Ophelia

A Play by Amit Zarka

Translation: Tom Chodorov



all rights reseverd ©

Scenes

- 1. The City Sings | 2. You Didn't Come Back to Lick | 3. Sometimes the Soul is Lit
- **4.** Promise | **5**. Waking Up from an Hallucination | **6**. Replacing Faces | **7**. An Alliance
- 8. Main Artery | 9. Come or Go | 10. Comfort Me | 11. After You Killed Me
- 12. Release Me | 13. The Girl Named Lost | 14. Swallowing | 15. Lost Was
- **16**. An Actor In Character | **17**. The End

Characters

The Maiden, The Redeemer, Universe, The Boy, The Girl Named Lost, The Husband, Another Man.

The dark song of the city sends the Maiden on a journey through the realms of the city and the soul.

A world of shadows is sprung to life in the small hours of the morning, acting as a sphere for the search after meaning.

The characters in the play (except for The Husband) are lost in their existential experience and try to be redeemed at any cost. They're possessed with lack of consent for the normative reality, undermining it by creating another world. A parallel one.

On stage an electric pole towers over, a kind of Tower of Babel, through which the characters try to bridge the ever-growing gap between sky and earth, spirit and matter, light and darkness, delusion and reality.

The three female characters constitute three different faces of a single woman.

1 - The City Sings

Midnight. The city awakens.

The Maiden: The city sings. Police sirens are wailing about. What occurred tonight in the hearts of men and in their loins. What was forgotten with darkness and bent by the sight of day. Streets packed with the remains of passion, lust and destruction. Electric light has shone for us, in full strength. Now, it's turning pale. Ill-colored. The sirens sweep aside everything the morning couldn't handle. Crimes of heart, of body, of control. Winter came on strong. Shoving the homeless and the tired to the corners. The city's quiet now. As if nothing ever happened.

2 - You Didn't Come Back to Lick

Universe returns to The Boy. They meet after a very long exile from one another.

(Silence)

The Boy: Your hair turned gray.

Universe: For every tear there's now a scar.

B: Show me mine.

U: No

B: What?

U: No.

B: How come?

U: You didn't come back to lick.

B: There. I'm back.

U: The wound has dried and scabbed.

B: I'll make it wet for you.

U: I don't think my body will absorb any of your juices.

B: Sentimental.

U: Fiery.

The Boy: (laughs) Your highness?

U: Yes?

B: Why are you here?

U: I don't know.

B: You're mean. (Universe laughs) Couldn't stand the longing?

U: No.

B: Did your soul yearn for the heat of my bones?

U: No.

B: Revenge for my sins. Atonement for yours. Jealousy. Boredom. (Universe doesn't answer. The Boy tries to draw her closer but she keeps a distance)

U: My hair turned gray.

B: You're a stranger.

U: Your own creation.

(He distances himself. Obsessively examines her. Doesn't trust)

U: No fire is ignited. I dreamt you fancier. (He gradually loses his patience) Chasing your own shadow. Like a drunkard. Not even a boy. (He grabs her, violently) Let go. (He grabs even harder) Let go!

B: I ran away when you became a pillar of salt. I didn't look back, I didn't look ahead. Complete blindness, just so I wouldn't see you. You murdered me, now you enter, ringing all the alarms at once. Why did you come? Why did you come?

U: (Pause) Perhaps the longing.

B: You're a whore (He lets go of her).

U: For real. Perhaps it was the longing.

B: (Treading restlessly, investigating) Perhaps! Why didn't you say so before?

U: You were a stranger.

B: And now?

U: Pushing me underneath you.

B: You like it.

U: Drop dead.

- **B**: You didn't come until today.
- U: You didn't deserve it.
- **B:** You brought bandits and wild animals upon me.
- U: You wouldn't leave.
- **B**: You wouldn't let me come.
- U: You didn't believe me.
- **B**: And rightly so.
- U: (Pause) So you say. (Pause) Got something to smoke?
- **B**: You came back a strong beast.
- U: Exactly.
- **B:** What does that mean?
- **U:** Curiosity killed the bird. Jealousy. Boredom.
- **B:** Stay with me tonight.
- U: Convince me.

