

The Peacock of Silwan

A Play by Alma Ganihar

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**The play premiered at the Israeli fringe theater festival in Akko (Acre)
on October 2012, and took place in an apartment in the Old City**

Directors:

Sinai Peter

Chen Alon

**With the creative participation of the actors: Ortal Avnaim, David Bilenka, Dori
Engel, Rima Jawabra, Fabiana Meyuhas, Samira Saraya, and George Iskandar**

Translated from the Hebrew by Anthony Berris and Margalit Rodgers

Characters:

Iman	25, Yasmin's sister. Works in the beauty salon.
Yasmin	18, Iman's sister. Works in the beauty salon and wants to become a singer.
Jamil	40, their father.
Amal	43, Thamer's mother.
Thamer	Amal's mute son.
Shosh	38, a single, childless, religious-Zionist woman.
Yoram	40, chairman of the Kingdom of David Foundation.
Naama	25, an Israeli woman.
Michael	28, a Russian-born security guard.
Efrat	45 An archeologist heading the excavation team.

In the play, the Palestinian characters speak Arabic, the Jews speak Hebrew, and Shosh speaks both languages.

Scene One: The entrance to the archeological sight

*In front of a house stands a guard post in which there is a plastic table, a chair, and a sunshade. On the table, a transistor radio and a Russian-language newspaper. From inside comes the intermittent rattle of drilling and the sound of Yasmin singing. **Michael** the security guard arrives. He is wearing a shirt bearing the legend “City of David – Security”, carries a pistol in his belt and has a security company cap on his head.*

The noise heightens. A cloud of dust hangs in the air. A plastic tape encloses the archeological excavation area. There is a “No Entry” sign.

Two men lift a stretcher bearing a covered body. They move toward one of the apartments, open the door, and carry the stretcher inside. The door closes. A grief-stricken woman’s scream is heard.

Michael *(In a Russian accent, to the audience)* The truth misleads and deceives just like a lie. You’re sure you remember something and suddenly you’re told it’s all crap, rubbish, it never happened. One minute you’re sure that people like you, appreciate you, respect you, and the next minute they drop all the shit on you, frame you, and you become the prime suspect, even though you’ve done nothing wrong to anybody. How did it all begin? Listen, and judge for yourselves. I came on shift as usual at seven in the morning. I’m never late. I hate being late. I don’t want people saying he’s late because he was drinking all night. So please, listen to the story and judge for yourselves.

The morning started off as usual. At seven-fifteen Amal, the Palestinian neighbor went off to work, and like every other morning she yelled at her son:

‘Don’t you dare run away’, and locked her door and went off.

Amal screams her sans name and exits.

At eight o’clock Iman, went shopping, like on any other Tuesday.

Iman, traditionally dressed, comes out of the house with shopping baskets.

Good morning, Iman I said and she answered to me in Arabic .:

Iman *Sabah al-khayr, ya Michael.*

Shosh, dressed in long clothing and head covering, enters from the closed-off excavation area.. In one hand she has a small Book of Psalms and several bags in the other.

Michael at ten past eight, Shosh the Jewish settler, arrived God knows where she popped up from. (*To Shosh*) How many times have you been told that this is an excavation site, not a promenade?

Shosh You think it's nice walking down that alley with all the Arabs staring at you like you're a pig?

And she exits.

Michael at eight-thirty Jamil, Imans father went out.

Jamil, impeccably dressed and carrying a black briefcase, comes out of the house.

Michael I said, "Marhaba"(hello) Jamil, but he didn't answer. He never speaks to me, like I'm some kind of leper .At nine o'clock precisely, as usual, Dr. Efrat, the Jewish archeologist arrived.

Efrat comes in, crosses the stage. . She is wearing a straw hat, a vest, and boots, and is very energetic.

She didn't say hello either. Looks right through me.

Efrat disappears into the excavation area

At twelve a demonstration started up top, but that's pretty usual too. Ahhh...At ten to twelve Iman came back from shopping. (*Iman returns carrying her baskets and goes upstairs*) and at one o'clock Yasmin, her sister, went out.

Yasmin, wearing a lovely summer dress and looking beautiful, walks out of the house fast.

Michael (*To Yasmin*) Good morning, Yasmin. Where are you off to?

Yasmin None of your business.

Michael But your sister's already been shopping.

Yasmin She forgot the pita bread.

Yasmin exits.

Michael And off she went. She came back at a quarter to two with an envelope. She didn't have any pitas.

Yasmin comes back with a big smile on her face and a brown envelope in her hand.

Michael And she started singing.

She hurries inside while singing.

At two-thirty I yelled at Aryeh. (*Shouting*) Why's my lunch late again?
And there's nothing cold to drink either! (*To the audience*) At a quarter to three I did a security check like I do every day.

Thamer, an overgrown youth with a bag with rabbit ears on his shoulders, passes Michael.

Thamer, maybe you should go back home? Your mother'll come home from work and start looking for you.

Thamer giggles, snatches Michael's cap and runs away.

Michael: (*To the audience*) Please, listen to our story, and judge for yourselves.

scene two.

Efrat emerges from the tunnel in dust-covered work clothes. The noise stops.

Please, Dr. Efrat

Efrat Thank you... ah... ah...

Michael My name's Michael.

