

# The Boatman: A Play by Sameh Mahran

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a play by

Sameh Mahran

Translated by

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## Act I

*(A young man & woman sit on a bench far from one another on a cornice overlooking the sea)* [\[1\]](#)

Young man: I want to kiss you.

Young woman: Kiss me.

Young man: I'm afraid someone will walk by.

Young woman: Think of something else.

Young man: These lights irritate me.

Young Woman: I told you a hundred times, use your brain!!

Young Man: Do you desire me?

Young Woman: You ask such silly questions all the time.

Young man: *(Annoyed. He screams)* Just answer me! Do you desire me?!

Young Woman: *(Calmly)* Desire kills me. What then?

Young Man: You always embarrass me like this. As if you get a thrill out of it.

Young Woman: It thrills me like the impact of sea-waves. From its mouth, the sea expels its filth in order to restore calm.

Young man: What a brilliant idea! I have a feeling it will bring you joy.

Young Woman: (*She applauds and beats the ground with her feet*) One must never lose hope in life.

Young Man: The bus!

Young Woman: Which line are you thinking of ?

Young man: It doesn't matter. What matters is that it is crowded. We will get on it and pretend not to know each other. It will be a good excuse for our bodies to brush against each other. Oh, how splendid must those directors of the Public Transportation System be. I had no idea they had such compassion for people like us.

Young Woman: This praise is more than they deserve.

Young Man: You are doing it again, you're starting to second guess their intentions.

Young Woman: (*Changing the subject*) How beautiful the view of the sea is.

Young Man: A question that never left my mind since childhood is, how do fish copulate? I never came across a female and male fish in an indecent position.

Young Woman: Who cares for decency in a world where the strong devours the weak.

Young Man: You are always looking at the empty half of the glass.

Young Woman: Seven years have passed in which we have loved each other ardently.

Young Man: Yes,... nothing managed to spoil our joy.

Young Woman: I admit, during this time you've been nothing but loyal, as a dog is to his masters.

Young Man: You've also been a model of commitment and steadiness.

Young Woman: And yet I blame you for some minor things.

Young Man: I am a liberal person, criticism doesn't distress me.

Young Woman: I mean your constant attempts at kissing and touching me.

Young Man: Could we actually be *that* similar?! No one would believe how similar we are. This is *exactly* what I have against you too. What a truly great surprise this is.

Young Woman: You are wonderful

Young Man: You are amazing.

(*They stretch their arms and their hands touch slightly*)

Young Woman: I want to kiss you.

Young Man: Kiss me.

Young Woman: (*Pulling back her hand*) I'm afraid someone will walk by.

Young Man: The most beautiful thing about fish is that they don't need to take their clothes off.

Young Woman: And they make love just like that, no need or privacy.

Young Man: But don't you find that somehow insolent?

Young woman: Certainly. What insolence!

Young Man: Insolence and immorality

Young woman: Immorality and disgrace.

Young man: Disgrace and vulgarity.

Young woman: Vulgarity and lewdness.

Young Man: And then all the new generations of fish will be illegitimate. Do you realize the magnitude of this crisis?

Young Woman: Air pollution, water pollution. O Lord, where are we all heading?

Young man: How about to the cinema?

Young Woman: And there your hand will find its way to my breast.

Young Man: And you will unbutton my pants.

Young Woman: *Unbutton* your pants. You are fixed on clichés.

Young Man: How could you say that? I possess excessive sense of humor.

Young Woman: Do you ever look around you?

Young Man: I swear, I can no longer understand you.

Young Woman: The only pair of pants you own has no buttons!

Young Man: Are there *ever* pants without buttons? Plus, you practically wrestle with them.

Young Woman: Wrestle? You don't mean that.

Young Man: Yes I do. Of course I do. Is there any doubt about that?

Young Woman: Every time we go to the movies the zipper on your pants makes noises like war tanks. It makes me feel that everyone there knows exactly what I am doing.

Young Man: You are endowed with a rare sharp sense of observation. I envy you for it.

Young woman: I never had any success with your zipper though. This can't be a good sign.

Young man: I'm not an easy man what's your name. It is not enough to stand under a tree you must reach out and pluck the fruit off of it. It is not enough to...

Young woman: You're right I'll throw a stone at the fruit.

Young man: *(Holds his head with his hand as if the stone hit him)* Ahh!!

Young woman: *(Alarmed)* What's wrong with you?!

Young man: *(Falling to the ground)* My head hurts.

Young woman: *(She moves in his direction and leans over him)* Do you desire me?

Young man: Desire kills me. What then?

Young woman: We can get rid of such things as desire just as we do with teeth decay. The important thing is to endure, to take refuge in our own skin.

Young man: *(Weeping)* But... *(He stops)*

Young woman: But what?

Young man: I don't know how to tell you.

Young woman: I've always known you as brave. Say it and die.

Young man: I have a chronic venereal disease.

Young woman: A cad and a coward!

Young man: I didn't know. I mean to say, I didn't mean for it to happen.

Young woman: What if we had made love? Wouldn't the disease have been transferred to me?

Young man: *(Cautioning her)* Never say 'what if'.

Young woman: Why?

Young man: Do you claim not to know? Stop this deceit.

Young woman: What deceit? I really don't know.

Young man: (*Whispering*) 'What if' opens the door to the works of the devil. And in our case, it allows love-making to be a tangible reality.

Young woman: You are so knowledgeable. That's what I love about you.

Young man: And you are so innocent. That's what I love about you.

Young woman: But don't you think that knowledge and innocence are opposites that can never meet?

Young man: As if you're implying that we are not suitable for one another.

Young woman: No. All I'm trying to emphasize here is that we need to find a new approach to that dialectic in order to synthesize a new rationale; one that allows my innocence some of your knowledge, and your knowledge some of my innocence.

Young man: A good idea. But you know of course that our country is overcrowded to an annoying degree.

Young woman: Should I understand from this answer that you are against rational thinking?

Young man: I am for family planning.

Young woman: I am bored with my innocence.

Young man: Likewise, my knowledge bores me.

Young woman: And in your opinion what is the solution?

Young man: To cross over the sea to the other side.

Young woman: (*Whispering slyly*) They say that people over there go to the beach stark naked.

Young man: And that men French-kiss their lovers in public.

Young woman: Don't forget, they also suck a women's nipples as if they haven't been weaned.

Young man: They cling to one another from head to toe.

Young woman: From head to toe.

Young man: Then they forget the world around them.

- Young woman: Two in one.
- Young man: Like shampoo and conditioner, both in one bottle.
- Young woman: (*She keeps getting closer to him*) Two in one.
- Young man: Two in one.
- Young woman: But over there, people can't be further away from piety.
- Young man: Of course. They will only receive the pleasures of this world.
- Young woman: But we'll have the next world exclusively to ourselves.
- Young man: We'll bask in heaven like two free birds.
- Young woman: While they burn in hell!
- Young man: These are societies consumed by sin.
- Young woman: I feel sorry for them because in spite of everything they've invented things. Useful things. This is the truth.
- Young man: They will be rewarded for that. Then they will be dragged into hell.
- Young woman: Why don't they get punished in hell first, *then* be rewarded for all the good things they have invented?
- Young man: Good God, am I proud of you! You have become an existentialist!
- Young woman: (*Turning around herself*) How beautiful freedom is when smeared with caution.
- Young man: Desire will not conquer us! This is what I've been trying to prove from the beginning.
- Young woman: We shall transcend warm embraces.
- Young man: Passionate kisses.
- Young woman: We shall rise above our stormy emotions.
- Young man: We shall demean our bodies, which have demeaned us for long.
- Young woman: We shall save our souls.
- Young man: We won't require prevention..