3 - Sometimes the Soul is Lit

The Maiden and the Redeemer lie alongside each other, on a rooftop, upside down,

facing the audience. They are bleeding from their hands, moments after trespassing

together, maybe abusing some substance. They met this evening. Adrenaline and

tension between them.

The Maiden: To be seen, and so be it. Just because. And I don't care about life, or about

tomorrow. Or about the ridicule.

The Redeemer: Sometimes the soul is lit.

M: Sometimes the soul is lit. And someone sees in you. Everything that was ever missing.

And gives you his warmth, and his mercy, and his soul and so forth.

R: Becoming known.

M: Yes.

R: High and sinful.

M: Yes.

R: That look..

M: What about it

R: Can't breathe.

(Pause)

M: Speak. Speak to my incurable ears. Speak the things life doesn't have and only you can.

Take me above and below. We'll burn as equal bodies.

R: I'll break every law.

M: You'll be crowned.

R: We'll be names in people's mouths.

M: Legends.

5

4 - Promise

Universe and The Boy play

The Boy: I'll be your home.

Universe: Be my promise.

B: I'll be bigger worlds than this.

U: I'll be your queen.

B: Be my Lilith.

U: I'll be a whore.

B: I'll be your tyrant.

U: Be like a father to me.

B: I'll be your dream.

U: And its pieces, and its foes.

B: I'll be your fantasy.

U: I'll be your Rabbi.

B: Be my flashes of being.

U: The warmth of the fall.

B: Give me life.

U: Be my redeemer.

B: Be my God.

U: Be uncircumcised.

B: I'll be your wild heart.

U: Be a gaping abyss.

B: I'll be your owner.

U: Paganism.

B: I'll be your sole, exclusive, envious ruler.

U: Be close to me. (He violently grabs her)

B: If you'll fulfill my needs. (He takes her outside as if she belongs to him)

5 - Waking Up from an Hallucination

The Maiden and The Redeemer regain consciousness.

The Maiden: I'm losing me. Or the feeling that holds onto life. The time. Mist. Captive in a floating dream. A-symmetrical.

The Redeemer: But satisfying in every other sense.

M: The earth is disappearing underneath me.

R: You're a living goddess.

M: Can't remember what came next.

R: A living statue peeling utmost splendor.

M: Without reins.

R: The object of all objects.

M: An Object!

R: No way!

M: I'm fine with it.

R: I want you, all of you, for good.

M: (Pause) You're my heroine.

R: Shooting up brings you to heaven.

M: The first time. Then you try a thousand shots and nothing.

R: Fortunately, it's only a very pretty image.

M: Is it?

R: Yes. You'll be my Muse until I die.

M: I want to, but -

R: It's stronger than us.

M: Yes.

R: You can't alienate yourself from all that.

M: It's all so fast.

R: On the contrary. Building gently. (Silence. He moves closer. She approves, he reaches with his hand to touch her stomach. Touches as if she's an object. Exploring the lines gently with curiosity and admiration. Deeply intrigued) I get it..

M: My shell..

R: Your being.

M: You were meant for me on a planet that left me heart-severed.

R: Don't worry, beautiful. You're with me. I'll keep you safe.

6 - Replacing Faces

A street, playing exchanging couples - a kind of dance ball with switching partners. All characters participate except for The Girl Named Lost.

The Maiden: Somehow I knew I wouldn't be wanted. So I became someone else.

The Boy: Replacing shapes.

M: Faces. That's the problem with human beings.

B: That's the beauty.

M: It's the lie and the fear.

B: It's freedom.

M: It's just that I never know which of them is me. (Pause) What's your midnight?

B: Like in Cinderella?

M: Time to return!

B: Depends on what day.

M: At this era, the only one.

B: Every moment, and never ever.

M: That's what I love so much.

B: Being able to be attracted, every minute - every direction.

M: Adventures.

B: Yes.. (He smiles) Adventures.

7 - An Alliance

The Maiden returns to The Redeemer.

The Maiden: Yesterday I saw a boy in the streets. A girl-boy. A lot of people take pictures of him for money. Out of beauty. A man, but a woman, but in a boy.

The Redeemer: I know him.

M: You do?

R: Sure.

M: More beautiful than me but similar in some way.. Like a nymph.

R: Imagine him a real woman.

M: He's fine the way he is.

