

# **“The Bear”**

By Ray Alcodray

(based on “The Bear” by Anton Chekhov)

## Characters:

**IM YUSSEF** – The mother of Leila

**MAHMOUD** – An old friend of the family, and “butler” to Leila

**LEILA** – The widow of Saleem

**HASHEM** – A restaurateur from Ohio

**HENCHMEN** – Two debt collectors with no lines in the play - enter at the end only

**(Curtain opens in Leila's house. The room is dark. Leila is in black, a mourning widow. The others are dressed normally, and are upset with Leila).**

IM YUSSEF

Ya-binti (my daughter), Ya-rouhi (my soul), It's just not right. You're letting yourself fall to pieces.

MAHMOUD

The cook and maid have taken the day off. Every living thing is out enjoying the sunshine, and here you sit, shut up in the house all day long, like some kind of nun.

IM YUSSEF

Ya-thou-eini (light of my eyes), that's no fun. You listen to what I'm saying, now! It's been a whole year since you left the house!

LEILA

I'll never leave this house. Why should I? My life is over.

IM YUSSEF

He's dead and buried

LEILA

And so am I - buried here within these four walls.

IM YUSSEF

Shoe-heil-hakii? (what kind of talk is this) I never heard talk like this! Your husband's dead – not you! You can't sit here wearing black and crying for the rest of your life.

MAHMOUD

Well, your husband, God rest his soul, as good of a man as you might think he was, is not coming back. You have mourned him long enough, now it's time to move on.

IM YUSSEF

When Baba, Allah Yarrhamou (God rest his soul), died, I cried for a month, and that was that. And your father was a good man. No need to sit around for years shedding tears – Saleem wasn't worth it! Now move on! (Sighs) You haven't seen your neighbors in months. You don't go out, and you tell us not to let anybody in. It's harram (not right).

LEILA

I get out mother.

IM YUSSEF

When!! To get your drugs for your depression? We're all living in the dark here. Fine, if there was nobody around worth seeing, but the whole country's crawling with eligible young men.

MAHMOUD

There's a convention in town - all those good looking young-single men. One look from you and you'll have them eating out of your hand.

IM YUSSEF

Ya-binti (my daughter), take a look at yourself – you're still young, you're still beautiful, you can go out and enjoy life. But a beautiful face won't last forever, you know. If you wait – ten years from now those same men won't look twice, and it'll be too late. You will have thrown away the best years of your life.

LEILA

(firmly) I must ask you to never to talk to me like this again! Either of you! When my husband died, life lost all meaning for me. You know that. Oh yes, I may look like I'm alive, but I'm not. I swore I'd wear black and shut myself up here until the day I die, didn't I? And I will. He'll see how much I loved him!

IM YUSSEF

To hell with him! He's exactly where he's supposed to be! It was his time.

MAHMOUD

It was written for him. God's will.

IM YUSSEF

The only thing he deserves more is to be buried deeper so he can have a shorter walk to hell!!!

LEILA

.... I know you think he treated me badly mother – I can tell that's how you feel – it shows. He was mean at times, and...and, yes, maybe even unfaithful. But I intend to be faithful to the grave and show him what *real* love means. You taught me that mother.

IM YUSSEF

Inti-magnooni (you're crazy) – crazy! I didn't teach you to be blind and stupid as well. (pause, searching the heavens and pounding her chest) If only your father were alive to see you act like this – it would kill him! Listen to me! What am I saying? Now you have me talking like an idiot too – your father's the lucky one - better off! But I'm right behind him. You'll be the death of me I swear! You'll send me to an early grave. (Wailing to the heavens) Get ready ya Bu-Yussef, I'm coming to join you – your sweet little Leila is going to see to it!

LEILA

Fine! You want me to re-marry? There's a really nice young man at the pharmacy.

MAHMOUD

(holding his head) Oh no.

IM YUSSEF

That's just a lot of talk. Haki bala-taami. Words without substance.

LEILA

No, truly mother. In fact you already know him – he's the bagger in aisle three.

IM YUSSEF

(reaction from mother) Over my dead body!

LEILA

By the way he looks at me, I'd say he's interested in handling more than just my groceries.

IM YUSSEF

Stop! Enough! The only regret I have coming to this country – it makes everyone crazy. I'm too old for this, I need to sit down, my heart is pounding, I..I..

