

The Village of Tishreen

The Village of Tishreen A Play by Muhammad al-Maghut Translated by Ahmad Mahfouz Arab Stages,
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Characters

The Moktar (The leader of the village, a post equivalent to mayor)

Ghawar

Ghawar's Wife

Abou Nara

Abou Nara's Wife

The Moktar's wife

The People of the village

Wardeh

Zenah

Abou Samra

The Policeman

The journalist

The Teacher

Scene One

The play begins with the People of the villiage sweeping the ground of the main square in the village. They start taking their seats while singing a traditional Syrian patriotic song that glorifies the love of

their home country and wishing victory for it: “Lolo lolaeh! God glorifies our country and its streets! My country, the victory is yours! “ Then the Moktar enters, waving his hand to his People. Next the Teacher comes on stage.

A Villager: Everybody! Stand up for the Teacher!

The People (*in one voice*): Welcome, Teacher!

The Teacher: Thank you, sit down

The People: We will not sit down, Teacher!

The Teacher: Sit down so we can start our lesson.

The People: Give us the lesson while we are standing.

The Teacher: I cannot.

The People: We won't sit down, as an appreciation of your position. You are very important to us as we were living in complete darkness because of our ignorance and you have come to light the candle of knowledge.

The Teacher: Thank you, thank you. Did you memorize yesterday's lesson?

The People: Of course we memorized it. Not only memorized the lesson but wrote it down.

The Teacher: Well done. You all seem to be good, hard-working students. Give me your class note book, Moktar.

Moktar: Here it is, my teacher.

(Suddenly Abou Nara stands up, shouting.)

Abou Nara: We have needles, scissors, clips and strings!

The Teacher: What is happening?

Abou Nara: I earn my living by making money selling my goods.

The Teacher: Selling during the lesson?

Abou Nara: Yes, if I did not buy or sell and have no money in my hands, how am I going to pay for the course book and other expenses?

The Teacher: Stop that and behave yourself!

Abou Nara: Yes, I will.

The Teacher: Moktar.

The Moktar: Yes, tell me what you want.

The Teacher: Did you do the mathematics homework?

The Moktar: Of course I did. I spent the whole night doing it.

The Teacher (*after examining the homework*): Your answer is wrong.

The People (*in one voice*): Teacher, think about it. Do not do harm to yourself.

The Moktar: I can solve the biggest problem in the village. Do you think I will be defeated by a small mathematics exercise?

The People: Of course not.

The Teacher: But you were not lucky this time; the answer is wrong.

The Moktar: Tell me how that is?

The Teacher (*he turns round and starts writing on the board*): We have seven eggs and seven eggs. What is the total?

The Moktar: It is clear from my note book that you have. The answer is an omlette.

The Teacher: If we did not break the eggs, what would the result be?

Moktar: If we did not break the eggs, we would not have an omlette.

The Teacher (*addressing the People of the village*): What is the result, do you know?

The People: You do make it too difficult for us. If the Moktar did not know, how can you expect us to know?

The Teacher (*writing on the board*): We are saying: seven plus seven.

The Moktar: Which seven is first?

The Teacher: It does not matter.

The Moktar: Stop, I know the answer! Seven next to seven is seventy-seven.

(The Wife of the Moktar starts shouting in happiness and the Policeman shoots his gun in the air a few

times as an expression of happiness that the Moktar knows the answer. The People of the village all stand and start singing.)

The People: We are so proud of our leader, the Moktar.

The Teacher: Please be calm.

The People: We cannot; we are happy because we have such an intelligent Moktar.

The Teacher: OK, listen to me.

The People: OK, we will listen.

The Teacher: I respect your Moktar, but his answer is wrong.

The People: Do not say that; our Moktar is not a liar.

The Teacher: This is what I have; take it or leave it. If you don't accept my answer, I will leave (*he picks up his books, preparing to leave*) Where is my bag?

The Moktar (*approaching the Teacher and trying to calm him*): Come on Teacher; this shouldn't make you leave us.

The Teacher: What do you want, other than seventy-seven?

The Moktar: Do not be angry. I will take ten out of it and leave fifty-seven.

The People: He did not agree to seventy-seven. Do you think he will be happy with fifty- seven?

The Moktar: I have said it; I won't change it now.

The Teacher: It is still the wrong answer.

The People: We urge you, Moktar, to increase it a little bit.

The Moktar: I do not mind; seven and seven is eighty-eight.

Teacher: Still wrong.

(The Moktar becomes angry and shouts.)

The Moktar: Either you accept eighty-eight or I will divorce my wife (*he returns to his seat*).

The Wife of the Moktar (*approaching the Teacher*): Please accept his answer or he will divorce me.

The Teacher: I wish I could, but if accept, my knowledge will divorce me.

The Wife: He divorced his previous wife for one letter in a single word.

The Teacher: This letter is important for the spelling of the word and was there before you, and before his previous wife. Mathematics has rules which must be respected.

The Moktar (*walks toward them; addressing the Teacher*): What does that mean?

The Teacher: That means that your answer contradicts the rules of mathematics.

Moktar: Change the rules of mathematics.

The People (*in one voice addressing the Teacher*): Do this according to the rules of our village and tell the Moktar not to change his answer.

The Moktar: I won't change a word I said. Or else I will divorce my wife.

The Wife (*addressing the Teacher*): Because of your mathematics, I will get divorced now and my life is going to be ruined.

The Teacher: Science does not ruin life, it creates it.

The People (*mocking the Teacher*): It creates it.

The Teacher: Knowledge enlightens our lives.

The Wife: We are used to the light of the candle. We do not need the light of your knowledge.

The People: Since you are saying that knowledge enlightens life, why do you not enlighten yourself with the knowledge of our Moktar?

The Teacher: You are driving me crazy, starting with your Moktar. How in God's name can seven plus seven become eighty-eight? Ask everyone! How that could happen?

The Moktar (*addressing the Teacher*): Hi!

The Teacher: Hi!

The Moktar: Do you want my final word?

The Teacher: Just say it.

The Moktar: Seven and seven, the final word is ninety-nine. Either you accept this answer from me or we will have a big problem!

(The Moktar approaches his People shouting.)

The Moktar: What do you want?

The People: We want what the Moktar wants.

The Moktar: What do you want?

The People: We want what our Moktar wants.

The Moktar: Seven plus seven is?

The People: Whatever the Moktar says.

The Moktar (*repeating*): Seven plus seven is?

The People: Whatever the Moktar says.

The Moktar (*approaching the Teacher*): What do you say now?

The Teacher: I want to leave. Where is my bag?

The People: No, no, Teacher. We can still negotiate.

Moktar (*to the People*): Shut up and listen (*and then addressing the final word to the Teacher*) What is the result of seven plus seven, according to you?

The Teacher: I tell you it is fourteen.

The People: No, this is too much! There is a huge difference between our answer and yours.

The Teacher: Fourteen is my final answer and if you do not accept it, I will leave (*searching for his bag again*) Where is my bag?

The Moktar: OK. Come down and I can make it even. Half-way between us makes it forty-four.

The People: This is the right answer. Long live the Moktar, the wise man!

The Teacher (*in an angry voice shouting*): Stop!

Abou Nara (*again*): Scissors, needles and strings.

The Teacher: Stop, I said!

Moktar (*addressing the Teacher*): Could we please change the subject? Which book do you want us to open next?

The Teacher: Whichever.

The People: We have the book about reading.

The Moktar: Let us start with a reading lesson, Teacher.

The Teacher: The child goes.

The People: The child goes.

The Teacher: The child comes.

The People: The child comes.

(A beautiful girl enters and everybody starts looking at her.)

Wardeh: Hi, guys.

The People: Welcome!

The Policeman: Will you marry me?

Wardeh: No. Hey, Abou Nara. I want some sewing needles.

Abou Nara: Your wish is an order, my lady.

The Teacher: The horse sleeps.

The People: The horse sleeps.

(Another beautiful girl enters)

The Girl: Hi.

The People: Welcome!

The Teacher: The horse wakes up.

The People: The horse wakes up *(speaking to the girl)*.

The Policeman *(again asking this girl)*: Will you marry me?

The Girl: No *(and then addressing the Teacher)*. My mother has told me to ask you if you can excuse my father for a little bit?

Teacher: Why?

The Girl: To solve some urgent problems at home.

Teacher (*addressing the girl's father*): Go with her.

The Girl: Thank you; we won't keep him for a long time.

The Teacher: Zaidon hits Amron.

The People: Zaidon hits Amron.

The Policeman: One moment, guys (*addressing the Teacher*). I have a question.

The Teacher: Yes, what is it?

The Policeman (*standing*): I am thinking, I have heard someone has hit another, who has begun the fight?

The Teacher: Nobody. This has only happened in our reading lesson.

The Policeman: In the lesson, in the village piazza or in the gardens, whoever attacks someone I will arrest him.

The Teacher: Could you please try to understand what the situation is?

The Policeman: I cannot negotiate and I am stubborn. I cannot be convinced to even ask the People of the village.

The People (*in one voice*): It is true, he is stubborn. You cannot convince him.

The Teacher: You are stubborn. This is your problem. But this example is printed here in the reading text book.

The Policeman: Are you planning to teach us how to attack each other and make trouble? I would not allow any lesson that would affect the national security of our village. That is why I am asking you, please change this lesson and give another example.

The Teacher: I cannot. This is found in the text book and I have to stick to the assignments.

The Policeman: So what? Change the assignment.

The People (*in one voice*): Yes, change it.

The Teacher: Do you want to learn according to what you wish?

The Policeman: Yes, not according to you.

The People: We are more than you. Consider our opinion.

The Policeman: We will get our own text book.

The People: And we will tell you to change this and keep that.

The Teacher: Then what is my role here?

The People: Teach us what we wish to learn.

The Teacher (*complaining to the Moktar*): Are you listening to that?

The Moktar: Of course. These are the rules of the new teaching.

The People (*addressing the Teacher*): What do you say now?

The Moktar: Either accept it or there will be a big problem.

(The Teacher picks up his bag, trying to leave. The People of the village stand and gather around the Moktar.)

The Moktar: (*addressing his People*): What do you want?

The People: Whatever the Moktar wants.

The Moktar (*repeating as an assertion*): What do you want?

The People: Whatever the Moktar wants (*He keeps asking the same question and they repeat in one voice the same the answer.*)

Ghawar (*enters and walks towards the Teacher, addressing the People*): Hi, guys.

The People: Hi.

Ghawar (*asking the People*): And what is the problem?

The Policeman: The Teacher is saying that Zaidon hits Amron.

Ghawar: Really?

The People: Yes.

Ghawar: Who said that?

The People: The Teacher.

Ghawar (*addressing the Teacher*): You, Teacher, when are you going to stop making trouble in our village?

The Teacher: Why are you late, Ghawar?

Ghawar: I am sorry; can you forgive me?

The Teacher: What is the reason for you being late?

Ghawar: I feel too shy to tell you.

The Teacher: Do not be shy; we are like brothers.

Abou Samra: His wedding was yesterday.

Ghawar: Yes, and I brought you a paper from my new wife.

The Teacher: What paper?

Ghawar (*handing the Teacher a small piece of paper*): This explains, in my wife's words, the reason for my absence.

The Teacher: Did you manage to marry that fast? I remember two days ago you divorced your wife.

Ghawar: I want my ex-wives to feel jealous of me.

The Teacher: Anyway, congratulations.

Ghawar: Thank you. Would you allow me?

The Teacher: Yes.

Ghawar: Thank you.

(*Ghawar leaves to go to his house*)

The People (*addressing the Teacher*): He is going.

The Teacher (*addressing Ghawar*): Where do you think you are going?

Ghawar (*standing next to the door of his house while putting on some perfume*): I have unfinished business to do.

The Teacher: You can do that later. Come now and join your friends in attending the lesson.

Ghawar: I know, I even memorized it word by word.

The Teacher (*mocking him*): I know that you are intelligent but come and attend the lesson.

Ghawar: I am not coming.

The Teacher (*getting angry*): Come here or else!

Ghawar: When you speak to me nicely, I will come.

The Policeman: You lazy student.

Abou Samra: And he keeps slipping off also.

Ghawar: Shut up (*and then he asks*) Where is my seat? (*He approaches one of them, hits him on his neck without him noticing, then in a sudden movement takes the chair from him, making him fall to the ground.*)

The Teacher (*changing the blackboard*): Now comes the grammar lesson “*men elah an ala*”--the verbs that change other words.

The People (*repeating after the Teacher the same verbs*): *Men ela an ala.*

The Teacher: The boy went to the garden.

The People: The boy went to the garden.

The Teacher: The bear falls off the tree.

The People: The bear falls off the tree.

The Teacher: I drank from the river.

The People: We drank from the river.

The Teacher: Now put one of these verbs into a meaningful sentence.

The People: Which verb do you want us to put in a meaningful sentence?

The Teacher: I want you to put ‘ala’ in a meaningful sentence.

(*The People start singing a traditional song after putting that verb at the beginning of that traditional song.*)

The People: *Al daloma wa ala daloma* the wind from the west has changed my condition *al daloma wa al daloma* my girl has cheated on me. *Ala daloma* knowledge is like the light that shows us the way.

(*All the People of the village hold hands and start to dance the traditional dance to this song. The Teacher, feeling desperate, puts his books in his bag and leaves.*)

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Scene Two

It is night time in the main square in the village with a lighted window and a large bin next to it. A voice is calling Zenah.

Zenah: Who is it?

Nayef: As if there is another one. It is always me.

Zenah: Where are you speaking from?

Nayef: From the waste bin next to you. Is anyone here?

Zenah: No, come out.

Nayef: I have spent an hour waiting for you in the bin.

Zenah: But you know my parents.

Nayef: Is your father here today or working in the fields?

Zenah: No, he is here sleeping.

(Nayef looks afraid and tries to go back to hiding in the bin.)

Zenah: Do not be afraid; my father is a heavy sleeper.

Nayef *(trying to look brave)*: I am not afraid.

Zenah: Why did you come at this late hour?

Nayef: To talk to you.

Zenah: Go on then, talk

Nayef: Ooh, what shall I say? I am out of words.

Zenah: There is a lot to talk about!

Nayef: OK, I will tell you the same words I told you yesterday: Oh my love, I love you more than anything in the world.

(Suddenly we hear the Policeman whistling. Nayef becomes afraid and hides in the bin again. The girl is still looking out from the window and then the policeman appears holding his rifle, walking slowly and looking slowly in all directions.)

The Policeman: What are you thinking of, Zenah? Did you listen to the orders?

Zenah: What orders?

The Policeman: *(mocking Zenah and repeating her question)*: What orders! Did you not listen to the Moktar order a curfew at night in the streets of the village; do you hold a licence to walk at night?

Zenah: I was looking out from the window, not walking in the streets.

The Policeman: It is the same.

Zenah: How?

The Policeman: You can see the streets from the window and, as the curfew applies to walking in the streets at night, you should not look at the street from your window either!

Zenah: What is the reason for this curfew tonight?

The Policeman *(whispering)*: Security reasons. *(Returning to his normal voice)* So please close that window and go inside.

Zenah: I want to smell some fresh air.

The Policeman: That is forbidden tonight.

