyed)

This is a fine good morning. What's all the racket?

All three kids start complaining at the same time.

DICKIE: I don't want eggs!-----

MICKIE: Vickie is a dummy head!----- (together)

VICKIE: Mickie hit me!-----

JERRY

(to everyone)

SHUT UP!

Immediate silence.

JERRY

(to Dickie)

You eat your eggs, champ. (to Mickie): Listen, sweetie-cakes, stop calling your sister names. (to Vickie) And you, dumpling, well ... whatever. (Jerry gives Vickie a hug. She stops crying and starts giggling) Now, let's eat.

Ettie puts a plate of scrambled eggs on the table and cold cereal and orange juice. Ettie puts some eggs on Vickie's plate and prepares for her a small bowl of cereal. Everyone else serves themselves.

JERRY

Ah, what a great way to start the day, with a nice big breakfast.

ETTIE

(annoyed)

Don't mention it.

JERRY

(to Ettie, annoyed)

What now?

ETTIE

It would nice if for once you would say those two little words.

JERRY

Okay. Here's two little words: More food.

The three kids start laughing.

ETTIE

(to Jerry)

You're such a schmo. You know that?

JERRY

Do you have to talk to me like that in front of the kids?

ETTIE

I shoulda married a doctor, like Ben Casey.

JERRY

You and your cockamamie Ben Casey. You keep watchin' that guy and I may have a good mind to get rid of the TV set!

ETTIE
(alarmed)

Don't you dare! You do that and I'll leave with the kids and go to my mother's!

JERRY

If our marriage falls apart, I'm holding your precious Doctor Casey responsible. He's nothing but a bum. That quack!

ETTIE

Dr. Casey is not a bum, and stop your kvetching already!

JERRY

Hey, watch your language!

ETTIE

Whad I say?

JERRY

Something to do with retching.

ETTIE

I said kvetching, not retching. Now you're losing your hearing?

JERRY

No. You said retching! You make it sound like I'm hearing things.

ETTIE

You're such a schlemiel!

DICKIE and MICKIE

(together, laughing, singing)

Daddy is a schlemiel, Daddy is a schlemiel!

ETTIE

(to Dickie and Mickie)

Stop that laughing! Show your father respect!

Dickie and Mickie struggle to stifle their laughter.

JERRY
(to Ettie)

See what you've done! Now you got them laughing at me!

ETTIE

Serves you right! You gotta be firmer with the kids!

JERRY

Me? That's your job! You're their mother!

ETTIE

You don't need to remind me of that.

JERRY
(exasperated)

I'm too old for this!

ETTIE

You shoulda thought of that when we got married.

JERRY

I DID think of it. I even told you how I felt, but you said so what? So I'm older than your mother. So what, you said. She'll understand, you said. We're in love, you said! We'll be HAPPY, you said! Well, guess what, Ettie: your mother still thinks I'm a pervert.

ETTIE

Oh, so now it's MY fault, and you keep my mother out of this!

DICKIE
(to Jerry)

Dad, are you really older than grandma?

JERRY

(*to everyone, annoyed*)

Why is everyone on my case? (*excited, to Dickie*): Yes. So what?

ETTIE

Why are you yelling at the boy? He just asked you a question.

Jerry pouts and starts muttering to himself incoherently.

MICKIE

(*to Jerry*)

I think you're nice, daddy.

JERRY

(*to Mickie*)

Thank you, sweetie-cakes. At least someone in this home appreciates me.

VICKIE

(*to Jerry*)

Daddy?

JERRY

(*to Vickie*)

Yes, dumpling?

VICKIE

Will you hug me?

JERRY

(*laughs, to Vickie*)

Of course I will. (*Jerry hugs and kisses Vickie*)

DICKIE

I'm finished with breakfast. (*Dickie hardly touched his food*)

ETTIE

(*looks at the plate*)

No you're not! You will finish your breakfast, young man!

DICKIE
(*to Jerry*)

Do I hafta, dad?

JERRY
(*to Dickie*)

Do as your mother says, champ. In the kitchen, your mother is the boss!

DICKIE
(*to Jerry*)

Some father you are!

