

# **Sonia And Bubek**

## **by Oded Liphshitz**

Translated by Varda Fish

Adult man and a woman are in bed in pyjamas. In the room there is a small table with wilted flowers. A door. The woman looks at the door while the old man next to her looks at her quietly. At first he is in the dark, Then he gets closer to her into the light.

Man [whispering]: Lilian, Lilian. [pause] I am here, Lilian.

Woman [sitting up, ignoring him]: Here he comes. [laughs]

Man: Lilian

Woman: He is here. [Lights comes up to illuminate the stairwell]

Man [impatiently]: Who is here? [steps are heard climbing the stairs]

Woman: Sonia

Bubek [only his voice is heard, standing out, shouting at the neighbors' door and knocks at the door]: Sonia! [after a moment] Sonia!

Woman [laughs]: She doesn't answer him!

Man [grumpily]: No. Never.

Woman: Quiet . . . [silence. She comes closer to the door]

Man: I guess he left. . .

Woman: He is waiting by the door!

Man: Did you hear something?

Woman: Yes! [chuckles, then whispering] Yes! Breathing [laughs]

Man: Breathing? I don't hear a thing [waits. She breathes heavily] . . . Just a minute . . . nothing. There is nobody there, Lilian.

Woman [gets up from bed]: Here again, sounds like he is digging into his pants, digging in his head. I hear. Digging.

Man: What are you chattering about?

Woman: Listen yourself.

[They slowly advance to the door, she breathes heavily]

Woman: Did you hear?

Man [impatiently]: I didn't hear a thing!

Woman [indifferently]: What a pity . .

Man: What is he waiting for? Come back to bed. This was enough for today. [turns toward the bed]

Woman: Stop mingling in my affairs. You go back to bed [turns her back]

Man [comes back to her]: Sorry to say, but I am getting fed up with this game.

Woman [contemptibly]: This isn't a game!

Man: Please, stop it. Come on . . .

Woman: *You* are a game. That's what you are.

Man [just nods with his hand and sighs]

Woman [comes closer to the door, to herself, while the man is grooming himself in the mirror] : He is waiting. He can wait like this for hours! I bet he is standing there with flowers or something. Nicely groomed [chuckles] shaved [chuckles] all buttoned up [chuckles] with a tie [chuckles]. Ridiculous. So ridiculous!

Man: This isn't ridiculous.

Woman: But it does make you laugh.

Man: Who says so?

Woman: I did, because I know. I know you. You weren't born yesterday.

Man: I can laugh whenever I want to. [fixes the collar of his pyjama]. Why would it make me laugh?

Bubek [his voice comes from outside]: Sonia! [Lilian startles, the old man seems as if he doesn't hear]

Abrupt transition to another scene

Inside Sonia's home

Sonia [wearing an apron, stands and talks to her son who sits on the kitchen counter. Speaks softly] Enough with that tantrum.

Boy [in anger]: I don't want to stop.

Sonia: Come down and do something nice. Come and help me.

Boy [angrily]: I don't want to do something nice. I don't.

Sonia [still softly]: It's your birthday today. You don't want to act out on your birthday.

Boy: Dad is waiting outside. Why is he waiting there so long? [losing his patience]

Sonia: We are going to celebrate, my boy.

Boy: Me, you and him?

Sonia: Me and you. This will be the best birthday you had.

Abrupt transition to another scene

Lilian changes her position by the door,  
sitting and looking at it.

Woman: He can wait there for hours. He can wait there until nine o'clock.

Man: Nonsense.

Woman: Who asked you to interfere? [to herself] He can wait there for ever.

Man [standing by her. Pause. Defying her] He is not going to stand there for too long.  
You know that.

Woman [looks at him as if he broke into her world]: You are so wrong.

Man [looks at his watch]: We'll wait and see [goes away from her.]

Woman: We'll wait until nine o'clock. He will stomp with his feet. He will knock on the door six or seven times. He will shout. He will clear his throat. And finally he will leave the flower on the threshold. [self content]

Man: That's too much. Don't you think? Knock four times [pauses, looks at her, waiting for her response ] Shouts twice. . . and maybe she will let him in, and they will all sit by the table for a family dinner.

