

The Orchard

A play by Yosef Bar Yosef

Translated by Binyamin Shalom

Cast of Characters:

Menashe Tsirkin	Older widower
Boaz	His older brother
Tsviya	Menashe's younger sister
Ida	An older widow and ballet instructor, from Russia
Three students	In Ida's ballet class

Location:

A sort of living room, which serves as the central room in Menashe Tsirkin's house, which is an old building in a small village. In addition to the doorway that serves as an entrance to the room and the two doors leading off to Menashe and Boaz' separate bedrooms, there is a large double door that leads out to a small backyard. The trees in the orchard brush right up against the backyard, and when the double doors are opened the orchard truly fills the house.

The time is the present, or a few years previous.

Act One

Scene One

(Towards evening. Tsviya is sitting at the table. Boaz is pacing, angrily.)

- Tsviya: Stop jumping around already!
(Boaz stops facing her, and stares at her).
- Tsviya: Fine, go ahead. Jump around.
(Boaz begins pacing again).
- Tsviya: I'm worried. How far can you go walking around here anyway? Take a look outside and see if they've returned yet. You're up anyway.
- Boaz: (stops facing her) A wife! (Begins pacing again).
- Tsviya: On the other hand – maybe it's a good sign, they're enjoying themselves. Why not? Let everything start all over anew. What a pleasure! When you get married young for the first time there are so many dreams, and there are things to do and things to buy, and you've got no energy left for life. The two of them are already taken care of, they've already done their part, they can start to really live. I don't have any problems, Chaim is healthy. I'm gonna fall asleep in another moment right here in my chair. Maybe all the same you could just go take a peek out there?
- Boaz: A wife – what's the big idea, huh? (Begins pacing again).
- Tsviya: He'll end up liking her, this Miriam, I'm sure of it. She's just what he needs. She's hard-working, thrifty, quiet, he won't even know that she's there altogether. Everything about her is just like Ruchama, God rest her soul. Even her voice sounds similar, there's something nasal about it. He won't sense any difference whatsoever. I made a mistake with that other woman, I admit it. At first – she was innocent as an infant, like a piece of cake – but in the end, what demands! A living stipend, savings, a house. She probably would have even demanded in the end that he put the orchard itself in her name. What she hadn't succeeded in obtaining in thirty-five years of marriage with her ex she wants to try to grab through a few final years with some stranger. He's a new widower, so all the women think he's like fresh-baked bread. Menashe was suspicious immediately. And he was right. It's not the property, it's the decency that counts.
- Boaz: What does he need a woman for altogether? It took forty years till Ruchama gave out. What's he need another one for all of a sudden?
- Tsviya: (Passes a finger underneath the table and turns up a thick layer of dust). Here's why. Look!
- Boaz: Who told you to go shoving your finger underneath the table?
- Tsviya: True, I just did it out of habit. Here there's no need to go looking for dust underneath the table (She passes the palm of her hand over the tabletop and it comes up full of dust). Look.
- Boaz: Let him buy a vacuum cleaner, not a wife!
- Tsviya: He needs a wife just in order to be able to survive with you underneath the same roof. To share the yoke a little bit. You're no party, Boaz, you know. You can really wear a person down.
- Boaz: What, am I also supposed to be some sort of party favor? You're supposed to wear people down, that's what they deserve.

- Tsviya: As if you'd be better with cats and dogs. To think you wanted to be a veterinarian!
- Boaz: Cats and dogs? They're just animals, and even the animals these days have become people, it's all the same! You can call them a dog, or a cow, but they already have human eyes, pleading with you: Have pity! Save me! Be my friend! Give me love!
- Tsviya: Enough Boaz. The two of you can't go on like this. And it's not going to get any better. You're not getting any younger. I can't take care of you. And a live-in isn't going to be any help either. The two of you are going to end up pretty quickly in an old-age home. You think you'll be any better off there? Miriam will be better than any old-age home out there for you too. And she's cheaper. She'd be satisfied with a small apartment and a living stipend. She's a modest woman, honest – she's one of us. Don't give me such a headache. You know how long it took me to convince him to try and find anyone at all? Half a year, that's what. The fact that he agreed altogether just goes to show more than anything else how tired he is, and how much he needs a woman.
- Boaz: I don't need any woman in the house!
- Tsviya: She's not for you, Boaz, she's for Menashe.
- Boaz: Sure, just like Ruchama. She was his wife, she was meant for him, but I was the one who suffered. He never even saw her at all, such an important guy like him, chairman of the city council. He was almost never home and the whole burden fell on me. She was cleaning up after me, dusting, even fixing the buttons on my shirts. And she would never shut her mouth.
- Tsviya: Miriam doesn't talk much at all, I told you, she's a quiet woman.
- Boaz: There too, it's just like Ruchama. She was all quiet with him, silent, fearful, but with me she sure talked. As soon as he would step foot out of the house she would start in. Anything she did she had to announce that she was going to do it first: "Now I'm going to clean the carpet... now I'm going to fry up some onions... now I'm going to scour the pots, with sand and a thin pad of steel wool..." She went on endlessly, a real hard worker!
- Tsviya: He doesn't go out anymore, he just sits at home these days, at most he goes out to entertain himself a bit in the orchard.
- Boaz: When he has a woman he'll start going out again. Sure, a married man, normal, successful, not like his older brother! But it's all a lie! He's no more normal than me, he's the real misanthrope! Where are his kids if he was really married? It wasn't her fault, that's all one big lie, he just didn't want to have any. Children grow up to be people in the end. The main thing is that he got the house and the orchard, that much is true!
- Tsviya: You're just talking nonsense, you and I also got an inheritance. Mother and father didn't play favorites.
- Boaz: Alms for the poor, that's what they handed out.
- Tsviya: Chaim and I didn't make such bad use of the money. We also worked like dogs and got somewhere. Nobody is to blame that you went and threw your money down the drain.

Boaz: It's none of your business what I did with my money. Sticking your nose in like that!... At least I didn't work like a dog.

Tsviya: That's how you look too. I look like Menashe, I'm happy to say. Now that I think about it... even my daughters look like him, they have the exact same nose.

Boaz: Really? I've got a much nicer nose. But the girls only get to look like the nose that's got an orchard, huh?

Tsviya: An orchard is a beautiful thing, and it shows.
(He suddenly looks at her, as if sniffing something out).

Tsviya: What are you doing? Staring at me all of a sudden. Sniffing around!

Boaz: A plot of land, that's what I see in your eyes, an empty lot. You want to take it from us in order to give it to your daughters! Miriam's a spendthrift, he won't need any money, he'll give it to you, and you'll go and sell it as an empty lot.

Tsviya: It's only natural, isn't it? The girls need it. He'll get married, he'll be taken care of, he won't want to work in the orchard so much anymore. He never really worked in the orchard. It's only now, because he's so lonely... When you're married you rest.

Boaz: The whole lot of you aren't gonna turn it into some empty field! You won't lay a hand on it! It's my orchard!

Tsviya: Really?

Boaz: Yeah, really. I'm gonna cut it down – me! I'll tear up the roots, that's what I'm gonna do! Tear it up by the roots, that's what!

Tsviya: What's that going to get you?

Boaz: Get me? The roots'll be on top, they'll get air, be exposed to the wind! That's what!

Boaz: They're coming back, quiet!
(Menashe walks in, looking sleepy).

Tsviya: What happened? Where is she?

Menashe: Who?

Tsviya: Her. Miriam.

Menashe: Huh.

Tsviya: What do you mean, 'huh'? Did you get in a fight or something?

Menashe: No.

Tsviya: Then where is she?

Menashe: I don't know.

Tsviya: What do you mean you don't know? You went out for a walk together, didn't you?

Menashe: Yes.

Boaz: He killed her!

Tsviya: You shut your mouth! (To Menashe) What happened to you? Where did you go?

Menashe: To the cemetery.

Boaz: He went and buried her too!

Tsviya: Why the cemetery?

Boaz: Where else? To the opera? How? Look, he's not even shaved, just like the dead, they sprout a beard, never get shaved.

Tsviya: Answer me!

Menashe: The air is clean there, they haven't sullied it yet.

Boaz: He buried her and he's already giving speeches about ecology!

Tsviya: Shut up already! (To Menashe) And then?... You went to the cemetery and then what?

Menashe: We sat down, next to Ruchama's headstone.

Tsviya: And?

Menashe: She fell asleep.

Boaz: Of course, sitting there with you!

Tsviya: And you...?

Menashe: I also fell asleep.

Tsviya: And then, when you woke up?

Boaz: He left her sleeping right there! He leaves all his women sleeping there in the cemetery!
(Menashe sits down, takes off his shoes and puts on boots).

Tsviya: You left her sleeping in the cemetery?

Menashe: I don't know, I didn't see her.

Tsviya: What do you mean you didn't see her? Was she there when you woke up or not? She fell asleep right next to you, didn't she? What do you mean you didn't see her?

Menashe: She fell asleep on the other side of the headstone.

Tsviya: And you just woke up and... and... you left? You couldn't take a look on the other side of the headstone?! That's all, just a little turn of the head, that was too much for you?! She's a human being after all, isn't she?! Are you?!
(Menashe, who is already wearing his boots, opens the double doors that lead to the orchard, and stands in the doorway, with his face to the outdoors. The orchard now appears to be lit up by the green-blue light before sunset).

Tsviya: (Gathers up her things). I'm done here. Go marry Boaz! The two of you can just sit there rotting at this huge, awful table. Go marry your orchard! For that you manage to wake up and get your boots on. You don't deserve a woman! Let the orchard take care of you! There's a limit. I also want certain things, but I'm also a human being, and I have values, I have my self-respect, with my rheumatism and all, I still do! My orchard is filled with human beings, not trees! (She turns to go and stops). You don't have to give me a thing, I'll end up with it all one way or the other at this rate! (Exits).
(The light grows dim and the orchard follows suit. Menashe sits as his head sinks down).

