

Bertod and Agnes

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Characters:

Bertod - in his 80's

Agnes - in her 80's, Bertod's wife

Galia - in her mid-40's, their daughter

The play takes place during the course of Rosh Hashanah eve, the Jewish New Year's.

Scene 1 - On the Way Out.

Bertod and Agnes's bourgeois apartment, which demonstrates a clear artistic inclination. The apartment is divided into the main living room, the dining room (adjoining the kitchen door) and the bedroom. Agnes stands by the entrance door to the house, purse in hand, ready to leave, fixing herself in front of a little mirror. Bertod arrives with a pair of scissors.

Bertod: How the scissors got into in the shoe drawer, is beyond me.

He hands them over to Agnes. She stalls. Bertod holds out the ticket attached to the back of his trousers. Agnes cuts it.

Agnes: That's the ticket!

Bertod: You're the best. The pill?

Agnes: Already taken.

Bertod: Great. Now just a little sip from the - *(looks inside the pill box)* Agnes! This pill works wonders.

Agnes: You take it then.

Bertod: I've taken mine. It's going to be a long night - we both need to be fully charged. *(Hands the pill along with a glass of water, signaling for her to take it)*

Agnes: Nudnik. *(Swallows pill)*

Bertod: Very good. *(Collects items)* Let's go, bag, wine...

Agnes: Where's my purse?

Bertod: I have everything.

Agnes: I need my purse.

They look around for the purse

Bertod: It's Rosh Hashanah, Agnes, we still have to beat the traffic.

Agnes: We always have Rosh Hashanah here.
Bertod: This year will be our year off, no harm in that, is there? (*Finds the bag*)
Aha, here it is! (*Brings it over to her along with her cane*).
Agnes: I don't need it.
Bertod: Just to be on the safe side.
Agnes: You keep me safe...
Bertod: Did you go to the loo?
Agnes: You brought the present?
Bertod: It's all here. The present, the wine and I'm giving them a copy of
"Fabricated". (*Agnes raises an eyebrow*) We're down to only two copies,
young lady, and that's that for this edition.
Agnes: Congratulations.
Bertod: Off we go, I'm parked right outside the building - a skip and a hop...

Bertod opens the door, turns off the lights, and locks the door behind them.

Agnes: Where's the chopped liver?
Bertod: Merde! (*French: Shit!*)

Bertod opens the door, they enter, turn the lights on. Bertod walks into the kitchen.

Agnes: Always forgets something, this one... and the chopped liver of all things...
hurry up...
Bertod: (*from the kitchen*) where is it?
Agnes: For heaven's sake... "Where is it?" Must I do everything around here...?

Bertod exits, bowl in hand, as she nears the door

Bertod: It was in the toaster-oven.
Agnes: The liver? Why did you put it in the toaster-oven?
Bertod: I didn't -

Agnes: Have I not asked you not to go into my kitchen?! Why did you go in there?
Bertod: I just went in to make sure the gas was off. I didn't touch anything, went straight in, straight out -
Agnes: So how did...?

A moment of terror. Pause.

Bertod: You know what, come to think of it, I may have walked into the kitchen and saw that the fridge was full so I decided to put it in the toaster-oven, temporarily... then later, when I saw there was something in the toaster-oven I instinctively turned it on... I got it all mixed up, I'm sorry... I'll try to peel off the top layer...
Agnes: *(taps the hardened crust of the liver)* throw this dreck in the trash.
Bertod: But Agnes -
Agnes: A la poubelle. *(French: to the trash)*

Pause. Agnes deeply pensive.

Bertod: Never mind, I'm sure they'll let us in, chopped liver or no, shall we...

He turns to leave, Agnes turns as well, then suddenly stops and sits down.

Bertod: What are you doing? *(Pause)* Let's go, Bubbale. *(Pause)* Nothing really happened... we can stop and buy some on the way.
Agnes: Buy Agnes's chopped liver?
Bertod: It'll be fun. We'll sit with Galia, with the grandkids. We'll get to see Idodi, get to enjoy him for a while and as soon as you get tired...
Agnes: I am tired.
Bertod: No, please don't start, please. *(Pause)* We have one foot out the door, let's just go back to where we were...

Agnes doesn't respond and picks up a newspaper.

Bertod: Agnes, we said, we agreed that we were going. Look, we wrote it down in the blue notebook... *(Goes over to the shelf and takes the little blue notebook to show her)* See? Rosh Hashanah at Galia's.

Agnes: We always have Rosh Hashanah here!

Bertod: You can't do this! Galia will be awfully hurt. *(Pause)* Pour moi, Mon cheri! Tu peux venir pour moi. *(French: For me, my dear. Come for me)* It's important to me.

Agnes: If it's that important to you, then you go.

Pause

Bertod: I will, I'll go alone... Ca suffit *(French: that's enough)*. Are you coming or not? It's in the blue notebook, Agnes... fine. I'm taking the book, the wine, the present. Off I go. I'm going, Agnes, I'm gone... happy New Year.

Bertod exits, closing the door behind him. Agnes walks over to the chopped liver, takes a bite and squints. Walks to the kitchen to throw it away.

Scene 2 - Misidentification

Bertod enters the living room, panting lightly, doesn't spot Agnes straight away.

Bertod: Agnes... Agnes...

Agnes exits the kitchen.

Bertod: *(a sigh of relief)* I'm sorry. Are you alright?

Agnes: Exquisite... yes... have a seat, I just need a moment to finish getting ready.

Bertod: Take two, take ten. No rush.

Agnes: What can I get you to drink?

Bertod: What? No, we'll drink at Galia's.

Agnes: Galia's on her way here. Late, of course, but definitely on her way.

Bertod: Seriously?

Agnes: I'm sorry, but you have to remind me... your name, it's on the tip of my tongue-

Bertod: Agnes, please ... this is no time for games.

Agnes: Ah, I know! You're the... uncle...

Bertod: I said I was sorry.

Agnes: ...Who's married to...

Bertod: You didn't really think I'd go without you, did you?

Agnes: ...The sister-in-law!

Bertod: I got to the car and ran straight back in.

Agnes: No need to run, you're the first one to arrive.

Bertod: *(Adamant)* Enough! You're doing it on purpose!

Pause

Agnes: *(Calls out)* Bertod. Bertod, we have a guest!

Agnes smiles apologetically. Bertod looks at her.

Bertod: Agnes, I'm Bertod. It's me.

Agnes: Of course it's you... Open the wine will you? Wine's your department...

Agnes begins to set the table. Bertod contemplates for a moment, then takes a pill out of the pill box.

Bertod: It's been a stressful day. *(Hands her a pill)* This will help.

Agnes: No, thank you.

Bertod: It will take the edge off. Take it!

Agnes: Thank you, no. I'm against pills!

Bertod eyes her, exits to kitchen.

Agnes: Excuse me, Sir! Sir! The toilet is that way! Sir, I'll kindly ask you not to barge into my kitchen... *(Walks in after him)* just tell me what it is that you're looking for and I'll get it for you -

Bertod: I'm getting us some ice cream.

Agnes: Ice cream is for desert.

Bertod exits with the ice cream, Agnes picks up the landline.

Agnes: I'll have you know that my sister, Lilian, should be knocking on that door any moment now...

Bertod: Dark chocolate and lemon, your favorite.

Agnes: along with her husband.

Bertod follows her around with the ice cream.

