FOREWORD

*L-Inkwiet tas-Sur Martin* is a one-act play about the impact of the City on the Village. The village represents tradition and conservatism, attachment to the old ancestral customs which are rapidly disappearing under the impact of city life which, being more cosmopolitan, is exposed to many foreign influences from which radiate new mental attitudes that are progressively eroding the core of the village community as we knew it in our younger days.

It is a one-act play which I enjoyed writing and seeing performed by my students several times in the University Theatre at Valletta. The play represents a conflict of mental attitudes to life as it affected the domestic habits and peace of mind of a good-natured, temperamental village man attached to his family traditions and customs and whose two lively daughters upset his tenor of life by some of the exotic fashions of modern life which they picked up from the two Sliema families they worked for as maids.

I am grateful to Mr. F. Williams, a British resident of Siggiewi and congratulate him on his mastery of written Maltese which is by no means easy for an English-speaking person. I have published the Maltese text and translation facing each other to enable Semitic linguists to read the two texts together and draw their own conclusions from the propinquity of the original text and its English rendering.

I do not think that this experiment is without its value. The Maltese language is rapidly developing along two distinctive lines which are one linguistic and another literary. Though Malta is a small country both its language and history form an integral part of the structure of Mediterranean civilization. Unfortunately, most books on Malta, very often *libri ex libris*, do not give a faithful picture of the Maltese and the language they speak. One field that is generally either ignored or underestimated is that of Maltese literature. This Journal will continue to introduce both aspects of Maltese contemporary culture to its subscribers abroad. There will be more translations, with or without the original texts as the occasion permits, in future issues.

This is the continuation of a policy which I have already adopted in previous numbers of this Journal in which I published Maltese texts with the English translations for comparative linguistic and literary purposes.

J. Aquilina
L-INKWIET TAS-SUR MARTIN

Kummiedja ta’ Ġ. Aquilina

NIES LI JIDHRU

MARTIN, Rahli minn Ġhawdex (li jista’ tkun tip ta’ kull rahli minn Malta).
MARIA, Tifla ta’ Martin u ġjarusa ta’ Karlu, seftura tas-Sliema.
TEREZA, Tifla obra ta’ Martin u ġjarusa ta’ Ġużepp, seftura tas-Sliema.
KARLU, Mastrudaxxa; membru tal-Partit tas-Soħor.
ĠUŻEPP, Bil-ħanut tax-xorb; membru tal-Partit tal-Hodor.
TABIB, Taḥib tar-Ħal; wieħed mill-ħbieb ta’ Ġużepp.
KARMNU, Hbieb ta’ Ġużepp, żewġ kandidati tal-Partit tal-Hodor.
PAWLU, Hbieb ta’ Ġużepp, żewġ kandidati tal-Partit tal-Hodor.
SURMAST, l-s-Surmast ta’ l-iskola tar-Raħal, ġabib ta’ Karlu.
TONI, Pulizija (bil-frank), ġu Karlu.
WIĠJ, Kandidat ieħor tal-Partit tas-Soħor.
FREDU, Ġabib ta’ Karlu.
KURUN, l-Huttab.


MARIA: Min ghandu żaqqu tugghu ħallih imut biha.
TEREZA: Jieħu porga mhux ahjar milli ġmut? Kemm int qalbek iebsa!
MARIA: [Tisfoga fuq qmis ta’ taht bija u titniha] Taf x’qaltli Dovina tal-Karrett hux? Taf x’kellha wiċċ tghidli hux?
TEREZA: X’qaltlek?
MARIA: Qaltli Karlu tieghek jaf li kont man-nies?
TEREZA: X’riedet tghid il-kiesha? Mhux kulhadd jahdem biex jaqla’ x’jie-

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MR. MARTIN'S ORDEAL

By J. Aquilina

Translated into English by F. Williams

CHARACTERS

MARTIN, A Gozo farmer (who might equally be any typical Maltese farmer).

MARIJA, Martin's daughter, engaged to Karlu, previously working as a maid in Sliema.

TEREZA, Martin's other daughter, engaged to Guzepp, also previously working as a maid in Sliema.

KARLU, A carpenter, member of the Yellow Party.

GUZEPP, A bar-owner, member of the Green Party.

DOCTOR, The village doctor, one of Guzepp's friends.

KARMNU, Friends of Guzepp, two Green Party candidates.

PAWLU, Schoolteacher, The village schoolmaster, a friend of Karlu.

TONI, A policeman (on leave), Karlu's brother.

WIGI, Another Yellow Party candidate.

FREDU, A friend of Karlu.

KURUN, The match-maker.

The scene is the best room of a village house. It is furnished in the style of a village dining-room, i.e. the best room which is normally kept closed and is opened only when the house is blessed at Easter or when someone is put up for the night, such as the doctor or the parish priest.

Enter two young girls in high spirits, dressed for a party, who are opening boxes that they take from two cupboards, one at each side of the stage.

MARIJA: People who go green with envy deserve to die of it.

TEREZA: How cruel you are! Wouldn't a purge do just as well?

MARIJA [venting her feelings on a petticoat which she is folding]: Do you know what Dovina tal-Karett said to me? Do you know what she had the impertinence to say?

TEREZA: What did she say to you?

MARIJA: She said 'Does your Karlu realise you've been in domestic service?'

TEREZA: What a nerve! What was she getting at? Doesn't everyone go out
kol? Hi ma tagħżaqx ma’ missierha, biċċa ta’ bidwija li hi! Jew jid-hrilha li huma xi gabilotti ħej, ghax għandhom l-Għalq tal-Mejjet taghhom u xi żewġ irziezet... U hallejtha b’xejn?


TEREŻA: Daqshek biss? U ma qbadthiex qabda minn xagħarha?


TEREŻA: Imma daqshekk biss?

MARIJA: Isma’, ħej, jaqaw ridtni nonxorha mejta fl-art u mmur il-habs għal wiċċek jew?


MARIJA: U jien mhux daqshekk biss għamiltilha.

TEREŻA: [Bil-herq] Tajtha xi daqqtejn? Ċarrattilha l-ghonnella?

MARIJA: Hallini nkompli, trid, ghax sa ttellaghhomli. Mela x’nagħmel! In-ċarrtilha l-ghonnella ta’ sitt liri jew iżjed. ... ghonnella tal-ħarir – biex ikolli nhallasielha mill-flus li faddalt mas-sinjuri.

TEREŻA: Mhux int għedt li mhux daqshekk biss?

to work so as to earn a bit of money? And doesn't she hoe the fields with her father, country bumpkin that she is? Or perhaps she thinks she's the daughter of a gentleman farmer, because they own Dead Man's Field and a couple of barns? And you let her get away with it?

MARIJA: I let her get away with it? I'd have you know that I'm not in the habit of letting people get away with things. [Interrupts what she is doing, and with arms akimbo re-enacts the scene.] 'Dovin,' I say, 'I'd have you know that I'm the daughter of a respectable man. It's no shame to be poor. Everyone works in order to live. And I learned a lot of education from the ladies I worked for. People who stay behind in the village remain dumb, like you.'

TEREŻA: That's all you said? Why didn't you pull her hair?

MARIJA: I'm sorry I didn't. But I grabbed her by the hand. 'Open your hand,' I say. She looks scared, and says: 'What for? How easily you take offence!' 'I told you to open your hand.' She opens it. I say to her: 'Look at your hand, and now look at mine. Which of them is the finer? You're the daughter of a gentleman farmer, yet your whole hand is hard with hoeing. Unlike you, I've never touched a hoe. So as to keep my hands soft, my ladies used to buy me hand cream. Mine are lady's hands, yours are those of a peasant girl.' Wasn't I right?

TEREŻA: But was that all?

MARIJA: Listen, you, would you have liked me to spread her out dead on the floor and go to prison for your sake, or what?

TEREŻA: Just let her start calling me a servant! I'd have done plenty more.

MARIJA: So you think that's all I did to her?

TEREŻA: [eagerly] You beat her up a bit? You tore her faldetta?

MARIJA: Let me finish, will you, you're getting on my nerves. So what should I have done, then? Rip her faldetta to pieces — a silk one, worth a good six pounds — so that I'd have to pay her for it out of the money I've saved from Sliema?

TEREŻA: But you said that wasn't everything.

MARIJA: Let me finish, for heaven's sake. When I let go of her hand, she's scared stiff of me, she thinks I'm going to slap her face, and she's on the point of running away. I grab her by the shoulder. 'Just a minute,' I say, 'I haven't finished with you yet. Now lift your skirt up over your knees.' She gets really frightened. 'Lift my skirt up over

TEREŻA: Oħt, kollox ġhamilt sewwa, kien ħaqqha. Imma daqqtejn messek ġhabtomlha biex tnejhilha l-ksuħat li għandha. Ma ġhedtilhiex xi ħaġa ohra?


Jinstama’ leħen minn ġewwa – Martin missierhom, ġħajjat: Terež! Tereż! Din ma tweġibx, tidher imghaddba u tgerger wahedha.

MARIJA: Għajtilha Tessy!


TEREŻA: Għajtilha Mary!

Martin jiżfaċċa mgħaddab b’idejb fuq ġenbu b’hal wieħed li ma jiʃlaḵx iżomm iżjed.

MARTIN: Isingħu wliedi, ommkom, Alla jahfrilha, Marija u Tereża kienet issejĥilkom u jiena ma bi ħsibnix noqghod nitkessaħ insejĥilkom bl-Ingliż. Hawn fejn wasalna! Mhuż biżżejjed li qed naqa’ għać-ċajt is-
'Have you gone crazy? I'm not in the habit of lifting my skirt up over my knees.' Listen to me,' I say, 'If the young ladies in town, judges' daughters, lawyers' daughters and doctors' daughters, have their skirts up over their knees, what does a country bumpkin like you think she is?' She begins to cry. 'If you don't pull your skirt up, I'll do it for you,' I say to her. 'I'll tell the parish priest about you,' she says. 'So you won't lift it,' I say to her: 'All right, let me pull it up for you!' And that's what I did. You could search this village and all the villages in Gozo, and you wouldn't find a pair of rough and filthy knees like hers! So I say to her: 'Now look at my knees. Do you see how clean they are? The ladies I worked for taught me how to dress properly and keep myself clean, you filthy pig, you rich farmer's daughter, you! Now I'll tell the parish priest about you!' 'What are you going to tell him?' she asks, with tears in her eyes. 'I'm going to tell him to buy you some soap!'

Tereža: Well done, sister, you were perfectly right. But you should have given her a smack or two to take the high and mighty look off her face. Didn't you say anything else to her?

Marija: To tell you the truth, I did think of slapping her face a couple of times before I left her, but as I was showing her my knees I caught sight of Ganni ta' Duminka watching us from behind a wall, and we both ran away. That Ganni, you know what he's like!! They may be prudes in the village, but they chase a skirt like a ferret after a rabbit.

A voice is heard from indoors. Martin, their father, calls: Terež! Terež! She does not answer, looks upset and grumbles to herself.

