

THE PEACOCKS' ISLAND

By: Dorit Makleff

For synopsis and the whole play roll down to bottom of page

Plays are available for production free of charge.

For permission please contact:

Arik Makleff: 052-8081503 arik19325@walla.com

Yontan Ofek: 054-3113411 antonykoafe@gmail.com

OR VIA <http://doritmakleff.com>



THE PEACOCKS' ISLAND - **Synopsis**

A peacock and a peahen live on an island formed/created by their love. This love is no longer fresh and vibrant. In order to revive it the peacock asks the peahen to tell him a story. (Her storytelling gift was the basis of their union). She reclines but then starts telling him a story about Gil, a budding writer, and Ran. Ran is a resident doctor in an E.R to which Gil is brought after her broken heart made her drive into a lorry.

They are both at turning points in their lives and they are brought together by Gil's unfinished romantic novel which Ran starts reading and will help her finish. They will become partners in love and in art and this night will produce a bestseller "The Peacock's Island".

Gil's novel is a story of grand passion and vengeance. Throughout the play the three "worlds" interlock. They coexist and have the same "validity". The play brings forth the duel/dialogue between male and female – an impossible mating dance.

THE CHARACTERS

The peacock - A middle-aged man dressed like a British gentleman (somewhat like Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady").

The peahen - A middle-aged woman.

Characters from the peahen's novel:

Gil - A young woman (26) who's written her first novel.

Ran - A young doctor (28) in his last years of training.

Nisso - A car dealer (26), Gil's boyfriend. Fashionably dressed. Sexy looking.

Carmit - Ran's girlfriend (27), computer specialist.

Characters from Gil's novel:

Joanna - A retired fashion designer (50), American. Tall, slender, very impressive.

Arturo - A grocery shop owner from Queens U.S.A (55), shabby looking and clumsy. Kind-hearted.

Michael - (52) Joan's lover in their youth. A celebrated British painter. Attractive and "well preserved".

"The old man"/ Belinda - Michael's wife. (48). Dainty. disguised as "the old man".

Mary - (22) Michael's student / assistant / lover. Romantic, youthful look.

The young man – (30) Terribly good looking. Muscular, sunny disposition. Travels around the world carefree and committed only and truly to himself. Sort of a personal trainer, dabbles in reflexology and homeopathy.

SCENE 1

Morning on the island, the peacock and the peahen.

The space defined as “the island” is filled with colors and voices. The flowers, trees and animals are not necessarily visible but one can sense them. The lighting creates a “legendary” atmosphere.

The peacock and the peahen are on the island. They look partly like a middle-aged English couple dressed like in the forties. The peacock is sitting in an armchair smoking a pipe and reading the paper. The peahen (deteriorating eyesight) is talking to a tall red flower, gently caressing its petals.

The peahen - How can you tell if it's the last morning? Tonight you'll close your petals and tomorrow you won't open them anymore. I've been on this island for years now ,watching you, trying to identify signs of death. A slight wilting, paleness, disintegration. Impossible to foresee. Impossible to prepare myself. But what would you do if you knew? The earth, the sun, the water that nourishes you, do it just like that. No special treatment. You're born, you die and no one cares. **(She smells the flower being rather noisy about it).**

The peacock - What's that noise? **(Still reading his paper)**

The peahen – I'm sniffing a flower which is about to die. It seems like just before they die the smell is more distinctive, intoxicating. Like the smell of love

fending off a verdict of doom.

The peacock – I haven't noticed.

The peahen – (To herself) Lately you never notice. **(While the peacock is stretching his legs, trying to get into his slippers. He, then, gets up and start looking around, dragging his feet).**

The peacock – Where are my slippers?

The peahen – I hid them. **(The peacock who until now hasn't really looked at her, turns his head towards her, surprised).**

The peacock - Why?

The peahen – You drag your feet . It makes you so **(pause)** old. **(Finds the slippers)**. We haven't made love for so long.

The peacock – I fail to see the connection. Give me the slippers. **(She doesn't move.**

He takes them from her, puts them on and goes back to his armchair).

The peahen – **(Close to him. Pleading)** Show me your feathers.

The peacock – I can't. They're heavy.

The peahen – You used to show them to me all the time. Remember?

The peacock – We were young then. **(The peahen stands in front of him, grabs the paper and tosses it away)**, What are you doing? **(He gets up to retrieve the paper)**. I don't understand. You act like a –

The peahen – A madwoman! Yes. A Lunatic. Say it. Don't be shy. I'm crazy because I can't figure it out. Why are we on this island? You are dedicating your life to reading about other people. **(Pause. Her back is turned to him)**. Our love is an island. **(Pause, turns to him)** remember? **(Pause, moves away)**. You forgot.

The peacock – What about you?

The peahen – What do you mean – what about me? I'm here. Waiting for you to touch me.

The peacock – For years now, everyday words are all you give me. **(Gets up, puts down the paper and his pipe, looks at her, then through her to “a distant memory”)**. I passed through there by mistake, on my way somewhere else. You were sitting by the river, telling a story – to yourself, I thought.

The peahen – I was very lonely. **(She sits down as if “by the river”)**. I don't remember how. **(Pause. Stands up slowly, looks in the direction from where the accessories for the “ER” scene will appear)**. Late at night. An Emergency ward. **(She starts walking over “there”. Speaking slowly – as if experimenting with the words, “trying them on for size”.)**

The peacock – I was just passing through on my way somewhere else. **(Comes near her, stops, tries to spread his feathers – finds it too difficult. Gil and Ran bring in the accessories / parts of the scenery)**. Your words put a spell on me. I was like a fish caught by an ancient golden net. Impossible to get out. **(The peahen watches Ran and Gil's backs as**

they are leaving the stage. She's sort of examining them, asking herself who they are and what they are about to do. At first, they are like puppets. As the story advances they become flesh and blood). It's been a long time since you told me a story. **(Slowly, strenuously, the peacock is spreading his feathers)**. Tell me a story.

The peahen – (Coming closer, her fingers flutter over his beautiful feathers. Their mutual excitement is apparent – as if “a sexual event” is taking place between them).

I don't know. No. Wait a minute. A bed. And on the bed a girl. **(Gil lies down on the “hospital” bed)**. Fan out your feathers. Go on. All the way. **(He breathes heavily)**.

The peacock – (Hardly breathing, sexually aroused) – What's her name?

The peahen – Shecherazada. Yes! Yes! They are so lovely, your feathers! How I missed them. **(Moaning)**. Wait. Wait. Not Yet. **(The peacock stops for a minute his grand gesture of displaying his feathers in all their glory)**. Don't stop.

The peacock – Shecherazada? It's a name from a different story.

The peahen – Yes! Oh God! **(orgasm)** Gil. That's her name. Gil

The lights go down. Blackout. Suddenly, the lighting becomes the bright light of a hospital ward.

SCENE 2

Night. An emergency ward. Gil, Ran, Nisso and Carmit (who are the characters of the story the peahen is weaving for her peacock).

Gil - (Almost shouting) No needles! You hear? I don't let strangers poke into my veins.

Ran – (Comes in, tired) What 's all this racket about? The nurse tells me you don't let them put the IV in.

Gil - I want to go home.

Ran - So do I. And you are wasting precious time. **(Examines the report on her condition)**. The lorry driver you drove into **(feels her arm looking for a "good vein")** said he couldn't get a word out of you. He wanted to make sure you're o.k. **(checks the other arm)**. Nice of him.

Gil – Stop necking me. **(Pulls her arm away. Then “gives in”)**. I hate it.

Ran – Nobody ever told you? You're supposed to bring your veins with you to the ER. Make a fist! It's the budget cuts. No more veins for free. Here, we found one and it's a beauty. **(Rubs with alcohol and sticks the needle in)**.

Gil – Ay.

Ran – You're exaggerating.

Gil - That's it? How long will it take?

Ran – Going somewhere? **(A nurse's voice is heard: “Rani, the baby's tests' results are back”)**. I suggest closing your eyes and thinking of whatever makes you feel good. **(Exits)** I'll be back.

Gil – **(Tries to get up. Dizzy)**. Shit, Shit, Shit! **(Closes her eyes)**.

In the corner, diagonally to Gil, the light comes on Nisso who is in a hurry to get dressed.

Nisso – Shit. She left marks. She has claws. Doesn't bite her nail like you do. What are you looking at me like that for? You were gone for a month! You're a writer now. Research in Santorini and all that. You've known me for how many years? I'm not a monk. I'm a monkey **(imitates a monkey. Pause)**. Shit! So I shagged her. Big deal! Sex. That's what it was. Don't turn it into a symphony orchestra.

Gil – **(Her eyes are still closed. Ran comes in while she's speaking. He's carrying a stack of stained, torn pages)**. Ten years. Ten.

Ran – You said something?

Gil – Nothing.

Ran – **(Puts the stack on her dresser)**. The lorry driver picked them up.

Gil – Such a gentleman!

Ran – Why the cynicism? Me – I would have just left you there. According to him you galloped into him like a crazy blind horse.

Gil – **(Tries to pick up the pages Ran brought, finds it difficult because of the IV. Ran tries to help her)**. Leave it. It doesn't matter.

Ran - What doesn't matter? More and more your case seems like a suicide attempt and I don't like it. I have my fair share of patients in the clutches of a disease that doesn't let go. I don't have time for those who inflict it on themselves and treat suffering as their self service buffet. **(Checks the IV, to himself -)** a bed and some sleep – that's what I need.

Gil – Take mine. **(Tries to get up. Dizzy again. Lies**

down).

Ran – What do you feel?

Gil - Nothing.

Ran – Nothing is not an answer.

Gil – Nothing is all you get.

Ran – I want to help you! Don't you get it? Another doctor would have transferred you to Pysch. **(Psychiatric ward)** by now.

Gil - I want to sleep. **(The nurse's voice is heard: "Ran. You're needed over here." He looks at Gil and leaves).**

The light comes up on Nisso. He is finishing getting dressed and puts on his shoes.

Nisso – I told you that this couple business is not for us. I told you. Didn't I? Friendship is something else but commitment is not for me. You think I wanted to hurt you? You know my "Mr. Horny" that you're quite fond of – "he" finds it quite hard – oops – bad choice of word – to abide by your "couple rules and regulations". Naughty boy! Besides, you want me to believe that a month in Santorini – pounds of simmering raw male meat – all those Greek Gods and no one made you come? I'm not buying the holy virgin pose.

Gil sits down slowly, carefully moves her arm, takes the pages from the dresser and examines them. Starts crying silently. Ran comes in. She instantly wipes here eyes. Puts the pages down.

Ran – My shift is over. I'm going home. **(Some pages fall down. He picks them up, glances at them for a moment. He takes out from his pocket a small package of Kleenex and puts it on the dresser with the pages.)** For

you. For later. Carmit, my girlfriend always sticks them in my pocket. I'm allergic. **(Checks her pulse and studies the report).**

The light comes up on Carmit exercising in her underwear and a T-shirt.