Young woman: Or birth-control pills.

Young man: (*Whispering*) Nor local contraceptives.

Young woman: (*Pretending*) Is there such a thing as local contraceptives.

Young man: I don't think you are serious in asking that.

Young woman: Sure I am.

Young man: Do you think I'm naïve?

Young woman: I really don't know that there are local contraceptives.

Young man: You are pretending to be inexperienced.

Young woman: There is a tone of suspicion in your voice. This is unacceptable.

Young man: My pure lily, I have a list of all your lovers.

Young woman: A list? . . . Lovers? How dare you!

Young man: I know the names of all of those who ever touched or flirted with you. I know their places of residence, important dates, age groups, family trees, marital, and social status. And I have documents to incriminate you.

Young woman: You are crazy for sure.

Young man: You're a whore. Here, I said it.

Young woman: You want to get rid of me, don't you? Why don't you just say so out loud?

Young man: When it comes to marriage no one can be dumber than me. Did any of your lovers want to marry you? Not really. They have all abandoned you. They only wanted to have fun, then they left you, (*dramatically*) and departed staring at the void insidiously. At the end you found no one but me. (*Angry*) Why should I have to bear the sins and wrongdoing of others? Why must I accept what should have been their anguish? I was the only one who preserved your chastity and pride. I preserved your dignity as a human being when I declined from inviting you up to my apartment on our first date.

Young woman: There was never an apartment.

Young man: Are you sure there wasn't one.

Young woman: There was never one. And forever there will be no apartment.

Young man: Wasn't there a car?

- Young woman: You don't own a car.
- Young man: Are you sure?
- Young woman: As sure as I am that there was no apartment.
- Young man: How then did our first date end?
- Young woman: It hasn't ended yet.
- Young man: At any chance you get you always find fault with me.
- Young woman: You don't stop talking and lying.
- Young man: Only a child or a simpleton tells the truth. I am neither.
- Young woman: How did you fool me! I didn't even notice your worn-out clothes.
- Young man: You were so skillful in not noticing. You've woven yourself into a cocoon of imaginary threads. And now you magically want to see the world through it.
- Young woman: A metaphor! How beautiful.
- Young man: Did you like it?
- Young woman: It frequently occurs to me that I love your words more than I love you.
- Young man: (*Elated*) As a pupil, I always got the highest grades in creative writing.
- Young woman: Is the cocoon big enough for both of us? I mean after all it can be a place where we can at least kiss.
- Young man: How do we guarantee that no one will invade our cocoon.
- Young woman: Shutters and a blanket will insulate the walls of our cocoon. This way our voices won't draw anyone's attention.
- Young man: With very few words we can solve all our problems.
- Young woman: In this area no one can beat you.
- Young man: I told my mother several times that if I looked all over the world I could never find anyone more pragmatic than you are.
- Young woman: We can enter our cocoon by using very few simple words. There's no need to use such words as 'pragmatic'.

- Young man: Simple or few? You have the choice.
- Young woman: I prefer simple words.
- Young man: Only God knows, but it seems to me that you prefer to live a shallow sort of existence.
- Young woman: (*Quickly*) Simple is not the same as shallow.
- Young man: The constant desire for oversimplification may lead us in the final analysis to the domain of shallowness.
- Young woman: Let's make gradual progress, from simple to complex.
- Young man: This way we won't miss anything.
- Young woman: We'll muster everything.
- Young man: From simple to complex.. hah?
- Young woman: Yes.. from simple to complex.
- Young man: We can enter our cocoon through the Cartesian door.
- Young woman: Names don't matter. The important thing is that we enter.
- Young man: You are right. But how will we enter?
- Young woman: We will sit down and...
- Young man: (*Cuts her short*) We are indeed seated.
- Young woman: We'll close our eyes. Then our cocoon will expand. It will become an endless void. No one will fill it but us. Only our voices can be heard in it.
- Young man: (*He closes his eyes*) How many rooms are there in that endless void?
- Young woman: Two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and one bathroom.
- Young man: Where are you now?
- Young woman: I'm stretched out naked in the tub. The water is lukewarm and the lather rich. I am humming a certain tune. No. I can only feel it, for it doesn't want to reveal itself.
- Young man: Blood is rushing into my veins the same way your song is running into yours.
- Young woman: Go on. Tell me. What are *you* doing?

Young man : I'm in the next-door room smoking my cigarette and drinking the best brand of cognac. I'm reading a book. It seems boring because I move restlessly in my seat. I keep looking right and left. Here, I've stopped reading. I pace up and down and open the door. I see a dark corridor ahead of me. I walk it to the end. There's the bathroom door. I bend down. I look through the key-hole. Boy what a splendid sight I'm looking at. I haven't realized until now the extent of your beauty. Your figure is sculpted of juicy flesh. I knock hard on the door. You ask, "Who is at the door?" I answer, "Me!" You say demurely...

Young woman: Who are you?

Young man: I'm me.

Young woman: (*Coy*) Go away!

Young man: Blood is rushing into my veins like your song. I knock on the door again. This time more vehemently. You ask demurely...

Young woman: Who are you?

Young man: I'm me.

Young woman: Go away.

Young man: I knock at the door with my foot. I push the door with my shoulder. Fancy this, doors usually open with this kind of force. At least that's what happens in films. But no your bathroom door doesn't open. I lose hope. I fall down with exhaustion. I cry. I knock at the door timidly. You answer demurely...

Young woman: Who are you?

Young man: I am you. The door opens without you opening it. Yet it opens.

Young woman: (*In a rush*) You are now close to the tub. I'm reclining naked in it.

Young man: And I am enveloped in the warm steam of the bathroom. My pores are getting rid of all the sadness after I've taken off my clothes.

Young woman: How beautiful you are. You look like a Renaissance sculpture. Perhaps like David, what with your hair down on your shoulders and your private parts in sight. How miserable clothes are, they hide our most beautiful possession. The Renaissance as a whole is splendid.

Young man: "As a statue, you can live forever. There is, however, one unequivocal truth: you are dead!"

Young woman: O statue, wake up from your slumber. You are now alive!

Young man: Stretch your hand out to me. Take me to your water.

Young woman: (*Overacting*) Put your stamp onto me. Sculpt my features.

Young man: We mustn't focus on cultural phenomena at the moment. We are now lovers.

Young woman: There is no reason why we can't be cultured lovers, culture lovers.

Young man: Just lovers!

Young woman: You're right. Just lovers.

Young man: I want to kiss you.

Young woman: Do you desire me?

Young man: (*Whistles the theme song from 'Love Story'.*)

(*They dance to it, each in their place.*)

Young woman: Don't you dare open your eyes.

Young man: You too. Keep on closing your eyes...

Young woman: How sly you are. How did you get to the tub?!

Young man: I can now touch and caress you. What fragrance! I've never in my life smelled anything more beautiful. I want to kiss you.

Young woman: Kiss me.

Young man: I'm afraid someone will walk by.

Young woman: No one will walk by.

