

## **A Short Summary of the Play** (its themes and its message to the contemporary world):

'The Tyrant in Underworld -- A Dream of Hades with Lucian of Samosata' (from here on, 'The Tyrant') is a play mainly about Megapenthes, the tyrant of the day, who finds himself in the underworld along with several other characters, such as cynic philosophers, shoemakers, people whom he wronged, all waiting to cross the River of Styx. 'The Tyrant' has two parts; the first part is an adaptation of one of Lucian of Samosata's stories about Megapenthes, adapted to theatre, and the second part is a modern day section which features the writer and the villagers of a modern Samosata, now a Turkish town. Lucian himself also plays an important part in the play, as the modern author finds himself transported to his time and has chance to ask him some important questions regarding his time and his actions. The play's main themes include conflict between the rich and the poor, cynic philosophy and simple living, tyranny of those in power, superstitious beliefs, accountability and lack thereof, and the human condition.

**The play's message to the contemporary world**, I believe, is that oppression lives on if power is left unchecked to the hands of a single person, with no checks and balances, and it can be easily abused against the masses. The other message of the play to the world is that human rights and freedom of expression are so precious and fragile, as the play demonstrates, freedom of expression and being critical of certain religious beliefs were much more tolerated at the time of Lucian than in some traditional societies today. Finally, the play also sends the message that superstition or religious beliefs can live on across borders, cultures, generations and centuries, which makes it hard to criticize, as it has become a taboo.

## **A Short Bio of Dr Ismail Kaygusuz:**

**Dr Ismail Kaygusuz** is a British-Turkish playwright and novelist who specialises in Ancient History, Classical Archeology and Classical languages. He worked as a lecturer at Classical Archeology and Classical Philology departments at a number of universities in Turkey for nine years. He also took part at the Van-Urartu, Enez and Perge archeological excavations and wrote several research papers on these in national and international scientific journals. He also studied the language and epigraphy of Byzantium at 'Université de Nancy II' and 'Collège de France'.

Dr Kaygusuz moved to London in 1992 and he continues to live and produce his work here to this day. There are various theatre plays, novels and semi-biographical books to his name, along with several academic books on Heterodox Islam (Alevism), Sufism, gnostic beliefs and institutions, philosophy and history. He was born in 1944, in Arapkir, Turkey, at the village of Onar.

## **Some Background on Lucian of Samosata** (adapted from the Wikipedia article):

Lucian was a Syrian satirist who was known for his tongue-in-cheek style, as he often ridiculed superstition, religious practices, and belief in the paranormal in his works. Although he was of Assyrian origin, he wrote all his works in Greek.

Lucian was the son of a lower middle class family from the village of Samosata, the capital of the remote Roman province of [Commagene](#). As a young man, he was apprenticed to his uncle to become a

sculptor, but, after a failed attempt at sculpting, he ran away to pursue an education in Ionia. He became a travelling lecturer and visited universities throughout the [Roman Empire](#). After acquiring fame and wealth through his teaching, Lucian finally settled down in [Athens](#) for a decade, during which he wrote most of his extant works. In his old age, he was appointed as a highly-paid government official in [Egypt](#), after which point he disappears from the historical record.

Lucian's works were wildly popular in antiquity and more than eighty writings attributed to him have survived to the present day, a considerably higher quantity than for most other classical writers. His most famous work is [A True Story](#), a tongue-in-cheek satire against authors who tell incredible tales, which is regarded by some as the earliest known work of [science fiction](#). Lucian invented the genre of the comic dialogue, a parody of the traditional [Platonic dialogue](#).

# A TYRANT IN UNDERWORLD

## OR

# A DREAM OF HADES WITH LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA

*By İsmail Kaygusuz*

### **Cast of Prologue and Epilogue**

THE WRITER, a time traveller from the future

LUCIAN, a traveller from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, an Assyrian writer from Samosata

EPHIALTES, a childhood friend of LUCIAN

YUSUF, a childhood friend of the writer

### **Travellers of the Underworld and Mythological Personae**

KLOTHO: goddess of fate

KHARON: the boatman of the river Acheron, one of the openings into Hades. He takes travellers across with his boat when he is paid the necessary amount.

MENIPPOS: a cynic philosopher, living close to nature

HERMES: a multi-functional god who carries spirits to the underworld

KYNISKOS: another philosopher of the cynic school

MEGAPENTHES: Tyrannos, a despotic king, a dictatorial spirit

MYKILLOS: a shoemaker spirit, he makes and repairs shoes

RADAMANTHYS: the top judge of the underworld

TISIPHONE: daughter of ALKMAION and MANTO, the goddess who takes the spirits of the dead over from Hermes and brings them to justice, the avenger

MINOS: one of the judges of the underworld

SOSTRATOS: soul of a killer

## ACT I

### Prologue

#### Scene I

At a crossroads in the countryside, we see the writer with his backpack next to him, leaning on the poll of a road sign that reads '6 kms to ONAR VILLAGE roman rock tombs'. An afternoon towards the end of spring, around 4-5 pm. It is obvious that the writer is returning from a long journey. Although he looks very tired, his joy and happiness for having returned to his hometown is apparent on his face.

WRITER: *(he gets up, takes a deep breath, talks to himself as he looks around turning on his feet 360 degrees):* This district is known as Omerbeg; on the other side is Kepez reef, on my left hand side rises Mt. Gol. Exactly 50 years ago I used to herd the oxen my father had at the farm, with auntie Hachik's son Yusuf from our neighbourhood. My dad is just over there, and Yusuf's father is in Yigmaca, both ploughing the fields. After our fathers finished the ploughing and planting seeds at the furrow, we used to unite on the banks of this river with the oxen in front of us. What games we used to play, with stones we gathered from the fields, with sticks in our hands, while the animals were pasturing! Throwing-sticks-into-the-air game, toppling-stones *(trying to throw a stone at three or four small stones to topple them)* game, 'three-stones', 'ten-stones', and we used to make up games along the way until the evening!...It's been more than thirty years since the last time I saw my village. Let me sit in front of this sign; I will surely come across with one of the villagers before dusk, so we can go to the village together chatting. I hope one of the villagers of my own age turns up, since I can't recognise the youngsters. *(Sitting at the bottom of the sign, propels his back on the sign poll, stretching out his legs.)* I'm so exhausted! I'll just read my book a bit more. *(lying down, he pulls out a book from his backpack on his right).* LUCIAN of Samsat from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century is truly a very intelligent writer, he seems to have educated himself really well, and analysed all the knowledge, beliefs and philosophical strands of his time. These ironical, critical as well as easily intelligible dialogues cannot be written without deep knowledge of the Greek pantheon with its history, that is the world of the gods, as well as the philosophical strands and philosophers of his time. *(Skimming through the book)* Anyway, where was I? Menippos and Cerberus had finished their conversation, I had left at the dialogue between Menippos and boatman Kharon. I am more curious about 'Journey into Hades' (Kataplous). *(Silently begins reading the book. In only a few seconds, the book slips from his hands and the torn cover remains in his hand, he nods off and starts sleeping with a snore. The scene transitions to the realm of dreams.)*

## LIVING THE HISTORICAL IN THE REALM OF DREAMS

## SCENE 2

*The writer had started to relive the book he is reading in his dream. He finds himself sitting in front of a large milestone at a crossroads as a traveller from the future. On the milestone it is written in Greek (Α ΠΑΡΑΣΑΤΤΗ ΤΗ ΣΟΜΑΣΑΤΗ) and Latin (V MILIA A SAMOSATI) '1 Fersah (6 kms) to Samsat'.*

*The scenery in the background has changed.*

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE. *(Stands up in bewilderment, looks around. Reads the text on the milestone.)* Aha! This stone shows the way to Samosata. There is one 'fersah', that is, if I walk for 6 kms, I will be able to get there. But I am travelling to Melita. If I stop at Samsat, I wonder if I will be able to see LUCIAN? I wonder if he is still working in Antiokhia as a barrister? Or is he making money by following in the footsteps of the sophists, the wisdom philosophers, travelling the Empire visiting every city, giving speeches to the public? I am an admirer of LUCIAN, so I will walk another hour to try my chance. I can ask around in Samosata, maybe he is here to visit his family. At what date was this region annexed to the Roman Empire? Which year are they in now, in Samosata?

*(Right when he was finishing his 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence, LUCIAN of Samosata enters from the left with his weathered leather traveller's dress fashionable among the horsemen class, and a bag on his back full of books. There is a staff in his hand, almost as tall as his height, with a twisted top. Without being seen, he watches the traveller from the future in surprise from his back, mimicking the movements of this person whose appearance and behaviour do not match his time. He particularly feels a strong urge to touch him, and he holds back his hand twice after almost touching him.)*

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: *(He cannot hold back anymore, answers the question of the traveller from the future.)* Hey stranger, who are you? You aren't someone from these lands, are you? Everyone here knows that Samosata served as the capital of the Kommagene Kingdom for exactly 232 years. 71-72 AD are the years when it was annexed to the Roman Empire. The history of cities begin with their annexation to the Roman Empire; in Samosata the calendar shows the last quarter of the year 59 AD. In the capital, however, the Romans are living the year 160 AD, month of Maius (May), and they are in the 810<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of the city. I may be telling you things you had never heard before, but it is one of the duties of Sophists to inform the people, no matter which class they hail from...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE (WRITER): *(Listening to him with bewildered looks, stuttering)* I, I, I, I am a traveller from the future; I was going to my village, all of a sudden this milestone of Samosata appeared in front of me *(Looking at the cover of the book in his hand, with joy)* You look like the statue of LUCIAN of Samosata, on the cover, you must be him, I was reading your book...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: *(This time he answers with a surprised tone):* What are the talking about? What book cover? What kind of book cover is this? *(takes the torn cover from his hand)* So it's true, the likeness of my statue is on this cover...It even has my name written in Latin letters; who translated it without my knowledge? What type of parchment is this, so thin?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: *(Calms down, places his hand on LUCIAN's shoulder):* No, this is not a parchment, this is paper. Written in Latin letters, but not in the language of the Romans. Come on, let us sit here, both of us come from a long way, we are tired. Let us set aside our feelings of anger, fury and bewilderment and have a discussion. Let's assume I am Menippos, whom you had sent to the moon and the sun and forgotten him there. I have returned after 2000 years.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*They were sitting both leaning against the milestone*) But I had made him a traveller in an imaginary world; I had sent a boatful of people to the skies, on a journey to the stars.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: I am also in a realm of dreams now. I have read some of your books on my journey, I am a fan of yours. When I was reading, I dreamt of you and now you are here. I come from the future, 1850 years ahead of your time. I set out for Melita from the British Isles, half of which were conquered by Emperor Hadrian on his expedition against the Brigantes. Like you, I was also travelling to see the village I was born after 30 years. Can you guess how long it took me to travel here?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA (*now calm as well*): I went as far as Galia, I do not know what lies beyond...It must have taken you a good six months...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: You wouldn't believe me if I told you...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Nothing you say makes sense anyway. You look like a writer with a vast imagination like me. It was undoubtedly fictitious, a product of imagination, when I made Menippus fly like a bird and travel to the moon. I had written it to entertain the readers and forget their daily worries by plunging into the realm of fantasy. Surely this wasn't my only aim; I write so that people think, use their minds, learn lessons about life from my writings, also to urge them to dream, asking themselves, 'perhaps such things are also possible?'

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: You mean things like, flying like a bird, travelling to the moon?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Isn't it a nice feeling to be able to fly at least in your imagination?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Then, brace yourself: both of those things you wrote and wanted people to think about are real and ordinary things in the century I live in.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*jumps up with excitement*) You mean they can fly? Then can go to the moon and the stars?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: They fly with winged and un-winged vehicles, even faster than birds. They also sent men to the moon, and they sent unmanned vehicles to other stars. Be proud as you learn about these things, because you wrote about these dreams for the first time in the history of mankind and they became real.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA (*with glee*) Have you ever travelled on any of those winged vehicles, then?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: What, you think I travelled all the way from Britain with one of these horse chariots you ride on? You thought I travelled for 6 months, but I travelled only 6 hours to arrive at Malatya, what you call Melita.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: In 6 hours on a flying vehicle, unbelievable. How high do they fly?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: But it is doable now, the flying vehicles, planes that is, fly two and a half parasang high, that is, 15.000 meters in our modern reckoning. But let's talk about you now; when I saw the milestone I had this hope in me which made me think that I was definitely

going to meet you. Tell me, what are you doing here? Weren't you supposed to be in Athens now? You must be giving lectures to the public in the agora, and in the stoas (between pillars)...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*interrupts him*) Look at you now, coming 2000 years from the future, and meddling with my life. True, Until 3 months ago, I was giving lectures on philosophy of ethics and politics in Attica, Ionia and Aiolia. Just as you said, I was giving a talk between the stoas in Athens on the ethical behaviour of the times. Just in the middle of one of my talks, my hometown Samosata came to my mind, which I had not visited for 30 years, and realised how I missed it, I felt a lump in my throat, I could no longer speak.

