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# Who Killed Szomna Grancsa?

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translated from Romanian by Diana Manole

*setting: a bench*

**CHARACTERS:**

Ildiko Magyari

Ibolya Granca

Father

Mother

Bulibaşa (the king-like leader of a Romani community)

Szomna's Voice

Priest

Teacher

TV Reporter

Prosecutor

Passer-by

*The audio recording of 'Cigány Himnusz' (Gypsy Anthem) is playing in Hungarian.<sup>1</sup>*

*The lights come up at the end of the song.*

*A bench is the only set piece.*

**SONG - CIGÁNY HIMNUSZ**

Zöld az erdő, zöld a hegy is

A szerencse jön is, megy is

Gondok kése húsunkba vág

Képmutató lett a világ

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<sup>1</sup>This song has been recorded in Hungarian and posted on the internet by Ando Drom. Translated with Edina Szabados.

Egész világ ellenségünk  
Úzött tolvajokként élünk  
Nem loptunk mi csak egy szöveget  
Jézus vérző tenyeréből

Isten, könyörülj meg nekünk  
Ne szenvedjen tovább népünk  
Megátkoztál, meg is vertél  
Örök csavargóvá tettél.

### **SONG - GYPSY ANTHEM**

The forest's green, the mountain's green, too  
Luck comes and goes, nothing's ever new,  
The knives of troubles our flesh split,  
The world has become a hypocrite.

All people've turned against us like one,  
We live as hunted thieves on the run,  
Though we've never stolen nothing grand,  
But a nail from Christ's bleeding hand.  
God Almighty, have mercy on us  
Stop the suffering of brothers 'n sisters.  
You've cursed us, you've beaten us,

You've made us into travellers 'n drifters.

## SCENE 1 - ON THE BENCH 1

*Ildiko Magyari and Ibolya Grancsa sit on the bench. A crowd can be heard offstage. The Passer-by comes in.*

**Ildiko Magyari:** I don' know what happened. I don' know nothin'. 'Em eyes said something, but I ain't get it.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Lorsy, Lorsy!

**Ildiko Magyari:** All my life, I ain't seen nothin' like that, Ibi!

**Passer-By:** But what happened?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Not even the priest, and he's a smart guy, he's been to many schools, not even the priest don' know what happened.

**Passer-By:** Do you know?

**Ildiko Magyari:** No, but Ibi knows. She been there first.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Right. I heard with my own ears, saw with my own eyes.

**Passer-By:** What?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Here, in the village. The Grancsas' Szomna.

**Ildiko Magyari:** She's...

**Ibolya Grancsa:** ...gone!

**Passer-By:** Where?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Up on the hill.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** At the cemetery.

**Passer-By:** What's the big deal? Thousands of women are slaughtered like animals every day.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Right. She's right, Ildiko. Oh, Lorsy, what we see on TV! Terrorists, earthquakes, floods, thieves breakin' into the homes of 'em, women like us, it make you go crazy... oh, man, but nothin' ain't happen nowhere like here in our

Frumoasa.<sup>2</sup>

**Ildiko Magyari:** Woe! So much grief on all of us 'cos of what you people's done to the whole village.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** What's the matter with you, why you talkin' like that?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I dunno, Ibi, but where you got even one Gypsy kid, you got all the bad things in the world happenin'.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Lorsy, why you talkin' like that?

**Ildiko Magyari:** You think 'tis nice for all 'em TV stations to come here and make us fools in fron' of the whole country?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Well, when they was here, they done filmed you too.

**Ildiko Magyari:** They filmed me, but they ain't make me look no good.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** They made you look like how you is.

**Passer-By:** What happened?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Ey, maybe you tell us what happen'. We don' know nothin' no more.

**Ildiko Magyari:** Tell her everything you saw 'cos we can't wrap our heads around it!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** You tell 'er! 'Cos you know it, too!

**Ildiko Magyari:** But you was there first!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I was, but you been there, too, you know what happen'!

**Ildiko Magyari:** But you called the cops, Ibi! Was three days ago. I was on my way back from the forest with firewood. Oh, my, her mom and dad to find 'er like that! You know, I think she wriggled up there to get the rope into her skin like that. When I seen her, I hurried to help her, to pull 'er down. Almost fell with her on top of me. Lawd forbid, what eyes she had! You could swear she wasn't dead. You know how her eyes glowed? Fireworks.

**Passer-By:** Her eyes glowed? She was alive!

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<sup>2</sup>Beautiful (Romanian), a village in Harghita county in Romania.

**Ildiko Magyari:** No, no, when I got there, the girl was dead – dead as dirt. I tried to help her, pull 'er down, but I tripped. Oh, Lawd, 'er eyes! Full of...of hate, disgust, of... I dunno what else to say. Fear? Nah, it wasn't fear. Shame, grief... Oh, Lawd, what was in my poor heart! I been barely standin' on my feet. I rushed home. What else? I couldn't do nothin'! I just went home. I can't raise the dead, Lawd forbid!

## SCENE 2 - THE INTERROGATION 1

**Prosecutor:** Citizen Ibolya Grancsa?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** That's me, ma'am.

**Prosecutor:** Are you related to the deceased?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** That's right, ma'am.