Bertod: Just have a taste, it's good for you. Agnes -
Agnes: Could you please stop following me around?
Bertod: (*Agitated*) See what happens when you don't take your pills, just take it.
Agnes: My family is at the... thing... they're knocking; I can hear it.
Bertod: Nobody's coming.
Agnes: I beg your pardon?
Bertod: They're all at Galia's. Waiting for us. Take your pill and let's go.
Agnes: Listen here, mister. My son is on his way here...
Bertod: Rami's been living in Australia for the past eleven years.
Agnes: Which is precisely why he's made the effort to surprise us tonight. My sister, Lilian, is coming especially to see him.
Bertod: Lilian?!
Agnes: Lilian's always early.
Bertod: Lilian died three years ago!!!

Agnes freezes. Bertod immediately regrets the outburst.

Agnes: Nonsense... we spoke on the phone yesterday... She's the one that called! She was adamant on bringing her Blintzes... world famous for having no taste at all.
Bertod: Lilian's no longer with us, Agnes. It's all here, in the blue notebook.

Hands her the blue notebook. Agnes doesn't dare look.

Agnes: Lilian's dead? (*Bursts out crying*) It can't be...
Bertod: Je suis desole'. (*French: I'm sorry*)
Agnes: When? How?
Bertod: She slipped and fell down the stairs, had a stroke. We didn't know if she slipped because of the stroke or got the stroke because she slipped.
Agnes: I never got to say goodbye...
Bertod: You did. You did, very beautifully.

Agnes: We were fighting... on the phone...

Bertod: No, no, in the end you didn't fight. You sat together, you held her hand, told her that you loved her. You were there with her until her last breath.

Agnes: My sister died... how could I not remember that my sister died?

Bertod: Maybe you just pushed it back... like a defense mechanism... sometimes you need to lock it in there...

Agnes: I guess. *(Bertod gets up to get the ice cream bowl)* Where are you going, Bertod?

Pause

Bertod: Chéri *(French: dear)* I am not going anywhere. Come here, have something sweet. I promise it will make you feel better.

Hands her the ice cream. Agnes eats her ice cream absentmindedly. Bertod puts music on. Keeps his distance as he talks on the phone.

Bertod: *(On the phone)* Galia... Yes, yes, everything's good, we are running a little late... oh don't ask, I got these allergies, really the worst, runny nose and... yes, I took a pill and rubbed some eucalyptus oil-- no... um, not yet. No, I think I'll let it take affect and then we'll be on our way... yeah... yes, alright. Au revoir *(French: good bye)*. *(Hangs up and walks back to Agnes who's finishing off her ice cream)* Good, isn't it? *(Pause)* Recognize the tune? *(Agnes nods)* "Fantasie en Fa Mineur" by Schubert. You like it.

Agnes: My sister never had the faintest when it came to music... only fancied the popular ones. Going with them to concert was...

Bertod: *(nods)* an interesting experience.

Agnes: Especially when he... her husband... would start snoring.

Bertod: with Aaron it was like the entire trombone section was sitting right next to you.

They laugh .Bertod rubs her back. Agnes eyes him in suspicion.

Agnes: Sir, I am a married woman.

Bertod: I know. *(Brings over an old picture from the bookcase)* Here, look, this will spark something for sure.

Agnes: That's Bertod and me.

Bertod: Don't we look alike? Look at that nose. Same dominant nose.

Agnes: But you're old.

Bertod: I grew old. We grew old together... I'm your husband -

Agnes: I'm sorry, please forgive me, but I am very tired. Thank you for the visit.
(Gestures towards the door)

Bertod: No, I think I'll wait a little bit longer. Till Bertod arrives.

Agnes: I'll let him know that you dropped by... *(Walks over to the door)*

Bertod: I really would prefer to see him face to face...

Agnes: Please! Thank you and good night!

Walks over to the door. Gestures again.

Bertod: Agnes, let's sit down, calm down a bit, listen to some music... *(Touches her to calm her down)*

Agnes: Don't touch me! *(Grabs the scissors)*

Bertod: What are you doing? Put them down -

Agnes: I'm stronger than I look!

Bertod: What's the matter, Agnes? I won't harm you.

Agnes: Three times I escaped the Nazis!

Bertod: You just didn't take the pill on time, that's all.

Agnes: Get out! *(Pushes him towards the door)* Get out of my house!

Bertod: It's my house too!

Agnes: Get out before I call the police!

Bertod: C'est moi, Mon chéri. *(French: It's me, my dear)*

Agnes: Help! Police!

Bertod: But Agnes, c'est moi. *(French: It's me)*

Agnes pushes him out the door and locks it. Puts the scissors down. She looks around, helpless. Turns the music off. The phone rings. She hesitates for a moment and then answers.

Agnes: Hello? ...Bertod, where have you been?! Have you completely lost your mind leaving me all alone like that...? There was a burglar in the house, he tried to rape me, almost butchered me... luckily I was able to... a friend of yours?! That meshugana?... who is he?... ah-huh... ah-huh... really? Ahh... *(Peeks through the front door eye hole)* Well why didn't you say so? I've made such a fool of myself... alright, alright, yes. When will you be here?... then please hurry Au revoir *(French: good bye)* ... I'm coming, I'm coming.

She hangs up, fixes herself up and opens the door.

Scene 3 - Blind Date

Agnes: *(Overly ecstatic)* Hello there.

Bertod: Happy New Year's.

Agnes: Happy New Year's. Please, please come in. I'm so sorry, I had no idea that you were Bertod's friend... there must have been some sort of misunderstanding...

Bertod: I never introduced myself properly.

Agnes: No, Bertod forgot to update me, and there's been a string of burglaries in the neighborhood -

Bertod: It's quite alright.

Agnes: What can I get you? Soda water? Wine? A good Cognac perhaps?

Bertod: A glass of water will do nicely.

Agnes notices the bottle of wine.

Agnes: Thank you very much for the wine. Looks lovely. *(Exits to the kitchen)*

Bertod: No, no... No wine for me, thank you.

Agnes: *(From the kitchen)* you're not allowed? I'm not allowed either.

Bertod: That's right.

Agnes: *(Returns with two glasses and a bottle opener)* it's good for the heart. And you know what - we're in an age when women decide for themselves, and I decide that we're having a drink. "Wine makes the heart glad"

Bertod: "The heart of man... Wine maketh glad the heart of man."

Agnes: Well, are you a man or not?

Bertod: One sip, to life

Agnes fails to remember how to use the bottle opener.

Agnes: Something here... is broken.

Bertod: May I?

Bertod opens the bottle.

Agnes: The wine is Bertod's department. *(Bertod pours sparingly)* Hey, big spender... Spend a little wine on me...

Bertod: L'chaim. *(a toast in Hebrew)*

They clink glasses, he takes a tiny sip making sure she does the same.

Bertod: There we go, a sip. *(Puts his glass down)*

Agnes downs her glass.

Pause. Awkward "first date" silence.

Agnes: These are all statuettes done by yours truly.

Bertod: Spectacular statuettes. It's too bad you stopped going to sculpting class.

Agnes: Actually, I go every week... I adore working with the... um... when you knead...

Bertod: Clay.

Agnes: Clay! Have you seen this one here? A homage to Gauguin's dancers.

Bertod: Degas had dancers. Gauguin drew Tahitians.

Agnes: Gorgeous Tahitians...

Bertod: Gauguin... easy to remember because it sounds like Go, like "Go on then" and Guin - "again" - "Go on then, draw those Tahitians again". Gauguin.

Agnes: I take it you meddle in the Arts as well?

Bertod: Me? No, no, no. All thumbs. If anything, I'm a writer.

Agnes: Of course, I read all your books.

