

Untitled #194418

Written by

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Characters



Nelly - An artist at different ages, from 18 to mid-60s.

Elderly Nelly - In her 90s.

Peter - Nelly's childhood friend and great love - ages 25, 35, 65.

Usher / Alga / Officer

- **Usher** - Age 40
- **Helga** - Curator and Nelly's friend - ages 20+, 40
- **Officer** - Age 40

Alejandro / Edward

- **Alejandro** - Musician and Nelly's friend - ages 20 to 30
- **Edward** - Scientist and researcher, Nelly's partner - ages 45 to 55

Gary / Interviewer / Nazi Officer

- **Gary** - Owner of Nelly's studio. Age 50
- **Interviewer** - Interviews Nelly. Age 50
- **Nazi Officer** - Age 50

Girl with cloth – Silent character, only Nelly can see her - Age 18

Scene 1

The theater usher brings young Nelly (age 18) onto the stage. They walk together and stop at center stage.

A sound effect *(unrelated to the scene) is overheard*

Black.

A blinding circular light stops on elderly Nelly (mid-90s) sitting in the audience.

V.O (Male): Please welcome this year's Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, one of the greatest artists of our time - Nelly.

Elderly Nelly comes up to the stage.

Elderly Nelly: Good evening, dear audience, esteemed colleagues, friends, family, and those who came here by accident thinking this was a night for play. I'm truly moved to be here. It's a great privilege to be present on this stage... and now. There were moments when I didn't believe I would stand here today; that I would stand at all. But here we are.

Pause.

(Nelly Puts on glasses, looks at the papers and starts laughing awkwardly) Ohhh my... how do I get out of this one... Charcoal, canvas, brushes... This is NOT what I wrote last night!...one has to be... truly special to come with the wrong papers to such a ceremony. I guess it comes with age... after all, 96 doesn't walk alone.... yes...yes...? (to the usher) Are you going to keep standing there without helping me...? (to the audience) I guess I'm alone in this story...

A sound effect *(unrelated to scene) is overheard*

Nelly opens her mouth in a silent scream.

Elderly Nelly: If a tree falls in a forest and there's no one around to hear it, does it still make a sound? *(pause)* Did it even fall, if no one was there to witness?... Our duty is to immortalize and keep alive the memory of those fallen "trees" destroyed by mankind; to restore their screams, as we have ceased to listen. It takes a lot of noise to revive silenced voices, voices whose lives were cut short, uprooted from their existence. To forget them is to kill them again.

Indeed, I have received quite a few criticisms about my works; that they make too much noise; that they're too...political... "disturbing the peaceful serenity of the crowds." There couldn't be more welcome news!

I want to thank the committee members who chose me for this award. I accept this with great responsibility and a true commitment to continue creating as long as I have a pulse!

A sound effect *(unrelated to scene) is overheard*

They're signaling that time is up... so... here's to art, feminism, and hope that I've inspired an artist to be stubborn and unapologetic. Thank you... I'll go look for my papers.

The usher leads elderly Nelly to sit and returns to her place.

A sound effect *(unrelated to the scene) – the sound fades into a birthday whistle sound.*

Young Nelly (age 18) does a handstand.

Scene 2

Lighting flashback. Terezín - 1941. Nelly (age 18) and Peter (mid-20s).

Peter: *(holding something symbolizing a cake with a candle)* "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Nelly..."

Nelly: *(still upside down and unable to see Peter)* Let me guess... cheesecake.

Peter: This time it came with a card. Just don't let it go to your head. *(Nelly blows the imaginary "candle")*

Nelly: *(reading the message while upside down)* "Listen to me more, you'll go far"?

Peter: Look where it got you.

Nelly: The world looks so much better from here.

(Peter does a handstand)

Nelly: Let's stay like this forever. *(They remain upside down in silence)*

Peter: I won't come down before you.

Nelly: May the best woman win! *(knocks him down)*

Peter: You'll never stop... *(sits down to work)* Nell, have you finished the illustrations for the operetta?

Nelly: I need to work on it a bit more.

Peter: It must go to print by the end of the day. *(Nelly flips over)*

Nelly: Give me five minutes and I'll finish it. *(sits on his desk and peeks at the newspaper)* What's this...? "The wife of the mas..."

