

Nermina Kurspahić  
**ALL ON BOARD**

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

A cage went in search of a bird...

– Franz Kafka

**Translated from the Bosnian by Igor Knežević**

**Revised and adapted for the American stage by H.B.J. Clifford**

Just outside Copenhagen harbour, Denmark, an ancient ship is moored that once served as a refugee camp for exiles from Bosnia and Herzegovina. This play is dedicated to them. All the characters, as well as their actions, are fictional. Everything else is real.

## **Cast of Characters**

**HAMLET**

**OPHELIA**

**KING CLAUDIUS**, King of Denmark, uncle to Hamlet

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**, Queen of Denmark, mother of Hamlet and wife to Claudius

**FIRST PLAYER**, who leads the troupe and takes the part of a king

**SECOND PLAYER**, who takes the part of a queen

**BARNARDO**

**MARCELLUS**

**FRANCISCO**

**HORATIO**

**POLONIUS**

**GHOST of HAMLET'S FATHER**, lately King of Denmark

**KASIM**

**MELIHA**, KASIM's mother

**KASIM**, KASIM's uncle, brother to KASIM's father

**CHILD**, cousin to KASIM, child of KASIM's aunt

**SELMA**

**SELMA's GRANDMA**

**TARIK**, SELMA's brother

**NAMIK**, SELMA's brother

**RASEMA**

**KENAN**

**ELVIRA**, KENAN's wife

**EJUB**, KENAN's father

**CHILDREN** of KENAN and ELVIRA

**RAJKA**, the interpreter

**MONITORS**

**POLICEMEN**

**THE CHINESE**

**THE BOSNIANS**

**ACT I**

**Scene 1**

*Elsinore Castle. It is foggy and the sentinels are nervously pacing along the walls.*

**BARNARDO**

What is happening? Why is Francisco upset?

**MARCELLUS**

We have seen him again!

**BARNARDO**

But whom, in god's name?

**FRANCISCO**

The old king... or rather something that very much resembles him...

**BARNARDO**

Well, what is it?

**MARCELLUS**

A ghost, you idiot, the king's ghost!

**BARNARDO**

Excuse me, what do you mean by ghost! Have you lost your wits? Where did this ghost come from...

*From the fog emerges the armed figure of the king... chaos ensues... the sentinels begin screaming... Here he comes, call Horatio!... You call him, I'm off...*

**BARNARDO**

What is going on here? I've never heard, let alone seen a ghost... The end of the world... Run for your lives...

**FRANCISCO**

But where to, when he follows us everywhere!

**MARCELLUS**

Hold on, maybe he would like to tell us something... Ghosts often know things. They can foretell calamity. Maybe it senses a misfortune.

BARNARDO

That may be so, but whatever it is, I am not interested. I have enough trouble as it is...

*Again there is shouting...* Horatio, come and see this... Horatio!

***END of Scene 1***

## Scene 2

*A rather old ship, anchored at sea. Three, four men are standing on the deck, Chinese or Vietnamese. They are smoking as they watch people boarding the ship. A multitude of people; women, men, children and elderly climbing aboard with suitcases, boxes, plastic bags. They hesitantly approach the ship deck. They are dropping things and getting in each other's way. several uniformed policemen are standing by,, a score of people with notebooks, checking the identity of every 'traveller'. One of the latter is especially clumsy, and books are dropping from his suitcase and out of plastic bags. Others are getting irritated and keep pressing him forward.*

KENAN

*(kicking the scattered itemst, some ending up in the water)*

Get out of my way with those books, can't you see we are climbing!

AMER

Don't throw my books...

*(he tries to catch the thrown objects)...*

I'm climbing too! Wait a moment, what's the rush?! You can see how narrow the passage is... And you can see how many of us there are, and each of us is carrying something... It's not my fault the bag broke!

KENAN

-You're the one who broke, let them all break! It's all the same to me!

SELMA

What's your problem! I've had enough of this humiliation, this poverty and this state I've been brought to. I don't have to listen to you as well.

KENAN

Who asked you? Are you his lawyer? You think I don't know where I am and what we've come to. I hardly need you to tell me...

ELVIRA

please don't start another fight! I've already had it up to here with your shouting.

KENAN

My shouting! And you're always taking the side of those who happen to be against me.  
Some wife *you* are!!

RASEMA

Why do you keep twisting things around. No one is against you, but the racket you're making.

KENAN

Here comes another lawyer. Who asked you, in any case... and what is this, some sort of conspiracy against me?

SELMA

Come on, don't be paranoid! Can't you very well see that we're all in the same boat, and that we're all on the edge of our nerves, to say the least. But still we're doing our best to control ourselves – or at least some us are. I would suggest the same to you...

KENAN

Who are you to give me advice?...

OTHER VOICES

who are you...

oi,, stop...

enough of that...

*Almost everyone joins in the fracas. Some children are crying. The Chinese men are still standing on deck smoking, with unaltered facial expressions.*

MONITOR

*(blowing his whistle)*

Quiet! Quiet! I ask you kindly to climb up one by one, without arguing. Some order, order please... you cannot behave like that

*His voice fades amid the clamour. The Chinese men smile indifferently at the row which is fast turning into a brawl.*

***END of Scene 2***

### Scene 3

*A cross-section of the ship reveals the ship's kitchen on the upper level, and three cabins below, one next to the other. The latter are tiny and the newly arrived 'guests' are just settling in. Kenan is in the first cabin along with his wife Elvira, his elderly father Ejub and two little children. Amir is in the neighboring cabin with his mother, uncle and a boy. The third cabin is home to Selma, her grandma and her two brothers.*

KENAN (*angrily*)

What is this? They want to bundle us in here! Here... like animals...

*Beats violently on the cabin wall... voices are heard –*

Oi, stop that!...

*KENAN sits on one of the beds and hold his head in his hands...*

KENAN

It's all a dream! Tell me that I am dreaming!... Here, in this coffin, below water, on the water, on a ship, among strangers.

EJUB

I told you we should have never left Trebinje.

KENAN

You don't say! I hope you're joking! What was I supposed to do! To serve them my own head, and heads of my children, on a silver platter? To let my wife be their servant? So... that they could humiliate you, kill you even...

