

Tied up

A play by Idan Silberstein

Translated from Hebrew by Niv Savariego

[The young woman's house has no walls around it; in its center, stands a tall pillar, out of which extends a long rope; its other end attached to THE WOMAN's leg. On the right, a window faces the outside; across it, stands a tree. A thick blanket is spread below the window. On the left, a single mattress. Around the pillar, utensils, agricultural tools and a pile of hay. A shovel and a rope lie near the hay.]

[Light isolates the woman.]

THE WOMAN: Told him I was barren.
 He took his cuckoo out of my nest,
 Put on his clothes.
 Theo, tell me,
 For three months now we've been married,
 Still you never told me
 That you love me.
 How can I say that? he said,
 You're barren.
 We share things other than children, Theo.
 We share coffee every morning and anticipation,
 We share your cuckoo and my nest,
 Coo-Coo, Coo-Coo...
 Right, he said,
 But,
 Being born in this village you should know;
 A man with no children,
 Can't get too far nor own a farm.
 When I go out to work,
 They see a man cuckolded.
 Don't go away, Theo.
 Stay with me. I wish to know
 What you do each and every moment.
 His deep breath revealed
 The next moment, hiding.
 I'll come for visits, he said.
 I'll bring the children, so they'll know you.
 We'll have our moments.
 He turned his back on me,
 Was about to leave, back to his work on the chicken coop.

I grabbed the shovel, hit him on his head.

In our village, they teach girls to use shovels, feed hens, butcher sheep; I danced. Every few weeks, the travelling contrabass player came to our village. He never said a word, just stood in front of the ancient tree, playing. I'd stand between the tree and him, and dance. The men would stop working and steal a glance. I was going from one movement to the other while the men flocked to the hills around me. The women sent them back to work. Calling me a whore, a nymphomaniac, whispering I didn't wear underwear. Secretly, one village woman told me I was the heroin of the village. Theo watched me dance like that, on the day he first came to our village. We married the following week. On our first night together, Theo mounted me, and I started learning the cuckoo and nest game. I felt pain. Theo said that's 'making love.' I asked him if he loved me. first produce children, he said. Every night we made love, and each night, the pain became a little more pleasurable. A fortnight after the wedding, the contrabass player came to our village. The dance with the tree and the deep tones became more sensuous than ever before. Men came out to steal their glances. The women sent them back to work, whispering that even now, being married, I still didn't wear underwear. Theo took me home; erected a pillar; tied me to it. He went back to work on Zvi's farm, managing his chicken coop. When he came back that night, the love we made was extremely intense. Throughout the night I sat watching him as he slept. Contrary to any urge I ever felt before, I fell in love with Theo.

[A light opens up THE WOMAN's house.]

For three hours I waited for him to wake up.
When he didn't, I figured his sleep
Will be longer than expected.

[Looks to the bed.]

Then it occurred to me, Theo,
That we never spoke much. I never asked you
If you think about me
At the chicken coop.
I never told you how glad I'd be
To have you home for lunch.
After a night of pain and pleasure

I never could caress you in the light of day.
I never got a chance to pity you, to forgive you,
To get mad at you, to hate you...
We never spoke about these things, Theo.

[Puts the chair near his bed and sits down. Light isolates her.]

After three months of making love and no children, Theo asked me to get myself checked. I did; I'm barren.

[A lights opens up THE WOMAN's house.]

We couldn't have known,
You and I.
We couldn't have known.

[Darkness.]

2

[Light. A big white egg appears in THE WOMAN's house. She stands somewhat distanced from it; looks alternately between the egg and THEO, who's lying on the bed; she looks disheveled, breathing hard as if after great exertion.]

THE WOMAN: All throughout the night I was screaming of pain.
Couldn't understand what's this thing inside my body
Pressing to get out, contracting...
Making me tremble, kicking, shattering
Me from the inside.
A wave burst on the sides of my body,
Receding till I could, nearly, breathe.

Then another came, bursting and receding.
One after the other, with no remission,
Sweeping swiftly upwards, so that my innards
Nearly spilled out from my eyes,
My organs nearly fell apart.