Carmit – These exercises are really good for the pelvic muscles. **(Pause)**. It's important, you know, for the uterus. **(Pause)**. Dudi called to remind me about the Brith on Friday. He says Liora is glued to the baby. I told him we'd be there. After all, he's your best friend. **(Pause)**. Make sure you're not working Friday. I want us to go together. As a couple. It's important to me. Our friends never see us together anymore. Five years – no weekends, no holidays. They understand - it's your residency - but I feel like a widow. And we're not even married. **(Goes out).**

Gil – Allergic to what?

Ran – **(Writes something in the illness report)** what are you talking about?

Gil – The Kleenex. Allergic to patients, are you?

(The nurse's voice is heard: "Ran Carmit's on the phone!").

Ran – Tell her I'm on my way.

Gil – I wanted to die.

Ran – I have to go.

Gil – You asked me what happened and now you're running away? You men are all the same. I never learn. And you can take those pages with you. I don't need them anymore.

Ran - Why? **(Picks up the first page and starts reading)**. "The ship was floating over the waves **(Sits down)** stroking its stern in silent consistency. Flickers of light strolled on the water and last spots of sunglow were dancing of the deck". So what is it exactly? A novel?

Gil – A romantic novel. Just get rid of it on your way home. Straight to the trash bin.

The light come on Carmit in a business suit. Next to her a fashionable briefcase. She is taking vitamins with a glass of carrot juice.

Carmit – You need to make up your mind because I can't go on like that anymore. I want to feel that I'm doing something with my life. **(Opens the briefcase)**. Where are my reports? Just what I needed this morning. We have a crucial board meeting with the Canadian

investors. **(Finds the reports, glances through them and closes the briefcase).** I want a ring on my finger and I want to add your family name to mine. If living together is like marriage why is it so difficult for you to actually do it? **(Puts on lip gloss).** I don't want to wait anymore. I want us to decide. **(Pause)** together or **(picks up the briefcase)** apart. **(Leaves).**

Ran – Carmit never cries. And it's a mistake because tears will win me over any time. **(Pause).** She has a "no nonsense" policy. No manipulations – even when she desperately wants something. **(Gil's emitting sounds of crying and nose blowing).**

Gil – **(Turns to him, uses her hospital gown to wipe her nose and eyes).**
Sorry.

Ran – I gave you Kleenex.

Gil – Carmit's Kleenex. I didn't want to waste them. She might also need to cry some day.

Ran – **(Suddenly puts on his "professional face").** Let's talk about your tears.

Gil – I thought your shift was over.

Ran – Why did you want to die?

Gil – Go home.

Ran – I'd like to understand.

Gil – What's in it for you? Understanding makes it even more painful.

Ran – It?

Gil – Love. Love is painful.

Ran I don't follow you.

Gil – You're missing all the details.

Ran – Tell me. You seem to be a storyteller.

Gil – My best friend is not my best friend anymore and it's my fault.

Ran – And this is a reason to die?

Gil - you're about to preach to me about all the really sick people who would sell their last breath in order to go on living. You stick needles in them everywhere and you do your utmost to hurt them and still they insist.

Ran – Did I say anything?

Gil – **(Smiles).** You didn't get a chance. When I start talking it's like a train going full speed ahead. There's no stopping me. **(Pause. Ran smiles back).**

For ten years Nisso and me - we've been keeping each other's secrets.

Laughing together. Crying together.

Ran – A teary-eyed man, that's nice.

Gil – He saved his tears for me. We were each other's treasures keepers. I would meet someone, sort of fancy him, a week later I was busy counting his faults – anything – so I could go back to Nisso and tell him all about my speedy tour to love land. Six months ago I finally got it: me and him we belong together. We complete each other's missing parts. Like in a puzzle – together we are whole.

Ran – I can see how you can write romantic novels. Not afraid of clichés, are you?

Gil – When I woke up after our first night together, I remembered the first time I actually touched him, almost by accident, at our graduation party. My skin burnt. The next time I saw him he was on his first leave from the army with a gorgeous addendum clinging to him like a jock strap. He was suffocating – came to me for air.

Ran – It's a kind of smell. Women can pick up on it. They can always tell when you're about to run for your life.

Gil – Now it's me depriving him of air.

Ran – Carmit and me – I was in my senior year in high school. We met in the hospital. My father was there for almost 5 months and then he died. She volunteered in the Children Oncology Ward. That's how we met. She knew instantly that I should be a doctor. She helped me decide.

Gil – Nisso gave me the courage to treat my writing as a profession. I felt that my talent made me beautiful in his eyes. At school I used to write his compositions for him. Later on I volunteered to write "goodbye letters" to his girlfriends. From time to time I would make them more and more moving, more and more heartbreaking. Like him. **(Pause)**. He said to me: "use your talent and make money". The father of one of his army buddies is a publisher. Nisso got me a job there. And that's how it all began. For two years I was a ghost writer. One day I took my life in my hands, asked for a chance and got it. The once is a lifetime kind of a chance.

Ran – Now, after all those years of hard work I actually don't know if I want to be a doctor. All these long nights in the E.R. people come and go, they moan,

they cry, they scream, they faint, die even. A symphony of distress and I'm becoming deaf. Nothing is left of the boy who sat by his father and simply didn't want to let him go. Who desperately looked for ways to beat the disease.

Gil – For three weeks I wrote like a madwoman. I couldn't see the sand nor the sea of Santorini. I could only see the sand and sea of a place deep inside me. The words turned into a whirlpool I was constantly drawn into. Couldn't stop. Till the knockout. My characters were entangled in the golden web I skillfully created for them. No way out. I tend to do the same with my life. I have a talent for manufacturing dead-end situations. **(Pause)**. So my characters and me – all of us gasping for air but still for the life of me I can't dream up a way out. Nisso. Nisso will rescue me. He always does. So I hop on the first plane home. To him. This novel is our baby. I want him to be the first to touch it. To sniff it. He will teach our stubborn baby to walk. When I'm around it only wants to be cradled. And it's too heavy for me. I opened the door fizzy with excitement like a little doggy wagging my tail, drooling. I call out his name. Noises from the bedroom. I approach, anxious, deep breath – "she's" there. In our bed. His new secretary. How banal! **(Turning towards Ran)**. Nisso is a car salesman. He just had to take her for a test drive. You know how men are with cars. A new model makes them lose their marbles. **Ran – (As if talking to himself)**. Sometimes, on a night like tonight, through all the commotion around me – all I can hear is my own heart. And my heart longs to escape. Far away from here, to your ship. I wish I could, like you, create my own world – stern and sunglow...

SCENE 3

The lighting changes and the world of Gil's novel is created – a deck of a luxury deck-chairs and a railing.

Simultaneously:

In the corner – defined on stage as "The Island" – the peahen and the peacock look as if they've just had a "quickie". The peacock is tucking in his shirt, the peahen rearranges her skirt and wipes off a tear. The peacock is folding his feathers. Tries to shake them.

The Peacock - The dust has blurred the colours. They used to be so beautiful.

The Peahen – (Avoids looking at him). It doesn't matter.

The Peacock – Why are you lying to me? I know the flavour of your pleasure.

The Peahen – What would you like for lunch?

The Peacock – Maybe I should wash them in the ocean and the sun will restore their glow. **(Starts walking towards the ocean, barely dragging his feathers. She looks at him with compassion. He stops for a moment and turns towards her).** Your story was beautiful. Thank you. Your words are as transparent as the river. Manifold worlds are reflected in them. I'll bring fish for lunch.

At the same time: in "Gil's novel area" – the yacht – Joanna comes in. She walks edgily back and forth on deck. Halts when Arturo arrives all excited and perspiring, wiping his face with a silk handkerchief. He is dressed too elegantly for this kind of trip.

Joanna - Silk doesn't absorb. I told you already.

Arturo – You look so refreshed.

Joanna – Did you find the captain? Did you tell him we need two cabins? Two! Not one!

Arturo – I'm truly sorry, cara mia.

Joanna – Don't speak Italian to me now! Did you know this would happen?

Arturo – No way! **(Crosses himself)** Dio santo, santa Maria Spiritus Santos –

Joanna – Basta! Listen to me – It's two cabins or I'm swimming back to New-York.

Arturo – **(Kisses her on the cheek),** I'll be right back. **(Starts walking then stops).** Don't stand in the sun. Remember what the doctor said? **(She look at him with killer eyes).** I'm going. Gone. **(Goes out).**

On his way, Arturo passes by a young man pushing an old man in a wheelchair. The old man wears a wide brim hat and sunglasses and has a decorated ivory walking stick. They halt not far from Joanna who is looking at the horizon.

Young man - I'm going to take a leak. You have here a lovely view - **(He eyes Joanna with a teasing look of a man sure of his appeal)** – and even company. Ideal spot. Back in a jiffy. **(Goes out whistling).**

Joanna is watching his back and then turns back to the sea and the seagulls. She addresses the old man:

Joanna – Beautiful seagulls. I wish I were one. You probably know the play by this Russian – Chekhov. **(Pause)**. Something went terribly wrong in the beginning of my life and I'm doing "my worst" to fix it now because time is running out. I wish I had seagulls' time – endless sky and sea. **(Pause)**. You don't answer. **(Checks if he's asleep. At the same time the young man enters in a bathing suit carrying a towel, stands relatively far from them and puts on tanning lotion)**. I like it. For me the best age in a man is the silent one – the age of diapers – the beginning and the end.

Young Man – That man dressed like a polish duke is running around like a slaughtered mouse for your benefit. And I'm almost sure he has some good years in him before diapers age.

Joanna – Was I talking to you? Butt out!

Young man – **(Bows)**. Humbly apologizing, Madame! **(To the old man)** Are you o.k.? **(Doesn't wait for an answer – as if it's clear the old man can't speak)**. Going for a quick swim. **(To Joanna)** It's hard to resist the temptation of such cold clear water. I'm sure you won't object to keep him company. **(Goes out)**.

Joanna – Too much testosterone. That's what it is. But he's right about Arturo. A doggie's soul. He has wrapped himself around my life for 30 years now. **(Pause)**. I had to undergo surgery last year, a small tumor – but they took my uterus out – just to be on the safe side. He was the only one at my bedside there in the hospital. Before the operation – marriage was an unknown concept to me. Now I find loneliness frightening. So when I got the brochure about this cruise – I thought – this is my chance. In a different atmosphere, a different setting I might be able to let him touch me without feeling like ants are crawling all over my body. You must be thinking – how difficult it is to open your legs? Women have been doing it for years as payment for the promise of economic security or any other sort of promise. So what am I waiting for? I gave up my career. Decided not to compete with young designers and hang on to my dignity and professional reputation. So it's time to party. Make up for all the years I was chained to a locomotive that never stops. You might say that some women would grab Arturo like a

cashmere sweater on sale. Hold their breath and dive right in. But **(sees Arturo who comes in carrying a tray with a tall glass of ice coffee on it)** I can't.