**Prosecutor:** What kind of relative?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I'm no relative. Here in the village, all of us are either Grancsa or Gabor.

**Prosecutor:** You were the first who saw the body of the deceased.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Yes, ma'am. Me.

**Prosecutor:** Tell us what happened.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I went real quick and called the police.

**Prosecutor:** When?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Four days ago.

**Prosecutor:** And what did you see?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** On the floor, I saw the girl's headscarf. Up there, I saw...

**Prosecutor:** The rope?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Yes. And I also saw somethin' written with red dye.

**Prosecutor:** What exactly was written?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Oh, ma'am, I gotta say it all, all the things, the whole truth as it was 'cos I can't lie.

**Prosecutor:** Very good. Please tell us.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I saw some things this morning.

**Prosecutor:** This morning? What exactly?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I saw the scarf on her head like this...



**Prosecutor:** On whose head?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Of the dead, ma'am.

**Prosecutor:** The scarf of the dead on the head of the dead?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** You'd think she was the Holy Virgin, Lawd forgive me. Yes, ma'am! Why you stare at me? You think people get killed just with knives and guns? No, ma'am, they get killed with other things, too. Power and money. No blood need be spilled, not one drop. Look at 'em: they healthy as a horse, but they all dead. Hate of race kills 'em! And greed! That's the biggest sin!

**Prosecutor:** Go back to your seat. Let's return to more concrete things. Did you see any signs of violence on the girl's body?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Oh, my, I dunno.

**Prosecutor:** Why do you think she wrote that?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno, ma'am, how can I know?

**Prosecutor:** But what did she write?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno.

**Prosecutor:** Didn't you read it?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno, ma'am.

**Prosecutor:** Do you know how to read?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno.

**Prosecutor:** Where did she get the rope?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Oh, my, how can I know? I dunno.

**Prosecutor:** Do you think there is a possibility that the girl was hung by someone else?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno.

**Prosecutor:** Do you think she was afraid of getting married?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno, ma'am.

**Prosecutor:** Had she run away from home?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I dunno, I dunno.

**Prosecutor:** No further questions.

### Scene 3 - The Interrogation 2

*Ildiko takes Ibolya's place in front of the Prosecutor.*

**Prosecutor:** Citizen Ildiko Magyari? Magyari?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Yes, ma'am.

**Prosecutor:** Are you from here, from this village?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Yeah, from here, from Frumoasa.

**Prosecutor:** Magyari? From this village? Everyone here's Gabor or Granca.

**Ildiko Magyari:** No, dear ma'am. Only theirs, the Gypsies. Not us.

**Prosecutor:** You aren't from the community.

**Ildiko Magyari:** Lawd forbid, no!

**Prosecutor:** Judging by your looks, you seem like one of them.

**Ildiko Magyari:** Woe, yous, too. Better yous ain't. It happens sometimes. But it's not like that with me.

**Prosecutor:** When was the last time you saw the deceased alive?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Dear ma'am, I saw her five days ago. Wednesday, the day before Children's Day.

**Prosecutor:** Under what circumstances did you see her?

**Ildiko Magyari:** 'Stances like what?

**Prosecutor:** Where was she, with whom was she?

**Ildiko Magyari:** She was at the general store. She'd just bought some red hair dye and I was truly shocked the girl was alone, without 'er brother on 'er side.

**Prosecutor:** Please tell me: how did she look? Did she bear any signs of violence? Of crying? How did she look?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Hm...She... had the headscarf on her head. But I ain't pay too much attention to 'er.

**Prosecutor:** Did you know her personally?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I knew 'er, how could I not? She's from the village.

**Prosecutor:** And you didn't talk to her?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Oh, my, I ain't have nothin' to do with 'er.

**Prosecutor:** Why?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Oh, we've nothin' to do with 'em Gypsies.

**Prosecutor:** Why?

**Ildiko Magyari:** 'Cos they stealin' our forest. They stole the wood of the whole village.

**Prosecutor:** In your opinion, what could have determined the deceased to take her own life?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I think, dear ma'am, the girl got scared of gettin' married and wanted to get away. What can I tell you? I think she lost heart. This girl was different, I dunno how to tell you. Okay, she was a girl like all girls, but different in some ways. Oh Lawd, I'm tryna forget 'em eyes. I ain't think I'd ne'er see her again. I mean, only see her like that, dead. Maybe if I said a word to her... What a sin! She sinned in front of the Lawd Almighty! She's burnin' in Gehenna! Oh, my Lawd!

