

Basa Janikashvili

ANGRY BIRD

Two-act play

Characters:

Ghio - a 16-year old boy

Khatuna - a 16-year old girl

Toma - Ghio's father

Hassan - Khatuna's father

Nora - Khatuna's mother

Scene One

Evening. KHATUNA's home. The living room. Like the majority of other houses in the village, the room is cluttered with numerous unnecessary objects and pieces of furniture. There are a table, sofa, chairs, kitchen unit in one corner. KHATUNA is reading a book. NORA is knitting. HASSAN is writing in his little book. He has a calculator close at hand.

KHATUNA: Dad, what's our god like?

HASSAN [*lifting his head from his work*]: That's something new.

NORA: What kind of question is that, girl?

KHATUNA: I'm just curious. I've never seen him.

HASSAN [*attempting to go back to his work*]: No one has seen God, sweetie.

NORA: He's kind.

KHATUNA: If you haven't seen him, how do you know he's kind?

HASSAN: We know it judging from His deeds. They are always kind.

NORA: And He is fair and just.

KHATUNA: Yes but what's he like?

NORA [*abandoning her knitting*]: What do you mean? What kind of questions are these?

HASSAN [*looking at KHATUNA closely*]: Did the village people tell you something?

KHATUNA: No, but I keep hearing that our god isn't like the Christians' god, so I got curious.

HASSAN: Ask them about their god. Actually, I've already told you that our God is kind and if not for Him, there wouldn't be any of us – neither you nor your mum nor me. There would be nothing in this world, just darkness and emptiness.

NORA: If you're really interested, your dad can take you to the mullah. He'll be able to answer all your questions better than us.

KHATUNA: They say our mullah likes money and drinking.

HASSAN: It's the Christians that say so. Why listen to them?

NORA [*putting her knitting on the table*]: It's late. Time to go to bed... And stop asking stupid questions.

KHATUNA: Who has seen the god?

HASSAN: Our prophet Muhammad.

NORA: He heard the voice of God and wrote Quran, the holy book. It's not a bad idea if you started to read it.

KHATUNA: Has anyone else except Muhammad seen him?

HASSAN: What's wrong with you, girl?

KHATUNA: Great reaction. [*Sarcastically*.] And you want me to believe in god? [*Pause*.] I'd like to see him. I'd like to know if he's tall or short, old or what.

NORA: Off to bed!

KHATUNA: But why do the Christians know what their god looks like and how come we don't?

HASSAN: Our religion forbids painting God.

KHATUNA: But what harm can come out of it? If we paint him, we know what he looks like. For instance, I'm really curious.

NORA: You've fallen under some very bad influence.

HASSAN: Had it been necessary to paint Him, your ancestors would've done so.

KHATUNA: But the Christians painted theirs! Was any harm done? Isn't it better if we also have him painted?

NORA: Instead of painting him, His prophet wrote the book.

KHATUNA: The Christians have got a book too.

HASSAN: Their so-called book wasn't inspired by God as opposed to our Quran. Their book is about their prophets and their lives. God has nothing to do with it.

KHATUNA: Oh, so they found an easy way out? Much wiser than the Muslims. Isn't it easier to paint a picture?

NORA: Stop it, now!

KHATUNA: Is Muhammad a messenger or a prophet?

HASSAN [*losing patience*]: While he was alive, Muhammad was called a prophet because he used to preach the God's word, was inspired by God. Later he was called the

messenger. Muhammad is our God's last prophet. But the Christians have made their apostle a god. Now it's up to you to decide which of us has got a genuine god.

KHATUNA: I don't get it. If Christ and Muhammad are both messengers, doesn't it mean we've got one god?

NORA: Khatuna!

KHATUNA: Were there other messengers before Muhammad? Why didn't they take his photo or made a video? Why didn't anyone think of it? Or was the one who filmed him killed?

HASSAN: There was neither video nor computer at the time, girl. People could only write in those days.

KHATUNA: Couldn't they paint? Someone could have painted him, no? Or even Muhammad could have painted our god. Especially if he was the only one who'd seen him. Was it hard to think of that?

HASSAN: Stop the blasphemy! God will punish you.

KHATUNA: I'm going to paint his picture. It won't be a sin, will it?

NORA: I'll take you to the mullah and he'll explain things to you.

HASSAN: The Christians have got three gods while we've got only one.

KHATUNA: I was told at school that we and the Christians have got one god.

HASSAN: How's that? What's that nonsense?

KHATUNA: I don't know, but that's I've been told. Also that Christ is one of the saints for the Muslims. If that's true, why do we fight the Christians?

HASSAN: Because they don't allow us to pray.

KHATUNA: Why? They pray as they wish, don't they?

HASSAN: That's the problem – you just don't know. But want to paint God.

KHATUNA: I don't see any harm.

NORA: Let's go to bed, Khatuna.

[KHATUNA *rises and follows* NORA. HASSAN *is left alone. Soon* NORA *returns.*]

HASSAN: I could hardly keep myself in check.

NORA: Good you managed to keep calm. She'd get more argumentative if you were to start a row.

HASSAN: Possibly I should have done that. If anyone had overheard her questions, I'm not sure what would've happened. That crap about pictures and video...

NORA: Please, don't make it worse. I'm nervous as it is. You didn't know much at her age, did you?

HASSAN: I didn't know what? That the God's picture couldn't have been taken in the seventh century? I didn't know that?

NORA: Don't yell! The neighbours might hear you. [*She closes the window.*]

HASSAN: I'll take her to the mullah.

NORA: First we need to talk to him, so that he explains properly without getting angry at her questions. Her inquisitiveness is pretty typical for her age.

HASSAN: At her age girls didn't go to school anymore. They used to have babies. And she asks why his picture wasn't taken. If she asks that question anywhere else, it'll be awfully embarrassing for me.

NORA: Do you want tea?

HASSAN [*looking at the clock on the wall*]: It's late. I need to get to work in the morning.

NORA: The bed's made. Go, lie down and I'll tidy up here.

HASSAN: If we aren't allowed to pray tomorrow, blood may spill.

NORA: Don't say terrible things.

HASSAN: Did you hear what they called us?

NORA: So what? Let it go in one ear and out the other.

HASSAN: And who's the instigator? Toma.

NORA: You used to be best friends once.

HASSAN: I think I'll hit the bed...

[HASSAN *goes out*. NORA *tidies the room*. *Fade out.*]

Scene Two

GHIO is in the back yard of the village administrative building. He is playing on his tablet. Enter KHATUNA.

KHATUNA: Hi, Ghio! I made it, finally.

GHIO: Here you are, Khatuna! I waited for you but then started the game.

KHATUNA: My parents fell asleep only now. What's the game? [*She sits next to him.*]

GHIO: The Angry Bird.

KHATUNA: Can I play too?

GHIO: Just a sec. I'll get through this level and then you can try.

KHATUNA: How do you play it?

GHIO: Look, just pull here and shoot the bird. Like this. Can you see?

KHATUNA: Do you have to demolish the wooden structure?

GHIO [*pointing at the screen*]: Yea. Look!

KHATUNA: Ah, if only Dad had this bird! He'd destroy the Christians' houses.

GHIO: And if my dad had it!

[*Both laugh.*]

KHATUNA: Don't show him or he'll think of something.

GHIO: No way! If he knew I've got the tablet, he wouldn't let me be. He'd go: 'How come you've got it? Did you steal it? Let's sell it...'

KHATUNA: Did you really steal it? [GHIO *stops playing and stares at KHATUNA.*] Enough! My turn. [*She takes the tablet.*] Do I push here?

GHIO: Yea and then let go. Like this.