Bertod: I wrote only one.

Agnes: And it was fantastic.

Pause

Bertod: You know what, I almost forgot, I brought you a copy.
Agnes: Oh no, you really shouldn't have.
Bertod: Nonsense... here. A signed copy. (*Hands her the book*)
Agnes: This is not yours, this is Bertod's book. Naturally, I have a copy.

Pause. Bertod looks at his watch.

Bertod: (*Impatient*) Where is Bertod? When is he coming?
Agnes: God knows. But even when he comes, he's not really here.
Bertod: What does that mean?
Agnes: He becomes... and this is between us, yes?... One of those who think about nothing except for whatever it is they're thinking about right at that very moment.
Bertod: Determined? Steadfast?
Agnes: Obsessionnel (*French*) Always was, but it got worse with age...
Bertod: But Bertod is very open minded, a socialite, full of pep...
Agnes: Full of pep when it's about him. That he is full of pep for.
Bertod: Bertod? All he ever wants is for you to do things together.
Agnes: Eh (*Dismissive*) ... he wants to but then disappears.
Bertod: With the computer?
Agnes: The computer's one thing, but his trips for work...
Bertod: Trips for work? Last time I had a business trip was thirty odd years ago...
Agnes: For you maybe, but he comes and goes like the wind.
Bertod: What brought the trips on? You never complained about them before.
Agnes: You hear me complaining? He can't really cope with anything, so he just runs off and leaves me all alone to deal with our daughter.
Bertod: He was always there for you and Galia, with the therapy sessions - with the... you're the one who wanted to leave the country for a breath of fresh air, even when our daughter - your daughter wasn't doing so well.
Agnes: Is that what he told you?

Bertod: That's enough wine for now, I think.

Agnes: Oh, let me let my hair down and kick my heels up. I can't even have a sip when he's around.

Bertod: Because you're not allowed--

Agnes: -- No drinking, no going out, not to mention the other stuff... I can't even remember the last time we... this is all between us, right?

Bertod: You didn't want to anymore. You said...

Agnes: What?

Bertod: it hurts.

Agnes: More "Bertod tales"? We've said enough. He'll be here any minute and you'll see he's become a real stick in the mud.

Bertod: *(Bursts)* have you no shame, Agnes? Talking like that about me behind my back?

Agnes: About you? What got under your skin?

Bertod: The moment the holiday's over and done with I'm calling Dr. Berk... You need to be more active, Agnes, more physically active... not a walk once in a blue moon, but every day. Walks and bending and stretching, those Shiatsu exercises they gave you... to move around every day... just get up and move, get up and move.

Agnes: *(Amused)* would you like to dance? *(Walks over to turn the music on)*

Bertod: Physical movements help the blood flow, blood circulates to the brain, makes it more active.

Agnes: *(To the music system)* It doesn't seem to be working.

Bertod: You need to press play.

He turns the music on, Agnes dances like she hasn't done in years. Bertod looks at her in awe. Agnes pulls him up to dance with her. He acquiesces.

Agnes: How we loved to dance, used to dance all through the night.

Bertod: We never did, actually, but it's never too late to start.

They dance, Bertod flings her around with a complicated dance move that goes awry, Agnes laughs.

Agnes: *(Stops abruptly)* Wait, I just remembered... You're the one that used to do all those tricks!

Bertod: Tricks?

Agnes: At parties, for the kids. You know, the tricks with the balls. *(Pause, mimes juggling)*

Bertod: Juggling? I think you're confused; I could never juggle.

Agnes: Don't be so modest. You certainly could. Show me one of your tricks!

Bertod: I swear I don't know how.

Agnes: Hogwash. You used to do it so wonderfully, please do it for me. Please, please, please.

Bertod: I don't know who you think I am, but I, Bertod, don't know how to juggle and never did. I'm sorry.

She looks at him. Something has shut off. Pause.

Agnes: I must be confused.

Bertod: Yeah...

Agnes: Was I talking nonsense?

Bertod: It's OK... happens to the best of us...

Agnes: No, no... I was very confused... today. Something... something's not quite right - today.

Bertod: Sit down, rest. *(Pause)* Would you like a glass of water? *(Pause)* we haven't had dinner yet and you didn't take your pill in time and you had wine... *(Pause)* perhaps the next time you get a little confused I'll make a gesture, maybe something like this - with my nose - so that you know that I'm Bertod, alright? Like this...

Pause

Agnes: It's not a good day...

Bertod: You know what, I can give it a try.

Agnes: Give what a try?

Bertod: Juggling! You wanted me to-

Agnes: Yes, go on, go on!

Bertod: Well, I'll try my very -- *(Looks around)* my hands are not what they used to be, you know... I shall require the audience's patience...

Agnes: The audience has no patience.

Bertod: *(Takes the box of pills)* its imagination, then! I give you: alternative Juggling! *(Mimes taking pills from the box and juggling them as if they were balls)* Let's start with two: vitamin C is first on the scene - doing its job as a natural vaccine, also helps with the iron ingest, and it's a heavy pill, though it's not a contest. We'll add a little Avliac, because the iron backed us up, calcium for the bones, Ebixa to ... um... remember! Though it'll probably keep you up till late December... So Bondormin to sleep through the night, but it messes with our balance alright. So we add Altefal - but that makes us nauseous and queasy, so Travamin for relief and life's never been so easy.... Aspirin for the heart, Viagra for the thrills, and there you have it - your ten juggling pills.

Agnes: Bravo!!!

Bertod: *(Catches his breath)* Surprised myself there.

Agnes: Fantastic.

Bertod: The things I'll do just to hear you laugh.

Agnes: You always made me laugh.

Bertod: Me? Bertod?

Agnes: Who else? Herod the Great? *(Laughs)* You deserve some wine. *(Pours him a glass)*

Bertod: No, no... alright. Un tout petit peu. *(French: Just a tiny drop)*

Agnes: *(Flirtatious)* Here's to you. "Your cheeks and eyes..."

Bertod: "...your lips and thighs!"

She comes close, Bertod gives her a kiss

Bertod: You feel better, don't you?
Agnes: I feel wonderful.
Bertod: I told you that pill will work its magic.
Agnes: You worked your magic.

He hugs her, peeks at his watch.

Bertod: Agnes, it's not too late, we can still make it to New Year's dinner over at Galia's. Everyone is waiting for us.
Agnes: Let them wait. The one time we get to spend New Year's all alone, just you and me. Why don't we celebrate it properly?
Bertod: How?
Agnes: How about, let's say you go and connect the beds?

Pause

Bertod: Really? (*Agnes nods*) You want to?
Agnes: Pourquoi pas? (*French: why not*) I miss you so much.
Bertod: I miss you too... but it will hurt... won't it?
Agnes: You'll take good care of me. (*Leads him to the bedroom*)
Bertod: Mon chéri... Tu es sure que tu veux? (*French: my dear, do you really want to?*)
Agnes: Come on, nudnik!
Bertod: I'm coming, I'm coming, coming, surely sure, I'm coming, coming... wait!
The pill.
Agnes: I'm not taking any pill.
Bertod: Mine - I'm taking it. Taking it and coming to connect those beds.

Agnes walks to the bedroom. Undresses down to her negligee. Bertod dials his phone as he downs a pill.

Bertod: *(With a “stuffed nose” voice)* Galia... hello Boaz... listen, please tell Galia that we won't be able to make it tonight after all. No, it's nothing serious just... Galia, hey... listen- I'm so sorry, truly, but this allergy has gotten a hold of me... I'm sneezing my head off.

