

FORBIDDEN GLASS

A Full-Length Play

By
Kirt Shineman

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TITLE: FORBIDDEN GLASS

PAGE COUNT – 80 PAGES

CHARACTERS:

JAVAD	This 23 year-old male, Iranian artist, with dark shaggy curly hair, brown eyes, feels most comfortable dressed in jeans, a sweater, and boots, to show his masculine and well-built body. Rather than handsome, Javad is beautiful, almost delicate, beardless, and tempting. His hair sets him apart from BARRY. {He is NAGHALI most of the time, except when Harun does the “role”.} The NAGHALI is a male traditional Iranian storyteller in a caftan, with a “talking stick” who can sing and speaks lyrically. He is Scheherasade.
BARRY	As an American reporter (male) with fair-hair he tries to conceal both his youthful twenty-something age and his intelligence. His Western style, as shown in his light genuine leather luggage, rugged and modern camera and cowboy boots, adds to his buccaneer swagger. Something about him makes him sexy; perhaps his attractiveness stems from his glamorous, yet strongly masculine blonde hair, or maybe from his well-defined body.
HARUN	In any corporate office, when this princely 43-year-old, enters he trumps the underlings with his stature alone. He is first an Iranian wealthy business man, well dressed, striking and muscular, but secondly, he is liberal and touching.
FATHER	A large beefy man in size and voice who maybe in his early 60’s. As Javad’s father he demands respect.
SISTER	a young woman, smart and beautiful
INVESTIGATOR	a Turkish man/woman
BASIJI ONE	an Iranian secret police
BASIJI TWO	another Iranian secret police
BUS DRIVER	

DOUBLING SUGGESTED CASTING:CAST: 5 [with double casting]

Actor One: JAVAD and NAGHALI

Actor Two: HARUN

Actor Three: FATHER, INVESTIGATOR, BASIJI ONE

Actor Four: BARRY

Actress One: SISTER, BASIJI TWO, DRIVER

CAST: 6 [with double casting]

Actor One: JAVAD and NAGHALI

Actor Two: HARUN

Actor Three: FATHER, BASIJI ONE

Actor Four: BARRY

Actor Five: INVESTIGATOR

Actress One: SISTER, BASIJI TWO, DRIVER

RACIAL & ETHICAL CASTING: No reason to be concerned with the racial appearance of the actors playing the Iranian characters. Iranian and Persian people are not necessarily any shade of brown. There are “White”, “Brown”, and “Tan” Iranians.

TIME:

February 28, to July 11, 2009, and the past.

SETTING:

We are transported to the Café of the Emirs, an enchanted Persian teashop ripe for romance and stories. The teashop (similar to a coffee bar) lies in the heart of an old Islamic city like Tehran, with walls covered with the mural of this tale. In the teashop are nondescript benches which allow the scene to flow to various other sites of memory. Most of the scene changes are done with lighting, music and sound effects.

My stage directions and setting design ideas are suggestions not requirement. For example if the up-stage wall is a scrim or a screen it could show the Naghali mural of the story like a painting and could be used throughout the play. Photos could be projected on the inside of the bus, or the street walls for the scene changes.

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ACT ONE

PRELUDE: Naghali Storytelling

(We see the theater, and then as the music begins we are transported to the Café of the Emirs, an enchanted Persian teashop ripe for romance and stories. It lies in the heart of an old Islamic city like Tehran, with walls covered with the mural of this tale. Persian music fills the Café of the Emirs and the wall mural glistens with images of a bus, a father and a daughter, a glass company, evil-looking African men with bags of gems and guns. At one end of the mural is HARUN, dressed like a prince, holding glass from the Hamini Glass Company. At the other end of the mural is a NAGHALI, a storyteller in a caftan. He comes to life and enters with a “talking stick”. He speaks to the audience and brings the mural to life.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Welcome to the Café of the Emirs.
Grab your drinks. Come closer, come near
and hear our tale of love and fear.
Hail a place of Muslim old school,
Hail a desert of Islam rule,
Here, where we praise our blest Imams,
Who spout laws like guns,
So pleads: The "Supreme" Leader, The Leader Supreme!
Our story tests the laws and limits of class.
Here, a young man, an artist with glass.
There a man, a prince, a peacock,
Who walked the walk and talked the talk.
To a boy, really, romanced him and fell in love.
The boy took his last chance in front of
Great odds to escape the land of Iran.
And here our story begins, on a bus, which left Tehran.
On a rickety bus, Javad, then artistic boy—
Looking for help. His story is one that destroys
A love that's banned. A true tale you will enjoy.
Here, near the border, growing desperation
As police use forceful ungloved intervention.