Peter: *(interrupting)* Shhh *(continues working)*

Nelly: Don't you shhh me. It says here that...

Peter: Just a second, Nell...

Nelly: "The master's wife"??? Seriously??

Peter: I knew you'd get upset...

Nelly: Frida Kahlo is an artist in her own right, why do they need to diminish her? Do they describe Picasso as Dora Maar's lover? No! So same, same!

Peter: Nell, this is from 1933. It's an old newspaper. Who knew then who Frida was.

Nelly: In Mexico everyone did!

Nelly takes a charcoal and connects her eyebrows.

Nelly: *(with connected eyebrows and Mexican accent)* "Soy la artista!" *(They laugh)*

Peter: You certainly are an artist! If only everyone could see the world like you do. *(tries to erase her eyebrows)* Have you started reading De Beauvoir?

Nelly: She's already back on the shelf.

Peter: Didn't like it?

Nelly: "Finally she chose. She chose herself"...

Peter: Wow...

Nelly: I couldn't stop reading.

Peter: Four hundred and eighteen pages in two days. You broke your own record.

Nelly: I try to break records every day.

Peter: 10 seconds.

Nelly: Is it alive?

Peter: No.

Nelly: So an object...

Peter: Yes.

Nelly: Furniture?

Peter: No.

Nelly: Clothing?

Peter: No.

Nelly: Something I use?

Peter: Bingo.

Nelly: Charcoal?

Peter: No...

Nelly: Ahhh....

Peter: Time's up..../ **Nelly:** Flour!....

Nelly: Argh....I knew it!!!

Peter: You got in!

Nelly: I had no doubt.

Peter: In the group exhibition...

Nelly: What? What are you talking about...

Peter: In New York. You're part of the exhibition in New York!

Nelly: How?

Peter: I submitted the forms in your name...and you got accepted.

Nelly: "Submitted in my name"!?...

Peter: I also added some of your works...

Nelly: Really ?!...

Peter: You yourself said you wouldn't do it.

Nelly: And that gives you the right to do it?

Peter: Your work needs a stage. Do you understand that?

Nelly: Peter, you don't get to decide for me!

Peter: I know who you are...

Nelly: So do !!!!

Peter: Anything else you do will silence you! When will you finally choose yourself?

Nelly: That's a decision I need to make!

Peter: You must create a future. This is your voice!

Nelly: Exactly! Mine!

Peter: Where's the artist who just shouted at me "Soy la artista"?

Nelly: She's here!

Peter: I won't let you miss this.

Nelly: It's easy to judge from the outside.

Peter: You could just say thank you.

Nelly: Thank you!

Pause.

Peter: You have one chance... and it might be your last. Try, worst case - you'll succeed. *(Peter exits)*

Nelly: Peter!... Peter!... *(Peter stops)*

Nelly: Don't try to stop me.

Peter: What?

Nelly: I'm going to New York!

Pause

Peter: You're insane.

Nelly: If I were normal, I'd go crazy.

Peter exits

Flashback lighting ends.

A sound effect (unrelated to the scene)

A girl's silhouette appears between the elements. Nelly senses her presence and begins searching for her. After a few moments, the silhouette disappears. With the charcoal, Nelly scratches lines.

Scene 3

New York - 1950s. Nelly (mid-20s) and Alejandro (early 30s)

Alejandro enters. Nelly freezes and stops marking lines.

Nelly: Alejandro?!... What are you doing here?

Alejandro: What are you doing here?

Nelly: I was sure you were...

Alejandro: Me too.

Nelly: How... How long have you been here?

Alejandro: Since we parted. Give me a hug, I missed you.

Nelly: *(moving away)* ...All this time I thought... I thought you were dead. Why didn't you leave me a sign?!

Alejandro: Who would have thought we'd meet again...and in New York out of all places!

Nelly: How come you are here?

Alejandro: Does it really matter?

Nelly: It doesn't make sense. *(pause)* Open your shirt.

Alejandro: What?

Nelly: Open it!

Alejandro: Nell?!

Nelly: Like a peacock...remember?! *(opens his shirt)* Where is it?! Alejandro...where is it?

Alejandro: What's up with you?...

Nelly: What did you do...?

