

# This Wide-Winged Sea

By Yosef Bar Yosef

Translated by Binyamin Shalom

## Characters:

Noach Grunwald – young lawyer, religious man who has left the religious lifestyle behind

Pnina – his wife

Esther – her sister

Yona – the sisters' father, a religious man from Jerusalem

Efraim – a young matchmaker

Misha – A legless cripples from Europe

Rita – his wife – they are both neighbors to Noach and Pnina

Aliza – elderly woman, neighbor in the next-door building as well

The Man – her son, with internal affairs, uses her apartment

The Woman – one of his secretaries or something like that

Jackie – busboy, neighbor, living on the next-door rooftop

The Rabbi – supplies incantations

Young Man – who keeps jumping from the promenade down to the sand below

Dog Owner – playing with his dog along the shore

## Time:

After the War of Independence in Israel, app. 1950

## Place:

Tel Aviv. Most of the scenes take place in the apartment of Noach and Pnina, and in the garden between their building and the neighboring one. You can see the garden from inside the apartment as well.

Additional scenes take place along the shore and in the Rabbi's study.

## Act I

## Scene 1

(By the sea, with a promenade and railing made from iron bars, steps that lead down to the sand, a thin strip of beach and the sea itself. It is a Friday afternoon and the sun is setting in the west, over the sea. Misha the cripple is crawling on his hands down to the sand via the steps, and at the same time a young man keeps jumping from the railing down to the sand below, landing nicely, doing a little exercise, and then climbing back up to the railing, etc. In the sand below there is a man playing with a dog, throwing a piece of wood which the dog then runs to retrieve, though we do not see the dog, just the man's back. Rita is out in the water, while Noach and Pnina are just arriving along the promenade, with him pulling her along by the hand).

Pnina:           Where are we going?

Noach:           You'll see in a second.

Pnina:           It's late, I have to light candles in a few minutes.

Noach:           In a little while, just a second.

Pnina:           The children... where are the children?

Noach:           (having arrived at the promenade, facing the sea) Here we are...

Pnina:           The children?

Noach:           What's with the kids all of a sudden? Look at this, look at all this...

Pnina:           It's the sea, right?

Noach:           (shocked) The sea?

Pnina:           No? It's not the sea?

Noach:           No, it's not the sea, it's a cat.

Pnina:           I don't get it.

Noach:           I can't believe it, it's the first time in your life, isn't it?

Pnina:           Once we went swimming during the summer, I got sick. I only saw it from afar.

Noach:           The first time in your life and all you can say is, 'The sea, right?', like it's nothing. It's not 'the sea' it's *the sea*. You just don't get it yet. The sea, right here, next door, as close to us as your mother's apartment in Jerusalem. Just a few steps, you can even walk over in slippers, or in

golashes, and that's it, the sea – 'This wide-winged sea...' Don't you get it? It's as if... as if we had a lion right next door.

Pnina: (laughing – his excitement charms her) A lion...

Noach: What else can you say about it? Even this... no, you really can't compare it to anything else at all. It's the opposite, you can compare things to the sea, even the very stones of the Temple Mount, when the Midrash wants to say how beautiful they were, it compares them to the waves of the sea. And it's not just the sea, it's everything that's behind it – America, Europe, the whole wide world, it's all right here, in the air, it's... (He takes her hand and pulls her forward) Touch it, can you feel it?

Pnina: (trying to pull her hand back) No, let me be.

Noach: Why?

Pnina: My hands are naked.

Noach: Your hands are naked...?

Pnina: Yes.

Noach: Even better. What do you feel on your naked hands?

Pnina: Your hands.

Noach: Forget about my hands right now. Think of the sea, really feel it. The size, the expanse, the freedom. All this endless blue, no mountain off in the distance, no fence, and no mother and father and mishpache telling you what to do. Just looking at it I get the feeling of the wide sea within me, everything is all swollen, ready to explode, I'm filled with a desire to do things, to give, to receive, to grasp life itself.

Pnina: (Laughing, enjoying his company) What is there to take? It's just water, and salty water at that, at least that's what I've heard.

Noach: You've heard...? Salty water, huh...?

Pnina: Yes, saltwater, Esther drank some of it when she was swimming, and it's not much more than that.

Noach: That's the whole thing, there's nothing to it, that's why it contains everything. Like taking a mikva at night, nothing, nothing at all, and that's why it's full of devils and spirits, no?

Pnina: That's something else altogether.

Noach: Of course it's something else. There aren't any demons here, just possibilities. It's boats and new immigrants and merchandise, import-export. And it's business deals and contracts and money, lots of money. So there are also thieves and cheats and courts of law. And it's all written right here in the sea, like fish. And it also holds the name of one Noach Grunwald, a typical Jerusalem yeshiva bochur, soon to be a well known attorney at law who'll turn into a veritable whale in the midst of all these fish. That's what the sea means, you get it?

(Pnina looks at him, laughs, amused by his excitement).

Noach: You see? Even you're starting to turn happy. The sea draws everyone in. (Noticing she's not looking at the sea) You're not even looking, what...?

Pnina: It's you, you're so happy.

Noach: You have to learn to enjoy yourself, Pnina, you've got to learn to enjoy yourself.

Pnina: I'm enjoying you.

Noach: Not just me, the whole world should give you joy.

Pnina: I'm enjoying the pleasure you get from it.

Noach: Would it be enough if I ate and drank for you too? You're not just a woman, you're my better half. The world is your oyster just like it's mine. You've got to learn to take pleasure in things, the more the better. That's what it means to enjoy in the modern sense.

Pnina: Like Uncle Shaya, he's always counting up his good deeds.

Noach: What kind of comparison is that? He's a slave to God, a slave. We're headed for freedom, and now we're headed there together. I'm tired of being alone the whole week, with all the trips back and forth to Jerusalem. Come on, let's go down to the water.

(The young man who keeps jumping down to the sand comes back at this point and jumps down to the sand once again).

Pnina: (alarmed) What's he doing?

Noach: Can't you see? He's jumping down there, come on...

Pnina: What, me? Like that? Just jump down? Not me, no way!

Noach: Really? You don't want to just jump down into the sand like him? So how are we going to get down there?

- Pnina: I don't know but there's no way I'm jumping down there.
- Noach: (laughing) Oy, you're so gullible! (Embraces and kisses her).
- Pnina: (separating from him) No, what are you doing, in public, with all these people around...
- Noach: This is Tel Aviv, Pnina, this is Tel Aviv! (Pulls her along after him towards the stairs) Come on, the stairs are right here, we'll walk down normally.
- Pnina: (as they descend the stairs) You know everything.
- Noach: Why have I been working for a year already in Tel Aviv, all week, every week?
- Pnina: You're working.
- Noach: I have to feed my soul too. I try to come down here at least once a week. And if I can't find the time, then I look at the sea from afar, from Allenby Street, like kissing a mezuzah.
- Pnina: (Already walking through the sand) I'm sinking.
- Noach: (directed towards Misha the cripple, who is making his way through the sand with difficulty) Look at him, what's he trying to say?
- Pnina: It's difficult for him, why is he...?
- Noach: He must have a good reason. Come on.
- (Pnina keeps walking through the sand, laughing).
- Noach: What...?
- Pnina: The sand keeps getting in my shoes, it tickles. (She takes off her shoes).
- Noach: The student is already doing better than her master. I'll take mine off too. (He removes his shoes).
- (The young man jumps down from the promenade again and lands not far from them).
- Pnina: (shocked) What was that? Where'd he come from?
- Noach: From the sky.
- Pnina: He fell from up there?

Noach: He didn't fall, he jumped.

Pnina: That's the same kid who was jumping before. Why does he keep doing the same thing over and over?

Noach: For the exercise. The sand is soft. You can jump from pretty high up.

Pnina: But there are stones here, he might break something.

Noach: Even better. It's dangerous, he can test his mettle.

(At the edge of the stage we see the man from behind again, throwing a piece of wood to his dog. We can hear the dog barking).

Pnina: (coming to a halt, alarmed) I want to go home. Where are the kids?

Noach: What happened?

Pnina: Can't you see? The dog, he almost...

Noach: What a little girl you are. He won't come over here, he's with that man over there, his owner.

Pnina: What are they doing?

Noach: Can't you see? They're playing. The man throws the piece of wood to the dog and the dog goes and retrieves it.

Pnina: The man is playing. The dog's not playing. He just keeps running every time to bring the piece of wood back.

Noach: That's how he likes to play. He likes running and retrieving. That's why he keeps barking, he wants the man to throw it already. It's beautiful, a man and his dog, a human being and an animal. Like the shepherd and his flock in your knitting.

Pnina: That's something else, it's just some knitting. Let's go already.

Noach: Why, when it happens in real life and not knitting it's not beautiful?

Pnina: I don't know. I never saw living sheep. I just copied it from one of my grandmother's pieces. Sheep are anyway another thing altogether, it's a kosher animal.

Noach: (angrily) You can really drive a man crazy! What does the animal's being kosher have to do with anything?

(Pnina remains silent).

- Noach: Forget it, I'm not angry. I'm asking quietly now, what's the difference if the animal is kosher or not?
- Pnina: I don't know. A kosher animal is beautiful, it's heimish.
- Noach: Why? Because you can slaughter it and eat it? You can tell that you're the daughter of a butcher.
- Pnina: He's also a cantor and a delegate for the Yeshiva.
- Noach: I can't figure you out. The fact that they slaughter it makes it beautiful, heimish?
- Pnina: I don't know. Maybe. Yeah. It shows you need it.
- Noach: You need a dog too, no? To guard the sheep.
- Pnina: There aren't any sheep here.
- Noach: (laughing) You're pretty stubborn and no fool either. No, not at all.
- Pnina: That's what you always say about me. But it's because you do think I'm a little bit of a fool, don't you?
- Noach: No, not at all, you've actually got a very practical mind, a straight way of seeing things. It's just that it's like... Yeah, it's like it's almost too straight for this world we live in.

(Pnina has already begun to walk out into the low water).

What are you doing? Where are you going? In the water – be careful! Wait, I'll walk with you. (Entering the water) Ooh, it's cold.

- Pnina: (facing the wet sand beneath her feet) Look, all the sand down there, it's blue.
- Noach: It's because of the sky that's in the water, it enters the sand along with the water.
- Pnina: Oh, it keeps moving, like someone keeps pulling the floor out from under you. My head is spinning.
- Noach: It's nice, isn't it? Come on, let's go back.

(Pnina turns away from him and walks out further into the sea).

- Noach: Where are you going? It's deep there, don't do everything all at once.

(Pnina puts a finger in the water to taste it).

Noach: Like in the kitchen, huh? Needs a little more salt, a little more sugar?

(Pnina walks further out into the sea, with her eyes closed).

Noach: (Stopping her, taking hold of her hand) Enough. You've got your eyes closed.

Pnina: The guy jumping over there also closes his eyes, doesn't he?

Noach: That suits you, with your eyes closed. Your hair has started growing back. Soon you'll be able to make braids like before we got married.

Pnina: (opens her eyes and says, with both fear and joy) Oy, the water is pulling me out. Look it's just water, after all, but it's so powerful.

Noach: (laughing, in admiration and amazement) What pleasure you're getting.

Pnina: If only Esther were here... she wouldn't believe her eyes.

Noach: Your mother too, she would hardly recognize you. We'll start everything over, you'll see. The whole country is being reborn right here in Tel Aviv.

(In the meantime, Misha the cripple arrives at the edge of the water, and starts sort of screaming and singing, in Russian. The sun is beginning to set. They both turn to face him, as does Rita who hears him though she is out in the sea and starts to make her way back to shore).

Noach: (turning to Pnina, quietly, so as not to bother the man singing) Where can you find anything like this in Jerusalem, all this beauty? That's why he came all this way, just to sing with all his heart to the sea, to the sunset.

(Pnina looks around in disquiet all of a sudden).

Noach: What happened?

Pnina: (turning back to the shore) It feels like I've forgotten something, but I can't remember what...

Noach: (laughing) No, huh? (his face lights up as he takes her hands) I'll tell you in a moment, you won't believe it when I tell you.