Zenah: The curfew applies to walking in the streets at night, not to smelling fresh air from your window.

The Policeman: OK then, smell fresh air while you are closing your eyes!

Zenah *(closing her eyes then asking him)*: Like this?

(The Policeman walks towards her): Let me see. Yes, now you are not breaking the law.

(Then he tries to sniff her long beautiful hair, but she slaps him across the face while still keeping her eyes closed.)

The Policeman: What are you thinking about?

Zenah: A lot of things.

The Policeman: And where did your thoughts take you?

Zenah: Far away.

The Policeman: You are breaking the law again.

Zenah: But I am still here at my window with my eyes closed.

The Policeman: But your thoughts have gone far away!

Zenah: What can I do about that? Thoughts do not adhere to rules, and barriers and closed doors cannot stop them.

The Policeman (*sadly*): That is true, Zenah.

Zenah: It is true that the streets are empty, but they might be filled with thoughts wondering in them.

The Policeman: This is a huge problem. How can we feel secure when all the empty streets are filled with thoughts.

Zenah: Arrest these thoughts.

The Policeman: We cannot; that is impossible.

Zenah: Then the curfew is useless!

The Policeman: I do not know. I am only following orders. I came across a saying that says that thoughts are more dangerous than people.

Zenah: Can I open my eyes now?

The Policeman (*smiling and playing with his moustache*): Yes, open your eyes. But do not think far away.

Zenah: No.

The Policeman: Oh, Zenah, my salary has increased now to two hundred Syrian pounds. Will you marry me?

Zenah: No. I am engaged to Nayef.

The Policeman: Bad.

Zenah: You mean Nayef?

The Policeman: No, your luck. Or both of them, Nayef and your luck. (*He whistles again and runs to another window*) Hey, Abou Mahmoud, I told you several times that the Moktar is thinking tonight, so close your window for security reasons.

(Then the policeman whistles again while running in another direction; he then disappears into the darkness.)

Nayef (*getting out of the bin again*): I was nearly suffocated in that bin because of the policeman. Could you remind me, what was I saying?

Zenah: You were saying, "oh my love."

Nayef: Oh yes, oh my love, I love ... (*a whistling is heard again so Nayef hides in the bin again*)

Zenah: Oh no.

(Abou Nara appears, whistling while running and holding a large bag on his back).

Zenah (*addressing Abou Nara*): Where are you going? Haven't you heard about the curfew tonight?

Abou Nara: Good evening.

Zenah: Good evening. You did not answer my question. Why are you breaking the law?

Abou Nara: I am breaking the law for the national benefit.

Zenah: Haven't you heard about the security reasons?

Abou Nara: I am holding these security reasons in this bag.

Zenah: What do you have in that large bag?

Abou Nara: Forbidden goods for the Moktar!

Zenah: I do not get it. Why all of this secrecy? I know that he and the People in the border agency are good friends.

Abou Nara: Yes, they are, but the Moktar does not want to tell them and ask for this favour for such a small thing.

Zenah: I do not understand.

Abou Nara: This means that the profit from this small amount of forbidden goods is not enough to share between them as usual.

Zenah: Is it not enough that the Moktar is a leading politician? So why does he want to be involved in these types of things?

Abou Nara: Working in this type of business requires the power and authority of politics as well. OK, see you. (*He walks away while whistling.*)

Zenah: Goodbye then. (*She addresses Nayef*) Nayef.

Nayef: Is it safe outside?

Zenah: It is safe; just come out of the bin.

Nayef: Oh, will I spend the whole night in the rubbish bin?

Zenah: The Moktar is not allowing anybody to live happily.

Nayef: And I also forgot what I was saying.

Zenah: You were saying

Nayef: Oh yes, I remember (*holds Zenah's hands*). Oh my love, I love you (*the whistle is heard again*)
Oh my God, is it the policeman again?

Zenah: No, it is my mother.

Nayef: That is even more dangerous (*and he returns to hide in the bin*).

(*Zenah's Mother appears outside the main door of the house, whistling and holding a small rubbish bin in her hands. She empties it into the large rubbish bin. She sees her daughter at the window and she shouts at her*): Zenah, what are you doing and why is the window is open?

Zenah: I am doing nothing and there is a curfew and nobody will see me.

Mother: I was a girl like you and I know what these things mean. (*Then she looks around and gets angry*)
Are you seeing your fiancé or falling in love with him?

Zenah: Oh no, I know it is not right for a girl to fall in love with her fiancé.

Mother: That is good. That is my girl.

Zenah (*speaking to herself in a loud voice*): Oh, speaking of love is more dangerous than speaking about politics in this village.

Mother: Stop philosophising about things, close the window and go inside.

Zenah: Mother, do you think a girl could sleep on the night before her wedding?

Mother (*sitting in front of the door of the house*): Oh yes, my daughter. I went through the same experience a long time ago but now I wish I had never gotten married.

Zenah: Why?

Mother: Do you see what happened to me and how lucky I am with that husband?

The Husband (*shouting from inside the house*): What is the problem with your husband?

Mother: Shut your mouth. Nobody is talking to you.

The Husband (*coughing*): When we got married, I was the most handsome man in the village.

Mother: There is a mirror in the house, just look at yourself.

The Husband: You are the reason for my fast aging. If you have stopped loving me we can get divorced

Mother: That is what you want. There is no way I could leave you.

The Husband: Then you still love me.

Mother (*speaking nicely now*): No.

Husband: Come to me then.

Mother: You come.

Husband: I cannot. I'm naked.

Mother: You are so stubborn (*then laughing and going inside quickly*).

Zenah (*addressing Nayef again*): Nayef.

Nayef (*appearing out of the rubbish bin with some watermelon waste on his head*): Do you think the fight is finished between your parents?

Zenah: Everyday they do the same.

Nayef: Do you think all married people fight with each other like that?

Zenah: Of course.

Nayef: Do you think the same thing will happen to us when get married?

Zenah: I hope so.

Nayef: You hope to get into a fight?

Zenah: Oh yes, because every time they fight with each other they get to make up to each other afterwards.

Nayef: And what?

Zenah: And reconciliation is beautiful. After that you live as if in a honeymoon atmosphere again.

Nayef: This is the first time I have heard such a thing.

Zenah: I swear that it is true and whenever they miss each other they get into a fight.

Nayef: Now I understand why my parents keep fighting with each other.

Zenah: I cannot wait until we get married and start fighting.

Nayef: Could you remind me of what I was saying?

Zenah: You were saying to me

Nayef: Oh yes, my love, I love you (*and then suddenly he hides again in the bin without hearing a whistle.*)

Zenah: Why are you hiding?

Nayef: Are you sure nobody is whistling?

Zenah (*laughing*): No.

Nayef: Why, that is strange.

Zenah: They are all asleep. There is only you and me in the night.

Nayef: And there is this bin.

Zenah: And the stars.

Nayef: Ask the stars what I told them about you.

Zenah: And the birds.

Nayef: I always send with them messages for you, did they reach you?

Zenah: I cannot read.

Nayef: After we get married I will teach you how to read.

Zenah: And how can I make use of that?

Nayef: To read my letters to you.

Zenah: Once we get married you will stop writing to me.

Nayef: That is true, because we will always stay with each other; we won't be separated.

Zenah: That is true. That is romantic.

Nayef: Of course. Tomorrow I will build a two-bedroom house for you and we will live in it.

Zenah: And we will fight with each other.

Nayef: Yes, every day two or three times.

Zenah: Nayef.

Nayef: Yes, my love.

Zenah: Do you love me?

Nayef: No.

Zenah: How come I am in love with you and you do not love me?

Nayef (*while playing with his moustache*): It is taboo for a man to express his feelings.

Zenah: I do not get it. Why is it difficult for men to speak in a romantic way?

Nayef: In order for girls not to ask too much from men. Did I make you angry?

Zenah: What do you think?

Nayef: I intentionally tried to make you angry for us to fight and then make up with each other.

Zenah (*laughing*): So cunning.

Nayef: Let us fight for a bit then.

Zenah: We cannot do that. Suppose somebody comes and sees us.

Nayef: Just one fight. Please.

Zenah: Leave it till tomorrow after our wedding.

Nayef: I do not know why I am always afraid of tomorrow.

Zenah: We waited for years and you cannot wait for one day now?

Nayef: There is always something mysterious and frightening about the future (*he holds Zenah's hand again*).

Zenah: Go now before the policeman comes again.

Nayef: OK, good night then.

Zenah: Do not go anywhere; go straight home.

Nayef: Of course, I am going home now.

(He stands up with the bin and walks slowly until he reaches his home next to Zenah's house, he gets out of the bin and enters his house. Then, there is traditional music with some folklore dancing which lasts for four minutes.)

Scene Three

The wedding of Nayef and Zenah starts with the celebrations, which mainly comprise a traditional dance in the center of the village and women singing. All the village people and the Moktar enter to celebrate the wedding. Two men are holding drums to accompany the dance, one is Abou Nara from the groom's side and the other is Ghawar from the bride's side. Nayef and Zenah also appear, each accompanied by their family.

Two Girls (*surrounding the bride start saying in a singing tone*): Aoohaaa, our daughter is like jasmine, thus she needs to be taken care of all the time. Aoohaaa, Zenah is the jewel of the village, a virgin who has not been kissed before.

The Female Relatives of the Groom (*starting to get angry at this, they reply in a singing voice also*): Aoohaa. Our son is handsome and beautiful. Aoohaaa. And they all envy him because of his beauty and your house was living in darkness and will be enlightened now with the presence of our son.

The Bride's Family: Aoohaa, your mother was pregnant for nine months and she raised you with love. Aoohaa, and they will be lucky to have you. We feel it would be better if we cancelled this wedding and kept our daughter.

The Groom's Family: Aoohaa, do not talk so much. Nobody is allowed to criticize us.

(The women from both families start fighting.)

Ghawar (*steps in, trying to separate the two groups and then addresses the women from the groom's side*): Step back, we are stronger.

The Groom's Family: Aoohaa, and if you feel you are losing, keep your daughter and give us back our presents.

Ghawar: What presents are you . . . !

The Bride's Family: Aooohaa, we have just heard about your presents. We have not tasted any of your sweets. Aooohaa. It is better to end it now.

(One of the groom's female family members faints.)

Abou Nara: Some water please.

The Groom's Family: Aooohaa, there is no need to talk any more. Your daughter is still with you and we still have our son and you will regret that.

Ghawar (*addressing Zenah*): Go back to your home; you will not marry Nayef.

(The bride's family start to enter their home.)

The Moktar: Where are you going? I have not spoken yet!

Ghawar: Listen. The Moktar wants to deliver a speech.

The Moktar (*imitating the women in a loud voice*): Aooohaa.

Ghawar (*addressing the Moktar*): Take it easy.

The Moktar: Leave this to me. I will solve the problem.

All in one voice: Do it.

The Moktar (*in a singing voice*): Aohaaaa, both of you are well behaved and are nice people.

Ghawar: That is nice.

(One of the groom's female relatives and one of the bride's female relatives come and shake hands.)

The Women: Aooohaa.

The Moktar: Zenah and Nayef love each other.

Nayef: That is right.

The Women: Aooohaa.

The Moktar: In this marriage you are all equal; there are no losers or winners.

The Women: Aooohaa.

The Moktar: What do you say now?

All in one voice: That is true. (*They start dancing again.*)

The Moktar: See how I can solve any problem!

Abou Mahmoud (*addressing the Moktar*): Could you start your speech now?

Ghawar: Congratulations, Zenah! Congratulations, Nayef!

Zenah: Thank you.

Nayef: Thank you.

The Moktar (*starting his speech*): My loyal People. In these decisive moments of our nation's life. . .

Ghawar stops him, asking him to sit down.

(The Moktar is getting tired, but is still enthusiastic about the speech, asking one of his assistants to refresh him by producing some fresh air.)

Abou Nara (*reminding the Moktar*): Moktar, the speech for the wedding.

The Moktar: Why did you not remind me before I started. I thought you meant the political speech (*He then asks his assistants to bring the wedding book.*) Where is the groom's father?

Groom's Father: I am here.

The Moktar: And the bride's father?

Bride's Father: I am here.

The Moktar: Any witnesses?

All in one voice: We will all witness this marriage.

The Moktar: Zenah, come and stand next to me. (*Zenah comes and stands next to the Moktar.*)

The Moktar: And the groom (*Nayef comes and stands next to the Moktar.*)

The Moktar (*asks Nayef*): Do you take Zenah as your wife?

Nayef feels shy and turns his head.

Ghawar (*addressing the Moktar*): If he does not, I will marry her.

Nayef: Yes, I do.

The Moktar: Zenah, do you take Nayef as your husband?

Zenah feels shy also and looks down.

The Groom's Family: Of course she does.

The Moktar: I must hear her voice.

Wardeh: She feels shy.

The Moktar: Zenah, do you take Nayef as your husband? I must write it down.

(Zenah nods her head.)

The Moktar: What shall I write down?

The Groom's Family: Write down the nod.

The Moktar: And how shall I write that?

The Groom's Family: Like that *(and they all nod with their head)*.

The The Moktar *(addressing Zenah)*: I want your answer.

Zenah: Yes, I do, but my family has the final word.

The Moktar: *(addressing Zenah's family)* Do you accept?

Zenah's Family: Yes, we do, but with one condition.

The Moktar: What is the condition?

Zenah's Family: Nayef has to present his orchard as her dowry.

The Moktar *(addressing Nayef's family)*: Do you accept that?

Nayef's Family: Yes, we do.

(They start dancing again and Nayef kisses his bride after lifting her wedding veil. The wedding party continues with women dancing and singing. After that, the men come to dance while playing with the swords and shield.)

The Moktar *(addressing Nayef and Zenah's fathers)*: Come and sign.

Nayef and Zenah's Fathers: What for?

The Moktar: The marriage certificate.

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: The marriage of whom?

The Moktar: The marriage of your son to his daughter!

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: We won't.

The People: Why?

The Moktar: Don't you agree to this marriage?

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: Yes, we agree.

The Moktar: And to the condition of presenting the orchard as her dowry?

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: Yes, we agree.

The Moktar: So then why are you fighting with each other?

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: About what type of food to have for the wedding guests.

The Moktar (*addressing Nayef's father*): What do you want to have?

Nayef's father: Lentils.

The Moktar (*addressing Zenah's father*): What is your objection to having lentils as the main dish?

Zenah's father: I want rice. Lentils are so cheap and my daughter deserves more than that!

The Moktar: And would you cancel the marriage because of the food?

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: Why not? We are so stubborn.

The People: We do not want to eat.

The Moktar (*standing and feeling angry*): No, we want to eat!

Ghawar: So why do you not you have beefsteak with mushroom sauce!

The People: What is that?

Ghawar: I do not know. I heard it today on the radio.

The People (*addressing Nayef's and Zenah's fathers*): Have you come to a decision yet?

Nayef's Father: I won't accept anything except lentils.

Zenah's Father: And I will only accept rice.

The People (*addressing the Moktar*): Please help us.

The Moktar: Let me think about it.

The People: Yes, think!

The Moktar: I have a solution for that (*he addresses Nayef's father*). What do you want to have?

Nayef's Father: Lentils.