Alejandro remains silent

Nelly: Alejandro...

Alejandro: Listen, if you came all this way to dig up the past, then you're wasting your time.

Nelly: How do you erase all of it?

Alejandro: I wanted to live. And I still do.

Nelly: By pretending nothing happened? Is that living?!

Alejandro: You think it was easy for me to get here?! To start a new life and build something from what was left of me? I had no choice. None of us had a choice.

Nelly: There are others?

Alejandro: Many.

Pause.

Nelly: ...Peter?

Alejandro: I don't know...

Nelly: Helga...?

A sound effect (unrelated to scene)

Nelly: What's that!?

Nelly: Me?... I'm gonna be part of an exhibition.

Alejandro: Nellism in New Yorkism!!! That's grand! Did you bring works with you?

Nelly: *(takes out a small sculpture)* I only have this one left...it's a sketch.

Alejandro: So crazy you make this out of bread.

Nelly: Better than potato.

Alejandro: You're kidding but one day it will be worth a lot.

A sound effect (unrelated to scene) intensifies

Alejandro: You have a place to stay?

Nelly: Not yet. Everything is so expensive here.

Alejandro: Why don't you try a bakery.

Nelly: They'll go out of business *(they laugh)*. You'll help me find a place?

Alejandro: In my heart, you already have one.

Nelly: Such a waste that you're gay.

Alejandro: Some might disagree with you...

Alejandro takes a paper, rolls it into a "trumpet" and plays a short piece.

Nelly: It's been so long since I heard this...

Alejandro: I haven't played it in a long while...hungry?

Nelly: Always.

Pause.

Alejandro: I'm sorry...

Nelly: For what?

Scene 4

Outside Gary's studio. New York - 1950s. Nelly (around age 25) Gary (age 50)

Gary: Sorry I'm late. *(Alejandro disappears)*

Nelly: Late?

Gary: You set our meeting for ten.

Nelly: It's ten now.

Gary: Exactly. You found the place easily.

Nelly: I always find a way.

Gary: Cognac?

Nelly: Too early for me.

Gary: We know each other from somewhere, don't we?

Nelly: I don't think so...maybe from another life.

Gary: I don't believe in second chances.

Nelly: Some risks are worth taking.

Gary: Are you always like this?

Nelly: For as long as I can remember.

Gary: I saw some of your work. Truth is, you kind of surprised me...

Nelly: Thank you.

Gary: You even managed to wake up some old demons in me.

Nelly: Sounds like you had an interesting time.

Gary: Art for the sake of provocation.

Nelly: For the sake of dialogue.

Gary: It depends on the context.

Sound effect (unrelated to scene)

Gary: Thinking about it, that's why I never became an artist.

Nelly: It's not for everyone.

Gary: I had talent, you know? I even won a competition when I was... like ten...why are you smiling?

Nelly: I was trying to imagine you at that age.

Gary: Gosh, what did I know then...

Pause.

Nelly: Would you go back there?

Gary: I'd do everything the same. I have no regrets whatsoever. You?

Nelly: What?

Gary: Regrets?

Nelly: I create with them... You have a studio for me?

Gary: When do you need it?

Nelly: Yesterday. I have an exhibition in three months.

Gary: And it's enough?

Nelly: I'm thorough.

Gary: I'm thorough when I choose tenants.

Nelly: How do you select them?

Gary: There are things I keep to myself.

Nelly: Do we have a deal?

Gary: This will have to stay between us.

Nelly: Obviously.

Gary: The studio is only available at night so I'll give you a fair price.

Nelly: I can pay you with my works.

Gary: I live on money.

Nelly: Right now I don't have any, but you have my word.

Gary: Nice, but I'll need a cash deposit.

Nelly: I'll find a way.

Gary: Keep the place clean and don't touch things that aren't yours. Understood? Low, quiet profile, like you were never here. Ah, yes...the key! (offers it to her but doesn't release) We know each other from somewhere... *(releases)*

Gary takes out a pen, rolls up her left sleeve and writes his phone number on her: 194418.

Nelly freezes.

Gary: If you need anything else, feel free to call.

Nelly remains silent.

