

3COOPER, HIS DAUGHTER AND THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY

A Play

By

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Cast of Characters:

Cooper	Dying old man. Formerly owned a workshop.
Tirtza	His wife
Miri	Their daughter, about 35, a photographer, in the early stages of pregnancy
Mordeaux	Her erstwhile lover

Location:

Inside a none-too-large apartment, filled to the gills with all kinds of junk – like some sort of lair – with the backyard visible through the window.

In Act Two the action moves to the backyard itself and the apartment remains in the background. Then the action gradually returns to the interior of the apartment.

Act One

Scene One:

(Inside the apartment, in the afternoon. Tirtza moves some of the junk aside, trying to make order. Cooper enters from the outside, laboriously dragging a heavy, old standing lamp. Tirtza stops trying to make order).

Tirtza: You.

Cooper: Really?

Tirtza: You went out.

Cooper: What else? (Towards the lamp) Look at the people these days, throwing a thing like that in the street! I saw it from the window. And that's not all, there are two good chairs back there, too. I'll bring them back in a second.

Tirtza: More? From the street?

Cooper: From where then? Show me the store, the supermarket, the... what do you call that thing, that... the mall – show me where you can find things like this?

Tirtza: You're also gonna bring the...?

Cooper: What else should I do with them? Leave them lying out there like that? What else do you wanna say?

Tirtza: Nothing, it's just... (Approaches as though to help him) That's heavy, maybe it's too much for you.

Cooper: Too much for me...! You say it's too much but there you are standing in my way. Why don't you just step aside instead. (Continues to enter the apartment, with apparent difficulty).

Tirtza: You shouldn't be dragging things back home today, you were in pain this morning.

Cooper: I was in pain this morning without doing anything, wasn't I? Pain's not like getting paid. You can get pain even without working for it. Look at this lamp. Just need to fix a little something, plug it in, and she's good to go.

Tirtza: There's no bulb.

(Cooper stares at her).

Tirtza: What did I say already?

Cooper: No bulb...! Now you've turned into an electrical engineer. The main thing is the structure, the base. Look at this cast iron. They don't make things like that anymore. Makes you wanna lick your fingers!

(Tirtza seems to want to say something).

Cooper: Yes? Spit it out.

Tirtza: I don't know. It's bent.

Cooper: Like that, huh? Bent? Way to go, eagle eyes! So what if it's bent? We'll straighten it out and it won't be bent anymore. You know how many people can still use this lamp? How many children can still study, read by its light, instead of going to bed with those feeble ceiling bulbs. What do you say to that?

Tirtza: Yeah, that's true, it's just... It's rusty, isn't it? I mean a little bit.

Cooper: What do you expect? Of course there's rust. It's not plastic, it's iron. You think this cooking oven doesn't have a little rust? And the carriage? And the pipes? And the Friedman ovens? Next you're gonna tell me I shouldn't've brought those home either, huh? Right? Isn't that what you're gonna say?

Tirtza: I didn't say that.

Cooper: Say it, say it! (Wracked by pain) Ah!

Tirtza: Here, sit down.

Cooper: I don't wanna sit down. It's not the rust, it's the people. They leave a piece of iron out on the open balcony, in the rain, so of course there's rust. It's like somebody hit by a car lying wounded in the open road, and instead of taking care of him they just throw him back out on the road to get run over again. Sure, that way they've got an excuse to toss this stuff to the curb and buy something new. But instead of throwing it out they could hold on to it and give it to someone who needs it, someone who can't afford to buy new, don't you think? How many times have I talked to you about that?

Tirtza: That's true, I'm sorry.

Cooper: Next you're gonna tell me that even the wooden furniture around here is no good, huh? That little table over there, it wobbles after all. And the leg on this chair here is broken anyway, right?

Tirtza: Yes.

- Cooper: What do you expect? And so what if it's got a broken leg. You know why it broke, huh?
- Tirtza: (She's not really interested and stares out the window). Yes.
- Cooper: What do you mean, 'yes'? You know why the leg broke?
- Tirtza: No, not me.
- Cooper: So why'd you say so?
- Tirtza: I don't know.
- Cooper: Would you like to know?
- Tirtza: Yes, tell me. I'm listening, go ahead.
- Cooper: The leg broke because the joints above the leg are solid. They didn't break so all the pressure came down on the leg, on the wood itself. The joints are the main thing, that's the beauty of the workmanship, that's the human touch. Everything'll rot and break, but the joints'll remain intact. It's a crime to throw out joints like that. (Looks around, down the passage that Tirtza created earlier). What happened here? Somebody moved things around, everything's all topsy-turvy. (He puts things back the way they were before and stands the lamp in the middle of the passage). There you go.
- (Tirtza seems to want to say something).
- Cooper: Yes? Something wrong?
- Tirtza: No, everything's fine. It's just... crowded, I mean a little bit. It's all right up in the entrance. You can't get through.
- Cooper: Like that, huh? It's crowded, you can't get through? What do you need to get through for? You expecting some important guests? Throwing a ball? A little cocktail party maybe? Or maybe you're just waiting for her, huh?
- Tirtza: (As if shocked) What? Who?
- Cooper: What, who...! It's for her you need to be able to get through. You've started staying awake all night, looking up at the ceiling in the dark. Is she up there on the ceiling?
- Tirtza: Really?
- Cooper: Really. And it's not enough you sit there looking up at her on the ceiling, you then go looking at me as if you're bringing her down from there with your eyes and putting her in my hands.

Tirtza: (Quietly) You too.

Cooper: What?

Tirtza: (Dares to say what she wants, though quietly) You love her.

Cooper: I love her? Really? When she was a little girl she was thrilled with every thing I collected. We made plans together: who'll we give that chair to? And the table? How about the washing machine? And those pots, who's gonna cook in them? And the clothes – who's gonna wear them? Every box was a palace, every *shmata* told a story.

Tirtza: You miss her. You wish she would show up.

Cooper: Really? Am I that sick? You think I'm dying?

Tirtza: You talk about her all the time.

Cooper: It's your fault, because you're thinking about her all the time. The air is all clogged up with those thoughts, you can't even breathe. What do I need her to show up for? She's not gonna show in order to give me a grandchild. Oh no, not that. She'll come just to say the same thing: it's rusty, bent, get rid of it! Why just the lamp? The whole lot of it is just stinking filth. Me too, right? Sure, why not just get rid of me too?

Tirtza: I never said anything like that. I just said it was crowded.

Cooper: Just, huh? Suddenly she speaks, she's got an opinion. You miss her so much that... that... yeah, you draw strength from missing her in order to fight me.

(A noise comes from the kitchen, as pots topple over, some glass breaks, and a cat makes off with the chicken).

Cooper: (Runs in there, and with a shout) No, wait!

Tirtza: What happened?

Cooper: The cat. The chicken.

Tirtza: What chicken?

Cooper: The chicken, how should I know what chicken.

Tirtza: (Now standing in the kitchen doorway) Where is it?

Cooper: Ran away.

Tirtza: The chicken?

Cooper: The cat.

Tirtza: The chicken, where's the chicken? It was on the counter, I took it out to let it thaw.

Cooper: Don't you understand anything? The cat took it.

Tirtza: What's that supposed to mean?

Cooper: He took it, snatched it. He left through the window, from there, with it in his mouth.

Tirtza: With the chicken?

Cooper: What else? My back pain?

Tirtza: It was a whole chicken, number two.

Cooper: White cat.

Tirtza: Missing one eye?

Cooper: I didn't notice.

Tirtza: It's him, that little white one. I always give him something to eat. The chicken is bigger than him.

Cooper: That's how it is, the rich rob the poor.

Tirtza: I'm sorry. It was a whole bird.

Cooper: And I'm an idiot, I actually said: no! Wait!

Tirtza: You said it to the cat?

Cooper: (Laughing) Yeah, to the cat, didn't you hear me? I said: no! Wait!

Tirtza: Really? (Laughs with him, then stops, and stares at him).

Cooper: What are you looking at? Next you're gonna say we ought to take a picture, huh?

Tirtza: The way you laughed just now.

Cooper: Really? I laughed?

Tirtza: It's too bad about the chicken, but... you started laughing and talking so softly like that and...

- Cooper: Like that, huh? Without something like that I don't laugh and talk softly and... huh? Is it so important that I laugh and talk softly and... huh? That's worth a whole number two chicken, huh?
- Tirtza: I don't get it.
- Cooper: (Suddenly) Why'd you actually take out the chicken altogether?
- Tirtza: (Trying to buy time) I took out the chicken?
- Cooper: Yeah, you took it out, why?
- Tirtza: What do you mean? To let it thaw.
- Cooper: Why let it thaw? How did the chicken get in there to begin with? Why'd you buy it? For years I haven't had any meat, and you never did.
- Tirtza: (Jokingly) Enough already, it's gone, the cat...
- Cooper: It's gone, the cat...! Trying to hide behind the cat, and a cat that's not even here, at that! You took the chicken out earlier, before the cat showed up. What was the chicken for?
- Tirtza: What was it for?
- Cooper: Last night, who were you talking to on the phone?
- Tirtza: Who was I talking to?
- Cooper: I heard something in my sleep, I wasn't sure. Now I got it. You don't even know how to lie. Who were you talking to?
- Tirtza: To her.
- Cooper: Like that? Her? All of a sudden?
- Tirtza: Not all of a sudden.
- Cooper: What's the big idea?
- Tirtza: You know that I call her, when she's in the country. You wait for it.
- Cooper: Stop, that's enough.
- Tirtza: If I don't call you start looking at me kind of funny, and then I know I'm supposed to go and call. And you stand in the other room and hear everything that I talk about.
- Cooper: Yesterday I didn't hear a single word.

Tirtza: Yesterday you were in pain, I gave you a shot and that was it.

Cooper: That was it? What do you mean, that was it? Why'd you call her yesterday? What did you tell her, I mean...? (As though afraid to delve any further into the matter, decides to change the subject). Where was she this time?