(Arturo is trying to steady himself, obviously afraid of dropping the tray).

You can't force love. It's either there or it isn't. **(To Arturo)** Careful! **(Arturo "manages to spill some coffee on the tray. He tries to wipe the tray with his handkerchief).** Leave it. Leave it! They will clean it up It's not your grocery store. You're a paying guest! **(Approaches him).**

Arturo – (With sadness) ice coffee, no milk, lots of ice. As you like it.

At the same time, the young man comes in dripping water all over the place.

Young man - Don't fret. Coffee is poison. **(Dries up).** I'm an expert – homeopathy. I know my poisons. Grandpa here can vouch for me.

Arturo – You shouldn't call him that. It's obvious he is not your grandfather. It's disrespectful. **(Arturo takes off his hat as a gesture of respect).**

Young man – Come on grandpa, I think we should give these young lovers some privacy. **(Grins at Joanna and pushes the wheelchair away. Then, starts exercising with his back to them).**

Arturo – You should be ashamed of yourself! **(Embarrassed, turns to Joanna).** Don't mind him. Young people today – they have no manners, no respect. When I was his age...

Joanna – Your father yelled at you in front of customers.

Arturo – Exactly! And I said nothing. Not a word. I think it's because of him I'm so clumsy, as you always say. He drilled holes in my hands, my dad. Around him I just lost it.

Joanna – What about my cabin? Did you at least manage to sort this mess out?

Arturo – Sure. Sure, darling! So sorry I forgot to tell you. The first officer is letting me use his cabin. You see, all the others came on board in England before us, in pairs.

Joanna – Just like Noah's Ark.

Arturo – What? Oh, yes. I see. Before the deluge, you mean. So, they thought we are a couple too. Same as the others. **(Looks at her with "calf**

eyes" while she turns and inspects the young man muscular torso, enjoying every minute).

Joanna – The Greek believed in physical beauty. Body building can be considered "classicism".

Arturo – You're such a woman of culture. I will never forgive myself for not going to college. My father needed me in the grocery shop. You know how he was.

Joanna – Yes. Yes. **(Turns her eyes back to him).** I hope you'll be comfortable there. In the officer's cabin. I guess it's rather special with all the maps, the ships' log and all the other knickknacks. **(Pause).** Maybe you should go now and relocate your stuff.

Arturo – Consider it done. **(The old man taps the railings a few times with his walking stick. The young man stops exercising and approaches. He takes off the old man shoes and socks and massages his feet).**

Young man - (To Joanna) Don't panic. His feet don't smell. Just like a young girl. The skin is so soft. **(Joan averts her eyes with unease).**

Arturo – Poor guy. Obviously childless. Lonely. Has to pay someone for company.

Joanna – Do you see an army of children following us? It's yet to be proved that kids are an insurance policy against loneliness.

Arturo – We have each other cara mia. **(Smiles and kisses her hand. She flinches).**

Joanna - You'd better move your luggage so that we could have rest.

Arturo – O.k. captain. **(Salutes her and starts leaving).** Don't stay in the sun too long. **(Blows her a kiss).**

(At the same time the old man taps with his walking stick. The young man starts leaving as well – to Joanna)-

Young man – He's right, you know. At your age frying your face in the sun is suicidal. Like dieting – it's an open invitation for a wrinkles attack.

(The old man taps with his walking stick to remind the young man to pick up the shoes and socks which he does. Joanna who has been stunned for a moment, approaches the young man with the intent of slapping him. As he bends down to pick up the old man things the slap lands on Michael's cheek. Michael has just entered the scene from

another direction, walking swiftly / jogging. He is dressed accordingly: very fashionable trainers, has a device for measuring blood pressure – terribly good looking for his age.

Joanna –(Almost choking) M...Michael!

Michael – Joanna. **(Gently removes her hand which seemed to be glued to his cheek. Joanna's slap has turned into a subtle caress).**

Joanna – I'm really –

Michael – (Smiling) Sorry. Yes. No doubt.

Young man – You know each other?

Michael – Let's say it's not the first slap she has graciously offered me. But her slaps were usually followed by kisses. And her kisses, believe me **(looks into her eyes)**, were worth praying in church for. To you, young man, I suggest stepping out of the picture right now. And take this nice old man with you. Go ahead – or you'll truly get what deserve!

Young man – (To the old man) No wonder they found each other. Two peas in a flaming pod. **(Joanna approaches him and the old man taps anxiously with his walking stick).** Message received. We're leaving. **(Pushes the wheelchair away. Loudly – for the benefit of them all)-** Beware of a woman who hasn't been ridden properly for years. One day without any warning she may lose it and start kicking in every direction like a mad cow.

Michael- (Shouts at the young man who is leaving the stage) – I hope you have life insurance!

Joanna – Leave it! It's not important. **(Touches his hand gently and her voice turns softer).** Maybe he's even right.

Michael – Right? It's rude. **(Michael checks his pulse).** I'm not supposed to stop jogging like that. It's detrimental to my heart rhythm.**(Resumes running movements).** What are you doing here?

Joanna – Exactly what you're doing. I'm on my way to "The Peacock's Island". I have to pinch myself to believe it's actually me on this yacht. "The Peacock's Island" – what nonsense!

Michael – (Quits running)- The island of lost love. **(Pause. Joanna looks at him deeply moved).** Carrot juice. **(Looks at his watch).** It's time.

Joanna – Maybe I got on this yacht for a reason. Maybe we were destined to meet. Especially now that –

Michael – No waiter in sight. What kind of a cruise is this? **(At the same time a beautiful young woman in a bikini comes in holding a glass of carrot juice in one hand and a towel in the other)**. I told Mary it was suspiciously cheap.

Joanna – Mary? **(The young woman reaches them)**. Who is she?

Michael – Here is Mary with my carrot juice. **(To Mary)** – I knew I could count on you.

Joanna – Could you get me something as well? Not carrot juice. I hate juices. All this sugar. Coffee. Ice coffee – black. Will you remember? I can't stand the taste of milk.

Mary – I'm not –

Michael – Mary was **(Pause)** my student. The Arts Academy in London. Outstanding student actually. A very gifted painter.

Joanna – So you took her under your wings and she's managing your studio in Scotland and learning so much in the process. **(Smiles cynically at Mary)**.

Mary – How do you know? I'm so –

Joanna – Grateful?

Arturo comes in. He's changed but has a real talent for looking shabby and out of place. He's holding tight a glass of ice coffee. No tray this time. Walks slowly and cautiously. Michael studies him with a mean smile.

Michael – Your coffee is here.

Arturo – **(Hands her the glass triumphantly)**. Enjoy, my love.

Joanna is appalled at this display of intimacy. She drinks her coffee without thanking him. Michael drinks his juice and they both look at each other. When Michael is done with his glass he places it on the tray Mary is holding. Joan holds hers so tightly it might break.

Arturo – And who are these nice people? **(Tries, unsuccessfully, to kiss the hand of Mary who is still holding the tray)**.

Joan – Cut the comedy of manners!

Michael – **(“Saves the day” with an air of chivalry)**. This lovely young lady is Mary and I am Michael. **(Shakes Arturo's slightly sweating hand)**.

Arturo – Arturo. A pleasure.

Michael doesn't know what to do with his hand which is a bit sticky now, eventually he wipes it with the towel Mary is holding then checks his pulse again and stretches next to the railing. The young man is back, looks at them from a distance, then lies down on a towel wearing headphones and sunglasses. At the same time –

Arturo – (To Joanna) Isn't he the one with the wife that-

Joanna – Killed herself. In the lake.

Mary – Sh... We don't talk about it.

Joanna – I bet you don't.

Arturo – She was your friend, wasn't she? You studied Art together at that Academy in London. You told me all about it. Remember?

Joanna – We were all friends. A threesome – remember Michael?

Michael looks at her, then everything "freezes".

SCENE 4

The yacht scenery "moves" aside. Instead the peacock and the peahen are seen sitting by a fire. The peacock is eating fish greedily. The peahen looks at him.

The peacock – Your story has given me an appetite. I haven't been that hungry for a long time.

The peahen – Beware of the bones.

The peacock – Why aren't you eating? Brought you your favorite fish. I had to go deep into the water for it and it was rather chilly. I might catch a cold.

(Pause. Licks his fingers, looks at her). You want to taste mine? (He obviously finds it difficult to give up the last bites).

The peahen – No, thank you.

The peacock – Why? I don't understand. **(Turns her fish over the improvised grill built over the fire).**

The peahen – Can't stand the taste of dead things.

The Peacock – You've changed.

The Peahen – So have you. **(Looking at the grilled fish).** It has the taste of our love.

SCENE 5

Everything changes abruptly. Again, the lighting of the emergency ward. Nisso's voice is heard, shouting. Gil is in her bed, Ran is sitting next to her holding some pages he was reading earlier. Gil looks at him.

Nisso's voice - (Alarms both of them). So what if I'm not her husband? I'm coming in. End of discussion! No one here is going to stop me! **(Stamps in, Ran gets up).**

Nisso – I've been looking for hours! Hours! What happened to you? Tell me! What happened?

Ran – (Moves over, puts the pages on the dresser). She's fine. **(Moves the chair towards Nisso).** Here, take a seat. Everything is fine.

Nisso – This looks fine to you? All these tubes? **(Kisses Gil's hand, till his lips reach the I.V. Sits down as if all the air has gone out of him).** She doesn't like her veins touched.

Ran – I know.

Nisso – How did you do it? I can't understand. And with a brand new car! Just got it out of customs. Total loss. Had to take a cab to the dealership to find me another car to go looking for you in the middle of the night. Total loss. How will we explain it to the insurance company?

Gil – She couldn't give you a lift after you've serviced her in bed?

Ran – I'm leaving **(looks at Gil).** Should have been home ages ago.

Gil – I want you to stay.

Nisso – Go. Go. I know how to handle her. That's how she gets when she blows a fuse. Do you think I don't understand? But you're behaving like you're the first woman this has ever happened to. Betrayals are part of life, isn't it right doctor? But with her it's the end of the world. She just has to turn life into a soap opera. It's a special talent she has. That's why I told her she had to write. At least we'll make money out of her gift for drama. **(Pause. Looks at Gil and Ran who are looking at each other).** So can I take her home? You said she's o.k., right?

Ran – We're keeping her here until we get the results of all the tests. **(Starts leaving turns to Gil).** I'll be back. **(Exits).**

Nisso approaches Gil, takes the hair off her face, strokes and kisses her. She is tearful.

Gil –(Blows her nose). Give me a tissue. I can't reach it.

Nisso – (Hands her one from the package left by Ran). An Alovera Tissue? And here I was under the assumption that our health system is undergoing a major budgetary crisis.

Gil – Ran gave them to me.

Nisso – He's too nice your doctor. It doesn't pay to trust the overly nice ones.

Gil – Only shits like you should be trusted. I know. I'm an expert.