Efrat Ah... yes... Michael (*To the audience*) I'm sorry, I really am. What happened was a terrible personal tragedy. But I wasn't a part of it. I'm not interested in politics. I'm here just to serve science. When it all began, I was just a step away from proving that Bathsheba's Spring, whose ruins I recently uncovered, is the same one that appears in the Bible: "And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon..."

Once and for all I was able to prove to all the skeptics from Tel Aviv University that the magnificent Kingdom of David is indeed located in historical Jewish territory. I worked hard and fast. Husband and children? Ahhh. I didn't take a vacation. Yet despite all my efforts, at three-thirty

that day came the injunction stopping the excavations. (*She sees Yoram coming*) Thank God...

Yoram enters walking quickly.

Efrat Yoram, I'm so glad you've finally arrived.

Yoram Show me the papers.

Efrat hands him a document. He scans it rapidly.

I should have guessed. It's the residents' committee, and Jamil is representing them. He claims that the excavations under his house have cracked its foundations.

Efrat But Yoram, you saw the route of the excavation and approved it. The engineers approved it, the municipality approved it. You know I've got to work fast, Yoram. It'll soon be winter. The Arabs put up unlicensed buildings and block my... And now this?

Yoram It's nonsense, Efrat. I'll deal with it right away. I won't allow that committee of criminals led by that lying Jamil to destroy our...

Efrat How many times have I asked you not to involve me in your politics?

Yoram Trust me. Nobody's going to stop this excavation – nobody.

Efrat I trust you, Yoram!

Yoram Yes, but give me a little help here. Please. Write me an affidavit that I can take to court, in which you claim you are able to prove beyond all doubt that you've found the ruins of Bathsheba's Spring beneath the house. Add a few biblical verses. Thanks.

Efrat But I can't prove it beyond all doubt, Yoram, because I haven't finished interpreting the findings or the lab work.

Enter Shosh.

Shosh Yoram, it's good to see you back. Have you got an answer for me?

Yoram Five minutes, Shosh.

Shosh But Yoram, you promised me the moment you got back...

Yoram (*Angrily*) I asked for five minutes, right?

Shosh moves away.

Do you want them to stop the excavation? The donations? Everything we've achieved? Is that what you want?

Efrat I've got to be loyal to the truth, Yoram.

Yoram Efrat, Efrat, do you have any idea what a dangerous precedent this could set? If Jamil wins his claim, all the villagers will file petitions. I want you to be clear on the situation – if I don't have your affidavit, I don't have a case, and if I don't have a case you don't have an excavation, and your spring and all the other wonderful relics will be buried forever. Is that what you want?

Efrat But what if they're right?

Yoram Who?

Efrat Well, Jamil. What if the foundations of their house have really been cracked and it collapses?

Yoram Efrat, their house is on our land! The affidavit's on my desk by five. Two pages tops. With a few biblical verses, that's all. Thanks, Efrat.

Efrat exits. Shosh approaches Yoram.

Shosh Yoram...

Yoram Did you know that Jamil filed a petition to have the excavation stopped?

She does not reply.

It's your job to know everything that's going on with them. Who says what to whom. Who's doing what. That was our arrangement.

Shosh Who says I didn't know?

Yoram You knew? So why the hell didn't you tell me? Do you have any idea how important it is?

Shosh Why should I do anything for you if you don't do anything for me?

Yoram Better you ask yourself what you've done for Jerusalem today.

Shosh (*Cutting him short*) I do my bit for Jerusalem every day. I'm fed up, Yoram, they're cooking all the time and the smell comes into my room, I've got no privacy. You said live in the room for a month or two, and afterward the whole house will be yours. It's been almost six months, hasn't it?

Yoram Shosh, don't worry, the house will be yours.

Shosh Where can I take the baby I'm going to have if I haven't got a house?
Where?

Yoram remains silent.

What did the rabbi from Brooklyn tell you?

What did he say?

Yoram The same answer. An unmarried Jewish woman cannot use a sperm donation.

She turns her back on him

Shosh, there'll be a house, there'll be a baby, you'll have it all. You've nothing to worry about. After all, you know I always get what I want, right?

Pause.

Shosh You told me to come and live here. You said that the Divine Presence is here. That here God would see me and I'd find happiness. Did you say that or not?

Yoram Shosh, when you came to me, *(To the audience)* she couldn't see the sun through her tears. She'd almost lost her faith. And look at you now, how much hope you have...

Shosh Hope is gone.

Yoram *(Soothingly)* It will come back. And don't you take your eyes off them. Tell me everything. Everything that goes on there. Who does what, who says what, everything.

Yoram exits.

Shosh I do my bit for Jerusalem day by day.

Amal enters

Amal Thamer! Thamer!

She sees Shosh, passes her, then stops and comes back to her.

(To Shosh, in Arabic) Have you seen Thamer?

Shosh No, he's probably tearing the feathers off that poor peacock again.

Amal No, he's not there.

Shosh Did you leave him at home again?

Amal Yes.

Shosh You didn't lock up?

Amal I did. He got out through the window.

Shosh Tell me, what's wrong with you? Is this any way to bring up a child? Is this any way to care for him? Always running from place to place, sweating, playing with that smelly bird. If I were his mother...

