



# Cambridge IGCSE™

**DRAMA**

**0411/12**

Paper 1

**October/November 2023**

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL



**Centres should download this material from the School Support Hub and give it to candidates.**

## INSTRUCTIONS

- The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the **two** play extracts provided in this booklet.
- You may do any appropriate preparatory work. It is recommended that you explore both extracts as practical theatre, investigating performance and staging opportunities.
- You will **not** be allowed to take this copy of the material **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination.
- A copy of the pre-release material will be provided with the question paper.

This document has **28** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

## EXTRACT 1

Taken from *The Browning Version* by Terence Rattigan

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

Extract 1 is taken from Terence Rattigan's *The Browning Version*. It was first performed in London in September 1948. The play is in one act, and the extract is abridged from the first half of the play.

The play is set in a highly traditional English public school of the 1940s with strict social conventions and a clear sense of hierarchy. Rattigan is often seen as a master of the well-made play, with a careful build-up of suspense and a well-crafted ending. Rattigan uses this framework as a vehicle for astute social commentary and an exploration of the emotional lives of well-drawn characters.

## CHARACTERS

JOHN TAPLOW (a student)  
FRANK HUNTER (schoolmaster)  
MILLIE CROCKER-HARRIS  
ANDREW CROCKER-HARRIS (schoolmaster)  
DR FROBISHER (Headmaster)  
PETER GILBERT (a new schoolmaster)  
MRS GILBERT

	<i>[Scene: the sitting-room of the Crocker-Harrises' rooms in a public school in the South of England. It is between six and seven o'clock on a July evening. The building in which the rooms are situated is large and Victorian, and at some fairly recent date has been converted into flats of varying size for masters. The Crocker-Harrises have the ground floor and their sitting-room is probably the biggest – and gloomiest – room in the house. It boasts, however, access (through a stained-glass door, L.) to a small garden, and is furnished with old-fashioned cheerfulness. Another door, back R., leads into the hall and the rest of the flat. This door is concealed by a screen.]</i>	5
FRANK:	Oh, hullo.	
MILLIE:	<i>[Without expression.]</i> Hullo.	
	<i>[She puts down a couple of parcels she has been carrying, and goes back into the hall to take off her hat.]</i>	15
TAPLOW:	<i>[Frantically whispering to FRANK.]</i> Do you think she heard?	
	<i>[FRANK shakes his head comfortably.]</i>	
FRANK:	I think she did. She was standing there quite a time. If she did and she tells him, there goes my move – Nonsense –	20
	<i>[MILLIE comes back into the room.]</i>	
MILLIE:	<i>[To TAPLOW.]</i> Waiting for my husband?	
TAPLOW:	Er – yes.	
MILLIE:	He's at the Office and might be there quite a time. If I were you I'd go.	25
TAPLOW:	<i>[Doubtfully.]</i> He said most particularly I was to come –	
MILLIE:	Well? why don't you run away for a quarter of an hour and come back?	
TAPLOW:	Supposing he gets here before me?	
MILLIE:	<i>[Smiling.]</i> I'll take the blame. I tell you what – you can do a job for him. Take this prescription to the chemist and get it made up.	30
TAPLOW:	All right, Mrs Crocker-Harris.	
MILLIE:	And while you're there you might as well slip into Stewarts and have an ice. Here. Catch. <i>[She takes a coin from her bag and throws it to him.]</i>	35
TAPLOW:	Thanks awfully. <i>[He passes FRANK on his way to the door. In a whisper.]</i> See she doesn't tell him.	
FRANK:	O.K.	
	<i>[TAPLOW goes out.]</i>	
MILLIE:	Thank you for coming round.	40
FRANK:	That's all right.	
MILLIE:	You're staying for dinner?	
FRANK:	If I may.	
MILLIE:	Where have you been all this week?	
FRANK:	Correcting exam papers – making reports. You know what end of term is like –	45

MILLIE:	I do know what end of term is like. But even Andrew has managed this last week to take a few hours off to say goodbye to people –	
FRANK:	I really have been appallingly busy. Besides I'm coming to stay with you in Bradford –	50
MILLIE:	Not for over a month. Andrew doesn't start his new job until September first. That's one of the things I had to tell you.	
FRANK:	Oh, I had meant to be in Devonshire in September.	
MILLIE:	[ <i>Quickly.</i> ] Who with?	
FRANK:	My family.	55
MILLIE:	Surely you can go earlier, can't you? Go in August.	
FRANK:	It'll be difficult.	
MILLIE:	Then you'd better come to me in August.	
FRANK:	But Andrew will still be there.	
MILLIE:	Yes.	60
	[ <i>Pause.</i> ]	
FRANK:	I think I can manage September.	
MILLIE:	That'd be better – from every point of view. Except that it means I shan't see you for six weeks.	
FRANK:	[ <i>Lightly.</i> ] You'll survive that, all right.	65
MILLIE:	Yes, I'll survive it – but not as easily as you will.	
	[FRANK <i>says nothing.</i> ]	
	I haven't much pride, have I? [ <i>She approaches him.</i> ] Frank, darling, I love you so much –	
	[ <i>Laughing.</i> ] You're very nervous.	70
FRANK:	I'm afraid of that screen arrangement. You can't see people coming in –	
MILLIE:	Oh, yes. That reminds me. What were you and Taplow up to when I came in just now? Making fun of my husband?	
FRANK:	Afraid so. Yes.	75
MILLIE:	It sounded rather a good imitation. I must get him to do it for me some time. It was very naughty of you to encourage him.	
FRANK:	I know. It was.	
MILLIE:	[ <i>Ironically.</i> ] Bad for discipline.	
FRANK:	Exactly. Making friends with the boys, too. How easy it is to be popular. I've only been a master three years but I've already slipped into an act and a vernacular that I just can't get out of. Why can't anyone ever be natural with the kids?	80
MILLIE:	They probably wouldn't like it if you were.	
FRANK:	I don't see why not. No one seems to have tried it yet, anyway. I suppose the trouble is – we're all too scared of them.	85
MILLIE:	[ <i>Rather bored with this.</i> ] My husband would never be popular whatever he did –	
FRANK:	Possibly not. He ought never to have become a schoolmaster, really. Why did he?	90
MILLIE:	It was his vocation, he said. He was sure he'd make a big success of it, especially when he got his job here first go off. [ <i>Bitterly.</i> ] Fine success he's made, hasn't he?	
FRANK:	You should have stopped him.	
MILLIE:	How was I to know? He talked about getting a house, then a headmastership.	95