## Scene 4 - At The Church

**Priest:** Shush, women! Why do you keep talkin' about sin? Get into the church. Pray! Stop yappin' so much! Is this the time for yappin'? Lawd Almighty, forgive me! Lawd, forgive Szomna's sin! 'Cos only out of ignorance and despair she did what she did! Lawd, forgive me my sin! It's my fault. It's only my fault 'cos I encouraged 'er in this direction. It's my fault, Lawd, I confess! Was a hot day, and I was on Rac Road. I was so thirsty, and I saw Szomna at the gate. And she waved at me and I went inside their house. She gave me a glass of water. And she begged me for the Lawd's sake to talk to her father to give her peace, to let 'er go back to school, to stop pesterin' her about gettin' married, to let 'er follow her way 'cos she wanted to leave the Gypsies, she wanted another kinda life. Lawd Almighty, forgive me! How she condemned me with what she wrote on that wall! I promised 'er, but something got into me, there was something wrong with that water and I got diarrhea and spent the whole day on the toilet. And I couldn't go talk to Grancsa. I couldn't keep my promise. 'Cos if I did, maybe this didn't happen. I confess, yes. Forgive me, Lawd! It's my fault. I've always kept my promises to her. I called Grancsa to church and told him: 'You, Grancsa, you and all of yours will burn in Gehenna if you don't let the girl go to school to find 'er way, to make a different life for 'erself, not the miserable one you all have. And the state'll also cut all your child benefits! Look it, that's how Szomna finished grade eight. No child from Frumoasa village has ever made it to grade eight. Our Szomna did. There was another girl, but Szomna was the first one. I also helped 'er with school supplies and told 'er to keep going. And I called Grancsa to church again and told him: 'You, Grancsa, pay attention to what I'm sayin', you and all of yours will burn in Gehenna if you don' let the girl go to high school! The mayor also helped me, it's true, with more down-to-earth arguments: he said that he'd cut their, what's it called, social aid. And that's how our Szomna went to high school. I helped 'er with commutin', with textbooks, with notebooks, I always put money on 'er phone card. It's my fault Lawd, 'cos it was me who supported 'er on this path! And I couldn't keep my promise. The next day, when I went down on Rac Road, I hadn't even set foot on it when I saw Szomna with 'er headscarf on. She looked at me in such a deep, serious way. It was like she put a handful of ice on my chest and I couldn't move anymore. And I knew, Lawd, that something terrible had happened. I went there and saw it all, her clothes and headscarf on the floor. How she condemned me with what she wrote there on the wall! It's my fault, only my fault. Lawd Almighty, she had only

You in 'er heart! You know it, Lawd, she was a pure soul! Only us sinners held 'er back. Since she was just a little child, she came to church, she was at every Sunday service, she sang in the church choir, she came to everything I organized at the church. Just three weeks ago she received the Holy Communion right from the hand of Bishop Jakubinyi of Alba Iulia. Oh, Lawd, His Excellency praised 'er so much, told 'er to stay in school, and our Szomna was so proud of 'erself, so happy. And His Excellency even took a picture with 'er. Could that have been a child thinkin' of dying? Not even three weeks passed, and now I, a sinner, have to hold 'er funeral service. Lawd, she had only You in 'er heart! Lawd Almighty, forgive her sin for she did it only out of ignorance and despair. Lawd, take her to Thy kingdom, where are no books, no notebooks! It's my fault! Maybe if I kept my promise and talked to Granca, maybe this wouldn't had happened. It was 'cos of the water! She could had been the pride of this village, but maybe something's still changed.

Our Father,

Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;

Thy kingdom come;

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

*(Blackout and audio recording plays)*

Ave Maria, gratia plena

Maria, gratia plena

Maria, gratia plena

Ave, Ave Dominus

Dominus tecum

Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus

Et benedictus fructus ventris

Ventris tui, Iesus

Ave Maria.

### Scene 5 - The Interrogation 3

**Prosecutor:** Please continue.

**Ildiko Magyari:** Dear ma'am, Szomna liked school since she was little, but 'er parents ain't let 'er continue 'cos she was the eldest child and they said she had to stay home and take care of the younger ones to get used to it for when she got married.

**Prosecutor:** When she got married?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Well, she was promised as a child to a Gypsy from their village, one István Gabor, who steals wood and got rich sellin' it in the villages. Write it down. The Grancsas, dear ma'am, are very poor. They been scrapin' by. Szomna said she'd kill herself if they ain't let 'er go to school.

**Prosecutor:** You heard her?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I didn', but the whole village knows. Szomna finished grade eight last year and passed the entrance exam to high school. Only her and another girl from Frumoasa. 8.75 she got, dear ma'am, everyone been amazed by such a smart Gypsy girl. But 'em parents, no and no, they ain't let 'er go to high school.

**Prosecutor:** But she went to high school.

**Ildiko Magyari:** She'd gone 'cos the priest ain't take no for an answer. But only a semester.

**Prosecutor:** Why only a semester?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Woe, 'cos she killed 'erself. Why ain't they let 'er go? But y'see, how long could they do it, she was older now, others 'er age have three-four children, not only Gypsies, but also our girls from the village. I dunno what Szomna learned in school 'cos she ain't even wanna wear the Gypsy dress anymore.

**Prosecutor:** What time do you usually go to the forest for firewood?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Oh, I only go for firewood, ma'am. 'Em Gypsies get the green ones.

**Prosecutor:** At what time?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Crack o' dawn.



**Prosecutor:** 4? 5?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Maybe, but I don' got a watch.

**Prosecutor:** And when you go to the forest, do you pass by Grancsa's barn?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I sure do, 'cos I live next door and I get to the forest faster if I go through their backyard.