Nisso – She's not worth it. She's not worth our falling out over her. Ten years of friendship. Ten years – it's history. She's only a cloud that passed through our sky and never even shed a drop of rain.

Gil – No rain? A deluge- That's what she was. And I hope you enjoyed her because it's going to cost you – dearly.

Nisso – It already has! What do you think? God only knows how I'm going to show my face at the office tomorrow. **(Pause).** And it's not going to be so pleasant for her either.

Gil – My heart bleeds for her, poor soul.

Nisso – She's not like that usually.

Gil - How do you know?

Nisso – (Strokes her hand). Sh.. sh.. why don't we sit here a minute, both of us quietly and recuperate from this night. My head is spinning. **(Takes her hand and puts it on his face).** You love me. I know you love me. It's a pity this hospital bed is not big enough for both of us. I would love to fall asleep in your arms. When we make our first million – remind me so I won't forget – we'll make a donation. **(Gets up and approaches her).** Or better yet we'll purchase a huge shipment of king size beds, you pick the colour, and we'll send them over. To be on the safe side. Because you know how money gets lots in the corridors of these institutions. **(Kisses her. She moves her face a little).** What's wrong with you? You forgot how to kiss? I hope it's not a case of long term amnesia. Let's make sure. **(Kisses her passionately. She responds. Their sexual connection is evident. At the same time the peacock and the peahen are seen peeping).** That's better.

Gil – You want to read what I wrote in Santorini? The lorry driver picked the pages up for me. I need your help. Somewhere in the middle I managed to get the story all entangled.

Nisso – Tomorrow, Gili. We have time. I've got to catch some sleep and so do you. Sleep cures everything. You'll wake up tomorrow bright and shiny – a new you. I'll be back later to take you home. **(Starts walking, stops)**. On Saturday I'm going with my father to the synagogue to say "Hagomel" – to thank God for your recovery. **(Exits while talking rather to himself than to her)**. It's a shame that driver was so nice to you. Now I don't have the heart to convince the insurance company it's all his fault. **(Gil watches his back and then closes her eyes)**.

Simultaneously, the peahen closes her eyes as well, the peacock looks at her.

The peacock – And you call this love? All the drama, the passion, the sex. It's teenage love – Romeo and Juliet style.

The peahen – **(Opens her eyes)**. It's love that's alive.

The peacock – **(Starts walking slowly away, dragging his feet. Stops, turns over to her)**. I know I'm not exciting anymore. I can't make your heart go wild, not like I used to. It's my body. It has a will of it's own. I'm not its master anymore. But you – you move me every time – like it's the first time. I want you to know that. Your story, my heart trembles with every word, just like the first time. **(He waits a moment for her reaction, then turns and leaves. She looks past him in the direction of the yacht which is returning to the scene)**.

SCENE 6

Sunset. Arturo is alone on deck. He is holding an ornate revolver. The revolver slips from his hand. He loses heart for a minute, picks it up and looks at it, strokes it. He starts walking, as if he's going back to his cabin. Halts when he sees Michael. Michael comes in dressed sportily but very fashionably. He is holding a fancy catalogue. He chooses a deckchair and is about to sit down when Arturo draws his revolver and "uses Michael as his target". Michael can hardly breathe.

Arturo – It worked! My hand was steady! If only my father could see me now!

Michael – **(Moves away from him)**. Lost it, did you?

Arturo – **(As if "waking up" – back to reality)**. Don't worry. No bullets, see? **(shows him the revolver and Michael flinches)**. I'm simply practicing. I've been dreaming about it for years. Mafioso. That's what I should have been. Life robbed me of my vocation. When I was a child, I had friends – good friends in the neighborhood. One of them is still "inside". They were well connected. La Familia. If you know what I mean. A few years ago I met one of them at a funeral and he whispered in my ear that today it's only a question of money. A lot of money.

Michael – **(Sits down, still out breath, holding the catalogue next to his chest, taking his pulse)**. You should be careful with these things, mate. You will give someone a heart-attack with that toy and you'll pass the Mafioso audition with flying colours. Killing someone without wasting ammunition is quite a valuable talent. **(Arturo's ridiculousness helps Michael regain his confidence)**. Come, sit here. I'll show you something. The catalogue of my last exhibition. **(Arturo sits down. Keeps hugging the revolver)**. Here – read what they wrote about me. **(Hands him the catalogue. Arturo browses)**. A great talent improves with time. Like good wine. **(The Young man wheels in the old man. Arturo and Michael both don't notice them. The young man is in Karate attire. He wraps a scarf around the old man's neck)**.

Arturo – I'm not what you would call a connoisseur. **(Looks more closely at one of the photographs)**. I find this beautiful. Very beautiful. Real life-like. You can hear the dog barking. And the woman, she's so sad. Why?

Michael – **(All excited)**. It's naïve, you see. I brought naivety back to art. Not abstract, not conceptualism, not post modernism. Life itself. I brought them back to art! **(The old man gestures repeatedly with his walking stick. The young man approaches)**.

Young man – I think he wants to see the pictures.

Michael – Oh, it's you, in disguise. A Mafioso and a Samurai. Was I the only one who didn't get an invitation to the fancy dress ball? **(The young man executes some ominous Karate movement in Michael's face. Michael is**

momentarily frightened. The young man snatches the catalogue while Arturo approaches the old man).

Arturo – You mustn't leave him on his own like that. Before they were hosing the deck. **(Approaches the old man).** Don't be afraid of the revolver. **(Puts it back in its boot).** I'm just making sure the brakes are locked. **(While he's doing that the young man gives the catalogue to the old man. Mary comes in with a painter's stand and a palette. The young man approaches her in order to help her).**

Young man – **(To Michael)** You don't intend to help her? **(Opens the stand and makes sure it's steady).**

Mary – Thank you. **(Michael kisses Mary on the lips. The old man is staring. She is embarrassed).**

Young man – **(Starts walking towards the old man. To Mary)** - Half my kingdom. Just ask.

Michael – The kingdom you don't have.

Young man – The kingdom I will have. **(To the old man)** I understand you're staying here. **(Looks at Mary again).** I also find the view quite appealing. **(Backs off and start doing Tai Chi at a distance).**

Michael – **(To Mary)** What's all this for?

Mary - I thought you would want to start painting. They are waiting for your new exhibition. You always painted lakes, oceans. The sea is very important to you. That's why I wanted to go on this cruise. For you. For your oceans.

Michael – Why don't you paint them? You're so talented! **(Strokes her. She is melting. Arturo is embarrassed, averts his eyes. The old man continues to stare at them).**

Arturo – When Joanna read in the papers that your wife **(pause)** killed herself – she was sure you'd never paint again. **(looks at Mary who is focused on Michael).** Yes. I remember. She came into the grocery store, the paper in her hand and said, yes, that's what she said **(approaches Michael)**, "he won't paint anymore".

Mary – **(Almost choking)** where is your tact?

Michael – **(Who paled for a moment and was focusing his gaze on the horizon, regains his confidence).** Don't fret my dear. Our friend Arturo meant no harm. He has a heart of gold. And that's precisely why he doesn't

stand a chance in hell with the lovely Joanna. You needn't worry your pretty head, love. There will be an exhibition. **(Pause)**. I have to lie down for a while. With all this "much ado about nothing" I didn't get –

Mary – Sure. Sure. What an unlucky coincidence. I wanted so much to give you a present. This cruise. I wanted you to forget.

Michael – Don't torment yourself. It's not your fault that Joanna received the same publicity leaflet about this cruise. I knew it was too cheap. It's never advisable to join the bargain hunters.

Arturo – My father used to say – the only thing you can get for free is a good beating.

Michael – Wise man.

Mary – I'm coming with you. **(Looks at Arturo)** I can't stay here. **(Arturo averts his eyes)**.

Michael – Nonsense! Come here. **(Sits her down by the painter's stand. Looks at Arturo)**. My beauty. Take a brush. **(Puts one in her hand)**. You are after all my most talented student! My star! Start painting. **(kisses her hair)**. Everything you see. Every – **(All this time it was impossible to tell whether the old man who was focused on Michael and Mary is asleep or awake. He now handles the brakes of his wheelchair and pounces on Michael and knocks both of them down against the railings. Arturo rushes to "save them". All this looks rather like an accident and not like a calculated action initiated by the old man)**.

Mary – **(Rushes to Michael's side)**. Michael, Michael! **(The young man is there as well, checking whether the old man is o.k.)**.

At the same time –

Arturo – **(To Michael)** Dio santo! Another minute and you would have been both down there, in the ocean!

Mary – **(Helping Michael to get up)** Are you o.k.? **(takes his hand. To Arturo)** His hands. He hurt his hands!

Young Man – So what? He's not a pianist, is he? They will heal. **(Mary looks at him with anger, takes the stunned Michael by the hand, they're about to leave when Michael stops for a minute near the old man and stares at him)**.

Mary – Come on. We have to take care of your hands. **(She drags him, they exit).**

Young Man – Such a fuss and he is not even bleeding!

Arturo – You should take him to the infirmary. At his age, it can be dangerous.

Young man - I don't understand! I made sure the brakes were locked. I'm sure of it! **(They exit, Arturo looks at them).**

Arturo – Nobody's asks about me. No "thank you", no – "do you need anything? I'm invisible. **(Pause. Takes the revolver out of its boot, touches it).** Joanna should have seen me. I was the main man! Superman, that's me! **(start walking)** I saved them both! That's what I did! Me – the grocery boy! No university, no exhibitions, no catalogues, but when push comes to shove I'm there! I saved the day! Not a moment of hesitation, no quivering, no stammering! **(Draws the revolver and aims with confidence).** Bull's Eye! I saved the day, Joanna! I'm your hero! **(At the same time the old man comes in, operating the wheelchair on his own. Arturo fires the gun. Simultaneously by means of lighting the peacock and peahen are revealed for a moment. His arms are around her. They're soon hidden by "darkness". Arturo falls backwards and the old man catches him).**

Arturo – Dear God! I could have killed somebody! **(To the old man)** I'm so sorry! Thank you!

Old Man – Don't worry it was a blank.

Arturo – I didn't know it was loaded. I got it from one of the elders of the neighborhood. He owed me money. I didn't care. I couldn't let an old man go hungry. It's hard growing old when there is no one to take care of you. But for him it was a matter of honor. He had to pay me back so – **(suddenly remembers)** – where is that young man?

Old Man – Fainted on the way to the infirmary. Had quite a scare.

Arturo – I thought you couldn't speak. A stroke or something.

Old Man – No. It's just the legs. Weak legs.

Arturo – This guy – you trust him? It's tough to be dependant on somebody. I know how it is. I had to help my dad with everything. I had to dress him, bathe him. Sometimes I had the urge to simply –

Old Man – Kill him?

Arturo – (Crosses himself) Sweet Jesus and Mary. He was a hard man. Hard as nails. **(Pause)**. I don't mean that you, of course –

Old Man – No. of course not. I dress myself and bathe myself. I suggest you check whether there are more bullets in your revolver. We wouldn't want this cruise to end up with a murder.

