

# Arton

**A play by Aharon Ezra**

**Stage version: Ron Ninio**

**Translated from the Hebrew by Mark L. Levinson**

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The play *Arton* was presented at Habima, The National Theatre of Israel, over the 2004–2005 season.

The plot unfolds among a family hermetically closed within its own world, and the timeline is short and eventful.

This is a play with elements of universality that transcend time and place: a modern tragedy about forbidden love between brother and sister, about piety and sacrilege, about the madness and the crumbling of a family.

And encircling it all, the play speaks of the art of theatre as a counterpart to life, and as a part of life.

The play is written in a unique language that this family speaks, a dialect intended as the song of their poverty, their helplessness, and their outcry.

The English, by American-Israeli poet Mark L. Levinson, emulates the unique phrasings of the original.

The dramaturge for the play, and the director of the production, is Ron Ninio, one of the finest and most original theatrical directors in Israel, who is also active extensively as a director in film and television.

*Arton* won the prize for Best Original Play from Habima, The National Theatre of Israel.

Attached are extracts from the reviews of the play and production.

From the reviews of *Arton*  
as staged at Habima National Theatre of Israel

“Aharon Ezra’s debut as a playwright, *Arton*, is a revelation.” — *Globes*



“Everything Tennessee Williams did for the American theater, Ezra does for contemporary Israeli playwrights.”

— *Dan Lachman, Pridezine*



“The nature of Aharon Ezra’s play recalls the dramas of Strindberg and the films of Bergman in its maturity, complexity, and sophistication, presented simply and without irritants but sweeping the audience into the depth of the tempest.” —

*Alice Blitental, Tsfon HaIr*



“With his play *Arton*, playwright Aharon Ezra attains new pinnacles of theater.” —

*Dan Lachman, Pridezine*



“Without a doubt, Aharon Ezra is an amazing and mesmerizing new voice in theatrical writing. ... The whole play leaves the spectator breathless. The play is multi-layered, poetical, and full of imagery throughout.”

— *Dan Lachman, Pridezine*



“The greatness of a playwright is measured, among other ways, by his ability to create an authentic original language that characterizes his plays and serves as a sort of calling card. The three classical playwrights mentioned in the program as favorites of Ezra’s — Chekhov, Shakespeare, and Lorca — are three excellent examples: any two ripostes from any text of theirs suffice to tell us whom we’re dealing with. The same is true of our own two great playwrights, Levin and Aloni; and to judge by this play, it is true of Ezra as well.” — *Jonathan Esterkin, Time Out*



“Ezra successfully and fascinatingly combines the classical and the postmodern, by writing a play that can be considered on the one hand a Greek tragedy by all criteria, with incest, insanity, and violent death in the family, and on the other hand a recursive, self-aware creation that probes the theatrical medium.”

— *Jonathan Esterkin, Time Out*



“A play like this gives me back my love of the theater.” — *Yossi Graber, Israel Broadcasting and Yedioth Ahronoth*



“Exceptional work by director Roni Ninio. A theater of novelty and originality.” — *Galei Tsahal*



“A play of rare quality, creative and poetical. A total experience.” — *Tsfon HaIr*



“This play is a major emotional experience, with a sort of celebration at the discovery of a new playwright. It’s impossible to leave unmoved.” — *Dan Lachman, Pridezine*



“There are even those who consider this play tantamount to the birth of a new form of theater.” — *Galei Tsahal*



“I’d like to close with a bravo.” — *Globes*



*Dedicated to my father, Avraham Ezra  
and my grandmother, Khabibah Khezkiyah  
of blessed memory.*

**Dramatis personae**

**Ma'amna – The grandmother**

**Badla – Her daughter**

**Manno – Her son-in-law**

**Hoopie – Her granddaughter**

**Arton – Her grandson**

The people in the play use a unique poetical language of their own,  
which differs in its structure and its character from proper everyday  
language.

First performed on February 19, 2004, at Habima National Theatre, Israel;  
Yaakov Agmon, director general.  
Directed by Ron Ninio

ARTON  
*by Aharon Ezra*  
*translated by Mark L. Levinson*

**Prologue**

A sparsely furnished room. An old wooden armchair. A small wooden table. Four or five absolutely plain wooden chairs. A heavy metal locker, and on it an urn that never stops boiling. Around the urn are tea boxes, coffee, sugar, cups, etc. The windows are barred and are covered with greyish old curtains. On one side, a way into the other rooms of the house, covered with a less-than-opaque and also greyish curtain. On the other side, an exit to outdoors, closed by a faded but heavy wooden door that creaks when it opens or closes.

Beside the door, a window onto the outdoors. On the windowsill is a beautiful primrose in a little flowerpot. In the yard, a tree or two and a little bench.

**Arton:** (Sits in the armchair, somewhat huddled, restless. Writes on some papers that he has on his knees. His hand isn't confident. Suddenly and sharply he rises, lays the papers on the table, tensely steps to the window, and looks out. He walks in a small pattern as if caged. He goes to the door, opens it, and looks out. Leaving the door open, he once more walks in a short pattern and then stops opposite the primrose that is on the windowsill. His body relaxes and his eyes are fixed on the flower. He murmurs.)

**Dreams by us shall sense**

**the odor of the primroses...**

(He writes on the papers.)

**Dreams by us shall sense**

**the odor of the primroses...**

**Happiness of us**

**shall reach... celestial... white!**

Hoopie: (Enters from outdoors and notices Arton. Pause. Is about to continue into the house.)

Arton: **Hoopie!** (Hoopie stops.) **For you I... For you I've been waiting...**

Hoopie: **Been waiting...**

Arton: **Here's words I've been writing...**

Hoopie: **Words those hands have written...**

Arton: **This heart has written!**

Hoopie: **And those legs? Where have those legs been walking?** (Is about to continue into the house.)

Arton: (Stops her.) **Hoopie...**

Hoopie: **Ill done, Arton, to follow me this night!... That was ill done of all things!** (Continues into the house.)

Slow fade.

**Act I**

Same room. Late the next morning.

Sunk down in the armchair is the aged Ma'amna, sleeping.

**Badla:** (Enters with a smoking cigarette in her hand. Pours two cups of coffee. Offers one to Ma'amna.) **Here.** (Ma'amna doesn't answer. Badla shakes her.) **Hey! Here!**

**Ma'amna:** (Wakes up.)

**Badla:** **Past morning, and those eyes not open?**

**Ma'amna:** (Yawns. Speaks while yawning.) **I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned...**

**Badla:** **And well you do know it, Mother. How well you do.** (Brief sigh.)  
**Did you hear his barking at me?**

**Ma'amna:** **And Hoopie would be where?**

**Badla:** **Why "Hoopie would be where?"**

**Ma'amna:** **Yesterday, past evening, out went Hoopie... Today, morning of all, out went Hoopie. And I asked her, "Out where, Hoopie?" And no voice from her.**

**Badla:** **Is there a single question that your tongue could hold back?**

**Ma'amna:** **Take a thread, then. Take a needle. Sew it up on me!**

**Badla:** **That would be a holiday, you and a hobbled tongue!**

**Ma'amna:** **And may your tongue never come back from holiday, Badla!**

(Brief pause.)

**Badla:** **Did you hear it, his barking at me, that one you married me to?!**

**Ma'amna:** **May the dogs bark at him!**

**Badla:** And for what? I said to him, “Manno, sugar do not forget on your way back home.”

“Sure, sure, sure. How much more will you nag?” That’s what he barked, and he left with the spittle still wet on his lips.

(Brief pause.)

**Ma’amna:** Never has Hoopie gone out in such a way... Days now... Night after night... From work she comes, not a scrap does she swallow, and goes! A day off from work she took today, morning comes and again she goes! What is there a pretty girl like that one could look for outside, without even saying the where and why? What’s out there, Lord?

**Badla:** My girl she is, not yours. Next time, send Arton after her... He does your mouth’s bidding, and you do what his heart is wishing!

**Ma’amna:** (Shocked.) And why now is the name of Arton the game-toy of your lips?!

**Badla:** And why to this day is my life the game-toy of your lips?!

**Ma’amna:** I’m a sick woman, Badla...

**Badla:** And I’m buried!

**Ma’amna:** Oh, Lord!

**Badla:** In the graveyard of Manno you buried me...

**Ma’amna:** (After a very brief pause, and referring to Hoopie.) And suppose you went out to see Arton’s sister is where... Go on, Badla, have a walk out.

**Badla:** May pins have a walk on your body!

**Ma’amna:** Before today turns into tomorrow!

**Badla:**        **And I being seventeen years old, Mother, how could you wive me into the hands of Manno!**

**Ma'amna:**    (Raises her eyes high.) **Mercy, Lord...**

**Badla:**        **A girl is all I was, a little girl. My eyes weren't open yet, nor my mouth, nor between the legs...**

**Ma'amna:**    **Put pepper on your tongue, Badla!**

**Badla:**        **It was a mistake, Mother! A mistake to begin with and a mistake to the end of all. A mistake of the heart that you made and can never erase! What shame. What shame. Those are the words I have.**

**Ma'amna:**    (Takes snuff from her big colorful snuffbox, sniffing loudly.)

**Badla:**        **But I too am guilty...**

**Ma'amna:**    (Sneezes.)

**Badla:**        **There's the guilt of doing, and there's the guilt of silence!**

**Ma'amna:**    (On the verge of sneezing.) **God is above us, Badla...**

**Badla:**        **I've heard that name. It's the name of a stranger.**

**Ma'amna:**    (Raises her eyes high.) **Absolve her, Lord: absolve Badla with your absolution! Absolve her, absolve — (Sneezes.)**

**Badla:**        **I shall divorce him! If I'm down to my last day, I'll divorce him for the sake of the day! For the sake of an hour, if I'm down to an hour!**

**Ma'amna:**    **And then you'll divorce him. (Sneezes.)**

**Badla:**        **It was you who favored him. You're the one who said, "Manno's fine-looking. Fine as a man from a palace or paradise." (Bitterly sneering.) That's Manno, my fine-looking husband... The fine man**

**who made my life foul! Who threw mud in my face! There isn't a tree around but the crows in it weep for me. They call one another and weep, they tell one another and weep, they cry out to the earth and sky, the earth and sky! Now will you give up the ghost at last, Mother?** (Bursts into quiet tears.)