(He stops by the painting of the Iranian bus. In the painting are travelers, including A BUS DRIVER, JAVAD and BARRY. The Café fades as NAGHALI becomes JAVAD.)

SCENE ONE: The Bus

(JAVAD in a bus seat, a backpack at his feet, tinkers with a camera. BARRY sits in another bus seat, looking in his genuine leather bags. He's sexy, and clearly American, wearing a tight, knit, ski cap. BUS DRIVER sits in the driver's seat.)

BUS DRIVER

Forty miles to Turkey! Get your documents!

BARRY

To himself) Shit. Oh shit.

BUS DRIVER

The border security will need your papers! Forty miles!

JAVAD

(Scaring BARRY) Excuse me? "Bebakh-sheed".

BARRY

(Frightened) DAMN!

JAVAD

Sorry. Merci. You didn't see me?—
I didn't mean to—

BARRY

What?! No! You scared me.!
Sneaking up on people!

JAVAD

Wait! Don't panic! Look. No bomb!

BARRY

Of course not. You just came out— You startled me!

JAVAD

Well. Don't explode on me. That's my job. *(Pause.)* "Bebakh-sheed". You just have—

BARRY

(Looking through his bag) I don't have any money—

JAVAD

(Playing with the camera and memory card) Oh, no, I'm not charity. It's— Can I take your photo?

BARRY

No. I don't want—

JAVAD

I won't sell it. Maybe put it at the post office under the "Most Wanted" sign. (*With a wink.*)

BARRY

Ha. Right. Iranian humor- dark.

JAVAD

More reason to turn on a light - (*Turns on the light over BARRY*) Your photo won't look like the Saddam mug-shot—

BARRY

No. Please. Not the light.

JAVAD

But we all look better with more light.

BARRY

Except Susan Boyle.

JAVAD

Those British're funny- to name an ugly woman a "boil".

BARRY

You know her?

JAVAD

Of course. We just get Britain's Got Talent. Well, we don't *get* it, but it's on TV. We get game shows and Westerns. That's how I learn English. From John Vain. (*As Clint Eastwood*) Only problem you have, Sheriff, is a short supply of guts. (*As himself*) You know, for a reporter you have a kind face—

BARRY

How could tell I'm a report?—

JAVAD

You watch. And then you write it down.

BARRY

I could be a poet.

JAVAD

No. Iran loves poets so much they'd put you in limo, not on a bus.

BARRY

Right. Iran doesn't like reporters.

JAVAD

About as much as Iran likes *The Da Vinci Code*, and any book by Salman Rushdie.

BARRY

We'll never see *The Satanic Verses* as a mini-series.

JAVAD

Ready for your picture? Look handsome—

BARRY

(Overlapping) No. Really. Please. No picture.

JAVAD

(Overlapping) Cheese! *(He snaps a photograph with his camera.)* Well!

BARRY

Not a happy meal picture?

JAVAD

No. More like an Afghanny tranny. Not happy at all.

BARRY

(Pause.) That's a nice camera. A good small one for spying—

JAVAD

Small enough. I take secret pictures. I have one of a cleric with a street walker.

BARRY

I'll bet that's against the law. Photography will be banned next.

JAVAD

Yes- Along with eye-liner, mullet haircuts, and conga-line dancing dogs. Can I show you something? *(BARRY nods)* More pictures. Things I've taken. My portfolio. I show you? My art? *(He opens a small portfolio.)*

BARRY

Open sesame!

JAVAD

I like to share-- My glass work. I made these.

