

**SISTERS THROUGH A WINDOW**  
a play  
by Stephen Cole

## CHARACTERS

<b>SAM SARDOFF:</b>	50s old world Russian/Yiddish accent
<b>GERTIE SARDOFF:</b>	Late 20s and 60s (should be able to play both ages), first generation American with Brooklyn accent.
<b>BEA SARDOFF:</b>	Early 20s and 60s (should be able to play both ages), first generation American with Brooklyn accent.
<b>SADIE SARDOFF/ MISS LEE:</b>	50s. Sadie has old world Russian/Yiddish accent, Miss Lee is a Brooklyn NY American through and through.
<b>BOY AT MOVIE THEATRE</b>	
<b>JACK WILENSKI:</b>	20s Huge bulky man who looks like Bluto from Popeye.

*(The stage is wide open, perhaps with levels...and a large white backdrop that can take projections and film. Nostalgic and atmospheric music. The light finds a middle-aged man, Sam Sardoff, old before his time. He is sitting. It is 1941 and Sam is inside looking out of a window. An old black and white silent home movie is projected. It flickers and has flaws.)*

**SAM**

*(With a slight old world Russian/Yiddish accent)*

Once I had two daughters...and they were sisters.

*(In the home movie we see two young woman in their twenties and their mother frolicking in the surf. The waves are huge and wash over them and toss them around. It is the perfection of a memory.)*

Even when I became dead and they became old, they were still sisters. More than sisters. Even with eight years separating them, nothing could separate them.

*(As the fun in the surf reaches its height, the music changes to the sounds of a hospital, with a blaring TV and rock music competing with a game show. The film peters out. A hospital bed is wheeled on and a projection shows us we are Brookdale Hospital in Brooklyn, NY. One of the sisters, Gertie, gets into the bed and grows old and sick before our eyes. She should appear to be in her 60s or 70s. Gertie uses the remote to shut the TV and only the distant rock music continues. She picks up her phone by her bed and dials and we are in Scene 1. Sam, who is the father, continues to look out of his window as if he can look into the future.)*

**GERTIE**

Bea? Bea, can you hear me. It's your sister Gertie. The one in the hospital for three months. The one you never call or visit. That Gertie.

**BEA**

*(now older and appearing on the other side of the stage with her phone. She is out on Long Island.)*

Hold on, Gert. I have something on the stove.

*(Bea has nothing on the stove, but just wants to rile her sister. She waits and counts to twenty. She holds the phone away from her mouth and yells as if she is in the other room.)*

I'm cooking a tszimis, like Mama use to make. If it comes out right, it'll be as tasteless as cardboard.

**GERTIE**

That's how Daddy liked it. But I know your tricks, Bea. You're not cooking. I can not smell it from here. But if you really are making mama's tszimis, why not put some in a Tupperware and bring it to me. This hospital food is from hunger.

**BEA**

You know I want to come out there, Gertie, but you also know I don't drive and I'm at the mercy of my daughter Rose. And Rose is not from the great drivers either. She knows how to put the car in A for Alexander's and B for Bloomingdale's, but that's it. To get her off this fakocta Long Island is not easy. I can't believe I live here, in a place where you're dead without a car. But where should I go? Florida? God's waiting room? She said, Ma, you're getting old and I wanna keep my eye on you. Such an eye she keeps, you shouldn't know from it. I do everything by myself. I push my wagon to the supermarket and shop.

**GERTIE**

Do I need to hear your life story? I'm sick. And I'm your little sister. Doesn't the railroad run anymore?

**BEA**

Stop me if I'm wrong, but did you say you were my little sister? Little? Are you maybe shrinking?

**GERTIE**

Bea...

**BEA**

Gertie, Enough already. Jack is dead.

**GERTIE**

And I may be joining him. Don't you want to see me first?

**BEA**

Of course I do. Listen, let me call you back tomorrow or the next day and we'll make a plan.

**GERTIE**

If I'm still here.

**BEA**

Oh you'll be there. Nothing could kill you. After all, you're the young one.