**Ma'amna: Badla... my only Badla... my one and only...** (Takes the snuffbox from her pocket and heavily rises from her seat.) **Lord, Lord, Lord...** (Goes to Badla and offers a pinch of snuff to her nostrils.) **Here. Hey, here. Here, my only one...**

**Badla:** (Sniffs the snuff in and sneezes.)

**Ma'amna: Better now?**

**Badla:** (Through tears.) **I shall divorce him...** (Sneezes.)

**Ma'amna: Out with it all... all of it!**

**Badla: I want a divorce, and I'll get a divorce!** (Sneezes again, and wipes her nose with a large flowered hankie.)

**Ma'amna: What'll we do, Badla? Where then is Arton's sister away? But how could I ever search out there? Lord our Creator, where would I search? And those dogs outside — each one a jackass son of a horse for size. They'd be tearing my flesh like a fox with a helpless chicken.**

**Badla: Won't that God of yours, who's preserved you so well to this age, be enough to protect you from dogs?**

**Ma'amna: As far as the gate of the yard I'll go...** (Rises from her place.)

**Badla:** (Pushes Ma'amna back into the armchair.) **You sit! And if you don't sit, do you see that table? That's what I'll sit atop you!**

- Ma'amna:**     **May the great hill by the sea sit atop me!**
- Badla:**       **And if the great hill sat atop you, you'd be out from under like a snake!**
- (Hoopie enters from outdoors, with a bulging bag in her hand)
- Badla:**       (Hugs Hoopie with much love.) **Blossom! Hoopie blossom!... My blossom...**
- Hoopie:**       **My mama...**
- Ma'amna:**     (To Hoopie) **And where have you been, Miss "My Mama"?**
- Hoopie:**       **There's curious. I have a curious grandmother!**
- Ma'amna:**     **Furious? Not yet, but I could be.**
- Hoopie:**       **Curious! Eager to know!**
- Badla:**       **You said it, Hoopie! That mouth deserves a candy. Isn't she just eager to know!**
- Hoopie:**       (Takes a high-risen cake from the bag.)
- Ma'amna:**     **But why such a cake, swollen up like a dead man's belly?**
- Hoopie:**       (Positioning the cake on the table) **And Arton would be where?**
- Ma'amna:**     **Sleeping is where. And don't make the awakening of him!**
- Badla:**       (Goes to Hoopie at the table. Lowers her voice.) **Tell Mama, Hoopie. Where have you been, my daughter?**
- Hoopie:**       (Also speaking low) **I'm happy, Mama!**
- Ma'amna:**     **Hiding her words from my ears!**
- Hoopie:**       (To Badla) **Mama, today when the sun comes near the sea — we dance!**
- Badla:**       **Dance?**
- Hoopie:**       **We dance!**

- Badla:** But dance for what, my blossom? Dance for what?
- Ma'amna:** (Who all the while is trying mightily to hear) **My heart is exploding!**
- Badla:** (Sharply) **What are you saying?**
- Ma'amna:** **What am I saying?!** (Short pause. She stops Badla's attempt to resume speaking with Hoopie.) **And what about what I said?...**
- Off... off to my doctor go off, Badla!... The pills I had over there, tell her that nothing's left of all.**
- Badla:** But I know that your doctor isn't working today.
- Ma'amna:** (Enraged) **She is working, working, working!**
- Badla:** Go ahead, say it again and again. Squawk away like that bird that goes caw-caw all the time!
- Ma'amna:** Off to the doctor! Now!
- Badla:** I stay here till my own heart tells me away.
- Hoopie:** There's Arton to be awakened. I'll go in...
- Ma'amna:** No! Let him sleep till it's his eyes that tell him enough.
- Badla:** You're in his dreams and he's in yours!
- Ma'amna:** May you dream only dreams of lizards!
- Hoopie:** Time for your drops, Grandma. (From a big bag of medicines, brings out a dropper bottle.)
- Ma'amna:** Time how? The day hasn't had its middle.
- Hoopie:** Come a bit early or come a bit late, time has come... (Ma'amna puts out her tongue and Hoopie drips a few drops onto it.)
- Badla:** Be healthy, be strong, and eat us all up head first!
- Ma'amna:** (Energetically grabs Hoopie's hand and brings her into her lap. Chuckles at Hoopie, evidently trying to coax a show of love from her.)

**And... Hoopie is where?! And... Hoopie is where?!** (While speaking, nuzzles Hoopie's face)

**Hoopie:** (Giggling) **Your nose...** (Wipes her face of the snuff that stuck to it from Ma'amna's nose.)

**Ma'amna:** **Woman to woman: Hoopie is where? Hoopie goes where, these days of now?** (Desperately whispers) **Into my ear, for good or ill: where does the sister of Arton go? Where does she go?**

**Hoopie:** **I'm keeping silence now... Like Arton.**

**Ma'amna:** (Tearful) **Things come to my ears, as if out of the wind...**

**Badla:** **Everything comes from the wind and goes off with the wind, and only you stay put!**

**Ma'amna:** (Rocks Hoopie in her lap, sleepily. Sings)

**Hoopie is a picture, pretty in the frame.**

**How her brother loves her. Arton is his name.**

**Hoopie is a flower, pretty in the field.**

**Lord, be her sunlight. Lord, be her shield.**

(Her head droops. She is asleep. Hoopie gently frees herself from Ma'amna's arms.)

**Badla:** (Referring to Ma'amna) **There's quickly to sleep. Some drops those are. As for her, better that she were napping for the rest of her life!**

**Arton:** (Enters)

**Badla:** **To sleep this one goes, and from sleep that one comes!**

**Arton:** (Silently looks at Hoopie. Badla assesses Arton with deliberation and suspicion.)

**Hoopie:** (To Badla) **And would there be food for my brother's morning?**

**Badla:** **And for your own morning, Hoopie?**

**Hoopie:** **No need, Mama. I've eaten.**

**Badla:** (Kisses Hoopie. Passing by Arton) **Ah, poor Arton!** (Enters the interior of the house.)

[Upon Badla's exit, Ma'amna's back goes crooked in the chair as she blurts some unclear syllable. Arton immediately goes over and straightens her up.]

**Hoopie:** (Pours two glasses of tea, slices some of the cake that is on the table, and extends it to Arton. Referring to the cake) **I brought this...**

**Arton:** (Eats silently of the cake, his mouth as if concealing the eating.)

**Hoopie:** **Cake that the tea is fond of!...** (Brief pause)

**Arton:** **Your scent is in the cake...** (Brief pause)

**Hoopie:** **It was ill done, Arton, to follow me last night... Have asked me you could: Sister, where are you off to?**

**Arton:** (Suddenly takes pages from his pocket and extends them to Hoopie.)

**Hoopie:** (Slowly and hesitantly takes the pages from his hand, looks at them, and reads. Surprised:) **"A play, by... Arton..."** (Slight pause. Reads from the play with care and with great interest.) **"The Characters: The Grandmother... The Father... The Mother..."** (Very brief pause) **The Brother... The Sister..."** (Looks up at Arton and assesses him. Arton disconnects from her gaze. Hoopie returns her eyes to the play and reads.) **"Curtain rises to reveal a sparsely furnished room: an old armchair for the Grandmother... a small wooden table... an urn that never stops boiling... On the windowsill is a beautiful primrose..."** (Hoopie looks at the flower on

the windowsill, and then fixes her eyes on Arton. Brief pause.) **And why a playscript, Arton?**

Arton: (Remains silent.)

Hoopie: **Once or twice a year, there would come a theater nearby our place. Do you remember? You would race like a gazelle, first to the theater, and then back to whisper all about the play to me. And now... a play by Arton?**

Arton: **For you I wrote it.**

Hoopie: **For me?**

(Ma'amna suddenly awakens. Noticing Arton and Hoopie, she leans an ear toward their conversation. They do not notice her.)

Arton: (Takes the playscript from Hoopie's hands and reads from it.) **The Sister says to the Brother: "By the light of these eyes, yourself I love... By the taste of this breath, yourself I love..."**

Hoopie: **Arton, at night you followed me and you saw. If you saw, then you know what there is to know: I'm off and away from here. Go I shall.**

Arton: **No!**

Hoopie: **And for yourself, my brother... a woman is what you need!**

(Suddenly the two of them notice that Ma'amna is awake.)

Hoopie: (Smiling archly) **I hope you had your fill of sleep, Grandma.**

Ma'amna: **Of sleep, not any. Not any... Not with this chair that's grinding at my bones. (Slight pause.) So Hoopie... out with you to the garden clothesline. Bring me my bedclothes in.**

Hoopie: (Dawdles, looking at Arton)

**Ma'amna: Go on there, Hoopie. Go on.**

(Hoopie exits.)