Tirtza: I don't know. Somewhere.

Cooper: Somewhere?

Tirtza: Yeah.

Cooper: She'll travel around the entire world twenty times, tens of thousands of miles. She'll bring pictures, thousands and thousands of pictures. Trying to catch the moment. Freeze it. Yeah, the snowflakes. Why doesn't she start a family, huh? Bring a child into the world?

Tirtza: (Mumbling) There's something, maybe, someone...

Cooper: What are you mumbling about? Always keeping secrets with her behind my back.

Tirtza: I want to tell you, you just don't want to hear. Even when she shows up.

Cooper: Shows up, sure...! Once every seven years.

Tirtza: At first you guys talk but then you start yelling at her pretty quickly. You both start, actually.

Cooper: (Getting to what he wanted to ask) That phone call last night, what did you talk to her about?

(Tirtza makes no response).

Cooper: You told her?

Tirtza: I told her.

Cooper: What did you tell her?

Tirtza: You know. About you, the hospital, the shots, the... everything.

Cooper: What right did you have? Talking about me behind my back. Why? Is she a doctor?

Tirtza: She's your daughter.

- Cooper: So what if she's my daughter? Why? Trying to make her feel pity for me? I told you: under no circumstances! I bet you also invited her to come over, without asking me, inviting her to come see her poor father, the dying man, huh? When is she supposed to come? What did she say? Tell me everything, word for word.
- Tirtza: (After a moment) She's not coming, she doesn't want to see you, she...
- Cooper: Keep going.
- Tirtza: She'll show up for the funeral, that's when she'll come.
- Cooper: Like that, I get it.
- Tirtza: She doesn't really mean it. She's like you.
- Cooper: Now you're placing the blame on me, I'm the guilty one, she's like me...! She's not at all like me. She has no values, no faith, just stubbornness. If she's not coming, then why'd you take out the chicken?
- Tirtza: The chicken?
- Cooper: The chicken in the freezer, you took it out for her, didn't you? Why? She's only going to show up for my funeral. Is there a funeral already? Maybe I have a little time left to live until the chicken thaws. It's the end of the summer now, nice and hot, it'll thaw pretty quickly, huh? Have her over, your daughter, I mean you miss her so much, don't you?
- Tirtza: (Almost shouting) You miss her too, you do too, you do.
- Cooper: But I have to die in order to earn a visit, don't I?
- Tirtza: No, it's not like that.
- Cooper: So what was the chicken for?
- Tirtza: It's gone anyway, the cat took it.
- Cooper: Of course it's gone and the cat took it. You know why? Because there's not gonna be a funeral so fast. Nobody's taking me away, not the angel of death and not some cat. I'm like this Friedman oven and this chair and this ladder here, all this old wood, all this iron with its rust, we're not made for jet-set girls who photograph the whole world. Us they just throw out, nobody needs us, leave 'em in the street. That's why we remain. (Wracked by pain) Ah! (Sinks down into a chair).
- Tirtza: I'll call an ambulance.

Cooper: What's with the ambulance?!

(Tirtza approaches Cooper, runs her fingers through his hair).

Cooper: What are you doing?

Tirtza: Your hairs are as stiff as steel wool.

Cooper: What'll you do afterwards?

Tirtza: After what?

Cooper: You know.

Tirtza: I do?

Cooper: You're not capable of living alone.

Tirtza: Why would I be alone? You...

Cooper: Have her come live with you, at least at first.

Tirtza: There's no need. The ambulance'll take you to the hospital and you'll come back just like the last time.

Cooper: The old chairs, out there in the street... how could I forget? (Gets up) Still able to stand on his own two feet, huh? We thought he was done for already, dead and gone. (Turns to go).

(Miri enters the yard of the house meanwhile, and spots Cooper and Tirtza in the window).

Tirtza: Why? We've got enough chairs to sit on already.

Cooper: What do you mean sit on? They're broken.

Tirtza: So what do we need the chairs for?

Cooper: To fix them, to fix them. (Exits).

Tirtza: (Turns to follow him) No, wait... (Sees Miri, stops).

Scene Two:

(Same location, just a moment later. There is a ring at the door. Tirtza opens and Miri is standing in the doorway).

Tirtza: You don't have to ring.

Miri: No.

Tirtza: Come in, sit down. Why are you standing there?

Miri: (Still in the doorway, looking inside). Yeah.

Tirtza: (With a little shout of joy, and an effort) Hello, hey, how are you?

Miri: (After a moment) That's it?

Tirtza: Come on in.

(Miri enters and looks around).

Tirtza: You want something to drink? Something hot? Something cold? I don't even know where you were this last trip. Just... something like, no? I told Cooper and he...

Miri: Cooper?

Tirtza: (Laughing, embarrassed) Yeah, I guess.

Miri: Something funny? (Looks around).

Tirtza: It's been almost a year already since I saw you last. The last time you invited me to that café. If not for you I would have gone my entire life without ever sitting in a café. Cooper never sat in one. There are so many café's but he never sat in a single one.

Miri: Stop, Mom.

Tirtza: Aren't you hungry? I wanted to make one of your favorite dishes, but the cat just...

Miri: The cat?

Tirtza: The chicken, that is, the cat snatched it, and Cooper...

Miri: Cooper, again?

Tirtza: Yeah, he laughed, he...

(Miri stares at her).

- Tirtza: How was it? Were you working on an exhibition or an album? Nice pictures?
- Miri: (While looking around) I don't take nice pictures, Mom. Just give me a second to look around in peace and quiet, okay? When is the funeral? What time does it start? Where's Uncle Haim, our funeral-Uncle?
- Tirtza: You know he's not... you know, you saw him.
- Miri: Saw whom?
- Tirtza: Cooper, your father.
- Miri: You told me he was dead, didn't you? On the phone.
- Tirtza: Not exactly, it's just...
- Miri: He's not exactly dead? He's approximately dead? Is that what you told me?
- Tirtza: You told me that was the only way you would show up, only after he...
- Miri: Really? Try and remember how the conversation went. Exactly. Take your time.
- Tirtza: It doesn't matter.
- Miri: (Looking around all the while) Yes it does.
- Tirtza: I called, told you to come, told you he was sick, very sick.
- Miri: And I told you that I don't want to, I said it softly, three times. I've got my own disease.
- Tirtza: You're sick? What happened?
- Miri: Forget about my diseases right now. Then you called me again, what did you say that time?
- Tirtza: Nothing, I just...
- Miri: You breathed heavily, like an animal. And I told you to deal with him on your own, bring a doctor. I told you to call me only after he died, for the funeral, then I would come. Right?
- Tirtza: Yeah, something like that.

- Miri: (Speaking softly the entire time, coldly) What did you say to me in response? Do you remember?
- Tirtza: Not entirely, not exactly.
- Miri: "Yes... that's it... you should come..." Right? Like that, with those pauses, but clearly. And then you said it again: "Yes... that's it... come..." I thought you were having a hard time because he had died. And that's why you had told me he was sick at first, so as not to tell the whole truth. That's how it went, didn't it?
- Tirtza: What can I do?
- Miri: That's a good enough answer. Dragging me out here with a story like that. And I had an appointment. A meeting, yes. A very important one. Very important. And I canceled it and came here.
- Tirtza: I'm sorry.
- Miri: Maybe it was some kind of punishment. I said I would only come for the funeral, so you... no problem, here's your funeral. Right? Just to make fun of me?
- Tirtza: No... no...
- Miri: So why'd you say it to me, if that's the case? What were you thinking? You thought I wouldn't find out?
- Tirtza: He's sick, he's very sick.
- Miri: Like that. By the time I show up he might really be, huh?
- Tirtza: No, God forbid, not at all. It just slipped out, it...
- Miri: Maybe you just want him dead already. He's tortured you enough.
- Tirtza: No, what do you mean? He never tortured me.
- Miri: (Toward the junk all around) What's all this? Isn't it left over from the Inquisition?
- Tirtza: No, what are you talking about?
- Miri: Let me have a little peace and quiet, Mom, okay? I'm asking nicely. (Moves around, touching things).
- Tirtza: (Following her around, until she can't contain herself anymore) He could have brought a lot more home. Sorry.
- (Miri keeps moving around).

Tirtza: Sometimes he brings home really big things and he himself understands that it's just not possible, there's no room. Sorry. My heart just breaks seeing him dragging these things back here first and then having to drag them back out there again.

(Miri stands by a broken piece of a table).

Tirtza: That's a really pretty table, though, isn't it? The box keeps it standing where the leg used to be. You get used to the slope. The main thing is to have an appetite and good food.

(Miri stands by the bed of the side, covered with piles of old newspapers).

Tirtza: That's nothing, you just have to move the bundles of newspapers. All that history there.

(Miri walks over to the doorway of the room that used to be hers).

Tirtza: (Makes as though to stop her, from a distance) You better not.

Miri: (Opens the door) It's completely blocked up. Why did I think that my room would remain the way it had always been?

Tirtza: He put the finest things in there, you can see for yourself.

Miri: Can't you just stay quiet for a few minutes?

Tirtza: I'm sorry. It's just like when I was nursing you and I would have milk and have to nurse.

Miri: What milk all of a sudden, and nursing?

Tirtza: I don't know, it's just... You're finally here in the house and I have to be quiet, as though you're not here. I'm so happy to see you.

Miri: (Suddenly) What was it like when you were pregnant with me?

Tirtza: You're asking me?

Miri: Didn't you feel like somebody stuck something inside you, and it was swelling there, and you were getting completely blocked up, like you weren't even...? (She falls silent, as though realizing that she got carried away).

(Tirtza stares at her).

Miri: What's up?

Tirtza: I was actually happy when I was pregnant. I always thought that I had been too thin, as if I didn't exist altogether. When I was pregnant I filled out and it was as if I had become, as if... (Falls silent).