*(Gertie slams the phone down and the light blackout on them, A jazzy Kern song plays and the lights come up on the lobby concession stand of NEW LOTS MOVIE HOUSE in 1941. We see large posters for the current attraction: FRED ASTAIRE AND RITA HAYWORTH in YOU WERE NEVER LOVELIER. As the lights come up we find Miss Lee, a woman in her late fifties with bright orange hair and a light freckled complexion. She is in the uniform of a concessionaire of 1941. She puts wieners on spits in the machine that roasts them, pours popcorn into the popper and arranges the bottles of coke on the stand. A younger Gertie enters, still putting on her uniform.)*

**SAM**

*(still at his window)*

Time is like a window, if you stare hard enough through it, it shows you the past and the future at the same time. The present you have to look for yourself. As least it was that way in the fall of 1941 at the New Lots Movie House.

**GERTIE**

I'm sorry I'm late, Miss Lee. My mother would not let me go until I scrubbed the kitchen floor. All the while telling me to get married already before it's too late. Of course my little sister Bea just started her new job as assistant bookkeeper and she has no time for housework.

*(Gertie starts helping Miss Lee get ready for the crowds they expect. She looks at the movie poster and poses like Rita.)*

Oooh, Rita Hayworth! Isn't she gorgeous?

**MISS LEE**

I would never report you, Gert. You're my best friend. And I notice you decided to dye your hair my color. Very flattering.

**GERTIE**

*(The two ladies hug)*

It's actually a combo...a cross between you and Miss Hayworth.

**MISS LEE**

I'm still flattered. Maybe more so.

*(The two ladies hug)*

**GERTIE**

So, Miss Lee, did you go out on the town after the last showing?

**MISS LEE**

Don't make me laugh. I went straight home to make sure my mother was still alive. She's almost 85 now. What about you?

**GERTIE**

I had a date.

**MISS LEE**

Don't make me pee in my pants. You say it like it was nothing. Come on. Tell me. Don't leave out a comma or I'll scream.

**GERTIE**

Well, he was a nice boy. But a little younger than me.

**MISS LEE**

How young?

**GERTIE**

Twenty-four.

**MISS LEE**

And you're twenty-seven, so?

**GERTIE**

Twenty-nine going on death...Well, he asked, I told and he excused himself and went to the men's room in the restaurant and never came back.

**MISS LEE**

You are kidding!

**GERTIE**

I paid the check and went home.

**MISS LEE**

The dirty swine! Well, time to let the vultures in.

*(Miss Lee opens the door and there only a couple of patrons enter: an older couple, a young man.)*

**GERTIE**

Thursday matinees. You could shoot deer in the balcony. I think we'll wind up eating the hotdogs ourselves.

**MISS LEE**

Speaking of the balcony. Last night, what I saw...I was in shock, Gert. Two women were kissing. Can you imagine? I mean, isn't it unnatural?

**GERTIE**

Not if they're not Jewish.

*(The young man approaches.)*

**BOY**

A box of Jujubes, please.

**MISS LEE**

Wait a minute. Shouldn't you be in school? How old are you?

**BOY**

Twenty-one. And a half.

**MISS LEE**

Why aren't you in the army?

**BOY**

Why aren't you?

**GERTIE**

Don't talk smart to Miss Lee. She has full authority to kick you out and never let you back in to see any movie...ever.

**MISS LEE**

That's right. And you can forget about your admission price being refunded. You're lucky we don't call the truant officer.

**BOY**

You two old bags don't scare me...

*(Suddenly a huge burly Bluto of a man enters and comes to the ladies' rescue. He practically picks up the boy with one hand.)*

**JACK**

Hey! You watch the way you talk to ladies. Now get to your seat and watch the movie or you'll have me to reckon with.

*(The boy runs for the hills and Miss Lee and Gertie are entranced. Especially Gertie. Jack orders.)*

Two hotdogs, sauerkraut, relish and ketchup and box of Mallomars and an extra large popcorn with butter and extra salt.

**GERTIE**

*(impressed as hell)*

Is that enough?

**JACK**

*(There is an immediate attraction with Gertie)*

It has to be. I need to get through the door of my truck and fit in the cab.

**MISS LEE**

*(under her breath to Gertie)*

I wonder if he will even fit in a seat here.

**GERTIE**

So Jack...

**JACK**

How do you know my name?

**GERTIE**

It's right there. Over your heart. Jack Wilenski.

*(Gertie puts her fingers on the massive chest where his name was stenciled on his UPS shirt.)*

So, Jack, may I recommend you sit in one of our comfortable and roomy loge seats?

**JACK**

Maybe you would be able to show me which seat is the roomiest.