**Ma'amna: (To Arton, sharply) Your mouth had better open!** (Arton remains silent.) **Your mouth had better open, Arton, and tell what my ears began to catch from the mouth of your sister!** (Arton remains silent.) **Away to where did you follow her, Grandmother's child? Where did those legs go night-following Hoopie now?** (Brief pause. Ma'amna fishes a banknote from the depths of her dress's pocket. She approaches Arton.) **For you I kept this...** (Pushes the bill into his pocket. Places her hand on Arton's heart.) **Inside here is my heart, Arton... inside here... my blood inside your flesh is pacing!... My breath inside your ribs is surging and sinking, surging and sinking.** (Arton remains silent. Ma'amna points heavenward.) **By His Holy Name I swear: Ma'amna shall not eat, nor drink, nor close an eye by night or day until your mouth opens!**

**Arton: There is no tongue in my mouth...**

**Ma'amna: Ma'amna's tongue is in your mouth!** (Arton distances himself from Ma'amna and is about to enter the interior of the house.) **Go with stones for feet, Arton!** (Arton stops where he is. Ma'amna approaches very close to him. Her body touches his. She whispers) **My back, Arton, my back, where the Lord landed the life of you... From Manno's life you went into the life of Badla, and from Badla's life you went into my own, my own! It's to me the Lord gave you! I have nine children watching, who died before their mouths had learned to say "Mama"... Watching, from their**

**abode, how you are here for them all... Their lives will be lived, by you! Nine ducklings, ducklings... pretty, plump, white... ducklings; my children, ducklings...** (Embraces Arton. Her sobbing tears at his heart. Pause.)

**Arton:** (Softly) **Her boyfriend...**

**Ma'amna:** (Astonished and furious) **The hobgoblins' boyfriend! What boyfriend, Grandmother's child?!**

**Arton** **The one who was... a boyfriend... to Hoopie...**

**Ma'amna:** **And travelled off! He travelled off! He took a wife and left the country five years ago and went off!**

**Arton:** (Murmurs) **He's here now...**

**Ma'amna:** **Close your mouth against your voice, Ma'amna!** (Bites her fingers one after another.) **And has she rendered her body to him yet?**

**Arton:** (Breathes in as if suffocating and pale.)

**Ma'amna:** **Make known what you know!** (Arton remains silent. Pointing upward) **I swear to you by His Holy Name, though the heavens fall to earth, here Hoopie stays! She is our own. She is ours!**

**Hoopie:** (Enters from outdoors, carrying bedsheets. To Ma'amna) **And now your bedclothes have the scent of flowers in, Grandma!**

**Ma'amna:** (Goes to her armchair, takes up her coat from there, and begins to put it on.)

**Badla:** (Enters from the interior. Astonished at Arton's pale figure) **But look at your face, like a dead man up from the grave!**

**Ma'amna:** **And here's hoping there's food you've prepared for your boy, to put the life in him.**

**Badla:** There is, there's food... But potatoes I had in mind to put down with it, and their father left not even one. Just gobbling and gobbling and gobbling. (Notices that Ma'amna is putting her coat on.) And that coat would be for what?

**Ma'amna:** What do you think? If it won't be you to bring my pills to me, then don't I have legs to take me?!

**Badla:** And I told you, your doctor today is not working!

**Ma'amna:** (Angry) May the night bird suck out my blood if she isn't working!

**Badla:** For a year upon a year, your legs have not set this house behind them...

**Ma'amna:** Though I be eaten by the dogs, I'll go!

**Badla:** And what's in you for a dog to eat? Dry meat and not much of it, with the taste gone and the smell gone!

**Ma'amna:** It's only you who has the juicy fat of a mutton tail! (Exits)

**Hoopie:** (Imitating Ma'amna) "It's only you who has the juicy fat of a mutton tail!" (Laughs and kisses Badla)

**Badla:** She's a good talker, your grandmother. Good, but her words are like strings from that bug that traps the flies...

**Hoopie:** (Laughs) A spider. A spider's web!

**Badla:** You're saying spider. Spyer. Skyler. There was a neighbor once named Skyler... How in love with me Skyler was, how in love... And seeing, when Skyler did, that Ma'amna had me in mind to give over to the arms of Manno, Skyler wept. He wailed and wept. He said to Ma'amna, "Promise me this promise, Ma'amna: don't

**hurry Badla... She's still a little girl. Is a little girl a wife for Manno?"** (Speaking as if to Skyler) **And I today, Skyler, what can I say to you? Ma'amna caught me with her strings! She caught me with her words, Skyler!** (To Hoopie) **But you, Hoopie, don't give her a grip. Don't give Ma'amna's words a grip on you too. Don't!**

**Hoopie:** **Is leaving here what you want, Mama?**

**Badla:** **Where is the key to the prison doors? I don't suppose you've brought it...**

**Hoopie:** (Indicates her heart) **The key is here, Mama!**

**Badla:** **What key, my girl? Tell Mama's ear... The key to something, Hoopie?... To somebody?...** (To Arton, who is staring at Hoopie.) **Eyes off your sister! Go, go eat the food for morning.**

**Hoopie:** **Some cake he's had. From his sister.**

**Badla:** **Cake won't do the job for even a dead man's belly.** (To Arton) **Food's for you. Get some food.**

**Arton:** **Not hungry!**

**Badla:** (Surprised that he said even a word) **He spoke! Doesn't go out, doesn't come in, doesn't work, doesn't talk, doesn't...** (Indicates her loins, meaning that Arton isn't sexually active) **How should he be hungry?**

**Hoopie:** **A will o' the wisp!** (Laughs, trying to mollify Badla)

**Badla:** (To Arton) **Out of your eyes with Hoopie! That's wrong! It's wrong! Shameful! Sinful! The whole house smells of you!**

**Anyone coming into this house can smell the stink of sin... and that's the last stink before the stink of death!**

**Manno:** (Enters from outside, holding a hat. To Arton) **My boy, hello.** (To Hoopie) **Manno's little beauty, hello...** (To Badla) **And to you, M'daddam, a special hello!**

**Badla:** **And this after you barked at me and left!**

**Manno:** **You shouted at me, so I responded. Was it otherwise, M'daddam?**

**Badla:** **M'daddam of the Back Country!**

**Manno:** (Displays his new hat) **But my new hat: How does it strike you, M'daddam?**

**Badla:** **The money for buying a hat: from where?**

**Manno:** **No money, M'daddam. I put it to you... How shall I put it?**

**Badla:** **Don't put it. Don't put it.**

**Manno:** (Puts the hat on his head) **M'daddam, I have my head in the hat — how?**

**Badla:** **You say head in the hat? All I see is a hat.**

**Manno:** (chuckles) **So amusing, M'daddam. A hat without a head...** (To Hoopie) **Isn't it, Manno's little beauty?** (Hoopie has sat down in Ma'amna's chair to look through Arton's play. He notices.) **And that would be what in your hands, Manno's beauty? Pages — you could call them booklike pages...** (chuckles) **Truly a wonder.** (Hoopie smiles to him and continues looking through the play.) **As far away as the garden gate I smelled the smell of the coffee.** (Goes to the urn to make coffee.)

**Badla:** **And what a wonder would sugar be if you remembered to bring it!**

- Manno:** For a fact, M'daddam... Sugar had I remembered, I would have brought. It's almost gone, here.
- Badla:** (Snickers bitterly and demonstratively)
- Manno:** After midday, my second time out, I'll bring it...
- Badla:** On the path where you walk, may the demons dance and sing:  
Sugar, sugar, sugar...
- Manno:** And right now on the path I walked, M'daddam, it was your mother I saw — talking to herself and running. Run, run, run. At such a run that where does an old woman find the strength? And where to would she be running?... Her eyes had no time to see me... Alone with herself, alone...
- Badla:** Don't summon a jinx on the strength of my mother!
- Manno:** May she be as strong as that big animal whose nose reaches down to the ground. What's it to me?
- Badla:** With her strength she went to work when you had the sickness, to bring food to your children!
- Manno:** Coffee for you, M'daddam?
- Badla:** Heap the spoon.
- Manno:** (Serves the coffee to Badla and lights a cigarette) Such a pleasure to smoke, and such a pleasure not to smoke!... Today at the square, as I sat and smoked, I thought of that...
- Badla:** And you'll go on smoking, and go on thinking you're alive!
- Manno:** Eating, drinking... smoking!... twice a day down to the square and a walk around... what's not alive about it? (Laughs)

**Badla:**        **Alive? What kind of alive? Without your medicine, you'd devour us all!**

**Manno:**        **Did I want the sickness? I must have said, "Without the sickness, life isn't worth living... No money, no women, no world, give me at least the sickness!" The pity is that a person can't die from the sickness.**

**Badla:**        **Better you were dead instead of putting us through hell!**

**Manno:**        **But now it's too late, M'daddam. I've come to love being alive!**  
(Chuckles)

**Badla:**        **I raised the children like a mother cat in the alley... And you with the sickness and without the sickness, without the sickness and with the sickness!**

**Manno:**        **But here I am now... They found a medicine for me, and M'daddam, I am here! With my health!**

**Badla:**        **With the health of the dead and buried.**

**Manno:**        **But look, M'daddam, how in the speaking of this and speaking of that, I forgot what I was speaking of ... Do you remember the boyfriend Hoopie had some two or three years ago?**

(Hoopie stops reading the play. Arton tenses.)