(*Both stand up in their places with their eyes still shut. They pretend to be kissing and embracing*)

Young man: This is strange indeed. The tub keeps expanding and expanding.

Young woman: It has become as big as a lake.

Young man: You swim as good as fish.

Young woman: And you're following me. You're trying to grab my tail.

Young man: There's fish of every kind and colour around us.

Young woman: As if they were security guards.

Young man: We're blessed by fish.

Young woman: They are congratulating us.

Young man: Good Heavens! What's happening?... What's this?

Young woman: The water is flooding/being drained. As if someone has removed the stopper.

Young man: We are being pulled down to the bottom.

Young woman: Pity. The fish is dying.

Young man: The lake is becoming a deep hole. We are falling into it.

Young woman: The dead fish has turned into firewood.

Young man: Who are those standing at the edge of the hole? They are waiving their hands angrily. They are shining like metal. What do they want?

Young woman: Who are they?! (*She hears a sound similar to that of a fire alarm*)

*(Together)*

Young man & woman: Are they firefighters?

*(A short period of silence)*

Young man: You! O you who reside up high! We didn't see. Our eyes were closed!

Young woman: Yes! Our eyes were closed!

Young man: Words have misled me! They took me where I didn't want to go.

Young woman: I didn't want to go there either!

Young man: Forgive us!

Young woman: We didn't mean it!

Young man: We didn't see our eyes were closed!

Young woman: By God, we didn't see our eyes were closed!

Young man: Please do not expose our private parts!

Young woman: I beg of you! It was merely a cocoon!

Young man: I didn't understand! I mean, I didn't mean it!

Young woman: The water has turned into fire.

*(They start swimming back and forth in air. They jump randomly as if fire scorches them)*

Young man: Open your eyes!

Young woman: Open your eyes!

Young man: Don't sink your teeth into my flesh.

Young woman: You're the one who started biting.

Young man: She won't survive.

*(He cries out in pain from imaginary fire burns)*

Young woman: You must open your eyes.

*(She cries out in pain from imaginary fire burns)*

Young man: Try to open your eyes.

Young woman: I feel it's the end. Aaaahh!!

Young man: In life there must be no despair. Open your eyes!

Young woman: Open your eyes!

Young man: Open your eyes!

Young woman: Open your eyes! .... I can't.

Young man: Open your eyes! I cannot.

*(Meanwhile they keep flapping their arms aimlessly in the imaginary water. They bump into each other. They cling to one another. They touch each other's faces. They exchange a long kiss. In the meantime, a policeman and his wife enter. They turn around the young couple who are still busy kissing).*

*(The young man and woman open their eyes.)*

Policeman: What do you think you're doing in the middle of the street?

Policeman's Wife: They are... Can't you see?

*(The young man and woman look around them in shock.)*

Policeman: The authority of the government is being ridiculed. You've dragged its dignity into the mire.

Policeman's wife: Don't let them go! This is a commitment of an indecent act in a public place. Worse than this, it's happening in your precinct. Hey you, woman!

Young woman: We were looking for a way back.

Young man: She's right. We had just found our way back.

Policeman's wife: The streets have become chaotic. People just do as they please.

Policeman: I'll give you both a lesson. I'll make you understand that the government will always have the upper hand.

Young man: The situation is not what it seems from the outside. On the inside it is quite different.

Young woman: He is telling you the truth. Fire was surrounding us from all directions. We escaped by a miracle.

Policeman: Are you both pretending to be crazy?

Policeman's wife: That won't deceive a vigilant policeman like my husband.

Policeman: When I've dragged you both to the police station, and when you've spent a few months in prison, you will then perhaps learn how not to disrespect others... huh?

Policeman's wife: *(Grabs the young woman's arm)* Come along daddy's sweetheart.

Young woman: Take your black hand off of me.

Policeman's wife: *(Makes a loud trilling noise)* Black! My hand.. *(She talks to her husband)* I am virtuous and immaculate. She must be blind. My hand is white. *(She uncovers her legs)* I'm white all over, whiter than milk.

Young man: You'll both regret what you're doing. She belongs to a very well-connected family.

Policeman: I've always wanted to humiliate a well-connected family. I've often prayed to God to let me humiliate a well-connected family. And here we are, my prayers have been answered. How just and generous God is.

Young man: *(Changes his previous tone of voice)* Please take *me*, but let her go.

Policeman: And what would I tell them at the police station?

Policeman's wife: That the young man was kissing himself. That he was squeezing his own lips and fondling his own bosom. That he was caressing his own arms in a soft horny manner.

Young woman: Who are you? What's your business in the first place?

Policeman's wife: I'm his wife. His lawful partner, hah? Yes, his *lawful* partner.

Policeman: And in spite of this we wouldn't dare do what you both have shamefully done in public.

Young man: We haven't done anything. Believe me! There's a great deal of misunderstanding here.

Policeman: You can explain everything to them at the police station.

Young man: I appeal to your good nature.

Young woman: It'll be an uncalled-for big scandal.

Policeman: (*Points to his wife*) Ask *her*. If she allows it I allow it. She is my guide and lead. You have annoyed her but she really has a kind heart.

Young woman: (*She implores the policeman's wife*) Please.

Policeman's wife: I may seem uneducated.

Young man: God forbid.

Policeman's wife: But I know about life.

Young woman: This is obvious.

Policeman's wife: You two have spoiled the outing of the Policeman and his wife.

Policeman: Is it your right to spoil our outing? This is my weekly walk with this gorgeous white wife of mine.

Young man: We've made a huge mistake. We admit that.

Young woman: We won't forget this favor for as long as we live, it just exceeds all our expectations.

Policeman: It seems I'm going to get angry a second time.

Policeman's wife: (*Whispers to the young woman*) The best quality in my husband is that he hates

hypocrisy. Please tell your boyfriend that.

Young woman: (*Whispers to the young man*) He doesn't like hypocrisy.

Young man: (*To the policeman*) He doesn't like hypocrisy.

Policeman: What are you saying? I practically can't hear you. It seems you are offering me a bribe.

Young man: This is not possible. I don't even have enough money in my pocket to buy a bag of peanuts.

Policeman's wife: Your watch is not bad.

Young woman: It's old and worthless.

Policeman: Do you want to be excused in spite of your *horrible* act....

Policeman's wife: *Terrible* act.

Policeman: ... And to enjoy your time *with* time?

Policeman's wife: You've wasted our time.

Policeman: Our time equals your time. (*To the young man*) Give me your watch.

Young woman: Give him your watch and let us go.

Young man: Is this because it's not your watch?

Young woman: This is not the time to be greedy. Give them the watch.

Policeman's wife: (*Takes the watch*) You'll easily replace it in the future.

Policeman: Woman! Let's go.

Policeman's wife: If God wills, you'll manage to replace it later on. My husband is right. My husband is always right.

Policeman: (*Takes the young man by the arm to one side of the stage. At the same time his wife remains standing next to the young woman.*)

Tell me Mr. ... Do you realize that I still don't know your name...

Young woman: (*She talks to the policeman's wife*) Let's leave the subject of names for another occasion.

Policeman's wife: I see that you are still scared.

Young man: On the contrary, I'm not scared. Everything seems just fine.

Policeman: I hope you're not holding a grudge against me in your heart. Not even a small one.

