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Collapse

By Motti Lerner

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©

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Characters:

1. Daniel - Pianist, conductor and composer (54)
2. Ruth - His wife, a pianist (50)
3. Leon - Conductor, Daniel's assistant

4. Tomer - Son of Daniel and Ruth, student at the music academy (24)
5. Neta - Daughter of Daniel and Ruth, opera singer (26)
6. Dori - Neta's husband, a surgeon (30)

Set

The play takes place in the living room of Daniel and Ruth's penthouse in Tel Aviv. It's a spacious room. On one side is a window, on the other side a grand piano. Backstage is the kitchen. In the center are a table, a sofa and a few armchairs. On the left is the front door to the house. On the right is an exit to the corridor with Daniel and Ruth's bedroom, their study, and the children's bedrooms. This description, of course, does not require a realistic style.

Time

The play starts on Friday morning, and ends the next day, on Saturday afternoon.

Note

Daniel's monologues from rehearsals of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, which are heard at the beginning of each scene, are pre-recorded to allow an easy transition from one scene to another. During the play, Tomer plays excerpts from Beethoven's piano sonata "à Thérèse", in a light and ironic style that befits his character.

Scene 1

The stage is dark. We hear the rehearsal of an orchestra. Daniel conducts the concerto for piano that he wrote.

Daniel: Very nice... Yes. Be generous. Open-hearted. With devotion....
 legato...legato... Honestly... Now the heart is beating... I hear
 it... It's beating... Now attack. Don't caress... No
 sentimentality. No hypocrisy. Without lies. Without pathos...

Now diminuendo to the adagio... Yes... Just a moment. These are not accidental sounds. There's a melody here... **(The orchestra begins to falter)** What's happening to you, violins? Sotto Voce! Sotto Voce!¹ **(The pianist also falters)** Slower, Helen. Slower. But with pain... Yes. Pain. Wildly. The piano dictates the tempo... Play as it's written... No self-pity, Helen. With passion. With lust... Wake up clarinet. With love. Not in anger... Presto. It says Presto. And now to the crescendo... What is this cacophony? Why a drum? Why trumpets? Stop! I said, stop...

Friday. 10am. Beethoven's piano sonata "à Thérèse" is being played. Light on the living room. Tomer sits at the piano and plays. He doesn't notice Daniel sleeping on the couch. A moment later, Daniel wakes up. He clears his throat. Tomer notices him.

Tomer: Dad?!!
Daniel: Good morning, Tomer.
Tomer: What are you doing here?!
Daniel: Taking a nap. **(They hug)**
Tomer: When did you come back?
Daniel: An hour ago.
Tomer: Why didn't you tell us? I would have waited for you at the airport.
Daniel: Where's Mom?
Tomer: At the Philharmonic.
Daniel: On a Friday?!
Tomer: Her concert is next week.
Daniel: I see you're also getting ready.
Tomer: Yes. Mine is tomorrow night.
Daniel: I'm glad you chose à Thérèse. It's a wonderful sonata. Beethoven loved it more than any of his other sonatas. Do you want me to listen to you?
Tomer: You don't have to. But if you're here, I hope you'll come tomorrow.
Daniel: Of course I'll come.
Tomer: It's at 8 o'clock. I hope Mom will come too.
Daniel: Why shouldn't she come?
Tomer: They are still in rehearsals.
Daniel: Tomorrow is Saturday!
Tomer: She worked with Leon and the Philharmonic yesterday, as

¹Turn down the volume!

well as the day before. And at night, they work on her solo.
Daniel: That's crazy. The orchestra has played this Mozart dozens of times. She shouldn't need more than two or three rehearsals.

Daniel is silent. Tomer sits down in front of him.

Tomer: Mom knows you're here?
Daniel: I left her a message on her cellphone.
Tomer: Did something happen?
Daniel: No. I came for the weekend. I fly back Sunday.
Tomer: How's New York? How's the orchestra?
Daniel: Good.
Tomer: I've heard some recordings of Helen, your soloist.
Tchaikovsky's First Concerto. Rachmaninoff's Second.
Beethoven's Fifth. She's the best pianist in America today.
Daniel: She is truly a great pianist.
Tomer: And what's it like working with her?
Daniel: Very challenging. **(To himself)** I should insert a cello instead of the violin at the end of the Andante.
Tomer: What?
Daniel: Nothing. Suddenly I thought of something.
Tomer: By the way, do you remember that I want to record a CD with Bach's French Suites?
Daniel: Sure.
Tomer: The studio wants the advance.
Daniel: OK. I will give you a check. Let me recover a little from the flight.
Tomer: Of course. Thank you. Would you like coffee?
Daniel: I've already had some.
Tomer: Are you tired? Do you want to sleep?
Daniel: I'm waiting for Mom.
Tomer: She's at the Philharmonic.
Daniel: She's not at the Philharmonic!

Tomer is taken aback by Daniel's vehemence. The door opens. Neta and Dori enter.

Neta: Daddy!
Daniel: Neta!

They hug and kiss. Dori and Tomer feel uncomfortable with the apparent closeness between Neta and her father.

Daniel: Did you leave the opera in the middle of rehearsal? I told you I was waiting patiently. **(To Dori)** Hello, Dori. **(To Neta)** They shouldn't be giving you special treatment there because of me.

Neta: How are you? I was worried.

Daniel: **(To Dori)** You must calm her down a bit.

Neta: I was afraid all the way here that something had happened to you.

Daniel: Nothing happened, Neta. I missed you.

Neta: Why didn't you call? Why didn't you send a message?

Daniel: **(To Dori)** Why don't you give her Valium?

Dori: Hello, Daniel. **(Shakes his hand)**

Neta: Did you have breakfast? **(To Tomer)** Is there anything in the fridge?

Tomer: No.

Neta: **(To Daniel)** Mom doesn't have time for shopping. The day before yesterday, she ordered a pizza.

Daniel: Mom ordered a pizza?!

Neta: In the last few days, she has lost her shame.

Daniel: I don't understand why she doesn't answer. I left her three messages.

Neta: She's at the Philharmonic.

Daniel: The Philharmonic is closed today.

Neta: I spoke to her this morning. She was in your office.

Daniel: In my office??

Neta: Yes. She was working with Leon on your piano.

Daniel: On my piano?!

Neta: Why not?!

Daniel: Because it's mine!

Neta: **(Surprised by his anger)** What happened, Dad?

Tomer: He doesn't like it when somebody touches his piano.

Neta: **(To Daniel)** Are you sure everything is OK? I wanted to talk to you yesterday. I called you every hour. I also called the hotel. No one knew where you were.

Daniel: I'm here. Everything is perfectly fine.

Tomer: He's only tired, Neta.

Dori: Let's give him a little rest. I have to get back to the hospital. **(To Daniel)** I have four surgeries this morning...

Neta: You can go back.

Dori: Aren't you going back to the opera?

Daniel: You want them rehearsing Carmen without Carmen?

Neta: They can wait a little. I want to talk to you.

Daniel: You don't have to worry about me. I'm perfectly fine.
Dori: He wants to rest, Neta.
Neta: So he does. It's none of your business. Why did you even come with me?
Dori: I came with you because you thought he was sick.
Neta: **(Angrily)** But he's not sick.
Tomer: What happened to you all of a sudden? Did the opera cut out one of your arias?
Dori: Nothing happened to her. **(To Neta)** I'm calling a taxi.
Daniel: You should go with him.
Neta: Why?
Dori: **(Angrily)** Because he wants to rest.
Neta: **(To Daniel)** I thought you'd have some time for me. I wanted to talk to you. We're leaving for Berlin in two months. In the meantime, all kinds of things are happening. I'm very confused. I don't know what to do.
Daniel: We'll talk tomorrow.
Neta: Please, Dad. I have to decide quickly.
Daniel: Let me rest a little. I didn't sleep on the flight. **(Trying to hug her)** You know how much I missed you. I want to hear what you have to say even more than you want to say it.
Neta: Thank you.

She is offended and turns to leave. Dori follows her. The door opens. Ruth and Leon enter.

Neta: Mom! **(Hugging her)** Dad is unbearable. I left rehearsal to see how he is doing, and he won't talk to me. No one in the world can insult me like he does.
Daniel: All right. Sorry. Let's talk. **(But Neta turns to leave)**
Ruth: Wait a minute.
Dori: Goodbye.
Tomer: My recital starts tomorrow at 8. Do me a favor, and don't be late.
Dori: Don't worry.