FRANK:	Crocker-Harris a headmaster! That's a pretty thought.	
MILLIE:	Yes, it's funny to think of it now, all right. Still he wasn't always 'The Crock' you know. He had a bit more initiative once. At least I thought he had. Don't let's talk any more about him – it's too depressing.	100
FRANK:	I'm sorry for him.	
MILLIE:	[Indifferently.] He's not sorry for himself, so why should you be? It's me you should be sorry for.	
FRANK:	I am.	105
MILLIE:	[Smiling.] Then show me.	
	[She stretches out her arms to him.]	
FRANK:	What have you been doing all day?	
MILLIE:	Calling on the other masters' wives – saying fond farewells. I've worked off twelve. I've another seven to do tomorrow.	110
FRANK:	You poor thing! I don't envy you.	
MILLIE:	It's the housemasters' wives that are the worst. They're all so damn patronizing. You should have heard Betty Carstairs. 'My dear – it's such terrible bad luck on you both – that your husband should get this heart trouble just when, if only he'd stayed on, he'd have been bound to get a house. I mean, he's considerably senior to my Arthur as it is, and they simply couldn't have gone on passing him over, could they?'	115
FRANK:	There's a word for Betty Carstairs, my dear, that I would hesitate to employ before a lady.	120
MILLIE:	She's got her eye on you, anyway.	
FRANK:	Betty Carstairs? What utter rot!	
MILLIE:	Oh, yes, she has. I saw you at that concert. Don't think I didn't notice.	
FRANK:	Millie, darling! Really! I detest the woman.	125
MILLIE:	Then what were you doing in her box at Lord's Cricket Ground?	
FRANK:	Carstairs invited me. I went there because it was a good place to see the cricket match from.	
MILLIE:	Yes, I'm sure it was. Much better than the grandstand, anyway.	
FRANK:	[As if remembering something suddenly.] Oh, no!	130
MILLIE:	It's all right, my dear. Don't bother to apologize. We gave the seat away, as it happens –	
FRANK:	I'm most terribly sorry.	
MILLIE:	It's all right. We couldn't afford a box, you see –	
FRANK:	It wasn't that. You know it wasn't that. It's just that I – well, I clean forgot.	135
MILLIE:	Funny you didn't forget the Carstairs's invitation –	
FRANK:	Millie – don't be a fool.	
MILLIE:	It's you who are the fool. [Appealingly.] Frank – have you never been in love? I know you're not in love with me – but haven't you ever been in love with anyone? Don't you realize what torture you inflict on someone who loves you when you do a thing like that?	140
FRANK:	I've told you I'm sorry – I don't know what more I can say.	
MILLIE:	Why not the truth?	145
FRANK:	The truth is – I clean forgot.	
MILLIE:	The truth is – you had something better to do – and why not say it?	
FRANK:	All right. Believe that if you like. It happens to be a lie, but believe it all the same. Only for goodness' sake stop this –	150

MILLIE:	Then for goodness' sake show me some pity. Do you think it's any pleasanter for me to believe that you abandoned me because you forgot? Do you think that doesn't hurt either?	
	[FRANK <i>turns away</i> .]	
FRANK:	Oh, no! I was so determined to be brave and not mention Lord's. Why did I? Frank, just tell me one thing. Just tell me you're not running away from me – that's all I want to hear. I'm coming to Bradford.	155
	[ <i>The door is pushed open. FRANK has made a move towards MILLIE but stops at the sound. MILLIE has recovered herself as ANDREW CROCKER-HARRIS appears by the screen. Despite the summer sun he wears a suit and a stiff collar. He carries a briefcase and looks, as ever, neat, complacent, and unruffled. He speaks in a very gentle voice which he rarely raises.</i> ]	160
ANDREW:	Is Taplow here?	165
MILLIE:	I sent him to the chemist to get your prescription.	
ANDREW:	What prescription?	
MILLIE:	Your heart medicine. Don't you remember? You told me this morning it had run out –	
ANDREW:	Of course I remember, my dear, but there was no need to send Taplow for it. If you had telephoned the chemist he would have sent it round in plenty of time. He knows the prescription. Now Taplow will be late and I am so pressed for time I hardly know how to fit him in.	170
	[ <i>This conversation has taken place near the door, the screen and MILLIE, blocking ANDREW's view of the room. As he now comes in he sees FRANK.</i> ]	175
FRANK:	Ah, Hunter! How are you? Very well, thanks.	
	[ <i>They shake hands.</i> ]	180
ANDREW:	Most kind of you to drop in, but, as Millie should have warned you, I am expecting a pupil for extra work and –	
MILLIE:	He's staying to dinner, Andrew.	
ANDREW:	Good. Then I shall see something of you. However, when Taplow returns I'm sure you won't mind –	185
FRANK:	[ <i>Making a move.</i> ] No, of course not. I'll make myself scarce now, if you'd rather – I mean, if you're busy –	
ANDREW:	Oh, no. There is no need for that. Sit down, do. Would it interest you to see the new timetable I have drafted for next term?	190
FRANK:	Yes, very much.	
	[ <i>ANDREW has taken out a long roll of paper, made by pasting pieces of paper together and which is entirely covered by his meticulous writing.</i> ]	
	I never knew you drafted our timetables –	195

ANDREW:	Didn't you? I have done so for the last fifteen years. Of course they are always issued as a copy under the headmaster's signature – Now what form do you take? upper fifth Science – there you are – that's the general picture, but on the back you will see each form specified under separate headings – there – that's a new idea of mine – Millie, this might interest you –	200
MILLIE:	<i>[Suddenly harsh.]</i> You know it bores me to death –	
	<i>[FRANK looks up, surprised and uncomfortable. ANDREW does not remove his eyes from the timetable.]</i>	
ANDREW:	Millie has no head for this sort of work. There you see. Now here you can follow the upper fifth Science throughout every day of the week.	205
FRANK:	<i>[Indicating timetable.]</i> I must say, I think this is a really wonderful job.	
ANDREW:	Thank you. It has a certain clarity, I think.	210
FRANK:	I don't know what they'll do without you.	
ANDREW:	<i>[Without expression.]</i> They'll find somebody else, I expect.	
	<i>[Pause.]</i>	
FRANK:	What sort of job is this you're going to?	
ANDREW:	<i>[Looking at his wife for the first time.]</i> Hasn't Millie told you?	215
FRANK:	She said it was a – private school.	
ANDREW:	It is run by an old Oxford contemporary of mine who lives in Dorset. The work will not be so arduous as here and my doctor seems to think I will be able to undertake it without – er – danger –	
FRANK:	<i>[With genuine sympathy.]</i> It's the most rotten bad luck for you. I'm awfully sorry.	220
ANDREW:	<i>[Raising his voice a little.]</i> My dear Hunter, there is nothing whatever to be sorry for. I am looking forward to the change –	
	<i>[There is a knock at the door.]</i>	
ANDREW:	Come in.	225
	<i>[TAPLOW appears, a little breathless and guilty-looking. He carries a medicine bottle wrapped and sealed.]</i>	
	Ah, Taplow. Good. You have been running, I see.	
TAPLOW:	Yes, sir. <i>[He hands the bottle to MILLIE.]</i>	
ANDREW:	There was a queue at the chemist's, I suppose?	230
TAPLOW:	Yes, sir.	
ANDREW:	And doubtless an even longer one at Stewarts?	
TAPLOW:	Yes, sir – I mean – no, sir – I mean – <i>[He looks at MILLIE.]</i> – yes, sir.	
MILLIE:	You were late, yourself, Andrew.	235
ANDREW:	Exactly. And for that I apologize, Taplow.	
TAPLOW:	That's all right, sir.	
ANDREW:	Luckily we have still a good hour before lock-up, so nothing has been lost –	
FRANK:	<i>[To MILLIE.]</i> May I use the short cut? I'm going back to my room.	240
MILLIE:	Yes. Go ahead. Come back soon. If Andrew hasn't finished we can sit in the garden. <i>[Moving to door.]</i> I'd better go and see about dinner.	



[*She goes out at back.*]

ANDREW: [To FRANK.] Taplow is hopeful of obtaining a move from my form, Hunter, so that he can spend the rest of his career here playing happily with the bunsen burners of your Science fifth. 245

FRANK: [At door.] Oh. Has he?

ANDREW: Has he what?

FRANK: Obtained his move? 250

ANDREW: [After a pause.] He has obtained exactly what he deserves. No less; and certainly no more.

[TAPLOW utters an explosion of amusement.]

[FRANK nods, thoughtfully, and goes out through the garden door. ANDREW has caught sight of TAPLOW's contorted face, but passes no remark on it. He sits at the table and makes a sign for TAPLOW to sit beside him. He picks up a text of the Agamemnon and TAPLOW does the same.] 255

TAPLOW: Line thirteen hundred and ninety-nine. Begin. 260

ANDREW: Chorus. We – are surprised at –

TAPLOW: [Automatically.] We marvel at.