JERRY
(*annoyed*)

Don't talk to your father that way! Boy, if I had talked to my father the way you talk to me, he woulda kicked my butt to the moon!

(All three kids ignore Jerry and continue lollygagging with their food.)

DICKIE
(*suddenly excited, to Jerry*)

Dad, guess what!

JERRY
(*to Dickie, sighing*)

Please. Can't it wait?

DICKIE
(*more excited*)

No, it can't! It's really important!

JERRY
(*to Dickie, annoyed*)

What is it?

DICKIE

Next Saturday all the dads are taking the kids to see the Yanks play the Tigers! They'll be sitting right behind the Yankees' dugout. I wanna go too! Will you take me? Whadya say?

JERRY

(*to Dickie, trying to change the subject*)

Well, I guess it's time for me to go out there and try to make a living.

Jerry gulps down the rest of his breakfast. Tony enters. Tony is a cocker spaniel.

ETTIE

(*to Jerry*)

Before I forget, don't forget to walk Tony after you come home.

JERRY

(*irritated*)

Why is it always me who gets stuck having to walk Tony? Can't Dickie walk Tony?

DICKIE

(*to Jerry*)

He's your dog, not mine! And besides, at night I gotta do my homework.

JERRY

(*genuinely surprised*)

You actually do homework? (*to Ettie*) Does he do homework?

ETTIE

How should I know? It's enough trying to keep 'em under control, no thanks to you.

JERRY

(*to Ettie*)

Why'd we get a dog in the first place?

ETTIE

That was your idea, remember? You said that having a pet would teach the kids responsibility.

JERRY

That's right, it will! (*to Dickie*) You know, champ, as of right now walking Tony is your responsibility.

DICKIE

Aw, c'mon, dad. That ain't fair. That's your job, not mine! Who needs that mutt anyway?

JERRY

It's part of growing up! When I was your age I was already making a living.

DICKIE

When you were nine? That's bull!

MICKIE

(*mimicking Dickie*)

That's bull!

ETTIE

(*to Dickie and Mickie*)

Hey, watch your mouths!

DICKIE

It ain't fair! Why should I hafta walk the dog? I bet when you were a kid you never even had a dog.

JERRY

When I was growing up we couldn't afford one. We weren't pampered like kids are today.

DICKIE

Look, dad, how about this: I'll walk the dog every night for a week if you take me to the ballgame tomorrow.

JERRY

That's something I'll have to think about, champ. How much are the tickets?

DICKIE

Three fifty.

JERRY
(shocked)

Three fifty!? That's highway robbery! (*bragging*) When I was your age, I saw Honus Wagner play, and you know how much we paid? A dime! Now he was a great player and somebody us kids could look up to, not like the prima donnas you have playing today, prancing around in their fancy uniforms and showing off their floozy girlfriends. With Wagner we got our money's worth.

DICKIE

You mean, he was worth a dime?

JERRY
(flustered)

No! That's not what I mean. He made me proud to be a Jew.

ETTIE
(amazed)

Honus Wagner was Jewish? I never heard that before.

JERRY
(dismissive)

What do you know about baseball?

ETTIE

Nothing but I'll ask Bertha when I see her tonight. She's married to the biggest sports maven in the city.

JERRY
(dismissive)

Don't make me sing! Merle doesn't know a thing about sports, and neither does Louise.

ETTIE

And you know better?

JERRY

That's right, I do! Merle is the biggest jerk in the world and as for Bertha, well, she's even worse! Just a big know-it-all. Ha! A woman's place is in the kitchen. A man's place is in the living room where he is king!

ETTIE

Okay, "king," whatever you say. But I still never heard of Honus Wagner being Jewish.

JERRY

(*pleading*)

But he WAS Jewish! (*to Dickie*) I'm telling you, champ, the guy was a Jew! With a name like Wagner, what else could he be? (*to Ettie*) You're saying that just to aggravate me. Aren't you!? Maybe you don't believe that Jews can play baseball. Well, guess what, my lovely, Jews can play baseball as good as the best of them!

ETTIE

When did you ever pick up a baseball glove?