KHATUNA: See, I'm good at it!

[*They play for some time.*]

GHIO: Today Dad said if the Wahhabis return on Saturday, he's going to kill them.

KHATUNA [*playing*]: See, I'm through the level!

GHIO: Khatuna, is your dad a Wahhabi by any chance?

KHATUNA: What's that?

GHIO: I'm not sure, but Dad says they're terrorists. Managed to get the whole village under their influence.

KHATUNA [*playing*]: Yea, Dad's gone insane.

GHIO: Is he a terrorist?

KHATUNA: No.

GHIO: How do you know?

KHATUNA: I don't.

GHIO: When you get home, have a look if he's got any weapons. What if he's preparing a terrorist attack and plans to blow up the entire village?

KHATUNA: I'll do that. It'd be a good idea if he blew up the place.

GHIO: Do you think he could begin with our school?

KHATUNA: I'll tell him. Know what I've just thought about? [*She doesn't continue, intent on the game.*]

GHIO [*waits for her to continue; KHATUNA is playing; after a pause*]: You know, you can have a look if he's got any grenades. We can take them, blow up the school and blame it on them.

KHATUNA [*stops playing; looks at GHIO*]: Great idea!

GHIO: Then your dad will be arrested and he'll leave us alone.

KHATUNA: I see. [*She resumes the game.*]

GHIO: Make sure you search the house. Or else, if the school starts, it'll be too late. [*Loudly.*]
Do you hear me?

KHATUNA: Don't shout. I can hear you.

GHIO: Let me play too.

KHATUNA [*not giving him the tablet*]: You played before I came, didn't you?

GHIO: I came a minute before you.

KHATUNA: Don't lie.

GHIO: Let me play.

KHATUNA: I've thought of something. [*She takes time being engrossed in the game.*]

GHIO [*looking at the screen*]: Pull again.

KHATUNA: If I find Dad's grenades, I'll tell you what we should do: we've got to blow up the school and our house.

GHIO: Are you out of your mind?

KHATUNA: No, I'm not. Dad will get blamed for the school and your dad for our house.

GHIO: How's that?

KHATUNA: We can hide some grenades in your place too.

GHIO: But the Christians aren't terrorists.

KHATUNA: I know, but it's going to be an exception.

[*They laugh.*]

GHIO: What if my dad gets blamed for the school too?

KHATUNA [*stops playing*]: Listen, don't you know what's going on in the village?

GHIO: What's going on?

KHATUNA: Your dad and the priest are fighting the Muslims.

GHIO: I'm aware of that. Tell me something really new.

KHATUNA: What else do you want?

GHIO: Why would your dad blow the school?

KHATUNA: Because he's a terrorist.

GHIO: And why would my dad blow your dad's house?

KHATUNA: Because my dad's a terrorist. Is it hard to guess that much?

GHIO: Okay. Give me the tablet. [*He takes it forcefully. He begins to play.*]

KHATUNA: The main thing is my dad has got to be a terrorist.

[*Fade out.*]

Scene Three

GHIO's house. TOMA, *his father, is in the kitchen. Enter GHIO.*

GHIO [*not expecting to see his father*]: Still awake?

TOMA: What are you doing every evening at the town hall?

GHIO [*taking time to think of an answer*]: The free internet.

TOMA: Free what?

GHIO: The internet.

TOMA: And why do you need free internet?

GHIO: We're studying, Dad. There are books in the internet which we haven't got here. So we read them there.

TOMA: You and that Wahhabi offspring?

GHIO: Not only her. Other classmates come too.

TOMA: Careful with that girl. Every Muslim is raised by the same whore.

GHIO: Khatuna isn't a Muslim.

TOMA: But her parents are, no? And she hasn't turned to Christianity, has she?

GHIO: She doesn't believe in god.

TOMA: Neither did I when I was your age.

GHIO: That's why Hassan and you were buddies?

TOMA: He's never been my buddy. When he and the others settled here, I helped him. He had no money at all. He had nothing.

GHIO: Yea, I know. Victims of the landslide.

TOMA: That landslide must've been the God's doing, a warning. There's no heaven for the Muslims but they refuse to get it into their heads. When they arrived, they kept low, were timid and quiet, depended on our generosity. But look at them now! Planning to build the mosque!

GHIO: Yea. I'm going to bed. [*He makes for the door.*]

TOMA: On our Christian land! Their mosque on our land!

GHIO: Yea, I know. Theirs was destroyed.

TOMA: That was the divine intervention. Why do our churches still stand?

GHIO: I'm not sure.

TOMA: Because the God wishes so. They're taking our religion, our history, our past. These Muslims... Have they been saying things to you?

GHIO: Such as?

TOMA: Who knows? You can expect anything from them. They're dangerous. They might've told you to become a Muslim. Promised money or a wonderful life abroad, have they? Please, son, don't hide anything from me. In memory of your late mum, please, son!

GHIO: No, Dad. Nobody's told me anything.

TOMA: Remember, if they approach you, just tell me and I'll make them pay for persecution of Christians.

GHIO: I think Muslims are more persecuted nowadays than Christians.

TOMA: Because this is a Christian land. Why should a Georgian be a Muslim? If they all change their belief and turn to Christianity, no one's going to touch them. Instead, they arrived and there's no stopping them! Breed like rats. They settled here when you were born. Initially, there were only a couple of families, but now they make half of the village.

GHIO: Do they interfere with your life?

TOMA: They do! With my life, your life and the whole country! The Muslims do not acknowledge nationalities. Neither languages. For them it's important to be a Muslim, the rest doesn't matter. Ever since the Communists left and this sham democracy started, they began to gather strength. Can't you see they've multiplied? Now they're

sticking their noses in everything. Their voices are heard loud. Who'd have dared that in those days? The borders are open now, Europe is here and the game called Democracy has started. Didn't they get the terrorist attacks in return? And now they want us to live in permanent chaos. But I'm not going to permit it, son. If only for your sake. You're still young and don't get it, but later you're going to appreciate what I'm doing.

GHIO: And what are you doing, Dad?

TOMA: You might have a point there. Not much. But if I kill them, I'll be arrested by our democratic authorities. Get blamed for murder. But are they people? They stink...

GHIO: Don't you want to kill them at one go?

TOMA: Of course I do but...

GHIO: Then toss a bomb, Dad, when they're in the middle of a prayer and that'll do the trick.

TOMA: What if I get arrested?

GHIO: Who's gonna know?

TOMA: What do you mean?

GHIO: You can hide the dynamite the day before and blow it on the next day.

TOMA: Good thinking! It hasn't occurred to me.

GHIO: Then you can shout in indignation louder than ever.

TOMA: They definitely deserve to be wiped out.

GHIO: Instead of attacking them at their prayer with sticks, you and your buddies can throw a grenade and finish with them. Should I teach you how to?

TOMA: Impressive! But where do I get a grenade?

GHIO: I'll get it for you.

TOMA: Where from?

GHIO: I'll steal it from Hassan.

TOMA: Has he got grenades? Is he planning to blow us up?

GHIO: He can't blow his own prayer house, can he? Khatuna told me today he's got loads of dynamite. The Wahhabis brought him a truckful.

TOMA: And?

GHIO: I asked her to take some without Hassan knowing and give to me.

TOMA: I said they're terrorists, didn't I? Otherwise why do they need a truck full of dynamite?

GHIO: I'm not sure. They might plan to blow up the school or the church. Khatuna said she overheard Hassan talking to the imam who suggested blowing up the church so that we'd know how it feels not to have a house of prayer.

TOMA: Listen to that! Now they're planning to blow up our church!

GHIO: So, we need to act first.