Agnes: *(From the bedroom)* You coming?

Bertod: Well, the way things are going, I'm afraid not. I took one - for all the good it did. Yes, I'm taking another one right now *(takes the Viagra pill)*.. Though I don't think I should be driving on it... Boaz will pick us up? no, no, no I won't hear of it, it's too much of a hassle... that's a hard no.

Agnes: Chéri, I'm waiting!

Bertod: Mom won't go without me... Galia honey, you keep on enjoying yourselves, we'll go straight to bed and come by tomorrow for leftovers, God willing. Well, it's a real shame for us too, really... and give everyone our love, and kisses to Idodi.

Agnes: Bertod!

Bertod: Au revoir *(Hangs up)* I'm coming!

Scene 4 - In Bed with Issac Netzer

Bertod and Agnes in bed, relaxed and appeased, post-coitus.

Bertod: I feel like I'm born again...

Agnes: Thank god we don't believe in the second coming...

They laugh.

Bertod: Why don't we do this more often?

Agnes: You disappeared...

Bertod: Me?... Anyway you were right on the money. This is exactly how one should welcome the New Year.

Agnes: It's a new year?

Bertod: Right this very moment... Happy New Year, Bubbale.

Agnes: Happy New Year, my darling. *(Pause)* I still got these legs, though...

Bertod: The legs of a twenty-year-old.

Agnes strikes a pose.

Agnes: What painting is this from?

Bertod: That's..." Sleeping Venus".

Agnes: Right!

Bertod: By... um... forgot the name... it's...it's

Pretends he doesn't remember, so that maybe she will

Agnes: Giorgione!

Bertod: Giorgione, yes. Giorgione, like George from Verone.

Agnes: Because he was Italian - but from Venice!

Bertod: From Venice, yes, look at you. It's the sex, I'm telling you. We must up the dosage of sexual activity. At least twice a week...

Agnes: Are you looking for an excuse to go another round?

Bertod: What, now? No. Let's not go overboard (*Pause*) why, you want to?

Agnes: No. Now it's time for you to sketch me.

Bertod: Sketch you?

Agnes: Yes, bring your kit...

Bertod: Agnes, you're confused, I could never draw.

Agnes: Hogwash, you're a great artist.

Bertod: Thank you kindly, but never a painter, I wrote a book. (*Shows her his book*) This one.

Agnes: I'm crazy about that painting, but that doesn't make this your book.

Pause

Bertod: That's Isaac Netzer's painting.

Agnes: Isaac Netzer, that's it! On the tip of my tongue this whole time... Isaac.

Bertod: (*To himself*) Isaac Netzer also knew how to juggle...

Agnes: Isaac, Isaac, forgive me... This whole time I've been wanting to call you by your name, but it didn't stick.

Pause. Bertod gestures "the sign" with his nose

Agnes: What's that?

Bertod: The sign to remind you you're confused. You think I'm Isaac Netzer?

Agnes: Been a few years, but the sex is as good as ever, my dear Isaac. (*Pause*) Well? Don't just stare at me all doe-eyed, are you going to sketch me or not? Go get all your... tools.

Bertod: (*Regains composure*) Yes. I'll go get the...

Agnes: And some wine, if you want your model to behave. And a cigarette...

Bertod: You don't smoke!

Agnes: *(Whispers)* That's what Bertod thinks...

Bertod goes to the living room, distraught yet driven. Takes a block of papers, a pencil, a glass of wine and returns. Puts the glass down in defiance.

Agnes: *(Sips)* How do you want me?

Bertod: Whichever way you're used to.

Agnes: I'm used to you posing me.

Bertod: Get into my favorite pose... you know the one.

Agnes: *(Lets her hair down)* Voila...

Sits in front of her, begins to sketch.

Bertod: I used to love sketching you, didn't I?

Agnes: I was your muse.

Bertod: I remember coming here in the mornings when Bertod was away at work...

Agnes: Here? Never. We had our places, though...

Bertod: Of course, of course we did... My office.

Agnes: You loved taking me out to the wild.

Bertod: The wild? You have a fear of insects.

Agnes: When I'm with you I don't have a care in the world.

Bertod: Yes... Tell me, did you keep any of my sketches of you?

Agnes: You never left me any. You were always so afraid that Bertod would find out the kind of inspiration I would give you...

Bertod: *(Under his breath)* Son of a bitch...

Agnes: That's what I liked about you - you were a son of a bitch... you always had the energy to make love to me... Before the sketching, after the sketching... sometimes during...

Bertod puts the block down

Agnes: Is that it? Time to cuddle the model?

Bertod: No. Stay in your pose (*Holds the sketchbook, cold*) When was it? My memory's not what it used to be.

Agnes: whose is?

Bertod: Bertod travelled a lot with work...that must have made it easy for us...

Agnes: I'll never forgive you, how you made me laugh under the Chuppah.

Bertod: Don't tell me it started back then.

Agnes: You were a very naughty witness, holding the... Um... the... and kept making faces at me all through the ceremony.

Bertod: Is that when it started Agnes?

Agnes: Are you drawing or just asking questions?

Bertod: How long did it go on for? A month? A year? Five?

Agnes: We're wasting precious time, Isaac, I have to go home soon.

Bertod: How come he, Bertod, never caught us?

Agnes: Oh, you know, those who don't fish don't catch...

Bertod: Why did we stop seeing each other, then?

Agnes: God knows... I've missed you so much. (*Comes closer*)

Bertod: Stay in your pose!

Agnes: Well, at least someone's missed me (*At his evident erection*)

Bertod: It's the pill.

Agnes: "Welcome thee back, pleasant bird"

Bertod: "Greetings to thee pleasant bird"* - that's the line!

Agnes: "Greetings" then. So what?

Bertod: So go to hell! You and your goddamn sketches! (*Crumples up the drawing*)

Agnes: No! What are you doing?

Bertod: You cheated on me! With Isaac Netzer! Have you no shame?! With Isaac fucking Netzer!

Agnes: (*Looks at the drawing*) what is this? Is this how you drew me?

** Taken from the famous poem "To the Bird," written by Israel's national poet, Haiym Nahman Bialik

Gets up, walks to the kitchen, Agnes follows him. Bertod takes a stool.

Bertod: We always used to joke about how you could never lie on account of your constant blushing. It's just lies upon lies.

Agnes: It's not a lie! I truly did miss you!

Bertod puts the stool underneath the overhead storage space cabinet and stands on it.

Agnes: What on earth are you looking for up there? It's all dusty!

Bertod: I'm going to ransack this place till I find those Isaac Netzer sketches, if it's the last thing I do. Then I'll tear them up one by one!

Opens the cabinet, pulls something and a box of books drops on him.

Scene 5 - Fabricated.

Agnes: Are you alright?

Bertod is shocked, looking at the spread of fallen books to his feet.

Bertod: What... what are all my books doing here?

Agnes: Well, they're your books.

Bertod: Yes, but what are they all doing here?

Agnes starts stacking them up, moving them aside.

Bertod: Agnes, do you remember when I was hospitalized for my prostate?

Agnes: Hard to forget the prostate era.

Bertod: I was at the hospital when I got a call from the publishers, saying they were vacating the warehouse and wondering if I wanted to come by and take my books...

Agnes: It's dustier than the Sahara in here...

Bertod: Just stay put for once and concentrate! *(She stops)* I never got to ask them how many were left of the five hundred printed, because a nurse came in to take some blood, but I did send Galia, who came back with seven books. You showed them to me.

Agnes: If you say so.