MAHMOUD

You better get some fresh air. Or better yet, let me bring out the "BM" and drive you home.

LEILA

Oh! (Bursts out into hysterical tears)

MAHMOUD

My dear - what is it? For God's sake, what's the matter?

LEILA

His new BMW!

MAHMOUD

It's only a car Ummu (literally – uncle, but used as an endearing term).

LEILA

How he used to love it! The "BM" he'd say. Someday I'll own a "BM."

IM YUSSEF

Goddamn him, and Goddamn his "BM." And never mind! I'll walk! (storms out of the house).

LEILA

Never mind Mahmoud. You can't help her, nor can you change her. It's the old country mentality.

MAHMOUD

The usual?

LEILA

Yes...call a taxi to pick her up. (Mahmoud does so) That car meant everything to him. What power, what beauty. He loved it like a rider loves his prize horse. Some days he would leave and not return until the following morning....Make sure to wash and wax the BM today.

MAHMOUD

(Sighs) I do it every day Ummu.

LEILA

Yes. But I'm feeling especially sentimental today.

MAHMOUD

Don't worry, I will. I will wash and wax it two times today, in his memory.

LEILA

That damn car...It was his pride and joy...it's all I have left.

MAHMOUD

I know Ummu.

(Im-Yussef re-enters at the door, goes over to Leila, and comforts her).

IM YUSSEF

Ya binti, I can't see you hurt this way, it's killing me.

LEILA

I know how selfish I've been over the last year mother.

IM YUSSEF

And I know how much Saleem meant to you. He touched us all in his own way I guess. I'd almost forgotten. But one year has passed, and I am so worried about you. (gets an idea) I know. Let me cook dinner for you. Like when you were a little girl – remember? You can help me. We'll make shish-Kafta – your favorite!

LEILA

But I don't have any meat! My cupboards are bare....

(horn beeps from taxi outside)

MAHMOUD

The taxi.

IM YUSSEF

I knew you still loved me. Only this time I'll have him take me to the store! I'll buy the meat and return. O.K. habibti? (my love).

LEILA

O.K.

IM YUSSEF

This day will be different, I can feel it Mahmoud. Somehow I feel Bu Yussef is watching over us. Let it mark a new beginning for us all, Inshallah! Mahmoud, get out the special shish from the cabinet. We're going to celebrate.

(Im-Yussef leaves excitedly, and there's a new sense of energy in the room, as though things are going to finally change. Mahmoud gets the shish rack out of a drawer. Leila starts to pick up around the room)

MAHMOUD

(taking a chance) Shall I open the drapes Ummu?

(The doorbell rings)

LEILA

(Exasperated) Now who's that? Go ahead Mahmoud, I can finish here.

(Mahmoud puts down the shish rack, smiles and goes to answer the door. Leila carries out the tea and cups to the kitchen. Mahmoud returns).

MAHMOUD

Ummu, there's someone wants to see you.

LEILA

(Entering from the kitchen) Go tell whoever it is I am not at home!

MAHMOUD

Na'am. (goes out)

LEILA

(picking up a photograph) You see what real love means Saleem? My love will last as long as I do, right to my last heartbeat. And I hope you're ashamed of yourself! You see what a good girl I am, what a faithful wife? I locked myself up here and will be faithful to you till the day I die, while you...(almost crying) well, I hope you're ashamed, you pig. You were mean to me, you cheated on me, and you left me alone for days at a time.....

(Enter Mahmoud upset)

MAHMOUD

He says it can't wait.

LEILA

Who says?

MAHMOUD

The man at the door.

LEILA

Didn't you tell him that my husband is dead?

MAHMOUD

I did.

LEILA

And that I see no one?

MAHMOUD

That's what I told him but he doesn't want to listen. He's...well he's kind of a wild man – he started shouting and pushed his way into the house. He's in the foyer right now.

LEILA

He what??....All right, all right, tell him all right. Really! The nerve of some people! Show him in.

(MAHMOUD goes out)

Why must people be so difficult? Why can't they just leave me alone? (Sighs) I may have to become a nun after all.

(Enter HASHEM followed by Mahmoud)

HASHEM

(To MAHMOUD) You hammar! You jackass! Stop trying to talk me out of here! Dingbat! My God it's like a dungeon in here! (Sees LEILA; suddenly very dignified) Ah, madam. Let me introduce myself: Hashem Hashemi. I own a restaurant in southern Ohio, perhaps you've heard of it – "The Cave." (Leila is not impressed) Well, anyway, I'm sorry to barge in like this, but this is important. I must speak to the lady of the house.