Dori takes Neta's arm and they both leave. Daniel turns to Ruth and hugs her.

Ruth: Why didn't you let us know that you were coming?
Daniel: I didn't have time. Yesterday's rehearsal was canceled, and I had no plans for the weekend, so I took a taxi from Lincoln Center and got on the plane at the last minute. **(to Leon)**

Hello, Leon. **(Shakes his hand)**
 Ruth: Hi, Tomer. **(To Daniel)** The rehearsal was canceled?
 Daniel: Helen fell ill.
 Ruth: Couldn't you work with the orchestra?
 Daniel: I missed home.
 Leon: It's good that you came. I wanted to consult with you. Ruth plays wonderfully. She is very sensitive and very delicate, but precisely because of this, it's hard for me to coordinate the orchestra's entrances during the transitions. The violins come in without responding to her. The wind instruments are too powerful. I can't control them. In the first movement, for example, at the end of the cadenza²...
 Daniel: I will gladly advise you, but first I need coffee.
 Tomer: I'll get it for you. **(Goes to the kitchen)**
 Daniel: **(To himself)** The allegro is too long. Maybe I should cut out the trumpets.
 Leon: What?
 Daniel: No. Nothing.
 Leon: So, as I said, my problem is with the orchestra's entrances. I'm trying to shape them as a dialogue, but Ruth plays softly and sensitively, and the players don't respond to her nuances.
 Daniel: Then force them to listen to her. That's why you're the conductor. **(To Ruth)** I hope you're not rehearsing this weekend. I thought we could go to a hotel for a couple of days.
 Ruth: Our concert is on Tuesday. I'm not sure I'm ready.
 Daniel: You've been working all week.
 Leon: This is the first time I'm conducting Mozart's No. 20...
 Daniel: You've heard me do it at least ten times.
 Leon: I know, but I'm trying to...
 Ruth: I also need time, Daniel.
 Daniel: You played this Mozart with me when you were pregnant with Neta. That's how long you've been ready.
 Ruth: Leon conducts differently.
 Daniel: I'm terribly sorry. I came here to spend some time with you.
 Ruth: **(Amazed)** Daniel...
 Daniel: Please, go pack a suitcase.
 Ruth: We planned to work tomorrow.
 Daniel: You'll work on Sunday.

Ruth looks at Leon. Leon nods in agreement.

A short solo segment in which the soloist demonstrates his virtuosity ²

Leon: It's OK, Ruth. We can postpone a rehearsal or two. We'll meet on Sunday. Goodbye Daniel. Enjoy.

Daniel: Thank you.

Leon exits.

Ruth: Is everything OK?

Daniel: Yes.

Tomer comes back and hands Daniel his coffee.

Tomer: Are you guys away for the weekend?

Ruth: Yes.

Tomer: My recital is tomorrow.

Daniel: Don't worry. We'll be back.

Tomer: Both of you?

Ruth: Yes.

Tomer: I'll arrange tickets for you next to Neta and Dori. And I remind you that everyone there will be watching you. You won't whisper or yawn, and you won't doze off. And you'll applaud like everyone else. No more, no less.

Tomer goes to his room. Daniel and Ruth are left alone.

Ruth: Are you sure everything is OK?

Daniel: Everything is OK.

Ruth: Suddenly you come back. Suddenly you want me to cancel rehearsals.

Daniel: I would like you to spend the weekend with me at a hotel. Is that too much to ask?

Ruth: I'm not ready for the concert yet.

Daniel: Get ready on Sunday and Monday.

Ruth: I know how much time I need.

Daniel: I will help you for a few hours on Saturday.

Ruth: This is Leon's concert, as well as mine. We'll prepare on our own.

Daniel: If he can't build the transitions, maybe he really isn't a conductor.

Ruth: He conducts very well. He brings things out of me I didn't know were there.

Daniel: He does that?

Ruth: There is a lot of comfort in this concerto. A lot of

encouragement. Leon recognizes both.

Daniel: Anyone who hasn't conducted by the age of forty-five, will never be a conductor.

Ruth: He never conducted because he never pushed himself.

Daniel: Because he doesn't know how to lead the orchestra.

Ruth: He tries to give the piano a more prominent role. In his eyes, the conductor is unnecessary. The piano is the real conductor.

Daniel: **(Amazed)** Is that what he told you? That the conductor is unnecessary?!

Ruth: It's a metaphor for the relationship between me and the other players.

Daniel: He is afraid to conduct. That's why he says that the piano is the conductor.

Ruth: He's been your assistant for ten years, Daniel.

Daniel: He doesn't know the difference between a clarinet and an oboe, between a viola and a violin. I'm giving him a chance to conduct, and he's tormenting you like that?

Ruth: He doesn't torment me.

Daniel: And why is he suddenly using my piano?

Ruth: I used it.

Daniel: OK. Sorry.

Ruth: Alright. I'll book a hotel for us. Take a pill. Go to sleep. We'll leave this afternoon. **(Picks up her phone and dials)**

Daniel: We need a place with a piano.

Ruth: **(Stops)** For what? To help me?

Daniel: I thought you might want to help me.

Ruth: How?

Daniel: **(Hesitantly)** Things have gotten complicated with Helen.

Ruth: Complicated how? Did you sleep with her?

Daniel: What are you talking about?

Ruth: When she came here to hear me with the Philharmonic, you...

Daniel: Nothing happened then.

Ruth: I don't want to go through this again, but...

Daniel: She doesn't believe in me, Ruth. She doesn't believe in my concerto. Modern music is completely alien to her. She doesn't understand the musical images. The punctuation. She doesn't see the poetry and the irony in it. She's become impossible over the past few days. Yesterday she told me that she was taking the weekend to think. I'm not sure she'll come back.

Ruth: There are many pianists who would be happy to replace her.

Daniel: I'm making such an effort to interpret the concerto for her, that I no longer understand what I want. When I play the solo myself, it sounds foreign to me. As if someone from another

planet wrote it. She requires changes that I am unable to make.

Ruth: What changes?

Daniel: She tries to seduce the audience with her sentimentality. And the result is a sentimental horror. It was a mistake to work with her. She may really be the best pianist in America, but she comes from a simplistic, melodramatic world. She plays as if she's never suffered. Never been in turmoil.

Ruth: Maybe your perfectionism makes it difficult for her. Many musicians feel helpless around you. Have you spoken to the management?

Daniel: The management panders to her. They don't understand that her popularity castrates her. She thinks that the melody is the most important thing. I should have insisted that you play there. After all, I wrote this concerto for you. Your performance with the Philharmonic was amazing.

Ruth: So you need a place with a piano to work on the changes she wants.

Daniel: I want to give it a try. You know this concerto so well.

Ruth: I worked on it with you for two whole years. I put my soul into it. And as soon as they approached you from New York, you threw me out, as if I had no part in it.

Daniel: I didn't throw you out.

Ruth: It was my chance to break through in America.

Daniel: I fought for you until the last minute.

Ruth: And now you want me to keep investing in it, while she gets to play it?

Daniel: You can't settle scores with me now.

Ruth: I have a concert here in four days.

Daniel: You'll help me, and I'll help you.

Ruth: I hope I can. You know how much your betrayal hurt me. When you went to New York, I thought I wouldn't be here when you returned.

Daniel: I didn't betray you.

Ruth: You chose her.

Daniel: The orchestra chose her. I had no choice.

He tries to hug her, but she evades him.

Scene 2

The stage is dark. The orchestra's rehearsal is heard. Daniel conducts his concerto.

Daniel: Now with passion, flutes. Lust takes over. The lust is threatening. The sensuality is frightening. It's terrifying. But also mesmerizing... What's going on with you, violins? Sotto Voce! Sotto Voce! **(The piano playing is disrupted)** More confidence, Helen. You have to be more demanding... Your solo is the heart of this movement. The piano is full of passion. Don't be afraid of it. It's not a sin... Now the flutes enter. Now the clarinets. And you again, Helen, courageously. Although the heart drips blood... Crescendo. Crescendo... Why did you stop, Helen?... Excuse me?! You don't connect with the passion?! Don't you feel it?!... Don't hold back. Allow it to burst out... No. In this Allegro there isn't any aggression... Yes. There is a melody. It emerges, hides, and emerges again. You have to make an effort to keep track of it... What happened, Helen?... I'm no longer asking you for anything, except that you play what I've written...

Light on the living room. 4pm. Tomer comes in, holding a pizza tray. He puts it down on the table and sits down to eat. A moment later, Daniel, dressed in pajamas, enters.