ELVIRA

Don't start, please! Things are the way they are! It's terrible! But what can we do? Going back is out of the question, as is leaving. I don't even know where...

*(crying)*

Don't, please, for the children's sake...

KENAN

It's for their sake that I came with you in the first place... I should have stayed. I should have picked up a gun... This is pointless. What have we gained... Peace! Cursed peace! A little food and drink! My god we are so stupid. *I am* so stupid. To have agreed to *this!* Treatment unworthy of any living things...

*beats his fist on the cabin wall once again...*

SEVERAL VOICES  
Stop that motherfucker!

KENAN, *to the wall*  
What was that about my mother?...

*In the interior of another cabin Amer is unpacking his books. His mother Maliha is adjusting a photograph of Banja Luka on the wall next to the cabin entrance. Uncle Kasim is angrily pacing around the room.*

KASIM  
You could have relieved us of some of these books of yours. We are suffocating as it is in this, this, I don't even know what to call it...

*KASIMkicks some bags around on the floor.*

KASIM  
And on top of everything there is this child. I only don't know why you ever brought him along.

MELIHA  
You know very well why I brought him. He is the son of Mustafa's sister. Your sister too, in case you've forgotten.

AMER  
That means nothing to uncle, as you know. Neither his brother nor his sister – much less so her children. He hardly cares that that very brother *and* sister have been herded off to the (concentration) camp.

KASIM  
*(turning on AMER)*  
Are you implying I was the one who sent them there?

AMER  
I didn't say that, but since you bring it up, it is rather interesting, isn't it, that they were picked up while you were left in peace.

KASIM  
You impudent bratlittle ! Did you hear what he said Meliha?

MELIHA  
I hear both of you both, quite frankly! I can only wonder and despair really, what's gotten into you two. Stop these arguments for god's sake. I cannot take it any more, do you understand, I just cannot take it...



*(crying)*

Do I have to think of everything? And this poor child, an orphan...

KASIM

Alright, alright!*is heard*

KASIM

What's this mad fellow from Trebinje up to now? Hey there, stop the banging!...

KASIM

Perhaps it would be best if we were all to calm down a little. It looks as if we'll be here for a while, and who knows when we'll be able to leave, or even *if*...

KASIM

What do you mean leave, we're not in prison...

KASIM

This is a slightly refined version of a prison... You know what I mean Denmark is a jail... oh, it doesn't matter... This here is a prison that gives you the illusion of freedom. There exists no legal basis for your confinement. All the same you are shut inn, legally or otherwise.

MELIHA

*(quietly, more to herself than to the others)*

Maybe there is another sort of justice in this case, god's justice, or cosmic...

KASIM

I am not qualified to speak about that. Maybe you are, I don't know... I only know that everything that is, is a deception. It seems to you that you are free, but you are not. Not in any shape or form. You have no choice but to follow the instructions they give you.

MELIHA

*(taking the crying child in her lap)*

My God. Don't scare this wretched child.

*(to the child)*

Don't cry honey, everything will be fine...

KASIM

Just bloody fine... How can it be fine. You have nothing of your own, not counting a few rags obtained under humiliating circumstances. You have no legal, or indeed any sort of protection enjoyed by all those fortunates, the citizens of states who practice peace and its incumbent fruits. Naturally, people will say you are protected under some convention or other. But that is all abstraction, theory...

KASIM

But we ourselves are an abstraction. More so than we can imagine. Not only because of what we have come to now, which seems surreal even to us, but especially because of that which we believed that we were, and could be...

KASIM

I don't understand you, what are you trying to say... Hey, stop with the banging...

KASIM

It's better that way... That makes it easier for both of us...

*He leaves*

.The interior of the third cabin. It is furnished with two bunk beds, a little table and a tiny closet; there is also a small round window. Selma is bustling about the room, helping her grandma settle down on one of the lower beds. Tarik and Namik are scrambling to climb the higher beds.

TARIK

I'll take this one!

NAMIK

No you won't, that's mine!

TARIK

I'm older!

NAMIK

Selma, look at him, he won't let me have the bed...

SELMA

Quiet already! Wait until we are all settled in. We have to fit everything we have into these few square metres.

TARIK

Yes, *all* those things we have...

SELMA

We have what we have, you little rascal, now be quiet and help me out.

GRANDMA

I don't really like anything here. Let's get up and leave this place.

SELMA

*(irate)*

We have nowhere else to go Grandma! They have placed us here and we have to accept it... Please try to understand!

GRANDMA

I'd like to go home now.

SELMA

*(more frustrated)*

What home! What's wrong with you? We no longer have a home! Have you forgotten that they kicked us out of our house! Grandma, please, don't you start causing problems on top of everything. We're lucky to be alive.

GRANDMA

You know, I am not so sure of that.

SELMA

Not sure of what?

GRANDMA

I am not sure we *are* better off alive.

SELMA

Well *I* am sure. I want my two brothers to survive, and you too, since mom and dad can't be here with us. And not only that. I want us to live, to have a future. You, at the very least had your past.

GRANDMA

My dear, what past. This is my third exile. And it's always the same ones chasing us away, killing our relativesour, robbing... my cup is full. I want my home, my street, flowers, my fig trees...

SELMA

Yes, we all know that Grandma – I would rather be back in Trebinje too. But we can't. You know we can't... I only hope that they still need mom and dad for something, so they would spare their lives. Surely they need doctors too. So help me out now. Please, for my sake and that of the children...

*Tarik is pulling things out from various bags. Namik is helping him.  
Grandma sobs quietly.*

SELMA

*(hugging her)*

Grandma, please don't. I now it's hard, but we're all in it together. –We're all miserable, disappointed, humiliated, scared... desperate, d e s p e r a t e!

*Selma breaks down in tears. She sits herself down next to grandma and embraces her.  
Tarik and Namik approach and they cry hugging each other.*

***END of Scene 3***

**Scene 4**

*The ship's kitchen. There are many people about, mainly women, the same prefects and an interpreter. One of the female prefects is saying something to the interpreter, who shrugs her head and smiles.*

**RAJKA**

*(speaks with a Serbian accent)*

My name is Rajka, your interpreter... Good day to you all, your hosts welcome you aboard, and they would like me to acquaint you with some of the rules of conduct here.