Marija: Call her Tessy!

Her father is heard mumbling something, but it is only possible to distinguish:

You're driving me crazy! Thank God you'll soon be married. Then he calls again: Marija! Marija! She does not answer either.

Tereža: Call her Mary!

Martin glares angrily, and puts his arms on his hips like someone at the end of his tether.

Martin: Listen, children, your mother, God rest her soul, called you Marija and Tereža, and I'm in no mind to make a fool of myself calling you by English names. Things have come to a pretty pass!! Isn't it

TEREŻA: Papà. Ma jidhirlekk li ...


TEREŻA: Imma pa ... [Tkun ser tghid papà].

MARTIN: [Jerq’a jaqtghalba kliemba] Ieqaf hemm, Pa biss. Ara żżid maghha. Sa hemm biss, Pa, – papà qatt – Qatt, qeghdinwiżmu?

MARIJA: Ġhax taf x’jidhrilna aħna ... jidhrilna li trid tara mhux x’kont imma x’int. L-għarus tieghi u ta’ Terry.

MARTIN: Tereża ... Tereża!

MARIJA: Terry! ... Terry ...

enough that I've become a laughing-stock because you call me Daddy in front of other people? And when I go to the bar for a pint, Karmnu tan-Nini says to me: 'Have a drink with us, Daddy!' And everyone burst out laughing. And when they see that they've upset me, they say that it's only a friendly joke. But, children, that's a joke that I feel here (touches his heart). I can't stand any more tongue-wagging. Now yesterday you tell me that I must start getting people to call me Mr. Martin. Children, do you want to see me drop dead with shame? Tell me, what did the people in Sliema do to you to turn your heads like this? And let me say something else, children. They tell me that when you talk to other girls, you try to show off by slipping in a few words of English, so as to appear better than they are. Tell me, did your Sliema people teach you this as well? You've got people talking about me, and if it weren't that I hope to have you married off in a fortnight's time, I'd have lost my patience and sent you both packing.

TEREŽA: Daddy, don't you think...

MARTIN: [interrupting her with a shout] Stop this Daddy, Daddy! You're not to call me Daddy again, or I'll blow up. Listen to me, children. Look at this room. [Points with his hand.] Three generations lived here before us - and don't forget, children, this house is more than two hundred years old. It always belonged to our family. In this house, no-one has ever called his father Daddy. [Shouting, as if he has taken leave of his senses]: And I'm not having you make a laughing-stock of me. Daddy, Daddy! In this house, the father has always been called Father. The most I'll allow you is to call me Dad: just Dad, do you understand, not Daddy. I used to enjoy my hour in the bar with my friends; now with all the tongue-wagging I can't go there any more.

TEREŽA: But Dad... [She is about to say Daddy.]

MARTIN: [interrupting her again] Stop right there. Just Dad. One syllable only: Dad. Never Daddy, never; do you understand?

MARIJA: You know what we think? One should see oneself as one is nowadays, not as one used to be. My fiancé and Terry's...

MARTIN: Tereža! Tereža!

MARIJA: Terry! Terry!

MARTIN: [at the top of his voice] Tere - e - ža! Tere - eža! I give up. So it's Terry you want to be called? All right, Terry you shall be. After all, I'll be rid of you in a couple of weeks. Let someone else cope with you. [Mops his brow.] What were you going to say, Marija?
MARIJA: Māry!

Jibqghu jgħajjtu bi Māry, hu Mārija, sakemm...

MARTIN: [lĉedi l-armi] Ħrabtu intom. Mela Terry u inti, ġawhra ta' qa'lbi, Māry. Mur ġib 'l ommkom, Alla jahfrilha win-nanna Gerit. [B'leħen ironiku ta' wieħed imxabba'] Mela beċċun tieghi Māry. X'kull waħda wkoll, ahjar flok nIRRabja nirdak u ngladdi kollox biċ-ċajt. Imma dem-mi ma jaghtinix. Mela Māry ta' qa'lbi kont qed tghidli...

MARIJA: Papà, kont qed nġhidlek...


MARIJA: U īsa, papà.

MARTIN: Pa, għedtlek!

Wara li jdumu stt jgħajtu l-wieħed pa u l-oħra papà hu ġċedi.


MARIJA: Kont qed inghidlek, papà, tara mhux x'kont imma x'int illum. L- ġħarajjes tagħna illum saru nies importanti. It-tnejn telgħu fil-Gvern u dalwaqt jibdew jikkmmandaw lil Malta. Ma jidhirlekk li l-gharusa ta' ragel li tela' fil-Gvern ghandha d-dritt tibda ssejjah lil missierha papà?

TEREŻA: U li inti issa għandek id-dritt tibda tissejjah is-sur Martin?

MARTIN: L-ġħarajjes tagħkom huma tfal mir-raħal. Wieħed mastrudaxxa u l-ieħor bil-ħanut. Telgħu fil-Gvern u issa saru jikkmmandaw lil Malta, kif qed tghidu. Imma, għiduli uliedi, m'għadux veru li intom ulied Martin u l-gharusa tiegħek Tereż huwa t-tifel ta' Ġamri tar-Re Rewrew u tiegħek Mārija t-tifel ta' Lonzu tax-Xatt? Allura għax telgħu fil-Gvern, nghid jiena, ma għadhomx li kienu? Hemm bżonn ninsew x'konna, Santa Mārija?
MARIJA: Mary!

They continue shouting Marija and Mary, until...

MARTIN: [surrendering] All right, you win. So you shall be Terry, and you, my pearl, shall be Mary. Thank the Lord that your mother, God rest her soul, and your grandmother Gerit are no longer with us. [Ironically, like someone who has had enough]: So you, my little dove, are Mary. So instead of getting angry, I should laugh and treat it as a joke. But it still sticks in my throat... So, Mary my dear, I was telling you...

MARIJA: Daddy, I was telling you...

MARTIN: Dad, nothing but Dad... You win half the battle, but at least let me win the other half. You shan’t win the lot. The lot wouldn’t be fair. After all, I’m not in the grave yet.

MARIJA: Get along with you, Daddy.

MARTIN: Dad, I told you!

After they carry on shouting Dad, and Daddy, he finally gives in.

MARTIN: So you’ve won this too... Take the lot, my children, take everything your poor father has left, and call me Daddy... [In the voice of a penitent, repeats three times:] Daddy. Daddy. Daddy. No, no, I shall never get used to this word. No more evening glass of wine for me in Kalang tal-Fenek’s bar, since I’ll never have the nerve to enter the place again.

MARIJA: I was telling you, Daddy, that one should see oneself not as one used to be, but as one is nowadays. Our fiancés have become important people these days. They’ve both got into the Government, and soon they’ll be running Malta. Don’t you think that the fiancée of a man who’s got into the Government has the right to start calling her father Daddy?

TEREŽA: And don’t you think that now you’ve the right to start calling yourself Mr. Martin?

MARTIN: Your fiances are village boys: one is a carpenter, and the other runs a bar. They’ve got into the Government, and now they’ve going to run Malta, so you say. But, children, tell me whether it’s not still true that you are Martin’s daughters, and that your fiancé, Tereža, is Ġamri tar-Rewrew’s son, and yours, Marija, is Lonzu tax-Xatt’s son? Just because they’ve got into the Government, aren’t they still the same people? Do we have to forget what we were, by Heaven?
MARIJA: Il-boy-friend tieghi taf x’kien ighidli, papa?

MARTIN: Il-boyfrent, binti? Dan x’ikun, ghoqol, naghga, hmar jew xkora patata, ghax jiena f’dan nifhem.

THEREZA: Boy-friend bl-Ingliż.


MARIJA: Boy-friend bl-Ingliż tfisser, kif nibda nghidlek, il-habib.

MARTIN: [Imwerwer] X’qed tghid, binti? Mela qed titlef rasek? Ma tafx li int gharusa? U x’isir minni u minnek jekk jisma’ l-gharush tieghek li kellék habib?

MARIJA: U fejn sejjer b’rasek, papà. Dan boy-friend biss taf.

MARTIN: Imma x’inhu sewwa gidli boyfrent? Ghax gibtuli ghajnejja wara widnejja.

MARIJA: Fejn naf, biex ma tiddejqaqx ikkolok boy tifel, mhux tifel żgħir tafx, ġuvni, nghidu aħna grazzjuz li toħrog mieghu.

MARTIN: [Irodd is-slalebl] U din il-moda ġdida tghallimtuha minn għand is-sinjur ta’ tas-Sliema wkoll, binti?


MARTIN: [Ironiku] Mela inti kellék bojfrent, Tereża, ġawhra ta’ qalbi?

THEREZA: Kelli u ma jiddispjaċinix daqs kemm kien kien gustuż.

MARTIN: Hux! U int Marija?

MARIJA: Mela jiena aghar minn ħaddiehor jew aghar minn oħti. Jiena wkoll kellì boy friend.

MARTIN: Tajjeb wisq ... qed tagħtuni gost ta’ mitt skud. U l-gharajjes taghkum, l-imsejknin gharajjes li ser jibdew jikkmandaw lil Malta u ’l Ghawdex, jafu b’dan?
MARIJA: Daddy, do you know what my boy-friend used to say to me?

MARTIN: Bajfrent, daughter? That could be a calf, a sheep, a donkey or a sack of potatoes, for all I know.

TEREŻA: Boy-friend’s an English word.

MARTIN: [losing his temper] So you don’t know that your father doesn’t speak English? Why do you have to show off at my expense as well? Isn’t it enough that you show off in front of strangers?

MARIJA: As I was starting to explain to you, boy-friend in English means a young man.

MARTIN: [shocked] What are you saying, daughter? Have you gone out of your mind? Don’t you know you’re engaged? What will happen to us if your fiancé hears you had a young man?

MARIJA: What on earth are you thinking of, Daddy? He was only a boy-friend, you know.

MARTIN: You make my hair stand on end with this talk about bajfrents.

MARIJA: As I see it, you have a boy-friend so that you won’t get bored – not a young boy, you understand, but a young man – and you’re very pleased to go out with him.

MARTIN: [crosses himself] And this is another new custom you learned from the ladies in Sliema, daughter?

TEREŻA: What are you so surprised about, Daddy? Miss Nelly, Mrs. Briffa’s daughter, where I worked, had a boy-friend too. Her father and mother knew about it, and never said a word to her. And they were Church people, you know – much better than us, they used to go to Confession every week. In any case, what’s wrong with having a boy-friend? Doesn’t everyone need someone to talk to? On your own, nothing but work, you eat your heart out...

MARTIN: [ironically] So you had a bajfrent, Tereža, my pearl.

TEREŻA: Certainly I had, and I don’t regret it, he was so sweet...

MARTIN: Indeed. And you, Marija?

MARIJA: So I’m uglier than other people, and uglier than my sister, am I? Of course I had a boy-friend.