ANDREW: We marvel at – thy tongue – how bold thou art – that you –

TAPLOW: Thou. [ANDREW's interruptions are automatic. His thoughts are evidently far distant.]

TAPLOW: Thou – can – 265

ANDREW: Canst –

TAPLOW: Canst – boastfully speak –

ANDREW: Utter such a boastful speech –

TAPLOW: Utter such a boastful speech – over – [In a sudden rush of inspiration.] – the corpse of the husband you have slain – 270

[ANDREW looks down at his text for the first time. TAPLOW looks apprehensive.]

ANDREW: Taplow – I presume you are using a different text from mine –

TAPLOW: No, sir.

ANDREW: Then why do you invent words that simply are not there? 275

TAPLOW: I thought they sounded better, sir. More exciting. After all she did kill her husband, sir. [With relish.] She's just been revealed with his dead body and Cassandra's covered in gore –

ANDREW: I am delighted at this evidence, Taplow, of your interest in the rather more lurid aspects of drama, but I feel I must remind you that you are supposed to be construing Greek. 280

TAPLOW: [Greatly daring.] Yes, but still, sir, translator's licence, sir – I didn't get anything wrong – and after all it is a play and not just a bit of Greek construe.

ANDREW: [Momentarily at a loss.] I seem to detect a note of end of term in your remarks. I am not denying that the Agamemnon is a play. It is perhaps the greatest play ever written – 285

TAPLOW: [Quickly.] I wonder how many people in the form think that?

[Pause. TAPLOW is instantly frightened of what he has said.]

Sorry, sir. Shall I go on? 290



[ANDREW does not answer. He sits motionless staring at his book.]

Shall I go on, sir?

[There is another pause. ANDREW raises his head slowly from his book.]

295

ANDREW: [Murmuring gently, not looking at TAPLOW.] When I was a very young man, only two years older than you are now, Taplow, I wrote, for my own pleasure, a translation of the *Agamemnon* – a very free translation – I remember – in rhyming couplets.

TAPLOW: The whole *Agamemnon* – in verse? That must have been hard work, sir.

300

ANDREW: It was hard work; but I derived great joy from it. The play had so excited and moved me that I wished to communicate, however imperfectly, some of that emotion to others. When I had finished it, I remember, I thought it very beautiful – almost more beautiful than the original.

305

TAPLOW: Was it ever published, sir?

ANDREW: No. Yesterday I looked for the manuscript while I was packing my papers. I was unable to find it. I fear it is lost – like so many other things. Lost for good.

310

TAPLOW: Hard luck, sir.

[ANDREW is silent again. TAPLOW steals a timid glance at him.]

Shall I go on, sir?

[ANDREW, with a slight effort, lowers his eyes again to his text.]

ANDREW: [Raising his voice slightly.] No. Go back and get that last line right.

315

[TAPLOW is just beginning the line again, when MILLIE appears hurriedly. She has on an apron.]

MILLIE: The headmaster's just coming up the drive. Don't tell him I'm in. The fish pie isn't in the oven yet.

320

[She disappears.]

[TAPLOW, who has jumped up on MILLIE's entrance, turns hopefully to ANDREW.]

TAPLOW: I'd better go, hadn't I, sir? I mean – I don't want to be in the way –  
ANDREW: We do not yet know that it is I the headmaster wishes to see. Other people live in this building.

325

[There is a knock at the door.]

ANDREW: Come in.

[DR FROBISHER comes in. He looks more like a distinguished diplomat than a doctor of literature and classical scholar. He is in the middle fifties and goes to a very good tailor.]

330

FROBISHER:	Ah, Crocker-Harris, I've caught you in. I'm so glad. I hope I'm not disturbing you?	
ANDREW:	I have been taking a pupil in extra work –	
FROBISHER:	On the penultimate day of term? That argues either great conscientiousness on your part or considerable trouble on his.	335
ANDREW:	Perhaps a combination of both –	
FROBISHER:	Quite so, but as this is my only chance of speaking to you before tomorrow, I think that perhaps your pupil will be good enough to excuse us – [ <i>He turns politely to TAPLOW.</i> ]	340
TAPLOW:	Oh, yes, sir. That's really quite all right. [ <i>He collects his books and dashes to the door.</i> ]	
	[ <i>He darts out.</i> ]	
FROBISHER:	Have the Gilberts called on you, yet?	
ANDREW:	The Gilberts, sir? Who are they?	345
FROBISHER:	Gilbert is your successor with the lower fifth. He is down here today with his wife, and as they will be taking over this flat I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind if they came in to look it over.	
ANDREW:	Of course not.	
FROBISHER:	I've told you about him, I think. He is a very brilliant young man and won exceptionally high honours at Oxford University.	350
ANDREW:	So I understand, sir.	
FROBISHER:	Not, of course, as high as the honours you yourself won there. He didn't, for instance, win the Chancellor's prize for Latin verse or the Gaisford.	355
ANDREW:	He won the Hertford Latin, then?	
FROBISHER:	No. [ <i>Mildly surprised.</i> ] Did you win that, too?	
	[ANDREW nods.]	
	It's sometimes rather hard to remember that you are perhaps the most brilliant classical scholar we have ever had at the school –	360
ANDREW:	You are very kind.	
FROBISHER:	[ <i>He corrects his mistake.</i> ] Hard to remember, I mean – because of your other activities – your brilliant work on the school timetable, for instance, and also for your heroic battle for so long and against such odds with the soul-destroying lower fifth.	365
ANDREW:	I have not found that my soul has been destroyed by the lower fifth, headmaster.	
FROBISHER:	I was joking, of course.	
ANDREW:	Oh. I see.	
FROBISHER:	Is your wife in?	370
ANDREW:	Er – no. Not at the moment.	
FROBISHER:	I shall have a chance of saying goodbye to her tomorrow. I am rather glad I have got you to myself. I have a delicate matter – two rather delicate matters – to discuss.	
ANDREW:	Please sit down.	375
FROBISHER:	Thank you. [ <i>He sits.</i> ] Now you have been with us, in all, eighteen years, haven't you?	
	[ANDREW nods.]	
	It is extremely unlucky that you should have had to retire at so comparatively early an age and so short a time before you would have been eligible for a pension.	380

[The HEADMASTER is regarding his nails, as he speaks, studiously avoiding ANDREW's gaze.]

