



# *The Outcast*

# *The Outcast*

dramatization of Joseph Conrad's second novel

by Christian Lanciai (2007)

*The characters:*

Vinck  
Cornelius  
Hudig  
Captain Tom Lingard  
Peter Willems  
Joanna, his wife  
Leonard, her brother  
Kaspar Almayer  
Aïssa  
Blind Omar, her father  
Babalatchi  
Abdullah  
Jim Eng, Chinese  
Ali

The action occurs at Makassar and on Borneo in today's Indonesia about 1870.

Copyright © Christian Lanciai 2007

Act I scene 1. A terrace in Makassar.

*Vinck*        There is nothing wrong with him. He is just a bit too self-confident.

*Cornelius*    Can't we frame him?

*Vinck*        You just go ahead and try. You can't beat him even in poker. You are powerless against the luck of others.

*Cornelius*    How did he turn up here in the first place?

*Vinck*        Tom Lingard took care of him and pulled him together. He escaped from home and wanted out at sea, but the sea became too much of a bore for him, so Lingard set him ashore here.

Cornelius    Hudig is too happy with him.

Vinck        He is too smart a business man.

Cornelius    Speaking of ghosts. Here is the unbearable man himself.

Willems (*enter*)    Hallo there! I heard Tom Lingard has come ashore. Have you seen him?

Cornelius    Not at all.

Willems        Hudig will come here any moment. He will have some poker.

Vinck        Is it just for that you turned up?

Willems        Any objections?

Vinck        Not at all. Have a seat.

Willems        I have an unbroken pack of cards with me. (*produces it*)

Vinck        Good. Shuffle and deal.

Cornelius    Shouldn't we wait for Hudig?

Vinck        He will come eventually. We don't need him.

Willems (*shuffling and dealing*)    I hope I have given you swell cards this time.

Vinck        It will turn out the way it does anyway.

Cornelius    You never give us the cards we deserve anyway.

Willems        What cards do you deserve?

Cornelius    Those you never give.

Willems        You can never have it all.

Cornelius    You got it all.

Willems        Not much.

Cornelius    A good wife. A good job. A good salary. A good position.

Vinck        Hudig's confidence.

Willems        I only manage his business. Are you jealous?

Vinck        No, but we have been in his service longer than you.

Hudig (*enters*)    Here you sit as usual playing cards and smoking and drinking. May I join you?

Vinck        We were just waiting for you, boss.

Hudig        Is Willems outrageously lucky as usual?

Vinck        We hadn't had time to start yet when you entered.

Willems        Now that we are four, we should make a new deal, shouldn't we?

Hudig        Yes, do that, Willems.

Cornelius    Willems asked about Tom Lingard. Is he ashore?

Hudig        Yes, he has landed.

Willems        Will he come here?

Hudig        Hardly. He has lodged himself at the 'Octopus' as usual.

Willems (*eager*)    Is it possible to see him there?

Hudig        Any time. He takes it easy.

Willems (*rising*)    Sorry, gentlemen, but I have to see him at once before he vanishes again. (*breaks it up in haste*)

Vinck        Is he in difficulty?

Hudig        Hardly. Only business.

*Cornelius* Do you really dare to entrust him with your entire company business?  
*Hudig* He managed it perfectly so far. I trust a partner until he betrays me.  
*Cornelius* But shouldn't his management be carefully controlled?  
*Hudig* Do you have any reason for any suspicion?  
*Vinck* Willems was always busy about other business besides your firm, which we know nothing about.  
*Hudig* Yes, with Tom Lingard, who brought him to me.  
*Cornelius* Not just Tom Lingard.  
*Hudig* What are you insinuating?  
*Vinck* Nothing. We are just observing that he is operating without an accountant.  
*Hudig* I am his accountant.  
*Vinck* But you trust him without controlling him.  
*Hudig* I control him but discreetly. There is no reason to make the scrutiny known as long as he manages well. Mind your business, and he will mind his own, and then I will manage and care for all of you.  
*Vinck* We trust you, boss.  
*Hudig* Good. Then start the game, so that we finally can get started.  
*Cornelius* I have shuffled and dealt. You start the bidding, Vinck.  
*Vinck (observing his cards)* Bad luck as usual. Willems gave me better cards.  
*Cornelius* Quit smoking and start playing.

## Scene 2. The port.

*Tom Lingard* No, Willems, stick to what you've got and run your business like a man! You have everything. What more do you need? Hudig has given you an excellent house, you got a wonderful wife who has given you a child, you are like a peacock in the garden of your service, what more do you need? I can't give you anything better. I gave you all that. Why won't you keep it? Just don't tell me that you've done something stupid.

*Willems* Tom, I just want an insurance in case anything should happen.

*Lingard* What could possibly happen?

*Willems* That's what you never can tell.

*Lingard* You are a rogue, Willems. You ran away from home to get out to the sea with me. I gave you the sea and you were not satisfied. I gave you a fine job ashore, which you have managed well, so that you've reached an enviable position here in Makassar, which you now wish to run away from back to sea. Is there any problem in your marriage?

*Willems* Not at all. My wife is submissive and faithful.

*Lingard* What is it then?

*Willems* Just some misgivings.

*Lingard* About what?

*Willems* My associates hate me.  
*Lingard* Nonsense. Paranoia. Fancies. Perhaps they envy you the confidence shown you by Hudig, but that's only human. Who is not envious of someone who is better?  
*Willems* Just don't forget me.  
*Lingard* There you are again. Go home, do your work and take care of your wife. That's all you need. Come to me if there is any problem, but if there isn't, it's just for you to carry on.  
*Willems* Thanks, Tom. (*shakes his hand*)  
*Lingard* Go now. (*Willems leaves.*) What the hell is he up to?

Scene 3. The office.

*Hudig (opens the door from his office, to Vinck and Cornelius)*  
Has Willems turned up yet?  
*Vinck* No.  
*Hudig* Send him in as soon as he comes.  
*Vinck* Yes, boss. (*Hudig shuts the door.*)  
*Cornelius* Is he finished?  
*Vinck* Not yet. But the hangman is waiting for him.  
*Cornelius* Will there be blood?  
*Vinck* Any amount. (*enter Willems*)  
The boss wants to see you, Willems.  
*Willems* Another raise?  
*Cornelius* Don't be so presumptuous.  
*Willems* Don't be so jealous.  
*Hudig (opens the door)* Come in at once, Willems.  
(*Willems enters his office. Hudig closes the door after him.*)  
Come here. (*shows some open accounts*) What is this?  
*Willems (not understanding)* What is what?  
*Hudig* Where is the cash-account?  
*Willems* You mean the ready money?  
*Hudig* What else?  
*Willems* I make a deposit of it towards the end of the year, as I always do.  
*Hudig* But that's what you haven't done this year! Where is the money?  
*Willems (shrinking)* I was going to do it after the expenses of the firm.  
*Hudig (rising in temper)* What expenses?  
*Willems* Postage, freight, presents, and more.  
*Hudig* You are wriggling!  
*Willems* No.  
*Hudig* Yes! You are trying to get away! What use have you made of the money since it isn't here?