Moktar (*addressing Zenah's father*): And you?

Zenah's Father: Rice.

The Moktar: And what did you suggest, Ghawar?

Ghawar: Beefsteak with mushroom sauce.

The Moktar: Why do you not have rice mixed with lentils together with mushroom sauce?

The People (*addressing Nayef's and Zenah's fathers*): What do you say about that?

Nayef's and Zenah's Fathers: We agree.

The women and men resume the party and start dancing again.

Nayef's Mother (*addressing Zenah*): Come and enter your new home.

Zenah and Nayef start walking, holding each other's hands.

Nayef's Mother (*giving Zenah a small amount of dough*): Throw this on Nayef's door to bring you luck and stay his wife forever!

Zenah throws the dough on the door but it does not stick, which is a sign of bad luck. We now see the Policeman entering quickly and approaching the Moktar. He looks as if he has been beaten.

The Policeman: Moktar, help.

The Moktar: What is going on?

The Policeman: The orchard.

The People: Which one?

The Policeman: Nayef's orchard that he was going to give to Zenah as her dowry.

The People: Yes, what is the problem?

The Policeman: An armed thief has put his tent in the middle of the orchard and attacked me, which has damaged my prestige.

The People: Just one person did that?

The Policeman: Yes, just one.

The People: But you are an armed policeman! Why did you fail to do your job?

The Moktar: Why did you not shoot him with your rifle?

The Policeman: Something has gone wrong with it and it has stopped working.

Nayef: But it always works when you are attacking us.

The Policeman: Really?

The People: Yes, really.

Ghawar: Oh, Zenah, don't you worry, my sweetheart. Your wedding is going to go on and we are going to repossess your orchard.

The Moktar (*shouting*): Let us go and attack that thief now!

(Ghawar begins beating his drum and walking with the rest of the village people to take their orchard back.)

The Moktar (*singing in a patriotic way*): Oh, thief, we are coming.

The People: Yes, we are coming.

The Moktar: To kill you and take our land back.

The People: To kill you and take our land back.

(All the men in the village are walking towards the orchard while the Moktar and his Policeman slow down gradually until everyone disappears. Then he enters his house with the Policeman while still singing.)

The Moktar: Oh, thief, we are coming.

Scene Four

Zenah appears alone in the dark with sad music in the background.

Zenah: And days pass by and the orchard has just become a song.

(Then we hear the voices of some men singing with that sad music.)

The Men: Please, our orchard, give your fruits to other people and we will wait until we smell some scent coming from you to remember our good old days where we used to play there when we were young.

Nayef *(he appears sitting on the ground with other men from the village and looking sad)*: Are we going to sing forever without taking any action?

Ghawar: But singing makes you feel relaxed, Nayef.

Nayef: But a song cannot bring our land back.

Ghawar: You must be joking. I can write two lines of poetry that will bring Andalusia back!

Nayef: What about the orchard?

Ghawar: I can have the orchard back by writing a whole poem.

Nayef: This is nonsense.

Ghawar: But poetry is nice.

Nayef: You are talking like the Moktar.

Abou Nara: He is preparing himself to take the position of the Moktar.

Nayef: Who is going to vote for you?

(At this moment the Policeman is about to leave the Moktar's house when he accidentally hears that Ghawar wants to be a Moktar and he goes back to the house to tell the Moktar.)

Ghawar: You are asking who is going to vote for me. *(while playing with his moustache)* My ex-wives together could vote to elect a whole parliament.

Nayef: Hey, guys, let us be serious. We must do something about the orchard.

Abou Nara: And who do you think will get it back?

Nayef: We can do that.

Abou Nara: But do we not have free will; we cannot decide on our own.

Nayef: Then who can?

The Moktar appears with the Policeman, eavesdropping on the people while they look anxious.

Abou Nara: It is the Moktar's decision.

Abou Samra: He is busy with the smuggling of his illegal goods.

Abou Nara: Do not speak in a loud voice; the Moktar will hear you.

(The Moktar and his Policeman appear, coming out of the door.)

The Moktar: I heard everything. Shame on you all, I am responsible for the law and forbid any smuggling in this village. Can I not have my own small smuggle? And after all, I am smuggling to make money for the village, for our homeland to be able to have our land back. *(He addresses his Policeman)* You see how the People do not appreciate any efforts I make.

The Policeman: Oh, shame on them!

The Moktar *(asking the Policeman)*: How much did you use to pay for a pack of playing cards?

The Policeman: One pound.

The Moktar: I am selling it to you all for fifty pence, so tell me, who is benefiting from my smuggling, you or me?

The People: We are.

The Moktar: And then what about these sardines you are eating? How could you dream of tasting them if I had not smuggled some boxes of sardines into the village?

The Policeman: And do not forget the corned beef, Moktar.

The Moktar *(reminding the Policeman)*: No, I did not give this yet to the shops to sell. *(To the People)*

I am giving you a last warning. If I ever hear you again speaking about my smuggling, I will stop and you know how stubborn I am.

The Policeman *(praising the Moktar)*: You convinced them all.

The Moktar: That is why I am in my position.

The Policemen: Yes, I agree.

The Moktar: And they dare to speak despite the fact that I am taking care of them and the stolen land.

(He goes back nearer to his door.)

Abou Nara: Now we know that Moktar did not forget about the stolen land.

Nayef: So when will get it back?

Moktar: Don't worry. We will get it back.

Nayef: When?

The Moktar: Why do you want that to happen so fast?

Ghawar: Because he wants to get married.

The Moktar: And why doesn't he get married? Who is stopping him from doing that?

Abou Mahmoud: Do not forget that the stolen orchard is the dowry of Zenah.

Moktar: Why don't you choose a different girl?

Nayef: But I love Zenah.

The Moktar: Love is not a necessary condition for marriage.

Nayef: Of course not.

The Policeman: You are mistaken. You are not better than the Moktar.

The Moktar: I have married four women out of hatred, not love.

Abou Nara (*addressing the Moktar*): But the village girls have sworn not to marry until Zenah gets married.

He Moktar: I like this cooperation, but I do not care if they get married or not.

Ghawar: I could accept that we could not continue our lives like that without getting married.

The Moktar: But you are already married.

Ghawar: But I love getting married. I now have three pairs of trousers and four wives.

The Policeman: This is what you think about, while the Moktar and I are always thinking of how to get

the stolen land back.

Ghawar: And why are you angry? How am I interfering with you?

The Policeman: Because you have four wives now and I am still single.

Ghawar: Why would women agree to marry you?

The Policeman: And why would they agree to marry you and not me?

Ghawar: This is my secret.

The Policeman: What is that secret?

Ghawar: I will not tell you.

Nayef: Could you please stop talking about that and think about how to get our stolen land back.

Ghawar: Aren't you hearing what he is saying? He lacks manhood and still wants to get married.

(The Policeman gets angry and tries to attack Ghawar. The People of the village try to stop them from fighting each other.)

Ghawar *(addressing the Policeman)*: And you dare to speak after you failed to defend our land even though you were armed.

The Moktar: How dare you speak to him like that? The policeman represents me and the government in this village.

Ghawar: What type of government could not defend its country?

The Moktar: Let us get back to the question of the stolen land. Could you remind me what season it is now?

The People: Spring.

The Moktar: I swear to you, after six months of winter I will get your stolen land back.

Nayef: What if you fail to fulfil your promise?

The Policeman: But the Moktar himself is swearing.

Nayef: I want to know what will happen if he does not fulfil his promise.

The Moktar: If I do not get the land back, I will shave off my moustache.

Scene Five

Wardeh and Zenah are sitting alone in the Village piazza at night drinking coffee.

Zenah: He promised to shave off his moustache.

Wardeh: Why?

Zenah: If he did not get the stolen land back within six months.

Wardeh: It is common these days to hear a lot of promises from politicians that are not fulfilled.

Zenah: The six months have passed now and the land is still stolen.

Wardeh: And his moustache is not yet shaved off.

Zenah: It is just getting longer.

Wardeh: Are you still meeting with Nayef?

Zenah: Sometimes, but I have not seen him today. He told me that he has a meeting with his friends to prepare for something to do tomorrow.

Wardeh: What will they do?

Zenah: I do not know.

Wardeh: Could you continue reading my cup of Turkish coffee to see my luck?

Zenah (*holding Wardeh's cup*): You will receive a letter after two signals.

Wardeh: Who is going to send it?

Zenah: Someone!

Wardeh: Oh no! My father would kill me if that happens.

Zenah: Why, are you in love with someone?

Wardeh: No!

Zenah: Then why are you afraid?

Wardeh: I am afraid there is someone who will send me a love letter. (*She takes her cup from Zenah and looks inside it*). What does he look like?

Zenah: How do I know?

Wardeh: You cannot tell if you look inside the cup?

Zenah: No.

Wardeh (*feeling disappointed, she hands her cup again to Wardeh*): Continue. Read my luck then.

Zenah: There is a road in front of you that you will walk.

Wardeh: That is true.

Zenah: Are you travelling?

Wardeh: No, I am going home.

Zenah: It's not that late; could you stay a bit longer?

Wardeh: I cannot. My parents will be worried about me.

Zenah: I will continue telling you about your future if you stay.

Wardeh: I stay awake all night because I drink a lot of coffee, and I will not get married, according to what you have been telling me from my coffee cups you were reading.

Zenah: It is not that easy to find a man.

Wardeh: It is hopeless. I am going home.

Zenah: Are you going to walk alone at night?

Wardeh: Yes.

Zenah: Do you not feel afraid?

Wardeh: Why? What do you think will happen to me?

Zenah: Aren't you afraid of the policeman hitting on you?

Wardeh: He wouldn't dare to do that.

Zenah: Wait, I could tell my father to accompany you till you reach your home.

Wardeh: I accompanied your father back home last night when he was visiting us.

(Wardeh walks in a manly way as if going to her home.)

Scene Six

Abou Nara is opening his shop in the main piazza of the village and it is day time now. We see two detectives wearing black sunglasses passing by quickly. A young girl walks towards the shop and she is run into by the policeman who is running to the Moktar's house.

The Girl: Why don't you slow down? You almost knocked me down.

The Policeman: I am sorry.

Abou Nara (*addressing the policeman*): Why are you in such a hurry?

The Policeman: Everything is going awry. There are serious demonstrations taking place (*He enters the Moktar's house*).

The Girl: Abou Nara?

Abou Nara: Yes.

The girl: Do you have any sugar?

Abou Nara: Yes, a lot.

The Girl: Give me one hundred grams please.

Abou Nara: And why that much sugar? Are you planning to have a banquet?

The Girl: No, I want to use it to make some jam.

The Policeman (*He comes in again as if he has forgotten something. He enters the shop and approaches the Girl*): Can I have a private talk with you? (*They leave the shop together.*) My salary has increased to three hundred pounds, will you marry me?

The Girl: No, I am married.

(*The policeman looks angry and goes back to the Moktar's house.*)

The Girl (*noticing a large picture of the Moktar inside the shop*): Why is the picture of the Moktar hanging inside your shop?

Abou Nara: Because he is sharing half with me now.

The Girl: Abou Nara?

Abou Nara: Yes.

The Girl: Could you give me a small piece of cake as a gift with my shopping?

Abou Nara: But all of your shopping is sugar.

The Girl: You are so stingy.

Abou Nara: If only you were not beautiful (*He gives her a small piece of cake*).

The Girl: Thank you (*She goes*).

Abou Nara: You did not give me any money.

The Girl: Write it down in your notebook; I will give you some money later.

Abou Nara (*complaining*): Nobody gives me cash these days. They all just take things and promise to pay me later.

(The voices of men are heard demonstrating. Then we see them coming to the main piazza, demonstrating and holding a sign saying " We want to change the Moktar.")

Nayef: Close your shop, Abou Nara.

The Demonstrators: Close your shop

Abou Nara: Why are you demonstrating?

Nayef: We want to change the Moktar.

Abou Nara: Do not speak in a loud voice; the Moktar will hear you.

Nayef: We are here to force him to listen to us and step down.

Abou Nara: Why can't you force him to listen to you while my shop is still open?

Ghawar: Just close your shop for the demonstration.

Nayef: You can choose between closing your shop or we will break everything in it.

Abou Nara: I cannot close it. Half of the shop belongs to the Moktar.

Ghawar: Close your half then.

Abou Nara: I cannot.

Ghawar: Why?

Abou Nara: I am afraid that if I close, the Moktar will think that I am participating in the demonstration with you.

Nayef: We are here to change him and force him to quit his job (*He addresses the men with him*) What do you want?

Men: To change the Moktar.

(The Moktar appears followed by the Policeman.)

The Moktar: Welcome, welcome. I love you all (*He steps down to the piazza*).

We see all of them except Nayef, who runs away and hides in the corner.

The Moktar: Is it necessary to demonstrate in order for me to see you all?

Abou Nara: Yes, that is true.

The Moktar (*addressing Abou Nara*): Come here.

Abou Nara: It is Ghawar who started all of this.

Ghawar (*looking frightened*): No, it is not me (*and he points to a man behind him*). It is this man. I was just passing by.

The Moktar (*pulling Abou Nara's ear and shouting at him*): Why didn't you close your shop as they told you to?

Abou Nara: I was afraid to join them, as the demonstration is against you.

The Moktar: You always have to be on the side of the majority of the people, even if it is against me. And to prove it to you I will be with them against myself.

Abou Nara: This is confusing.

(The men, hiding now, feel safe and they come again to the centre of the village.)

Nayef: What do you want?

The Men: To change the Moktar.

The Policeman: Shall I join them also Moktar?

The Moktar: Of course. We must all must succumb to the will of the people.

The Policeman: Yes, sir.

The Moktar: So what do you want?

The People: To change the Moktar.

The Moktar (*addressing the Policeman*): See, it is done now (*Then he turns to the People again*). So now that you have had your demonstration, why do you want to change me?

Ghawar: For internal and external reasons.

The Moktar: OK. Start then with the internal reasons.

Ghawar: The village is deteriorating socially, politically and economically.

One of the Demonstrators: The Minister of Finance bought two luxurious houses.

Abou Nara: And the Council Manager is stealing money and hiding it.

Ghawar: And only in your glorious era are we forced to wear second-hand trousers.

Another one: And you only deliver meaningless speeches.

Ghawar: And a lot of promises of good things to do that remain only on paper.

Nayef: So what do you want?

The People: To change the Moktar.

(The Moktar appears standing on his balcony next to the Policeman, who is holding a towel. They are with the Minister of Finance and the Council Manager. The Moktar addresses the People.)

The Moktar: Do not get angry and only listen to me. When the Policeman told me that there were demonstrations against me and my people were not happy, I immediately had a meeting with my assistants and reached the following decisions ...

The Policeman: Firstly ...

The Moktar: The Minister of Finance is dismissed from his position.

The People shout in happiness.

The Moktar: And the Manager of the Council is appointed to that position.

The People look confused.

The Policeman: Secondly...

Moktar: The Manager of the Village Council is dismissed and the Minister of Finance is appointed to his job. (*The Moktar addresses the two ministers*) Change your positions now.

(*The policeman comes near them and moves the tarboosh (fez) from each one to the head of the other.*)

Nayef: But the most important is having *you* changed.