Woman: Ha!

Man [trying to get closer to her]: And she will take the flowers from him and put them in a vase. And they will all go to sleep [arranges the bed]

Woman: You really make me laugh. It will never happen. Too late for this. You know.

Man: Too late? But he brings her flowers all the time. And all this for nothing?

Woman: He brings the flowers only on Tuesdays.

Man: It's always Tuesday for you.

Woman [busy arranging her wilted flowers]: On Tuesday he brings flowers. Violets. A bouquet of violets. He hides them behind his back, embarrassed, until she will appear at the door. And since she doesn't appear at the door, he puts them side by side along the door. And then, the next day, she collects them and throws them away because she will never put them in a vase.

Man [tries to get closer to her, to cooperate with her]: If that's what you want. [in compliance] Yes, on Tuesdays he brings the flowers, and she throws them to the garbage. Family life.

Woman: Because Tuesday is a special day. . .

Man [grumpily]: Tuesday is a special day!

Woman: And on Tuesdays he stays late.

Man: Yes, late, and now . . . [about to take her to sleep]

Woman: Because he is in the mood for love.

Woman is playing Sonia. She wears something from Sonia's costume, like a scarf or something else. She becomes energetic and is trying to pull him into the game

Woman: Are you in the mood for love, dear?

Man: Lilian, maybe we will give it up today?

Woman: Are you in the mood for love? [She tries to dress him up for the game with a hat or something else]

Man: You know it can't go on like this [as she continues to dress him up] Stop with this.

Woman: Are you . . .

Man [adjusts the costume slowly, speaks as if he is reading from a text]: I am in the mood for love, my dear, you know this. Maybe because I didn't find love yet.

Woman: Maybe you don't look for it the way you should.

Man: I am looking, my dear, again and again. You can't blame me for this. I insist on doing this.

Woman: You are helpless, my dear, I know you well, but you know that I don't blame you.

Man: You torment me, my dear. You don't see the effort I make.

Woman: Maybe you don't look in the right places.

Man: I am looking here, at home. Where else can I look?

Woman: maybe in the stairwell?

Man: That is impossible. If it were in the stairwell, it would have been taken already. You women, you always know better where things are. But don't blame me, dear. You should appreciate what I do. Believe me, I looked everywhere possible.

Woman: You should be less helpless, and less apologetic. Maybe it is in the house somewhere, and you miss her all the time?

Man: Why should I miss her? It is such a concrete thing.

Woman: Sometimes you need to check what is just under your nose.

Man: My dear, I know what is there since I was a child. That is not what I look for.

Woman: Let's start from the beginning. Did you check in the living room?

Man: I know every thing in the living room. If it hid there. . . No, I don't remember that. . .

Woman: Come, let's look.

Man: You are so considerate.

They leave, as she pulls him behind her

Bubek [from outside the door]: Sonia! [knocks on the door]

Abrupt transition

Sonia: You don't stop grumbling. Look at your hands, they are so dirty. Go, wash them, please.

Boy: Mom, he knocks on the door.

Sonia: I told you to wash your hands, so you can help me. Stop shouting and bring me the butter.

Boy: What is he going to do?

Sonia: We [emphatically] are going to make a cake [pats his head]. Doesn't it sound lovely?

Boy [convinced]: What kind of cake?

Sonia [thinking]: Cranberry cake.

Boy: I love it!

Sonia: I know, dear. Today is a very special day. Now, go and wash your hands.

Abrupt transition.

Man and Woman return to the room,  
Man follows her, exhausted. She looks  
amused. They wear a few more things  
which they collected on the way which  
belong to their role game

Woman: You wouldn't find it here, dear. Nowhere.

Man: Are you sure we looked everywhere? [His voice continues to sound fake]

Woman: We looked everywhere in this house.



Man: So what do you recommend, my dear?

Woman: Maybe it is somewhere else?

Man: Somewhere else, dear? . . .

Woman: Yes, dear.