**GERTIE**

I might be able.

**MISS LEE**

She's very able.

**JACK**

First I better hit the john and make room for all this food. Meet you inside?

*(Gertie just nods as if she is under a spell. Jack goes off to the men's room, leaving Miss Lee and Gertie alone.)*



**MISS LEE**

Jack! Such a masculine name.

**GERTIE**

And he drives a truck. For UPS.

**MISS LEE**

Oh, he'll go far.

**GERTIE**

If he has enough gas.

*(They both laugh)*

**MISS LEE**

So, listen Gert. Go sit down by Man Mountain Dean, but don't ruin it by telling him how old you are.

*(The music for You Were Never Lovelier's credits begins as the lights shift to the Sardoff apartment on another day. Sadie Sardoff, a Russian immigrant with a thick as borscht accent in her 50s, who looks much older sits by a sewing machine taking in a dress. Her husband Sam sits looking out the window. There is a distance between them that is both physical and emotional. Twenty year old Bea is laying on the couch in a robe. She is home sick. She has a bowl of Polly seeds and she eats them as she talks.)*

**BEA**

Ma, can you bring me some seltzer?

**SAM**

The thing about windows is that even though you can see through them both ways, most people never really look.

**SADIE**

Gussie, get up and get for you'self. I'm in the middle from ripping a seam.

**BEA**

Bea, Ma...my name is Bea, not Gussie.

**SADIE**

I named you Gussie after my grandmother in Russia, may she rest in peace. I don't know from any Bea. A bee maybe vill sting.

**BEA**

Ma...I'm thirsty. And I'm home sick.

**SADIE**

Who wouldn't be thoisty eating all them Polly seeds and making mess on my clean couch? Maybe their father who sits in the vindow all day doing nothing could get for you something to drink. *(She looks at Sam who shrugs and continues looking out of the window)* Me, I'm too busy now.

*(There is a knock on the door. Nobody moves.)*

Vei is mir, Somebody get the door. Gussie!

*(Nobody moves. The knocks continue)*

**BEA**

It's Bea, Ma. And I'm sick.

*(The knocking continued and Sadie sews and Sam sits. Bea has no choice but to get up off the couch and answer the door. She opens the door and there is the huge burly form of Jack Wilenski. He is sweaty and might even smell bad from moving furniture down the stairs.)*

**JACK**

Excuse me, but would you happen to have a glass of water for...

*(Bea's mouth falls open to see this manly man. She looks at him, looks down at her disheveled self in a robe and slippers and slams the door in his face. She quickly runs the other end of the room where there is a mirror and puts her hair into braids as swiftly as possible. She kicks off her slippers, throws the robe on the ground, pinches her cheeks, bites her lip, drawing blood and goes back to the door and opens it as if nothing had happened. Sam continues looking out the window and Sadie sews.)*

**BEA**

Hot or cold?

*(Bea wipes the blood off her lips off with her sleeve, all the while never taking her eyes off of Jack.)*

**JACK**

What?

**BEA**

Hot or cold? The water, I mean.

**JACK**

Cold, please. But I bet when you touch a glass of ice water, it heats up to a boil.

*(Bea giggles uncontrollably. Jack finds that attractive. There is an instant chemistry between Bea and Jack, just as there was between Gertie and Jack. Bea touches his name embroidered on his sweat soaked shirt.)*

**BEA**

*(flirtatiously)*

So, Mr. UPS man, what are you delivering?

**SADIE**

Gussie!

**BEA**

My name is Bea, Ma...*(to Jack)* My name is Bea.

**JACK**

I'm Jack.

**BEA**

I can read that. *(she touches the name on his shirt and closes her eyes)* Even in brail. It's even nicer in braille.

**SADIE**

Gussie!

**BEA**

*(Thoroughly exasperated)*

It's Bea, Ma.

**JACK**

I'm helping out my friend. We're moving all the furniture out of the apartment over you.

**SADIE**

Oy, that Pinky. She died again.

**BEA**

You can only die once, Ma. *(to Jack)* We all hated her. She was such a mean old crone...and she had pink hair.

**SADIE**

A demon! May she rest in peace.

**BEA**

Yeah. She used to yell at all the kids if they made noise under her window and then she would pour down a pot of boiling water on you. I'm not kidding. It's why I wear long sleeves.

**JACK**

You could wear anything and look good.