Bertod: I say so, because that's what you told me. You and Galia. I was over the moon; we went out to celebrate.

Agnes: Celebrating is fun.

Bertod: Celebrating what? I never sold a single copy... why did you do this?

Agnes: I can't remember.

Pause

Bertod: Shall I ask Galia? Perhaps she remembers?

Agnes: Ask Galia. She's the one with the ideas.

Bertod: So it was Galia's idea?

Agnes doesn't answer.

Bertod: Agnes, enough. Ten years! You've been hiding my books up there for ten years! Oh, you're no stranger to lying - you do it all the time! Through the teeth! About the books, about Isaac Netzer -

Agnes: Isaac Netzer?

Bertod: Your lover!

Pause

Agnes: Have you gone completely out of your mind? You're hallucinating!

Bertod: Just a moment ago you told me he would take you and screw you in the wild!

Agnes: How dare you! That I would ever do such things - and in the wild?!

Bertod: You said so yourself.

Agnes: Then you must have riled me up and I just said it out of spite.

Bertod: Agnes! Agnes, look at me. Do you remember us making love just now?

Agnes: What?

Bertod: And you telling me about Isaac Netzer? Remember? *(Pause)* Yes or no?

Agnes: I don't remember, OK?

Bertod: Then either you're a pathological liar or you've gone full senile!

Bertod walks over to the books and starts ripping off the covers.

Agnes: What are you doing? Stop that! No, Bertod, stop that, those are your books. Why would you do that to your books?

Bertod: These are my books and I will do with them as I please!

Agnes: You see - you're like a pressure-cooker when it comes to that book.
Always have been...

Bertod: "That book" has a name: "Fabricated"!

Pause

Agnes: Bertod, you were weak from the surgery, the books came back and we didn't want to upset you.

Bertod: So you do remember. (*Pause*) I just can't wrap my head around what reason you had to keep this from me and let me live with this lie... you saw how proud I was that the book had practically sold out, I was boasting and bragging to everyone, snooping around the publication to see about a second edition, thinking it quite odd that they were ignoring me... why did you let me make such a royal ass of myself?

Agnes: And if you had known, then what?

Bertod: Then I would have taken the books and tried selling them myself.

Agnes: No one would have bought them.

Bertod: Why not? (*Pause*) You thought the book was crap, didn't you?

Agnes: What are you talking about?

Bertod: Always were my harshest critic.

Agnes: I adored the book, others... not so much.

Bertod: Who? Anyone who read it couldn't get enough of it.

Agnes: Not everyone has your broad-mindedness when it comes to such provocative stories.

Bertod: It's a love story - what's provocative about that?

Agnes: A love story? The protagonist can't stop humping the Shiksa. You and him, the pair of you.

Bertod: What are you talking about?

Agnes: Don't you for one moment think I didn't know you had an affair. You told me yourself... "Dora looks like this, Dora would do this" ...

Bertod: Dora from my book?

Agnes: Dora, Dora! And her hair, and her breasts...
Bertod: She's a character from the book, Agnes, from the book!
Agnes: And you go and write a book about her!
Bertod: All I did was write about her. It's a fictional character - you do still understand the meaning of "fictional", right?
Agnes: That's even more insulting when you prefer the fictional over the real!

Pause

Bertod: That's it! You've lost it. Whatever it is you had left, tonight you've lost it, gone off the deep end, bananas, nuts, the lot!
Agnes: You don't get to speak to me that way, you hear?
Bertod: We had the ideal marriage, everyone envied us, we were happy, do you remember that?! We were happy and you destroyed it all with your cheating!
Agnes: If you keep talking to me this way, I'll go. Shame on you.

Agnes enters the room. Bertod continues ripping the book cover. He stops on one he can't quite rip, gets up and looks for something.

Bertod: Where's the... um... oh come on... the ... er... what's the name, the...
(Gestures scissors with his fingers). The... the thing that you cut with....
The cutter... no... it's that funny word... the dicer, the... mincer... Agh! It's on the tip of my tongue... you snip with the razors, you reap with the sickles and you cut with the... there's a tiny one for the nails, a regular one for paper... tonight Agnes threatened me with the... I had really large ones to cut the fabrics with at the factory... Goddammit! Two blades sliding off of one another... and the fingers go safely in the bows... bloody word!
Bloody bloody... *(Gestures scissors again with his fingers)* Good, yes, the body remembers... Shit! Shears! Yes! No... almost... shears... she... she's... She took them and cut the ticket with the... and they aren't even

hers, it's her sister's. Scissors! Scissors!!! Rock, paper, scissors! Thank God! Scissors!

Bertod finds the scissors where Agnes had left them. Goes back to the books and goes on ripping and cutting them. Agnes leaves the room wearing an old gown carrying a suitcase.

Agnes: Put those down.

Bertod: Go back to bed... *(Looks at her)* Where'd you dig that from?

Agnes: I'm leaving you. Packed my things. I'm leaving you the statuettes.

Bertod: Off to your lover, then?

Agnes: Lover?

Bertod: Netzer, Netzer. *(Pause)* If you have a hard time finding him, try looking in the disabled wing of the "Young at Heart" old people's home.

Pause

Agnes: You're out of your mind.

Bertod: I deserve to know the truth. That's all. Was there or wasn't there?

Agnes: Wasn't there what?

Bertod: An affair! With Isaac Netzer.

Agnes: Isaac Netzer was our witness.

Bertod: Of that I'm aware.

Agnes: He asked if he could... once. And I slapped the living daylight out of him. C'est tout.

Bertod: I don't buy it.

Agnes: I'm not selling. Au revoir Bertod. *(Tries to go out the door)* Where's the... the... where's the thing you open with?... Give me the thing you open with!

Bertod: Where exactly do you plan to live?

Agnes: I'll start at Lilian's for a short while - till I figure it out.

Bertod: There is no Lilian - Lilian's dead.

Agnes: Hogwash, why we spoke on the phone, only yesterday.

Bertod: *(Apathetic)* She died three years ago. Slipped on the stairs, had a stroke, died.

Agnes: Non, C'est pas vrai. *(french: That's not true)*

Bertod: You were still quarreling, so you didn't speak to each other. When you told her you loved her she was already unconscious.

Agnes: Enough!

Bertod: Three years ago, Agnes.

Agnes: *(Mumbles to herself, weeping)* Three years ago? What's happening to me? What's happening to me, Bertod? I have to get out of here, I want to leave. Now! I want to go to Galia's!

Bertod: You're too late. She's not available now.

Agnes: Why not? Is she ashamed of me? Ashamed of her own mother?

Bertod: She's entertaining. She's busy.

Agnes: You always took her side. Always. Even when she didn't want to eat anything I'd cooked for her -

Bertod: She did that because she was sick.

Agnes: Sick Shmick! She was just being stubborn! "Sick".

Bertod: Sick. The Anorexia.

Agnes: What Anorexia? See, that was exactly the problem - you always believe every little show that she put on. No wonder she grew up to be such a spoiled brat...

Bertod: And you made her run away...

Agnes: Where is the thing that opens!!! I want to leave. This is illegal what you're doing...

Bertod: Enough, Agnes.

Agnes: You're not allowed to hold me against my will!

Bertod: Go to bed, you're exhausted...

Agnes: I don't want to go to bed... stop trying to lull me to sleep. You always have to have everyone around you be so weak and needy - so you can feel strong.

Bertod: *(Mumbles)* that's enough, Agnes ...

Agnes: That's why Rami ran off to the other side of the planet and Galia became so clingy.

Bertod: That's enough!