Rita: (aloud, directed at Misha who is still singing, and she is still in the water, up to her thighs) Enough, stop. The whole shore can hear you!

(Noach and Pnina stare over at Misha and Rita).

Misha: (who has stopped singing) I don't want you, I don't!



Rita: I heard, I heard.

Misha: Get away from me, leave me alone! I've told you a thousand times. I hate you!

Rita: That's why you came all this way, to tell me that? Start heading home, I'm already on my way.

(Misha begins to move off, then turns around to face her again).

Rita: What are you looking at?

Misha: I like seeing you like this, without your legs.

Rita: Sure. Maybe you want me to go even further out in the water? (Pointing to her belly) Maybe up to here? (Pointing to her neck) Or here? Maybe I should just completely go under water? To disappear, to cease to exist, everything, not just my legs, huh?

Misha: Who are you here with? Where is he?

Rita: Enough, you're embarrassing me.

Misha: Your new lover.

Rita: My new lover huh? (Towards the other people gathered at the shore) There he is! And her too, and him, that one over there! They're all in the water, without legs, without a belly, without a body altogether, just a head, they're all my new lovers! (Now towards Noach and Pnina) And him too, and her (recognizing Noach and Pnina, as she changes her tone to a much more pleasant one) sorry, hey there. You're our new neighbors, right, from Jerusalem? You don't remember me, you don't...?

Noach: Sure, of course, sorry...

Rita: It's okay, there's no way you would remember. I was in a different state. (She is already standing on the sand, facing Misha she says) Allow me to introduce my husband, Misha. I'm Rita.

Noach: Nice to meet you, I'm Noach, and this is my wife, Pnina. Can we help you in any way?

Rita: Thanks, no need. We're just fine. Isn't that right, Misha? (Turning to leave with him).

Noach: (to Pnina) You don't remember her? In the building next door. God have mercy on her, no?

(Pnina makes no response, her mind is occupied with something else).

What happened?

Pnina: Candle-lighting, that's what I forgot...

Noach: (laughing) Of course, it's the sea. That's what I brought you here for, here you can forget everything and start fresh. We can do it together, look, you simply forgot about it. Yes, candle-lighting, that's what you forgot. So what? Did anything terrible happen? Look up, the sky stayed right where it was, it didn't fall, right?

Pnina: You... on purpose...?

Noach: Yes. Here you don't need any candles, the stars are your candles. They'll be coming out soon, and you'll see how many stars there are here.

Pnina: (pulling away from him in sudden fear) Where are the kids? They were waiting in the street...

Noach: What do the kids have to do with anything all of a sudden? (pointing off in the distance) There's Dina over there, with her neighbor and her kids.

(Pnina walks out of the water, with Noach following. The piece of wood falls right by Pnina's feet. Pnina lifts it up lost in thought. The dog arrives and barks at her. This can take place at the edge of the stage so that we don't see the dog himself, but just hear him barking. Pnina is alarmed but doesn't let go of the piece of wood).

Let go of the piece of wood already! Give it to me! He'll bite you.

(Pnina refuses to let go of the piece of wood)

Enough, throw it already!

Pnina: (not letting go) Not me... not me...

Dog Owner: (entering) Sorry. (He takes the wood from her and walks back off).

Noach: (Excitedly) You wouldn't give it to the dog, you... such bravery!

Pnina: (Still breathing heavily) I held on to it because I was afraid.

Noach: You won. That's what counts, it doesn't matter why or how. This is Tel Aviv, this... look, here come the stars already...

Pnina: (half-questioning) The stars...?

Noach: Yeah, just a few more moments and you'll see how many there are...

Pnina: And zodiac signs?

Noach: What signs all of a sudden?

Pnina: Stars and signs, no? I don't worship stars and signs.

Noach: What are you talking about? What world are you living in?

(Pnina leaves).

## Scene 2:

(A few months later, outside, in the yard between the two buildings, where there's a small garden with a bench and some nearby bushes, along with a faucet for the garden. Enter Pnina and Esther. Pnina has some cookies wrapped in paper in her hands. She stops and takes a deep whiff).

Esther:       What are you doing, they're cookies, eat them already.

Pnina:        They smell like Mom's place. Dad... does he know...?

Esther:       No, he didn't see.

Pnina:        Does he ever say anything – about me or Noach?

Esther:       Not a thing.

Pnina:        If he only knew what they think of me over here, like I'm some great Rabbi's wife, or something, it's scary!

Esther:       Like that, with your hair uncovered, no shawl, nothing?

Pnina:        For Tel Aviv, that's enough. All sorts of women keep coming up to me and asking me what's kosher and what's not – and how to light candles. They get to wanting it at some point, like on New Year's or something. (Smelling the cookies again) It has the scent of cloves, the spices he uses at havdala. How's he looking these days? Has he aged? And his leg...?

Esther:       I don't know. I get enough of Dad when I'm in Jerusalem.

Pnina:        It's not like I have any great reasons for thinking well of him, you know, but all the same...

Esther:       Why are we still standing?

Pnina:        That's what he wanted, not inside the house. I also thought it was best this way. It's a nice place, with a little sort of garden – it even has a bench. Also, if you guys want... (she turns on the faucet and drinks some water).

Esther:       What are you doing, why?

Pnina:        I wanted a drink, you want some too?

Esther:       The water... you turned it on on your own, without permission – who does it belong to?

Pnina:        The building, the... I don't know exactly. Here there are water faucets everywhere.

- Esther: (half-questioning) Just like that? Really...?
- Pnina: Yeah, all the time. It's Tel Aviv, not Jerusalem, whoever wants can drink from it.
- Esther: Anybody – whoever wants to?
- Pnina: Anyone at all. If they want water, they're free to drink.
- Esther: Turn it off, you're just letting it run for nothing, that's wasteful.
- Pnina: (turning off the faucet) There's plenty to go around. Noach explained it all to me. Everything down here is water, from the depths of the earth. You just dig down a little bit and there you have it, a well. It's like there's a sea right underneath our feet, but it's sweet. It's good, no? You're walking through the streets all thirsty, turn into a yard and have a drink. (Immediately in confidence she says) They even go and pee in the yard when they have to, even women and girls, I've seen it with me own eyes.
- Esther: Stop it already, enough. Boy the way you talk. Like you're some big Rabbi's wife!
- Pnina: (with a half-smile, curiously) Why Tel Aviv of all places?
- Esther: What...?
- Pnina: You and this guy, Efraim, your meeting today...
- Esther: What are you talking about? This is what he came up with. He wanted us to talk with you, since you're my family.
- Pnina: It's not just Tel Aviv that he wanted but he wanted to meet out in the open.
- Esther: So what? In Tel Aviv you can meet outdoors, that's what he said. You even said yourself...
- Pnina: But tell me – you yourself...
- Esther: I don't have anything to say.
- Pnina: You don't even really know what we're talking about but you've already decided that you've got nothing to say. And as for him... he didn't say anything? He didn't give you some sort of sign?
- Esther: I don't know. What do you want from me? What signs could he possibly give? And if he looked at me in a certain way...? And if his voice suddenly came out in such a way that...? He's a matchmaker,

that's all. He came to me on behalf of the Rabbi when the Rabbi became a widower.

Pnina: How about him, when did he become a widower?

Esther: How should I know? It's not my concern. It's been two years already and there are four little kids to take care of, two of them are really very young still. They're kept clean and all but there's no one to really take care of them. The little girl gets sick all the time.

(Pnina smiles, chuckles).

What's so funny?

Pnina: You turned red – you want him.

Esther: When I want something I always ruin it. I wanted Schmalka to stay with me, so I got a restraining order from the court when he tried to go to America to be a cantor for the High Holidays. What good did it do me? He demanded a divorce. The match with the old Rabbi is my punishment. I deserve to suffer not be given a prize. (almost crying) I mean, after all, Efraim, he's always so funny, it does my heart good. Things will go well all of a sudden, suddenly I'll be happy too. And with his kids, I'll have kids to take care of, I'll be happy all day and night.

Pnina: You want him and he wants you.

Esther: Why should he possibly want me? He's still pretty young. He's got enough women running after him. He's coming down in order to arrange the match with the old Rabbi. He won't talk about anything else. He'll be afraid that everyone will gossip. Jerusalem is just one big pair of ears, as soon as they hear something then they go off gossiping.

Pnina: That's why he wanted to meet in Tel Aviv, so that nobody would hear about it, talk about it, until the time is right. That's why he wanted to meet outdoors, so he could be alone with you. You're both in love. It would be a shame to lose something like that. Help him out.

Esther: In love...! You're so Tel Aviv already, your head is full of nonsense, what with all the movies you go see. How can I help him? What could I possibly do?

Pnina: You'll know when the time comes. It'll be just like you're drowning in the sea.

Esther: What do you mean, drowning in the sea?

Pnina: I don't know, that's just the way it came out.

Esther: I've never even been in the sea, so how should I know what it's like to drown in it, not to be able to get out?

Pnina: You'll know – someone's coming...

Efraim: (entering hastily, almost at a run, with ice cream cones). Hello there, sorry, I...

(They stare at him in shock).

Efraim: Hard to believe, huh? That's the same way everyone kept looking at me in the street. A Jew with a black hat and a long black coat moving through the streets of Tel Aviv with three ice cream cones in his hands. And almost running at that. What can I do? Their ice cream melts immediately, like sand running through your fingers. You have to run if you want to have anything left. Here, take one each.

(They laugh).

Efraim: What happened? You're laughing...! In Mea She'arim and Batei Ungarim there's no ice cream, so what, that means there's none anywhere in the world? Take one already, they're melting. Here, a matchmaker is allowed to try and please women.

(They take the ice cream cones from his hands and begin to lick them).

Efraim: It's good, no? It's all because of sweets that I got to be a matchmaker. My father, may he rest in peace, used to take me with him sometimes when he was working on a match. They would sit there talking about the potential bride and groom and the conditions of marriage, and I would filling my mouth with chocolates and candies from the table. If that's the way it is, I said to myself, then matchmaking is a good business.

(Esther laughs and Pnina exits, just disappears. Esther and Efraim remain).

Esther: (starting to call after Pnina) Pnina... what did she leave for?

Efraim: She left you all alone, huh? Your big sister...

Esther: She's younger than me. She has kids so everyone thinks she's older but I'm actually two years older than her.

Efraim: Maybe they just think that because you look so young, like a little girl. It's a good sign.

Esther: When you can't have kids then you're a little girl and an old maid, all at once.

- Efraim: Yeah, I understand. In any case... When God created woman he created her without any children, right? But she herself, she's alive. There are so many forms of life out here.
- Esther: Perhaps... I don't know.
- Efraim: The two of us can be left alone, though, it's allowed. After all, I'm a matchmaker, it's like being a doctor. I'm not really the one here, I'm just a messenger, I'm not here because of myself, that is... (becoming emotional, even shaking a bit) Let's sit down, huh?
- Esther: Excuse me?
- Efraim: Let's sit down, on this bench. My legs suddenly... My mouth is mumbling and my legs... man, it must be good to be a table, then your legs don't start shaking on their own.
- Esther: (already sitting, quietly, with a premonition) You can sit down.
- Efraim: Excuse me?
- Esther: (a bit louder now, bolder) You can sit down.
- Efraim: Sure, of course. I'm talking while I'm standing, huh? (sitting down) Thanks, that feels a lot better. You took the words right out of my mouth, as they say.
- Esther: It's all because of Pnina, I just use her as my model. They do all sorts of things here in Tel Aviv.
- Efraim: True. Let's get started, huh? (Having difficulty actually beginning a sentence) I never arranged a match before in my life with ice cream in my hands. Did anyone ever make a successful match like this? What should we do? Maybe we should just... (He makes as if he's going to throw away the ice cream, but doesn't actually follow through) No, I can't do it. Back where we come from you don't just throw things away, huh?
- Esther: But we're here now, we're not back home.
- Efraim: That's true. We're here, we're really here, but all the same, that 'back where we come from' is peeping in on us from all the little holes in the wall. There's another solution, here... (He starts eating the ice cream in big chunks, talking all the while) So, yeah, the match, we already spoke about it. The old Rabbi... I don't have to sit here and tell you all the good things you already know about him. He's a big Torah scholar, member of a religious court, respected by everyone... (Finishing the ice cream) There you go, I've finished it now. Pretty quick, huh? (He wipes off his mouth.) He also wants to wrap things up pretty quickly,



the engagement, the wedding. He's been a widower for half a year now already.