**SADIE**

How is your stomachache, Gussie?

**BEA**

It's Bea, Ma...and suddenly I'm all better.

*(The lights go out on the apartment except for the spot on Sam at the window)*

**SAM**

My wife, Sadie sews. I used to sew too. Every day, stitch, stitch, until I decided no more stitching it together, it time to look on the whole fabric of life. That's when I sat down by this window. I wanted to see the world, but I didn't want to leave home. As long as the glass is clean I found I could see everything. I watch it all. There's Tilly sitting in the middle of the gutter on a bridge chair, all dressed up and eating a can of peas. Where else can you see that? Eh? Of course mine wife, Sadie doesn't approve of my early retirement. So she stopped talking on me. That's okay too. And now you maybe wonder if I see how this ladies' man from UPS can juggle two girlfriends. That was the easy part. But dating two sisters who lived under the same roof and not knowing it? This was a miracle.

On Tuesday and Friday nights, there he is with my Gertie, picking her up at the New Lots Movie Theatre.

*(We see Jack, all dressed up holding a bunch of flowers and giving them to a smitten looking Gertie.)*

**JACK**

You look wonderful outside of uniform.

**GERTIE**

I could say the same about you.

**JACK**

How about some Chinese tonight, Gertie?

**GERTIE**

As long as you get to stuff my fortune cookie.

**SAM**

*(Rolling his eyes at his daughter)* On Thursday and Saturday night, I look down the block and watch as he picks up my Gussie on Snediker Avenue, under the candy store sign.

*(Jack turns around and there's Bea. Like a magician, he comes up with a whole new bouquet of flowers for her. She sniffs them and smiles)*

**JACK**

For the freshest flower in Brooklyn.

**BEA**

You're the fresh one, Jack.

**JACK**

Do you feel like Italian, Bea?

**BEA**

Sure. I love a good sausage hero.

**SAM**

Oy! Anyway...what was even more amazing is that neither of the sisters had a clue who the other was dating. This went on all through a frigid November, but both sisters only felt warmth. Until the cold rainy night of December 6th, 1941.

*(We hear thunder and the sound of rain. Under the marquee of the New Lots Movie House, we see Bea and Gertie exiting the movie, which is You'll Never Get Rich starring Rita Hayworth and Fred Astaire.)*

**GERTIE**

Close your coat, Bea. It's not summer.

**BEA**

Don't you wish it was, Gertie? Then we would be in those waves again in Rockaway. Those waves that can swallow you whole and then spit you out on the sand. Don't you just long for summer?

**GERTIE**

Of course I do. And it will be here soon enough. With the flies and the humidity. Thank God they air-cool the movie house even if me and Miss Lee have to lug in the ice and turn on the fans.

**BEA**

What's it called when you go to the movies on your night off from working at the movies?

**GERTIE**

Stupid. Really stupid. No, actually, it's "a busman's holiday." And we needed some time together. We've both been so busy at work. You've even been working late some nights, Bea. I'm proud of you.

**BEA**

Oh gosh, didn't you just love Rita. I think she was more beautiful in this picture than the last. I hope Fred Astaire keeps her as his partner forever. So much better than Ginger Rogers, don't you think, Gert?

**GERTIE**

Ginger's gone serious now. She doesn't want to dance anymore. I read it in one of my movie magazines. You know what this movie makes me want to do? Dance.

**BEA**

But it's pouring out.

**GERTIE**

Who cares? Come on Bea. You be Astaire.

**BEA**

Why am I always Astaire? Just because I'm the younger sister?

**GERTIE**

Yes, just because. And because I have the red hair in the family.

**BEA**

From a bottle.

**GERTIE**

And the legs. Never forget I got the legs.

**BEA**

Yeah. I know. And my legs came from a piano.

**GERTIE**

Your legs are fine. Like Mom says, *(imitating her mother's old world accent)* "good big farmgirl legs to plow all of Russia." Now dance.

*(Bea puts out her arms and Gertie and Bea start to dance as the Cole Porter music for Dream Dancing plays.)*

**BEA**

I'm getting soaked, but who cares!

**GERTIE**

Mom would kill us if she saw us dancing down Livonia Avenue in the rain. *(imitating their mother)* "Do you want to get amonia?" Do a time step now, Bea.

**BEA**

I would if I knew how. How's this?