The Moktar: Wait! I have not yet finished my speech.

The Policeman: Thirdly ...

The Moktar: I promise you all that I will change myself starting from now in the following way ...

The Policeman: A...

The Moktar: I will change my house and move to a more luxurious house that my people will like.

The Policeman: B...

The Moktar: I will change my hairline from right to left.

The Policeman: C...

The Moktar: I have finished (*He puts the paper in his pocket*). Now I have finished with internal reform. What are the external issues?

Nayef: My stolen orchard.

Ghawar: You promised six months ago that if you did it get it back you would shave off your moustache and the six months have passed.

Moktar: I have broken my promise. Someone give a pair of scissors; it is solved now.

Ghawar (*feeling angry*): No, it is not.

Nayef: The thief is still occupying the land.

Moktar: Why don't you just leave the planning to me about this? I am waiting for the winter to come with its severe cold weather and you will find the thief just packing his tent and stuff and going away. He will not be able to stand our severe weather.

Nayef: But the winter started two months ago.

The Moktar: I did not know that. (*He addresses his policeman*) Why didn't you tell me?

The Policeman (*looking around, feeling confused*): I have not had time to look up at the sky.

The Moktar: Maybe the winter has started, but the severe weather has not started yet.

Ghawar: We must do something before this thief just settles down on our land.

The Moktar: Why should we trouble ourselves with that? Why don't we just let the severe weather deal with him?

Nayef: He won't be affected by that.

A Member of the Demonstrators: He is not living in a tent anymore; he has built a house there.

Nayef: He has even brought his siblings to live with him.

The Moktar (*looking shocked*): When did this happen?

Ghawar: On the first day of winter.

The Moktar (*addressing the policeman*): Why didn't you tell me?

The Policeman: I am not responsible for that.

The Moktar: But you are the policeman.

(*While the policeman is trying to answer Ghawar speaks.*)

Ghawar: His only business is hitting on the village girls.

The Policeman (*addressing Ghawar*): But you are also talking to all the girls. You do not leave me any chance.

Ghawar (*smiling*): I cannot get enough of beautiful girls.

The Moktar: Stop it! This nonsense does not serve our just cause. This matter needs some serious thinking. (*He addresses his policeman*) What do you think?

The Policeman: It does need serious thought.

The Moktar: Abou Nara?

Abou Nara: Yes, sir.

The Moktar: I want some books from your shop.

The Policeman: What is the use of books?

The Moktar: I want to read and think about the stolen land.

Abou Nara: How many books do you want?

The Moktar: I want two kilos of history and one kilo of geography.

Abou Nara: OK.

The Moktar (*addressing the policeman*): And you just prepare the atmosphere to start thinking and send these guys home.

The Policeman: Yes, sir (*and he starts whistling*).

Ghawar: Never!

The Policeman (*approaching the demonstrators*): Come on, go home.

Ghawar: We won't go; the demonstration will continue until we force the Moktar to quit.

(*All of the village men sit on the ground.*)

Ghawar (*addressing the Moktar*): We want a change of Moktar.

The Policeman: Hey, Ghawar! Please! I have to follow the Moktar's orders.

Ghawar: The demonstration is still ongoing.

The Policeman: Please, guys, listen to me. I have to do what he ordered by clearing the village streets and ending this demonstration.

Ghawar: The demonstration is still ongoing.

(*The Policeman starts shooting in the air with his rifle. Everyone raises their hands.*)

Ghawar: The demonstration is ... over (*and everyone starts to run*).

(*The policeman comes forward towards the Moktar looking happy.*)

The Moktar: Good work. Remind me to promote you.

The Policeman: thank you. I am your loyal servant.

(*The Policeman continues to chase the People while Abou Nara is busy weighing the books for the Moktar.*)

The Moktar: I am watching you. Add some more kilos.

(Abou Nara cuts a book into small pieces and put them on the scales to add some weight to the books and then brings the books to the Moktar.)

Moktar: Thank you.

(Abou Nara returns to his shop and starts to close it while we hear the whistle of the policeman who is approaching.)

The Policeman: Everyone, enter your houses. I do not want to see anybody outside. *(Then he comes to Abou Nara)* Abou Nara, please close your shop and go home. I do not want to see you outside.

Abou Nara: OK.

(Then the policeman sits on the stairs looking tired and puts his head back, falls asleep and starts snoring.)

Scene Seven

The Policeman is still asleep and it is now night time. Suddenly the Policeman wakes up looking angry.

The Policeman: What do my eyes behold? What are these annoying mosquitoes? Don't they know that there is a curfew? Even the mosquitoes do not respect government orders. *(He notices someone has opened his window and he shouts at him)* Hey, Abou Mahmoud, close your window! I told you several times that the Moktar is thinking.

(Wardeh appears walking quickly, holding a large pottery jar.)

The Policeman *(catching her by her shoulder)*: Hey, where do you think you are going? Don't you know there is a curfew?

Wardeh: I was just bringing some water from the stream.

The Policeman: It is forbidden to go out tonight.

Wardeh: Why?

The Policeman: The Moktar is thinking.

Wardeh: About something new to smuggle?

The Policeman: No! He is thinking how to get the orchard back.

Wardeh: Which one?

The Policeman: The stolen one.

Wardeh: But this orchard is stolen. He must forget about it and start thinking about the next land which is going to be stolen.

(The window of the Moktar is opened, so the Policeman hides Wardeh behind the wall so that the Moktar does not to see her.)

The Moktar: Where are you?

The Policeman: Always at your service.

The Moktar: Could you tell me the meaning of technology?

The Policeman *(looking confused)*: It is a new brand name of a new chemical fertilizer.

The Moktar: I guessed that. And what is the meaning of the sentence - [Czechoslovakia](#)?

The Policeman: That is not a sentence. It is a verb.

The Moktar: Are you sure?

The Policeman: No, I am not. This requires a dictionary.

The Moktar: But you would need then a Moktar who is able to use a dictionary *(and he enters his house)*.

The Policeman: Yes. *(He looks at Wardeh)* You were lucky he did not see you.

Wardeh: And what if he sees me?

Policeman: There is curfew tonight

Wardeh: Does that means that I have to stand here all night?

The Policeman: No. You can go home.

Wardeh: But you are saying there is a curfew tonight.

The Policeman: That is right.

Wardeh *(pointing to the two opposite directions of her home and to the stream)*: But it will mean walking and breaking the curfew.

The Policeman *(looking confused)*: I did not think about that. OK, go then.

Wardeh: OK.

The Policeman: Hey, Wardeh.

Wardeh: Yes?

The Policeman: My salary is now four hundred pounds. Will you marry me?

Wardeh: No. If I had wanted to get married, I would have married Ghawar.

The Policeman: You and Ghawar can go to hell! As if there were no more men in this village except Ghawar! (*Then he notices another window has opened*) Hey, Oum Aziz, close the window and stop hitting on me. I won't marry you. You are too old for me.

The Moktar (*shouting*): Hey, policeman! Did you see a thief coming out of my window?

The Policeman: No. Why?

The Moktar: This is a catastrophe! Then who stole it?

The Policeman: What has been stolen?

The Moktar: My thoughts.

The Policeman: About the stolen land?

The Moktar: Yes. I found an excellent idea to get our stolen land back and when I got tired of thinking I had a nap and when I woke up I discovered that somebody had stolen that idea from me because I could not remember it.

The Policeman: I advised you several times to close your window before you sleep.

The Moktar: And why did you not guard me?

The Policeman: Did you check your family? Your wife, maybe, was searching in your head while you were sleeping.

The Moktar: No, I do not think so. Go and catch that thief (*he goes inside*).

The Policeman (*starts shouting*): There is a thief! There is a robbery!

(*Wardeh returns from the steam and Zenah appears on her balcony.*)

Wardeh: What is it?

The Policeman: Somebody has stolen the Moktar's ideas while he was asleep.

Zenah: Oh, my God. We can't dream of getting the orchard back.

Wardeh: Come on, Zenah. They might arrest the thief.

Zenah: And since when has a thief been arrested in this village?

The Policeman: What do you mean?

Wardeh: She is right. My father's shoes were stolen and up till now you have not found or arrested the thief.

Zenah: Let us search for the idea. We might find it on the ground

Wardeh: There is nothing. If it had fallen from him we would have found it. It must have been stolen

Ghawar (*opens the door of his house*): There is only one way to get Moktar's idea back.

All: What?

Ghawar: You have to bring a trained police dog and let him smell the Moktar's head and then let it search for the thief.

The Moktar: Hey, policeman!

The Policeman: Yes?

Moktar: Search for the thief! I have found a new idea!

All: About the orchard?

The Moktar: Of course

Zenah: Beware of thieves who try to steal your ideas.

The Moktar: Do not worry. I will always come up with new ideas.

Wardeh: What is this idea?

The Moktar: Everyone, go to your homes now and you will hear about it tomorrow (*addressing the policeman*) Come here.

Policeman: Everybody, go home (*and then he come close to the Moktar*). What is this new idea?

Moktar: Is your rifle ready?

Policeman: Of course (*and then he tries it*).

Moktar: That is fine. How many bullets do you still have?

Policeman: They are finished.

The Moktar: You are stupid. Do you have more at home?

Policeman: Yes.

The Moktar: Go home now and get your rifle ready, and then go to Abou Nara's stable and shoot his cow. And be sure that nobody sees you.

Policeman: Do you mean kill the cow?

Moktar: Yes.

Policeman: Why? The cow is innocent. It has not done anything.

Moktar: Not everyone who is killed by us must be guilty.

Policeman: OK

Moktar: And then throw this identity card near to the dead cow.

Policeman: Whose identity is that?

Moktar: It belongs to Ghawar. He gave it to me in order to renew it and I forgot about it.

Policeman: And what shall I do next?

Moktar: Then you return to her immediately.

Policeman: Yes, I will. Finally, I will get rid of Ghawar.

The Moktar: Hey.

Policeman: Yes.

Moktar: And do not forget to kill it gently; do not make it suffer.

Policeman: You have a kind heart.

Moktar: *(he gives the policeman a large bucket)* And do not forget to milk it before you kill it.

(Zenah opens her window.)

Moktar: Finish that and return to the village piazza, and fill it with rocks and large sticks for people to use in their fight tomorrow.

Policeman: Yes, I will do that *(and he leaves singing)*.

(Nayef appears coming back home.)

Zenah: Nayef you are late today. I have been waiting for you for two hours.

Nayef: I am concerned.

Zenah: About the orchard?

Nayef: And about you.

Zenah: Where have you been?

Nayef: I spent the night on the hill looking at my stolen land far away.

(The policeman appears holding the bucket and drinking from it.)

Nayef: I believe that as everyday passes my orchard goes a year further from coming back and our happiness appears to be a distant dream.

Zenah: Shall I tell you a happy thing?

Nayef: Yes.

Zenah: The Moktar has come up with a new plan to regain the orchard.

Nayef: How do you know?

Zenah: I saw him sending the policeman off with a rifle and a bucket.

Nayef: At this late time? Why?

Zenah: Maybe to kill the thief and to fill the bucket with his blood.

Nayef: God protect him if that is true.

Abou Nara's voice is heard: I will kill you. I will kill you. If you are a man come and face me Ghawar.

Ghawar: *(appearing in his underwear)* Good evening, what is wrong?

Abou Nara: I will kill you.

Ghawar: Why?

Abou Nara: As if you do not know.

Ghawar: Yes.

Abou Nara's wife: You kill and pretend to be innocent.

Ghawar: Good evening, madam. You look beautiful as always.

Abou Nara: Come here and face me, or I will kill you.

Ghawar: Nobody dares to kill me.

Nayef: What is the problem?

Ghawar: I do not know.

Abou Nara: And my cow.

Nayef: What happened to your cow?

Abou Nara: This murderer has killed her.

Abou Nara's wife: He is feeling satisfied by all of his wives and he is beginning to hit on cows now.

Ghawar: But I did not kill it.

Abou Nara: And why then is your identity card there? My cow's tail is worth ten men from your family. Come here to me.

Ghawar: I am not afraid of you and your wife.

Ghawar's wife: Please don't.

Ghawar: Do not hold me. I am feeling angry now.

Abou Nara's wife: Why don't you leave him?

(And each one is shouting for his family)

Ghawar's wife: Please don't go to them; they are not like us.

Ghawar: But we are the Tosheh family.

Abou Nara's wife: Fuck you and your family

Ghawar: How dare you. Now I am coming.

(And the fight begins between the two families. The Moktar suddenly comes to the piazza and sees the fights and starts to calm them.)

Moktar: Why are you fighting? Shame on you all; you are one family. You should not fight. By doing that you are distracting yourselves from our main goal to get back the stolen orchard.

(We see the People of the village freeze in the same fighting positions as if time stands still.)

Policeman: I did not understand until now your plan about the stolen land.

Moktar: This is the plan in front of you.

Policeman: I still do not get it.

Moktar: Because you are stupid in politics.

Policeman: What does that mean?

Moktar: It means that the People of the village won't forget about the stolen land until they are busy with a new problem.

(The policeman nods his head and he leaves with the Moktar and then the People of the village continue their fight.)

Scene eight

The main village piazza where we see Abou Nara who is changing the signboard for his shop from the National Bookstore to the National Cafe. Ghawar is sitting outside the cafe smoking a shihsa. We then hear Abou Ahmad shouting.

Abou Ahmad: Attention! The policeman wants everyone to be here for an important matter.

Abou Nara: Hey, Abou Ahmad, what is going on?

Abou Ahmad: I do not know. Attention! The policeman wants everyone to be here for an important matter.

Abou Nara: *(addressing Ghawar)* Do you know what is going on?

Ghawar: No.

Abou Nara: It must be something important.

Ghawar: Let us listen to the BBC from London on the radio so we can find out what is going on in our village.

Abou Nara: OK.

(Zenah leaves her house and goes to Abou Nara's shop).

Zenah: Good morning, Abou Nara.

Abou Nara: Good morning.

Zenah: Can I have some henna?

Abou Nara: It seems that you are getting old.

Zenah: We can colour our hair but, what we can we do for aging hearts?

Abou Nara: I hope to find some henna left.

Zenah: Why, what did you do with all the henna you used to have?

Abou Nara: I had a sale of all the old stuff. There, I have found you some.

Zenah: *(looking surprised at how the shop has been turned into a cafe)* What happened to all your stuff and the books?

Abou Nara: I changed them for these shihsa.

Zenah: And I was wondering what has changed in your shop?

Ghawar: It is not only his shop; the whole village has changed.

Zenah: And why are you smoking, Ghawar? I did not know that you smoked.

Ghawar: I am smoking to forget that I am from this village.

Zenah: And you, Abou Nara, how dare you change your book store into a cafe?

Ghawar: What is wrong with the cafe?

Abou Nara: A book is like a shisha; each is sold for one pound.

Zenah: How is that?

Ghawar: The book cleans your head and puts some useful ideas into it.

Zenah: And the shisha?

Abou Nara: It cleans your head and thoughts and leaves nothing.

Ghawar: And smoking shihsa won't get you into trouble for being jailed, while books might cause you to be jailed. And there were many cases when books and ideas have affected some People and they were hanged because of that.