I felt a deep longing for Samosata and my family. I was burning with an unquenchable longing.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: On the other hand, you had made a lot of money and became rich, but perhaps you were feeling guilty thinking about your family's poverty from your childhood days.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: You are right, it seems all these information from my life reached your century. These were emotions that I was feeling in my heart and was thinking about in my mind.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE :But those who read into the dialogues in your books more carefully can deduce these from the behaviours of the characters. While you were giving lessons of morality, your own unethical actions and carefree behaviour were disturbing your conscience.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA : True, I am extremely worried about my family and relatives, I haven't been hearing from them or the last 15 years, ever since I left my occupation as a lawyer in Antioch. Who knows who died and who lived on? I would like to take with me to Athens those who still live from my family. At least in their last days they could lead a comfortable life. With this aim I set out from Athens two months ago. From Smyrna (present day Izmir) to Psidia Antiokhia (Yalvac) I hired a four-horse chariot . From there to Seleukia (Silifke) I travelled with a horse accompanied by a local guide. From then on it took me no less than two weeks to arrive here through Tarsos...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Let me guess, you followed the route you had amateurishly taken when you had escaped Samsat at the age of 16-17, visiting the villages and towns you had visited along the way..

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Are you the Oracle of Claros Apollon, or what? How do you know all these? (*Epialtes enters from the right on a donkey*)

### SCENE 3

EPHIALTES, THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: (*approaching the two after getting off his donkey, carefully watching them, perplexed. LUCIAN and the traveller from the future also stand up.*) Hey you two! You're not from around here; where do you come from, and where are you going?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*looks at LUCIAN, waits for him to respond. But he was fixated on the man on a donkey, not blinking an eye*): In the villages of Melita where I am from, we have tradition. They don't just ask where they are from and where they are going, when they see a stranger!

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: (*shouting, swings his club in the air*) What do they ask then, where you come from, you stranger in strange clothes! You're not from Melita at all, they also dress like us.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: I am indeed from Melita, but I have lived in a foreign country for a long time; that is why my clothes are different from yours (*he understands that LUCIAN is trying to recognise the man by looking hard at him, so he keeps talking to give him some more time*). Where I come from, after asking ‘where you come from and where you are headed’ they ask, ‘are you hungry, are you thirsty, do you have a place to stay, stranger?’

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: How can I know you are a good man! Maybe you are a murderer, or a thief...(*disturbed by LUCIAN’ gaze, turns to him*) Why do you keep looking at me sneakily like a dirty gray snake covered in dust? Snakes ready to strike look like that. Stop or I will hit your head with my oaken club and smash it!

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*comes to himself, laughing*) Aren’t you Ephialtes? Hey Efi, don’t you recognise me, it’s Luki, runaway Luki, LUCIAN! You were a brawler too back then, but you always protected me from the onslaughts of the other boys.

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: (*first looks with suspicion, then after approaching him, embraces him, shouting*): Alright, now I have recognized you, from the mole hidden under your beard on your cheek. (*he lets go of the donkey’s leash, the traveller from the future gets hold of it*) wow, you look to have aged, Luki! It’s been 30 years. How did you recognise me?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*elated*) you haven’t changed much, and I have never forgotten your face anyway, Efi. You are the man who caused me to change my life. We used to sculpt rough stone together, you remember? We used to prepare the stone and then we’d give it to my uncle, who would turn it into a sculpture.

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: Your uncle had given you the job of chiselling a slab of marble for the sculpture of the newly appointed mayor of Smisata.. I had helped you without him noticing it. You know, I was almost finished with my apprenticeship...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: I don’t know how it happened, and what I was thinking, but with a wrong move the beautiful piece of marble was broken into two pieces. You know my uncle, he came towards me like an eagle and struck me with a slap.

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: If I hadn’t run after him and held him back, he was going to beat you like a pest. Because the mayor had already paid for the sculpture.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*turning towards the traveller from the future*) Ephialtes, this countryman of mine from Melita, is the person who weaves my fate, he is my very Moira.

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: Quiet, Luki! Don’t slander the goddess of fate; she can break the thread of your fate right away and send you to Hades!

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*disregards what is being said, keeps talking*) Not only did he protect me from my uncle, he also helped me escape. He had travelled to Tarsos to take their sheep there with his herdsman father; he knew the roads well. I knew how to read and write in Syriac, although I hadn’t finished school. I had a writing tablet with sealing wax, and he taught me to write and memorise all the villages and towns I needed to follow till Tarsos. I had even learned the Greek alphabet from him, I didn’t know the language but I could read the letters.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: It’s so good that you came across an old friend. You will never lose your way now. Hey, Ephialtes, I can’t keep your donkey down, he is so wild!

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: He grasped that you are a stranger, thought you would harm him (*holding the leash*) my donkey is well-behaved my friend. Luki, my dear, you left Smisata, travelled the world in 30 years, wrote books. They say you are even known in the imperial capital. What was the name of the current emperor?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Antoninus Pius!

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: That's him, now the regional governor he had appointed came all the way from Antiokhia (Antakya) in Kilikia to Samosata, just because you were born here. He visited your parents in their home. He is a fan of yours, read most of your books. I was there too, he praised you to the skies. The prominent people in the city were all in your house, we were all very proud. 'Ah!' said the governor, 'if only his verse were soft like the poems of the Latin poets, not so sharp-tongued.' Your father was alive back then, and he snapped to the governor. 'Just like his mother, she also stings me every day like a bumblebee with her sharp tongue.'

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*sad*) Doesn't my father live anymore? How about my mother?

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: Your father died two years ago. Your mother lives, and she is strong too. Since your father's death she has been talking about you ever since, saying, 'my Luki will come, and he will take me with him'. Both your sisters died when they were young girls.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: I had heard about them. How about my brother, is he married?

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: He's married, and has two young boys. He became a well known sculptor in the region. He built a house and bought vineyards and gardens, he is doing quite well. But they are angry at you, saying you don't ask for them or send any news.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: They're actually right, the language and culture of the Western cities have taken my mind, they estranged me from my roots.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Shall we take this as self-criticism? You mostly write about the West, that is, about Greek and Roman cultural sphere, beliefs and philosophy. You only have one book on the gods, religions and beliefs of the region...

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: You could at least write that in Syriac, your native tongue, then those who know little or no Greek could benefit from it. Why didn't you write about what's been happening in these parts, why?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Isn't Ephialtes right in what he says, Luki? This might confuse your friend a little bit, but a book on world history to be written by one Abul Faraj from 13<sup>th</sup> century in Syriac survived even to my time.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*without letting Ephialtes ask anything, who looks on surprised*) Syriac was the language of my childhood, I haven't been speaking it for 30 years, I am familiar with how its orthography either. But if I live in the region for a while, I made up my mind to acquire the writing rules of my mother tongue again, and I intend to write in Syriac or translate my works into Syriac. My books are now more than 50...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*while Ephialtes is looking for something in the saddlebag, without letting him hear*) You will keep writing at least another 30 books...but all of them will be in Greek...You know what? We are not able to do the same criticisms you did in your writings

regarding faiths, beliefs and gods. Let alone criticising majority religions, even pointing out mistakes and calling for change of outdated traditions are forbidden in our country.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*surprised*) How is this possible? Can such things even be considered in a society with a civilization level of such advanced technology and techniques? Who prevents you from this? Is it the governments? Are you being governed by tyranny?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: No, we live in a nominal democracy; a majority vote democracy! The head of government, who comes to power with the majority vote, exercises open and hidden pressure on those who did not vote for him. He does not shy away from imprisoning those who criticise his wrongdoings, his rule, his understanding of religion and beliefs. If you as a cynic thinker, who always used to talk about freedoms and equality, had lived in my time, you wouldn't be able to get out of jail. Because even the legal system looks at the final word to come out of the mouth of the head of government.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: This was called a tyranny in the ancient Greek city-states. The archon, after coming to power with the votes of the residents of the city, after a while, with the help of a handful of despotic ruffians discards the city and public councils and governs all by himself with force however he wishes. It seems tyranny that comes with elections was revamped in the 2000s once again!

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: (*intervenes*) Luki, you are having quite a conversation with your countryman from Melita. I work as a peddler in and around Smisata, which you call Samosata. I exchange textiles, various clothing items and cheap knickknacks with eggs, oil, cheese, fresh and dried vegetables and fruits from the villages. You both come from a long way—you must be exhausted and hungry. I took out a few boiled eggs, cheese, raisins and bread from the donkey's load; let me arrange a table for you here so that you can satisfy your hunger (*while saying these, he takes out a thick piece of cloth from the load and spreads it on the floor, and places the food in front of both travellers, who look on in silence and with perplexed looks*). If you feel thirsty, there is a cold spring 2 stadions away (360 meters) under a tree, you can drink from there. You can keep talking while you are eating and taking a rest. I will mount the donkey and be on my way now. Luki, I will give the glad tidings of your homecoming to your mother and will get my present. We will hire a pair of saddled horses with your brother and come galloping through the market.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*motioning before LUCIAN, who can't restrain himself from looking at Ephialtes perplexed*) You will no doubt shout at the top of your voice while galloping through the bazaar, saying, 'LUCIAN returned to Smisata!'

THE MAN WITH A DONKEY: (*riding on his donkey at speed*) We will do exactly that. Don't move an inch, in a few hours, people of Smisata will set off to welcome their countrymen (*Exits from the left side, the time travellers from another time look behind him for some time*).

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*talking to himself*) People of the Eastern countries are unlike any other; they are like a puzzle that is hard to solve, that hides many secrets in it. The guy was threatening us with a club at first, and then all of a sudden he became good-hearted, completely changing his personality; he spread a table in front of us and left. A Westerner? He never shows such behaviour. He would never compromise his rigidness. It is very hard for him to change his personality (*they eat their meals in the meantime*)

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: It is still like this; I haven't been able to tell whether this behaviour is virtuous or lacks virtue! But you also keep changing your personality as a sage-writer from the East; you were a sophist, then you became a quiet and patient stoic, and now you are a cynic, dog-like philosopher depending on nature, doubting, faithless, mocking and with a sharp tongue! (*laughing*) You have been living in the West for 30 years, but you are still an Easterner, you remained an Easterner...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA (*in a mocking tone*): You know a bit too much! Don't talk much and eat! You are bound for Melita; you are surely not coming with me to Samosata with this dress from the two thousands?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Now that I saw you, what business do I have in Samosata? Is this a dream or real? Anyway; I have to return to my real life, to the year two thousand thirteen. I have a final favour to ask from you dear LUCIAN.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Let me hear it! I will fulfil it whatever it is, so that I can be freed from you.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Can you tell me about that work of yours called *Kataplous or Tyrannos*, I'd like to hear it from you personally. I was just reading that part of the book I was holding; save me the trouble by recounting it to me.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*surprised, with a loud voice*) I have just finished writing that book; I didn't even get it published, how do you know about it? (*Slowly*) Right, since you are the traveller from the future, it's normal that you know. I left it with my publisher in Athens; he will have copies of it written by his scribes and will have it distributed. I have a copy of it in my bag...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*thrilled*) You can read it from your own copy...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Alright, bane of my life, I will do that after meal, and then discuss it. You can turn the dialogues into scenes in your mind. Then you will get the hell out of here before my fellow Samosatans arrive!.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*laughing out loud*) Now you started to show your canine teeth to me too, Luki! (*the scene changes with transition music*)

## **VOYAGE TO THE UNDERWORLD OR THE TYRANT**

**ΚΑΤΑΠΛΟΥΣ Η ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΣ**

**(KATAPLOUS H TYRANNOS)**

**Dialogues: Lucian of Samosata**

**Adaptation to theatre: Ismail Kaygusuz**

**RIVER AKHERON PIER**

## SCEEN 4

*Klotho and Kharon. A small ancient raft placed sideways on the stage is waiting to set sail with its open sails and long pole reaching the ceiling. The scene is that of a pier. The boatman of Hades, Kharon. with such an agility unexpected from his gigantic build empties all the water from the raft and ties the oars to their straps. Then he starts waiting by walking around the raft with heavy steps. There is a dim light on the stage, the beginning of dusk.*

*Goddess Klotho, who weaves the fates of mortal men, with her 'kirman' full of woven threads dangling from her belt, arrives with a black covered book in one hand, holding onto the thread with the other.*

KLOTHO: The great boatman of River Akheiron, whose muddy waters flow into Hades, seems to have been left unemployed at this hour of the day! Your customers, the souls who were handed over to Hermes by the life-taking Atrapos after cutting their life threads, are delayed..What's more, they're not as numerous as you'd expected them to be, you won't gain much obol (money) today.

