FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

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

J. AQUILINA
L-INKWIET TAS-SUR MARTIN

Kummiedja ta' Ġ. AQUILINA

NIES LI JIDHRU

MARTIN, Rabli minn Għawdex (li jista' jkun tip ta' kull rabli minn Malta).
Marija, Tifla ta' Martin u għarusa ta' Karlu, seftura tas-Sliema.
Tereża, Tifla ohra ta' Martin u għarusa ta' Guzepp, seftura tas-Sliema.
Karlu, Mastrudaxxa; membru tal-Partit tas-Sofor.
Guzepp, Bil-konut tax-xorb; membru tal-Partit tal-Hodor.
Tabib, Ta dib tar-Rahal; wiebed mill-bbieb ta' Guzepp.
Karmnu, Haieb ta' Guzepp, żewġ kandidati tal-Partit tal-Hodor.
Pawlu,
Surmast, Is-Surmast ta' l-iskola tar-Rahal, babib ta' Karlu.
Tonjl, Pulizija (bil-frank), hu Karlu.
Widi, Kandidat ieħor tal-Partit tas-Sofor.
Feredu, Habib ta' Karlu.
Kurenu, Il-Huttab.


Marija: Min għandu żaqqu tuggħu ħallih imut biha.
Tereżà: Jieħu porga mhxuq ahjar milli jmut? Kemm int qalbek iebsa!
Marija: [Tisfoga ġuq qmis ta' taħt hija u tinibà] Taħ f'qaltli Dovina tal-Karrett hux? Taħ f'kellha wiċċ tghidli hux?

Tereżà: X'qaltlek?
Marija: Qaltli Karlu tieghek jaf li koot man-nies?
Tereżà: X'riedet tghid il-kiesha? Mhxuq kulhadd aħdhem biex jaqla' x'jie-
MR. MARTIN'S ORDEAL

By J. Aquilina

Translated into English by F. Williams

CHARACTERS

MARTIN, A Gozo farmer (who might equally be any typical Maltese farmer).
MARIJA, Martin’s daughter, engaged to Karlu, previously working as a maid in Sliema.
Tereza, Martin’s other daughter, engaged to Guzepp, also previously working as a maid in Sliema.
Karlu, A carpenter, member of the Yellow Party.
Guzepp, A bar-owner, member of the Green Party.
Doctor, The village doctor, one of Guzepp’s friends.
Karmnu, Pawlu, Friends of Guzepp, two Green Party candidates.
Schoolteacher, The village schoolmaster, a friend of Karlu.
Tonu, A policeman (on leave), Karlu’s brother.
Wigi, Another Yellow Party candidate.
Fredi, A friend of Karlu.
Kurun, The match-maker.

The scene is the best room of a village house. It is furnished in the style of a village dining-room, i.e. the best room which is normally kept closed and is opened only when the house is blessed at Easter or when someone is put up for the night, such as the doctor or the parish priest. Enter two young girls in high spirits, dressed for a party, who are opening boxes that they take from two cupboards, one at each side of the stage.

MARIJA: People who go green with envy deserve to die of it.
TEREZA: How cruel you are! Wouldn’t a purge do just as well?
MARIJA [ventling her feelings on a petticoat which she is folding]: Do you know what Dovina tal-Karett said to me? Do you know what she had the impertinence to say?
TEREZA: What did she say to you?
MARIJA: She said ‘Does your Karlu realise you’ve been in domestic service?’
TEREZA: What a nerve! What was she getting at? Doesn’t everyone go out
kol? Hi ma taghqaq ma' missierha, bićča ta' bidwija li hil! Jew jidhrilha li huma xi gabiłlotri hej, ghax ghandhom l-Ghalqa tal-Mejjet taghom u xi zewg irziezet ... U halleljha b'xejn?


TEREŻA: Dgashekk biss? U ma qbadhiex qabda minn xaghara?


TEREŻA: Imma daqshekk biss?

MARIJA: Isma', hej, jaqaw ridmi nonxorha mejta fl-art u mmur il-habs ghal wċċek jew?


MARIJA: U jien mhux daqshekk biss ghamiltilha.

TEREŻA: [Bil-herqa] Tajtha xi daqqtejn? Ċarratilha l-ghonnella?

MARIJA: Hallini nkompli, trid, ghax sa trelaghhommi. Mela x'naghmei! Ċarrilha l-ghonnella ta' sitt liri jew izjed. ... ghonnella tal-harir - biex ikolli nhallasielha mill-flus li faddalk mas-sinjur.

TEREŻA: Mhx int ghedt li mhux daqshekk biss?

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

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

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

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

TEREZA: But was that all?

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

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

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

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

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

TEREZA: But you said that wasn't everything.

MARIJA: Let me finish, for heaven's sake. When I let go of her hand, she's scared stiff of me, she thinks I'm going to slap her face, and she's on the point of running away. I grab her by the shoulder. 'Just a minute,' I say, 'I haven't finished with you yet. Now lift your skirt up over your knees.' She gets really frightened. 'Lift my skirt up over
Tereža: Oht, koloz ghamilt sewwa, kien ḥaqqa. Imma daqqqejn messek Ighabtomlha biez tnejhila l-ksuhat li ghandha. Ma ghedtihiex xi ḥaga ohrə?

Marija: Biez inghidlek kelli hsieb qabel nitaqqa minn idejja ntappilha tnejn imma kif kont qed nurija eskobbi ttedejt li kien hemm ġanni ta' Duminka qed ihares lejna minn wara hajt tas-sejjieh u jiena u hi taqqa nigr. Dakh ġanni taf Ṣṭif hux! Dawn tar-tahal ḥafna skrupli u jennmsu daqs in-nemes ghall-fenek.

Jinstama' lehen minn ġewwa – Martin missierhom, ighajjat: Terež! Terež! Din ma tweġibx, tidber imgħaddba u tgerger wabedba.

Marija: Ghajtilha Tessy!


Tereža: Ghajtilha Mary!

Martin jittfaċċa mghaddab b'idejh fuq ġenbu bbal wiebed li ma jiflahx iżomm iżjed.

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

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

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

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

Marija: Call her Tessy!

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

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

Tereza: Call her Mary!