Abou Nara: See, so what is better: books or shihsa?

Zenah: Henna.

(Abou Samra appears in ripped clothes asking for help from People.)

Ghawar: Hey, you.

Abou Samra: What is it?

Ghawar: Who did you hit while you were walking? *(But he did not hit anyone as he was half a metre away.)*

Abou Samra: I am just walking; I did not hit anyone.

Ghawar: Come, where are you heading?

Abou Samra: I am coming to the piazza as the policeman has ordered.

Ghawar: And did you know what this gathering is for?

Abou Samra: No.

Ghawar: Then why did you hit me?

Abou Samra: But I did not hit anyone.

Ghawar: So I am a liar.

Abou Nara: Why are you causing trouble today?

Ghawar: I do not like anyone to touch me.

Abou Nara: But nobody has touched you.

Ghawar: You are also accusing me of being a liar.

Abou Nara: But I was here and I saw what happened.

Ghawar: What happened?

Abou Nara: He did not touch you.

Ghawar: I will convince you now that he touched me. Let us presume I was sitting there where he was passing by, then would he have touched me or not?

Abou Nara: Yes.

Ghawar: (*shouting*) Don't anyone dare touch me.

Abou Samra: Calm down for God's sake.

Abou Nara: Could you explain to me what is the reason of this fight?

Ghawar: There is no reason for this fight, and since when did we need an excuse to fight in this village?

Abou Nara: Then why are you fighting?

Abou Samra: I do not know. Ask him?

Ghawar: See how he is impolite? I am still standing here, and he dares to say 'ask him'?

Zenah: Fuck you all. Your place is in the psychiatric hospital, not here. You changed the bookshop to a cafe and everybody is fighting with each other instead of fighting that thief in the orchard.

Ghawar: You look so beautiful when you get angry.

Zenah: This is what you care about.

Ghawar: I just cannot get enough of women.

Zenah: It is just useless to speak to you.

Ghawar: Hey, Abou Samra, let us get back to our business. I do not have a lot of free time left. (*and he returns to hitting him*) Why did you touch me?

Zenah: And what if he touched you? What has happened in this village? Everything used to be solved with a word. This village was filled with love. It is just useless to speak to you all. (*And she throws the henna on the ground and goes to her house.*)

(*Wardeh and some of the People of the village start coming to the meeting.*)

Ghawar: I am convinced by what Zenah has said, so give me a cup of tea and let Abou Samra pay for it as a sign of reconciliation between us.

Abou Nara: You have such a kind heart.

Nayef: (*coming*) Good morning, everyone.

Ghawar: Good morning.

Nayef: Do you know the reason for this meeting?

Abou Nara: I do not know.

Abou Samra: I heard that they changed the Moktar.

Nayef: Could that be true?

Abou Nara: I hope so.

Nayef: Switch on the radio to hear what is happening.

Abou Nara: OK.

Ghawar: Do you know what that means in political terms?

Abou Samra: *Coup d'état* or defeat or blow to the state.

Nayef: I wish that were true.

Ghawar: I also wish it were so.

Wardeh: He makes us hate our lives.

Abou Samra: He almost turns me into a beggar.

Ghawar: But you are.

(Abou Nara switches on the radio and her military performances followed by someone saying: Breaking news. People start gathering around the radio. Announcement number one: This morning a number of your honest men have got rid of the ruling by tyranny, oppression and corruption and have changed the Moktar and his corrupt assistant entourage.)

The policeman: *(appearing)* Listen up, everyone. The new Moktar would like to deliver a speech.

(The Moktar appears and is the same person, just wearing different clothes and he has a different voice).

The 2nd The Moktar: My beloved People, the People of the great village of Halloum, I took over the power in this village to save you from the corruption of the late Moktar and his assistants.

(Everyone is happy and shouting with happiness.)

The 2nd The Moktar: My first job is to kick the thief out of the stolen land. Goodbye, my brothers and sisters.

(Everyone dances happily.)

Scene nine

Zenah appears from her window holding a pen and writing on the air while speaking.

Zenah: Days passed by and we are still the same; the orchard is still stolen. The only thing that the new Moktar has done is to change his house furniture and build a new prison in the village. And I am growing old; I noticed ten white hairs in my hair today. Our life was better during the time of the old Moktar. Signature, Zenah.

Ghawar: *(appearing and walking towards his home)* Good evening.

Zenah: Good evening.

Ghawar: Why are you still awake at this late time?

Zenah: I am writing the history of this village.

Ghawar: Where?

Zenah: On the air.

Ghawar: On the air. *(and he appears as if he is reading what she has written on the air)* Oh, yes. That is true and why didn't you write the history of the village on a piece of paper?

Zenah: I am afraid if I did so, somebody would get hold of it.

Ghawar: Do you fear that somebody would read it?

Zenah: No, I am afraid that they would change it as it is history.

Ghawar: You are right; by the way what is this word? *(pointing at the air)*

Zenah: Village.

Ghawar: I read it as age.

Zenah: Sorry, three letters missing.

Ghawar: Good evening then.

Zenah: Goodbye.

(We see Ghawar fall on the ground as he is leaving.)

Zenah: Are you OK? What caused that?

Ghawar: I stepped on a word.

Zenah: What is that word?

Ghawar: It is the word 'Moktar' and has a dent.

Zenah: This has fallen from me.

Ghawar: And how did it reach here?

Zenah: Maybe it was the wind.

Ghawar: I advise you to write the history of this village in a book.

Zenah: Why?

Ghawar: I am afraid that if it is written on the air it will disappear in a gust of wind.

(He leaves.)

Scene ten

We see the main piazza in the village and we hear a song on the radio in the café saying that "Life is beautiful." In the café, which is still called 'Patriotism Cafe', we see Abou Samra sitting, drinking a cup of tea. Abou Nara is taking a cup of coffee to Ghawar, who is sitting next to his house. Suddenly, we hear military music and someone on the radio saying, "Wait for an important announcement."

Ghawar: Hey, Nayef what is going on?

Nayef: I heard that the Moktar was overthrown.

Ghawar: Another one!

Nayef: Still fresh coming out of the baking oven.

Ghawar: I wish they would offer us fresh bread from the oven like overthrown presidents. Do you know what happened to the previous Moktar?

Nayef: He is in jail.

Ghawar: What a terrible ending - from the head of the village to the jail.

Nayef: This is politics.

Ghawar: I am happy for him because he was a liar.

Nayef: Oh yes.

Policeman: Listen up; our newest The Moktar will speak to you.

(The same man appears as the Moktar but in different clothes).

Third Moktar: My beloved People, the People of the great village of Halloum, *(the People of the village, feeling bored, clap their hand just once.)* I took over the power in this village to save you from the corruption of the late Moktar and his assistants and family. I have the job of kicking out the thief from the stolen land as my first priority and good bye my brothers and sisters. *(They clap their hands just once again.)*

Abou Nara: *(addressing the People of the village)* Could you please look after the cafe?

Nayef: Where are you going?

Abou Nara: I am going to frame the picture of the new Moktar to put in my cafe.

Nayef: You should, just go but do not be late.

Ghawar: If we are going to have a new Moktar every day, I think everyone's turn to be a Moktar will come.

Abou Samra: I hope so because this is the only thing we have left from our village.

Nayef: Why are you all so pessimistic? He might be a good person.

Abou Samra: From your lips.

Nayef: The best thing to do is take a little nap.

(Suddenly the military music is playing again on the radio and we hear the words, "Wait for an important announcement.")

Nayef: What do you think is the matter ,Ghawar?

Ghawar: I think it is another defeat.

Policeman: Attention please. Our newest Moktar wants to speak to you.

4th Moktar: My beloved People, the People of the great village of Halloum ... *(The policeman appears behind the Moktar urging the People to clap their hands.)*

Moktar: What is the matter with you? Your leader is delivering an important speech in the hope of seeing you enthusiastic.

(The People start to clap their hands in a slow, bored way.)

Moktar: I took over the power in this village ...

(Abou Nara returns holding the framed picture of the Moktar and is shocked to see another person speaking, and he looks repeatedly at the The Moktar and the picture.)

Ghawar: Do not be shocked; he has changed.

The Moktar: ... to save you from the corruption of the late Moktar and his assistants. I have the job...

The People of the village in one voice: ...of kicking out the thief from the stolen land as my first priority, and good bye my brothers and sisters.

Moktar: You cunning People, you memorize my speech by heart. Anyway, just be sure I will do all of that.

Abou Nara: *(addressing the Moktar)* I have a question?

Moktar: What do you want?

Abou Nara: Could you tell me who is succeeding you?

The Moktar: Why are you asking that question?

Abou Nara: In order to prepare the framed picture as from now.

Moktar: Nobody knows that really because I personally just know that I became a Moktar ten minutes ago. But I want to assure you that I am staying in this position for a long time.

All: How could you know?

Moktar: Because my defeat of the last Moktar was well done from every angle and I am assured that everyone around me is loyal. *(And he enters to his house.)*

Ghawar: I wish that this were true to have some rest from these government defeats every now and then.

(Military music is heard again and we hear, "Wait for an important announcement.")

Ghawar: Did you hear that?

Nayef: And he said he felt assured from everyone around him.

Ghawar: He is being beaten now from everyone around him.

The policeman: Listen up, everyone. Our newest and latest edition Moktar wants to speak to you.

(Again the same person with a new voice and clothes.)

The Moktar: *(shouting)* My beloved peeeeeeeeeeepeople, the People of the great village of Halloum, I took over the power in this village to save you from the corruption of the late Moktar and his assistants.

(Ghawar starts singing and the People of the village start dancing while the Moktar is still speaking and delivering the same speech but nobody is paying attention to him.)

Scene eleven

Night time. Zenah appears out of her window writing the village history on air.

Zegah: And every day we are having a revolution and assuming authority turns into musical chairs. And every new Moktar renews his house furniture and opens a new prison before he leaves. And the village is deteriorating in all aspects and I wish the first Moktar were back.

Wardeh: *(running towards Zenah)* Hey, did you finish?

Zegah: Yes.

Wardeh: Just delete the last sentence.

Zegah: Why?

Wardeh: Another Moktar has been overthrown.

Zegah: I thought there was something important.

Wardeh: I do not mean about the new defeat but about the new Moktar.

Zegah: What about him?

Wardeh: No, this is different this time. He is one of us.

Zenah: They all say that.

Wardeh: No, he is different. He is dressed like us and he was Ghawar's friend; they used to play cards together.

Zenah: Is this really true?

Wardeh: Yes, and everybody is preparing for the big celebration tomorrow.

Zenah: Does that mean that I am going to have my orchard back?

Wardeh: Of course. Prepare your wedding dress.

Zenah: (*addressing the audience*) And I will leave now to colour my hair.

Scene twelve

The next day we see the People of the village are dancing happily because the new defeat of the government has resulted in a Moktar who is one of them. And we see the new Moktar standing with Nayef, Ghawar and the policeman.

Everyone: We want a speech from the Moktar. (*several times*)

Moktar: The time for hard work had begun and there is no longer room for empty speeches and military announcements. (*Everybody claps their hands. Surprisingly, we see the Moktar taking out a paper from his pocket to deliver a speech.*)

Moktar: My beloved People, our village is going through difficult and decisive times in its history and I have witnessed these difficulties since my childhood and the dangers threatening your future, village and orchards.

Everybody: Oh yes .

Moktar: My fellow citizens, we must get rid of our internal enemies in order to be able to get rid of our external enemies.

Ghawar: That is true.

Moktar: So there are the demagogic People.

Ghawar: What? Who are they?

Moktar: And the bureaucratic People and the bourgeoisie ... (*He is pointing with his hand while speaking about these People and Ghawar is trying to see where the Moktar is pointing, and looks at where his wife is standing as the Moktar points to her when mentioning the bourgeoisie.*)

Ghawar: So, you, my wife, are what the Moktar meant by these People?

His wife: No, do not believe him.

Ghawar: Go inside.

His wife: No, I want to watch the Moktar.

Ghawar: You have been bourgeoisie behind my back.

Nayef: (*addressing the Moktar*) But nobody will understand these terms.

Moktar: No, everyone knows what 'bourgeoisie' means.

Ghawar: What that word means is a type of porcelain!

The Moktar: No, my dear good citizen, bourgeoisie refers to the People who suck the blood out of common People by enslaving them in their companies and lands.

Ghawar: Then you do not mean us by this word.

Moktar: Of course not.

Ghawar: Now I understand why you do not speak in common words instead of these difficult terms.

Moktar: Anyway, I promise you to get rid of all of those People who make use of your efforts and work without paying you back.

Ghawar: Aaaaaaaaah.

(And the Moktar steps down to stand among the People. Ghawar is trying to address the Moktar, looking for him and then he finds him among the common People.)

Ghawar: Where are you going my friend?

Moktar: To my house.

Ghawar: But this is your house now, the house of the Moktar.

Moktar: Never. This is the house of the blood-sucking People of our fellow citizens.

Ghawar: But you have to live in a luxurious house because you will be our representative and a lot of People will come to visit you.

Moktar: I am the repressive of the People so I will live with the common People.

Ghawar: As you wish, and truly we have been waiting for a long time to have a Moktar who feels what we feel.

Moktar: That is why I assume that position. So, be sure that everything is going to be fine.

Ghawar: God bless you.

Moktar: And now come with Ghawar to drink coffee together in my house.

Ghawar: I cannot.

Everyone: Why?

Ghawar: I would not dare because in my whole life I have never sat next to a Moktar; he is a VIP.

Moktar: But I am one of you and I am here to serve you.

Ghawar: We aren't used to this, and we have never heard anything like this from a previous Moktar.

Moktar: Hey, Abou Nara?

(Abou Nara tries to come nearer to the Moktar but Ghawar keeps him away.)

Abou Nara: Yes.

Moktar: Could you send me home a kilo of coffee?

Abou Nara: Yes, I will.

Ghawar: See how everyone loves you? And you must return them that love.

Moktar: The coming days will prove that.

(And the Moktar goes with Ghawar to his house while Ghawar tries to keep everyone away from him.)

Scene thirteen

The scene begins at night and Zenah is wearing her wedding dress and dancing and turning around herself.

Nayef: Stop doing that; you will get dizzy.

Zenah: I was feeling dizzy before that, I can smell the orchard's grapevine again.

Nayef: This Moktar is really a man of his words.

Zenah: Our love is going to be strong again.

Nayef: And what about your few white hairs.

Zenah: They are gone. I will dance for you tomorrow in your orchard.

Nayef: I want to fight with you from the first day.

Zenah: We will. Do you like my wedding dress?

Nayef: Yes, when did you buy it?

Zenah: Fifteen years ago; do you not remember?

Nayef: And I was asking myself when I had seen that dress before.

Zenah: I have waited fifteen years.

Nayef: I hope that the waiting is finished.

(And Zenah continues to dance happily).

Scene fourteen

The scene opens in the main village piazza. We see Abou Samra entering and begging People to give him money. We also see three intelligence agents standing and wearing black sunglasses and one of them is pretending to read a newspaper he is holding.

Abou Samra: Please give me some money.

(He approaches the intelligence agent without knowing his identity, but when he comes nearer to him he see a gun on his belt. So he realizes his identity and lowers his voice while going away from him. He then goes to Abou Nara's shop asking him for some money.)