*(They are now laughing in each other's arms as a huge thunder and lightning bolt are heard. The lightning illuminates the huge form of Jack Wilenski.)*

**SISTERS**

*(delighted at first. simultaneously)*

Jack!

**BEA**

*(Turning to Gertie)*

You know him?

**GERTIE**

Of course I do. It's Jack.

**BEA**

I know his name.

*(Jack looks at the two girls and almost faints. What are they doing together dancing on Livonia Avenue? And how do they know each other?)*

**JACK**

You girls know each other?

**GERTIE**

*(to Bea)*

Wait a minute, is this...

**BEA**

This isn't the guy who picked you up at the movies, is it?

**GERTIE**

He didn't pick me up.

**JACK**

Listen I can explain...

**GERTIE**

Fine. Explain.

*(The sisters wait but Jack cannot not utter another word)*

**GERTIE**

You've been dating my sister?

**JACK**

Sister?!

**BEA**

You didn't know we were sisters?

**JACK**

How would I know?

**BEA**

The arms of an Popeye and the brain of Sweet Pea.

**GERTIE**

We live in the same house. We share a room.

**JACK**

But how would I know that? I've never been there. Bea never lets me walk her past the candy store on the corner and you make me pick you up at the movies and leave you on New Lots Avenue. I had no idea you were sisters. You never talked about each other.



**BEA**  
*(to Gertie)*

You never mentioned me?

**GERTIE**  
It was...too soon. You never mentioned me!

**BEA**  
That's different.

**GERTIE**  
How?

**BEA**  
It just is.

**JACK**  
Please, girls, let's at least get out of the rain.

**GERTIE**  
This storm has just begun.

**BEA**  
*(to Gertie as they huddle under an awning for a store.)*  
I can't believe you betrayed me.

**GERTIE**  
*(To Bea)*  
I betrayed you? You never told me who you were dating.

**BEA**  
Neither did you. Just some big fat lug from the movies.

**JACK**  
Hey!

**GERTIE**  
Listen to me, Bea...  
*(Bea turns her back on Gertie and will not look at her.)*  
You're turning you back on your sister? *(to Jack, taking the bull by the horns)* Jack, you have to choose.

**JACK AND BEA**

What?

**GERTIE**

You can't have us both. So choose.

**BEA**

*(turning back into the trio)*

My sister is right. Choose.

**JACK**

I can't choose. You're both wonderful girls.

**GERTIE**

We know that. But you can't have two wives. Next he'll want a harem.

**JACK**

Wives? Who said anything about wives or marriage or...

**BOTH SISTERS**

You did!

**GERTIE**

*(to Bea)*

He asked you?

**BEA**

Not in so many words, but he talked all the time about a house on Staten Island. A two story cottage. Didn't you, Jack?

**JACK**

I...

**GERTIE**

He wooed me with four room in Queens with an eat-in kitchen. That was after the honeymoon in Niagara Falls.

**BEA**

Mine was going to be in Miami.

**GERTIE**

I like that better. *(to Jack)* Why didn't you want to take me to Miami, Jack? You know I love the beach. *(to Bea)* How many kids?

**BEA**

Four.

**GERTIE**

Two. Can you afford to support six kids and two wives, Jack?

**BEA**

The mormons do it, I think.

**JACK**

I can't think. I just can't. Can I just walk you home?

**GERTIE**

Of course and then you can tell us which one you want.

*(Both girls give their arms and they walk on either side of Jack down the street. They walk a bit and wind up in front of the house where Sam sits in the window silently watching his two daughters with one man.)*

**JACK**

I think the storm has passed.

**GERTIE**

That's what you think.

**BEA**

Well, who is it going to be?

**JACK**

Tomorrow. I'll tell you tomorrow.

*(And with that, Jack tips his hat, hands his umbrella to Bea and scrams as fast as his huge legs will take him. The two sisters look at each other and then turn away from each other. Something has broken.)*

**GERTIE**

I really like him.

**BEA**

So do I. *(her secret weapon)* Does he know how old you are?

**GERTIE**

That is not fair.

**BEA**

All's fair in love and war.

*(The lights black out on the sister as it changes from tonight to tomorrow and we hear the famous voice of FDR telling the world about Pearl Harbor and that America is now officially in the war.)*

**VO FDR**

Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

*(The lights come up on the Sardoff family huddled around their radio. We simultaneously see Jack exiting the Army recruiting station.)*

**SADIE**

Vei is mir.