Esther: For two years I thought, no?

Efraim: Excuse me?

Esther: You, since the time you became a widower.

Efraim: Yes, that's right, I... you know what they say about the shoemaker. Anyway, I'm much younger than the Rabbi, there's time that is, so to say. He doesn't have a lot of time left, I mean may he live to be one-twenty and all, why push off till tomorrow what you can do today... tonight, that is... Sorry, my timing is a little bit off right now, huh? In short... he likes you. But of course that's the case – 'charm is a lie and beauty is vain'... but all the same, whoever says of a tree that it's beautiful... and of course the main thing is that you're a God-fearing woman, with a good name, good hands, a good heart.

Esther: My heart is bitter.

Efraim: Of course, without any kids... It'll be a blessing for the Rabbi. He's already got grandchildren. You'll only have to take care of him, take care of the Torah, that is, so he can learn as much as he wants in peace.

Esther: My pain will be his pleasure.

Efraim: Excuse me...? Yeah, I guess that's about right, though you could also look at it from another angle. He's taking pity on you.

Esther: No need.

Efraim: Excuse me...? Fine, I understand. It'll be a big mitzvah, he says, if he marries you.

Esther: He's already got enough mitzvahs without me, no?

Efraim: Yes, that's about right, I mean...

Esther: What's the little girl's name?

Efraim: Excuse me...?

Esther: The little girl, your little girl, I ran into her in the street, it looked like she was freezing...

Efraim: Yeah, Sarah, Sura'le. They don't close the windows and a cold breeze is always blowing in. Sometimes my sister comes over to help, but... What should I tell the Rabbi? You know, the timing of it all, the engagement, the wedding...

- Esther: Why did you want to meet me in Tel Aviv?
- Efraim: Excuse me...?
- Esther: Pnina says it's not just a coincidence. The fact that you wanted to meet outdoors, too – no coincidence.
- Efraim: Yes, that's true, it's so easy to ask on behalf of other people, but when it comes to yourself it's tough, huh? You're pretty brave-hearted.
- Esther: I'm drowning in the sea.
- Efraim: I don't understand.
- Esther: Forget it, it was just something that Pnina said to me.
- Efraim: When it comes to me, you see...? Last night I had a dream. I went over for a nap in the afternoon by my grandmother Chava's. As if we'd already arranged it. I came to rest at the shop, her shop, you know...?
- Esther: In Geula Street.
- Efraim: Right. And in the dream my grandmother's bed was right there. But when I get there I see that I'm... forgive me... that I'm only wearing my underpants. And my pants, I'm holding them in my hands – why? A grown man, a matchmaker, just like that, wearing only my underpants to go visit my grandmother...? (He falls silent).
- Esther: That's it?
- Efraim: That's just the beginning. (Suddenly getting up) It's getting late, huh?
- (Esther makes no response as she licks at the remaining ice cream).
- You've still got some ice cream left.
- Esther: I try to eat slowly. Especially when it's something so tasty...
- Efraim: Yeah, sure... (hesitates, draws close to her) You understand...? Me too, sure...
- (She rises. They draw next to each other. The sky is turning gray and the street lights come on. A man and woman enter from the bushes. The man hugs and paws the woman excitedly. Esther and Efraim separate).
- The Man: (quietly, excitedly) Come, let's go upstairs, the place is empty already...
- The Woman: No, I don't want to do it like that.

The Man: I'm not throwing her out of the house, she goes out anyway, to take walks. Come... (exit together with the Woman).

Efraim: Did you see that...?

Esther: Yes, you...?

Efraim: Of course. How could I not see it? It's soon going to be time for evening services and I didn't even daven the afternoon service.

Pnina: (enters as though she'd been lying in wait not too far off, in the event she might be needed) Nu, what's up, anyway I could be of help?

Efraim: (towards the bushes, like a sort of joke) Those folks over there don't need any help, huh? Like wild animals.

Pnina: What happened?

Esther: A man and woman, over there, together...

(Pnina turns to face the bushes, suddenly consumed with interest).

Efraim: (to Esther) This dream of mine... wearing only my underwear to go over and visit my grandmother, how...? And then I suddenly realize that I haven't gone over to-my grandmother's but that I... forgive me, it's all just a dream... I've come to visit you and you're waiting for me in my grandmother's bed – my grandmother whom I loved so much... Again, forgive me... dreams are just full of nonsense and they lie, but sometimes you want to know just what they're lying about.

(The couple – a man and a woman – return and head into the bushes, hugging and making out).

Pnina: (quietly, in alarm, with her hand over her mouth) No... Noach... Rita...

(The Man and Woman turn to her and it's neither Noach nor Rita, then they exit).

I'm sorry. Such a mistake, I don't know what came over me. We have a neighbor, she's a good woman, she's teaching me how to use the typewriter. I love talking to her. Noach also loves to... I...

Jackie: (Walks in with a red waiter's jacket over his arm). Hallo.

Pnina: (all confused) What...? Sure, hey there.

Jackie: Hau ar u?

Pnina: Excuse me...?

Jasckie: English. Eye no, eye spik very gud. U not english, I no. U yudish, u nut frum hier, you light candles for Shabbos, right? Like my mother. Me, enough, I've had it, I'm a busboy at the new hotel along the shore. Soon I'm gonna start a waiter's course, the first waiter's course in the State of Israel. With my name and everything: Ya'akov...

Pnina: Sure, right. Nice to meet you, Ya'akov. I'm Pnina and this is my sister, Esther...

Jackie: No, I'm not Ya'akov anymore, I'm Jackie! (pointing to his jacket) U si? Dis (pointing to himself) eye. (pointing at the jacket again) Dis Jackie, yess? You follow?

Pnina: Sure, of course.

Jackie: Beautiful, no? Red.

Pnina: Yes, very red.

Jackie: Soon you're gonna see me wearing it, and it'll be even redder. (exit).

Efraim: Yeah, even redder, just like that...

Aliza: (enters, directed towards the waiter who just left) Boy the people coming over lately, what material they're made of, in another class altogether! From Asia, from Africa, even from all sorts of shantytowns. Am I wrong?

Pnina: Excuse me...? Here, this is my sister, Esther...

Aliza: (doesn't hear, lost in her own thoughts as she is) My son works at my house. He's in planning for the Department of Internal Affairs. With his secretary. At my place things are quiet, so he can concentrate. At his place, with his wife... I'm not saying a word. I'm just out for a little walk, breathing some fresh air. (Turns to go, then stops) Who knows what will be with this country? (exits).

(Pnina turns to the side. Efraim and Esther are left in the middle of the stage).

Efraim: (to Esther) Some day, huh? Tel Aviv all of a sudden... and dreams looking for an interpretation... who am I to go dreaming? And to ask for an interpretation of all things? Who am I – Joseph from the Bible? I'm just some little matchmaker, a messenger, running around at the feet of great men. What's your answer? What should I tell the Rabbi? When? The Rabbi...

(Esther makes no response, she just turns on the faucet in the garden, and the water flows. Pnina, standing off to one side, is eating every last cookie her sister brought her).

The truth is that it's not for nothing that I wanted to meet you here. It's just that... You see how things are? And the Rabbi... Oh, he's really putting the pressure on, he likes you, you could even say he desires you for real. He's a great Torah scholar, and as they say, whoever is greater than his friend... His eyes sparkle when he speaks of you, and his hands are like this, as though he's already got you in his arms. Who am I too...? After all, he thought of you first, he's the one who... I never know how to compete. When there's competition I turn aside, you understand...?

Esther: In another week or two, whenever you want.

Efraim: Excuse me...?

Esther: The Rabbi, the engagement, the wedding, whatever you want. (exits).

(Efraim turns to leave as well, as does Pnina).

Jackie: (enters meanwhile, wearing his red waiter's jacket. To Pnina, as she exits:) Beautiful, huh? What did you expect? This is nothing. Wait till you see me with the pants too, in a full suit, the jacket and pants together. Everyone's gonna see just who Jackie is. (pointing to himself and the jacket:) Dis I!

Aliza: (enters meanwhile, directed at Jackie and the others walking out:) These black holy-rollers, now they're coming here too. Let 'em stay in Jerusalem, what are they looking for over here? (directed at the lit window in her apartment) My son, he's already hard at work. He always has a new secretary. They just can't seem to keep up with his pace, to say nothing of being in the same league as him.

(The light goes out in the window).

Jackie: Darkness.

Aliza: Darkness helps you concentrate. He has to do a lot of thinking when he's on the job. (turning to exit) What material, in another class altogether! (exits)

## Scene 3:

(One or two months later, Friday night. The scene is set in Noach and Pnina's apartment and also in the yard outside, which can be seen, along with the neighboring building, from the windows and balcony of the apartment. There is a low light in the apartment, just oil-burning candles. Jackie, in his red waiter's suit, is standing in the yard, looking at the burning candles. Noach and Pnina enter the yard, and Noach is slightly tipsy).

Pnina: (directing him, while walking) Over here...

Noach: Wassup?

Pnina: This way, back home...

Noach: That's all you know, back home, back home...

Pnina: I'm really sorry.

Noach: Oh enough already.

Jackie: (mainly to Pnina) Hey there.

Pnina: Hey there Ya'akov. Jackie, that is. (to Noach) You remember? The neighbor, over there in the room on the roof. (to Jackie) How're you doing? Did something happen?

Jackie: Yeah, today at the hotel... no big deal... (changing the subject) Those candles of yours... such a waste, huh? All the oil...

Pnina: It's not a waste for me. Like your mother, from what you told me.

Jackie: Women love to waste. (returning to his own concerns) In the hotel today there was also something wasteful like that. I wanted to tell you, this woman and her daughter...

Noach: (coming closer to Jackie in the meantime, scanning his suit, as if in disbelief) Red... what's up with that?

Jackie: What do you mean? It's me... the suit... jacket and pants – the pants and the jacket too.

Noach: People who were condemned to die, that's the way they used to dress them up, in red, the day before the hanging.

Jackie: It's the outfit of a busboy, that's all.

Noach: I got it, sorry, a waiter, of course.

Jackie: What do you mean waiter – busboy. Waiters only wear black, there's no such thing in the world as a waiter in red.

Noach: Really? I see I've still got plenty to learn about the world, huh? Another time, okay? (to Pnina) Come on.

Pnina: (to Jackie) Bye. Tell me another time about what happened in the hotel, okay? (exits with Noach).

(Misha enters meanwhile from the stairwell of his building).

Jackie: (to Misha) Did you hear him? He doesn't understand a thing. (regarding his clothing) That's the luck of a busboy. Everything about him is less than a waiter, the money, the tips, of course, even his word, he has no word, so what? When it comes to the color of his outfit he's more. Beauty also counts for something, doesn't it? I heard there are even outfits in blue, and yellow. (turns to go, stops, refers again to his clothing) Friday night, no work, so I'm taking it out for a walk, to give it some air. It's a full suit, jacket and pants. (exits).

(Misha exits towards his apartment, while Noach and Pnina enter theirs).

Noach: (tipsy, wobbling, sits down) What's going on? Everything is spinning.

Pnina: It's because of the candles.

Noach: The candles...? When are you gonna stop sidestepping the issue? Why can't you just tell me straight that I drank too much? Put on the lights, alright?

(Pnina stares at him).

Sorry, of course. Me, I can do it, I'll do it already... (rises and remains standing in place).

Pnina: (walks into the children's room, then returns) Everything's fine.

Noach: (sunk in thought) What...?

Pnina: The kids – they're in there, sleeping.

Noach: Really? Nobody kidnapped them?

Pnina: I'm a worrywart, I know.

Noach: You're not a worrywart, you're stubborn. You won't give in. You even cling to your fear like it's some sort of life raft, some rare stone.

Pnina: You're so angry at me.