LEILA

(Doesn't offer him her hand) What can I do for you?

HASHEM

I don't think I made myself clear. I need to speak to the wife of the late Saleem.

LEILA

I understood you completely. Now sir, would you mind telling me what it is you want?

HASHEM

You...I mean. Yes...well. You look different than I remember you.

LEILA

Perhaps because we have never seen each other before.

HASHEM

Yes, perhaps you're right. I would never forget such a face. (sees picture of Saleem) This is your husband in the picture? (Leila nods) Ah. Uh hum.

LEILA

You were saying?

HASHEM

Madam, I had the pleasure of knowing your late husband, and as it happens, he left me two IOU's—the total of which comes to forty thousand, three hundred and fifty dollars. Now, I have...well...a...a *mortgage* payment, so to speak, due tomorrow. So I have to ask you, in your husband's absence, madam, how shall I say...to...to pay up (Leila does not respond). And...umm...I'm afraid I need the money *today*.

LEILA

What did my husband owe you the money for?

(Hashem hesitates in front of Mahmoud)

LEILA

It's o.k. Mahmoud is an old friend of the family. For what did my husband owe you forty thousand dollars?

HASHEM

Well if you insist, Madam, it is a gambling debt.

LEILA

I see. (beat)

MAHMOUD

So it's true! Your mother is right Leila – Saleem – God rest his soul - was no good! Son of a bitch – Ibn Kalb! Wahhad sharmout! (a whore).

LEILA

(With a sigh, to MAHMOUD) Enough. Now be gone with you Mahmoud, and don't forget what I told you. Be sure the "BM" gets washed and waxed twice today – do you understand?

MAHMOUD

Yes Ummu, I understand.

(MAHMOUD goes out)

LEILA

(To HASHEM) If my husband owed you money, then of course I'll pay it, but you'll have to excuse me – and I'm sure you'll understand - I don't have that sort of cash on me. My bank will be open the day after tomorrow and I'll see that you get paid. But today, I'm afraid, I cannot help you. It's exactly twelve months today that my husband died, and I'm in a very sad mood and in no condition to talk about money.

HASHEM

(Annoyed) And I'm in a sad mood too because my bank never closes. It stays open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and if I don't meet my mortgage payment tomorrow, they'll not only foreclose on my property, but you can say goodbye to me too!!

LEILA

You'll have your money the day after tomorrow.

HASHEM

I need the money today, not the day after tomorrow.

LEILA

Excuse me; I've already said I cannot pay you today.

HASHEM

And I've already said I can't wait till the day after tomorrow.

LEILA

What can I do? I don't *have* the money!

HASHEM

That means you won't pay me?

LEILA

It means I *can't* pay you!

HASHEM

I see. Is that your final word?

LEILA

That is my final word.

HASHEM

You've made up your mind?

LEILA

Yes, I've made up my mind.

HASHEM

Thank you very much.

LEILA

You're welcome. Goodbye.

HASHEM

I won't forget this. (Shrugs, starts for door, stops) What am I saying? I can't go out there!

LEILA

Why not?

HASHEM

The mortgage collectors – they'll find me! They're vicious! They won't rest until they do!

LEILA

Goodbye Hashem.

HASHEM

You are as heartless as the rest! Do you think I'm going to take this lying down? Hell no! Well, excuse me – but I'm desperate for money! I've been up since dawn yesterday and have driven to everyone I know who owes me money, and not one of them came through! I've been to every middle-eastern bakery, pastry shop, and restaurant between Toledo and here, and even had to spend the night in my car! Now I finally get here, my last stop, my last hope, hundreds of miles from home, expect to get paid, and what do I get? "A sad mood"! Now that's original. Not that anyone has tried to offer that up in payment yet. I mean I've got enough hummus, falafel, and bitlaweh, to last a lifetime, but money – that's another subject. If I see another Shawarrma sandwich, I swear I'll puke. But a sad mood – now that's original.

LEILA

Well at least that explains the garlic. My *mood* sir, is simply because my husband is dead.

HASHEM

Well I dare say, that soon I may be right behind him. What the hell - excuse my language - kind of mood do you think that puts *me* in?