Policeman's wife: Of course my dear, we are all of us policemen and citizens. We are all in one boat.

Policeman: Perhaps that's what makes me want to give you advice.

Policeman's wife: It's certainly true that one must hide one's misbehavior.

Policeman: Things don't go as planned every day.

Policeman's wife: Today you fell into the hands of a kind-hearted policeman. Tomorrow you never know.

Policeman: I have a brother who owns a boat.

Policeman's wife: He can take you both to the middle of the sea.

Policeman: Where there will be no onlookers or observers.

Policeman's wife: There will only be water, air and sky.

Policeman: It won't cost you much.

Policeman's wife: Just give him whatever you can afford in booze and hashish.

Policeman: He'll be on his own.

Policeman's wife: And you two on your own.

Policeman: Go to the fishermen's café in Anfuchi.

Policeman's wife: Ask for Buddha the boatman.

Policeman: That's right ... they've named him Buddha over there.

Policeman's wife: Because he's always cross. His frown reaches neighbouring cities.

Policeman: He's always like that.

Policeman's wife: But he's a kind man.

Policeman: I hope that your outing has not been wasted away.

Policeman's wife: Like ours has.

Policeman: *(To the young man)* Remember me.

Policeman's wife: *(To the young woman)* Remember me.

Policeman & wife: *(On their way out)* Remember us.

*(They laugh and exit)*

Young woman: *(She jumps with joy)* I've always dreamt of a sea-trip.

Young man: *(He watches the policeman and his wife as they exit)* I was born to make your dreams come true.

## Blackout

## Act II

*The front and rear ends of a boat are visible... in between there is an empty space. In the middle of this empty space sits a boatman. Next to him there is a metal support that holds an oar, which he keeps rowing with in a void.*

*The young man and woman are seated in the front section of the boat, facing the audience. They are fidgeting with their hands in ecstasy. There are two bottles of wine in front of them.*

Boatman: *(He looks at the two bottles of wine which the young couple has brought)* I see that you are very well prepared for meeting me.

Young man: The policeman told us exactly what to do.

Young woman: He told us that we would never forget this trip, for as long as we lived.

Boatman: But it seems to be cheap wine.

Young woman: *(Mocking)* Wow... so you drink expensive brands... we didn't know *that*.

Young man: *(He tries to make-up for her sarcasm)* She means to say that if we could afford better we would have brought the best brand.

Boatman: I'm so fed up with my luck. It always brings me the poor—always. It always brings me the poor.

Young woman: And you don't know why.

Young man: She hopes that your luck will improve in the future.

Boatman: I'm starting to believe that rich people don't know how to love.

Young woman: Or don't need your boat.

Young man: Perhaps --excuse me-- she is right. They have everything. They need nothing. I mean, if they need you, then they might perhaps need you only as a distraction from what they are used to. We could say that they might long for a trip only for the sake of a trip. Sorry. I don't mean to say that but to them you are like an accessory... Perhaps the right word is 'folklore'. No, no. All I mean to say is that perhaps they just don't need your boat. Please don't take this the wrong way. I mean, don't take what *she* said the wrong way. Because I --we--no. no. She and I alone. I and she appreciate you. Sorry.

Young woman: It seems we're now a long way from the shore.

Boatman: The farther we are from the shore, the farther we are from onlookers.

Young man: You are right. (*He looks reassuringly to the young woman*) Yes, he is right.

Boatman: I will take you to the middle of the sea exactly. There we'll be lost in the middle of this world.

Young woman: Are you not tired of rowing?

Boatman: Are you not tired of holding his hands? Although one's hand may sweat, it never gets tired in spite of the dampness and salt.

Young man: She's just scared of crossing over more than half the sea.

Young woman: (*She addresses the boatman*) Would you like some of this cheap wine?

Boatman: I never drink while working.

Young woman: When will you drink then?

Boatman: When I arrive.

Young woman: When will you arrive?

Boatman: When I come to a stop.

Young woman: When will you come to a stop?

Boatman: When I start drinking.

Young woman: (*In haste and with anxiety*) We are not here to prove that the world is round. You must start drinking here. I mean you can stop here, right now, if you want to arrive now - here, I mean.

- Boatman:            (*He cuts her short*) I must first take you beyond the area of the Mountain of Magnet.
- Young woman:     Mountain of Magnet!... I've never heard of a mountain with such a name.
- Young man:         Allow me to second her on this. (*He screams*) Yes. Don't look at me like *that*, there is no mountain with such a name.
- Boatman:            Are you both so knowledgeable of the sea and its mysteries?
- Young woman:     (*She addresses the boatman*) Look here, don't go filling our ears with your nonsense.
- Boatman:            Very well. I'll stop here, but it will be your responsibility. Hand me the bottle. (*The young man hands him the bottle*) But something is missing.
- Young woman:     We're missing nothing.
- Boatman:            You've forgotten the most important thing. How are we going to open the bottle without a bottle-opener?
- Young man:         (*Talking to the young woman*) Perhaps it is in your purse. (*She checks her purse and the young man practically sticks his head into it*).
- Young woman:     Unfortunately, I didn't bring any bottle-openers with me.
- Young man:         How did it not occur to you to bring a bottle-opener?
- Young woman:     (*She screams in the young man's face*) And why didn't it occur to *you*, to bring a bottle-opener?
- Young man:         Men don't worry about things like that. It's a woman's job.
- Young woman:     Men, men, men. You give me a headache with your constant mention of men. None of you ever bear any responsibility. You don't want to. You all get rid of it as if it were a prison sentence. In reality, you are all superficial. A bottle-opener! Why should *I* remember to bring a bottle-opener!!
- Boatman:            Don't worry about it. I'll break it at the neck. (*He hits the neck of the bottle at the edge of his oar. It breaks and he pours the wine*) I simplify. I don't like to complicate matters. (*He drinks. There is silence*) But don't tell me you both forgot to bring appetizers, some lupine seeds for me to snack on.
- Young woman:     (*She bursts out*) Listen up! The policeman said booze and dope, nothing else. He didn't say lupine, he didn't say bottle-opener. Only booze and dope. Do you understand....?
- Boatman:            aaaa ...
- Young man:         (*He cuts him short*) We have no carrots. We have no pickles. We have no lettuce. You

are hurting our feelings. We borrowed money to buy your booze and dope.

Boatman: That policeman, you know is my brother--? No good ever comes from his direction. *(Silence)* He is very strange this brother of mine. *(Silence)* Do you believe that he actually takes his wife along during his shifts. *(He laughs but fails to attract their attention. They continue caressing each other)* He doesn't want to leave her alone at home in case she brings over a young policeman. I think he caught her once. *(Silence ... The young man and woman are busy with their caresses)* But he would never admit it, that brother of mine.

Young man: *(Moves his head in the direction of the boatman)* But they were taking a stroll when we met them.

Boatman: That's what he always says, the bastard.

*(The young woman pulls the young man's head back toward her)*

I've always hated full moons just like I hate it tonight, to hell with the moon. I loathe the moon. It's a pimping moon that allows prostitution and pimping. *(The young man and woman stop their caresses and giggles)* How glorious is sin in the eyes of lovers. It causes misfortunes the scale of which are not known to anyone. *(He screams)* Ahh!!... Your wine burnt my stomach. I won't be able to sleep. *(He twists in pain)* How can I sleep when there's a fire inside me? You've both dumped on me the worst of harms.