MARTIN: Very fine indeed... you delight me. And your fiancés, the poor fiancés who are going to run Malta and Gozo, they know about this?
MARIJA u TEREZA: Ara ma tohroglokx xi kelma. Għax li ma ġieξ id-diskors lanqas lilek ma konna nuru.

TEREZA: [Ghal oħta] Dil-ħmar tlablab wisq.

MARTIN: Uliedi, qed nara li ahna n-nies tar-raħal konna lura wisq. Intom mindu ħالتu setfuri man-nies ta’ tas-Sliema sirti fini u puliti wisq. Isimgħuni daqsxejn kif kienu jaħsbuha n-nisa ta’ dari ... Isimgħuni, wliedi u ara tghidu xi kelma qabel nieqaf jiena.

MARIJA: In-nies ta’ dari? ... dari miet ... Illum id-dinja tbiddlet ... Mela ġhaħna ginbqghu bħan-nisa ta’ dari ... bicie ta’ qlugħ ta’ ghon-nella ma thalli lil ħadd jara min ikun warajk u dublett ikaxkar sa saqajhom? ... Baqax! Id-dinja titbiddel u ahna nibqghu fejn konna?


MARIJA: Miskin ...

TEREZA: Illum mhux hekk ...


TEREZA: Hi xi dwejjaq! Mur għidilhom hekk lis-sinjurini ta’ tas-Sliema ... l-aktar meta tibda tagħmel is-shana u kulpadd joħrog jippassiggga Ghar id-Dud.
MARIJA AND TEREŽA: See that you don’t let out a whisper. If we hadn’t had this argument, you wouldn’t have heard anything about it.

TEREŽA: [indicating her sister] This donkey can’t keep her mouth shut.

MARTIN: Children, you make me realise how old-fashioned we villagers are. Since you’ve been in service in Sliema, you’ve become quite the young ladies. Listen to me for a bit, and I’ll tell you how girls used to behave in the old days. Listen to me, children, and don’t interrupt until I’ve finished.

MARIJA: In the old days? The old days are dead. The world’s different now. So you want us to remain like the girls in the old days... wrapped up in a faldetta like a sail so you can’t see who’s behind you, and a skirt trailing round your ankles? Not on your life! The world is changing, and we should stand still!

MARTIN: So that’s what you think, children? All right, think what you like, but if you’ll let me, I’ll tell you how we used to behave in the village and how a lot of us still behave today, those who haven’t become high and mighty like you. Bring a couple of chairs, and sit down beside me for a bit. [They do so.] Listen to me. When I was twenty-five, I saw your mother for the first time. She was going to church. A beautiful girl. Strong as they make them. I was taken with her from the first. When she saw me looking at her, she began to look at me as well. But her mother, Grandmother Gerit, God rest her soul, noticed. And I couldn’t talk to her face to face.

MARIJA: Poor Daddy!

TEREZA: It’s not like that these days.

MARTIN: I know, I know it’s not like that these days. So what was I to do? I spoke to Ganna tal-Bubun, the match-maker, and told her that if she negotiated with Toni ta’ Dovik for his daughter, and the marriage went through, I’d give her five dollars. The next week, she told me that she’d spoken for me to the mother. She hesitated at first, but eventually said it would be all right. So I began to visit them. They never left me alone with her, Grandmother Gerit was always on guard. She didn’t trust me for a minute, although no-one had ever been able to say a bad word about me. After a while the match was arranged. I gave her the ring and she gave me the kerchief. But we never went out alone; we always had Grandmother Gerit watching us.

TEREZA: How boring! Go and tell that to the young ladies in Sliema! Especially when it’s spring, and everyone’s parading at Ghar id-Dud.
MARTIN: Imbagħad wara xi  żmien iżżewwiġna ... kellna tieg sabih. Imma wara t-tieġ damet ditt ijiem ma ġiet toqghod mieghi ... [Wara ftit] U issa kif triduni, uliedi, nieħu gost meta nisma’ lilkom tghiduli bil-boj-frent, wil-ħafna ksuħat ta’ papà, Sur Martin u x’naʃ jiena? Uliedi, intom ma tixbhu xejn lil ommkom ... tbiddiltu ... bil-kemm nista’ nemmen li intom tieghi ... Li kieku ommkom ma mitetx żgħira u ħal-lietni nħhabbat wiċċi magħkom wahdi, kieku bhal issa ...

MARIJA: [Taqtqaghlu kliemu] Miskina l-mamà ...

MARTIN: [Jitlagħlu. Iqum minn fuq is-siggu u jghajjal] X’mamà mamà! Kieku bhal issa qieghda tismagħkom u tista’ tqum mill-qabar kienet toħrog għalikom u tħabbatkom ras ma’ ras! ...

Marija u Tereża bhal jaħbu jibżgħu minnu. Jitwarrau.

MARTIN: [lkompli] Imma issa li hemm hemm. Jiena illum jaqbilli li ma naqlax inkwiet biex tistgħu tiżżewgu ...

Marija tbuslu idu. Martin juriba idu mċapsa bil-lipstick. Wara ftit donnu qag had jahsibha x’ighidilha...

MARTIN: Marija,  għandek tkun illum ċappast ḡafna tadam maż-żejt ma’ xuſftejk?

Tereża taqbad tidḥak.


MARIJA: Da1waqt il-ħdax ...

TEREŻA: Hi, x’waħda din, dalwaqt jaslu ...

MARTIN: Il-ħin dieħel. L-ġharajjes tagħkom bil-mistednin ftit ieħor jkunu
MARTIN: After a while we got married. We had a fine wedding. But after the wedding it was three days before she came to live with me. [After a pause:] And now, children, you expect me to be happy when I hear you talking about boyfriends and your twaddle about Daddy, Mr. Martin and I don't know what else? Children, you're not a bit like your mother. You've changed: I can hardly believe you're mine. If your mother hadn't died when she was still young, and left me to struggle with you on my own, perhaps now...

MARIJA: [interrupting him] Poor Mummy!

MARTIN: [loses his temper, jumps up from his chair and shouts] What's this Mummy, Mummy? If she heard you now and could rise from her grave, she'd make a bee-line for you and knock your two heads together.

Marija and Tereza start to look scared. They draw away from him.

MARTIN: [finally] Well, it's no good crying over spilt milk. There's no point in my getting upset now, since you're going to get married...

Marija kisses his hand. Martin shows her his hand covered with lipstick. After a pause, during which he seems at a loss what to say to her...

MARTIN: Marija, you've forgotten to wipe the tomato paste off your mouth.

Tereza bursts out laughing.

MARIJA: [annoyed that her sister is laughing at her] Daddy, haven't you noticed Tereza's lips? Are mine the only ones in sight? Look how hers are covered with lipstick like mine.

MARTIN: [angrily] Come here, both of you. [They approach him timidly.] Certainly I noticed Tereza's lips. This is getting too much of a good thing. I warn you, I won't stand for it. [As he says this, he takes hold of their hair and bangs their heads together. Marija and Tereza shriek. He lets them go, and starts to leave. When he reaches the door, he turns and speaks to them.] Now, don't cry over spilt milk. I mustn't spoil the party, and give people the satisfaction of seeing things go wrong. Today it's my job and yours to see that your marriages go through. Your job, so as to get a husband, and mine so that I can be rid of you. [To Marija:] What's the time?

MARIJA: Nearly eleven.

TEREZA: What a thing, they'll be here any minute.

MARTIN: It's nearly time. Your young men and their friends will soon be
hawn. Lestu l-mejda — Qis li ma taghmlux xi xenata li tista' thassar l-ghenusija ghax dik tkun l-akbar disgrazzja tieghi ... qassmu l-misstednin ta' Marija naha u ta' Tereža ohra, ghax Alla jbierek l-gharajjes taghkom wil-mistednin lanqas huma tal-istess partit u qis li ma ċin-bux lil xulxin ... biex isehh il-partit u wara hmistax ohra k'Alla jrid titilquli minn hawn ħa noqghod wahi ... Jiena sejjer fil-kċina nieħu hsieb il-borma [Jobrog].

Tereža: X'kull wahda, illum il-papà ġhamilhielna. Kemm baqa' lura!
Marija: U mhux int ilsienek twil?
Tereža: Ilsienek twil int. Dan x'għandu x'jaqsam?
Marija: X'ridt tghidlu bil-boy-friend? Ma tafx in-nies tar-raħal kemm huma skruplużi?
Tereža: Ma għandekx xi tghid? Mela int ma ftaħartx bil-boy friend tieghek ukoll?
Marija: Imma int semmejtu l-ewwel, ja paċpaċa li int.
Tereža: Paċpaċa int. Ara ma nghidlekx!

Iltnejn dejjem jisthnu għal xulxin – leħenbom jogħla sa twerżiqa.
Marija: Trid titfa' l-htija fuqi, ja paċpaċa?
Tereža: Paċpaċa int għax lanqas taf xi tkun qed tghid.
Marija: Jiena għandi għaqal biex nixtrik u nbighek. Għalhekk mas-sinjuri dejjem kont stmata, mhux bhalek!
Marija: Jiena mas-sinjuri qatt ma ħadd kunfidenza. M'iniex wieċċi tost!

Tereža: Ajma min qed jitkellem! Qed tghid hekk għax għajjura. Lilli ssinjur kien iżommni niekol fil-mejda mas-sinjura.
Marija: Għas-sabih wieċċek!
Tereža: Xi trid tghid bih dan il-kliem? [Idejha f'wieċba].
Marija: Nerga' nghidlek, għas-sabih wieċċek!
Tereža: [Idejha pommijiet ma' wieċ Marija] Ghidli xi trid tfisser, qed inghidlek għax sa niggranfak.
here. Get the table ready. And mind you don't create a scene and ruin the engagement — that would be my final disgrace. Put Marija's guests on one side and Tereža's on the other, for, Heaven help us, your young men and their friends are on opposite sides of the fence when it comes to politics, and you must be careful not to let them quarrel. We've got to make a success of the betrothal, and in a fortnight, God willing, you'll be off my hands and I'll be on my own... I'm off to the kitchen to see to the food. [Exit.]

TEREŽA: Dear me, how Daddy carried on today! What an old fogey he is.

MARIJA: What did you want to open your big mouth for?

TEREŽA: Big mouth yourself. What's that supposed to mean?

MARIJA: What did you want to mention boy-friends for? You know what prudes they are in the village.

TEREŽA: Who are you to talk? Weren't you showing off about your boy-friend as well?

MARIJA: You mentioned it first, big mouth.

TEREŽA: Big mouth yourself! You just listen to me.

_They start to lose their temper, and their voices get shrill._

MARIJA: So you're trying to put the blame on me, big mouth?

TEREŽA: Big mouth yourself! Why don't you watch what you're saying.

MARIJA: I've got more brains than two of you put together. Where I worked, they appreciated me — not like you.

TEREŽA: They appreciated you, did they? So that's why you ate all by yourself in the kitchen.

MARIJA: I never took liberties with the family. I have my pride, not like some other people.