LEILA

I think I made myself perfectly clear, and I will not have such language in my house, nor will I tolerate that tone of voice! I refuse to listen to any more of this! (Storms out)

HASHEM

(dumbfounded) I don't believe this! "It's twelve months today my husband died, and I'm in a sad mood..." What's that got to do with me? I have to make a mortgage payment! Fine, your husband's dead, your bank's closed, you're in a mood – whatever - what do you expect me to do? Flap my wings and fly to get away from my creditors? (holding head from it all) I feel like I've been running around banging my head into a brick wall. Everyone is either not home, hiding, or broke. And now this one has "a sad mood." Not one of them paid me! What a bunch of deadbeats! And it's all because I'm a softy. I'm such a sucker for a hard-luck story! I'm too nice for my own good! Well, it's time to get a little tough. Nobody's going to fool around with me like this, goddamn it! I'm not moving; I'm staying put until she pays up! Look at me—I'm shaking I'm so mad! Mad through and through, goddamn it! Mad enough to get nasty! (Goes to the window - shouts) Hey, you! Stop washing that car and come into the morgue for a minute! My God, how can anybody live like this!

(Enter MAHMOUD)

MAHMOUD

What do you want?

HASHEM

A glass of water.

(MAHMOUD goes out)

Here's a man so desperate for money he's ready to hang himself , and – excuse me very much – she's "in no condition to talk about money." This is why I don't get along with women. I hate talking to them. I'd rather play Russian roulette than talk to a woman. At least five out of six times you survive, but with a woman, it's death every time! All I have to do is see one coming at me and my leg muscles start cramping up. I want to start shouting for help.

(Enter MAHMOUD - brings HASHEM a glass of water)

MAHMOUD

Your water. There were two strange men looking at your car at the bottom of the drive. They looked upset.

HASHEM

Oh Great!! Just what I needed. Look, tell the black widow I need to talk to her.

MAHMOUD

The Missus is sick; she says she can't see anybody!

HASHEM

Get out of here!

(MAHMOUD startled, hurries out)

What kind of logic is that? She's sick and she can't see anybody! (thinking) Fine. She doesn't have to see me. I just won't leave – I mean I can't! I'll just stay right here until I get my money. She stays sick for a week, I stay here for a week. She's sick for a year, I stay here for a year. That's safe. I want money, lady! Your black dress and dimples don't impress me. I've seen plenty of dimples before! (Goes to the window and shouts) Hey, tough guys! We're not leaving just yet! I'm staying right here! (Moves away from the window) God, what a mess. (Thinking) Hottest day of the year, nobody wants to pay me, didn't sleep, and now I've got to deal with some wacky widow and her moods. It's enough to give a man a headache. I need a drink, that's what I need. (Yells) Hey, you!

(Enter MAHMOUD)

MAHMOUD

What do you want?

HASHEM

A shot of Vodka!

MAHMOUD

We have no alcohol in this house sir.

HASHEM

(angry) Bullshit!!

MAHMOUD

I'll see what I can do.

HASHEM

And take your time - I'll wait – even if you have to make some!

(MAHMOUD hurriedly exits; HASHEM falls into a chair and looks himself over)

Oof, I'm a mess. Hot, sweaty, I need a shower and a shave, my hair needs to be combed, I stink. The lady must have thought I was here to rob her. Not too polite, I guess, showing up like this, but what the hell...I'm not a guest, I'm a walking dead man; I mean how do you dress for that...

(Enter MAHMOUD, gives HASHEM a glass of vodka)

HASHEM

(mocking) "We have no alcohol"

MAHMOUD

You take too many liberties ....

HASHEM

(Angry) What!?

MAHMOUD

Nothing. I ....Nothing.

HASHEM

Who do you think you're talking to? Just be quiet and shut up will you?

MAHMOUD

(to himself as he goes out) Ya-Lateef. How are we going to get rid of him...

HASHEM

O, I'm mad! I am so mad! Mad enough to really get nasty! (Shouts) Hey you!

(Enter LEILA)

LEILA

My dear sir, I have lived so long by myself, I am not used to hearing the human voice. I cannot stand to hear shouting. I am going to ask you to respect me in my house, and further to respect my solitude.

HASHEM

Pay me my money and I'll go.