BARRY

(He looks at the portfolio.) Beautiful glasswork. Difficult to make?

JAVAD

Not so much. I've had learning. This one was hard. But this one... I sold this for lots of money. It was really pretty, the way the light hit it— And this vase we sold to a Saudi Prince.

BARRY

What will you do with your talent?

JAVAD

I have plans. I am looking for a way to make money from my glass work. *(He closes portfolio)* And you? Did you find what you were looking for?

BARRY

No. I didn't. I didn't get THE story. I'm still looking for my story.

JAVAD

And if you don't get a story?

BARRY

I'll be pink slipped.

JAVAD

I have a story to save your underwear. Maybe you'll like my story.

(JAVAD ejects the memory card from the camera.)

BARRY

A story of clerics and streetwalkers makes my list. But for now I just need to lay low.

JAVAD

Did they throw you out of Iran?—

BARRY

How can you say that!—

JAVAD

I mean—Iranian police search your bags. Quick and sloppy! What're you missing?

BARRY

Nothing.

JAVAD

(With a coin-trick JAVAD "finds" the memory card behind BARRY's ear.) This?

BARRY

Is that? My memory card?

JAVAD

Oh, it was in your ear.—

BARRY

Please don't play games—

JAVAD

You dropped it when you were getting your ticket—

BARRY

I don't remember dropping—

JAVAD

It is a small. You drop it.

BARRY

It was in my camera bag?—

JAVAD

Police give it to me.

BARRY

The police? At the—

JAVAD

They thought its mine—

BARRY

That's impossible—

JAVAD

Police give it to me—

BARRY

They'd detained me—

JAVAD

I saw you when you got on bus and you look — well—

BARRY

I was trying to look incognito.

JAVAD

Worked until you opened your Blackberry, your iPhone, and your Palm pilot.
Looking for this?

BARRY

(Madly) Give that to me or by God I'll —

JAVAD

(Over) What? You can't do shit to me—

BARRY

Yes I can. I could turn you over to them—

JAVAD

(Waving the memory card) But I'm the one with proof.

BARRY

They'll make you disappear.

JAVAD

I have to exist first—

BARRY

Give me my card—

JAVAD

This prove what you seen?

BARRY

(Overlapping) Yes! Now stop fuckin' around—

JAVAD

(Overlapping) You blow up more than an IED.

BARRY

(Overlapping) Come on! You little thief—

JAVAD

(Overlapping) Help me get to Ankara.

BARRY

Give me that! *(Looking to the other people on the bus.)*

JAVAD

Oh, don't worry. I don't exist to them. This jacket, these jeans, and my shoes. Although my clothes are in shape of man, in eyes of Iran there is no man here.

BARRY

What is your name? Maybe I can—

JAVAD

How can I have a name if I don't exist?

BARRY

Sorry.

JAVAD

That's why I flee. And these— Are these pictures why you flee? (*Silence.*) You help me— help me, you know, in Turkey, get me interview—

BARRY

A trade?

JAVAD

Oh come on! Refugees are all the rage!

BARRY

Not on your life.

JAVAD

Don't be so Iran-o-phobic!

BARRY

I'm not. If I help you, then what?

JAVAD

When I'm in America ... Driving my BMVeh.

BARRY

You'll never have a BMW.

JAVAD

Yes I will. It might be a 1988 BMVeh, with only a radio, no air-conditioning, and no reverse- But it'll still my BMVeh, nonetheless. And then in America I repay you.

BARRY

(*Silence.*) Trade?

JAVAD

Help me get my first BMVeh. Get me an interview with UN Refugee "rahes".

BARRY

Why?

JAVAD

To undo an injustice?

BARRY

I'll consider it.

BUS DRIVER

We're almost to the border! We will be stopping!

JAVAD

Help me and I give you memory card— one I found on floor.

BARRY

On the floor? You said the police—

JAVAD

Yes. On floor. What I said before.

BARRY

I knew it. It fell out?

JAVAD

That's what I said.

BARRY

No you didn't. *(Pause.)* I don't trust you.