R: Really? Just so you know, he's a real man. He's *this* big.

M: Oh.

R: I'll bring him to your door. As a gift. And go away for a while.

M: Really.

R: Sure.

M: But..

R: It's clear to me you're not through with all of your spinning.

M: Others don't allow.

R: I'll let you spin.

M: Like a ballerina?

R: Like a goddess.

M: (Tries to find logic) You'll bring him to me as a gift.

R: Sure. You'll be mine.

M: (Pause) Adventures.

R: Anything you'd like.

M: You build me up from scratch.

R: And you have no idea where it's headed. (**Pause**) You and me, and the entire world.

M: I want to. Really. But (Pause) I don't know. You want a lot. Everything.

R: That's the problem. I'm addicted to you with every fiber of my being.

M: I've also just started to get along with the world a little bit. To understand people's methods. To get up in the morning and slowly fulfill my fucking dreams.

R: I'll hand them to you on a plate.

M: Others work passionately.

R: You're not average like the rest.

M: But a million times softer. And curious, God damn it.

R: You're a million times everything.

M: I wish.

R: I know women.

M: Plenty. That's something too.

R: And there's nothing like *this*. Look at me. There's nothing like it in the entire universe. With you I am completely bewitched. You're different. It's meant for us. These things happen once in a thousand...

M: Years? (He crosses physical borders and she gives in)

R: I'm your heroine.

M: Yes.

R: And you're brave.

M: Trying.

R: The world will stop, you know.

M: Yes?

R: Stuff that fairytales are made of. (He enters her and she blesses)

M: On the fifth day, on Sabbath, the twenty third day of the month of Nissan, in the year five thousand, seven hundred, seventy one since the creation of the world, according to the count we hereby use, we witness how -- the son of – said, Be my wife according to the law of Moses and Israel. I faithfully promise that I will be a true husband unto you. I will honor, feed and support you in the custom of Jewish men, who work, honor, feed and support their wives faithfully. I will give you the settlement of -- silver coins, which is due according to law, as well as your food, clothing, necessities of life and conjugal needs, according to the universal custom. And the said bride has reconciled, and became his - (wife)¹.

(He cums, corrupting the moment. Maybe on her face).

¹ Taken from the Jewish marriage contract (The Ketubah)

8 - Main Artery

The Maiden exits, Universe takes her place, bleeding.

Another Man: My beautiful.

Universe: I hurt my main artery again.

AM: It's mixed up in your legs again.

U: There's magic to it.

AM: To all of you.

(Cleans the blood off her. Intimate)

AM: You're wonderful, no matter what.

U: Ha.

AM: Yes. (He cleans her) Wonderful, no matter what. (Pause)

U: After this I'm leaving.

AM: I know.

U: You see right through me.

AM: For every time you weren't seen, you demand a thousand men in unconditional admiration.

U: That's true.

AM: It's natural.

U: Only afterwards you must pay.

AM: Of course not. You keep your promises.

U: A lot of them say I don't. Even get very mad.

AM: I admire you differently.

U: That's why I come.

AM: I know.

U: You understand me.

AM: I see right through you.

U: It's beautiful. (He's done cleaning her) I must go soon.

AM: Come, magic. I'll walk you (home).

9 - Come or Go

The Maiden comes to The Redeemer.

The Maiden: I went and all my thoughts are for you. (**He's silent**) I'm sorry. I was searching.

The Redeemer: Where?

M: Forget about it

R: With whom?

M: Drop it (He threatens to go wild. Holds back).

R: (Conditions) Come or go.

M: I'm going.

R: Come.

M: I came. To set you on fire.

R: Go.

M: There, I came.

R: Stop.. Stop. (She's silent). You're sick, you know that?

M: Lovesick.

R: In the head.

M: I'm going.

R: Stay.

M: For this? (Pause) I came because my soul is yearning for your spirit.

R: Liar.

M: And my body yearns too.

R: Come or go!

M: My feet.

R: Not kidding.

M: Not kidding.

R: You're aggressive.

M: Says you.

R: Then says who?

(Pause)

M: For good?

R: There. You see? You went and only your thoughts are for me. For good? What are you, fucked up?

M: You're not responsible for holding my heart.

R: Bullshit.