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

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

Tereża: Papà. Ma jidhirlekx li ...  


Tereża: Imma pa ... [Tkon ser tghid papà].


Marija: Ghaq raf x'jidhrilna ahna ... jidhrilna li trid tara mhux x'kont imma x'int. L-għarus tieghi u ta' Terry.

Martjin: Tereż ... Tereż!

Marija: Terry! ... Terry ...  

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

Teresa: Daddy, don't you think...

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

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

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

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

Martin: Teresa! Teresa!

Marija: Terry! Terry!

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

*Jibagha jghajtu bi Mary, bu Marja, sakemm ...*

MARJIN: [lēedi l-arm] Irbah tu intom. Mela Terri u inti, ġawhra ta' qalbi, Mary, Mur gib 'l onmmkom, All ha jahfrilha win-nanna Gerit. [*B'leben ir-yniku ta' wiehed imxabba*] Mela beccun tieghī Mary. X'kull waħda wqoll, ahjar flok nirrabja niddak u nghaddi kollox biċ-ċajt. Imma dem- 

mi ma jaghtinix. Mela Mary ta' qalbi kont qed tghidli ... 

MARJA: Papà, kont qed nghidlek ... 

MARJIN: Pa, pa biss ... ghall-inqas nofs tirbhu intom u nofs nirbah jien. Kollox intom le. Kollox mhux sewwa. Jiena ghadni haj, fl-āħhar mill-

ahhar. 

MARJA: U iza, papà. 

MARJIN: Pa, ghedtlek!

*Wara li jдумu štīt jghajtu l-wiehed pa u l-ōhra papà bu jēedi.*

MARJIN: Irbah tu din ukoll. Hudu kollox, uliedi. Hudu l-biċċa l-ōhra ta' missierkom ukoll - sej hurli papà. [*B'leben ta' wiehed mghaddab, ghal 

līlet darbiel*] Papà ... Papà ... Papà le, le, dil-kelma ma nidalka qatt 

u ghalija spiccat dik il-pinta nbid ta' kull filgħaxja ghand Kalang 

tal-Feneq ghaq qatt ma jkolli l-hila narga' n'idhol il-hanut tieghu 

izjed. 

MARJA: Kont qed inghidlek, papà, tara mhux x'kont imma x'int illum. L-

gharajjes taghna illum saru nies importanti. It-tejn telgħu fil-Gvern 

dalwaqt jibdew jikkmandaw lil Malta. Ma jidhizlekx li l-għarusa ta' 

ragel li tela' fil-Gvern ghandha d-dritt tibda ssejjaħ lil missierha 

papà? 

TEREŻA: U li inti issa ghandek id-dritt tibda tissejjaħ is-sur Martinn? 

MARJIN: L-għarajjes taghkom huma tfal mir-rahal, Wiehed mastrudaxxa u 

diehor bil-hanut. Telgħu fil-Gvern u issa saru jikkmandaw lil Malta, 
kif qed tghidu. Imma, għiduli uliedi, m'għadux venu li intom ulied 

Martin u l-għarusa tieghiek Tereż huwa t-tifel ta' Ġamri tar-Rewrew u 
tieghek Marja t-tifel ta' Lonzu tar-xatt? Allura ghaq telgħu fil-Gvern, 

nghid jiena, ma għadhomx li kienu? Hemm bżonn ninsew x'konna, 

Santa Marja?
MARIJA: Mary!

_They continue shouting Marija and Mary, until..._

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

MARIJA: Daddy, I was telling you...

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

MARIJA: Get along with you, Daddy.

MARTIN: Dad, I told you!

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

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

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

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

MARTIN: Your fiancés are village boys: one is a carpenter, and the other runs a bar. They've got into the Government, and now they've going to run Malta, so you say. But, children, tell me whether it's not still true that you are Martin's daughters, and that your fiancé, Tereza, is Ġanmi ċar-Rewrew's son, and yours, Marija, is Lonzu tax-Xatt's son? Just because they've got into the Government, aren't they still the same people? Do we have to forget what we were, by Heaven?
MARIJA: Il-boyfriend tiegħi taf x'kien IGHIDLI, papà?

MARTIN: Il-boyfriend, binti? Dan x'ikun, għogol, naghga, ħmar jew xkora pata ta, għax jiena f'dan nisfem.

TEREŻA: Boyfriend bl-Ingliż.


MARIJA: Boyfriend bl-Ingliż tfisser, kif nibda nghidilek, il-habib.

MARTIN: [Imwerwer] X'qed tghid, binti? Mela qed titlef rasek? Ma tafx li int gharussa? U x'isir minni u minnek jekk jisma' l-gharux tiegħek li kellek habib?

MARIJA: U fejn sejjer b'rasek, papà. Dan boyfriend biss taf.

MARTIN: Imma x'inhu sewwa ghidli boyfront? ghax gībutli ghajnejja wara widnejja.

MARIJA: Fejn naf, biex ma tiddejjaq xikkolok boy tifel, mhux tifel żgħir tafx, guxni, nghidu ahna grazzjuż li toħrog miegu.

MARTIN: [Irodd is-slalet] U din il-moda g'gida tghallimtuħa minn ghand is-sinjuri ta' tas-Sliema wkoll, binti?


MARTIN: [Irojiku] Mela inti kellek boyfrent, Tereża, gawhra ta' qalbi?

TEREŻA: Kelli u ma jiddispjacinix daqs kemm kien kien ġustuż.

MARTIN: HUX! U int Marija?