ANDREW:	Pension? [After a pause.] You have decided then, not to award me a pension?	385
FROBISHER:	Not I, my dear fellow. It has nothing at all to do with me. It's the governors who, I'm afraid, have been forced to turn down your application. I put your case to them as well as I could, but they decided, with great regret, that they couldn't make an exception to the rule.	390
ANDREW:	But I thought – my wife thought, that an exception was made some five years ago –	
FROBISHER:	Ah. In the case of Buller, you mean? True. But the circumstances with Buller were quite remarkable. It was, after all, in playing rugby against the school that he received that injury –	395
ANDREW:	Yes. I remember.	
FROBISHER:	And then the governors received a petition from boys, old boys, and parents with over five hundred signatures.	
ANDREW:	I would have signed that petition myself, but through some oversight I was not asked –	400
FROBISHER:	He was a splendid fellow, Buller. Splendid. Doing very well, too, now, I gather.	
ANDREW:	I'm delighted to hear it.	
FROBISHER:	Your own case, of course, is equally deserving. If not more so – for Buller was a younger man. Unfortunately – rules are rules – and are not made to be broken every few years; at any rate that is the governors' view.	405
ANDREW:	I quite understand.	
FROBISHER:	I knew you would. Now might I ask you a rather impertinent question.	410
ANDREW:	Certainly.	
FROBISHER:	You have, I take it, private means?	
ANDREW:	My wife has some.	
FROBISHER:	Ah, yes. Your wife has often told me of her family connections. I understand her father has a business in – Bradford – isn't it?	415
ANDREW:	Yes. He runs a men's clothing shop in the Arcade.	
FROBISHER:	Indeed? Your wife's remarks had led me to imagine something a little more – extensive.	
ANDREW:	My father-in-law made a settlement on my wife at the time of our marriage. She has about three hundred a year of her own. I have nothing. Is that the answer to your question, headmaster?	420
FROBISHER:	Yes. Thank you for your frankness. Now, this private school you are going to –	
ANDREW:	My salary is to be two hundred pounds a year.	
FROBISHER:	Quite so. With board and lodging, of course?	425
ANDREW:	For eight months of the year.	
FROBISHER:	Yes, I see. [He ponders a second.] Of course, you know, there is the School Benevolent Fund that deals with cases of actual hardship –	
ANDREW:	There will be no actual hardship, headmaster.	430
FROBISHER:	[Pause.] Well, now – there is a particular favour I have to ask of you in connection with the ceremony, and I know I shall not have to ask in vain. Fletcher, as you know, is leaving, too.	
ANDREW:	Yes. He is going into the City, they tell me.	
FROBISHER:	Yes. Now he is, of course, considerably junior to you. He has only been here – let me see – five years. But, as you know, he	435

ANDREW:	has done great things for our cricket – positive wonders, when you remember what troubles we were in before he came –	
FROBISHER:	Our win at Lord's this year was certainly most inspiring – Exactly. Now I'm sure that tomorrow the boys will make the occasion of his farewell speech a tremendous demonstration of gratitude. The applause might go on for minutes – you know what the boys feel about Lord's Cricket Ground – and I seriously doubt my ability to cut it short or even, I admit, the appropriateness of trying to do so. Now, you see the difficult situation in which I am placed?	440 445
ANDREW:	Perfectly. You wish to refer to me and for me to make my speech before you come to Fletcher?	
FROBISHER:	It's extremely awkward, and I feel awful about asking it of you – but it's more for your own sake than for mine or Fletcher's that I do. After all, a positive ending is what one must try to work up to on these occasions.	450
ANDREW:	Naturally, headmaster.	
FROBISHER:	You really mustn't take it amiss, my dear fellow. The boys, in applauding Fletcher for several minutes and yourself say – for – well, for not quite so long – won't be making any personal demonstration between you. It will be quite impersonal – I assure you, quite impersonal.	455
ANDREW:	I understand.	
FROBISHER:	[ <i>Warmly.</i> ] I knew you would, and I can hardly tell you how wisely I think you have chosen. Well now – as that is all my business, I think perhaps I had better be getting along. This has been a terribly busy day for me – for you too, I imagine.	460
ANDREW:	Yes.	
	[MILLIE comes in. She has taken off her apron, and tidied herself up.]	465
MILLIE:	[ <i>In her social manner.</i> ] Ah, headmaster. How good of you to drop in.	
FROBISHER:	[ <i>More at home with her than with ANDREW.</i> ] Mrs Crocker-Harris. How are you?	470
	[ <i>They shake hands.</i> ]	
MILLIE:	You're looking extremely well, I must say.	
FROBISHER:	Can I persuade you to stay a few moments and have a drink, headmaster. It's so rarely we have the pleasure of seeing you – Unfortunately, dear lady, I was just on the point of leaving. I have two frantic parents waiting for me at home. You are dining with us tomorrow – both of you, aren't you?	475
MILLIE:	Yes, indeed – and so looking forward to it.	
FROBISHER:	I'm so glad. We can say our sad farewells then. [ <i>To ANDREW.</i> ] Au revoir, Crocker-Harris, and thank you very much.	480
	[ANDREW bows.]	
	[MILLIE holds the door open for FROBISHER and follows him out into the hall.]	
MILLIE:	[ <i>To ANDREW as she goes out with FROBISHER.</i> ] Don't forget to take your medicine, dear, will you?	485

ANDREW: No.  
FROBISHER: Till tomorrow, then? Goodbye.

*[We hear the door slam. ANDREW is staring out of the window. MILLIE reappears.]*

*[Pause.]*

490

*[There is a knock on the door.]*

MILLIE: Come in.

*MR and MRS GILBERT come in. He is about twenty-two, and his wife a year or so younger.*

GILBERT: Mr Crocker-Harris? 595

ANDREW: *[Rising.]* Yes. Is it Mr and Mrs Gilbert? The headmaster told me you might look in.

MRS GILBERT: I do hope we're not disturbing you.

ANDREW: Not at all. This is my wife.

MRS GILBERT: How do you do. 500

ANDREW: Mr and Mrs Gilbert are our successors to this flat my dear.

MILLIE: Oh, yes. How nice to meet you both.

MRS GILBERT: *[At the garden door.]* Oh, look, darling. They've got a garden. It is yours, isn't it?

MILLIE: Oh, yes. It's only a small garden, I'm afraid, but it's very useful to Andrew. He often works out there, don't you, dear? 505

ANDREW: Yes, indeed. I find it very agreeable.

MILLIE: Shall I show you the rest of the flat? It's a bit untidy, I'm afraid, but you must forgive that.

MRS GILBERT: Oh, of course. 510

*[They disappear.]*

ANDREW: *[To GILBERT.]* Don't you want to see the rest of the flat?

GILBERT: No. I leave all that sort of thing to my wife. She's the boss. I thought perhaps you could tell me something about the lower fifth. 515

ANDREW: What would you like to know?

GILBERT: Well, sir, quite frankly, I'm petrified. The headmaster said you ruled them with a rod of iron.

ANDREW: Did he? I think he exaggerated. I hope he exaggerated.

GILBERT: *[Puzzled.]* He only meant that you kept the most wonderful discipline. I must say I do admire you for that. 520

ANDREW: It is not so difficult. They aren't bad boys. Sometimes – a little wild and unfeeling, perhaps – but not bad.

GILBERT: Perhaps I shouldn't have said that. I've been tactless, I'm afraid.

ANDREW: Oh, no, please sit down. 525

GILBERT: Thank you, sir.

ANDREW: From the very beginning I realised that I didn't possess the skill of making myself liked – a skill that you will find you do possess.

GILBERT: Do you think so?

ANDREW: Oh, yes. I am quite sure of it. 530

GILBERT: I want to learn.