JAVAD

So American of you. *(Beat.)* And I don't trust you. *(Beat.)* But... In me you get a story. Might win Pollster Award.

BARRY

You mean a Pulitzer. And if I don't help?

JAVAD

If you don't then I swear. At border... Iranian military will see these. I turn you in and you'll be next Tom Sutherland or Terry Anderson. *(Beat.)* Nice pictures. Of things you shouldn't take.

*(JAVAD and BARRY feel a big jolt, a bump in the road?
No, the bus is coming to a fast stop.)*

BUS DRIVER

"Bebakh-sheed!" We must stop. Border guards. Hold on! Unexpected delay.

(BASIJi ONE to enter the bus. Basiji are plain-clothes militia used for crowd and border control.)

BASIJI ONE

Papers out!

JAVAD

(Nervously) So?

BASIJI ONE

(Walking through the bus) We have intell of illegal smuggling out of Iran.

BARRY

(Whispered) Oh shit.

JAVAD

(Nervously) Merci? Um... "Bebakh-sheed."

BASIJI ONE

Yes?

JAVAD

Are you looking for forbidden goods?

BARRY

(Whispered) Please. Don't.

BASIJI ONE

Do you have any? Seen any?

BARRY

(Whispered to JAVAD) Okay. On one condition.

JAVAD

(Whispered) What condition?

BASIJI ONE

Seen anything illegal? Any thieves who hide by night?

BARRY

(Whispered) Even steven. You have a story I can use.

JAVAD

(Whispered) And more.

BASIJI ONE

(By JAVAD) YOU!!! You seen anything being smuggled into Turkey?

JAVAD

Yes. That man there. (*He points to a body on the bus.*) I think he's dead. I saw them put him on here and he hasn't moved.

BASIJJ ONE

That's Iran— Give Turkey our problems. (*He pokes the MAN*) Hey! Hey! (*The MAN [played by HARUN but completely disguised with hoodie, scarf, and beard] stirs.*) Naw he's not dead. (*To BUS DRIVER*) On with it! (*He exits.*)

(*The bus starts up and continues its journey.*)

JAVAD

So? You said you'd help?

BARRY

If you have a story. One to go with those photos.

JAVAD

I especially liked the photos of the election protests.

BARRY

The Green Party protests— if there only had been Irish beer I'd feel like it was Saint Patrick's Day. Everywhere green: green hijabs, green scarves—

JAVAD

And green teeth— thanks to the embargo against dental floss. (*Beat.*) You see what you expect?

BARRY

I didn't expect so many rules, and so many individuals breaking the rules.

JAVAD

Individuals, yes. One Iranian, no sin, no irreverence; two Iranians? Perfect Muslims. When we're alone we aren't Muslim. When together we're holier than the most pious clerics of Mecca. Maybe one reason we all have so many secrets. You know?

BARRY

Oh, I know about secrets.

JAVAD

Yes, you do. I especially liked the photos of the mountains near Qom—

BARRY

You've been to Qom?

JAVAD

Yes. With a friend named Harun. Nice photos of Qom. Bet you didn't expect snow.

BARRY

Nuclear weapons but not snow.

JAVAD

Wow you said “nuclear” correct. Are you sure you’re American?

BARRY

Are you sure you’re Iranian?

JAVAD

I am Persian, not Iranian. And as a Persian I’m an unwelcome guest. So I leave.

BARRY

Released on bad behavior— Why’d you leave?

JAVAD

To fight my fate. Did you know it’s written on gates of paradise, “Woe to the ass that yields to Fate!” Or something like that. I’ll not yield to fate unless it looks like Ayatollah driving a big truck while I’m crossing a street.

BARRY

Where do you want to end up?

JAVAD

Pittsburgh. Not Turkey. The Andy Warhol Museum. For my glass art.

BARRY

So far— But you’ll miss your family.

JAVAD

No I won’t.

BARRY

Not your Father?

JAVAD

He’s tough. He clips his nose hair with his teeth.

FATHER (*o.s.*)

Javad!

JAVAD

My father likes to yell.

FATHER (*o.s.*)

Before your beard comes you must learn ancient trade.