MARTIN: Tajebeb wisq ... qed tagħtuni gost ta' mitt skud. U l-gharajxes taghkom, l-imsejninin gharajxes li ser jibdew jikkmandaw lil Malta u 'l Għawdex, jafu b'dan?
MARIJA: Daddy, do you know what my boy-friend used to say to me?
MARTIN: Bajfrent, daughter? That could be a calf, a sheep, a donkey or a sack of potatoes, for all I know.
TEREZA: Boy-friend’s an English word.
MARTIN: [losing his temper] So you don’t know that your father doesn’t speak English? Why do you have to show off at my expense as well? Isn’t it enough that you show off in front of strangers?
MARIJA: As I was starting to explain to you, boy-friend in English means a young man.
MARTIN: [shocked] What are you saying, daughter? Have you gone out of your mind? Don’t you know you’re engaged? What will happen to us if your fiancé hears you had a young man?
MARIJA: What on earth are you thinking of, Daddy? He was only a boy-friend, you know.
MARTIN: You make my hair stand on end with this talk about bajfrents.
MARIJA: As I see it, you have a boy-friend so that you won’t get bored—not a young boy, you understand, but a young man—and you’re very pleased to go out with him.
MARTIN: [crosses himself] And this is another new custom you learned from the ladies in Sliema, daughter?
TEREZA: What are you so surprised about, Daddy? Miss Nelly, Mrs. Briffa’s daughter, where I worked, had a boy-friend too. Her father and mother knew about it, and never said a word to her. And they were Church people, you know—much better than us, they used to go to Confession every week. In any case, what’s wrong with having a boy-friend? Doesn’t everyone need someone to talk to? On your own, nothing but work, you eat your heart out...
MARTIN: [ironically] So you had a bajfrent, Tereza, my pearl.
TEREZA: Certainly I had, and I don’t regret it, he was so sweet...
MARTIN: Indeed. And you, Marija?
MARIJA: So I’m uglier than other people, and uglier than my sister, am I? Of course I had a boy-friend.
MARTIN: Very fine indeed... you delight me. And your fiancés, the poor fiancés who are going to run Malta and Gozo, they know about this?
Marija u Tereža: Ara ma tohroglokxi kelma. Ghax li ma gix id-diskors lanqas lilek ma konna nuru.

Tereža: [Ghal obba] Dil-hmar tlablab wisq.

Martin: Uliedi, qed nara li ahna n-nies tar-rahal konna lura wisq. Intom mindu dhaltu setfuri man-nies ta' tas-Sliema sirtu fini u puliti wisq. Isimghuni daqsxejn kif kienu jahšbuna n-nisa ta' dari ... Isimghuni, wliedi u ara tghidu xi kelma qabel nieqaf jiena.

Marija: In-nies ta' dari? ... dari miet ... Illum id-dinja tibdidel ... Mela ahna ghanda nibaghlu bha-nisa ta' dari ... bicça ta' qlugh ta' ghonellha ma thalli lil ḫadd jara min ikun warajk u dublett ikazkar sa saqajhom? ... Baqax! Id-dinja tibdidel u ahna nibaghlu fejn konna?


Marija: Miskin ...

Tereža: Illum mhux hekk ...


Tereža: Hi xi dwejjaq! Mut għidilhom hekk lis-sinjurini ta' tas-Sliema ... l-aktar meta tibda taqmel is-shana u kulhadd johrog jippassigga Ġhar id-Dud.
MARJA AND TEREZA: See that you don't let out a whisper. If we hadn't had this argument, you wouldn't have heard anything about it.

TEREZA: [indicating her sister] This donkey can't keep her mouth shut.

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

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

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

MARJA: Poor Daddy!

TEREZA: It's not like that these days.

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

TEREZA: How boring! Go and tell that to the young ladies in Sliema! Especially when it's spring, and everyone's parading at Ghar id-Dud.
MARTIN: Imbaghad wara xi żmiem iżżewwigna ... kellna tieg sabih. Imma wara t-tieq damet titt ijjem ma ġiet toqghod nieghi ... [Wara fitt] U issa kif tiduni, uliedi, niehu gost meta nisma' lilkom tghiduli bil-boj-frent, wil-hafna ksuhat ta' papa, Sur Martin u x'naif jiena? Uliedi, intom ma tixbhu xejn lil omnikom ... tbiddiku ... bil-kemm nista' nemmen li intom tieghi ... Li kieku omnikom ma miterx żghira u hallienni nħabbat wiċċi maghkom waħdi, kieku bħal issa ...

MARIJA: [Taqtagblu kliemu] Miskina l-mamà ...  
MARTIN: [Jitlagblu. Iqm minn fuq is-siġġu u jghajjat] X'mamà mamàl Kieku bħal issa qieghda tismagħkom u tista' tqum mill-qabar kienet toħrog għalikom u tħabbatkom ras ma' ras! ...


MARTIN: [Lkompli] Imma issa li hemm hemm. Jiena illum jaqbilli li ma naqlax inkwiet biex tistgħu tiżżewgħu ...  
Marija tbuslu idu. Martin juriba idu mċappsa bil-lipstick. Wara ftit domna qag ħad jahsibba x'iqgħidila ...  
MARTIN: Marija, għandek tkun illum ċappast ħafna tadam maż-żejt ma' xufftejk?

Tereża taqbad tidħak.


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

Marija: [interrupting him] Poor Mummy!

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

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

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

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

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

Tereza bursts out laughing.

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

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

Marija: Nearly eleven.

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

Martin: It's nearly time. Your young men and their friends will soon be
hawn. Lestu l-mejda – Qis li ma taghmlux xi xenata li rista’ thassar l-ghenusija ghax dik tkun l-akbar disgrazzija tieghi ... qassmu l-mistedn ta’ Marija naha u ta’ Tereżta ohra, ghax Alla jbierek l-gharajjes taghkom wil-mistednin lanqas huma tal-istess partit u qis li ma tin-buxx lil xulxin ... biex isehh il-partit u wara ħmistrax ohra k’Alla jrid titiquli minn hawn ha noghod wahdi ... Jiena sejjer fil-kcina niehu hsieb il-borma [Joseph].

Tereżta: X’kull wahda, illum il-papà ghamilhielna. Kemm baqa’ lura!
Marija: U mhux int ilsienek twil?
Tereżta: Ilsienek twil int. Dan x’ghandu x’jaqsam?
Marija: X’ridt tghidlu bil-boy-friend? Ma tafx in-nies tar-rahal kemm huma skruplużi?
Tereżta: Ma ghandekx xi tghid? Mela int ma ftahartx bil-boy friend tieghek ukoll?
Marija: Imma int semmejtu l-ewwel, ja paċpaċa li int.
Tereżta: Paċpaċa int. Ara ma nghidekx!
It-tnej dejjem jisbru ġbal xulxin – lehenhom jogħla sa twerżiqa.
Marija: Trid titfa’ l-htija fuqi, ja paċpaċa?
Tereżta: Paċpaċa int ghax lanqas taf xi tkun qed tghid.
Marija: Jiena ghandi ghaqal biex nixtrik u nbighek. Ghalhekk mas-sinjur dejjem kont smata, mhux bhelek!
Tereżta: Stmata ħej. Ghalhekk mhux fil-kcina wahdek dejjem kont tiekol.
Marija: Jiena mas-sinjur qatt ma hadt kunfidenza, M’iniex wieċi tost!