Man: Do you hide it from me?

Woman: Of course not.

Man: I am sure I left it somewhere here.

Woman: Maybe you forgot?

Man: Why do I always have this strange feeling that it is always behind your back?

Woman: Behind my back. . . What a strange idea. Why would I want to hide it from you?

Man [comes closer to her]: Let me peek.

Woman [trying to prevent him]: Go ahead, peek.

Man: Move away.

Woman: I am not in your way.

Man: Let me peek. You hide it from me. [struggles with her as he tries to look behind her, then in her pockets] What do you have there? What do you have there? Here it is, here [kisses her belly] my love. Yes, [now kisses her breast], here, and also [kisses her mouth] here, everywhere. Give it back to me right away.

Woman: It is not yours, it is mine [patting her belly]

Man: Yours? You are a thief.

They start struggling with each other.  
Woman looks amused, Old Man less

Not yours, mine. . . not yours.

As they struggle, she stuffs the scarf into  
her blouse or dress so she looks  
pregnant

Man [notices her belly]: Give it back to me. What's that? What are you doing?

Bubek [knocking hard]: Sonia, open the door. The game is over.

Abrupt transition.

Sonia: Look, here is the dough. One cup of sugar. I need your help.

Boy [upset]: Mom!

Sonia: Come on! [Boy hesitates, starts pouring in the sugar, then stops] Don't stop!

[Boy is frightened. The mother guides him with her hand and they both pour the sugar in.  
Softly to Boy] Don't stop. Yes, just like this. And now the yeast.

Boy [hesitates]: Like this?

Sonia: Yes, beautifully. Now we are mixing everything and let it rise and rise and rise.

Abrupt transition

Back to the old couple. They stand formally by the door. Woman is playful, Man is solemn.

Man: Honorable Judge – Mr. Sonia, we are here to decide on a very grave matter.

Woman [excited]: Very grave and most important.

Man: Your Honor, you understand, we are indeed husband and wife, and there were times when we used to share almost everything. I don't complain about this. This is reasonable. But, there are still things, Your Honor, which belong to me and I have to insist on them. . .

Woman [enjoying the game]: This man, Your Honor, complains about everything.

Man: Keep quiet!

Woman: He complains about his share in bed.

Man: Keep quiet! And lately . .

Woman: A long time ago, Your Honor. . .

Man: We had a terrible fight about something which she took away from me. . . .

Woman [ironically]: Some thing!

Man: Which was taken . . .

Woman: Which you left behind

Man: with such impertinence!

Woman: Willingly!

Man: A long time ago, eight years, I would say.

Woman [angry]: More than nine years, to be exact!

Man: That much?

Woman: That much.

Man: And this is the matter we can't agree on. And we ask you to do justice with both of us, and give me back what I left behind which naturally belongs to me.

Woman: Belongs to him ! How dare you!

Man: Let me finish what I have to say, my dear. Yes, Your Honor, I gave her. . . [points to his heart], you understand, and now she took it and changed it without my knowledge and my approval. She made something very big out of it, while I was away. . . And now it grew to this size [marks the height of the Boy].

Woman [laughs, she obviously likes the game he plays]: Listen, things change when you don't pay attention! Or when you don't come back for a long time to find out what is going on!

Man [to her]: Excuse me. Now, after she took it, and raised it, etc., it turned to, how would I say it, something all its own, something real, with its own mind. Something hard to deny.

Woman: Impossible.

Man: A kind of presence which overpowers everything else, which makes you doubt your own existence.

Woman: Everything is in doubt.

Man: A kind of presence which makes you wonder. . . which runs around you and doesn't stop asking you questions.

Woman: Indeed.

Man: With cute little fingers.

Woman: Oh, so cute.

Man: Soft pink cheeks and a blue sweater with ruffled . . .

Woman: Yes. . .

Man: And a woolen hat. . [looks at her and sees she is absorbed in her fantasy] A kind of existence which never existed, only in games and perverted thoughts. Try to understand me, Honorable Judge. You would have understood me, if you weren't the outcome of this same fantasy, your Honor.