ANDREW:	I can only teach you from my own experience. For two or three years I tried very hard to communicate to the boys some of my own joy in the great literature of the past. Of course, I failed, as you will fail, nine hundred and ninety nine times out of a thousand. But a single success can atone and more than atone for all the failures in the world. And sometimes – very rarely, it is true – but sometimes I had that success. That was in the early years.	535
GILBERT:	[ <i>Eagerly listening.</i> ] Please go on, sir.	
ANDREW:	In early years, too, I discovered an easy substitute for popularity. I had, of course, acquired – we all do – many little mannerisms and tricks of speech, and I found that the boys were beginning to laugh at me. I was very happy at that, and encouraged the boys' laughter by playing up to it. It made our relationship so very much easier. They didn't like me as a man, but they found me funny as a character, and you can teach more things by laughter than by earnestness – for I never did have much sense of humour. So, for a time, you see, I was quite a success as a schoolmaster – [ <i>He stops.</i> ] – I fear this is all very personal and embarrassing to you. Forgive me. You need have no fears about the lower fifth.	540 545
GILBERT:	[ <i>After a pause.</i> ] I'm afraid I said something that hurt you very much. It's myself you must forgive, sir. Believe me, I'm desperately sorry.	550
ANDREW:	There's no need. You were merely telling me what I should have known for myself. Perhaps I did in my heart, and hadn't the courage to acknowledge it. I knew, of course, that I was not only not liked, but now positively disliked. I had realized, too, that the boys – for many long years now – had ceased to laugh at me. I don't know why they no longer found me a joke. Perhaps it was my illness. No, I don't think it was that. Something deeper than that. Not a sickness of the body, but a sickness of the soul. At all events it didn't take much discernment on my part to realize I had become an utter failure as a schoolmaster. Still, stupidly enough, I hadn't realized that I was also feared.	555 560
	[ <i>GILBERT is now deeply embarrassed and rather upset, but he remains silent.</i> ]	565

## EXTRACT 2

Taken from *The House* by Arzé Khodr

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

*The House* was written by Lebanese playwright Arzé Khodr (b.1976) and was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in November 2008.

The play focuses on two sisters and a brother who have a deep-seated family disagreement about the sale of the house in which they grew up. The dilemma of selling the house brings out the tensions between men and women in decision-making in such matters.

## CHARACTERS

NADIA (female, forties)

REEM (female, mid-thirties)

NABEEL (male, early thirties)



## ACT ONE SCENE 1

*[A living room in an old city home. REEM is sitting, NADIA comes through the kitchen door. They are both dressed in black.]*

NADIA: I finished cleaning the kitchen. What a day it's been, I've been on my feet since seven this morning!

REEM: You're a masochist, you enjoy the exhaustion... 5

NADIA: What do you want us to do? Leave Mama without a forty-day memorial?

REEM: We could've just had something intimate, without the extended family. A simple lunch. I don't think there's anyone we know who didn't come by today. 10

NADIA: So, let them come...

REEM: I just want what's best for you! You've worn yourself out!

NADIA: It's nothing.

REEM: Fine, it's nothing.

NADIA: Did you see Nabeel's wife? A layer of foundation on her face this thick... *[Indicates a thickness of five centimetres with her fingers.]* 15

REEM: You know her. Full make-up no matter what the occasion.

NADIA: I can't stand the woman. How can Nabeel be happy with her?

REEM: He seems happy...

NADIA: Happy, living under her thumb... 20

REEM: Oh, let them be. Sit down, I want to talk to you.

*[NADIA, very carefully, sits down.]*

NADIA: I know...

REEM: What?

NADIA: You want to leave... 25

REEM: Yes. I think it's time. I have to get back home.

NADIA: This is your home.

REEM: Nadia, do me a favour –

NADIA: What about you doing me a favour? You know I can't live alone.

REEM: Why can't you? You'd be better off! 30

NADIA: No, I wouldn't. Reem, please don't leave so soon after Mama's death.

REEM: Nadia, I've been here for forty days. Longer, two months in fact, ever since Mama went to hospital.

NADIA: Two months. Seems like only yesterday. I can't believe it, she was fine... and in a blink she got a fever, then she's gone... *[Starts to cry.]* 35

REEM: I know. Every time the phone rings, I expect it to be her. I catch myself saying, 'What does that woman want now...!' How life unfolds... 40

*[Silence.]*

NADIA: You know that in a month or so I'm going overseas, right?

REEM: Yes.

NADIA: I'm signing a six-month contract... 45

REEM: You told me.

NADIA: And my contract might get extended, I'll be away for quite a while.

REEM: I know!

NADIA: So whichever way, I won't be able to live with you.

REEM: You could stay until it's time for you to travel.

REEM:	I don't want to. I want to go home. I want to leave. I can't stand it here.	50
NADIA:	Ah well, you could have said that earlier. It's nice to know you hate my company. Admit it!	
REEM:	I didn't say that.	
NADIA:	Just for a few more days...	55
REEM:	Nadia. Nadia, why are you doing this? It's been ten years since I left this house, and I'm always hearing the same thing. Not once did Mama call me without asking when I'd be coming back, when I'd be sleeping here in this house again...	
NADIA:	Well, she's dead now. What else do you want?	60
REEM:	What else do I want? You think I wanted her to die? You think I'm happy now?	
NADIA:	I didn't mean to...	
REEM:	No, go on, say it. Enough. Listen to me, Nadia, I have to go back to my house, I need to prepare for my trip and organise my life. I'm leaving you tomorrow. I don't want us to live together.	65
NADIA:	Mama's gone now, and I certainly won't get in your way.	
REEM:	Enough, Nadia. I've got a million things to take care of. I need to go back home tomorrow.	
NADIA:	Oh, I get it. You have a boyfriend you don't want to bring back here. That must be it.	70
REEM:	Whether or not I have a boyfriend is simply none of your business.	
NADIA:	So, it's definitely that. Why else would you have left ten years ago?	
REEM:	Ah, so that's what this is about. You can relax, I don't. And if I want to go home, it's because I want some room to breathe and feel alive again, because this place is killing me.	75
<i>[There's a knock at the door.]</i>		
NADIA:	Someone's at the door, I hope they didn't hear you.	
REEM:	Let them hear. I couldn't care less.	80
<i>[NADIA opens the door. NABEEL enters.]</i>		
NABEEL:	I came back, thought I'd check on you, see if you needed anything. <i>[To NADIA.]</i> You all right? You look tired.	
NADIA:	It's been an exhausting day.	
REEM:	I told her we didn't need such a big event.	85
NADIA:	Oh, shut up.	
NABEEL:	What's wrong? Have you two been fighting?	
REEM:	Oh, it's nothing. Nadia can't live on her own, that's all.	
NADIA:	I don't want you staying here any more. Go to your own house.	
REEM:	You sure?	90
NADIA:	I'm sure. There's no living with people like you, anyway.	
REEM:	Don't even think of it. Careful you don't stoop to my level.	
NABEEL:	Just calm down a minute. What happened exactly?	
NADIA:	I was just asking her to stay with me a little bit longer. I can't be in this house alone. You know me, Nabeel. I can't sleep alone, I stay awake all night.	95
NABEEL:	I know.	
NADIA:	But she wants to leave because she has more important things to tend to.	

REEM:	Of course I want to leave. I have to leave. I've got to be overseas in six weeks, Nabeel.	100
NABEEL:	Just stay here for these six weeks, and then it will all be sorted out.	
REEM:	How? Now or later, it's all the same.	
NADIA:	She doesn't have to stay if she doesn't want to. Just leave, I'll be fine.	105
NABEEL:	Reem, can't you stay a few more days? What's the worst that can happen? You'll be in another country soon enough.	
REEM:	I've got so much to take care of before I leave...	
NABEEL:	Well then, take care of it during the day and sleep here at night. That's not too difficult, is it? [ <i>Light-heartedly.</i> ] And you, Nadia, stop annoying your little sister.	110
NADIA:	Me, annoy her? It's the other way round!	
NABEEL:	I know. I know.	
REEM:	What? You too, Nabeel?!	115
NABEEL:	Just relax, Reem. You were away for so long... you never called. You should soften a little, Mama's only been dead forty days. Nothing will happen to you if you stay with Nadia a little longer.	
NADIA:	Listen to me, Reem, you know I want you to stay with me with all my heart, but you do whatever you want.	120

## SCENE 3

*[The house is empty. There's a knock at the door. REEM comes down the stairs. She looks through the spyhole then opens the door.]*