TEREŽA: Look who's talking! You only say that because you're jealous. In my house, the master always invited me to sit at the table with madam.

MARIJA: All for the sake of your blue eyes!

TEREŽA: What do you mean by that? [Raises her hand.]

MARIJA: I tell you, all for the sake of your blue eyes!

TEREŽA: [shaking her fist in Marija's face] Just you tell me what you mean by that, or I'll scratch your eyes out.

MARTIN: Sa tisktu, ja żewġ imgiener! Dalwaqt jiġu l-gharajjes taghkum u jekk isinu jafu x'żewġ angli fikom, kemm tinhabbu, kemm intom bil-għaqal, nibżα' li jisfratta kollox u tibqgħuli ma' wiċċi. [Lil Marija]
Żgur inti bdejtha dix-xenata! Taf għax ma naghtikomx xebgħa bastun ...

Marija u Tereża jtitlu 'l xulxin, jirrandaw xagħarhom u kwejjighom jitnaddlu u jlestu għall-gharajjes, sektin. Martin jarga' johrog jonfo b. Jqogħdu bi kwiethom sa kemm ...

MARIJA: Int dejjem tobghodni ... anki missieri ma jaħmilnix ... lili biss ra ...

TEREŻA: Owqghod, ja mikduda.
MARIJA: Kulladd bil-preferenzi. Anki fid-dota jiena mort l-agħar.

TEREŻA: Ara ma nghidlekx. It-tomna raba' tas-Sinet li ħadit int ahjar minn tieghi ...


TEREŻA: Imma tieghek fiha iżjed minn tomna.

MARIJA: Tomna biss fiha ... tomna biss, taf ...

TEREŻA: Fiha iżjed ...

MARIJA: Hallina minnek. Jien mort l-aghjar ...


MARIJA: Ghid fiex mort l-aghjar.

Idumu jghajjtu bekk wiċċ imb-wiċċ. Imieru lil xulxin sakemm jerğghu jaqbdlu f'xagħar xulxin. Twerżiq.

MARTIN: [Jghajjat minn ġewwa] Ja xjaten li intom, sa tisktu ... jekk tinharaqli l-patata mhabba fikom noqtolkom it-tnejn ...

Marija u Tereża jinfirdu minn xulxin. Għal darba oħra jirrandaw xagħarhom u jerğghu jaqbdlu jiffaċendjaw sakemm tarġa' taqbad ...

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MARIJA: You really want to know? All right, I'll tell you. [As she says this, she seizes her by the hair. Her sister seizes her hair as well. Great commotion. Their father comes running in with a stick in his hand.]

MARTIN: Quiet, you two devils. Your fiancés are coming any moment, and if they realise what a pair of angels you are, how fond you are of each other, how bright you are, I'm afraid everything will be ruined and I'll be left with you on my hands. [To Marija:] To be sure, you started all this. Just you explain to me why I shouldn't give you a good bearing with this stick.

Marija and Tereža separate, tidy their hair and their clothes, and in silence start to clear up and get things ready for the guests. Martin goes out again, breathing heavily. They remain silent, until...

MARIJA: You've always hated me. Even my father doesn't care for me. He's always had eyes only for you.

TEREŽA: Pipe down, you poor misunderstood thing.

MARIJA: Everyone's unfair to me. Even with my dowry I've done worse than you.

TEREŽA: Who's talking? The tas-Sinet field you got is far better than mine.

MARIJA: The Marzena field I got is full of stones. I've every right to complain.

TEREŽA: But yours is over a tumolo.

MARIJA: It's just one tumolo, I tell you.

TEREŽA: It's bigger.

MARIJA: You're talking rubbish, I came off worst.

TEREŽA: What do you mean, you came off worst? I came off worst.

MARIJA: You tell me how you came off worst.

They continue shouting in each other's faces, and get more and more furious with each other, until once more they start pulling each other's hair. Commotion.

MARTIN: [shouts from inside] Be quiet, you devils. If you make me bum the potatoes I'll murder the pair of you.

Marija and Tereža separate. They tidy their hair again and busy themselves about the room, until it starts again...
TEREŻA: Dejjem tigbed lejk. Kollox trid ghalik. Il-fardan tan-nanna Gerit mhux int ħadha?
MARIJA: Wid-dublett ta’ mitt lembuba tan-nanna Gerit min ħaddu?
TEREŻA: Ajma ħej. Sa nilbes id-dublett ta’ mitt lembuda u mmur nippassigga Għar id-Dud bih, arani. Dak x’jiswa?
MARIJA: Mela ma jiswiex! Dak antikità. Mur bieghu biex tara x’iddahħal tieghu.
TEREŻA: U ħallina minnek ...
MARIJA: U żgur, ma sibt xi tghid issa, lċ-cappetti taz-zija Żabbera min ħadhom?
TEREŻA: Antikalja. Għax ma tghidliix min ħa l-imsielet taz-zija Marinton?
MARIJA: Hadthom jiena. Ma jiswewx ħabba.
TEREŻA: Kemm int ta’ sebghek f’halqek!
MARIJA: Daqskemm int ta’ sebghek f’halqek int. Il-polka tan-nannu min ħadha?
TEREŻA: Għax ma ssaqsix min ħa ċ-cintill tan-nannu u dak il-ġmiel ta’ ġarikor?
MARIJA: Kiesha. Taf x’imissek tghid, min ħa l-ġisirana tal-mamà – dik tiswa ħafna flusu.
TEREŻA: Il-ġiżirina, jekk johġbok, ħadtha jiena u dik mhix ġejja minn tal-mamà imma xtrajtha jien bi flusi.
MARIJA: Giddieba!
TEREŻA: Giddieba int u min ħgid li ma ġintix!
MARIJA: Iva eh, jiena giddieba? Mela ħalli nurikjiniex giddieba.


MARTIN: Demonji – Ma ghedtilkomx li l-gharajjes taghkom dalwaqt jaslu? Ma tafux toqoghdu bi kwierkom ġhal frit? [jiṭlaqilhom xagħarhom]. Isimghuni, uliedi, jekk dan iż-żwieġ jisfratta jiena nsiefer jew mmur naqbeż minn x’imkien ... Jekk dan iż-żwieġ jisfratta ma ssibux rągel iehor li jehodkom. Tafu kemm siefru rgiel dis-sena? ... Ma ssaqsunix?
TEREŽA: You're always drawing attention to yourself. You want everything for yourself. Wasn't it you who got Granny Gerit's bedspread?

MARIJA: And who got Granny Gerit's skirt with the hundred pleats in it?

TEREŽA: Lord love us! Can't you just see me parading in the evening at Ghar id-Dud wearing a skirt with a hundred pleats in it? You think that's worth anything?

MARIJA: What do you mean, anything? It's an antique. You just see how much you'll get for it if you sell it.

TEREŽA: That's enough from you.

MARIJA: Naturally, you can't find anything to say. Who got Aunt Žabetta's bracelets?

TEREŽA: Old rubbish. Why don't you tell me who got Aunt Marinton's earrings?

MARIJA: I got them. They're not worth a farthing.

TEREŽA: What an innocent you are, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth!

MARIJA: Innocent yourself! Who got Grandfather's watch chain?

TEREŽA: Why don't you ask who got Grandmother's pendant, and that fine chain?

MARIJA: You've got a nerve! You should have asked who got Mummy's necklace — it's worth a packet.

TEREŽA: The necklace, if you please, came to me, and it wasn't left to me by Mummy, I bought it from her with my own money.

MARIJA: Liar!

TEREŽA: Liar yourself. Everyone knows you're a liar.

MARIJA: So I'm a liar, am I? I'll show you who's a liar.

They pull one another's hair again. Commotion. Their father comes running in breathing heavily, with a pair of bellows in his hand. He gives each of them a slap on the behind. Then, grasping each of them by the hair, he once more scolds them angrily.

MARTIN: You devils! Didn't I tell you that your two fiancés will be here any minute? Can't you keep quiet for one moment? [Let's go their hair.] Listen, children, if this engagement gets broken off, I'll emigrate or go and throw myself over a cliff. If it's broken off, you won't find another man to take you. Do you know how many men have emi-
... nghidilkom jien ... Dawn l-aħħar snien siefru daqskemm hawn nies Ghawdex kollu ... hekk qalli Mstru Karm ... U taf x'qalli Mstru Karm ukoll? ... qalli li dalwaqt jasal iż-żmien li ghal kull ġuwni jkun hawn sitt xebbiet ... Jekk dan iż-zwieġ jisfratta tibqgħu ma' wiċċi ... u jiena mbagħad ma nafx x'isir minn ... 


MARTIN: [Lil Tereża] Tereža, gie Ġużepp.

ĠUŻEPP: Ġejna kmieni għandu jkun ...

MARTIN: [Iressaq lil Tereža li tagħmel ta' bir-rubha qed tisthị] Hawn Ġużepp, Tereža, ilha tistenniek. Jahasra tħobbok wisq. Imma baqghet misthija ħafna avolja għamlitha man-nies ...


TEREŻA: [Titbissimlu grixtija grixtija u minn taħt il-sien tghidlu mħejma] Kuntenta ħafna ... Imma ...

ĠUŻEPP: Hemm xi imma, Terež? Mhux biżżejjed taqtaqtli qalbi sa għedtli iva? ... Ma għadekx bil-ħsieb ts' xi Malti hux? [Bid-dahka].

TEREŻA: Tridx tmur! Ġuż, mela aħna tal-istess drawwiet tal-Maltin. Jiena lilek ħabbejt, lilek biss. Imma qalbi sewda għax ser ikolli nħalli lil papa ... u lil ohti Marija ... ma tafx, ħajja g'dida ... ħsebijiet godda ... meta tiżżewweġ toħroġ mid-dar ghal kollox.

ĠUŻEPP: U la tinkwetax. Aħna mhux fejn missierek ser inkunu noqghdu?

MARTIN: Dak il-post tal-pjazza imbieghed imma aħjar minn dak li ġawm fejni. Ma qbiltux fuq il-kera?

ĠUŻEPP: Xi qbilna ... tawh rigal ta' ħamsin lira u ħadhuli ... mhux għax ma kontx raġel naghtih ħamsin lira rigal imma ma ridtux jiskappriċ-čani.

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grated this year? Why don’t you ask me? I’ll tell you. These last few years, as many men have emigrated as there are people in the whole of Gozo. That’s what Teacher Karm told me. And do you know what else Teacher Karm said? He told me that soon the time will come when there’ll be six girls to every young man... If this wedding doesn’t come off, you’ll be left on my hands... and then I don’t know what will become of me...

*There is a knock at the door. The girls quickly tidy themselves and go on with their work as if nothing had happened.*

**MARTIN [to Tereža]: Tereža, here’s Gužepp.**

**Gužepp:** It looks as if we’ve arrived early.

**MARTIN [bringing him over to Tereža, who pretends to be shy]:** Here’s Gužepp. Tereža’s been waiting for you for such a long time. Poor thing, she’s so much in love with you! But she’s still very shy, even though she’s been away working.