DICKIE

Yeah, dad, when?

JERRY

(*to Dickie*)

Way before your time, champ. I had to quit playing ball to go to work. Since then I've been too busy making a living to spend time playing games. But let me tell you something, when I was a kid I was quite a player. I could hit a baseball faster than you could pop a cork.

DICKIE

(*impressed*)

Wow! You were that good?

JERRY

Absolutely, my boy.

DICKIE

You were like superman! Wait till I tell the kids!

JERRY

And let me tell you something else: I never struck out! I remember my father, your grandfather, may he rest in peace, telling me: "Son, when you're up at bat don't rush things. Remember: it's four strikes and you're out."

DICKIE

But, dad, it's three strikes and you're out, not four.

JERRY

(to *Dickie*)

No it's not! It's four.

DICKIE

(laughs)

C'mon, dad, stop pulling my leg. Everybody knows it's three strikes, not four.

JERRY

(to *Ettie, confused*)

Is that right?

ETTIE

Don't ask me. I'm just a woman. You're the big sports expert.

JERRY

(to *Ettie*)

Stick it in your sock! (to *Dickie*) Hey, champ, you know what? They must have changed the rules. Three strikes, four strikes, what's the difference?

DICKIE

(laughing)

I guess grandpa didn't follow baseball, huh, dad? (pause) So, how about it dad? Are we going to the game tomorrow or what?

JERRY

I don't know, champ. I gotta think about it. It'll cost me a fortune and I'm not made out of money. I gotta work for a living.

ETTIE

Here you go again with that sob story.

JERRY

(*to Ettie*)

It's true! Business has been slow.

ETTIE

You've been saying that ever since we got married.

DICKIE

(*excited*)

C'mon, dad, you take me to the baseball game and I'll walk Tony. Is it a deal? It's the Yanks against the Tigers! It's the biggest game of the season!

MICKIE

(*to Jerry*)

Could I go too?

JERRY

(*to Mickie*)

No, sweetie-cakes. It's just for us men.

MICKIE

(*whining*)

But I wanna go too!

Vickie starts screaming incoherently.

JERRY

(*harrid, wanting to escape*)

I can't deal with this now! We'll talk about this after I get home from work.

ETTIE

Once again, running out on me!

Jerry grabs his hat, and quickly exits.

DICKIE

Wow, dad was sure in a rush.

ETTIE

He always is. That's you father.

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Time: 8:00 AM

Place: In the lobby of the building. As Jerry is leaving, Arnold "Arnie" Rosenbaum enters. He is 68 years old. Arnie is Jerry's next door neighbor.

JERRY
(flustered)

Arnie, am I glad to see you.

ARNIE

And good morning to you too, Jerry.

JERRY

I have no time for that. Look, I don't wanna burden you with my problems but I gotta talk to you.

ARNIE
(sarcastic)

What are pals for?

JERRY

My kid wants me to take him to a ballgame.

ARNIE

So, what's wrong with that?

JERRY

The tickets will cost three fifty. EACH! That's a fortune!

ARNIE

Can't you afford three fifty?

JERRY

Why does everyone think I'm rich? I'm just a working guy, just like you.

ARNIE

I'm retired.

JERRY

Don't be so smart! You know what I mean!

ARNIE

Okay, okay. Why are you being so touchy?

JERRY

I'll tell you. This morning I received the shock of my life: My wife told me that Honus Wagner, the guy who played for the Cubs when I was a kid, wasn't Jewish. I still can't believe it. Good ol' Honus Wagner. He made me feel so proud to be a Jew. Boy, the way he played the outfield, you thought he owned it.

ARNIE

I have bad news for you, Jerry. Your wife is right. Wagner wasn't Jewish.

JERRY

(shocked)

What? Next thing you're gonna tell me is that Lou Gehrig wasn't Jewish either!

ARNIE

That's right. Lou Gehrig wasn't Jewish either.

JERRY

What the ...

ARNIE

And Honus Wagner played shortstop, not the outfield, and played for the Pittsburgh Pirates, not the Chicago Cubs.

JERRY

(Aggravated)

Can't I catch a break from anybody?