REEM:	Don't you have a key?	
NABEEL:	I do, but I don't know where it is. Is Nadia gone?	125
REEM:	Just left for work. Want some coffee?	
NABEEL:	No, <i>merci</i> . I had one at home.	
REEM:	Well, sit down, I need to talk to you.	
NABEEL:	As long as it's quick, I've got an appointment at nine.	
REEM:	Oh, Nabeel, you're always rushing off. Didn't I ask you yesterday to give me half an hour of your time?!	130
NABEEL:	Fine, I'm sitting. What's up? Still fighting with Nadia?	
REEM:	Yes... Well, no... Poor thing, she's doing her best not to disturb me, so I don't pack up and leave... but I'm suffocating, I can't stand it...	135
NABEEL:	It's all right. How long till you travel? A month and you're free, not long to go. I'd ask her to stay at mine, but you know what she's like with my wife, and I'm not brave enough to mention it.	
REEM:	I don't expect you to do that. That's not what I'm talking about. If I stay here then, when I come back, where do I come back to?	140
NABEEL:	What?	
REEM:	Where do I go when I come back from overseas? Where will home be?	
NABEEL:	'Where will home be?' What do you mean?	
REEM:	Don't play dumb, Nabeel. I'll be there for at least six months. My lease ends in four. I either pay rent on an empty house, or move all my things into this one.	145
NABEEL:	Move your things and just come back here when you're done. Isn't that cheaper for you?	

REEM:	Nabeel, my dear brother, concentrate with me here – I just told you I can't stand living here! If I move out of my place completely, I'll have to stay here for good!	150
NABEEL:	Not necessarily. Just move your things in here. When you get back, rent your old place again. It isn't that complicated.	
REEM:	It is complicated. Haven't you heard Nadia? 'I can't live alone, don't leave I won't be in your way, what do you want to eat, what do you want to drink...' You think she'd let me leave that easily?	155
NABEEL:	She'll get used to living alone while you're away.	
REEM:	She'll be forced to live alone while I'm gone... and when I get back, she'll force me into staying.	160
NABEEL:	Reem, honestly. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Besides, no one's been able to force you into anything. You are always so stubborn.	
REEM:	It's different now. Nadia's been laying on the guilt, thick. Every time I come back here, I decide to speak to her about leaving, but she won't let me. She's smothering me with questions, asking if I'm hungry or thirsty, if I need to rest... I'm only alone when she's crying in Mama's room. Honestly, it's driving me mad. I feel as though I'll be trapped here for ever.	165
NABEEL:	'Trapped here for ever'?	170
REEM:	Yes, trapped. Forced to live in this house with Nadia for the rest of my days.	
NABEEL:	And... what's wrong with that?	
REEM:	What do you mean? 'What's wrong with that?' I'd go numb, go crazy, I'd die...	175
NABEEL:	Enough already! What do you want?	
REEM:	I want to sell the house.	
NABEEL:	What?	
REEM:	Sell the house and split the money. That way I can buy my own place, Nadia can have her own place too, and we'll get her a housekeeper to stay with her so she doesn't feel so alone. You can do what you like with your share.	180
NABEEL:	Oh no!	
REEM:	It's the best option.	
NABEEL:	How can you even be thinking about this?	185
REEM:	Are you telling me it's never crossed your mind?	
NABEEL:	No, honestly, it hasn't.	
REEM:	Well, now you can think about it. It's a big house, in the centre of the city. You know that property prices have been rising... I had the house valued recently, we could get two and half million dollars for it. That means eight hundred thousand each. Have you bought your house yet?	190
NABEEL:	Still paying the bank mortgage.	
REEM:	Perfect. You can pay that off.	
NABEEL:	Yes, but...	195
REEM:	But what?	
NABEEL:	I don't know, I'm a little shocked. Are you serious about this?	
REEM:	Yes, Nabeel, to my own house.	
NABEEL:	Have you mentioned this to Nadia?	
REEM:	Not yet, I'm running it by you first. What do you think?	200
NABEEL:	To be honest, it's never crossed my mind. It is a big house, and of course we'd get a good deal of money for it, but I've never thought of it, especially with both of you living here.	
REEM:	I am not living here, and I don't want to be. That's why we have to sell it.	205

NABEEL:	Truthfully, do you need the money? Do you have debts or a bank loan you need to –	
REEM:	No, no. I just think that selling the house would be better for us, and for the house! It needs a lot of work done... repainting, the plumbing, the roof leaks, and someone should bring the garden back to life. I'm going away soon. Do you really think Nadia can handle all that on her own? She could use the money, you know, and you don't need that mortgage hanging over your head.	210
NABEEL:	It's a fair point. I'm with you. But we'd be selling our parents' house, the house we grew up in...	215
REEM:	Yes, I realise that. The whole point is to sell the house we grew up in.	
NABEEL:	Always the troublemaker, Reem!	
REEM:	How dare you?! Two months I've been shutting up, when you know damn well how much I hate being here. So selling the house and getting a place of my own makes me a troublemaker? You call making good use of our only inheritance 'trouble'? All I want for us is to live comfortably.	220
NABEEL:	That's all you care about, living comfortably, everything else can go to hell. Do you know what selling this house would really mean? Have you considered Nadia at all? Imagine the consequences...	225
REEM:	I've thought this through, and know very well Nadia won't accept it initially, that's why I spoke to you first, so we can convince her together.	230
NABEEL:	Bravo, Reem, scheming against your sister. Making trouble to get your own way.	
REEM:	You seemed to like the idea...	
NABEEL:	Don't you understand that all my life I've tried to stay out of your problems? I left this house too, you know. You're not the only one who had a hard time here. Of course I like the idea, why shouldn't I? But do you know what it's going to cost? Can you imagine the headaches? You don't see a problem with it because you create the problem in the first place, and if a person chooses to ignore you, you insist on making their life a misery just to please yourself. I can't deal with it any more, Reem. I've always tried to balance things out, but I've had it up to here with these hysterics. I want to live comfortably too. I'd sooner see the back of this place, believe me, but this idea of yours could stir up endless trouble, and who'll be in the firing line, huh? Me. Who has to mediate between you two? Both of you have always been like this and I accept it. 'They're my sisters. I'm their only brother...' But now you want to start a war and you want me to be on your side?	235
REEM:	No, Nabeel, no. Do me a favour and listen to me. I'm not trying to manipulate you, or trying to cause trouble, believe me. I just can't stand the idea of living here, you know. I want something good to come out of this house for once, instead of the misery it's given us.	240
NABEEL:	Oh, of course, this plan sounds misery-proof!	245
REEM:	Look, if we sell, at least we'd have some money to spend for once. You do have a point, I know it could be difficult at first, but just think of getting rid of this place for good. The thought of this house not existing any more makes me so happy...	
NABEEL:	You should listen to yourself. You're sounding a little crazy...	250
		255
		260

REEM:	No I'm not, I've never been saner. I've done my research. Did you know that if Nadia refuses, the two of us could legally oblige her to sell her share of the house?	
NABEEL:	What? Take your own sister to court?	
REEM:	If she gave us no other choice.	265
NABEEL:	Reem. For heavens' sake, give it a break! You want to fight your own sister for her share of a tattered old house, to get us involved in an ordeal with courts and lawyers? And for what? The house will be all yours in the very end. And you don't need the money at the moment, do you?	270
REEM:	No, I don't.	
NABEEL:	If we're ever desperate to sell, then so be it. But do you have to cause friction between us now? Those doors are closed for a reason. Aren't you the one who moves on and never looks back? Forget about the house, let's just go on with our lives. If the house needs to be sold someday, we'll find the right time to do it.	275
REEM:	That time has come.	
NABEEL:	You're adamant?	
REEM:	Yes.	
NABEEL:	Listen, I'm not getting in between you and Nadia. Don't even dream of it. But I'll tell you one thing, if both of you agree to it, we'll sell. If you don't, I won't be getting involved in your dirty games, dragging this through the courts. You hear me?	280
REEM:	I hear you. Meaning you're a coward.	
NABEEL:	You can say what you like, but don't think you can manipulate me.	285
	[NABEEL <i>leaves.</i> ]	
REEM:	Of course... Only your wife can do that now...	