Daniel: Is that you?
Tomer: I think so. Did I wake you up?
Daniel: I thought it was Mom.
Tomer: How did you sleep?
Daniel: Where is she?
Tomer: She went.
Daniel: When?
Tomer: When you fell asleep.
Daniel: Where to?
Tomer: To the Philharmonic.
Daniel: The Philharmonic is closed now.
Tomer: She has a key to your office.
Daniel: **(Take out his phone and dials)** She's not answering.
Tomer: She turns off the phone when she's working.

Daniel turns off the phone. Silence.

Daniel: **(To himself)** Maybe the rondo is too fast. That's why Helen doesn't feel the passion.
Tomer: What?
Daniel: Nothing.
Tomer: You want pizza? This is our lunch.

Daniel: No, thank you.
Tomer: I can make you a coffee.
Daniel: No, thank you.
Tomer: She saw that you were asleep and thought she could work a little before you left.
Daniel: That's what I thought.
Tomer: Do you want to go back to bed? **(Daniel doesn't answer)** So maybe you'll listen to me after all?
Daniel: I'm listening to you.
Tomer: I meant for you to listen to "À Thérèse". After you fell asleep, I suddenly thought of a different interpretation.
Daniel: What interpretation?
Tomer: It's a sonata about love. Most pianists play it with pathos. I think it's worth playing it with irony. Beethoven doesn't believe in this love.
Daniel: If that's how you feel, then...
Tomer: True, but it creates a contradiction. **(Sits down at the piano)** In the opening, the chords are lyrical and slow. It's only afterwards that the allegro becomes sarcastic. **(Plays)**
Daniel: **(A moment later)** Not now, Tomer. I have a terrible headache.
Tomer: When I play the allegro like that, it sounds a bit childish. Don't you think?
Daniel: I don't think so, but you don't need my advice. You are an excellent pianist.
Tomer: And look what's happening here... **(Continues to play)**
Daniel: Please, Tomer. Give me a moment to wake up. **(Tomer stops)** Maybe you should consult Mom. She plays this sonata much better than I do.
Tomer: I haven't been able to talk to her, lately.
Daniel: All right. I'll take a pill and listen to you. By the way, how do you know she went to the Philharmonic?
Tomer: She told me.
Daniel: And do you think she's really there?
Tomer: I don't follow her. Usually, she leaves before I wake up and comes back after I fall asleep.
Daniel: Where does she come back from?
Tomer: They also work at night. Leon is a violinist. He doesn't understand the pianist's technique.
Daniel: Give me the car keys.
Tomer: For what?
Daniel: I'm going to the Philharmonic.
Tomer: You said you'd take a pill and listen to me.

Daniel: I'll listen to you later.
Tomer: You don't have a few minutes for me?
Daniel: Just give me the keys.
Tomer: **(Angrily)** My recital is quite difficult, Dad. I also play Rachmaninoff's etudes, and Bach's Partita No. 6...
Daniel: I'll come back and listen.
Tomer: You never listen. When I started at the Academy, we decided that we'd sit down once a week and you'd listen to me. When did we ever do it? When I finally manage to catch you for a moment at breakfast, I tell you what I'm playing, offer an interpretation, share my doubts with you, and I realize that I don't interest you at all...
Daniel: Give me the keys!
Tomer: Do you see that you're not listening?
Daniel: We'll talk about it when I get back!
Tomer: I don't believe you. You despise anyone who isn't as perfect as you are, and you don't waste time on them. Not even on me.

Tomer throws the keys on the table. Daniel takes them and hurries to the door.

Tomer: Is that how you go to the Philharmonic? In pajamas?!

Daniel returns and goes into the bedroom. Tomer hastily eats another slice of pizza and turns to leave the house. Ruth and Leon enter.

Ruth: Hi Tomer. Did Dad wake up?
Tomer: He's crazy. I don't understand how you live with him.
Ruth: Wait a minute. What happened? Where are you going?
Tomer: I don't know.

Tomer starts to leave. Daniel comes in, dressed in his clothes, his shoes in his hands. He looks at Ruth and Leon suspiciously.

Ruth: I see you've already woken up.
Leon: We had a good rehearsal. I think we were able to solve some of the transitions.
Ruth: I booked a hotel for us on the beach. We'll also have a piano.
Daniel: So, are we going?
Ruth: I've already packed.

Ruth leaves. Daniel takes a slice of pizza that was left on the table.

Leon: You eat pizza, too? Did Tomer make you coffee? I'm almost a member of the family here. I can make you one. **(Daniel nods no)** By the way, I am very happy that you are willing to help us with the rehearsals, but there's no need. Our difficulties stem from the depth of our exploration. Luckily, Ruth is a great pianist. Open. Attentive. Her playing is so sensual. She reveals new worlds in Mozart to me.

Daniel: Of course.

Leon: She told me about your difficulties in New York. I'd be happy to contribute to the revisions. I know your concerto quite well.

Daniel: Thank you.

Leon: Ruth will help you. She is such a wise woman. So generous...

Daniel: **(His patience has run out)** I know very well what kind of woman she is.

Leon is silent, embarrassed by Daniel's reaction. Ruth enters, carrying a suitcase.

Ruth: Shall we leave?

Leon: Have a great vacation. We'll meet on Sunday morning.

Leon and Ruth embrace. Daniel restrains himself and remains silent.

Leon: Goodbye, Daniel. Good luck.

Daniel: Thank you.

Leon leaves. Daniel puts on his shoes.

Ruth: You could be a little nicer to him. He is so insecure. He is afraid to express his most brilliant ideas. He's a much deeper person than you think.

Daniel: Sorry. I couldn't sleep. Suddenly I'm not sure about the revisions Helen is demanding. I can't fool myself. I'm a modern person and so is my music. She's a classical pianist, and she doesn't connect with it. I may have to cancel this concert. Apparently, most musicians in the world aren't ready for music like this yet.

Ruth: Don't talk nonsense. You're a wonderful composer. Every good orchestra plays your music.

Daniel: I've been thinking about it for a few days now. Helen isn't the only thing troubling me. I suddenly feel a kind of terrible helplessness. No. Not helplessness. Heartlessness.

Ruth: Let's go. When we start working, you'll forget that you felt it.

Daniel: You have no idea how much I needed you there. You're not just a better pianist than Helen. You're a real human being - in a place where there aren't many left.

Ruth: There are excellent musicians there, Daniel. Maybe you don't listen to them enough.

Daniel: As a person, I am willing to listen to anyone. As a musician, I only listen to those who have something significant to say.

He takes the suitcase. The door opens and Neta enters, a suitcase in her hand.

Neta: Hello Mom. Hello Dad.

Ruth: We're just going.

Neta: No problem. Go.

Daniel: Are you going away too?

Neta: I left home.

Ruth: Again?

Neta: I can't go on anymore.

Daniel: Why? Dori is such a nice guy.

Ruth: Just a week ago you said you weren't getting divorced.

Neta: I'm not going to Berlin with him. Here I'm singing Carmen. There I may end up singing in the chorus.

Ruth: In a few months they'll see how good you are.

Neta: There are a thousand like me there.

Daniel: Give yourself a chance. If you don't get good roles, then...

Neta: **(To Daniel)** I have to talk to you about it. I tried yesterday, too. I want to stay here for a few days. I have to think.

Ruth: What about?

Daniel: You can stay here as long as you want.

Ruth: Do you want me to talk to Dori?

Neta: No. **(Crying)**

Daniel: Enough, Neta. I can't bear to see you crying. Do you want us to stay with you? **(She's still crying)** I'll call Berlin tomorrow evening. I know several opera house directors...

Neta: Go already. Go.

Ruth: And don't be so quick to get divorced. Take a bath. I'll make you dinner.

Daniel: She says we can go.

Ruth: We'll go after she calms down.

Daniel: She's a big girl. She can make herself dinner.

Ruth: Nothing will happen if we leave in an hour.

Neta: Dori doesn't understand that if I continue singing here for a few more years, then I'll be able to sing in Milan, in New York...

The doorbell rings. Dori enters.