Miri: Yes?

Tirtza: It's just... I'm not even allowed to look at you? (Suddenly) Why are you asking?

Miri: Asking what?

Tirtza: What it was like to be pregnant with you.

Miri: I don't know. Maybe in order to find out where I come from. Why are you asking?

Tirtza: What?

Miri: What...! What am I asking for.

Tirtza: Are you pregnant?

Miri: (After a moment) Do I look to you like someone who oughtta get pregnant?

Tirtza: Why not? Pregnancy is the type of thing that...

Miri: Let me have just another moment of peace and quiet, Mom, okay?

Tirtza: What? I didn't hear you. You're talking with your mouth closed.

Miri: I'm a cold fish, everyone says it about me. I asked for another moment of quiet.

(Mordeaux enters the yard, and looks in through the window).

Tirtza: (Spotting him) There's someone out there...

(Miri looks out the window, sees him, and looks away like it was nothing).

Tirtza: You didn't see him?

Miri: I did.

Tirtza: You don't recognize him?

Miri: Why should I recognize him?

Tirtza: No reason. That's the path through the yard, the old path. Nobody uses it anymore, they don't even know it's there.

(Mordeaux leaves. Tirtza wants to say something, but doesn't. Miri sniffs the air).

Miri: (Gathers up her things). I'm leaving.

Tirtza: Wait, just another moment. He'll be back any second. If you already waited for him until now...

Miri: I waited for him?

Tirtza: He's sick, very sick, really.

Miri: And that's a reason to start loving him? That makes him clean, retroactively? That's what they depend on, in the end they die and people forgive them.

Tirtza: (With all her heart, with difficulty) Don't you see? He won't be around anymore, no, enough. It might be the last chance for the two of you.

Miri: Last chance for what? To scream at each other? To go crazy, all over again?

Tirtza: You don't have to. Things can be different, good, you can forgive, be human.

Miri: What's good for you isn't good for me, Mom. You start with what's good for you and everything turns sweaty, sticky, like some disease. Why'd you do this to me? You know me, don't you? Did you really think that you would bring me back to him like this? What were you thinking?

Tirtza: I don't know, I wasn't thinking, I just... maybe all the same, being pregnant...

Miri: Pregnant? Where'd you get that from?

Tirtza: I don't know. No reason. I tried. No real reason. Just the way you asked me before about my pregnancy.

Miri: I asked about yours, not mine.

Tirtza: Somebody called too, they asked about you. He didn't say who it was. I told him you might come around.

(Miri stares at her, then looks out the window).

Tirtza: He left, the one standing over there.

Miri: Why are you telling me this?

Tirtza: No reason, you just looked out the window. Like you were thinking of something but didn't tell me what.

(Miri gathers up her things once more).

Tirtza: A year ago when we sat in the café you talked about pregnancy.

Miri: I talked about freedom. That maybe sometimes you have to decide not to get pregnant while you can still choose, not when it's too late already. It was just empty talk. It's too much even for someone like me to get pregnant just to decide afterwards if you want it or not, just to exercise your free choice.

Tirtza: I just remember you talking about pregnancy, not freedom.

Miri: That's for sure. (Suddenly) And if I was pregnant? Does being pregnant mean you turn into an animal, a doormat – some hysterical female – somebody's sick, dying, so that's it, she lets down her guard, gives in, gives up. Maybe it's true, maybe that's what comes from pregnancy.

Tirtza: You get something else too.

Miri: Really? How interesting. (Turns to go).

(Cooper is standing in the doorway, with two broken chairs).

Tirtza: You. (After a moment) Come in, why...?

(Cooper doesn't move).

Tirtza: Look, Miri, she came for a visit.

Cooper: (Enters, addresses Tirtza and ignores Miri, despite the fact that it's clear that everything he is saying is essentially directed at the latter. Referring to the broken pieces of the chairs in his hands, with pauses) Look, look! What chairs, what chairs! And the wood! The workmanship! You leave a thing like that in the street? (Takes apart the chairs) You see? It comes apart. You can put it right back together again, too. (Tries to put them back together) You see? (In pain, but he fights through) Whole families are still gonna sit on these chairs.

Miri: (On the side, softly) Yeah. The whole lot of them on a single seat.

Cooper: Did somebody say something?

Tirtza: No, nothing. (Offers him a chair) Here, sit.

Cooper: (Does not sit down, refers to some oven) And whole families are still gonna cook food in these ovens. Just think of the workmanship, the planning, the precision! A hundred years ago something like this was just a fantasy. What about the material, the iron, the copper? Till this day miners still die in the mines when they collapse, you know that? What about the ships transporting the iron and sinking at sea? And all this wood. Think of the woodcutters, the oarsmen on the rivers, and the carpenters. Throwing this stuff out is like spitting in their faces, it's... (Turns into a cry of pain) Ah!

Tirtza: (Offers him a chair) Sit.

Cooper: I don't want to sit! This old plow... I found it down Allenby. Just imagine how it ended up there. We don't need a TV in here. All seven wonders of the world are right here, all you have to do is open your eyes, open your heart. Yeah, the wonders of the world, not just some *shmatas*, you hear me? None of that plastic stuff they make everything from these days, robots turning things out in droves. They make it in a second, and it falls apart in a second. That's their policy – somebody makes money off it, somebody's destroying the world like that. (Turns into a cry of pain) Ah!

(Miri is about to say something. Tirtza motions to her to be quiet. Cooper turns his head).

Tirtza: It's nothing. Nobody said a thing.

Cooper: (To Tirtza) Just imagine that the world falls apart and there's only one man left standing.

Tirtza: Why just one? Let it be a couple.

Cooper: I mean at that point even the most meaningless book'll be like the whole world to that guy. And half-filled notebooks like these – he'll be able to write, start everything over. And he'll have a table and chairs and an oven and a lamp. He'll fix them and build new ones according to their design. I mean a table like this with a leg missing, it's... a plow like this, they'll be a thousand times more helpful to him than all the photographs in the world. (To Tirtza, grabbing hold of her) Isn't that right? Huh?

Tirtza: (Trying to get him to sit down again) Yes, of course. Now sit.

Miri: And what's he going to do with the stench, this last man standing? How's the stench going to help him, and all this rot?

Cooper: (Continues addressing Tirtza) Life is about rot too. It's not about dead pictures.

- Miri: There are a few other signs of life besides rot, aren't there? How come that's your only sign of life – rot, this horrid, acrid sweat?
- Cooper: Tell her to show some respect! It's the sweat of human beings, their toil. She doesn't know what that means. That doesn't interest her, no, you can't take a picture of that, huh? (Without any strength) Huh? Huh?
- Tirtza: (Finally getting him to sit down) There, like that, sit. Here, drink this. (She gives him some medication, turns aside and makes a phone call).
- Miri: I actually know that, I recognize the smell. It's not all that special. You come across it quite a bit, in all the filthy holes in the world. Over in India, in Africa, even in New York. It's not the smell of the sweat of labor. Working people shower, even poor ones. This is the smell of the sweat of laziness, and failure. And fear. Even famine, and running sores and inflamed gums. I recognized it at once when I was abroad. It was the same smell, the smell of this house.
- Cooper: I was a failure? I was lazy?
- Miri: That's what makes it so awful. It was as if the foul stench was some sort of donation, the stench of an ideology, actually. It's an annoying smell, it drives you insane and just won't leave. Till this day people can smell it on me. Just like back then, in high school.
- Tirtza: No, what are you talking about? Not then either. Ask around.
- Miri: I know, trust me. It was me, they smelled it on me.
- Cooper: She was in the city high school, for honor students. I sent her there.
- Miri: When you send your daughter off to a place like that you also have to outfit her with an appropriate scent, which is definitely not the stench of chicken-head soup.
- Tirtza: (Ending her phone call) No, what? We never made any soup out of chicken heads.
- Miri: It doesn't matter that we didn't actually make it, what matters is that's what they said about us. There's no other house that they said it about. They laughed at me behind my back, they called me cock-a-doodle-do. I wanted to die.
- Tirtza: I felt bad, I...
- Miri: I bought perfume in the market. In secret, so he shouldn't find out. Instead of standing up to him and facing him down and throwing all that garbage of his out in the street. So I poured the perfume all over myself. They just laughed at me even more.

(Cooper gets up, with difficulty).

Tirtza: Sit, there's no need for you to...

(Cooper pushes the chair aside, shaking, unsteady).

Miri: You're doing it on purpose, just to break her heart.

(Cooper ignores her).

Miri: I'm talking to you, aren't I? I'm here, it's me, not some plow you found down Allenby.

Cooper: (To Tirtza, softly) Really? She's here? What happened? Somebody die? Is there a funeral?

Miri: She meant well. She made you out to be dead so we might meet, Cooper and his daughter. So we might forgive each other, kiss and make up, cry on each other's shoulders.

Cooper: (With the last of his strength, addressing Miri) Out, get out! (To Tirtza) You too, everybody!

Tirtza: (Terrified) No, why?

Miri: (Grabs hold of her) You're terrified. He can barely stand on two feet. (To Cooper) But you can still toss people out, get out! Just like back then, when I was sixteen and you threw me out and even...

Cooper: I never threw her out, she did it on her own.

Miri: Sure, after...

Cooper: She still has the nerve? She laughed in my face, she...

Miri: All I did was wash my hands, with my soap.

Cooper: Washing her hands before she left the house – *before*. That's 'all I did'?

Miri: That's right, that's all I did.

Cooper: And not just once, day after day.

Miri: That's right.

Cooper: How much can a man stand? Like that... outside everything's clean, that's where cleanliness is, and here inside the house there's just filth, huh? Outside they're all wise men, real modern, and only here it's your

father the idiot, the dumbass, right? Is that it? Answer me! Do you hear me?

Miri: I hear you. I heard you.

Cooper: And you didn't say a thing. You kept right on washing your hands, just right on washing.