LEILA

How many times do I have to tell you that I have no such money here.

HASHEM

And I also told you I need the money today. If you don't pay me today, I might as well hang myself by the day after tomorrow!

LEILA

I asked you not to shout.

HASHEM

You mean you're not going to pay me, Is that what you mean?

LEILA

No! I mean Yes! I mean, no, that's not what I mean. I am going to pay you, but I can't pay you until the day after tomorrow.

HASHEM

The day after tomorrow?

LEILA

Yes! For God's sake yes.

HASHEM

In that case, I stay right here until I get it. (Sits down) You're going to pay me the day after tomorrow? Fine. I'll be sitting right here!

LEILA

You're not a stable person.

HASHEM

(Jumps up) Look, don't you believe I have a mortgage payment due tomorrow?

LEILA

I asked you not to shout!

HASHEM

You think I'm joking? Just look outside! The bank is at the bottom of your driveway!

LEILA

You haven't the faintest idea of how to behave in a lady's presence.

HASHEM

I do so know how to behave in a lady's presence!

LEILA

No, you do not! You are ill-mannered and vulgar! No gentleman would speak like this in front of a lady!

HASHEM

Oh, well, excuse me! Just how would a gentleman speak in front of a lady? (nastily) How charmed I am to know that you reject to pay me my money! Ah, pardon, I seem to be upsetting you! Lovely weather we're having! And my, my don't you look lovely in black! (Makes a fake bow).

LEILA

You're being very stupid! And I do not find this funny.

HASHEM

(Mocking) Stupid and not funny! I don't know how to behave in a lady's presence! Hah! Woman, I have been with more ladies in my time than I care to mention. I have been in several fist fights

because of so called "ladies." I have walked out on twelve and nine ladies have walked out on me! So there!

LEILA

Who's asking?

HASHEM

(Without missing a beat) Oh, I used to be an idiot like the rest. See a woman, get a crush on them, get sweet-talked by them, fall in love, sigh in the moonlight, freeze up, melt into puddles – I did it all. I could rattle on for hours about women's rights: I spent half my life hanging around women, but not anymore! No, thank you very much!! No more wool over my eyes! I've had it with dark eyes, ruby lips, dimples, moonlight walks, perfume, sighs of passion – no, sir, I wouldn't give you two cents for any of it now.

LEILA

(snapping back) It would cost you a lot more than that.

HASHEM

Did I offend you? Short skirts, breasts, and hot air - that's what makes up the whole works.

LEILA

How dare you! What – do you think you have a monopoly on love?

HASHEM

Tell me honestly: have you ever seen a woman who was faithful and true? Huh?! No, you haven't! The only honest and faithful women are old or ugly.

LEILA

Excuse me, but would you mind telling me just who you think *is* faithful and true?

HASHEM

Well, men, of course.

LEILA

Ha!

HASHEM

Well at least they have the *intention* of being faithful.

LEILA

(A mean laugh) Men - faithful and true in love?! Well, let's all spread the good news! (Hotly) How dare you say that?! Of all the men I have ever known, my dear departed husband was the best. I loved him passionately, with all my heart and soul, the way only a young and sensitive woman can love; I gave him my youth, my happiness, my life; I lived and breathed for him. And what do you

think he did? Hmm?! This best of all possible men betrayed me in the worst possible way: he cheated on me every chance he got. After he died I found love letters in his desk! Perfume on his clothes! Lipstick on his shirts! And when he was alive he'd leave me alone for days on end.

HASHEM

(Notices something in Leila for the first time) Really...

LEILA

He flirted with other women right in front of me, and he laughed at me when I objected. (Breaking down a little) Despite everything, I loved him, and I will be faithful to his memory. Even though he's dead, I am faithful and unshakable. (Dramatically) I have buried myself within these four walls. I shall wear black until the day I die.

HASHEM

(A laugh) Black? Don't make me laugh! I understand exactly why you go around in that costume and why you've buried yourself within these walls! Of course! It's all so romantic, so mysterious! You're waiting for some poor sap to come barging in, or some sentimental schoolboy with a bad complexion to look up at your widow face and then: Ah! There dwells the mysterious Leila, who loved her husband so much she buried herself within four walls...I know all about these little games.

LEILA

(Flares up) What? How dare you even suggest it!

HASHEM

You buried yourself alive but I see you didn't forget to powder your nose or put your lipstick on!