*Willems (constantly shrinking)* Various expenditure.

*Hudig* Various expenditure! Speak out, man! Tell the truth! You have embezzled it to manage your own business!

*Willems* No.

*Hudig* Yes! Don't you know what you are doing, man?

*Willems* I had planned to pay it back as soon as possible...

*Hudig* Begone, Sir! You have betrayed my confidence! Get out!

*Willems* But Sir, it's just a question of petty matters...

*Hudig* Petty matters! I trust a partner until he betrays me! Then I kick him out of my life forever! Get out of here at once!

*Willems* Mr Hudig, I assure you...

*Hudig* Out! Or do I have to throw you out? (*grows threatening, Willems retire in obsequious cowardice*)

(*Cornelius and Vinck are deeply absorbed by their work as Willems comes out.*)

Never let that man in here again! (*slams the door*)

*Willems (stumbles on his way out, shattered to shreds)*

*Cornelius* Run along home to your wife now and beat her, if you dare!

*Vinck* Don't torture a wounded animal.

*Willems* Are you behind this?

*Cornelius* Ask your wife. (*Willems disappears escaping.*)

*Vinck* As I said: any amount of blood.

*Cornelius* I suppose he got what he deserved.

*Vinck* He will probably never rise again.

*Cornelius* We will probably never see him again.

#### Scene 4. At home.

*Joanna (carrying their child, as Willems comes home)*

I heard the news, o great man.

*Willems* We must get away from here, Joanna. We can't stay in Makassar any longer.

*Joanna* You mean *you* have to get away. *You* can't stay in Makassar any longer.

*Willems* I have a family to think of.

*Joanna* You should have thought of it before your embezzlement.

*Willems* What do you mean?

*Leonard (enters from inside)* She means that you are finished here.

*Willems* What are *you* doing here?

*Joanna* He was the one who brought the news. Hudig has cleared me and allows me to retain the house. It's *my* house, Willems. You have no more part in it.

*Willems* You are my wife, and you are carrying my child!

*Leonard* Don't you see that you are done for, Willems? Get lost! You are disgraced, you have done it all yourself, and no one who knew you wants anything

more to do with you, least of all my sister, whom you always only treated ill. Get out of here.

*Joanna* That's the best thing you can do, Willems. Never come here again.

*Willems* Are you throwing me out of my own house?

*Leonard* Yes, and with every right. Hudig gave you the house. He is magnanimous enough to let your wife keep it but only if you get lost.

*Joanna* Go now, Willems. You are done for.

*Willems (to Leonard)* Are you behind all this? You never could stand me. Or is it an intrigue together with the others? Who reported me?

*Leonard* It doesn't matter. You cooked the books and was found out. That is all.

*Willems (suddenly knocks Leonard over)* You'll never see me again, Joanna! *(leaves in fury)*

*Leonard (rising with a bleeding nose)* Damn it!

*Joanna (taking care of him)* You asked for it, Leonard. You knew he was a brutal man.

*Leonard (cross)* Damn!

*Joanna* Make him come back. He is after all my husband.

*Leonard* But you just threw him out!

*Joanna* He is still my husband. You have had your fun and got him humiliated. We brought him down to earth. That's enough.

*Leonard* I will never cringe to him any more.

*Joanna* Then don't. He will come back.

#### Scene 5. A tavern.

*(Willems sits drinking when Lingard enters.)*

*Lingard* So here you sit drinking and drowning your life in drink instead of getting up and doing something about it, you miserable wretch!

*Willems* Shoot me, Tom. I don't want to live any more.

*Lingard* Bullshit! You know nothing. I know everything.

*Willems* About what?

*Lingard* Don't you get anything, you poor coward and fool? Did you never suspect that Joanna was Hudig's daughter?

*Willems (surprised)* Hudig's daughter?

*Lingard* Hudig's illegitimate daughter, whom he fooled you to marry to get her a husband. That's why he gave you the house. I have spoken to him. You owe him nothing, if you go back to your wife.

*Willems* Never in my life. She threw me out herself. Hudig fired me himself. What do they mean? Did they act like this just for the pleasure of humiliating me? I could never go back to them.

*Lingard* You have to.

*Willems* Why?

*Lingard* It's the only way for you to get on. Or else you are a failure, if you admit defeat.

*Willems* I will never admit myself defeated.  
*Lingard* That's what you do if you allow yourself to be thrown out from your own home by your wife.  
*Willems* Hudig's daughter. Why did he cheat me?  
*Lingard* He thought he could cheat you. Instead you cheated him. So you cheated each other. Now you are even.  
*Willems* No, we are not even, for he was not humiliated.  
*Lingard* What do you intend to do instead then?  
*Willems* Anything except return. I would rather drown myself, either in the sea or in booze.  
*Lingard* No, you will not. *(takes a seat beside him)* I have taken care of you once and for all. I am partly responsible for your life. Join me a second time. But I promise you, it will be your last chance.  
*Willems* Are you really offering me another way of escape?  
*Lingard* Hudig always desired to know from where I got my rubber and rattan. I know a river unknown to everyone else which only I know how to navigate. There I have a trading post. My agent there is Almayer. You know him.  
*Willems* What would I do there?  
*Lingard* I offer you a new kingdom. You will not just be able to get rich in the bargain but also have power and influence. There is everything there for you to get and win.  
*Willems* Do I have any choice?  
*Lingard* No, you have no choice, except to return to your wife. She wants you back.  
*Willems* Is it true?  
*Lingard* Yes, it is true.  
*Willems* *(looking thoughtfully past Lingard)* You open up another opportunity for me. I can only accept it with all my heart.  
*Lingard* Good. We sail at once.  
*Willems* No farewells? No luggage? No money? No debts?  
*Lingard* Nothing. You just disappear into another life.  
*Willems* *(eager)* What are we waiting for?  
*Lingard* The land breeze. Come along.  
*(breaks it up. Willems follows immediately.)*

Act II scene 1. The trading post in the jungle.

*Almayer* *(sits drinking)* Here comes that damned slave-driver again. The only thing that ever happens here to break the monotony is his arrival, and still it would be nicer if he never came, so that you could be alone in peace with your failure of a life. *(enter Tom Lingard with Willems)* Captain Lingard. Who the devil have you brought here with you?

*Lingard* Just a brief visit this time, Almayer. I hereby install your trading partner. You already know each other.

*Willems* Almayer, it was quite some time ago. (*offers his hand*)

*Almayer* (*does not accept it*) What the devil are you doing here?

*Willems* I was meant here to come to work.

*Almayer* There is no work here, only sloth, tropic fevers and gin.

*Lingard* You appear to be more than moderately drunk today, Almayer. There is no harm in showing some friendliness. Willems is here to stay, so you might as well get along from the beginning.

*Almayer* No, I am not more than normally drunk. Here you stay continuously drunk, for nothing is worse than getting eventually sober.

*Willems* Captain Lingard is right. There is nothing wrong with some friendliness, and after all, we are to work together. (*offers his hand again*)

*Almayer* (*accepts it reluctantly*) Welcome to hell, partner.