Boaz: (Laughs). The great hero!... Wearing his boots, going out to work in the orchard at night!... In a little while you're gonna fall asleep for real and die. You got married before me, you skipped my turn, now you're gonna go diving in headfirst and die before me too!
(Ida shows up in the orchard among the trees, trying to find her way).

Menashe: (Opening his eyes, seeing her) What?...

Boaz: What 'what'? What do you mean 'what'?

Menashe: ...A woman...
(Ida disappears among the trees).

Boaz: A woman in your head. In the cemetery. Women in the orchard that's my thing. I took Nozaha to the irrigation ditch, not you. You don't have the time, you've got to work. But I wasn't afraid of the smell. I gave her a little piece of laundry soap so she could wash up and she got

all cleaned up – not some sorry worker, but a woman, a beautiful woman, the whole season long. But you went and married Ruchama, somebody normal!

- Ida: (Turns up again amongst the trees). Is anyone home?... Hello!...
- Boaz: Answer her.
- Ida: Hello!... Is anybody home?...
- Boaz: Answer her, why aren't you answering her?
- Ida: I can hear someone... there's a house over here, isn't there?
(Boaz turns on the floodlight that is directed at the orchard).
- Ida: (Blinded by the light). Hello. My name is Ida, nice to meet you. I'm Ida, the new ballet teacher, from Russia. All these flowers are going to turn into oranges, aren't they? What a smell! Even the leaves have a scent, even the trees too, like a flower. Where are you? I can't see a thing. How do you get out of here?
(Menashe turns off the floodlight, turns on the lights in the house and remains standing off to the side).
- Ida: Thank you, thank you very much. Now I can see. Hello. (She enters the house from the orchard. Her feet are covered in mud, and she's only wearing one shoe. To Boaz) There was a hole in the fence, so I came in. I just had to, all of a sudden. I've been in Israel for a year already, and the whole time there's never any time, I'm always running around, traveling, looking for the right job. Here I am walking along in the street when suddenly I see an orchard, so close by, so beautiful. Every year my father used to buy oranges from Israel. Three of them. They were expensive. That was a long time ago, right after the revolution. They would sit on the buffet for a long time, giving off their scent. When the oranges' smell would fade, my father would peel them slowly, and we would all stand around looking at them. He would always get angry, that's the kind of person he was, a good person. When he would peel the oranges he would fill up with light, he became beautiful, happy, like he was looking at the peels and seeing the Land of Israel.
- Boaz: (Follows the mud that she keeps leaving everywhere she steps). Mud! Mud!
- Ida: Excuse me?
- Boaz: You're dirtying up the whole house with the mud.
- Ida: Yes, thank you.
- Boaz: You ruined the ditches.
- Ida: Excuse me?
- Boaz: In the orchard, the irrigation ditches, you ruined them.
- Ida: Perhaps somebody here would like to dance ballet?
- Boaz: Huh?
- Ida: Ballet. I'm a ballet teacher. We're getting a class together, then we're going to put together a troupe. The city council decided, the cultural department. That's why I was walking in the street, looking for students who want to learn ballet.
- Boaz: Here? That want to learn ballet?
- Ida: Perhaps, I don't know. Such a beautiful house, with such style, somebody must want to learn. You don't need any experience, age doesn't really matter either. We have one girl who is pregnant.

Boaz: There's nobody pregnant here.

Ida: There are no girls in the house, no woman?

Boaz: The women here are all over at the cemetery.

Ida: Ah, I see.

Boaz: No you don't.

Ida: I don't.

Boaz: So why'd you say you do?

Ida: (Desperately tries to lend some cheer). I'm so happy, such a beautiful orchard, a real one, so alive! I haven't been this happy for a long time. I can't live without happiness. Really, thank you very much.

Boaz: No need for thank you's. People say it and then go asking for something in return.

Ida: You've already given me something, with this orchard. It's yours, isn't it?

Boaz: Well... sort of... yeah...

Menashe: (Moves to the center from the corner). It's mine.

Ida: (Only notices him now and in a last attempt to lend some cheer) Oh, of course, with those boots, and those hands, the whole thing, you can tell right away... A man with an orchard! My God... Just like it ought to be, such a beautiful man, with everything! (She hugs him and kisses him). Thank you, thank you! (She turns sober, pulls away, stepping back). I'm really too tired, I think. I'm a ballet teacher, and a ballet teacher shouldn't have to go walking around from house to house to ask who wants to learn ballet, like she's selling matches. I'm not a little girl anymore. They told me: everything is going to be alright. But there's no proper studio and all they gave us was some completely soaked bomb shelter, and it was just impossible to get any work done there. I want to work so badly, that's why I came here, I came from Jerusalem. Goodbye! (She turns to go, towards the orchard).

Boaz: (Stops her). Not that way!

Ida: Right, thank you. (She can't tell which door leads out and turns to Boaz' bedroom door).

Boaz: That's my room. (He points to the front door). That way!

Ida: Thank you very much. (She starts to go, then stops). No big deal. No reason to give up hope. In the end it will be a beautiful ballet. It'll be Israel and it'll be ballet too. It's not Russia here, it's not that cold, you can even go around to the homes a little bit. In the meantime you get to see the houses. This is a beautiful house, really stylish, with a large living room. It would make a great studio. It was very nice to meet you, goodbye!
(Exits).

Boaz: Hey, who is going to clean up the mud?! (He stares at the muddy footprints on the floor). Look at the strange prints. (He opens the door and looks after Ida). She's walking along with only one shoe. She left her shoe with us. She left it out in the orchard. What are you so quiet for?!

Scene Two

(A few days later, in the afternoon, with the door to the orchard closed. Menashe is sitting at the table. He is waiting for Ida, wondering what to do with her shoe, whether to hide it or place it on the table. He hears a noise from the direction of the orchard. He gets up, with the shoe in his hand, and opens the door. Boaz walks in).

Menashe: (Hides the shoe behind his back). You!...

Boaz: Whom were you expecting? Again? How? You closed up the hole in the fence, didn't you? I just saw it. You're waiting and closing at the same time. Everything just in order to close things down. There's finally something interesting in the orchard, a hole, and he goes and closes it up. What would it bother you to leave it? She would come back again to look for her shoe, and lose another one. I'm eating myself up inside all the time: Why didn't I go follow her, to watch her walking through the streets with her one shoe? That's how a woman ought to be, with just one shoe. It warms the heart.

Menashe: You said you were going to the movies to go see some daily showing.

Boaz: How can I? With the paltry pocket change you give me? It's like you're giving money to a little kid.

Menashe: I'll give you the money, just go.

Boaz: (Spots the shoe). The shoe!... You found it!... When? Why didn't you tell me? I've been going crazy the whole day, not even going to the movies, all in order to find that shoe in the mud, and you... what are you going to do with it?

Menashe: Take the money, take some more, buy some peanuts too.

Boaz: What, do you have a fever? All because of the shoe, huh? You want to take it to the police, I know you. You'll file a complaint against her, she entered your orchard. Just like with Nozaha – you took pity on her when it came to having anything to do with her, but you didn't have any pity when it came to firing her.

Menashe: I'm going to give her back her shoe.

Boaz: Why give it back to her? Sure, she bought you off. She said to you: What an orchard! What a smell! Everyone laughs at this orchard. Even you yourself can't believe it, you just stand there staring at it the whole day. I've seen you.

Menashe: Go already.

Boaz: How are you going to get it back to her? You're gonna walk the whole way with the shoe? Menashe Tsirkin, such an important man, a real personality, a real heavyweight, walking around... with a shoe like that? A ballet instructor's shoe?

Menashe: She's going to be here in a little bit. Now just go to the movies.

Boaz: What do you mean she's going to be here? Who gave her the right?

Menashe: I invited her. Enough Boaz!

Boaz: What do you mean, you invited her? I don't want to go to the movies, I want to see this. I'll help you out. We'll stand against her together. It'll be good. Me and you, just the two of us.

Menashe: Go already!

Boaz: Where should I go? The movie started already. You should have given me the money earlier.

Menashe: I don't care where you go, walk around the streets, just leave!

Boaz: I should walk the streets, sure. Did you forget, huh? What did you promise mother, huh? Before she died, what did she ask you? To treat me nicely, and you promised her, just before she died.

Menashe: (Quietly) Go to your room.

Boaz: (Turns to go to his room, then stops and says quietly, insulted) "Go to your room!..." That's the best you can do after I remind you of mother, that's the greatest display you can come up with of treating me nicely. "Go to your room!..." Without even shouting, like I'm less than a dog. And I hear you and I leave. What am I, your kid? Funding me, sure, taking care of me!... Take care of your kids instead. Who prevented you from making kids yourself? One time I'm going to leave you and then you'll see. What are you going to do without me? How are you going to be so smart? How are you going to feel your own importance? How are you going to stay normal? Every day you get up and look at me and you say to yourself: I'm not Boaz, not me! And then you breathe deeply, you can breathe again. Without me around you would choke yourself to death, you'd die in an instant. That's right! Just tell me to "Go to your room" one more time, just like that, quietly, and I'm not gonna leave, that's right!... One time, you'll see! (A knock at the door).

Menashe: (Quietly) Go to your room.

Boaz: Shh... quietly! It's her, don't do this to me in front of her! I'm leaving, fine.
(Boaz exits, and there is another knock at the door. Menashe sits down at the table).

Menashe: Come in.

Ida: (Enters). Hello!

Menashe: (Offhandedly) Hello.

Ida: (Turns her whole body to face the orchard, stares at it, then gets a hold of herself and turns to him). Sorry, the orchard... it's even more beautiful now, in the sun, so green!...

Menashe: The orchard's green.

Ida: Sorry?

Menashe: There's no such thing as a blue orchard.

Ida: Sure, of course, I just meant that it's so green, so... Even inside the air is full of color, like lemonade. (Brief silence). You shaved off your moustache too, didn't you?

Menashe: Excuse me?

Ida: The moustache on the house, the one that was climbing up around the door outside. I saw it when I left the last time.

Menashe: (Looks at his papers). Just a moment, okay?