Miri: It was a pleasure, not to answer you, just go right on washing my hands, in silence, just go right on. I felt this strength all of a sudden.

Cooper: You felt strong, so you got what you deserved.

Miri: Till this day I can still feel the slap on my cheek. Like a burn mark.

Cooper: I hit you, I didn't throw you out.

Miri: You had never hit me before. You bothered me, mocked me, screamed at me, you never hit me.

Cooper: There's a limit, the straw that breaks the camel's back. You spit in my face, at my whole way of life.

Miri: (Toward the junk all around) This is your face? This? This?

Cooper: When you were a little girl you didn't say, "This...?" "This...?"

Miri: Girls grow up. They see other houses, they see the world. I asked you to stop, but you kept going, you just filled the house up even more, on purpose.

Cooper: What did you expect? I wanted to show you what's what, you and all your friends, your teachers. You all made fun of me, you went right along with them, that whole open-minded world of yours. This house, it was always open, anybody in need was welcome to come in and help themselves. That's called open in my book.

Miri: (Softly) What do you mean the house was open to anyone in need? Who came? Who took anything? One family, those new immigrants. They took a table, two chairs, and a washing machine. Then you went out and brought home three times more stuff.

Cooper: They ruined that stuff, destroyed it.

Miri: You pleaded like a beggar: come, take something. But people ran away from the stench. They ran away from you in the street too. Mothers used to scare their kids by using your name, did you know that?

(Silence).

- Miri: (Feeling she has gone too far) Enough, I'm leaving. Where is my bag, goddammit!
- Cooper: (Gets up, trembling. Softly) Children weren't afraid of me, ever, that's not true!
- Miri: Yes it is. It is. It's true. And I'll be the one to say it. If you were alone – be my guest, stink all you want, bury yourself underneath your ideology. But you buried me and mom in here along with you.
- Tirtza: No, not me...
- Cooper: (With his last remaining strength) How dare you talk to me like that? I... I'm still alive. I... I... they removed a tumor, it was the size of a fist.
- Miri: Really? A fist?
- Cooper: You...! You...! I...! I...!
- Miri: (Almost shouting) Enough already! Shut up already! I can't stand to see this!
- Cooper: Maybe you want to take a picture, huh? A little photograph? Click-click, huh? Click-click?
- Miri: I don't have to take any pictures here, the whole world is waiting for me, for my camera.
- Cooper: (Confusedly) Click-click! Click-click! Click-click!
- Miri: (Simultaneously) What a joke! What a joke! What a joke!
- Tirtza: (Trying to quiet them down) Stop, enough already. Look, look, the sun is setting.
- (They become awestruck, fall silent, and stare at the reddening sky, then they look at Tirtza).
- Miri: Say that again.
- Tirtza: What did I say?
- Miri: Say what you said.
- Tirtza: What did I say, already. It's true, the sun is setting, almost.
- Miri: I never heard such an idiotic thing in my entire life.

(The ambulance's siren can be heard. Cooper sinks down. Mordeaux appears once more in the yard).

Tirtza: (To Miri, softly) I called them.

Cooper: (Confused) What's going on? Who is that for?

Miri: For you. Come, I'll help you. Just the siren is enough to kill you.

Tirtza: (Spotting Mordeaux) Again, out there, the same guy from before. Don't you see him?

Miri: (Seeing him) No, I don't. (Turns to Cooper, adjusting the buttons of his shirt).

Cooper: Let go! What are you doing?

Miri: Nothing, the buttons, they were out of place.

Cooper: I'm still alive!

Miri: And if the buttons'll be in the right place you won't be? You've got no other way of knowing?

Scene Three:

(Later that same evening, in the same location. A lantern is lit outside, partly illuminating the apartment as well. Mordeaux can be seen in the yard through the window, standing or pacing, waiting. Tirtza and Miri enter the apartment. Tirtza does not turn on the lights).

Miri: (After a moment) What are you waiting for?

Tirtza: (Seeming confused) Yes.

Miri: Yes...?

Tirtza: No?

Miri: What no? What yes? The lights, why don't you turn them on?

Tirtza: (Still does not turn them on). It's less frightening like this, in the dark, isn't it? You can pretend that he's still around here somewhere.

Miri: What are you trying to squeeze out of me exactly? It's not the first time he's been in the hospital.

Tirtza: I always stayed overnight there. The nurses would let me. It was less work for them.

Miri: Why didn't you go sleep there tonight?

Tirtza: So you wouldn't be left alone, right?

Miri: Are you making fun of me or what? I'm not you, not at all. That's what defines me most, not being you. I don't need anyone to look after me when I'm alone. You ought to get used to it too. What are you going to do afterwards? Put on the lights already, I have to go. I just need to find my bag and go.

Tirtza: Right. (Turns to put on the lights).

Miri: (Spots Mordeaux outside, stops her from putting on the lights). Wait.

Tirtza: I shouldn't put them on?

Miri: No.

Tirtza: No I shouldn't put them on or no I should put them on – yes, that is? You're all mixed up, you know.

Miri: Don't put them on. Where's my bag? I never lose it. How do you find anything in here?

Tirtza: They'll take care of him and he'll get better and come home quick, I'm sure of it. It'll take two days – maybe three. The doctor didn't say anything bad, isn't that right? He really didn't, right?

Miri: Enough, Mom.

Tirtza: That's not true?

Miri: No, he didn't say anything. I asked him if there was any chance and he stayed quiet. And you know it. And you also know I'm not going to stay here. I can't stand to stay in this bunker even a single night. Where is it goddammit? Not a single *shmata* gets lost in here, only my cameras have to go missing.

(Tirtza meanwhile spots the camera bag, and pushes it aside in order to hide it).

Miri: What happened?

Tirtza: Nothing, it's just, I... (Spots Mordeaux outside) Look, that same guy from the afternoon, he's in the yard again.

Miri: (Continues looking for her bag) Really?

Tirtza: You know, you saw him. He reminds me of somebody. Looks just like him. That boy, the grocer's son, Mordeaux. Their house was right nearby, you remember?

Miri: I remember.

Tirtza: The house with all the screaming. It was his father. He would beat them and scream too. The boy never screamed though. Cooper had a lot of respect for him, the boy that is.

Miri: I heard.

Tirtza: He was your admirer, that's what they call it, right? That was in elementary school still.

Miri: That's right.

Tirtza: Now I get it.

Miri: What do you get exactly?

Tirtza: That's how he knows the old path in the yard. That's where he used to wait for you.

Miri: Wait for me...?

Tirtza: When you were in high school. They sent him to an institution. Instead of sending his father off. When he was on vacation he used to wait for you in the yard in order to catch a glimpse of you. That was the way you always went.

Miri: I don't remember anything like that, I never once saw him there.

Tirtza: There was no way you could have, he would wait lying down, behind the bush, so that he would see you but you couldn't see him. I understood it right away.

Miri: Keep going.

Tirtza: He would wait for an hour, even two, until you'd pass by.

Miri: And you... you knew and never told me?

Tirtza: It was beautiful, I have a thing for love stories.

Miri: Love stories? I get the chills just hearing about it.

Tirtza: It's not easy to sit out there waiting on your stomach for an hour or two, all just to see you walk by for a mere second, after all. I even thought something might develop between the two of you and that you would get married in the end. With Cooper, too, he met me when I was twelve. He was fourteen. He never liked to talk much.

Miri: That's for sure.

Tirtza: He was a good boy. He used to come into Cooper's shop a lot. Cooper said he was better than all those kids from the so-called good homes that you had gotten mixed up with.

(Mordeaux stops in the yard, looks inside through the window. Miri looks at him).

Tirtza: He heard you, he knows you're in here.

Miri: (Towards Mordeaux) I did it, I'm done already.

(Mordeaux does not respond).

Miri: You don't hear me? I did it. This morning, at Dr. Shasha's clinic. They gave me an emergency appointment. It wasn't too late, there was still time. You know that, you know everything, don't you?

(Mordeaux does not respond).

Miri: (Goes back to looking for her bag) Where is it? (Addresses Mordeaux again) You know everything, huh? It's true, I didn't do it today, I canceled, I had a funeral.

Tirtza: God forbid, there was no funeral.

Miri: (To Mordeaux) I'm gonna do it tomorrow. There's nothing you can do, don't you get it? Where is it already? Get lost! (Continues looking for her bag, somewhat wildly now. As she goes she tosses a piece of junk out the window).

Tirtza: (Shocked) What...!

(A shocked silence ensues. Tirtza stares at Miri, who stares back at Tirtza. The two of them seem to need a moment to digest what just happened).

Miri: (Shakes off the shock and begins tossing more and more junk in Mordeaux' direction, as she starts to laugh). What a pleasure! What joy! (Almost tosses the camera bag out the window).

Tirtza: Your bag, the cameras.

Miri: (Stops) How'd it get over here? I didn't put it here, that's for sure.

Tirtza: I don't know, it's nothing.

Miri: Sure, it's nothing. (Goes back to throwing things out the window) The way it all comes apart, just look at it! You think it's some huge beast, a real monster... just a bunch of *shmatas* after all, dry bones, that's it.

Tirtza: Cooper, your father, he'll be back.

Miri: Yeah, like the doctor said. He didn't say anything negative, he just didn't say anything at all.

Tirtza: Even with a chicken, you only pluck her feathers after she's dead, right?

Miri: (After a moment) Say that again.

Tirtza: Even with a chicken, you only pluck her feathers after she's dead, right?

Miri: (Softly) You brought me to him after he died, right? (Throwing the junk out the window) And since when is he a chicken? And what's with the feathers? This, these are his feathers? He's got nothing else? He was a real artisan. He was a brave man. He was a real original. He was... oh, forget it already! (Goes back to tossing junk through the window) Don't lie to me again, another one of those half-lies. Your whole life's been like that. And don't hide my cameras again. If you hadn't hid them I would have left already. (To Mordeaux) You're still there? (As she tosses junk in his direction) Me? A child from me? Not just some kid, he wants to have a kid with his father's name.