**Prosecutor:** And do you come back the same way?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Yeah, got no other choice.

**Prosecutor:** On the morning in question, did you hear anything, did you notice anything when you passed by the barn?

**Ildiko Magyari:** No, nothin'.

**Prosecutor:** And when you came back?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Neither.

**Prosecutor:** I'll ask you one more question and I'd like you to answer honestly. Are you sure you didn't enter the barn that morning?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Biztos, sure. I got no business goin' to 'em Gypsies.

**Prosecutor:** How do you explain the fact that witness Grancsa declares that she saw you running out of the barn that morning, terrified and with red dye on your skirt?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Lawd forbid, but this Grancsa lies. But 'tis not true. This Grancsa lies. I ain't go into no barn.

**Prosecutor:** Why do you have red dye on your skirt?

**Ildiko Magyari:** But I don' 'cos I washed it.

## SCENE 6 - THE TV NEWS REPORT

**Tv News Reporter:** She wanted it, she wished it, and she would have succeeded! Szomna Grancsa had nothing to eat or wear, but now she has a rich girl's coffin, a grave with ceramic tiles, and the most beautiful horses at her home's gate. Ladies and gentlemen, we'll show you the enormous drama of the unfortunate Gypsy girl, too smart for the wretched world in which she was born! As the saying goes, the family lessens you and the family lowers you into the ground. We'll show you step by step the funeral of Szomna Grancsa. We're broadcasting live from the heart of the Gypsy community where the Gypsies are taking Szomna on her final journey to the cemetery, with great pomp and circumstance! Gypsies from seven counties have pitched in for this funeral, and my colleagues from all the TV stations are broadcasting live, but we have the exclusive, don't go anywhere, we'll broadcast step by step what happens at Szomna Grancsa's funeral! Don't go anywhere, we'll also have guests. And now it's time for a short commercial. We're back, we're here in Frumoasa village. As I already mentioned, we have live guests. My colleagues inform me that the most important man in Frumoasa will join us in a few moments. Here he comes! Bulibaşa, the Gypsy king-like leader from Frumoasa. We ask that he come closer, and we thank him for accepting our invitation. What an extraordinary guest! Please take a seat. Good afternoon and welcome. We're glad that you are here with us. Please tell me: why this astonishing splendor?

**Bulibaşa:** Are they filming?

**Reporter:** Yes, they are. Please sir, the mic needs to stay with me.

**Bulibaşa:** Dear madam, we don' make us fools in fron' of the whole country! The political sirs come here, and we did our duty, we gave them what we should: kettles, teapots, piros virág, red flowers. Please film the wreaths. You can see the writing on the ribbons. Can you film 'em? And cars done come from all over, can you film 'em?

**Reporter:** What do you mean that you don't want to make fools of yourselves? Or rather, are you trying to wash away the sin of not letting this girl go to school? Are you sorry Szomna died? Why do the Gabor women walk one step behind the men?

**Bulibaşa:** The Gabor women are very faithful. Very hardworking. With beautiful

long braids down their backs, not like others.

**Reporter:** Why did this girl have to get married and have many children and raise them in poverty and darkness?

**Bulibaşa:** Tinsmithing, handiwork – there's things to do for money.

**Reporter:** Why do the Gabors' women have to obey the men?

**Bulibaşa:** We're the biggest Roma family!

**Reporter:** I have one more very important question for you. Please listen carefully! Did you prefer to let this girl die rather than let your girls go to school?

**Bulibaşa:** Are they filming?

**Reporter:** Yes, sir, they are.

**Bulibaşa:** Swear on my kids we's gonna keep our girls iskolában, in school, day and night, nonstop.

**Reporter:** Thank you! Dear friends, the Bulibaşa from Frumoasa was here with us! Now, it's time for a short commercial break. And we're back. We have very important information for you. We're coming to you live from Frumoasa village. This girl's death seems to be a big loss for everyone here. Many people say that Gypsy girls shouldn't be locked away at home. They say that they're locked away both literally and figuratively. Breaking news from an unofficial source: on the first day of high school, when Szomna left home for the first time, all the people came, young and old, like today to the funeral, to see with their own eyes the miracle that a Gypsy girl from Frumoasa was going to high school in the city. We're told that no one from her family came. The men stayed home, resentfully gnawing on their mustaches.

**Old Woman:** It ain't true.

**Reporter:** Not now, please. And the women from her family went only up to the gate, when the bus passed, to show the rebel something under their skirts. Now, ma'am, come closer.

**Old Woman:** It ain't true, ma'am. What they say on 'em TVs is all just lies.

**Reporter:** A very important witness. Looks like she's seen everything that

happened here in Frumoasa. So, we have very, very important new information for you. Ma'am, turn to the camera. Yes, with your feet, your head, your shoulders, yes, let the entire country see you because you have very interesting things to say. You said that everything we've reported so far is just lies. But what is the truth?