Agnes: You always gave her everything she asked for, letting her walk all over you, just so you'll be the favorite one... you distanced me from them, their own mother!

Bertod erupts, dragging Agnes to the bedroom himself

Bertod: I said enough!

Agnes: Leave me!

Bertod: Get in the room!

Agnes: I don't want to! Let me go! I want to go!

Bertod: Va dans la chambre! (*French: Go to the room*)

Pushes her into the bedroom.

Bertod: I've had enough! Enough of you! (*Slams the door, locks the bedroom*)
Galia was the sick one but I was busy taking care of you instead of her!

He sits outside the door, breathless.

Agnes: (*Beating the door*) Bertod! Open the door! Open up!!! This instant!

Bertod: Where will you go? You think anyone will treat you better than me...?
Where will you go?

Scene 6 - Galia

A knock at the door. Bertod peeks through the eye-hole. Another knock. He looks around trying to walk silently away from the door. On the way he knocks over a stack of his books. A key rattles, the door opens. Galia enters. Bertod startles and turns back.

Galia: Dad?

Bertod: Galia! Hey...

Galia: Did I wake you?

Bertod: No. I mean, yes, we were fast asleep. Is everything alright?

Galia: Yes, I just thought I'd come over and bring you guys some soup.

Bertod: You really shouldn't have.

Galia notices the mess in the living room.

Galia: What's all this? What's going on here?

Bertod: Tidying up a bit... that's why it's all so messy.

Galia: You're sweating.

Bertod: Am I? Cleaning will do that to you...

Galia: You said you were asleep...

Bertod: I was asleep, then I was cleaning.

Galia: And the cold? Any better?

Bertod: Fine, fine, really, nothing for you to worry about. Look at the time, and you need to drive back as well... *(Motions to the door)*

Galia: I'll just pop the soup in the fridge, shall I?

Bertod: It's fine, I'll take it.

Galia: I'd like a cup of water.

Walks to the kitchen, Bertod after her.

Bertod: But quietly please... Your mother's asleep. *(A glance at the bedroom)*
How was it? Nice?

Galia: Yes *(comes out with two glasses of water)* Not a single burned pot or pan,
and no one's been rushed to the hospital for food poisoning... yet.

Bertod: I really am very sorry we couldn't make it.

Bertod drinks, Galia spots the books on the floor.

Bertod: Thank you, I didn't realize how thirsty I was...I'll head on off to bed now,
OK?

Galia squats by the books, starts piling them up.

Bertod: No, no, please, what are you... leave it. I'll tidy up tomorrow morning.

Galia: With your back? Go on, off to bed, I'll stack these up and lock the door
behind me.

Bertod: Not in a million years, you've slaved hard enough tonight *(pause)* Galia,
please *(tries to take the books away from her)*

Galia: Dad, just let me... it's not a big...

Bertod: I don't want us waking up your...

Agnes: *(From the bedroom)* Galia?!...Open up!! Hello?!

Galia: Why is the door locked?

Bertod: The mechanism's off, sometimes it locks itself.

Bertod opens the door, Agnes comes out, wearing her gown and in a "business as usual" manner.

Agnes: Galia sweetheart, how are you?

Galia: *(To Bertod)* You guys going out?

Agnes: This old thing? No, I just happened to find it... see? Still fits.

Bertod: Incredible, isn't it? Your mother hasn't changed since

your Bat-Mitzvah.

Pause

Agnes: So what can I get you? Soda water? Wine? A good Cognac?

Agnes walks over to the kitchen door, they follow.

Bertod: No, no, she just dropped by.

Galia: I brought Dad some chicken soup, for his cold.

Agnes: What cold?

Pause

Bertod: As you can see, we're awfully tired...

Agnes: I'm not sleepy in the least...

Bertod: *(To Galia)* We'll talk about it tomorrow morning!

Agnes walks off to the kitchen.

Galia: So you found out about your books? And you and Mom had a fight?

Bertod: Who's fighting?

Galia: I forgot you don't fight... you have disagreements.

Agnes returns with an empty wine glass

Agnes: There you go, Galia.

Galia: It's empty, Mom.

Bertod: *(Points)* the bottle's there.

Galia: *(Looks at the half empty bottle)* So you've also been drinking... if you were so keen on having the night to yourselves, why did you pressure me into having Rosh Hashanah at my place?

Agnes: (To Bertod) Why would Rosh Hashanah be at her place?
Galia: Because that's what Dad wanted.
Bertod: (To Agnes) I thought it would be nice, for once, to have it at Galia's...
Agnes: We always have Rosh Hashanah here!

Pause

Galia: (To Bertod) And there you have it!
Agnes: Was it something I said?
Galia: Never mind, I'm off. Have a wonderful evening...
Bertod: Yes, it really is getting awfully late...
Galia: Oh, where did I put the...?
Bertod: The what?
Galia: The keys...
Agnes: Are you sure you came with them, Dear?
Galia: Yes! Yes, I'm sure.

Bertod helps Galia look for them. Galia finds them

Galia: There! Happy days. Good night.
Bertod: Now's not a good time to talk anyway. We'll talk tomorrow...
Galia: And tomorrow will be a good time to talk? It's never a good time to talk.
Agnes: (To Bertod) What is she talking about?!
Galia: Mom, please. You couldn't stand the idea of Rosh Hashanah at my house from the get go.
Bertod: That's not true.
Galia: But Dad wanted to lighten your load and I agreed, I wanted to do it right, so I skipped my workshop, sent Idodi to Boaz's folks and Boaz to rent a table, borrowed some chairs from the neighbors, bought cutlery for twenty people, made a roast, Tzimmes, Kneidlach, Kreplach, Gefilte-fish...
Agnes: You? Gefilte?

Galia: Yes, Mom. Me Gefilte! Me Gefilte, Mom!

Bertod: Galia, please, calm down.

Galia: *(To Agnes)* No, it really pisses me off that you picked today, of all days, to tell Dad about his books.

Agnes: *(To Bertod)* Why is she screaming at me?

Galia: I wasn't screaming.

Bertod: The tone is a tad aggressive...

Agnes: *(To Bertod)* What does she want from me?

Galia: I'm right here, mom! You can talk to me! *(Pause)* I want you to know that Idodi made you a beautiful greeting card and waited by the door, crying, we practically had to drag him to the table, cause he wouldn't eat without Nana and Grandad. What am I supposed to tell him? That's what you can expect of those two - they always put themselves first!

Bertod: Galia, it's only this one time -

Galia: Please, spare me. There is no reason on earth that my boy should also endure your behavior.

Bertod: Enough! Look what you're doing to your mother!

Galia: Aw, it's always about what I'm doing to mother.

Bertod: She's in a delicate state...

Galia: She's always in a delicate state! Like at my exhibition, she was so offended by something written in the catalogue and wanted to leave, and you - you left with her! You never even got to see my work! Or with my shrink...

Bertod: What's that got anything to do with anything?

Galia: It's the exact same thing. Me having to hide the fact that I'm seeing her because you asked me not to upset Mom, so instead I went "Tap-dancing". For four years!

Bertod: What on earth are you on about, your mother was worried sick about you...

Galia: Dad. I was thirty-one kilos and you went on a trip to Brussels 'cause Mom needed some “fresh air”. This, to you, sounds like healthy parenting? Leaving your kid in such a state? *(To Agnes)* Huh, Mom? Any thoughts?

Agnes moves with unease trying to hide the lower half of her body.

Agnes: I need some privacy...

Galia: You have nothing to say? Nothing?