Young woman: We didn't know it was that bad.

Young man: It also seems that your stomach is somewhat sensitive.

Boatman: Don't worry about the quantity. I'll empty my stomach then we can start afresh. *(He sticks his finger in his mouth and throws out ... when he's done he looks at the young man and woman)* Each on of you two should sit on one side of the boat.

Young woman: Why?

Boatman: *(He stands up holding a pair of binoculars)* Can't you feel it? The horizon is forecasting a storm. We must maintain a balance for the boat in order for it to float steadily. The boat is rocking.

*(The young man moves from where he was sitting next to the young woman to the other side of the boat, where he now faces her).*

Young woman: I don't see any traces of a storm and the boat is not rocking.

Boatman: I see that you insist on proving me a liar. I told you I had to go beyond the area of the Mountain of Magnet. *(He sits down again and searches all the corners of the boat. He brings out a book)* At any rate, this is the proof. Here, look! We are facing the Mountain of Magnet exactly.

Young woman: I don't see anything. There are only jumbled lines that no one can understand.

Young man: *(He stands up to look at the book)* I think that this is a special navigators' map. He alone can read it.

Boatman: *(Angrily)* Go back to your place and keep maintaining the boat's balance! I'll hold you responsible if the boat drifts toward the Mountain of Magnet.

*(The young man returns to his place in fear).*

Young man: I won't leave my place again, but what's the story of the Mountain of Magnet?

Young woman: Do you plan to believe him? Has the boat actually rocked under your feet? You've gone mad without a doubt. Where *is* the storm? Does it whip you on the face and slap your cheeks?

Young man: I swear to you. I feel it rocking under my feet.

Young woman: Look at me. *(She leaves her place and sits next to him)* We came here to make love, not to be scared...

Young man: I swear to y...

Young woman: *(She cuts him short)* Hold me. *(She holds on to his arm)* Put your head on my shoulder. Open your eyes, your ears, your heart. This moon is engulfing us in a halo of light. Through its light we can see each other's features, which we have forgotten. This is a summer sky, it sends a warm breeze that can melt away the frost of our burdens, disappointments and anxiety. This is an evening at sea, it will lull us over its surface, and like a secret thread it will connect your world and mine. The world of small fish, beautiful and colorful fish.

*(The young man starts touching her face. Then he bends down and kisses her hand.)*

Boatman: Hey!.. Hey!..*(The young man is busy kissing her hand)* Hey! ...I'm here. *(The young man turns to the boatman, but the young woman turns him back to her)* You wanted to know the story of the Mountain of Magnet.

Young woman: It's better for you to save your stories to yourself.

Boatman: It is a mountain of black snow.

Young man: Black snow... how creative you are.

*(At this point, the young man starts caressing her but she looks away. He pulls her head to him, so that her face will be before his.. but the boatman seems to have already attracted her attention.)*

Boatman: It stands in its entirety under the water. Here, in this very spot as my book indicates, but it's impossible for the eyes to see it... It could be right here under us.

Young woman: Is it a mountain or a demon?

Boatman: And suddenly...

Young woman: (*Sarcastically. She makes horror-film noises and music*) Tata...tataaaaa...

Boatman: ...It's peak appears on the surface of the water and attracts everything that is metal. It gulps them down.

Young woman: I don't believe you... Did you hear that? I said I didn't believe you.

Boatman: It wasn't my intention to make you believe me. This doesn't concern me. What I want is...

Young man: (*He cuts the boatman short*) But does the Mountain of Snow swallow up human beings too?

(*At once the young woman stands up and leaves her place next to the young man. She reaches for the bottle of wine. She picks it up and sits down across from the young man, on the opposite section of the boat.*)

Boatman: (*Speaks to the young woman*) How will you open it?

Young woman: I'll break it at the neck.

(*She breaks the neck of the bottle against the edge of the boat.*)

Boatman: (*Speaks to the young man*) Are we going to sit down and watch her drink it?

Young man: (*He looks back at the boatman blankly. He doesn't seem to get his drift.*)

Boatman: Didn't you bring booze and dope?

Young man: (*Brings out drugs from his pocket*) Yes, but I'm not good at rolling joints.

(*He gives the boatman both drugs and cigarettes*)

Boatman: Pray tell me, what exactly do you *do* well? Is it expected of me to do everything myself?

Young man: You didn't *do* anything.

Boatman: How so, didn't I bring you here?

Young man: This was the only thing, but you threw up the wine and haven't slept until now. Look! She slept. She drank the wine and went to sleep. I didn't come here to sit next to you and roll your

joints for you and listen to your meaningless stories. Yes, I am not good at rolling joints. And so what? I lack experience ... I know. I don't know how much tobacco to put in it and how much dope..

Boatman:           *(He has already rolled a joint)* Take it. *(The young man hesitates .. There is silence)*  
Your rage will melt away. *(The young man takes the joint)* You asked me whether the Mountain of Magnet devoured human beings or not. It certainly does, if what they are wearing has any metal in it.

Young man:       *(He takes off his shoes)* This is the only item of my clothing that has metal in it. *(He tosses it into the sea)*

Boatman:           But isn't the zipper in your pants metal too?

Young man:       Oh boy.. I almost forgot that. You're right, definitely right this time.

*(The young man puts the joint in his mouth and takes off his pants.)*

Boatman:           That was in the nick of time.

Young man:       *(Regretfully)* Those were my only pair of pants.

Boatman:           Nothing is more valuable than life.

Young man:       How can I leave your boat looking like this?

Boatman:           You'll be lost in the mad crowd at the beach. Don't worry about it *(Silence.)* Women frequently entangle men in difficulties. *(Silence.)* They were the reason we were expelled from paradise. See how she sleeps and leaves you alone to suffer storms, cold weather and seasickness. *(The young man starts shaking and shivering)* Deception runs in their blood. Do you know the story of the Pharaoh? *(The young man vomits)* Are you still suffering from seasickness? *(Silence.)* The sea has calmed down now and the boat is steady.

Young man:       *(He becomes restless in his seat.)* Which Pharaoh do you mean? There were many of them.

Boatman:           The one who became blind.

Young man:       I've never heard of a Pharaoh who became blind.

Boatman:           Are you calling me a liar?

Young man:       I didn't mean to accuse you of lying ... it's just so that I've never heard of him.

Boatman:           Did your seasickness come back?

Young man:       No, no.. I'm perfectly all right *(Silence.)* Yes, he became blind what then?

Boatman: You don't care.

Young man: On the contrary, I care. I care very much.

Boatman: There's no point in my going on when you are preoccupied with her.

Young man: (*Angrily*) I'm not preoccupied with her, plus what business is it of yours if I'm preoccupied with her? Why do you poke your nose in everything and anything? There is only place left into which you haven't poked your nose, my bottom. C'mon poke your nose in it and I'll break wind to blind you. Damn you and your Pharaoh. Your job is to sail the boat and sleep. Why haven't you slept until now? Are you going to stay awake until the Mountain of Magnet pulls us to it?

Boatman: Do you hear that?

Young man: Hear what?

Boatman: I imagine it is right underneath us.

Young man: You told me that the sea has now become calm.

Boatman: It must be the calm before the storm. It'll appear all of a sudden and swallow us up.

Young man: (*Quickly takes cover in the boat*) No!... Please do something. I've nothing on me but my under pants. There's nothing metal in them.