**Gužepp [takes Tereža by the hand, squeezes it and asks her]:** Happy, Tereža? Everything’s all right? For five years I’ve been dreaming about you. When you were away working in Malta I hardly saw anything of you, except for the odd occasion when you came to visit your father. Now that’s all finished with. Two weeks more, and we’ll be married. Happy, Tereža?

**Tereža [smiles at him coyly and whispers coaxingly]:** Very happy. But...

**Gužepp:** What’s the ‘but’ about, Tereža? Aren’t you satisfied with torturing me until you said yes? [Laughing] You’re not still thinking about some young man in Malta?

**Tereža:** Get along with you, Guž. Do you think we behave like the people in Malta? It’s you I love, and you alone. But I’m sad at having to leave Daddy... and my sister Marija... surely you understand? A new life – new responsibilities – when you get married, you leave home for good.

**Gužepp:** Now don’t you worry. After all, aren’t we going to be just next door to your father?

**MARTIN [horribly]:** That other house in the square is further away, but it’s much better than the one near me. Do you mean to say you haven’t yet settled about the rent?

**Gužepp:** How could I settle about the rent? Someone gave him fifty pounds key money and cut me out... Not that I couldn’t have paid fifty pounds, mind you, but I wasn’t going to let him pull a fast one on me.
MARTIN: [Rassenjat] Tkun maghmula l-volontà t'Alla ... [Lil Tereža] Mur aghiti daqqa ta' ghajn dak il-ghaġin u l-patata ...

TEREŻA: [Toħroġ. Hi u hierġa thares lura lejn Ġużepp. Tarab dahru lejha u bil-mod tghid lil Marija] Inkedd; tiegħek mhux mghaggel jigi jarak.

Marija tghaqqad il-ponn minn taht u Tereża titlaq 'il barra. Imma dak il-ħin tinstama' taħbita oħra fuq in-naha l-ōhra tal-bieb. Martin imur jiʃta b.


TEREŻA: Mela ma għidtulhomx li l-partit kien ser isir tar-mejn f'daqqa?

MARIJA: Papà, x'għamiltilna?

MARTIN [in a voice of resignation]: Ah well, God's will be done. [To Tereža] Go and look at the pasta and the potatoes.

Tereža: [Leaves. As she goes out, she looks back at Gužep and seeing that he has his back to her she says softly to Marija] You'd better watch out; yours is in no hurry to come and see you.

Marija clenches her fist and Tereža goes out. However, at that instant another knock is heard at the second door. Martin goes to open.

Martin: Karlu's arrived. Come in. Marija, your fiancé's here as well. Now we're all together, one happy family.

Marija goes to greet him and bids him welcome. But Karlu, after taking her hand, glares across the room at Gužep. Gužep glares back from the other side. Apparently neither had been expecting the other. Pause, until Tereža returns and goes to join her fiancé.

Martin [confused]: Don't glare at one another like that, as if you were going to eat each other.

Tereža: What, you didn't tell them that both the parties would take place together?

Marija: Daddy, what have you done to us?

Martin: Children, I didn't say anything to them. [To Karlu:] Now, you just sit down here. [To Gužep:] And you here. Tereža, you sit next to Gužep, and Marija, you next to Karlu. [Clears his throat like someone who has difficulty in explaining himself.] No, I didn't tell them I was going to invite them both together. When I spoke to Karlu, I realised he couldn't stand the sight of Gužep. [Gužep starts to rise and clenches his fist. Tereža pushes him back onto his chair.] Listen to me, children. Don't get mad at each other. If anyone's to blame for your unexpected meeting, it's me. Do you know why I brought you here together? I brought you together because I can't bear to think that my two daughters, who have always been brought up loving one another and who have always been together, should start to hate each other when they get married. So, I said to myself, Marija, who if she buys a bar of chocolate can't swallow it unless she gives a piece to her sister, and Tereža, who if she buys a pound of nougat at the village festa always buys another pound for her sister, she loves her so much, when they get married, is this love to be lost, and instead of loving one another, are they to start hating each other? For we know that if the husband of one can't stand the husband of the other, then the family will start quarrelling, and I

Marija: [Tagħid lil missierha mifxul ukoll] Jaqaw din biċċa oħra tieghekk?

Martin: [Iqaħqah griżmu u jghid] Biċċa oħra tiegħi għall-ġid ta' kulħadd. U mhux minn rasi, tafux. Ridt nagħmlilkom ... ridt nagħmlilkom ... x'kelma qalli l-kappillan ... [B'sebgħu fuq naghsu] Iwa, ridt nagħmlilkom sorspriża ... Lill-Kappillan għeddlu kemm kont inkwitat għax ulie-di kienu ser jiexdu żewġ guvintur mill-ahjar, ma ssibx bħalhom jekk iddur Ġhawdex kollu, imma mbagħad ħej, ma jahmlux lil xulxin qishom kelb u qattus. Il-Kappillan, qallli, għandi ħasba. Ismagħni, Martin ... Qalli laqqa' l-għarajjies ta' uliedek fil-ġumata tal-partit ma' xulxin mingħajr ma jkunu jafu wieħed bl-ieħor ... aġħmel partit wieħed ... u stieden tlieta mill-bbieb tagħhom għall-festa ... bla preferenzi, biex ħadd ma jkollu xi jghid; dik ġumata ta' ferħ u żgur jagħmlu bbieb. Jekk ma jagħmlux, mela lix-xebbiet tieghek ma jħobbuhomx biżżejjed.
didn’t want that. And if there are little ones, when Tereza, if God wills, has ten children like her mother, and Marija has ten others, are these children too to start squabbling when they meet one another? After all, what’s all the fighting about? Just because you are candidates of two opposing parties? The Yellow Party is against the Green Party. But Martin’s two girls are not against each other. So why should their husbands be against each other? That’s why I brought you together here without saying anything to you. Now you tell me whether I did right or not.

For a time there is a dead silence, until eventually Karlu gets to his feet and offers his hand to Guzepp. The latter grips it, and they embrace like two friends. Moved, Tereza and Marija embrace as well. Martin wipes his eyes. Knocking is heard at the two doors through which Karlu and Guzepp entered. Marija and Tereza go to open them, each on her own side. Through the door from which Karlu entered there appear one after the other his brother Toni, a policeman on leave, the village schoolmaster, and Fredu and Wigi, another Yellow Party candidate, whilst through the door from which Guzepp entered there appear the village doctor, Pawlu and Karmnu, two other candidates of the Green Party. Martin shakes hands with each of them, beaming. But it seems that the one group of friends was not expecting the other. With the exception of the schoolmaster and the doctor, who step forward and greet each other, the others remain speechless and look as if they would like to attack one another. Embarrassing silence. Tereza and Marija look helplessly at each other, not knowing how to start the conversation, until...

Marija [speaks to her father, who also looks helpless]: I suppose this is another of your bright ideas.

Martin [clears his throat and speaks]: Yes, this is another of my ideas for helping everyone. And, mark you, I didn’t think it up on my own. I wanted it... I wanted it... now what was that word the parish priest used? [With his finger to his forehead,] Yes, I wanted it to be impromptu. I told the parish priest how unhappy I was, because my children were going to marry two of the finest young men, finer than any you’ll find in the whole of Gozo, who none the less fight like cats and dogs. The parish priest says to me: ‘I’ve got an idea. Listen to me, Martin,’ he says, ‘invite both your daughters’ fiancés together to one party, without either of them knowing... Have just one party, and invite three of their friends to the celebration – no discrimination, then no one can complain. This will be a day of rejoicing, and they’re bound to make it up. If they don’t, it will mean that they don’t
U mexxiet, għax araw Ġużepp u Karlu ħadu b’id xulxin u jiena ferħan ħafna. Biex ħadd ma jkollu xi jgħid stedint tnejn tal-iskola wkoll - lis-Sumast mal-ħbieb ta’ Karlu u lit-tabib mal-ħbieb ta’ Ġużepp. Issa għiduli intom għamiltx tajjeb jew le.

**Ġużepp u Karlu jedduha wieħed b’id u l-ieħor b’ohra, sinjal li l-ħasba tiegħu mexxiet.**

**TABIB:** U lill-Kappillan ma stedintux, Martin?

**MARTIN:** Stedintu. Imma taf x’qalli, Qalli, Martin, li kont nista’ ninqasam fi tnejn kieku nofs li kont mmur mal-ħbieb ta’ Karlu win-nofs l-ieħor mal-ħbieb ta’ Ġużepp. Imma billi ma nistax ninqasam l-ajjar ma nigix. – U din x’fiha, għedtlu, Sur Kappillan? Ser joqgħdu jaraw?

**KARLU:** Sewwa għedtlu. Dal-biża’ għalfiejn?

**ĠUŻEPP:** Tassew. Dal-kappillan x’haseb li ċiha, tghid?


**KARLU:** Ara, Martin kliem il-kappillan ma għoġobni xejn. Dak li qal hu ma ġgħoddx għall-partit tas-Sofor ... il-partit tagħna partit tal-irġiel ... [Kif tghid hekk shabu, Fredu u Wiġi jinqalghu lejn in-naha tiegħu, iġbidu Sewwa qed tghid – Il-partit tas-Sofor partit tal-galantomi eċċ.]

**ĠUŻEPP:** [Jishon] Isma’ jiena ma għandix ħajta f’ilsieni ... jekk qed tghid li l-partit tal-Hodor mhux partit tal-galantoni, nghidlekk li ma intix galantom int u lanqas niesek ... Shabu, Pawlu u Karmnu jersqu lejn in-naha tiegħu u l-erbgħa jharsu bl-ikreb lejn xulxin ...
love your daughters enough. And it came off, for you can see Gużepp and Karlu shaking hands, and you can imagine how happy I am. So that no one could complain, I invited two educated gentlemen as well – the schoolmaster with Karlu’s friends and the doctor with Gużepp’s friends. Now tell me whether I did right or not.

Gużepp and Karlu take each other by the hand, to show that the idea has succeeded.

DOCTOR: And you didn’t invite the parish priest, Martin?

MARTIN: Certainly I invited him. But do you know what he said? ‘Martin,’ he says, ‘if I could cut myself in two, one half would go with Karlu’s friends and the other half with Gużepp’s friends. But since I’m indivisible, I’d better not go.’ ‘So what, Your Reverence?’ I say to him, ‘who’s going to take any notice?’

KARLU: Quite right. What’s he frightened of?

GUZEPP: Certainly. What sort of people does this parish priest think we are?

MARTIN: Well, children, do you know what he said? He takes a box of matches out of his pocket like this. He asks me: ‘Do you see this match?’ [Martin matches his actions to his words.] ‘Now, watch me,’ he says. He lights the match. ‘You see how the match catches fire as soon as it touches the box?’ he says. ‘Sure I see, Your Reverence,’ I say. ‘Martin,’ he says, ‘that’s just how the two parties catch fire when they touch each other, or somebody touches them. Now, I’m afraid of fire. I’ve got a new cassock, and I don’t want it to get burned.’ ‘What do you mean by that, Your Reverence?’ I ask him. ‘Martin,’ he says, ‘your daughters are going to marry the two finest lads in the village, but they’ll murder each other on account of politics. They’re both easily provoked, and if you please one of them, the other gets mad with you.’