Abou Samra: Please give me some money.

Abou Nara: *(giving him some money)* May God help you.

Abou Samra: God be merciful and help everyone. I wish this situation would change.

(Upon hearing him, the intelligence agent comes quickly to Abou Samar and puts his hand on his back.)

Intelligence agent: Come with me.

Abou Samra: Where are you taking me?

Intelligence agent: To the cinema.

Abou Samra: Is it a good movie?

Intelligence agent: You will see a brand new movie that has never been seen before.

Abou Samra: Is it porn?

Intelligence agent: Yes, porn.

Abou Samra: What is the name of the movie?

Intelligence agent: Hell.

Abou Samra: I have seen that movie before. (*And he tries to escape.*)

Intelligence agent: (*lifting him with both hands*) Come with me.

Abou Samra: Please no. Please let me go.

Abou Nara: God be with you, Abou Samra. (*And he continues to read from his book*) I can feel pain so I do exist.

Wardeh: (*entering, holding a bag and approaching Abou Nara's shop*) Good morning.

Abou Nara: Good morning, you have not shown up for a long time.

Wardeh: I was visiting my uncle in the US.

Abou Nara: Did you like it?

Wardeh: Everyone there can speak English.

Abou Nara: Really?

Wardeh: Even a small child can speak English.

Abou Nara: That is nice.

Wardeh: By the way, how is the new Moktar doing? Has he turned out to be a good leader?

Abou Nara: I do not want to speak about that.

Wardeh: That is strange. I hear the same answer every time I ask someone that question.

Abou Nara: What can I help you with?

Wardeh: Give me a loaf of bread.

Abou Nara: It is out of stock.

Wardeh: That is strange. No bread!

Abou Nara: Yes, no bread.

Wardeh: Why?

Abou Nara: Because the mill has closed down.

Wardeh: Why?

Abou Nara: The person responsible for the mill is working now as a singer at the national radio station.

Wardeh: A time has come when we do not have any flour after we used to distribute flour to other villages.

Abou Nara: Lower your voice. What else do you want?

Wardeh: One kilo of cucumbers.

Abou Nara: Out of stock.

Wardeh: Even that is out of stock.

Abou Nara: Yes, they are out of stock.

Wardeh: But you always sell cucumbers, all year round.

Abou Nara: Because the person responsible for planting the cucumbers is in jail.

Wardeh: Why?

Abou Nara: Because they suspect that cucumbers are old fashioned and against the progressive politics of the Moktar.

Wardeh: Then give me a bottle of frying oil.

Abou Nara: Out of stock.

Wardeh: Also!

Abou Nara: Yes.

Wardeh: But you used to have a lot of bottles of oil.

Abou Nara: Yes, but the olive press shop has also closed.

Wardeh: Why?

Abou Nara: The owner of that shop emigrated to Europe.

Wardeh: So what can use for frying food now?

Abou Nara: I have some Scotch Whiskey.

Wardeh: You want me to fry food in whiskey?

Abou Nara: Yes, the food will be really delicious and you will get drunk eating it.

Wardeh: So you cannot give me even half a bottle?

Abou Nara: No, I do not have bread or olive oil, soap, lentils; I do not have any of these luxuries.

Wardeh: This is a catastrophe.

Abou Nara: There have been a lot of changes during your absence; a lot of People got jobs at the government doing nothing. Some have emigrated and others are in jail. There is a lot of activity in the village.

Wardeh: Where can I find these things?

Abou Nara: You have to search.

Wardeh: (*pointing to the intelligence agent*) Who is he?

Abou Nara: (*whispering*) Intelligence.

Wardeh: This is a new job in our village?

Abou Nara: No, it was firstly introduced at the first presidential defeat but every new Moktar has added some changes to it.

Wardeh: Do you know why he is looking up at the sky? Did he lose something up there?

Abou Nara: No, he is thinking about what to write.

Wardeh: A new poem?

Abou Nara: No, a new intelligence report.

(And she walks away towards one of the intelligence agents while Abou Nara continues to read his book. Wardeh is looking at one of them standing in a small wooden guard room.)

Wardeh: do you have any bread? *(he shakes his head)* Lentils? *(he shakes his head)* Oil? *(again he shakes his head)* Then why are you opening this shop if you do not have anything to sell?

The intelligence agent: This is not a shop.

Wardeh: You do speak then. Good morning.

The intelligence agent: Good morning, good evening. How are you? All of these useful social phrases are out of use now.

Wardeh: If you do not sell anything ,then why are you standing in this shop?

The intelligence agent: *(looking angry)* Are you stupid? I told you, this is not a shop this is a guard room.

Wardeh: *(holding him by his shirt)* Why are shouting? Just tell me that you do not have oil. *(And she leaves.)*

Abou Nara: *(pretending to be busy reading his book)* And if I do not feel the pain, then I do not exist.

Ghawar: *(entering with a pain in his neck)* Good morning, Abou Nara.

Abou Nara: Good morning. Hey wait, do you feel pain?

Ghawar: Oh yes, I am suffering from a neck ache.

Abou Nara: Then you do exist. Come and have a seat.

Ghawar: I cannot.

Abou Nara: Why?

Ghawar: I want to go and see the Moktar, my friend.

Abou Nara: Why?

Ghawar: There are a lot of wrong things happening in this village, in addition to the right things.

Abou Nara: Like what?

Ghawar: Abou Ghiath for example.

Abou Nara: Yes, I know him.

Ghawar: They nationalized his one thousand sheep and gave them to the People.

Abou Nara: He deserved that; he was a bad and greedy person.

Ghawar: I agree that this is a great achievement by the Moktar. But there is Abou Amsha.

Abou Nara: What happened to him?

Ghawar: They nationalized his three cows as well.

Abou Nara: If it is for the sake of the People, then that is good.

Ghawar: But these cows already belong to the People as there are a lot of poor People benefiting from them by having shares in them.

Abou Nara: (*trying to ignore Ghawar*) But People have to suffer in order to exist.

Ghawar: Who said that?

Abou Nara: Kant.

Ghawar: I do not believe either Kent or Marlboro; People have the right to feel happy.

Abou Nara: Do you understand better that Kant?

Ghawar: I understand better than all cigarette companies. I am going to the Moktar, my friend, to tell him that seizing Abou Amsha's cows is not right.

Abou Nara: Why don't you mind your own business?

Ghawar: I am afraid, as having four wives they might seize them and distribute them to the People.

Abou Nara: You are right to try and convince him.

Ghawar: I do not know why he started to change when he moved to live in the previous Moktar's house.

Abou Nara: (*looking afraid and checking the intelligence agent*) We all noticed that but nobody dares to speak.

Ghawar: But I will speak to him because he is a friend.

Abou Nara: That is true.

Ghawar: When Nayef comes, tell him to wait for me here.

Abou Nara: OK.

Guard: Where are you going?

Ghawar: To visit my friend, the Moktar.

Guard: It is forbidden.

Ghawar: Why?

Guard: He is in a meeting with the People of the village.

Ghawar: Then I will see his wife.

Guard: She is also in a meeting with a delegation from the village women.

Ghawar: I will see his son then.

Guard: He is also in a meeting with the youth of the village.

Ghawar: Just go and tell him his friend wants to see him.

Guard: What is your name?

Ghawar: Tell him 'your friend Ghawar'.

Guard: Wait here.

(The guard rings the Moktar from his guard room. And then we see Nayef coming and looking angry when seeing these intelligence agents).

Nayef: Hi, Abou Nara.

Abou Nara: Hi.

Nayef: Have you seen Ghawar?

Abou Nara: He was here and he wants you to wait for him here until he finishes his meeting with the Moktar.

Nayef: We will see what the result is of that.

Abou Nara: Why?

The guard: *(addressing Ghawar)* Hey you.

Ghawar: Thank you (*and he goes to the Mortar's house*) Of course he said to let him come.

Guard: No.

Ghawar: Why did not you tell him that his friend Ghawar is waiting outside.

Guard: Yes.

Ghawar: And what did he tell you?

Guard: Fuck him.

(Ghawar looks shocked and goes slowly towards Abou Nara's shop and sits there.)

Nayef: Any positive results?

Ghawar: Bring me a Shesha.

Abou Nara: He has started smoking again.

Nayef: Hey, Abou Nara. They did not only inspect my house, but they also stopped Zenah and asked for her identity card.

Abou Nara: Could you lower your voice? Maybe there is national security reason.

Nayef: *(looks angry and stands)* I won't. I will speak in a loud voice as I cannot stand this anymore.

Abou Nara: *(looking afraid)* They have discovered new conspiracies against the village.

Nayef: This is nonsense. In other countries, they discover oil or scientific discoveries, but only in our village the only things they discover are conspiracies against them.

Abou Nara: Please lower your voice; they might hear us.

Nayef: If there are conspiracies, why do they not tell us who is doing them and we would kill them.

(Suddenly we find the intelligence agent comes to them and put his hands on Nayef and Ghawar.)

Intelligence agent: Come with me.

Nayef: *(addressing Abou Nara)* Where is he taking us?

Abou Nara: To the cinema.

Nayef: But I do not know him.

Abou Nara: This is the same way they captured Abou Samra.

The intelligence agent: *(pushes Nayef and Ghawar)* Go.

(They both go while Abou Nara is looking at them.)

Scene fifteen

The scene takes place in the prison; the policeman is pushing Nayef to sit on a chair in the middle of the room.

Policeman: Are you going to confess to me?

Nayef: What shall I tell you?

Policeman: What did you tell Ghawar in Abou Nara's cafe?

Nayef: I told him what everyone is speaking about.

Policeman: Who are these People? *(And he slaps him.)*

Nayef: How should I know?

Policeman: You do not want to tell who your partners in the conspiracy are?

Nayef: Conspiring against whom?

Policeman: Conspiring against the People, the Moktar and our homeland.

Nayef: It is just gossip.

Policeman: What about?

Nayef: That there is no bread, no lentils, no rice...

Policeman: And what is your opinion? There is or there isn't?

Nayef: You want the truth?

Policeman: Yes, you bastard. *(And he slaps him.)*

Nayef: the truth is that there isn't any of this stuff.

Policeman: You are a liar and a traitor. Come and see my house and the Moktar's house, and how they are loaded with rice, oil, bread, lentils, whiskey and meat . Everything. Is that true or not?

Nayef: Yes, that is true.

Policeman: Then why are spreading rumours? And what is your connection with Zenah?

Nayef: (*looking shocked*) She is my fiancée and we've been in love for twenty years.

Policeman: You are a liar and a traitor. We have reports saying that you and she have been seen alone whispering to each other. What were you saying to her?

Nayef: What is someone in love supposed to tell his beloved?

Policeman: This is what we want to know?

Nayef: We were talking about....

Policeman: Yes...?

Nayef: We were talking about the moon.

Policeman: You are also conspiring against the moon; what did you tell her about the moon?

Nayef: I was telling her that I wish that we could escape and live on the moon.

Policeman: Oh yes, this is proof then that you are not innocent, because if you're not guilty why would you escape and live on the moon and ignore your role and duty in our battle with the enemy? You're a traitor (*and he pushes him away and shouts the name of Ghawar to come next for the investigation.*)

Policeman: Hey you! Come here!

(*And Ghawar walks proudly, but the Policeman slaps him.*)

Policeman: Stop walking like that and come here. Are you a womanizer and in love with a lot of women?

Ghawar: No sir.

Policeman: Then what are you?

Ghawar: I am only in love with my country.

Policeman: Then why are you talking behind its back and criticizing your country if you love it? Tell me, what did you tell Nayef in the shop?

Ghawar: I did not even open my mouth and I have a lot of witnesses.

Policeman: This is the problem and the conspiracy, because you are more dangerous than Nayef.

Ghawar: Why?

Policeman: Because Nayef talks and we know what he wants and thinks of, but you did not and we do not know what you are thinking of.

Ghawar: Then what?

Policeman: I want you to tell me what you were thinking of telling Nayef.

Ghawar: What is this? So a person will be arrested if he speaks when he did not?

Policeman: No, I want you to speak.

Ghawar: And if I do not speak?

Policeman: Then I will suspect that what you were thinking of telling Nayef is so dangerous that is why you did not tell me.

Ghawar: I do not get it.

Policeman: You must speak and express your opinion as the freedom of opinion is respected because the freedom of opinion is respected in Europe and that is what makes its civilization. So you must speak.

Ghawar: I still don't get it.

Policeman: You will speak whether you want to or not. *(and he takes off his shoe and begins hitting him on his back)* And now what are you; are you a man?

Ghawar: No.

Policeman: Then what? A woman?

Ghawar: No

Policeman: What are you then? *(And he threatens to hit him again with his shoe.)*

Ghawar: I am nothing.

The Policeman: *(giving Ghawar a piece of paper)* Sign here.

Ghawar: What for?

Policeman: For the things that you were thinking of telling Nayef.

(Ghawar signs the paper and then the policeman pushes him into a cell with Nayef and locks the door.)

Nayef: Did they hit you a lot?

Ghawar: I do not know. I did not feel anything.

Nayef: I felt; I felt that dogs are better than us.

Ghawar: You are right.

(Then Nayef notices that Ghawar is crying)

Nayef: Are you crying? A man shouldn't cry. You did not cry before when the French colonizers used to torture you and now you cry like a child because of some whipping and face slapping.

Ghawar: Oh Nayef, it is totally different when you are tortured by your fellow citizen and brother in this country than by a stranger.

Scene sixteen

Zenah appears at night by her window writing the history of the village on the air as usual.

Zenah: Nayef was released from prison and he did not know me when he got out. *(And she continues writing without telling us what she is writing)* I am not telling you what I have written as I am afraid that somebody will write a report about me. *(And then she closes the window and goes inside.)*

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Scene Seventeen

Daytime. Some men are sitting in the café, including Ghawar and Abou Samra. Wardeh is eavesdropping at the window of the Moktar's house and then she runs to Zenah's House.

Wardeh: Zenah, Zenah...

Zenah: Yes?

Wardeh: Come here.

Zenah: What is going on?

Wardeh: The Moktar is having an important meeting with his council concerning the orchard.

Zenah: Why?

Wardeh: They are saying that the thief is threatening us with his rifle and that we are not going to tolerate that.

Zenah: Does that mean that we are going to get our land back?

Wardeh: I hope so.

((And they sit together. Abou Nara comes out of the Moktar's house holding a tray.))

Ghawar: Abou Nara, give me another Shesha.

Abou Nara: You have smoked a lot today.

Ghawar: Then can you give me... *(and he looks at the bar inside the cafe, but then he points to Abou Samra who is standing outside the cafe)* ... give me Abou Samra. I want to fight with him.

Abou Nara: Why?

Ghawar: He is looking at me.

Abou Nara: I do not want any trouble in my cafe.

Ghawar: He is looking at me and you want me to ignore that.

Abou Nara: If you want to have a fight go to him, not here in the cafe.

Ghawar: He has to come here to me.

Abou Nara: Do what you want.

Ghawar: *(addressing Abou Samra)* Vome here.

Abou Samra: I did not do anything to you.

Ghawar: Ehy did you look at me?

Abou Samra: I was looking at the tray.