Yeah, that same father who used to beat him. He found a woman who fits the bill. He found me and I found him. *Alte sachen*, that's me. What are you following me around for? What are you gonna do if you see me going into the clinic? What are you gonna do? Gonna break something? Tear it down? Or you just gonna stare at me there too? What, are you trying to put a spell on me with those eyes of yours? You think I don't have enough *meshugenas* in my life without you? (As if addressing herself) Enough already, stop it, shut up already! For years I've stayed silent, in control, a real pleasure, and now suddenly everything's falling through my hands.

(Tirtza stares at her, smiling).

Miri: What are you smiling about?

Tirtza: The color returned to your cheeks.

Miri: The color in my cheeks? That's what you're worried about now?

Tirtza: Maybe we ought to tell Cooper, about your being pregnant.

Miri: Don't you dare! There's no pregnancy, nobody's pregnant, and they won't be either!

Tirtza: He'll be happy. He doesn't have a lot of time left.

Miri: Do you hear yourself? He's gonna die and I'm gonna be pregnant there in his head? Another trap? No way! (Continues tossing junk out the window).

Tirtza: He loved children so much. They had a poor house, they were nine kids. They lived in a basement and it was empty and freezing. He talked about it all the time, how empty and cold it was. He wanted seven children, that was the plan. But I wasn't able to have any more kids after I gave birth to you. I told him that if he really wanted more kids I was prepared to give him a divorce. He didn't talk to me for two months after that. Then he started with the collecting.

(Miri stops, stares at her in the middle of her words, listening).

Tirtza: Yes, that's what happened.

ACT TWO

Act Two takes place both inside the apartment and in the yard outside. In Scene One the majority of the action takes place between the apartment and the yard as well as in both spaces at the same time. Scene Three takes place in the apartment once more, as in Act One.

Scene One:

(The next day, in the afternoon. Outdoors, in the backyard. On the side it is possible to see the interior of the apartment, which is almost completely empty. Everything that was previously inside has been thrown outdoors. Some of it, like the large furniture, has been thrown in the street, and we can not see it. The rest is in the yard, mostly in a big pile of broken junk, newspapers, old clothing, etc. To one side, behind some fence, there is a small, hidden, extra pile. All sorts of things that fell along the way are scattered here and there. Tirtza enters from the direction of the house, dragging some full bag to the large pile).

Tirtza: (To herself, sort of chattering away) That's how it is. He told me not to throw it out, not a thing! She tells me I should throw it out – everything! Who am I supposed to listen to? On the one hand, he's my husband. On the other hand, she's my daughter, my blood, right? But on the other hand, she's also his daughter. That means it's his blood too... though on the other hand... the third, or fourth hand, that is... yeah, even if he's more than that, I have to listen to her. After all, she's here and he's there, in the hospital. The way he was screaming this morning. (Makes sure Miri is not within earshot, as she transfers a few things from the large pile to the small pile on the side). Let a little bit stay, at least something.

(Miri appears while Tirtza is still talking, on her way from the street back to the house. She sits down on something and falls asleep).

Tirtza: (Approaches her, though not too closely, and says to her, though softly) I told him. (Miri is sleeping, it is clear that she hasn't heard). She fell asleep like that, again. (Turns away from her, then goes back and says to her, a little louder now) I told him, today, in the afternoon. (Even louder now) I told him, I did.

Miri: (Waking up) What? Did you say something to me?

Tirtza: No, nothing. You were sleeping, you fell asleep. You're falling off your feet.

Miri: Really? (Gets up and goes into the apartment).

Tirtza: (To herself) I told her. Nobody can say I didn't tell her. Yes, I told her. (She goes back and transfers a few things from the large pile again).

(Mordeaux enters the yard, approaches her, from behind).

Tirtza: (Terrified) No! Who...? (Turns around, sees him) Hello. I got scared. He used to say that I liked to be afraid. Now I've got what to be afraid of.

Mordeaux: Nothing? You didn't hear a thing, all afternoon?

Tirtza: (As though she did not hear, while transferring items) Now I've got to be afraid of him too, what if he sees me throwing everything out? And her too, if she catches me... yeah, *not* throwing things out. Putting things on the side, that is – something.

(Mordeaux takes another step in her direction).

Tirtza: I heard, I understood too. I might be stupid but I'm not that stupid, not all the time. I heard her on the phone.

Mordeaux: What did you hear? I asked you, tell me. You also want her to...

Tirtza: And what if I do? I wanted them to meet and make up. What did that come to? Came out that I said he was dead, and now he's ended up in the hospital while she throws out his collection of a lifetime. For my sake, so I can have a regular house. It's like a pogrom, no? I have to not get out of character. They want enough as it is. First you've got to collect everything. Just have to. Then you've got to throw everything out, just gotta do that too. Even our soap has to be thrown out, it's dirty. Who ever heard of something like that? Dirty soap.

Mordeaux: What did you hear?

Tirtza: Did you ever hear of something like that, dirty soap?

Mordeaux: What did she say? On the phone, with the clinic.

Tirtza: They gave her an appointment, at night. It was getting late, that's what they told her. They wanted her to come in the afternoon. She had to finish something first, that's what she told them. That's why she's working like that during the day and at night too, in order to get it done before it's too late altogether.

(Miri appears deep in the yard as she exits the apartment, dragging a bed in the direction of the street. Mordeaux turns to Tirtza as if to ask what's going on).

Tirtza: To the street, the curb. We're putting the big things out there. He used to come home like that sometimes at night, dragging things along. Even in the winter, in the rain, there wasn't even a dog in the street, and there from the window I'd suddenly see some table moving along in the street, or some washing machine. The country is crumbling, going to seed, he said, we've got to do something.

(Mordeaux makes some motion in Miri's direction).

Tirtza: (Putting a hand on his arm, as though to stop him). Wait. Perhaps, who knows? Sometimes you think one thing – and things turn out the other way. With all the work she's doing. Even earlier she just dropped and fell asleep. Only for a moment, but... she used to always use up all her energy, and then she would just drop and sleep forever. That's how it is, all this cleaning – when my mother was pregnant she used to turn the whole house upside down – what a scare! (Towards Miri in the distance) Hey, that's my bed. She already took it out once.

(Miri hears her voice from a distance, approaches, puts down the bed. Tirtza stops in the middle of transferring something to the small pile. Miri sees her. Mordeaux has retreated to the side).

Tirtza: (Trying to hide the little pile behind her with her body, and addressing Miri) What's doing? (Indicating Mordeaux) You've got a visitor, he...

(Miri does not respond, ignoring Mordeaux).

Tirtza: (Indicating the large pile) What a pile! You got a lot done today, didn't you? And there's still the big stuff out in the street. (Addressing Mordeaux now as well) All this was up there in our little apartment, hard to believe, right? And it's all just *shamatas*, it's true, we should throw it out, right?

(Miri does not respond).

Tirtza: It's not true?

Miri: (Indicating the little pile behind her). What's that, Mom?

Tirtza: What?

Miri: Behind you, behind the fence.

Tirtza: Look at that, interesting, how'd that get here? Same stuff like over there. Same *shamatas*. Let 'em stay here, no? What's the difference? It'll be easier for the garbage men, they won't have to take everything all at once.

(Miri puts the things from the little pile back on the big one).

Tirtza: The way he was screaming this morning at the hospital.

Miri: Really? I didn't know.

Tirtza: You heard it same as I did. You called that doctor to give him a shot.

Miri: So why tell me about it? And so what if he screamed? Is that a reason to go hiding stuff off on the side?

Tirtza: That's true. (Gathers up things to put them back, together with Miri, with Tirtza's coat among the things) That's a good coat, I was still able to use it this past year.

Miri: I'll buy you a new one.

Tirtza: Cooper, your father, he bought it for me when I was pregnant with you. He really had an eye for stuff.

(Miri stops).

Tirtza: (Puts the coat on Miri) He bought it so it should be a little small on purpose, so that I would be able to wear it even after I gave birth. Not too small, so I wouldn't suffer too much. It really didn't pull in the shoulders almost at all. It just pulled a little over the stomach, when it would get cold and I would close the coat up. I thought it was gonna burst. But no, nothing happened. He knew how to spot good material.

(Miri stands there with the coat on as though in a trance).

Tirtza: It fits you too, just right. That's what he said back then: even our daughter is gonna be able to wear this coat when she gets pregnant.

Miri: (Laughingly, surprisingly soft) Already when you were pregnant you were busy getting me pregnant too, huh? (She takes off the coat wildly) The way it sticks to you, goddammit!

(Tirtza seems to want to say something).

Miri: Yes? You want to say something?

Tirtza: (Getting up the courage) I told him.

Miri: Told what? To whom?

Tirtza: You know.

Miri: I don't know.

Tirtza: Cooper, your father, about you being pregnant.

Miri: I told you not to tell him, didn't I? Why? To try and force my hand? Why?

Tirtza: After you left he felt a lot of pain again in the afternoon. He fell asleep after they gave him the shot, but you could see he was in pain. So I told him.

Miri: And what happened? That stopped the pain? Did he even hear you?

Tirtza: I don't know. He opened his eyes. Then he closed them again.

Miri: Move over, okay? (Goes back to the bed to pick it up).

Tirtza: That's my bed again, you took it out already.

Miri: And you just sat there the whole time? Why didn't you say something to me right away?

Tirtza: How could I? You were talking, you...

(Miri turns to the bed that she brought out, in order to pick it up).

(Mordeaux stands in her way, and during the course of what follows, Tirtza keeps putting things back stealthily on the little pile on the side).

Miri: (To Mordeaux) What now?

Mordeaux: Give it to me, I'll carry it.