KARLU: Look here, Martin, I don’t like this parish priest’s talk at all. What he said doesn’t apply to the Yellow Party. We’re a party of gentlemen. [As he speaks, his friends Fredu and Wigi move to his side, saying:] Quite right, the Yellows are a party of gentlemen, etc.

GUZEPP [excitedly]: Listen, I’m not one to mince my words. If you’re suggesting that the Greens are not a party of gentlemen, then I say that you’re not a gentleman yourself, neither you nor your people.

His friends Pawlu and Karmnu move to his side and the four of them glare angrily at each other.
MARTIN: Jaḥasra, x'ghamil b'idejja! ... dik kienet ẓajta ... ẓajta tal-kappillan ... ẓajta biss ... Isa, surmast, tabib, jaḥasra, ġhidu kelma ġħall-ġid ... thalluhomx ġħassru festi ...


TABIB: [Lil Ġuzepp]: Iva narrak imbierek, jiena ġejt ferhan li ser nieh u qatra u int ser taħmel dix-xenata? Isa, ġerġħu ġudu b'idejn xulxin.

KARLU: Mhxu dak il-kiesaħ beda?

TEREŻA: Bdejt int u jekk jgħeqbok lill-ġħarus tiegh tiegħi tghidlux kiesaħ.

MARIJA: Ġ'ax ma ssikketx ilsienek, ja ġmara li int. Mhxu l-ġħarus tiegħek beda?

MARTIN: [Jonfok u ġhajtal] Uliedi, ser ġħassru kollox ... [It-tabib wis-surmast ifittux jiberrduhom waqt li l-oħrajn jibqgħu ġħarsu lejn xulxin domnhom ġiridu jiekhlu wiehed lil ġebor]

TEREŻA: Lili tghid ġmara? Lili, ja kiesha. Ejj a ġa notik jiniex ġmara ... [Kif tghid hekk tmur taqbad f'xuxet oħtha ... Martin jagħti fuq rasu jghajjat, Ifirduhom ... ser ġħassru kollox ... Karlu u Ġużep ġjommu kull wiehed l-ġħarusa tiegħu. Ghal ġtit taqa' sikta kbira, Imbagħad ...]

MARTIN: [B'lehen miksur] Ara x'kelli nara ġllum ... u dan mħabba daqsxejn ta' ẓajta ... din l-inghamharqa politka ... Karlu, Ġużep, ġgieħ Alla, ejjew ġudu b'id xulxin ... ejjew ... uliedi, ġhidulhom jieħdu b'id xulxin. Agħmluhom paċi ...

SURMAST: [Iressaq lil Marija lejn Karlu waqt li t-tabib iressaq lil Tereża ġdejn Ġużep] Inti Tereża, aqbad b'idejn Ġużep u inti, Marija, b'idejn Karlu. [Karlu u Ġużep jersqu lejn xulxin u bi tbissima jergłu jieħdu b'id xulxin].

KARLU: Kienet ẓajta ...
MARTIN: God save us, what have I let myself in for? That was a joke—
the parish priest was only joking. Now, Teacher and Doctor, for
heaven’s sake say something sensible... Don’t let them spoil the
party.

SCHOOLTEACHER [To Karlu]: Are you trying to make us look silly, or what?
I came here for a drink, not to listen to you two squabbling. Come on,
Karlu, that’s enough of that.

DOCTOR [To Gužepp]: You wretch, I came looking forward to a drink, and
you have to create a scene? Come, shake hands again with each
other.

KARLU: It was that hooligan who started it, wasn’t it?

TEREŽA: It was you who started it, and you have the impertinence to call
my fiancé a hooligan?

MARIJA: Why don’t you shut up, you idiot? It was your fiancé who started
it, wasn’t it?

MARTIN [puffing and shouting]: Children, you’ll spoil everything.

The doctor and the schoolmaster try to calm them, while the others
continue to glare as if they could murder each other.

TEREŽA: You’re calling me an idiot? Me, you brazen hussy? I’ll show you
whether I’m an idiot...

As she says this, she grabs at her sister’s hair. Martin, tearing his
own hair, shouts:

Separate them, they’ll spoil everything.

Karlu and Gužepp each take hold of their respective fiancée. For a
short while there is a deep silence. Then...

MARTIN [in a broken voice]: To think that I should have lived to see this
day... And all because of a little joke. These infernal politics...

Karlu, Gužepp, for heaven’s sake, come and shake hands with each
other. Come, children, tell them to shake hands. Get them to make it
up.

SCHOOLTEACHER [pushes Marija towards Karlu whilst the doctor pushes
Tereža towards Gužepp]: Tereža, you take Gužepp’s hand, and
Marija, you take Karlu’s. [Karlu and Gužepp approach each other and
with a smile again shake hands.]

KARLU: It was a joke.
GUZEPPE: Čajta biss...

MARTIN: Čajta tal-kappillan...

SURMAST: ... Prosit, hekk sewwa...

TABIB: Isbaħ mill-paċi ma hemmx fid-dinja...

MARTIN: Marija... Tereża, morru ġewwa ġibu qatra lill-ħbieb...

JOHROGU...

TONI: [Waqt li l-oħrajn jittellmu bejniethom] Mur ġhidilna, Pawl, kemm kellek tikber meta konna ġhadna mmorru l-iskola tal-Gvern flimkien Il-pulitka ġħamlitek nies...

PAWLJ: [Im/antas] Mela jien kont ħanżir, Toni?

TONI: U fhimtni ħazin! Issa int bħal Koli ta' Xafrin? Dak jirgħa n-nagħaq beda u jirgħa n-nagħaq ġhadu. Int thallat ruhek mieghu?

PAWLJ: Mela mohħ ta' kulħadd xorta, Ton?

TONI: Hekk mhux. Ara int, Alla jbierekk, kemm imxejt 'il quddiem.

PAWLJ: Il-bniedem ħadd ma jkun jaf x'għandu jgħaddi minn ġhalih. Fejn qatt għaddiel li ġhad irrid nibda nikkmanda lil Malta u Għawdex...

TONI: Bi ħsiebek taghmel xi ħaġa sabiha għar-rahal?

PAWLJ: Jiena... u mela le... lill-kappillan ġa weghedtu li nwaħħallu żewġ fanali quddiem iz-zuntier... nifthulu triq ġhan naha ta' Ghajn Sīġar... u nwaħħlu erba' fanali mal-hitan... ġhax tkun ġhaddej bil-lejl lanqas tara tahlef...

KARMNU: [Li jkun qed jissemma] E, insejt tghidlu li sa nqabbdu ħafna nies ġahdmu... kemm Alla ħalaq... biex ħadd ma jgerger...

FREDU: ... Imma dax-xoghol kollu, nghid jien, kif ser tagħmluh jekk il-Gvern mhux f'idejkom?

WIĠI: Sewwa qed tghidlu.

PAWLJ: Ara x'qallek, elezzjoni oħra aħna nirbhuha.

KARMNU: Darb'oħra ma nitilfuhiex il-pultruna tal-bellus li hemm f'dik id-dar sabiha.

PAWLJ: X'dar hi?
GUZEPP: We were just joking.

MARTIN: The parish priest's joke.

SCHOOLTEACHER: Fine, now everything's all right again.

DOCTOR: There's nothing in the world finer than peace.

MARTIN: Marija, Tereza, go and get the drinks for the guests.

They go out.

TONI [whilst the others chat amongst themselves]: Who would have thought how far you'd get Pawl, since we used to go to the Government School together! Politics has made you somebody.

PAWLU [offended]: So otherwise I'd have been nobody, Toni, just a pig?

TONI: How you twist what I say! These days, are you like Koli ta' Xafrin? He began as a goatherd and a goatherd he's remained. Would you compare yourself to him?

PAWLU: Everybody's got the same brains, Toni, haven't they?

TONI: Certainly not. Look how you've got on, God be praised.

PAWLU: A man can never tell what's in store for him. How could I ever have dreamed that one day I'd be running Malta and Gozo?

TONI: Are you thinking of doing something special for the village?

PAWLU: Sure! I've already promised the parish priest that I'll fix up two lamp-posts for him in front of the church. We'll make up a road for him to Ghajn Sigar, and we'll fix four lamps on the walls - if you walk along there at night you can't see to spit.

KARMNU [who has been listening]: Hi, you've forgotten to tell him about the jobs we're going to create - for all the people God made - so that no one will be able to complain.

FREDU: But how are you going to do all this, may I ask, when you're not in power?

WIGI: He's quite right.

PAWLU: You watch out, we're going to win the next election.

KARMNU: Next time we're going to make sure of those velvet seats in that fine big building.

PAWLU: What building do you mean?
KARMNU: U dik id-dar fejn jiltaqghu tal-Gvern x'jghidulha bhal issa? Għidilna int Mast.

SURMAST: [Ikun medhi jitkellem ma' ohrain] Lili qed tghid?

KARMNU: Iva, lilek Mast, X'jghidulha dik il-kamra fejn jiltaqghu biex jitħaddtu kulħadd jghid tieghu?

SURMAST: Emminni ma naʃx għal xiex trid tghid, [Isejjah lit-tabib] Dott, ara Karmnu tagħna jrid isaqsik xi ħaġa ... ma nistax naqbad x'inhi.

KARMNU: U dik, tabib, dik, għorfa bħal kamra kbira kbira fejn jiltaqghu dawk li jikkmandaw lil Malta, Għawdex u Kemmuna ... 

SURMAST: Karm, żid Kemmunett u Filfla biex tkun semmejt kollox.


KARMNU: X'kelma twila ... il-kliem tal-iskola twil wisq ... It-tabib itaptaplu fuq spalltu u hu wis-surmastr joqogħdu jitħaddtu bejniethom ...

PAWLU: [Lil Toni]. Taf x' qed ingħid, Ton. Lil Karmnu fraħtlu talla fil-Gvern u lili lanqs kelma.

TONI: Ara taħseb li ma ridtx nifrahlek ukoll, taf ... għalija jien bniedem tas-servizz, ġejt hawn biex nikkompanja 'l ħija Karlu u għada għall-uniformi bḥas-soltu ... wil-Bambin jehlisna mill-politika. Issa jiena rrid minnkom ... Kos, jaqbadni d-daħk x'in niftakar li konna l-iskola flimkien; min jaf kemm morna l-għalqa u ġrejna għall-bejtiet tal-għasa-far u issa meta narakom ser ikollu nesellmilkom.

KARMNU: Mħux għalija, Ton, imma meta tarana sellmilna għax jekk ikun hemm xi ħadd ieħor li ma jsellimx ma nknux nistghu nagħmlu favuri ... 