Ida: Sure, sorry, I talk too much. You called me, you wanted to talk to me, but in the end I'm the one doing all the talking. There I go again, sorry. That's how I am. My mother used to say that I was like a cage full of flies. (Brief silence). May I sit down?

Menashe: (Together with her). Please do.

Ida: Excuse me? Sure, of course, right, sorry, thanks. (She sits).
(Menashe gets up from the table, walks around the room behind her back. Silence).

- Ida: (She turns her head around from time to time, trying to catch his eye as she talks). I almost fainted when they told me that you had invited me, to talk to me. I'm new here, I don't know a single soul, just some clerk at the city council, and suddenly... The most famous man in the whole place! I already dreamt about your orchard at night. It was funny. In the dream the orchard was in Russia, at my mother and father's house. There were ducks and feathers flying through the air, everything all at once, it was a real pogrom.
- Menashe: (Sits down in his chair at the table). I don't have a lot of time.
- Ida: Sure, of course. Sorry.
- Menashe: (Without looking at her, having difficulty saying what he wants to say). So, you see... I made a few inquiries, that thing you said about the drenched bomb shelter that they gave you. It's true, you can't work there.
- Ida: I don't lie.
- Menashe: I never said you did. I'm not here to defend the city council either. I know them well, but I also know the people that live here. In this case you didn't even have to exaggerate. I found out something even worse. It turns out that they're even paying you for nothing. Sure, public funds, who cares.
- Ida: I didn't want it. I'm sorry, I...
- Menashe: I didn't say it was your fault. You want to work, you really want to, I'm convinced of that. It's them that I'm angry with!
- Ida: I understand, sorry. I just got scared at the anger.
- Menashe: On the one hand they're paying you for nothing and on the other hand they're not letting you... work, yes, if we can call it that.
- Ida: Excuse me?
- Menashe: Nothing, it's not your fault. There are other people that don't want to work at anything at all. At least you want to work at something. When it comes to the students too, they should have taken care of that. They shouldn't make you go running around from house to house like a... like a matchbook salesgirl, yeah. What I wanted to say to you is this... (having difficulty) That's also why I invited you, you see... (angrily) You never studied engineering, huh?!
- Ida: Excuse me?
- Menashe: Women study engineering in Russia, don't they? Mechanical Engineering, even Metallurgy. Real work, real hard work!
- Ida: No, I studied ballet.
- Menashe: Israel needs engineers, not ballet, she has to be able to get her own bread out of the ground, that's it, the bread comes first! You've got to work hard, spend wisely, stay quiet! (He gets up from the table, stands behind her).
- Ida: I'm sorry. That's all I know, ballet, and not much at that. (She gets up). My husband was an engineer. He was a little too much of a communist. In the end they didn't even let him work. Nothing helped, no one could do anything for him, all his friends were engineers. He began drinking vodka. He froze in the snow. I thought it was just a pile of snow, in the morning, when I went out of the house, there on the sidewalk. An engineer, right.
- Menashe: (From behind) Sit, please!

Ida: Are you done? (to herself:) Don't give up. Even in Russia there are all different types of people.

Menashe: I'm not done yet!
(Ida remains standing for a moment, as though considering something, then sits down).
(Standing/pacing behind her). Now listen!...

Ida: I'm not a horse.

Menashe: Excuse me?

Ida: A horse, you talk to a horse from behind its back.

Menashe: (Taken aback for a moment, then returns to his spot, and says in a single breath) It's not because of the ballet, it's just because of all the efforts you made to try to get some money for nothing!... And it's only on the condition that nothing changes in the house, you've got to arrange the room just like it was beforehand!... There's no one to clean up, there's no woman in the house, I'm a widower, you understand?!

Ida: No, not a thing.
(Boaz peeks in from his room).

Menashe: And I have a brother too, a sort of brother, a... you understand?

Boaz: No, not a word. I'm leaving, I'm gone. (Exits and returns).

Ida: I don't follow a single word.

Menashe: (Still doesn't say what he wants to. Angrily) Here, your shoe. Many years ago a group of young girls came by. They were new in the country and they worked on the road, in the fields, like the young men, real backbreaking work. They were given old work shoes, shoes that were left over by the Egyptian workers in the British army. Their little, delicate feet were covered by those shoes left over by the Egyptian workers, you understand?... They were always losing them in the mud. Here, take your shoe!

Ida: Thank you very much. It was worth coming here. (She gets up).

Menashe: I'm not done yet. That's not why I called you. I'm not that much of an idiot. You don't have a place for your ballet, right? I'm offering you this room, you can give your ballet lessons here, until the city council arranges some suitable location for you. Three times a week, no more, and only for an hour each time!... And you've got to put everything back the way it was every time!...

Ida: (Completely shocked, gets up, does a turn around the room). My God, I can't believe it!... The whole room, with the orchard!... Thank you so much, you!...

Menashe: (Towards Boaz) Thank him! It's because of him! So I don't have to be all alone with him for an entire twenty-four hours!

Ida: (Kisses a shocked Boaz on the cheek) You're such a sweetheart!

Scene Three

(A few days later, in the afternoon. The door to the orchard is open. The sun is out. The table and chairs are on the side, in disarray. Ida and three students are in the midst of a ballet lesson. Boaz and Menashe are peeking in).

Ida: One two three four and... not like that! Give it some soul! From deep inside!... Elevate! Don't jump! Don't fly off! I flew, I flew, sure, but in the end you just jumped. We're not birds, we're merely human beings. Trying to fly like birds we end up looking like cows. It's not enough to have soul, you've got to have discipline. (Towards the orchard) Here, take a look at the orchard, not at me, I'm not an orchard! See the trees, their branches, the way they climb out slowly, from inside, not jumping everywhere! The next lesson we'll do a better job. (Students say: 'Goodbye', 'See you', and leave. Menashe enters from his room).

(She addresses him, but tiredly, as though not talking to him, but to herself) This isn't ballet, it's a comedy, it's a disgrace, so unprofessional. I'm just fooling them and fooling myself too. There's no talent, that's the whole thing. Either there's too much soul or none at all. And that stomach. At night I can't fall asleep, I'm busy making plans, everything always looks so rosy, but now by daylight – it's like everything just goes black. What do I need this for? I could just stay in Jerusalem. Without ballet, so what? There I've got my friends, I've got concerts, who said I need ballet? I need to get some sleep. (She turns to go and stops, addresses the orchard) Maybe it's his fault, so beautiful and all, at night, during the day, I take one look at him and I remember my father, I remember myself. What dreams, what ambitions! Everything always so out of proportion. (She walks outside).

(Menashe stares angrily at the furniture that has been pushed to the side).

Boaz: What happened? Oh, the table, the chairs, that's no big deal, she'll be back in a moment just like the last time. She forgot and came back, set everything straight. What, you can't ever forget anything? I'll take care of it, it's fine.

Menashe: Don't touch it.

Boaz: And if it's all topsy-turvy, so what? Look, what a pleasure, like before Passover, a real revolution!

Menashe: If you don't shut up!...

Ida: (Enters and addresses Menashe) Sorry, I apologize, I forgot to say goodbye. I also talked to you as if you weren't really there. Just tired today. Forgive me. Bye. (To Boaz) You too. (She turns to go, and stops). Yes? You've got this look. Like I forgot something else. Whenever you look at me it's like you're trying to tell me I forgot something. Like you're my memory. I say such stupid things. (She walks out).

Menashe: That's what she forgot, huh, to say goodbye!...

Boaz: I'll go get her.

Menashe: Don't move!

- Boaz: For once I agree that there should be a woman in the house and you've got to be against it.
- Ida: (Returns, starts to straighten up immediately, putting the table and chairs back in the center of the room). Sorry, I forgot, I'm so sorry, I'm really so embarrassed, you're such a kind person, and I... Oh, how I promised you! I woke up in the middle of the night, and I said to myself: Today, Ida, you're not going to forget, no way! I've got no head on my shoulders, it's all stuffed with straw, everything's a mess, that's my real home address, not Russia, not Israel, just this big mess, like a home address!...
(Menashe moves/shoves the table and chairs back over to the side).
No, you don't have to help me, I'll straighten up by myself.
- Menashe: I'm not helping you, I'm not straightening up, just the opposite, I want it all just the way it was!
- Ida: (Understands). No, I'll straighten up, I'm straightening up now...
- Menashe: That's not called straightening up! Every time I have to wait for some miracle to take place so that you suddenly remember and, wham, you're back! That's called playing coy! And I hate coyness. I couldn't fall asleep last night, you understand? (He hands her a chair). Please, sit down, we'll have a little talk now, we'll get it all over with.
- Boaz: I know you!...
- Menashe: (To Boaz) Go to your room.
- Boaz: You invited her, didn't you? You can't invite her over and throw her out.
- Menashe: Go to your room.
- Boaz: (Quietly) Don't do that to me in front of her. (Exits).
(Ida sits down. Menashe paces back and forth. Ida gets up, wants to bring him a chair).
- Menashe: I said sit down... please!...
- Ida: I just... I can't stand to see the way you're suffering so much. It's my fault, and in the end I'm the one sitting down and you're... sit down at least.
- Menashe: I don't want to sit down! I want to suffer! Are you completely incapable of just sitting there silently for a second? (He grabs hold of her shoulders in order to sit her down, but doesn't and remains standing there holding her by the shoulders). It's not the table and chairs, don't you understand? It's the principle, it's your responsibility! If somebody makes a mess, they have to straighten up afterwards. I let you use this space on the condition that you would straighten up. That's your most elementary responsibility! It's where your decency is at stake! A person has to stand behind their word. Here's this orchard that you like to talk about so much, take a good look at it: you have to give it water, fertilizer, hard work, and then it gives fruit, it doesn't forget and come back asking to be forgiven. It stands behind its word and fulfills its promise faithfully, honestly, and... (He falls silent, realizes that he is still holding her, and lets go, sort of staring at his own hands).
(Ida begins to laugh softly, silently, satisfiedly to herself).
- Menashe: What are you laughing about?