TOMA: Yes! And act fast! Dynamite?

GHIO: Khatuna will steal some.

TOMA: Only a Muslim can betray her own father. Cursed people...

GHIO: And all the while you blame Europe for everything.

TOMA: And America. Wait! How do you know all this? You can't have thought of it all by yourself.

GHIO: It's all on the internet. [*He heads for the door, intending to go to bed.*]

TOMA: So, you say Khatuna's going to steal the dynamite?

GHIO: Right.

TOMA: Is she reliable?

GHIO: Absolutely.

TOMA: How can you trust anyone who is betraying her own father? Can it be arranged that she's praying when we do it?

GHIO: What have you got against her?

TOMA: She's going to inform on us. Women can't hold out.

GHIO: Fine. I'll ask her to steal the dynamite and then we'll blow her up along with others. But we need to make sure her mother's there too, otherwise she might say we stole from her husband and point at us.

TOMA: You're really smart! Let's kill all of them!

GHIO: And you've been chasing them with sticks, Dad. You're hopelessly dated. [*Exit.*]

TOMA: Imagine that! Planning to blow up our church, the pagans! Planning to blow up the school, the rogues! Planning our end, the scoundrels! Just imagine! Unheard of! Can

you believe it! The boy's really smart. My Ghio. [*He rises.*] Ghio, Ghio! Don't go to bed! Just a second! [*Exit.*]

Scene Four

Evening. KHATUNA and NORA are in the room. NORA is sitting at the fireplace, keeping warm. KHATUNA is reading a book.

NORA: When do they say your studies will resume?

KHATUNA: I don't know. They say till the village is in turmoil, the kids are to stay at home.

NORA: Why?

KHATUNA [*lifting her head from the book*]: They're scared of Dad, Mum!

NORA: That's what they say?

KHATUNA [*sarcastically*]: Exactly, Mum.

NORA [*after a pause, in a whisper*]: Scared of your dad?

KHATUNA: Is it news they're scared of the Wahhabis?

NORA: Your dad isn't one of them.

KHATUNA: Tell that to the village people.

NORA: How can I if even you don't believe me?

KHATUNA: I believe in what I see with my own eyes.

NORA: Which is what?

KHATUNA: That Dad is hiding grenades under his bed.

NORA [*jumping up in fear*]: What? What's that you say?

KHATUNA: Go, have a look for yourself if you don't believe me.

NORA: Why does he need grenades?

KHATUNA: Ask him when he comes home.

[NORA *goes out of the room. For some time KHATUNA is alone. She goes back to her book. NORA comes back.*]

NORA: How do you know he's got grenades?

KHATUNA: Grenades and dynamite.

NORA [*agitated*]: I asked how you know!

KHATUNA [*stops reading*]: Saw with my own two eyes. [NORA *sits down, pale and shaky.*]
I also heard Dad telling the people who arrive here every week that he's planning to blow up the school and the village hall.

NORA [*frightened*]: Please, stop it. Please, I beg you...

KHATUNA: You started it. I was trying to read.

NORA: Where is he? Why is he so late?

KHATUNA: Must be busy blowing up things.

[NORA *faints and falls to the floor. Genuinely concerned, KHATUNA rushes to her. She slaps her mother on the cheeks in an attempt to bring her back.*]

KHATUNA: Mum! Mum! What's wrong with you? That was a joke, Mum! Please, Mum, speak to me! It was just a joke... I'm so sorry, Mum...

[NORA *comes to her senses. KHATUNA helps her to sit up. NORA remains on the floor while KHATUNA fetches her some water. NORA drinks it.*]

KHATUNA: How are you, Mum?

NORA: Did your dad say he was going to blow up the school?

KHATUNA: Drink it, Mum, don't worry about it.

NORA: Yes but your dad isn't a murderer!

KHATUNA [*after a short pause*]: That's what he was saying... Let's hide his grenades.

NORA: Did he really say so?

KHATUNA: Yea, said he's going to blow up their school, village hall and the church. Said the plan was to do it when people gather to pray in the church. He was angry that someone found out about the school and that's why the classes were suspended. He also said it'd be difficult to blow up the village hall as it's heavily guarded by the police. But the imam who arrives every Friday said he's got a man who can carry the dynamite into the church when there are lots of people and blow it.

NORA [*nearly fainting again*]: Did he really say all that? [KHATUNA *bursts into laughter*.]
Well, there's nothing under the bed now.

[*The front door slowly opens. HASSAN comes into the room. He is badly beaten, his clothes stained with blood. KHATUNA stops laughing. Mother and daughter stare at HASSAN. Caught unawares, neither of them thinks to help him. HASSAN walks in and lowers himself on a chair. Silence.*]

NORA: Your hands are bloody.

HASSAN: Not only hands.

NORA [*rises and goes over to her husband*]: Tell me, however awful it might be.

HASSAN: They attacked us in the middle of the prayer.

NORA: While you were praying?

HASSAN: Yes. Even Communists never did anything like that.

NORA: You didn't use to pray in their times. Hassan, what happened?

HASSAN: The whole village rushed in. What have we done to deserve this? Can't we pray in peace? [NORA *is about to say something but changes her mind*.] Help me to undress. [*He takes off his shirt but NORA doesn't help him. KHATUNA goes over and helps him. To NORA.*] What's wrong with you? [NORA *springs up and helps him*.]
Khatuna, sweetie, bring me some water and a cloth, will you?

[KHATUNA *runs out to fetch them*.]

NORA: Can you tell me why those people come to our village? [HASSAN *looks at his wife closely*.] Yes, I'd like to know the reason that brings a busload of people to our village. What makes them travel at such a distance? We even haven't got the minaret. You gather in a little room for prayer. Can't they find a spare room where they are?

HASSAN: You talk like the head of the village administration.

NORA: I wouldn't know that... But why don't you tell me the reason they refuse to pray in their own village?

[KHATUNA comes back with a bowl of water and a piece of cloth. She puts them on the table. She soaks the cloth, wrings it and cleans HASSAN's wounds.]

KHATUNA: Because that's the policy.

[HASSAN and NORA stare at their daughter.]

NORA: What policy? Who told you?

KHATUNA: It's the talk of the entire village. Someone wants the situation to be potentially explosive, that's why those people arrive here regularly. They want the villagers to get involved.

HASSAN: Why do you listen to that crap?

KHATUNA: I don't, but I can't help hearing. Everyone talks about it.

HASSAN: Then stay away from them!

NORA: Don't yell at the girl! It's not her words. Others say it, don't they?

HASSAN: Why do you listen?

KHATUNA: Instead of shouting at me, you should've yelled at those who beat you up today!

[HASSAN slaps KHATUNA on the cheek. NORA rushes to her.]

HASSAN: You've lost all respect to your father!

NORA *[to KHATUNA]*: Get up, sweetie. Don't cry. Can I look at your cheek?

KHATUNA: It's not me, it's you who's got no respect for anyone! We're fed up with that god of yours! As if he's ever helped you.

[HASSAN *makes for* KHATUNA *but* NORA *stops him.*]

HASSAN: I'll show you how to be disrespectful towards your father and the God!

NORA: Hassan! Stop it!

HASSAN: Get out of here! I don't want to see you!

KHATUNA: You're brave with me, aren't you? No one talks to me because of you.

HASSAN: For a good reason! They don't need to talk to someone like you.

NORA [*to* KHATUNA]: Go to your room.

KHATUNA: If you can, take revenge. I'm sure you just stood there, all of you, turning one cheek, then another to their blows.

HASSAN: Who taught you that? Have you become a Christian by any chance?

NORA: Khatuna, get out of here!