Arturo – Santa Maria! **(At the same time Joanna comes in "dressed to kill")**.

Joanna – Someone said something about a murder?

SCENE 7

A brusque shift of lighting brings back the "Casualty" scenery and Gil's novel scenery disappears. Gil is lying on the hospital bed with her eyes closed. Ran is sitting by her bed the pages in his hands. He's not wearing his medical stuff gown.

Gil – Go on. Why did you stop? Nobody has every read to me out loud my own words.

Ran – I should have been home ages ago.

Gil – So why aren't you leaving?

Ran – If Carmit could see us now –

Gil – Her heart wouldn't be broken because you've never –

Ran – We've never spent much time with one another. Couldn't afford to. **(Pause)**. Carmit is a project manager at her firm. She's very successful.

Gil – She succeeded losing you. Oops! Sorry. I was really out of line. Help! Woman overboard! **(Pause)**. Sometimes frogs leap out of my mouth witch style. You have to believe me. I tend to entangle myself in the web of my own thoughts which have little if no regard for me and act solely on their own accord. Here's a brilliant example: I started out writing a romantic novel – the kind women write for women and then sell it all over the world and make tons of money – and here I have in front of me –

Ran – A murder story?

Gil – You won't know if you don't go on reading it.

Ran – You'll go back to him, to your car dealer?

Gil – Don't call him that.

Ran – Why? All is fair in war and love.

Gil – Who loves whom?

Ran – You love Nisso and he loves you. What did you think I was talking about?

A lighting shift reveals the peahen who is busy inspecting a flower that has begun to wilt. She tries to blow on it. The peacock, dragging his feet with difficulty, approaches her.

The Peacock – want to see my feathers?

The Peahen – Can't you see that the flower is dying?

The Peacock – I rinsed them with ocean water. They're shiny now. **(Manages to open his feathers and display their glory although it's obviously strenuous for him).**

The Peahen – When the sun goes down these petals will be shut forever. We have to stop it. We have to stop time.

The Peacock – Look at me. **(The peahen buries her face in the flower).**

The Peahen – **(Raises her face to him – covered with pollen).** I can't. **(The peacock hesitates for a moment, then approaches her, again dragging his feet, moves her away from the flower which he picks brutally and throws to her feet).**

The Peacock – Now you can. I stopped time. **(Pause)** For you.

Right away a waltz music is heard. The peacock drags the peahen to an imaginary dance floor and they dance awkwardly while he displays violence towards her in his movements. The flower is trampled under their feet.

SCENE 8

Simultaneously:

On an elevated stage, Joanna and Michael are dancing as well. The lighting is colorful portraying the atmosphere of a festive ball. The physical compatibility between

them is apparent. They're synchronized and seem like "one body". Slowly, the light on the peacock and the peahen goes out. They disappear and the ball scene commences. The song ends, the music stops gradually. Michael, self conscious about their intimacy, extricates himself elegantly from it.

Michael – Some things never change. **(Pause. Mary enters, comes closer then halts when the young man arrives and stands behind her. At the same time – Joanna grabs Michael and kisses him passionately. Mary turns to walk away but the young man grabs her and kisses her).**

Mary – What are you doing?

Young Man – What they are doing. **(Joanna and Michael go from kissing to heavy petting).**

Mary – Disgusting.

Young Man – Us or them? **(Kisses her again. While he's kissing, from the other direction, Arturo enters wheeling in the old man. Arturo is dressed in a frock-coat. He looks like a waiter or a penguin. On the old man knees – a closed silver plated serving dish. A few seconds go by till Arturo notices Joanna and Michael.**

Arturo – Are you sure it's not too heavy for you?

Old Man – No need to worry.

Arturo – You're holding my future, you know.

Old Man – You were afraid to drop it. **(Facing Michael and Joanna's torrid embrace, they halt instantly. Arturo is flabbergasted, almost choking).**

Old Man – Say something!

Arturo – I...I can't breathe!

Old Man – You expect me to give you the kiss of life? Go break them up! **(Mary – all fired up and decisive approaches Michael).**

Mary – I can't believe it! You said you hated her! You said she ruined your life! **(To Joanna)** This cruise was

his chance to start painting again. **(To Michael)** You said she's responsible for your hands shaking.

Joanna – Me?

Mary – For two years I've been waiting for it to happen.

Since his wife –

Old Man – (Approaches) Belinda.

Mary – Don't interfere!

Michael – How do you know my wife's name?

Young Man – Look at you! A bunch of idiots! We're at the heart of the ocean. In two hours we'll reach one of the most beautiful places on earth. And what do you all choose to do instead of thanking your lucky stars? Fight.

The polish duke **(points at Arturo)** is firing bullets all all over the place, while this gentleman tampers with the brakes. And don't think I haven't figured it out. **(To**

Joanna - This one decided to finally gorge herself on What she missed out all her life.**(Pause)**. Listen up, you morons! Life is staring you in the face. It's here and now. Not tomorrow! What are you waiting for? For grandpa death to come and take you by the hand, while you're crying your heart out? "A moment, just one moment more! I haven't yet" –

Arturo – Shut up! **(Joanna is amazed at this "brutal reaction" not characteristic of Arturo)**.

Young Man – You will not tell me to –

Arturo – Shut it or I shoot! **(Reaches for the revolver in his trousers, realizes it's not there)**.

Old Man – I have it. **(Takes it out of his jacket and hands it to Arturo)**.

Joanna – **(Softly)** Arturo! **(Approaches him)**.

Arturo – Don't come any closer! Not one centimeter! **(Holds the gun to her face, his hand is shaking)**.

Joanna - What's wrong with you? You're acting like a-

Arturo – A Mafioso? Yes. Finally. And I have you and your

prince of darkness to thank for it! **(Bows dramatically and staggers. The old man tries to steady him).**

Michael – Prince of darkness. Unbelievable! A penguin and poet! **(Joanna tries to silence him with a gesture).**

Young Man – **(To Mary)** Let's go.

Mary – **(To Michael)** You said I'm your last chance! **("Attacks" him physically as well. In the beginning he's still passive).** When I completed my studies I wanted to go home. **(Gets him down on his knees).** On your knees you begged me – "stay". You are my muse! Say it! **(Michael is holding her like a drowning man).** Say it loudly – make her hear you!

Joanna – **(Wards her off and helps Michael up).** Are you crazy? **(The young man takes Mary by the hand).** Go with him! What are you doing here, anyway? You're talented? Fight for your talent! Don't let it die for the name of love!

Young Man - This is love? Do you love him? You only think you do. Do you burn all over when he touches you? Does he make your soul tremble? **(He opens his arms and Mary is sucked into his embrace. He smiles at her).** He makes you laugh when you're sad? **(Mary takes him away from there).**

Arturo – Nobody leaves! It says a fancy dress ball on the program tonight. Nobody spoils my fun! Maestro! **(Music is heard. The old man hands Arturo the silver dish. Arturo approaches Joan, opens it and announces):** "Pecan pie for you, my dear! Eat! **(Joanna flinches).** Eat, I said. **(She begins nibbling and then gobbles greedily. Arturo addresses Michael):** She's addicted! Addicted to pecan pie! Careful! She's about to vomit. **(Joanna runs away choking),** And you know why? Come on, guess. You seem to intimately know all her pleasure buttons! **(Michael wants to go after Joanna but the old man blocks him).** Patience, patience. I'll explain it all. I see you're confused and rightly so. How could Joanna – a well-known designer who could always compete with her super-models anorexic look – have a fatal attraction to such a rich delicacy? This woman who all her life almost refrained from breathing in order to avoid the calories of air pollution. So that's how the story goes. Let me take you to the 20th of December thirty years ago. Stormy weather. Two o'clock a.m. outside looks like two o'clock p.m. The scene: our grocery store in Queens. Enter a young woman dripping wet. Raindrops - or

are they tears? - trickle down almost drowning her but she just stands there. Unable to talk, holding a piece of a magazine close to her heart. It's torn and the letters seem to fly away drop by drop. Her almost transparent hand takes off the shelf a pecan pie I've just laid there. "Watch out! It's hot!" She can't hear me. "Ay!" Her tongue is slightly burnt. She exits leaving a train of water behind her which makes me think of a wedding dress. A few minutes later she comes back in. Crumbs decorating the mouth I desperately want to kiss. **(At the same time Joanna returns and looks at him teary-eyed)**. "Let me taste you" I tell her silently. My father isn't there but even in his absence I'm paralyzed. And she says –

Joanna – How much do I owe you? Every Thursday you'll bake it for me – the same thing. I'll come at the same time.

Arturo – (To Michael) A sort of a ritual for your benefit. This magazine – shall I tell you what was in it?

Michael – I'm all ears.

Arturo – (As if reading aloud): The upcoming young painter Michael – this bit was somewhat smudged – was married today to his beloved Belinda. **(Pause)** I wish you could just – drop dead.

Michael - She's not that skinny. She felt quite padded to me. **(Smiling meanly at Arturo)**. Trust me. I gave her a thorough check-up. **(Arturo hits him. He falls down, then gets up and tries to hit back. Joanna separates them, pushes Michael against the railing)**.

Joanna - – Padded?

Michael – **(Smiles at her)** Here and there! And I quite like it.

Joanna - **(Shouting)** Padded? **(Tears the seams of the dress neck-line)**. Touch. Touch me! **(Takes his hand)**. Put it in. **(Her breast are partially revealed. He takes out Dollar bills)**.

Young Man - Dollar bills?! She's officially potty.

Arturo - Joanna!

(Mary scrutinizes Joanna's breasts).

Michael – You're totally bare!

Joanna – You cover me – with your arms. Hold me so no one could see what was once yours!

Mary – You have no shame?

Joanna – (Approaches her and reveals more of herself). Many men feasted on them and your Michael was the first. Quite addicted he was. Weren't you, Michael? **(Arturo, coming out of his temporary state of shock, approaches her and covers her up with his frock-coat. She takes more bills out of her dress and puts them in the palm of his hand. He refuses to take them).** It's yours. All of it – for you. For us. I wanted us to stay on this island. To hide from the world. To love each other like those peacocks with no one to interfere.

Young man – It's the peacock's island. Only their love can survive there. It's not an island for humans.

Mary – How do you know?

Young Man - It says so in the prospectus. **(To Joanna)** Didn't you read it?

Joanna – Have you ever loved someone? Were you desperate enough to cling to him like a dress to a hanger? Please forgive me, Arturo.

Arturo – This dress. You began designing it in the hospital. I remember you waking up from the anesthesia and asking for your drawing pad. I told you you're retired – no need to run yourself into the ground anymore – you deserve a rest. **(The old man turns around and quickly wheels himself out).**

Mary – (To the young man) Go after him.

Young Man – I'm not leaving you here with these lunatics.

Mary – Go. You're paid to look after him.