With a new dawn,
And no power left in me,
It came out,
This -

[Approaches the egg; examines it, nearly touching it; taking herself back, she then comes near and dares touch it with one hand, with both hands; shakes it cautiously with her hands; puts her ear to it and listens.]

I can hear,
Life. Inside.
The sound of a small heart beating.

[Hugs the egg hesitantly; knocks on it.]

Can you hear me?
Are you a She?
You there, Offspring,
Can you hear me?
Last night I was still barren
See now! - it's morning,
And I'm going to become a mother,
Yours.

When I said that word; Mother, my face turned white with trepidation. I had no idea what it meant, no idea how to be one.

When I said that word; Mother, I remembered my own, and all the times she wasn't there for me.

When I said that word; Mother, I felt I was a real woman.

When I said that word; Mother, I loved Theo even more.

[Comes running to stand by THEO's bed.]

Our union's real, accomplished, Theo.

You can go out now,

Go to the village, tell them we're

No longer man and woman,

We're mom and dad.

You're not cuckolded now, Theo,

You can strut the village like a cock.

Go out to work and get a farm of your own,

Theo...

[Sits by his bed; lifts him to a sitting position. He falls down flat. She lifts him again, supporting his body.]

Look,

There, inside, waits

Our offspring.

I am so calm, Theo,

Now that you hold me,

As we watch our future offspring.

Tell me, Theo,

Do all women feel this way

Becoming mothers?

[Pause.] Foolish me,

How would you know what women feel like?

And what do men feel like?

[*Pause.*] Theo...

Theo...?

You opened your eyes...

You opened your eyes...!

Look at me, at me...

When Theo opened his eyes, I heard noises from outside the window. I heard noises from the roof.

[*Gently lays down THEO; gets up; grabs the shovel and comes near the window; bangs the shovel.*]

Go away, you peeping toms. Go live your village life and let us be.

Go away...! Shoo...! Shoo...!

[*Looks again and again through the window and towards the roof; turns around, puts down the shovel and goes to THEO's bed; sits on his bed lifting him to a sitting position.*]

Theo... Theo...!

When I came back to Theo, his eyes were shut again.

[*Covers THEO; goes to the egg and covers it.*]

You should be warm.

Those gossipy villagers should have nothing to speak about.

One's sleeping, the other's not yet born.

[THE WOMAN *sits on the chair by THEO's bed; holding a bowl of soup, a spoon and a small piece of cloth.*]

THE WOMAN: The following days, I sat there, dividing my time between Theo and Offspring.

[*Supports THEO into a sitting position and puts the spoon to his mouth; feeds him, cleaning his mouth with the cloth.*]

A big one, Theo.

Open big,

A i r p l a n e ' s c o m i n g !

[*Pause.*] Look at you,

That's our last bowl of soup,

And you spill it out

As the storehouse holds more chickens.

When this bowl's finished,

I can offer you nothing but boiled water,

Perhaps chicken seeds from the bag.

So go on,

Open big.

You've got to grow stronger.

Soon winter comes,

You wouldn't want to wake up sick now, wouldn't you?

[*Holds out the spoon, tilts his head backwards; feeds him and cleans his mouth.*]

I'm proud of you, Theo.

[*Pause.*] My mom also used to say

She's proud of me.
When finally I ate
Some chicken soup.
I was five, Theo,
Always running around. Never standing still.
That day too, winter was coming.
My mom, always in the field with dad,
Was sick that day, and stayed back home.
I was playing by the ancient tree,
By *my* tree. She called out to me.
I can't remember if I ever heard her,
Just climbing up the tree,
And her angry face below it.
She took me back home, full of threats,
Saying if I don't want to be sick like her,
I better eat some chicken soup.
Asked me to sit down.
I refused.
Forced me in the chair,
I got up.
She forced me; I got up.
She tied me to that chair with a rope.
Wrapped around my legs, my belly,
My chest, my hands.
She tried forcing a spoon of chicken soup into my mouth.
I kept my lips closed tight.
Soup was dripping down my chin.
She clasped my jaw,
Tilted my head backwards,
And started pouring chicken soup down my throat,
One spoon after the other.
You've been bad,

So you'll spend the night tied up to this chair,
She said, forcing the last drops of soup down my mouth.

[*Pause.*] One last spoon, Theo.