- Ida: My husband – he was also one of those guys who used to get angry a lot. The way he used to rant about the party, and the way he loved it too! You're really like my memory.
- Menashe: I didn't fall asleep the entire night, don't you see? It's not a laughing matter! I had a wife who kept things in order, a real hard-working woman, thrifty, quiet, she didn't even bother me with children, the house was always quiet, and I slept well at night, you hear? I never even sensed she was there, for forty years, you follow? I had time for my work. This house was dead. I don't know who you are, you didn't come with any recommendations. You're always jumping around, you never stop talking, you're like some peacock!
- Ida: (Perhaps beginning while he is still talking). I don't know what's going on with me. I'm so silly, with my ballet!... What do I want from them? The Bolshoi? I forced them to drag themselves out to this class, didn't I? I can't live without ballet, not me!...
- Menashe: I'm not some little kid, there are principles that must be honored in this world, principles you've got to live by. I can't suddenly transform myself, you can't just fall in the end like a bear into the entire honey-pot, all at once like that! What are you laughing at?
- Ida: I don't know, a bear, honey – you smell so nice, so nice!...
(They hold each other's hands and draw close. Silence).
- Boaz: (Comes in, approaches). What are you doing?! What are the two of you doing?!
- Ida: I knew it, I knew it! I've got love! I've got love! The Land of Israel and no love? A man like that with an orchard!
- Menashe: (Doesn't know what to do with her, or with himself, finally he bends down in front of her and points to her to get on his back). Get on!
(She gets on his back and he jumps around, galloping with her on his back. Boaz hoots and falls silent, in shock.)

Scene Four

(A few days later. The door to the orchard is open and the sun is out. The table and chairs are off to the side, in disarray, Boaz is standing facing Tsviya, talking to her. She is sitting on one of the chairs off to the side. She isn't entirely listening to him, but sits staring out at the orchard. Ida and her students appear every now and then among the trees, and you can hear their occasional laughter, Ida's above all).

Boaz: (Addresses the hat in his hands) Look, this hat!...

Tsviya: What?

Boaz: You don't see? The hat!

Tsviya: The hat, yes.

Boaz: The hat?... It's not just a hat, it's... what a hat! It's what some painter in Paris might wear – that's what she said – it suits him. She bought it for him in the flea market. Don't you get it?! Him, Menashe Tsirkin, with a hat like that out in the street, on his head!... What are you looking at?

Tsviya: (Addresses the orchard, as Ida's laughter is heard) What does she find so funny out there? She's laughing the entire time. You might think the trees were telling her jokes. We're the ones who ought to be laughing – what a farce!... What's happened to him? A practical man like him, with both feet on the ground, real solid stock, a straight-shooter, what's all this twisted stuff about all of a sudden?

Boaz: That's what I've been trying to explain to you the entire time, he's gone mad! That's nothing. You wouldn't believe it if I told you everything: she soaps up his back, they get into the bathtub together, I've heard them. Don't you get it? Together, in the bathtub, like it's some irrigation pool out in the orchard. And he went to Tel Aviv with her to the opera.

Tsviya: You're not making any sense to me, you're just getting all worked up and screaming.

Boaz: Because you're not following.

Tsvika: You're no great saint, but you've got the psychology of one. You're too emotional, you're not practical enough. That hat, his back, the opera, that doesn't help me at all.

Boaz: What would help you? We've got to do something. This entire house, the orchard, everything is drowning, screaming: rescue me! Maybe we should talk to her, we should explain to her that... we'll badmouth him a bit, tell her things about him.

Tsviya: Don't cross the line, Boaz.

Boaz: Fine, that's not what I meant. So what, then?

Tsviya: Let's try all the same to remember: are you sure? They haven't talked about any agreement? She doesn't want anything at all – a stipend, a little place of her own?

Boaz: Again with that!... This isn't one of your matchmaking trips, this is something else altogether.

Tsviya: A woman at her age has to worry about her future. And certainly someone like her, who has nothing. It's only natural.

Boaz: There are all different types of 'natural'. She's a different sort altogether, that's the thing. She's the most dangerous type. She even

managed to deceive me in the beginning. I was all for her – you know that? I can't even believe it myself. I wouldn't let him throw her out. I went and found her shoe for her. I went looking for it the whole night long, yessir. I get the shakes just thinking about it. I thought to myself: somebody like her, from Russia, with the whole revolution, might be interesting, but then: she's a woman! Same story! And what's worse: it's real love, good God! I haven't been able to asleep for nights on end. I'll never forgive her for this.

- Tsviya: Let's try and be a little practical, Boaz, don't go getting all poetic. What do you mean she hasn't asked for anything? They've talked about a wedding, haven't they?
- Boaz: There you go again! They're not talking about any wedding, that's just the thing!
- Tsviya: So what do they talk about then?
- Boaz: How should I know? What do they talk about!... They... what does water talk about? What do frogs talk about? They talk – about Russia, about Israel, about ballet, and... and the orchard. That's the main thing, you get it? A real orchard-owners' association. He and the orchard are one and the same. He's just as beautiful as, just as strong as, smells the same as... the orchard, oy!...
- Tsviya: Wonderful.
- Boaz: Wonderful?! He's going to give her everything, not some little apartment, not some stipend. He's even going to give her... the whole lot! Don't you get it? She doesn't need to ask him for it. It's enough that she just gets a whiff of it. Her nose is the best agreement there is. The kind of nose that goes around sniffing out orchards: "Ah!..." He's also doing it now, everything is: "Ooh!..." The two of them together are like some sort of chorus of Ooh's and Ah's. They don't say a word, just "Ooh" and "Ah". But somewhere between the "Ooh" and the "Ah" it's all slipping through our hands.
- Tsviya: That's wonderful.
- Boaz: Shh... quiet now! He'll hear you! That's all we need now, for him to hear you saying how wonderful it all is.
- Tsviya: It's really wonderful.
- Boaz: Again? You still don't get it?!
- Tsviya: Why not? Let him hear me, on the contrary. It's really wonderful, it's... yes, it's almost too wonderful, a little too wonderful to be true. It's suspicious – it's worse than that. The poison gets to you through the reddest apple in the bunch, that's what they always said in our family.
- Boaz: (Stares at her in silence for a moment, digests what she said, and then says happily) I get it, yes, I get it, sure! That's it, turn him right around! Tell him: Wonderful, just wonderful, a bright red apple, let him take a bite, till he gets to the very poison itself! I like the sound of it! There's nothing to say, you're a real professional! I knew whom to call on, huh?
- Tsviya: Whom else could you call? Who is left? Afterwards, if everything works out, you're going to start bothering me, huh? It's mine, I want to cut it down, with my own two hands!...

- Boaz: No, what are you talking about, you also deserve a piece, you and your daughters, sure, they've got the same nose! We can talk about that afterwards, it doesn't matter, right now we have to get the orchard out from under her nose! (Feverishly) How are you going to do it? What are you going to tell him exactly? Tell me!...
- Tsviya: I don't know. It isn't simple, talking to the water, the birds!...
- Boaz: What birds? I said frogs.
- Tsviya: We'll see, we'll find something. I have to, for his own good. We have to keep him away from her. Miriam is a woman for him. She's not even angry at him. He leaves her sleeping in a cemetery and she, on the contrary, still goes ahead and says: he's a quiet guy, gentle. She's a brave woman, she woke up, found herself in a strange cemetery, it's already almost nighttime, and that's all, nothing, she just got up and went to get the bus.
- Boaz: (Still in a fever) All the same, try and think: how are you going to do it, what?...
- Tsviya: (Wearily, as though nodding off) Just like Chaim, every night he asks me: what are you going to cook tomorrow? It's annoying. It takes all the element of surprise out of life. How many surprises do I have left after all? Soon I'm also going to want love, I'll start to laugh, maybe even dance ballet. I didn't take a nap this afternoon, my head is spinning.
- Boaz: Tell me something!...
- Tsviya: That laugh of hers... there are women like that, we've got everything and they're the ones laughing. You might just think that the orchard is already hers. My daughters played hide-and-seek among the trees when Mother and Father were still alive. Naomi, she has a poetic sense – once she peeled an orange and she suddenly caught its scent and shouted: Oh, Grandpa! Let her laugh, I'm not missing out on anything. It's just this rheumatism all of a sudden, they're sending me off to the hospital to do a biopsy, for the second time now. You can't even depend on rheumatism. It's nothing, though, they just want to be sure. I'm beginning to despise this orchard. It's beautiful, there's nothing to say. I want to go to sleep.
- Boaz: You're not hearing me. Are you sleeping, dreaming, or what?
- Tsviya: Yes.
- Boaz: What?...
- Tsviya: Yesterday evening, after you called, after you told me about her, I dreamt that I was coming to the house to die.
- Boaz: You've gone completely nuts.
- Tsviya: (Continues to tell the story of the dream). I walk into the house and Father and Mother are home. They don't pay any attention to me, they're busy, as usual. So I say to them: But I came home to die. So then they turn to me and they're happy and laughing and Father even kisses me on the head. It was so pleasant. It wasn't frightening at all. Of course, it wasn't real. When were they ever happy, when did they ever laugh at home? When did Father ever kiss me? It was just silly and pleasant like that.

(Ida and the students appear once more among the trees of the orchard, and their laughter is heard. Tsviya stares at them with her entire being).

Boaz: What happened to you?

Tsviya: (Gets up, gathers her things). I'm going home. This isn't my home, not this, no!... Let him go crazy, let him do what he wants, he's enjoying himself, let him enjoy. It doesn't interest me, how is this whole orchard going to help me anyway?

Boaz: Have you lost your mind? What do you mean? No!...

Tsviya: Dreams all of a sudden, laughter. Enough! In my house nobody laughs all of a sudden like that, there's security in my house. I've got a house of my own, I've got a husband, I have my daughters.

Boaz: I don't get it. You'll do it, I'm sure of it, you know just how!..

Tsviya: That's not true, I'm not some evil bitch. I don't deserve it, I've only barely begun to live. Bitch – bitch!... What do I get out of it in the end? Spoiled girls with demands, so what kind of bitch am I after all? I won't spoil it for him, either. Let him have his fun. I'm leaving.