KHARON: What're you talking about, Klotho? My raft is already ready, all prepared to set sail to the river. Look, I emptied the bilge, I set up the pole and unfolded the sails. I also fixed the oars to the straps one by one. So as you can see, I have nothing to hold me off from setting sail.

KLOTHO: Yes, there is something to hold you off, it's Hermes! If he doesn't turn up, you can't find anyone to carry to Hades.

KHARON: But why is Hermes late anyway? He should have been here already. As you can see there isn't a single passenger in the raft; we could have carried at least three groups today. It's already evening and I haven't earned a single obol \ penny. I'm sure Pluto, the god of the underworld will get angry with me, he will think I'm slacking. You are my witness; do I have anything to blame?

KLOTHO: I can testify that you have nothing to blame. That's Hermes, Zeus' emissary, who knows where he is.

KHARON: What if Hermes, the naughty errand boy drank from the spring of Lethe and forgot to come here?

KLOTHO: It's not gods and goddesses who drink from Lethe, it's the mortals, to forget about their worldly life.

KHARON: Then he is either on the loose with a goddess or drinking nectar while playing the khitar, having a jolly good time. Or maybe he is wrestling with youngsters, having taken the form of a human being.

KLOTHO: He really has all sorts of abilities!

KHARON: Maybe this evil deity is bent on stealing something. Because he is also good at thievery. Anyway, Hermes doesn't care about us at all, what he's doing is not right! Isn't it one of his duties to look after us and cooperate with us?

KLOTHO: We'd better not take this any further. Maybe he was on an important mission, how can we know? Perhaps Zeus, god of gods, sent him on a mission on a whim.

KHARON: You're right, but Klotho, you think he can just forget about his job? Have we ever kept him from leaving the underworld, for the upper world? But I can guess why he's not coming...

KLOTHO: Why?

KHARON: He's not coming because here, we don't have anything to eat or drink except drinks made of asphodelus and some cookies; he gets bored here in this foggy and dark place. In the skies it is so bright, and he's got enough ambrosia to eat, and enough nectar flowing to drink. He is having more fun up there.

KLOTHO: Stop getting angry now, Kharon, Hermes is not far off, he is coming with lots of dead souls just now.

KHARON: Where is he? (*looking to the right*) Now I see him. He's got them all together, goading them with his staff like a herd of goats.

KLOTHO: But what's that? (*looking in the same direction*) They seem to have tied one of the dead souls tightly, and one of them is laughing without end. One of them has a saddlebag on his arm, and a staff in the other hand, his eyes flashing like lightning.

KHARON: Look here Klotho, Hermes seems to have sweated a lot, his winged feet are very dusty, he's coming gasping for breath.

KLOTHO: I'll welcome Hermes, you take care of this canine guy (*Menippos enters from the left*)! (*Exists from the right*)

## SCENE 5

### MENIPPOS, KHARON

MENIPPOS (*Looking behind Klotho*): Klotho, who weaves the life threads of mortal men by fastening them to her kirman does not seem to like atheist cynics like me; she didn't even look at me. I had come on my own volition without waiting for Hermes to goad us, before everyone else, Kharon. Let's have a chat with you on the raft before the herd of Hermes is upon us. (*jumps on the raft quickly*) I'll just sit in a corner, will watch what's happening, and will laugh and have a jolly good time on my own (*bursts into laughter*)

KHARON: Such an impudent man, sitting in my raft without permission. Give me your fare.

MENIPPOS: Shout all you want, Kharon, we haven't even gotten to the other side yet.

KHARON: I charge those with no manners like you beforehand.

MENIPPOS: You can't get a single dime from me. What can you take from someone with nothing to his name?

KHARON: Is there anyone with nothing to their names?

MENIPPOS: I don't know about others, but I don't have a single penny. You're not gonna kill me, right? I'm already dead!

KHARON: You low life! For the love of Pluto-Hades, if you don't pay, I will strangle you.

MENIPPOS: If I hit you with my club, I can crack your head.

KHARON: I won't let you pass, ever.

MENIPPOS: Oh you won't? If you don't, I will go back. Klotho told you to attend to me. If she doesn't see me when she's back, she can sack you! Look I'll show you a way out—In a moment Hermes will be back with his group of dead souls, there will certainly be rich people among them. You can then take a few obols from one of them for me, and that's it.

KHARON: Among all those dead souls, you want to be the first to boast having crossed this swamp without paying a dime, eh? No way, no service is for free.

MENIPPOS: I am not asking to pass for free, either! I'm just saying I do not have any obol to pay you with. It's not like I wasn't going to die if I didn't have a penny. Until we get to the other side, I can do chores on your boat; I can clear the bilge from water, I can row the oars, and I won't disturb you like the rest of the dead by weeping and moaning. I can entertain you by laughing out loud. Isn't it a shame that all of these duties cost only one obol? You will then be indebted to me, and can take me on the boat back and forth a few times.

KHARON: Look at that! You are making it look like I am in debt to you already! No way, I won't move an inch if you don't pay me an obol – one penny.

MENIPPOS: Then I will return back to life again. I came without Hermes' knowledge anyway (*gets up, tries to get off the boat*).

KHARON: Such a clever dog you are! (*Interrupt him from getting off*) Klotho saw you, and you must already be listen in his list of the dead. I'm not going to be beaten by the judge of Hades because of you! Sit down and never get up again.

MENIPPOS: How boring you turned out to be.

KHARON: Open your sack, let me see what's inside.

MENIPPOS: I have lupines in there, you want to try one? Ah, there's also what we call 'Hekate dish', filth and shit...

KHARON: How on earth did I come across with this dog? Who is this! He has sharper teeth than the three headed hound of hell Cerberos. There he is, Hermes; I'll ask him once he's here, I will complain, too. I've never seen like it for the thousand years I have been conducting my duty as the boatman here.

MENIPPOS: You do not know who to allow on your boat, Kharon. I am a free man; and a care-free, completely independent one at that!

KHARON: Once I bring you to the other side, don't even dare to come to me again! If you dare to do just that, I won't care about any law or rule, and will drown you in this very swamp, and leave you here.

MENIPPOS: Once I get to the other side, you won't see me again. Out of question, my friend, what did Heracles say, 'you don't pass through the same muddy waters ever again!.' (*As he is laughing loudly, Hermes enters from the right side with Klotho, breathing heavily*)

## SCENE 6

### KLOTHO, KHARON, HERMES

KLOTHO: What's wrong, Hermes? What's your problem? You are out of breath and sweating all over.

KHARON' You look very angry as well. I am also very angry, because of this man.

HERMES: (*looking into the boat at the man*) This is the cynic philosopher Menippos-(*talks to him*)where were you man?! I visited your house made of woods from a few kegs, your body was starting to smell horribly, but your soul was nowhere to be found (*Menippos keeps laughin audibly, ignoring him, as he gets on the boat. Hermes, showing the man standing up, his hands and arms tightly bound with a strong rope from his hips to his shoulders*) That man is a thug, Klotho! I was almost going to become a fugitive in your eyes while trying to get hold of him!

KLOTHO : Then who is this thug? Why is he on the run?

HERMES: I'm sure he was on the run because he wants to live more. Seeing how he keeps weeping and moaning about the blissful life he lost when he died, he is either an oppressive king, or a dictator!

KLOTHO: Aha,look at that idiot! So he thinks he can still live even as his appointed life thread is all but finished?

KHARON: Was he running away for that reason? (*Hermes nods 'yes'*)

KLOTHO: (*showing the bulky kirman on her belt*) I tied here the threads I finished spinning of all the dead you brought, does this insolent dead wretch still think he can escape back?

HERMES: And what an escape that would be, Klotho! (*looking at the man with the staff behind the tied dead man*) This man you see with the staff, if he hadn't helped, if we hadn't tied his hands and arms after he was caught, he was almost going to make his way out and escape.

KLOTHO: Was he always like this?

HERMES: It all started when the life-taking god Atrapos brought him to me. His whole journey passed with him struggling and pulling back. He wasn't moving a single inch like a column, resisting. I brought him here with such hardship.

KLOTHO: How dare, he was resisting you?

HERMES: And how! He was even begging us to letting him go for a little bit lifetime offering us so many things. But I didn't give in. Finally we came to the gates of Hades.

KHARON AND KLOTHO: (*both together*) and then?

HERMES: Then I, as I always do, stopped to account to the daughter of Zeus, goddess Aiakos, the woman judge of the country of Hades. Just as we were comparing the list you, Klotho, and your sister Lethesis, had sent, with the people coming, putting them into order...

KLOTHO (*with curiosity*) what happened, was there a mistake in the list?

HERMES: No. Just as I was doing that, this insolent man escaped back without us noticing. As we were counting, one dead was missing. Aiokos frowned. (*imitating Aiakos*): ‘No, Hermes, you have no right to show your abilities in thievery everywhere; keep such jokes to yourself, try them in the heavens; in the realm of the dead, we don’t use trickery in our lists, nor do we hide anything. (*Kharon and Klotho nod together in confirmation*) As you can see in this list there are 1004 dead people listed, and yet you only brought 1003. This means that one is missing. If you are saying ‘life-taker Atropos made a wrong calculation, he deceived me’, then that’s a different matter.

KLOTHO: (*intervenues*) There is no mistake. Because I report the name of the person as soon as his life thread ends, and he then removes his soul from his skin immediately, he records everything to the smallest detail.

HERMES: That’s right. When Aiakos said these things, my face turned red from embarrassment. I quickly remembered what happened on the way and looked around. When I couldn’t see that insolent man, I realised that he had run away. I went after him with all my might and my winged feet. I followed the path that leads to the light by running and flying (*showing the man with the staff*) This man joined me out of his own volition, and both of us like runners heaving heavy ropes ran after him and caught him finally at Tainaros, one of the gates of Hades. He had made it that far, if we hadn’t caught up to him, he was almost going to return to earth to be resurrected.

KLOTHO: And we were just saying with Kharon, ‘Hermes has been slacking lately, he’s not thinking about us anymore’.

KHARON: What are we waiting for? Isn’t the time we have already lost enough?

KLOTHO: You’re right. Let the dead enter the boat. Kharon, first pull your boat to the hidden shadows behind the wall of the wharf. (*he pulls the boat and it disappears, we only see his head and arms. From the back, quiet moans, laughing and crying are heard, the sense of a crowd is given.*)

Let’s open our notebook and sit at the front of the wharf. I will ask, as I always do, who the passengers are, where they come from, and how and why they died. You take them onto the boat, and have the good and bad sit apart.

KHARON: (*turns his head, looks at the invisible crowd*) Will this crowd fit into the boat?

HERMES : (*answers with a laugh*) You make me laugh Kharon, you seem to have forgotten where you are, and what you have been doing for a thousand years. This is not the upper world, rather, it is the underworld, Hades. The passengers are the souls of men, they left their bodies up there, so they are as light as a feather, they are like air, they do not fill up any space; they are ghosts that are vaguely visible...

KLOTHO: That’s enough Hermes, let’s not waste time by giving lengthy answer to the unwitting questions of Kharon. Tell Kharon put newborn children who died at birth onto the boat first, what am I going to ask them anyway!

HERMES: Take these boatman. Including those found on the street, they count up to 300.

KHARON: Wow we’re blessed! You brought us some fresh ones!

HERMES: (*not answering Kharon, turning to Klotho*): With your permission Klotho, after the children, I will have the dead after whom no one cries on the boat.

KLOTHO: You mean the elderly? Okay, let them enter the boat. You over 60s, come over here. What now, they're not hearing me? Old age turned them into deaf men. Or, does that mean they have no strength to walk? Are we supposed to carry them onto the boat?