Shosh exits. Amal goes into her house.

Michael (*Enters, speaking on his walkie-talkie*) Aryeh. The roof's okay. The site's okay. I sincerely hope that lunch is waiting outside.

Amal Thamer! Where are you?

Michael Amal, your Thamer took my favorite cap. I want it back.

Amal: Have you seen Thamer?

Michael (ignores her) (*On his walkie-talkie*) I'm going in to check the site right now.

He goes into the site.

Enter Naama, young, beautiful and extremely cute, with a camera hung round her neck, a bag over her shoulder/

Naama Hello? Anybody there?

Michael (*Emerges speaking on his walkie-talkie*) A vegetarian lunchbox? Are you nuts? I'm dying of hunger here!

Naama Hi... ah... excuse me...

Michael (*Sees Naama*) Hold on, who are you? How did you get in? What's this? Photographing is prohibited here.

Naama I'm sorry, I didn't know.

Michael you can't go inside without permission. It's an archeological site.

Naama Really?

Michael It's The Kingdom of David to be precise, and you're standing in his bathroom right now.

Naama Where do I get permission?

Michael You have to write a letter to the Kingdom of David Foundation explaining why you want to go in, and if they receive the letter – and they don't

receive every letter – they’ll interview you. If you pass it – and not everybody does – they’ll invite you to a meeting. You explain why you want to go in, and then they decide if you can. Getting permission takes two weeks, a month.

Naama A month? I haven’t got a month. I’ve got to take the photographs today. tomorrow I’m off to Varanasi.

Michael Sorry, that’s the rules.

Naama Look, this house used to belong to my grandmother. She’s old and sick and doesn’t really remember who’s who and what’s what. When I went to see her yesterday before I fly to Varanasi, she suddenly woke up and told me about the house where she was born. And she remembered everything, everything. The mosaic floor and the big window from which she could see the whole garden. And the spring. So I decided to come and bring her a few photographs of the house where she was born in Silwan, before it’s too late.

Pause.

Please? Afterwards – coffee on me.

Michael Coffee on me? (*To the audience*) Sir, you heard what she said – coffee on me. But why here? There’s nothing here, just a house. Let’s go over there. There’s a nice café there with a nice view and great music, nicer people over there.

Naama What’s your name?

Michael Michael.

She touches his hand as if accidentally. He is very embarrassed.

Naama I’m Naama. (*To the audience*) How was I to know that one little touch could lead to all this?

Michael Alright. Two photographs, and that’s it. Come on.

Naama Thanks, Michael.

They turn to go, Naama remains.

(*To the audience*) When I got back from what was Grandma’s house with Michael – we weren’t there for long, maybe fifteen minutes – they weren’t

very nice to me, but I photographed what I wanted to. And when I got back to my car I thought I'd die. It had been broken into and all my money had been stolen. Everything I'd saved for my trip Nobody wanted to help me, nobody. I went to the police, and they laughed at me. Why did you leave money in the car? You think you're in Tel Aviv? So I came back here, to Michael.

Michael (Enters) Enough, please don't cry, babushka. I'll help you.

Naama (To the audience) And he was really nice and suggested I talk to Yoram.

Michael Don't worry, Yoram can fix anything.

Enter Yoram. He is talking on his cellphone.

Yoram I want to understand how two months ago the minister assured me that everything would be all right, and suddenly I'm landed with an injunction stopping the excavations.

Michael Welcome back, Yoram. How was America?

Yoram (On the phone) I don't care who. The main thing is that this injunction is withdrawn, and the sooner the better. I don't care how. Yes, I'll hold.

Michael Excuse me, Yoram.

Yoram Michael, please. (On the phone) So get him to take a break. It's urgent.

Michael Yoram, this is Naama...

Yoram Pleased to meet you. Now please excuse me, young lady, I'm very busy.

Michael ...a friend of mine. They broke into her car and took a lot of money.

Yoram (On the phone) So tell him that after everything he promised me they've got an injunction to stop the excavation.

Michael But, Yoram...

Yoram Michael! Enough! Don't get smart with me!

Michael Excuse me, Yoram. (To Naama) ... Never mind, come on, let's go.

Naama Please, sir, all I wanted was to bring my grandmother a few photographs of the house where she grew up, and since I got here all I've had is trouble.

Yoram She grew up here? In which house?

Michael Jamil's. The beauty salon. But that's not important. What's important is that her money was stolen from her car, and I thought...

Yoram Jamil's house was your grandmother's?

Naama Yes, a long time ago, but then they left and...

Yoram *(To Michael)* I don't understand. She tells you that Jamil's house belonged to her grandmother and you didn't call me right away?

Michael I'm sorry.

Yoram ignores him and turns to Naama.

Yoram Naama?

Naama Yes?

Yoram Do you have any documents?

Naama Sure, comprehensive cover, third-party insurance...

Yoram No...I mean for the house.

Naama *(She rummages in her bag)*...My grandmother gave me all kinds of papers
She hands him a plastic sleeve containing documents.

Yoram What's your grandmother's name?

Naama Miriam Levi.

Yoram I see. And you grandmother wants me to restore the house to you?