*Lingard* Good. I hope you will stay on that course. With some good will you can both get yourselves both riches and a kingdom. If you waste your life by drinking it up, Almayer, it will never get any better.

*Almayer* It won't anyway. You are stuck here anyway.

*Lingard* I leave you two to continue getting along. I must go on to the next port. Do your best, Willems. Remember, this is your second chance and the last one you will get from me.

*Willems* Ay ay, captain. (*Lingard leaves.*)

*Almayer* What the hell did you do to get punished with exile here beyond all honour and honesty?

*Willems* Don't bother about that. I am here to work, and together we can get something done.

*Almayer* I doubt it. The last thing you can do here is something useful.

*Willems* I don't believe it until at least I have tried.

*Almayer* I never even tried. Any effort was stillborn from the start. I stuck to that cognition, and that's how I have survived.

*Willems* It's no use making life intolerable here, as we did under Hudig.

*Almayer* Life here is already intolerable enough as it is. You must have done something seriously wrong to be brought here.

*Willems* Some other time.

*Almayer* So you are a failure.

*Willems* (*hits the table*) No!

*Almayer* You were happily married. Didn't you have a child as well? What happened?

*Willems* I know all about your aborted marriage. Don't try anything with me.

*Almayer* Did you beat her too much? Didn't you know that she was Hudig's illegitimate daughter?

*Willems* That's enough.

*Almayer* Very well, I will leave you alone. We had better leave each other in peace. The less we have anything to do with each other, the better. We couldn't stand each other under Hudig and will probably not get along any better here. Do what you want. I will at least stick to my own liquor.

*Willems* You drank too much already under Hudig. That's why Lingard tried to offer you a better life here, which you scrapped anyway.

*Almayer* This is a swamp, Willems. This godforsaken bog in the land of nowhere is nothing but a microcosmos of the entire world, which only consists of lost opportunities. What are we white colonialists in our established supremacy of power and riches? Just wasted bog creatures like all the others. Man was created a failure, and all nature keeps laughing at man's imbecile folly. I understand nature, drink my liquor and smile.

*Willems* You are going gaga.

*Almayer* Like all philosophers of too much wisdom.

*Willems* We will never get along in any agreement.

*Almayer* I know. That's why I welcomed you to hell. Let's see which one of us will perish first, you or me. I think it will be you.

*Willems* I don't care. You are a stinker. I'll go down to the store to see what can be done. (*leaves*)

*Almayer* Nothing can be done about the hell of the world, for we humans made it ourselves. (*drinks*)

## Scene 2.

*Aïssa* What do you really see in me, you great white man? What can you find in me but your own perdition? Stick to your own people, since you know, that we are of a lower race.

*Willems* Aïssa, I can't stand my own people, these haughty suppressors who have no business in this tragic world, who are only good for humiliating and making fools of themselves, like my partner Almayer, who only degrades himself by drinking.

*Aïssa* It's the privilege of the white men. They may do what they like. We are only to work for them and serve them. If we don't work, they beat and punish us. Not working is their privilege.

*Willems* You are beautiful, Aïssa, in contrast to those white fleshy women who just make themselves up and walk about in revolting clothes. Your clothes are both beautiful and practical. I envy you your freedom and your naturalness and closeness to nature. That's what we have lost.

*Aïssa* And that's why you are heading for perdition. I deplore you. You complicate life and make it unbearable at length by your making it artificially intricate, while we keep it simple. That's why we manage and survive with ease. We will still be here when you are gone.

*Willems* That is why I try to find a refuge in you, to reclaim and find my life to get it back again. My people rejected me and excluded me, casting me out from their community, because I made it too well and was too good. They couldn't accept being seen through. They can't accept that anyone detaches himself from their corruption and rude insolence, their ruthlessness and baseness, their vulgarity and superficiality, their egoism and arrogance, their short-sighted carelessness, their self-sufficiency and parasitism...

*Aïssa* Come to me then and be mine, you great white man, but I warn you, that I intend to keep you. I will never let you go, for in order to be mine you have to become one of us.

*Willems* Why not? What have I to lose? Mine own have cast me out. Why then not accept being an outlawed outcast like any gipsy? I love you, Aïssa, and I never want to lose you, for you are the opposite of everything I used to be and learned to despise and hate. I find my way to redemption and release by you, for you can give me a new and better soul.

*Aïssa* Come then into my darkness and love me. I welcome you to keep me for good, you great white man, you god who stepped down to us from the heights of colonialism to the level of us coloured slaves. You will get it all, you great white man, since you have joined my soul to yours and already taken me without having touched me. Take me then, and let me be your slave.

*Willems* No, my love, I will be your slave, for I love you.

*Aïssa (smiles)* Then it's mutual. *(They embrace and go out together.)*

### Scene 3.

*Almayer* Now he has been gone for three weeks. It doesn't matter. I manage better without him. I welcome him to disappear among the natives. I never asked for any partner. Captain Lingard forced him on me, and I was only obliged to accept it, since I am his son-in-law. I am stuck here. He came here to break loose in freedom, and he has gone so far in that self-indulgence of freedom that he has turned into an oestral bull among the natives. Let him love them and let me do without him. I will not miss him if he dies.

*(Willems turns up, long-haired, decayed, feverish, unshaven and in tattered clothes)*

Just don't tell me he is coming back. Is that a ghost I see, or is it a totally ruined man?

*Willems* She has left me, Almayer. I cannot manage without her.

*Almayer* Why do you come to me then? Go and chase her instead! She can't be far away.

*Willems* I want to start all over again from the beginning. I want to open a trading station of my own. I have ideas. I can work. You could help me with money and equipment.

*Almayer* What more do you want? My house? My costume? My daughter? My store? You'll get nothing, Willems. You are a lost man. Why did you come here? What did you do to get fired by Hudig? Did you steal his money?

*Willems* I just borrowed some. I didn't have the time to pay it back before my enemies discovered it and reported me. It was a conspiracy.

*Almayer* Go back to your natives. You can never become a human being any more. You have lost your face. Your reputation has made you impossible. A burnt child smells. Return to the flaming passion you still have left. You are done for in the established world.

*Willems* Almayer, I have ideas. I have contacts. I can build an empire if you help me on the way.

*Almayer* Go to hell. I am the king here. You came here as a discarded beggar. Lingard dropped you here to me as a wasted bone gnawed to nakedness. I will not help you. Get away. Or else I'll shoot you.

#### Scene 4.

*Blind Omar* Where is she? Why has she left me? Who sent that devil to take her away from us?

*Babalatchi* He came by himself, o great Omar. Nobody sent him. He came from the white people, and we must send him back there or kill him with the other white man, our enemy and oppressor.

*Omar* But she has been separated from him, and still she hasn't come back.

*Babalatchi* And yet you see so much more than all with seeing eyes. If you then with your second sight no longer can read your daughter, I am afraid she has given herself over entirely to the white man's mortal command.

*Omar* Alas, the white man's command is the ruin of the whole world. So much harm has been done by only two white men here. How much harm then will not all the rest of the white men have done to all the world?

*Babalatchi* Don't talk about it. She is coming back.