*(Sam looks at Sadie who turns away from him.)*

**VO FDR**

As commander in chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us. . .

**BEA**

Now what?

**SADIE**

*(shutting off the radio)*

Now, I take in this dress for Mrs. Auslander downstairs who is dying of cancer. And your fadder sits in the vinder. That's what is now. Life goes on.

**BEA**

I guess so. I'm late for work at the A&P.

**GERTIE**

And I have to work too...at the movies.

*(The scene changes and it's one week later. The marquee for the New Lots Movie Theatre advertises: Shadow of the Thin Man. Miss Lee is behind her counter filling up the popcorn machine with kernels as Jack enters in his uniform)*

**MISS LEE**

Well, if it isn't the "Shadow of the Not So Thin Man? I never knew the US Army made uniforms that big.

**JACK**

Is Gertie here?

**MISS LEE**

What if she is? She doesn't want to talk to you unless you're here to propose.

*(Gertie enters in her crisp white uniform carrying hotdogs to go on the spits)*

**GERTIE**

Miss Lee! I never said I wanted him to propose.

**MISS LEE**

Yes, you... Well! Excuse me for living. I'll just go back and check on our supply of real creamery butter.

**GERTIE**

I think you better.

*(Miss Lee exits in a huff. Gertie looks at Jack with a determined stare as she remembers her sister's voice)*

**BEA**

*(in her memory)*

Does he know how old you are?

**JACK**

Gert...

*(The ghost of Bea stays and watches)*

**GERTIE**

*(Taking his hand)*

I know. You want me to wait for you. Right?

*(Jack shyly nods)*

**JACK**

Gertie...how old are you?

**GERTIE**

*(Taking her hand away and busying herself with the hotdogs)*

Old enough to know better, but young enough to not care.

**JACK**

*(sincerely)*

Really.

*(Gertie stops what she was doing and looks at Bea who was still lurking in her mind. She then looks Jack right in the face and speaks)*

**GERTIE**

I'm twenty, Jack.

*(The ghost of Bea shakes her head and exits. It's done. She knows it is done. We hear a phone ring and on the other end is Bea's grown son. It is 1984.)*

**VO BEA'S SON**

Mom. You have to come see your sister. It's time. There's not much time left, Mom. Come see Gertie.

*(Jack takes Gertie's hand and smiles.)*

**JACK**

Will you wait for me, Gertie? When I get back, I want to marry you. Will you wait?

*(The scene shifts to the apartment where Sadie and Sam are alone. There is a knock on the door and Sam doesn't move, so Sadie is forced to answer it. It is Jack, hat in hand)*

**SADIE**

Oy, I thought it was the giant from Jack in the beansprout.

**JACK**

I came to talk to your husband.

**SADIE**

Be mine guest.

*(Sadie points to Sam who pats a chair next to him in the window)*

**JACK**

I want your permission to marry your daughter, Mr. Sardoff.

**SAM**

Which one?

**JACK**

Gertie. May I have your permission?

**SAM**

Ah...so whatever I say one of my daughters walks away with a broken heart. Vat you need from me permission? It's 1941 and we're at war. Permission he needs.

**JACK**

Gertie wanted your blessing.

**SAM**

From a fadder who sit by the window looking for seven years?

**JACK**

Why?

**SAM**

Why what?

**JACK**

Why do you sit in the window?

**SAM**

A very good question. But no one has ever asked. You seem a good man. And very big. I can remember when I first came to this country and all my friends who had come before me had bragged that there was gold in the streets. So when when I looked down in the gutter that first day off of Ellis Island, I found out that they were right. They didn't lie. There really was gold in the streets. I saw it and I bent down to pick it up, but when I got it closer to mine face, I could see that the gold in mine hand was chewing tobacco and nothing more.

**JACK**

Chewing tobacco?

**SAM**

From that day on, I questioned everything in America, but I did what I had to do. I married Sadie, she had five children...the sons got married and left, and me, I worked until one day in 1934 when my sewing machine broke. I decided that was it. I was done. That was when the fadder sat himself in the window and watched the world go by. So can you marry my Gertie and not break her sister's heart? *(Jack doesn't answer)* I didn't think so. Nothing is that easy. Go, go to war, then come back and get married.

**JACK**

Thank you, Mr. Sardoff.