Agnes: *(Whispers)* Please, I need some privacy...

Bertod and Galia are suddenly aware that Agnes has urinated on herself.

Bertod: That's... that's OK, nothing happened. We'll get you cleaned up in no time.

Leads Agnes to the bedroom. Returns to Galia.

Bertod: You have no idea what you're talking about! A spoiled little girl who can't see what's happening right in front of her! Now I need you to leave! Good night.

He goes back to the bedroom to help Agnes change to her nightgown. Galia, left helpless in the living room, starts cleaning the floor with a towel. She then tidies the books. Bertod finishes helping Agnes.

Bertod: There we go. All cleaned up. *(Puts her to bed)*

Agnes: Tu ne viens pas? *(French: Are you not coming?)*

Bertod: J'arrive tout de suit. *(French: I'll be right there)*

Bertod enters the living room, Galia is still there.

Galia: Can I have a word with her?
Bertod: Galia, It's best if you just left.
Galia: I can't leave like this! Dad, please!

Bertod pops his head in the bedroom, Agnes sits on the bed, curled up.

Agnes: Is Lilian here?
Bertod: Lilian? No. Galia. She wants to apologize.
Agnes: As long as she doesn't start lecturing me on how to raise Galia.

Bertod enters the living room.

Bertod: Mom needs some time to calm down a bit.
Galia: The old cold shoulder routine?
Bertod: No. She'll talk with you tomorrow morning...
Galia: She would do just about anything not to talk to me... Mom...
Bertod: Galia!

Galia walks into the bedroom, Bertod follows, failing to stop her.

Galia: Look, Mom, I never meant for this to come out the way -
Bertod: She knows you didn't mean -
Agnes: I want you to leave now, Lilian.

Pause

Galia: Mom, it's me... you recognize me, right?
Agnes: Of course I do!
Bertod: Well, that settles it!
Agnes: Why wouldn't I recognize my own sister?

Galia turns to Bertod.

Bertod: Mom has these spells sometimes...

Galia: But Lilian? Mom, Lilian who? Lilian's been gone -

Bertod: --Out of town today, but she'll be here tomorrow. This is Galia, our daughter. Look how alike we look. Thank God she didn't get my nose, huh?

Agnes: Are you two trying to drive my completely mad?

Bertod: You have identical palms, show her, Galia. Go on, show her. (*Galia holds her palm up to Agnes's*) You were always joking about what a waste it was that you weren't both pianists...

Agnes looks at her, frightened.

Agnes: (*To Bertod*) I don't feel well. Everything's muddled up!

Bertod: It's going to be alright, Agnes...

Agnes: Bertod, I'm frightened, it's empty, empty. All empty inside. Remind me!

Bertod: Remind you of what?

Agnes: Everything! Everything! Remind me of everything!

Bertod: You remember how we met?

Galia: You love that story...

Agnes: I do?

Bertod: After the war I arrived in Brussels, looking for Jews, and they gave me an address to an apartment... I knock on the door, and who opens it?

Agnes: Who?

Bertod: You. By sheer chance. You didn't even live there.

Agnes: I opened the door to a house that wasn't mine?

Galia: You were the upstairs neighbor.

Bertod: I was so mesmerized by your smile that the only thing my brain could muster was "Sorry, what time is it?"

Galia: It was exactly three O'clock.

Agnes: Three is my lucky number. I escaped the Nazis three times!

Bertod: It was love at first sight -

Agnes: And we got married immediately-

Bertod: After about a year. I had to stay with the Brigade, and you immigrated to Israel and waited for me in Kibbutz Ein HaHoresh.

Agnes: *(Recalls with excitement)* And they wanted to change Agnes to Hannah!

Bertod: Yes!

Agnes: But Helena became Hannah, and Anda became Hannah and Henya and Anna and Masha - they all became Hannah!

Galia: With you in the tent was Hannah D.

Agnes: Hannah D! Every night she would sit and read aloud – she never let us...

Bertod: Exactly, *(They laugh, Galia gets up)* how we used to laugh. Even at our wedding, I made you laugh under the Chuppah... I was so nervous I came with a pair of different coloured shoes and you told me that -

Agnes: -- I won't marry you a second time.

Bertod: Look at you! Yes. We got married the day Jerusalem was covered in snow.

Agnes: There was so much snow. As if it was put there just for us. *(To Galia)* And the following winter you arrived...

Galia: Rami came first.

Agnes: Oh, that's right...

Agnes gets up takes the blue notebook. Galia and Bertod onlooking discreetly.

Galia: Did you get her checked out?

Bertod: Mom's being treated. Maybe she needs to change pills again...

Agnes: *(From the notebook)* Rami was born four kilos one hundred grams...

Galia: But what do the doctors say? What's the prognosis?

Bertod: It has a lot of names.

Agnes: *(From the notebook)* I'm allergic to mushrooms.

Galia: What names? How many names could it have?

Agnes: Bertod, do you remember I'm allergic to mushrooms?
Bertod: Of course I do.
Galia: Dad...?
Bertod: The research on it is very advanced and if you treat it right you can significantly delay the effects.
Agnes: (Referring to the scattered books) What's all this mess?

Agnes starts tidying up the books with renewed vigour.

Galia: (*Whispers*) How long have you known about this?
Bertod: A few months.
Galia: A few months?!... Does Rami know? Have you told him?
Bertod: We didn't want to spring this on you two.
Agnes: (*Stacking the books*) I always keep a tidy household. Spic and span. Everyone knows that over at Agnes's you can eat off the floor.
Galia: (*To Bertod*) I had a feeling, I talked to you about it and you told me, I remember, you told me it was the sleeping pill... right? At Idodi's birthday? And again when I was here a month ago, you told me she had some kind of inflammation or something...?
Bertod: She did. Tonight she's just extra delicate. And Mom is used to having Rosh Hashanah dinner here...
Galia: You should have told me, Dad. This is not one of those secrets that you can keep to yourself.
Bertod: You have enough on your plate.
Galia: Did you think that if you wouldn't tell me it would just disappear?

Agnes stops arranging the books and looks at them.

Agnes: What are you two whispering about over there? (*Pause*) Stop talking about me behind my back!
Galia: No, Mom, Dad was just bringing me up to date about your condition...

Agnes: Then why aren't you asking me, I'm still here.

Bertod: I told her about the pills you're taking-

Galia: -and that you're being treated and that it's all going to work out. I'm sure it's all going to work out just fine-

Agnes: Yes, I'll forget a little more each day until I'll be completely erased.

Pause

Galia: Please don't say that, Mom. I doubt that's the best way to approach this situation.

Agnes: Nothing I do is ever good enough for her.

Bertod: No, Galia's just saying that -

Agnes: She's not "just saying" - she's chastising me. Always did. Always had me to blame and you to talk to. You two had your little jokes, stories that you made up together. Thick as thieves. While I always got the pointy end of the stick... complaints. The way I dress, the way I talk, the way I cook! And all I wanted was for her not to starve herself.

Galia: Mom, I was -

Bertod: She was ill.

Agnes: That's not an illness, please! Some crazy notion crept into her head one day. Like a fly, buzzing around in her head. I mean, the looks that I got from people... as if I'm some sort of monster. What kind of mother lets her daughter walk around looking like a ghost? But it wasn't my fault. I'm not the one to blame - it's that buzzing fly!

Bertod looks at Galia helplessly

Galia: That's right, Mommy. A little, buzzing fly.

Pause

Agnes: (To Bertod) she was sure I didn't even love her. Of course did.
Galia: She knows. Galia knows that you love her.
Agnes: How can you be sure?
Galia: She knows you did the best you could.