*(Aïssa appears. Babalatchi makes a sign to her to keep quiet.)*

*Omar* Oh no, she will never come back any more. She is lost to me and to all of us.

*Babalatchi* Three days have passed without his going back to her. He knows that he can come back. Still he hasn't.

*Omar* She is lost anyway. She is stained by him. He has taken her soul. He may come back and go on taking her. She is lost anyway.

*Willems (outside)* Let me go, you devils! You can't keep me away from her! She is mine! *(Aïssa hearkens and immediately turns out.)*

*Babalatchi* I fear that he has come back.

*Omar* He is lost, and she also.

*Voices (outside)* Kill him! Kill him!

*Aïssa (outside)* No! He is mine! And I am the blind prophet Omar's daughter!

*Babalatchi* She is your daughter, o blind Omar.

*Omar* To my eternal curse and damnation.

*Babalatchi* She has him entirely in her power. He is like a small nestling in her hands. She can do whatever she likes with him. To him she is already like the sea is to one who is thirsting. He can never have all of her. She is like water in his hands which he can't drink but must get more thirsty of. That's how their love will be until it dies. It is already like a steadily increasing fever of madness, and she regulates it entirely herself.

*Omar* Let it be as you say, Babalatchi, and let us bide our time.

*Babalatchi* She is and remains your daughter, blind Omar.

*Willems (entering carrying Aïssa in his arms)* Never again shall your people come between you and my love, Aïssa.

*Aïssa* You great white man, you have taken me. Keep me if you can, but I will never let you go.

*Willems* Never again will I let you go. (*disappears with her*)

*Omar* Is he hers or is she his? Who can possibly separate them any more?

*Babalatchi* The question is rather which one of them will consume the other. Be comforted, o blind Omar, that she is and remains your daughter.

*Omar* I hope you are right, but I dare no longer have any hope for her.

*Babalatchi* He is a non-believer and therefore a hopeless case. He must perish. And we could perhaps cause both his and the other white bastard's destruction by her. She already holds him in her hand, o blind Omar. He is as soft as mud in her hands. He is with us. We could make him help us.

*Omar* How?

*Babalatchi* The great Abdullah wants to help us against the white domination. The great Abdullah knows our river but not how to get by it. Aïssa's devil could be of service to him.

*Omar* And betray his own cause?

*Babalatchi* O blind Omar, who sees everything, can't you see that he in his blindness could be led anywhere if only your daughter will show him the way?

*Omar (considering carefully)* Perhaps there is hope in spite of all for both us and her.

## Scene 5.

*Aïssa* Tell me what you and Abdullah were discussing.

*Willems* He needs help to navigate up the river. We are old acquaintances. He is a great businessman from Malacka. He recognized me at once and was surprised to find me here. We have done business before. We could do it again.

*Aïssa* He wants to overthrow your partner.

*Willems* It's my partner's own fault. He didn't want to help me get started again. He turned me down. I gave him a chance. He cast me away, like everyone else always cast me out. So I go to Abdullah instead.

*Aïssa* He wants to overthrow Tuan Laut.

*Willems* That will be more difficult. Tom Lingard is free. If he loses the monopoly of this river there are other rivers. Tuan Lingard can manage without us and we without him. Don't you understand, Aïssa, that you are all I care about, the only thing I own, the only thing I have to live for? What do I care if the whole world goes down, if all empires break up, if all civilization is ruined, if the white man's world domination goes to hell, as long as I have you? I could never feel love before. Suddenly I have found love, and I will never let it go.

*Aïssa* Still it is difficult for us to believe in you. You come from the white world, which turned rich and powerful by selling arms and plunge nations into wars, which proudly praises its own greed and which only brings misery to those who aren't white. No one can trust you here. All we have learned from you is falsehood. I am afraid of that betrayal and deceit which is the result for everyone who has anything to do with the white man.

*Willems* I haven't let you down. I came back. I made Almayer an offer. That's all. He didn't give a damn. So I am free and justified in betraying all my own people to become one of you.

*Aïssa* That is what I can't believe until you do it. When you have helped Abdullah against Tuan Laut I will believe in you.

*Willems* Your faithlessness puzzles me. Why did you leave me the first time?

*Aïssa* You asked me to follow you to your country, your evil land of lies from which we only have troubles and afflictions, where there are only white women with hard eyes and calculating intrigues. We are without schemes, since we are natural and free. Where scheming becomes a necessity, the evil of power rules like a mental disease destroying and corrupting all. That's the country from which you come. I grew afraid of it and left you.

*Willems* I will never again ask you to follow me there.

*Aïssa* But I am already damaged and corrupted by your race and your mentality, since I am afflicted by the love you gave me. My own kin threaten to disown me. My blind father hates you and wishes to kill you. Still you are just an innocent child who really only wants love. Therefore I will take care of you. Rest on my knees. Sleep by my bosom. Let me be your mother. I will protect you.

*Willems (obeys her)* Let me vanish in the veils of your long black hair with its tints of red fires. Let me drown in your sea of love. I ask for nothing else. Let me stay at home in your soul and sleep off my fever in your bosom. Don't let me down, Aïssa.

*Aïssa* You are safe with me but only with me.

*Willems* Let us make love and sleep.

*Aïssa* Come into me.

*(They start making love. When they are at it, Omar comes stealing in without a sound with a long knife. They don't notice him. He finds his way up to them and is just about to thrust his dagger into Willems' back, when Aïssa discovers him, throws Willems aside, rushes up to attack her helpless father, knocks him over, tries to strangle him.)*

*Aïssa* Let go of the knife! You will not kill him!

*Omar (wheezing)* You are not my daughter!

*Aïssa* He is my husband!

*Omar* He is our enemy! He is not a believer! He is just a dog!

*Aïssa (gets at the knife, throws it down beside Willems, who just looks on like spellbound)* He is a man! (*succeeds in lifting her helpless father and carry him out. You hear how she throws him away.*)

*Omar (outside)* A curse on you for betraying your people and your faith! You are now just a white man's bitch! (*goes on mumbling and rattling curses*)

*Aïssa (to Willems)* I will be yours, you great white man, when you have betrayed your own people and race for my love. Until then I am as much of an outlawed outcast as you, but then we shall make love. (*leaves with pride*)

*Willems (takes up the knife)* Sweetest Aïssa, you will be the death of me, but I love you. Will it then be my only mission in life, to constantly betray all who trust me, Hudig, Almayer, Tom Lingard, Aïssa, just for a vain mad chase of a dream of love which I don't know if it is a lie or real? But that is maybe the illusion we all have to live for, since there's hardly anything else to live for. (*rolls over on his back, exhausted*)

*Abdullah (entering cautiously)* Willems? I have come to fetch you.

*Willems* Abdullah? Yet another one who is my destiny and who I am obliged to cheat and betray. Welcome then, my destiny, and fool me on, take care of me and seduce me and go on leading me to perdition, as long as my love's illusion at least keeps staying with me like a mirage somewhere beyond all accessibility.

*Abdullah* Come along! (*Willems gets up and follows him.*)

### Act III scene 1.

*Almayer* He has only himself to blame. I have nothing to do with all this sordid business. He has made his own hell and let all the devils loose, and he has to answer for that himself to Tom Lingard, when he arrives. (*Jim Eng comes bursting in.*) What is it, Jim Eng? Is there a fire in your arse?