Boaz: If you go, the whole thing is lost.

Tsviya: My head is spinning, I don't like it. (Suddenly feels weak).

Boaz: Great! Sit down and rest, it'll pass, he'll be back any minute, then you can talk with him.

Tsviya: I don't want to spoil it for him.

Boaz: Fine, fine, but you'll do something.

Tsviya: No, not me.

Menashe: (Comes in from outdoors, and addresses Tsviya energetically, in a good mood). Look, look, of course, the cavalry has arrived – hello there!

(Tsviya does not reply, gets up, stares at him, is shocked by how good he looks, how positive he is).

Menashe: What, you won't salute the enemy? What are you staring at?

Tsviya: Nothing, I'm leaving. Goodbye. (She sinks down).

Menashe: As usual – she's leaving but she's already sitting down. Why be simple and direct when you can twist things around, huh?

Tsviya: (Gets up). No, I'm leaving. My head is spinning all of sudden, as if I fainted. You look good.

Menashe: That's a good reason for you to faint, sure. (Sits her down). Sit, sit quietly. (Towards his hat on the table) I see, you got a full report, right down to the hat. The opera, the... a... yeah, that too, of course. (Sits down next to her). You got here quickly – in our family the dead are much quicker than the living.

Tsviya: Who is dead? I didn't even...

Menashe: You're their lawyer, aren't you? Ruchama, Father and Mother, may they rest in peace – they're all your clients. I'm disgracing them, and myself too. (To Boaz) Isn't that right? Isn't it? (To Tsviya) Suddenly he's guarding my honor, free of charge. Come on, let's hear what you've got to say to, go ahead!

(Tsviya cries silently).

What's that supposed to be?

- Tsviya: I don't know. I'm sorry. I'm happy, I think. When I remember how you looked the last time. It's like you've come back from the dead. I'm happy to see you like that, at least you're healthy.
- Menashe: Sounds a little too good, a little too nice.
(Ida and her students appear once more among the trees in the orchard. Ida sees Menashe and enters at a run).
- Ida: Menashe! (She embraces him).
(He is uncomfortable in Tsviya's presence).
What?...
- Menashe: Nothing. Meet my sister, Tsviya.
- Ida: We met already. She's very sweet.
- Tsviya: You too. Thank you.
- Ida: (Fixing Ida's collar). Sorry, your collar.
- Tsviya: Thank you.
- Ida: (Addresses Menashe, with her hands on his shoulder). You came just in time. We've started something new. I got an idea for a ballet, something really wonderful. It's all thanks to you. You gave it to me.
- Menashe: Me?
- Ida: Last night I was lying in bed and I was thinking of you and I felt so good and suddenly it popped into my head: The Dance of the Orchard!...
(The students appear in the orchard in the doorway, or perhaps they even enter, dancing, and Tsviya turns to them).
- Student 1: (Laughing). I'm an orange tree!
- Student 2: I'm grapefruits!
- Student 3: I'm a mandarin!
- Ida: Let me talk. (To Menashe) We still don't know what we're going to do, we just got started today. First we need some more information, you've got to help us out.
(Menashe is shocked and shy. The students turn to the side meanwhile, still dancing, and Tsviya walks behind them, as if spellbound).
- Ida: Menashe!...
(He lifts his face to hers).
- Ida: What?... The way you're looking at me!... What happened? Tell me...
- Menashe: (With an effort, with difficulty) Ballet and the orchard!... It's too much, no? It's a joke, isn't it? I'm an orange tree, I'm a grapefruit, I'm a mandarin!...
- Ida: That's just the start, I told you. We're still searching. In the end it will come out beautifully, it has to, that's what we need you for.
- Menashe: Do what you want, I don't understand anything about it. Just do it without me, okay? I'll give you some written material.
- Boaz: (Tries to separate Tsviya from the dancing students). What are you doing, come, listen.
(Tsviya remains with the students).
- Ida: I want to do the dance of this orchard here. It's special, you said so yourself, such large trees, with so many branches, you can barely pass through.
- Menashe: (Though he tries to contradict her he is flattered and there is a certain hidden pride in his words). It's too full, too crowded, I ought to have

thinned it out some time ago, uprooted about half the trees. I didn't have the heart, I couldn't... it's just been neglected. The machines can't pass through. I have to keep working it using the most primitive methods out there. I still pull out the weeds by hand, with my father's hoe. Then I turn the soil over by hand afterwards too. And who still irrigates using ditches, dug with his own bare hands? And when it comes to harvest time? The trees are packed together so tightly and so high up that you can't even get in there with a ladder, you just have to climb up the trees like a monkey in order to pick the fruit. It's not economical, it's just madness, this orchard died a long time ago, I just... you see?...

- Ida: (To her students). Listen, listen good!
(Menashe turns to them angrily, he is speechless from anger).
What happened?
- Menashe: I was telling you in order to explain why I'm saying "no", but you're twisting it around as though I said "yes". (He raises a chair to her height). That's enough now. Enough! (He puts the chair down).
- Ida: (To Menashe) I'm sorry. (To the students) Come on, girls. Another time.
(Ida and the students go out into the orchard).
- Menashe: (To Tsviya). Now you're enjoying yourself, huh? I won't give it to you! (He waves the chair around in the air like before). Old man! Stupid old man! Be strong!... To be stupid, sure, then I've got enough strength, to be a stupid old man, yeah, for that I've got strength. My whole life I've been a stupid old man, that's what. I had the strength to live with Ruchama, to keep Boaz with me. For their sake I was able to overcome myself, to vanquish myself, but not for her? I can eat gravel, chew on glass, sure. But I can't taste the honey? Why shouldn't she make a ballet out of the orchard? I can go around turning the soil over with my hands, which is complete madness, but she's not allowed to perform its dance? Let her do her ballet! She puts her entire soul into that ballet.
(Tsviya sits down, cries).
- Menashe: Again?
- Tsviya: I don't know what's happening to me. I so wanted to learn ballet when I was a little girl and they didn't let me. They laughed. Now there's ballet here in this house, and you... everything that you're saying, health is spilling out of every nook and cranny here, health, and beauty and brains. I want to go home. Let me go, Menashe. It's true, I came to spoil it for you. I came to ruin things and cast my curse, but in the end I just want to give you my blessing: Mazal Tov! That's all.
- Menashe: That sounds too good to be true, a little too pretty. It's suspicious – it's worse than that.
- Tsviya: (Has already stopped crying, has forgotten her tears). Sometimes miracles happen, right? You had a miracle happen to you, right? Her too, a woman like that, it's a miracle, isn't it?
- Menashe: What do you want to say with that? What do you have to be suspicious about with her?
- Tsviya: I didn't say suspicious, I just said it was a miracle. I can also have a miracle happen to me, can't I? I'm allowed too. (Cries again). Oh no,

not again! Don't pay any attention to me, you should just be healthy, be happy, you should at least. The poison comes inside the red apple, but it also arrives hidden in rheumatism. An apple is better at that point. And with ballet, what's more. You should just have the sense to enjoy yourself, nothing else matters, nothing at all!

Menashe: What poison are you talking about? What doesn't matter?

Tsviya: Nothing at all.

Menashe: What do you mean nothing at all?

Tsviya: There's no 'what do you mean', there's just nothing at all. Nothing is nothing, isn't it?

Menashe: Not with you. With you nothing is something, two or three times over.

Tsviya: That's idiotic, isn't it? Finally I want to do something good, I want to wish you good luck and you... you found an interesting woman, a brave woman, a woman straight out of the fairy tales, full of life and love – and a ballet teacher at that – she loves you, she loves the orchard that you are enamored of, the whole thing, and you keep digging and digging and prying away...

Menashe: (Laughs). Finally, the cat is out of the bag. What's that got to do with it... that she loves the orchard?

Tsviya: What do you need it for, Menashe?

Menashe: No reason, I'm amusing myself.

Tsviya: Amusing yourself!... I never heard you use a word like that before. Like a new pair of shoes, God bless.

Menashe: Answer me, what's the connection?

Tsviya: I just said it like that, for no reason. Other women in her situation have an entire other set of things on their minds – money, a house, security, do I need to tell you? Not that there's anything wrong with that, it's natural. It's good to know where you stand, too, without any last-minute surprises. But it doesn't make any difference, it's also good not to know. It doesn't matter, nothing matters, nothing at all, just health, just life!... (She starts to cry again). Why do I have to cry when I'm being kind? As though being kind is like slicing onions.

Menashe: What last-minute surprises? Answer me!...

Tsviya: What do you want from me, Menashe? Open your eyes, look, you don't see?

Menashe: What am I supposed to be seeing? What surprises is she preparing for me in your opinion? At the last minute!... What does she intend to ask me for, in your opinion?

Tsviya: It doesn't matter, it really doesn't matter, whether she asks for it now or asks for it later, you should give it all!... You're alive, you're healthy, so give, give the orchard away too, give it all, give it away!...

Menashe: (Laughs). That's what you wanted to say to me the entire time, huh?

At the last minute, the orchard, the whole lot!... (Kisses her on her head). Your dirty little mind!...

(His kiss freezes her, she stops crying, and stares at him).

Menashe: What are you looking at? That's not it?

Tsviya: (Cries again, this time truly wailing). I'm afraid, Menashe. I don't want to have that illness. They're doing a biopsy, you understand? For the second time! I'm afraid.

- Menashe: (Laughs over her tears). Your dirty little mind!... She hasn't even thought of asking me for anything. Certainly not money, and nothing else either. She never even mentioned a wedding. I'm going to ask her to marry me. I'm going to ask her on my knees. And I'm going to put everything I have in her name, too, including the orchard. Since she's not asking for anything I'm going to give her the whole lot, that's right!... (He stops, goes back and repeats himself slowly and quietly, out of a moment of hesitation and as if to hear the thing once more, in order to understand it). Yes, since she's not asking for anything at all I'm going to give her everything... because she's not... because she... no, what are you trying to say here?
(Tsviya has walked out in the meantime. He didn't notice and keeps talking to her as if she is there).
(Angrily now). No! She's not not asking me for anything in order that I should give it to her – that's what you're saying. Your dirty little mind!... I don't want to hear you, I don't want to see you! Get out of this house! Where are you? (Goes out after her).
- Boaz: The apple is starting to work. And here I was getting afraid, how afraid I was! She really turned kind all of a sudden, she lost her mind, for real: give it to her, enjoy!... I don't want to ruin it for you!... What a stroke of luck! Pure evil – as bitchy as possible, on purpose, she wouldn't have had as much success. What a piece of work, splendid! And it came off naturally, looked real, precisely because she didn't want to! Keep on like that, be kind, all of you. Don't spoil anything, it'll all work out, in the end it'll all work out!