LEILA

How dare you yell at me!! How dare you *speak* to me like this!

HASHEM

I'm just calling a spade a spade. And now I'll ask *you* to please stop shouting.

LEILA

I'm not shouting – you are! Crazy man! Please go away and leave me alone!

HASHEM

Pay me my money and I'll go!

LEILA

I will not give you any money!

HASHEM

You will too!

LEILA

I will not! You won't get one cent from me! Now please go away!

HASHEM

I'm not your husband or your fiancé, so please stop making scenes for my benefit. (Sits down) I hate that.

LEILA

(Snorting with anger) You dare sit down?

HASHEM

Just give me my money.

LEILA

I want nothing more to do with you! Please leave!

(Frustrated, turns away, closes her eyes. There's a pause. Opens her eyes)

You're still here? You haven't left?

HASHEM

Does it look like it?

LEILA

No.

HASHEM

Brilliant.

(enter Mahmoud)

MAHMOUD

What is all the shouting?

LEILA

Oh Mahmoud! Thank God! Mahmoud, will you please show this gentleman out?

MAHMOUD

(Goes over to HASHEM, not quite sure how to accomplish the task) Please leave, sir, like the lady asked you to. She doesn't want you here.

HASHEM

(leaps to his feet) And you shut up! Who do you think you're talking to? (grabs the shish rack) I swear I'll make shish ka bob out of you!

MAHMOUD

(clutches his heart) Oh, my God! Oh, God! (Falls into an armchair) I think I'm dying! I can't breathe!

LEILA

Help! Somebody help us!

MAHMOUD

They're all out. There's nobody else in the house!

LEILA

Will you get out of here?

HASHEM

Can't you be a little more polite?

MAHMOUD

I'm dying! Water!

LEILA

(Makes a fist and stamps her foot) You idiot! You're killing him! You...You - animal!

HASHEM

What did you call me?

LEILA

I said you were an animal!

HASHEM

(Moves towards her) And just who said you could insult me like that?

LEILA

What about it? You think I'm afraid of you?

HASHEM

You think, just because you're some kind of romantic widow, that gives you the right to insult me with impunity? Is that it? Oh, no! Nobody insults me and gets away with it – not even a woman. (short beat – nobody is sure where this is going) Apologize or I challenge you to a duel!

MAHMOUD

Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Water!

HASHEM

Apologize or choose weapons!

LEILA

(Trying to shout him down) *Animal! Animal!! ANIMAL!!!*

HASHEM

It's about time we got rid of old prejudices about only men needing to defend themselves on the field of honor! If it's equality you want, then it's equality you'll get!

LEILA

You want to fight a duel! Good! Let's fight!

HASHEM

Right this minute!

LEILA

Right this minute! God-damn you! (looking over the shish rack) You have no idea what a pleasure it will be for me to put a skewer right through your thick head! (selects her shish and steps back).

HASHEM

I'm not a schoolboy anymore, I'm no sentimental puppy – I don't care if you are the so called weaker sex! (selects his shish, and steps away, swishing it in the air like a sword). These days, it's us *men* who have to defend themselves!

LEILA

What am I thinking? My husband has some antique swords that are more suitable for the occasion. That will give me much greater pleasure. Don't move!! (she leaves to get the swords).

MAHMOUD

Oh please sir! (Falls to his knees) Please don't do this, please just leave, please just leave, please. I'm an old man, my heart can't take the excitement!

HASHEM

(Pays no attention to him) Equality of the sexes at last! But what a woman! (Imitates her) She got all flushed; her eyes were flashing fire; she accepted my challenge without even thinking! By God, that's the first time this has ever happened to me!

MAHMOUD

Oh, please sir, please go! Just go away!

HASHEM

Now that's a woman I understand! A real woman! Not one of your typical sissies, nothing wishy-washy about her, no sir! She's all piss and vinegar, flint and firepower! (sudden thought) I'm almost sorry to have to kill her!

MAHMOUD

(Cries) Please, sir, please, just go! Please!

HASHEM

I definitely like this woman! Definitely! So she has dimples – I still like her. I'm almost ready to tell her to forget about the money. And I'm not that mad anymore...

(Enter LEILA; she carries a pair of swords) What an astonishing woman!!

LEILA

Here. But before we have our duel, will you please show me how to use the damn things? I've never even held one before.