Gary: Hope the place gives you inspiration... Nelly. *(exits)*

Sound effect *(unrelated to scene)*

The young woman with a piece of cloth appears, she has a mark on her wrist.

Nelly notices her and begins to create. The young woman with a piece of cloth disappears.

Scene 5

Lighting flashback. *Terezín 1943. Nelly (age 18) and Peter (late 20s)*

Peter runs to lift Nelly in the air.

Nelly: Stop! Peter enough! Put me down!

Peter: We've got to celebrate!

Nelly: Why?!

Peter: I sent some of your works in your name and... *(Nelly's expression changes)* Just kidding!

Nelly: That's not funny.

Peter: Don't you want to know...?

Nelly: What?

Peter: Our first newspaper issue is out! And... your drawing is on the cover!!!
(pause) Aren't you happy?

Nelly runs to the side to vomit and without noticing, a piece of fabric (similar to the one belonging to the young woman with a piece of cloth) falls from her. Peter picks it up and puts it in his pocket.

Peter: *(Nelly returns)* What's wrong? *(pause)* Nell? *(pause)*... What's going on, Nell?... Can you please talk?!

Nelly: *(whispers)* I'm pregnant.

Peter: What?... You're what?!... By whom?

Nelly: What do I do? *(Peter is silent)* Peter, what do I do? *(Peter remains silent for a while)*

Peter: How long have you known?

Nelly: Don't know. Wasn't sure that...

Peter: How far along is it?

Nelly: A few months... maybe...

Peter: *(to himself)* Months.

Nelly: I don't know... how do I hide this?

Peter: The same way you did until now.

Nelly: Peter.

Peter: What do you want me to say?! You're the one who asked me to stop making decisions for you!

Nelly: I know!!! But now I'm asking you to please answer me!

Peter: Why does it matter? You'll end up doing whatever you want anyway.

Nelly: I can still listen to what you have to say.

Peter: Are you really thinking about bringing a child into this world? Here?!

Nelly: I can't think right now.

Pause

Peter: We both know how this will end.

Nelly: Peter...

Peter: What?!

Nelly: I'm hungry.

Peter disappears.

Flashback lighting ends.

Scene 6

New York - 1950s. Nelly (mid-20s) and Helga (mid-20s)

A sound effect (unrelated to scene)

Helga appears with a cigarette.

Helga: I've got a few crumbs.

Nelly: Helga!!!

Helga: How many times, I imagined this moment ... *(They embrace)* I was really dying to see you.

Nelly: How did you know I was here?

Helga: I know Gary.

Nelly: Really?

Helga: A complex personality but he has a lot of connections.

Nelly: Well, that makes up for his personality issue.

Helga: Nelly! I saw your exhibition. It's a crime not to spread it around.

Nelly: You were at my show?

Helga: Like I would miss it?! *(Pause)* ...Shhh...did you hear?

Nelly: What?

Helga: Listen.

Nelly is trying her best to hear

Helga: We just started working together!

Nelly: Last time we met... you had other plans.

Helga: Nel, you have a brilliant career ahead of you.

Nelly: I like the way you think. You should do that more often.

Nelly takes the cigarette from Helga.

Helga: The moment the museum buys your works – I quit. *(Helga takes back her)*

Nelly: You're invited to stop now.

Pause

Nelly: You know, when Alejandro told me you were here...

Helga: *(interrupting)* Alejandro...?!

Nelly: Yes...he told me that

Helga: Nell, Alejandro never got here.

Nelly: What?

Helga: He never made it here.

Nelly: What do you mean? We met...he even played for me.

Helga: Nell....

Nelly: Don't look at me like that! I know that look...

Helga: It's okay...

Nelly: No. It's not!..... I know what I saw! I was with him. I was with him. *(she's lost and agitated)* I was with him.....

Helga: I know.

Nelly: I touched him...I listened to him... He even played for me!... I saw him. I saw him. (*Nelly is more and more troubled*) ...I know I saw him...

Helga exits.

A sound effect (unrelated to scene)

The young woman with cloth appears and rolls the cloth into a trumpet, when she puts it to her mouth the fabric slips. The young woman disappears.

Nelly begins to move elements and continues to create her art installation.

Scene 7

New York - 1950s. Nelly (mid-20s)

Nelly takes charcoal and writes with it.