Act Two

Scene One

(It is the late afternoon. The ballet lesson is almost over. The students are dancing. Ida is seated, tired, staring at the large stomach of Student 1).

Student 1: (To Ida) How is it coming out now? It's pretty right?

Ida: Sorry? Yes.

Student 1: I also think so. It's really pretty, right?

Ida: Yes.

Student 1: It's interesting, I also feel it, it's really wonderful now, right?

Ida: Yes, thanks so much.

Student 1: Excuse me?

(Ida touches her stomach).

What?...

Ida: Nothing, goodbye. See you.

Student 1: We're done?

Ida: Yes.

(The students say: 'Goodbye', 'See you', and exit. Menashe arrives from the orchard and enters the backyard, with a bunch of pruned branches. Ida goes out into the backyard as well. Menashe stares at her without saying a word).

Ida: Oh, Menashe. How could I have missed you? Hi, how are you?

Menashe: How are you? How was the lesson?

Ida: Good, very good. No it wasn't good, it was terrible. It was absolutely horrible. The whole ballet... I keep telling them: beautiful! Great! Wonderful! They keep asking me for it and I keep giving it to them. Everyone's enjoying themselves, just poor art is suffering. Such small-mindedness! She's got a child in her stomach, you can already see the little thing breathing quietly inside there, something real, simple, good, and she... what does she need ballet for? And a ballet like this. It's coming out like a caricature. Yes, like a cow. The topic is too nice, too pretty. I've had it, I'm bored, I feel like throwing back a vodka. And I hate vodka. What should I do?

(Menashe is not entirely listening to her, he is troubled, busy with the pruned branches, one of which pricks him).

Ida: What's that? You got cut...

Menashe: It's nothing.

Ida: Did I say something wrong? Oh, I'm sorry, I probably talked about the orchard again. I promised you I wouldn't.

Menashe: You didn't talk about the orchard, and I didn't ask you not to talk about it either. Don't make a mockery of me.

Ida: You asked me not to talk about it too much. Oh, your entire hand is full of blood. (Takes his hand). The whole thorn is under the skin. Come, I'll get it out.

Menashe: There's no need. You get pricked a lot working with lemons. I'm used to it.

Ida: What do you mean? The thorns get under your skin and you don't take them out? (She looks at his hand). No? All those black spots?... I saw them, didn't know what they were. It's all thorns in your hands?

Menashe: It's nothing.

Ida: You're like a tree, you're like a tree right out of your own orchard. Sorry, I said it again... no, it doesn't matter, I don't know what's gotten into me, it just clings to me, it... every day I just have to say it: the... sorry, I almost said it again. You smell good but you... What's bothering you? Did something happen?

Menashe: It's nothing.

Ida: When you say it's nothing then I know: it's not nothing at all. What happened? You're soaked, how could I have missed that? I'm missing everything today. Did another pipe burst? Yes, that must be it. And me, silly girl that I am, I'm here filling your head with all my foolishness – ballet. What day is it today?

Menashe: No pipe burst! There are no pipes in the orchard, didn't I tell you already? You don't listen? It's a ditch!

Ida: Sorry?

Menashe: One of the ditches burst, the irrigation ditch.

Ida: Right, I forgot. You weren't able to shut it off.

Menashe: I could, of course I could, I just didn't. The water flowed, it ruined all the ditches, they all flooded, whole gallons of good water, and I just stood there and stared. I was like a little boy again making himself an ocean, all that was missing were paper boats. The water flowed and it was like I was drinking it all in, like some sort of whale. I stood there for two hours and just stared at the water and thought of you.

Ida: I understand, you shouldn't waste anything. But it's a one-time thing. And it was pleasant too, right? A sort of energy, yes?

Menashe: I couldn't move, I just stood there like I was paralyzed. The water flowed slowly, and I felt a certain weakness. And it was pleasant. It was frightening, and it was... (Suddenly). Marry me!

Ida: (Stares at him, makes no reply, as though she did not understand).

Menashe: You didn't hear me? Marry me!

Ida: (Laughs). You're such a sweetheart! (Embraces him). You smell so good! I'm like my aunt, Sima, she used to faint a lot, she had to sniff valerian all the time, just like I need to smell you, your scent, the scent of the... I'm not really sure anymore that this topic is too good to be true. There's no such thing. You just need to have patience.

Menashe: What are you talking about? I asked you: Marry me! Give me a simple, straight answer, yes or no? Every night I walk you back to your room, I walk with you and then I come back home and I can't fall asleep. I can't handle a flood like that every day, don't you see? I'm not some boy-toy, a man and a woman ought to be married. I didn't love Ruchama but she was my wife, yet I love you, so what – you're not my wife? A wife for me means anything but love, is that it? All it means for me is a cemetery, just a stone in my shoe? For forty years she was my wife and I couldn't get her out of my shoe. There was no reason to, there weren't even any children. I just thought that was how you had to live, with a stone in your shoe. I was comfortable that way, with that stone in my shoe. But you've taught me about real life.

- Ida: (Happily) What rooms I've lived in! Suddenly a single house, a house like this, a place to rest finally, in Israel, a house like this, the entire thing? All the... the...?...
- Menashe: Yes! Yes! And the... the... the orchard, yes!
- Ida: (Perhaps still happily) What do you need that for, Menashe? Ballet, an old teacher, what for? Even when I was young I was no pleasure for any family. I didn't want children. The entire time all I did was ballet, art, without a break, like a constant flame. Now I'm old, like water and fire at the same time – you ever see fire with water inside it? It's a catastrophe.
- Menashe: What are you trying to say?...
- Ida: (As though going back and agreeing to his offer though less happily) It's funny how it happened to both of us on the same day – you with your water in the orchard, me – with the belly. The entire lesson I just stared at her belly. I should be looking at the legs. I thought about my life. I never did anything really good ever, and suddenly you... a family once again, a little belly. Some rest. (Reversing herself) I can't handle rest. I have to work, I have to be thinking all the time about how to make it better and better. Rest will just get in the way. I have to do something good here in Israel. In Jerusalem they didn't even let me try, there are enough Russians, more famous ones at that. I'll make it in the end, I'll bring them to Jerusalem, let them all see! Nobody will dare laugh! It's late, isn't it?
- Menashe: You mean to say that you don't...?
- Ida: You want to love me less, isn't that right? It'll be easier for you, without floods, why should I agree? Maybe I'll come live with you, then you won't have to walk me home at night, just to come back alone.
- Menashe: (In a strange voice all of a sudden, bitter, pain-filled, the suspicions breaking through) And if I were to put everything in your name, huh? Everything, even the orchard, this entire orchard, huh?
- Ida: I don't understand, what...?
- Menashe: What?! Suddenly you don't understand. You love it, don't you? So much!...
- Ida: Yes.
- Menashe: That's it, it'll be yours. We won't just get married. Of course, that's not enough, I'm old, I'm going to die, and then you'll be left without the main thing. That's what you want, isn't it? That's what all these pretty phrases are all about it: it's late!... I don't want to rest!... I'll come live with you!... Here, take it!
- Ida: What happened to you, Menashe? It's something bad...
- Menashe: (Towards the orchard). It's not an orchard. It's the devil, don't you see? I don't even understand it myself. I'm drowning, I... The suspicions, all the bad-mouthing... did you ever see a harnessed horse fall over on its side? With its entire body, all its force, and then it can't get up, as if precisely because of its body, its force. (He gets down on his knees before her). You're going to rescue me, you!
- Ida: You're a little boy, you're my little boy. What am I going to do with you? How can I say no to an orchard that gets down on its knees. Get up already, my sweet orchard.

(Menashe raises his head).
Ida: What?...
Menashe: (Lower his head). Nothing.
(Boaz enters in the midst of this final exchange and sees them).

Scene Two

(Late at night. Menashe and Boaz are wearing pajamas, each one in his respective room, wide awake. Menashe enters the living room restlessly, paces around, sits down, gets up, turns towards Boaz' room, stops, then goes back to his own room).

Boaz: (Enters, opens the door to Menashe's room). A regular guy, a guy who is about to get married for the second time, fast asleep at two in the morning. The roosters are already crowing, can't you hear them? It's not roosters, it's the angel of death come for you!
(Returns to his room).

(Menashe enters, turns towards Boaz' room, stands facing the door, hesitates).

Boaz: (Enters). I'm sleeping now, I'm not getting married, I can sleep in peace! You're insane! (Returns to his room).

Menashe: (To himself) I'm going crazy. (Returns to his room).

(Boaz enters from his room, restlessly, sits down next to the table on Menashe's chair. Menashe enters from his room, sees Boaz, hesitates for a moment, then approaches).

Boaz: Yes?... Oh, sure. (Gets up). Your chair, even at two in the morning.

Menashe: You can sit down, I...

Boaz: I'm sleeping now, I sleep peacefully. I don't get it. I'm losing my mind. (Imitates Ida) How can I say no to an orchard that gets down on its knees?! (Towards the orchard) She's marrying him, not you, she said it herself and instead of running away, you did just the opposite, you're getting married... My head is exploding. (Returns to his room).

Menashe: (To himself) I found someone to talk to, huh.

Boaz: (Enters). There's just one thing I want you to tell me and then I'll go to sleep. Just one thing: why did you get down on your knees? She wouldn't have agreed to accept the whole thing if you were standing up? I'm not going to stay in this house! (Turns to go, stops). You're gonna have to remove me by force! (Turns to go, stops). What am I going to do now? (Returns to his room).