Young Man - I'll go if you're coming with me. **(Mary glances at Michael, then takes the young man's hand and they exit. At the same time -)**

Michael – Mary!

Joanna – So here we are – the three musketeers! Think we could go out and conquer the world? **(Arturo picks up the scattered bills).**

Michael – (Checking his pulse). I have high blood pressure. I'm not supposed to get excited.

Joanna – Being excited is being alive.

Michael – You've never been able to see that I was not made for your fire. It can swallow me whole.

Joanna – (Clears her throat). My mouth tastes like rust. I hate vomiting. I must smell terrible. **(Approaches Arturo).** Arturo? Either Arturo is anosmic or

he loves me with this stench. **(To Michael)** The stench of my rotten love for you.

Michael – I should go to bed. I don't feel well. **(Arturo gives Joanna the bills he collected. He looks at her for a moment and picks up the silver dish. Joanna takes off the frock-coat puts it on Arturo who looks at her and then leaves. The bare Joanna approaches Michael and clings to him. She puts his hands on her waist. The old man comes in).**

Michael – Joanna, I'm dizzy. **(The old man approaches him).**

Joanna – Sticking your oar in it again, you dirty old man? **(The old man pushes her away from Michael with his stick. She removes the stick forcibly).** Came to drool? Come on, Michael. **(She lies down on the floor).** Let's show him our stuff. **(She pulls Michael to the floor and the old man pulls him back).**

Michael – I don't feel well, Joanna. I have to go. **(Michael wobbles. The old man stands up).**

Old Man – Lean on me. **(They start walking slowly. Joanna gets up and sits in the wheelchair).**

Joanna – Sod off. Just make sure he doesn't throw you overboard. The ocean is deep. You may find your Belinda down there! **(Michael walks away. The old man looks back. They exit. Joanna takes off her dress and tosses it away. She stands by the railing – as if she's about to jump into the ocean).**

SCENE 9

A sudden change of scenery – back to the emergency ward scene. The starry night lighting changes into a hospital one – blinding white light.

Ran – No. She can't do it.

Gil – Why? Have you ever been in her position?

Ran – People don't die from love.

A different lighting brings forth the peacock and the peahen. They look as if they have fallen asleep after love making. The peacock's feathers are scattered around them. He wakes up, touches his bare body – where

the feathers should have been. He looks at the peahen with sorrowful eyes and with great sadness he starts walking.

The Peahen – Wait a minute! Where are you going? We were so good together. Just like in the beginning.

The Peacock – You don't love me. You love your imagination.

The Peahen – What are you on about? The orgasms you gave me tonight were unimaginable.

The Peacock – You plucked all my feathers.

The Peahen – **(Looks around her).** I haven't noticed. **(Starts collecting them off the ground and her attention is diverted from him to the feathers. She tries to clean them. Since they're covered in sand she blows on them).** Where are you going? **(He exits. She adorns herself with the feathers as if they were hers. Nisso comes is running. The peahen looks at him. He doesn't see her).**

The peahen – Careful! You're treading on my feathers. **(He might trip over something for a moment and immediately head for the Emergency dept. He finds Ran pacing back and forth by Gil's bed immersed in her novel which he's [still] reading. Gil is following him with her eyes).**

Nisso – That's it! You're taking the needle out of her vein right now! She and I are going home. **(Pause. He approaches her and tries to do it himself).**

Gil – Nisso, don't. It hurts even when you don't touch it.

Nisso – Don't you see that the I.V. bag is empty? What exactly are you two doing here? **(Ran checks the I.V. bag, than takes the needle out gently).** Look at the blue mark you gave her.

Gil – My veins are too thin.

Nisso – Come home. I can't fall asleep without you.

The Peahen – That's love for you. The proper kind. **(Watches the peacock who is approaching her).** He is not a quitter.

The Peacock – I'm cold without my feathers. **(Shivering)** hold me.

The Peahen – **(Her attention is focused on the E.R. scene).** I can't now. It's a critical moment in the story. I can't feel the right words for it. Wait a minute. Here they are. I feel them coming.

The Peacock – **(Turning away from her).** Your words stab me. **(He exits. The peahen approaches Ran – as if "activating" him that way).**

Ran – (Examines Gil). You can go home if you want to. I'm discharging you.

Gil – You said we needed to wait for the tests results.

Nisso – We'll come back for them in the morning.

Gil – (To Ran) Is that what you want? I Thought you wanted to find out what happened to Joanna.

Nisso – Who is Joanna? **(Carmit enters. It's obvious she has been crying).**

Carmit – (To Ran who is looking at her as if he has just woken up from a dream). So this is where you're hiding instead of coming home?! **(She throws the her keys at him. Run ducks, Nisso catches them).**

Nisso – Hey, careful. **(Hands them to Ran).**

Carmit – I'm through being careful. Through being considerate, through...

Nisso – Roger. Message received. No need to exert yourself.

Carmit – Who the hell are you? **(To Ran)** This is how you choose to end our life together? In an Emergency Dept. surrounded by total strangers?

SCENE 10

A siren is heard and at the same time there is a dramatic change of lighting. The siren changes into the "symphony" of Mary's orgasms courtesy of the young man. At first, they are only heard – not seen. The scenery is that of the Island – The Peacocks' Island.

Mary – Don't stop, don't stop.

Young Man – (Gasping) I'm generally in great shape but it's been a while since I was called upon to perform Olympic style. **(She continues to touch him).** Just let me catch some sleep and I can promise you another round.

(Mary keeps on "handling" his body). Wow! I may yet have to thank your Michael. He starved you. You shouldn't do that to animals. They become carnivorous.

Mary – I can't sleep.

Young man – You're coming with me to the Himalayas. You'll have no trouble sleeping there. That place will harmonize your body and soul. The perfect tune up. A friend took me there. He is the one who taught me all about

medicinal herbs. Did you know that some of the poisons could actually heal you? Arsenic, for example, is a vital ingredient of some homeopathic medicines. Come with me to the Himalayas. You can paint there. I met people who painted God there. Only in the Himalayas they managed to see Him. I know I'm supposed to say – "Her" because God might as well be a woman but that's besides the point.

Mary – Your looks are deceiving.

Young man – You should develop your eyesight.

Mary – Where do you get the money for all your travels?

Young man – Money comes to me when I need it. Working "nine to five" is not for me. I'm addicted to my freedom.

Mary – Me too.

Young man – You haven't even discovered your freedom yet. Your beloved Michael has been blocking your vision.

Mary – **(On top of him, biting him)** I'm discovering it now.

Young man – Oh, God!

SCENE 11

A sudden transition to the E.R. scene. (From this moment on – the three "worlds" coexist on stage: The peacocks' island, the peahens' story and Gil's novel).

Gil – Ay. It hurts.

Nisso – You must try to get up.

Gil – I can't.

Nisso – O.K. I won't force you. At least HE has gone, your doctor.

Gil – He isn't mine.

Nisso – It took him a while to go after her. It's no way to treat your woman.

Gil – And you are the expert.

Nisso – **(The following words come out of his mouth although he almost chokes on them).** I love you. I want us to get married. **(Ran comes in at the end of this speech and doesn't really grasp it. He's holding some papers).**

Ran – Your tests are here. You're in the clear. Only one X-ray missing. They are jammed over there. A multiple car accident. **(Nisso kisses the stunned Gil. Ran is embarrassed).**

Nisso – Think of what I said. **(Looks at Ran triumphantly).** People drive like crazy. Aren't you worried about your girlfriend? **(To Gil)** I'll be back in the morning. Catch some sleep. **(To Ran)** Don't you have other patients to take care of? You're disturbing her. She needs her rest. I want her to be fit for celebrations in the morning. We have a good reason for celebrating and we definitely know how, don't we? You can only dream about what she does to me.

Gil – Nisso, enough.

Nisso – Why Nisso? Look how he's drooling over you. **(To Ran).** You're going to need an umbrella. **(To Ran)** Your girlfriend stormed out of here and you are busy with mine? Unacceptable! Tests shmests. Excuses – that's what it's all about. Your E.R is full of sick people. Go take care of them before they drop dead!

Gil – **(Imploringly)** Nisso.

Nisso – It's Nisso again. Isn't curing people his reason for living? He's a bloody doctor. He's supposed to help not to interfere.

Gil – He helped me. He read my story to me and now I understand it better.

Nisso – I also understand. I understand he doesn't know that you love me. So, for your information, dear doctor, we are getting married.

Ran – **(Surprised but reacts quickly before Gil manages to say anything)** Congratulations!

Nisso – **(Surprised)** Thank you! **(Ran starts walking away).** It can still happen for you too. If you run quickly enough you might still catch her. **(Ran exits).**

Gil – You're heartless.

Nisso – Me? You want to hear my heart? **(Approaches her and takes off his shirt).**

Gil – I don't know if this is what I want.

Nisso – What are you talking about? Since when you don't want –

Gil – Marriage.

Nisso – (Stops a minute by the bed, puts on his shirt and looks at her).

So what was all this drama about?

The peahen – He wants you, silly girl. What are you waiting for?

The peacock – (Unwillingly drawn to the story) When two fish are fluttering in the net of love the only decent thing to do is to throw them back into the ocean.

The peahen – (Turning to him) What?

The peacock – Otherwise, they'll die.

The peahen – (As if seeing for the first time) You really look awful without the feathers.

By means of lighting the focus is on Mary who is - half asleep. The Young man stands up.

Young man – I need to pee. I'll be back in a minute. **(He walks towards a bush and halts suddenly when his eyes meet Joanna's body).**

Young man – It's Joanna! Look! **(Leans over the body).** She's not breathing. And her dress is completely torn.

Mary – (Moves swiftly away) I can't. I've never seen a corpse before. **(Furtively glances at Joanna)** Don't touch the money!

Young man – Who's touching anything?

Ran – I thought she jumped. What is she doing here on the beach?

Mary – We need to fetch them! Let's go!

Gil – The rest of them are probably on the yacht still sleeping.

Ran – O.k. o.k. I know. **(Starts walking).**

Gil – (Stands up) Where are you going?

Ran – Wait for me. I'll be right back. **(Exits).**

(The young man is mesmerized by Joanna, Mary pulls him away).

Young man – Look at her face. Such tranquility. She was quite dishy, the old broad.

Mary - I'm going to wake them up! We have to notify the police!

(Ran arrives. He's holding one end of the old man's walking stick while the old man is holding the other end. Ran is pulling him).

Ran – We have to! **(They stop walking when they reach the others. Ran begins peeling off the old man's cloths. Gil hurries over there).**

Gil – What are you doing?

Ran – Trust me. You wanted a solution to the problem? **(He keeps on peeling off the old man revealing a woman's body. She's wearing a bathing-suit, her face and neck are covered by an "old man" mask which she's starting to peel off – Mary screams).**

Belinda – **(Having taken the mask off, extends her hand to the young man).** Belinda, a pleasure.

Young man – **(Shakes her hand).** Your feet, dainty like a porcelain doll. I should have guessed.