KHATUNA: I know plenty of other things. [*Exit.*]

HASSAN: I know who'd behind this! I know! It's Toma and his son who are behind all this. She's with that boy a lot of time. The whole village talks about them.

NORA [*forcing her husband onto the chair*]: Calm down. Please don't shout. The neighbours will hear.

HASSAN: They know everything anyway. Better than you and me.

NORA: Who is Khatuna seeing? Who told you?

HASSAN: What does it matter if everyone knows?

NORA: Apparently everyone except me.

HASSAN: It'd be better if you found more time for your daughter.

NORA: Are you telling me that? You spend all days at work, then meet those Wahhabi friends...

HASSAN [*interrupting*]: Don't call my friends Wahhabi! They're ordinary, hard-working Muslims. Stop calling them names!

NORA: Everybody calls them that.

HASSAN: Because they want people to hate them.

NORA: Khatuna's a good girl. Smart and very prim. She's friendly with Ghio, that's all. She told me herself. Ghio's a good boy too. He's been here several times when you were out.

HASSAN: Why? What did he want?

NORA: They were studying.

HASSAN: There are no classes at school. Why do you fool yourself? Studying, ha?

NORA: Hassan, you can't keep going like that. You're too suspicious of everyone. You don't trust a single soul.

HASSAN: Because that's how I'm treated. How can I trust Toma's son?

NORA: When we moved here, it was Toma who lent you a helping hand. You were good friends. Ghio and Khatuna were born in the same year. You've completely forgotten how happy we were. Our first house was destroyed by the landslide but we loved each other. Hassan...

HASSAN: Then the borders stopped to function and all sort of abomination poured in. One can't distinguish between the good and the bad. The only way to resist the West is to believe in God. To resist homosexuality, the stink of money, competitiveness and slyness. I pray to God to give me the strength.

NORA: They also pray, Hassan. They also believe in God.

HASSAN: But we don't rush into their church and beat them up.

NORA: It happens because they're afraid of the Wahhabis. They dread those strangers who arrive here every week. Can't you get it? When no aliens came, were you harassed? Nobody touched you, right? [HASSAN *doesn't reply*.] Listen, Hassan, I really don't like them arriving here. What do they want anyway? If we had the mosque here, I'd understand, but how come they can't find a room for praying where they are? I'm beginning to believe it's some kind of a political thing and I don't like it at all.

HASSAN: What has politics to do with it?

NORA: What else? Why do you keep grenades?

HASSAN: What are you talking about?

NORA: Don't yell. Relax and tell me why you need those grenades. What are you planning to blow up?

HASSAN: Are you insane? Who told you that nonsense?

NORA: The entire village knows you've got grenades and dynamite under your bed.

HASSAN: Me?

NORA: And that you plan to blow up the church. You and those people who come here every Friday.

HASSAN: God help me!

NORA: You really need His help, Hassan.

HASSAN: True, we put our hope in Him.

NORA: Tell me it's a lie.

HASSAN: What, that there are grenades under my bed? It's a lie.

NORA: Be careful. The village believes so, so watch yourself.

[*Silence. Fade out.*]

Scene Five

The area behind the administrative building. GHIO is playing on his tablet. KHATUNA appears and hugs GHIO.

GHIO: What's wrong? [*KHATUNA is crying.*] Anything wrong? [*He looks at her attentively.*] Who did it? What happened?

KHATUNA: I argued with Dad.

GHIO: Did he hit you?

KHATUNA [*sobbing*]: Yea...

GHIO: Is he out of his mind?

KHATUNA: The only consolation is that he was badly beaten himself. He came all bruised and covered in blood... There was a fight, apparently...

GHIO: Yea, I know. Dad was there too. It's that kind of time, isn't it, when parents fight and not the children?

[*Unexpectedly* KHATUNA *kisses* GHIO *on the lips. He is stunned. Silence follows.*]

KHATUNA: Don't you like me?

GHIO: I do.

KHATUNA: Did you like the kiss?

GHIO: I did.

KHATUNA: Do you know how to do it?

GHIO: What?

KHATUNA: Sex. Do you know how to do it?

GHIO: Oh, that... Yea, I do...

KHATUNA: Have you done it?

GHIO [*unconvincingly*]: Yea.

KHATUNA: Want to have it with me?

GHIO: Yea, sure but...

KHATUNA: So you don't. [*She sulks.*]

GHIO: I do, of course I do, but...

KHATUNA: I'm sick and tired of my parents. They think I'm still a little girl. I refuse to go on like this. Come on, let's do it. Let's have sex. You know how to, don't you? You can teach me...

GHIO: What, here?

KHATUNA: Yea. It's late. Nobody's gonna come here. The whole village is beaten up. [*She laughs.*]

GHIO: Shall we look first and then do it? [*He points at the tablet.*]

KHATUNA: Yea, cool! Girls tell things that make my hair stand on end. Go on, switch it on.

GHIO: Just a sec.

KHATUNA [*hugging* GHIO]: Come on!

[KHATUNA and GHIO are about to watch a porn film. For a while there is silence, followed by the characteristic sounds of such a film.]

KHATUNA: What are they doing?

GHIO: That's sex.

KHATUNA: I got that but why is she standing like that?

GHIO: Do you want to try?

KHATUNA: Yea, I'm curious. [*She assumes a strange posture, peeping at the screen at the same time.*]

GHIO: Raise your leg... That's how she stands. [*He corrects her leg position.*]

KHATUNA: Come on, what are you waiting for?

GHIO [*also standing in a weird pose*]: It's gonna hurt.

KHATUNA: Why? She's not hurt.

GHIO: Now, don't shout.

[KHATUNA shouts and GHIO covers her mouth with his hand.]

KHATUNA: Why didn't you warn me it'd hurt so much?

GHIO: Don't yell. Want the police to come?

KHATUNA: Oh god, it hurts!

GHIO [*begins to move*]: It doesn't, not any more. You're lying.

KHATUNA [*peering at the tablet in an attempt to imitate the porn star's movements, which looks funny*]: Yes but it really hurt you know!

GHIO: I warned you.

KHATUNA [*imitating the porn actress, she moans without any emotion*]: Yes, yes, oh!

GHIO: Shut up! You're distracting me.

KHATUNA: Today Mum told me the Christians and the Muslims have got one god. Did you know?

GHIO [*not paying much attention*]: No.

KHATUNA: If that's true, why do they beat each other?

GHIO [*inattentively*]: No idea... Can you raise your leg a bit?

KHATUNA [*raises her leg, ending up in a more awkward and funny pose*]: But they're not standing like that in the film?

GHIO: They will...

KHATUNA: If the Christians and the Muslims have got the same god, it means everything is senseless.

GHIO: Why?

KHATUNA: Why? Think for yourself.

GHIO: I can't think now. You tell me.

KHATUNA: Because they've got nothing to argue about.

GHIO: Looks like it.

KHATUNA: Wait, let me turn. [*She consults the tablet.*] Leg like this?

GHIO [*also peering at the tablet*]: And where do I come in in this case? Ah, I see...

[*They attempt to shift. More sounds of the porn film.*]

KHATUNA: Go on, don't stop!

GHIO: Yea, yea...

KHATUNA: Today I asked Mum if the god is kind why he punishes people and know what she said?

GHIO: What?

KHATUNA: She said it wasn't the god but people who punish themselves.

GHIO: Sounds great. Does it hurt?

KHATUNA: No, it's good... Mum also told me...

GHIO [*interrupting*]: Can we talk about the god later?

KHATUNA: Okay.

[The actors in the porn film must have shifted again because KHATUNA gets to her knees, imitating oral sex.]

GHIO: Oh, yes, it's so good...