- Noach: You've got to learn to even enjoy the parties on Friday night, together with me. You think it was easy for me? Didn't you hear them? The lawyer who got his degree from some correspondence course...! Sure, they went and studied in London and Beirut. All true, I admit my guilt. I also left the Yeshiva and fought with my entire family the whole time I was learning in that correspondence course. And in addition I managed to support you and the kids the entire time I was in the course – I even fought with the Jerusalem Brigade. I'm also guilty of all that as well, no? (wobbling, grabbing hold of a chair) What's going on? Why did I get up altogether?
- Pnina: You wanted to turn on the lights.
- Noach: That's right. (starts walking, wobbles, sits down, laughs) But at least I enjoyed myself, that I did. I showed them how a real man drinks – and eats! Everything was top of the line there, huh? Caviar, fish eggs, not just some egg powder. A man has to know how to take pleasure in bread and grapes just like caviar and whisky. Bread and grapes... That's it, that's what I need.
- Pnina: You want me to bring you some? You want to eat right now?
- Noach: Right now, right now. I'm famished. What, you think I'm like them? At least if they had something to say, something interesting. Courts, cases, victories – what a bore! What – are lawyers just a plate of herring?
- Pnina: (putting bread and grapes before him, laughing) What do you mean herring?
- Noach: (eating) Herring, what else do herring talk about, huh?
- Pnina: (laughing) I don't know.
- Noach: They talk shop, brag about their victories, their place in the can, who's higher, who's lower. Who's got more salt in their mouth, who's got less. And they talk so quietly, so politely. They don't make themselves look ridiculous, huh?
- Pnina: You didn't...
- Noach: Sure I did. But I don't care – let 'em laugh, let 'em have their fun. A man isn't a herring, a man was created in the image of God, no?
- Pnina: Sure, that's what it says in the Bible.
- Noach: A man is tremendous, wide, never-ending, like the sea. Let the boss' eyes pop out of his head! (laughing) He's got some affair going on with his secretary. They go off into a room, lock the door, and a few minutes later they come out. Everything real hush-hush like that, like a



sick man with his nurse closed up in a room to get an injection or pop some blister.

Pnina: (laughing) Enough already...

Noach: You say enough already but you're laughing, the modest girl from Jerusalem... why didn't you used to laugh over there?

Pnina: I don't understand.

Noach: Are there more grapes?

Pnina: I can't believe it. After all the little sandwiches that you ate over there.

Noach: Sandwiches, it's pronounced 'sandwiches'.

Pnina: I like it better when you eat bread and grapes.

Noach: You have to know how to eat everything.

Pnina: At least I know how to pronounce bread and grapes without making any mistakes.

Noach: You're no pushover, that's for sure.

Pnina: It makes me happy, you know. You've been saying that a lot lately. (serving him more grapes) Here.

Noach: Yeah, now that we're home you're laughing, now... (looking at her, at her shoulders) She's also not burning you anymore, huh? The dress, the plunging neckline, that is...

Pnina: I completely forgot, I'll change.

Noach: What happened? You remember how much it used to burn? It started burning again?

Pnina: You're just laughing at me.

Noach: Is it possible not to laugh at you? Before it used to burn like fire, at least that's what you said. Now you completely forgot about the whole thing.

Pnina: When I'm at home, when I'm just with you, that's something else.

Noach: Again with that 'at home' – again and again. You don't know anything else but being 'at home' and just to mix it up a little bit we'll talk about being 'at home' for a change, and then just in case we're getting bored, we'll talk about it some more, huh? That dress isn't for wearing at home. There's life outside the home too, you know. I have to make a

place for myself in the world. It's war, it's terribly difficult. I need you to help me, to be my equal, my wife.

Pnina: I tried, I sewed the dress myself.

Noach: Until you agreed. But once we got there you went and hid in a corner. If you could have you would have just disappeared into the wallpaper. And there I was stuck in the middle again. Making a fool of myself – sure, all by myself.

Pnina: Can't I help you and be your wife like that? With a dress that shows a little bit less...

Noach: Now you're laughing at me.

Pnina: No I'm not, why would you say such a thing?

Noach: This isn't Mea She'arim here. Here it's not enough for you to just give birth and take care of the house all barefoot and pregnant. Here you also have to go outside with me, and give your best, put your best foot forward. The two of us together, precisely because we're not from this world. And you did it. You were a smashing success with that dress of yours. I saw how everyone was looking at you.

Pnina: Yeah, one of the women asked me who made the dress. She couldn't believe that I did it all by myself... the fabric too... She couldn't believe that I bought it all in Jerusalem. It's similar to the fabric I bought for Esther's wedding.

Noach: Who you trying to fool? I'm talking about the men, not the women. About the neckline, not the fabric. The awful neckline, I mean really. Other women there had twice as low a neckline as you. Just that on them it made no real impression, like some big open field. In your case it's... yeah, you were on fire. That's your real merchandise, you've got to sell it.

Pnina: (softly, chuckling) I was on fire and I should sell myself at the same time?

Noach: What...?

Pnina: Nothing at all. I'll get changed. (turns to go into the bedroom).

(From the neighboring building, from Rita and Misha's apartment, you can hear soviet army music. Noach turns to the window. Pnina stops instead of walking out).

Noach: He can't take it anymore, huh? He's calling her to come home, sending the Cossacks out after her. Or maybe he's screaming out to the whole world like that, 'gevalt', telling them that his wife runs around at night

who knows where. If only the soviet army knew what use their songs were put to in the wider world.

(The music stops playing and Rita enters the yard with a handbag. You can hear her heels).

Noach: She's a brave one. Knocking around in heels, not trying to hide anything from anyone.

Pnina: What's she got to hide? She works at night too, she works hard.

Noach: You sure of that, on a Friday night...?

(Misha in the meantime has gone out into the yard and sits there facing Rita, blocking her path).

Rita: Let me go.

(Misha doesn't move and makes no response).

I was out playing tennis. They've started opening on Friday nights too. Here... (she brandishes her racket).

Misha: In high heels, no less, the finest that money can buy...

Rita: (showing him her tennis shoes) Here are my tennis shoes. What else? Even Stalin plays tennis.

Misha: What's Stalin got to do with it? You think you're gonna get over on me? Why'd you change? Tennis shoes are more comfortable.

Rita: I like the high heels. Enough, Misha.

Misha: (approaching her) No bra. What do you think I'm blind?

Rita: So what? I'm entitled. Let me go.

Misha: You think I don't already know you? You don't waste a second. Even at night on the way back from tennis, you're clacking around in high heels so everyone should turn to see your naked breasts beneath your blouse like two naked sheep with little red nipples, just so everyone's eyes pop out their heads.

(Rita steps around him, exits toward their building. Misha follows her).

Noach: (laughing) Everybody's got their own little flock of sheep, huh? You can smell the perfume on her all the way up here.

Aliza: (who has meanwhile entered the yard; directed at Misha and Rita:) What people! And even if they were really there, so what? Who told

them to stay in Europe? They could have come to the Promised Land and suffered like we did. I'm just out for a walk getting some fresh air.  
(exits)

Noach: She's just out taking a walk, and her boy is up there working, even on Friday night.

Pnina: I owe you an apology.

Noach: You owe *me* an apology?

Pnina: It was a while ago already, the day that Esther was here with Efraim. We were down in the yard, in the little garden. We suddenly saw a couple in the bushes, you know, without seeing their faces, just from the back, and I thought that it was... (stops)

Noach: Come on, you've already started – say what you have to say.

Pnina: I thought that it was you and... oh I don't know who.

Noach: Yeah, I get it. (stares at her)

Pnina: What?

Noach: You said you were gonna change outfits.

Pnina: Right. (Turns to go, then stops). Do you...?

Noach: What...?

Pnina: I don't know...

Noach: You've gotta speak a little clearer. Like you used to once upon a time, you remember? On Friday evening, when there was still a little time left before the candles burned out and you'd be lying in your bed in your corner and I'd be lying in my bed in my corner, and then you would turn to me and say quietly: "Noach..." and my heart would start racing like crazy, and I would say, "Yes..." and then you would say to me, "Bring me a glass of water, okay?" and I would bring you a glass of water. And the whole way carrying the glass, felt like such a long journey that was so brief at the same time...

Pnina: Stop it, you don't have to...

Noach: You've turned red. It's pretty by the low light of the candles. It looks brown like you got burnt by the sun.

Pnina: If you'd like...

- Noach: (doesn't hear her, by the window) You think maybe on a Friday evening that they also... You think it's also the time when they wanna ask for a glass of water? Who's gonna give her water? The man with no legs? Do you think he can altogether...?
- Pnina: (Getting back to what she had started saying) If you want I can take it off, I can...
- Noach: Go ahead...
- Pnina: I'll take... I'll take everything off, I'll be completely naked...
- Noach: As usual, in the dark – we'll even close the blinds...
- Pnina: No, in the light, what you always ask me to do. There's enough light with the candles and the streetlamps...
- Noach: Really? Just like that? I see... I appreciate that, I really do. (Remains seated).
- Pnina: You don't want to do it now?
- Noach: Just like that – the way you are right now.
- Pnina: I don't understand.
- Noach: I want you just as you are.
- Pnina: How? With the dress on...?
- Noach: (beginning to approach her slowly) Exactly as you are, with the dress on, with the neckline, the... just take off what you've got on underneath.
- Pnina: (slowly moving away from him) Why? What for?
- Noach: You look beautiful in that dress. Now I can really see just how beautiful. Yeah, I can see it through their eyes. Your modesty, your silence – not like me – your little neckline, bashful almost, but bashfulness can also be a turn-on, you know, a real fire of desire. That's what they saw in you.
- Pnina: They were looking at me in order to...
- Noach: In order to what...? Who cares? They wanted you, that doesn't mean you actually gave them anything. They wanted you and I'm proud of it, you're my wife, you're mine...
- Pnina: I'm yours even without all the...

Noach: Being mine when you're dressed like that means even more to me, with all those men ogling you...

Pnina: I couldn't stand their eyes anymore. That's why I wanted to leave.

Noach: Just like that? But when we were there you told me you wanted to leave because of the kids, because you were worried...

Pnina: I don't know, I was just embarrassed.

Noach: You lied to me.

Pnina: I'm sorry.

Noach: (drawing closer to her) That's not gonna help you – you lied. That's how it is, nobody is so pious, that's the way of the world, that's life. It has everything and you've got to try it all, every day something new. I brought you enough glasses of water, now I want you just like this, with your dress on, with their eyes on you... (he reaches for her dress) Just like this...

Pnina: (breaking, quietly) No, I can't do it like that, I just can't, I can't...

Noach: Forget it, sorry about that, forgive me. I won't do that to you anymore.

Pnina: I'm sorry, I'm trying, I just can't.

Noach: Enough, forget about it. Even like this everything suddenly becomes so complicated. C'mon, let's get to sleep. I'm tired. I've had enough for today. My boss is gonna fire me anyway.

Pnina: You didn't tell me anything about that.

Noach: What's to tell? I'll find another place. I'm not afraid.

Pnina: Take your time, you'll find an even better place. We'll be able to get by even with a lot less money than we have right now.

Noach: That much you know, that's for sure. You'll fry up some herbal cutlets, just like in the war when the food was scarce, right? The best herbal cutlets in Jerusalem.

(Outside Rita enters the yard from her building. Misha follows her. He trips on something and falls face-first).

Misha: (to Rita) Don't come back, you hear? Don't come back! I want to sleep in peace.

Rita: (bending over him) Here, let me help you up.

(Misha hits her with both fists in the face).

Pnina: (indoors) No, why...?

Noach: Piece of shit!

(Rita picks Misha up and exits with him, comes back and enters the yard by herself, looking up at Noach and Pnina's window).

Why's she looking at us, what's she looking for...? It's all dark.

Pnina: The candles.

(Rita exits heading toward their building. They don't see her walking towards them).

Where's she going now?

Noach: Have faith in her, she won't get lost. She's from over there, who knows what she's already been through. It's a whole 'nother world, something we can't even imagine. That's the way the world is, that's truth for you. They've really tasted life, the ones that are left. Like they have nothing and everything at the same time.

(The doorbell rings. Noach opens and Rita is standing in the doorway).