BARRY

Was your father the reason you left?

JAVAD

My father... kind of.

FATHER (*o.s.*)

“Pesar?” With education, you’ll always have job.

JAVAD

If I tell you why I am running away, will you help me?

BARRY

Tell me. Then I’ll decide.

(The lights shift and we forget the other passengers.)

SCENE TWO: Javad’s Home

(FATHER, early 60’s burly man, stands from the bus. HARUN enters. HARUN is provocatively dressed and full of masculine magic, even at 43-years-old.)

FATHER

(To JAVAD) You and your sister always go to Glass Museum—

BARRY

I went there. I was like a bull in a –

JAVAD

Don’t interrupt or I’ll lose my place—

FATHER

So you will learn glass. I’ve set up an apprenticeship! Come here!

(JAVAD and SISTER walk to FATHER and HARUN. BARRY is beside JAVAD, unseen by the others, listening to the story.)

FATHER

“Pesar?” Little Princess? Meet “Aghaieh” Mohammad Harun Hamini. Good man. Orthodox, too. Javad. Here’s your new boss!

BARRY

(Whispered) Handsome?

JAVAD

(Sighed) Dressed to impress a peacock.

FATHER

Harun. My son.

JAVAD

Immediately our eyes... touched.

HARUN

It is so good to meet you, Javad. *(JAVAD and HARUN shake hands.)*

JAVAD

You look like... the Shah of Iran.

FATHER

“Pesar.” The Shah? Excuse my son—

JAVAD

Sorry, Father.

HARUN

No, don’t apologize. I’m flattered.

FATHER

“Aghaieh” Hamini is his father, Javad. And they own —

SISTER

(Interrupting) You own the Hamini Glass Company don’t you?

HARUN

My father owns the company. I’m in charge of the apprenticeships.

SISTER

My dream come true. Am I going to be your next—

FATHER

(Pushing up his glasses) Harun is good son to Hammid Hassan Hamini, my friend. And since, Javad, it’s time for you to learn trade—

SISTER

Javad?

FATHER

Yes. Javad.

SISTER

But *I* want to learn the business?

HARUN

Javad, your father told me you like glass—

SISTER

But “Babba!” Javad will break all of—

FATHER

“Dokahkar! Saaket!”

SISTER

But “Babba!”

BARRY

(Whispered) Your sister’s spiteful?

JAVAD

(Whispered) She’s like sand in my jockstrap.

SISTER

I’m the one who loves glass—

FATHER

“Haerfe cizi ra zaed aaen!” Where’s your manners?

SISTER

“Babba!” I want to learn—

FATHER

Deaf Girl! He’s my eldest boy! *(Pause)* So? Harun. My eldest, my only son, sorry to say, needs guidance. He is full of charm, but no job, no future. That is where you enter. Javad begins Monday. After school.

JAVAD

(Whispered) And so I did.

(SISTER and FATHER fade into the shadows as the Glass Company comes forth.)

SCENE THREE: The Glass Company

(We see The Glass Company. BARRY stands beside JAVAD, invisible to HARUN.)

BARRY

(Whispered) You went to The Hamini Glass Company?

JAVAD

(Whispered) To learn glass art from Mohammad Harun Hassan Hamini!

HARUN

Welcome! I'm so excited.

JAVAD

Why?

HARUN

For you to begin your new job.

JAVAD

I'm ready, but not good at this. Father always says I'm no good.

HARUN

But you'll try? *(JAVAD nods.)* Yes. And as it says in the good book, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a metal detector."

JAVAD

It doesn't say that.

BARRY

(To JAVAD) Does it say that?

HARUN

No, not really. I just wanted an excuse. *(HARUN retrieves glass blowing properties.)* To show you my new glass torch. We just got this one in. I want you to get started right away, but you can't wear that. *(He seduces JAVAD with a touch.)* Hmmm. Nice.

BARRY

(To JAVAD) Oh boy. Watch out.

HARUN

The fabric. But it'll go up in flames real fast.

JAVAD

Should I take it off?