Naama No, no, that's not the problem. Grandma doesn't want the house. It's not ours. She just asked me to photograph it for her. I did, and then I went back to the car and saw the broken window, and all my money had been stolen. Everything I've saved for my trip to Varanaci. And Michael told me that you run things here, and maybe you'd be able to help me.

Yoram is very deliberate and unhurried.

Yoram First of all, Naama, don't cry. It'll be alright. *(Makes a call)* Aryeh, you can see the parking lot on camera five, right? Check the recording and see what went on there from three o'clock onward. I'll hold.

Michael *(To Yoram)* Yoram, you're not mad at me. Are you?

Amal comes in and walks toward Yoram.(yoram speaks to her in Arabic she answers in English)

Michael (Agitatedly) Go away! Now!

Yoram Don't shout at her, Michael. Yes, Amal, how can I help you?

Amal Mr. Peled, maybe you can call your friends in the police for me? I'm worried about Thamer.

Yoram Again? What's happened this time?

Amal does not reply.

Look, Amal, I've got a good friend, a building contractor. He's putting up a new building not far from here. Leave your pigsty of a house and I'll arrange a new apartment for you there.

Amal Can you call the police for me? I'm worried about Thamer.

Yoram And I'll give you the money for a special school for the boy. (*She remains silent*) And should anything happen to you, God forbid, who'll take care of the boy? I'll give you a week, Amal, then the offer's withdrawn.

Naama (*Whispering*) Michael, what about my money?

Michael Not now.

Amal Can you call the police for me? I'm very worried about him.

Yoram I'm busy right now. (*On the phone*) Yes, Aryeh, I'm listening.

Amal exits,

Yoram (*On the phone*) Yes, Aryeh. Thanks. (*Disconnects. To Naama*) So, at four-fifteen the camera caught somebody smashing your car window, taking something, and running away.

Michael (*Excitedly*) Who was it?

Yoram We'll find him.

Naama So what do we do now?

Yoram :(*To the audience*) It's true, what happened here that day was a regrettable incident, most regrettable. But, despite what you're thinking, it wasn't an innocent one. What happened here was part of a well-planned, violent plot by the residents of the village, sponsored by very radical Palestinian elements, and all they want is to damage and destroy our magnificent enterprise. Do you know how tired I am of all these constant battles, of the bureaucracy, of all the idiots in the municipality, and in the government? But still I carry on. Do you know why? Because I know that on the day all our enemies unite again to finish us off, our army would not protect us, our air force would not protect us, even our nuclear power would not protect us. The only thing that would protect us is

our Jewish memory. It owns this land. And I am its guardian. Pleased to meet you:
Yoram Peled – guardian of the Jewish memory.

Jamil appears from upstairs. He is wearing a suit and leaning on a walking stick.

Jamil (To the audience) You probably believe what they told you here. They speak beautifully, in your language, in a pleasant atmosphere. But they lied to you. They said there was no alternative. I'd like you to come inside and see that there *was* an alternative. That there's always an alternative. Come on up, my daughters will show you everything.

The audience moves to the beauty salon

Scene Three: The Beauty Salon

All the dialogs between the sisters and their father Jamil are in Arabic. Shosh is translating from arabic to Hebrew.

Yasmin (18) and her sister Iman (25) are in the beauty salon. There is a treatment chair, a large mirror, cosmetics, towels, and all the other accessories of a beauty salon. A vase contains dozens of peacock feathers. Yasmin is wearing a colorful dress and is singing and moving gracefully. Iman, in traditional dress, has a stern expression on her face.

Iman (To the audience, recalling) At three-thirty that day, a moment before Father came in, Yasmin and I were working on a client in the beauty salon. We need a volunteer.

A female volunteer sits in the treatment chair.

Jamil (Enters, high spirits) Yasmin, Iman, come!

Iman Father, what's happened?

Jamil We've done it! We've been granted a temporary injunction to stop the excavations. My Attorney said, Jamil, it's a precedent. If we succeed, all the village's residents will file petitions. Their crazy takeover will be stopped.

Shosh's voice Yoram, it's Shosh. Can you hear me?

Iman: But Father, you know they're after you, and they'll come into the house again. They're just waiting for you to make one small mistake, and it'll all begin again.

Jamil Don't worry, everything will be fine, I promise.

Shosh's voice: Yoram, can you hear me? So, the father's come back home as pleased as Punch because he managed to stop the excavations. But the older sister isn't happy. She says you'll get back at him.

Jamil exits, speaking to the attorney.

Iman This quiet scares me

Yasmin Everything scares you. It's scary when they're digging. It's scary when they stop. Fear causes wrinkles. Just look at your face, it's all wrinkles.

Shosh's voice You hear, Yoram? The big one's scared by the silence, and the little one says that fear causes wrinkles.

Iman: What do you know? Here your face get wrinkles while you're still a girl. don't you understand? Everything's upside down Here: The living are dead, and the dead are alive and speak aloud.

Shosh's voice You hear, Yoram? The big one says that everything's upside down. The living are dead, the dead are alive and speak aloud.

Yasmin I won't get wrinkles because I won't be living here.

Iman (*Derisively*) Yes, sure, because you'll be living in Paris and become a famous singer. What a fool. You think I didn't have a Paris of my own? And Mother didn't have her Paris? Paris is there, and we're here.

Shosh's voice They're talking about Paris. The little one says she's going to Paris and that's why she won't get wrinkles.