Tereżta: Ajma min qed jitkellem! Qed tghid hekk ghax ghajjura. Lili s-sinjur kien iżommni niekol fil-mejda mas-sinjura.
Marija: Ghas-sabiż wieċek!
Tereżta: Xi trid tghid bih dan il-kliem? [Idejba fi wieċba].
Marija: Negxa’ nghidek, ghas-sabiż wieċek!
here. Get the table ready. And mind you don’t create a scene and ruin the engagement – that would be my final disgrace. Put Marija’s guests on one side and Tereza’s on the other, for, Heaven help us, your young men and their friends are on opposite sides of the fence when it comes to politics, and you must be careful not to let them quarrel. We’ve got to make a success of the betrothal, and in a fortnight, God willing, you’ll be off my hands and I’ll be on my own... I’m off to the kitchen to see to the food. [Exit.]

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

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

Tereza: Big mouth yourself. What’s that supposed to mean?

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

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

Marija: You mentioned it first, big mouth.

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

They start to lose their temper, and their voices get shrill.

Marija: So you’re trying to put the blame on me, big mouth?

Tereza: Big mouth yourself! Why don’t you watch what you’re saying.

Marija: I’ve got more brains than two of you put together. Where I worked, they appreciated me – not like you.

Tereza: They appreciated you, did they? So that’s why you are all by yourself in the kitchen.

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

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

Marija: All for the sake of your blue eyes!

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

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

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

MARTIN: Sa tisktu, ja żewq ingienen! Dalwaqt jigu l-gharajjes taghkom u jekk isini jafu x'żewq angli fikom, kemm tinhabbu, kemm intom bilgħaqat, nibżà li jisfratta kollox u tibqghuli ma' wiċċi. [Lil Marija] Żgur inti bdejtha dix-xenata! Taf ghax ma nagħtikomx xebqha bastun ...

Marija u Tereża jijilqu 'l xulxin, jirraġaw xagħarhom u bwejjigsaw jinaddju u jiestu għall-għarajjes, sektin. Martin jargha jebrog jonfo b ġoqgħedu bi kwiethom sa kemm ...

MARIJA: Int dejjem tobqghodni ... anki missieri ma jahmilnix ... lili biss ta ...

TEREŻA: Oqghod, ja mikdu-da.


TEREŻA: Ara ma nghidlekx, I-tomna raba' tas-Sinet li ħadt int ahjar minn tieghi ...


TEREŻA: Imma tiegħek fiha iżjed minn tomna.

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

TEREŻA: Fiha iżjed ...

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

TEREŻA: Kif mort l-aghār? Mort l-aghār jiena.

MARIJA: Ghid fiex mort l-aghār.

Iddum jghajitu bekk wiċċ imb-wiċċ. Immieru lil xulxin sakemm jergġu jaqdu f'xagħar xulxin. Twerziq.

MARTIN: [Jghajit minn gewwa] Ja xjaten li intom, sa tisktu ... jekk tinharaqli l-patata mħabba fikom noqtolkom it-tnejn ...

Marija u Tereža jiżirdu minn xulxin. Għal darba oħra jirraġaw xagħarhom u jergġu jaqdu jiżifajendjaw sakemm tarqa' taqbad ...
MARIJA: You really want to know? All right, I'll tell you. [As she says this, she seizes her by the hair. Her sister seizes her hair as well. Great commotion. Their father comes running in with a stick in his hand.]

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

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

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

TEREZA: Pipe down, you poor misunderstood thing.

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

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

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

TEREZA: But yours is over a tumolo.

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

TEREZA: It's bigger.

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

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

MARIJA: You tell me how you came off worst.

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

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

Marija and Tereza separate. They tidy their hair again and busy themselves about the room, until it starts again...
TEREZÀ: Dejjem tïgbed lejk. Kollox tríd ghalik. Il-farda tan-nanna Gerit m'nx int hadtha?

MARÌJA: Wid-dublett ta' mitt lembuba tan-nanna Gerit min hadu?

TEREZÀ: Ajmà hej, Sa nilbes id-dublett ta' mitt lembuda u mmur nippas-sigga Ghar id-Dud bih, arani. Dak x'jiswa?

MARÌJA: Mela ma jiswiex! Dak antikità. Mur bieghu biex tara x'iddahhal tieghu.

TEREZÀ: U hallina minnek ...

MARÌJA: U żgur, ma sibtx xi tghid issa, Iç-cappetti taz-zija Żabberta min hadhom?

TEREZÀ: Antikalja. Ghax ma tghidlixx min ha l-imsielet taz-zija Marinton?

MARÌJA: Hadhom jiena. Ma jiswewx habba.

TEREZÀ: Kemm int ta' sebghek f'halqek!

MARÌJA: Daqs kemm int ta' sebghek f'halqek int, Il-polka tan-nannu min hadha?

TEREZÀ: Ghax ma ssaqsix min ha e-cintill tan-nannu u dak il-gmiel ta' garikot?

MARÌJA: Kiesha. Taf x'imissek tghid, min ha l-gisirana tal-mamà – dik tiswa hafla flus.

TEREZÀ: Il-gizirina, jekk joghgbok, hadtha jiena u dik mhix gejja minn tal-mamà imma xrajtha jien bi flusi.

MARÌJA: Giddieba!

TEREZÀ: Giddieba int u min ighid li ma intix!

MARÌJA: Iva eh, jiena giddieba? Mela halli nutikjiniex giddieba.


TEREŽA: You're always drawing attention to yourself. You want everything for yourself. Wasn't it you who got Granny Gerit's bedspread?

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

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

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

TEREŽA: That's enough from you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARIJA: Liar!