"October 1957

Dear Peter,

New York is good to me!

You were right! It was a brilliant idea to come.

Just don't let it go to your head.

Yours,

Nelly".

Nelly moves and assembles more elements, some of which are made of bread.

Scene 8

New York. 1950s. Nelly (mid-20s) and Gary (age 50).

Nelly is fully immersed in her work as Gary walks in.

Gary: Sorry, didn't mean to startle you. Just dropped by to check for dampness (*looks at the ceiling and drinks from his flask*)... As I thought...there's a leak... How's the work going? Making the most out of every moment?

Nelly: I'm fine. Thank you.

Gary: What are you working on?

Nelly: I don't talk about my work while I'm in the process.

Gary: I thought art was a dialogue...

Nelly: Not at this stage.

Gary: Won't you give the landlord a little preview?

Gary peeks at one of her works.

Gary: Is this art!?

Nelly: Depends on the context.

Gary: Honey, I'm a practical man and way too old to be educated.

Pause.

Gary: Loosen up a bit. You work too much.

Nelly: It's what keeps me sane.

Gary: Tell me something about yourself. A beautiful girl like you, alone in New York...

Nelly: I'm not alone.

Gary: I don't see any ring – you're alone, darling.

Nelly: Some people are lonelier with a ring on.

Gary: And I know some who think they know much and dig their own grave...I'll come back later to fix the leak.

Nelly: Thanks.

Gary exits. Nelly returns to work. A sound effect (unrelated to the scene) .

After a moment, Gary returns, stands behind her and bends Nelly over the table. Nelly is trapped and he rapes her. The lighting is dimmed, and we only see Nelly's face looking directly at the audience. Gary takes a drink from the flask and puts it on the table.

Gary: Like I said...we know each other from somewhere.

Nelly raises her gaze to the audience: You didn't finish. *(she then finishes the flask till the end)*

Nelly: I can only go up from here. You have nowhere lower to go.

Nelly attaches a pregnant belly to herself. Gary disappears.

Scene 9

Living room in New York - 1960. Nelly (around age 35) pregnant. Edward (age 45).

Nelly lip-syncs to "Habanera" from "Carmen". Edward, her partner, joins in, wearing one of Nelly's hats.

A sound effect (unrelated to the scene) merges into a ringing tone of a phone in the living room. Nelly continues "singing" and Edward answers.

Edward: Hello... *(trying to overcome the music)* Hello? ... Hello? Hello... Nell

(signals to turn off the music) Hello? *(hangs up)*.

Nelly: Who was it?

Edward: I don't know. Couldn't hear anything. *(Nelly is thoughtful)* Remember we're going out today?

Nelly: Like this?

Edward: *(gesture with the hat)* Why? I might steal the focus?

Nelly: *(notices the newspaper)* Why is this here? Have you read the article?

Edward: It's good!

Nelly: ..."Many fail to decipher the phenomenon called Nelly". What's good about that? *(takes her hat back from him)*

Edward: The rest of it is pretty good.

Nelly: Edward, have I ever settled for "good"?

Edward: You settled for me.

Nelly: Even the critic wrote that if I were a man, my works would be received differently.

Edward: Why do you dwell on what others think?

Nelly: Why did you read it?

Edward: It doesn't change what I think.

Nelly: You understand they're slaughtering my work because I have breasts?!

Edward: Nell, Rome wasn't built in a day. Statistics show that...

Nelly: Statistics?!? We're talking about people, not numbers.

Edward: You know what I mean. There's considerable improvement among women...

Nelly: Improvement?!...Why are we all equal in death but not in life? Why?

Edward: Should we cancel tonight?

Nelly: Yes... I don't know. Maybe. I can't breathe...I need a cigarette.

Edward: It's not good for you now.

Nelly: The aftermath is good.

A sound effect (unrelated to scene) A loud siren that turns into a kettle whistling.

Edward: I'll make you tea *(while exiting)* See... equality. *(exits)*.

A piece of bread is thrown onto the stage.

Scene 10

Flashback lighting. Terezín 1943. Nelly (age 17) and Peter (mid-20s, wearing a prisoner uniform).

Peter sits on the floor behind a wall that separates them.

Peter: You caught it? Hard as a rock but edible.