**Old Woman:** I was there in the barn and saw everythin'.

**Reporter:** What did you see?

**Old Woman:** Blood, ma'am. It was full of blood. On the girl's skirt, on her hands, on the floor.

**Reporter:** And beside this, did you see anything else?

**Old Woman:** The wood the Gypsies been stealin'. The whole forest was there in the barn.

**Reporter:** I get it. But other than that, did you see anything else?

**Old Woman:** Blood.

**Reporter:** I have one more very important question. Please listen carefully. Do you think someone killed Szomna?

**Old Woman:** Maybe someone killed her. Sure, it's possible. But I can't know.

**Reporter:** I understand. Thank you. Now we have a new theory.

**Old Woman:** Oh, the hell with yous all and the seven lei<sup>3</sup> you gave me. And they lyin' about makin' our pensions bigger.

**Reporter:** Studio, am I live? We now have an interesting new theory. If you believe someone killed Szomna Granca, text 1422, if you think Szomna Granca committed suicide, text 1759. And now we're taking a very short commercial break. Dear friends, we're live again, bringing to you a sensational, extraordinary story. We're now in front of Szomna Granca's house. Look for yourselves, ladies and gentlemen, in what poverty and darkness this girl was forced to live. Dear friends, in a few moments, Szomna Granca's father will be here with me. He's the alleged moral author of this tragedy. Don't change the channel, in a few

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<sup>3</sup>Leu (singular), lei (plural) – Romanian currency.

seconds Mr. Grancsa will come and share with us some very interesting things. Here he comes. Mr. Grancsa, thank you very much for talking to us. We know that Szomna had run away several times to escape the Gypsy traditions. Mr. Grancsa, did you prefer to let your daughter die instead of letting her go to school? Mr. Grancsa, do you hear me?

**Father:** I let her go, dear madam. But what if someone stole my daughter from school? How could I find her then?

**Reporter:** Really? Mr. Grancsa, where was she safer than at high school, with guards at the gate?

*Blackout and audio recording of the song, 'Szomorú vasárnap' (Mournful Sunday), playing in Hungarian in the original.<sup>4</sup>*

### **SONG - SZOMORÚ VASÁRNAP**

Szomorú vasárnap

Száz fehér virággal

vártalak kedvesem

templomi imával.

Álmokat kergető

vasárnap délelőtt,

bánatom hintaja

nélküled visszajött.

Azóta szomorú

mindig a vasárnap,

könny csak az italom,

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<sup>4</sup>Also known as 'The Hungarian Suicide Song,' this was a popular song composed by Hungarian pianist and composer Rezső Seress, released in 1933. The audio recording is available on Amazon Music Unlimited. Translated with Edina Szabados.

kenyerem a bánat.

Szomorú vasárnap.

### **SONG - MOURNFUL SUNDAY**

Mournful Sunday

On a mournful Sunday, I was  
waiting for you, my dearest,  
with a hundred white flowers  
and a church prayer.

On a Sunday morning,  
when all chase their dreams,  
my sorrows' carriage  
came back without you.

Ever since, my Sundays  
have been just mourning,  
tears - my only drink,  
sorrow - my daily bread.

Oh, mournful Sundays.

## SCENE 7 - THE PARENTS

**Father:** She had a sensitive nature, my daughter. She ne'er bother'd anyone, my daughter. Seventeen years old. She didn't know any men. She was pure, my daughter, 'cos that's how I been raisin' her. I don' feel guilty about nothin'.

**Mother:** That's right, husband, you's right. Someone messed with 'er head there, at the school in Miercurea Ciuc, or else she ne'er done nothin' like that! We ain't let 'er go to school no more, it's true, but where to get the money? And some been sayin' she loved a classmate there at the school. And that's great shame for us, Gypsies, great shame. We only thought of what was good for 'er.

**Father:** Right, what can we do if the girl didn't wanna listen? We must make peace with her bein' gone and that's the end of it!

**Mother:** Oh Lawd, but what a girl we had! She was very kind. She always helped 'er brothers. Maybe if you let 'er go...

**Father:** To be honest, the girl was backwards. She had some problem but ne'er told us nothin'. When the doctor came, he told us she been takin' pills. We saw that she was troubled, but I didn't know it was that bad, I didn't think that she got so bad. We been talkin' to others about the ins and outs. They told us that their daughters also went and got all worked up like that, but in the end, they listened to their parents, and now they're good, married, with families. Maybe 'er mother had to talk to 'er more, woman to woman, 'cos I'm a man, it ain't my place.

**Mother:** Woe, talk about what, husband? You ain't let 'er go to school. You locked 'er away for days. She done run away to kin in Sângeorgiu so many times. Maybe if you let 'er go, our girl ain't do what she did.

**Father:** And what did you do, bitch, what? Was it my business to talk to 'er, a man? Eat your grief, woman, drop dead like her! So te phenau me na si tu lajavo, te ashunen o gadje?<sup>5</sup>

**Mother:** So kames mo? So phenes? Ka tu kamnian love te des la romeske,<sup>6</sup> you bum!

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<sup>5</sup>'Shut up, do you want the gadje to hear you?' (Romani, translated by the author)

<sup>6</sup>'What do you want from me? What do you want? You were happy to get her money!' (Romani)

**Father:** I'm glad all the neighbours and relatives pitched in to bury her in the proper way, in a white wedding dress and a lacquered oak coffin. As I been tellin' you: she had a heavy weight on 'er heart, she had... What do they call it, woman?