ARNIE

Sorry to disappoint you, pal. But facts are facts, and that's that.

JERRY

How do you know all this?

ARNIE

I saw Wagner play at the Polo Grounds when I was a kid. Didn't you see him play there too?

JERRY

(*blustering*)

Absolutely! I went to the Bronx dozens of time to see him play! I was his number one fan!

ARNIE

For some reason, I find that hard to believe.

JERRY

Well, it's true, and if you don't believe me, then go twiddle your fork! Now, what am I gonna tell my son?

ARNIE

Why not just admit that you made an honest mistake and tell him the truth, that Honus Wagner wasn't Jewish.

JERRY

I can't do that! If I admit I was wrong about Wagner, then he'll think I'm full of hot air and then he'll NEVER listen to me.

ARNIE

Yeah, but if you don't tell him, he'll eventually find out for himself and then what will you say?

JERRY

You know, Arnie, you gotta point. Maybe I'll tell him after he starts walking the dog.

ARNIE
(surprised)

Walking the dog? What does walking the dog have to do with Honus Wagner?

JERRY

I made a deal with my kid: I'll take him to the ballgame if he walks the dog for a week. Of course, what I didn't tell him was that after he starts walking the dog the job is his permanently. I have no intention of walking the dog again. Pretty slick, eh?

ARNIE

A deal? With your kid? Since when do fathers make such deals with their kids? Aren't you taking him to the game to have some fun?

JERRY

Nah! I have no time for fun. And besides, (*in a moment of candor*) what do I know about baseball?

ARNIE

So, you never really saw Honus Wagner play, did you?

JERRY
(defensive)

Hey! I'm as big a sports fan as anyone else in this city! Just because I got a few facts wrong about Wagner doesn't mean I didn't see him play. In fact, I even shook his hand! So put that in your hat and wear it!

ARNIE

So you're trying to pass yourself off as a baseball fan to impress your kid.

JERRY

(Another moment of candor)

Well, I have to do SOMETHING to get his respect. If I don't then I'm stuck with walking the dog, permanently. Let somebody else do it. I'm sixty-six years old! After being out in that jungle all day slaving away, I've earned the right to rest at night, but nobody in my family seems to care.

ARNIE
(*Sarcastic*)

It must be tough being you.

JERRY
(*Oblivious to the sarcasm*)
It certainly is. Where you heading too?

ARNIE

Right now I'm going to my apartment. Later on I'm going to the library and then to the movies.

JERRY

You single guys got it made.

ARNIE
(*patronizing*)

Whatever you say, Jerry. Enjoy the ballgame. (*Muttering to himself*) What a putz.

JERRY

What would I ever do without a good friend like you?

Jerry and Arnie exit, each walking in opposite directions.

End of scene 2.

Scene 3

Time: Next day.

Location: Yankee Stadium. Jerry and Dickie are sitting in box seats. They are surrounded by other kids and their fathers. From offstage comes the voice of the public address announcer.

PA ANNOUNCER

Now batting, playing centerfield, number seven, Mickey Mantle.

DICKIE

(excited)

Mickey Mantle's coming up, dad! He's my favorite player!

JERRY

(*Feigning interest, perfunctory*)

Let's go Mickey!

DICKIE

I hope he hits a home run!

JERRY

Me too. (*Jerry glances at his watch*)

From offstage the voice of a vendor.

VENDOR

Hot dogs! Soda! Popcorn!

DICKIE

Dad, I'm hungry. How about getting us a couple of hot dogs and soda.

JERRY

I don't know, champ

DICKIE

C'mon, dad, splurge! How can you watch a ballgame and not have a hot dog and soda?

JERRY
(*flustered*)

Please, champ. I already spent a ton a money.

DICKIE

But dad ...

JERRY

Don't "but dad" me. It's enough that I took you to the game. What quarter is it?

DICKIE

Dad, this is baseball, not football. Don't you know the difference?

JERRY

Of course I do. It's just that sometimes in the excitement I forget which is which, that's all.

From offstage comes the sound of bat striking a ball followed moments later by thunderous yelling and applause. Mantle has homered.

