

The Burdens

JANE (CONT'D)

He fought in World War II. Well, he worked a desk job. But he somehow still got shot in the leg.

He walked with a cane. His favorite had a crow carved into the handle. He called it his Jewbird Cane. Like that Bernard Malamud story.

After the war he married my Bubbie and opened a carpet store in Camden, called A to Z Carpets. I remember playing with the carpet samples when I was a kid. Magic carpet ride. The big samples for me. The small ones for my Barbies.

I was the one who started calling him Zad Zad because I had trouble saying Zaydeh. He hated it. He wanted everyone to just call him Solomon.

One Passover, my mom had started preparing the meal days before. It's this huge deal for her. I think it was the first time we ever had a Seder at our house.

Before we eat, I'm reading the Four Questions and when I ask: "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

My Zad Zad answers, without missing a beat. "Because this night we're forced to listen to a little bitch who can barely read."

And then he laughs. And my father yells. And then everyone yells. And some people cry. I cry. But I don't think I even knew what I was crying about.

I was six years old.

And that was really the last time I remember he and my father talking. Zad Zad didn't even come to Daddy's funeral.

And ever since then I vowed that I wouldn't go to his...

Expediting things.

JANE

Did you see I sent you a picture?

MORDY

Yes. Very cute.

It's not of the kids. JANE

Oh... I know. MORDY

Do you not look at the pictures I send you? JANE

I do. MORDY

(Pause.)

You send a lot of pictures.

Well, look at this one please. JANE

OK. MORDY

(He looks for and sees it.)

What is that?

What do you think it is? JANE

It looks like a shitty apartment. MORDY

That's what it is. JANE

Whose? MORDY

Are you serious? JANE

Yes. It's gross. Why were you there? MORDY

Mommy. JANE

What about her? MORDY

It's her new place. JANE

No. MORDY

Yes. JANE

I thought the new place was supposed to be nice. Just smaller. MORDY

Well this one is just smaller. JANE

Ugh. MORDY

Mordy, she can't stay there. It's scary. The kids were terrified. JANE

What's so scary about it? MORDY

It smells. JANE

It smells scary? MORDY

It smells on top of it being scary. JANE

Why did she have to move there? MORDY

She's broke. JANE

I know, but... Can't you help her? MORDY

I do help her. I give her money every month, but I have to hide it from Dave. I have to spread it out. JANE

MORDY

Why is Dave such an asshole about it?

JANE

He's not an asshole about it! We have three kids. With a fourth on the way!

MORDY

Fuck. I forgot all about that. How's that going?

JANE

My pregnancy?

MORDY

Guess so.

JANE

It's going fine, Mordy.

MORDY

I wish I could help Mommy. Maybe I'll get this song placement. Did I tell you there's a possibility that one of my songs might be used in a Charmin commercial?

JANE

No. Awesome.

MORDY

They contacted me through my website.

JANE

If you get it, I'll start buying Charmin.

MORDY

You don't gotta. It's not as if I'll get a cut.

(Beat.)

So why is Mommy so broke?

JANE

Two words.

(A weirdly long pause. Maybe Jane freezes.)

MORDY

Yes?

Two words?

Hello?

The suspense is killing me.

MORDY (CONT'D)

I'm on tenterhooks.

(Another long pause. Jane un-freezes.)

JANE

Sorry. My son needed me.

(Pause.)

What is that word?

MORDY

Tenterhooks.

JANE

Auto-correct?

MORDY

No. It means I'm in suspense. It's like, I'm on pins and needles.

JANE

I don't like it.

MORDY

Isn't it past the kids' bedtime?

JANE

They don't have a bedtime. They go to sleep when they are tired. They're not soldiers. They are people like you and me.

MORDY

I have a bedtime. I'm not a soldier. So what were the two words?

JANE

What?

MORDY

The two words that explain how broke Mommy is!

JANE

Oh. Sorry. Two words: Zad Zad.

MORDY

Well, that's really just one word, repeated.

JANE

Haha.

MORDY

Why does Zad Zad make her broke?

JANE

The Masonic Home.

MORDY

I thought that was free.

JANE

Well she had to pay to get him his own room and this private nurse.

MORDY

Why?

JANE

No one there wants to deal with him.

MORDY

Jeez.

JANE

Because he's such a fucking terror.

MORDY

God.

JANE

He's a drain on everyone.

MORDY

That sucks.

JANE

I wonder sometimes if he even appreciates it. All Mommy does for him. All we do for him.
(A long pause and then...)

MORDY

I hope he dies.

(Another long pause and then...)

JANE

Me too. I hope he dies too.

(A long beat.)