HARUN

Merci—I wish, but no. *(HARUN hands JAVAD an apron.)* Put on this apron.

JAVAD

Merci.

HARUN

So. The traditional art of Shisheh Gary.

BARRY

(To JAVAD) What?

JAVAD

(To BARRY) Glass blowing and crystal cutting—

HARUN

(Seeing JAVAD is ready) Good. Here. *(With a wink)* The glory hole.

BARRY

(To JAVAD) Oh please.

JAVAD

(To BARRY) That's what they call it. *(To HARUN)* This where I get the glass?

HARUN

Yes. The other men call it: the honey pot.

JAVAD

(To HARUN) You're going to show me how to blow ...

HARUN

Yes. We'll do it first with this straw. And— What did you bring your lunch in?

JAVAD

I just have these figs. *(JAVAD gives the empty plastic bag to HARUN.)*

HARUN

Super. Merci. Now, glass is very important to our economy in Iran.

BARRY

(To JAVAD) Probably why his family was allowed to stay—

JAVAD

After the Shah?

HARUN

Yes. Exactly. We thought we'd have to close the doors, but... as the good book says, sometimes when Allah closes a door he opens an escape hatch.

BARRY

(*To JAVAD*) Or sometimes he closes the door so painfully on your fingers—

JAVAD

(*To BARRY*) (*Whispered*) Shhh! Quiet.

HARUN

For us he opened a new door. We're the only company that still works in the Seljukid era of glass. Dishes, bottles, vases.

JAVAD

And what was the deal your family made?

HARUN

That we make the glass to be used as tiles in the mosques.

JAVAD

And that's why Father likes you.

HARUN

I hope you'll like me too.

JAVAD

Oh, I do. I mean, I hope I will too.

HARUN

Hope is the emotion that says, "I'm really naïve."

JAVAD

I'm not naïve.

HARUN

No. Just cute. So. This is what we're going to practice this week. With the straw, you'll grab the molten glass, the plastic bag. (*HARUN puts the bag on the end of the straw.*) Okay, this is the blowing tube. And the plastic bag. This is the liquid glass. You have a long tube... and on this end is the liquid glass. You blow through it. (*He blows through the straw into the bag.*) The molten glass on the other end—

JAVAD

It puffs up.

HARUN

Relax. You're too tense. As you blow the tube, the liquid glass inflates. Now you try.

(*HARUN hands the straw and bag to JAVAD. He moves behind JAVAD and helps him handle the items.*)

JAVAD

So I blow into the bag.

HARUN

Yes, but not so fast. Smoothly.

JAVAD

But what—

HARUN

You can't talk and blow at the same time.

JAVAD

Try it again?

HARUN

This time not with all your might. Slowly. Turn the bag as you blow. Use your air and shape it. Twist it and turn it. Good. A natural.

JAVAD

It's because you're a good teacher.

HARUN

It's because I like you. I see lots of... opportunity. Let's take you over to the hole and... Wait. What are you doing tonight?

JAVAD

After? ... Nothing.

HARUN

Why don't you go with me? I'm doing a Naghali storytelling.

JAVAD

You are a storyteller too?

HARUN

Yes. It is fun. I don't get paid for it, but culturally I really enjoy it. It is a high. A bit of magic in the words. Just come. See it.

JAVAD

Where?

HARUN

At this café. The Café of the Emirs. I'd like your company. My treat.

JAVAD

I'd love to.

(HARUN removes some props as the lights shift back to the bus.)

SCENE FOUR: The Bus

(BARRY and JAVAD sit on the bus.)

BARRY

I can't do anything with this story.

JAVAD

Sorry?

BARRY

I write about politics not illicit seduction at a glass-shop.

JAVAD

But it is dangerous—

BARRY

So is walking in East LA past midnight, or standing up on a roller-coaster, or voting for Sarah Palin—

JAVAD

But doesn't my life matter?—

BARRY

Not to my audience. My editor wants an Iranian John Wayne.

JAVAD

I can be John Vain. *(As John Wayne)* "There are just some things a man can't run away from."

BARRY

Give me my photos!