M: Yes. It's true.

(Pause)

R: You're actually domesticated.

M: No. (Pause) Besides, I'm trying.

R: What for?

M: I know how it happens when the earth disappears from under me and I am arrows in every direction, elusive, wet and cruel as it might be.

R: Sadist.

M: Like everyone. Need to feel. Just a bit more.

R: I'll push your limit to death.

M: You're an evil God.

R: I can't believe it. You still haven't let go of *Him*.

M: It's the structure of the soul. Insisting on another entity.

R: You're still religious in your head. I can't believe it. It's the sin and punishment in your brain.

M: No. Fuck sin and punishment.

R: Wow. I like you swearing.

M: A soul free to be humiliated.

R: To boast.

M: There's great humiliation in the body's scream.

R: That's because you've been brainwashed for too many years.

M: He who has touched the gutter would know.

R: Then it's a good thing we're more *sky*.

M: What?!

R: That look.

M: You're always chasing it.

R: Unfathomable.

(Pause)

M: You know, I've dreamt you before.

R: I already told you, It's a sign.

M: Yes. I just didn't know of what.

10 - Comfort Me

The Maiden: We need to talk specifically, where there's instantly a fire of destruction threatening to ignite, because the anger's force is dark and the ways get evil with time. Corruption. I'm losing my mind.

The Redeemer: That's why you came.

M: Yes. It's just that there's a *lost* that's too extreme.

R: Where the surprises begin.

M: There's darkness here.

R: He's a good boy.

M: It depends on how he gets up in the morning.

R: Come here, you.

M: There's no *me* right now.

R: Dramatic.

M: Not truly *me*..

R: You're not happy with me?

M: Of course I'm happy.

R: I'm not enough for you..

M: Of course you are. I'm just tired. Stormy. I don't know.

R: Don't worry. It becomes you.

M: They always said..

R: You'll be my Muse. You know Picasso drew the same girl all his life.

M: I wish I was the same girl.

R: That's the magic.

(Pause)

R: That look...

M: Please. Comfort me.

R: Of course. For the rest of my life.

M: Thank you.

(He leads to sex)

R: You're made of marble. Simply. You're all made of marble.

M: What does that mean?

R: Flawless.

(He fucks her).

M: That Picasso girl. What happened to her in the end?

R: (Laughs) How would I know?

(He keeps fucking her. She becomes more and more disconnected from the situation).

M: (Pushing him away) The scream is so loud, I don't have enough room to hear anyone. (He's alert. She is frightened). No. Come to me. Don't listen to the girl who says *leave*. (He doesn't answer) Come. Please.

R: There. I'm yours.

M: Me too. (He keeps fucking).

M: I heard once, most of the homeless people chose to be that way.

R: The whores too

11 - After You Killed Me

Universe and the Boy are playing who is more lost. The game goes wrong.

Universe: After you killed me I wanted to die.

The Boy: After you killed me I walked the city for nights on end, violently.

U: After you killed me I hated you and wanted to cut my own body.

B: After you killed me I wanted to set your house on fire.

U: After you killed me I cheated on you the hardest.

B: After you killed me the doctors nearly took me away.

U: My heart was broken in pieces and scattered all over the city.

B: I killed myself in return.

U: I wanted to die.

B: I avenged your insult with a thousand bitches.

U: You scared me to death.

B: I was scared I lost you forever.

U: You lost me forever.

B: You know that's a lie.

U: I told the whole truth about you.

B: What truth? (Pause) You bitch.

U: But I hoped you'd come.

B: I spat on you.

U: Sometimes when I remember, I hate you more.

B: You lied to me.

U: You were judgement day, an evil God.

B: If anything, you deserved much more.

U: Yeah, I fucked the whole city.

(The Boy stops. He's alert. Universe laughs)

U: I've already paid for it.

B: Not enough.

(He hits her. Pauses. Tries to collect himself)

B: After you killed me, time after time...

U: It's funny what people tell themselves to justify their fucked up choices.

B: Get out of here.

U: Call the police.

12 - Release Me

The Maiden: Someone once said, insanity is the releasing of the soul. Release me.

The Redeemer: There (He firmly grabs an area of her body. Wounds her. The more she bleeds the more she is fulfilled inside. A quality of Cocaine. They begin to move. Dancing. Intimate)

M: Once there were skies here.