*(murmur)*

First, you are requested to respect the regulations of conduct and the house rules. The details of these are available in the brochures that have been left in your cabins. Thus you are not free to walk off the ship whenever you feel like it. You will be supplied on a monthly basis with money for food, and you will be able to purchase it whenever you obtain a permit to leave. Furthermore, please refrain from destroying ship property, and kindly maintain an acceptable level of cleanliness... especially in regards tables, chairs, bathrooms and stoves. Listening to loud music is not allowed, nor is conversing in loud voices. The use of showers is prohibited after eleven o'clock pm... You might have noticed that also resident on this ship are refugees from Vietnam and China here. They will be leaving the ship soon, but until that happens, you are asked not to get into arguments or confrontations. Next, you should draw up a schedule for the use of the kitchen, for, as you can see, we only have three stoves, and there are many more of you... As for the rest, it is all to be found in your brochures, and I strongly recommend that you study them carefully.

**RASEMA**

So, from now on all we have to do is follow orders and instructions. Very interesting... You know something, we know a little more about order and hygiene than either you or they could tell us about... So please leave aside all this talk of cooking, tables, showers and noise. We are far more interested in what is to become of's going to our children. They have to go back to school!

**OTHER VOICES**

That's right, what will happen with their education

**ELVIRA**

Of course, why don't you tell us about that. No one has come here in order to be a passive parasite. We all have children, and what they need most of all is school.

*Rajka translates for the prefects, the very same ones who had been introduced as the hosts. They confer among themselves. Some make calls on their mobile phones. After some time.*

RAJKA

For now organised schooling is out of the question.

RASEMA

But can't our kids at the very least go to Danish schools. They're children... they'll pick up the language quickly...

*The hosts confer again.*

RAJKA

At this moment in time that is impossible. The decision about the children's schooling, as well as that regarding about your status here, must be made by the Danish government, and a solution may even to be reached at the European level. Until that happens, everything will remain as you have just been informed.

SELMA

And how is that? Explain to us! How! Like this, dreadful, and you call that a program! Shame! Shame!

RAJKA

Please do not begin causing problems. The stipulations of your stay here are currently as follows you all have to remain on board. Without a permit, you are not allowed to leave the ship, for no reason whatsoever.

RASEMA

But who's going to stop us! Come on then! Speak...

*Uproar ensues, people exclaim*

*What is this, a prison...*

*some are shouting...*

VOICES

Is this the prolongation of our suffering...

are they going to kill us as well...

Go on, do away with us at once...

*Screaming and confusion... The prefects blow their whistles*

***END of Scene 4***

**Scene 5**

*The ship deck. Strolling along and bumping into each other are the Asian and some of the Bosnian men, refugees. They are whispering, exchanging some little bundles and money. Amer is reading.*

SELMA

What are you reading?

KASIM

Shakespeare.

SELMA

Something rotten in the state of Denmark, no?

KASIM

*(laughing)*

Denmark is a prison... but the world is a prison. It hath many prisons, cells, and towers, and Denmark is one of the worst.

SELMA

At least it is for us right now. But you will concede, prince, that there are worse prisons. I have vacated one recently, and so have you, I imagine...

KASIM

*(extending his hand)*

I am Kasim, and who might you be, lovely lady?

SELMA

Selma, a wretched refugee who is no longer what she once was. Even that is but a distant memory.

KASIM

So then you also heal your heart's abrasions with dreams. Pray tell me who is it that you were precious nymph...

SELMA

Literature student from Trebinje. It seems so long ago that I don't quite know where, how or when. Does that place of my reminisces exist, did it really contain the life that I remember.

KASIM

That which once was, which we remember, no longer is. Gone are those people, houses, and things. Maybe beings identical in shape to those we knew still traverse stroll the streets of our cities. But those who have remained behind are no longer the same, no longer familiar to us. Their shells remain, but the essence is transformed. They have become shadows. Spectres of peculiar content, a sham of what they once had been. And that which they had been perhaps wasn't quite what we took it for. Maybe their current state is in fact their reality, and all our former ideas of them had been but an illusion... There not even the air is as it was. Neither the trees nor the flowers. Your and my departure, exile rather, demolished the image of the world we knew and loved. Many lives have perished, much that was dear and familiar. Now, some other people inhabit the places where you also once lived. If they may be called people indeed. Still you knew them, just as I knew *my* would-be executioners, and until yesterday, even loved them... What a piece of work is man, really!

SELMA

Man is magnificent! What possibilities he has before him, and he still chooses the worst of the lot. For others, that is... but for himself too... What's your story? What are your memories and wounds?

KASIM

Unsightly, distressing, unreal and painful. I often wonder whether all of it really happened. Was I ever really that which I perceive myself to have been, or have I always been thus, as I am now. And could it all have fit into this single, abject life of mine... did that life truly once know happiness and beauty. I do, however remember those days, but the recent, miserable times are fresher in my memory. And I thought that no such thing could ever happen to me. For the illusion of happiness that Fortune has gifted us has clouded our senses and reason... and Fortune is a harlot.

SELMA

A well-meaning harlot. Harlot from necessity, like all of her kind.

KASIM

Shakespeare would say then Judgment Day is upon us.

SELMA

Perhaps we are its witnesses even as we speak.

KASIM

I doubt it. Although our suffering is great, there are, and have been, greater ones, though we might be ignorant of them, or else choose to ignore them, just as others avert their gaze from our misery. It's a vicious circle...



SELMA

The circle of suffering... still, we are at its centre right now... or is it only my imagination... After the life that I used to have, that we used to have, we have been reduced to no more than its crumbs, destitution, degradation, pain and sadness... suffering... and what do is it that remains? ... Love... do we still have the energy or the will for it... revenge... are we capable of it?

KASIM

We remain alone. Thrust upon one another... with or without love, we have to bear the intensity of revelations previously unknown to us... Thus, perhaps even before love, we require passion and lust... they consume us... And revenge? Revenge is a poison. A sweet one, to be sure, or maybe undesirably desirable...