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

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

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

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


Martin: [Lil Tereżu] Tereżu, ġie Ġuzepp.
Ġuzepp: Ġejna kmieni ġhandu jkun ...

Martin: [Iressaq lil Tereżu lil tagħmel ta’ bir-rubba qed tistfh] Hawn Ġuzepp, Tereżu, ilha tistenniek. Jahasra thobbok wisq. Imma baqqhet misħija ħafna avolja għamlilha man-nies ...


Tereżu: [Tibissimlu grixijja grixijja u minn tabt iltien tghidlu mhejma] Kuntenta ħafna ... Imma ...

Ġuzepp: Hemm xi imma, Tereżu? Mhxux bżżejjed taqtaqtli qalbi sa ghedtli iva? ... Ma ghadexx bil-ħsieb ta’ xi Malti hux? [Bid-dakka].

Tereżu: Tridx tmur! Ġuż, mela aħna tal-istess drawwiet tal-Maltin. Jiena lilek ħabbejt, lilek biss. Imma qalbi sewda ghax ser ikollli nhalli lil papà ... u lil oħti Marija ... ma tafx, ħajja gdidu ... ħsebijiet godda ... meta tiżżewweġ toħrog mid-dar ghal kolloss.

Ġuzepp: U la tinkwetax. Ahna mhux fejn missierek ser inkunu noqgħda?

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

Ġuzepp: Xi qbilna ... taww rigal ta’ hamsin lira u ħadhuli ... mhux ghax ma kontx ragel naghtih hamsin lira rigal imma ma ridtux jiskapprici-ċani.
grated this year? Why don’t you ask me? I’ll tell you. These last few
years, as many men have emigrated as there are people in the whole
of Gozo. That’s what Teacher Karm told me. And do you know what
else Teacher Karm said? He told me that soon the time will come
when there’ll be six girls to every young man... If this wedding
doesn’t come off, you’ll be left on my hands... and then I don’t know
what will become of me...

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

MARTIN [to Tereza]: Tereza, here’s Guzepp.

GUZEPP: It looks as if we’ve arrived early.

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

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

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

GUZEPP: What’s the ‘but’ about, Tereza? Aren’t you satisfied with tor-
turing me until you said yes? [Laughing] You’re not still thinking
about some young man in Malta?

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

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

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

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


Marija tghaqqad il-ponn minn tabt u Tereža titlq ‘il barra. Imma dak il-bin tistampa ta’kbita obra fuq in-naħa l-obra tal-bieb. Martin imur jiftaħ.


Tereža: Mela ma għidulhomx li l-partit kien ser isir tae-mejn f’daqqa?

MARIA: Papà, x’għamliltina?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARIJA: Daddy, what have you done to us?

MARTIN: Children, I didn't say anything to them. [To Karlu:] Now, you just sit down here. [To Guzepp:] And you here. Tereza, you sit next to Guzepp, and Marija, you next to Karlu. [Clears his throat like someone who has difficulty in explaining himself.] No, I didn't tell them I was going to invite them both together. When I spoke to Karlu, I realised he couldn't stand the sight of Guzepp. [Guzepp starts to rise and clenches his fist. Tereza pushes him back onto his chair.] Listen to me, children. Don't get mad at each other. If anyone's to blame for your unexpected meeting, it's me. Do you know why I brought you here together? I brought you together because I can't bear to think that my two daughters, who have always been brought up loving one another and who have always been together, should start to hate each other when they get married. So, I said to myself, Marija, who if she buys a bar of chocolate can't swallow it unless she gives a piece to her sister, and Tereza, who if she buys a pound of nougat at the village festa always buys another pound for her sister, she loves her so much, when they get married, is this love to be lost, and instead of loving one another, are they to start hating each other? For we know that if the husband of one can't stand the husband of the other, then the family will start quarrelling, and I
... U meta jkun hemm il-frott, meta Tereža 'kk Alla jrid ikollha ghaxart iftál bhal onmha u Marija ghaxra ohra, dawn it-tfal meta jghad- du fejn xulxin jibdew iharsu bl-ikren lejn xulxin ukoll? Imbaghd din il-mibeghdha kollha ghaflejn? Ghax imtom kandidati ta' żewġ partiti wiehed kontra l-iehor? Il-Partit tas-Sofor huwa kontra l-Partit tal-Hodor. Imma ż-zewġ xhebjiet ta' Martin ma humiex kontra xulxin. U mela ghaliex żwieghom ghandhom ikunu kontra xulxin? ... Ghalihekk laqqażjkom hawn flimkien mingħajr ma ghedtikom. Issa jekk ghamilt ħazin jew tajeb ghidul intom ... 


MARIJA: [Tgħid lil missierba mifxul ukoll] Jaqaw din biċċa ohra tiegħek?

MARTIN: [Lqabqab griżmu u jgħid] Biċċa oħra tiegħi għall-gid ta' kulħadd.

U mhux minn rasi, tafux. Ridot nagħmilikom ... ridt nagħmilikom ... X'elma qalli l-kappillan ... [B'sebug bu fuj nagħsa] lwa, ridt nagħmilikom sorpriżu ... Lill-Kappillan għedulu kemm kont inkwitat għax uliż- di kienu ser jieħdu żewġ guvintur mill-ahjar, ma ssibx bhalhom jekk iddur Gawdex kollu, imma mbaghad ħej, ma jahlux lil xulxin qishom kelb u qattus. Il-Kappillan, qalli, ghandi ħasba. Ismagħni, Martin ... Qalli laqqa' l-gharajjes ta' uliedek fil-gumata tal-partit ma' xulxin mingħajr ma jkunu jafu wiehed bl-ieħor ... aqiemel partit wiehed ... u stieden tlieta mill-bbieb tagħhom għall-festa ... bla preferenzij, biex ħadd ma jkollu xi jgħid; dik ġumata ta' fer' u żgur jagħmul bbieb. Jekk ma jagħmiux, mela līx-zebbieg tiegħek ma jħobbuhom biżżejjed.
didn’t want that. And if there are little ones, when Tereza, if God wills, has ten children like her mother, and Marija has ten others, are these children too to start squabbling when they meet one another? After all, what’s all the fighting about? Just because you are candidates of two opposing parties? The Yellow Party is against the Green Party. But Martin’s two girls are not against each other. So why should their husbands be against each other? That’s why I brought you together here without saying anything to you. Now you tell me whether I did right or not.