**Mother:** Depression.

**Father:** Right! I have that, too, now, 'cos I miss my daughter. I'm tryna act like I don't miss her, but we's sick, me and my wife. We didn't tell our daughter not to go to school. If we had money she could gone. Our girl wanted to climb up and look what came out of 'er! Lawd Almighty, what curse got on our heads! Her fate hurts me more than anythin'! I'm alive but I'm not livin' anymore.



## SCENE 8 - THE TEACHER

*Rehearsing her eulogy.*

**Teacher:** We're here today to celebrate... Pay attention! We'll start from the beginning and, quiet, or I'll give you a quiz! Such sadness. I see attendance is good. We're here today to guide on her last journey this girl who was our daughter, our student, and our classmate, a prominent, outstanding member of Frumoasa village. What do I want you to know? On the first day of school, student Grancsa asked for permission to address the class. I let her, and she said, 'Listen, I'm tellin' all of you that I'm a Gypsy and, if you have a problem with that, please tell me now. Please don't make me suffer for it later 'cos all I want is to be like all of you, I wanna study.' And then she asked me to move her to the front row. How could I? We're a special class, the mayor's daughter was sitting in the first row together with... better to keep it positive. She wanted to study, could study, but had the wrong conditions at home. I'm sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Grancsa. For us, the teachers, but also for her classmates, it's very clear why Szomna did what she did. She also left it in writing. She wanted to climb above her station. She was pretty good in math, had trouble with physics, that was her sore spot, but she could had done better, she wanted to learn more. What do I mean? Love's a wandering child. While her classmates will continue their studies, live their adolescence, youth, their entire lives, go to university, what was student Szomna Grancsa expected to do? She had to withdraw discreetly and walk barefoot on the path beaten by hundreds and thousands of Roma women. That's what she had to do. She suffered from being kept on a short leash, too short. She confided in me, we had a more special relationship. She was destined to be the slave of her family and then of her husband. With no right to appeal. Szomna was guarded by a man from the family all the time, not only on the way to school, but also on the way back home, and even during school breaks. She wasn't allowed on class trips. She only went on a short city tour with her classmates. We gave a test in class: 'What do I like about you?' Do you know what Szomna's classmates wrote about her? 'What do I like about Szomna Grancsa? She doesn't scream, doesn't get into fights, doesn't swear.' I'll summarize because there are many answers. Students mean, Szomna behaves. She doesn't stink, she doesn't come to school barefoot, she isn't filthy. They mean, she's beautiful. Szomna Grancsa does her work in class, she doesn't steal. She's hardworking. And she sang very well. We wanted to stage Carmen at

school. What do I mean with these test results? Szomna was an absolutely normal teenager, though she was a Gypsy. It happens, rarely, but it happens. We must admit: there are exceptions. For the life of me, I can't understand why she did this. I mean, this, why she took... Although the student left it in writing. I know that, when she was younger, Szomna benefited from this program 'Psychologists in Schools,' a very good one. The government changed, the Minister of Education changed, they cancelled the program. Everything that works gets cancelled in this country. She had this thing, as they say in math, a problem: she couldn't accept her status as a minority, as Roma, she couldn't accept her destiny to walk barefoot on the path beaten by thousands of Roma women. She couldn't imagine that. And because we're here to guide her on her last journey, we should get to know her better, we have time, the dead can wait: did you know that Szomna Grancsa was the first little Gypsy girl in Frumoasa village who dared to wear jeans? You didn't know! Did you know that she was the first Gypsy girl in Frumoasa who dared to wear the sweaters and blouses received from charities? Did you know that since the age of nine she wasn't allowed to walk alone on the street, anywhere, unaccompanied by a male family member? What kind of life is that? Did you know that she started a small revolution on her own? Yes, others followed her example. Other Roma children went to school in jeans and sweaters. We're here today to guide her on her last journey. I hope that this day will remain deeply imprinted in your hearts and minds because education, darn it, and only education can solve the Gypsy problem! Look, we sit around and cry on graves. I'll circle back and end exactly how I started. We're here today to guide Szomna Grancsa on her last journey. Don't forget this day. I'd like all of you to ask yourselves in your minds and hearts: who killed student Szomna Grancsa? Not who killed her, but why did Szomna Grancsa kill herself? That sounds better. What if I tell them that I almost lost my job because of this little Gypsy girl? That all the parents came to ask to withdraw their children from my class and, after twenty years of hard work in the middle of nowhere, I was going to lose my bread and butter? I had to go to Bucharest for a hearing. The mayor also helped me, don't think dirty, he's married, but we were classmates at university.

*Blackout.*

## **SCENE 9 - ON THE BENCH 2**

**Ildiko Magyari:** Lawd forbid, Ibi! Why did that woman say Szomna was killed? Was this girl killed or she killed herself? I don' understand nothin' no more.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** She took 'er own life. That's what she said after 'er death.