HERMES (*pretending to carry them all*) Oh no, take all of these too boatman, they are 398 in total, they are all soft as a feather, they are all ripe products, and collected on time!

KHARON: (*responds to the joke*) by Zeus, these are no different from dry raisins!

KLOTHO: After the elderly, put the injured ones on the boat Hermes! (*addressing the nominally injured*) Tell me now, what kind of death brought you here? But wait, I will look at my notebook instead of listening to all of you one by one (*looking at his records*). Yesterday, 804 warriors were to die at the war in Media. Gobares, the son of heroic Oxyartes, was among them.

HERMES: They are almost all here, on the boat now.

KLOTHO: Seven of the dead killed themselves for love. By the way, where is philosopher Theagenes, who killed himself for a prostitute from Megara?

HERMES: They are all here, in front of you, if you look down you will see them.

KLOTHO: Now bring those coming from the courts, I mean those who were killed by crucifixion or by beating with the rattan stick. Also, there were going to be sixteen people killed by bandits, where are they Hermes?

HERMES: they are right here, look. They stand before you with their injuries. Shall I bring the women as well? (*Looking down from the wall, he makes a signal to call them*)

KLOTHO: Of course, bring them. (*looking at the notebook while seated, then looking towards the moaning voices*) Where is Kyniskos the philosopher? He was to die from poisoning, after eating a Hekate dish made from filth, left at the road side, and eating a squid afterwards; hasn't he arrived yet?

## SCENE 7

*Characters from the previous scene, including Kyniskos and Tyrant Megapenthes. Unlike Hermes who is constantly in motion, Megapenthes lies on the ground, his hands tied to a thick rope, and a bizarre looking old man stands over him, waiting with his club in his hand. When he is called, he motions and shouts. Startled, Klotho enters.*

KYNISKOS: (*like they are old friend, in an unceremonious way*) I have been here for a long time, my dear Klotho. What sin did I have that you have made me live in that awful world! You have spun a very long thread for me it seems. I have tried to break it so many times, but haven't managed to come here.

KLOTHO (*laughing*): I wanted to you save people around you from their mistakes, so I kept you alive. Get on the boat now.

KYNISKOS: No, I'm not getting on there before Hermes puts that man on the boat, the one whose hands are tied. I fear that he might deceive you with his constant begging.

KLOTHO: Let's see who this is. (*gets down from where she was sitting and looks around*)

HERMES: (*raises the man from the ground, and brings him in front of Klotho*) Megapenthes, so of Lakydes; they say he is a king who usurped the throne forcefully by deceiving the public and having their support. They call him the tyrant, or dictator!

KLOTHO (*harshly*) Onto the boat, now!

MEGAPENTHES: (*gently*) O great goddess, our fair princess Klotho! I don't want to embark just now, let me go back to earth for a moment, I promise I will return on my own will!

KLOTHO: (*the others laugh without showing it to Klotho*) Now why should I set you free?

MEGAPENTHES: Let me go so that I can finish constructing my palace, white as milk; only half of it is done, I don't want to leave it like that. Let me build a huge bridge over the sea; let me also build a modern city in Trakhia. So that my people can travel to this city over the bridge!

KLOTHO: You talk nonsense! Just get on the boat already!

MEGAPENTHES: (*tries to tone down his requests*) I'm not asking much from you, just a moment Moira, my beautiful goddess of fate! Let me stay on earth for another day! So that I can tell my wife the treasures I left behind; so that I can show him the place I buried my great treasure! So that she can do what I wished to do!

KLOTHO: No way, your fate was destined and written in this black covered book; it doesn't change, you can't get anything from me.

MEGAPENTHES: Are you saying that much gold should amount to nothing?

KLOTHO (*looking at the book of destiny*) Don't worry, it won't amount to nothing. Megakles, your uncle's son, will find it.

MEGAPENTHES: Woe is me! My treasure will be found by my own enemy! Now that I am dead, my hands are tied; I can do nothing. O supreme goddess, untie my hands at least, so that I can stand on my feet comfortably, and explain myself to you easier. (*Hermes and Kyniskos make a head motion meaning 'no' to Klotho*)

KLOTHO: Untie him Kyniskos, because he tired Hermes down, he fears that the man is going to run away. Be confident, he can't escape anywhere here. If he attempts to run, I have Cerberos, I will whistle to the three-headed hound of Hell, to catch and cut him into pieces! So even the soul of his dead body will perish. Now tell me, explain yourself to your heart's content.

MEGAPENTHES (*his hands untied, comfortably*): May Zeus be pleased with you, o Goddess! That man you mentioned was my enemy; but because I was belittling him, I ignored him and did not have him killed. So he is to find my great treasure after all?

KLOTHO: That's right. He will live another 40 years after your death, and all your odalisks, your clothes even all your gold will be his.

MEGAPENTHES: Is it justice, to give all my property to my enemies, o Klotho?

KLOTHO: How about you, Megapenthes? Didn't you take them over from the previous ruler? You had killed him, and before his corpse had turned cold, you brought his children and had them strangled, did you forget that? His spirit wasn't as yet brought to Hermes by Atrapos, as he was

waiting at the corpse's side. Even the soul-taker god was rendered helpless, watching what you had done.

MEGAPENTHES: True, but all that property was mine from then on.

KLOTHO: You had your enjoyment with them, now your time is up.

MEGAPENTHES (*approaching Klotho, in sotto voce*) Listen, Klotho, I want to talk to you one on one. (*gently pushing Kyniskos and Hermes*) Could you please leave us for a moment? Klotho, if you let me go, I will give you 1000 golden pieces in total (talanton), you will receive them all today.

KLOTHO: Poor, crazy man! Are you still thinking of gold and talanton? (*a bit angry*) Take this man away, it seems he won't get on the boat on his own hill, put him on there forcefully!

MEGAPENTHES: (*while Hermes and Kyniskos drag him to the wall behind the wharf, he shouts in resistance*) You are all witnesses: both the castle and the ship wharf I was constructing for my subjects are both left unfinished. If I had live only another five days, I could have finished them!

KLOTHO: Do not worry, another person will come and finish them.

MEGAPENTHES: (*they stop dragging him*) You can't say no to what I have to say now. You will find me in the right, too.

KLOTHO: Then tell us, what is it?

MEGAPENTHES: Great goddess, fair goddess! Let me go, so that I can take Bithynians (in the Marmara region) and Pontians (Black Sea coast) into my dominion. Then I can extort a tribute from the Thracians. In the meantime, I will connect Pontika (Black Sea) to the Aegean by bypassing Marmara by opening a channel. Then I will have a mausoleum built in my name like a palace, and will have them write and paint scenes from my famous deeds and heroism.

KLOTHO: (*mockingly*) well, you're not asking for a day or two, you're asking for 20 years, at the very least.

MEGAPENTHES: If my promise to return soon isn't enough, I can leave someone as a hostage. If you like, you can take two of my most favourite odalisks as hostage until I return.

KLOTHO: You low life! Is there anything else that you wouldn't do?

MEGAPENTHES: (*helpless, as his wishes aren't accepted, begging on his knees*) Oh goddess of fate Moira! I have another request from you, please do not say no to that.

KLOTHO: Tell me then, what is it?

MEGAPENTHES: What will happen to my country after I die? That's what I'd like to know.

KLOTHO: I can say that much, but it will break you all the same. Your slave, Midas, will take your wife. He's been with her for a long time, anyway.

MEGAPENTHES: And there I was, giving him his freedom after my wife begged me for it!

KLOTHO: Your daughter will be one of the odalisks of the new tyrant. All of your statues will be destroyed, both the broken statues and your reliefs on memorial walls will be the ridicules of the people.

MEGAPENTHES: Isn't there a single one of my old friends protesting against these insults to me?

KLOTHO: Have you ever had a friend? And why should they befriend you anyway? Don't you know? Those who were worshipping you and those who pledged allegiance to you, those who clapped at your every word, were only those who feared you or those who expected to gain something from you. They only loved your power and strength, and adjusted themselves to the times.

MEGAPENTHES: But at ceremonies, when offerings were being made to the gods, they were all praying loudly for me, asking blessings for me, and were pledging allegiance. In fact, each one of them were ready to give their lives for me...

KLOTHO: (*mocking him*) They loved you so much, and that's why you died when having a meal in the house of one of them! You remember the last wine they offered you? That's what brought you here.

MEGAPENTHES: It sure had a sour taste, that's why...But why did my friend do this to me?

KLOTHO: Enough, you asked too many questions, time is ripe, get on the boat now. It's time for you to stand and be judged.

MEGAPENTHES: (*keeps threatening, as if he is still alive*) None dare question and judge a powerful king, a tyrant!

KLOTHO: True, no one can dare question a king in the mortal realm, but here, Radamanthys questions each dead soul and judges them. You will soon see his level of justice, and how he gives everyone what they deserve. No more waiting, it's time.

MEGAPENTHES: (*keeps begging*) You, goddess of fate Moira! If you like, don't make me a king again, make me an ordinary man, or a slave, but let me live.

KLOTHO: Hermes, hold this man by the legs, get help from the guy with the club, it's clear he's not going on the boat himself!

HERMES: Come with us, you filthy fugitive! (*walking to the wharf*) Take this boatman, now that I think of it, to make absolutely sure, we can...

KLOTHO: Don't you worry, we will bind him to the mast.

MEGAPENTHES: (*proudly, still deeming himself to be a tyrannos*) I will at least be seated at the seat of honour, at the front like a true king, right?

KLOTHO: And why would we do that?

MEGAPENTHES: Because I was a king, a ruler. I had ten thousand soldiers guarding me, that's why.

KLOTHO: (*turning to the others*) Wait and taste the club of the cynic Kyniskos here, and then you will know whether being a tyrant and oppressing people is a sweet or bitter experience. You will know, then.

MEGAPENTHES: What, a cynic philosopher is raising a club against me, huh? How dare! Didn't I have you crucified just a day ago, for criticizing rudely everything and everyone?

KLOTHO: So now we are crucifying you at the mast! (*With Hermes' sign, the cynic philosopher hits the king with his club on the back. He drags the king to the boat and shoemaker Mikyllos enters.*)

## SCENE 8

MIKYLLOS and the rest of the cast from the previous scene

MIKYLLOS: Hey Klotho! Why aren't you looking at me? Is it because I'm poor? Is that the reason why you have me enter the boat the last?

KLOTHO: Who are you?

MIKYLLOS: I'm Mikyllos, the shoemaker.

KLOTHO: Are you pissed that you turned out to be the last, huh, Mikyllos? Didn't you hear what dictator Megapenthes said? He was offering us so many things to let him go, even for an instant. It strikes me as odd that you aren't happy that we let you be on your own for a little while more.

MIKYLLOS: Listen to what I have to say then, best of the Moiras! Why should I care, when Cyclops the one-eyed giant gave the promise to eat the one man called '(No)One'? Why should I be happy, to be the first, or the last? It's the same mouth and the same teeth that is going to chew and devour us'. My lifestyle wasn't like the life of the rich anyway, in fact, how do they put it, it was the exact opposite. We led such lives.

KLOTHO (*with Hermes next to her*) What do you mean? Can you do a comparison?

MIKYLLOS: For instance, that dictator over there could be said to be happy in his life. Everyone feared him, and all eyes were on him. He left behind all his gold and silver, all his money and clothes, his pretty boys and fair ladies, his horses and his lavish festivals; this mustn't be easy, it is understandable if he is mourning for leaving behind such pleasures! I don't know how it happens, but the soul can be enamoured with such things like a moth is attracted to the fire; and after being together with such pleasures for such a long time, he can't part with them easily. Better put, those pleasures become like chains for that person, chains that he finds very hard to break away from.

HERMES: Mikyllos the shoemaker, you speak as if you tasted such pleasures.

KLOTHO (*looking towards Hermes*) No, Hermes, according to my notebook, Mikyllos dreamt of experiencing such pleasures all his life. He always envied those who experienced them, and became one with them in his imagination, then after putting his mind into it and focusing his senses, he is naturally now able to tell us these things as if he lived them.

MIKYLLOS: At any rate, when someone tastes those pleasure even once, then when he loses them, he starts shouting, begging and crying. Even those who are known to be fearless, when they set out for Hades, they become scared. For this reason, they keep looking back, like lovers who haven't been able to reach their beloved, they wish to see the light of the world once again. The fool who was trying to escape just a moment ago, and disturbing you with his begging just now, is no different.