**Badla:**        (Also tense) **Five years ago, luckmaker of mine, five years!**

**Manno:**        **His father was at the square today... (Coughs)**

**Badla:**        **Now of all times the devil is in your throat? Speak out!**

**Manno:**        (Still coughing) **"Hello Manno, sir, so happy to see you"... Like diamonds from his mouth. And how he opened his arms to me...**

**Sat down alongside on the bench, and his hand was on my shoulder, the way I've seen sometimes a man hold a woman...**

**Badla: Good you at least remember about a man holding a woman!**

**Manno: "My finest, best regards to the family, Manno sir. Give them my blessing. We haven't forgotten you friends, we wouldn't forget friends like Manno..." And it was this hat, M'daddam, that from his own head he took and put it on this head of mine... (Enacts how the hat was given, and quotes) "Here's a gift for you, Manno, sir." Just that way, M'daddam, and it raised tears in my eyes.**

**(Remembers) Oh, and these good cigarettes from overseas he gave me... "Manno, sir, you're a person who knows how to smoke. These were made for someone like you." (Shows the pack of cigarettes, and gives one to Badla) A fine man... A fine family...**

**Badla: (Referring to Hoopie) Ah, Manno, such a pity! What a longing for Hoopie his son had! He told me back then, "Mother of Hoopie, your daughter is all the world, and all the world is your daughter!"**

**Manno: Did he so say, M'daddam?**

**Badla: (To Hoopie) Then why? Why, Hoopie, after less than many days, did you walk simply out on him? To this day I'm asking, and to this day your mouth remains shut on the why of it. Look — he's been married, gone to live far from the country, grown to be rich, but rich — and you, my blossom, had you not pulled back your hand from marriage, you would today be a woman on a chair on a platform like a queen has! And then, M'daddam — the way your clever father says — you'd be away from here, M'daddam! Away**

**from this pit! This tomb! But no, you stayed wrapped up in the words of Ma'amna. You sat back down in the gaze of Arton.**

**Never leaving his eyes, and his eyes see nothing but you!**

**Manno: Why Arton, M'daddam? Bless his soul, shouldn't a brother love his sister?**

**Badla: (Approaches Arton) **Out of his eyes with her! Out!** (To Arton, angrily) **Put Hoopie out of your eyes!****

[Hoopie goes to separate Badla and Arton, But Badla pushes her away. Hoopie leaves the house in protest.]

**Badla: (Calling angrily after Hoopie) **Who would take mud in their hands and smear their own face?!****

**Manno: (Seems to be recollecting) **You're saying face... And you should have seen his daughter, M'daddam.****

**Badla: **Seen whose what?****

**Manno: **A wonder... Hoopie's friend's father's daughter.****

**Badla: **Will you speak nothing for ears to follow? Whose what?****

**Manno: **M'daddam, wonder upon wonder. The man I met at the square today... who has a son who was Hoopie's boyfriend... has also a daughter. A daughter! Can I point more plainly for your ears to follow?****

**Badla: **Was anyone clever as you since time came crawling?****

**Manno: **His daughter, M'daddam, and he was with her hand in hand, could be the age of Manno's little beauty... delicate, white... like milk, you could say...****

**Badla:** And why, to her father, did you not say “I have a son!”? Clever as you are, you could say “A son of mine is at the age for marriage.” How is it then that you can have a mouth and the same mouth makes no sound? Your turn comes for talking, and how do you stand there dumb? How is it only at home that you squeak like a squeegee?

**Manno:** M’daddam, I squeaked him — I told him! I told him I —

**Badla:** You told him. ... Fine. But what did he say?

**Manno:** I told him, it’s a fine Arton we have at home. Arton —

**Badla:** And why did you not tell him: your daughter and my Arton for husband and wife!

**Arton:** (Leaves the house, in pent-up anger)

**Badla:** That one hears marriage, and that one is gone.

**Manno:** But marriage will come, M’daddam. Marriage for Arton —

**Badla:** Marriage! Arton in a marriage? Arton and who? His sister?

**Manno:** Truly a wonder...

**Badla:** You have eyes, and will you not open them for seeing? Have you not ears on the sides of your head for hearing? And as for knowing, what is it you know? What? How to eat and drink, drink and eat... shaking about like a donkey... Put yourself to work. Work! Moneymake!

**Manno:** I worked! Forty years I worked... broke my back... my hands just scars on top of scars... my legs no strength for standing... my eyes – hardly seeing the way at all... there you have it, M’daddam: I’m done for... But still I’ve raised Arton and Hoopie, still I fed

**them and clothed them... I sent them to school... forty years at work... sixty years at life... what's left now?**

**Badla: Your fists, Manno! And your curses!**

**Manno: And that could have been from the sickness I had... inside... in my body, in my soul, and we never knew till it came out...**

**Badla: Not the sickness. No, my gut always felt the fear of you! My body always bore the bruises. And that night... oh, that dark night when your hands burned deep into my flesh... you were on me like a lion, and the great force of you planted Arton between my thighs! I shook underneath your body... wanting away from there, away, away....**

**Manno: How many times the telling before that's been told enough for you? How many times the hearing before it's been heard enough?**

**Badla: Until it's been learned by the houseflies and they bring my voice outside, so that everyone out there will know the story!**

**Manno: But what about giving forgiveness, Badla? Won't you forgive? Or like the animal that eats the dead people, will you eat at me while I'm still alive?**

**Badla: Until death comes to eat you! And after you're dead, may the day come soon, I'll still be eating at you!**

**Manno: (Loses control in a fit of rage. Shouts, trembles, and stammers) **May death come soon for you! Today, today! Death for your mother too, after she's cried over you!** (Turns to the armchair, Ma'amna's place) **May your heart roast on a coalfire!** (Back to Badla) **And your father... as for him... May he get up from the grave so that****

**he can die again!** (Removes his shoe and bangs it desperately on the floor.)

**Badla:** (Taken aback) **But your pills, today, I think you didn't take them...**  
(Hurries to take a container of pills from a medicine bag and offers him a pill. Manno takes the pill from her hand and swallows it. Badla gives him water. He drinks. Pause.)

**Manno:** (Somewhat calmed now) **And for eating, what shall I eat today, M'daddam?**

**Badla:** **Cook yourself an egg.**

**Manno:** **Egg. Let it be egg, then.**

**Badla:** **One egg!**

**Manno:** **Who said eggs? Fewer than eggs is one egg. Truly a wonder...**  
(Enters the interior of the house)

[The light leaves the house and comes up in the garden. There on the bench, Hoopie sits intently reading Arton's play. Arton enters and quietly approaches her. Hoopie, noticing Arton, looks up in amazement from the play to him.]

**Hoopie:** **The words in the playscript... are like pearls. They glow from the page!**

**Arton:** **They glow... (pause) And Hoopie's boyfriend?**

**Hoopie:** **Hoopie's boyfriend?**

**Arton:** **Do his eyes glow?**

**Hoopie:** (Remains demonstratively silent)

**Arton:** **Do they glow?**

**Hoopie:** **With love's own fire! They glow with the fire of love!**

**Arton:** A foul wind shall rise, and the fire in those eyes be smothered.

**That is the writing of Arton in the play.**

**Hoopie:** (Upset) The foul wind is who? To smother the fire of love? Who, then? But who?

**Arton:** His wife!

**Hoopie:** (Scoffing) His wife? The one far from the country? My boyfriend divorced her! He's divorced! (Arton is astonished.) That surprises your heart, does it? That surprises the pages of your play?

**Arton:** Give me the playscript!

**Hoopie:** I'll read it to the end!

**Arton:** It doesn't end!

**Hoopie:** Here's a play you have written, and it doesn't end? (Arton tries from time to time to snatch the play from her hands, but Hoopie eludes him.) What could the end be waiting for? For somebody?

**Arton:** Give me the playscript!

**Hoopie:** I'll compose the end! The sister follows her beloved far from the country. There's the end!

**Arton:** Of a different play...

**Hoopie:** No, that's what belongs at the end of your play: The boyfriend is divorced! To Hoopie he comes! With him I go! Far from the country with him I go!

**Arton:** The end is mine to write! The playscript is mine! It's my play!

**Hoopie:** It's my play too! It's in the family name, so it's in my name as well!

**Arton:** (Sits and breathes heavily. Chokes.)

**Hoopie:** (Rushing to him fearfully) **Don't choke, Arton... Don't... You're not... You're not choking... No, no, no... Hoopie is here. Hoopie... You have Hoopie, Arton. You have Hoopie. ... My brother, my brother...** (Holding his face) **Don't choke, Arton... Don't...**  
 (Strokes his face very softly) **Here, here... Here...** (A long, wet kiss on his forehead) **A kiss to make it better!** (Flutters her lips on his eyes. Whispers) **Make it better... Make it better... Do you remember, Arton? Remember how you loved my make-it-better kisses?... Remember, remember, remember?** (Arton smiles weakly, his eyes remote) **And on that night... That night of all our childhood nights... When the choking came upon you... It was Hoopie you asked to kiss you... "Kiss it all better," you said...**  
 (Swept up herself in the vision; dreamily) **"Kiss it all better, Hoopie. Kiss it all better..."**

**Arton:** (Shrinking) **It was cold... cold...**

**Hoopie:** (Shivering) **And cold it was on that night... a biting winter... terrifying...**

**Arton:** (Grasps Hoopie suddenly) **But now it's warm! Warm!... Our little room is warm... warm... and the wind... from out of the sea the wind is a battle maker! Singing a song of darkness! Darkness!**  
 (They embrace desperately) **Hoopie? Hoopie afraid? Afraid? Here with me, sleep here with me, here!** (Lies down on his sister) **A trembling in Hoopie's body, a trembling...**

**Hoopie:** (Tries to extract herself from underneath him) **To the field! To the field together, Arton; come with me, brother... to the field...**

**Arton:**        **The field? The field?** (Excited. As if wandering in the field) **The field! The field! Oranges, oranges!...**

**Hoopie:**        **Oranges to eat in the field!...**

**Arton:**        (As if handing out orange segments) **For Hoopie from the orange... Arton from the orange... Hoopie... Arton... Hoopie...** (suddenly looks far off) **A faraway man: do you see, Hoopie?**

**Hoopie:**        **A man, Arton?**

**Arton:**        **That man...**

**Hoopie:**        **Who is he?**

**Arton:**        (Suddenly withdrawing his gaze from far off) **Primroses... Primroses...** (Circles Hoopie. Happily) **It was pink you dressed in Hoopie... dressing pinkly... pinkly...**

**Hoopie:**        (As if blossoming) **A primrose is what I am! A prim-mm-rose!**

**Arton:**        (Very gently, whispering) **Dreams by us shall sense the odor of the primrose... Happiness of us shall reach celestial white... Love of ours... Love...** (Seems to notice the man again) **The man, Hoopie... He's here... Here...**

**Hoopie:**        **And this man, Arton?...**

**Arton:**        **Opening his mouth...**

**Hoopie:**        **And that mouth?... (slight pause) What does that mouth say?**

**Arton:**        (Hugs Hoopie tightly and his body seems to meld with hers. His eyes shine and his voice comes from elsewhere.) **“Once you are grown, you shall be each other’s own... You shall be each other’s own... Once you have grown”...** (Arton falls silent. Pause. Both emerge from the vision and return to themselves, to the present.)