KHATUNA: Do you like it?

GHIO: Yea, it's just great...

KHATUNA: More slowly, right?

GHIO: Do you like it?

KHATUNA *[peering at the tablet]*: Am I doing it right?

GHIO: Yea. Push your hair just like that woman.

KHATUNA: What time is it?

GHIO: Whaaat?

KHATUNA: That man is looking at his watch all the time. You can do the same.

GHIO *[hasn't got a watch, but looks at his wrist]*: Still early.

[They continue to imitate the sexual intercourse.]

KHATUNA: Yea, yea...

GHIO: I think I'm coming...

[KHATUNA shouts with pleasure. The young people have 'finished their sex'. GHIO sits on the ground and KHATUNA puts her head on his shoulder. They are silent for some time. The film continues in the tablet.]

GHIO: As a rule, in such film they never come inside.

KHATUNA *[content]*: Ah, does it matter? *[Pointing at the tablet.]* Why don't they finish for so long in there?

GHIO: Next time we'll do the same.

KHATUNA: Want one more?

GHIO: Yea...

[*They kiss. Fade out.*]

ACT TWO

A month later

SCENE 1

The living room in KHATUNA's house. HASSAN comes in briefly and leaves immediately. For a while the stage is empty. NORA comes in through another door. She opens the cupboard and searches its drawers. Having failed to find what she needs, she goes out. Visibly annoyed, HASSAN comes in. He goes over to the same cupboard where NORA was looking for something. He opens the drawers. NORA comes in.

NORA: I've looked there.

HASSAN: And?

NORA: Have you looked in the basement?

HASSAN: Every inch.

NORA: It's not there. Don't waste your time.

HASSAN [*closing the drawer with a bang*]: It couldn't have walked away on its own, could it?

NORA: Try to remember. Might you have given it to the visitors?

HASSAN: Why would I give away my granddad's dagger?

NORA: How do I know? You were collecting money.

HASSAN: And I'd have sold granddad's dagger?

NORA: You are selling it now, aren't you?

HASSAN: I am because we haven't got any money.

NORA: Don't shout. I can hear you perfectly well.

HASSAN: Then help me find it.

NORA [*sitting down in exhaustion*]: Let's think together. Could you have left the visitors in the house on their own?

HASSAN: How dare you even think about it!

NORA: I don't know what to think.

HASSAN: By any chance, have you taken it? [NORA *looks at him sternly, without replying.*]
Could he have taken it?

NORA: Who, Hassan?

HASSAN: That friend of your daughter.

NORA: Ghio? What are you saying, Hassan? It's a sin to accuse others without a good reason or proof.

HASSAN: I'm not blaming anyone. I'm just asking.

NORA: How can you even think about him?

HASSAN: So now you're forbidding me to think in my own house? [*Pause.*] Have you left that lad Ghio alone at any time?

NORA: Hassan!

HASSAN: Just asking, just asking. Has he been on his own here?

NORA: No. There were Khatuna and myself with him.

HASSAN: Bad age. One can be tempted to sin at his age.

NORA: Stop it, Hassan. Besides, how could he have found it if it was hidden away?

HASSAN [*sits at the table*]: Yes, it was... If that's how things stand, there's nothing to keep us here.

NORA: Please, Hassan, you're scaring me.

HASSAN: Why don't you ask me why I'm selling the dagger?

NORA: Why should I if I'm aware of the reason?

HASSAN: You are? How do you know?

NORA: There are no secrets in the village, Hassan.

HASSAN: Who told you?

NORA: It's everybody's talk. Has been for quite some time.

HASSAN: Talking behind my back? And you knew and never told me?

NORA: What did I know? You've said many times you were collecting money for the new mosque.

HASSAN: What has the mosque to do with it?

NORA: Everything! Ever since you got involved in religion, things started to go wrong. The entire village sulks at us. We've lived here for many years, ever since that dreadful landslide. This is our second home. The locals accepted us, helped us settle down, showed sympathy and understanding. But you stick to your ridiculous ideas. So, tell me what's going on?

HASSAN: I just pray, Nora. In fact, I don't do much. And I'm not in a foreign country – it's mine as well and I've got the right to pray. I don't break any laws or hurt anyone.

NORA: I know very well you're not doing any harm. But why do others believe you are?

HASSAN: Because it's in someone's interest to muddle things up for their own benefit.

NORA: But why do you and your buddies give them the pretext? Can't you pray without interfering with the others?

HASSAN: Who do we interfere with? We gather in a small room in the evenings and pray. Do we hurt anyone, Nora? Tell me, who do we hurt?

NORA: Then why does that bus arrive every week? Ever since they've started to show up, things have gone wrong.

HASSAN: How do you know it started with their arrival? I believe the reason is I said we wanted to build the mosque.

NORA: You've got an answer to everything, haven't you? [*Silence.*] Why do you want to sell your granddad's dagger? [HASSAN *is reluctant to answer.*] If it's not for the mosque, then what for? [HASSAN *doesn't reply.*] Has something happened?

HASSAN: Nora, when our house was destroyed by the landslide, you told me you'd be with me till death, in good and bad times... We buried our parents there and it's hard for us to go back... It's difficult for me too. The place seems cursed...

NORA: Why have you brought it up now, Hassan?

HASSAN: I'll grant you, when we came here the village helped us a lot, stood by us at the difficult times, but now it's different. People have changed with times. I've changed, I suppose... But I'd like to ask you if you think in the same way as you did then, twenty years ago.

NORA: I do, but...

HASSAN: The only thing that kept me here was my job. I couldn't have found anything like it back home... It gave us relatively reliable income. I find it hard to think about going back, but I believe nothing keeps us here anymore.

NORA: What are you saying, Hassan? We can't live there. The landslide can repeat itself any minute. But here we've got a house, garden, vineyard and orchard, Khatuna goes to school and has got friends. Back home there's nothing but graves. No one lives there. There's neither school nor shop nor work there. Even the roads are blocked.

HASSAN: So, what do you say, Nora? Will you be able to do it? Do you still love me? You believe the village gossip and have accepted I'm a terrorist only because I'm a Muslim! So, what do you say, Nora?

NORA: Tell me, Hassan, what's happened?

HASSAN: I was dismissed. Now we can sell granddad's dagger and return to our village... The landslide would've settled and we'll be able to start all over again... We can build a little hut, just like twenty years ago and start from scratch...

NORA [*after a pause*]: Why were you sacked?

HASSAN: I was told there's now a huge gap between us. Apparently, I plan some evil while they only do the good.

NORA: Hassan... [*She goes over to her husband and embraces him.*] Hassan...

[HASSAN and NORA embrace. Enter KHATUNA. HASSAN and NORA hastily move from each other.]

KHATUNA: Dad, Mum, I've got to tell you something. [NORA *is about to say something, but KHATUNA stops her by raising her hand.*] Mum, I'm not a little girl anymore.

NORA: I know, sweetie...

KHATUNA [*interrupting*]: Dad, Mum, I'm getting married. [HASSAN *rises to his feet; NORA sits on the chair.*] I know it's rather unexpected, but that's what I want.

HASSAN: But you're still at school, sweetie!

KHATUNA: Yes, but I'm pregnant.

[*Fade out.*]

Scene Two

[GHIO's place. TOMA is sitting at the table with a bottle of vodka in front of him. Enter GHIO.]

TOMA: Where've you been?

GHIO: Out. Just hanging around.

TOMA: How are things in the village?

GHIO [*about to go to his room*]: Fine.

TOMA: Don't go yet. Come, sit with me. [GHIO sits beside him. TOMA looks closely at his son.] I feel something's amiss. What's wrong?

GHIO: Nothing.