(Menashe returns to his room).

(Boaz enters and stands facing the closed door to Menashe's room).

In love, huh? I mean really!... I'm also in love. Mrs. Mandel from the kiosk, why does she look at me so much, what do you think? I'm just some passerby in the street, and she sits there staring. Am I so good-looking? Me too, yes, and she's from China, even farther away than Russia. Sometimes she sits there for a whole hour all by herself, with all the nuts and the waffles and the chocolate – all alone. (Returns to his room).

Menashe: (Enters, opens the door to Boaz' room). I have to talk to you.

Boaz: (Enters, stands in the doorway). And why does she give me extra peanuts? She finishes measuring and then she adds another full handful, just like that. Why?

Menashe: (Grabs hold of him by the shoulders). Enough already!

Boaz: What do you want from me? I'm exhausted, my head is exploding.

Menashe: I'm dead-tired, I can't fall asleep, don't you see?!

Boaz: I can barely stand, my legs are trembling.

Menashe: I can't take it anymore, it's pure torture, it's an outrage.
 Boaz: I want to go to sleep, I want to rest.
 Menashe: I have to talk to you, to get your advice, I don't have anyone, help me.
 Boaz: I'm sleeping now, I'm sleeping in peace! (Returns to his room, closes the door, then reopens it). I'm locking the door with the key. (Closes the door, then reopens it). Me... you want me to help you?
 Menashe: Yes.
 Boaz: (Brief silence, he is completely shocked). You want... you want me to get dressed?
 Menashe: No need, nothing at all, just listen.
 (Boaz enters the living room, slowly, as in a dream, and sits down in his chair).
 Menashe: (Paces, stops, begins to speak, with difficulty). I... you understand?...
 Boaz: (Gets up from his chair, crosses over and sits down in Menashe's chair). Sit.
 Menashe: Huh?
 Boaz: Sit.
 Menashe: It's fine, I'm comfortable. I can't sit down, can't you see?
 Boaz: I'm not comfortable like this.
 Menashe: (Remains standing, has difficulty asking for help, tries to change direction). Just tell me what your problem is, I'll help you. I've neglected you, I know...
 Boaz: Now I'm helping you. (Sits him down). Sit, you're shaking. (Sits down as well).
 Menashe: (Finally) Why is she doing this to me? And if she loves it so much – can't she wait? Does she have to talk about it so much, so much? Can't she see what's happening to me?
 Boaz: What... with regards to what?
 Menashe: The... the... the...
 Boaz: Sure, right, finally you're coming around.
 Menashe: On the other hand – if that was really the object of her intentions, then she wouldn't talk about it at all, she would hide it, stay quiet.
 Boaz: No, what are you talking about?
 Menashe: Or perhaps on the contrary, she keeps talking about it in order to get rid of any suspicions I might have.
 Boaz: That's it, exactly, you got it now.
 Menashe: But maybe it's something else altogether, you follow?... As if she wants to get me angry with the whole topic, to try to arouse my love for her, my jealousy. It's funny. What else could she arouse? It's awake, it's... there's no room left. And whom should I be jealous of? My orchard?
 Boaz: What you said before, that's the thing.
 Menashe: I'm going crazy. How can I live like this?... Living and resting at the same time?
 Boaz: You want me to tell you? Without a wife, there's no need, that's all.
 Menashe: She's an honest woman, innocent, wonderful, she doesn't want anything from me, it's all me, my dirty little mind. I'm just not capable of understanding and accepting something good.
 Boaz: What's that supposed to mean? No!...

- Menashe: You don't follow?... I want her to be my wife, I never wanted anything the way I want this, and at the instant that she agreed, I suddenly began to suspect her. As if her agreement were the proof. It means that I'll never be able to, you understand?...
- Boaz: I understand, of course. You want me to help you give her my orchard, is that what you want?!
- Menashe: How can I get out of this... out of myself... out of my own skin?...
- Boaz: Sure, you already started to give it away to her, now I get it. You made the call in the evening from your room, I heard you. You called Dvorin, your wise lawyer. You won't succeed! I'll cut it down, you'll see! Not with an axe – I'm gonna cut it down with an electric buzz-saw, bzz! Bzz!
- Menashe: (Sobering up). No!... Who am I talking to? Who am I turning to for help? How low have I sunk?
- Boaz: I'll kill myself if you do it! I'll hang myself in the orchard, you'll see! Not just me, all the suicides, they'll all hang themselves in this orchard. There won't be a single clean tree left! Every rape in any orchard anywhere will be right here! All the bodies, all the murders, they'll all be hidden and buried here! The sergeants too... they'll hang 'em here! All the jackals, the wild dogs, they'll all come to die in this orchard. What a howling there'll be here, you'll see! It won't yield oranges, it'll give carcasses! Look at the pretty orange, what a nice smell, ah! – You'll peel it, the two of you together along with her father, but inside of every orange all you'll find is a little carcass!
(Menashe stands facing him, staring at him).
What are you looking at?
(Menashe makes no reply, just stares at him).
I'm going to sleep. I've had enough.
(Menashe hits him, with his hand or a broom).
No, what?!...
- Menashe: Keep the orchard! You'll be the one to get it, choke on it, it'll be all yours, yours! (Turns away from Boaz, opens the doors to the orchard).
Damn orchard, damn you! (To Boaz) Go, it'll take care of you!
(Moonlight from the orchard fills the house).

Scene Three

(A few days later, in the afternoon. The doors to the orchard are open. Tsviya walks in, opens all the doors, looks everywhere, but no one is home).

Tsviya: (Calls out weakly) Menashe!... What's going on here? He's gone mad. The house is wide open, completely empty. Whoever wants, just come right in and take what you'd like!... Oh, no!... (Goes on another round of opening doors, then remains standing). What am I doing? Think clearly, Tsviya, clearly! He's crazy, he's sick, you're not anymore. You *were* sick, but it's over now. Oh, how sick! Go ahead, give it to her, nothing matters anymore!... Give it all to her, give her the... the!... Oh, no, I see red when I just think of it. Enough already, it's over, the biopsy came back benign, no cancer! Now it's just rheumatism, so think clearly! (She runs around the room, opens the doors again, looks underneath the table and chairs). You can't hide from me! I won't let it happen! I need to live, I'm a regular person, I have daughters, I'm not something better – no ballet, no emotions! Clear-thinking is an emotion too, you know! Having daughters is emotional! (Stands drained). Just don't let it turn out that he already gave it to her and I'm too late!... How can I be sure? When you give away something normal, like a vase – then you know it was given away because it's not around anymore. When you give away an orchard though, it stays in the same spot. Just try and figure out whom it belongs to now. (Faces the orchard). That orchard... as long as it's here I won't have any peace. Somebody should cut it down already! (Turns to walk out). I'll find him, if I have to plow up the entire village! (Exits).

(Ida enters the house from outside. She pushes the table and chairs to the side, stops, walks out towards the orchard, wipes dust from the leaves with her handkerchief, and sees somebody among the trees).

Ida: Menashe!...

Boaz: (Enters with a smile from among the trees). Hello.

Ida: Sorry. I was so sure... He always turns up all of a sudden like that in the orchard.

Boaz: Sure, he's a tree, all beautiful, strong, with that scent.

Ida: Right. I have to get the room ready, I just got started... (Turns to go back inside).

Boaz: Don't you want to know where he is?

Ida: Yes.

Boaz: I'm not allowed to tell you. He went to Tel Aviv.

Ida: I see.

Boaz: Don't you want to know why he went?

Ida: Yes.

Boaz: So why don't you ask?

(Ida turns to go back inside).

I'm not allowed to tell you. He asked me not to. He wants to tell you himself when he gets back. Everything'll be over in a little bit.

Ida: I see.

Boaz: No you don't.

Ida: I don't.

Boaz: So why say you do?

Ida: Forgive me, we've got a lesson in a few minutes.

Boaz: (Indicates the handkerchief in her hand). You wiped the dust off the leaves a moment ago, I saw you.

Ida: I took out my handkerchief to blow my nose and I suddenly felt like dusting off the leaves.

Boaz: You can wash them with soap too if you want. You can even put furniture polish on them when you're done.

Ida: You've got a real sense of humor.

Boaz: It's only natural, the orchard is going to be yours in a little bit, right?

Ida: I don't know exactly. Menashe mentioned something, about putting it in my name along with his, something like that, I think.

Boaz: There was somebody else here who thought something too, you know. It's a good thing to think. Electric buzz-saws are a good thing, too, don't you think?

Ida: Excuse me?

Boaz: Electric buzz-saws.

Ida: I don't know, forgive me, we've got a lesson now. (She goes back inside, begins to push the table and chairs aside again).

Boaz: (Enters after her). It's really beautiful, the Dance of the Orchard: I'm an orange tree!... I'm a grapefruit!...

Ida: We're doing something else now.

Boaz: Now you're jelly? Juice?

Ida: Excuse me?

Boaz: Ballet: I'm orange jelly!... I'm grapefruit juice!...

Ida: You're in a good mood today.

Boaz: I've got a good reason. (Takes out a brochure from his pocket, spreads it out in front of her). You want to see what this is?

Ida: What?

Boaz: (Takes back the brochure). No, you're not allowed to see!

Ida: I wasn't looking.

Boaz: Wanna have a look?

Ida: No.

Boaz: I'll let you.

Ida: I don't want to.

Boaz: It's a catalog of electric buzz-saws.

Ida: There's no need to tell me.

Boaz: Know what for?

Ida: No.

Boaz: You'll soon find out. You're not supposed to know yet. I'll let him be the one, let him tell you himself. You're already dying to know, aren't you?

Ida: I don't know.

Boaz: What *do* you know?

Ida: I really don't know.

Boaz: I think you don't know anything about ballet either. Your ballet is boring. You've got no imagination.

Ida: That could be.

Boaz: Put some electric buzz-saws in your ballet, that would be interesting, bzz! It goes well together. All orchards get cut down with saws. It

might make a nice ballet, the falling trees, all those tall branches pointing downwards, all the roots pointing up.