*Jim Eng* There is rebellion, sahib! The natives are revolting! Mynheer Willems has guided Tuan Abdullah up the river with his bark and all his pirates and loose killers! All Mahometan devils and murderers are let loose!

*Almayer* Don't you think I know? Do you think I am imbecile? What will you do about it?

*Jim Eng* You have guns and ammunition! Shoot them down! Exterminate the mad devils! They are still just brainwashed Mahometans blinded by the world's most intolerant religion, which only is a pretext for total egoism!

*Almayer* Don't tell me that Buddhism is any better.

*Jim Eng* I am not Buddhist. I am pantheist.

*Almayer* What's the difference?

*Voices (outside)* Give us the Chinese! Give us the Chinese!

*Almayer* What noise is that? What have you done to them?

*Jim Eng* Do something! Open fire! Shoot them down!

*Almayer* No, I will not do anything. I stand under the protection of Tom Lingard and his British company with its flag of neutrality. Willems is no danger yet, and he has succeeded in keeping his pygmies in line by hoisting his Dutch flag and making the chiefs accept the Dutch sovereignty of Batavia. But what did you do to provoke them?

*Jim Eng* I refused to submit to the foreign flag!

*Almayer* I see. You objected and were the only one to do so.

*Willems* Almayer! Let us in! We are taking over all business here!

*Almayer* The hell you are! You are Tom Lingard's man like me!

*Willems* I gave you a chance! You refused it! So I have to start my own business with other partners. Open the gates!

*Almayer* Go to blazes and hang yourself!

*Jim Eng* I will not surrender without fighting. *(pulls a gun and shoots wildly against the aggressors. Someone is wounded, wild outcries of pain, upsets and anger. At once the attackers break in led by Willems.)*

*Willems* Stop! Not one hair must be touched on anyone's head! Almayer, you opened fire without our having fired one shot. Therefore we must break in and disarm your station. You have a large store of gunpowder which we'll need. Give me the keys!

*Almayer* Never in my life.

*Willems* Sew him up! *(The pirates produce a sail-sack and start sewing up Almayer in it.)*

*Almayer* What are you doing? This is violence! Willems, don't you see that this madness can only lead to your own destruction? Aha, I see that pirate daughter at your side. Naturally she is the one who has turned your head. *(Aïssa stands by Willems, who embraces her with one arm while the other holds a rifle.)* You have allowed yourself to be totally bewitched out of your wits. When Tom Lingard returns with his brig, he will make mincemeat of all of you.

*Abdullah* Tuan Laut is wrecked.

*Almayer* What?

*Willems* *Flash* has foundered. Tom Lingard has lost his flag ship.

*Almayer* That's why you could make this coup!

*Willems* Almayer, in all my madness I am reasonable. Not one hair will be touched on the heads of you or your wife or your daughter. But you opened fire against us. All we wanted was the Chinese.

*Almayer* He was the one that shot at you. I will make amends.

*Willems* That's fair. But we have to disarm you. That's why we must take over your gunpowder and ammunition. We will not touch your store. We are honourable businessmen. Just give me the keys.

*Almayer* *(all sewed up to his chin)* How could I?

*Willems* *(to Babalatchi)* Go to his wife and get them. She is hidden inside the house. *(Some go inside to fetch the wife.)*

*Almayer* Are you satisfied now? The entire colony is in uproar! You have betrayed your own benefactor! You have dishonoured me!

*Willems (calm)* We leave you in peace. We allow you to retain your British flag. And don't talk of dishonour. I made you an offer. Your dishonour is that you turned down your only chance. Only you yourself are to blame. I am just consistent.

*Almayer* Sooner or later Tom Lingard will return.

*Willems* We'll see when that happens.

*Babalatchi (comes out with the others)* We have the keys.

*Willems* Good! Leave nothing behind! All gunpowder must be removed from here!

*Almayer* Thief!

*Willems (approaching him closely)* Drunk! Go on drinking your own liquor! That's all you are good at. Come! We are finished here! Bring Jim Feng along! Even he must submit to the Dutch flag!

*Jim Feng* Sahib! Don't let them kill me!

*Almayer* What can I do? They will not kill a miserable wretch like you. Get out of here, all you failures of rotten bastards! *(The whole company leaves. He is left in the straitjacket.)* Damn it! Tom Lingard! How on earth could you founder! Get me out of this damned straitjacket! *(He has been placed in a chair, in which he fights, which upsets the chair. Lying helpless on the floor:)* Damn it! *(some servants appear to liberate him.)*

*Aïssa* Now you are all mine, you great white man. You have proved yourself to be just and to stand up against your own.

*Willems* For your sake, my love, I would be ready to scrap all humanity.

*Aïssa* Do it, my lover, do it.

*Willems* I already did.

*Abdullah (aside to Babalatchi)* We got him where we wanted. How long shall we keep him?

*Babalatchi* No longer than necessary.

*Abdullah* The blind Omar is crying for his blood, since he means that the infidel not only killed his daughter but also her soul..

*Babalatchi* His life is in your hands, o Abdullah. Keep him as long as you need him. Then we'll just let him disappear.

*Abdullah* Like all other whites.

*Babalatchi* The sooner, the better.

*Almayer (screaming)* You are lost, Willems! You are lost!

*Willems (out of sight, calling back)* Don't you think I know it!

## Scene 2. On board Lingard's new schooner.

*Joanna* He is alive, and that is all that matters. I will not give in, captain Lingard, until I get him home alive.

*Lingard* It's possible, Joanna, that he no longer is the same man.

*Joanna* I don't care. Whatever you have done to him, he is the same to me.

*Lingard* It's not what we have done to him that has changed him, but what he has done to himself.

*Joanna* Do you think you can make me believe that that drunkard Almayer is completely innocent?

*Lingard* That's what we must investigate. He is coming on board now.

*Joanna* I don't want to see him. He has ruined my husband.

*Lingard* They have ruined each other. That's the problem. We don't know who started ruining who.

*Joanna* My husband was always envied by everyone for being better than all others.

*Lingard* Still you yourself turned him out of your own home.

*Joanna* My father demanded it for his having embezzled his money. He repented it afterwards and retrieved it, but then it was too late. No one regretted it more than I.

*Lingard* It will be difficult to get him back.

*Joanna* You did get that letter. That Abdullah man wants to hand him over. What's so difficult about that?

*Lingard* The case is complicated by the fact that your husband actually has done his utmost to ruin my life's work.

*Joanna* He or Almayer or Almayer's folly?

*Lingard* That's what we must find out. Here is the dinghy now. – Get on board, Almayer!

*Almayer (appearing over the railing)*

*Joanna (as soon as his head turns up)* What have you done to my husband, you damned alcoholic lout!

*Almayer (ducking the onslaught)* Who the hell gave you the idea to bring her out here in the country without laws?

*Lingard* She asked for it herself. I had no say. No one could stop her.

*Almayer (getting on board)* The doings of your husband, Joanna, and all the mess he has achieved is completely his own responsibility.