Miri: (Starts to try and pick it up, then stops) I had a bitch once. When she would be in heat, all the dogs would show up. I'd get rid of them. They'd disappear, and then come back later. There was one that wouldn't move, a big, black dog. I would hit him with a rubber hose, I'd really hit him hard. He could've torn me to pieces, but he would just stand there and absorb the blows and look at me with those eyes like that. I can still feel his body now, under the blows from the hose in my hand. I can still see his eyes, soft, awful. (Starts to pick up the bed and drag it along).

(Mordeaux stands in her way).

Miri: Twenty years... twenty years you've been lying here in the yard waiting to ambush me. Lying on the ground! Putting down roots, trying to get inside me with those roots. Trying to stick that father of yours inside me. Me... me, out of all the women, I have to give you a son with the name of a father like yours?! After all the times he beat you, all the... you still owe him something?! And not just anything, you owe him the name of your son, of...?!

Mordeaux: I don't owe him anything, it's not for him – it's for me, me.

Miri: I don't want to hear it, move!

Mordeaux: (Not too loudly, but in a sort of shout, something desperate, trying to stop her) There are a lot of people with that name, a lot. I always hear somebody calling someone else in the street with that name. I hear that

name and it hits me like a lead fist in the gut. It cuts me to pieces, takes the air from my lungs. I loved him and he was a bad man, my father, a bad man.

(Miri stops).

Mordeaux: The child'll be a good person, you understand? He'll have my father's name, but he'll be good. I'll call him by his name, by my father's name, and I'll hear the way others call him by his name – my father's name – without feeling that fist in the stomach. I... I...

Miri: I'm listening.

Mordeaux: With my own two hands I'll make him a good kid, like that, with his name – my father's name. When he cries at night, I'll get up and go softly to him. No, I won't slap him 'cause he woke me up. I'll get up and go to him and I'll cover him quietly with a blanket. That's all, so that he should sleep peacefully. Then I'll go back to my bed and sleep peacefully too.

Miri: (Approaches him, as though touched, then stops) What do you want from me? It's driving me nuts, this... what a waste! Don't you see? You've got money, you're a man, you're not just some big talker, you've got plenty of luck with women. Let somebody else have your kid for you. Why me? I thought I wanted it, that I was ready, but I'm not. So just because I don't you do? Because I'm the girl from back when, a sort of antique?

(Mordeaux approaches her).

Miri: No, I don't want to.

Mordeaux: You have it good with me.

Miri: So what if I do? Don't you get it? That's just it! No, it's not the pregnancy, it's not the child, it's you, your hand, it's inside me trying to grab hold of me. (Trips on the bed, falls/sinks down on it). You won't catch me, nobody will. I'm gonna abort it just to cut your hand out, just for that! (Lies down on the bed, falls asleep).

Tirtza: (Covers her with some blanket from the pile) Everything's right here, just like home.

Scene Two:

(Later in the same day, towards evening. The action takes place now inside the apartment as well as out in the yard. The apartment is empty except for a few pieces of junk and *shmatas*. It is difficult to see because of the dim light. Miri's camera bag is on the floor in the middle. Miri and Tirtza enter from outside, tired, standing. Miri leans against the wall and rolls against it out of tiredness as though she is on the floor, rolling from her back onto her stomach).

Tirtza: (After a moment, as a half-question) That's it?

Miri: What else is there?

Tirtza: Nothing. I was just asking. When you're collecting you can always find space to fit something else inside. When you're getting rid of things – you're finished and that's it, it's done.

Miri: I didn't throw him out, Mom. And I didn't make him sick either. Neither did you. What kind of game are you playing? All through the years you didn't stop complaining quietly, behind his back. Why don't you sit down.

Tirtza: (There is no chair to sit on) Yes, in a sec.

Miri: (Angrily, still against the wall) I've had it. Sit, you hear me? I'm dead, my head is spinning. And I have to wash up and get dressed. I've got an appointment this evening and you know it. So all of a sudden you don't want to sit down? Sit and have something to drink.

Tirtza: (Remains standing) I'm sitting, I've been sitting for a while already.

Miri: Really? You've been sitting for a while already?

Tirtza: (Laughing) Yes, quite a while.

Miri: You're laughing.

Tirtza: Is that prohibited?

Miri: (Laughing now as well, though tiredly) Oy, Ma, you have a beautiful laugh, Mom, you know that? You really have a beautiful laugh, oy, Ma. What a laugh, Mom, what a laugh! What happened to me? I don't remember the last time I laughed like that. Enough, that's it.

Tirtza: Should I put on the lights? It's dark.

Miri: Leave it like this, just another sec. You wouldn't believe it but I've waited for this too, I dreamt about it. You're sitting there calmly by the little table in a normal house, and I'm bringing you coffee.

Tirtza: I only drink tea.

Miri: I'll fix the dream. I'll put in tea instead of coffee. (Immediately)
Maybe now, who knows, maybe they won't smell that stench on me anymore.

Tirtza: How am I going to live here all alone?

Miri: Alone with the *shmatas* was better?

Tirtza: At least his smell would have remained. There were things. I could have remembered how he brought them home, their history. (Right away) If there were some child to take care of.

Miri: (Laughing) I'm supposed to give you a kid to take care of, huh? And here I am laughing. I'm so tired that I can't even tell how tired I am anymore.

(Tirtza puts on the lights, and stands there exposed in the middle of the room. In the yellow light the empty room appears in all its ugliness, with filthy, scarred walls, *shmatas*, etc.)

Tirtza: Should I turn it off?

Miri: No, leave it. (Keeps moving and looking around).

Tirtza: Are you missing something?

Miri: Are you making fun of me, huh? There were so many *shmatas* here that I always thought to myself who knows how much room, how much beauty, is hiding there behind all that, what a palace! No, that's not true, I didn't throw the stuff out in order to have a palace. And I didn't do it for you either. I threw it out just to get rid of it, to get it off my back, the way you get a big load off your chest, you just get rid of it.

Tirtza: So things are good now.

Miri: What's that supposed to mean?

Tirtza: You threw the stuff out, got rid of it.

Miri: Yeah, that's true. (Continues looking around).

Tirtza: Maybe because it's cold.

Miri: What because it's cold?

Tirtza: I don't know, just... you know. It's cold.

Miri: Really?

Tirtza: No?

Miri: No.

Tirtza: That's true. It's warm.

Miri: What do you mean warm?

Tirtza: No? So what then?

Miri: What do you want from me, Mom? (Exits in the direction of the street).

(Cooper enters the yard meanwhile, at the edge, wearing hospital clothing. He moves/stands with difficulty, looking around at the junk, *shmatas*, etc., seems shocked, doesn't understand. A streetlight comes on).

Tirtza: (To Cooper, rushing towards him, shocked) You.

Cooper: (Approaches her, touches her, her face) You. (Indicating all the things) I thought I might be drunk from all the shots, the pain. Maybe I'm dead already altogether, seeing things all of a sudden. What's this?

Tirtza: (Trying to buy time) What?

Cooper: This, the whole yard, this pile, all the... (In fear) Whose is it? Not...? Not...? (Tries to run from the truth) One of the neighbors?

Tirtza: Yeah, sure, the neighbors, somebody.

Cooper: They threw it out? Stuff like this?

Tirtza: You know how it is, people, they've been brainwashed. Come on, you have to get back to the hospital.

Cooper: The garbage men – they'll take it all, they'll throw it all out. It's good stuff, solid gold.

(Miri appears at the back of the stage, dragging the bed from the street towards the house).

Cooper: (Spotting her) That's not...?

Tirtza: Yes, Miri.

Cooper: Where'd she come from?

Tirtza: The street. There are some good things out there too, big things.

- Cooper: What are you trying to tell me? Are you telling me that she's collecting, bringing stuff inside? To our place, our house?
- Tirtza: Just like that, yes. (Takes hold of his hand, trying to pull him away) Come, you have to get to the hospital.
- Cooper: Just a second. (Stops, as if trying to remember something).
- (Miri, having spotted him in the meantime, puts down the bed and approaches. They don't notice her).
- Cooper: (Remembering) Before, in the hospital... it's like I was dreaming, they told me, somebody... is it possible that...? She's...?
- Tirtza: Yes, it's true, she's...
- Cooper: Really?
- Tirtza: Yes, pregnant. Come.
- Cooper: (Laughing, softly, happy, as much as he can muster with his remaining strength) I knew I should come, huh? Sure, she's pregnant so she's become human again. You have to collect things if you're gonna have a kid, you can't just photograph them. Let everybody throw everything out, go ahead. We'll collect it all. I'll go help her. Look, (picks up a horseshoe from the floor) an old-style horseshoe, cast iron, the real thing. We've got one like this in the house, too. It'll bring luck, you'll see. (Falls silent).
- Miri: (Stands facing him) It's not the neighbors', not that.
- Cooper: What's that supposed to mean?
- Miri: It's all yours, from your house, I put it out here, threw it out, everything, even the horseshoe, it's yours, I remember.
- Cooper: You're joking, you... it's not true. (Indicating the bed off to the side, that she was dragging just a moment before) That – you were dragging it, I saw you.
- Miri: It's Mom's bed, I threw it out by mistake. She needs it until we buy a new one, after they repaint the place. I don't want to lie to you. You're not dead yet, right?
- Cooper: And you're also... you're pregnant...?
- Miri: (In a half-question) Is that why you came? (To Tirtza) That's how you get us back together, huh? Me you bring back by telling me he died,

him you bring back by saying I'm pregnant. Come on, I'll take you back to the hospital.

(Cooper turns away from her towards the house. Miri and Tirtza follow him. He rings the doorbell).

Tirtza: (From behind) You're ringing the bell.

Cooper: (With his back to her) Really?

Tirtza: You never did before.

Cooper: No?

Tirtza: (Standing behind him) Come on, go inside.

(Turns around, as though to follow her outside).

Tirtza: (Trying to direct him inside, into the house) Not here, there, into the house.