Iman (*In Arabic, to the volunteer*) We're done. thanks

The neighbor pays her 20 shekels.

(*To the audience*) The neighbor paid and left. Twenty shekels isn't much, but that's what we live on here.

Yasmin snatches the money. Iman chases after her. Yasmin stuffs the money into her bra.
Give it here. We need it for the house.

Yasmin Enough of the house. I've given everything to the house and now I need some for my trip to Paris.

Iman (*Submitting*) I'll tell Father.

Yasmin Don't.

Iman Father will take it off you.

Yasmin If he takes the money, how will I manage in Paris?

Shosh's voice: So, Yoram. The little one wants to go to Paris, The big one doesn't want to give it to her because their father's out of work and they haven't got any money.

Iman Now clean up the mess.

Iman exits with the towels. Yasmin hides the money.

Yasmin (*To the audience*) When I was ten I told Father that God didn't give me a lovely voice so I could sing to stones.

Shosh's door opens and she comes out carrying a toilet roll and a towel. Yasmin sees her and rushes toward the toilet. Shosh tries to get there before her, but Yasmin is quicker and closes the door after her. The irate Shosh bangs on the locked toilet door.

Shosh Come out of the toilet right now, you cheeky little...

Yasmin Go and do it in the bath.

Shosh You go do it in the bath.

Yasmin I'll come out when you stop spying on us.

Shosh I know you went in just to annoy me. You always go at seven-thirty and nine in the evening. You never go in at four.

Yasmin So today I've gone in at four.

For a moment Shosh stands quietly, then resumes her knocking.

Shosh Come on out.

Yasmin Hold on. Patience, Mrs. Shosh.

Shosh (*To the audience*) I'm sick and tired from fighting! It poisons my soul. Yoram offered them a lot of money to leave, and the father didn't want a cent, not a cent. It's a pity – if jamil had just taken the money and left, nothing would have happened to anyone. I said, Yoram how will the house be mine if he doesn't agree to leave? And Yoram said, with God's help,

trust me and you'll see how I turn it all around – what's below will be above, and what's above will be below.

Yasmin Talk as much as you like, you'll soon be gone.

Shosh stamps her foot.

Shosh Come out already!

Enter Iman.

Iman What's all this shouting?

Shosh Tell your sister to come out of there.

Iman (*Arabic*) Yasmin, come on out.

The toilet flushes.

 There you are, Mrs. Shosh, she's coming out.

Shosh Thank you very much. You're nice – not like your sister.

Yasmin comes out smiling.

 Have you cleaned up?

Yasmin You think I leave it dirty on purpose like you?

Shosh goes into the toilet and locks the door. A sigh of relief is heard.

Iman (*Angrily*) Why are you making trouble with her. Haven't I got enough as it is?

Yasmin Why are you so nice to her?

Shosh comes out of the toilet and washes her hands.

Iman (*To the audience*) Yasmin didn't understand how dangerous that woman is. Nothing would have happened if she'd listened to me. Nothing...Instead of helping me with the house, the business, with Father who's fighting all the time, she wanted to drop everything and leave me here on my own. As my father's wife.

Shosh And don't forget that I take a shower at eight

Shosh exits. Iman picks up a bag, puts a scarf on her head, and exits. Yasmin comes in with a twenty-shekel bill in her hand.

Yasmin (*To the audience*) If I'd known what would happen because of the money I saved, I wouldn't have dared to dream.

She hides the money. A knock on the door,

Who's there?

Michael's voice Yasmin, open the door.

Yasmin No, my father's not here.

Michael's voice Yasmin, stop playing games.

Naama (*Peeps through the window*) Pleased to meet you. I hope I'm not intruding. I just want to take a few photographs for my grandmother. Michael said it would be alright.

Michael (*Peeps through the window*) You've got a music lesson at four-thirty, right? How will you get out if the gate's locked? (*Laughs*) And how will you get back home?

Yasmin opens the door. Michael and Naama come in.

Naama (*To the audience*) If only she'd listened to me she would have realized that I hadn't come to make trouble. Two or three photos and that's it. Wow! (*She moves around without being asked and starts taking photographs*) How lovely it is, just like Grandma said it was. What a space, such big windows.

Yasmin blocks the camera.

(*To Michael*) Maybe she wants me to photograph her?

Yasmin This is my house. Go away.

Naama Michael? What's going on?

Michael Yasmin, just a minute. I want to talk to you.

Yasmin First get out of my house. Then we'll talk.

Michael Do you want me to tell your father that you had passport photos taken last week? Maybe you're planning to go abroad?

Yasmin That's none of your business.

Michael True, but maybe it's your father's business?

Yasmin Two photographs, and you and that woman are out of here.

Michael Be nice. (*To Naama*) Take as many as you want.

Naama moves to the window and looks out.

Naama (*To Michael*) It's odd, Michael, I can't see a garden or a spring. Just soldiers, demolished houses, and flags. Maybe this isn't the right house?

Michael It is. The garden's gone. It's been a long time. Come back in a year or two and you'll see – there won't be a single house here. They're going to build a tropical garden here, plant trees.

Iman (*Enters*) What's this? What are you doing here? (*Shouts at Yasmin*) Why did you let them in when Father's not here?