HERMES : Klotho, what Mikyllos is saying makes perfect sense. Wouldn't it be better if he talked about himself a little, too? (*Klotho nods in the affirmative and signals Mikyllos to continue*)

MIKYLLOS: I never had anything in my life. I neither had a field, a house, golden plates, nor a tree planted in my name. I didn't make it to any high position, nor did I attain any glory. I have never had any statues built for me either. I was surely already ready to come here. Just as I saw Soul reaper Atropos make a hand gesture, I threw the shoe and the blade I was using, stood up and followed him, neither wearing any shoes, nor cleaning the paint. Truth be told, I walked in front of everyone just like that, looking in front of me.

KLOTHO: Truly, except for a few cases of suicide, it is rare to find someone who joins the trip to Hades with the soul reaper Atropos' faintest of signals.

HERMES: And I was wondering all along why you were looking in front of you. Ever since Atropos handed the dead souls to me, you've never looked back.

MIKYLLOS: (*laughing*) I didn't leave behind anything that would call me back, or cause me look back, that's why! By Zeus, I will tell you this much, as much as I have seen, the circumstances here are to my liking; everyone is equal, no one is privileged, I like that. I think in this underworld no one is going to come up to me to pay up my debts, and no one can turn another into a slave if the debt isn't paid, nor should there be any taxes. It is not attested that one would die from the cold in winter, nor are there anyone who fall ill, or is beaten up to a pulp by his masters; I am sure one would be able to rest his mind here. What's more, here in this world, unlike the earthly realm, the ones who owned nothing are the ones who can smile, and the rich are the ones who cry and weep constantly.

KLOTHO: Why, I see you keep smiling and laughing Mikyllos. Any reason for your constant happiness?

MIKYLLOS: Oh Klotho, whom I love and respect the most among goddesses! Listen to me well. When I was in the upper world, I used to live close to this oppressive king; I used to see what was going on in the palace and therefore I used to imagine this man to be like a god. His bright clothes, his army of followers, his gold, his silver inlaid saddles for his royal horses, his bedsteads with golden legs, his gilded armchairs had dazzled me so much that I was of the impression that he was a very happy man. When I used to smell the food that was prepared for him I would burn with envy. When he used to walk pompously, with his head upright and his eyes looking down on everyone, I would consider him to be higher than anyone; for me, he would surpass anyone I knew! But when he died and was stripped from all those valuables, I realised he was a man to be ridiculed. It turns out I was amazed by this lowly man; I used to imagine him to be happy when I smelled the food cooked for him in his kitchen, and I used to envy him for the shellfishes brought to him from Laconia. It seems I was so laughable, too!

HERMES: So you only laugh at dictator Megapenthes and yourself, eh?

MIKYLLOS: No, I'm not laughing at myself and Megapenthes only, no way! Gnyphon the pawnbroker was also laughable, too; he used to weep, moaning that he couldn't taste the joys of being rich in his life! All that belonged to him was inherited by Rodokhares, a spendthrift man, because he was the closest kin. When I remembered how Gnyphon lived, I couldn't resist laughing out loud. His skin looked lifeless, and he used to walk around in shabby clothes; he was in such a sorrowful state. Ha ha haa! Is there anything better to laugh at, than this? (*the wall curtain slowly opens in the middle, Kharon and his boat appears, with Megapenthes tied to the mast. Sounds of crying and moaning heard, which do not interfere with the dialogues.*)

## ACT II

## SCENE I

*We return to the beginning scenes of the dream. Lucian stands before the milestone, with a parchment of Kataplous in his hands. The Traveller from the Future enters, with a middle sized waterskin on his shoulder.*

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: The spring was close, it seems; you came back quickly. I was truly thirsty, but if you hadn't warned me I wasn't going to stop reading, I was so immersed in it.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: *(takes the waterskin off his shoulder and passes it to Lucian)* Take it, drink as much as you like. The spring was indeed close, it's not even two stadions away. Because there is the hill in between, it's not seen from here.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: *(hands the waterskin back, and the traveller places it next to the tablecloth)* May Zeus and Hercules help you! You have quenched my thirst. May the Father and the Son protect you from all kinds of evil, my travelling friend.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: *(laughing out loud)* So you're invoking the Father and Son for me, huh? You should have called on Hermes too while you're at it, Luki!

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: *(not making sense of his laughter)* Why are you laughing? I only wished you well, I called on the gods for help...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Anyone hearing you praying like this will think that you are a Christian, and you will be in trouble for being taken as a member of this forbidden belief! Thank goodness Ephialtes wasn't with us!

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Why should I be taken as a Christian? I expressed my views on this new religion in a few sentences in my book *Death of Peregrinos*.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Maybe you didn't know, but if you use the term 'Father and Son' separately, it looks like you are making the prayer of a religious Christian. The founder and propagator of this religion is Jesus Christ, Christ is therefore the son of the God born from a woman named Mary.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: That's right, I had heard these. If it had occurred to me then, I would have made this comparison when I wrote about this Christos the Sophist from Nazareth crucified for bringing a new religion to the Roman Empire. Christos' birth is similar to the birth of Hercules, both have their father as God, and their mothers are human. It seems just as Zeus, the head of the gods, became enamoured with the Mycenaean king's daughter Alkmene, and appeared to her in the form of her husband Amphitryon, the God of the Christians took on the form of Joseph the carpenter and impregnated Mary!

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: That is, a direct copy of a mythological incident. The only difference is the roots of the husband and wife: the mother of Hercules is the daughter of a king and she is also the wife of a king, while the mother of Christos, Mary, is a servant of the temple, who was dedicated to a Syrian God at a young age, as she is also the wife of Joseph, a poor carpenter.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: I had friends at Antiokhia of Pissidia and Perge city on the Mediterranean coast, and I used to join their secret meetings by changing my clothes to match theirs, to learn about the new religion.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: What were your impressions, then? You had mentioned you had written about the religion of the Christ..

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: I hadn't given his name in my book; it turns out this Christ was a sophist who was trying to inform the general public by wandering around and giving lectures. He was then crucified for being against the polytheistic official religion of the state, and for doing the propaganda of a new religion. Christians still worship him. Because the wandering preachers of this religion has convinced them that all those who give up worshipping the Greek gods and worship the crucified sophist and live by his teachings are all brothers and sisters. These poor, unhappy people were made to believe that they are immortal, therefore they don't fear death and submit themselves to this religion willingly. Also, they are against possessing personal properties without any exceptions, he blames all those who own possessions. And people accept these without asking for any proofs, based solely on belief. It is to such extent that someone who is shrewd and lack a conscience can fool them easily to become rich in a short time by joining their ranks. True equality only exists in the afterlife.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: You discuss these in some detail in all the dialogues you had written regarding the underworld and Hades. You evaluate this new religious movement from the perspective of established beliefs and practices. You see the Christ as a sophist and a travelling teacher imparting wisdom. However, you were also doing the same thing for money as an old sophist. You sell your knowledge in the agoras and between columns. The Christ, on the other hand, had taken on the responsibility of his mission of spreading his teachings without asking anything from people. 'Love each other. All of you are brothers and sisters. In the sight of God, all of you are equal.'

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Yes, they talk about 'love', 'equality' and 'brotherhood', but how are you going to sustain the rest? How are you going to change a life style shaped by the pressures of Latin-Greek cultural and military dominance, In a society where inequality is the norm and where there are masters and slaves? What's more, it's impossible to change the current world order with the Christ's pacifist philosophy, as he adds to his words these: 'But I tell you, don't resist him who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.'

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Even if we think that true equality only exists in the afterlife, it doesn't mean that we can't establish equality here in this life, too. You had through that the current world order cannot be changed, but let me inform you: despite the full force of Roman cultural and military might, the spread of this religion couldn't be stopped. In four centuries, the beliefs and life style of this society changed completely, which you had deemed to be 'immutable'. In my time, almost half of the world' population consists of the followers of the Christ.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*surprised*) Incredible! Are you also of that same religion?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: No. Another great world religion is Islam of Muhammed. Both of them are monotheistic faiths. In our society, we only have one God, Allah, instead of many gods.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: So as I understand you belong to the religion of Islam. When did that faith come about? Can you explain what monotheistic religion means?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: The religion of Muhammed, Islam, came about six centuries after the Christ. Allah is the Creator of everything, the universe, and all that is animate and inanimate. He is One and has no peer, He is the creator, not created, nor born from a mother and father. He controls the universe, and humans are His servants. He is the creator, we are the created.

We are considered to be his creation; why are you so surprised, looking shocked? Isn't the mythological worldview of your time which necessitates belief in dozens of gods more implausible and shocking?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: I was already mocking and criticizing Greek mythology and its gods because I wouldn't embrace it, please don't be offended but, I think your belief in one God is more nonsensical than that!

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*looks around*) shush, someone can hear us! What am I saying? For a moment I thought I was in my own time period. Then, why do you think monotheistic religions are nonsensical?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*laughs out loud*) What kind of religion is this? You fear saying a single word against it! Our gods and goddesses are at least like humans; they have fun, they drink, they get married and have children, sometimes they get naughty and they cheat on their husbands and wives, they change their form and walk among us sometimes, and they also have fights and then make peace like humans. And when it comes to us, we can criticise whichever we want and worship the one we choose. Clearly you know our history quite well, you should know that each settlement had its own single guardian deity as a tradition; therefore this is a sort of monotheism that they had!...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: You're right—as an archaeologist and an epigrapher I saw examples of this many a time; Artemis Pergaia, Artemis Ephesia, Zeus Kimitenos. Artemis Kratiane...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*sure of himself*) Our dozens of gods, as they govern this world and the next, make countless mistakes and therefore we don't shy away from criticizing them. Now tell me, o traveller who claims to have come from the future, how can your one God, Allah, can govern the universe, the world and the afterlife singlehandedly and properly?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Monotheistic religions prohibit such questioning from the very start. They command us to worship only one creator, to worship Him through some special body movements and to obey rules and regulations he put into place...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: That's shocking to say the least.. (*continues from where he left off*) As you know, mythologies define our belief system. Some believe that Zeus sits on Mt Olympus, and according to others his throne is on the farthest edge of the Milky Way, and he governs all our gods and goddesses who control the upper world and the underworld, and the powers of nature, mountains and sea. When Zeus decides on something regarding world's order or to punish someone, he convenes with the other gods and goddesses as part of the assembly of gods and puts forward his proposals; and then they discuss them and come to some decisions. But it seems a single god governs this world and the next through oppression like a tyrant, a dictator...

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: What are you saying! Dear Lucian, the mythological gods that the Greeks appropriated and developed are the gods of the Hittites, Egyptians and the Mesopotamian peoples who live a thousand years before your time, with their number lessened and with their names changed. The Hittites had a thousand gods; their chief god was Tarhunna, he was the god of thunder and storms, and he became Zeus; to give another example, Telipinu, the goddess of nature, became Demeter and changed her gender. The Egyptian god Toth, the god of wisdom, writing and order, joined with Ea, the Hittite goddess with the same functions, and became Hermes.

The moon goddess of the Hittites, Nikkal, and the moon god Khonsu of the Egyptians, transformed into Selene. Egyptian, Hittite and Babylonian mythologies were appropriated into Greek mythology. Where do you think the mythological themes came from in *Theogony*, penned by Hesiod, who lived 700-800 years before your time?

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: You are right, the same goes for Syrian gods, they arrived at our coasts as a result of the transformation process of Mesopotamia-Babylonian religion. I explained this in my book *Epi Thea Syria* ('On the Syrian Goddess'). Now I have a question for you; regarding what you read in my book *Kataplus* regarding Hades, do you have comparable things regarding the afterlife in the religion of Islam that you belong to?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: I was about to tell you that in a moment. You are going to be very surprised to hear the similarities I am going to tell you about. But first I have to say, I am really curious about what kind of punishment awaits the tyrant king Megapenthes, so I don't want to prolong our conversation anymore..

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Okay, then tell me quickly, who took on the responsibility of the soul reaper Atropos, who cuts people's life threads and hands their souls to Hermes?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Azrael, the Angel of Death has the exact same role. He follows the list provided to him by two angels called Kiramen Katibin. These two angels record the good and bad deeds of each individual that they did throughout their lives in the 'Book of Deeds'. Their fates and how they will apparently die are all predetermined. Azrael brings the souls of the dead to the graves where the bodies of the dead are buried and hands the souls to two angels that wait for the souls, namely Munkar and Nakir. And these two angels of afterlife interrogate the souls according to the lists of deeds and names. As you can see, the souls do not arrive to Hades all together like a hoard, but the bridge can get real crowded...