*Joanna* I don't care! He came here to do business! You stopped him! So he had to try on his own. Blame yourself, Almayer, for all you can do is to empty bottles!

*Almayer* Bottles exist to be emptied. To drink is not to sin. It's only when people don't drink that they commit themselves to foolish things.

*Lingard* Let's discuss this now as grown-up people. I placed Willems here, Almayer, to give him a second chance. I entrusted him with you, my own son-in-law, to give him a stable basis. That solid ground of operation you deprived him of, so that he found himself obliged to turn himself over to competitors. He led them to success, and here we are now with our beards in the letter-box, my life's work ruined, our monopoly devastated and Willems' wife here as our prosecutor. The question is what we can do about it, if we can do anything at all.

*Almayer* The case is simple, Tom. You had a letter from Abdullah. You know what it says. It couldn't have been written clearer. He wants to get rid of Willems, and he wants an agreement with you.

*Joanna* Does that mean, that it's enough if we just collect Willems?

*Almayer* Joanna, your husband Peter Willems has destroyed Tom's life's work, and both he, Abdullah and Tom are very well aware of it. He, Abdullah, wants to turn your husband over to Tom, in order not to have to kill him himself.

*Lingard* I also had a letter from Willems, but I don't understand it.

*Joanna* What does it say?

*Lingard* He challenges me to meet him in private.

*Joanna* Give him that chance, Tom, to explain himself.

*Almayer* Let me shoot him instead, and we'll be rid of him once and for all.

*Lingard* What do you hold against him, Kaspar?

*Almayer* Everything. He is unbearable, arrogant and superior. He is dishonest and brutal. He has cheated you, stolen from his benefactor, abused his wife and ruined your life's work. What more do you need? What more evidence do you need of his total unpredictability and disloyalty?

*Joanna* He never hit me, although he could be hard sometimes.

*Lingard* I feel responsible for his fate, Kaspar. He started off well. He was a brilliant businessman. But he raised envy and made you and all other partners turn against him. Then he found himself obliged to fight, and he used all means. Can you accuse a man for having defended himself against unfair attacks and intrigues? (*Almayer is silent.*) I have always been able to turn troublesome destinies to their advantage, Kaspar. I am an old and experienced man and have managed worse shipwrecks than the loss of *Flash*. You can see for yourself how I managed to come back here with a new schooner.

*Almayer* After three months.

*Lingard* Yes, the loss of *Flash* is irreparable.

*Almayer* So what keeps you from accepting Abdullah's offer and take him away from here to safety to give him a new start in his career as a swindler and abuser of women?

*Lingard* I want to hear him first. He tried to work with you, Kaspar, but you turned him down. That's the source of all this new misery. That's why he turned against us all. Give me a boat with your best oarsmen, and I will take the bearings of the situation myself. (*Joanna makes a movement.*) Stay on board, Joanna, until further. I don't want any more trouble with the unpredictable pirates ashore.

*Almayer* All right. Tom. You shall have your boat. But leave me out.

*Lingard* With pleasure. (*Almayer intends to leave the ship, and Lingard intends to follow him.*) Stay calm on board, Joanna. Don't try to seek out and visit this lawless hell of interests and passions of unfathomably unpredictable intrigues. You are safe here out of range, and we can manage it as long as there are no more casualties.

*Joanna* Go in peace, Tom. I'll wait here. But don't let me see him (*indicates Almayer*) any more.

*Lingard* That's not asking too much. (*leaves after Almayer*)

*Joanna* Your outlawed exile has become your protection, Peter, and your strength. If you manage better with it and without me, I will accept our separation, and you won't ever have to learn that I have been here. But I will be here if you need me.

Act IV scene 1.

*Babalatchi* Who is coming here stealing in the night like another thief and villain to butcher and rob souls? A white man, a great man, a chief, a man without fear inspiring fear. So he has come, the great man for whom the fallen man has been waiting for three days and nights without sleep. The destinies are closing in. Let them come and gather and end up in that chaos which all passions always lead up to, like the brooks and the rivers always give themselves up to the universal chaos without end of the sea.

*Lingard* I come looking for a white man.

*Babalatchi* I know the white man you are looking for. You are Tuan Laut, his great chief.

*Lingard* And who are you, who knows who I am?

*Babalatchi* I am Babalatchi, Abdullah's closest man. Without him I am nothing, and without the raving white man Abdullah is nothing. But I know why you have come.

*Lingard* I don't know myself why I have come. How could you then know why I have come? I have come on his own invitation, he is expecting me, and maybe he is expecting death from me as the wages of his misdeeds, but I don't expect to kill him. All I expect is justice, but how this justice shall be made or what form it will take I still don't know.

*Babalatchi* I have an excellent weapon here, a rifle that can't miss. He still doesn't know that you have arrived. You can hit him from here without being seen when he gets out in the morning from his hut with curses of the whole world. You can make justice.

*Lingard* Why do you hate him? Why do you wish to see him dead? And in that case, why don't you kill him?

*Babalatchi* We leave to the white men to kill their white men themselves. We wish to purge ourselves of the blood of the infidels but not shed it.

*Lingard* I haven't come to kill him.

*Babalatchi* Why then have you come?

*Lingard* (*shows his loaded gun in the pocket*) I just want justice. But first I want to find out what it is before I execute it. I am neither a judge nor hangman, just a distrainer.

*Babalatchi* Then go to find out what you have come to distrain, but don't try to understand what is right in the problem complex you find, which is far too difficult and caustic for us, which is why we just want to get rid of it.

*Lingard* Very well. I shall face him.

*Babalatchi* He is not without surveillance.

*Lingard* Armed?

*Babalatchi* More than armed.

*Aïssa (appearing)* That's good, Babalatchi. I know he has come. He has been expected for a long time.

*Lingard* I know you. You are the daughter of the blind Omar, the pirate, who once was the chief of all of you here.

*Aïssa* The blind Omar is dead. I helped him on the way myself. When he tried to kill my husband I hastened his death.

*Babalatchi* The blind Omar was buried yesterday, the one who most of all desired the white man's death.

*Aïssa* Why have you come, old master? To kill him? Or even worse – to bring him back?

*Lingard (astonished)* How could you guess?

*Aïssa* I can read the souls of men and all their souls except one, who is my own lover's. Only his soul is closed to me, although we both gave each other everything. Don't give him the blame for his crimes, Tuan Laut. I forced him to it. Twice I left him. The second time I promised my faith to him again if he turned against his own white brothers and took a stand for our own free people of the woods. He was brave enough to do so. Therefore he became my own for real, but at the same time, I lost his soul. If I became quite alone in my people by his taking my soul away from me, that was nothing to the loneliness which then became mine in his constant company.

*Lingard* That's how we work, we poor humans. In our loneliness we have the whole world for company, and we love the more faithfully the more we long for the love we never can reach, but truly lonesome we never get until we never more can get rid of our own company.

*Aïssa* What will you do with him, Tuan Laut?

*Lingard* I will give him life.

*Aïssa* As a reward for all the mischief he has done especially to you?