SELMA

Oh, but I would like to take my revenge. For all that has been taken away from me. For all the pain and suffering of those most dear to me. To revenge myself, yes... only how? To kill, I feel would be beyond me. To hate, that I could manage. But what then with all that hate? It is very unproductive. It consumes and doesn't nourish if it's not expressed through .

KASIM

It nourishes wounded souls such as ours. It feeds them artificially. In a way that doesn't prolong life, but renders it bearable. Especially for those who have been made powerless. Those who are no longer masters of their own lives.

SELMA

I would like it however, if love were to possess the power of healing. If it were able to remedy wounds and dilute the pain? If it were capable of changing a given world-view, to offer something better...

KASIM

I don't believe in love. I don't believe in its fruits... but I desire their taste... for I have been starved of all other sustenance...

*(he approaches Selma, as if he were about to kiss her)*

TARIK

Is this fellow from Banja Luka bothering you?

SELMA

*(giving him an angry look)*

Don't be silly – go and find out what your brother's doing...

TARIK

He is with Grandma, it is not him that I am worried about... you are the problem right now...

SELMA

*(angrily)*

You little brat! How dare you! Since when am I your problem?

TARIK

since we have been alone, without mom and dad...

SELMA

That's one more reason to obey me! I am older, don't forget!

*A hubbub ensues on the deck... a fight has broken out between the Chinese and the Bosnians.*

BOSNIANS

You slant-eyed rabble!

What's the problem then, where's the money...

where's the money...

do you understand me...

swindlers, bloody swindlers!

You think you're going to put one over us!

This is not China ayou know! There are no dragons and spells over here...

you think those spirits of yours are going to scare us

I am not afraid of bigger game than you, you'll soon see...

CHINESE

No money!

No money...

evil spirits take away...

BOSNIANS

What do you mean, no money?

You little bastard!

I'll tan your hide...

*they resume fighting A group of Bosnians is standing and quarrelling amongst themselves...*

*One voice exclaims*

Thief, I gave you money so that you could get my brother out of Trebinje...

Liar, you gave me nothing...

you little shit...

you're all criminals...

*fighting... the prefects arrive on the scene and whistles are presently heard.*

***END of Scene 5***

**Scene 6**

*Once again the walls of Elsinore castle. The sentinels are rushing about calling each other's names.*

*Ghost beckons HAMLET*

**HORATIO**

**It beckons you to go away with it,  
As if it some impartment did desire  
To you alone.**

**HAMLET**

**It waves me still.  
Go on; I'll follow thee.**

**MARCELLUS**

**You shall not go, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**Hold off your hands.**

**HORATIO**

**Be ruled; you shall not go.**

**HAMLET**

**My fate cries out,  
And makes each petty artery in this body  
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.  
Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.  
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!  
I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.**

*Exeunt Ghost and HAMLET*

**HAMLET**

**Where wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.**

**GHOST**

**I am thy father's spirit,**

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part  
And each particular hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:  
But this eternal blazon must not be  
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love,  
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

#### HAMLET

To be, or not to be  
that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing, end them? To die  
to sleep;  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
To sleep  
perchance to dream  
ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause  
there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office and the spurns

**That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action.--Soft you now!**

*END of Act I*

ACT II

Scene 1

*The ship's kitchen. There is smoke everywhere. There is gGeneral commotion and noise. Someone is calling out another's name amid the noise of clattering pots and pans.*

RASEMA

Whose pot is this anyway! Get it away from here, it's in my way...

*the lid falls off the pot.*

MELIHA

Leave that alone! Can't you see it's not done yet!

RASEMA

I don't care! The kitchen is not only here for your personal use. You can see how many of us are waiting in line to cook something!...

*more women join the altercation, their voices mingle with each other, so that only broken off bits of sentences are heard...*

WOMEN'S VOICES

what do *you* want...

I've been waiting for over an hour...

none of my business...

who put *you* in charge here...

so you're a lady and we're animals...

well, this is not Banja Luka...

you boor...

you people from Trebinje are worse than the *chetniks*...

fuck you and your *chetniks*...

*a fight nearly breaks out... the prefects intervene once again.*

RAJKA

Enough of this! The hosts want you to know that they will no longer tolerate scenes like this...

RASEMA

Who asked you anything, you *chetnik* lout! Who are you to threaten us... and who placed you here to translate for us...

*more voices are heard*

That's right...

RASEMA

*(continues)*

And god only knows what it is that you are translating. I bet you're lying and telling us only what is to our detriment... and what could they do to us anyway? Throw us into the sea... to the sharks... well they don't have to go that far, there are enough sharks here...

VOICES

That's right...

She's right!

*RAJKA confers with the prefects.*

RAJKA

We will not stand for this, you will all answer and...

RASEMA

*(throwing the pot)*

What! Who am I going to answer to! Fuck you and your *chetnik* mother... to you, to the United Nations... or maybe to your bearded brotherhood. Think again! I am not afraid of anyone! No one, do you understand...

That's right...

Tell it to her!

*whistles, shouting and swearing...*

***END of Scene 1***



**Scene 2**

*ELVIRA's cabin. It's a mess. The floor is strewn with biscuit crackerboxes, chocolate wrappers, empty bags of crisps etc. ELVIRA is watching television and eating cookies from one of the boxes. RASEMA walks in.*

RASEMA

This is becoming unbearable. I am going to go crazy... just the way that they are treating us... But they have to be working with the *chetniks*. Guaranteed! And what made them force us to live with those, those... How rude and impudent those women from Banja Luka are, especially that Mehila...

ELVIRA

*(not taking her eyes off the TV screen)*

Ummm...

RASEMA

Hey you! stop staring at that screen and gorging...P just look at yourself. You're as fat as a sow... you keep eating that junk and staring at the television... Are you listening to me?

ELVIRA

Ahh, what...

RASEMA

But you've gone overboard now... I'm going to get angry with you, and then you *will* be completely alone... at least look after these children of yours, if you insist on neglecting yourself...

ELVIRA

*(finally turning to RASEMA)*

I am sorry, what did you say?