Ida: Menashe loves the orchard too much.

Boaz: That's it precisely! You got it!

Ida: I don't get it.

Boaz: (Laughs). Too much, right? Too much!

(Menashe comes in from outside).

(Stops laughing, brief silence). I didn't say a thing, I swear, I... sure, tell her yourself. I'm leaving, right, going to my room. I'm not even here. (Goes to his room, returns). I'm going to lock the door too.

(Goes out, closes the door, opens it again right away, peeks out).

Ida: Hello.

Menashe: (Already sitting, tries to be energetic and practical, as it were, but in reality he is moved and fearful). I want to tell you something.

Ida: What happened? Fine. (Sits at the table).

(He has difficulty continuing).

Would you like something to drink? You look tired. You don't like going to Tel Aviv.

Menashe: How do you know I was in Tel Aviv.

Ida: You didn't go?

Menashe: I asked how you know that I did.

Ida: I don't remember, oh, yes, Boaz...

Menashe: So he anyway went and told you something.

Boaz: (Enters). No, not a thing, I swear, not me!... Right, I'm not here.

(Leaves, closes the door).

Menashe: What did he say to you?

Ida: All sorts of things, you know how he is, he's all mixed-up. I remember the fact that you went to Tel Aviv, because you don't like to do that.

What happened? What's all the...

Menashe: I'll tell you right away, get it out in the open, without any introduction. I... (Has difficulty continuing).

Ida: (Jumps up). Oh, I get it. It's not really all that important, Menashe, it really isn't.

Menashe: What's not that important?

Ida: You went to put the orchard in my name, right? You weren't able to, something's not right, is that it? That's why you're tired, angry.

There's no need. It doesn't matter. Put it in my name too in another week, in another year. Even my kettle isn't in my name, it's not even mine, it belongs to friends, so what? I don't get to drink tea? That's not good enough?

Menashe: It really doesn't mean anything to you?

Ida: Of course not. (Corrects herself). I'm happy, of course. Just the fact that you would like to give it to me, that's the most important thing. No, the fact that you actually give it to me, that's even more important. You're giving away your most precious possession. True, I have nothing, even my kettle isn't mine, and suddenly I have my own orchard.

(Menashe laughs a sort of laugh).

Yes, it's funny. Why are you laughing?

Menashe: Just a second ago you said that it didn't matter to you.

Ida: I don't know what to say anymore. I just want to be good to you, but you... I say it doesn't matter – that's not good enough, I say it does matter – that's not good either. I don't know what to say anymore.

Menashe: Don't do me any favors, just tell me the truth.

Ida: That is the truth, I want to be good to you. You think I'm lying?

Menashe: No, it's not your fault, it's the thing itself! You love it too much.

Ida: Why isn't it a good thing to love so much? Without that is it really worth living? It's boring, isn't it?

Menashe: You can't live in a flood!

Ida: You want to say something not nice about me, I can feel it. I did something wrong.

Menashe: No, it's my fault no less than yours, even more so.

Ida: What did we do wrong?

Menashe: You don't see? Everything's fine between us, until it comes to that one thing. You... yes, it's too much, the whole thing! And I... on the contrary, yes – I became suspicious, stingy, yes, filthy.

Ida: That's not true, you're an angry man. My husband, towards the end he would just get angry. There was nothing left of him, just him and his communist party, nothing else. You have an orchard, the way you get up every morning to go to work, the way you insist on it, the way you love it, the two of you together!...

Menashe: You turn everything into one big porridge. Your husband was one thing, and I'm another!

Ida: Why are you shouting?

Menashe: There is no orchard anymore. Here's why! It belongs to Boaz, I gave it to him today, I transferred it to his name.

Ida: Oh sweetheart! You thought that would make me sad? That's why you're like this. Why didn't you say so right away? That takes care of everything, you don't have to put it in my name. You don't have to keep on thinking: She does care about it – She doesn't. Boaz, too, he'll be so happy... What are you looking at? It's not true? He won't work in the orchard, that's for sure, you can keep on working as much as you want, right? You can turn over the soil, and water it, it suits you, too, I don't understand it at all, but I'm sure there are a lot of taxes. He'll pay the taxes, you'll just be able to enjoy. I'm happy, things'll be just like in the beginning, things were so beautiful then, so fascinating.

Menashe: (Suffering) Enough! Enough!

Ida: What happened?

Menashe: It belongs to him, I can't work in it anymore. He's going to cut it down, he's going to cut it down, completely!

Ida: I don't get it. What do you mean he's going to cut it down?

Menashe: You don't know what it means to cut it down? To chop, saw, with some mechanical saw: bzz, bzz! I transferred it to him without any conditions. When you decide something you have to go all the way, without any pity or coyness, let it hurt! The more it hurts the better, we'll get more of a reward for it.

Ida: That's not true, no!... An orchard, an orchard like that!... All the trees, those trees!... Cut down?...

Menashe: What else do you cut down? Pieces of paper? Empty words? Trees, trees just like those, that's what you cut down.

- Ida: And you knew, you knew beforehand, you knew he would cut it down, chop it all down like that? You knew and you gave it away anyway?
- Menashe: I knew – I didn't know, what's the difference? When you give something away you have to give it away completely, without any questions, without holding on to it by the tail. Of course I knew! What do you want from me? Those trees are also mine, aren't they? They're me, they're my body, I invested my entire soul in it, I'm chopping off a piece of myself!... You're laughing... What are you laughing at?
- Ida: Russia – Israel, it's all the same thing. You – him, it's all the same. I've seen this before: a man chops down, tortures himself and then everything is permissible.
- Menashe: The orchard, that's what hurts you. You can live without it, but you can't live without trust and honesty.
- Ida: Perhaps you love me, but you love the party more.
- Menashe: What party? What do you mean party?
- Ida: I don't know, the... your truth, the... I don't know what. First him, now you. You're destroying what's left of him. You too, just like him with his party, in the beginning everyone was happy, everyone believed it would be a better world, prettier, then afterwards nobody believed in anyone. You become like two bricks of charcoal, all burnt up but wanting to burn still more. Everything turns bad, ugly, boring – so boring. That's how I am – bad stuff just bores me. Maybe that's why I'm not really a good artist. I just want to be one, I want it too much, it's true. Maybe there's something bad inside me too, something boring. I think I'm going back to my place to sleep.
(Turns to go).
- Menashe: What do you mean go to sleep? You have a lesson, don't you? Your students, your ballet, you don't intend to...?
- Ida: I'm afraid, you're chopping down everything that you love, aren't you?
(Turns to go).
- Menashe: (Sort of shouting). And you, what are you doing now, huh? God knows what! What's between us means less than that orchard, the... the...? What's going to be with you? Where are you going? Just like that, in the blink of an eye?! What are you going to do?
(Ida stops, turns to him).
(He jumps, stands facing her, and with a sort of laugh, as though in one last desperate attempt to be happy) You just don't follow, you... You're so silly! The whole orchard isn't worth a thing, it's just some old bloated orchard, an arrogant old orchard, a stupid, stubborn old orchard, let it die, we'll live! I... I won, like it was some bulldog, snapping its teeth, not letting go, and I... I won, don't you see? Because of you. I had nothing else to hold on to. Now I have you. You taught me that there are things that are more important than the material world. So there are things that are more important than beauty too, right? You're my little girl! (Spreads out his hands). Come to me!... You're my orchard!...
(Ida begins to move towards him, stops, as though turning faint, and grabs hold of a chair).

We have what to do even without the orchard, right? What, I'm not worth anything by myself? I'm not just the man with the orchard, am I? (Sort of shouting) That's too much, hey! First the orchard, now you? I gave it away so that we would be able to live together...

(Ida turns to him, begins approaching).

Yes, that's it, come to me.

Ida: (Stops, grabs hold of the chair). What's happening to me? Am I that tired? I'm old too. All I did was see a hole in the fence and go in. Look what it led to. An old woman shouldn't go walking through holes in fences.

Menashe: You're not old, no! (Runs to her, bends down before her, points to his back). We'll start everything over, get on!

Ida: No, I don't want to, what do you mean!

Menashe: (Already pulling her awkwardly onto his back by force). Get on! Get on!

Ida: No, put me down! This is idiotic!

Menashe: Yes, yes, yes! (He jumps/gallops around with her, moved, drunkenly, but without any energy, bumps into a chair, wobbles, and falls down together with her).

Ida: (On the floor, laughing, looking at him) From the start, huh?... Sorry, I'm sorry. It's idiotic, the whole thing altogether. It's like a hack orchestra, like a weak ballet, so unprofessional. What can I do? I'm ruined, I'm spoiled. I'm from Moscow, not Vilna. I like pretty things, nice things, it's a curse. What can I do? (Gets up with difficulty). What's happening to me? I can't even get up from the floor anymore? Get up already, I can't stand to see it. Get up yourself. I'm old too. (Menashe gets up from the floor, and they stand facing each other in silence. Ida turns to go, slowly).

Ida: (Stops). I've been searching for something my entire life, and I don't even know what it is – it's my soul, it sucked dry my entire life, all my energies. Now it's going to suck some more, there's nothing, nothing left, but it'll still suck away, that's all it knows how to do. It's true, where can I go now? What'll I do?

Menashe: Go back!... Go back to Russia, go back to your old Moscow! There everything's good and beautiful, there nobody... there orchards live forever, go back!

Ida: (Towards the orchard) At least now perhaps you won't cut down the orchard. You gave it away so you wouldn't think badly of me. It's not the orchard's fault. I won't be around so there's no need. (Exits).

Menashe: (With her departure, addresses Boaz who is standing peeking in at the doorway) Cut it down! What are you waiting for? Go ahead, cut it down! (Sinks down at the table).

Boaz: (Enters). You're not going to tell me what to do. I'll cut it down when I feel like it. I've got time. Let it wait now. (Pours a glass of water for Menashe). Here, drink. (Towards the orchard) I'll cut it down, don't you worry, little by little. When a man has an orchard he can afford to be good and generous.