Naama I just took a few photographs for my grandmother. She used to live here. That's it, I'm done. Thank you, Michael. Thank you. I've go to run. I've got a flight to Varanasi first thing in the morning. So girls (*Waves goodbye*) *marhaba*.

Michael Wait. Naama, what about the coffee you promised me?

Naama I didn't promise, I said 'maybe'. (*To the audience*) Remember me saying 'maybe'?

She exits. Michael gazes after her sorrowfully. Yasmin giggles.

Michael Don't you dare laugh at me.

She laughs spitefully.

(*Angrily, to Yasmin*) That's it. You've brought it on yourself. The gate won't be opened today.

Iman (*To Michael*) Michael, you must be hungry.

She brings a pot from the kitchen and removes the lid. Michael is tempted and moves closer.

Michael Just rice? No chicken?

Iman I'll fetch the chicken.

Michael With those spices, yes? And coffee?

Iman Will the gate be open?

Michael And cake?

Iman nods. Michael exits, the pot's lid in his hand.

Iman (*After him*) Michael!

Michael returns the lid to the pot and exits.

Shosh's voice Yoram, can you hear me?... the big one's mad at the little one for letting Michael and his girl in.

Enter Jamil.

Jamil I don't want you going outside now. The Border Police are in the streets, and I don't want you getting into trouble.

Yasmin But, Father, just to the post office to pay the registration fee.

Shosh's voice The little one wants to leave the house because she wants to register for her music, and he won't let her.

Jamil You're not going out.

He goes into the other room.

Yasmin *(Runs after him)* Father, I've got to.

Shosh's voice But the little one does what she wants.

Jamil I said no!

He slams the door shut. Yasmin looks at her sister, picks up her bag, and exits.

Jamil *(Comes out of the room. To Iman)* Has she gone out? *(Iman nods)*
(To the audience) I remember the day the soldiers came into our house, searched everywhere and humiliated me in front of my daughters. I remember the look on their faces after the soldier shot me in the leg and I fell. They pitied me. At that moment I felt like a father made of paper.
(To Iman) Where has she put her money?

Iman shows him the hiding place.

Jamil : *give it to me.*

Iman goes to the hiding place, takes the envelope and hand it to jamil.

Jamil : *(To the audience)* You have to understand me, I had to teach her a lesson.

He puts the envelope into his jacket pocket and walks out. Iman is alone at the room. She stands facing the mirror and slowly takes off her traditional clothes, remaining in short, brassy clothes. She begins to rap:

Iman's Rap

Never forget, always remember
 Noise, turmoil, fear, power
 Gently soothe the scars after surgery
 The scent of a woman and morning coffee
 A good morning that suddenly turned dark
 A soul will die and a soul will remain unharmed

And what could be done and not done to make the headline different
 Without answers I try to remind you all,
 that the writing was always on the wall
 And remember too... to embrace you...
 Remember God for fear of Hell
 Remember yesterday, tomorrow, and today as well
 Wash, iron, cook, sweep under the rug
 Clean and polish anything that smells
 The smell of Mother and a warm, pleasant home
 To remember what Grandfather said years ago
 The Turks and the English went away
 And these ones will do the same
 Being inside or out
 Feeble or stout
 Dirty or washed clean
 Caring or mean
 To run, and run, and run
 For everything there's a price to pay
 And anything unpleasant can be thrown away
 Dig deep, dig far
 Conceal, conceal, conceal
 And go on singing
 And remember too...

Iman finishes her song and goes into the other room. Yasmin enters and looks for her money.

Yasmin Iman, have you taken my money?

Iman (*Comes out in her traditional clothes*) I haven't touched it.

Yasmin I don't believe you. Give it back. Give me my money.

Iman Leave me alone. I haven't touched it. Father took it.

Yasmin Where did he put my money, Iman? Where's he put it?

Iman goes into the other room. Yasmin sits down, weeping. Enter Thamer, wearing Michael's cap. He moves toward her with squawks and leaps.

Yasmin Go away. Go away, I said.

He puts a peacock feather in her hair.

Father's taken the money I saved up for my trip.

Thamer looks at her. He runs around, looking everywhere for the money.

Thamer *A...na... jib... masr...ri.*

He gestures that he will get her the money.

Yasmin I don't understand what you're saying. Thamer, where are you going?

He exits.

Yoram's voice: Shosh, what did you say about the money?

Yasmin *(To the audience)* I didn't ask Thamer to break into the car and steal the money. I'd never ask anything like that.

Shosh's voice I said that her father took the money his daughter saved for Paris and hid it.

Iman *(To the audience)* I didn't do it out of envy. I wanted to protect her.

Yasmin *(To the audience)* It wasn't for me to protect him. She's his mother, not me.

Yoram's voice: But where did he put it?

Shosh's voice I told you. It's in his pocket. And Yoram – I'm doing what you want. Are you taking care of me?

Yoram's voice: Of course, Shosh, of course.

The room is empty.

Scene 4 – at the beauty salon

Enter Efrat.

Efrat *(To the audience)* Round about five-thirty I went up to talk to Jamil. If he'd listened, if he'd put himself in my place for a moment and really listened, this whole thing would have been resolved and this terrible tragedy could have been avoided. I believe in dialogue, you see. Violence isn't my language. I told him (*Enter Jamil. Efrat addresses him*) Jamil,

I'm not fighting you, on the contrary. I really don't want your house to collapse or anything.