RASEMA

*(angrily)*

Nothing, only that you too could help out in some way with the school which we have started here for the children. Surely you haven't forgotten everything that you had been in your previous life!... I am teaching the kids Maths and Physics. You could maybe move that fat ass of yours and teach them Biology and Chemistry.

ELVIRA

*(staring at the screen again)*

Oh, I don't know if I would be able to do that... It's been a while since I taught... I've forgotten much of it... and you know how things change.

RASEMA

Everything changes! But not the basics, never. Of course you could teach... We were high school teachers for so many years... don't you remember...

*Elvira resumes watching television...*

What is it that you are watching anyway?...

*she glances angrily at the screen.*

ELVIRA

A Mexican series... she is a beautiful servant girl working for wealthy landowners... she is actually the master's daughter, but she doesn't know it yet. Neither does the master himself, who fancies her. She has also caught the eye of her brother, who is likewise unaware that she is his sister. While the mistress's sister, who is in point of fact his mother has taken a liking to him, and besieges him incessantly. She is also ignorant of their true relationship since they took her child away from her when he was little... here, look... she has succeeded, she's got him into bed...

RASEMA

But what are you blabbing about... what is that, a Greek tragedy Oedipus and Jocasta...

ELVIRA

*(distractedly)*

No, no, a Mexican soap, only there is incest too... look, that priest is actually a woman who has the hots for that other priest, the half-brother of the master's daughter, and they are all immeasurably unhappy, one could just cry...

RASEMA

Cry indeed! What is she to you or you to her that you should cry! Look at yourself, the rest of us around you. Now *there's* a reason to cry...

ELVIRA

I know, I know! But I have no more tears for us. These cheap illusions are all that keeps me going... Bizarre love triangles and incestual complications... cheap stories for cheap emotions...

RASEMA

*(very angry, pulls the TV plug out of the socket)*

Fuck you and your incestual bastards... Have you lost your mind... Wake up. take a good look around you... Can you see where and what we are... How dearly we have paid for all this... Do you see our suffering, your children, husband... Do you see me. I am all alone with the children. Ivan has been murdered and who knows where his grave is –

ELVIRA

*(desperately)*

I see it, I see it... And I envy you! Where do you get the strength for all that. I am struggling not to go mad because of this situation. I see my life, which has in fact turned into an anti-life, so to speak, it has fallen apart. I see an unbearable reality... I cannot bear it. This is the last illusion that I can afford myself, and which I need in order to keep my sanity. I watch these cheap dramas, I listen to the Spanish, which I had never learnt well enough and I think of my Italian, all the hard work and the beautiful moments I had enjoyed while learning it. I only have this, and the food, for KENAN hardly sees me anyway... or he else sees me as no more than a bundle of meat...

RASEMA

You're the only one to blame for that! How else is he supposed to see you... you sit here in this dark little cabin, you stare at the television, gorge on junk, surrounded by piles of wastepaper... what do you expect...

ELVIRA

I expect a little understanding. I expect my husband to love me, to understand me. I *don't* expect to be repulsive to him...

*(crying).*

Do you know how long it's been since he kissed me; approached me as a woman, not to mention anything further...

RASEMA

I totally understand you, I am on your side. But don't expect too much. You can see the situation we're in. Where we find ourselves. And how could you make love? There are four of you in the cabin. You, Kenan and two children... Thank god they put grandpa in another cabin... How can you make love under those circumstances?

ELVIRA

*(sniffling)*

Those who are willing always find a way. Just look at the people in the neighbouring cabin...

RASEMA

what?! What neighbouring cabin? But that is Meliha with her husband's brother, and her son and her sister-in-law's child...

ELVIRA

I don't know how, but all I hear is lustful screams...

RASEMA

But who for goodness sake?...

ELVIRA

Meliha and Kasim, I guess, you should hear how passionate they are...

RASEMA

I knew it, that bitch. And with all her airs. Slut. I knew it. And you know what, I believe in the rumours about her involvement, along with Kasim, in her husband's detention in the camp... Just look at her...

ELVIRA

You don't know that. You can't go around accusing the woman just like that...

RASEMA

I can and I will. Her own son is reserved with her. He seems nice enough. He's been spending a lot of time with our Selma from Trebinje. He's been avoiding his mother and uncle,...

ELVIRA

Who knows what is going on there. Kasim is a little strange. Neither Kenan nor Ejub seem to like him... But she's not so bad...

RASEMA

You don't know the half of it. You don't run into her every day... What, at best you've seen her and talked with her two-three times... I see her every day... She's a real bitch... Bitch... Just you look at her. Slut... she thinks the world revolves around her... Oh... She's so high and mighty, and I am a lout... Well no longer I'll be to it...

*END of Scene 2*

**Scene 3**

*The next cabin along which is occupied by Meliha and Kasim. They had been making love on one of the lower bunks. The bed is narrow, and the space between the lower and upper bunk is so small that Kasim keeps hitting his head on it.*

KASIM

Ouch, fucking bed...

*Meliha straightens herself up, lifts up her dress and holds her head in her hands. Kasim tries to push her back down, but she shrugs him off.*

MELIHA

Enough, stop it!

KASIM

What for? What's got into you?

MELIHA

What's got into me? What do you think?

KASIM

I don't know, you tell me... It's not like I raped you or anything... what's the problem now! You admitted yourself that you were having fun and that you'd never had better sex...

*(sarcastically)...*

...not even with your dear husband...

MELIHA

*(gets up nervously)*

Stop it, stop it! You know I love Enes. You know everything that happened, you know...

KASIM

That's right, but do you know! Why did you agree to all this then? I certainly didn't force you.

MELIHA

Oh, how you twist things around. You didn't force me, but you wouldn't let me be. After Enes and Visnja were led off to the camp, you happened to be there to console me... to offer your services...

KASIM

And you accepted it all, why?... What for, if you didn't desire it

MELIHA

Because I was weak and afraid, lost, I don't know what... and you, you were there with care and consoling words.

KASIM

*(sits on the bed and lights a cigarette)*

There was far more than just words of caring there... Don't you remember the first time I kissed you. You were only too eager for more... Have you forgotten the first time we made love? You enjoyed it as no other woman I have ever been with... You gave yourself and clutched at me as if you were drowning...