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Oh wow! These are all copies of the gods and goddesses we have, such as the goddesses of fate the Moires, Klotho, Lakheisis and the soul reaper Atropos, as well as the judges of Hades Aiakos, Minos, Radamanthys. Our chief god Zeus appointed each god and goddess to do a different duty, he sometimes supervises them, sometimes rewards and even punishes them. These angels that you speak of, are they the children of your God?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: In our religion, Allah is beyond any imperfection. He has no partner, wife or children. Those who think like this commit an unforgivable sin, they commit what we call 'shirk', therefore they are unbelievers. It is believed that God Almighty created angels from light and humans from mud (*Lucian is bewildered, but he is not given a chance to speak*) Therefore the angels aren't God's children, they are, so to speak, His workers, His helpers unseen by humans.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Then why do you call it monotheistic, if God has helpers?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*unable to say anything*) Don't ask too many questions; angels do not have godly powers and attributes.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*in distress*) Okay, I am just listening. But I really wonder, do these angels have families, do they have husbands, wives, mistresses or children?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: No. Unlike your goddesses, these do not have human qualities, and they do not have godly qualities either, therefore they are creatures without human

behaviour and characteristics. Their number is unknown, and they are divided into a few classes based on their duties.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: So they are indeed like are demi-gods, the big and the small!

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: You're so fixated on establishing some sort of similarity! At least listen to me, I will summarise it all. Angels only spend their time on worshipping God, praising and glorifying Him. Angels also keep the order in the universe, and follow the orders of God to maintain this order in the world and the hereafter, applying the laws of God. Thirdly, there are angels who are concerned with humans directly. The first four of angels are considered archangels. Gabriel brings God's revelations and message to Prophets sent by God, and all these revelations were brought together in a holy book called the Qur'an, shaped in the mind of Muhammed as a set of rules through the revelations he received from God. Michael the angel arranges the shares and livelihoods of each individual throughout their life, therefore he establishes whether God's servants will be poor, middle class or wealthy. The other two archangels are previously mentioned Azrael and Israfel. These are angels related to death and resurrection, but the last one does not have a counterpart in Greek mythology. I have already mentioned the angels of interrogation and angels that record deeds.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: And how! You were saying God governs the world and everything by himself, but as it looks He would really be in a quandary if he didn't get the help of angels! (*laughs out loud*). Then who assigns the life spans of people; who weaves the thread of life? I didn't understand that part.

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: This is the job of God alone. All the deeds of man are recorded in the Preserved Tablet with Him, as He assigned people's fates, whether good or bad. Humans cannot escape what is written for them in the tablet. As I said before, the angels of interrogation and recording are assigned to this duty, they do their jobs through commands from God. The symbolic act of 'weaving and cutting' the life thread doesn't exist in our faith, but as a common faith and a possible remnant from your belief, we use the phrase, 'our lives and fates are tied to a thread of cotton' quite often in our language.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: You had mentioned a bridge at one point. Where is this bridge? Who can and cannot cross it?

THE TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Yes, we have a bridge that doesn't exist in your underworld. Instead of Akheiron, Styx and Lethe, rivers that allow for passing into the world of Hades from the upper world, we only have the Sirat bridge. After an interrogation in the grave, every soul has to pass the bridge, that's why it can become quite crowded. This bridge is thinner than a strand of hair, and sharper than a sword. Those who don't believe in God those who don't obey God's commands and who weren't good servants won't be able to cross this bridge. Those who were not good servants cannot pass the bridge, rather, they fall into the corresponding layer they deserve of the seven layered Hell, and there, among the flames, receive their punishment in cauldrons of boiling tar.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Are witnesses also heard during interrogation?

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Witnesses, such as the body organs of the person, or sometimes the things the person used to use in his worldly life, give testimony for or against the person. These witnesses either affirm or disapprove the answers given by the spirit of the dead person. Those who are able to pass the bridge are those for whom witnesses testified that they are good people.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Where do they go afterwards? To Heaven, apparently!

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Exactly. For the ones who pass the bridge, one of the eight gates of Heaven open for them according to their ranks, and the gate keeper of Heaven, Ridwan, welcomes them and places them in their level of Heaven. The gatekeepers of Hell, on the other hand, are Zebanis, ogres with blackened faces with maces in their hands. Their job is to send back those who try to escape Hell by hitting them on their heads with their maces.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Our gatekeeper is the three-headed Cerberos, thanks to it, not even a fly can escape Hell. According to our beliefs regarding the afterlife, renowned people who are loved by the public, heroes, very handsome men and most fair ladies enter Heaven. To be with them is a great privilege and reward for the spirits of the dead. What does your Heaven have to give to the good as reward?

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: You tell me what isn't there! There's nothing that doesn't exist in Heaven. Those who go to Heaven are given countless rewards. Freshwater rivers and rivers of wine, milk and honey flow in Heaven. Its glorious mansions have countless rooms with carpets and windows with silk curtains and pillows—and its palaces are full of young maidens with blossoming breasts called Huris, and full of handsome young men called Gilmans. In these mansions, women and men who enter Heaven entertain themselves with seventy gilmans and seventy huris respectively. All those who enter heaven can eat and drink whatever their hearts desire. For the rich, this world is a type of Paradise, so they enjoy themselves here, the poor, on the other hand, spend their whole lives worshipping God, praying to Him and fasting for Him, all the while longing for Heaven..

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*Sad and with a sullen face*) How fascinating is your religion and your Heaven...and how! I will none of it, you can have all of it, its God, Prophet, its Heaven and Hell! That's enough, don't tell me the rest. Woe to you! It's not enough that you copied all this nonsense from us, it seems you have also added to it. You have progressed in the sciences so much that you fly in the skies and land vehicles on the stars; and yet you are also mixed with illogical beliefs and superstitions, I fail to understand this. I wrote *Kataplous* to demonstrate to people that there cannot be such a life for spirits under the ground, and to show them the nonsensical belief of a life after death, to enable people to think and use their reasoning. My countrymen, Samosatans, will be here soon; see the dust rising from the hill over there? They're coming! (*They look towards the audience, they gaze, shielding their eyebrows with their hands*) There is very little left to read, it won't take long; you'd said you were a writer; maybe you can write something similar after being inspired by it, or you may adapt what I wrote to your time! (*opens the scroll in his hand, the stage darkens.*)

(Lucian's *Kataplous or Tyrannos* dialogues continued)

## ON KHARON'S BOAT

### SCENE 2

*Everyone is on the boat except for Mykillos. Klotho, Kharon, Hermes, Kyniskos, the spirits of the dead are not seen but their moans are heard.*

KLOTHO: Come on Mykillos, get on the boat so that we can set sail.

KHARON: (*Mykillos approaches the boat laughing*) Where are you going? The boat is full. Stay here for now; tomorrow morning I can take you to cross the river to the other side.

MYKILLOS: Is it fair to leave behind a dead man starting to rot and smell, Kharon? You'll see what happens when I complain about you to the great judge Radamanthys for not following the laws of Hades! See what they're doing! (*the boat leaves slowly*) They are leaving me here on my own; even in the underworld they do not respect a poor man like me! Can I perhaps catch up to them if I swam? (*rolling up his sleeves, pretends to enter the river*) I'm a dead man already, no point in worrying about drowning, right? I don't have a penny to give to the boatman, anyway.

KLOTHO (*concerned*): What are you doing, Mykillos, wait! It's not allowed to cross the river swimming.

MYKILLOS: (*ignoring him*) I don't care! I might even reach the other shore before you.

KLOTHO (*furious, addressing Kharon, who started to row*) Kharon, stop the boat, let's take Mykillos on the boat, he's going to cause us serious trouble. Hermes, help him get on the boat.

KHARON: (*insisting*) Then where are we going to have him sit, Klotho? We're fully packed, as you can see.

HERMES: (*holding Mykillos, pulling him onto the boat*) If everyone agrees, we can have him travel on tyrant Megapenthes' back.

KLOTHO: Brilliant idea, Hermes.

KHARON: Get on the boat and sit on the shoulders of this treacherous man; but step on his neck well! Let us set off then! Safe journey everyone! (*Mykillos sits on Tyrannos' shoulders. Amongst a blue hued smoke, the boat moves. In the background, the moans of the spirit of the dead, the laughing of Mykillos, and the sounds of Kharon's rowing are heard*)

KYNISKOS (*exclaims all of a sudden*) Kharon, I'll say it now so that you don't tell me I tricked you later on; don't ever expect me to pay you an obolos once you get to the other shore. I've never had in my life anything other than my staff in my hand and my saddlebag. Before Atropos handed me over to Hermes, I neither had anyone to put an obol in my pocket to give to you, nor did I have a stash of money in one of the branches of the oak tree trunk I used to live in, so that someone finding it could put it in my pocket. But if you ask me to take a bucket and throw the water welling in the boat, or help with rowing, I am ready as ever, I wouldn't mind. Give me an oar fit for my hand, you will see, you'll never complain.

KHARON: Alright then, there's an extra oar, take it, won't take money from you then. There's another one like you, sitting on the corner just like that (*he points at Menippos, Menippos raises his hand without looking at them*)

KYNISKOS: Can I sing a tune, or a folk song, while rowing?

KHARON: If you know a good seafarer's song, sing it, that would be nice, we can entertain ourselves.

KYNISKOS: Not just one, I know many tunes Kharon, but your passengers keep moaning, I might miss a lyric or two. Listen to this one! (*sings a Black Sea folk song, but confuses the lyrics in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza, stops singing*)

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD: (*various voices heard*) woe is me, my goods! My harvest is incomplete! Aah! How beautiful were my houses and my dwellings! They all belong to strangers now! Ah my new born! They're orphaned now, ah! I wonder who is going to eat the produce of the grape vines I had planted last year?...

HERMES: What about you Mykillos? Don't you have anything to weep for? Even if you don't, weep, because it is a tradition, everyone weeps while crossing this river.

MIKYLLOS: Why should I be sad? I don't have anything to miss, why should I weep and moan? We're crossing the river so well, in fact, I can now do the unimaginable, I am travelling on the shoulders of tyrant Megapenthes, haha!

HERMES: Please don't laugh, you moan too, so that things go according to tradition.

MYKILLOS: I will do so, if you so wish, Hermes: Woe is me, where are my leathers! Where are my spoiled goods! Woe, to my rotten sandals! Woe is me! (*stops moaning for a while*) I will longer go hungry and thirsty from morn till evening! Even in winter, I won't have to go about bare-footed or walk around in rags! Who will inherit my bodkin and my blade, ah! (*moaning heard for a while, unintelligible words*)

HERMES (*shouts*) Enough! Enough weeping. The journey is already over, we have arrived on the other shore. (*sound of rowing stops*)

KHARON: Come on now, before you disembark, pay what is due for the boatman, we didn't row for nothing! Mykillos, come now, give me my one penny.

MYKILLOS: I see you want to laugh, Kharon, asking money from me and writing on water is one and the same thing. Ask me first: what you call a 'penny', is it rectangular shaped or is it circular? Do I know that? (*others laugh as he gets off the shoulders of Tyrannos*) In fact, I didn't take space on your boat! I came with Megapenthes; I was a part of him, so if you wish, you can take two pence from him; one for me, hahaha!

KHARON: I couldn't get anything from Menippos and Kyniskos either, it seems we've had a profitable day today..Get off now y'all, I will now go back and bring dead horses, dogs, cows and other animals. Pity them, they also deserve to cross the river, they don't deserve rotting between the world and the underworld!

MEGAPENTHES: (*Kharon unties the rope binding him to the mast, his eyes bright, whispers with joy*) Dear Kharon, please don't be sad for not being able to take any payment from some, bring me back; so that I can pay the obolos that Mykillos owes you, and I will also pay you gold talanton in exchange for the pennies you received from these passengers.