*Lingard* No, as a punishment. I know he is living in his own hell and that he constantly has made it worse for himself. That will be my just punishment of him, to let him keep it and continue making it worse.

*Aïssa* Everything is my fault. I was the one who brought him astray.

*Willems (suddenly breaking in)* Don't believe her, captain Lingard.

*Lingard* You... (*can't control himself, attacks him, grabs him by the throat and gives him a deadly blow in the face, loses his grip, and Willems stumbles backwards, his face bleeding*)

*Willems* That's a fine way to behave.

*Aïssa (has seen Lingard fingering his gun)* Don't shoot him! (*Throws herself down to Lingard, clasping his legs*) Don't hit him!

*Willems* I will not hit back, captain Lingard. I will not defend myself. I will not fight, and least of all with you.

*Lingard (furious)* Are you a coward now as well? Tell your woman to let me go. If you don't have anything to say for your defence, it means that you are even more guilty of an even worse treason than I thought.

*Willems* I wanted to see you to give you a chance to hear any other side of the case than that of the infamous creep Almayer who only has one perspective of life by the reality distortion instrument of his bottle. I spared him. I could have had him disposed of directly with all his station burned up with your store, but I didn't want to. I wanted my rebellion to be correct. That's why no one came to any harm. Almayer was just a bit sewed up and disgraced, as if he had any honour that could be disgraced. Wasn't my rebellion reasonable, captain Lingard, who knows me well, when those creeps in Makassar got me sorted out for a trifle...

*Lingard* You stole from your benefactor and betrayed him!

*Willems* No, I borrowed from him and was reported before I had had time to restore the loan. Those idiots just wanted to get rid of me, just like you wanted by dumping me here at Almayer's, who just wanted to get rid of me from the start, like also the leading scoundrels here among the pirates and the crooked rajahs just wanted to get rid of me, hoping that anyone would kill me as long as they didn't have to do it themselves. Only Aïssa here never wanted to get rid of me. Let her go, captain.

*Lingard* I did ask her to let me go!

*Willems* She has let go of you, but you are standing on her hair.

*(Lingard moves a step backwards. Aïssa rises at once and hides her face in her hands.)*

I have been waiting for you for three days, captain, and not had any sleep until now. She should have wakened me when you arrived, but instead she came out to receive you. For three days she has feared your arrival so anxiously that she constantly has asked me to shoot you as soon as you turned up. She has suggested all possible places to fire at you from behind. But when you came, she received you almost like a father to welcome your judgement of me. I waited long for that judgement. What will my sentence be? I have explained myself. What are your conclusions?

*Lingard* Peter, I knew that I didn't come here to kill you. Almayer and others among your associates have tried to persuade me to have you killed. No, I just want to forget you. You were a brilliant talent that I took care of and helped on his way, but you have consistently just flushed all your possibilities down the drain. My sentence is to let you live – here, forgotten and discarded by all of us as my life's only failure, of which I am ashamed. You will never be able to get away from here. Keep your woman – during forty years, that's the only thing you managed to save and the sum of your career. She will guard and watch you, so that you don't break out again and start swindling and cheating people of their money and trick yourself to new failures and foundered careers in the cheating business. Stay here and rot with your failures, like Almayer. I will never help you again and never intend to see you again.

*Willems* So you leave me alone with her, my evil genius, who stole my soul and ruined my life by turning me into as wild an animal and half-blood as herself?

*Lingard* You are no longer human, Willems. It is neither possible to kill you nor to forgive you. You are an inconvenience that lacks a body and must be kept hidden. You are my life's great mistake, and your pariah capacity will be a pain to everyone's mind and soul except that woman's, who gave you mercy in your hell. Stick to her in your hell. That's the only life you have left.

*Ali* The rain is coming, Tuan Laut.

*Lingard* Yes, we must get going. *(breaks it up)*

*Willems* Lingard!

*Lingard* No, Peter, nothing more. I am finished with you. *(leaves with Ali)*

*Willems* I have nothing left but you, Aïssa. You are the only life I have left, and that life is a curse.

*Aïssa* Enjoy your curse as long as you can, my lover. I have no intention to release you from it.

*Willems* Come. I am tired and need to sleep. I have received my sentence which isn't worse than status quo – perpetual outlawry in hell.

*Aïssa* It's only love, o great white man. It will never pass.

*Willems* No, it will never pass. *(kisses her and embraces her, and they return into the cottage. Babalatchi is long since gone.)*

#### Act V scene 1.

*Almayer* It couldn't get worse. Stuck with Willems as a threat for life. Now captain Lingard has really gone mad. Something must be done. And his wife just keeps on crying. Willems would on first possible occasion immediately escape and make the world unsafe again. It will not do. I must find out something. I must try to make Willems escape while his wife is here and captain Lingard is away. It's just to start working on it at once. *(goes off to knock on a door)* Mrs Willems?

*Joanna (opens the door)* What is it now? More bad news and covert insinuations? Stick to your bottle!

*Almayer* Come in. We have to talk. I have to reveal the truth to you.

*Joanna* That's what you always say when you intend to make up new lies.

*Almayer* This time it is serious.

*Joanna* So it never was serious all the previous times you said so?

*Almayer* The thing is, Mrs Willems, that captain Lingard is away on missions to the north estuary while your husband is still alive and just waiting for a possibility to leave this swamp world. You can save him now and get away with him.

*Joanna* So all you said up till now was just lies?

*Almayer* Captain Lingard's intention was to keep him here as a prisoner forever for what he has done. Therefore Lingard persuaded me to convince you of your husband's death. I couldn't do that. I tried, but I could not break your heart. After all, it's only for his sake that you have come here.

*Joanna* That was kind of you.

*Almayer* But to manage your escape you need money to pay the natives. Do you have money?

*Joanna* Not much. Hudig sold the house, and almost all the money went to the relatives. Leonard took the main part.

*Almayer* Do you have anything left at all? Pounds, dollars, gulden, anything?

*Joanna* Two hundred and fifty dollars. That is all.

*Almayer (relieved)* At least something. Or else I would have been obliged to help you. I suggest that you immediately find out your husband and speak with him. Convince him of the situation and his possibilities. Perhaps you can save him. You are the only one.

*Joanna* Thank you, Almayer. At last I can believe in you. At last I understand something of the situation. He is a dangerous man, but he is my husband. Yes, I will save him. When can I leave?

*Almayer* Now at once. A boat is waiting.

*Joanna* I am ready.

*Almayer* Come, Mrs Willems. (*helps her courteously out*)

(*when she is gone*) All ways are opened, and I can shut them all. She can fetch him and bring him back to civilization, and I can go down to Tom Lingard and tell him about the escape, so that he will interrupt it and finally shoot him. Or I could lay myself in ambush and shoot the villain. Everything is possible. The only important thing is that he finally is disposed of.

## Scene 2.

*Joanna (climbs ashore)* Is this where he lives, in a ramshackle hut among primitive natives and malaria, without protection against sun or illnesses, exposed to all as an outcast? Yes, and I even contributed to having him cast out. Now I am myself lost as an outcast but still have a husband to collect, if he is still alive.