Boatman: Don't be scared. Be a man! If it swallows us up it'll swallow all of us. This is our only consolation. I'll roll another joint. (*He gets busy rolling a joint. Silence.*) I believe in fate and destiny. Lean back and rest. (*He puts the young man's head over his knee. Then he lights the joint and hands it to him*) Take it. (*The young man takes the joint*) Death is our only truth. "Upon us death is true".

Young man: I don't want to die before having made love.

Boatman: I fear for you from the betrayals of women.

Young man: But she loves me.

Boatman: You've seen yourself how the sea changes from one moment to the next and women are seas.

Young man: You just don't know her.

Boatman: She who lets go of her chastity once will forever let go of it. It's you today, another tomorrow.

Young man: Don't incriminate her.

Boatman: Do you think that you're better than the Pharaoh?

Young man: Which Pharaoh?

Boatman: The one who became blind.

Young man: Oh .. I remember. But you never continued his story.

Boatman: I thought you didn't want to hear it.

Young man: What happens to him after he becomes blind?

Boatman: All his doctors become perplexed. They consult seashells and fortune-tellers till one day a strange soothsayer comes into town. He tells the Pharaoh that he would regain his eyesight if he washed his eyes with the urine of a woman who never had sexual encounters with any man before her husband. So what does he do?

Young man: Wash his eyes with the urine of his own wife.

Boatman: How intelligent you are. This is exactly what he does, but he doesn't regain his eyesight. So he tries with other women for no avail. As a result, he takes a newly born girl and attends to raising her up himself. He locks her up in a place impossible to reach and when she grows up he marries her off to some guy. Then he takes her urine and with it he washes his eyes. This way he regains his eyesight. However, he eventually gathers all the women in the city and burns them.

Young man: *(He has slept in the meantime and is now snoring loudly)* khkhkhkh...khkhkhkh..

Boatman: *(He stands up and rests the young man's head on the seat.)* What is this? Disgusting! You've peed on yourself and have only one pair of under pants. C'mon stretch your legs and fall asleep. Perhaps the day will come when you will actually make love. *(He crosses over to the young woman and sits next to her . He starts singing)*

“When will destiny allow us baby

To meet each other by the Nile”....

Wake up young lady! You lady! Did you wake up? Wake up! Don't waste your outing in sleep. You'll regret it. *(He continues singing)*

“When will destiny allow us baby

To meet each other by the Nile”....

Lady! Lady! ... I beg you both, don't sleep and leave me alone. *(He shakes her)* Come now. Do you know that every single thing in this world ought to be disdained? This is my philosophy in a nutshell. In the name of everything dear and valuable to you, wake up. I can't bear loneliness. Wake up, I'm telling

you! *I want to sleep. (She is in deep slumber)* Hahaha ... Look! Look how he is wishing on a star in his dreams and peeing on himself. The crows are fluttering their black wings on top of his head. This is a bad omen. *(He screams)* This is absurd and inhuman of both of you to leave me alone. I know you love each other the same way maggots love dead dogs, but this should not give you the right to do this to me. I did you a favor this cannot be my reward. I don't deserve this. I must sleep, even if for just a moment. I can't be responsible for your sleep. He is ... He is *(He points at the young man)* He's worthless and phony. He wants one thing only, sex. He wants anything that will arouse him, it doesn't matter what. Anything that moves can arouse him, it can make him lose his mind. He doesn't know the difference between a woman and a lamppost or even a broomstick. *(He screams)* According to him, there is no difference between a woman and a broomstick. You are both not better than me by any means. I am you. All there is to it, is that I'm can't sleep and you can't wake up even if your eyes were forced open. You are such hard-hearted people, I give you my time and effort and boat for your enjoyment, yet where is my compensation? You've both taken my booze and dope and here I am alone once again. *(The young woman moans and rolls in her sleep. The young man does exactly the same thing. The boatman looks closely at them in turn)* I must've grown two horns on my head just now. The horns are becoming as long as my boat's mainsail even as I speak. You neither one of you has pure intentions nor paid me as I mentioned before. This isn't right. I said wake up! *(He brings a metal pestle and mortar in order to wake them up. He gets very close to their ears and starts pounding loudly and incessantly)* Rise! It is time for work! *(To the young woman)* Wake up your father has come! *(To the young man)* Wake up stupid, the creditors have arrived! *(To the young woman)* It's prayer time! *(To the young man)* Your mother has died! *(To the young woman)*

She who her trust to a man gives ...

She who her trust to a man gives,

Is as she who stores water in sieves.

*(He stands in the middle of the boat pounding the pestle and mortar).* If you sleep you die! If you sleep you die! It's now my turn! I want to sleep!

*(The young man and woman start waking up... They are in a state of shock.)*

Young woman: What's this noise?

Young man: How relaxing this nap was.

Young woman: *(She warns the young man)* Don't say that!

Boatman: *(To the young man)* Was it she? *(To the young woman)* Was it he? *(They both look at each other suspiciously)*

Young woman: You betrayed me, didn't you?

Young man: It was *you* who slept first?

## Arab Stages

<https://arabstages.commons.gc.cuny.edu>

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Boatman: Please don't throw accusations at each other. These are very sensitive and private matters.

Young man: (*To the young woman*) You're ridiculous.

Young woman: (*Throws him with the empty bottle of wine*) Promiscuous and corrupt.

Boatman: Let's not be divided by conflict. We must join forces in the face of the Mountain of Magnet and Snow.

Young man: I wish from the bottom of my heart that it swallows her up.

Young woman: By the will of God it will destroy *you*! I hope you become a nail or a piece of metal wreckage or even a tin-box full of your failed ideas so it'll destroy you.

Young man: Did he tempt you with money?

Young woman: Like I bought you with a pair of pants to cover up your crooked legs.

Boatman: Don't patronize him and show off your white complexion.

Young man: It's only a surface, inside is a dark carob shell.

Boatman: Now you hold your tongue. A man's worth is measured by how much money he has in his pocket.

Young woman: His pocket is cleaner than his tongue.

Boatman: Do I hear silence? (*Silence*) There's something somewhat embarrassing that I would like to say.

Young man: (*Talking to the young woman*) I didn't think you were that bad.

Young woman: This is exactly how I feel about you and worse.

Boatman: I told you both I want silence! I haven't finished what I wanted to say yet ...

Young woman: What do we care about what you have to say.

Young man: That's right ... You have no right to interfere between us.

Boatman: Destiny brought us together and I'm a man who believes in destiny. It merely brought us together, not necessarily to love each other. But like, for instance, the way it brought both of you together, you are not exactly in harmony, as far as I can see.

Young woman: How insightful!

Young man: You're a psychic, huh?

Boatman: Do you team up only to make fun of me?

Young man: What do you want? Why can't you just leave us to ourselves for a short while?

Boatman: You've taken advantage of my belongings. You drank my wine and smoked dope, and wanted to enjoy them alone. You've even denied me sleep.

Young woman: (*Predicting danger*) It's time for us to go back.

Young man: For sure, it's becoming very late.

Boatman: It seems I'm going to let you down. There's no energy left in me to take you back to the shore.

Young woman: Who are you to keep us against our will on this despicable boat of yours?

Boatman: I'm not keeping you against your will. Whoever has the ability and skill is welcome to go and take this load off of me.