PAWLU: Sewwa qallek Kamnunu, sellem, biex ma nagħtu 'l ħadd xi jghid ... 

TONI: U mel ma nesellemx. Lilkom naghrafkom minn mil bogħod, imma qaluli li hemm erbghin minnkom ... dawn biex tagħrafhom kollha trid twaħħlilhom medalja ... 

FREDU: Taf li għogbitni l-idea ta' Toni. L-ewwel ħaġa li nagħmlu malli ntitlghu fil-Gvern nghaddu liği biex kull min jikkmanda 'l Malta u Għawdex jibda jgib il-medalja ...
KARMNU: That building where the Government meets. Now, what do they call it? You tell us, Schoolteacher.

SCHOOLTEACHER [who has been engrossed in other conversation]: Are you speaking to me?

KARMNU: Yes, Schoolteacher, to you. What do they call that place where they meet so that everyone can make a speech?

TEACHER: Believe me, I don’t know what you’re talking about. [Calls the doctor.] Doc, our Karmnu wants to ask you something... I can’t make out what he’s talking about.

KARMNU: It’s a room, Doctor, like a large hall, where they hold meetings of those who’re running Malta, Gozo and Comino...

TEACHER: Karm, don’t forget Cominetto and Filfla while you’re at it.

DOCTOR: I know what he means, the House of Representatives.

KARMNU: What a mouthful! What long words educated people use!

The doctor claps him on the shoulder, and he and the schoolteacher go on talking together.

PAWLU: [to Toni] You know what occurs to me, Toni? You congratulated Karmnu on getting selected, but you didn’t say a word to me.

TONI: Don’t think that I didn’t want to congratulate you as well, but you know... I’m a civil servant, I came over to stay with my brother Karlu, and tomorrow I’ll be back in uniform as usual... and heaven preserve us from politics. These days, I’m your servant. I really can’t help laughing when I remember that we were at school together; who knows how often we used to go out together bird-nesting, and now whenever I see you I have to salute you.

KARMNU: Not on my account, Toni, but when you see us, don’t forget to salute us, since if someone else fails to salute us, we have to do something about it.

PAWLU: Karmnu’s quite right. You have to salute us, otherwise the others might complain.

TONI: Sure, I salute, don’t I? You I can recognise from a long way off, but they tell me that there are forty of you. So that one can recognise you all, you ought to have a medal pinned on you.

FREDU: You know, I like that idea of Toni’s. The first thing we’ll do when we get in is to pass a law saying that every M.P. must wear a medal.
PAWLU: Medalja sabiha...
KARMNU: Medalja tad-deheb...
FREDU: U le tal-fidda biżżej jed... Nibżgħu għall-kaxxa ta' Malta, l-aħwa! basta medalja...
KARMNU: Ħares, ħuti, in-nies mhux midalji trid imma x-xoghol... ἱ bobż id-dar.
KARLU: [Li jersaq fuqhom jissamma' ma' Ġużépp] Min għamel xoghol daqs il-Gvem tas-Sofor...
ĠUŻEPP: Tal-Hodor għamel iżjad...
KARLU: Min fetah il-gibjun?
ĠUŻEPP: Min bena skejjel l-aktar?
KARLU: Min fetah il-latrina tat-Tokk?
ĠUŻEPP: Il-partit tal-Hodor!
KARLU: Mhux veru. Qed nghidilek fetahha l-Partit tas-Sofor.

Jibqgħu sa stt ieħor imieru lil xulxin, wieħed iġhid tas-Sofor, l-ieħor tal-Hodor sa ma jibdew iferfru idejbom f'wiċċ xulxin...

ĠUŻEPP: Issa telaghli. Intom is-Sofor taf x'intom? qabda nies ma temmnu b'xejn...
KARLU: U intom, intom taf x'intom?... qabda nies faċċoli... faċċoli...


MARTIN: [Lit-tfal] Hsiebkom f'dak il-gabarrë... ghamilt ġafna spejjeż għal xejn... ser thassru kollox... Niżżlu dak il-gabarrë fuq il-mejda... rażżu l-gharajjes taghhom feroći li ghandkom ġax ma niflaħx iżjad għal dawn ix-xenati... [Jagħmlu hekk - Ċulħadd jiskot. Wara pawsa] Issa ħalluni nitkkellem... Isimgħuni, uliedi, Ġużépp u Karlu u intom surmastr u tabib araw jiniex qed nghidilkom sewwa - [Lil Karlu u Ġużépp] Ejjew 'l hawn [Jagħmlu hekk] Intom tridu tiżżewgu lil uliedi? [Inkwitat ġhaż ma jiktellmux, ighajjal] Tridu, jew le? [Jagħmlu
PAWLU: A handsome medal.
KARMNU: A gold medal.

FREDU: And a silver one’s not good enough? We must be careful with public funds, comrades. Provided it’s a proper medal...

KARMNU: Be careful, comrades, it’s not medals that people want, but jobs – full stomachs.

KARLU [comes over to them to listen to Gužep]: Who created as many jobs as the Yellow Government?

GUZEPP: The Greens did more.

KARLU: Who built the reservoir?
GUZEPP: Who built more schools?
KARLU: Who provided the public lavatory at It-Tokk?
GUZEPP: The Green Party.

KARLU: That’s not true. I tell you the Yellow Party provided it.

They go on contradicting each other for a short while, some saying ’Yellow’ and the others ’Green’, until they start shaking their hands in each other’s faces.

GUZEPP: You really get under my skin. You Yellows, you know what you are? A bunch of people with no principles.

KARLU: And you, you know what you are? A bunch of hypocrites.

Gužep and Karlu are on the point of striking each other. The schoolmaster and the doctor separate them, whilst the others look on as if expecting to see a fight. At that moment Martin, Marija and Tereža enter from the kitchen with a tray loaded with food and drink for the fiances and their guests. The girls start screaming, and nearly drop the tray.

MARTIN: [to his daughters] You watch out for that tray. I’ve spent a lot of money for nothing... Everything’s going to be spoiled. Put that tray on the table. You hold these wild young men of yours, I can’t cope with these scenes any longer. [They do so. Everyone is silent. After a pause...] Now you let me speak. Listen to me, children, Gužep and Karlu, and you, Teacher, and you, Doctor, you see whether I’m talking sense. [To Karlu and Gužep:] Come here, both of you. [They do so.] Do you want to marry my daughters? [Worried, because they do not answer, shouts:] Do you want to, yes or no? [They indicate

Gużepp: Le ma rridx.

Martin: [Lil Karl] Int lil Marija ma thobbhiex anqas milli Gużepp ihobb lil Tereża. Mux hekk?

Karlu: Inhobbha daqs ruhi l-ghażża.

Martin: Mela lin-nisa taghkom tkunu triduhom isellmu lil xulxin u jmorn ghand xulxin, mux hekk?

Karlu u Gużepp: U mel a le ...


Surmast: Bravu, sur Martin.

Tabib: Ragel tas-sens is-sur Martin.

Martin: Isaw Gužepp u Karlu, aghfsu id xulxin ...

Jaghmlu hekk.

Karlu: Kienet ċajta ...

Gužepp: Ċajta biss ...

Martin: U issa nixorbhu qatra bis-saħha tal-għarajjes.

Kulhadd jersaq fuq il-mejda u jieħu tazza xorbi. Ighidu flimkien: Bis-saħha tal-għarajjes! X’hin ikunu qed jergghu jqieghdu t-tazzi battala, tinstema’ taħbita fuq il-bieb, Martin imur jifshab.

Martin: Issa ahna lkoll. Hawn Kurun il-huttat ... [Gużepp u Karlu jmorru jifirbu bih] Ara Kurun ... X’hemm Kurun ...

Kurun: Martin stedintni ghall-qatra mal-għarajjes. Mux hekk kien jixraq? Il-huttat jorbot u ġejt biex norbotkom ...

Marija: [Lil missierha – innervjata] Papà, lilna ma ghedtilna xejn b’dan?
agreement by nodding.] You do? All right. Now listen to me, Ġużepp and Karlu. Tereža and Marija have never had a quarrel in all their life, except today on account of you two. Otherwise there couldn't be two better-behaved, pious and thrifty girls. They love one another so much that one won't go out without the other. [To Ġużepp:] I know how much you love Tereža. Now tell me the truth. Do you want to see Tereža hurt because of you?

Ġužepp: No, I certainly don't.

Martin [To Karlu]: You love Marija just as much as Ġużepp loves Tereža. Isn't that so?

Karlu: I love her like my life.

Martin: And you want your wives to greet each other, and visit each other, don't you?

Karlu and Ġużepp: Sure.

Martin [taking them by the hand]: So, make peace. You're marrying two sisters. It's only right that you should live like brothers.

Teacher: Bravo, Mr. Martin.

Doctor: Mr. Martin's talking sense.

Martin: Come now, Ġużepp and Karlu, shake hands.

They do so.

Karlu: We were joking.

Ġużepp: It was only a joke.

Martin: And now let's drink a toast to the bridal couples... [All go to the table and take drinks. They say in unison:] To the bridal couples!

While they are replacing their empty glasses, a knock is heard at the door. Martin goes to open it.

Martin: Now we're all here. It's Kurun, the match-maker. [Ġużepp and Karlu go to greet him:] Hi, there, Kurun! How are things, Kurun?

Kurun: Martin asked me to look in for a drink with the happy couples. Isn't this how it should be? The match-maker arranges betrothals, and I've come to see to your betrothal.

Marija [to her father, irritably]: Daddy, you didn't say anything to us about this.
**TEREŻA:** [Innervjata b'halha] Kollox la antika.

**MARTIN:** Ma ghedtilkom xejn ... ridt naghmlilikom ... x'inh l-kelma li qalli l-kappillan ... [Habbat sebghu fuq naghsu] ... sibtha ... surprizia ... Ridt naghmlilikom surpriza. Ghedt Marija u Tereža il-hwejjeg kollha tan-nanna ghogbihom ... kullma sabu fis-senduq ... id-dublett ta' mitt lembuba ... il-farda ... il-kul ... ix-xinilja tas-suf ... ic-čulqana ... kullma ħalliet warajha. ... Ghedt mela žygur li joghgbuhom ukoll l-usanzi tan-nanna. Illum Kurun ser jorbotkom kif il-huttab rabat lin-nanna man-nannu u lili ma' ommkom, Alla jahfrilha. U hekk, uliedi, illum ser nergghu mmore ughall-antik ... L-antikis nies tajba.

**GUŻEPPE:** Jiena l-antiki joghgbuni ħafna. In-nies tal-lum ksuhat ghandhom wisq.

Pawlu u Karānu jğhidu kliem li juru li jaqblu.

**KARLU:** Taf li lili dawn id-drawwiet tal-antiki joghgbuni wkoll! Id-dar ġhad ġhandna d-dublett tat-tieq li żżewget bih il-bużnanna u sidrija tan-nannu bil-buttuni langasin, ma ġix sabiha bil-frit.