Ghawar: Do you mean that I look like a tray? I am the great Ghawar.

Abou Samra: I am honoured.

Ghawar: You should be. Stand up.

Abou Samra: You stand first.

Ghawar: *(rubbing his feet as he was bitten on his feet yesterday in the prison)* You are a bourgeois.

Abou Nara: *(looking at his torn shirt)* Me?

Nayef: *(entering)* What are you doing Ghawar?

Ghawar: I was fighting with my friend Abou Samra.

Nayef: Have they finished their meeting?

Abou Nara: Not yet; it seems complicated.

Nayef: Why is that?

Abou Nara: I do not have any idea.

(The policeman appears coming out of the Moktar's house wearing a large casserole on his head.)

The policeman: Listen, everyone.

(Then the Moktar appears wearing a larger casserole on his head and he takes a paper out of his pocket.)

The Moktar: My dear People, in these decisive moments of the history of our village and because of the thief's continuous attacks on our land, we have had an urgent meeting where we exchanged thoughts in a mutually understanding atmosphere and it has ended with our hitting each other, taking into consideration that we could no longer wait.

Abou Nara: Oh yes.

(And everyone clap their hands.)

The Moktar: *(shouting)* That is why we have decided on the following secret decisions.

Nayef: Speak in a lower voice; the thief might hear you.

The Moktar: I want him to hear; we are not afraid of that son of a ... *(addressing the thief)* Listen you filthy son of a... You have no escape.

The policeman: Firstly ...

The Moktar: *(shouting)* Nayef and Ghasan will attack you from the north holding a 14 -millimetre rifle.

The policeman: Secondly...

The Moktar: *(still shouting)* Abou Samar, Ghawar and Abou Nara will attack you from the south.

Abou Nara: Can I stay here to defend the village?

The Moktar: There is no defence, only attack; everyone should attack to get rid of the thief.

The policeman: Thirdly ...

The Moktar: The rest of you just attack from anywhere.

(Abou Nara and Abou Nayef try to get Ghawar, who seems drunk, to stand up.)

Abou Nara: Come on, Ghawar, let's go.

Ghawar: Where?

Abou Nara: To war.

Ghawar: *(indifferently)* OK, let's go.

Ghawar: *(singing)* You thief, pray for your soul.

Everyone: You thief, pray for your soul.

Ghawar: We are going to get rid of you now.

Everyone: We are going to get rid of you now.

(The policeman goes to the radio station, while the Moktar is waving his hands to the men of the village who are going to war.)

The Moktar: Snd you my beloved girls of the village, prepare the flowers to celebrate the near victory when the men come back. And I am going to the roof of the radio station to tell you what is going on.

The Moktar's wife appears: Hey Moktar.

Moktar: Yes, my love.

The Moktar's wife: Could you give me the casserole before you go? I want to use it for cooking.

The Moktar: You do not need it; do not cook anything, and nobody cook today. We will have our lunch tomorrow in the stolen orchard.

(And he goes to the radio station and we see each one of them is looking in a different direction.)

The Moktar: *(shouting while looking in his field glasses)* Attaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaack!

Zenah: Where are you ordering the attack Moktar?

The Moktar: In the orchard.

Zenah: But the orchard is in the opposite direction!

The Moktar: Really? Anyway, our fight with colonialism is everywhere and does not have a specific time or place.

The Moktar: (*addressing the policeman*) Step aside. I want to see the battle. (*And he takes out a long antenna from the casserole on his head.*) You are right, Zenah, now I see them.

Zenah: How is the battle going?

The Moktar: It has started.

Zenah: I know but what do you see now?

The Moktar: Oh my God. If only you could see what I can see.

Zenah: Can I go up and stand with you?

The Moktar: No, stay away. I am afraid you may get shot by mistake. It is dangerous up here.

Zenah: Then tell us what is going on?

The Moktar: They are attacking him now.

Zenah: So they have reached him.

The Moktar: A long time ago and they killed his first child.

Wardeh: Oh no! Tell him not to kill him; just kick him out.

The Moktar: No, he deserves that. Oh, they killed another three of his children.

Zenah: (*looking surprised*) Three!

The Moktar: And now Nayef has killed another six.

Zenah: That means that they have killed ten now.

The Moktar: That is true.

Zenah: But there are only three!

The Moktar: (*looking to Zenah*) I am just telling you what I can see with these field glasses.

Wardeh: I think the field glasses glorify the battle; isn't that true Moktar?

The The Moktar: You are right. Remind me, who are your parents?

Wardeh: (*playing in a sexy way with her legs while seated*) I am engaged Moktar.

The Moktar: (*looking again in his field glasses*) Oh, they have come.

Zenah: Who?

The Moktar: The People of the village next to us to help our men in the battle.

Zenah: And you used to say that they hate us; we will always be like one family.

The Moktar: They are coming from behind the thief and he has not noticed them.

Wardeh: I am happy that he has not noticed.

The Moktar: (*shouting*) Hey, split into two groups and attack him from the right and left.

Zenah: Why are you shouting? The thief will hear you and notice them.

The Moktar: He has noticed them and has begun shooting in their direction. I cannot see anything now because of the dust. Oh, my beloved Abou Fares, he has dropped his gun; maybe he is out of bullets. Just shoot with your eyes.

Zenah: You want him to shoot with his eyes?

The Moktar: Of course, he has charming eyes. You can ask his wife.

Zenah: His charming eyes may have an effect on his wife but not the thief.

Moktar: Why are you interfering in the war? Leave the men do their duty.

Wardeh: Shall I go and participate in the battle with my eyes?

Moktar: No, just stay and prepare the flowers to welcome our heroes when they come back. Oh, I hear the guys singing for death.

Zenah: We can hear that.

Wardeh: How can you listen without the field glasses?

The Moktar: I like you, who are your parents?

Wardeh: (*playing with her legs again*) I am engaged Moktar.

The Moktar: Congratulations on your engagement. Congratulations on the victory; move forward men.

(*We see Zenah and Wardeh stand upon seeing the men coming back who are looking sad while the The*

Moktar is still looking in his field glasses and announcing the false victory.)

The Moktar: Just surround them. Do not let them escape. We have almost finished.

Zenah: *(addressing the Moktar)* But the men are here!

The Moktar: *(looking in his field glasses towards the village piazza)* Oh yes, that is true.

Zenah: And nobody is even injured.

Wardeh: Or even dusty!

Ghawar's wife: They do not look like men coming back from a battle.

(The Moktar and the policeman take the casseroles off of their heads.)

The Moktar: Why did you come back so soon?

Nayef: Another part of our village was stolen.

The Moktar: Really!

Wardeh: We can count upon you.

Abou Nara: It is not our fault.

Zenah: Then whose fault is it?

Abou Nara: The Moktar's.

The Moktar: Why me? I was even with you.

Nayef: You told us that the thief would run once he saw us coming.

Abou Nara: We did not have any bullets.

Abou Samra: And you told us that we had more than him and his family.

Abou Nara: He has about forty rifles.

Nayef: And we only have five rifles.

Abou Nara: And he knows all our moves.

Abou Samra: And he knows all our plans.

The moktar: So it is my fault then.

Abou Nara: We do not mean that, but you told us something and we faced a completely different thing.

The Moktar: And why didn't you fight or resist?

Zenah: Why did you not fight with them Moktar? We could almost lose the whole village.

The moktar: I thought about fighting with them but I was afraid of being killed. And then the village would not be worth anything without me; did you ever see a village without a Moktar?

Nayef: And did you ever see a Moktar without a village?

The Moktar: See, he is philosophizing now. If you got killed or injured then you have the right to talk and criticize me.

Ghawar: You know us, Moktar. Your People are famous for being brave, good fighters and they never retreat; just read the history and will find out. So stop talking about death and sacrifice. For the sake of what shall we sacrifice or die?

The Moktar: For the sake of your country and the land.

Ghawar: What country and what land? The country is worth nothing without human beings living in it. And citizens want something in this country and a reason to defend it. Give me that reason or do you want me to defend my shoe size? My shoe size was 8 before I entered prison and I came out of prison with an 11 shoe size. What do you want us to defend? Do you want us to defend prisons that have increased to become more numerous than schools? There is always a place for a prisoner but there are thousands of children without a place in schools. What do you want us to defend? We only dare to open our mouths when we visit the dentist. People defend happiness and schools in their country, not sadness and prisons. We only care now about how to survive; we do not want that miserable life anymore.

The Moktar: Who is that person who is philosophizing?

Ghawar :(proudly) The defeated citizen Ghawar.

Abou Samra: Ghawar is speaking the truth. Look at me. What shall I defend?

The Moktar: You shut up. You beggars make a lot of money.

Abou Samra: But the beggar has a country to defend; he considers all the streets in the world to be his country.

Ghawar: Our beloved Moktar, for twenty years now we feel defeated inside ourselves. That is why we were defeated in the war.

The Moktar: I cannot stand this bullshit anymore. This is not a defeat.

Abou Nara: Then what do you call it?

The Moktar: This is a setback, a relapse...

The policeman: (*whispering in the Moktar's ear and the Moktar replies in a low voice*) Don't you think this is too much?

The The Moktar: (*addressing the People*) See I have just learned that we had a triumph over our enemy.

Nayef: And how is that?

The Moktar: Yes, I have just understood the situation. The thief's goal was not to steal the orchard or any part of our land, His main goal was to get rid of me, but he could not. That is why we defeated him. Damn you all.

Scene eighteen

The scene begins with the village men at night time sitting sadly in the main village piazza and in the cafe. Ghawar is drinking whiskey and Abou Nara is asleep with his head on the table. And the men are singing traditional folklore sad songs.

Abou Nara: (*waking up suddenly and singing*) My country is very beautiful (*And he puts his head back on the table and falls asleep.*)

(*Wardeh comes to Abou Nara's shop.*)

Wardeh: Abou Nara ...

Abou Nara: Yes?

Wardeh: My father is asking you whether you have a bottle of whiskey that is so strong that you become drunk from the first glass?

Abou Nara: (*looking surprised at Ghawar*) That is strange. I know that father is not an alcoholic.

Wardeh: He is fed up.

Abou Nara: From not drinking?

Wardeh: No, from not being able to speak.

Abou Nara: And talking politics is forbidden unless you are drunk.

Wardeh: He wants to curse the Moktar and to criticize him, but he is waiting to get drunk.

Abou Nara: (*giving a bottle of whiskey to Wardeh*) Here you go.

Wardeh: Thank you.

Policeman: *(arriving while singing happily)* Hey you, girl?

Wardeh: I know what you want to say. You want to say that your salary is now 800 pounds.

Policeman: Yes, that is true.

Wardeh: And I do not want to get married to you.

(The policeman looks annoyed and goes to Ghawar, trying to smell his mouth to make sure that he is drunk and Ghawar blows in the policeman's nose.)

The policeman: Abou Nara...

Abou Nara: Yes, sir?

Policeman: Since when has Ghawar been drinking?

Abou Nara: Since we had our victory and defeated the enemy.

Policeman: *(looking annoyed)* Did he talk or say anything?

Abou Nara: He cursed the Moktar.

Policeman: While he was drunk or not?

Abou Nara: Don't be worried about him being drunk.

Policeman: That is fine then. So I can write in my report that everything is secure and under control.

Abou Nara: Yes, that is true.

The policeman: Yes, thank you.

(And while he is leaving and singing happily, he sees somebody is coming so he runs and hides in the corner. The Teacher appears, coming back after a long journey and wearing a suit, holding a camera and a map while the men are singing a sad song again.)

The Teacher: Oh my beloved village, my country. *(And he kneels down and kisses the ground.)* Hi, everyone.

Abou Nara: *(waking up again and singing)* Oh my beloved country. *(and goes to sleep again)*

The Teacher: Good evening, everyone. Is that not Halloum?[\[1\]](#)

Ghawar: No, this is Parmesan.

Abou Nara: What do you see?

The Teacher: I see my village Halloum.

Abou Nara: How did you recognize it?

The Teacher: From that wall.

Nayef: (*looking at the wall*) Maybe he used to pee here before he travelled.

The Teacher: No, I engraved my name on that wall.

Abou Nara: And why did you come back?

The Teacher: I could not forget my village.

Ghawar: (*holding his glass of whiskey*) Cheers.

The Teacher: Cheers. I have been away for twenty years now, but I could not forget my village. I missed you all. I missed our homemade bread. I missed reading books in Arabic. By the way, give me some books in Arabic.

Abou Nara: Do you want them wrapped or open?

The Teacher: No, I want some books by Tewfik Al Hakim, Taha Hussein.

Abou Nara: Yes, I have Johnny Walker, Black Label, Rayan. So we have homemade and imported alcoholic drinks, just choose.

The Teacher: (*looking at the shop again*) Is that the national bookstore?

Ghawar: It used to be.

The Teacher: Oh, how beautiful is this sky, these stars and this land. (*He hears a dog barking.*) Isn't that the policeman's dog, Max?

Abou Nara: No, that is his son.

The Teacher: And Max?

Abou Nara: He was shot.

The Teacher: Why?

Abou Nara: He barked at the policeman.

The Teacher: Shame on him; he is a policeman and a thief.

(We hear the voice of a cow.)

Teacher: Oh, isn't that Abou Amsha's cow?

Abou Nara: No, this is the voice of Abou Amsha himself.

The Teacher: How is his cow? I still remember the taste of its milk.

Abou Nara: It has stopped giving milk since they seized it and had it nationalized.

The Teacher: Why?

Ghawar: Because they employed ten men to milk it. It feels like she is an old fashioned cow.

(The sound of gun shots is heard so the Teacher feels afraid.)

The Teacher: Oh my God. Is there a war in this village?

Ghawar: No, peace.

The Teacher: If there is peace, then what is the reason for all this shooting?

Abou Nara: There is a wedding.

The Teacher: All this for a wedding?

Ghawar: Then you should have seen the wedding of the Moktar's son. We used a mortar to celebrate.

The Teacher: Oh, this must be a nuclear wedding. And then...?

Abou Nara: Yes.

The Teacher: Then if at peacetime you use all of these weapons, what would you use in war?

Ghawar: We do nothing as we are afraid of war.

The Teacher: This is not acceptable. We should reconsider everything again in this village.

Ghawar: But who are you?

The Teacher: I am the Teacher, I have been away for twenty years. I used to teach you grammar and mathematics.

(The policeman walks slowly behind the Teacher and he puts his hand in his shoulder.)

The policeman: Stop! You are a suspect; you are under arrest.

Abou Nara: *(singing)* Oh my country is beautiful.

(The policeman drags the Teacher to the corner to investigate him.)

The policeman: Abou Nara, stop it. *(He addresses the Teacher)* Give me this camera and map.

The Teacher: Why?

The policeman: Because you are a spy.

Ghawar: Then why do you think we had this bad looking victory?

Abou Nara: Because of the spies like you.

The Teacher: How could you accuse me of being a spy when I came back due to the love, and nostalgia I hold in my heart for this country?

Ghawar: How did you pass the borders with all of these things?

The policeman: Do you have a customs report for these things?

The Teacher: No.

The policeman: Then you did not enter legally through the borders, come with me.

The Teacher: Where are you taking me?