Nelly: Thanks.

Peter: You have one for me?

Nelly: Mmm...Wait....yes! No... yes.

Peter: Is it alive?

Nelly: No.

Peter: Food?

Nelly: I wish...

Peter: So, a thing...

Nelly: Sort of.

Peter: Furniture? Clothing...?

Nelly: One question at a time!

Peter: An object.

Nelly: Wrong.

Peter: A coat?

Nelly: No.

Peter: Shirt?... Pants... Skirt...?

Nelly: Peter...

Peter: A hint.

Nelly: You sew it.

Peter: Yellow.

Nelly: *(pause)* You shouldn't have put it on.

Peter: I prefer to be on this side...

Nelly: And now you're stuck here.

Peter: Fine by me.

Nelly removes the pregnant belly

Nelly: Now what?

Peter: You tell me.

Nelly: Now we eat. Tomorrow, we'll worry about tomorrow... Peter?

Peter: Yes?

Nelly: Bon appetit.

Nelly begins to eat a piece of bread. She suddenly removes it from her mouth and begins to sculpt with it. She slowly creates the small sculpture she gave to Alejandro (in Scene 3).

Flashback lighting ends. *Peter disappears.*

Scene 11

Nelly's studio in her home with Edward. New York - 1967. Nelly (in her 40s).

Nelly continues to create. She takes a piece of charcoal and scratches lines (similar to scene 2).

Nelly: *(Nelly writes with the charcoal and says it aloud):*

"October 1967. Dear Peter, 10 years have passed. I miss you."

Scene 12

Nelly and Edward's house. New York 1967. Nelly (around 40) and Edward (late 40s).

Edward: Who were you talking to?

Nelly: No one. You're not ready?!

Edward: I fell asleep with David. You wanted equality...

Nelly: I didn't know it would come with Pj's.

Edward: Everything has a price.

Nelly: Edward, remember the first time we met? (*Edward is silent*) You said you needed sweetness in your life and... I passed you the sugar.

Edward: That was a long time ago.

Nelly: Not that long ago... You need to love life for it to love you back.

Edward: How poetic.

Nelly: Edward, Look at me. Look at yourself through my eyes and see what I see in you.

Edward: It doesn't change what I see.

Nelly: What do you see?

Edward: Do you really want to know?

Nelly: You have no idea how much!

Edward: I see gray, ashes... a complete void of emptiness. Apart for my nightmares, nothing is left of me; and I don't know anymore what is real or what isn't.

Nelly: (*touches him*) This is real...

Edward: I can't breathe without a lump stuck in my throat.

Nelly: Edwa...

Edward: My tears have dried up... Every night I feel them cutting my ligaments and I fall to the ground. I can feel my teeth rot and sand in my mouth...I want to scream but no sound comes out...and there's no one who can hear. That's what's real for me right now. Do you understand?

Nelly: Edward, show your nightmares that you have dreams!

Edward: What difference does it make if I feel like a corpse begging to be buried?

Nelly: I fell in love with you because, despite everything, you had a passion for life.

Edward: I lied... I'm not like you...

Nelly: Pull yourself up! If not for yourself, at least for your son!

Edward: My son? *(exits)*

Nelly: Try! Worst case, you'll succeed.

Scene 13

New York 1967. Living room. Nelly (age 40) and Helga (age 40).

Helga bursts into the house with a cigarette.

Helga: You did it!!! All the reviews are raving about your work, and I even secured the TV interview for you.

Nelly takes the cigarette from her.

Helga: Are you okay?

Nelly: I can't breathe.

Helga: You can't breathe because of that *(she takes the cigarette back)*

Nelly: Thought you quit.

Helga: So did I. You're ready for the big world?

Nelly: I always was. It's the world that took its time.

Helga: Ahh!!!! Guess who else is coming tonight...

Nelly: *(pause)* Peter?

Helga: More in the direction of... Picasso!

Nelly: *(Bursting out laughing)* Sorry! *(continues in a fit of laughter)* Sorry. Sorry ...

Helga remains silent.

Nelly: *(composing herself)* Is he really coming to my exhibition?!

Helga: Yes. And at the MOMA museum, mind you! You fooled us all! Now powder your nose, we really have to leave.