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

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

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

Ġużepp u Karlu jekkuba wieħed b'ld u l-ieħor b'oħra, sinjal li l-hasba tieghu mëxxiet.

Tabib: U lill-Kappillan ma stedintux, Martin?

Martin: Stedintu. Imma taf x'qalli, Qalli, Martin, li kont nista' ninqasam fi tnejn kieku nôfsi kont mmur mal-bbieb ta' Karlu win-nôfs l-ieħor mal-bbieb ta' Ġużeppi. Imma billi ma nista ninqasam ġaħjar ma nigriz. – U din x'fiha, għedtu, Sur Kappillan? Ser joqogħdu jaraw?

Karlu: Sewwa għedtlu. Dal-biża' għalfjejn?

Ġużepp: Tassew. Dal-kappillan x'haseb li aħna, tghid?


Karlu: Ara, Martin kliem il-kappillan ma għoġobni xejn. Dak li qal hu ma ġgħoddx għall-partit tas-Sofor ... il-partit taħna partit tal-irgiel ...
[Kif ġgħid hekk sabu, Fredu u Wiġi jinqalghu lejn in-naba tieghu, ġgħidu: Sewwa qed ġgħid – Il-partit tas-Sofor partit tal-galantoni ecc.]

Ġużepp: [jishon] Isma' jiena ma għandix ħajta f'ılısieni ... jekk qed tghid li l-partit tal-Hodor mhux partit tal-galantoni, nghidiek li ma intix galantom int u lanqas niesek ...

Skabu, Pawlu u Karmn jersqu lejn in-naba tieghu u l-erbqha jbarsu bl-ikreb lejn xulxin ...
love your daughters enough. And it came off, for you can see Gűżepp and Karlu shaking hands, and you can imagine how happy I am. So that no one could complain, I invited two educated gentlemen as well — the schoolmaster with Karlu's friends and the doctor with Gűžepp's friends. Now tell me whether I did right or not.

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

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

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

**KARLU:** Quite right. What's he frightened of?

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

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

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

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

His friends Pawlu and Karmnu move to his side and the four of them glare angrily at each other.
MARTIN: Jahastra, x'ghamilt b'idejja! ... dik kienet ċajta ... ċajta tał-kappillan ... ċajta biss ... Isa, summast, tabib, jahastra, ghidu kelma ghail-gid ... thalluhomx ṭassru festi ... 

SURMAST: [Lil Karlu] Ahna ser nirtellhu, jew? Illum waqt il-ġlied? Jiena biex niehu qatra gejt mhux biex nismaghk kom titlewmu? Isa, Karl, hallina minn dan ... 

TABIB: [Lil Ġuzepp]: Iva narrak imbierek, jiena gejt ferhan li ser niehu qatra u int ser taq传媒 dix-xenata? Isa, ergghu hudu b'idejn xulxin. 

KARLU: Mhux dak il-kiesah beda?

TEREZA: Bdejt u jekk joghġok lill-għarus tiegħi tghidlux kiesah. 

MARIJA: Għax ma ssikketx illsienek, ja ħmara li int. Mhux l-għarus tiegħek beda?

MARTIN: [Jonofok u jghajjat] Ulidi, ser thassru kollox ... [īt-tabib wis-surmast ifittux jbeerdbom waqt li l-obrajn jibqghu ġbarsu lejn xulxin donnbom iridu jieklu wiebed lil iehor] 

TEREZA: Lili tghid ħmara? Lili, ja kiesha. Ejjja ha nurik jiniex ħmara ... [Kif tghid bekk tmur taqbad f'xuxet okhba ... Martin jaght a fuq rasu jghajjat, Ifirdubom ... ser thassru kollox ... Karlu u Ġuzepp ġzommu kull wiebed l-għarusa tiegħu. Ghal fitt taqad sikta kbira imbagbad ...]

MARTIN: [Blleben miksur] Ara x'kelli nara llum. ... u dan mħabba daqsxejn ta' ċajta ... din l-imgharrqa politika ... Karlu, Ġuzepp, f'gieħ All, ejjew hudu b'id xulxin ... ejjew ... ulidi, ghidulhom jieħdu b'id xulxin. Aghmluhom paci ... 

SURMAST: [Iressaq lil Marija lejn Karlu waqt li t-tabib iressaq lil Tereza bdejn Ġuzepp] Inti Tereza, aqbad b'idejn Ġuzepp u inti, Marija, b'idejn Karlu. [Karlu u Ġuzepp jersgu lejn xulxin u bi thissima jerġġu jieħdu b'id xulxin]. 

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Separate them, they'll spoil everything.

KARLU and GUSEPP each take bold of their respective fiancée. For a short while there is a deep silence. Then...

MARTIN [in a broken voice]: To think that I should have lived to see this day... And all because of a little joke. These infernal politics... Karlu, Guzepp, for heaven's sake, come and shake hands with each other. Come, children, tell them to shake hands. Get them to make it up.

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

KARLU: It was a joke.
GUZEP: Ĉajta biss...

MARTIN: Ĉajta tal-kappillan...

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

TABI: Isbaħ mill-paci ma hemm fid-dinja...

MARTIN: Marija... Tereża, morru Ġewwa gibu qatra lill-hbieb...

JOBROGU...

TONI: [Waqt li l-obrajn jikellmu bejniethom] Mur ghidilna, Pawl, kemm kellek tikber meta konna ghadna mmorra l-iskola tal-Gvern flimkien Il-pulitka ghamltek nies...

PAWL: [Imfantas] Mela jien kont hanzir, Toni?

TONI: Uhimmni hazin! Issa int bhal Koli ta' Xafriż? Dak jirgha n-nagħaġ beda u jirgha n-nagħaġ għadu. Int thallat ruhek mieghu?

PAWL: Mela mohħ ta' kulhadd xorta, Ton?

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

PAWL: Il-boiedem hadd ma jkun jaf x'ghandu jghaddi minn għalih. Fejn qarr ġaddielegi minn rasi li għad irrid nibda nikkmanda lil Malta u Għawdex...