Young man: We didn't do you any harm.

Boatman: No one can do me any harm. Here, I'm a fortified fortress. But by God, if...

Young woman: If what?

Boatman: If the Mountain of Magnet moved.

Young man: I beg of you, take us back now. Her father might become worried and could call the police if we didn't return now. That could very well cause us all sort of troubles.

Boatman: No, no, no. I wouldn't fear that possibility; the police report would probably end up with my brother. No, no. There's no reason to worry about that at all. Think of something else.

Young woman: (*Talking to the young man*) Why don't you try to take us back.

Young man: I don't know where we are exactly. We could be close to the Italian or Greek shore for all I know.

Young woman: We've set sail in the boat for only two hours, not more.

Young man: It seems that the world has grown smaller.

Young woman: As usual, you're becoming evasive.

Young man:        (*Angry*) I'm not trained to do this sort of work. I've never been on a boat before. I don't know how to sail a boat. No one has ever taught me to navigate a boat. Neither my family nor any of my relatives own a boat. "This is the truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God".

Young woman:    Is there anything that you excel at?

Young man:        Why don't *you* try to take us back. I'll surround you with all of my best wishes.

Young woman:    This isn't a job for women.

Young man:        Women, women, women, you give me a headache with this notion of 'women'. You have all taken your full need of equality. I'll take shelter in this equality and won't ever leave. I'll continue being the honest loyal guard of the issue of equality. I'll never go back to the dark and darkened ages. I'll never return to the dreadful illusion of male superiority. If I had known that your character was so conservative I'd never have come here, to the middle of the sea, with you.

Boatman:          (*Applauding*) Outstanding, outstanding.

Young man:        Where exactly is the outstanding element in this?

Boatman:          You remind me of men.

Young woman:    What now? If I don't return quickly my family will break my neck.

(*Silence*)

Young man:        (*To the boatman*) We're appealing to your generosity and accommodating nature. At least help her keep her neck intact.

Boatman:          I told you I was tired. I didn't get enough sleep as I didn't get enough enjoyment.

Young woman:    And what enjoyment exactly did we get?

Boatman:          Fresh air, a view of the sea. Reclining on your backs in the lap of nature. This is of course in addition to my wine and dope. Aren't all of those considered enjoyments? You two are never satisfied.

Young man:        (*Angry*) We didn't come here to breath your unpolluted air or to bask on our backs like spoilt dogs, or ..

Boatman:          (*Cuts him short*) Why then did you come?

Young woman:    To enjoy your "pimping moon".

Boatman:          Aren't you ashamed of yourself woman? (*To the young man*) She's removed the veil of shame just like that, very easily. (*Imitating the young woman*) "To enjoy your pimping moon." Is this

your image of me? I wish I never lived through or experienced that.

Young man: We're ordering you to take us back now and at once.

Boatman: If you hadn't used up my wine and dope, you'd have had the right to order me.

Young woman: Do you want us to get down on our knees and implore you?

Boatman: You don't need to do anything of the sort. To prove my good intentions, let me remind you that you can swim back to the shore.

Young man: You know it's very far. Plus we're very close to the Mountain of Magnet and Snow which could very well be underneath us right now .. Have you forgotten?

(Silence)

Young woman: What do you want from us?

Boatman: I don't think that you are in any mood to understand what I want.

Young man: No, no .. We are in a good enough mood. Just don't waste more time.

Boatman: I can't get myself to say it.

Young woman: Don't be scared of anything.

Young man: We're all brothers and sisters.

Boatman: I'm still a little nervous.

Young man: Just regulate your breathing, that'll restore your calm.

Boatman: Let's regulate our breathing together for there is strength in unity.

*(They all breath in deeply then exhale slowly. Every time the young man and woman attempt at stopping the boatman breathes in and out loudly indicating to them that they must continue. That makes them join in again... This is repeated a few times)*

Boatman: My hands and legs are starting to hurt..

Young man: C'mon, stretch your legs and relax totally. *(The young man helps the boatman to stretch)* It seems he needs a massage badly. *(To the young woman)* Please help me. *(They both start massaging him)* Don't tell me you forgot to bring Vicks Vapo-rub.

Young woman: I didn't bring any Vapo-rub.

Young man: Do you know what your problem is?

Young woman: What?

*(They continue massaging him.)*

Young man: You're so self-possessed you don't even think about emergencies.

Young woman: You never told me we were immigrating, I thought we were merely going on a sea-trip.

Young man: You don't miss any opportunity to make fun of me.

Young woman: And you don't miss any opportunity to pick on me.

Boatman: *(He stretches up)* Uhh!.. Your fingers are like magic.

Young man: *(He tries to flatter the boatman)* Wow ... You look younger already.

Young woman: *(She looks at the young man and follows his example)* Your cheeks got their colour back and each one is now vying with the other, which has more colour.

Boatman: I can't find the words to thank you both.

Young woman: Why don't you tell us what you want from us...

Boatman: Only now can I express what has been on my mind.

Young man: We're all ears.

Boatman: *(He stands up)* I agonize over justice. I suffer for it. I feel that our world is cruel. It doesn't reward everyone. It lacks a balance. A world characterized by deficiency and no one in it is complete. You both and I are incomplete. This is the problem. We must become complete. Our completion will be a realization of justice. Did my message get through?

Young man: *(He applauds)* Bravo...bravo. This is exactly what I expected of you.

Boatman: So, you agree?

Young woman: Agree on what?

Boatman: Justice, certainly.

Young woman: Which justice do you mean; our justice or yours?

Boatman: There is only one justice girlie.

Young woman: This chatter is like waves it fizzles away completely at the shore.

Boatman: Don't be stubborn. Obstinacy will lead you nowhere.

Young woman: Are you threatening me?

Young man: Differences of opinions shouldn't spoil friendships.

Young woman: Are you still basking in the gardens of your stupidity.

Young man: What are you talking about? I don't understand anything.

Young woman: Ask him.

Boatman: This is my boat. I own it. You want to enjoy yourselves alone, huh.. Well, you either swim back to the shore –and this is your prerogative—or I take part in your pleasure and this is mine.

Young woman: (*She screams*) Did you hear that?

(*The young man is in shock*).

He's haggling us.

Young man: (*To the boatman... In shock*) Is what she's saying true?

Boatman: They say morons learn by repetition. All right then, I'll repeat what I just said in some other way. It is your right to enjoy her, and it's her right to enjoy you. It is also my right to enjoy you and you to enjoy me, and for me to enjoy her and she me. This way the world becomes a vast warm place where differences and categories don't exist. This is true justice. (*He shouts out*) We'll be partners till death.

Young man: You're mad. Mad. You'll be penalized for this. (*He pulls out an imaginary sword*) I swear that you'll ...

Boatman: (*Cuts him short*) There is no need for violence. The shore is before you and the Mountain of Snow is behind you. The decision is yours.

Young man: Yes it's our decision, there is no question about that.

(*He puts back the imaginary sword into its sheath, then crosses to sit next to the young woman who has in the meantime retreated to a corner of the boat.*)

Young woman: Do you believe me now?

Young man: How I wish to see that rotten policeman who brought us here so I can tear him to pieces without any mercy.

Young woman: What are we going to do now?

Young man: We can't swim back.

Boatman: You have only ten minutes to make up your minds or else I'll regretfully push you both off the boat.