**Hoopie:** (Gently disengaging from Arton's grasp) **Arton... He will come today... Hoopie's boyfriend, who's from far from the country arrived, will come to this house today... He will be my husband... My husband... The sister of my husband too will come to this house today... (Arton trembles) The delicate one, as Father Manno called her, the white one... and she... for you is coming, Arton... for you!**

**Arton:** **Come night for me! Come darkness!**

**Hoopie:** **No to darkness!**

**Arton:** **Your "husband" will bring the darkness! You make the darkness! That shall be the writing of Arton in the play!**

**Hoopie:** (Stunned and helpless) **I am... I am not in your play, Arton... It is out I am bound for!... Out!... The man has come, you hate him, but from the pit of this grave he is raising me! The man has come, you hate him, but his heart is open for me! The man you hate is stretching out his arms to me! His arms will take me away from here! Far they will take me! Off and afar!**

(Throws the play to his feet and exits)

Lights down.

**End of Act I**

**Act II**

Afternoon.

**Ma'amna:** (Is sleeping in her armchair, her head lolling to the side. From time to time she snores lightly.)

**Badla:** (Enters yawning) **No sleep for these eyes... No sleep on this day, no...** (to Ma'amna) **Tobacco, if you would give me...** (Notices that Ma'amna is asleep) **And your head why that way, Mother? It's wrong for a person to do that to their body. It's wrong...**  
(Straightening Ma'amna's head and touching her repeatedly) **Oh, Mother, oh... Mother, Mother, Mother... Merciful Mother, gracious Mother, spoiled and pretty Mother... How you loved me... once... How you loved my children... How you wore yourself out for us... How much you brought us, how much you worried... How very much... Where are your nine children who died, Mother?... My brothers and sisters are where?... Of all the ten children, why am I the one left, Ma'amna? Why am I?! Did your God want me for a game-toy in His hands?! Food for that wild beast whose name is Life?! Don't leave me alone in the world, Mother... not all alone... not all alone...**  
**And where is this ugly suffering from? Who pulled it from under the earth? Who said to it, go pour poison into Badla's cup of life?! It brings shame on life... It brings a bad name to the Creator, the One whose believer you are. I never existed, Mother... I never was born, I never brought children into the world, I never married... Not to be, not to be! Ask me, and that's the answer!...**

**And look at this body, Mother, what's become of it... Was I wrong to expect a man? Not a king, not a prince. Just someone to offer a little fondling... a little pampering now and then... even kissing! Someone who could love me a little! What am I, not a woman, Mother? Not a woman? But once... how they envied me. Remember? "Look at that Badla. How beautiful her eyes are..." And this skin, Mother... How delicate it was... How warm... Like a baby's, anyone would say... And my walk, do you remember? Like a cavalry mare for a king... Now it's a hump I'm growing on my back, a hump! How long it's been since I raised this body straight, Mother! How long. And what's there to straighten up for? Or raise my eyes to? I'm all right with my eyes to the ground and my back bent over... Ready for the grave! The pit! No sunlight, Mother; no stars, no moon... The sky's had its lights turned out! Dark now! Nothing up there but groaning! They groan for me and ask how then, how then, how then... It has no heart, this world, if it doesn't wail day and night for me, if it doesn't groan! Let it groan for me, Mother! For me... for me...**

**Arton:** (Enters from the interior, straightens his grandmother's back which has gone aslant again, and goes to the urn to pour himself some tea.)

**Badla:** (To Arton) **But if she mattered to you, then you would make a marriage, be a father. Bring grandchildren for the gladdening of Ma'amna! Instead, your sister Hoopie is in your grip and here you squat! On her heart and on my heart! And Hoopie — what can she give you? What a woman gives?! Ask your grandmother's**

**God what a sister gives a brother! It's wrong, Arton, it's wrong!...  
A wife, go find yourself a wife! Twenty-five years and no woman,  
even a saint would be rattled!** (Arton hurries into the house with his  
glass of tea. Badla calls after him) **And between those legs, I'll be so  
bold, is there nothing?** (Brief pause) **No flesh crying out?... No  
blood wailing?... Night and another day... Day and another  
night... Oh, but the flesh... Oh, the blood... The blood, the blood...**  
(Begins to stroke lightly and carefully near her crotch, through her  
dress, while watching Ma'amna who could be about to awaken) **Fire  
is burning, and no one knows!... Fire... Burning fire...** (Moans  
quietly) **Oh, fire... fire...**

**Manno:** (Entering from the interior, engrossed in the papers that are in his  
hand) **Exactly one hundrend!**

**Badla:** (Startled and angry; does not know whether she was in fact observed)

**Manno:** **And by the signs I have spread on the paper, one hundrend  
remains in our pocket for the rest of the month, M'daddam...**

**Badla:** **Instead of calling me M'daddam, turn yourself into a man! Be a  
man!**

**Manno:** **Truly a wonder...**

**Badla:** **Badla, Badla...**

**Manno:** (Deep in his papers) **This month, vegetables was too big a cost... At  
the grocery — this will amuse you, Badla — up to now, we spent  
just like last month! Same as the same!**

**Badla:** **And coffee we drank just like last month! And tea! And the same  
pills we swallowed! And walked from room to room, and back**

**from room to room! And twice a day you went out to the square!  
And back! And you washed your flesh! And you filled your belly!  
And you went to sleep in your creaking bed! And you broke wind!  
And you woke up at night and again you broke wind! And on  
your way to the bathroom you passed by my room and my  
mother's room in your white underwear and again you broke  
wind!**

**Manno: But the windbreaking, M'daddam, is from the pills...**

**Badla: There are thoughts that the sight of a man like you awakens... Can  
everyone in a pair of pants tell people, "I am a man?"**

**Manno: But there was a time, M'daddam, when men wore a sort of gown!  
(Chuckles to himself)**

**Badla: Is there no redness to your blood? Does it not run through your  
body? Doesn't it budge?**

**Manno: What a world, what a world...**

**Badla: May the world drop dead. It never made me a place. It took up a  
stick and drove me out!**

**Manno: (Standing by the urn) And the sugar that I brought would be  
where?**

**Badla: (In a sort of chant, as if keening) Who, if I speak, will take notice?  
Who, if I weep, will have pity? Who, if I weep, will have pity?**

**Manno: My mother too, how prettily she would sing that song... weeping  
and singing, weeping and singing... Coffee then for you,  
M'daddam?**

**Badla: A divorce for me! A divorce!**

**Manno:** As has been your word from the starting day... Your memory has mislaid the days of what was before the wedding...

**Badla:** What's to remember of an onion like you? Peel another layer, cry another tear!

**Manno:** Tell me how long you waited in the shade of the trees outside my house, to see me arriving back from work!

**Badla:** Cursed be the day for Badla!

**Manno:** Tell me how jealous you were of the other girls who desired my heart!

**Badla:** If only another girl had the brunt of your life! I wish another girl had drunk the poison that I've swallowed from your mouth! I wish your sickness had burnt down another family instead of burning our family down!

**Manno:** But the children are healthy, M'daddam, are they not?

**Badla:** Healthy? Healthy like you? Healthy thanks to you? Arton... your son... is sick! Sick like you! Not swallowing pills — but sick! And Hoopie... Hoopie is not sick... not sick right now! But her son, won't he be sick, likely? And the son of her son, won't he be sick, likely? On your account! The black claws of your sickness are in our family forever!

**Manno:** (Maddened by anger) **May death come soon for you! Today, today! Death for your mother too, after she's cried over you!** (Removes his shoe and bangs it on the floor)

**Badla:** (Taken aback) **But the pills... Again to take them, maybe?** (Offers him the pills, but Manno has calmed already and pushes her hand

away. Pause. Softly, taking pity on Manno:) **And for your afternoon stroll, won't you go? ... You may attract some other woman, one of the local beauties...** (They chuckle to one another)

**Manno:** But then, M'daddam, what would I do with another beauty?

**Badla:** Bring her here! Dig another pit in the graveyard you've built...

**Manno:** You do say "graveyard" all the time... but I say Paradise. A Paradise, this place is truly. Quiet, near the sea... Fine air, the smell of the fields surrounding... A guava tree in the garden... plants, birds, roosters, lizards on the walls... beetles... (chuckles) Life runs long in a place like this... And the singing of the crickets, M'daddam... At night, how prettily the crickets all sing...

**Ma'amna:** (Awakens with a start) **Darkness be light!... Darkness be light!**

**Badla:** (Referring to Ma'amna) **Another cricket!**

**Ma'amna:** A dream! Badla, a dream!

**Badla:** Then let the mouth tell what the eyes of sleep have seen.

**Ma'amna:** No memory... No memory, or may death remember me! Woe, woe...

**Manno:** Truly a wonder... No memory, so why "Woe, woe"?

**Ma'amna:** No memory, Manno, but blackness in the dream! Black as coal! Flowers turned to thorns! Wind turned to fire! Fire in the thorn fields! Fire in the thorn fields!