## SCENE 5

[NADIA and NABEEL are sitting at home.]

NADIA:	You've made it clear to her that I won't be selling?	290
NABEEL:	Yes, I explained it to her. Why won't you believe me?	
NADIA:	What else does she want from us? Can't she just leave us in peace?	
NABEEL:	I don't know, Nadia.	
NADIA:	I thought she was joking at first. Thought she'd go back to hers, calm down, and just forget all about it.	295
NABEEL:	She's not capable of forgetting. Never lets you forget it either.	
NADIA:	Nabeel, please, stay true to your word, don't let her have her own way. You know how much I'm attached to this house...	
	[We hear the keys in the door. REEM opens the door and enters.]	300
REEM:	<i>Bonsoir.</i>	
NADIA:	[Frosty] If it isn't Madame Reem!	
REEM:	What? You're still on your high horse?! Can't we at least discuss this like civilised people?	
NADIA:	There's nothing for us to discuss. You know I don't want to sell the house.	305
REEM:	This isn't just your house, you know.	



NABEEL: You don't need the money.  
 REEM: No, I don't.  
 NADIA: Well, that's wonderful. You just want to sell the house on a whim! 310  
 REEM: I want to sell this place because I can't stand it, I can't tolerate its stench. I can't stand these walls and everything they contain! I hate that I was ever conceived in this house, the fact that I grew up in it, and the fact that I'm standing in it now talking about it. I've never liked this house or the life I had here. I almost didn't believe it when I was finally able to afford to move out, and not have to listen to your voices again. I've never been happy in this house. Not one minute of normality. It makes me sick. I can't breathe here. They could tear this place down, for all I care. I hope it burns down. All of it, with every last thing in it. 315  
 NADIA: What is this madness?! You're crazy! You've lost your mind!  
 REEM: You're the one living in a silly dream. Are you really happy? You've convinced yourself that you're living like a queen in your parents' house. How stupid can you be? And you want me to live with you like this? Do you think anyone can bear living with you? Just like your mother! 325  
 NABEEL: I've had enough of both of you! I don't have to listen to this. I'm going.  
 NADIA: No, stay. You stay and she can go. Insulting me in my own house!  
 REEM: [*Calm*] I'm staying right here. This is my house too and I have the right to be here. I want to sell... 330  
 NADIA: And I won't sell.  
 NABEEL: Here we go again... Don't get me involved in this. I'm not making the decision for you.  
 REEM: You've never made a decision in your life... 335  
 NADIA: Oh yes, just let Reem walk all over you. Typical.  
 NABEEL: What is wrong with you two? Fighting with each other isn't enough, so you gang up on me?  
 REEM: Forget it, Nabeel. Just go. You're absolutely useless.  
 NABEEL: Oh, I'm gone. 340  
  
*[He takes his jacket and leaves, closing the door behind him. The two women sit in silence.]*  
  
 REEM: I'm leaving too.  
 NADIA: Go, good riddance. And get the idea of selling this house out of your head. 345

## SCENE 7

*[Inside the house, NADIA is busy cleaning. There's a knock at the door, then REEM uses her key and enters.]*

REEM: Welcome back!  
 NADIA: What are you doing here?  
 REEM: I'm paying you a nice visit. I've come to see how you are, what you're up to... I'm flying out after tomorrow. 350  
 NADIA: Great! It'll be nice to see the back of you!  
 REEM: Come on, Nadia! Is this how sisters speak?



NADIA:	You made up all those lies. You waited for me to go to work so you can have the house sealed off. Was that very sisterly? With red wax, no less!	355
REEM:	You're back now. Don't make such a big deal out of it.	
NADIA:	How dare you, Reem...? You have your own sister thrown out of her parents' house, and that's not such a big deal?!	
REEM:	I've had enough of you and this house! You think I'm doing this just to annoy you?	360
NADIA:	Why else? You must be enjoying this.	
REEM:	No, Nadia, I'm not enjoying this. I don't enjoy this at all! I told you I want to sell this house and will do everything I can to make that happen!	365
NADIA:	Bravo! You'll have to show me how clever you are then!	
REEM:	So, we're still in the same place! You insist on this! Shall we have this out in the courts? Is that what you want?	
NADIA:	What do you think you'll get from taking me to court? If I don't agree, you'll never sell the house!	370
REEM:	Once I get Nabeel on my side, we'll force you to sell!	
NADIA:	Don't worry, Nabeel would never do that...	
REEM:	Really? Are you sure about that?	
NADIA:	Not just Nabeel, his wife too!	
REEM:	Oh, really?	375
NADIA:	Honestly! She loves her money, and I've found a way to keep her satisfied.	
REEM:	Liar!	
NADIA:	Go on, ask her.	
REEM:	Are you trying to scare me?	380
NADIA:	Suit yourself. You'll find out soon enough.	
REEM:	What did you do? What did you say to Nabeel?	
NADIA:	Ask him.	
REEM:	I'm asking you.	
NADIA:	I've signed off my share of the inheritance to him, on the condition that I get to stay in this house for the rest of my life.	385
REEM:	What do you mean?	
NADIA:	Nabeel owns two-thirds of this house now, and in return, he agreed to let me live in it until I die. That means, if you want to sell this house, you'll have to do it over my dead body.	390
REEM:	You had no right to do that...	
NADIA:	Says who?	
REEM:	You can't do this!	
NADIA:	Fine, ask your lawyer about it, and then get back to me...	
REEM:	You must be very pleased with yourself. Do you feel strong and intelligent now? I will ask my lawyer, we'll contest this, and we'll see what you can do about that!	395
NADIA:	Well, I'd like to see what you can do! Do you know how long a case like this could take? Ten years, at least. You'll lose, anyway...	400
REEM:	We'll see about that! What do you know?	
NADIA:	Whatever you say, Reem. You can do whatever makes you happy, if you can...	
REEM:	Of course I can. Even if it means dragging this through the courts for ten, twenty, fifty years. I'll persist with this from my grave. Whatever it takes, this house will be sold.	405

[End of Act One.]

## ACT TWO SCENE 1

[NADIA and NABEEL are in the living room.]