Agnes fluffs Galia's hair tips. Suddenly she tenses up, walks over to the bedroom to look for something. Bertod and Galia follow.

Bertod: What are you looking for?
Agnes: My jewelry. (To Galia) I want you to have them.
Galia: There's no need, Mom. Really.
Agnes: Where are they, Bertod?
Bertod: Here. Here they are.
Agnes: The recipe! The recipe for "Agnes's chopped liver".
Galia: There's no rush, Mom.
Agnes: I want you to have it.
Bertod: Maybe it's in the blue notebook...
Agnes: (Points to her head) Here. It's all up here.
Galia: In any case, I don't eat meat anymore...
Agnes: It's not "meat", it's chopped liver. Fetch her something to write with, darling.
Galia: Just tell it to me - I'll remember.

Bertod hands Galia a pen and paper

Agnes: Alright, good... write it down: one kilo of freshly chopped chicken liver... and not from the supermarket, heaven forbid, you go to the butcher on Arlozorov St. Where the... the...
Bertod: Next to the post office.
Agnes: Exactly.
Bertod: Him you remember...

Agnes: (To Galia) He gets the freshest and cleanest. You also ask him for some shmaltz and you fry four large onions with a heavy spoon of shmaltz.

Bertod starts to laugh

Agnes: At least half an hour, till the onions are good and golden - soft, but not crispy - then you move them all to the side of the pan, add the chicken liver and a quarter cup of Cognac.

Bertod laughs

Galia: What is it Dad, what's so funny?

Bertod: Nothing, nothing, go on.

Agnes: Where was I?

Galia: A cup of Cognac.

Agnes: Quarter cup.

Bertod tries unsuccessfully not to burst out laughing. Agnes and Galia are affected and giggle as well.

Agnes: You wait till the liver gets that brownish colour, but careful not to burn it. Bertod! Five or six minutes, then off the gas to cool down. Then a third you cut up coarse and the other two thirds into the blender with four hard boiled eggs, salt, pepper and to top it all off, two spoonfuls of... That confiture... the um... the orange coloured one...

Galia: Orange?

Agnes: No! The... the one with the big seed...

Bertod laughs

Galia: Dad, stop it! Mango?

Agnes: They have it as a dry fruit as well -

Bertod: *(Still laughing)* Apricot, apricot!

Agnes: Apricot! That's the most important thing. Apricot confiture. Two spoonfuls, gives it that delicate sweet taste.

Bertod: Good thing you remembered! That's right up there on the top of the list! Who I am or what I am to her - no recollection, but the apricot – that's the most important thing! Doesn't remember who she slept with, but the apricot confiture – so when her dead sister will come, she will savor that sweet delicate apricot taste! ...So what does that make me? Chopped liver? *(Laughs even harder)* No - I'm not even chopped liver. *(Agnes stomps out of the living room in protest. Bertod's laughter turns distinctly into sobbing)* what's going to happen, Galia? That's it... it's a losing battle and I keep fighting it and fighting it like some kind of idiot... what does it matter who we were and what we've done if in the end it's all wiped out?

Pause

Galia: You're supposed to be the optimistic one, remember?

Bertod: I'm allowed to forget too, you know.

Galia: We'll think of something, together. We'll talk to Rami, bring him into the fold...

Bertod: It's OK. It'll be OK.

Agnes: *(Returns)* Galia sweetheart, Daddy needs his sleep.

Galia: You guys want me to stay the night?

Bertod: No, no, we're fine.

Galia: You sure?

Bertod nods

Galia: Whatever happens, it's going to be alright.

Bertod: Thank you, Galia. Thank you for coming.

Galia: Go to bed... I'll drop by tomorrow with Idodi. He'll give you that greeting card he drew for you...

Galia gives Agnes a peck on the cheek

Agnes: Wait.

Agnes hugs Galia. It is evident that they don't hug often. Galia exits.

Scene 7 - Promise me

Agnes: You never cry.

Bertod: I'll go wash my face.

Gets up, she stops him

Agnes: Bertod, when I get to Aunt Henya's stage, will you let me go? We swore we'd never let it get to that stage.

Bertod: You're a long way from that.

Agnes: The light goes on and off, on and off... but I can never see the full picture... and I keep yearning for something, but I never remember what it is. You'll get me the pills and when I tell you, I want you to give them to me, Bertod.

Bertod: How will you know when it's the right time?

Agnes: Just like a baby knows when it's time to leave the womb.

Pause

Bertod: I'm afraid... I don't know how to live without you.

Agnes: Nothing to be afraid of... come inguele (*Yiddish: son*), come here...

She lays him on top of her like a mother would her son. Strokes his hair and softly sings a Polish lullaby.

Bertod: Polish... you completely forgot your Polish (*She continues singing*) you see, Agnes... things also come back.

He drifts into sleeps as Agnes continues singing.

Scene 8 - Let It Snow

Bertod is asleep. Agnes takes snowflakes out from the surrounding furniture and cardboard boxes the books were previously hidden in and scatters them all over the floor. The living room floor is now covered in a thick layer of paper snowflakes from Bertod's books. Agnes stands over Bertod, scattering paper snowflakes on him, gently.

Agnes: Morning all, morning all
Out of bed, throw those sheets
Look out the window
Run down to the streets.

Bertod: *(Alert)* what? What's happened?

Agnes: Look how pretty...

Bertod: What's all this, Agnes? Why aren't you asleep?

Agnes: How can you sleep with all this beautiful snow around us?

Bertod: *(In a state of shock)* It's all my books... *(Picks up the paper snowflakes)*
When did you have time to...?

Agnes: It's magic. Isn't it wonderful? *(Crumples up a paper snowball and hurls it at him)* Come on! You're not chicken, are you?

Bertod snaps out of his mesmerized state and flings "snow" back at her. A snow fight begins.

Bertod: Careful not to slip!

Agnes: I will, Daddy...

Bertod: *(Stops)* What... what did you call me?

Agnes: Let's make snow-angels!

Bertod: We'll get cold...

Agnes: I'm not cold... please, please, pretty please...

Bertod acquiesces.

Bertod: Lay down, carefully... *(They lay on the snow)* Give me your hand. Ready?

Agnes: Un, deux, trois...

Flinging their hands and legs they make snow-angels. They get up.

Bertod: Happy New Year, Agnes.

Agnes: Is it a new year?

Bertod: Is started this morning, we still haven't made our New Year's wishes.

Agnes: I want a baby!

Bertod: A baby? You already have a little grandson.

Agnes: I want my own baby. That I can kiss right here, on his neck... and he laughs so hard...

Bertod: I wish to start writing a new book.

Agnes: You're a writer?

Bertod: World-renowned!

Agnes: I knew you were a good catch... I wish that the snow doesn't melt till our wedding day.

Bertod: It really did snow on our wedding day.

Agnes: Would you like to marry me?

Bertod: I already did.

Agnes: You were our witness - I want you as the groom.

Bertod: Am I Isaac again?

Agnes: Who's Isaac?

Bertod: The one you want to marry.

Agnes: You, you! I want to marry you!

Bertod: Who am I?!

Agnes: You are my one and only true love. The one I wish to be with till the end.

Pause

Bertod: Don't move, chéri

Bertod goes into the bedroom, comes back with a pair of shoes, each in a different colour. Agnes spots his shoes.

Agnes: Just look at you... I won't marry you a second time.

Bertod takes her by the hand. They kiss.

Light dims.

The End.