[*Feeds him; cleans after him.*]

When I finished feeding Theo, I heard a light tapping; soft kicks calling out to me.

[*Gets up; puts down the plate, spoon and cloth; turns to the egg; caresses it, hugs it.*]

You called out to me, Offspring?

You kicked, I feel it.

You're restless. Are you cold?

Frightened?

Here, mommy hugs you

Daddy's here too.

You know daddy's real happy about you?

When he wakes up,

He will hold you, and

You'll grow calm and all your fears will go away.

[*Pause.*] You know, Offspring,

My dad held me too. Once.

I was nine,

I woke up that morning terrified,

And ran to my tree,

As if my life depended on it.

Dad, who's just gone out to the field,

Came after me and held me.

He asked what was wrong.

I told him blood

Had stained my nightgown.

There, beneath my belly,

And that it ached now.
I asked him if I was sick,
If I was about to die.
Dad looked sideways, made sure no one's looking,
He grabbed me with his huge hand,
Dragged me back home.
He told mom,
And they started yelling at each other;
That it's too early,
That the neighbors mustn't know,
That it's his fault, her fault...
Dad said I have to stay homebound till the bleeding stops.
I wanted to get back to my tree.
He took a rope and tied me to the bed.
It took nearly seven days for the bleeding to stop.

[Silence. She listens.]

Sweet dreams, Offspring.

[She walks quickly, takes a bowl and hurries to THEO; puts the bowl under his head and washes his hair.]

I used to wash my hair for hours,
Once a day, sometimes twice.
Every time mom came back from the field,
She told me I should wash it once a week.
Not enough water for a daily wash.

[Puts down the bowl; runs to the egg.]

Just a bad dream, Offspring.

Cry all you want. Daddy'll teach you soon,
Like my dad taught me -
You only cry once.

[Hurries to THEO's bed, then comes back to the egg.]

Sure he loves you,
Daddy really loves you.

[Hurries back to THEO, then back to the egg; keeps on going back and forth; when her actions reach a certain climax; grabs the rope and stops.]

Zvi said he loved me. I was fourteen, it was his wedding day. The entire village was invited, and me tied up at home. The contrabass player came to play. I could hear his deep low tones. It was the first time I ever heard a contrabass playing. He stood under my tree, playing. I managed to free myself and ran with a piece of rope attached, to stand between the tree and the contrabass player.

[Starts dancing with the rope.]

That way, with the breeze from the tree and the sounds from the wooden instrument giving me life, I discovered my body.
I found out hair was growing in my nest.
I found out I had breasts.
I found out hands could touch,
Play a tune of pleasure in the body.

[Goes on dancing; stops.]

Your parents don't love you; I do. Zvi was standing in front of me.
I noticed, he said; coming closer.
Noticed you're quite mature for your age.

Zvi, I said, I don't like it, you standing too close to me.
I noticed your dance, it makes my body dance too.
I could feel his body dancing. Party guests called out for him.
He detached himself from me.
I noticed you don't wear underwear.
How can you know that?
He returned to his party.

[Goes to THEO.]

At that moment; I could see Theo no more; just a cuckoo with a man wrapped around it.

[She dances a peculiar dance with THEO; lifting him up to a sitting position and putting the rope around him; she reaches between his legs, gives him a blow job; lays him down and sits on him, wrapping the rope around herself as well.]

You're the only one, Theo,
The only one who knows,
If I wear underwear,
Or not.

[The Love Dance continues. Light fades out.]

4

[First light of day. THE WOMAN comes out of THEO's bed and gets under the blanket beneath the window. She speaks quietly, so as not to awaken the sleeping.]

THE WOMAN: That night I slept in Theo's bed. Before falling asleep, I told him of my dream: performing in a large theatre in the big city; dancing a duet with Offspring;

who craves for life, whose eyes show sweetness, intimacy, pity. The entire audience will be a single person - Theo.

[Lies on the bed under the window, then gets up.]

And he will stand there, clapping his hands till they're red like raspberries.

[Hurries to THEO's bed.]

Theo, Theo....

You're waking up?

You called me?

You're hungry again?

I can give you some boiled water,

I know you can't stand that chicken food.

Standing by Theo, the rustling sound became louder, more demanding.