**Manno:** And this is you after a dream? Face gone as white as the underside of a baby? Truly a wonder...

**Ma'amna:** It was all told in the dream... I was told everything... so why don't I remember? Why, o Ruler of the universe, Knower of all? Badla! Better for some few days not to set foot outside. Keep still, keep still. (Points upward.) And you on high, keep watch. Keep watch.

**Manno:** (Scoffing) Well, Mother by Badla, I'm going out whether He pleases to keep watch or not.

**Ma'amna:** Fear the Lord, Manno, Fear God!

**Manno:** Mother by Badla, why then did a man first say, "There is a God?" For fear! Alone as the man was in the world, and frightened, he stayed frightened until he said "A God there is, and He watches over me." But listen to this, and learn from this: out of Man's own fear was God created, and when God emerged, Man found Him fearsome! So I ask you, is that not a wonder?

**Ma'amna:** God would do well to bring Hoopie back to this house. (Rises and goes to the window.)

**Manno:** But I say this, Mother by Badla: Not this religion's God, not that religion's God... What a man has in this life is his head for thinking and his hands for working.

**Badla:** (Erupts in a brief laugh of bitter ridicule.)

**Ma'amna:** (At the window) With the sun past mid-sky by three fingers, Hoopie's come not back.

**Manno:** (Increasingly excited by his own words) And you know, Mother by Badla, what's been done in God's name, many times after times! You've heard it told! Up to the knees in blood!

**Ma'amna:** Having a home, that daughter of yours, she goes looking for some other home!

**Badla:** Hot coals for your tongue!

**Manno:** And what is to you, wherever whenever Hoopie comes and goes?

**Ma'amna:** Your daughter or not?

**Manno:** And exactly I say so: our daughter, not yours!

**Badla:** Whether hers, whether not hers, she puts a string to everyone and dances them however she pleases!

**Hoopie:** (Enters teary and weeping. Falls sobbing into the arms of Ma'amna, who is the first in her way)

**Manno:** Manno's little beauty... Why such as this?

**Badla:** (Grabs Hoopie from Ma'amna's arms and hugs her with emotion)  
These tears then, for what, Hoopie? What drew tears from those eyes, blossom of all blossoms?

**Manno:** Why, Manno's beauty, why?

**Badla:** These tears, pure as the sky's own rain, for what then, Hoopie?  
For what?...

**Hoopie:** My boyfriend...

**Badla:** Boyfriend? A boyfriend how, Hoopie, how?

**Hoopie:** Who used to be my boyfriend... The one who used to...

**Badla:** Used to be and was! But he married. Went far from the country.

**Hoopie:** But he's here now, Mama. He's here!

**Badla:** And if he's here, my blossom, what if he's here?

**Hoopie:** Divorced, Mama. He's divorced!

- Badla:** And for that? You would weep for the woman he went off and left? You would weep for the woman who for five years sat in your place?!
- Manno:** But Badla, it could be that my Hoopie, with him...
- Badla:** As for you, quiet! Be quiet! Won't your brain give you leave to wait and hear what happened?
- Hoopie:** These days of now, we were together, and with him... with him... together...
- Badla:** (Suddenly understanding what was hidden from her eyes, both now and for several days) With him?... Together... Oh, blindwoman Badla!
- Hoopie:** He told me: "My first love was yourself. My last love is yourself. My heartbeat is the beat of your blood!" He said to me, "Your husband is what I want to be. Your husband!" (Weeps bitterly)
- Badla:** He said husband? (Stops as if beginning, perhaps, to understand the implication)
- Hoopie:** But today... At the noontime of this day... With his eyes behind tears... with his hands shaking upon my body... and his tongue not moving, Mama, but this I heard: "I'm afraid... There's something I have heard, Hoopie, and I'm afraid. Afraid!"
- Badla:** Be the earth afraid; be the sky afraid... Afraid of what, my blossom? Of what?
- Hoopie:** He said to me, "Such a love stops me from saying what I'm afraid of. From adding injury to injury, Hoopie." He told me, "I'll be returning home tomorrow, far from the country... I'll send you a

letter, Hoopie... a letter to you... my love... queen of my life.” He said that, Mama: “Queen of my life!”

(Her weeping intensifies)

**Badla:** And what way is there, Hoopie, for me to hear the good and the bad together? To be glad for the beginning, or to cry over what is finished? Afraid?... Afraid of what?! With him in the morning you were, no fear then. But after the morning, fear? Of what? What? Of who? Of who, then? (Suddenly turns to Ma’amna in anger and astonishment) For a year and another year, those legs did not leave the house... And those legs, where have they now taken you?... Where did you walk?

**Ma’amna:** Where did I walk?...

**Badla:** What have you done? What have you done, you graveyard hag?

**Ma’amna:** What have I done, Badla?!

**Badla:** What have you done? That mouth will tell, and may the telling be a knife to the tongue inside. What have you done?!

**Ma’amna:** May I be done by the angel of death if I did anything.

**Badla:** But if not you, then who? Who then?

**Ma’amna:** From the good Lord...

**Badla:** From the good Lord, you say, comes such an evil?!

**Ma’amna:** May the crows peck my eyes if I did evil!

**Badla:** Evil, evil, nothing but evil have you done! Nothing but evil will you ever do! Only evil, evil, ee-vill! (Arton enters) Ask her, ask that hag why she wants the girl to stay here! Who is she looking out for? Who are you looking out for, that won’t look out for you

**by tomorrow's daylight?! You spilled Hoopie's blood today, for blood to fill Arton's body! (Bluntly to Arton) Arton who casts shame upon our eyes like gritty seawater!**

**Ma'amna: Do not put Arton on a pole of shame!**

**Badla: On a flagpole of shame I'll put Arton! On a flagpole of shame! So that the people will raise their eyes up and say: what this one has done, it is wrong to do! It is wrong!**

**Ma'amna: Oh, Lord!**

**Badla: May you be wiped out of the book of that God you believe in! May a flood of stones fall from the sky upon your head! Who are you? What are you? Blood, isn't it? Flesh, isn't it? Didn't you appear from between the thighs of a woman? Won't you disappear into the pit that swallows all humanity? Who speaks from your tongue? Who is it? And why? And why?**

**Ma'amna: (Tries to get up. To Arton) Here, Arton, take me...**

**Badla: (Pushes her back into the armchair) Myself you've buried, but Hoopie you won't! You won't, devil woman! Devil from hell!**

**Ma'amna: (Points to her neck) The sheep is in the slaughterer's hands...**

**Badla: (Falls upon Ma'amna in a rage) Devil! In this house is a devil, and I'll cast her out! (Chokes Ma'amna) Devilll!**

**Manno: She'll die, she'll die! (He and Arton, with great effort, separate Badla from Ma'amna)**

**Ma'amna: (Panting heavily after the attempt to strangle her) Your grandmother, Arton... Your grandmother...**

**Hoopie: (Stroking Badla, who is upset) My mama...**

- Ma'amna:** (Weeping) **To choke Ma'amna... To choke Ma'amna...**
- Manno:** (To Ma'amna) **Go then, go... Into the house be going...** (Referring to Badla) **That those eyes of hers not see you now...**
- Ma'amna:** (Rises heavily and totters into the house, with Arton helping her in)
- Badla:** (Already somewhat recovered, still in Hoopie's arms as Hoopie sobs softly)
- Hoopie:** **My mama...**
- Badla:** **May tomorrow change your tears to diamonds, Hoopie...** (Kisses her face.) **Don't be afraid, my daughter, don't be afraid...**
- Manno:** **And for you to be resting, Badla. The bedpillow for your head...**
- Badla:** **Quiet!** (To Hoopie, decisively.) **Make me hear again, what did he tell you? Love he told you!... That he loves you!**
- Hoopie:** **Yes, Mama...**
- Manno:** **And in your head, Badla, for the blood to cool...**
- Badla:** (Ignoring Manno entirely; to Hoopie:) **And how did you say he said that he loves you? His heartbeat... is the beat of your blood? His last love is yourself, after the first that he divorced?**
- Hoopie:** (Through tears) **Yes, Mama...**
- Badla:** **And you are the queen of his life: that too he said?** (Hoopie is silent.) **That too?**
- Hoopie:** **Yes, Mama!**
- Badla:** **That's it, then. For the hearing of whoever has ears! How can anyone say that but someone to be in your arms again? Who here can differ to me? Does anyone here have a tongue that turns over to the other side?** (Looks suddenly and sharply at Manno.)

- Manno:** No differing, and no turning over!
- Badla:** Is there a man who would let his life escape on account of fear?
- Manno:** No such man!
- Badla:** (To Hoopie) Loving you, Hoopie! Wanting you! Living and dying by the name of you! Another day or two, or maybe more... When the day becomes dark in his eyes, and by night no sleep will befriend him, then he will cast his fear to the pit and instead he will raise you up! In his heart, you alone! You alone! Mama knows! (To Manno) And you, make those two legs seven and run now to the home of Hoopie's boyfriend. They like you there. Speak with him. Speak into his heart.
- Manno:** And to tell him, what would I tell him?
- Badla:** Say this: Our home holds no fear. None!
- Manno:** None, M'daddam, none!
- Badla:** Never was there fear of this home, and never will there be.
- Manno:** Never was ever, never will be forever!
- Badla:** See that he knows: There are no better people than ourselves in this place, bar none!
- Manno:** Bar none, M'daddam. That tongue speaks true.
- Badla:** See that he knows: Only one of this household is sick with your sickness: yourself!
- Manno:** Myself!
- Badla:** And tell him, tell him that if tomorrow he flies on that aeroplane to the sky without Hoopie, to this land he may never return.
- Manno:** How well you put it, M'daddam: if to the sky, never to this land.