Mary – Belinda. **(Pause)** Like Michael's wife.

Belinda - Bingo! **(Mary screams again).**

(Arturo is seen dragging the sleepy Michael).

Arturo – I told you I heard screaming. Something happened. **(They come closer. Michael, seeing Belinda, stops obviously stunned. For a moment Mary and the young man are blocking their vision and they can't see Joanna's body. Arturo catches a glimpse of her dress and rushes over there).** Joanna!

Mary – She's dead. **(Arturo caresses her, arranges her hair and her dress).**

Young man – It probably happened a few hours ago. She's totally cold.

Michael – Shut her eyes! See how she's looking at me?!

Belinda – Calm down, Michael. You didn't kill her, **(Michael looks at Belinda)** although you had one of the best reasons. She knew your most guarded secret. The secret of your life. And she was about to reveal it. Now that she's lost you once again, she had nothing to lose.

Ran – He has high blood pressure. He'll have a heart attack.

Gil – People who love themselves are in no hurry to die. They're quite immune.

The peacock & peahen – Sh... **(Ran and Gil don't respond to them because they don't belong to the peacocks' reality).**

Mary – Michael, tell her to shut up. I don't understand what she's doing here. The police said you drowned. Someone saw you jump off a cliff. Michael! **(Pause, to Belinda)** You killed her. I'm sure of it!

Belinda – And what about you? Didn't you have some powerful reasons to do the lovely Joanna in? How did you feel when you saw her and your Michael devour each other? **(Mary looks at her increasingly more astonished)**. But you're not the only one, dear heart. It pains me to have to say it but even the woeful chevalier here **(points at Arturo)** had perfect reasons – intimately known to me – to feel murderous. When you invest your best years in a woman, it's unbearable to watch her catch fire from another man's flame. A man who did nothing but utter her name.

Gil – She's cruel.

Ran – She's truthful.

Michael – **(To Belinda)** You've changed.

Belinda – Suits me? Yes. I've changed. I used to be like a little mermaid. I lost my voice and everything else for you. **(Approaches Michael, he moves aside)** and now it's virtually impossible to stop talking. So where were we?

Young man – The list of suspects.

Belinda – Thank you. What do you think of his muscles, Michael? He took good care of Mary – sorry – your virgin Mary, tonight. I'm very pleased with my choice. There was no shortage of candidates – **"required an escort for an exotic journey"**. I knew exactly what I needed and believe me, Michael, when he showed up I was tempted to examine the merchandize myself, but the disguise was more important. I couldn't jeopardize my sacred mission. The only luxury I allowed myself was foot massage. **(To Mary)** You have no idea what it does to your body – having someone like him giving you one. It's priceless. **(Mary jumps her, the young man intervenes. He gently calms Mary thus saving Belinda from Mary's fury)**. Thanks. You're really worth your price in gold but it doesn't mean you're off the suspects' list.

Young man – Me? How am I connected to your "pulp fiction"?

Belinda – You're an expert on toxicology, aren't you? Arsenic and stuff. And we really don't know what made her ticker give in and totally shut down the factory. Maybe some smart little poison.

Mary – You're an expert in homeopathy.

Belinda – Exactly. Some sophisticated homeopathic poison. After all – it's money we're talking about. Quite a few thousands dollars in that dress of her. How many are there do you reckon? - Hundred bills clinging desperately to

each other? She was, after all, planning the big escape – from herself, from the sour taste of a life half lived straight into Arturo's arms.

Arturo – (Crying) Joanna!

Belinda – She was well prepared for this escapade. Maybe not emotionally – but money-wise she definitely was. And you like money. I can't see you as a stock broker and you wouldn't enslave yourself to the gathering of worldly riches. I'm pretty sure you don't subscribe to the lovely notion nurtured by bankers, I presume, that money can keep death at bay. Nor do you use it to color your neighbors green with envy or just to feel good about yourself. No, You obviously aren't one of those silly buggers. You're one of the enlightened ones. But the free spirit lifestyle isn't quite inexpensive as it may seem. You're addicted to your freedom. The freedom to commit to yourself alone – no compromises. **(Pause)**. And that's why, my friend, I know you didn't kill her. You would never lose your freedom.

Me, on the other hand, I've been burning with the desire to kill her. And I would have – hadn't I realized last night at the ball that the deed was already done. **(Pause, she approaches the body)**. Joanna died **(Ran and Gill look at each other)** of a broken heart.

Ran – That's what your lorry driver said when I asked him about the accident. He said: a broken heart can kill you. **(Gil smiles at him, they touch)**.

Arturo – (To Michael) You did it. You finished her off. Everything was lost from the moment we boarded the yacht. **(Pause)**, I'm a believer. I might not have been a regular churchgoer but I've tried my whole life not to hurt anyone.

Michael – And the only reason for it is - you simply couldn't hit the target. It's all about aiming, you know.

Belinda – You respect nothing, no one.

Mary – How do you let her speak to you like that?

Belinda – (To Arturo) God was not a player here, you know. I rented this yacht, I sent out the leaflets to all of you. Michael had to be on this yacht for my vengeance to be complete.

Mary – Vengeance? You ruined two years of his life. Two years of creating – down the drain. He couldn't pick up a brush.

Belinda – He hasn't had a brush in his hand for years.

Mary – What are you talking about?

The young man – (Triumphantly) All those paintings. It's her. She's the artist. Not him!

Arturo – Joanna's dead and all you can talk about now is art?

Belinda – Joanna died last night. But she killed me a long time ago.

Mary – I don't understand what you're all talking about.

Belinda – (To Michael) I think you should do us all the honor of enlightening the holy virgin here.

Michael – Joanna and me – we were a couple from the first day at uni. (University).

Belinda – I was 4 years younger. The neighbor's daughter.

She wouldn't give me the time of day when we were kids. Nevertheless, when it was time to leave Cornwall and go to London, I convinced myself she'd be there for me. Kind of show me the ropes.

Young man – She came through – she gave you enough rope to hang yourself with.

Mary – Don't interrupt. I need to hear this.

Belinda – I imagined London as an ocean of strange faces and unknown streets and I was terrified of drowning in it.

Young man – We get the picture.

Mary & Arturo – Sh...Sh...

Belinda – For some reason, Joanna decided to be generous or she was simply homesick and she did help me quite a bit in the beginning.

Arturo – You see! She was generous. I knew it.

Belinda – Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. You're a living proof of it. Anyway, I think she respected my talent.

Young man – The talent **(Puts his arm "cordially" around Michael who flinches)** this dear boy so artfully stole from you.

Mary – You're talking as if he's never painted in his life.

Belinda – Michael did paint. He was a master of technique. He didn't have what I had. What I guess you have – or you wouldn't be in his bed nor anywhere else. Take my word for it. **(Arturo is again sitting by Joanna's body looking defeated and drained of life)**. He wanted her but he didn't want to pay the price of living with her scorching fire. I was more convenient. I was unaware, inhibited and very much unlike Joanna who always knew who

she was and what she wanted. No one could take from her what she was unwilling to give –

Arturo – (With resignation) It's true. She was –

Belinda – From me he could take it all. Even my self. Joanna could read all the signs. Long before Michael – let alone – me – she instinctively knew that the battle was lost. So she decided to cook herself a tasty dish of revenge.

(To Michael) I wanted you just like her **(pointing at Mary)** because of all the wrong reasons. **(To Michael)** You were the most charming man, you were my teacher – in love and everything else. **(Pause)** Joanna decided to leave you and she whispered in my ear that the road to eternal bliss was there waiting for me. I told her: "no way, he wants you". And she said, ever so sure of herself, "true – but you have something much more valuable to him".

Mary – Your talent.

Belinda – The next day she was on a flight to New-York without even saying good-bye and following her advice, carrying out her majesty wishes, I made a deal –

Young man – That only the devil could be happy about.

Arturo – I should close her eyes. **(Tries to touch her face, his hands are frozen)** I can't. **(Covers his own eyes with his hands).**

Young man – I can't begin to imagine how this ungodly arrangement was actually played out.

Belinda – It was almost a natural sequence of events. He was my mentor. I came to him for guidance. I told him I couldn't do it on my own and gradually came to believe it myself. The next step, was the cosigning of "our" paintings. When we were thinking of the first exhibition – note the use of "we" which for me obliterated the "me/I/myself" – It made sense to assume that Michael, being the more experienced, hence known – especially in the academic circles – would stand a better chance of overcoming the barriers faced by every novice in this game. And in order for my work to be exposed to the public as well, I suggested that Michael should sign my paintings and displayed them along with his.

Michael – Have you forgotten how happy you were on the opening night of that first show? You were glowing, almost –

Belinda – Beautiful? As beautiful as her? **(Approaches Joanna's body)**. No, I haven't forgotten. I was intoxicated. I guess I felt how the mythical mermaid longed to feel after "selling" her voice to the witch for the love of her earthly prince. **(Pause)** I was happy because I finally managed to completely drown myself in you.

Michael – And thirty years later you remembered to come up for air?

Belinda – Did you ever drown, Michael? No, of course not. We were all excellent swimmers. Even Joanna, who so desperately wanted to drown herself tonight couldn't do it. Luckily for her, her heart gave out. Medically they would call it a heart-attack, I guess.

Michael – You had a good life. We traveled, you never had to worry about money, paying the bills, keeping house, not even cooking. You can't blame me for not having kids. **(Belinda approaches Joanna's body and gently closes her eyes)**.

Arturo – We need to burry her. We should go back to New-York.

Michael – You want us to shlepp her body all the way to New-York? Can you imagine her state when she gets there?

We will need a generous supply of oxygen masks.

Young man – Quite a gesture – chucking herself clad in a dress made of dollar bills right into the ocean. **(Picks up one of the bills)**. Hundred dollar bills.

Arturo – We'll burry her here.

Ran – **(To Gil)** In the Island of lost love.

Arturo – That's what she would have wanted.

(Mary starts crying. The young man caresses her, she sobs).

Arturo – **(To Michael)** Start digging.

Michael – With my bare hands? **(Arturo starts digging, Michael kneels next to him and digs as well. Mary is still crying. The young man, having realized he's unable to calm her down, leaves her)**.

Young man – **(To Belinda)** Where are the peacocks? Have you seen any peacocks?

SCENE 12

The island scene slowly disappears. Only the peacock and peahen are left looking at each other. He embraces her, she's passive.

The peacock – You named our island "The Island of Lost Love" but for me our love lives forever – in your stories, your words of magic. **(She looks at him and starts walking. She follows the disappearing island scene and he goes after her).**

Gil – I was caught in the web of my words and you disentangled me. You did it! **(Ran looks in the direction of the vanished scene and then at her).**

Ran – We did it together. **(Pause)** I feel so good! **(Takes off the doctor's gown).** I feel like I've finally beaten death! **(Starts walking in the direction of the vanished scene).**

Gil – Where are you going?