TOMA [*yelling*]: I asked what's wrong!

GHIO: You think if you bang your fist, I'll get scared and tell you?

TOMA: I can't be as soft as your mum!

GHIO: You were never soft and caring towards her either!

TOMA: Why do you blame me for her death? It was cancer that killed her. Was it my fault too? [GHIO doesn't reply.] Answer me! Or did she get it because of me? Want to say that? You think so, don't you?

GHIO [*pouring vodka into TOMA's glass*]: Have some.

TOMA [*in a different tone*]: Want to kill me?

GHIO: I see you're in a mood to joke.

TOMA: You're the only one I've got, son. If anything happens to you, I'll hang myself. [*He drinks.*]

GHIO: Better if you keep drinking every single day. A much more pleasant death.

TOMA: Great stuff! Don't drink, son. Too early for you.

GHIO [*gets up, takes a glass from the cupboard, pours himself the vodka*]: When was the last time you went to Mum's grave? I bet you haven't been there for at least a year.

TOMA: What are you doing? You're too young for it.

GHIO: You're too busy chasing the Muslims. This is to us! [*He is about to drink it.*]

TOMA [*stops him by lifting his hand*]: You're still at school.

GHIO: I'm of age already.

TOMA: Don't drink.

GHIO: I'm going to be a father soon, so I can.

TOMA: You must be joking.

GHIO: No, I'm dead serious.

TOMA [*pours himself some drink*]: In that case this is to us! [*He clicks his glass with his son's glass.*]

GHIO: You don't believe me, do you?

TOMA: I do. In fact, I'm quite happy. But how are you going to support your family? With your schoolbooks?

GHIO: I thought you'd be more interested to know who my wife is.

TOMA: The main thing is she mustn't be a Muslim. You're a smart lad and wouldn't have chosen badly. I trust you.

GHIO: What if she's a Muslim? What would you do?

TOMA: I'd cut off your dick. [*He laughs.*] I know she can't be a Muslim.

GHIO: But still, what if she is?

TOMA: All I'm gonna say is you've got one dad and take good care of him. [*He pours some more into his glass. There is a knock at the door.*] Expecting someone?

GHIO [*poring himself some vodka*]: What do you have against the Muslims? You're a Christian and you are supposed to love your enemy. But you hate and fight them.

TOMA: Don't you dare teach me how to live and think!

GHIO: Have they wronged you but I don't know about it? This is to the battle between the Muslims and the Christians! [*He drains his glass.*]

TOMA: You don't realize how dangerous these people are for our country.

GHIO: Why have they become dangerous all of a sudden?

TOMA: Because they are financed by the terrorists. If they get a chance, they'd turn the whole world into the Muslim faith.

[*The knock is heard again.*]

GHIO: And they weren't financed before?

TOMA: No. That's why they stayed quiet and kept low, but now they want to build the mosque.

GHIO: Does your buddy Hassan show any signs he's getting some funds?

TOMA: Unlike me, they don't take home everything they earn. They save and put it into business. If they only prayed, I wouldn't mind. I wouldn't really care! All I'm asking is that they shouldn't try to push their god at us. Do I tell them to become Christians?

GHIO: Did you know the Christians and the Muslims have got the same god?

TOMA: Who told you that crap?

GHIO: Doesn't matter. But if that's so, I don't get it what you're fighting for.

[*There is another knock at the door.*]

TOMA: Are you going to open the door?

GHIO: What's wrong if they build their mosque?

TOMA: It's that if today they are allowed to build a mosque, tomorrow they'll forbid us to drink spirits.

GHIO: And that Hassan was your friend?

TOMA: He was. [*He pours himself more.*] Once he was but then he went astray. He's our enemy. He's fighting all of us and my family too. When they came here to settle, they

were so miserable I helped them to build a house with my own two hands. But where's the appreciation?

GHIO: Know what? [*He pours himself the drink; ironically.*] You're a true Christian.

TOMA: Their village was destroyed by the landslide. That's when they moved here.

GHIO: They were saved by the Muslim god.

TOMA: Not saved, punished. But they still cling to their god. Phew!

GHIO: Punished by their god? Mum used to tell me the God was kind.

TOMA: Our God is, but theirs... Can't you see what happened to them? Their village was buried under the ground. They survived just to spite me.

[*The knock sounds louder, more persistently. The following dialogue is accompanied by the noise.*]

TOMA: He envies us.

GHIO: Envises us? Dad, open your eyes! How can you compare their house with ours! See the filth we live in? It rains through the roof, we can't walk in the garden because of the mud, the neighbour gives us drinking water, our orchard is overgrown and Hassan envies us?

TOMA: All that's because there's no woman at home.

GHIO: Is that the Muslims' fault too?

TOMA: Want to know where the real fault lies? It's the liberties given. There were no Muslims or Christians in those times, but now they want to build a mosque.

GHIO [*ironically*]: You're right. Let them build it and then we can blow it up. What do you say?

TOMA: Open that damn door!

[*GHIO rises and goes to the door. He opens it. KHATUNA is standing in the doorway.*]

KHATUNA: Hi.

GHIO: What are you doing here?

KHATUNA [*reluctant to step over the threshold*]: I've got to talk to you.

GHIO: I'm kind of busy right now.

KHATUNA: I was banned from home.

TOMA [*noticing KHATUNA in the doorway*]: Is that Hassan's girl?

GHIO [*to KHATUNA*]: Why?

KHATUNA: I'm pregnant.

GHIO: How do you know?

TOMA: What does she want?

GHIO [*to KHATUNA*]: Wait, I'll come out.

TOMA: Where are you going? Come here!

GHIO [*to TOMA*]: I'll be back soon. [*He takes his jacket.*]

TOMA [*rises, goes to the door and stops GHIO*]: You're not going anywhere.

GHIO [*trying to free from TOMA's grip*]: I said I won't be long.

TOMA [*to KHATUNA with disgust*]: What do you want? Why have you come?

KHATUNA: I'm going to have a baby.

TOMA: What has it got with us?

GHIO: Dad, let me go.

KHATUNA: It's Ghio's baby.

GHIO [*frees himself from TOMA's grip*]: Dad! [*He goes out and takes KHATUNA's hand.*]
Let's get out of here.

[*Fade out.*]

Scene Three

(Version One)

(If the director considers this version of the scene too sensitive from the religious point of view, she or he can use the second version of the scene.)

GHIO's place. TOMA and HASSAN are standing facing each other, holding swords in their hands: one has a typical sword of a Crusader, the other a scimitar.

TOMA: That upon you may come all the righterous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righerous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (Matthew 23:35)

HASSAN: Do they not consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein many contradictions. (Quran, Verse 4:82)

[TOMA and HASSAN cross their swords. The battle begins. The proscenium is lit, revealing GHIO and KHATUNA holding a tablet. They control their fathers.]

KHATUNA: See my dad?

GHIO: I do!

[Both look into their tablet. Their fathers battle in the background.]

HASSAN: Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the disbelievers, the Fire of Hell, therein shall they abide. It will suffice them. Allah has cursed them and for them is the lasting torment. (Quran, Verse 9:68)

TOMA: It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

GHIO: Now my dad is going to wound yours.

[TOMA *swings his sword and wounds HASSAN in the shoulder.*]

HASSAN: It is not for the idolaters and pagans to maintain the mosque of Allah, while they witness against their oneselves of disbelief. The works of such are in vain and in Fire shall they abide. The mosques of Allah shall be maintained only by thosewho believe in Allah and the Last Day; perform As-Salat and give Zakat and fear none but Allah. It is they who are expected to be on the true guidance. (Quran, Verse 9:17,18)

KHATUNA: Don't you want them to fly?