Rita: I'm sorry, it's pretty late isn't it? Excuse me. I saw you guys earlier from the window, so I allowed myself to come over. I can even see in the dark. They used to call me 'cat's-eyes'.

Pnina: Please, come in.

(Noach turns on the lights).

Rita: (pointing to her eyes) Sorry. I got hit playing tennis.

Noach: Tennis? Really?

Rita: There's a sort of court over there, the only one in Tel Aviv. They've begun to open at night, even on Friday nights, and there's not enough money for electric lights and the court is full of potholes. It's not the greatest but I really love to play, I just have to get out there sometimes. The American soldiers taught me how to play over there in Europe. They used to look like angels in their tennis whites and shoes. When it comes to shoes I actually like high heels, and silk stockings. That's my thing. When I can't fall asleep I put on silk stockings, high heels and then I fall asleep right away, just like a baby. I just have to have nice clothing, and the most expensive stuff at that, that's the way I like it. When I think of how long I have to work as a waitress just to afford a pair of shoes or a pretty blouse...

- Pnina: You're from a rich family, aren't you?
- Rita: My family...? No, back in the old country we didn't even have enough for the holes in silk stockings. It's nice that some good comes out of a war in the end, no? The bad you can count on, so if there's anything good – why not? Nobody steals anything from the dead after all. Why did you think I'm from a rich family?
- Pnina: I don't know. I just thought... because of your clothing, the high heels.
- Noach: Because of your high cheek bones.
- Pnina: Excuse me...?
- Noach: You have such high cheek bones, didn't anyone ever tell you?
- Rita: And high cheek bones are a sign of a rich family? (To Pnina) Men are really pretty funny, huh?
- Pnina: You're asking me?
- Noach: My wife doesn't understand men.
- Rita: Uh-oh – your husband is a real show-off. You have to surprise him somehow. I think I'll head back home. It's late already. And the funniest part is that I'm not even tired. I love letting off steam. Even when I'm working as a waitress. It's nice to feed people, it's something they really need from you. You also get to meet new people all the time, make connections. I found a partner at the restaurant, we're going to open a business together. We already found a place. Boy I do go on and on, don't I? Enough. (she turns to go).
- Noach: That's not from tennis.
- Rita: Excuse me...?
- Noach: The bruise under your eyes, we saw who hit you.
- Rita: Uh-oh – Mr. lawyer-man! I see I'm on trial. Misha's also studying law, in a correspondence course. What do you say to that?
- Noach: We know, you already told us.
- Rita: Really? A man with a memory – very dangerous! Maybe you can help him. Me and Pnina'll keep learning how to type, and you guys will study law.
- Noach: You're changing the subject. You bent over to help him up and he hit you, hard.



Rita: That's how it is when you've got no legs, the hands become stronger.

Noach: That's all you've got to say? He hit you.

Rita: Maybe I also hit him. There're all sorts of blows, no? After all, it's not the most pleasant thing in the world when you've got a wife who's always running around, and when Friday night finally comes she even leaves you at home alone in order to go play tennis at Maccabi with the bourgeoisie, and gets all dressed up so elegantly and luxuriously. Sometimes he just has to hit me like that, it helps him get by, I think.

Noach: So that's your arrangement, huh? You feel the need to play tennis and get dressed up in high heels and he feels the need to hit you. Everyone gets off in their own way, nobody's holds back.

Rita: Your husband is a real smarty-pants, it must be nice. Could I get a glass of plain water?

(They stare at her).

Rita: Sorry...? I really just want a glass of water. I'm so thirsty all of a sudden.

(Noach turns to go into the kitchen, stops and looks at Pnina).

Pnina: You want me to get it for her?

(Noach exits).

Rita: What a nice dress. Where did you get it?

Pnina: (absentmindedly) What...?

Rita: Your dress...

Pnina: I sewed it myself. My sister helped me out, she's a real seamstress. If you'd like I could make one for you.

Rita: Sure, why not?

Noach: (entering with a pitcher of water and a glass) Here you are.

Rita: A whole pitcher, I don't need all that water.

Noach: Drink as much as you want. Sounds like you're really thirsty.

Rita: Really? I just wanted a little. (drinks, stops; directs herself at Pnina who is staring at her:) Are you thirsty too?

- Noach: Should I get another glass? There's certainly enough water to go around.
- Pnina: No need, I'm fine as I am...
- Rita: (drinking a second glass, then pausing) I like to leave a little behind. (drinks the rest of the glass) He'll apologize to me, I know it. He's like that sometimes, gets real worked up pretty quickly but also repents pretty quickly. He used to be able to run so fast. He had real long legs. We used to make fun and say that he had twice as much leg as the ordinary Joe. It was pretty important in the forest. That was the first thing I noticed about him.
- Pnina: That's how you met, there, you became a couple?
- Rita: Yeah, I was all alone and I thought that was it, everyone was dead, there were just Germans and Ukrainians left. Then all of a sudden here was this man, such a tall, thin boy. Sometimes I close my eyes and I can still see him as he was back then, like he's just standing in the sea with his full legs, only they're not visible because they're underwater with his boots on, from the old country. I fell for him immediately, just like he fell for me.
- Noach: Sure, just like Adam and Eve.
- Rita: Adam and Eve...? Oh, I remember, from before the war when I was still just a girl, something about a snake, no?
- Noach: Yeah, something about a snake.
- Rita: How were we like Adam and Eve in your opinion? They were naked, weren't they?
- Noach: Let's forget about that for now.
- Rita: Why? It's interesting. I used to love to philosophize when I was younger. My mother told me that I might score a real good match because of it. C'mon, tell me more about us.
- Noach: I'm talking about myself, about us. (to Pnina:) It was the same with us, wasn't it?
- Pnina: What...?
- Noach: We didn't meet in a forest but we were set up with each other, it wasn't our choice. Yeah, in our case too it was like there was no one else. Of course we could have rejected the match but that never really came into consideration, like this is the way you get married and that's it. Anyway, why not agree to the match? The families were both fine. We were also pretty good-looking then. Pnina had a wonderful

reputation, she was diligent, quiet, and rather good at knitting. Everyone said that she would make a wonderful wife and above all a wonderful mother, and I was a star pupil in Yeshiva, a good Jew. So that was it, one Jew got married to another. You raise a family, bring children into the world. You have to, it's like a sentence, God said so, just like with Adam and Eve.

Rita: But you were in love, weren't you? I'm sure of it. Before, when I went outside, I thought to go down to the water, to breathe some fresh air, but then I changed my mind and said I'd be better off coming over to visit the two of you.

Noach: That's true, we also fell in love at first sight. The question was only... the question was whom we really fell in love with.

Rita: Your husband is quite amusing.

Noach: I'm not kidding around. After all, we barely knew one another – who were we anyway, what were we – we knew nothing about each other. And anyway, I would have probably fallen in love with any match at that point, either Rachel or Leah, provided they weren't complete monsters. I would have loved them with all my heart, with the very same heart. Just like with you, if Grisha would have showed up in the forest and not Misha, the chances are that you would have fallen with him instead, no?

Rita: I don't know – we really fell in love.

Noach: But it's not the man himself who woke this love up inside you, you brought that with you all by yourself. We came all prepared with all of our love inside us. We'd been gathering it up for years, we'd been watering it, feeding it, and at the moment that we met someone we poured out all our love and began to drink. Instead of drinking up something new we were drinking our own selves dry.

Rita: Listen to Mr. lawyer-man, a real expert when it comes to love! You should be a poet.

Noach: Don't cut me off, all right? (Continuing) It was like the other party was just a transparent vessel that we filled up and then got down before on our knees. Everything was all about me, me, me. But not the real me, since after all I didn't choose her, just like I didn't choose my father and mother. Are a man and woman supposed to be like a child with his parents? Is that what it means to be a man and a woman?

Rita: (to Pnina:) Do you also see it the same way?

Pnina: Me...?

Rita: What do you think?

- Pnina: I don't know. He knows these things better than me. I'm not a good example.
- Noach: She paid dearly in order to be with me. Her father stopped talking to her because of me, but she stuck with me. Yes, indeed, and we became as one flesh. It sounds beautiful, really wonderful, but it's not enough. Love is something else, it's two people who...It's something that hunts you down, it digs a pit for you and you just fall right in...
- Rita: Some husband you've got. He needs a pit now to fall into.
- Noach: Don't keep interrupting me all the time, don't interrupt me!
- Rita: Whoa, whoa, he's also scary, I'm pretty shocked.
- Noach: (with all his heart, though not necessarily loudly – trembling almost) Do you know what I'm missing...? High cheekbones for example. Or a dripping red eye that just got hit by someone else's fist. That's what I'm missing...!
- Rita: (pouring for him and handing him the glass) Here, have a glass of water.
- Noach: (drinking) Nobody ever offered me a glass of water before. I'm always the one offering, isn't that right? And why? Simply because there are things that a woman does and there are different things that a man does. That's how it is, that's the way our forefathers and mothers did it, right?
- Pnina: Yes...
- Noach: Pnina really likes to do things the old way. Maybe Tel Aviv will help her change. Maybe she could learn a thing or two from you, not to just go around ticking at a typewriter. Sure, you could teach her. A few days back she saw a couple in the garden, a man and a woman, embracing and... you understand. She couldn't see their faces. Tell Rita what you were thinking.
- Rita: What's going on? I don't follow.
- Pnina: I thought something that simply can't be, that's all.
- Noach: Tell her.
- Pnina: I thought it was you – the two of you.
- Rita: Really? I'm sure Noach is not like that.
- Noach: Why, you are?

Rita: Me...? I don't know what I'm like. How's the typing coming along?

(Pnina sits down, and starts typing away rather quickly).

Rita: Wow, you've made so much progress in such little time.

Noach: What are you doing? It's shabbos!

Rita: (approaching) You didn't write anything, it's just gibberish.

(Pnina stops typing and goes over to the window).

Rita: Sorry, I should really... thanks for the water, for everything. Bye.  
(Exits).

Noach: Let's go to sleep. (Exits towards the bedroom).

Jackie: (next to his room on the facing roof, directed at Pnina:) That woman with the little girl, the one I was telling you about before, the waste, you remember...?

Pnina: Sorry...? Oh, yes...

Jackie: She took out a whole suite on the penthouse floor, the most expensive suite in the hotel. And she also paid for everything in advance, in cash. Then she went and jumped out the window with her little girl. They died on the spot, that's what everyone said. Now you understand...?

Pnina: No. What...?

Jackie: Such a waste! Why did she altogether have to take out a room? And a suite at that? And to actually pay? She knew she was going to jump, she could have just gone up on the roof, without paying anything, just like that. What a thing to do, you follow...?

Noach: (entering from the bedroom) That's it we're closing up shop, going to sleep, no?

Pnina: Yes...

Jackie: What do you mean 'yes'? Can you understand such a thing?

Pnina: No, no...

Noach: First it's yes, now it's no. What do you really want? I'm going to sleep, turning off the lights. (shuts off the lights).

Jackie: I can't understand such a thing – I just can't.

Pnina: No, me neither.

## Act 2

## Scene 1

(Some time later. Scene takes place at the Rabbi's place – the Rabbi who provides incantations. His desk is full of religious books and incantations. Pnina sits facing him).

The Rabbi: This incantation, the third one, you should hide above the bed, where he rests his head. Is there some place you could hide it?

Pnina: Yes, one of my knitting works hangs there.

Rabbi: Good. This incantation is the most powerful one, it was written with rose water and saffron on a sheet of copper. (He unfolds the incantation for her). You see? It's the names of the angels responsible for love, the highest order of angels that there is.

Pnina: (looking at it) What's written here?

Rabbi: Can't you see? "He should neither rest nor sleep nor take any pleasure whatsoever and he should be as one thirsty for water but not be able to drink, his heart should be overturned and he should love her once again with all that he is..."

Pnina: No – why...?

Rabbi: What do you mean no? You don't want him to love you like before?

Pnina: Why shouldn't he be able to get any rest or sleep? Also the phrase that "he should be as one thirsty for water but not be able to drink" that's a little rough...