Young woman: Why didn't I just die before getting on this boat. Why didn't the Angel of Death take my life before taking this step with you.

Young man: I told you many times to stop looking at the empty half of the glass. There must be a solution.

Young woman: Let's jump into the sea. Let's take charge of our own destiny rather than leaving it to him.

Young man: There's no place for such heroics now, or for linguistic jargon. (*Angrily*). We can't just *jump* into the sea.

Boatman: Five minutes to go.

Young woman: And why can't we jump into the sea?

Young man: If we survive the waves, we won't survive the storms and cold.

Young woman: The sea is calm. There aren't any storms or cold currents.

Young man: Is it my fault that you don't feel the storms and cold. (He starts sneezing and feeling cold) Brrrrrrrr (*The young woman takes off her jacket and places it on his shoulders*) Brrrrrrrr. I'm afraid I've come down with a flu. Brrrrrrrr

Boatman: Three minutes left.

Young woman: Believe me, there is no other solution. If we die, God forbid, the honor of having tried to escape will be our deliverance.

Young man: Is it possible that all we ever get from life is the honour of having tried? By this token, we've accumulated piles of honours. We are indeed dead my darling. We are the "Choked by Honour" people. Think of something else other than *honour*, brrrrrrrr.

Young woman: What? Are you tempted to follow him? You're actually thinking of this instead of planning to kill him?

Young man: Who said brrr, that I brrrrrrrr,, didn't brrrrr, think of killing him brrrrrr, but brrrrr, after the massage brrrrr, he became brrrrr, more brrrrr, powerful and healthier brrrrr. This brrrr, as well as brrrr, the fact brrrr, that I brrrrrr, am scared brrrr (*With a scream*) ...of going to jail brrrrrrrrrrr.

Young woman: Death is better for me than laying on my back mounted by that that pig.

Young man: Reality forces us to do so. *(He screams)* Besides you betrayed me only moments ago with someone I don't know. What made it all right then? Was it merely that the fact that I didn't know him? Brrrrrr *(He sneezes)* Brrrrrr.

Young woman: Will reality force you too?

Young man: Death doesn't discriminate between men and women. Accidents don't either. *(He points a the boatman)* He is only an accident. We'll remember him when we grow old and smile contentedly that we were able to overcome him. Brrrrrrrr.

Boatman: Two minutes left.

Young woman: I have a wish, which I hope you won't deny me.

Young man: I was born to make your dreams come true. Brrrrrr

Young woman: I want to dive in with the coloured fish for just a short while, then return to you.

Young man: Provided you don't stay longer than a minute. Otherwise, the bastard will push us off his boat. Besides you must be careful of the big wild fish. Brrrrrr

Young woman: Are you scared for me?

Young man: *(He sobs bitterly)* Certainly. Brrrrrr

*(The young woman slips slowly into the water ... There is a heavy grievous silence. The young man looks out from the boat into the water.)*

Boatman: Half a minute left.

*Silence*

Young man : C'mon, come up my love. More than five minutes have passed... You must have used up all the oxygen in your lungs by now. Don't let the beauty of the small fish make you forget that you don't have gills like theirs. Yes, we don't have gills.

Boatman: *(Laughing)* She tricked you and died.

Young man: *(Without turning to the boatman)* She told me she was coming back, brrrrrr *(He calls the young woman)* I fear that the Mountain of Snow and Magnet will swallow you up. C'mon, come up as fast as you possibly can. Brrrrrr

Boatman: What amuses me most is that you will spend your whole life masturbating. Hahaha. You'll have intercourse with yourself or your pillow. There's no difference.

Young man: You'll suffocate darling. You don't have gills. There are wild fish down there. Beware of the Mountain of Magnet. C'mon already, come up!

Boatman: *(In his loudest voice)* Masturbation is the solution. Masturbate all of you, you become healthy. Hahaha.

*(The boatman moves toward the sail of the boat and starts loosening it.)*

Young man: What are you doing?

Boatman: We are at a very close proximity from tomorrow, so we must return. Otherwise, we'll be swallowed up by the Mountain of Magnet. Without a doubt you do not wish us to be swallowed up by the Mountain of Snow.

Young man: My love, this is the last call! We'll set sail now! You have no gills. Wild fish take up all places. You'll suffocate. We are at a very close proximity from tomorrow.

*(The boatman brings out a bottle of wine and bottle-opener. He opens the bottle and pours the wine in a glass, then places a few dishes of appetizers.)*

Boatman: The sea water will evaporate. There will be nothing but salt, and your sweetheart will become smoked-herring, hahaha. *(He drinks)*

Young man: My love, this is the last call. We'll set sail now! You have no gills. We are at a very close proximity from tomorrow. I fear your becoming smoked-herring.

*(An open space with no particular character. There is a man sitting in a chair, busy knitting. He uses knitting needles. Next to his foot there is a big ball of yarn. Another man gets hold of that ball and emulates the movements of a newly-born baby, he suckles on the yarn-ball as if it's a breast.)*

Man/newly-born: Mummy, mummy!

*(The sound of fire-works is heard. An advertising agent enters. She is wearing very revealing apparel and carries a box similar to those used at theatres' box offices. She puts it down and starts blowing balloons. She then decorates the place with them.)*

Woman: Everyone is overjoyed. They are dancing and singing. The family-planning campaign has succeeded.

Man/newly-born: Mummy, mummy!

Woman: *(She continues to blow balloons and uses them to decorate the place)* We no longer have housing or transportation problems. The crowds have been considerably reduced in public transportation. We can now, once again, see "For Rent" signs.

Man/newly-born: Mummy, mummy!

Man:                    (*Still knitting*) These balloons seem somehow unusual.

Woman:                (*She continues to blow the balloons*) After the successful completion of the campaign, authorities have decided to use the huge surplus of condoms toward decorating the country. They cost over millions of dollars to produce and import. (*She screams with joy*) Yahooo!!

Man/newly-born: Mummy!

*(The young man enters, his clothes divided into two vertical sections. One section represents a man with half a mustache and a pant-suit. The other represents a woman in heavy make-up, long hair and a décolleté dress. He keeps moving back and forth.)*

Young man :        Kiss me.

I'm afraid someone will walk by.

Think of something else

How about a sea-trip?

*(The young man's monologue continues and is accompanied by a gradual fade out of lights, which ends in a total blackout.)*

Sameh H. Mahran, PhD. President of Cairo International Festival for Contemporary and Experimental Theatre. Mahran has written and published over forty plays and is the recipient of numerous national awards for best playwright. He is Former President of the Academy of Fine Arts (2008-2014), Head of Theatre Committee at the Supreme Council of Culture, Ministry of Culture (2009 to present). Head of Education and Communication Department at Cairo University in 1999 and Vice Dean of the College of Fine Arts for Graduate Studies at Cairo University (1999-2001). Mahran has published a number of books on dramatic and cultural criticism and theory, and his research papers are published widely across the Arab World.

[1] Corniche: road that skirts a river or sea. Some areas of it are secluded and have trees or shrubs thereby good spots for lovers to meet.

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## MARTIN E. SEGAL THEATRE CENTER PUBLICATIONS

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Arab Stages

Volume 11 (Fall 2019)

©2019 by Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications

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Arab Stages is a publication of the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center ©2019  
ISSN 2376-1148