[Hurries to the egg; touches it, then retreats a bit; comes up close and takes off its upper portion; takes out a baby wrapped in cerements; breathes hard; holds it somewhat away from her body, as if both attracted and repulsed; stands for a moment or two, then walks that way towards THEO.]

Theo, look...

Our little cub...

Theo, it has hands,

And feet, two ears,

Lips, and his eyes...

Theo, what should I do now?

[Looks at THEO.]

Theo, what should I do now...??

Answer me, Theo,

I've no idea...

I felt Theo was going further away, while my responsibility grew larger.

[Looks again at the baby; hurries and puts him back inside the egg; goes away; trying not to look at the egg; looks back at it; comes back and takes out the baby; holds him a little closer this time, with lesser repulsion.]

Hi, I'm your mommy.

Why make a face like that...?

I'm your mommy,

Like it,

Or not.

And over there, lies daddy.

He can't say hi,

He's sleeping,

But take my word for it -

That's daddy.

Here, want to grab on to something?

[Gives him her finger.]

Ouch... Give me back my finger!

[Pulls back her finger, putting it in her mouth; softens a bit.]

Where did you get these nails?

You've hardly been born yet...

Well, I've introduced myself,

What'd you think?

And as for you; who are you?

Oh...

I guess I should give you a name.

You get a name when you're born, don't you?

So what should I call you?

[*Pause.*] We'll call you... Lavi...!

So you'd be strong and firm and important,

A king of your kingdom.

Theo! Here's Lavi,

Your son.

[*Looks at THEO; turns back to look at LAVI.*]

Lavi's eyes seemed distant. Pitiless. Their look was sober,

Expressing some need I couldn't quite figure out,

Yet knew I had to satisfy somehow.

Only looking at his eyes now, did I suddenly realize,

He never cried.

Not even once.

I told him of my dream.

I figured the heat he'll get from me,

During our duet,

Shall satisfy his needs.

Granted, we there's no big city, no large theatre -

But Theo's in the audience.

[*Attempts a dance with LAVI; can't make it; tries again and again; stops in frustration.*]

What is it you want from me...?

I don't get it!

How the hell am I supposed

To figure out what you need?!

[Puts him with fervor back in the egg, and goes away.]

Go find someone who can understand

What you need from her.

I don't know how to be your mom,

I don't know...!

I guess some are simply born that way,

While some, like me, don't.

[Comes running to THEO's bed.]

What is it you want from me...?

I don't get you either.

Just keep on guessing and guessing.

And what if I'm wrong?

Do you want to have your hair cut?

A shave?

Are you hungry again?

[Silence. She looks at THEO for a few seconds then turns back towards the egg; takes out LAVI; comes to the chair beside THEO's bed and sits down; takes out one breast and puts LAVI's face near her nipple, humming a tune; she then brings out the other breast and puts his face near its nipple.]

When Lavi sucked motherly milk out of me, I was becoming  exhausted.

The little food I've eaten many days ago,

Got sucked out of me, through his lips.

I had nothing left to give him.

[Finishes feeding him; lays him down next to THEO.]

[THE WOMAN opens up a bag of seeds; takes out a handful; brings her hand to her mouth in hesitation; tries eating a little, almost throwing up; overcomes her repulsion; tries eating some more, then more; chews slowly while breathing hard; takes another handful from the bag and eats it; then another; this time seeds scatter on the floor; when she finishes eating her handful, she kneels down and eats the scattered seeds. Suddenly something draws her attention; she stands up, straightens. Light isolates her.]

THE WOMAN: What are you doing here?

I came to see why Theo doesn't come to work, he said.

Theo's sick, when he gets well, he'll come.

He hasn't come for many days. His sickness must be serious.

It's a sickness... He needs sleep, a rest... Don't you go near his bed!

How dare you...

I see someone else sleeps next to Theo...

Don't you touch...!

Or is it a She?

It's a Him; the name's Lavi; not that it's any of your business...

How do you mean? You got a son and never told the village?

Just waiting for Theo to get well, then we'll tell.

And I thought we were close friends...

Zvi came close to me. You're shivering, he said.

A little cold, that's all.

No wonder, with your man sick like that.

I get along.

I saw you eating chicken food off the floor.

Theo's not working now, the food ran out.