R: Today, darkness is crowned.

M: For a while now.

R: I've had skies since you came.

M: Really?

(He grabs another area of her, harder. She's even more bloody and intoxicated by him.

They keep dancing)

M: Please, God, heal her.²

R: So much light.

M: Flickering. Electricity.

R: Where have you been all my life? (She grabs and wounds him. He is alert)

M: Where am I today? (He grabs one final spot)

R: With me.

² Numbers 12.13.

13 - The Girl Named Lost

The Girl named Lost:

The crickets aren't crying

No storm is knocking

Barely. Sounds of cars

The drunks have tired

Returned to amnesia's lair

We've had enough of rage

Of promise

Of scorching shells

We've had enough

Now, fall asleep in the void's lap

Now rest.

If my mother comes to ask

Which one of them was I

Caress her ears with

A girl of white and blue.

And if she'll laugh at your words

Describe to her the flowers of that

Willow tree

And call me Ophelia.

The Girl Named Lost rises to the sky.

14 - Swallowing

Each couple is in a different area of the stage. Trapped inside their own structures.

Universe: I have to go.

The Maiden: I have to go back.

The Boy: I want you to go.

The Redeemer: What?

B: Why did you come?

M: I just need a home for a minute

U: So I could go.

R: I'm going to fight you

B: Stay

M: Please don't

U: Always on against

R: With all I have

B: Always *for*

M: That's unfair.

U: For drinking up my waste..

R: That's your problem

B: Always for it.

M: If peace is driving me mad

R: The war will bring you to your knees.

U: The minute you see half a shadow of abyss...

M: And that's what you're after -

B: I don't see anymore

R: That too.

U: I knew it.

R: Just. Don't get fat (laughs).

B: That drug we used to do.

U: Ocean.

B: I loved it.

M: Yesterday I said *blessed thee* and it didn't help me this morning.

R: I can't believe it. Are you serious? No, you.. You're still exactly the way you were..

M: Not for a long time now..

R: Who didn't help you? God?

M: I..

R: *He* still counts for something to you?

M: Just..

R: Sometime you see something in someone but it's not real. It's only in your head.

M: What you saw in me? (Pause)

R: Look, I'm not cut out for you fleeing everything that's really good.

M: (Pause) You'll swallow me.

R: Exactly. (Pause) Wait, do you allow it?

M: No. (Pause) I desire it

(He swallows her. Universe abandons the boy. An empty stage)

M: A fear moon, perhaps dark, universe is bleeding from fear and dreams. Pieces of. My mother calls me America because of my many imaginings. I'm the cold, I am. Morning comes burning to avenge the visions of the night.

15 - Lost Was

The Maiden and the Husband.

The Maiden: *Lost* was a magical town. So lively.

The Husband: Don't know it.

M: Far away from here. At the foot of a famous volcano.

H: Active?

M: Angry. After *she* was destroyed, they put her together beautifully. Colorful and magical. They put strawberry cakes in the Square. They scattered fireflies and what not. Only in the stones carved along the sidewalk, you could see Volcano, she is still laughing. Longing.

H: It's a *he*.

M: Not to me it isn't.

H: How can you see exactly?

M: You can hear the weeping.

H: But how?

M: She's a wonder of wonders. I wander around her blushed with belonging.

H: Save up some money and go.

M: I'm terrible with getting it.

H: Smoke less.

M: How they've reassembled her, like magic. Colorful and new. Strawberry cakes in the Square.

H: I want to see the Northern Glow. That is truly..

M: I want all the wonders. And to discover some of my own. Like an addict. I want it now. Until I Bleed. Until I can't breathe.

H: Cloud girl..

M: Here I'd rather die.

H: Die?

M: Die.

H: Honey..

M: There's nothing to do.

H: That will always upset me.

M: I'm sorry. I need wonders to exist.

H: I'm sorry. I'm awfully tired.

M: Fine.

H: Come hug me.

M: I have no patience.

H: I'll give you some.

M: You don't have any.

H: My woman of the night..

M: To offset the nightmares of the day. I heard my mother cries about me to other people. About what's become of me. Thinks I'm all sorts of.. If anything, I don't care.