Rabbi: Of course it's rough. In order to force his hand. That's how it is with-love. What do you think? You think that he's in love with that other woman, someone else's wife, abominable beings, both of them, you think he gets off scot-free for stuff like that? Those are the husks, the evil angels, the demons, they drag him along by the nose or the... Whatever, you understand what I'm getting at. They're tugging at him in one direction, and we'll pull even harder in the opposite direction.

Pnina: I don't know – just like that? – I guess... (about to get up).

Rabbi: Wait a second, what do you want? What else did I write for you besides the incantations...?

Pnina: (tiredly, absent-mindedly) What...?

Rabbi: My head is already spinning. So many people come to ask me to arrange their love lives for them, like there's some sort of famine in the

land, endless, really. Not some seven thin cows and then seven fat ones, but all thin ones, no fat ones ever. (flipping through a holy book) Here we are, I'll give you one last thing. Take nineteen drops of sweat from your face and body and nineteen drops of the first urine that you excrete in the morning, like the morning dew, and put it all in the food you make for him, and be sure to say over what I've written for you on this piece of paper, right here, and only then let him eat it.

(Pnina stares at him).

Rabbi: What are you looking at? You don't get it? From the sweat on your face and body and from your urine...

Pnina: I should be getting home.

Rabbi: Wait a second, we still have to deal with this woman, what's her name...?

Pnina: (bursting out) No, I don't want her to die, I don't even want... no...

Rabbi: Who said that she should die? Even the Sanhedrin didn't kill anyone all that quickly. There are all sorts of things one can do. You can ask for her to turn ugly, or act stupidly, the main thing is that he should hate her.

Pnina: No, nothing.

Rabbi: First you want her to die and now nothing at all?

Pnina: Not me, on the contrary. I said that I don't want her to die, not at all.

Rabbi: Just like that, I see. It's just that sometimes the opposite is that... never mind, let it be as it is.

Pnina: Just make it so that she loves her husband more, that's all.

(The Rabbi stares at her).

What...?

Rabbi: (tiredly) Never mind. I'm tired. You're a difficult woman, too soft.

(Pnina turns to go).

You forgot everything, the incantations, the pages, everything. Here, take.

Pnina: (undecidedly takes nothing) He wouldn't like this.

Rabbi: (staring at her) Where were you born, huh?



- Pnina: Jerusalem.
- Rabbi: I already was starting to think that you weren't born anywhere. Is that what you really want to give him – something he likes? Go ahead, give him this woman, this Lilith, let him go commit abominations with her. Let him have her, give him your blessing even. This is war, don't you get it? You're trying to fight against his eyes, until they roll over and he returns to you, to the path of righteousness. That's how you can help him – get it?
- Pnina: These incantations, the auguries... it's not very modern.
- Rabbi: It's like that...? It's not *modern*... Listen to yourself, you're like a person who's relating to the hangman. Even a cow screams when they bring the knife, no?
- Pnina: What...? Yeah, I guess so.
- Rabbi: And you think love is modern? It's all husks and demons. They keep confusing us, messing with our minds, telling us: It has to be 'modern, modern, modern' as though that's tantamount to 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. Can't you see the difference? 'Modern' sounds like 'mud and dirt' when it comes out of the mouth. Whereas 'Holy' is like 'honey' in your mouth, no?
- Pnina: Yes, thanks a lot. (Turns to go, without taking all the incantations etc.).
- Rabbi: Why did you come to see me?
- Pnina: I don't know. My neighbor at the synagogue told me to try it.
- Rabbi: But you're the one who came to me, not her. Do you need my help or don't you?
- Pnina: I do, I do.
- Rabbi: Then take what I'm offering. You already paid me. You don't want me to go taking money for nothing, turning me into some sort of beggar, looking for handouts, right?
- Pnina: No, of course not.
- Rabbi: (Placing the incantations and auguries in her hands). Here, take it. If it helps, then all the better, and if it doesn't, then no harm done – what can you lose? As the saying goes, we don't have to finish the work, but we're not free to ignore our part in it either.
- Pnina: Thank you very much. (Turns to leave).

Rabbi: There's something else, something very beneficial. Under the bed where he sleeps put a fish eye and a rabbit's ear facing each other, and if you add seven hairs from a fox it would be even more effective.

Pnina: How...? Why...?

Rabbi: It's not for nothing that they say the mysteries of life are beyond our comprehension.

Pnina: Where can I get these things though?

Rabbi: A fish eye...? That's simple, you get it from a fish.

Pnina: And a rabbit's ear... and...

Rabbi: Hairs from a fox.

Pnina: Yeah.

Rabbi: That's true, it's a pretty complicated matter love. The ear of a rabbit... hairs from a fox... pretty tough to get a hold of these things. It's a real serious problem. May God have mercy on you and help you and all the Children of Israel.

Scene 2:

(A little while later, at lunchtime. Indoors, inside Noach and Pnina's apartment. Noach is packing his things up in the bedroom where his desk is also located. Outside, at the same time, Aliza is moving around heavily as she is sick. Jackie is up on the roof where he lives, wearing the red suit and standing on the edge of the roof, waving his hands. Pnina enters the yard, returning from a trip).

Pnina: (to Aliza:) Hello.

(Aliza makes no reply).

Did something happen?

Aliza: Why should anything have happened?

Pnina: I don't know... maybe you're not feeling so well. What did the doctor say? You went to see him this morning...

Aliza: And what if he did have something to say? I'm not going to make a big deal out of a little fever. In the end we all have to die you know.

(The man enters the yard, gives Aliza back her key without saying a word and walks out with the woman who is accompanying him. Aliza begins to move towards him, stops, and sinks down onto the bench).

Pnina: (reaching out a hand to help, though her timing is off) Can I help you? To sit down that is...

Aliza: I'm already sitting.

Pnina: Sorry, I just... never mind. Anyway, if you need anything at all...

Aliza: Why should I need anything? The main thing is to talk, to make an impression, it doesn't cost anything at all. I don't like to just talk in the air. He doesn't either. Sure, my son, he's just like me. That's why he left like that. What could he possibly have to say anyway? To ask me how I'm doing? What does that help? And anyway, do I understand everything? He was wounded three times during the war, but he got better and went back to the battlefield, again and again. What do you have to say to that? Once he even got injured right here, in the neck, as if they'd slaughtered him.

Pnina: (holding her own neck) No...?

Aliza: Yes. Why not?

Pnina: Sorry, sure, of course... I meant the opposite, really, that is to say...

- Aliza: Whatever, if you get wounded once, okay, that's understandable. But to risk your life all over again each time? Tempting the angel of death like that? So he works in the house with his secretaries and I wander around outdoors with a fever – so what? So he forgets to ask how I'm doing in the end. I can understand almost anything, you know? I'm not missing anything, I've got it all.
- Pnina: Can I help you maybe, in any way? I could accompany you back home, I mean...
- Aliza: Who said I want to go home? What am I not allowed to sit outdoors?
- Pnina: Sure, sorry. (Turning to go she notices Jackie up on the roof).
- Jackie: Are you afraid something's gonna happen to me? You think I'll fall or something?
- Pnina: No, why?
- Jackie: You've got nothing to worry about in my case. I'm just taking the suit out to get some air. In my entire life I'll never fall down. And with the suit on of all things, I mean, if you follow me...
- Pnina: Sure. (Exits towards her apartment).
- Aliza: (getting up, facing the roof and Jackie) Some people just have to stick their noses in, but no one follows the main thing. Who knows he received a badge of courage, my own son? I wander around the streets, people pass me by, all busy, sure, all important people. Nobody knows, all they know is that he works extra hours with his secretaries. What do I care? It's their problem. (exits).
- Pnina: (entering her apartment, sees Noach within, from behind. After a moment, hesitatingly) You... you came back early...
- Noach: (seeing her) Yes. (Keeps packing up in the interior room).
- Pnina: (wants to ask him what he's doing) What...? (asks something else instead) Where are the kids?
- Noach: With friends. The little one is going to sleep over.
- Pnina: Sleep over...?
- Noach: You said you were going to be back late. She likes to sleep over at friends. Does that bother you?
- Pnina: What...? No, if she likes it. (silence) You haven't asked me how things went, in Jerusalem.

- Noach: Really? I haven't asked you?
- Pnina: Things went fine, just like that. I mean, not entirely. The truth is that they didn't need me. Her wedding is in another week, but it's like nothing at all is happening. They're going to have a modest ceremony. Suddenly I'm talking a whole lot, huh?
- Noach: Sorry...?
- Pnina: Never mind. (wanting to ask once again) What...?
- Noach: Yes? You want to ask me something?
- Pnina: (changing topics again, facing Jackie up on the roof) Look at him, on the roof, again. As if something happened to him. You remember? He once told us that story about a woman and her daughter who jumped off the hotel. Since then it's like... he never stops talking about the money that she paid beforehand...
- Noach: Interesting, very interesting. (enters with a suitcase from the inner room).
- Pnina: What...?
- Noach: What 'what'?
- Pnina: The suitcase...
- Noach: That's right, it's a suitcase. (returns to the inner room).
- Pnina: (haltingly, just to fill the void and assuage her fears) When my father was at home all his suitcases used to peek out from every corner under the beds, like shoes. I knew that when the suitcases were around so was my father and when they weren't around my father wasn't either. You were the same way, the last year, when you used to travel to Tel Aviv every week.
- Noach: (from within) Yes.
- Pnina: My mother doesn't treat him all that well. At lunchtime she sent him out to get bread. Then she sent him out again, to get salt. She'd forgotten, she said. No big deal – she said to him – you wandered around so much in America, so wander around a bit over here too. Like she was paying him back for all the years that he wasn't at home. You're not listening...
- Noach: No?
- Pnina: He wouldn't talk to me, but he stared, as if he wanted to try and start making peace with me, but it was hard for him. It's a shame, isn't it?

So many years he went around wandering in America, traveling all the time, alone, and in the end... suddenly I just wanted to get back to Tel Aviv real quickly. I didn't want Jerusalem anymore. I couldn't believe myself.

(Noach enters with another suitcase or two, one of which bursts open so he closes it up again. Outside Aliza enters the yard, walking heavily).

Pnina: (wanting to ask about the suitcases but talking about something else instead. Directed at Aliza in the yard:) Look at her, all sick and walking around. She loves to walk around.

Noach: Really? She's just walking around, really loves it, huh?

Pnina: Yeah. Now she's sitting down, but...

Noach: She's not walking around and she doesn't really love it, you see? It's her son who keeps kicking her out of the apartment to wander around out here with a fever so he can fuck his secretaries in her bed.

Pnina: Oh the way you talk.

Noach: It's the truth. You're just lying to yourself, hiding your head in the sand. You chatter on about all sorts of things as if that's really what interests you.

Pnina: (chuckling) Yeah. (still trying to avoid the main thing on her mind) Her son, you know... (Finally, directed at the suitcases) Why are you...?

Noach: Why am I want...?

Pnina: These... the suitcases...

Noach: Finally. What are the suitcases for – you can't guess?

Pnina: For traveling, for...

Noach: There you go, you do understand. These suitcases are also for traveling, for leaving, for flying, for... the main thing is to get out, get away, not to be here anymore.

Pnina: I don't understand.

Noach: (bringing the incantations out of the bedroom) What's this, huh? I found it under my pillow and above the bed and in the drawer of my desk...

Pnina: Incantations.

- Noach: Really? Interesting. And I thought they were yellow scorpions, a scorpion under every rock. Who put them there, huh, what do you think?
- Pnina: You know.
- Noach: Who put them there?
- Pnina: Me.
- Noach: This is how you wanted to convince me, with incantations and black magic? To bring me back to you, so I should love you again? (reading the incantation) 'He should neither sleep nor find repose...' Sure, the truth is I couldn't get any sleep. I dreamt of her, I longed for her, I went nuts. All because of some incantation.
- Pnina: I'm sorry, I didn't know you would get so angry.
- Noach: What *did* you know?
- Pnina: I don't know. I didn't think it could cause any harm.
- Noach: Couldn't cause any harm? To force me to love you with the help of all sorts of angels and... the devil knows what else? And without my knowing of it. And to think you really thought you would succeed like that. I mean – you really thought this would help?
- Pnina: I don't know. No, I didn't really think it would work.
- Noach: But you did it anyway – that's even worse. That's just plain stupidity, it's like, it's... there are no words to describe it.
- Pnina: What else could I do?
- Noach: What a reason, what logic!
- Pnina: You don't love me anymore so everything is falling to pieces, slipping through my fingers. Now you love me even less.
- Noach: This isn't what you should've done, don't you get it? You shouldn't have done this!
- Pnina: What should I do? Tell me, I'll do it.
- Noach: The first thing is not to ask me what to do! Think for yourself! You're not stupid, you're just stuck in... I don't know what. It's all so senseless, so insane. It's driving me nuts, it's... (stopping, with restraint) Just live your life, go to work, enjoy.
- Pnina: Then you'll love me like before?