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

PAWL: Jien... u mela le... lill-kappillan ġa weghedtu li nwaħħallu żewġ fanali quddiem iz-zuntier... nifthulu triq ġhan naha ta' Ghajn Siġar... u nwaħħlu erba' fanali mal-hitna... ghax tkun għaddej bil-lejl lanqas tara tahlefl...

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

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

WĠTI: Sewwa qed tghidlu.

PAWL: Ara x'qallek, elezzjoni ohra ahna nirbhuha.

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

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

MARTIN: The parish priest's joke.

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

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

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

They go out.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WIDI: He's quite right.

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

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

Pawl: What building do you mean?
KARMNU: U dik id-dar fejn jiltaqghu tal-Gvem x'ighidulha bhal issa? Ghidilna int Mast.

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

KARMNU: Iva, lilek Mast. X'ighidulha dik il-kamra fejn jiltaqghu biex jithaddu kulladd ijjhid tiglihu?

SURMAST: Emminni ma nafx ghal xiex trid tghid. [Isejrab lit-ta'rib] Dott, ara Karmnu taghna jrid isaqsis xi haqa ... ma nistax naqbad x'inhi.

KARMNU: U dik, tabib, dik, g'horfa bhal kamra kbira kbira fejn jiltaqghu dawk li jikkmandaw lil Malta, Gha'dex u Kemmun ... SURMAST: Kam, 9id Kemmunett u Filfla biex tkun semmejt kolloks.

TABIB: Naf ghalfejn qed jighid. Ghal-Assemblea Legislativa.

KARMNU: X'kelma twila ... il-kliem tal-iskola twil wisq ... It-tabib itaptaplu fuq spalltu u bu wis-surmastr jooqghdu jithaddtu bejnietbom ...

PAWLU: [Lil Toni] Taf x'qed inghid, Ton. Lil Karmnu frahtlu talli tala' fil-Gvem u lili lanqas kelma.

TONI: Ara tahseb li ma tidxt nifrahlek ukoll, taf ... ghalija jien bnejedem tas-servizz, ghejt hawa biex nikkompanja 'l hija Karlù u ghada ghall-uniform bihas-solto ... wil-Bambin jejlisna mill-politika. Issa jiena trid minnkom ... Kos, jaqbadhi d-da'b x'hin niftakar li konna l-iskola fimmek; min jaf kemm morna l-ghalqa u grejna ghal-bejriet tal-ghasafar u issa meta narakom ser ikolli nseilmilkom.

KARMNU: Mhux ghalija, Ton, inma meta tarana sellmilna g'ax jekk ikun hemm xi hadd ieheor li ma jsellimx ma akunux nistghu naghmlu favuri ...

PAWLU: Sewwà qallek Karmnu, sellem, biex ma naghtu 'l hadd xi jghid ... TONI: U mela ma nsellemx. Likkom naghrafskom minn mil boghod, inma qaluli li hemm erbghin minnkom ... dawn biex taghrafskom kolha trid twarihlihom medalja ... FREDU: Taf li g'ghostini l-idea ta' Toni. L-ewwel haqa li naghmlu illirid biex kull min jikkmanda 'l Malta u Gha'dex jibda jib il-medalja ...
KARMNU: That building where the Government meets. Now, what do they call it? You tell us, Schoolteacher.

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

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

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

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

TEACHER: Karm, don't forget Cominotto and Filfia while you're at it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREDU: You know, I like that idea of Toni's. The first thing we'll do when we get in is to pass a law saying that every M.P. must wear a medal.
PAWLU: Medalja sabiha...

KARMNU: Medalja tad-deheb...

FREDU: U le tal-fidda biżżejjed... Nibżghu ghall-kaxxa ta’ Malta, l-ahwal basta medalja...

KARMNU: Hares, huti, in-nies mbux midalji trid imma x-xoghol ... hobż id-dar.

KARLU: [Li jersaq fuqhom jissamma’ ma’ Ġużepp] Min ghamel xoghol daqs il-Gvern tas-Sofor?...

ĠUŻEPP: Tal-Hodor ghamel iżjed...

KARLU: Min fetah il-gibjun?

ĠUŻEPP: Min bena skejjel l-aktat?

KARLU: Min fetah il-latrina tat-Tokk?

ĠUŻEPP: Il-partit tal-Hodor!

KARLU: Mhux ven, Qed nghidlek fetahha l-Partit tas-Sofor.

Jibqghu sa jtit tebɔr imieru lil xulxin, wiehed igkid taş-Sofor, l-tebɔr tal-Hodor sa ma jibejtu iferfru idejhom f’wiċċ xulxin...

ĠUŻEPP: Issa telaghli. Intom is-Sofor taf x’intom? qabda nies ma temmnu b’xejn...

KARLU: U intom, intom taf x’intom? ... qabda nies faċċoli ... faċċoli...


MARTIN: [Lit-tfal] Hsiebkom f’dak il-gabarrè ... ghamilt ṣafna spejjeż ghal xejn ... ser thassu kolloq ... Niżżlu dak il-gabarrè fuq il-mejda ... rażżu l-gharajjes taghkom feroći li ġhandkom għax ma niflax iżjed ghal dawn ix-xenati ... [Jagħmlu bekk – Kulbadd jiskot. Wara pawsa] Issa halluni niskellem ... Isingham liuliedi, Ġużepp u Karlu u intom sumast u tabib araw jiniex qed nghidilkom sewwa – [Lil Karlu u Ġużepp] Ejjew ‘l hawn [Jagħmlu bekk] Intom tridu tiżżewgu lil uliedi? [Inkwitat għax ma jitkellmu, iġ bajjal] Tridu, jew le? [Jagħmlu
PAWLU: A handsome medal.

KARMNU: A gold medal.

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

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

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

ĠUZEPP: The Greens did more.

KARLU: Who built the reservoir?

ĠUZEPP: Who built more schools?

KARLU: Who provided the public lavatory at Iż-Tokk?

ĠUZEPP: The Green Party.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ġuzepp: Le ma rridx.

Martin: [Lil Karlu] Int lil Marija ma thobbhiex anqas milli Ġuzepp ihobb lil Tereża. Mhx hekk?

Karlu: Inhobbha daqs ruhi l-għażiża.