And you've got two mouths to feed now.

Right.

Why didn't you tell me? We could have come to some arrangement.

You think perhaps you can give us some food, and when Theo gets better settle it with him?

I didn't necessarily had that in mind.

[*Pause.*] What did you have in mind then?

Zvi put his hands on my shoulder. forget Theo, he said.

I don't like it, you're standing too close to me.

Haven't seen you dancing in a long while.

Haven't danced in a long while.

Your dance makes my body dance with you.

Go away...! [*Pause. Softens.*] I've just given birth...

Birth...? That's not birth, that's laying an egg...! You thought I didn't notice?

Wait for the village women to hear...

What did you have in mind...? About the food... What's the price?

[*Silence.*]

As I lay on the heavy blanket, I saw clouds growing heavier through the window,

And felt the coming winter's chill on my face.

He was everywhere.

My neck, my breasts,

Inside my mouth.

His cuckoo entered my nest

In ways I never knew existed.

The friction, like swords scrubbing,

Fiery sparks, but no smoke,

Voices from the depths of hell,
I breathed, he did too,
And turned me over,
Not in there, not in there,
Don't put your cuckoo in there...!
[Pause.] The bitter pain, the sweet...
No,
It's just a price you have to pay,
Don't enjoy it, don't enjoy it...
Don't enjoy it...!

Voices came through the window, he was up already.

He left the house; stood near the window speaking with someone,
Then said, the village will be glad to learn
That the one driving everybody crazy with her dancing,
The one not wearing underwear,
The one who laid an egg like a chicken,
Seduced a married man as well.
You know they punish hard for that...

[THE WOMAN *gets up, barely walking towards THEO and LAVI; stands looking at them.*]

I asked myself if either of them heard anything,
And stood by their bed, till the cock crowed,
Never finding the answer.

[A light opens up THE WOMAN's house. She takes LAVI in her hands and looks at him for a few seconds.]

Your first laugh...
How I needed that laugh.
What are you laughing about?
Huh?
Is there something you know,
But hide from your mom?

[Tickles him.]

Tickles, doesn't it?
More?
Here's more,
And more...
I start figuring out your needs.
What is it you want now? Huh?

[Lifts him up in the air cautiously.]

A i r p l a n e...? A i r p l a n e...
To take us... Where?
Where would you like the airplane to take us?
Far away? To the big city? Abroad?
When daddy wakes up...
[Pause.] That makes you laugh as well?
What's funny about *that*, Lavi?

[Sits down on a chair, putting him between her legs; brings her face near his belly and blows on it.]

Phew... Phew...

Won't you make me laugh too?

Make me, Lavi.

Phew... Phew...

[After a few seconds, takes her face away looking at him in surprise.]

You're laughing?

Is it laughter, or is it something else?

Why are you screaming, what happened all of a sudden?

What did I do, Lavi, what is it you want?

[Takes out her breast and offers it to him.]

Here, eat.

[After a short while, takes out the other breast.]

This one should have some left in it,

Here, eat.

[After a short while, she covers her breasts and stands up holding him; kneels down to the seeds on the floor, stuffing some into her mouth.]

I'll eat so that you can eat too.

Look, I'm eating,

Now stop screaming.

[Gets up; puts him on the blanket under the window; looks out the window.]

Zvi...!

Zvi will bring us chickens soon

I'll make soup for you.

Zvi, what about those chickens...?

[Goes away.]

Enough!

I can't take your screams anymore.

Enough! Cut it out...!

[Pause.]

Then it came to me; perhaps he's sick.

[Goes up to him; lifts him putting her hand on his forehead.]

Burning fire.

[To the audience,] I wanted to yell for someone to call a doctor.

Lavi screamed for several minutes, then he cried, then fell asleep. His sleep was calm.

I never saw such calmness. *[Shakes him gently.]* I watched him, trying to figure out if he was handsome.

I knew nothing of beauty; but knew his looks gave me belly cramps.

His nose had that sweet little strawberry shape,

His ears were perfectly aligned, as if telling the world

Nothing can escape his attention,

His hands like a grown man's attached to his baby body,

His smooth forehead with two closed eyes underneath it,

A dark circle around each one.