Dori: I want you to take your suitcase and come home.
Neta: So I can undermine your mental stability?
Dori: You ran out of the house and were almost run over.
Neta: Because you ran after me.
Dori: Because you ran away.
Neta: Because I don't want to play tennis.
Dori: We agreed I'd book a court.
Neta: My father came for two days, and I want to see him.
Dori: I suggested you see him this evening.
Neta: I'll see him whenever I want!
Ruth: Stop yelling.
Daniel: **(To Dori)** Sit down for a moment. **(To Neta)** There's no point in this argument anymore. Mom and I are going away. You can play tennis.
Neta: You're also telling me what to do?
Daniel: I'm trying to help you solve a problem.
Neta: The problem is much bigger. **(To Dori)** You can see that I don't feel well, and you force me anyway.
Dori: I didn't force you. I offered.
Neta: You said that you are always playing second fiddle to my father.
Dori: I didn't say that.
Neta: You insist on going to Berlin, just to keep me away from him.
Dori: I insist, because I'm doing a surgical fellowship there.
Ruth: **(To Neta)** That's perfectly fine, Neta. Dad wasn't offended. He knows that sometimes people say things which they don't mean.
Neta: He said it to come between us.
Dori: Just the opposite. I said I envy his relationship with you.
Ruth: I also envy his relationship with you.
Dori: Come home. I may be able to shorten the fellowship to a year.
Neta: A year?! **(Pulls herself together)** Do me a favor, Dori. I don't want to fight with you. Certainly not here. I don't feel well. I need to calm down. When you pressure me like this, it only makes things harder. Go get some sleep. We'll talk tomorrow...
Dori: I don't want to fight either, Neta...

Neta: Then goodbye.
Dori: Goodbye. **(Exits)**
Neta: He doesn't understand anything. I'm twenty-six. I need freedom. Freedom to search. To explore. To try. **(To Daniel)** The freedom you've always taken for yourself. That's why you were conducting the Philharmonic when you were my age. If I had that kind of freedom, I'd already be singing Carmen in Paris. Dori does everything he can to keep me down. That's why I'm afraid to sing with the same ferocity you conduct with... **(Crying)**
Ruth: Enough, Neta. Enough. You're not afraid of anyone. That's why you're singing Carmen. Let's take a bath. Eat something. We'll think about how to explain it to Dori.
Daniel: I thought we were going.
Ruth: I can't leave her like this.
Daniel: We agreed to work together.
Ruth: I'll give her a pill. She'll fall asleep. We'll work here.
Daniel: That's out of the question, Ruth. We need quiet. We have to concentrate. I have to strengthen the melody in the allegro...

But Ruth leads Neta to the bathroom. Daniel is left alone. A moment later the door opens and Dori returns.

Dori: So, you're going away for the weekend?
Daniel: I hope so.
Dori: And where's Tomer?
Daniel: Why do you ask?
Dori: I don't think we can leave Neta alone.
Daniel: Why? Did something happen?
Dori: I don't know. I'm terribly worried about her. In recent weeks, when she's alone, she experiences bouts of anxiety she can't control...
Daniel: She's not suffering from anxiety. Carmen is too demanding a role. She still doesn't know what to do with it.
Dori: I'm not sure that's the only reason. She also has outbursts of anger. You saw.
Daniel: She may also be afraid of the trip to Berlin. She's not sure she'll find work there.
Dori: At least there, no one will say she got Carmen because of her father.
Daniel: You know that's not true.
Dori: But it hurts her and shakes her. It's been going on for quite a while.

Daniel: What the hell are you talking about? What's been going on for quite a while?

Dori: These bouts of anxiety. I suggested she take Cipralex...

Daniel: She doesn't suffer from anxiety, and she doesn't need any Cipralex. It's hard for her because you're at the hospital most of the time.

Dori: What troubles her more is that I don't play the piano.

Daniel: She knew that before she married you.

Dori: She thinks anyone who doesn't play like you can't love like you.

Daniel: That's garbage.

Dori: I still think you both should stay with her for a few hours, until she calms down a little.

Daniel: Can't you stay with her?

Dori: You saw for yourself.

Daniel: We can't postpone our trip.

Dori: Just for a few hours. Maybe she'll come home a little later.

Daniel: And if she doesn't?

Dori: You'll have to stay with her until the morning.

Daniel: We really can't, Dori.

Dori: I don't think you have a choice.

Daniel: We don't have a choice?! Why?

Dori: Because I don't know how to help her. She's immersed in some imaginary world of operas in Milan, London and Paris, and she's gradually drifting away from me. You probably raised her in a world without boundaries, and she doesn't understand that we have to live within the limits reality imposes. When I tell her that, she runs away. I don't want to lose her.

Daniel: What exactly are you accusing us of? Raising her without boundaries? She knows the limits of reality very well, but she isn't willing to let them become the limits of her dreams. And if you don't want to lose her, don't put the idea that she has anxiety attacks into her head. Show her she can trust you. That you're willing to postpone the trip to Berlin so she can sing a few more good roles at the opera here...

Scene 3

The stage is dark. The orchestra's rehearsal is heard.

Daniel: Very good. Very moving. Now, Crescendo. Now the timpani and the trumpets... yes. Largo. A deep breath. Eyes on the

horizon. With pride. Now Diminuendo. Slower. Hesitant. Cautious... No, Helen. That's not what's written in the score... I gave you a new score this morning. I worked on it all night and brought out the melody as you requested... I don't understand. Do you want me to rewrite this concerto from scratch?... I'm not forcing anything on you. I'm asking you to try again. This is the moment of disillusionment. The moment of the transition from desire to rejection. From longing to disgust. From affection to loathing... You don't connect with it because you don't try... I can only write what I feel, Helen... You must respect my loyalty to myself... **(In pain)** Helen, I put this concerto in your hands because I believed in you...

Light on the living room and kitchen. 8pm. Ruth prepares soup for Neta. Daniel is standing next to her. Tomer sits on the sofa, smoking a joint.

Daniel: We don't have much time, Ruth. You can't waste it on chicken soup.
Ruth: She loves chicken soup.
Daniel: So order it from a restaurant.
Ruth: She wants my soup.
Tomer: I can do it for her, Mom.
Daniel: Now do you understand why I wanted to go to the hotel?
Ruth: We'll begin in a few minutes.
Daniel: That's what you've been saying for three hours.
Ruth: She can't stop crying.
Tomer: Go work with Dad. I'll give her the soup.
Ruth: I want to sit with her for a few more minutes.
Daniel: Why is she crying like this?
Ruth: I don't know.
Daniel: Maybe I'll talk to her?
Ruth: When she calms down.
Tomer: Something always happens to her before a concert of mine.
Ruth: She really doesn't feel well.
Daniel: Fine. Give her the soup and we'll get to work. The allegro is the most problematic part. Helen thinks it's technical. That I demand technique instead of emotion. She doesn't realize that the mental turmoil stems from suffocation. Shortness of breath.
Ruth: Helen doesn't interest me, Daniel.
Daniel: You're right. Her criticism is irrelevant. She has to play it like you. Like a marathon runner on the last kilometer.

Ruth: I'll be back in a minute. **(She takes the bowl of soup and heads towards Neta's room)**
Daniel: **(To himself)** But if I change the melody in the allegro, I have to change it in the Andante as well...

Neta enters. Daniel sees that she is in distress. Ruth places the soup on the table.

Neta: I want to go to the emergency room.
Daniel: What's wrong?
Neta: I'm bleeding.
Daniel: What?!
Neta: Mom didn't tell you? I'm pregnant. I want to have an abortion.
Daniel: You're pregnant?! My baby...
Ruth: **(To Neta)** It's only a few drops, Neta. It's nothing. Sit down and eat. **(To Daniel)** I didn't want to bother you right now.
Daniel: What month are you in?
Neta: Third.
Tomer: From Dori?
Neta: Who else?
Tomer: Does he know?
Neta: He's not going to know, either.
Ruth: No one will give you an abortion because of bleeding like this.
Daniel: Mom had bleeding when she was pregnant with both of you, too.
Neta: Really? That's all you can say?
Daniel: What do you want me to say?
Neta: Tell me what to do! That's why I've been trying to talk to you all week. How can I give birth now, when I don't know where I'm going to live? I don't know who I'll be with. I don't know where I'm going to sing. I don't know if I'll even be able to sing...
Ruth: You're singing Carmen now, Neta...
Neta: I'm not sure I can do it. Lately, I've been feeling completely numb. I can't love. I can't feel compassion. No child deserves a mother like me.
Daniel: That's destructive self-criticism, Neta.
Ruth: You'll soon discover what a wonderful mother you are. Dad and I will help.
Tomer: I'll be the best uncle.
Daniel: You have doubts, like any musician trying to find her way. It's natural and it's right. I'm going away on Sunday. Mom has a concert on Tuesday. We'll talk about it when I get back.