GHIO: How's that?

KHATUNA: Like it's in the games. Make them fly.

GHIO: Wait a sec.

[TOMA *is lifted into the air, suspended for a while.*]

TOMA: For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:28,29,30)

[TOMA *lands on the table.* KHATUNA *claps in excitement.*]

TOMA: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righterousness: for they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

GHIO: Wait! Doesn't your dad fly?

KHATUNA: My dad's breathing fire, if you can do that.

[*In the course of the battle HASSAN breathes fire. TOMA flies from the table onto the sofa, artfully dodging the fire.*]

KHATUNA [*clapping joyfully*]: That's impressive!

GHIO: That's only the beginning.

HASSAN: Truly! Allah wrongs not mankind in angst; but mankind wrong themselves.
(Quran, Verse 10:44)

[HASSAN *breathes fire which hits* TOMA.]

TOMA: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

[*Ablaze*, TOMA *flies high and stabs* HASSAN *in the chest, wounding him severely*.]

HASSAN [*dropping to his knees*]: Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa. Surely, He will gather you together on the Day of Resurrection about which there is no doubt. And who is truer in statement than Allah? (Quran, Verse 4:87)

[HASSAN *breathes fire, burning* TOMA, *who attempts to fly up but fails, only able to stagger on his weak legs*.]

TOMA: Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? [*He drops to his knees*.] Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? (Luke 12:56,57) [*He drops to the ground*.] A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:57, 58) [*He dies*.]

HASSAN: And if you would count the graces of Allah, never could you be able to count them. Truly, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Quran, Verse 16:18)

[HASSAN *falls to the ground*. *Silence*. GHIO and KHATUNA *are seen on the proscenium*.]

GHIO: Can add some music here.

[GHIO *returns to the tablet. Dramatic music is heard.*]

HASSAN [*raising his head*]: And as for those who emigrated for the Cause of Allah, after suffering oppression, We will certainly give them goodly residence, but indeed the reward of the Hereafter will be greater, if they but knew! (Quran, Verse 16:41)

KHATUNA: Are they dead? [GHIO *doesn't reply, trying to make the figures move from his tablet.*] Are they dead?

GHIO: It wasn't bad for the first try, was it?

KHATUNA: But how can we play if they're dead?

GHIO: Shall we make the school teacher and the priest fight?

KHATUNA: Yea, great!

GHIO: And there are plenty of villagers for the game, no?

KHATUNA: Alive, so far.

GHIO [*pointing at the tablet*]: Press here.

[KHATUNA *presses the screen. The house bursts into flames. Both laugh. Fade out.*]

Scene Three

(Version Two)

GHIO's *place*. TOMA and HASSAN are standing facing each other, holding swords in their hands: one has a typical sword of a Crusader, the other a scimiter.

TOMA: For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns,
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? (Hamlet, 3.1)

HASSAN: But I will punish home.
No, I will weep no more. – In such a night
To shut me out? Pour on, I will endure. (King Lear, 3.4)

*[TOMA and HASSAN cross their swords. The battle begins. The proscenium
is lit, revealing GHIO and KHATUNA with their tablet. They control
their fathers.]*

KHATUNA: Look at my dad!

GHIO: What do we do with them now?

[Both look into the netbook. The battle continues in the background.]

HASSAN: Tut, man, one fire burns another man's burning,
One pain is lessened by another's anguish.
Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning.
One desperate grief cures with another's languish. (Romeo and Juliet, 1.2)

TOMA: Hear, nature; hear, dear goddess, hear:
Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful.
Into her womb convey sterility.
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honour her. (King Lear, 1.4)

GHIO: Now my dad's going to wound your dad.

[TOMA swings his sword and wounds HASSAN in the shoulder.]

HASSAN: Two households, both alike in dignity
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. (Romeo and Juliet, 1.1)

[*With renewed energy, HASSAN charges towards TOMA, who manages to guard his blows.*]

KHATUNA: Don't you want them to fly?

GHIO: How's that?

KHATUNA: Like it's in the games. Make them fly.

GHIO: Wait a sec.

[*TOMA is lifted up, suspended in the air for a while.*]

TOMA: Persuade me to the murder of your lordship,
But that I told him the revenging gods
'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend. (King Lear, 2.1)

[*TOMA lands on the table. KHATUNA claps in excitement.*]

Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel –
That she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child. (King Lear, 1.4)

GHIO: Wait! Doesn't your dad fly?

KHATUNA: My dad's breathing fire, if you can do that.

[*In the course of the battle HASSAN breathes fire. TOMA flies from the table onto the sofa, artfully dodging the fire.*]

KHATUNA [*clapping joyfully*]: That's impressive!

GHIO: That's only the beginning.

HASSAN: Thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? (King Lear, 1.2)

[HASSAN *breathes fire which hits* TOMA]

TOMA [*ablaze*]: To fight you thus methinks I am too savage,
To do worse to you were fell cruelty,
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you. (Macbeth, 4.2)

[TOMA *flies high and stabs* HASSAN *in the chest, wounding him severely.*]

HASSAN [*falling to his knees*]: Round about the cauldron go,
In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i'th' charmed pot. (Macbeth, 4.1)

[HASSAN *breathes fire burning* TOMA, *who attempts to fly up but fails, only able to stagger on his weak legs.*]

TOMA: Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,
Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat
I'll tell thee thou dost evil. (King Lear, 1.1)

[TOMA *drops dead on the ground.*]

HASSAN: With an untitled tyrant bloody-sceptered,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,
Since that the truest issue of thy throne
By his own interdiction stands accused
And does blaspheme his breed? (Macbeth, 4.3)

[HASSAN *drops to the ground. Silence. GHIO and KHATUNA are seen on theproscenium.*]

GHIO: Can add some music here.

[He returns to the tablet. Dramatic music can be heard. HASSAN raises his head.]

HASSAN: The point envenomed too? Then, venom, to thy work. (Hamlet, 5.2) *[He dies.]*

KHATUNA: Are they dead? *[GHIO doesn't reply, trying to make the figures move from histablet.]* Are they dead?

GHIO: Wasn't bad for the first try, was it?

KHATUNA: But how can we play if they're dead?

GHIO: Shall we make the school teacher and the priest fight?

KHATUNA: Yea, great!

GHIO: And there are plenty of villagers for the game, no?

KHATUNA: Alive, so far.

GHIO *[pointing at the tablet]*: Press here.

[KHATUNA presses the screen. The house bursts into flames. Both laugh. Fade out.]

Scene Four

GHIO and KHATUNA's living room. A table, two chairs, a gas cooker and a washstand indicate utter poverty. It can hardly be called 'a room'. It has got makeshift wooden walls and a celluloid ceiling.

KHATUNA is holding a screaming baby, wrapped in rags. KHATUNA walks up and down, humming to calm the baby and she seems to succeed. Only later we discover that the baby is not an ordinary one – it is a netbook application, a rather realistic one. The baby calms down. KHATUNA unwraps the baby (i.e.

the tablet) and puts it on the table. The baby's happy face stares at her, occasionally shifting the gaze at the audience. The baby is cute and clean, smiling a lot, showing two snow-white teeth, which makes it even more lovable.

The tablet is on the table. KHATUNA begins to cook for the baby: white bread crumbs in watery milk. She stirs the mixture with a spoon. The baby is waiting for the food with an expectant face, occasionally glancing at the audience as if saying: 'You've got no idea how tasty it is.' KHATUNA is feeding the baby-tablet, which is readily opening its mouth and swallowing the ungainly mixture. KHATUNA sings to the baby-tablet. Enter GHIO with a loaf of bread and a milk carton. He puts them on the table, goes over to his wife and kisses her. KHATUNA continues to feed the baby.