I told myself he's getting better,

Busied myself with his clean beauty,
To curb my awareness.
For I knew;
One can endure without motherly love,
Yet die of hunger.

Then he started trembling and convulsing,
Had troubles breathing,
His lips constricted,
And me trying,
Trying,
With all the power left in me, trying....

Lavi opened his eyes
His eyes knew.
Knew everything there is to know about me.
Then he closed them.
Then,
Then there was this sigh...

7

[THE WOMAN goes to the hay stack and gently lays LAVI's body on it; takes up the shovel and starts digging behind it; stops; puts down the shovel.]

THE WOMAN: I wanted to gather all his games. His clothes, his diapers, the memories.

[Takes LAVI's body and puts it inside the hole she dug behind the hay stack.]

But there was nothing left to gather.

[Takes up the shovel and covers up the body; puts down the shovel and looks at the grave.]

How many things can a child leave behind in a day?

When I finished burying Lavi, Zvi brought me two chickens. He hurled them through the window and went away.

After he left, a deep note from the contrabass player pierced the air. His melody, And the next one, resonated in tune with my belly cramps. I've never missed anyone that bad before...

[A contrabass playing. She comes slowly, standing between him and the tree. Light isolates all three. She starts dancing a slow dance of mourning, of farewell, of burial. The dance becomes more and more sensuous, liberated, as if by dancing, she purges herself. The dance reaches no climax. A purifying ritual concludes it. Light fades out on it.]

8

[Nightly light opens up THE WOMAN's house. She sits straight on the blanket, watching the window.]

THE WOMAN: The following days, I've been sitting watching my tree. At night, a moon hang up above it. Both of them lonely. I wondered if Lavi was wandering now around the tree top, below the moon; if he felt lonely.

I wondered if in all that wandering around of his, he's aware I'm looking at the three of them.

I wondered if he was wandering at all... Another night I thought I saw him standing by the tree, looking at me.

As days gone by, Lavi's image slowly evaporated; other thoughts came and filled my head.

[Daylight shines.]

That day, a day before the winter celebration starts in the village, a few girls, a little younger than me, came to my tree. They played around it, climbed it, carved heart shapes on its bark. On one arrow end, they carved their own name, on the other, their lover's. I was jealous of my tree but couldn't make them stop. The dark sky, the girls' dresses, the tree and the smell of cool hay, everything was too intense. Alive. The wind carried the sound of their laughter, rattling up the tree top. They moved as if there was no tomorrow. As if we all had no tomorrow. As if playing by that tree fulfilled their destiny, as if that moment became eternity. I wanted to call out to them, to tell them, that in a day, in a week, once they're twenty, they'll have to marry that other arrow end. That's how it goes in the village. The only thing worse than an unmarried twenty year old, is a married twenty years old who can't have children. Worse still.. I wanted to call out to them, to tell them, but knew they wouldn't come nor listen, that it's of no use. By and by they vanished, one after the other; the tree just stood there, lonely again.

[Nighttime. She stands up; goes near THEO's bed; looks at him.]

For many days and many nights
I didn't speak with you, Theo.
A lot has happened
Since we've last spoken.
Our life together
Got built, and then destroyed.
They got hope,
But it was buried in a day.
I can't tell anymore
If you can even hear me.

I can't tell anymore
If my expectations that you wake up
Have any chance of ever materializing.
Move a leg now, a hand,
If you can hear me.
Move a single finger now, Theo....

[*Silence.*]

Show me you can hear me, Theo,
Because the loneliness
Is driving me crazy,
Wake up, because I...
I can't even remember who you are anymore...
Don't know if I still love you anymore,
Don't know if I want to stay,
Or run away from here,

T h e o !

[*Pause. Determined, she turns around, taking the shovel; sits down and starts vigorously hitting the chain attached to her leg, trying her best to detach it from her leg. Her attempts grow slower, as she starts losing faith in her abilities; slowly she gives up; puts down the shovel; goes to THEO and shakes him.*]

I can't take it anymore,
I can't take it...

[*After a few seconds of shaking him, she looks at him and moves back a bit.*]

Theo...
You moved your hand. I felt it.

Move it once more...

[*Pause.*] I feel...

That you hear me, Theo,

Right?

[*Pause.*] Right. You hear me...