Cooper: My house is outside, inside-out. They slaughtered it.

Miri: Come on, I'll take you back to the hospital.

Cooper: It's hardest at the hospital. You can't live and you can't die either. A man ought to die in the midst of his life, in the dust, on his land. (Looks out the window at the yard) Rain.

Tirtza: (Returns and enters, wraps him up in something) There, so you'll be warm. Come, sit down.

Cooper: Where?

Miri: Here, there's a chair.

Cooper: (Approaches it, remains standing) I don't recognize it.

Miri: Suddenly you don't recognize it? Just because I cleaned it?

Cooper: (Indicating the window) The rain... everything'll get wet. The armchair, my spot... good things, solid gold, I feel bad for them.

Miri: Yes, you feel bad for them, for *them*. (Goes outside, brings things back in, including the armchair).

Cooper: (Does not see her bringing things back, addresses Tirtza) And you... you let her?

- Tirtza: I guess, because she's pregnant. You know how it is, when a woman's pregnant. Suddenly she wants something so badly, just has to have it.
- Cooper: That's not a lie, is it? Like my funeral, the way you told her, just to get her to come?
- Tirtza: No, she would tell you if it were a lie, you know her. She's going to have a kid. This way it's like she's building a house for him, a new home. There are some who need a new home, everything from scratch.
- Cooper: A child, huh? A grandson, after all that.
- Miri: (To Cooper, directing him towards the armchair she brought back inside) Here, sit.
- Cooper: What's this? You brought it back in?
- Miri: Your spot.
- Cooper: (Shows her the horseshoe he has in his hand) Look, look.
- Miri: What are you showing me?
- Cooper: I had a horse, it was my uncle's. It was old, full of injuries. It lay in the stable, in its place, with all the flies... even the dogs had already starting taking bites. I told my uncle and his sons too. He'll die on his own, they said, just another day. They were lazy, sure. So I did it myself. He was so old and weak that I had to lift him just to get him to stand on his legs. I was still just a kid but I was strong. I got under his belly and picked him up. He had a white stomach, yeah. And I led him like that, little by little, so he wouldn't fall. Over there, behind the dumpsters, to the man who hides the animals. He'll do what has to be done. Enough, let it die, let it rest.
- Miri: You're still far from dying and resting, Dad. You're still gonna make plenty of trouble. (Sits him down) Here, sit. (Brings some of the things she brought back inside over to the armchair) Here, I brought your bookcase too. And your newspaper holder. And the papers. I'll bring in more stuff from outside.
- Cooper: (Hands her the horseshoe) Here. Little kids like stories about horses. Give it to him and tell him the story, huh? Keep it and give it to him.
- Miri: (On the verge of taking it, then doesn't) No, Dad. I don't want to lie to you. I'm not going to keep it for him and I'm not going to give it to him. Not me.
- Cooper: So what are you bringing things back inside for, huh? All these things...

- Miri: (Continues piling things up around him, all around the armchair) I don't know why, I don't know, I really don't. (Stops, as though she begins to understand).
- Cooper: It's not for you, for your child?
- Miri: (Absent-mindedly) My child... (Absent-mindedly) Yeah, I guess. (Stops, her head is somewhere else, suddenly she grasps something, and says happily) How could I not have thought of that? What stupidity, what idiocy! Why did I throw everything out? Why didn't I just...? (Goes back to piling things up all around him).
- Cooper: Yes, that's something a child would like.
- Miri: (Takes out her camera) It's not for the kid, Dad. I didn't throw it out for the kid, and I'm not putting it back for the kid. I want to photograph you. That's what I want. That's what I wanted from the start, the entire time, all these years. To photograph you, and the house, you and the house together. (Points the camera at him).
- Cooper: No! No!
- Miri: For the sake of my pregnancy you're ready to throw everything out. But you can't let me photograph you? I'm a photographer, I'm not a pregnant person, that's not me, not me at all. (On the verge of snapping a photo).
- Cooper: (Shakes his hand at her, threateningly, as much as he can) No!
- Miri: Yes, that too, just like that, exactly, hold that pose! (On the verge of snapping a photo).
- Tirtza: (Steps between her and Cooper) He's still alive.
- Miri: That's just it, because he's still alive. You want me to wait till he's dead?
- Tirtza: I won't let you.
- Miri: We'll see. (Brings more of the junk back inside, wildly).
- (Tirtza sits Cooper down in his armchair. Mordeaux enters and approaches Miri).
- Miri: (Bringing junk back inside, placing it around Cooper's armchair, addresses Mordeaux) Move, not now.
- Mordeaux: (In a strange voice, having difficulty speaking) You don't want me, right? That's why you don't want the child. It's like my hand inside

you. You want to cut my hand out, that's what you want, it's what you said, right?

Miri: You're bothering me.

Mordeaux: Fine, I'll go. You won't see me again, he won't know anything about me. You can have him. Give him whatever name you want, live wherever you want. I won't know where. I'll just send money, as much as you need.

Miri: What are you talking about?

Mordeaux: I'll disappear, I'll cut myself right out of you, everything, just not my hand. You don't need any abortion, no clinic.

Miri: (As though just now understanding what he is saying. Approaches him, touches him, softly) I can't believe it.

(Mordeaux takes his hand from her, almost pushing her away).

Miri: You pushed me, you... it's like you...

Mordeaux: No, I don't hate you.

Miri: Who said anything about hate? Now I'm sure of it, you hate me.

Mordeaux: Yesterday I told you that I don't want to hit my child. I don't want to hit anyone and I don't want to get hit either, I'm not ready to take that anymore, from anyone.

(Miri photographs him, he shakes his hand at her, almost hitting her).

Miri: Sure, same thing.

(Mordeaux does not hit her, just leaves. Miri turns to photograph Cooper. Tirtza is standing facing her).

Miri: (Photographs her again and again) Enough already. It's no trick to take your picture. Move over.

(Cooper turns away, walking slowly, heading into one of the corners of the room).

Tirtza: Where are you going?

Cooper: Home, home.

Tirtza: (Trying to pull him back to the chair) Not there – here, all your things, everything you collected.

Cooper: (Walks towards the corner) Home... nine brothers, and a sister... cold and empty, cold and empty, so cold... (Stands in the corner and begins to sink down).

(Tirtza and Miri carry him back to the armchair, sit him down, and his head sinks).

Miri: (Raises his head) Wait, Dad, don't go. Open your eyes, listen to me, you can do it. I'll get you to do it. We'll talk, we'll argue, but listen to me, listen.

(His head sinks).

Tirtza: That's it, it's over.

Cooper (dead): Now photograph me, let's see you do it.

Miri: Say that again.

Cooper (dead): Now let's see you do it.

Miri: You'll see.

Tirtza: Who are you...?

Miri: What?

Tirtza: You spoke, you said, "You'll see".

Miri: Really?

Tirtza: We have to call an ambulance, the hospital.

Miri: Why?

Tirtza: Him, Cooper.

Miri: Wait, don't call anyone. Let me catch my breath a second. Let me catch my breath.

Scene Three:

(A little more than a day later, at about four in the morning. The scene takes place in the apartment interior, which is now full just as it had been and just barely illuminated. A projector lamp lights up the face of Cooper's body, which is seated in the armchair, with his back to the audience. Miri is photographing him over and over. The pictures appear one after the other on a large screen, the face of Cooper in death. Tirtza stands off to the side).

Miri: (Extremely tired, falls down and rises again, on all four for a moment, and says, as though quoting Cooper, and his laugh) You with your jet-setting! Huh? You travel, pay a king's ransom, but if there aren't any photos it's like it wasn't even...! Huh? That way it's also worth the... the... (Not quoting) What was it? I heard it a hundred times, like a drill boring away in my head...

Tirtza: Maybe that's enough, take a break.

Miri: No, let me do it. Like this, it's the best, I want to exhaust myself completely, then it'll happen, I'm sure of it. Like that time with the stone. A thousand photos, all the same thing, and suddenly something new appeared. The life of the stone, its insides, what it truly is. (Laughs) And who I truly am, my life, what I want to do with myself. That was when I decided to have a child, how idiotic! (Sinks down, addresses Cooper) Just a second, you let me...?

(Tirtza approaches her, concerned).

Miri: (To Tirtza) What's up? You afraid he might answer me? Let him wake up, answer me!

Tirtza: It's not...? Not...?

Miri: What's not? What is?

Tirtza: Not really...? He's not really talking to you, not now, that is.

Miri: No? Who knows? (Takes more pictures, and quotes Cooper again, with his laugh) I mean your entire life...! Huh? And your kids too...! They're alive, laughing, but they're not worth a thing if they haven't had their picture taken...! You need a photo to prove that...?! If that's the case then it's really like they never existed...! The proof is in the pudding...! Right? Right?

Tirtza: Maybe all the same... eat something, have a drink.

Miri: I have company right now, Mom. That's not polite. When he eats and drinks then I will too. What are you afraid of, Mom?

Tirtza: Me...?

Miri: Who else? Me?

Tirtza: You're not afraid?

Miri: What should I be afraid of? He's the one should be afraid. In Africa they're afraid that they might lose something when you take their picture. (Again as though quoting Cooper, with his laugh) That's true, you take things...! You take freedom, uniqueness, you take the soul...! Turn it into a piece of paper, with copies, hung on poles...! You pass it from hand to hand, stare at it, without any permission...! (No longer quoting) It's the first time in my life that I'm not afraid of him. Maybe that's why he died. When he was alive he didn't allow himself. It was his pride. Finally we're doing something together, did you think of that?

(Tirtza stares at her).

Miri: Yes, together. Taking pictures is like giving birth. The stone has to give itself away for it to happen. That moment, the miracle. (To Cooper) What did you do your entire life, huh? Fixing these *shmatas*...! Waiting for somebody who might need them...! That's not waiting on a miracle?

(Tirtza approaches her, seems to want to say something).