**SURMAST:** Jiena dilettant tal-antik, xi darba ħallini narahom.

**TABIB:** Kemm kienu jilbsu isbaħ mill-lum l-antiki. Jien ġhandi mużew shih id-dar.

**FREDU:** [Lil Martin] Ahna ser niehdu qatra tal-gharajjes jew le?

**MARTIN:** Isa, Kurun fittex orbothom ...

**KURUN:** Hawn jien arani ... [Lil Martin] qieghed erba' sigġijiet tnejn tnejn fejn xulxin fejn il-hajt.

*Martin jagħmel hekk. Iġħinub x'uħud mill-oħrajn.*


**MARTIN:** Min, Kurun?

**KURUN:** Qed infittex gabarrè u f'dal-gabarrè żewġ ċrieket tad-deheb biex norbtu l-gharajjes wir-riżq wil-barka.
Tereza [equally irritated]: Everything just like the old days.

Martin: I didn’t say anything to you... I wanted it... Now what was that word the parish priest used? Impromptu. I wanted it to be impromptu. I said to myself how delighted Marija and Tereza were with all their grandmother’s things – all the clothes they found in the chest – the skirt with a hundred pleats, the bedspread, the crinoline petticoat, the woollen shawl, the smock – everything she left behind her. So I said to myself how delighted they’d be with their grandmother’s customs. Kurun will betroth you today just as the matchmaker betrothed grandmother and grandfather, and me and your mother, God rest her soul. So, children, today we’re returning to the old customs. They were fine people in those days.

Guzepp: I’m very fond of the old ways. Today people are too high and mighty.

Pawlu and Karmnu indicate their agreement.

Karlu: You know, I like these old customs as well. At home we still have the wedding-dress my great-grandmother got married in, and grandfather’s waistcoat with the big silver buttons; it’s quite fine.

Teacher: I collect antiques, some time you must let me see them.

Doctor: How much better people used to dress in the old days! I’ve a whole collection at home.

Fedu [to Martin]: Are we going to drink to the happy couples or not?

Martin: Come, Kurun, get on and betroth them.

Kurun: Now, pay attention to me. [To Martin:] Get four chairs and put them two by two against the wall.

Martin does so, some of the others helping him.

Kurun [to the two couples]: Karlu and Marija, you sit on this side, and Tereza and Guzepp, you sit there. [After they have sat down, he looks at them benevolently.] What handsome girls and boys! Karlu, if you searched the whole village, you wouldn’t find another girl like your Marija. [To Guzepp:] And that goes for your Tereza, too, Guzepp. [Turns to Martin:] My friend, you should be proud to have two daughters like these... roses of our village. Now, where is it, Martin, I don’t see it?

Martin: What, Kurun?

Kurun: I’m looking for a tray and for two gold rings that should be on the tray, so that we can betroth the happy couples, God bless them.
MARTIN: Għal kollox ṣibtlek ... Arani sa ngiblek kollox ... [Jidhol ġewwa ġib gabarrè b’żewg crieket fih. Imur quddiem l-gharajjes] Ġużepp, int iċ-ċurkett tiegħek ġibtu?

ĠUZEPP: Mela le. Niġu għall-partit bla ċurkett? ...

MARTIN: Ixhtu fil-gabarrè fejn dan, iċ-ċurkett ta’ Tereża. [Jagħmel hekk]

MARTIN: [Lil Karlu]: U int, Karl, lil Marija ma xtrajtilhiex xi ċurkett ukoll?

KARLU: U mela le. Hawn hu [Ixhtu fil-gabarrè].

MARTIN: [Lil Kurun] Hawn il-gabarrè biċ-ċrieket. Fittex orbot, Kurun ... fittex orbot ...,

KURUN: [Bil-gabarrè f’idu] Kemm inhossni ferħan ... żewġ ġuventur u xebbiet bħal dawn fejn ser issib ... [Lil Ġużepp u Tereża] Aghtuni idejkom ħalli nghaqqadkom ... Hekk, sewwa ħafna ... u issa ċ-ċrieket ... ha naraw sewwa [Idħbal iċ-ċurkett l-ewwel f’sebgha Ġużepp u mbagħad f’sebgha Tereża] ... Jidħlu tal-qjies. [Lil Karlu u Marija]
U issa intom aghtruni idejkom ħalli nghaqqad lilkom ukoll ... sewwa ħafna – wiċ-ċrieket ... tal-qjies ... jigu kom sewwa kollha ... Jalla intom ukoll tkunu sewwa ma’ xulxin sakemm jogħġob l’Alla ... salmewt ... [Martin jidher jimsaħ id-dmugh. Kurun jittendi. Iġbidlu] Martin, illum nifirhu mal-gharajjes ... ħallik mil-biki ...

MARTIN: Hallini, Kurun, x’in niftakar li ser nitlef żewġ ġawhiriet bħal dawk; l-ghaxqa ta’ ħajti wil-bastun ta’ xjuhiti ... Tereża u Marija ħarsu lejn xulxin minn taħt ’il taħt.


Martin u x’uħud ġħinub iqassam ix-xorb. Kliem ta’ xewqat sbieħ bħal “Bis-sahha tal-gharajjes, Alla jgħaddihom ’il quddiem ...”

Wara x-xorb is-surmast wit-tabib jersqu fuq l-gharajjes, jeħdulhom b’idejhom, isellmu lil Martin u jitilqu. Bħalhom tagħmlu l-mistednin kollha ... Kurun l-ahħar li jitlaq.

KURUN: [Hu u biereg] Jekk Alla jrid, ma ndumx ma nerga’ nduq il-biskut-tini tagħkom ... taħt sena oħra ... u għal għaxar darbiet bħal ommkom ... Alla jgħaddikom ’il quddiem. Sahha! [Johroġ wara li kulhadd ikun gallu sahha, jwieġeb] Grazzi ħafna taf! ...
MARTIN: I've thought of everything for you... See, I'll get everything for you. [Goes inside and brings a tray with two rings on it. Stops in front of the bridal couples.] Gužeppe, you brought your ring with you?

GUŽEPPE: Naturally. Would we come to the engagement party without the ring?

MARTIN: Put it on the tray next to Tereža's. [He does so.] [To Karlu:] And you, Karl, didn't you buy Marija a ring, too?

KARLU: Here it is. [Places it on the tray.]

MARTIN [to Kurun]: Here's the tray with the rings. Get on with the betrothal, Kurun, get on with it.

KURUN [holding the tray]: How happy I am! Where could you find two young men and two young girls like these? [To Gužeppe and Tereža:] Give me your hands and let me unite you. Like this, that's fine... and now the rings... let me see properly... [Places a ring first of all on Gužeppe's finger and then on Tereža's.] A perfect fit! [To Karlu and Marija:] And now you give me your hands and let me unite you too. That's fine. Now the rings... a perfect fit... made to measure. God grant that you may live happily together as long as it pleases Him... until death do you part. [Martin pretends to wipe his eyes. Kurun notices him, and says:] Martin, today we must congratulate the happy couples, there's no place for tears.

MARTIN: I can't help it, Kurun, when I remember that I shall be losing two such jewels, the light of my life and the support of my old age.

Tereža and Martin look at each other surreptitiously.

KURUN: God will comfort you, Martin. [To the guests:] What are we all waiting for? [Approaches the table.] Stretch out your hands, brothers, do you want to see all this food and drink going to waste?

Martin and a few of the others help him to pour out drinks. Toasts, such as: 'The health of the happy couples, God bless them.'

After drinking, the schoolmaster and the doctor go up to the couples, shake hands, say good-bye to Martin and leave. The other guests do likewise. Kurun is the last to leave.

KURUN [as he goes out]: God willing, it won't be long before I take another drink off you - less than a year - and ten times, just like your mother, God be with you, Sahha. [Goes out after everyone has said 'sahha' to him.] Thank you, and the best of luck.
GUZEPP: Issa, Martin, aħna ftehimna li mmorru sa Ta' Pinu ... ma tigix magħna?


KARLU: U ejja, Martin. Tieħu gost fil-karrozza.

MARTIN: Mhux illum. Imma ħmistax oħra, jekk Alla jrid, niġi Ta' Pinu magħkom biex nirttingrazzja lill-Madonna.


TEREŻA: [Lil-Gużepp] Dalwaqt inkunu ta' xulxin.

L-ħarajjes jitgħannel. Fit-tagħna waqt li it-tnejn iħarsu lejn missierhom Tereża ssejjaħ lil Ġużepp Joey u Marija lill-għaruss tagħha Charlie ... L-Ħarajjes biex ikomplu ċ-ċajta waqt li jgħannelquhom isej- ħulhom Terry u Mary.

MARTIN: Bhu xi ksuħat ...

ĠUŻEPP: Ĉajta ...

KARLU: Ĉajta biss ...

Jinsexxu jidħku. Imbagħad joħroġu 'l barra lambranżetta ...

MARTIN: [X'ħin isib ruħu wahdu, b'ghajnejħ merfugha lejn is-sema, s-swaba' ta' idejħ imdaħħla ġo xulxin bħal min qed jtitlob bl-akbar ħerqa jghid] San Nikola tal-Venturi, Patri Bernard qalli li inti twassal iż-żwieġ tax-xebbiet ... Ismagni sewwa, San Nikola, jekk sa ħmistax oħra ma jinqala' xejn wiż-żwieġ jimexxi, u jien neħles miż-żewġ xjaten li għandi, jiena nixgħellek xemgħa kuljum ġhal xahar u nsumlek ġobż u ilma ġhal xahrejn ...

Jinżel is-Simarju.
GUZEPP: Look, Martin, we thought we'd drive to Ta' Pinu. Won't you come along with us?

MARTIN: Not today. Who will look after the cooking? I'll come when you're married and settled down...

KARLU: Come on, Martin, you'll enjoy the ride.

MARTIN: Not today. But in a fortnight's time, God willing, I'll be going to Ta' Pinu with you to give thanks to the Blessed Virgin.

MARIJA [moving close to her fiancé]: How happy I am!

TEREŽA [to Guzepp]: Soon we shall belong to one another.

The engaged couples embrace, whereupon, after glancing at their father, Tereža calls Guzepp 'Joey' and Marija calls her fiancé 'Charlie'. The young men cap the joke by kissing them and calling them 'Tessy' and 'Mary'.

MARTIN: What nonsense is this?

GUZEPP: A joke.

KARLU: Just a joke...

They burst out laughing, and leave arm in arm.

MARTIN [now that he finds himself alone, raises his eyes to heaven, joins his hands in pious supplication, and says]: Blessed Saint Nicholas, Father Bernard tells me that you're very good at fixing up girls' marriages. Now, listen to me carefully, Saint Nicholas. If nothing goes wrong in the next two weeks and these weddings go through, and I'm rid of the two devils I have round my neck, every day for a month I will light you a candle, and for a whole two months I'll eat nothing but bread and water.

The curtain falls.