Neta: I want to talk about it now.
 Daniel: I understand, but...
 Neta: But you have a concerto that you need to work on.
 Daniel: If it's so urgent for you, we can talk tomorrow night.
 Tomer: Tomorrow night you're coming to my recital.
 Daniel: I remember. **(To Neta)** I really don't know what to say. On the one hand, I'm very happy for you. On the other hand, you're only twenty-six. You're singing major roles now. You might really want to think about...
 Neta: If I have an abortion, Dori will leave me.
 Daniel: I thought you wanted to leave him.
 Neta: I thought so too. But without him, I'd be completely alone. On the other hand, he doesn't help me stay sane. He has no idea what it means to sing opera.
 Ruth: He understands.
 Neta: He will say this is the right time to go to Berlin.
 Daniel: He might be right. In two months you won't be able to perform. Even after the birth it won't be so simple...
 Neta: Who will even remember me after the birth? Who will give me roles?
 Ruth: This child won't stop you, Neta. On the contrary. When you become a mother, you'll discover things in yourself you never knew. Most of the great singers are mothers.
 Daniel: You have another month to decide.
 Neta: I don't have another month. I have to decide now. Damn your concerts. I'll catch a taxi outside. You can go to a hotel, for all I care. I've known all my life that I can't trust you. Even though I tried. Even though I did everything to please you...
(Facing the door)
 Daniel: Wait a minute. I'll take you.
 Tomer: I'll take her.
 Ruth: You're not taking her anywhere. **(To Neta)** If you don't want soup, then come to bed and stop whining. You're a big girl already. You don't have to be frightened by a few drops of blood. Drink some water and go to sleep. In the morning, you'll wake up and feel that you're already in love with what's growing in your stomach.
 Neta: I don't want to fall in love with it.

Ruth takes her arm and leads her to her room. Silence. Tomer lights another joint.

Tomer: Listen, Dad. If you want to work on your concerto now,

maybe I can help you.

Daniel: You?

Tomer: I've improved a lot over the past year. I can learn it in a few hours. I won't play it like Mom, but maybe we can make the changes Helen wants.

Daniel: Thank you very much, but you need to prepare for your own concert, don't you?

Tomer: Yours is much more important.

Daniel: I have more time.

Tomer: I'm not sure Mom will join you in the next few hours.

Daniel: We'll wait for her a few minutes.

Tomer: Don't you see that she doesn't want to do it?

Daniel: She'll want to.

Tomer: Don't be so stubborn, Dad. I did Tchaikovsky's First at the Academy this year and Beethoven's Fourth...

Daniel: Those are classical pieces, Tomer. My music is a bit different.

Tomer: But still, maybe I can...

Daniel: Mom has already worked on it. She knows it.

Tomer: **(Angrily)** Give me a chance!

Daniel: **(Angrily)** She owes it to me. Without me, she would have stayed a piano teacher in some miserable conservatory. **(Ruth enters)** There she is.

Ruth: Now she's started vomiting.

Daniel: She's vomiting?

Ruth: She's frightened. She's confused. She didn't plan this pregnancy.

She takes a bottle of water and heads back to Neta's room. Daniel blocks her way.

Daniel: **(Desperately)** Forget the water. Something went wrong there in New York. When the orchestra plays this concerto, all I hear are screams and wails that mean nothing. I can't understand why I wrote it. What I wanted. What I was looking for. Helen says there are no melodies in it. That I'm incapable of writing melodies. That's why there's no feeling in it...

Ruth: Don't exaggerate, Daniel.

Daniel: You've played this concerto dozens of times. You can explain it to me.

Ruth: All right. I understand. I'll give her the water and come back.

Daniel: Can't she get it herself? I'm beginning to suspect that you're doing everything you can to avoid me. Are you punishing me for something? Are you getting back at me?

Ruth: There are more important things than you right now.

Ruth tries to get around Daniel, but he blocks her way.

Daniel: Wait. I have a suggestion. You'll play my concerto in New York. You. You wanted a chance to break through there. Here it is. We'll work together today and tomorrow. On Sunday we'll fly. On Monday we'll start rehearsals with the orchestra. Everyone there already knows Helen has left. They'll discover very quickly that you're much better than she is.

Ruth: I have a concert here on Tuesday.

Daniel: There are dozens of pianists here who would be happy to play it.

Ruth: I've been working on it for two weeks now. Leon has poured his heart and soul into it.

Daniel: I don't care about Leon now.

Ruth: I can't abandon him.

Daniel: And you can abandon me?

Ruth: You don't need me. You're a great composer. You're one of the most important conductors in the world. That's why the New York Philharmonic invited you. **(Tries again to get past him)**

Daniel: Wait a minute. I don't understand. What are you actually saying? You're not coming with me?

Ruth: No.

Daniel: Because of Leon's concert?

Ruth: Yes.

Daniel: Can't you see that I need your help?

Ruth: You don't need any help. Here you're the god of the piano. That's why no pianist ever questioned you. Now suddenly someone criticizes you, and you panic like an amateur.

Daniel: I'm still asking you to...

Ruth: I'm not going with you.

Daniel: Because of your stupid suspicion that I slept with Helen?

Tomer: Dad...

Ruth: Because this concert is important to me. Because I play it much more freely. With much more hope. Because I've never played like that.

Daniel: You've always played like that.

Ruth: I owe it to Leon. He helped me through my most difficult days.

Daniel: He?! He could help you? How? How did he help you? I want to know. **(She doesn't answer)** Don't tell me you're sleeping

with him.

Ruth: Are you crazy?

Tomer: I'm here, Dad. I can hear everything.

Daniel: Suddenly I understand. Everything is clear now. It's written on your face.

Ruth: What's happening to you, Daniel?

Tomer: Enough, Dad. **(Moves toward him)**

Daniel: This is your revenge. All these rehearsals were just an alibi. While I was in New York, he slept with you in our bed. That's why you feel so free with him...

Tomer: **(Intervening)** Leon never slept here, Dad.

Ruth: I swear to you, nothing like that happened.

Daniel: I don't believe you. You only accuse me of sleeping with Helen to justify it.

Ruth: Are you out of your mind? I've been playing in the Philharmonic for twenty years. I've travelled all over the world with it. I've never been tempted by anyone. Even when you allowed yourself to...

Tomer: Enough, Mom.

Daniel: I'm not blind. Ever since I got here, you've been hovering around him. Whispering to him. Playing for him on my piano, in my office. This can't go on. If you're not playing for me, you won't be playing for him either. **(In his rage, he grabs her hand and twists one of her fingers)**

Ruth: **(Screaming)** You're breaking my finger!!

Tomer: Leave her alone! Leave her alone!!

Daniel: And you won't sleep with him anymore!

Tomer: Dad!!

Tomer rushes to Ruth's aid. But Daniel doesn't let go. Ruth lets out a cry and goes into the hallway. Tomer follows her. Daniel is stunned by what he has done. Neta enters.

Neta: Dad??

Daniel: Oh my God. What have I done to her...

Neta: Don't come near me.

Daniel: Go see how she is. I need to know she's all right...

Neta: She'll be all right. Tomer is with her. I want to know you're all right.

Daniel: I don't know. I don't understand. I can't understand. You have to explain it to me...

Daniel turns to the window and opens it. Neta is afraid he is about to

jump, and she rushes to him.

Neta: Get away from the window!

Daniel: I need air, Neta...

Neta: **(Dragging him to the couch)** You're not moving from here now. You've already done enough.

Daniel: Suddenly I felt an electric shock inside my head. I couldn't think. I couldn't see. I couldn't hear. Then she screamed...
(Struggling to breathe again) Air... I'm about to suffocate...
(Turns to the window again)

Neta: **(Pulls him back to the couch)** Sit down!!!

Scene 4

The stage is dark. The orchestra's rehearsal is heard.

Daniel: Legato... Legato... I wrote it in bold: legato. It means that the sounds are connected. It is the continuity that creates the melody. What's not clear here?... Stop. Stop. **(But the playing continues)** I don't understand these accusations, Helen... Don't you hear the melody? Don't you feel the longing? The passion?... When my wife played this concerto, it burned with passion. You heard her with your own ears... **(To the orchestra, furiously)** I believe I asked you to stop!! **(To Helen)** I appreciate your opinion very much, Helen, but my music is not artificial. It is not an abstract idea. I wrote every bar in a storm of emotion... **(To the orchestra)** Silence!! I said silence!! **(The orchestra falls silent)** If you surrender to the music, Helen, you'll feel how it sets the soul free. How it allows your passion to break through. How it challenges reason, the social order... You may be a great pianist, Helen, but I'm not willing to put up with your tantrums!!