NADIA:	What does that mean?	
NABEEL:	It's over, you have to leave the house...	410
NADIA:	I can't even comprehend it...	
NABEEL:	I know... But there's nothing more we can do...	
NADIA:	I don't understand... Suddenly they want to build a new highway? All of a sudden there's Town Planning involved.	
NABEEL:	Well, it's not much of a surprise, Nadia. Didn't you hear the lawyer say this project had been lost for fifty years – [ <i>Mocking.</i> ] 'If not since the time of the Ottomans...' Our beloved Government has been busy with Solidere for so long, and just now they remember all their other town planning.	415
NADIA:	I don't care about all the roads they're building. What does our house have to do with it?	420
NABEEL:	It's right in the middle of the planned highway. If Your Highness had agreed to sell it a year ago, we would've made some real money! Now, we'll be lucky to get forty or fifty per cent of what it's worth!	425
NADIA:	As little as forty or fifty?	
NABEEL:	Something about the highway only running through half the house! Just our luck!	
NADIA:	You can stop talking about it now. It's painful enough...	
NABEEL:	If you'd only accepted when Reem wanted to sell the house last year. But no! You wanted to stay! You're stubborn and unbreakable!	430
NADIA:	Now it's my fault? I seem to remember you loved it when I gave you my share of the house.	
NABEEL:	I only wanted what's best for you! You were on the verge of breaking down. There was no talking to you... But you're always right, whatever you do, you're always right. Whatever happens you're always right...	435
NADIA:	Don't blame me! If you really wanted to sell this place, you could've stamped your foot and sold it with Reem regardless!	440
NABEEL:	Not one more word! I could kill you!	
NADIA:	I'll speak to Reem... We'll see what we can do about this. Maybe we can take this to court, appeal or whatever...	
NABEEL:	Nadia, the decision comes from the Ministry. What can you do? Aren't you tired of this already? Or do you want to waste more time until the value drops further?!	445
NADIA:	Stop blaming me! Did I plan to build this highway? What am I supposed to do? What's done is done, let's try to find a solution, some legal loophole...	
NABEEL:	There is no solution, Nadia, and I don't want to be wasting any more money on lawyers, or getting into any 'legal loopholes' with you... In seven, eight months, a year at the most, they'll pay us our money, you'll leave the house, and they'll finally demolish this place. We take whatever they offer, because no one's going to buy it from us anyway...	450
NADIA:	It's not about finding someone to buy it. It's about buying us more time...	455
NABEEL:	'More time'? You'll have to leave sooner or later. Enough! Forget about it! Let go of this cursed house!	

NADIA:	Can you please just listen to me? Reem knows many important people, she might be able to help us...	460
NABEEL:	Reem, help you? She was dying to get rid of this house. Or has that conveniently slipped your mind?	
NADIA:	Reem wanted to sell. I don't think she'd be happy with the Ministry running a highway through the place and drip-feeding us money...	465
NABEEL:	Either way, we lose.	
NADIA:	We have to call Reem. I'll speak to her.	
NABEEL:	When will you stop fighting this? Till the last breath <i>ya'ni</i> ?	
NADIA:	I'm fighting for my home, Nabeel. I don't expect you to understand.	470
NABEEL:	Of course. You're the only one who lives here, only you understand!	
	<i>[He starts to leave.]</i>	
NADIA:	You're just going to sit back while they take our house away?	
NABEEL:	There's nothing more we can do. I'm not dealing with this any more.	475

## SCENE 2

	<i>[Inside the house, empty of most of its furniture. Suitcases and boxes in the corners. NADIA brings some bags down from the upstairs rooms. The front door is open. REEM enters. NADIA sees her, runs towards her, and hugs her.]</i>	480
NADIA:	I'm glad you came. I missed you...	
REEM:	<i>[Quietly]</i> How are you, Nadia? Everything packed?	
NADIA:	Almost. The movers came and took the furniture to the new house. All your things are over there. <i>[She points to a corner.]</i>	
REEM:	Do you need any help?	485
NADIA:	No, I'm done. That's it...	
REEM:	What about the furniture that's left?	
NADIA:	Not enough space for it in the new house. I'll put them in Nabeel's garage, he can sell them if he wants to...	
	<i>[REEM looks around, observing the space.]</i>	490
	Can you believe it, Reem? I can feel my heart breaking inside... I can't believe I'm leaving this place...	
REEM:	<i>[Noticing another pile of things in a corner]</i> Are those mine as well?	
NADIA:	They're Nabeel's. Have you seen him?	495
REEM:	Not yet.	
NADIA:	Have you spoken to him?	
REEM:	Yesterday, after I got back.	
NADIA:	What did he say?	
REEM:	What else would he say? That you're leaving the house in three days...	500
NADIA:	Didn't he say we should've sold the house, just like you wanted?	
REEM:	He called me whilst I was away to tell me about the highway. He was very upset.	

NADIA:	He blames me for it... but things happen, you know. I just couldn't bring myself to leave this house...	505
REEM:	It's done now. No use talking about it...	
	<i>[She moves some things closer to the door.]</i>	
NADIA:	Will you come and visit me at my new place?	
REEM:	If I'm invited...	510
NADIA:	<i>[Smiles]</i> I'm not sure if I'll get used to it, the new house... I don't know what to do...	
REEM:	You'll get used to it, Nadia! You've survived worse. What's wrong with you?	
NADIA:	I feel as though the world is ending... You know? I don't regret not selling the house... At least I had those two years of living here...	515
REEM:	You really don't regret it? With all the money we've lost? We only got half of what it's worth!	
	<i>[Silence.]</i>	520
	Just so you could stay here those two years, you put me, yourself and Nabeel through hell? All the lawyers and court-rooms... and you still don't regret it? Well, I don't regret it either, I don't regret it at all.	
NADIA:	Of course you don't! When did you ever regret stirring up trouble...? In any case, you got what you wanted. You wanted to get rid of this place and you couldn't sell it, now the Government's snatched it away... You always get what you want... It's a game of luck...	525
REEM:	Yes, luck. You're right, it's all just a game of luck.	530
	<i>[REEM moves the rest of her things to the door.]</i>	
NADIA:	What can we do? In our family we're destined for pain...	
REEM:	You know what, Nadia? If you think sometimes other people have it easy, you're not mistaken. You'd be right, other people out there do get what they want, their lives are much easier. But if you think this thing just fell out of the sky to annoy you and make me happy, you'd be very wrong about that. I worked hard to make this happen!	535
NADIA:	What?!	
REEM:	You heard me! If you think the Government woke up to a long-lost piece of town planning overnight, I'll have you know they had someone to remind them!	540
NADIA:	I don't believe this! You took your twisted ways all the way up to the Ministry? You liar!	
REEM:	I'm not lying! My 'twisted ways'? You remember my boyfriend? Majid... Remember how he wanted to marry me but Mama and his parents wouldn't have it? He went to study abroad and I had a nervous breakdown? Well, Majid's now an engineer working for the Ministry, and we're still friends...	545
NADIA:	So it's that easy? You tell your ex-boyfriend and he tears down the house?	550
REEM:	Of course it wasn't that easy, Nadia... I spent who knows how long trying to convince him. He doesn't like this sort of thing, but I have my ways... I'd heard about this piece of planning a long	

	time ago. Remember Mama saying there was a highway that was going to run right through this house? Baba thought it would take them a hundred years to get the Government contracts signed? We dug up the highway plan, and found a minister to sign off on it, we looked for support in very high places... If Majid had enough power to get this done himself, it wouldn't have taken a year or two...	555
NADIA:	I can't even begin to believe what I'm hearing...	
REEM:	I'm sorry, Nadia. You forced me to do it like this...	
NADIA:	No, of course I didn't.	
REEM:	Can you imagine the highway cutting through this living room? We might be left with just a corner of the kitchen, or half a wall... but I think they'll demolish the whole thing. [ <i>Very excited.</i> ] The cars will rip right through here – [ <i>She points in the direction of the future traffic.</i> ] at a hundred and twenty kilometres per hour... The living room, everything above it. The spare room, your room, Mama's room... It'll be open unto the sky... Lovely. Like being in a convertible. Aaaaah... Breathe, Nadia, breathe it in... The fresh air. Finally... It's all happening.	560
NADIA:	How could you do this, Reem? How could you?	
REEM:	It's the happiest ending! You know if we'd sold it, and they'd turned it into a hotel or a restaurant, the walls would still be standing. But now it'll be gone. Eradicated. There will be nothing left. Can you imagine it? Can you see it, Nadia? It's all over!	565
NADIA:	Yes, I can imagine... I see...	570
REEM:	Congratulations, Nadia, congratulations.	575

*The End.*

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