The policeman: To prison where all the suspects like you are held.

The Teacher: But this is my passport where you can find that I was born here.

Abou Nara: Just go with him; you cannot resist.

The Teacher: Shall I go to prison without an accusation or a charge?

Ghawar: He will find you one, don't you worry.

(And the policeman drags the Teacher to the prison. The men sing again in a loud voice).

The Moktar: *(appearing coming out of his house and looking annoyed)* What is this noise, Abou Nara?

Abou Nara: We arrested a spy here.

The Moktar: Oh, I hate those spies. Why don't they just leave us?

Abou Nara: Oh yes.

The Moktar: I have just found three under my pillow. What does he look like?

Nayef: He is holding a bag full of dynamite and he was about to put a mine under the village bridge to blow it up.

The Moktar: Oh my God.

Ghawar: And he is using field glasses which allow him to see through walls.

The Moktar: Oh my wife is naked inside.

Abou Nara: And he is holding a map which has all the village houses and roads in it and a pen that can be used as a gun.

The Moktar: Where is this criminal?

Abou Nara: The policeman took him to prepare him for the investigation.

The Moktar: Bring that spy.

Abou Nara: Bring that spy.

The policeman: (*dragging the Teacher and the Teacher's clothes are torn*) Walk.

Abou Nara: Here he is.

The Moktar: You could tell from his face that he is a spy. (*addressing the policeman*) Did you prepare him?

The policeman: He is ready to confess.

The Teacher: Give me the paper to sign; I am willing to sign anything.

The Moktar: Tell me, why did you come to this village?

The Teacher: I came back to my country.

The policeman: He is a liar I saw him taking photos of everything in this village.

Abou Nara: And he took a picture of the wall.

The policeman: And this is the negative.

The Moktar: You are taking photos as well. Do you know there is the death penalty for that? (*looking at the negative*)

Abou Nara: What do you see?

The Moktar: I do not see anything.

The Teacher: This film needs to be developed first.

Ghawar: I have heard something like this before, that in order to develop a film you must put some lemon juice on it.

The Moktar: (*giving the film to the policeman*) Squeeze some lemon on it.

The Moktar: Did you find anything else with him?

The policeman: Yes, this map.

The Moktar: This is even worse.

The policeman: And you can find all the village houses and roads in it.

The Moktar: Why are you holding this map?

The Teacher: To guide me.

The policeman: And he even puts his nose on the ground trying to sniff to see if we have any oil or gold.

The Teacher: But I kissed the ground.

The policeman: You are a liar; we do not even kiss our mothers' hands these days, never mind kissing the ground.

Ghawar: And do you want to kiss your mother's hand? Is it to thank her for giving birth to such a bad person like you?

The Moktar: Just confess what you are doing in this village.

The Teacher: (*sad music*) I came back to my village to see you Abou Nara, to see Ghawar, to see Nayef and Zenah's children. Did you forget me and my lessons on verbs?

Ghawar: We have never forgotten you; we recognized you immediately, but why did you come back, asshole?

The Teacher: I felt nostalgic.

(The policeman laughs.)

The Moktar: Hey, do you know that spy?

Everyone in one voice: Yes, he is the Teacher.

The Moktar: Then he is from this village.

The policeman: Yes, I forced him to confess that he is from here during the investigation.

The Moktar: As you were living abroad can you speak English?

The Teacher: Yes, I can.

The Moktar: Then come here. I have a bag of Epsom salts and I want you to translate the instructions written on it for me.

(The Teacher walks to the Moktar with his head down feeling sad.)

The Moktar: *(addressing the policeman)* Did you prepare his file?

The policeman: Yes, and I also have files for unborn People.

The Moktar: That is my man.

(Then the policeman, The Moktar and the Teacher enter the Moktar's house.)

Scene nineteen:

It is daytime now and the men are still sitting drinking. One of them goes to give his glass back to the bar and hits another one standing there as they are all drunk

Abou Nara: Look out.

Ghawar: Get away from me. You stepped on my shadow.

(And they all stand to dance the Dabkeh to a sad song.)

All: The tanned girl, oh my tanned girl. I am tired and your love is controlling me *(And they stop dancing to belch because they are drunk.)*

Abou Nara: *(pretending to sing while we hear the singer of the song saying)* You with that fancy dress, why don't you like me?

All: I hope God gives you everything you want. The tanned girl, oh my tanned girl. I am tired and your love is controlling me. *(And Ghawar stops to drink from the whiskey bottle he is holding.)*

Abou Nara: Your beautiful eyes ... *(And then Ghawar comes to him and puts the bottle near his nose to smell his debased whiskey and empty some of the bottle on his head.)*

All: The tanned girl, oh my tanned girl. I am tired and your love is controlling me. *(And they fall to the ground while dancing.)*

Scene Twenty

It is night now and we see the Moktar coming out of his house with the Teacher who is clothed again in a good suit.

The Moktar: I found your story strange that you knew each one of us and we did not recognize you.

The Teacher: I have changed, but you have all stayed the same as I left you twenty years ago.

The Moktar: Of course we stayed the same. Do you want others to say that we are easily changed People? By the way, I hope that you are not angry because the policeman slapped you during the investigation.

The Teacher: I did not get angry but I was shocked.

The Moktar: Why?

The Teacher: I was shocked by this new job in the village with the intelligence agents and spying on People.

The Moktar: Yes, all of this is for security reasons.

The Teacher: Anyway I still feel like we are one family and I came to the village when I heard about the orchard.

The Moktar: Yes, speaking of the orchard I have heard that a European journalist has come with you. What is his name?

The Teacher: Mr Ralf.

The Moktar: And why is he here?

The Teacher: He came to find the real story behind the orchard.

The Moktar: But it is known who the thief is.

The Teacher: My dear Moktar, the world is much bigger than our village and there are many People outside who think that we are the thieves and he is a victim of injustice.

The Moktar: How is that?

The Teacher: Because nobody has gone outside to explain to them our point of view.

The Moktar: But we are always explaining the situation on our radio station; did they not hear that?

The Teacher: But the broadcasting of this radio station does not even reach the end of the village.

The Moktar: What are you saying? I have ten thousand People who work there.

The Teacher: Because they are ten thousand who are not doing anything.

The Moktar: I am going to put them all in jail tomorrow. What do you think I should do with that journalist?

The Teacher: You should meet him and explain to him our point of view.

The Moktar: I would like you to attend that press conference in order to translate for me. I am feeling some pain in my leg and I can't speak in English because of that. (*And the Moktar leaves his house limping while the Teacher looks astonished.*)

Scene Twenty one

It is the morning of the following day and all the village men with the journalist and the Teacher are waiting for the Moktar. The journalist looks annoyed as the Moktar is late for the press conference.

The Journalist: It is two o'clock now.

The Teacher: Yes, I am sorry.

The policeman: What is he saying to you?

The Teacher: He is referring to the fact that the Moktar is two hours late now.

The policeman: He is a liar. Translate that for him. The Moktar told him the appointment is anytime between sunset and noon precisely.

(The Moktar appears.)

The Teacher: Mr Ralf, this is the Moktar.

The Journalist: Oh ... (*And he begins taking photos of the Moktar.*)

The Teacher: Did you prepare your version of the case to tell him?

The Moktar: Yes and I will tell it to him.

The Journalist: (*shaking hands with the Moktar*) Good morning, Moktar.

The Moktar: No, this is our version. (*and he addresses the Teacher*) What did he ask me when I answered no?

The Teacher: He was just saying good morning.

The Moktar: Yes, still no. Tell him that our evenings and mornings are not good as long this thief does not respect the United Nations resolutions.

The Journalist: Do you agree with the decisions of the United Nations?

The Moktar: No.

The Teacher: He is asking whether we agree with the United Nations resolutions.

The Moktar: This is what I understand- no.

The Journalist: (*looking annoyed and giving his notebook to the Teacher*) Could you please ask him and write down his answers?

The Teacher: He is asking whether we support that resolution?

The Moktar: No.

The Teacher: Do you want peace?

The Moktar: No

The Teacher: Do you want war?

The Moktar: No.

The Teacher: Do you have any clear suggestions?

The Moktar: No.

The Journalist: Could you please write the Moktar's answers?

The Moktar: No.

The Teacher: But he is talking to me.

The Moktar: I know, but no.

The Teacher: His answer is no.

The Journalist: (*shocked and moving his hands*) All of them.

The Teacher: Yes, all of the questions.

The Moktar: Why is he moving his hands? Are any of my answers not clear?

The Journalist: No. Goodbye, Moktar.

The Moktar: No.

(The Journalist leaves while the Moktar is still saying 'no' and the Teacher looks astonished.)

The Moktar: *(addressing the People)* I believe all of you liked my answers in that press conference.

The Teacher: No.

The Moktar: Why not?

The Teacher: Do you think that you expressed your opinion and the journalist has learned the truth?

The Moktar: No.

(The People of the village look sad and begin to leave.)

The Moktar: Where are you going? You did not tell me your opinion yet? Hey, Ghawar, Abou Samra, Abou Nara, why have you changed?

Ghawar: You are the one that has changed and forgotten your principles.

Nayef: We had a lot of hope in you.

Ghawar: You have built a large wall between us.

Nayef: You have left us and lived in a luxurious house.

Abou Nara: And you have stopped coming to ask about our problems.

Ghawar: And you forbid us to reach you and talk to you.

The Moktar: *(looking impressed)* Please treat me like before and I will do all that you want.

Abou Samra: It is too late.

The Moktar: I swear with my honour, principles and kids that I will change.

Ghawar: We all wish that you had stuck to your great principles.

Scene Twenty Two

It is night time and a voice is saying: "From the heart of principles some friends appear and they destroy the bars for the principles and honour to continue shining."

And then the lights switch on with sensational music: "Our homeland sun belongs to everyone, not just to some People, and the essence of homeland is the preservation of the dignity of the citizens who are living in it."

Scene Twenty Three (final scene)

In the main piazza in the village in the daytime, we see Abou Nara's wife running quickly to Zenah's house while shouting.

Abou Nara's wife: Zenah... Zenah!

Zenah: What is it?

Abou Nara's wife: Is my husband here at your house?

Zenah: No, I have not seen him for two days

Abou Nara's Wife: He went out yesterday and did not come back until now.

Zenah: I was also coming to you to ask you if you have seen my father?

Abou Nara's Wife: Why, where is your father?

Zenah: I last heard that he was invited to dinner at the new Moktar's house.

Abou Nara's Wife: And my husband was invited as well.

Zenah: This is strange. Are they still having dinner until now? Let us go and see.

Abou Nara's Wife: I was there and I did not find them. Even the Moktar's wife is asking about him.

Zenah: So where have they gone?

Abou Nara's Wife: Let's search for them.

Ghawar's wife appears: Hey, has anybody seen Ghawar?

Abou Nara's Wife: He might be at a bar drinking as usual.

Ghawar's wife: But he only drinks now on special occasions.

Abou Nara's Wife: Everyday is a special occasion for him.

Wardeh: (*appearing running towards them*) Have you seen my father?

Zenah: That is really strange. Where are all the men?

Wardeh: Let's go and look for them in the prison as whenever we have a new Moktar he puts all the men in prison.

Ghawar's wife: I checked there and I did not find them. The prison is empty.

Abou Nara's Wife: And why should he imprison them? They are friends and they are spending the day together.

Zenah: And Nayef keeps saying to me that this new Moktar is different and he has changed us all.

Wardeh: And they all listen to him and they love each other now.

Abou Nara's Wife: That is right as my husband is kissing me all the time.

Ghawar's wife: And Ghawar also is tickling me all the time.

Zenah: And my father has returned to work at his orchard again.

Abou Nara's Wife: He teaches them how to love.

Wardeh: And the one who can love loves everything and if he was only capable of hatred he would hate everything.

Abou Nara's wife: But where are the men now?

Wardeh: Do you think that the Moktar got rid of them when they started loving us.

(*We hear the sounds of mortars.*)

Zenah: Oh, what is happening? (*And she goes to the roof to see.*) There is dust in the direction of the stolen orchard.

Wardeh: What?

Zenah: It seems as if the war has begun.

Abou Nara's Wife: I will lose my husband's shop.

Ghawar's wife: The whole village will be taken.

Wardeh: And how have they started the war without announcing that on the radio?

(Then we hear the triumph drums and the men are singing patriotic songs.)

The men: Lololo lollali lololo lolali. God bless the streets of our victorious homeland.

(The women hug each other felling happy about the victory. The men appear now raising their rifles and singing.)

The men: Lololo lollali lololo lolali God bless the streets of our victorious homeland.

Abou Nara: My beloved wife, we fight this time. *(And he hugs his wife.)*

(Ghawar's wife searches for her husband. All the men look sad.)

Ghawar's wife: Where is Ghawar? Somebody tell me where Ghawar is?

Nayef: Ghawar has been killed; he is a martyr.

(We hear the voice of the Muslims calling for prayer along with the sounds of the church's ringing bells.)

Ghawar's wife: Why are you saying that in a low voice? Raise your voice to let everyone hear, including those who tortured him in the past.

All: We do not care about them.

Abou Nara's Wife: It is important that our children and the young generation hear that.

Zenah: Why didn't you bring him with you so that we could bid farewell to him in a big festival.

Nayef: But before he got killed we heard him saying 'the one who is killed for the sake of his homeland is a lucky one.'

Ghawar's wife: Goodbye, my love.

All: Lololo lollali lololo lolali God bless the streets of our victorious homeland..... Lololo lollali lololo lolali God bless the streets of our victorious homeland..... Lololo lollali lololo lolali God bless the streets of our victorious homeland..... lololo lollali lololo lolali God bless the streets of our victorious homeland..... lololo lollali lololo lolali God bless the streets of our victorious homeland.

[1] Halloum is the name of the village and a type of cheese.

career in the Syrian prison to which he was sent for being a member of the Communist Party. During the time of unity with Egypt between 1958 and 1961 Al-Maghout escaped to Beirut. Upon his return to Damascus in 1961, after publishing his first collection of poems Sadness in the Moon Light in 1959, he wrote in first play, The Hunchbacked Bird. His second poetry collection, A Room with Millions of Walls, was published in 1960. The Village of Tishreen was written in 1973, as a first collaboration with the actor Doried Lahham, with which he also collaborated for the writing of Inside Out (1976), Cheers my Homeland (1979) and Wind Flower (1987). His last play, Outside the Flock, was produced in 1998. A prolific writer, Al-Maghut also wrote journalistic articles (published as I will Betray My Homeland, The Executioner of Flowers, East of Aden... West of God, and The Red Bedouin), two screenplays (The Borders, 1984; The Report, 1987), and authored three Television series (The Nights' Tales, 1974; Where the Mistake is?, 1984; The Musk Valley, 1984)

Ahmad Mahfouz received his B.A in English Literature from Damascus University, and an M.A in English literature from the University of Newcastle. He is currently persuing doctoral studies at the University of Sheffield under the supervision of Professor Steve Nicholson and Dr. Bill McDonnell. His research investigates the political theatre of the Syrian playwright Mohammad Al-Maghut, while also considering his other dramatic writings, journalistic articles and poems. Mahfouz has translated six of Al-Maghut plays into English.



Arab Stages

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