- Badla:**           **Make your words a song upon his ears!**
- Manno:**           **A song o' the songs is what they'll be!**
- Badla:**           **Don't be closing your mouth till it's done what it opened for!**
- Manno:**           **Truly a wonder...**
- Badla:**           **(To Hoopie) And that one, your boyfriend, the answer of his  
mouth to Papa Manno will be joy in your heart!**
- Manno:**           **Joy for Manno's little beauty!**
- Badla:**           **(To Hoopie) Has Mama ever lied to you? Ever?**
- Hoopie:**           **No, Mama...**
- Badla:**           **Whenever I spoke, have I said such, or such, without the knowing  
of it and for certain?**
- Hoopie:**           **No, Mama...**
- Badla:**           **Hasn't this mouth spoken always truth to your ears?**
- Hoopie:**           **Yes, Mama!**
- Manno:**           **And I, M'daddam...**
- Badla:**           **How much talking must you talk? Be running!**
- Manno:**           **And I, M'daddam, am running now to Hoopie's boyfriend's house,  
and returning from there with dates and cherries on my tongue!  
(Pretentiously, to Hoopie:) Dates and cherries, Manno's beauty!  
(Exit)**
- Badla:**           **(Hugging Hoopie) Is Hoopie glad, then?**
- Hoopie:**           **All glad.**
- Badla:**           **Trust your mother?**
- Hoopie:**           **All trust.**

**Badla:**           **There's nothing blind about luck. As much as it's weighed me down with darkness, it will raise you up with light. As much I'm covered by bruises, it will cover you with kisses. Even luck knows the need for... justice. Is that what you call it? Justice?...**

**Hoopie:**           (In tears) **Justice...**

**Badla:**           (Holding Hoopie in both arms) **Pair of arms today, pair of wings tomorrow... Wings of that bird, the most beautiful one...**

**Hoopie:**           (Chuckling through tears) **The hoopoe!**

**Badla:**           **And did you think a grackle like your boyfriend would say he doesn't wish for a hoopoe?**

**Hoopie:**           (Giggling a little in embarrassment) **My husband, a grackle?**

**Badla:**           **A grackle with gold in his beak, and in his heart! (Slight pause) And if he's not so handsome... but he's a good man! And it's a clever man too that you're taking, Hoopie... (Slight pause) And if he's divorced... Look how rich he's become! Look what he said he would, and he did! I remember he said to me before he left, "Mother of Hoopie, no less than a fortune do I go in search of... Hoopie may not wish for me now, but perhaps if I become rich..."**

**Hoopie:**           **He loves you!**

**Badla:**           **Because he knows how much I love you!**

**Hoopie:**           **He said to me, "With your family if you bring them, it'll be two women for me: you, and Mother Badla!"**

**Badla:**           **It'll be one woman for him... one blossom... As for me, Hoopie, I've already been picked and wilted, shrivelled to where you could turn me to dust and the wind would take me... It's gone from my**

**memory, Hoopie, that I'm a woman... The world should be ashamed that a woman like me is in it...**

**Hoopie:** Your youth is still with you, Mama. And there, good doctors are many... and money will be plenty... We'll take Papa to the doctors...

**Badla:** Or maybe instead of giving money to the doctors, you could buy me another husband! (Laughs)

**Hoopie:** (With tears of laughter and weeping) **Have a laughing life, Mama. A life that laughs!**

**Arton:** (Enters holding the pages of the play)

**Badla:** (To Hoopie, referring to Arton) **And tell him... tell him that you're out and off!** (Straight at Arton, bluntly) **Hoopie is going off from here, away! And after the going of Hoopie, whose smell will you smell every morning? And in whose shadow will you cover yourself every night? Your grandmother, even if all the saints pray for her, how much more time will she live for you? Away Hoopie's going, away!** (Slight pause) **And you as well, get that door open and find your life outside, Arton...** (She takes pity on her son. Tenderly and gently:) **Go, poor soul... Go away from here... Go far away... My son!** (Kisses his forehead) **My head is like the booming of war... My eyes want closing... Who knows if I'll have to open them again.** (Enters the interior of the house)

**Arton:** (To Hoopie) **An ending I've written, to the play.**

**Hoopie:** **And this ending?...**

**Arton:** **The brother and sister alone shall dwell... together...**

**Hoopie:** Arton... Mama Badla, it's right what she said... Off to your life be going. Be flying, for fly you can... (Takes the play from his hands)  
Here is your playscript... your wings, your wings! An angel of the sky is in your words... You've set our lives to poetry, Arton.  
You've poetried the weeping. The screaming. The exhaustion. A force passed through me as I was reading... And this is a play... that you must send to the theater, Arton... to the theater! Go off to your life, and I'll be off to my life... with my husband!

**Arton:** He's fled! That "husband" has fled!

**Hoopie:** With him I'll go! Away to life I'll go! A life that no one in this place knows! Places there are where people really and truly live! And it's to live I want, Arton... To live with all the colors of the eye and the sounds of the ear! In here I've wilted. Here I've withered. Here I've putrefied. This is a place... of suffocation!

**Arton:** This is the place of the heart, Hoopie! Of the heart...

**Hoopie:** (Sobs) And from between these walls, shall I not walk? A call for my husband, shall I never call out down the street? Shall I never laugh at the laughter of my children? Never hear my children?

**Arton:** But love?!

**Hoopie:** Yourself I love! (Choking tears) And with him I'll go... with him!

**Arton:** (As if visited by a vision) Myself she loves...

**Hoopie:** By the light of these eyes, yourself I love... By the taste of this breath, yourself I love... By my birth, from my birth, yourself I love... But with him I go... With him... (Weeps bitterly)

**Arton:** (Hoopie's weeping strikes a blow at him and his heart trembles. His love for his sister attains its fulfillment in purity. He touches Hoopie softly, tenderly, with infinite grace and mercy.) **My sister...**

**Hoopie:** **My brother...**

**Arton:** **The play ends... like this, Hoopie...**

**Hoopie:** **Like this?**

**Arton:** **With him you go... With him you go!** (They embrace desperately.)

**Hoopie:** **You see, Arton, we are the writers of ourselves!...**

**Ma'amna:** (Enters from the interior. Seeing the two embracing, she smiles in open pleasure.) **Now heart has returned to heart, and blood to blood.** (Arton and Hoopie hurriedly separate. To Hoopie:) **And when did Arton ever not love you? Since you were children, hand holding hand, hand holding hand... Praise to the One who sits above, who in His wisdom told you here to stay, and who gave happiness to Arton!**

**Hoopie:** **The wisdom is mine, Grandma... And my wisdom has told me to go far from the country!**

**Ma'amna:** **And far from the country who will take you, sister of Arton?**

**Hoopie:** **My husband!**

**Ma'amna:** **Your husband?!**

**Hoopie:** **He will take me!**

**Ma'amna:** (With bitter scorn) **The one whose heart went dry with fear? The one who is running away from you on past the ocean?**

**Hoopie:** **Myself he will take! With him I'll go! Whether that's what you wish or not!**

- Ma'amna:** Is it such a spirit that Badla planted in her daughter's heart?  
Giving such life to a thing that is already dead?
- Hoopie:** Alive! More alive than life is!
- Ma'amna:** Dead! Dead! From poison that I poured in the ears of your  
boyfriend! Demons of fear that I planted deep into his heart. I bit  
him the bite of a sick dog, deep into his flesh. "Of the sickness of  
Hoopie's father, beware," I told him. "Of the sickness that will  
pass from this family to your family forever!"
- Hoopie:** You worm of death!
- Ma'amna:** And I went on to tell him, "Arton has put a seed of love into the  
soul of Hoopie! Into her blood! Into her flesh!"
- Arton:** That's a lie! No, no!
- Ma'amna:** Here is the place for Hoopie! To us she belongs! To you, Arton!
- Arton:** Not now! She's not mine now. Not mine!
- Ma'amna:** Yours she is! From the day she was born until the day she dies!  
Such is the will of God, and that is what I did!
- Arton:** You did that... Why did you? Why? Why?!
- Ma'amna:** And who said to my ears: "Hoopie's boyfriend is here?"
- Arton:** (Dizzied and stammering) I did... I did... I said that!... I... My  
mouth told those evil ears: To here has Hoopie's boyfriend come...  
here... Hoopie's boyfriend is here!
- Ma'amna:** (Decisively) Silence your mouth, Arton!
- Arton:** (Pushes Ma'amna into her chair) My mouth told what it told – Your  
heart did what it did! Die now! Die now, Ma'amna! (Enraged, he  
falls on her to strangle her; but he stops himself. Turns to Hoopie and

tries to approach her, but Hoopie shrinks from him in contempt, dizzied and miserable.)

**Hoopie:** **That mouth... told?**

**Arton:** **This mouth...**

**Hoopie:** **You?...**

**Arton:** **I...**

**Hoopie:** **A deed of shame is what you've planted... And what have you harvested? My life!**

**Arton:** **The shame... The deed and the shame...**

**Hoopie:** **Yours is the shame, Arton! Upon yourself!** (Hits him, in fury and despair)

**Arton:** (Clutches his sister) **The shame is mine! The deed is mine! But you belong to life, Hoopie... You belong to life...**

**Hoopie:** (Tries to escape from his grasp, and a struggle develops) **Snakes from your mouth, into my throat... choking...**

**Arton:** **Choking is for Arton! For Ma'amna, a devouring fire from the sky! But you belong to life, Hoopie! To life! To your husband! Go to your husband!** (Struggling with Arton, suddenly Hoopie falls and her head hits hard on the metal cabinet on which the urn stands. Suddenly she stands up as if involuntarily and freezes. After being that way a little while, Hoopie touches the back of her neck and upon bringing her hand in front of her face again, she sees it is covered in her blood. Her eyes, beautiful and cold, widen in astonishment. Arton tries to say something to her, but his voice catches and only a kind of

croaking comes out of his mouth. Hoopie collapses in a deathly silence.)