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

Karlu u Ġuzepp: U mela le ...


Surmast: Bravu, sur Martin.

Tabin: Ragel tas-sens is-sur Martin.

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

Jaghmlu hekk.

Karlu: Kienet cajta ... Ġuzepp: Ĉajta biss ...

Martin: U issa nixorbu qatra bis-sahha tal-gharajjes.

Kulbad dersaq fuq il-mejda u jieba tazza xorb. Ighidu flimkien: Bis-sahha tal-gharajjes! xhin tkunu qed jergghu jqięghdu t-tazzi bat-tala, tinstema’ tabbita fuq il-bieb, Martin imur jiżtab.

Martin: Issa ahna lkol. Hawn Kurun il-huttab ... [Ġuzepp u Karlu jmorru jiżirbu bib] Ara Kurun ... X’hemm Kurun ...

Kurun: Martin stedintni ghall-qatta mal-gharajjes. Mhx hekk kien jixraq? Il-huttab jebot u ġejt biex norbotkom ...

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

ĠUŻEPP: No, I certainly don’t.

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

KARLU: I love her like my life.

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

KARLU AND ĠUŻEPP: Sure.

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

TEACHER: Bravo, Mr. Martin.

DOCTOR: Mr. Martin’s talking sense.

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

They do so.

KARLU: We were joking.

ĠUŻEPP: It was only a joke.

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

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

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

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

MARIJA [to her father, irritably]: Daddy, you didn’t say anything to us about this,

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TEREŻA: [Innervjata bhalba] Kollox la antika.

MARTIN: Ma ghedtilkom xejn ... ridt naghlilkom ... z'inih l-kelma li qalli l-kappillan ... [habbat sebghu [aq naghsu] ... sibha ... surpriża ... Ridi naghlilkom surpriża. Ghedt Marija u Tereża il-hwejjeg kollha tan-nanna ghogbhuhom ... kullma sabu fis-sendug ... id-dublett ta' mitt lembuba ... il-farda ... il-kulè ... ix-xinilha tas-suf ... iċ-ċulqana ... kullma halliet warajha. ... Ghedt mela żgur li joghgbuhom ukoll l-usanzbi tan-nanna. Illum Kurun ser jorbotkom kif il-huttub rabat lin-nanna man-nannu u lili ma' ommkom, Alla jahfriha. U hekk, uliedi, illum ser nergihu mmorru ghall-antik ... L-antiki nies tajba.

GUŻEPP: Jiena l-antiki joghgbuni ḥafna, ln-nies tal-lum ksuha haddhom wisq.

Pawlu u Karμu jghidu kliem li juru li jaqblu.

KARLU: Taf li lili dawn id-drawwiet tal-antiki joghgbuni wkoll! Id-dar ghad ghandna d-dublett tar-tieq li żewġet bih il-buznanna u sidrija tan-nanna bil-buttuni langasim, ma hix sabiha bil-fut.

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


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

MARTIN: Isa, Kurun fitteż orbothom ... 

KURUN: Hawn jien arani ... [Lil Martin] qieghed erba' siggijiet tnejn tnejn fejn xulinx fejn il-hajt. 

MARTIN jagħmel bekk. Igħinub x'ubud mill-oħrajn.


MARTIN: Min, Kurun?

TEREZA [equally irritated]: Everything just like the old days.

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

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

Paulu and Karinu indicate their agreement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Martin does so, some of the others helping him.

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

MARTIN: What, Kurun?

KURUN: I'm looking for a tray and for two gold rings that should be on the tray, so that we can betroth the happy couples, God bless them.
پیامدها و اثرات می‌تواند شامل انتقال و توزیع اطلاعات، بهبود کیفیت محصولات، کاهش هزینه‌ها، افزایش بهره‌وری و افزایش رقابت شود.
MARTIN: I’ve thought of everything for you... See, I’ll get everything for you. [Goes inside and brings a tray with two rings on it. Stops in front of the bridal couples.] Gužep, you brought your ring with you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tereza and Martin look at each other surreptitiously.

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

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

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

KURUN [as he goes out]: God willing, it won’t be long before I take another drink off you – less than a year – and ten times, just like your mother. God be with you, Sahha. [Goes out after everyone has said ‘sabha’ to him.] Thank you, and the best of luck.
GUZEPPISSA, Martin, abna ftehimma li mmotru sa Ta' Pinu ... ma tigix maghna?

MARTIN: Mhx illum, Minn jorxod mal-kćina? Meta ttejgu u jkun kollox sew.

KARLU: U ejja, Martin. Tieb gos fil-karrosso.

MARTIN: Mhx illum. Ima ħmistax oħra, jekk Alla jrid, niği Ta' Pinu maghkom biex nirringrazzja lill-Madonna.


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

L-gharajjes jigtbhannu. Fit-tagħmiqa waqt li it-tnejn ibarsu lejn missierhom Tereza ssejjab lil Gużepp Joey u Marija lill-għarus tagħha Charlie ... L-gharajjes biex ikompli ċ-ċajta waqt li ħbannqubom isej-kulhom Terry u Mary.

MARTIN: Bhu xi ksuħat ...

GUZEPPI ċajta ...

KARLU: ċajta biss ...

Jinfezzu jidtiku. Imbagħad jo brożu 'l barra lambranzetta ...

MARTIN: [X'hin isib rubu wakdu, b'ghajnejh merfugha lejn is-sema, ssuha ta' idejj imdahla go xulxin bhal min qed jitlob bl-ażbar berqa jgha!] San Nikola tal-Venturi, Patri Bernard qall li inti twassal iż-zewg tax-xebbiet ... Ismagħni sewwa, San Nikola, jekk sa ħmistax oħra ma jinqala' xejn iż-żewg jimexxi, u jien nehles miż-żewg xjaten li ghandi, jiena nitghellek xemgħa kuljum ghal xahar u nsumlek hobż u ilma ghal xahrejn ...

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

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

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

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

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

TEREZA [to GUZEPP]: Soon we shall belong to one another.

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

MARTIN: What nonsense is this?

GUZEPP: A joke.

KARLU: Just a joke...

They burst out laughing, and leave arm in arm.

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

The curtain falls.