Noach: Again with that? On the contrary – your goal should be to learn to live without me. Without my love, just live and forget about me.

(Pnina chuckles).

What's so funny?

Pnina: If I forget you, you might love me once again and then I won't want you.

Noach: Great! You'll be free finally! What do you care what happens to me? You won't want me anyway.

Pnina: But I don't want it to be like that. I want to want you.

Noach: God, talking to you... You don't even hear yourself, like a hibernating handmaid. You're still a young woman, you're beautiful, you'll start a new life. You'll get to know men, you'll fall in love. Or you'll go back to Jerusalem. Get married over there, you'll find someone, not some right-wing extremist, but a man who keeps the laws, just like you. Do something, don't stay stuck in the middle of nowhere.

Pnina: (shocked, half-jokingly) Get married...? How...? I'm your wife...

Noach: You won't be my wife. Now already, me and Rita, you know what's going on between us, don't you? You know where I spend all my nights, don't you? You don't? We'll get divorced, I'll give you a bill.

Pnina: A bill...? What are you talking about...?

Noach: A bill of divorce, you don't know what that is? It's from the Bible. It's... even in Jerusalem they give out bills of divorce. You'll go your way and I'll go mine, that's it, enough, the end!

Pnina: I don't get it.

Noach: I can't believe you. You're just playing the fool. I'm leaving the house, I'm leaving you. I'll give you money, I'll come visit the children, but that's it, enough, I'm leaving, I'm leaving, leaving, leaving. Don't you get it?

(Pnina stares at him and makes no reply).

Enough already! You turn me into a butcher who's being forced to slit the same throat over and over again.

Pnina: I'm sorry.



- Noach: There's nothing for you to be sorry about. It's me, it's all me. I can't live any other way, I have to leave.
- Pnina: I wasn't okay, with the incantations and the black magic, and now you've got to leave.
- Noach: I don't have to leave, I want to leave. It's just the last straw. Today you're hiding incantations and tomorrow you'll be casting spells yourself. We live in two different worlds, that's all. Like one of us is from planet earth and the other is from the moon.
- Pnina: Which one of us is from the moon, what do you think?
- Noach: It's just a metaphor to try to explain things to you. Like fish and men, some breathe in the sea and some drown in the sea, what's good for me is bad for you and vice-versa. You know this, don't you?
- Pnina: I'm definitely the fish.
- Noach: Again with that? You followed me, you left your whole family behind, you fought with your father because of me. But you didn't really... Your body came along but your soul never did. I don't have the strength to help you anymore. I've got my own battles I have to fight, I'm almost drowning as it is. What, then, more incantations...? (holding on to the ones in his hand) Just the smell of the parchment drives me crazy. It's choking me. All the smells of the synagogue, the study halls, the smell of my father the sage, it's all in this parchment, I just have to get out, to run away, I don't even know where to, I just have to escape...
- Pnina: And at night, where are you going to sleep? Your bed is right here...
- Noach: I don't believe you. There are other beds in the world, did you ever think of that? I took out a room near her office. It's a joint office now. And stop worrying about me. Worry about yourself! Don't you see what's happening to you? Worry about yourself! (he raises the suitcases in one fell swoop and one of them pops open and spills all over the place).
- (Pnina starts gathering up the clothes that fell out).
- What are you doing?
- Pnina: I'm helping you, everything fell out.
- Noach: You're helping me?
- Pnina: Yes, just a second.

Noach: (separating her from the suitcase) You don't have to help me, you have to... just the opposite! I'm leaving you and you're... It's like... like I'm not doing anything at all, like I don't even exist. No, that's not it, I do exist. But not with you, with her, and how! Yes, I love her. It's not a sin, that's how God made us, not just to have kids. That's the difference between a man and an animal, that's man's free choice, yes!

(Pnina raises something from the floor without noticing what and places it in the suitcase as he stares at her).

Pnina: Sorry...

Noach: (gathering his things up into the suitcase) Nothing's gonna help you. You want me to stay, is that what you want? You want me to be living with you and missing her all the time... that would be even crueler, don't you think? (turning to go, stops) I love her, I don't know how or why. I love everything about her, all at once. These clothes and shoes, stupidity like that! And what a head for business! And what hasn't she been through, all those guys but she – how she laughs, makes light of everything! And how she suffers his blows! Everything is one big riddle and I've just got to figure it out. Like an endless sea, and I'm drowning in it. And when all is said and done, she tears my heart to pieces.

(Pnina sort of laughs).

What are you laughing at? What a laugh...

Pnina: That's what I have to do in order to make you...? Like with the dress... you want me to have... you want there to be other men... lovers...

Noach: Stop it already! You can barely get the word out of your mouth even – 'lovers' – it's just a metaphor, don't you get it...?

(Pnina stares at him, smiling).

What are you looking at, what are you smiling about?

(Pnina stops smiling. Noach takes his suitcases in order to leave and tries to take them all at once and gets stuck. Pnina laughs).

Stop that laughter already! (in pain, beating with his fists on his chest) I can't help it, there's nothing I can do about it, nothing at all! I love her! I love her! I love her!

Pnina: (reaches out to stop him from beating himself) Stop, you're going to hurt yourself...

(Noach stares at her for a second, then goes back to gather up his suitcases, stops, puts them down and turns to go)

The suitcases, you're leaving them behind, you're not...

Noach: No, I'm not.

Pnina: You'll be back... to take them with you, I mean, afterwards?

Noach: No, I won't.

Pnina: What do you mean...? All your clothing...

Noach: And if it's all my clothing, so? And what if I walk around naked?  
What's it your concern?

Pnina: Why...?

Noach: I don't know why. Just like that. Just like that. Just like that. (exits).

## Scene 3:

(This scene takes place about a week later. It is a warm evening, set in the yard, with the streetlamp lit. It should open in a not entirely realistic manner. All the characters in this scene should be on stage off to one side at the very beginning, each character in his/her spot, ready to enter, each one in turn. They should all stand off to the side, except for Pnina. When the scene opens she should already be sitting on the bench in the yard, wearing her evening dress, wrapped in a shawl that hides her neckline, wet from her feet up to her waist. She sits for a moment then gets up wearily, turns to the stairwell that leads to her apartment, stops and goes back over to the bench. Yona enters from the side, slowly, with his face turned towards her apartment).

Pnina: (seeing him, shocked) Daddy... you... hey there, how...? Sorry (she covers her belly with her hands, as if to hide the wetness).

(Yona stands facing her, not looking at her, without saying a word).

This is a surprise this... come, come on in, have a drink, have a little something to eat... did anything happen?

(Yona makes no reply).

Did you finally decide to look for a job as a cantor in Tel Aviv? I told Mommy, they're also looking for someone to slaughter the chickens for Yom Kippur...

(Yona makes no reply).

Come on in, everything's kosher at my place, glatt kosher. (She is suddenly reminded) Esther's wedding, I completely forgot... it was today at lunchtime. How was it? I wanted to call and... I'm sorry. You were worried about me that's why you came...? Mommy...? All by yourself too...?

(Yona makes no reply).

I'm so happy. You came just in time... I'm having a difficult time... it's really tough for me... something happened, me and... (she has no strength to stand and sits down on the bench) Sorry... I don't feel all that well, I... (changing the topic, chuckling) I used to love hearing you on the High Holidays. Even slaughtering the chickens for Yom Kippur didn't bother me that much, because it was you doing it... you want to sit down?

(Yona makes no reply).

(chuckling) Today I just remembered... the chickens on Yom Kippur – even after you slaughter them they keep running around without their heads, right? As though they're still alive. Once a chicken ran around like that and then came to a standstill. And all its blood... it became a

sort of pool around it, like it was some sort of rag. And the chicken stared at it. Previously they had been connected and now he was alone and his blood was all alone, separately, and... so I thought that's probably what it's like when we die, we become separated. Suddenly I can't think straight, I... (directed at her wet dress) I got wet before, down by the sea, I... how did you know exactly when to come for a visit? You've forgiven me...?

Yona: I didn't come for you.

Pnina: (half-questioning) Just like that, yeah, not for me...

Yona: You have a husband, he'll take care of you. You have kids. She doesn't have anything here. She'll sink down like a stone in a well.

Pnina: (Still not following what's going on, out of breath from the effort) Yes, her...? She...?

Yona: Let her go, just let go of her. Call her, get her out of there.

Pnina: Get her out...

Yona: Of your house. Where will she run to? After all, she came after you, you set the example for her. You don't understand what I'm getting at?

Pnina: What...? Yeah... not really, that is to say...

Yona: Esther, your little sister... she ran away from his house, after the wedding... just like that, a wife, the wife of the Rabbi, a judge in a religious court of law, and she ran away like a cat...? I'm talking to you, don't you follow?

Pnina: (in a monotone) Yes, now I understand. You also have to be understanding. She doesn't love him, she loves another man, she... it's no sin to be in love, no... that's how God created us, no? It's all the difference between a human and an animal, no? It's...

Yona: Enough, enough already. Where is she? I'll bring her out here. (Turns towards the apartment building).

Pnina: No, there's nothing for you there... she's not at my place, I don't know where she is...

Yona: You...

Pnina: It's the truth, I don't have the strength to lie.

(Yona turns to go).

Maybe you should go up to my apartment all the same, have a cold drink or something. (She suddenly smiles as she absent-mindedly removes her shawl from her shoulders and the neckline remains). It's really hot, isn't it?

Yona: (alarmed by her) What are you doing? And still laughing like that... (exits).

(Esther enters from her spot on the side. Pnina covers herself with her shawl and is about to get up, but remains seated).

Esther: I'm not going back there. If only he had some little kids... but him, his sons and daughters... they took us back to his house, his daughter even made the bed for us, you understand...? Our bed where we were supposed to... all of them calling out to him 'Daddy... Daddy...' Then all of a sudden I saw it... they were all even older than me, at least double, his children... and their fingers are all like dry twigs, just like his. I can't, I just can't. I'll stay here, I'll find work, I have a profession, I'm a really good seamstress. They need a lot of seamstresses right now in Tel Aviv, that's what I was told. Why aren't you saying anything?

Pnina: What...? Yeah, just like this, I'm happy for you...

Esther: I'm tired. I was wandering around the streets, I didn't just want to fall on you like a ton of bricks. I have no other place, though. Until I find some sort of arrangement. I don't need anything, just to get some sleep, come on, let's go inside, okay?

Pnina: Fine. (gets up, starts to walk her towards the building, then stops).

Esther: What happened?

Pnina: What...?

Esther: You stood up.

Pnina: (putting her best foot forward) Never mind. I don't really know, I... yeah, I'll just walk around a little bit, get a little fresh air. (handing over the key) Here, go inside, there's food in the refrigerator. There's enough for a few days.

Esther: I don't feel like eating, I just want to get some sleep, sleep for a hundred years, even, just to sleep, to sleep. (turns to go, stops) I'm sorry, in the end I'm landing up at your place all of a sudden.

Pnina: What...? Oh, no, it's fine. The children should be back soon. I don't like it when they come back to an empty house.

Esther: You're not...?

Pnina: What...? Yeah, in a little bit, I just...

Esther: Fine, I'll go in. (turns to go)

(Pnina makes a certain motion, as if to try and stop her).

What?

Pnina: Nothing, just... everything is in the fridge, there's nothing missing.  
Have a good night.

Esther: Good night (exits).

(Pnina sits down on the bench, now Misha and Rita enter from one yard into the other, with Rita headed towards their building, while Misha stands facing her as if he just came out to meet her from the stairwell. Noach suddenly comes in, following Rita).