DICKIE
(*Ecstatic*)

Did you see that! Mantle homered! Look at him rounding the bases!
(Dickie hugs Jerry) You're the best dad in the world!

JERRY
(*feigning modesty*)

I try my best, champ. I know how to pick 'em!

DICKIE

You sure do!

JERRY

At least we're getting our money's worth.

DICKIE

You got that right!

(*The noise subsides. Offstage comes the voice of the PA announcer*)

PA ANNOUNCER

Now batting, playing first base, number fourteen, Moose Skowron)

DICKIE

(*Even more excited*)

Moose! Moose! (to Jerry) Skowron is the best first baseman in baseball!

JERRY

He is?

DICKIE

Why, you don't think he is?

JERRY

Whatever you say, champ.

DICKIE

Who do you think is the best?

JERRY

I don't know. You decide for both of us.

DICKIE

I'm asking YOU, dad. You know everything about baseball!

JERRY

(*thinking hard*)

Maybe ... Wilt Chamberlain?

DICKIE

(*doubles over laughing*)

Stop pulling my leg, dad. Chamberlain is a basketball player.

JERRY
(annoyed)

Stop pestering me with all these questions.

DICKIE

(laughing harder)

Chamberlain the best first baseman in baseball. Wait till I tell the guys!

(to the other kids in the section)

Hey guys! I asked some guy who's the best first baseman in baseball and you know what he said?

KIDS

What?

DICKIE

Wilt Chamberlain!

(Loud hoots of laughter)

Various KIDS

What potato head said that? Who's the dope? What a jerk!

DICKIE

(to Jerry)

Don't worry, dad. I won't tell. Your secret is safe with me!

JERRY

(Muttering to himself, humiliated)

Whatever you say, champ.

DICKIE

(excited)

Hey, dad! I could sure use a hot dog and soda!

Jerry is digging into his pocket. He has a pained look on his face.

From offstage comes the sound of thunderous roars from the crowd.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time: Early evening.

Place: the kitchen. Present are the Jerry, Ettie and the kids. The kids are sitting at the kitchen table.

DICKIE
(elated)

What a game! The Yanks won, nine to one! Mantle hit two home runs! And we had great seats! Right behind the Yankee dugout! Yankee Stadium is huge!

ETTIE
(to Dickie)

So, you had a good time. (to Jerry) How come you never take me out anywhere like you used to?

JERRY

Oh, let's not get into that now.

ETTIE

You take the boy to the ballgame but you won't even take me out to dinner. It's not fair!

JERRY
(sharply)

Are YOU willing to walk the dog?

ETTIE

What is this thing with you and the dog? It is your job to walk the dog! Period! I'm busy cooking.

JERRY

You walk the dog and maybe I'll take you to dinner.

ETTIE

Such a kvetcher. What did I ever see in you? I coulda married Frankie Siciliani.

JERRY

Go on! Marry your precious Frankie whatever his name is!

ETTIE

(laughs)

Oh, Jerry, can't you tell when I'm joking?

JERRY

(pouting)

Well, it's not funny.

VICKIE

(giggling)

Yes it is, daddy. You and mommy are funny! You make me laugh.

MICKIE

Daddy: why do you yell so much?

JERRY

(to Mickie)

Because, sweetie-cakes, if I don't yell, then nobody will listen to me.

MICKIE

I'll listen to you.

DICKIE

I'll listen to you too.

JERRY

(to Mickie and Dickie)

You promise?

DICKIE and MICKIE (together)

I promise!

JERRY
(*to Vickie*)

How about you, dumpling: you promise too?

VICKIE
(*laughing*)

I promise!

JERRY

Good! We're all on the same page. Now, who's gonna walk the dog?

ETTIE and the kids
(*together, to Jerry*)

YOU!

JERRY

Me? Why me?

DICKIE
(*gleeful*)

Because you're the greatest dad in the world!

JERRY

And probably the biggest sap too. (*to Tony*) Let's go, boy.

Jerry fastens a leach to Tony, goes to Ettie and gives her a hug, and exits. Tony is barking happily.

The end.