Miri: Yes, Mom?

Tirtza: You have to bury the dead.

Miri: Give me a sec, okay? Just a sec! (Takes a picture and quotes Cooper again) Sure, instead of looking at the child – you look for the right moment to take his picture! Some life, just moments, bits of shiny paper, still life, without a scent...! (Answers him) For your information I always photograph the filthiest holes, just so you know, so that people should see the stench, that's my challenge, to get them to see it. (Quotes Cooper, with his laugh) What heroism! Instead, why don't you just offer them the smell, plain and simple? That's why we have noses, don't we...?! (No longer quoting, addressing Tirtza) A real phenomenon, huh? He's not stupid, that's for sure. He just doesn't understand that cameras these days are like soil, like air, that's it, they exist, by the hand of God. (To Tirtza) How come he doesn't think of the desire to remember, to leave something behind, to memorialize? Who's gonna know he existed if we don't...? (Quoting him again) Who needs to know? You need to live and to... (No longer quoting, in her own voice) To give birth, huh? You've got to, got to give birth, that's what it means to be alive...?

Tirtza: (Loudly) You have to bury the dead.

- Miri: Really? The worms are better than me? I finally have an opportunity to talk to him, to do something together, to be friends.
- Tirtza: Everything in it's time. Now's the time for burying.
- Miri: You're really afraid for me, huh?
- Tirtza: Yes, that's it, you could say that.
- Miri: Actually, why haven't you said anything until now?
- Tirtza: What's that supposed to mean?
- Miri: (All while photographing) You're so afraid. Why did you let me go on until now? Keeping him here, taking his picture, and...? You lied just like I did to the hospital, when they called looking for him. What time is it, actually?
- Tirtza: (Tries to avoid the question) The time...?
- Miri: The time, what time is it?
- Tirtza: (Tries to avoid the question) Maybe all the same you should have something to eat.
- Miri: What time is it? Can't you give me an answer? I have an appointment at the clinic at ten.
- Tirtza: It's four.
- Miri: Four?
- Tirtza: Yes, on the dot. Now it's four-o-one.
- Miri: (Projects the pictures she has taken on the screen, not satisfied) No, no, no! He's not giving himself to the camera, he's just not. It's like he's cooperating but he's actually making fun of me. (Here she begins to attack him, to try to provoke him, with her last remaining strength) That's it, no more Mister Nice Guy! Memorialize you...? To get to know myself, for real...? Mind-games! I'm doing this for an exhibition, an album. You hear me? "Cooper, Man of the 20th Century, Marxist, Technician, quasi-Engineer, never had his picture taken his entire life – deathbed photos." What a topic! They'll love it, all those people you hate. You hid from them behind your junk, but now you're gonna hang on their walls. What do you say to that, huh? (On all four) Speak, let's hear you! Let's see what you know! I've had it with Africa and Thailand, conjurers and child prostitutes. My father, Cooper, that's my new career. I've got no time to give birth, I... (Falls down from exhaustion) What time is it, you just told me?

Tirtza: Now?

Miri: Now, when else? I have to finish. My appointment...

Tirtza: Four-ten.

Miri: Ten?

Tirtza: Yes, exactly.

Miri: (Laughing, softly, exhaustedly) Huh. When I used to have to hide from him... You tell the truth by the minute and lie by the hour, that's what he said. Four... My appointment is at ten, right? That means I have time. (Gradually falling asleep) Actually, how can that be...? Four...? He died in the evening, altogether, it was dark already. How...? (Falls asleep).

Tirtza: (To Cooper) I didn't lie. It's really four now. She didn't ask if it was four in the afternoon or four in the morning. She didn't ask what day it was either. Anyway, it doesn't matter anymore. The appointment was on Sunday, now it's Tuesday, almost morning. They called looking for her. Enough, they won't operate on her anymore, it was too late as it was. They told me to tell her. They were looking for her at the clinic just like they were looking for you at the hospital.

Miri: (Half-waking up) Who are you talking to? Is there someone here...?

Tirtza: No, no one, just...

Miri: It's like someone was standing here. (Indicating Cooper) He didn't get up all of a sudden?

Tirtza: No, how...?

(Miri falls back asleep. Tirtza opens the window, closes it immediately, opens, then closes, etc.)

Miri: (Half-waking up) What do you mean straight from the wall?

Tirtza: Excuse me?

Miri: You told me that I used to eat the paint straight from the wall, when I was a little girl.

Tirtza: Yeah, with your mouth, straight from the wall.

Miri: Like nursing, huh? I was nursing? The wall?

- Tirtza: With your eyes closed, too. Cooper said it was good. It was a sign that your body knew just fine what it needed. (Repeats herself) Your body knows.
- Miri: (Half-asleep) You're still trying to convince me, with my pregnancy, huh... (Laughs, softly, easily) Maybe like this... if I have love I'm not capable of having a kid, so maybe I can do it with hate. The ways these kids find to make it into the world, huh? (Falls asleep).
- Tirtza: (Opens the window again, then closes it, opens it, etc., all the while talking to herself) What should I do? When I close it... Sorry, it smells already. And when I open it... Sorry, the smell carries outside. The neighbors... I'm sure you understand.
- (Cooper gets up and stands on his feet meanwhile, as in Miri's dream. Tirtza does not see this. Miri wakes up, rises, and without a word she turns her projector lamps on Cooper).
- Cooper: (Covering his eyes with his hands) No! What are you doing?
- Miri: Washing my hands, in the house, before I go outside.
- Cooper: The... the... projectors!
- Miri: Finally, a sign of life...
- Cooper: Take them away! Turn them off!
- Miri: Sure, in the dark, that way you can keep hitting me and no one will know...
- Tirtza: (Sees and hears Miri, terrified by the force) What...? Who are you...?
- Miri: Step aside now, Mom! Just step aside! (Photographs Cooper).
- Cooper: No! What...?
- Miri: I told you, I'm washing my hands, trying to get rid of the stench, so I can go hang out with normal people.
- Cooper: You're photographing me.
- Miri: It's the same thing, the same thing.
- Cooper: What right do you have? I...! I...! (Raises his hand to hit her).
- Miri: That's it! Just like that! That's the moment! That's you! What a face! You're alive, alive, just like that, finally!

(The pictures that she takes appear on the screen, with the same picture of Cooper's dead face).

Cooper: You want to take my picture when I'm...? When I'm...?

Miri: Exactly! Just like that! I wanna take your picture while you're...!
What do you mean while you're...? Speak! Speak!

Cooper: I'm your father, I... you make fun of me, you drive me nuts, and then you... you take my picture?! Instead of listening to me, asking me to forgive you, or... you're still taking my picture?! What are you, God, God...?! You're a little pisher, my little girl, my girl, you're... you're... you're... (He weakens, returns to his spot in the armchair, as though the vision has ended).

(Miri projects the pictures she took on the screen. They are all the same picture of Cooper's dead face. She moves forward and backward through the series).

Miri: Where is it? I took the picture... where did it go? He was standing right here, he lifted his hand to hit me, he screamed, he was alive, finally, and I took his picture, I took it, I did. (To Tirtza) You saw it, right? You saw it, just like me, you saw it together with me, you saw it, right? Right...? Didn't you...? Didn't you...?

(Tirtza does not respond).

Miri: (After a moment, addressing Cooper) That's your victory, huh? Take my picture, let's see you...! You with your camera, state-of-the-art, you with that whole world of yours, take my picture...! And then you just go and die, disappear, die right in my face. (Throws it to the ground) What do I have? What do I have?

Tirtza: There are still people to photograph. There'll be new ones. A little boy... or a girl.

Miri: That's an idea... to give birth so I'll have someone to photograph. Good thing you reminded me, my appointment. There's not much time left, huh? (Looks out the window) Yeah, it's getting dark.

Tirtza: No.

Miri: What do you mean no? Here, it's getting dark, nighttime. My appointment's tonight.

Tirtza: It's getting light.

Miri: Tonight, I said tonight. My appointment is tonight, at ten.

Tirtza: It's not getting dark, it's not nighttime. It's getting light, it's the morning. Here, look out the other window.

- Miri: How can that be? What about my appointment? (After a moment, with a sort of laugh) You mean to tell me that I... I missed my appointment? By how much? A day? A week?
- Tirtza: Not that much, just two days. A day and a half, actually. Even less, a day and...
- Miri: Stop, enough! Why didn't you say anything? Both of you!
- Tirtza: What could I do?
- Miri: You with your 'what could I do'. How did I not think of it?
- Tirtza: You were taking pictures, you didn't have time to think.
- Miri: I always thought I didn't have time to give birth because I have to take pictures. Now it turns out that I don't have time for an abortion either because I've got to take pictures. A few pictures here and a few pictures there and in the middle the baby steals its way in, squirms through. To where? What a revelation! Maybe all the same there's still time to...
- Tirtza: No, they said it would be too dangerous.
- Miri: You're terrified, huh? (Laughs, softly, very tired now, gradually falling asleep) I hate it when people set me up, I hate it. But here they set me up something special, really screwed me... yeah, it's like a thing of beauty, really, like... Only God could have concocted something like this. What can I do now? Mordeaux suddenly hates me, he disappeared. Dad... what else. They're leaving me all alone, there's nobody to fight with, the whole burden is on my shoulders, that's it, no excuses. Suddenly I'm just like him, this little baby growing inside me, he's got no choice but to be born, and me, I've got no choice but to give birth to him. God am I tired. Both of us, we're floating, swept away by a kind of river, something ancient, dense, with all sorts of *shmatas*, all sorts of. Hey, that too... (Takes her camera in her hand) Who tosses around a camera like this? Completely wrecked, smashed. Takes a lot of strength to ruin something like that. It can be fixed, though, I think, it can be fixed. (Falls asleep).
- Tirtza: (Opens the window to get some air, and addresses Cooper) Sorry, I have to. She can't tell anyway, she's so exhausted.