H: She's just worried.

M: No, but she'll sing *Lovely Elisheva*, and after all the excitement, it turns out she's an amputee. **(Pause).** I'm sorry, you're beat.

H: I'm sorry, I'm beat.

M: I'm done anyhow.

H: Good night.

M: How they've put her together. Sacredly. They just didn't see in the flushed stones, Volcano, she is still laughing.

H: Maybe you are having second thoughts?

M: About what?

H: Fine, I'll let you wake me when you're finished.

(The Maiden laughs)

16 - An Actor in Character

Universe: I'm an actor completely in-character in this arena, accepted by an extinct bunch of people. A lost-in-character actor, who finds once in a thousand years signs of revelation. And the rest (of the time), just in-character. Just lost. Orphaned from justification. One who laments normality. Hideous normality. An anarchist volcano taking Clonex. And the rest (of the time), just kicks. Even when there's nothing left to kick. Gets all violent. Home scares him to death. Because he to himself, deserves only his poor existence. To ask, over and over again, the exact same question. The exact same secret, we're gathered here for.

17 - The End

The Maiden: (At the door) I'm sorry. I'm rescuing me.

The Redeemer: First you murder me, now you're talking gently.

M: I'm not.

R: You need to go some place where you'll be happy.

M: Yes.

R: That's what matters to me. That is selfless love.

M: Yes.

R: Yes. I want what's best for you.

M: More like an addiction.

R: And what are we addicted to if not the good? **(Pause).** You now the good is the scariest. It takes guts.

M: I think the place that will do me good isn't here.

R: You don't really believe yourself.

M: I've decided.

R: You've decided?

M: Yes.

R: You've decided that I'm not good for you.

M: I didn't say.

R: I'm not good for you?

M: No.

R: After everything I did for you, I'm not..

M: I didn't say.

R: You whore! (He tries to hold back, then breaks something)

M: Actually, yes. You're not good for me.

R: Since when, you bitch?

M: There, cursing...

R: You deserve it.

M: For what?

R: You're more corrupt than I thought.

M: My intentions are fine.

R: I don't buy it. I know women. I do.

(Pause)

M: It's hard enough already.

R: Exactly. So why suffer? (**Pause**) You're zealously running away from everything that's truly good. I saw just how good it was for you. In your gaze. I saw it. One day it'll all blow up in your face. I won't be there to rescue you.

M: You're a doomsayer.

R: I see what you'd rather forget.

M: Just trying to get up in the morning and slowly fulfill my fucking dreams.

R: That's bullshit. I thought you were smarter.

M: I am smart.

R: So what can't you see?

M: I can see right through.

R: Yeah? So what exactly do you see?

M: The lie.

R: The lie. Fuck you, you fucking bitch. You coward.

M: This conversation is over.

R: Ungrateful. You're calling me a lie?

M: I'm rescuing me. That's it.

R: Lie. You fucking whore.

M: See? Exactly. I prefer pretty words.

R: And who gave them to you more than I did? Who?

(The Maiden is silent. Doesn't move)

R: Answer me. Who gave them to you more than I did?

(The Maiden tries to leave but he catches her).

R: There's the fear. You fucking liar. I can see it in your eyes.

(He rapes her. He cums inside her. She's completely dead)

Universe: The city sings. Police sirens are wailing about. What occurred tonight. What was forgotten with darkness. Bent by the sight of day.

M: I'm possessed with cursed blindness. To what do I belong?

R: The good guys won. (Pause) I've missed you.

M: You didn't miss a thing.

R: This.

M: The city is filled with lost kids.

R: Who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron.³

M: I used to have wild fields and lakes outside my home.

R: And here it's wild, and burning, and inherently breached.

(Pause)

M: That drug we used to do.

R: Ocean.

M: I loved it.

Black. Light goes up for curtain calls.

The body of The Girl Named Lost is shattered on the sidewalk.

³Psalms 107, 10.

 $\hbox{@ all rights reseverd} \hspace{0.1cm} | \hspace{0.1cm} \underline{ \hspace{0.1cm} zarkamit@gmail.com } \hspace{0.1cm} | \hspace{0.1cm} \underline{ \hspace{0.1cm} Tchodorov@gmail.com } \hspace{0.1cm}.$