KLOTHO: Hermes, Megapenthes started talking nonsense again. He proposes to bribe Kharon to deceive him. Take these spirits of the dead and go! I will return to the other shore with Kharon. Two great land owners from the border, they are also waiting there, there was no space for them left on the boat. They had killed each other regarding a land dispute, it's them. I will bring them with the animals... (*Klotho and Kharon return with the boat, the scene blackens*)

## **ARRIVAL IN THE LAND OF DARKNESS AND THE JUDGMENT STARTS**

### SCENE 3

*In The Court Sale of Underworld; Radamanthys the judge, Hermes, Kyniskos, Mykillos, Megapenthes, sitting on his seat, Tisiphone the goddess holding a torch*

HERMES: (*addressing the goddess with the torch*) Take these off of me, Tisiphone; they are one thousand and four souls in total. There's also Kyniskos the cynic philosopher, who came before me.

TISIPHONE: (*pointing at Radamanthys sitting on his seat*) Radamanthys has been waiting for you for a long time, you are late.

RADAMANTHYS: Bring those who have been handed over to you, oh Tisiphone. Hermes, you call them by name one by one.

KYNISKOS: (*interrupts*) for love of Zeus, Radamanthys, please call me first.

RADAMANTHYS: And why is that?

KYNISKOS: To testify. A tyrant has been brought here. I know all his crimes and I want to recount them to you one by one. But if I don't introduce myself first and tell you how I lived, what is the value of my testimony?

RADAMANTHYS: Who are you, then?

KYNISKOS: They call me Kyniskos, oh just judge! If you ask me what I think and what I do, then let me tell you: I am a cynic philosopher who lives in accordance with nature.

RADAMANTHYS: If that is so, come, let me judge you first. Hermes, call those who can tell us the crimes of Kyniskos.

HERMES: (*shouts*) If there is anyone who observed one of Kyniskos' crimes or has witnessed him committing it, come forward to bear witness!

MENIPPOS: I have, and I will witness. (*loudly, with his right hand raised*) As someone with the same profession, and as somebody who sees his life as mine, Kyniskos has done no crime. One who has held no possessions in his life can have no crime either. Those who have property and riches commit crimes, oh just judge!

RADAMANTHYS: Keep your cynic philosophy to yourself, Menippos. If you are so attached to Kyniskos, I cannot accept your testimony. Is there anyone else to witness? (*no one raises a voice*)

KYNISKOS: No one is stepping forward.

RADAMANTHYS; But that's not enough, Kyniskos. Now take off your clothes so that I can see your blemishes.

KYNISKOS: Do I have blemishes?

RADAMANTHYS: Every sin and crime a man commits during his life leaves invisible blemishes on his soul. Only we can see them.

KYNISKOS: (*takes off clothes*) I have taken my clothes, I am undressed now, look, can you see any blemishes?

RADAMANTHYS: (*checks Kyniskos' nude body*) If we don't count these, three or four small blemishes, you are unblemished and clean. What is this? There seem to be a few burnt areas and blemishes but they have apparently been erased; how could this be? Or more likely they have been removed. How did this happen, Kyniskos? How were you cleansed like this?

KYNISKOS: Let me tell you; in the past I was an uneducated, ignorant man, therefore I followed evil paths and attained many a blemish in this way. But after studying philosophy, slowly I cleansed my soul from those blemishes.

RADAMANTHYS: The medicine this man uses seems to be a good and effective one.

MENIPPOS (*interrupts*) You see now? And here you were, ridiculing my philosophy, looking down on it!

RADAMANTHYS: (*with a threatening tone*) We will talk to you when your turn comes! (*to Kyniskos*) Now go to the Island of Happiness, Elysium and mix with the blessed ones. You will sit with the good there, but before then, you must bear testimony for the tyrant you talked about. Hermes, call the others and put them in a queue. And have some of them stand in line before Minos the judge.

MYKILLOS: (*interrupts, undressed*) My trial is easy too, Radamanthys, it will be resolved quickly. Look, I am already undressed, you can see if I have any blemishes.

RADAMANTHYS: Who are you?

MYKILLOS: Shoe repairer, shoemaker Mikyllos.

RADAMANTHYS: (*turns him around to check him*) Very well, Mikyllos, you are also completely clean, no blemishes. You go and sit with Mikyllos, too. Hermes, now tell this tyrant to come.

HERMES: Megapenthes, son of Lakydes, come forward! Where are you going? Come over here, I'm telling you, I'm calling you dictator Megapenthes! Tisiphone, grab him by the neck and drag him to the centre.

TISIPHONE (*does what she is told*) I have brought him, Hermes.

RADAMANTHYS: Kyniskos, tell us all you know, the criminal is here.

KYNISKOS; If you can tell whatever he did by looking at his blemishes, I could even sit down and remain quiet. But I will explain nonetheless, what I can tell can expose him even better. This lowly creature, before he got the reins, things he did when he was just an ordinary man like us, I will leave those things aside.

RADAMANTHYS: You mean he committed lots of evil deeds, committed crimes before even becoming a dictator?

KYNISKOS: However, later on, he got together with the most despotic, bravest bullies ever known and after finding several helpers and obtaining control of the country, he got ten thousand people butchered without any court hearing, and usurped their properties. Once he became so wealthy, he committed all kinds of heinous sins, kept oppressing and persecuting his people, dishonoured the chastity of young women, seduced young men, and did every evil a drunkard could do to people around him. He used to look down on those he came across with such contempt and vehemence that whatever punishment you give to him would not do it justice. To understand that what I have told you are not a lie or smearing, just call those whom he got killed. I am one of them; he got me crucified. Look, they are already here, their hands on his neck. (*from his behaviour and pantomime gestures, it can be deduced that Megapenthes, standing next to Hermes, is being disturbed by invisible spirits*). All these men, Radamanthys, were victims to this man's lack of a sense of justice, some of them fell to his trap because their wives were beautiful; some were killed because they couldn't stand witnessing their sons being taken to be raped. Some died for being rich, and some for not nodding yes to everything he said. (*he stops talking all of a sudden, the speaks with a different tone*) Esteemed Judge Radamanthys! I can see that there is another hearing going on ahead, your fellow judge Minos is judging someone. Let me go and observe, I have heard a familiar name. I know Sostratos, the thug being judged. I would to learn his punishment. Sostratos is a bloodthirsty killer, but such a cunning man! You can listen to other testimonies in the mean time; if needed, I can come back and stand in testimony for the tyrant Megapenthes. (*Radamanthys nods, allows him to go, and Kyniskos goes and follows the trial of Sostratos, judged by Minos*)

#### SCENE 4

*The judge Minos, Sostratos, audience, Kyniskos and Hermes*

MINOS: (*angrily shouts*) Bring that thug, Sostratos, and throw him into the depths of Pyriphlegethon (Hell), so that the monster Chimera tears him to shreds. Or let him lie next to Titos the giant so that vultures gnaw at his liver. Make sure these are done, Hermes. (*to the spirits previously judged, to unseen another*) you good people, go to the gardens of Elysium (Heaven); in return for the good deeds you have done on earth live among the happy in the island of happiness.

SOSTRATOS: Just Judge, please listen to me, you may find what I have to say to be correct.

MINOS: Why should I listen? Did you not accept that you are an evil man, that you killed many an innocent soul?

SOSTRATOR: Yes, I was evil, but listen and see if the punishment you think I deserve is justifiable.

MINOS: The punishment you deserve is just and necessary.

SOSTRATOS: I would say, listen to me at least first and find your own answer, esteemed judge, I will not speak very long.

MINOS: Alright, speak; but keep it short, I have the other spirits to judge waiting in line.

SOSTRATOS: Did I commit the evil I committed on earth of my own volition, or did I do all that because Moira Klotho has woven my fate in that way?

MINOS: It was because Moira has woven it that way, of course!

SOSTRATOS: Then, aren't we, both good and evil, all under the command of Moira?

MINOS: That's correct; Klotho determines everyone's luck and lives ever since their birth, and weaves their life thread.

SOSTRATOS: Then if a soldier or an executioner kills a man by the orders of the king or a judge, who do you find guilty, the sword?

MINOS: No doubt it is the judge or the king who is guilty; no way we'd find the sword guilty. The sword is just a tool in the hand of the executioner or the soldier, just as the executioner or the soldier is but a tool in the hands of the king or the judge.

SOSTRATOS: Very well said, esteemed judge, you have even gone further than me. Let me ask you one more thing; a man sends money to another through his slave, and the slave brings it. Then who is the one who has done good; the one carrying the money to the recipient or the one who gave it in the first place?

MINOS: Undoubtedly it is the one who gives the money in the first place, because the one who carries it is just a tool.

SOSTRATOS: If that is the case, then, judge Minos, aren't you committing an injustice by punishing us for doing the things that Klotho had determined for us by weaving our life thread, or rewarding some of us for being a tool in the hands of Klotho? Surely you cannot claim that we can go against our predetermined fate?

MINOS: (*looks around confused, his eyes meet Kyniskos*) Ah Sostratos; if you look a bit closer, you can find so many similar inconsistencies and illogical things. By asking these to me you only earned one thing; we will no longer just call you a thug, but we will also see you as a talkative quibbler. Untie him, Hermes! The punishment he received until now must be enough for him. (*while Hermes unties him*) But be careful, Sostratos; do not ever teach such things to the other dead spirits!

## **THE PUNISHMENT GIVEN TO DICTATOR MEGAPENTHES**

### **SCENE 5**

*The scene returns to the scene of judge Radamanthys. Kyniskos and the other previous characters.*

RADAMANTHYS (*to Megapenthes*): You have heard everything that Kyniskos and the others have said against you, what are you going to say about them, you lowlife?

MEGAPENTHES: It is true that I have killed and have ordered to be killed many men, but I did not commit some of the crimes that Kyniskos has recounted. It is a lie that I have deceived women and violated young boys and girls.

KYNISKOS: Everything I said is true Radamanthys, I can bring a witness to all of them!

RADAMANTHYS: Who are the witnesses, bring them forward!

KYNISKOS: Hermes, summon the bed and the lamp of this man, so that they can testify for the crimes committed on them and in front of them.

HERMES (*shouts*) Megapenthes' bed and lamp, come forward! (*after this command, a bed and an oil lamp is lowered from above, in front of the judge*)

MEGAPENTHES: Now tell us what Megapenthes has done, bed, you speak first!

BED: All that Kyniskos has said is true, esteemed judge; I cannot bring myself to recount them all; things that he committed on me were such abominable and shameful things.

RADAMANTHYS: You cannot bring yourself to tell the details, but even this much is enough leaves no doubts. Lamp, it's your turn now.

LAMP: I don't know what he was up to during the day, as I didn't see them and I wasn't with him. But what he did during the night, and what he allowed to be done, I feel ashamed to tell them. I have seen such lowly things; they can cause you to get goosebumps, so I cannot bring myself to tell them. How many times have I wished not to drink any more oil so that I can be put off, but every time he would fill oil into me and kindle my wick, and he used to bring me close to his obscene deeds, and by doing so he used to pollute my light.

RADAMANTHYS: Enough witnesses! (*to Megapenthes*) now you, take off your shiny clothes, so that we can see your blemishes. (*Megapenthes undresses*) By the great gods! The man's body is full of blemishes, it's become purple with sin from top to bottom! What kind of punishment shall we give to him? Shall we throw him into the depths of Hell, so that he burns, or shall we give him to the three-headed Cerberos, so that it tears him to shreds?

KYNISKOS: Neither this nor that; if you allow me; after listening to Sostratos' defense against judge Minos' judgment, I will suggest a new punishment for him; may his soul experience this torture forever! This is better fitting for the sins this man committed.

RADAMANTHYS: Do tell me, I will be glad, I hope it's a very intense punishment!

KYNISKOS: It is a tradition for all dead spirits to drink from the Lethe river, isn't that true?

RADAMANTHYS: That's right, all of them drink from it and forget about all that they experience in the upper world.

KYNISKOS: Don't let this man to drink from it; don't let him drink from Lethe, may this be your punishment.

RADAMANTHYS: Why is that?

KYNISKOS: Don't let him drink, so that he never forgets his status and power during his time on earth, and he never forgets the pleasures he experienced and the comfortable life he had, so that he suffers with longing for all of them; this would be a fitting punishment for him.

RADAMANTHYS: Well said, Kyniskos, let us give him this punishment. Let him be taken and tied to Tantalos. Don't let him drink a single drop from the river Lethe. So that he can never forget what he had during his life; his pleasures, his riches, his palace and his treasures; and may he moan forever with longing for them! (*the scene changes, it returns anew to the crossroads, to the dialogue in front of the millstone*)

## SCENE 6

*Lucian, the traveller of the past, and the writer from the future. Approaching sounds and noises of a crowd, sounds of footsteps of animals and men, and sounds of drums and horns.*

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: (*takes a deep breath*) *Kataplous or Tyrannos* has come to an end here. You were really curious about the punishment Megapenthes the tyrant was going to receive; how did you find it? Those welcoming me from Samosata will be appearing up on this hill any minute, they are fast approaching. If you have things to say, say them quick, and get out of this dream world!