MELIHA

That's right, drowning. You were the straw at which I clutched desperately. That's precisely it. A lighthouse in the darkness that surrounded me at the time and threatened to devour me... and all I needed was to hold on to something, someone... you were the nearest, and you were offering yourself... My God... I am afraid, afraid...

KASIM

*(stroking her back)*

But surely it was more than that, come now, be honest with me and with yourself... You enjoyed yourself with me, like with no one before. Those are your words. In the beginning you even demanded a proximity with me such as I hadn't even thought possible myself.

MELIHA

*(eluding his grasp and lighting a cigarette)*

You misunderstood everything...

KASIM

What, for example? The fact that you wanted me, and gave yourself like a whore...

MELIHA

*(slaps him)*

Lout! How you've turned things inside out! You don't think I see what you are driving at! To make me responsible for everything...

KASIM

*(grabs hold of her hand)*

Never do that again... shameless slut...

MEIHA

Let go of me! Your presence has separated me from my son. You think he doesn't see what's going on...

KASIM

Don't mention that impudent and conceited know-it-all. He never liked me. And he holds me responsible for Enes's arrest... And now this thing with you. He was glad of the opportunity to hate me even more and blame me for everything. For my brother's arrest, your depression, his exile and failure... Maybe in his opinion I am also to blame for the aggression on Bosnia...

MELIHA

First of all, don't insult my son like that. He is the only bright spot in my life. Secondly, he may even be right in regards to you... All this is sick, unhealthy... Don't you see how people look at us... Can't you see how Kasim suffers and suspects... And he's right. Oh, my son how unhappy he must be...

*(clutches her head),*

I only hope he'll understand... I hope he finds the love and the faith he has lost... Oh, God willing that he should find at least a slice of happiness and joy in the arms of that beautiful girl from Trebinje... How could I let this happen! How? I have lost my son... the only person who loves me disinterestedly... Let me be, let me be, you disgust me...

KASIM

*(swings his arm as if he were about to hit her, and then caresses her face and breasts)*

I disgust you... I would hardly say so... No, no, this lovely face doesn't deserve blows... these gorgeous breasts for which I sighed even before you married my brother, they demand only caresses... Caresses that only I can offer you... your body after which all of Banja Luka pined it needs and seeks my hands... my touches and my tenderness... because it is passionate... fiery... unique...

MELIHA

*(moving away, though unconvincingly)*

Stop it, stop it please... Ohhh

*The stage lights are dimmed accompanied by passionate sighs.*

***END of Scene 3***

**Scene 4**

*The main hall of Elsinore castle. A mass of people are assembled. A band of harlequins is miming and performing acrobatics. The king and queen are seated on the throne holding hands. A few steps below, closer to the audience and centre stage, Hamlet and Ophelia are seated next to each other.*

**HAMLET**

**Ha, ha! are you honest?**

**OPHELIA**

**My lord?**

**HAMLET**

**Are you fair?**

**OPHELIA**

**What means your lordship?**

**HAMLET**

**That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.**

**OPHELIA**

**Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?**

**HAMLET**

**Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness  
this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.**

**OPHELIA**

**Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.**

**HAMLET**

**You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it.**



**I loved you not.**

**OPHELIA**

**I was the more deceived.**

**HAMLET**

**Get thee to a nunnery  
why wouldst thou be a  
breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest;  
but yet I could accuse me of such things that it  
were better my mother had not borne me  
I am very  
proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at  
my beck than I have thoughts to put them in,  
imagination to give them shape, or time to act them  
in. What should such fellows as I do crawling  
between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves,  
all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.**

**HAMLET**

**If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for  
thy dowry  
be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as  
snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a  
nunnery, go  
farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs  
marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough  
what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go,  
and quickly too. Farewell.**

**OPHELIA**

**O heavenly powers, restore him!**

**HAMLET**

**I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you  
make yourselves  
another  
you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and  
nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness  
your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath  
made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages:  
those that are married already, all but one, shall  
live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a**

**nunnery, go.**

*Harlequins perform somersaults and cartwheels in the space  
in front of the throne.*

*Exit*

**HAMLET**

**Lady, shall I lie in your lap?**

*Lying down at OPHELIA's feet*

**OPHELIA**

**No, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**I mean, my head upon your lap?**

**OPHELIA**

**Ay, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**Do you think I meant country matters?**

**OPHELIA**

**I think nothing, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.**

**OPHELIA**

**What is, my lord?**

**HAMLET**

**Nothing.**

**OPHELIA**

**You are merry, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**Who, I?**

**OPHELIA**

**Ay, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do  
but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my  
mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.**

**OPHELIA**

**Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.**

**HAMLET**

**So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for  
I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two  
months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's  
hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half  
a year  
but, by'r lady, he must build churches,  
then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with  
the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is 'For, O, for, O,  
the hobby-horse is forgot.'**

*The actors become louder, and Hamlet gets up from his place to clap.*

**HAMLET**

**Let us hear now what the players have to tell us!**

*The first and second player cough and begin reciting melodramatically.*

**FIRST PLAYER**

**Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round  
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground,  
And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd sheen  
About the world have times twelve thirties been,  
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands  
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.**

**SECOND PLAYER**

**So many journeys may the sun and moon  
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!  
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,  
So far from cheer and from your former state,**

That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,  
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:  
For women's fear and love holds quantity;  
In neither aught, or in extremity.  
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;  
And as my love is sized, my fear is so:  
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;  
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

**FIRST PLAYER**

'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;  
My operant powers their functions leave to do:  
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,  
Honour'd, beloved; and haply one as kind  
For husband shalt thou--

**SECOND PLAYER**

O, confound the rest!  
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:  
In second husband let me be accurst!  
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

**HAMLET**

*[Aside]* Wormwood, wormwood.

**SECOND PLAYER**

The instances that second marriage move  
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:  
A second time I kill my husband dead,  
When second husband kisses me in bed.