Can you move anything else?

[*Pause.*] Your leg...

[*Sits next to him; puts her hand softly on his shoulder.*]

Don't try to get up now,

Take it easy,

You've been asleep for many days.

[*Caresses his forehead.*]

Yes, it's me.

Can you see me?

You do...

[*Pause.*] It's fine, don't try to speak,

I understand...

[*Gets up and uses a pillow to elevate him a little.*]

Better...?

[*Stands up watching him.*]

I always had a feeling

You can hear it all...

[*Pause.*] You're hungry, Theo?

Because we've got... chickens...

I'll go make you some soup.

[Gets up, turns to go; stops.]

I heard it all,
He said.

[Turns back to him.]

You see, Theo,
I wished to know
What you do each and every moment.
I remember that, he said.

[Comes a bit closer.]

Let's speak about it...
No use speaking, he said.
Old people speak,
They have the time for it.
Theo,
We had a son,
Can you remember that as well?

[Silence.]

He's dead now.
We're not a man and woman anymore,
We're parents of a dead child.
And that's more,
Much more,
Than we've ever been before.

[*Silence.*]

That means
That I'm not barren, Theo,
That you don't have to go away.

[*Daylights shines. Snowflakes begin falling. Sounds of people celebrating. She extends her hands sideways as if in celebration. The sound of the contrabass is heard. She starts dancing.*]

Even the snow came to celebrate your awakening.

[*She dances her way to the window.*]

They celebrate the beginning of winter.
Let's go out and join them.

[*Turns back to THEO. The sounds grow louder as if approaching the house.*]

I'll help you up.

[*Stops. The sounds grow very near. She turns around and looks out the window; terrified.*]

First came the women. All the village women,
Headed by Zvi's wife, with a pair of shears.
Then came the men, with clubs and hayforks,
Calling out.
Whore... Nympho...
Lays eggs like a chicken...
Dances without underwear, bewitching the men...

You seduced mine...! Called out Zvi's wife.

[She runs, taking the shovel in her hand.]

The women came to my window.

Cut out her clit...

Cut out her clit...!

Two women were about to enter my house,

One of them - Zvi's wife,

In her hands, the sharp shear blades

Kept on opening and closing,

Opening and closing...

Opening...

[Silence.]

Suddenly everything turned silent. The men hurried back to the village.

The women ran after them.

Zvi's wife was still looking at me,

When Zvi, who called up everyone,

Took her away.

I saw a barn burning in the distance.

[Looks out the window for a few more seconds; turns running to THEO's bed.]

You didn't help me...

[Climbs his bed; shakes him.]

You never helped me...

[Keeps on shaking him, then stops; removes her face from the dead THEO and looks at him.]

You can't leave me...
You can't leave me, because you're,
Like my lips, my tongue, my breasts,
Like my heart, my lungs, my innards,
Like all these,
A part of me...!

[Abruptly unbuttons THEO's shirt.]

You'll stay with me, so I'll know what you do each and every moment.

[Brings her face to his belly; takes a bite; starts eating his innards.]

9

[An isolating light shines. THE WOMAN enters it. Snow keeps on falling.]

THE WOMAN: Happiness, a small and shifty gnome I've never invited, suddenly dropped by.

It stood facing me, held out two fists, and said, choose one.

Take your pick. I chose one, he opened it, it was empty. He opened the other,

It was empty too. I don't get it, I said to the gnome. Watch carefully, he said and put both hands near my eyes.

In his open palms, mom and dad appeared. They were coming returning the field, laughing. Zvi and his wife appeared,

And everyone else in the village. They celebrated the beginning of winter, singing and dancing. In his hands, I saw my ancient tree wrapped within a scarf of snow. Not far

from it, stood the contrabass player. I was dancing between him and the tree. Above me, Lavi's little body was standing afloat, inside my body, Theo was dancing along.

Theo's meat poisoned my blood. I felt suffocated.

That's the deal? I asked the gnome.

Yes, he said, that's the deal,

Birth and death and some short journeys inbetween,

As far as the chain allows you.

The feeling of suffocation was taking over me.

What now? I asked.

You know already, he said, then slipped away and disappeared.

Then,

Then there was that sigh...

[Light fades out.]

The End