Nelly: I put makeup on!

Helga: *(takes out lipstick and applies it to Nelly)* Now you're ready! *(fixes her own make up and lights a cigarette)* Last one!

Nelly turns on the radio and begins dancing wildly. Helga joins Nelly dancing till they notice Edward who passed through the living room and went back to the room. Nelly stops dancing.

Helga: Is he coming?

Nelly: Yes, yes. He's getting ready...

Helga: *(notices the time)* We really have to go!

Nelly: I'll wait for him.

Helga: You can't be late to your own opening.

Nelly: Go. I'll meet you there.

Helga: Fine. But don't be long. *(exits. Returns to take the end of the cigarette, Nelly takes it from her and Helga exits).*

The song on the radio ends and we hear the radio announcer: "We just heard a piece from the new solo album of Alejandro Levy. And now we'll move to a piece from the choir..." Nelly turns off the radio and searches for a lighter.

Scene 14

Flashback lighting. *Terezín 1942. Nelly (age 17) Alejandro (mid-20s).*

Alejandro appears and approaches to light her cigarette. They smoke it together slowly.

Nelly: Don't give in to them. Alejandro...lift your head... Show them who you are. It's the only thing they can't take away from you. You're walking out of here like a peacock. You hear me? *(Alejandro is frozen and Nelly begins to draw with charcoal on his face)* Open it. *(Nelly opens his shirt and continues to draw all over his body).*

Alejandro: *(whispers)* ...Nellism...!

Nelly: ...What?

Alejandro: They'll call it "Nellism"!

Nelly bursts into laughter that mixes with crying. She continues drawing on him.

Alejandro: I'm sorry...

Nelly: For what?

Flashback lighting ends.

Alejandro disappears and Nelly continues the drawing. A sound effect (unrelated to the scene) turns into a telephone ring.

Scene 15

New York 1967. Nelly (age 40)

*Continued **sound effect** - phone ringing intensifies and merges with additional noises (unrelated to the scene). Nelly sees a shadow passing on the other side of the stage. Circular lighting begins to blind her. Nelly struggles to find the source of the noises and the shadow that appears each time in a different direction.*

Nelly: Alejandro?... Alejandro?

*Nelly sees **the young woman with a piece of cloth** standing on the other side of the stage. The woman disappears and from the other end of the stage the noises intensify. Nelly walks toward the noise and sees something behind the scene that frightens her. She stops, opens her mouth in a silent scream and collapses.*

Scene 16

New York - 1967. Television studio. Nelly (age 40), Helga (age 40), Interviewer (age 50).

Nelly and the Interviewer sit facing each other. A light shines strongly on Nelly. Helga whispers in the Interviewer's ear and stands behind him.

Interviewer: Nelly...? I'll repeat the question- as an artist you set yourself no boundaries but as a private person, you keep your personal life very much away from the spotlight. But today, we are here to learn everything about the person behind the persona.

Nelly: The person behind the persona...everything is in my works. They are like an X-ray of my soul.

Interviewer: When did you decide you wanted to be an artist?

Nelly: When did you stop? *(pause)* We're all born artists with the need to create. The question is when and why some of us stop.

Interviewer: In my case, it was a matter of public hazard... Nelly, let's talk about inspiration. What happens when it doesn't come, are there weeks or even months when you don't create anything?

Nelly: Yes. It's part of the creative process and one must learn to embrace it. Sometimes what you need is simply... to "be." *(pause)* And not be afraid of that silence.

Interviewer: And when inspiration comes...how is it? Like a divine revelation?

Nelly: I haven't met God to answer that question, but if it was to happen, I would have a lot to say to her.

Interviewer: Like what?

Pause

Nelly: Where do you think we'd be today, if you hadn't disappeared when we really needed you?

Pause

Interviewer: Out of this terrible pain, you created a new language. Where did you get the inspiration to work with bread, charcoal, and found objects?

Nelly: From the school of life.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate?

Nelly: No.

Interviewer: ...You established a new movement in art alongside Dadaism and Cubism.

Nelly: Yes. Nellism also opened the way for many women in the artworld.

Interviewer: How did you manage to continue after everything?

Nelly: I'm not here just for myself.