**Ildiko Magyari:** How can a dead girl talk?!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** If she talked, she talked... What can I say?

**Ildiko Magyari:** Lies! Everybody been sayin' only lies about this girl! The teacher, the priest, her mom and dad, lies and lies.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** She showed 'erself to me and I'm tellin' you that she talked.

**Ildiko Magyari:** People keep tellin' stories, some say one thing, others the other one. Maybe that makes it easier for 'em. What do I know?

## SCENE 10 - THE APPARITION<sup>7</sup>

**Szomna:** Look it, my father's hatchet, how long he's been lookin' for it! He never thought it was up here. I forgot the dye bottle open. If the li'l one steps on it, she'll be red from head to toe! Hyper as she is, I'm sure it's gonna happen. Sunita, my li'l sister, what a relief it's been to watch over you all night! You gave me strength. What a big hand I have! Look at my feet hanging over the floor! It's beautiful here, I didn't expect that! No more worries, no more longing, no more fear they won't let me go to school. My body feels light and one with everything else! What's that chair doin' upside down? Did I push it? So, what am I doin' up here? No, no, it ain't no good, it ain't no good, I must focus, scream for help! Someone has to hear me! Mother, father, li'l sister, brother! Can't any louder 'cos my neck hurts! What? I'm still here? After all, I'm glad they didn't catch me. I'd have been ashamed. The plan was good, it didn't fail. Why stay here? School was over for me. The priest thought I could do it, but I couldn't. I had to go back to the village. You can't escape from here. That's how they'll bury me, in a white wedding dress and a big coffin. I wanted real bad to go to high school in Miercurea Ciuc! But I was sick of the last row in the classroom. Forgive me, mother! Forgive me, father! If you love me, you'll understand! Stop lookin' at me like that! Please, beat me, kill me if you want, but don't look at me like that! There was no place for me on this earth. I was caught between two worlds and both gave me nothin' but sufferin'. Is there a place for girls like me? With a school as good as fresh bread? Here, there was no school or bread for girls like me. I've ended up hatin' who I was, hatin' the poor boy I had to marry, all the relatives, the school, my classmates, the priest, but especially myself 'cos I was real powerless. I was hurtin' and I wanted to punish them! Now, I'm askin' all of 'em for forgiveness. I still don't have it in me to forgive myself. I'll see you all in your dreams. But other girls shouldn't go through what I've been through. If you're thinkin' of takin' your own lives, listen to me. Talk to someone, to anyone. But don't go all the way like I did. It was too much for me. But it's good that I wrote on the wall, so it stays there. Anyways, everyone will forget about me after a few years. Dark's coming down. I see a red rose in my mouth and thorns in my throat, but it doesn't hurt. Don't believe anything they say about me! The hell with them! I did what I wanted to do! Oh, God! Have you ever heard such words

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<sup>7</sup>Szomna's apparition was originally performed by the actors playing Ibolya Granca (movement) and Ildiko Magyari (voice).

from a girl? Have such curses ever reached someone's ear? The ears of those who gave them life? My curses killed me before I did!

**Ildiko Magyar:** Lawd forbid, Ibi, everybody been sayin' only lies about this girl!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Crazy woman, you're scared stiff! 'Em no lies, I just told you! She showed herself to me!

*Blackout and audio recording of the song 'Na djuvav' (I can't live) is playing in Romani in the original.<sup>8</sup>*

### **SONG - NA DJUVAV / I CAN'T LIVE**

Na djuvav

Na djuvav,

na djuvav,

na geonav so te cherau,

me ca mofte rovav,

pa la mori chei te geau,

me ca mofte rovav.

Ai devla devla!

I can't live

I can't live,

I can't live,

I dunno what to do,

I wanna cry,

go after my girl,

I wanna cry.

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<sup>8</sup>Rough translation provided by the author.

Oh Lord, oh Lord!

### SCENE 11 - ON THE BENCH 3

*Ildiko and Ibolya approach the bench. Ibolya carries a big raffia shopping bag.*

**Ildiko Magyari:** Woe, Lawd, you stepped on my foot! Come closer!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Can't! You come. Move away!

**Ildiko Magyari:** Where?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** But why is it so heavy? What's in it? It broke my back!

**Ildiko Magyari:** Open it! Let's see what they been givin' us!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Wow! They gave us books.

**Ildiko Magyari:** Oh, my, what can we do with books? We don' need 'em! Wait! They good for the toilet! Give 'em to me! Pack 'em, I'll take 'em home.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Shut up! Books got Szomna where she's now! I'll put 'em all on the fire!

**Ildiko Magyari:** I see, you don' have enough wood stolen from the forest!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Shame on you!

**Ildiko Magyari:** Books ain't got Szomna where she's now! The girl been scared of marriage and wanted to get away from it.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** You said that already.

**Ildiko Magyari:** I was near the barn that day.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** I know 'cos I saw you!

**Ildiko Magyari:** Shut up! Keep it down 'cos I don' want all the village knowin' that I saw her.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Tell me!