Jamil tries to answer but she cuts him short.

Listen to me, it's important. I'm not fighting you, just the opposite. I really don't want your house to collapse or anything.

Jamil Then why...

Efrat The country's most senior engineers approved the route of the excavation, Jamil. But I won't get into that. There are very important relics here. Really. Relics that can shed a different light on Jewish history, relics that...

Jamil You people...

Efrat I'm not you people. Put your fight against Yoram aside for a moment. I'm a scientist, Jamil, and politics aren't for me. I've got a request. Listen to me. I'm asking you to put your petition on hold for two weeks.

Jamil Do you think...

Efrat And I'll use the time to verify my findings!

Jamil Then what do I...

Efrat You're not listening, Jamil. Do you have any idea how valuable my findings are? It's a huge discovery of universal value. This is where the cradle of civilization is. It goes far beyond a local conflict.

Jamil Yoram sent you to me.

Efrat Of course he didn't, on the contrary. He wanted me to sign an affidavit for the court, and I didn't.

Jamil An affidavit? What affidavit?

Efrat He needs an affidavit from me for the court, stating that I've discovered Bathsheba's Spring under your house. But I'm not yet sure about it, so I didn't give it to him.

Jamil Look, I'm willing to delay the injunction for two weeks on condition that you write me an affidavit stating that you're not sure about finding Bathsheba's Spring under my house. I'll take it to court...

Efrat But if your petition is upheld, what about my discoveries?

Jamil Tell me, can't you see what's going on around you? Can't you see that house after house is being demolished here? Can't you see that your soldiers have moved onto our roofs? The money your government is spending on these excavations? Can't you see that we pay property taxes as if we're living in an up-market neighborhood? That there's not a single children's playground here? That nobody collects the garbage? That we're thrown into jail every other day to keep us quiet? Can you see anything at all? Or are you as blind as a real mole, eh?

Pause.

Efrat *(To the audience)* And that's how our dialogue ended. It's just impossible to talk to him.

Exit Efrat.

Jamil *(To the audience)* Once upon a time a pair of peacocks lived on the roof of our house. The beautiful male would spread its plumage and dance before the female. And one day they started to build a nest, and we realized she was pregnant. When the soldiers came the first time, they went up onto the roof and sprayed teargas. The female was frightened off, and we found three broken eggs in the nest. The male screamed all night on the roof, gave everyone a headache. I didn't sleep all night.
Next morning my daughter Iman went up on the roof to hang out the washing, and found him dead. He apparently died of sorrow.

Enter Yasmin from the other room.

Yasmin Father, give me back my money. Please. I've got to get away from here.

Jamil You'll get the money when I say so, not a minute sooner.

He picks up his briefcase, and turns to leave, Yasmin runs after him.

Yasmin Father, please,

Jamil You'll learn to obey your father.

He walks out and slams the door.

Yasmin *(To the audience)* When I was ten I told Father that God didn't give me a lovely voice so I could sing to the stones. I'll go to Paris and sing, and the

whole world will hear me, and Father said, Why don't you sing to us here in the village? And I told him that everyone in the village says, Quiet, Yasmin, there's a war now. Instead of saying, Quiet, war, Yasmin's singing now.

I knew that I had to get away.

She sings. Thamer comes running in, takes off his bag, takes out a wad of bills and shows her.

Is that my money?

He nods, runs away with her pursuing him all over the room.

Give me my money before Father comes home.

He waves his arms, points to his heart, opens his hands and forms a heart with his fingers.

You love me?

He laughs.

If you love me, give me the money, Thamer.

He shakes his head and takes her hand.

Come with me? You want to come with me? Out of the question.

She tries to snatch the money, and he runs away again.

Thamer, listen. You can come with me. *(He is happy)* Now give me the money.

He gives it to her. She sees it's not hers.

(To the audience) I told him it's not my money, but he insisted. *(To Thamer)* Go and pack a bag and wait for me downstairs in half an hour, alright?

She goes into the other room. He collects his belongings. Enter Shosh, who sees Thamer.

Shosh Thamer, sweetie. Want an apple?

He hesitates, then takes the apple and runs off. Shosh looks around and puts the headphones on.

Yoram Can you hear me,? The boy came and brought some money to Yasmin. I don't know where he got it. But he's willing to give it to her on

condition that she takes him with her to Paris. So she said, Alright, I'll take you.

Enter Yasmin with a suitcase, looks at Shosh, and exits.

(To the audience) And she lied to him.

Shosh exits. Enter Michael.

Michael Every time I go to the bathroom up here I think about what Yoram would say if he knew. Because he'd never use their bathroom, never. But on the other hand he's not stuck all day without an air conditioner and without a bathroom, and without a cold drink. No, Yoram's got social conditions. Goes to America, the prime minister's office, eats in fine restaurants. Not that I'm jealous. Yoram's achieved what he's got with his own two hands. But sometimes I also feel like not being the one who holds back.

Michael goes into the toilet. Enter Yoram and Naama. Yoram sits down. Enter Jamil, limping, with Iman. He looks exhausted and is surprised to see them in his house.