Light on the living room. Saturday. 8am. Daniel is sitting in an armchair, Tomer is on the couch, smoking a joint.

Daniel: Go to bed. You didn't sleep all night.

Tomer: I'm not tired.

Daniel: I'm not going to do anything to myself.

Tomer: I hope not.

Daniel: You have a concert tonight. Get some sleep.

Tomer: When Mom gets back from the hospital.

Daniel: I'll wake you when she's back.

Tomer: I'm not leaving the two of you alone for a moment.
Daniel: Is that what she told you?
Tomer: She didn't have to.
Daniel: **(Angrily)** Stop being so afraid of me.
Tomer: Take a joint, Dad. Maybe it'll clear your head.
Daniel: My head is perfectly fine. By the way, I prepared the check for your CD. I left it open. Put in as much as you need. **(Gives him the check)**
Tomer: Are you trying to bribe me?
Daniel: Take it before I regret it.
Tomer: It will take a lot more than this for us to forgive you.

But he takes the check. Neta enters.

Neta: **(To Tomer)** You can go to sleep.
Tomer: I think he's OK.
Neta: Dori will come to examine him soon.
Daniel: I don't need to be examined!
Neta: **(To Tomer)** Don't worry. I'll manage. **(To Daniel)** I'm making us breakfast.

Tomer exits. Neta turns into the kitchen. Daniel follows her.

Daniel: How do you feel?
Neta: Better. You?
Daniel: I don't understand why they're still in the hospital. I hope she can play.
Neta: You should have thought about that before...
Daniel: Of course I should. But when she said she wasn't coming to New York with me, a whole movie started playing in my head. Last week I called here at midnight, your time, and he answered.
Neta: So what?
Daniel: What's he doing here at midnight?
Neta: They were working.
Daniel: At midnight? And yesterday I got home, and she's with him. I fell asleep for a few hours, and she went out with him.
Neta: They have a concert next week.
Daniel: This Mozart doesn't need so many rehearsals.
Neta: Leon admires you. He wouldn't even dare think about Mom.
Daniel: Don't be naïve.
Neta: She helps him because he doesn't get along with the orchestra.
Daniel: But he gets along very well with her.

Neta: I swear to you that there is nothing between them.
 Daniel: So why did she call him to take her to the hospital?
 Neta: Because she didn't want you to take her.
 Daniel: You could have taken her.
 Neta: I didn't feel well, and she wanted Tomer to watch you, so that you wouldn't go near the window again...
 Daniel: I wanted to get some air.
 Neta: All right. I'll believe you. But as for Leon, you're wrong. What woman would want to have an affair with him? Certainly not Mom. We talk about everything. She'd tell me.
 Daniel: Didn't she tell you?
 Neta: Would I have kept quiet if she'd told me?
 Daniel: You're still taking her side.
 Neta: I'm on your side. I always have been. Even when there were all kinds of rumors about your affairs in the Philharmonic.
 Daniel: Are you bringing this up again?
 Neta: When Helen came to hear Mom play your concerto, you stayed overnight with her in the hotel.
 Daniel: I stayed to talk to her. We sat in the bar, at the piano, until morning.
 Neta: Mom heard something else.
 Daniel: Don't you see you're taking her side?
 Neta: I'm trying to explain to you why she's so hurt.
 Daniel: So now she's taking revenge on me?!
 Neta: What's gotten into you, Dad? Are you losing it?
 Daniel: **(Angrily)** I'm losing it?! Why?! Because one day I found out that Mom was cheating on me? That she refuses to play for me? Do I have to cut my wrists for you to understand that?
 Neta: **(Shouting)** I'm not going to listen to this anymore.
 Daniel: All right. All right. I'm sorry, Neta. I really don't understand what I'm saying. Maybe I'm accusing Mom of something she didn't do. Apparently, I can't see who is with me and who is against me...
 Neta: You can't do whatever you want, Dad. Certainly you can't hurt Mom like that. If you don't understand that, you won't be able to live with us.

The doorbell rings.

Daniel: That's her.

The door opens and Dori enters.

Dori: Good morning.
Neta: I'm glad you came.
Dori: I was in surgery all night. How are you?
Neta: I'm OK. How's Mom?
Dori: She's on her way. She's already been released. **(To Daniel)** I consulted the psychiatrist on duty. Take a Clonex now. It'll calm you down a little. Take another one this afternoon.
Daniel: All right.
Dori: He knows who you are. He'll come see you this evening.
Daniel: Thank you. **(Goes to the kitchen to take the pill and says to himself)** I should have removed the violins at the beginning of the Rondo. They're too naïve for such emotional turmoil...

Daniel leaves. Dori holds Neta's hands.

Dori: We have to keep this baby, Neta. It's our chance. When you stop performing, we'll go to Berlin, have the baby there, and come back after a year.
Neta: We still have time to think about it.
Dori: And you don't do anything without talking to me.
Neta: I hope Mom won't file a complaint with the police.
Dori: She won't.
Neta: So maybe they'll still be able to continue together.
Dori: Of course they will. Us, too. You'll be a wonderful mother. The child will be great. He'll bring some order to our lives.
Neta: I can't talk about it now.
Dori: Your parents aren't an excuse to give up on him.
Neta: Can you hear him? He's talking to himself.
Dori: He'll stop soon. The pill is very effective.
Neta: This morning he threatened to cut his wrists. I don't understand what happened. He was always the smartest, most charming person. I called him in New York almost every day. He was so optimistic.
Dori: He'll be fine. Your Mom too. Now you need to concentrate on yourself and the child.
Neta: He is not a child yet.
Dori: **(Angrily)** What did you say? What did you say?
Neta: You heard what I said.
Dori: I won't give up on this child, Neta. Under no circumstances. You can't afford to repeat your father's mistake. Reality is stronger than dreams about art. And in reality, you have a child in your belly. It's still the size of a finger, but it's real. Even more real than Carmen. Do you understand?

Neta: You don't understand.
Dori: I understand more than you think. Your parents ruined their lives because of their delusional dreams about art. I won't let that happen to us too. **(She doesn't answer)** And don't make me think you want to get rid of this child so you can leave me...
Neta: I'm not making you think anything.

Ruth and Leon enter. Ruth's hand is in a cast and in a sling. Neta rushes to her. Daniel, who is in the kitchen, hesitates.

Neta: Mommy...

Neta wants to hug her, but Ruth pulls away and sits down in one of the armchairs.

Leon: The finger's broken.
Neta: Broken?!
Leon: They'll take off the cast in a month.
Neta: It's just a concert, Mom. You'll have many more of them.
Ruth: Just a concert? It's my whole life.
Neta: It was an accident. An unforgivable accident. He'll have to get treatment, take medication. He knows that already.

Daniel approaches Ruth.

Daniel: Forgive me, Ruth. You have no idea how sorry I am. I lost control for a moment. It won't happen again. I swear. I'll do anything I can for you...
Leon: It will be two months before she can play again.
Daniel: Then we'll postpone the concert for two months. I'll conduct it.
Leon: This is my concert, Daniel. As soon as she's able, we'll continue rehearsing.
Ruth: They won't postpone it, Leon. It's already sold out. You should look for a replacement.
Leon: The concert is mostly yours.
Ruth: You can't give up on this opportunity.
Leon: I'm not conducting the concert without you.
Daniel: Don't argue with her. She told you to look for a replacement.
Leon: I'm thinking about her and what's best for her.
Daniel: Thank you. We appreciate it very much. But this is a difficult moment for us, and I don't think you should be here. Please, be considerate and leave us alone.

Leon: I'm not sure I can leave her alone here.
Neta: She's not alone. We're with her.
Daniel: **(Firmly)** Get out of here, Leon! Right away! No, don't say another word. Just get out!
Leon: Why should I be considerate? Did you show consideration? Toward her? Toward me?
Neta: Don't argue, Leon.
Daniel: Get out and don't come back! I don't want to see you again! Not here and not in the Philharmonic! You won't conduct again anywhere in the world!
Neta: Dad...
Daniel: Don't make me throw you out.
Neta: Enough, Dad.
Leon: In two months, I'll be conducting the concert with her.
Ruth: Please, Leon.
Neta: **(To Leon)** Get out of here!
Dori: Don't you hear what she's telling you?