**PLAYER KING**

I do believe you think what now you speak;  
But what we do determine oft we break.  
Purpose is but the slave to memory,  
Of violent birth, but poor validity;  
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree;  
But fall, unshaken, when they mellow be.  
Most necessary 'tis that we forget  
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:  
What to ourselves in passion we propose,  
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

The violence of either grief or joy  
Their own enactures with themselves destroy:  
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;  
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.  
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange  
That even our loves should with our fortunes change;  
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,  
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.  
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies;  
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies.  
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;  
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,  
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,  
Directly seasons him his enemy.  
But, orderly to end where I begun,  
Our wills and fates do so contrary run  
That our devices still are overthrown;  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:  
So think thou wilt no second husband wed;  
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

**PLAYER QUEEN**

Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!  
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!  
To desperation turn my trust and hope!  
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope!  
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy  
Meet what I would have well and it destroy!  
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,  
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

*A player comes in, takes off his crown, kisses it,  
pours poison into the Player King's ear, and exit.*

**OPHELIA**

The king rises.

**HAMLET**

What, frightened with false fire!

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

How fares my lord?

**LORD POLONIUS**

**Give o'er the play.**

*END of Scene 4*

**Scene 5**

*SELMA and KASIM are sitting on the ship's deck. They are gazing at the sea...*

SELMA

What do you think, will this shabby boat be the end of us?

KASIM

*(absentmindedly)*

What?

SELMA

I was asking... never mind. What are you thinking about?

KASIM

About everything. About what I had been, and could still have been. About all that I had done and still wanted to do, about life as it had been and as it still could have been...

SELMA

So, can it still be?

KASIM

Such as we had got to know it and had led it, no. Never again...

SELMA

*(nervously)*

So what then can be...

KASIM

How do I know... Come on, let's end this fortune-telling séance...

SELMA

*(merrily)*

Let's. Let's direct our thoughts back to the happy moments. Let's imagine the times when we were happiest... and, even though we had never met in our previous lives, let's pretend we had.

KASIM

How do you mean that?

SELMA

*(merrily)*

For example, in Trebinje I really had some wonderful summer days. It was warm. My garden was full of flowers. There was even a fig tree. It was so fruitful that we had to invite friends over in order to pluck it all... So let's imagine that you came over to pick the figs...

KASIM

*(closes his eyes)*

Hm, wait a moment so I can concentrate... yes, I can see it... Good, come on...

SELMA

*(exhilarated)*

Hey, mom, mom... look who's here... Kasim from Banja Luka... Welcome to my White Castle. Sit here in the shade. How was your trip? Are you tired?

KASIM

Everything went well, but these heat waves of yours... How hot it is! It feels as if my head will explode. The air is dancing in front of my eyes, and my gaze is clouded. How can you stand this?

SELMA

just listen to him, the sissy. Well, then, young gentleman, we cool down in the bathroom, or at the seaside... we drink water and eat fruit...

KASIM

Yes, the sea! That is one thing I envy you. To be so close to the sea, but not quite next to it.

SELMA

See, it is nice to live here after all... If you want, after you have rested for a while, we can go straight to the seaside, or let's go this very evening to Dubrovnik. They will be presenting 'Hamlet' at the Summer Games.

KASIM

Wonderful, I am just in the mood for that play.

SELMA

So this evening it is, until then, let's take walk around town... I'll show you the most beautiful plane trees in the world...

KASIM

Wait a little... forget the plane trees in this heat. Better if you offer me some of these tasty figs.



SELMA

With pleasure. Only, you will have to pick them yourself.

KASIM

The pleasure's all mine...

SELMA

Oh, do be careful, the branches are slippery... you could fall.

KASIM

Don't worry, I am quite the expert. You'll see when you come to visit me in Banja Luka. In my garden, next to the River Vrbas, there are many fruits. Cherries, plums...

SELMA

I don't like plums.

KASIM

You don't have to eat them...

SELMA

Fine... you won't mind if I leave you on your own for a short while. I have to shower and to decide what I am going to wear tonight.

KASIM

Well, young lady, I hope you won't leave me for too long among these flowers and scents... the bees could devour me...

SELMA

Don't worry, I'll be quick... here I come...

KASIM

You look wonderful...

SELMA

You like it... don't you think the dress is too low-cut?

KASIM

Not at all. Just as it should be. Enough to tickle the imagination, and give one a sense of what a beautiful and perfect body the owner of that dress must possess.

SELMA

You flatterer... you and your poetical observations...

KASIM

Could I have any other sort when I am in your company, in these incredible surroundings... with the most beautiful of all flowers... mmm, what is that scent...

SELMA

You like it?...

KASIM

Like it? It's enchanting me... mmm

SELMA

*(wriggling)*

No... Not here... Kasim... my parents...

KASIM

What about your parents... I only want to kiss you, to inhale the scent of your body... graze your skin...

SELMA

You know what, let's go to my room. I want to show you my books... records...

KASIM

Great, show me yourself *(he comes closer and kisses Selma)*

SELMA

Slow down, what's ...

KASIM

*(opens his eyes)*

Why did you wake me up... to dream, to dream, perchance to sleep... well let's go to Dubrovnik already. And something else, after the play I want you to come to Banja Luka with me.

SELMA

Agreed, if you will let me drive too. Also that we will stop over in Mostar and Pocitelj on the way.

KASIM

Your wish is my command...

SELMA

So, what did you think of the play... I always want and expect more...

KASIM

I would say much the same thing. I always come to the same conclusion that all the best things are written in the play itself.

SELMA

Still, Ophelia is exceptional. Beautiful, delicate...

KASIM

Such as no one, not even Hamlet really deserves...

SELMA

Be careful so you don't miss the Mostar exit... Ugh, what a crowd.

KASIM

That's why I can't stand Mostar in the Summer. You can't see the city for the crowds and the heat.

SELMA

then we won't detain ourselves here. Let's continue on for Pocitelj.

KASIM

And what else is apart from rocks and a brilliant beauty?

SELMA

My best friend, Maurizia, an Italian painter, and her boyfriend are in the Pocitelj colony – I promised to pay them a visit.

KASIM

Ok then,,,

SELMA

So? How do you like my friends?

KASIM

Almost as much as you...

SELMA

Isn't it nice of them to invite us over to Padua? Are we going to take them up on that?

KASIM

And why not... When would you like to go?

