

## Scene 1

(May 1997, abroad, at a Scientific Congress): *MENACHEM DVIR and Dr. MELANIE LAIDLAW slouch post flagrante delicioso. Typical post-coital discourse: affectionate, tinge of guilt, touch of banter, curious yet private.*

MENACHEM

*(nuzzles her)*

So you thought I looked married?

MELANIE

You didn't look single. *(Beat)*. You looked... *(searches for word)*... not loose enough. You aren't finger-branded, but I sensed some stamp of ownership.

MENACHEM

So why didn't you ask... yesterday, at the opening session... or last night, in the sauna?

MELANIE

I preferred not to know.

MENACHEM

Because?

MELANIE

Because if I had known—at that stage—that you were married... I mean known unequivocally... I wouldn't have... couldn't have.....

MENACHEM

I'm glad you did. By the way... you have great legs.

MELANIE

I know. But thanks anyway.

MENACHEM

And so smooth. When I saw your legs for the first time in the sauna last night, I knew I'd have to touch them. (*Beat*). You were the only one wrapped in a towel.

MELANIE

We Americans are primmer than Europeans. It's our puritan heritage... especially in saunas with strangers.

MENACHEM

Puritan... shmuritan! You may consider yourself too puritan to be sexy... but you're much too sexual to be prim. If I had to choose between sexy and sexual, I know what I'd pick.

MELANIE

(*quick*)

Who says you'd be the one doing the picking? (*Turns serious*). Do you believe that I've never done this before?

MENACHEM

Define "this."

MELANIE

Having ... carnal relations—

MENACHEM

(*grins*)

"Having carnal relations"—

*(Menachem attempts to continue speaking, but she leans over to put her hand over his mouth)*

MELANIE

—with a man I met only yesterday... some Israeli nuclear hotshot at this conference, who—

MENACHEM

*(Succeeds in pulling off her hand and laughs)*  
... comes from the land of the Bible?

MELANIE

*(Irritable)*

You don't believe me? You think I make a habit of hopping into bed—

MENACHEM

*(Laughs)*. How American! "Hopping into bed."

MELANIE

*(Irritable)*

How about... "I don't fuck men I don't know"?

MENACHEM

*(Gently)*

Melanie! Tsk, tsk.... Don't...

*(Tries to put index finger across her lips, but she bites it)*

Ouch!

MELANIE

All right.... so what would you say?

MENACHEM

Make love "with." Or maybe, "to."

MELANIE

And you prefer?

MENACHEM

“To.”

MELANIE

Is that what we did?

MENACHEM

*(Very gentle)*

It was “with”... “To” is different. Someone has to take the initiative.

MELANIE

I see... and, of course, my virile Israeli wants to be the one—

MENACHEM

*(Plays with her hair or other gesture of affection)*

No, I don't... at least, not this time. *(Beat)* I think I'd leave it up to my puritan—

MELANIE

*(Quick, but softly)*

.... if there is a next time.

MENACHEM

There will be another time... there must be!

MELANIE

You're that sure?

MENACHEM

Yes... because you're not the type for one-night stands... as you Americans call them.

MELANIE

You really believe that? Honestly? Cross your heart?

MENACHEM

Crossing one's heart doesn't mean much to a Jew. But sure,  
(*somewhat clumsily crosses his heart*)  
I believe you—honestly.

MELANIE

How come?

MENACHEM

Guess.

MELANIE

(*Shakes head*)

No. You tell me... please. It's too early between us to even guess.

MENACHEM

All right. (*Beat*). I believe you, because it's also true for me.

MELANIE

You? You've never slept with a woman you barely knew?

MENACHEM

Well... (*beat*), not one I met only twenty-four hours ago.

MELANIE

Oh Menachem, I know so little about you.

MENACHEM

And I don't know much more about you... other than that you're a scientist... or you wouldn't be here at this Congress.

MELANIE

You want to know what kind of science I do?

MENACHEM

No! It's not your science that interests me.... You can't make love to science. (*Beat*). Are you alone... I mean, in general?

MELANIE

Well... I have no husband and I have no children.

MENACHEM

So you want children?

MELANIE

Uh-huh.

MENACHEM

How old are you?

MELANIE

Guess.

MENACHEM

(*Reaches over to run his hand slowly over her face, like a blind person*)

Thirty-seven years plus or minus seven months.

MELANIE

(*Impressed*)

Not far off. So you see? I don't have too much time left... I mean for having children. But what about you?

MENACHEM

Do I want children? At one time, yes. (*Brusque*). But not anymore.

MELANIE

Am I getting too personal?

MENACHEM

Maybe. (*Beat*). Ask something else.

MELANIE

How old are you?

MENACHEM

(*Mock whisper*). Almost fifty. (*Louder*) Now it's my turn again.

MELANIE

Ask.

MENACHEM

What made you—

MELANIE

Hop into bed with you? Just because I have not made love with any man since my husband's death doesn't mean I'm not a sexual person.

MENACHEM

I'll vouch for that.

MELANIE

I don't want you to think I was a widow of opportunity. (*Beat*). But this scientist knows enough chemistry to recognize a unique reaction—one I've never experienced before.

MENACHEM

You're right about the spontaneous chemistry between us.

MELANIE

I said "unique."

MENACHEM

And the difference?

MELANIE

Spontaneous ones have a tendency to quickly fizzle out... unless you add something—

MENACHEM

Such as?

MELANIE

A chemist would say, you need more reagents... or maybe a catalyst.

MENACHEM

What kind?

MELANIE

It's too early to ask. Right now, the reaction is still sizzling... not fizzling.

MENACHEM

Maybe because I wanted it to sizzle, I didn't tell you—right then and there in the sauna—that I was married. But now you know everything.

MELANIE

Everything?

*(Long pause, looking anywhere but at MENACHEM)*

For a scientist, that's a meaningless word. You can never know everything.

But you can learn enough to convince yourself to stop looking for more.

*(He starts to speak; she kisses his mouth shut and rolls onto him.)*

*(Languorously, erotically, slowly)*

This time... it will be "to."

END OF SCENE 1