GHIO: Today I've brought bread and milk.

KHATUNA: That's okay. The most important thing is for the baby to have enough food.

GHIO: How long will the milk last?

KHATUNA: I'm trying to eke it out. I'm dividing a portion for two meals.

GHIO: Do you add water?

KHATUNA: No, just flour. I was told babies can't tell the difference.

GHIO: I've spent the whole day at the construction and bought bread and milk.

KHATUNA: I don't need milk. It's not helping with the breast milk, so don't bother. Next time bring flour. We're running out of it.

GHIO: Didn't the neighbour tell us drinking milk helps?

KHATUNA: How does she know? I can't squeeze a drop! Instead of useless milk you should get yourself some food.

GHIO: Meaning I eat and you can go hungry?

KHATUNA: You should know by now that for a Muslim woman her husband's full stomach is the most important.

[They laugh. GHIO drops a potato into a huge pot to boil.]

GHIO: Today we've got bread and potato for dinner.

KHATUNA: Make sure we've got one potato each for the supper.

GHIO: Which means we've got to divide one for the dinner.

KHATUNA: You have it. I'll have bread. [*Merrily.*] On the other hand, we can go for a walk after our late supper.

GHIO: What if we feel hungry after the walk?

KHATUNA: Let's say I'm dieting.

GHIO: Our diet is kind of too long, don't you think? [*He breaks the bread and puts the pieces on the table.*] For a Muslim woman her husband's full stomach...

KHATUNA: And that of her baby.

GHIO: And what's most important for a Christian husband?

KHATUNA: It's you, so you've got to tell me.

GHIO: For a Christian husband? Actually, I've never thought about it.

KHATUNA: I'll tell you. [*To the baby-tablet.*] Open your mouth, my sweetie.

GHIO [*peeping into the pot*]: There's too little food.

KHATUNA: Let's have my arm.

GHIO: No, mine.

KHATUNA: We had it yesterday. Want to be armless? Come on, take it off.

GHIO [*after a pause*]: Okay. [*He goes to KHATUNA and pulls her arm.*] When we've eaten each other, who's gonna feed the baby?

KHATUNA: God will take care of it.

GHIO: Dad used to say the Muslims are cruel. [*He puts KHATUNA's arm into the pot.*] Said they cut the boy's dick off and that one couldn't deal with such awful people.

KHATUNA: And?

GHIO: I believe he was wrong. We love each other, don't we?

KHATUNA: Your arm was tasty.

GHIO: Yours is gonna be good too. I'm sure. [*He adds some salt to the pot and stirs.*]

KHATUNA: I'm not so sure. I'm kind of scared.

GHIO [*goes over to KHATUNA and hugs her*]: No, no, don't say that! We must be together. And we mustn't quarrel. We love each other.

KHATUNA: Yea, yea, we do.

GHIO: Do you think our baby should be a Muslim or a Christian?

KHATUNA: Does it matter?

GHIO: Not for us, only for our parents.

KHATUNA: Since when have you been interested in their opinion? They killed each other over that nonsense.

GHIO: Apparently, they were good friends once, in the Communists' times. Before the borders were opened and the Wahhabis began to arrive. It's them who muddled things.

KHATUNA: I've never seen a stranger with my dad. Please don't talk like your dad.

GHIO: They say the Wahhabis train terrorists so as to carry out terrorist attacks.

KHATUNA: Was my dad a terrorist? Do you honestly believe it?

GHIO: I don't know what to believe. What changed then? They were friends, weren't they? He used to say it all started with the lifting of the borders when all disgusting things came from the west.

KHATUNA: I knew you didn't do well at school, but the west means Europe. The Wahhabis are from Asia.

GHIO: I know that much but...

KHATUNA: But what? [*She laughs.*]

GHIO: Want to say the Muslims are good people?

KHATUNA: What harm have they done to you?

GHIO: Your dad did harm, didn't he?

KHATUNA: But your dad was a Christian. What wrong did he do?

[*Pause.*]

GHIO [*taking the food from the pot and placing on plates*]: I'm so hungry I can't eat.

KHATUNA [*to the baby-tablet*]: Now, sweetie, have a rest while I dine, okay?

GHIO [*looking at the baby-tablet*]: We've got a beautiful baby. Why does it matter if it's a Muslim or a Christian?

KHATUNA: Pass the bread, will you?

GHIO [*cutting up KHATUNA's boiled arm; puts one piece for her, the other for himself*]:
Especially that there's one god, it seems.

KHATUNA: That won't be enough for you. You'll be hungry.

GHIO: That's okay. If worse comes to worst, I've got the other arm.

KHATUNA: If we go on like this, we're gonna eat each other.

GHIO: Mmm, yummy. Does it need more salt?

KHATUNA: No, it's fine.

[*For a time they eat in silence.*]

GHIO [*to the baby-tablet*]: What, my darling?

[*The baby-tablet smiles at him from the screen. It is holding a small tablet in its hand.*]

GHIO: See, it's got a tablet of its own!

KHATUNA: Yea, this generation is very different.

GHIO: Where's it from?

KHATUNA: Anything's possible in a game.

GHIO: Did you buy it?

KHATUNA: Yea, I stole Dad's dagger.

[*They laugh.*]

GHIO [*pointing at the baby*]: What do you think it's playing?

KHATUNA: I think it's us in the game. It's playing with us.

GHIO: Is it the baby's fault we're eating each other?

KHATUNA: So what?

GHIO [*takes a knife and stabs KHATUNA in the belly; very calmly*]: Do you remember how you moved here?

KHATUNA: No, I was born here. [*She pulls the knife from her belly and cleans it.*] But Mum used to tell me how it all happened. One night a mountain came crushing down and buried the entire village.

GHIO: How did your parents survive?

KHATUNA [*rises, goes to GHIO and stabs him in the heart*]: They were visiting some relatives in another village.

GHIO [*looking at the knife in his heart*]: And they settled here, in this village?

KHATUNA: Yea, the Communists gave some land to Dad. Now this village is our homeland. I don't even know what's happening in the other place. [*She pulls the knife and stabs him again, stronger this time.*] Dad said there's a high hill now where the cemetery used to be. And only the tip of the minaret shows of the whole mosque.

GHIO: Everything's buried under the ground?

KHATUNA: Yea, the entire village. [*She sits at the table and resumes eating. The wound in her belly has clearly weakened her.*]

GHIO: You know very well... [*He pulls the knife from his heart. He breathes heavily.*] That our village is also under the ground. [*He rises with difficulty, goes to KHATUNA and puts the knife at her throat.*] We're the same, aren't we? Refugees. [*He slits KHATUNA's throat.*]

KHATUNA: But we love each other, don't we? [*She drops dead.*]

GHIO: Yea, we do. [*He staggers, attempts to steady himself but falls down.*]

[GHIO and KHATUNA's room catches fire. The baby-tablet watches the scene very carefully. Now, when the parents are dead, the baby glances at the audience with a happy face. A screen is lowered onto the stage. There are several blank spaces on the screen.

The text on the screen appears at the same speed as the baby fills the blanks.

Name: Angry; Surname: Bird; Age: 2 gigabyte; Gender: 8 megabyte RAM; Confession: Android.

[The baby-tablet pushes the button and an inscription GAME OVER appears on the screen.

NORA rushes onto the stage. She looks around, sees the bodies of GHIO and KHATUNA. She runs to her daughter but realizes she is dead. Then she moves to GHIO. The blaze becomes stronger. NORA takes the baby-tablet, presses it to her chest and runs out. Fade out.]

THE END

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