SELMA

In September. It's not too hot, but still warm enough and beautiful.

KASIM

September it is then... And until then – straight for Banja Luka.

SELMA

Banja Luka, Banja Luka! What's so great there...

KASIM

quite a few things in fact. The River Vrbas, the greenery... Ferhadija (Mosque)... Kastel...

SELMA

Sounds a lot like Trebinje!

KASIM

Only Banja Luka is even prettier.

SELMA

We shall see about that... Hey, slow down, don't drive that fast...

KASIM

Here we are, that's my house... Do you like it?

SELMA

It's beautiful.

KASIM

You see, this fruit-orchard is mine... all the way up to the river... Come and meet my parents...

SELMA

I'm a little scared.

KASIM

Come on, I could be with your parents...

SELMA

That's different...

KASIM

I don't understand...Come on

SELMA

What's the rush... let's see the river first...

KASIM

Ok, as you wish...

SELMA

Ah... the water is so cold...

KASIM

Be careful of the whirlpools, they might carry you away...

SELMA

Uh, hold on to me!...

*Amer puts both of his arms around her waist and they kiss...*

***END of Scene 5***

**Scene 6**

*People are gathering in groups on the deck. A storm is brewing, with wind and rain.*

MELIHA

Can't anything be done to stop this ship from rocking?

RASEMA

You don't say! And what do you suggest should be done... Can't you see it's a storm...

ELVIRA

This is unbearable. We'll flip over.

KENAN

Don't be silly! Can't you see that we're anchored in a harbour?

KASIM

But the wind is too strong... It can turn the ship upside down...

*more voices join in it can!*

*no, it can't...*

KENAN

Hold on a minute... Don't panic... ere, my father will leave the ship and get help.

KASIM

Why your father? Why not me?...

KENAN

Because I say so! You're not going to be saving your ass again... Ejub is still fit enough and quite handy. He won't be bowled over by the wind. The rest of us should stay on board in case something happens...

That's right!

...

Quick, find some ropes or something similar.  
We have to tie ourselves to something strong...  
Look out for the children...  
Hurry up Ejub...

*the wind rises to a howl, the women scream.*

MELIHA

Dear God, will this ship be the end of us?

RASEMA

Stop complaining for once and give us a hand here...

SELMA

Kasim, where are you?

KASIM

I am right here, give me your hand...

SELMA

Right away, let me just see where my brothers are, and Grandma...

KASIM

Don't worry, they are with the others.

SELMA

Come to me...

KASIM

I am right here...

*A crash. The ship begins drifting out towards the open sea... It is being pounded by the waves and the wind...*

MELIHA

But we are sailing... Sailing...

***END of Scene 6***

**Scene 7**

*Daytime. Calm weather. At the place where the ship had been moored only the anchor and a few scattered planks remain Ejub is standing on the shore with a group of Danes, policemen and prefects.*

**PREFECT I**

Incredible! How is this possible!

**PREFECT II**

I said we should have checked the moorings...

**PREFECT I**

But who could have imagined something like this happening...

*a group of policemen and coast guardsmen approaches.*

– Is there any news?

**POLICEMAN I**

Nothing! It's as if they'd vanished into thin air... We've sent out two choppers. They went as far as Sweden. Nothing. We've also sent three Coast Guard speedboats, and a patrol ship...

*Rajka translates for the dumbstruck Ejub.*

**EJUB**

But what are they going to do? Do something! My son is there, my grandchildren... women, children... You have to do something...

**RAJKA**

Please remain calm.

**EJUB**

*(in desperation)*

How can I be calm... How! Oh, God, after all we've been through, now this! Everything is stacked against us, everything!

**RAJKA**

*(speaking to the Policeman)*



Is there any hope for them?

POLICEMAN

Unfortunately not. We've tried everything. The search has lasted for two days already, and there is nothing else we can do...

RAJKA

So are you going to give up?

POLICEMAN

I am afraid we will have to... but please don't tell the old man. We really don't have any more time for searching...

EJUB

What are they saying?

RAJKA

They are still waiting for some reports... Why don't you go and have some tea? I will let you know as soon as there is some news...

EJUB

But what bugger the tea... leave me alone. Can't you see what has happened... can't you see... Oh, God... help, help...

RAJKA

He won't leave.

POLICEMAN

IN that case let him stay here on his own. We have to get going.

RAJKA

Will you stay here then?

EJUB

Damn right I will... and so should they... they're not giving up, are they... but of course, it makes sense, ! they were just waiting for something like this to happen... to rid themselves of irunwanted and undesirable visitors.

POLICEMAN

Let's go then. Nothing else for us to do here...

*They all leave. Ejub is left alone on the shore and stares desperately towards the open sea.*

*END of Scene 7*

**Scene 8**

*Silence. Thick fog. The ship can barely be seen, and it's impossible to see whether it's at sea or run aground. The people on the ship are dazed, moving and gazing slowly about.*

MELIHA

How cold it is! Is the storm over?

KASIM

I hope so... I can't hear anything... listen...

MELIHA

What? Silence...

ELVIRA

Is it possible that we've hit upon some land?

KENAN

*(tossing a pebble overboard)*

I can't hear a sound... we're not on water...

RASEMA

Nor on land...

SELMA

What happened, where are we?

KASIM

I don't know. Are you Ok?

SELMA

I am not sure... Oh, God where are others?

KASIM

They're all here. Don't worry. I saw your brothers and Grandma. My mother is there too...

SELMA

*(feeling her body with her hands)*

Are we alive?

KASIM

*(felling himself in turn)*  
I don't know. I really don't know...

SELMA  
What if we're not, What if...

KASIM  
*(hugging her)*  
At least we are together... you, me, and the others... you and I...

SELMA  
You think that means something...

KASIM  
Nothing has any meaning, except that you are surrounded by those who love you, who are your friends, or in any case not your enemies...

SELMA  
And that is all!

KASIM  
More doesn't exist – or at least it is not attainable for us...

SELMA  
And what if we are no longer alive... what then?

KASIM  
I guess we'll find out one way or another...

*The ghost of Hamlet's father is barely visible through the fog, strolling on the scaffolding above the ship.*

**Curtain**