Woman [apologetic]: He is jealous, Sir, forgive him. He simply can't stand to see me so happy in my own world which he can't reach.

Man: Which I can't enter. . .

Woman: Yes. He can't enter. Look how mad he is. No, you are not allowed to enter. This is a place only for two. You have to accept that.

Man now stops playing the game.  
Facing her

Woman: He wouldn't bother us. Nobody can bother us in our quiet life.

Man: But I will bother you.

Woman: We will be able to live in our small world. . .

Man: Do you hear me?

Woman: In need of nothing else. Nobody will interfere. And finally in peace

Man: I will. I already decided, and I wouldn't give up. I wouldn't allow you to continue with these games. I am asking you with all due respect . . .

Woman [under him]: And finally, in peace. . .

Man: Stop with this nonsense! [Woman is frightened]

Bubek: Sonia, open the door!

Light goes up on Sonia's apartment, while it stays on on the couple. It is important to show at this point the parallel between Bubek's wish to enter Sonia's apartment and Man's wish to enter into Woman's world. She is absorbed in the story as much as Sonia is absorbed in her son and doesn't hear the knocking on the door. The more Sonia [mother] is indifferent to the knocking, the more aware of them is the Boy. Lilian's fantasy is about to fall apart.

Man: Right away!

Sonia [happy, points at the cake]: Look at the texture. You can see all kinds of shapes there.

Boy [angry]: Mom! I am fed up!

Man: Lilian ! [Woman pushes aside Man in front of her]

Sonia: Here is a dolphin swimming in a pool.

Boy: Mom! Stop it!

Man: Lilian! [Man is trying to distract Woman, but she pushes him aside]

Sonia: Here is a clown with a chef's hat.

Boy: He is shouting. Stop it, [scared] mom . . .

Sonia: Let him shout. Nothing will upset us today. Isn't it?

[calmly to her son] Be patient, don't be afraid. Soon it will be ready. [Shows him how to put the cake in the oven] And now to the hot oven. Be careful not to burn yourself, dear, when you put the cake in. And be careful when you take it out.

A video projection of the Boy putting cake in the oven, Mother is very happy, looks bewitched.

Man: Lilian, stop it now. I will have to use force if you don't.

Woman [waking from her dream, frightened, standing by the judge, absorbed in playing her role]: Your Honor, listen to what he says. This guy disappeared years ago.

Man: I wouldn't cooperate with this, do you understand? It doesn't amuse me.

Woman: And he forgot that it isn't my duty to keep what he left behind. And now he is back to demand his treasure. [ironically]

Man: Nonsense!

Woman: This little treasure. What could I have done? I had to overcome . . .

Man: What are you talking about!

Woman: You understand, I had no choice. . .

Man: I don't want to hear that.

Woman: Yes, all alone. I hope you understand

Man: Stop it!

Woman: And now he pops up out of nowhere, and wants me to give up on all that. I wouldn't . . .

Man: Give up what?

Woman: No. Hallucinations. Get these hallucinations out of the way and leave me alone. Leave us alone.

Man: Hallucinations? What do you mean? With whom are you talking? And you want us to leave you alone with. . . [looks around]

Woman: And let us leave in peace. Finally.

Man: I am taking you to the hospital.

Woman: No. You wouldn't force me to do anything. Get out of here!

Man: Tomorrow morning. You are out of your mind. You old hag.

Woman: [starts to show confusion] No! Everything is fine with me. Everything. My boy. Yes.

Man: Get him out of your head.



Woman: No. Nobody will get into my head now. My head. Get out.

Man: Excuse me?

Woman: Out

Man: You take him out of your head! And all the rest of it. You silly old hag.

Woman: Honorable Judge, I ask you to leave me alone. I want him to get out.

Man: Over my dead body!

Woman: Your dead body! [laughs] Your dead body

Man: My dead body.

Woman walks around the room as if she is floating. Man tries to stand in her way, but she ignores him.

Woman: We have to decorate the cake, my dear.

Man: Nonsense!

Woman: My dear little one.