He leads Leon to the door. Daniel sits down at the table. Silence. Tomer, who has come out of the shower, approaches Ruth.

Tomer: Hi Mom. How are you?
Ruth: As you can see.
Tomer: Two months?
Ruth: Apparently.
Tomer: I hope the orchestra will agree to postpone.
Ruth: Me too.
Tomer: And if not?
Ruth: I asked Leon to look for a replacement.
Tomer: Yes, I heard you.
Ruth: We have no choice.
Tomer: Of course. There are lots of pianists who would be happy to replace you. I'm not sure you've thought about it, but maybe it's worth thinking about the possibility that I...
Ruth: It's Leon's decision.
Tomer: So let him test me. I played this Mozart when I was sixteen. I know it very well.
Ruth: OK. I'll suggest it to him.
Tomer: You're only going to suggest it?
Neta: Enough, Tomer.
Tomer: You know how sorry I am for what happened, but it has already happened. Maybe this is my chance.
Neta: Tomer!

Tomer: Leon will do whatever you tell him.

Ruth doesn't answer. Silence. Daniel turns to Neta, Dori and Tomer.

Daniel: I think Mom and I want to be alone.

Neta: Are you sure, Mom?

Dori: I think it's better to have someone else at home.

Daniel: You can stay here. Mom and I will go to our room.

Neta: And leave the door open.

Daniel: OK.

Ruth: That's not necessary. We will talk here. You should hear us. It concerns you as well. **(Pauses)** I... I'm leaving home.

Daniel: What?

Ruth: I'm leaving home. I want him to sleep in his study tonight. Tomorrow morning, he will go to New York. Until he comes back, I'll find an apartment.

Daniel: You're leaving the house?!

Neta: Please, Mom. Listen to him. You can't leave now.

Daniel: I told you. It won't happen again.

Dori: You're under the influence of painkillers, Ruth. You shouldn't be making such a decision.

Ruth: I've had all night to think about it.

Daniel: It's true. It's terrible. You didn't deserve it. My suspicions were unfounded. I've already admitted it. I've given up on Helen. She won't play my concerto. You will. I've already told the orchestra I'm sick, and I canceled tomorrow's flight. We'll go to New York as soon as your finger heals.

Ruth: **(Talks directly to him for the first time since she entered)**
You cancelled your flight?

Daniel: I'm staying with you.

Ruth: Who asked you to?

Daniel: You don't have to ask.

Ruth: If you're staying, then I'm leaving right now.

Daniel: That's out of the question.

Neta: You just got back from the hospital, Mom. Take some time to think it over. Don't you see that Dad needs you more than ever?

Ruth: I'd really like to help him, but I can't anymore.

Tomer: **(Lights a joint)** No one can help him except you, Mom. But apparently you don't want to help anyone anymore.

Ruth: That's not true, Tomer.

Tomer: You're leaving us as if we were strangers you happened to meet on the street today.

Daniel: Because of one moment when I lost control, Ruth?

Ruth: Because I was never important to you. Because you never appreciated me. You became intoxicated with your own success and thought I had to play for you your way. When I begged you to let me play my way, you used your power to impose yourself on me... Just as you did with several other young women who wanted to play in the orchestra... And you slept with them... With Helen too... That's why you chose her to play the concerto... In an instant, you forgot everything I had done for you and went to her. And when she decided to stand her ground and play her way, you panicked and came back... And now you expect me to be at your disposal again...

Daniel: That's not true, Ruth. I have always appreciated you. That's why I've always worked with you. I value you far more than Helen. And I swear I didn't sleep with her.

Ruth: And when you found out that I was no longer willing to be at your disposal, you broke my finger.

Tomer: It was an episode, Mom. I'm about to have one myself.

Ruth: It was the tip of the iceberg!

Daniel: I don't understand. We've lived together for twenty-eight years...

Ruth: You don't live with anyone. You live with yourself and your music... **(To Neta)** Will you help me pack?

Neta: No.

Ruth: **(To Tomer)** Come, Tomer.

But Tomer doesn't answer. Ruth turns to go out into the corridor. Daniel stops her.

Daniel: Wait, Ruth. I'm willing to accept everything you've said. If my devotion to music comes at your expense, then I'll give it up. The concert in New York too. I'm willing to stop writing. I'm willing to stop conducting...

Ruth: You won't stop anything. You can't live without music, and you'll sacrifice all of us for it. You've already sacrificed me. That's why I didn't believe in myself. That's why I didn't fight to play your concerto, even though no one will play it like me.

Daniel: I thought that music would make me a better person.

She goes out into the hallway. He goes after her, but Neta blocks him.

Neta: She's tired, Dad. She didn't sleep all night.

He tries to get around her, but Dori holds him.

Daniel: I want to talk to her.
Dori: Let her be by herself for a while.
Daniel: Why? Because I'm dangerous?
Dori: Because she's still afraid.
Neta: She needs to think a little. She needs to calm down.
Daniel: I'll calm her down.
Neta: Wait until she comes out. And if you want her to forgive you, tell her the truth. She's right. She paid the price for the freedom you took for yourself all your life. Including the affair with Helen.
Daniel: I didn't have any affair with Helen!
Neta: You can't imagine how hurt she was.
Daniel: She was hurt because Helen was chosen to play the concerto.
Neta: We were hurt too.
Daniel: The affair with Helen is just a rumor, Neta.
Tomer: **(Angrily)** I don't care about your affairs, Dad! I want to play Mozart's concerto instead of Mom! If she's not willing to arrange it for me, then you will. D'you hear?! **(Dark)**

Scene 5

The stage is dark. The orchestra's rehearsal is heard. A minute later, the concerto comes to an end

Daniel: Bravo. Bravo. Thank you. You did an excellent job. There is still a long way to go, but... **(Notices Helen leaving)** Just a minute, Helen. Where are you going? I haven't finished yet... I am willing to hear all your complaints... I'm a tyrant?! Who have I tortured? Who have I been cruel to?... I forced my will on you?!... I'm not a megalomaniac, and I don't think every note I've written is genius... I write because I believe in the power of music to make us better... In a day or two, you'll begin to feel how the music redeems you, just as it redeems me... Wait a minute. You can't betray me like that!

Saturday. Noon. Tomer is sitting on the couch, smoking a joint. Neta and Dori are sitting at the table.

Tomer: I hear them talking.
Neta: He's talking. I'm not sure she's answering.
Tomer: At least he's stopped talking to himself. **(Laughs)**

Neta: I hope she hears him.
Dori: **(Frustrated)** You're not hearing me. If the bleeding continues, you have to go to the ER.
Neta: I can't leave them like this.
Dori: Tomer is keeping an eye on them.
Neta: Tomer can't even keep an eye on himself.
Tomer: Why should I keep an eye on them? Did they keep an eye on me? Do you remember how many times they forgot me in kindergarten? How many times the teacher took me home with her? **(Laughs)**
Dori: I'm beginning to suspect that you're doing everything you can to lose this child.
Neta: I can't do anything now. Mom might manage. But something is terribly wrong with Dad.
Dori: He's a strong man, Neta.
Tomer: Very strong. We saw it back then, when we were kids. Whenever he had guests, he would force us to perform in front of them. When they applauded, we thought we were prodigies. We wanted so much. We hoped for so much. **(Laughs)**
Neta: Stop it. What's so funny? You won't be able to play tonight.
Tomer: Am I playing tonight? Where? **(Laughs)** I'm not sure anyone will want to hear me. A great pianist probably needs a great libido. At least as great as Dad's, who might be sleeping with Helen, or as Mom's, who might be sleeping with Leon. Arthur Rubinstein was ninety when he left his wife for a woman who was thirty... **(Laughs)**
Dori: I think she asked you to stop laughing.
Tomer: I'm trying... **(Laughs)**
Dori: All right. If you don't want to go to the ER, let's go home and I'll call a gynecologist to come over. **(She doesn't answer)** I want us to raise this child, Neta. I'm willing to cancel the trip to Berlin. **(She doesn't answer)** I'll stop the research. I'll take fewer shifts. If it's so important to you, then after the birth, you'll return to the opera. Your parents raised children too.

Ruth enters. Her hand is in a sling. Daniel comes in after her, her two suitcases in his hands. She sits down on the couch.

Daniel: You can tell me, Ruth. I swear I won't follow you.
Ruth: I told you. I'll be at a hotel.
Daniel: Which hotel?
Ruth: I don't want you to know.
Daniel: Can we meet for breakfast tomorrow?