*(Jack exits as Sadie reenters)*

**SADIE**

So...Vat do you tink? Your daughter is finally getting married. Of course he could still be killed in the var, but at least someone finally asked.

**SAM**

*(In shock!)*

Are talking to me?

**SADIE**

I'm talking to the vall. Vat else?

**SAM**

Ahhh...

**SADIE**

You didn't give away her real age did you?

**SAM**

What does a vall know from age?

**SADIE**

Good. But did the vall eat his supper?

**SAM**

The vall did. And it vas delicious.

**SADIE**

I'll give compliments to the chef.



*(She exits)*

**SAM**

*(back looking out the window and musing to himself. We glimpses of what he describes through the scrim.)*

If this window could look out into the future, it would see my Gussie crying to see her older sister become her younger sister. Through the window...if I squint, I can see Gertie and Jack married and the years flying by. But I can also see my Gertie having to count on her fingers to remember what age she was supposed to be. My Gussie will find a husband and have those four children that Jack promised, but when my son-in-law Jack will make a fiftieth birthday party for his wife, my Gussie will not attend. Neither will I because I'll be dead. Through this window I can see the future. Jack gone and my little Gertie in a hospital waiting to join him...

*(We also see the scene as 1941 turns to 1984 and the hospital bed comes into view with Gertie under the covers. Her sister Bea enters in a hat and a coat. At first Gertie does not see Bea and Bea gets a good look at her dying sister. Finally Bea speaks causing Gertie to turn her head toward her.)*

**BEA**

Well! I finally made it. You can't imagine the trip from Long Island. Endless. And don't even talk about the money I had to spend. This was not an easy trip to undertake. And I haven't been feeling one hundred percent myself. Let me tell you, Gertie, Brooklyn has changed so much since I left. I don't know how you people can stand the *mishogas*. I mean the noise, the traffic, the congestion...and the rudeness of the people at this God-forsaken hospital...I asked for Mrs. Wilenski and that nurse out there looked at me like I was talking Swahili. This hospital is a mess. It's enough to turn your hair grey.

**GERTIE**

*(who is grey)*

It did. Six months, Bea. Six months I've been here. And now you visit? I got old waiting.

**BEA**

How old?

**GERTIE**

What?

**BEA**

How old, Gertie? Can you remember anymore? Now that Jack is gone, do you know how old are you?

**GERTIE**

I don't have to listen to you and your ancient gripes. Jack chose me and you never got over it.

**BEA**

I was twenty years old and you were my older sister. Then boom! I was the older sister. It wasn't that he chose you, Gert. It was that you aged me. Do you know what that felt like for forty years? You turned me into a liar so that you would be seen to be telling the truth. For over forty years...

*(Gertie turns her head to the wall away from her sister. The light finds Sam looking out the window as he was at the opening of the show. The silent film black and white home movie begins again. This time it is of Bea and Gertie walking together on their street with Jack. It is that night back in 1941.)*

**SAM**

Once I had two daughters...

**BEA**

You're turning you back on your sister?

**SAM**

..and they were sisters.

**BEA**

Gert. Don't be stupid...Gertie!

*(Gertie closes her eyes and ignores her sister as the home movie shows Jack tipping his hat and walking away from the sisters. The sisters talk without a smile.)*

**SAM**

Look them. So young, but so serious. I only see them through the glass and the raindrops make a kind of prism. I can't hear what they say, but this much I know.

*(As the girls walk up the stairs to their front door, separate but as if they are in synch.)*

They are like the two girls I once saw at the beach, riding a tandem bicycle, their legs pumping like two rows of perfect stitches on a pair of pants. And I know that those sisters through a window will always be walking in tandem through the years, inseparable.

*(the movie freezes on the girls looking at each other just before they walk in the building, as the light grows brighter on Bea and Gertie in the hospital.)*

**BEA**

Gertie, I'm sorry it took me so long to visit. You don't have to punish me anymore.

*(Bea gets up from her chair and gently pulls Gertie toward her. She gasps. It is clear that her sister has died.)*

Nurse! Nurse! Oh, God. Nurse!

**SAM**

One thing I know as I see them through the dots of rain on the glass: Whatever else changes, nothing will ever change their hearts.

*(The light goes out on Gertie, then on Bea, then on Sam and grows brighter on the frozen piece of film and then Blackout.)*