Man: You are dreaming

Woman: Those pink little cheeks. . .

Man: Get out of it!

Bubek [knocks loudly]

Lilian [absorbed in her world, starts singing Sonia's song to the imaginary child, until Sonia's voice comes out of her throat]: Mix the cream. Mix it slowly. . .

Abrupt transition

Boy mixes the cream

Sonia [singing]: Mix the frosting, mix it slowly.

Be patient, don't forget the cherries

And if you peek inside

You'll be surprised to discover

A maze made out of dough,

Rubber snakes, chocolate made dwarfs,

And star-like candies.

Mix the frosting, mix it slowly

Be patient, don't forget the cherries.

Boy: All mine?

Sonia: Yes, all yours.

Abrupt transition.

Man knocks on the table. On the other side Sonia and the Boy light the candles on the cake.

Man: Wake up! [in despair]

Woman plays with the dead flowers, all absorbed in her hallucinations, dancing to the music which comes from a music box. She ignores her husband completely.

Man: Lilian, look at me and stop it now. Lilian, look at me.

Woman: Leave me alone. Let's light the candles one by one.

Man: You can't ignore me for ever. You will finally have to hear me. When you come back to bed, I'll be by your side.

Woman lights the candles

You will see me wherever you look.

Woman: Go away! You don't exist! [or You are not here]

Man [laughing]: You are wrong [throws away the dead flowers. To the flowers] That doesn't exist.

Woman: Go away!

Man: How long are you going to continue with this? What's the purpose? All these stupid games. At the end you will have to look at me. It is stronger than you think. Here I am, by you. Feel me – just as I was when I left.

Woman: No. There is no trace. You are gone. Leave me alone.

Man: Feel me, Lilian, Look!

[pause]

Woman: Stop it! Go away!

Man: Finally you are ready to throw me away. Outdated memory. Ready to forget. How couldn't I have guessed.

Woman: I didn't forgot.

Man: So look at me. Why don't you look at me.

Woman: I can't.

Man: Look at me. Tell me, how do I look?

Woman [turns her head slowly at him. She notices him and starts to cry] You. . . You. .  
[pats his face] Leave me alone. Leave me alone. Stop chasing me. [They begin a  
struggle in slow motion. Part of it can look like a dance of lovers, part like a rough fight.  
It has to look like an inner struggle of Woman. Finally Woman succeeds in pushing him  
away. Slowly Man disappears in the darkness. Light also fades out on Sonia and the Boy.  
Only candle light is left.]

Woman walks around in the room, dazed and exhausted from the struggle, stops, and tries  
to listen.

Sonia: Sh. . . Do you hear?

Boy: Did he leave?

Sonia: He left. Left. It's only the two of us. . . as we wanted.

Boy [stealthily comes close to the door, trying to check if the man left. He is sad,  
motionless]: Where did he go?

Sonia: I don't know. Far away from here. Here is our cake. Look, it radiates ! [They look  
at the cake and pause]

Boy: Yes, but Mom.

Sonia: Sh....

Boy [softly]: Mom. . .

Lilian: Sh.....Look....

Sonia [dramatically]: Yes, of course, I know.

Boy comes close to the candles and blows them out one by one.

Sonia: Make a wish, dear.

Boy nods and continues to blow them out.

Sonia: Have good dreams.

Lilian [in fear of the growing darkness]: No. . . please. . .

Sonia calms her Boy, as if she prepares him for sleep. Sings a lullaby.

Lilian: No, please stay with me. [feeling for something in the dark] Stay [walks in different directions, in the direction of the Old Man, the Boy's. She continues to search for one than the other with increasing urgency until she notices the bed and stops] So dark.

Sonia's soft lullaby affects [charms] her. She notices she is all alone, quiet all around. She comes to the bed, makes it slowly and lies down the way she did at the beginning of the play. The candles blow out to the very end. Complete darkness.

Lilian: So quiet. . . Are you here? Are you here? Lie by me. I can hear you. I still hear you. Hug me. Are you here?

Sonia's soothing voice from the other side is heard till it fades away.