Rita: (stopping, turning towards Noach) I already told you where I'm headed, no?

Noach: Yes.

Rita: So why are you following me?

(Noach makes no reply).

You don't like what I'm doing.

Noach: No, that's too much. There's a limit to everything, no?

Rita: You have a choice, I told you. I'm not forcing you to do anything.

Noach: I don't care.

Rita: And what if you did? It won't kill me.

Noach: You don't really love me.

Rita: Go back to the office. I'll be there in a little bit.

(Noach turns to go, but stays for a little bit in the yard, off to the side).

(to Misha) I brought you some food. Ribs, beef, look what I got.  
You'll have food for a few days, come on.

(Misha makes no reply, doesn't move).

Enough Misha, come let's go in.

- Misha: Why?
- Rita: To put the food away.
- Misha: Leave it right here.
- Rita: Enough.
- Misha: Did you also bring the prostheses?
- Rita: They're waiting for you at the center. Just head over there, you'll be able to walk.
- Misha: Just like that?
- Rita: You'll even be able to run.
- Misha: Where will I go, where would I run to? After you, maybe, to your office. There's a room there with a double bed, I heard, a sort of office space with a double bed.
- Noach: (exploding, approaching, directed at Rita) He won't agree to it, don't you get it? If he has prostheses you'll leave him, he knows it.
- Rita: You're still here?
- (Noach turns to go, stays on the side).
- Misha: Mr. lawyer man has something to say. He just doesn't know one thing (laughs a sort of bitter laugh) You don't just want to give me prostheses and food, you don't just want to give...
- Rita: Stop with all that laughter!
- Misha: Sure, don't let him hear, your new man, new pair of shoes. Israel, the new land, old shoes don't fit over here, especially not shoes like mine with no legs. What's up? Is he too naïve? Let him know. You also come around to get something from me, it's not enough what you get from him, huh?
- (Rita makes no reply).
- Come on, where's your comeback?
- Rita: Not me.
- Misha: (bending his head) Yes, even that you're coming to give me as a gift, a pity offering. Like the food, like the prostheses. So I can sleep well, just like you. With me or with him, it doesn't matter, you sleep well all the same, in perfect peace.



Rita: Let's go inside, I'm begging you.

Misha: I don't want to sleep well in some perfect peace.

Rita: Then what do you want, to hate the whole world all the time without a single moment of peace?

Misha: Since when are you the whole world? Since when are you...! Yeah, fine, I want to hate you. Are you going to take everything from me? Even my right to hate you? What will I have left? (spilling all the food) There!

Rita: (picking up the pot) I'll bring you some fresh food tomorrow. (turns to go).

(Noach takes a step towards her).

Leave me alone! (Exits).

(Noach turns towards Misha, who remains where he is, steady, still not certain what to say or do).

Pnina: (without getting up from the bench) Hey there.

Noach: You...

Pnina: Good evening.

Noach: Good evening, a very good evening.

Pnina: `What...?

Noach: Excuse me...?

Pnina: How are you?

Noach: How am I...

Pnina: Yeah, how are you?

Noach: Fine, thanks, and how are you?

Pnina: Fine, too.

Noach: Great, I'm glad. (Again turns towards Misha and stops).

Pnina: (after a moment) I took a walk. I can't stay at home, it's so hot.

Noach: So it is.

Pnina: With my dress... you remember? The open one, showing the entire back, and the neckline. It's so hot...

(Noach stares at her).

What...?

Noach: You with your shawl.

Pnina: Excuse me...? Oh yes, I put it on, I forgot.

Noach: Of course.

(Pnina laughs a soft, silent laugh).

What's so funny?

Pnina: Like fish.

Noach: What do you mean fish?

Pnina: Me, you must think that I'm some sort of fish. I speak but it's like I'm underwater, you can see my mouth moving but you can't hear anything.

Noach: Really?

(Pnina gets up halfway from the bench, and reaches a hand out to his shirt).

(repulsed) What are you doing?

Pnina: The button...

Noach: Let go!

Pnina: Sorry, I forgot. Once I gave birth to your children, but now you're this close to me and I can't even fix your button. I can't do anything at all.

Noach: Stop it, that's enough already. What world are you living in? What are you talking about altogether? You don't see what's going on here?

Pnina: Before I told my father about the chickens, after they're slaughtered, you remember? We both saw it, how the chicken looked at his own blood on the ground...

Noach: I don't have the head right now for your father or for some chicken or any slaughter. Nothing is gonna get in my way! (unloading on Misha who has remained off to the side) And not for any handicapped people of any kind!

(Misha turns to go, walking on his hands, though not in the direction of his house).

And just where do you think you're going, huh? Where...?

Misha: I'm headed where I'm headed, that's where I'm going. (exits).

Noach: Don't you dare try to follow her!

Pnina: He's probably going down to the sea.

Noach: The sea...?

Pnina: I've seen him there a few times.

Noach: You...?

Pnina: Yeah. (suddenly deciding to tell him, with a sort of laugh) Even now... (towards her dress) Can't you see? I'm all wet, the whole dress right up to my belly button. I went into the sea before...

Noach: You, by yourself? What for...?

Pnina: You're never there. Even on Friday afternoons...

Noach: I see.

Pnina: You said you just had to get down there, every day, even just to see it from afar. Isn't that what you do?

Noach: (As though absent-mindedly) What...?

Pnina: The sea, don't you go down to see it from afar...?

Noach: No, not me. I completely forgot that such a thing exists. 'Down there' huh? Back then, when we were still living in Jerusalem, then it was 'right here' close by. You could touch it, you could take it with you, it was all yours, the wide-winged sea. In the end you're gonna have to be the one to show it to me, to teach me what it really is. Is this how things have to be? Anything I get too close to just turns smaller, turns bad, turns ugly. That's how it is with everything, the sea, freedom... How come? What's good for one person has to be bad for another – why? (silence) Let's go back, go home, to Jerusalem...! Is that the answer to it all? No, not me. Somebody's just testing me, that's all, on purpose. To see how much I really love, how much I'm willing to pay for her. And for my freedom. To pay and even to sacrifice, yeah. God tests people who believe in Him and He also tests the ones who don't believe. The main thing is to stand the test. Now I'm swimming in the real sea, the sea of life. A truly endless sea, with endless dirt and filth,

and endless battles. I'll earn my way, and I'll give back to all of you, pay you and the kids. I'll work like a dog, day and night.

Pnina: No, you don't need that much. Even now what you make is enough.

Noach: Tell me, are you even going to take this away from me with all your piousness? What will I have left? I'm suffocating with you, choking...

Pnina: I don't understand. How...? On the contrary I don't...

Noach: I don't get it either, I don't, nothing at all. (exits).

(Jackie enters, wearing his red suit. The Man enters while he is speaking).

Jackie: (to Pnina) They fired me at the hotel. I talk to the guests too much, they say, I ruin the name of the hotel, also make the guests feel depressed. Me depressed? How? I'm just the opposite, I tell them all what a crazy woman she was, taking out a suite on the penthouse floor and jumping out the window, throwing out money for nothing. They fired me and they also want their suit back, you follow? Or they want me to pay for it and they'll deduct it from what they owe me, you follow?

Pnina: Yes...

Jackie: (cutting the suit that he's wearing with a knife) She wasn't crazy, that woman, not her. She didn't just rent out some suite before she jumped, it wasn't for nothing. She wanted to show them how she was hooting at them. That all their money should just go to hell, let it go! They should all go to hell, the whole world, life itself, everything! She was the only one who counted, her honor. They treated her badly enough, they fucked her around enough, enough! (To Pnina) You follow?

(Pnina gets up while he is speaking, retreats a little bit before him, as though she is about to fall down).

The Man: (catching her in his arms) Are you feeling alright? You don't look well, you...

Pnina: No, it's nothing, everything's fine, just that... I haven't eaten...

The Man: You're the woman from Jerusalem, aren't you? I'll take you back to your place.

Pnina: No, not back to my place...

The Man: You have to rest, to lie down. (Looks her over quickly) If you don't mind, I could take you back to my place, to my mother's, that is. She's not at home... (exits with her).

Jackie: (continues tearing his suit) Money is not a problem. Something else is the problem. Why did she jump together with her daughter, that's the problem. She at least had her honor to worry about, but maybe her girl had a different sort of honor all her own. Why take the daughter with her? It could only mean one thing, just one thing... Her compassion, she didn't want to leave the girl all alone like that. It's tough being all alone, very tough. My whole family is in Tiberias, living in a shanty town, and here I am trying to make it as a busboy. Alone all the time, all alone, and now they're firing me, and they even want their suit back. What will I have left? And all alone like that. (keeps cutting the suit).

## Scene 4:

(The same night, much later. By the water's edge, like in the first scene. The lights are lit along the promenade. There can also be a searchlight sweeping the water in regular sweeping motions. Misha is by the water, singing his song to the sea. Pnina enters from the promenade, goes down the steps and arrives at the edge of the water, standing there).

- Misha: (finishing his song, seeing her) You... what are you doing here?
- Pnina: Excuse me...?
- Misha: It's nighttime...
- Pnina: (half-questioning, not really following his meaning) Yes...?
- Misha: What, is it daytime?
- Pnina: Yes... no, no...
- Misha: There's no such thing, huh, neither day nor night?
- Pnina: (chuckling) "And the day is approaching, the day is approaching that is neither day nor night..."
- Misha: What...?
- Pnina: I heard that song that you just sang once before. It was a Friday afternoon. She was out in the water and you were singing to her. Her... you know whom I mean...
- Misha: And if so...?
- Pnina: Never mind, forget it... who were you singing to now?
- Misha: Who was I singing to now...?
- Pnina: It's just the empty sea, there's no one here, nothing, it's even dark...
- Misha: And so what if it's empty and it's dark? This is the end, there is no other side, is that what you think? There's no light? The sea, this darkness is just the path, the bridge. There's another side, another place, with light, it's no big deal to get there. And there's even a different dimension of time. Does time just get lost, you think?
- Pnina: What...? Yes, yes... (slowly enters the water, breathing silently, deeply).
- Misha: No, not even time just gets lost. Back then she didn't want to get me prostheses. I was enough for her just as I am. A man is not just legs,

not just a body, that's what she used to say back then. I was her pride. I lost my legs in a battle. Not in business, not playing tennis. And what legs! I could run three miles like it was nothing. And just running you think? With the tips of my toes I used to be able to play the mandolin, could you believe it? So I should put pieces of dry wood in their place...? (staring at her) Hey, what are you doing? What's the matter with you? You're...

Pnina: (breathing) Me...?

Misha: You, who else – what, me? The way you're breathing like that... What's the matter with you? Did you run down here or something?

Pnina: Oh, it's nothing, just breathing... just came to breathe the air... (Continuing to wade out slowly into the sea).

Misha: (not really paying attention to what she is doing) I like to look at people when they're in the water. A man out in the water looks like he has no legs. And even further out in the sea – it looks like he doesn't have a body altogether. But that's not it. He has it all, it's just hidden under the water. Me too, you understand. I close my eyes and I see them from inside, my legs, my real legs, alive. You follow...?

(Pnina makes no reply, wades deeper and deeper into the sea. The searchlight – if there is one – tries to follow her).

Hey, what are you doing? Where are you going? Wait, stand still! (crawling after her into the water) It's deep over there, if you don't know how to swim, you'll drown! Wait, I'll give you a hand! (The water reaches his neck) I can't go on. Me, I don't have legs, I just don't have em. Come back by yourself, come back!

(Pnina keeps heading out into the water. The light starts to look like morning, but different. The man with the dog comes down to the water. The young man starts jumping from the promenade down to the sand, gets up and does it again. Noach and Esther and Rita, maybe even more people, come down to the banister by the promenade).

(to all of them) She's going out into the sea, the idiot, she believes everything you tell her! I told her: 'this is just the way, there's a second side, right around the bend, there'll be light'. And she believes me. I told her: 'the body doesn't matter, legs don't matter,' and she believed me. She's looking for air, what an idiot! (to the sea) Come back, you hear me? Come back!

(Pnina stops, turns around. The searchlight – if there is one – stops on her face, blinding her eyes).