Ruth: I don't know. I'll call you this evening.
Daniel: Do you want me to call a taxi?
Ruth: Leon will be here in a minute.
Daniel: Leon?! Him, of all people?! Why?!
Ruth: He'll help me with the suitcases.
Daniel: And he'll know where you are?
Ruth: Yes.
Daniel: Hang on, Ruth. I want to understand. What exactly are you looking for in him? He's a poor conductor. He's a naive interpreter. He doesn't understand the guile of music...
Ruth: I don't have to explain anything to you anymore.
Tomer: She doesn't have to, and she won't explain. She doesn't care that we don't understand.
Neta: Enough, Tomer.
Daniel: Are you still afraid of me?
Ruth: I'm afraid of myself.

Dori turns to her.

Dori: Maybe you should also take a tranquilizer? It'll help you make better decisions.
Ruth: I don't want a tranquilizer. I want to understand how we got to this moment.
Daniel: I told you. We got to this moment because I didn't listen to you enough. I admit it. I finally understand it.
Neta: Take the Clonex, Mom! Take it already!
Dori: Shouting doesn't help, Neta.
Daniel: Even if you leave me, you won't be able to let go of me.
Neta: You're not going to any hotel, Mom. You're going to unpack the suitcases. What happened, happened. Now we're going to calm down, forget and move on. Dad conducts, and you play.
Daniel: Listen to her, Ruth. Let's give ourselves another chance. Let's try one more month.
Ruth: I've already given you too many chances.
Neta: Give him another one. Give it to us too. Maybe we'll come to believe that it's possible to raise a child... that we can do it...
Dori: **(Angrily)** You should also take something to calm down.
Tomer: I have a better idea, Neta. Take a joint. Maybe it will save your child. It has already saved me. Do you see how calm I am? And I have a concert tonight. The graduation recital of the child prodigy. And I'm planning a surprise. When they call me to the stage, I won't go up. I won't go up because I won't be there. I won't be there because you won't be there. Because

you know too that the prodigy is gone. There's no point in hearing me at all. I'm so mediocre that I'm not even worth inviting to an audition. Sad. Very sad. Especially when you're the best in the world. In the end I'll be a piano teacher, and I'll blame you for it... (Takes **out Daniel's check**) You both said it in your own way. There's no point in my recording the French Suites. Bach will never forgive me. (**Tears up the check**)

Ruth: I never said that, Tomer.

Daniel: Me neither.

The doorbell rings. Leon enters. Silence.

Leon: (**To Ruth**) Shall we leave?

Ruth: Yes.

Leon turns to take the suitcases. Daniel stops him.

Daniel: Where are you taking her?

Ruth: To a hotel.

Daniel: Which hotel?

Ruth: (**To Leon**) Don't tell him.

Daniel: Which hotel?

Ruth: (**To Leon**) He doesn't have to know.

Leon: I'm taking her to my apartment.

Daniel: Yours?!

Ruth: He has a large apartment. There's a room there for me.

Daniel: You're not going to stay with him.

Leon: She'll stay with me as long as she wants.

Daniel: (**To Ruth**) I can arrange the best hotel for you.

Leon: She'll be better with me.

Neta: You're not going to him, Mom!

Daniel: I think I deserve an explanation, Ruth.

Leon: I'll explain it to you. I've been single all my life. I thought I wasn't made to be with a woman.

Ruth: You don't have to explain anything, Leon.

Leon: I was even afraid of women. I never dared correct a female musician when she made a mistake. But Ruth gave me confidence.

Ruth: Please, Leon...

Leon: And so, little by little, I managed to get closer to her. And in her generosity, she reciprocated.

Neta: She reciprocated?

Ruth: What's wrong with you, Leon? What are you doing?
Daniel: Is that true, Ruth?
Ruth: Of course not.
Neta: So stop him.
Leon: **(To Daniel)** When you left to work with Helen, she was completely broken. She decided to leave you. She thought she wouldn't play anymore.
Ruth: He knows. I told him.
Leon: She had already started looking for an apartment. I stupidly persuaded her to stay here. I was sure that she would recover and move past it. I never imagined that you'd abuse her like this.
Daniel: I understand. Thank you.
Ruth: That's enough, Leon. Stop this game.
Leon: Until now, I have hidden my love for her, but I'm sure she felt it. She even encouraged it.
Daniel: I said I understand!!
Neta: **(To Leon)** Shut your mouth!
Ruth: What the hell are you talking about? Have you lost your mind? I encouraged you?!
Leon: You already know who he is. He'll continue to abuse you. He won't let you play the way you want to. The way you can...
Ruth: This game is over, Leon. Get out of here. Get out now.
Leon: He's not the great conductor he once was. We saw how you played when I conducted you.
Ruth: Get out of here!! I'm not going with you!!
Leon: No one will inspire you like I do.
Ruth: Get out already!!

Ruth pushes Leon out of the house and returns to Daniel.

Ruth: Daniel, listen to me. That's not true. Not a word he said is true.
Daniel: You didn't sleep with him?
Ruth: Of course not. After you left, we worked together. I needed encouragement from someone who trusted me, someone who appreciated me. I thought he was a decent man.
Daniel: I hope you're not going to live with him.
Neta: And she won't play for him.
Daniel: And you're staying here?
Neta: And you'll live together and play together.
Daniel: Helen was an illusion, Ruth. A passing mirage. Yes. I was captivated by her playing. She fascinated me. She bewitched me. That's why I gave her the concerto. But you're a much

more genuine pianist. You're human. Flesh and blood...

Neta: I believe him, Mom.

Daniel: I dedicate this concerto to you. Only you will play it. Not just in New York. All over the world. Only you. No composer has ever done such a thing for his wife.

Ruth hesitates. For a moment she seems to consider his offer, but she immediately comes to her senses.

Ruth: No, I don't want to play this concerto anymore.

Daniel: Because of Helen?

Ruth: **(Furiously)** Not because of Helen. Or any of the other women you demeaned yourself by sleeping with. Because of you. When I played this concerto, I knew it was the voice of your selfishness. Your arrogance. Your compulsiveness. I knew, and I kept silent. I won't play it anymore. **(Takes her purse)** I'll get a taxi outside. The driver will help me with the suitcases.

Neta: You see what's going on here, and you're leaving?!

Ruth: If I don't leave now, I will never leave.

Neta: If you don't stay, I'm having an abortion.

Dori: You're not having an abortion. You're having this child for us. Not for her.

Neta: **(To Ruth)** I won't have it without you.

She opens Ruth's suitcases and empties them.

Dori: **(To Ruth)** She won't make it without you. You can see the state she's in. She's falling apart. We're all falling apart.

Ruth: When you give birth, I'll come and be with you. **(Turns to leave)**

Tomer: You're not leaving, Mom... (Blocks her way)

Ruth: Let me pass...

She moves past him and continues toward the door.

Daniel: Just a moment, Ruth. Wait. You're right. I admit it. I defiled this concerto. But I can write another one for you. A new one. A pure one. I can already hear you playing it. With the Philharmonic. I'm on the podium. You're at the piano, playing what's in your heart. And the music is healing you...

Ruth: Daniel, I'll never again play anything you wrote.

But Daniel no longer hears her. He detaches himself from reality and sees himself conducting as Ruth plays with the orchestra.

Daniel: Now the violins. Dolce... Dolce... Now the cello, the clarinets, the drums. And now you. Yes, beautiful. Beautiful. Legato. Gently. Let the melody lead you. Let it seep into you. Softly. Yes. Softly. Now the flutes join you. Their sounds are still trembling. They hesitate. Unsure. But now they are getting stronger. They are singing you, Ruth...

Tomer and Neta, alarmed, move closer to Daniel. Ruth notices and stops.

Neta: Dad...

Tomer: Dad?

Neta: Dad, can you hear me?

Dori: Daniel?!

Daniel: And now the trumpets join in, and you're swept away, surrendering to the melody. Crescendo, Ruth. Crescendo. Presto. And with this melody, you sweep the violins along... And now Fortissimo... The whole orchestra awakens in magnificent harmony...

Ruth: **(To Neta and Tomer)** I am sure this concerto will be wonderful. He'll find many pianists who'll be happy to play it.

She sits down on the sofa, her purse in her hand. Daniel continues conducting the imaginary orchestra. The concerto he imagines can now be heard clearly in all its glory, until it ends with the sound of a piano fading away. Lights fade out slowly.

End