**Ildiko Magyari:** I will, but keep it down. I heard Szomna near the barn cryin' and howlin'. Real bad! And there was a young lad who been beggin' her to run away with him. He said he had enough money set aside, they'd live well, he'd work. That he'd make her happy. Only and only if she'd run away with him and get married. 'Say yes! Say yes!' the lad kept sayin'. 'If not, I'll kill you and kill myself.'

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Oh, Lorsy! What if this lad killed her?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I think he was desperate she'd marry the one she been promised to. He couldn't make her quiet, she kept cryin'. She said yes at long last and he left. The boy been laughin' on the road, I saw him. But Szomna stayed in the barn cryin'. Writin' somethin'. With red dye. Cryin' and writin'. I couldn't take it no more and told her: 'Don't cry, my dear girl! No matter how hard you cry, it's all for nothin'.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** That's right!

**Ildiko Magyari:** 'That's how us women are made, we cry.' And then all that wailin' changed and she started laughin' like crazy. She said, 'Not me, I'm not weak. You're weak 'cos you put up with everything. If you're strong, why don't you kill your man?' 'Lawd forbid, how can you say that? How can I kill my man? We fight at times, he beats me, but he's my husband and he loves me.'

**Ildiko Magyari:** Mine, too!

**Ildiko Magyari:** And she said somethin' else and told me to remember.

**Ildiko Magyari:** What?

**Ildiko Magyari:** I been tryna for three days and... Wait! (Remembering) 'You can send him to the gallows. That's what a woman would do. But you ain't women. That's why I'm cryin'. For all of you 'cos I'm tired of this bad joke.' She spat me right in the eyes and laughed like crazy. 'Don't forget what I said!' I ran away from the mad girl. I ain't guilty of nothin'. If she wanted to kill herself, what could I do? I couldn't even say nothin'. Maybe a nice word... But if she wanted to do it? I would've talked for nothin'. What can I do? I can't raise the dead.

**Passer-By:** *(to the audience)* Which version of Szomna's story do you choose to believe?

*The Passer-by leaves the stage.*



## SCENE 12 - ON THE BENCH 4

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Get up! You hear that?

**Ildiko Magyari:** A baby's crying.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Oh, how pretty she is!

**Ildiko Magyari:** Look, she has gold earrings!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Have you no shame? You're petty and greedy!

**Ildiko Magyari:** Greedy 'cos I want to take care of an orphan? How much fun 'em parents had when they made this baby! And then they threw her away.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** They also left an icon. Poor parents, they put it here to protect her! They been through hell to abandon this baby!

**Ildiko Magyari:** And you take their side.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Give her to me! I have six more children and I'll take care of her.

**Ildiko Magyari:** I ain't give you this baby to make her a Gypsy. It's enough how much you been ruttin' in Frumoasa. You wanna rule over us.

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Shame on you for talkin' like that! Give her to me 'cos I'll raise her with love.

**Ildiko Magyari:** Raise her with love to send 'er to steal wood?

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Why do you talk like that? Give me the baby. I'll name her Szomna.

**Ildiko Magyari:** That cursed name brought grief on the entire village. Gonna be seven years of hunger and misery in Frumoasa 'cos of what that girl did. Even the grass won't grow green no more. Lawd will punish all of us 'cos of her!

**Ibolya Grancsa:** Shame on you to talk like that! Szomna set an example for the whole village. What she did should be heard in every home in Frumoasa and everywhere else too. 'Cos she did a great thing for our women. Think about it and see if you don' agree with me!

**Ildiko Magyari:** And that's why she wrote what she wrote?

*Ildiko goes to the back of the stage and draws the gallows on the back wall.*

**Ildiko Magyari:** You playin'?

*Ildiko and Ibolya start playing the Hangman game on the back wall. Ibolya says letters at random. A few letters are filled in, but Ibolya loses the game, as Ildiko finishes drawing the hanged man on the wall. Then she fills in all the missing letters: THE SCHOOL IS ME. The lights focus on the words on the wall.*

**Ildiko Magyari:** You lost, Szomna, you lost!

*Blackout and audio recording of the 'Cigány Himnusz' (Gypsy Anthem) playing in Hungarian in the original.*

**SONG - CIGÁNY HIMNUSZ**

Zöld az erdő, zöld a hegy is

A szerencse jön is, megy is

Gondok kése húsunkba vág

Képmutató lett a világ

Egész világ ellenségünk

Úzött tolvajokként élünk

Nem loptunk mi csak egy szöveget

Jézus vérző tenyeréből

Isten, könyörülj meg nekünk

Ne szenvedjen tovább népünk

Megátkoztál, meg is vertél

Örök csavargóvá tettél.

### **SONG - GYPSY ANTHEM**

The forest's green, the mountain's green, too

Luck comes and goes, nothing's ever new,

The knives of troubles our flesh split,

The world has become a hypocrite.

All the people have turned against us like one,

We live as hunted thieves on the run,

Though we've never stolen nothing grand,

But a nail from Christ's bleeding hand.

God Almighty, have mercy on us

Stop the suffering of brothers 'n sisters.

You've cursed us, you've beaten us,

You've made us into travellers 'n drifters.