**Ma'amna:** (Shocked, hitting her own face with her fist) **May your tongue be cut out, Ma'amna! May your lips shrivel up, Ma'amna!... May your mouth fill with sand, with grit, with grit...** (whispers) **Hoopie fell down, fell down...** (Suddenly shouts loudly) **Hoopie fell down! Do-o-wn!!**

**Badla:** (Bursts in wild-haired and bleary-eyed. Ma'amna's shout awakened her from a sound sleep.)

**Badla:** (Her voice shattered) **Blossom, blossom, blossom!** (Falls to her knees and embraces Hoopie to herself) **Hoopi-i-ie!**

**Ma'amna:** (To Arton) **Go, Arton. Off to the doctor go! Bring the doctor!**

**Arton:** (Stands frozen in his place.)

**Badla:** **Eyes open now, Hoopie. Open those eyes, my daughter. Those eyes... Those eyes...** (Weeps bitterly)

**Ma'amna:** **Oh, a doctor to bring! A doctor, a doctor!** (Runs out of the house)

**Arton:** (Doesn't move a muscle. His gaze is dead.)

**Badla:** **Hoopie... Hoopie, Mama is here... Mama... Hoopie? Heaven and earth may be deaf, but you'll hear your mother's voice! Blossom? Did my blossom fall? And if you did, can the sun and sky be standing? ... Sit up. Sit yourself up, my girl! Your bridegroom is calling you, time to get up... Get up now, queen of his life... Sit up now, bride-to-be, sit up... Dream-blossoms are in your hair, bride-to-be... The sun is gold on your neck, bride-to-be... Whites of cloud on your dress, bride-to-be... Joy has come to us. Joy,**

**hap-pi-ness!** (Weeps bitterly.) **With my heart's eyes I see**  
**happiness...** (Notices Hoopie's blood.) **Dead? Hoopie dead?**  
(Smears her face with Hoopie's blood; her voice is choked.) **Your**  
**blood, Hoopie... Your blood shall be a sign of shame between the**  
**eyes of the world! Tears of mine shall fall like a torrent of salt**  
**upon the earth! Our misery, Hoopie, shall paint the heavens**  
**black! Black, black, black... If it's to death you go, Hoopie, it's to**  
**the pit I fall. I fall too. To the pit. Along with you, along with**  
**you! Here now... Your mouth to your mother's breast, my baby**  
**girl... Mama is with you, my blossom... Not alone, not alone...**  
**Your mother's with you, in the good heart of the earth... Time to**  
**die, Hoopie, and in our grave a bird will be singing... The**  
**darkness will come to us, Hoopie, and there in the darkness it's**  
**warm... In the darkness it's good... Fear nothing, my daughter...**  
**Fear nothing... The darkness is warm... The darkness is good...**  
**It's good...** (Sobs a deathly sob.)

Lights down.

**End of Act II**

**Epilogue**

(a week later)

Manno, dressed in black, is sitting on a chair, withdrawn into himself. His body seems shrunken. He has a cigarette in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. From here until the end, he smokes. Ma'amna is also dressed in black. She is silent.

**Manno: And smoking alone, Badla, nothing of pleasure there. Nothing... Even when you fought with me, I would say: “but it’s a pleasure there’s a soul to drink coffee with, to smoke with...” A thing of fear has come on me, cornered me... Seven days and nights you’re in the grave, and I could say it’s me the worms are having... But oh, my wife, you were heroic. How heroic. With your own hands you ended your life. You said to life: “If that’s how you are, then it’s death for me!” Woman of mine, I’m a simple man. I’m tormented in life but afraid of death... Suppose you could tell me now, is there mercy over there? Is there enough of everything? Or is it this all over again?... And perhaps too you’ll have found out now, Badla: the torment is why? Why the torment? To make us dead, there’s death. And it’s welcome enough, after living and living and life. But the torment, why? (Energetically takes puff after puff of the cigarette.)**

[Arton and Hoopie enter. Arton is carrying Hoopie in his arms. On his lips, which seem clenched, there constantly dwells a sort of twist of astonishment. His body seems to tremble constantly. He is not in black. Hoopie seems frozen in an extended moment of shock. Her

pretty eyes are open but express emptiness. Chillness flows from her body. She is not in black either. Arton seats his sister in a chair and straightens her. He does it with gentle, soft, and infinitely loving meaningfulness. The whole time, this is his behavior toward her.]

**Manno:** (Takes a letter from his pocket) **Here, Arton... A letter having come this morning... A far-from-the-country letter. The one who has the letters to bring said to me, “Far from the country this one, Manno... From far from the country...”**

[Ma’amna tenses. Arton does not react at all to his father’s words; he only goes to the urn to prepare tea. Ma’amna, who is close to the urn, holds out a cup to Arton, but Arton, with a sharp sightless movement, strikes her hand and his face convulses. Ma’amna opens her mouth as if to shout in pain, but she stanches her voice and quickly shuts her mouth. Arton takes another cup and makes the tea.]

**Manno:** (Speaking to Hoopie, his voice trembling) **And that is what your boyfriend said to me, Manno’s beauty, saying as he did: “A letter I’ll send, Father of Hoopie... A letter from far from the country, for Hoopie...” Good he did not say, bad he did not say... All he did say was, a letter from far from the country he would send... (looks despairingly at the letter) As if he had ever seen me reading... Why, if I knew how to read I might have become a great name in all the world... (Turns back to Arton. Speaks to him tenderly and kindly) Give the letter to those eyes and read, Arton... Who knows? There might be good inside... (Extends the letter toward Arton, but Arton refrains completely from reacting. Manno hugs him and a sob**

catches in his throat.) **Oh, Arton, Arton... Your sister took a blow to her skull and she knows nothing, she says nothing, but you from where, eldest cub of Manno?**

**Ma'amna:** **From the Lord, Manno, from the Lord.** (Points upward with great significance) **Him alone! Him!**

**Manno:** (With repressed anger) **And if "Him" is really "Him," perhaps you could ask of "Him" what I was asking Badla: The torment is why? But why?!**

**Ma'amna:** **Sinful words, Manno!** (Bites her finger) **Sinful!**

**Manno:** **Truly, truly a wonder! All your children taken by "Him," and you'll never ask why?!**

**Ma'amna:** **What we know, we know. What we don't know, we may flourish and fall and we still won't know.**

**Manno:** **And when I see you, I say: look there, look there to see how life rises up against death and casts it out! But when I look again, I say: but a life of what?!**

**Ma'amna:** **Life is holy, Manno. The Lord gave it, and until he takes it away, life is holy!**

**Manno:** (Strongly scoffing) **Holy, like the life of the pitiful ant that we step on and don't even feel... (referring to Hoopie's flower, which has wilted over the past week but is still in the pot on the windowsill:)**  
**Like the life of that flower, Hoopie's flower, with its head drooping and hasn't even a mouth to say "water I'm asking!"**

**Ma'amna:** (To Arton, choosing her words carefully) **Arton... If you had found attention for your sister's flower as well...**

Arton: (Does not answer)

**Manno: And now only with her, only with her, where would he find attention for her flower as well? (Wipes his face with his hand as if in shame) And at night, doesn't he leave his bed where else to go but hers?**

**Ma'amna: Go he does. These are no sightless eyes. And what does the poor lad do there? Stands by her bed for that long, with those pages, the white pages in his hands... a play-sript is what it's called, Manno... a theaktrical play-sript... Into these ears Arton spoke quietly of he's writing a theaktrical play-sript... and Arton said to me, it's of us the theaktric is; about us...**

**Manno: (Scoffing bitterly) Theaktric to make of us? Here let the watchers come, here's the theaktric! (Draws despairingly on his cigarette) Haven't I seen theaktric? Back then Arton would go, time to time I went with him... There on the high place, actors arrive... All that light... color... melody... and what clothing they have!... with paintings all around them... painting after painting... like a life divorced from life!**

**Ma'amna: But life, Manno — life belongs to God, even in the theaktric... Even in Arton's theaktrikal play-sript.**

**Manno: But even if those actors truly think that they are yourself and myself... and even if they truly weep and truly laugh — will that be truly like the truth? Will they be ourselves? When their performance finishes, and the patty cake the way the watching of it finishes, they'll go away. They'll say, we've worked our day's**

**work and tomorrow it's a different theaktric. And the watchers? They'll make a watching. They may say well done, they may say ill done, but they'll go home to their own lives... What do you think, our pitifulness is for them to pity? Will they fear, with our fear, that what happened to our house will happen to their own? The memory is for them to at all remember? Perhaps for a day or two, or even a little for a year or two... But suppose they remember for all their lives: tell me then, by what help in return will they help us? Will they return us Badla in return? Will they return Hoopie and Arton in return? Will they return myself in return? (Puffs the cigarette energetically, tearfully) **To here let them come, smoke a cigarette with me, drink coffee with me, weep with me... Better that, than to make of me there a theaktric...** (Closes his eyes against the tears and sobs quietly)**

**Ma'amna:** (Speaking over Manno's sobbing) **Your eyes shall not close, Manno, but rather you shall see... Arton will give his play-sript to be seen at the theaktric... And laughter will open the mouth of Arton... And his joy will give song to the lips of Hoopie, and her tongue shall dance and dance...**

(Sings) **Hoopie is a picture, pretty in the frame.**

**How her brother loves her. Arton is his name.**

**Hoopie is a flower, pretty in the field.**

**Lord, be her sunlight. Lord, be her shield.**

(The stage darkens and light remains only on Hoopie and Arton. Curtain.)