Ran – To help Arturo. How will he be able to return to his grocery shop when Joanna is here – so far away. We need to take her back to New-York. He deserves to have a grave to visit and a headstone to cry on. I'm going to tell them to stop digging. **(He exits).**

Gil – I love this man. **(Goes back top the E.R bed).** How could it all happen in only one night? **(She picks up her belongings and the pages of the novel, takes off her hospital gown and puts on her clothes. At the same time the scenery of the "Barnes & Nobles / New-York" appears as well as music evoking New-York and its atmosphere).**

SCENE 13

Nisso is sitting on an armchair in "Barnes & Nobles" next to a large poster depicting "The Peacock's island – fifth edition of the bestseller", a picture of Gil and Ran, "soon a new novel". Behind him Carmit is approaching holding GAP carrier bags. Both, although dressed very fashionably, look tired and devoid of energy in comparison with the

image of Gil and Ran's eternal bliss on the "Peacock's Island". Carmit halts. She stands behind Nisso. She is mesmerized by the poster. At a distance, Ran and Gil in bathing suits are rubbing tanning oil on each other and the peacocks' screams are heard. After a moment, the island scene disappears. Nisso gets up, starts walking and halts at the sight of the teary-eyed Carmit.

Nisso – Don't cry. They are not worth it. **(Pause)**. You don't remember me? Five years ago, at the hospital...**(Pause)**. They bought an island! What a great gimmick!

Carmit – Nisso, isn't it? You helped me with the car.

Nisso – Your battery was dead. What are you doing here?

Carmit - I wanted to buy a book for the flight back home. I can never fall asleep on a plane.

Nisso – Afraid to miss the crash? **(Pause)** I see you have a ring on "the right" finger.

Carmit – And twins at home. Girls. Three years old. What about you?

Nisso – Free as a wingless bird. **(Pause)** You look good. Still in computers?

Carmit – Yes. My husband is the firm's accountant.

The peacocks' shrieks are heard once more. The island scenery appears. Ran and Gil are asleep on the beach – holding each other - (the "spoon position"). Nisso and Carmit are staring at them.

Carmit – My hotel is around the corner. **(Nisso looks at her, she starts walking, halts and waits for him).**

Nisso – **(Looking at Ran)** Son of a bitch! **(Follows her, they exit).**

From another direction the peacock comes in, dragging a half closed suitcase. The peahen is behind him.

The peacock - Where are my slippers?

The peahen – How should I know? What kind of a psychic relationship you imagine me having with your slippers?

The peacock – Your sarcasm is totally uncalled for, I assure you. **(Angrily closes the suitcase).**

The peahen – When we met you didn't own any slippers.

The peacock – (Approaches her, looks at her and then puts his hands on her neck while saying:) What do you want from me? My last breath? You want to slash my wrists for me? (almost strangles her) stick an arrow in my heart? (takes his hands off her, kisses her forcefully, then lets go and starts walking away. She looks at him). Shit! The sand is scorching hot! I can't walk barefoot. (Turns to her) Where the hell are my slippers?

SCENE 14

A swift change to Nisso and Carmit – her room at the hotel. Nisso is getting dressed. Carmit looks at him with desperation.

Nisso – This, us, was not what you actually wanted. (Carmit seems to have decided to "collect herself". She puts on her clothes, make-up, perfume – and she answers him only when she has her disguise/armor on).

Carmit: At work I can make a room full of men do exactly what I want. Three days in New-York and I managed to solve a problem no one could figure out for two months. But in my private life – I want mocha and I get vanilla. I want one man and I get another.

Nisso – You should come with me. **(Pause).** I'm going over there, to their island.

Carmit – Are you crazy? I'm going back home. It was difficult enough leaving my girls even for a 3 days trip.

Nisso – Yes. You have the perfect package: The husband, the girls, the au-pair. But inside you're empty. **(Pause)** Does your husband make you come? Maybe you don't do it anymore. Once is enough for spawning babies.

Carmit – You're crossing the line here!

Nisso – Me? My tongue went numb from licking you. I've never worked so hard for zero result! You've locked yourself up – a princess in your own dungeon. Don't you know a clogged carburetor can ruin your engine? Didn't they teach you the facts of life at uni (*university)?

Carmit – Get out of here. Evaporate! I don't want to see you anymore. **(Shoves him to the door).** I hope I never see you again.

Nisso – What did you want me in your bed for? Be truthful with yourself! He is to blame for all of it. The son of a bitch who stole from me the only woman

who ever knew me. You know who first suggested she should write for a living? Me – the village idiot. I opened the cage for her and she flew away.

Carmit – You can't hold someone by force. For seven years I made his bed for him, made a life for him and waited. Seven years and he couldn't decide it was me he wanted. With her – all he needed was one bloody night!

Nisso – That night, after I recharged your battery, I didn't go home. I was knackered but something made me go back there. I sat by her and watched her sleep. I've never done it before. Ever. I was happy in a quiet intense sort of way. It made me peaceful – knowing that I love her so deeply, that somehow, by miracle, something good came of the mess I made. I suddenly realized she was my life. I couldn't lose her. **(Pause)**. We went home. We hardly spoke on the way. Three days in bed our bodies talk and we are silent. On the morning of the third day I wake up and she is there, standing by our bed all dressed up. "I miss his voice", she says, "his voice reading my stories to me".

There is a silence between. The silence is penetrated by "sounds of New-York" (sirens and car horns) and these sounds are replaced by the sounds of "The Island". The New-York scene vanishes.

SCENE 15

Ran and Gil on easy-chairs appear on stage, a cold lemonade jug and a bowl of fresh fruits are laid on a table between them.

Ran – Why did you agree? You know I don't like it.

Gil – It's a couple. They are both journalists. They'll spend a few hours with us, ask some questions, you needn't answer if you don't want to. See how you feel. No one will be holding a gun to your head.

Ran – Five years, almost five books and we've never given interviews . Why start now?

Gil – Because it sells books and we need p.r. (*public relations) for our new novel.

Ran – A master terrorist who falls in love with an American Journalist in Iraq is a topic that sells. It doesn't need journalists.

Gil – You said the same thing last time, you said we had a best-seller, but none of our books succeeded as well as "The peacocks' Island".

Ran – I thought this was our private island. Our shelter from the world. **(Pause)**. I hate those questions. "Why did you leave medicine?" How could you make such crucial decisions after only one night?" They are bound to question the choices we made.

Gil – Any regrets?

Ran – We created our own version of the Deluge.

Gil – You mean we hurt people.

Ran – I prefer this whole story to remain ours. I don't want it to be public property. To be manhandled by whomever.

Gil – Let's go home. If it means so much to you I'll call to cancel. I hope it's not too late. **(They exit)**.

The peahen shows up wearing the peacock's lost slippers. She's looking at her legs.

The peahen – He's gone. Good riddance, He won't get far. They're so ugly – his slippers, but the sand is burning hot. Right now his anger is more powerful than the pain in his legs. We'll see how long he will last this time. He thinks I won't be able to survive without him? He looks so lame without his feathers. **(Caresses the feathers she had plucked off him before and since then have been using them for her adornment)**. Who will want him anyway? A useless creature. **(She caresses one of the flowers)**. I was o.k. on my own. Managed to find rivers, told stories and the water listened. **(Pause)** I'm hungry. Who's going to fix my lunch for me? **(Looks around)**. Nasty business. Nasty! **(Starts walking)**. Where is he? I hate cooking! **(Exits)**.

Carmit and Nisso enter the stage. Carmit is wearing the same outfit she wore in the "Barnes and Nobles scene". Nisso wears hunting gear. He looks as he is on safari.

He is carrying a large handbag.

Carmit – It's madness! I don't understand what we are doing here. I have sand in my shoe. I hate it!

Nisso – Take them off. I told you to wear something for the beach – not a business suit.

Carmit – It's too hot. It feels like Tel-Aviv in August.

Nisso – **(Approaches her)**. So take everything off. It's not as if I haven't seen you naked. Or if you're bashful – leave your bra and knickers on. Be the sexy lady I'm sure you once were. Make him remember what he lost. **(Unbuttons her blouse)**. Seven years together – I'm guessing you two had some good sex, hey, Frau Doctor?

Carmit – What are you doing? In your opinion, is this how a professional journalist looks?

Nisso – I'm glad you've finally decided to get in the game and play your part.

The peahen reappears.

The peahen - The earth swallowed him.

Nisso takes out of his bag a bow and arrow. He aims. Carmit, who was busy taking off her shoes, suddenly realizes that the peahen is there and she halts.

Carmit - Be careful! You'll kill the peacock.

Nisso – **(Continues aiming)**. I'm a hunter but I don't prey on helpless animals.

The peahen – **(Turns her back to him and walks away muttering to herself)** – I'm not helpless! **(Turns for a minute and looks at them before she exits)**. It's frightening how this story has gone amok. I messed it up. Didn't tell it right. **(While she exits one of the feathers falls down. Carmit picks it up)**.

Carmit – It's so unfair that the males have such beautiful feathers on top of everything else.

Gil's voice – There's no one here. **(Carmit looks at Nisso who tenses up)**.

Ran's voice – I heard a plane, I'm sure of it.

Ran and Gil enter and face Carmit and Nisso.

Gil – **(Happily)** Nisso! **(She approaches him. He puts aside the bow and arrow. She hugs him)**.

Ran – **(To Carmit, surprised and angry)**. What are you doing here?

Carmit – It's all a mistake! We're here by mistake!

Nisso – No mistake. **(Gil is still touching him and he pushes her away. Goes over to Ran)**. A beautiful island you've got here. "The island of lost love". **(Aims the bow and arrow towards Ran)**. I lost and you found!

The peahen – **(Hurrying over there)** – Not like this! This is not how it should end!

Gil starts, carefully, walking towards Ran and Nisso.

Nisso – Don't come any closer! You bought it for me – "Zen and the art of archery" - remember? I've been practicing for five years.

Ran – What do you intend to achieve?

Nisso – My freedom. I want to be free of missing her, free of my jealousy, free to love another woman. **(To Gil)** – I'm entitled to, don't you think?

The peahen – **(Hurries in order to stand in front of Ran and shield him)**
No! No!

Blackout. Everything disappears.

Nisso's voice – How the hell did it happen? That peacock, **(Pause)** - it simply flew into my eyes. Strange. A peacock without feathers.

Carmit – Rani, save (it) him.

Ran – I can't. I don't know how.

When the light comes up again only the peahen is visible, crouching by her wounded mate, trying to "glue back" the feathers she "stole" from him.

The peacock – No. No need. Please, tell me a story.

The peahen – You're so beautiful now. **(Closing her eyes and concentrating in order to find give birth to a story)**. Once upon a time... No. I can't! **(Caresses him)** I don't want you to die! Don't leave me alone!

The peacock – I'll help you with your story. Once upon a time there were a peacock and a peahen. Their love conjured them up a beautiful island. "The peacocks' island". **(Peacocks' screams are heard)**.

THE END