MAHMOUD

Oh God have mercy on us all! I'll make a run for it and get the police ... (crawls secretly out during the commotion)

HASHEM

You see there are several different types. But what you have here are beautiful pieces! Now look, you hold the sword like this...

LEILA

Like this?

HASHEM

That's it, that's the way. Next you stand like this...arm as such, shoulders sideways...eyes level. Arm relaxed... that's the way. That's all there is to it. Main thing is, keep your cool. Try not to let your hand shake.

LEILA

Right...

HASHEM

I must warn you, I have no intention of using this.

LEILA

Why?

HASHEM

Because...because...It's none of your business why!

LEILA

You're getting scared, is that it? Aha, that's it! Oh no, you won't get out of this so easily! I won't rest until I lop off that big head of yours!

HASHEM

Yes, that's it - I'm scared...I'm a coward.

LEILA

You're lying! Why don't you want to fight? What's the matter with you! Tell me!

HASHEM

Because....because...because I like you.

LEILA

(Sarcastic laugh) He likes me! He dares to tell me he likes me! (Points to the door) That's the last straw! Just go. Get out!

HASHEM

(Puts down the sword in silence and starts out; at the door he stops and turns. They look at each other in silence for a moment; then he goes hesitantly toward LEILA) Listen...are you still mad? I was crazy myself until just a minute ago, but you know...how can I put it? Well, the fact is, I...you see, the fact is nothing like this ever happened to me before.....(shouts) Well, is it my fault I like you? Do you understand? I ... I think I'm in love with you!

LEILA

Get away from me! Do *you* understand! I despise you, I hate you!

HASHEM

God, what a woman! I've never met anyone like you in my entire life! I'm done for! I'm caught in your trap!

LEILA

Get away from me or I swear I'll use this.

HASHEM

Go ahead! You don't know how happy that will make me, to die with your beautiful eyes upon me, die from your silky little hand...Oh, I'm out of my mind! Look, you'd better think this over fast and decide right away. Once I leave here, we'll never see each other again. Make up your mind. Did I tell you I'm from a good family?

LEILA

Get out!

HASHEM

O.K. But first, will you marry me?

LEILA

(Angry, she waves the sword) Marry you? I don't even like you!

HASHEM

I'm out of my mind! I'm in love! I'm behaving like a schoolboy! (Grabs her hand, takes away the sword, she shrieks with pain) Can't you see I love you! (Falls to his knees) I love you, the way I've never loved anyone before! Of all the woman I've ever walked out on or that have walked out on me, I've never loved one of them the way I do you! My mind has turned to jelly, my brain has turned to mush, I'm on my knees like a dope, and I'm asking for your hand...Oh, the shame, the shame! I haven't been in love for six years, I swore I never would again, and all of a sudden I'm head over heels! I'm asking you to marry me! Yes or no? Will you? Yes or no? No? Fine! (Gets up and head quickly toward the door)

LEILA

Wait ...

HASHEM

(stops) Well?

LEILA

Nothing, just go! I mean, wait... No, go away! Go away! I hate you! I mean, don't go! Oh, you make me so mad! Well, what are you waiting for? Just get out of here!

HASHEM

All right then. Goodbye.

LEILA

Yes, yes, just go! (Screams) Where are you going!? Wait a minute...come back. Oh, I'm so mad! Stay away from me! Stay away from me!

HASHEM

(Crosses to her) *You're mad? I'm mad!* I fell in love like a schoolboy, got down on my knees, I've even got goose bumps...(Roughly) I love you! That's all I needed, to fall in love with you! Tomorrow I've got to pay the mortgage, but today there's you – (Grabs her around the waist) I'll never forgive myself for this –

LEILA

Get away from me! Get your hands off me! I...I hate you! I want to fight you...I want to...

(A long kiss. Enter MAHMOUD with Im-Yussef carrying groceries and two large, gruff looking henchmen)

MAHMOUD

(Sees the couple kissing) Oh, my God.....

IM YUSSEF

I've never seen him at the pharmacy.

MAHMOUD

I never made it past the drive before these men...

LEILA

MAHMOUD, please give these men the keys to the “BM,”

MAHMOUD

The.....

LEILA

But first...open the shades and give my mother a ride home, will you?

(Hashem and Leila kiss again, wailing and surprise by the others)

**CURTAIN**