Yoram *Marhaba, Jamil.*

Jamil Get out of my house.

Yoram I just want to have a quiet talk.

Jamil I know very well what you want.

Yoram Come and sit down.

Jamil This house will never be yours.

Yoram You see? You're not listening to me. What house? Just an hour ago all this young lady's savings were stolen from her car. I know for sure it was you who took the money, and I want you to return it right now.

Jamil I haven't stolen any money from anybody.

Yoram Then you won't mind if we search you.

Jamil does not resist. It is beneath his dignity.

Yoram Michael...

Michael frisks Jamil. He takes the envelope from his jacket pocket. It contains money. He gives it to Yoram who passes it to Naama.

Yoram Naama, count it please.

Jamil (*Rushes at him*) Are you out of your mind? That's my daughter's money, not hers.

Michael holds Jamil back.

Yoram Please. Jamil, don't lie to me.

Naama It doesn't matter, Mr. Peled. I'll withdraw the complaint. The main thing is I've got the money.

Michael You stay out of it.

Jamil You want to get me out of this house, and it's not going to happen.

Yoram The house isn't yours, and it never was. It belongs to this young lady's grandmother, and there's a registration certificate to prove it.

Jamil Nonsense.

Yoram Its not nonsense at all.

Jamil I've got documents for this house. My grandfather bought it from her family.

Yoram Who needs endless administrative detention right now? Courts? Lawyers?. I'm not being difficult, just the opposite. If you ask nicely I'll give you enough money to buy another house for you and your daughters.

Jamil I don't want another house.

Yoram Just between us, it's because of your stubbornness that you're a cripple. Is it worth it?

Jamil I'm not a cripple because of my stubbornness. It's because of the bullet your soldiers put in my leg. And I'm not leaving here even if they shoot me in my other leg.

Yoram (*Looks at Iman*) And your daughters? that work for you and keep you. Is that dignified? Look at your daughter. She hasn't got a life. She runs after you all the time and takes care of you, worries about you. Isn't it a waste?

Iman (*Breaking in*) It's our house that interests you...

Jamil (*Silencing her*) Iman!

Yoram And your beautiful young daughter? I sew her with a suitcase. She was on her way to Jordanian border.

Jamil Nonsense. She's at her music lesson.

Yoram Oh, didn't you know? Then I've done you a big favor made sure they stopped her out at the checkpoint.

Jamil is enraged.

Jamil Where is she?

Jamil throws himself at Yoram. Michael easily overcomes him.

Yoram Now I can have you charged with assault too. *(To Michael)* Take him away.

Michael starts pushing Jamil outside, followed by Iman. Naama and Yoram remain in the room.

Yoram So there you are, you've got your money back. Where are you going to?

Naama Mr. Peled, this money... isn't mine. I had bills of two hundred I took out of the bank. There are only small bills here.

Naama puts the envelope with the money down between her and Yoram.

Yoram The man's a criminal, Naama.

Naama *(To the audience)* And I told him again – it isn't my money.

Yoram So there you are, you've got your money back. Where are you going to?

Naama And again... In the end I said, first to Varanasi to my boyfriend, and then to Australia to work.

Yoram Have a great time.

Naama looks at the envelope with the money. Should she take it or leave it?

Naama *(To the audience)* I just wanted to get out of there and forget all that shit.

She grabs the money and exits. Yoram looks around for a moment.

Yoram *(to the audience)* .That's it. Everything will soon be as it should be. And you, my friends, if you come back here in a year's time – you won't recognize the place. Let's have a look together: *(video)* Take a look at this magnificent city, the city of our dreams for 2,000 years – Jerusalem. Here you can see the area called 'Silwan Village' – it's actually only a neighborhood, part of the big city of Jerusalem, our holy city. This is actually the place where king David built his first palace. We found proofs for this in our recent archeological digs. Now you can see here only gray old Palestinian houses, but in your mind's eye you can see the beautiful tropical garden that will be built here, instead of all these ruins. Here, right above the archeological site that you saw earlier, we are going to build a huge visiting center. We'll call it 'The immortal King David Visiting Center', and thousands of visitors from all over the world will come here to witness this wonder – the wonder of our ancient Jewish history. Take a moment to imagine how this whole area

will look like in a year's time. Here we are going to build a new Jewish school. And here, next to the mosque, can you see the blue and white flag, our flag? Well, now it's not seen here very often, but in a year's time, I assure you, over every roof top in the city this flag will fly, and the heart will flow.

Michael invites the audience to hear the end of the story.

Yasmin looks at him and hurries out. Yoram blocks her way.

Yoram She's not going anywhere, Jamil.

Jamil looks at him, frees himself from Michael, and attacks Yoram. Yoram falls. Jamil grabs Yasmin and runs out.

Michael, stop him.

Michael pulls his gun and aims at Jamil.

Iman's Rap

Stop everything, freeze!

Maybe it won't happen, stop everything, please!

Maybe the bullet won't hit its mark

Once fired, a bullet can't be turned back

It won't change its course or freeze in mid-air

It won't have mercy and it won't be fair

Stop everything.

Stop!

Enter Thamer, Michael fires. Thamer is hit, and falls dead. A peacock screams. All freeze. Amal bends over the body. All the characters are looking at the dead boy.

CURTAIN