Interviewer: Still...you chose life.

Nelly: I chose to create life!

Interviewer: You also created a family.

Nelly: Yes.

Interviewer: We were all truly sorry about Edward's sudden death.

Nelly: Once you stop living, it doesn't matter if you survived.

Interviewer: I imagine it was quite difficult for your child.

Nelly: Quite complicated even.

Interviewer: Yes...I meant complicated...

Nelly: Why don't you focus on the questions they wrote down for you?

Interviewer: *(reading)* Now that you're a widow, does it affect your art?

Nelly: Of course!

Interviewer: How does it manifest itself?

Nelly: Now I make widowism.

Interviewer: Widowism...I'm glad to see your sense of humor is still intact.

Nelly: No human has managed to destroy it.

Interviewer: Any final words to conclude?

Sound effect *(unrelated to the scene)*

Scene 17

Israel. 1983 Nelly (in her 60s). Peter (approaching 70).

Nelly: "October 1983. Kibbutz Yad Mordechai. P.O.B 194418 Israel. Yours forever?"

Peter: *(enters with the letter)* Don't let it go to your head...

Nelly stands stunned and after a few moments runs to hug him.

Nelly: Took us some time, no?

Peter: Good things ripen slowly.

Nelly: Like the wrinkles on our faces.

Peter: Unfortunately, I can't really see them anymore. *(they move closer)*

Nelly: Let's stay like this forever.

Peter: I'm not going to lose you again.

Nelly: The house isn't big, so that probably won't happen... *(pause)* You know, at some point I'll need to use the bathroom....

Nelly and Peter begin to laugh uncontrollably.

Nelly: Peter...why didn't you speak whenever you called?

Peter: If only I had one percent of your courage...

Nelly: You're standing here now so... you must have a bit more than one percent.

Peter: It's thanks to you...everything I have become - it's all you *(takes out **the piece of cloth**)*

Nelly: Where did you find it?!

Peter: It's what kept me going all these years.

Nelly: I've been looking for it for...

Peter: ...Thirty years. I know...I wanted to give it back to you a while ago... *(he attaches the piece of cloth to her attire)* You know when you insisted on sewing it inside your uniform, I fell in love with you right then. Barely seventeen and with such a will to preserve a piece of your identity.

Nelly: ...I was stubborn.

Peter: You still are... You're ready?

Nelly: Now?

Peter: Yes.

Nelly: Alive?

Peter: No.

Sound effect (unrelated to scene)

Nelly: An object?

Peter remains silent.

Nelly: Is it a place?

Peter remains silent.

Nelly: Something you eat?

Peter remains silent.

Nelly: Peter...?

Sound effect (unrelated to scene)

Peter: Time's up.

Nelly: Cheesecake?

Sound effect (unrelated to scene)

Peter: Time's up.

Nelly: No.

The noises from the outside world enter throughout the scene.

Nelly: No... Peter...No! No!

Nelly arranges, frantically, all the elements on stage , including the letters and the bread sculptures. She arranges them all into her life's work installation.

Scene 18

Terezín 1944.

Strong circular lighting in motion (identical to the one in the opening scene). Nelly continues creating while simultaneously all the sound effect noises that were overheard throughout the play are heard in one sequence, but now they relate directly to the current scene. Gradually all the characters who accompanied her until now appear. The lighting stops on Nelly.

V.O (Male): Please welcome this year's Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, one of the greatest artists of our time - Nelly.

*The moment Nelly finishes her artistic installation, she removes her clothes and gives them to the Officer (Usher/Helga). Nelly is now 18, holding **the piece of cloth** Peter had attached to her attire. The Officer/usher/Helga whispers something to the Officer (Gary/Interviewer) and brings him a lighter. The officer (Gary/Interviewer) burns Nelly's drawings (the same ones Gary peeked at in the scene). The Officer / usher / Helga leads Nelly to the center and you can see a swastika on her left arm. Nelly, with her back to the audience, walks to the depth of the stage, and she let go of the piece of cloth. She disappears into her lifetime art installation.*

Silence.

*The stage remains empty except for **the piece of cloth** on the floor.*

Darkness.

Sound effect

Six empty seats scattered in the auditorium are illuminated, including the seat where elder Nelly sat.

End.