*Willems (comes staggering out)* I can't believe my eyes. Am I hallucinating, or are you a ghost from out of my past? Of all people *you* come here to haunt me!

*Joanna (shocked at first)* Is this harrowed wreck of a human being my once upon a time husband, or have I just come to find a ghost of decayed hopelessness? Still it's Peter. (*rushes forth to embrace him*) Peter, I have come to get you home! The coast is clear. Lingard is gone, and Almayer gives you a free passage. I have a boat at your disposal. Forgive me! (*sinks down before him, clinging to him*)

*Willems (at a loss)* For what?

*Joanna* For deserting you! For having forsaken you! For having thrown you out!

*Willems* Are you serious?

*Joanna* Of course! I have learned everything about your tribulations here, your suffered injustice, your rebellion and ineffectiveness and Lingard's judgement! But it is over now! Only he is threatening us, and he is gone now.

*Willems* You know nothing.

Joanna Yes, I know everything!

Willems Joanna, you come like a revelation, and it's too good to be true, and yet it is true. But it is not as you think. Almayer is just lying and only wants to see me dead and get rid of me like all the others and has probably fooled you here to entrap me to be able to dispose of me by some ambush...

Joanna No, he wants to get rid of you and help you escape! That's the only reason why he has opened this way of escape for us!

Willems It's not as you think. It's never as you think. There are dangers lurking in every bush, and all my life I have only been cheated of my life. This is the last attempt against it. I can't see from where it comes or wherein it consists. Therefore it is the more dangerous.

*(Aïssa is seen but keeps away without being seen by Joanna and Willems.)*

Joanna No, all the dangers have passed now. I have come to bring you home at last and end your outlawed exile.

Aïssa *(enters in all her glory)* Who is she?

*(Joanna is shocked and struck dumb and understands nothing at first)*

Willems *(resignedly and simply)* It is my wife.

Aïssa And what am I then?

Joanna Was it true then? The rumours told me about a native woman with whom you lived. I refused to believe it. Almayer said nothing and neither did captain Lingard. What trap have they lured me into?

Willems Joanna, go back to the boat and wait for me there.

Joanna No, you are mine! I will not let you go! *(clings to him)*

Aïssa And what am I? Your secondary woman and a slave to that ugly creature? You never told me you were married. You never told me you had a past that could catch up with you. You told me you had left your white life behind. And then you are married to that half-blood?

Willems Aïssa, she has come to help me get away from here. Please let me go.

Aïssa If she can't let you go, how could I then, who loved you more than anyone else can do?

Joanna She lies! I have sacrificed everything for you!

Aïssa But I have given him my soul and enclosed his with my own. We can never be separated.

Willems Go to the boat, Joanna. I will follow you.

Joanna I can't leave you alone with another woman!

Willems *(kicks her away)* Do as I say!

Joanna *(whining)* Peter, I will never again let you go. Forgive me everything. It's my fault that you ended up here unrecognizable both as a human being and a soul. There is hardly anything left of you in your burnt-out state.

Aïssa You don't see his soul. You have never seen it or known it. But I know it in all its nakedness, like he in his falseness with his insults has bereft me of everything except my soul. I thought I had won you back, my lover, and instead you come here with a wife dug up who makes demands on you and wants to deprive me

of the last remains of my love. No, you half-blood, I can't accept you. (*has removed her girdle and throws it to Joanna, continues with her arm rings, golden needles and flowers in her hair, then gets Willems' revolver, aims it at Joanna*) Go, woman! He is mine! I will never let him go back to the land of lies, from which all misfortune, ugliness and falseness come!

*Willems* Go, Joanna. I will come. – Give me the gun, Aïssa. It's not loaded anyway, and you don't know how to aim.

*Aïssa* I don't care! You are mine!

*Willems* Aïssa, I have to go. Give me the gun. I need it to manage some hinders on the way.

*Joanna* She is wild. She is crazy.

*Willems* Give me the gun, Aïssa. (*approaches her*)

*Aïssa* You great white man, I hold your life and your soul in my hand! I will never give back what you once have given me!

*Willems* She is mad. She could wound anyone by mistake. – Hand over the gun, Aïssa! (*makes a dash towards her, she fires in the same moment. Willems is hit, stops short standing, can't understand it, and then falls.*)

*Aïssa* (*devastated, rushes to throw herself over him*) My husband! My husband!

*Almayer* (*has come ashore*) I came too late. It's over now, Joanna. She has won and taken over him. (*takes care of Joanna*)

*Aïssa* My love! I didn't even know how the gun worked! It just went off! Live and stay by me! The last thing I wanted was to do you any harm! (*covers him with kisses and gets her long black hair all bloody*)

*Willems* Aïssa, your love... became too much for me. (*dies*)

*Aïssa* He is dead! And I killed him!

*Almayer* No, Aïssa, you only liberated him. Or else someone else would have done it. Now the honour is yours.

*Joanna* Was it really my husband, the feverish skeleton, the decayed wreck, the malaria-stricken wild maniac, that shadow of a man that now has got away?

*Almayer* Yes, Joanna, he was once your husband, but that was a long time ago.

*Aïssa* You may have been married to him, you ugly half-blood of a failed woman who let him go, but I loved his soul which was all I wanted of him, and I will keep it. Go. You are the one who has killed him.

*Almayer* Leave her alone with her corpse, Joanna. I will ask Tom Lingard to give him a decent burial.

*Joanna* I came here to save him and his life but lost him in the bargain. Take me away from here, Almayer, from this nightmare realm of illness and decay that became his death.

*Almayer* He is yours now, Aïssa. (*leaves with Joanna*)

*Aïssa* (*alone with the body*) So you finally got away, you great white man, but not at all as you had planned. Now they never got rid of you, all those who hated you and wanted to kill you, for now you are free to haunt them at night forever, and I will join you in your eternal fury against that damned humanity that threw you out to

find in my arms an eternal avenger. I will never let you go, my love, for now at last you are mine forever. (*lies down over him like to never again let go of him .*)

*Curtain.*

(*Verona, Easter day 8.4.2007,  
translated in May 2020.*)

### *Post script*

I loved Joseph Conrad from my first meeting with him ("Lord Jim" of course) as a very young man, and he was the first English author I systematically started collecting in his original language. I was also a devout reader of Graham Greene in those days, and it struck me as a positive surprise when I learned, that Greene's favourite author was Joseph Conrad.

"An Outcast of the Islands", his second novel, which also could be seen as a deeper version of the famous and several times filmed short story "Heart of Darkness", has always held a special place in my heart among his novels, partly because it never reached the fame it deserves, its romantic character which separates it from all of Conrad's other works, and its tight atmosphere, which Conrad himself admitted made it his most "tropical" novel. Still Conrad is difficult if not impossible to dramatize, because of his infinite richness of language and the advanced level of his dialogue, but when I reread "An Outcast of the Islands" for the first time in almost 40 years, I simply could not help myself, although it wasn't planned at all.

That's how this dramatization came into being – by pure chance and whim. All honour and glory for it goes to Joseph Conrad of course, for his high lasting example with its inexhaustibly inspiring capacity.

Gothenburg, 30.5.2007