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: (*baffled, tries to come to himself*) After listening to the defense of Sostratos and Kyniskos, I found their suggestion for the judge's decision to be very befitting.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Especially after the testimony of the bed and the lamp...

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: If only the judgment lasted longer... Then what Sostratos said to judge Simon would have reached the other spirits of the dead, and eventually would have reached Megapenthes' ears, and then he could have held the goddesses of fate responsible for all the crimes, oppression and sins he committed. So the judge could give him a much reduced sentence, since despite the testimonies he takes the defence as the basis for his judgment.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: With the inconsistency and paradox in the defence of Sostratos, I wanted to criticise and place an emphasis on the nonsensical belief that the goddesses of fate determine the lives of people either before or right after their birth. Doesn't your God do the same thing?

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: Don't make me talk about these things anymore; I am not as free as you. I'll tell you anyway: what's more, in Islam, 'believing in fate, that all things, good or bad, come from God' is one of the tenets of faith. Thankfully, the gnostics of the faith have protested, saying, 'God does not make it a human's fate to commit crimes and evil; God does not both determine a servant's evil deeds and then punishes him for it. Therefore, only good things are written in the stars for the individual, his bad deeds are committed of the servant's own will' Orthodox religious scholars and interpreters of the holy book soften this creed with the concepts of 'God's higher will' and 'a person's free will'.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: Both are nonsense; don't try to defend them to me with verbose abstractions! Just tell me whether you found the punishment befitting or not; then begone! (*the noise of approaching footsteps becomes louder*)

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: It is befitting that he was placed next to Tantalos who is punished with endless thirst and hunger in the bottom of hell.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: As you know, Tantalos was Zeus' son. He was honoured by being invited to the table of the gods; he was offered the food and drink of gods (ambrosia and nectar). Then he became greedy and stole some of them and brought it to earth. Thus he breached divine laws and failed to protect his honour and gave in to his pride. His punishment was very severe as you said, he was succumbed into the water at the bottom of Tartaros, or as you say, Hell, with only his head outside the water, with fruit trees hanging over his head with branches full of ripe fruits, he was left to feel extreme thirst and hunger; whenever he feels thirsty and tries to drink from the water, the water around him subsides, and whenever he reaches to the fruit tree's branches the tree branches are raised higher and further away from him. So Tantalos cannot reach either forever.

TRAVELLER FROM THE FUTURE: But I think Megapenthes should be buried in reeking mud rather than water like him. There, his heart will burn with the longing of the worldly pleasures he left behind forever.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA: This is a better suggestion, but let me change the wording; instead of mud, let him enter one of those burning cauldrons you had mentioned with all his body burning in it, therefore his outer body burn with the burning tar in the cauldron while he can burn with longing for all things he can never forget in his heart...

*(the noises and voices come ever closer to disturb the ears, then everything becomes quiet and the lights are turned off. When the lights come back on, we see the author sleeping under the sign of the first scene, but this time there is another man with a donkey next to him. A silent play takes place between them for a few minutes as if observed from afar: the villager with the donkey wakes the traveller up by pushing him with his staff. The writer looks around, baffled. The man with the donkey asks through mimics and hand gestures where he was coming from. With hand gestures, the writer tells him that he knows him and that they are childhood friends. Then they hug each other. Then the villager with the donkey has the writer climb onto his donkey and rides both of them to the village, thus they leave the scene. The play can either end this way, or it can be continued with the Epilogue below)*

## **EPILOGUE**

### **THE DREAM WORLD COMES TO AN END**

*When the lights come back on, we return to the first scene and see the writer under the sign at the crossroads moving about in his sleep, unconsciously move his feet and say unintelligible things in his sleep. Above him there is the man with the donkey holding a leash in one hand and with his other hand pushing the author with his staff. The man with the donkey and the author.*

AUTHOR: *(rises up right after the man with the donkey pushes him with his staff, still dreaming)* is it you, my fellow countryman Ephialtes, are you alone? Where are the Samosatans, coming with all that noise? Did they take Lucian away? *(the man with the donkey keeps pushing with his staff)* My countryman, it's you who should speak, not your staff; *(looks around)* where is everyone?

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: What are you babbling 'bout, man? What Faltes? Who's this Lusyan? Wake up, come to your senses. This ain't Samsat or Samsata, this here is the land of the village of Onar.

AUTHOR: (*comes to himself, rubs his eyes with the bewilderment of having woken up from his strange dream. He sits up and looks more closely to the man in front of him*) You look like someone I know, but I can't tell exactly who... Whose family are you from old man?

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: 'Old man' my ass! You tell me first, who are you? Are you a man or an evil spirit? Are you a friend or an enemy? You're dressed up nothing like someone from around here, you're clearly an outsider.

AUTHOR (*remembers the questions of Ephialtes in his dream, smiles*) I'm neither an evil spirit, nor a demon, but a man who has come from far away.

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: Whatcha lookin' for here, then? You waitin' for some taxi? I saw you right there at the top of Yaylabashi hill, getting' off a minibus. You placed your back on the poll of the sign, and sat down right there. The sun was above Gol The mount, the height of a table, and you were already lying down on the dirt just like that. I kept my eyes on you from afar, I was plannin' to go through Kemer while grazin' my donkey, an' I only came this way for you. I told to myself, this strange man will fall asleep here, yesterday shepherds saw a wolf between the stones in Kepez right ahead of us, an' I said, 'the wolf will tear the man into shreds while he sleeps'. See, the sun is down, it's nary pitch dark, I said to myself, even if the wolf doesn't turn up, the poor guy can't find the way to the village in this darkness. (*towards the writer, who listens to him without blinking*) Why ya lookin' at me like that, you didn't like how I'm dressed, huh? Tell me who you are, right now! (*raising his staff*) 'Cause if you don't, I can pierce your brain with this my staff!

AUTHOR: (*laughing, starts talking with the local village accent*) Now I know ya. We were, like, ten or eleven years old, an' you used to teach me shameful things near the creek up ahead, an' when I couldn't do the things that you were tellin' me, you had said just like now, 'I will pierce your brain with me staff! Ain't you Yusup, son of my auntie Hacchik, from our neighbourhood? That right? I got you, right?

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: (*baffled, puts down the staff he had raised to the air*) That's right, you got me, but I still have no idea who you are.

AUTHOR (*stands before him*) Don't ya remember, like, at all? 'Twas the same season, towards the end of summer, your pop was plougin' in Yigmaca, an' my pop was ploughin' here, in Omerbeg. When they were done with ploughin' at noon time, you'd goaded the oxen from Yigmaca, me from Omerbeg, we'd arrived together at the creek of Delali, to graze'em. 'Member now? We'd played so many games, till evenin'!

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: Aha! Now I remember! (*cheerful*) It's you! You're Ismo, son of my auntie Fidan! So it's you, my old friend, my shepherd friend, no? (*He throws the leash and the staff in his hands and they hug each other*) Screw you, man, Ismo, I was almost going to pierce your brains for real!

WRITER : Yusup, you've grown up, but you're still swearin' like in the ole days, stop this bad habit, man!

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: (*laughing and taking back his leash and his staff*) If the bad habits could be stopped, everyone would either be Ali or a saint, I'd say! You must know betta' than me, you're a lettered man, like our elders say: 'even the spirit leaves the body, but habits remain' You didn't use to like swearin' much when you were small anyway, when we used to even swear to the oxen in front of us, you used to throw stones and sticks at us, 'member?

WRITER: 'Course I remember, but you're not a little boy anymore, you've got kids and grandkids, at least don't swear 'round them, is all I'm sayin'. See, you even grew a big belly, the thin, small Yusup is long gone; but your bleary eyes an' your voice hasn't changed a tiny bit. I recognised you from those, but if you hadn't said 'I'll pierce your brain', I wasn't going to call you Yusup!

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: Ismo, you have changed as much, too! If I saw you somewhere else, I couldn't tell it's you anyway. It's been fifty five years since I saw you, they say you came to the village some thirty years ago with your students, I wasn't there then. I used to hear that you had become a stranger in the land of strangers, but turns out you're still Ismo, my auntie Fidan's son. They say you've written many books, have become a writer. They also say you put all the old secrets of the village in your books, everyone's gettin' secretly angry with you, just thought I'd say it to your face.

WRITER: (while he's talking, the writer remembers that in his dream; Ephialtes says the opposite to Lucian: 'at least you could write that book in your mother tongue, Syriac, so that those who knows little or no Greek could understand and benefit from it. Why didn't you write at least a little bit about what's going on in this part of the world?' (*His thoughts are voiced in the background*) Look at the his paradox: While Ephialtes expresses the anger of Samosatans to Lucian for not writing about Samosatans and their beliefs, Yusuf tells me about the anger of the villagers of Onar for writing about them .

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: You're silent all of a sudden, like you're blameworthy, huh! Did things people did in the village's past bother you that much? Are you the advocate of those whom they offended or something?

WRITER: Can such a thing be, Yusup my friend! I couldn't praise the things my villagers did together enough, I sang the praises of their friendship, their love and affection, I introduced them to the world. I wrote about the sufferings during the times of martial law, I wrote about the exploitation of the urban masters who exploited the village, the hardship of ploughing and shepherding days, I also wrote about our now-forgotten worship ritual of Cem, the ways of our beautiful belief, and I wrote about our ancestors in my book *Savaşlı Yıllar* (Years of War). So what's wrong with writing about the mistakes, things that shouldn't have been done, in a few pages? So what? Should I have said, things that had happened in every corner, hadn't happened in our village? Those ill-intentioned people who only read those pages but not read the whole novel instigate my villagers towards me!

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY (*listens with interest, nods his head*): Exactly, Ismo! I couldn't read myself, 'cause my eyes have poor sight, I asked the teacher, and some educated

ones in the village, an' they'd said even more than what you've just said. An' I said to them: Ismo is my childhood friend, he wrote too little in those few pages, if you ask me the things he wrote in a few pages it can become a huge book!

WRITER: (*slapping him on the waist*) Yusup, you naughty pig! You talked like that you make me speak, right?

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: Course, what did ya think? I wanted to hear it from you, too. Don't you know, they call us the villagers with sandals. In our childhood, we nicked so many sandals! (*they laugh together*) Enough talking, let me take your bag and hang it over the saddle here (*does what he said*). You get on the donkey too, so that we can go to the village. Don't tell me you forgot how to ride a donkey!

WRITER: Do you remember, you used to say, 'Instead of making fun o' me, make fun o' your own ass!' Why should I forget it? I just want to go on foot, for thirty years my feet didn't touch the soil, if I could, I would go barefooted till we get to the village.

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: (*laughs out loud, and pulls the leash of the donkey*) Then walk, be quick! I know you're hungry and thirsty, as long as you're in the village, you're my guest, no protesting, or I will pierce your brain with my staff, come on!

WRITER (*excited*) But you didn't ask, Mr Yusuf, at what time those men lived.

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: I don't care when they lived! (*hesitates*) Okay, then tell me, when did this Lukyunus, you call the writer, live? (*the writer remains quiet*) Just tell me now, why, are you waiting for me to pay you?

WRITER: (*hesitant*) You know the rock graves of the Romans in front of our village?

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: You mean the caves we used to play in when we were kids, and performed folk dances boys and girls together during festivities? Thirty years ago, when you wrote that the twenty caves in front of our village are actually rock graves, the villagers had become angry, and had said, 'the guy calls our caves graves, our kids can't even pass by the caves now out of fear', they used to talk like this behind your back.

WRITER: I also heard that, I know, and there were even some who told it to my face like you. Now this Lucian, who was reading his book to me in my dream, was living at the time when these rock graves were built, that is, about a thousand and eight hundred or nine hundred years ago! (*stops and waits for his reaction*)

YUSUF, THE MAN WITH THE DONKEY: (*for a moment he pushes the donkey with his staff, shouting 'chooo!', and then his face takes on a serious tone*) By God, my aunty Fidan's son Ismo, are you mad, or possessed?! (*the writer laughs slyly because he was expecting this reaction, then they both exit*)

**THE CURTAIN CLOSES,**

**THE END**

İsmail Kaygusuz Londra, 31.01.2014

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