JAVAD

You said you'd help!—

BARRY

You think you got a good story? Your story isn't getting in anything except a gay rag with ads for naked house-cleaners.

JAVAD

Do it 'cause we both like Westerns.

BARRY

My paper wants loss of due process and illegal activities.

JAVAD

(As John Wayne) Out here due process is a rope not a bullet.

BARRY

(He laughs at JAVAD's impression. BARRY removes his knit hat) Okay, okay, okay. 'Cause I like you. And you're impressions are horrible. I'll give—

JAVAD

Thank you. *(Seeing BARRY's hair)* You have great hair. So sexy.

BARRY

Oh please.

JAVAD

Really, I like it. So American.

BARRY

I'll give you and your story a listen to. *(Putting his hat back on)* I'll listen. And if I can use your story I'll set you up with this guy I know in Ankara. He'll investigate your story. You'll need to convince me—

JAVAD

Convince you?

BARRY

That it's news. That it's for my paper. That's it's verifiable.

JAVAD

Oh, it is.

BARRY

And if I can help in Ankara you'll need to convince my friend at the UN too.

JAVAD

Deal. *(He sticks out his hand, like a cowboy)* Put her there. *(They shake. JAVAD holds BARRY's hand.)* What's your name?

BARRY

Barry McCarty.

JAVAD

And Barry ... why didn't you get your story? The one from Qom?

BARRY

I'm new at this. I thought if I could get the perfect story I'd make my career. And what better place but going to a hot bed of controversy. Find an award winning story and—

JAVAD

Land yourself big money with your big story.

BARRY

Do I look like a rookie? I'm not a rookie—

JAVAD

Not rookie. More... Like a kid, wet behind the ears. Like... Barry the Kid.

BARRY

I'm not that novice. I've just been writing financial articles, book reviews, economic reports, and I want something more political. More espionage and double-oh-seven. More ... I don't know.

JAVAD

Well, Barry, I assure you my story, it is good for you.

BARRY

Are you a refugee?

JAVAD

Don't I look like a refugee? A political refugee?

(The Café of Emirs appears. HARUN enter as a NAGHALI in the theater.)

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

Welcome to my show. Here life is theater!

BARRY

How are you a political refugee?

JAVAD

I am gay. And it is *not* an act?

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

Where life is an act.

BARRY

That won't get you political asylum?

JAVAD

They give me death penalty if they know

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

I tell my “friend” that sometimes we must act to fool the world.

JAVAD

Hang ‘em high every Tuesday.

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

Here we tell stories you’ll enjoy. That is the art of decoy.

JAVAD

Letting people know I’m gay scares me. Ever since Harun, as the Naghali.

BARRY

I don’t know the *Naghali*.

JAVAD

The Naghali? They tell stories. In coffee houses. Haurun told one of the most memorable stories for me.

(The bus fades away as the café of the Emirs is complete.)

SCENE FIVE: Café of the Emirs

(JAVAD pours a glass of wine and sits in the café. BARRY sits with JAVAD. HARUN as NAGHALI tells his story.)

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

Welcome to the Café. This evening, let me tell you the story of Two Princes. (He gets into the story telling attitude.) Once, in our beautiful kingdom, there were two princes: Prince Shahrayar and Prince Shahzaman. These two princes could be you. Or you. Unlike brothers they knew each other’s secrets; unlike friends they were full of passion for each other. These two great men were lovers, of the most romantic kind. One night when the moon was full and bright the King was brought a virgin, for his delight. In order to stay alive she told the King where to find Prince Shahrayar and Prince Shahzaman. The virgin thought this secret would make her the King’s favorite. The King was mad. He went after the princes. He searched for them.

(He searches for the Princes in the café.)

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

(As the King) “Where are they! Come out, come out!”

HARUN

Will you two be in my story?

JAVAD

Me?

HARUN

You could be Prince Shahrayar.

JAVAD

Okay.

HARUN

And you, sir, you can be Prince Shahzaman.

*(He finds the Princes. He pulls on to his "stage"
BARRY and JAVAD.)*

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

(As the King) "Ah! There you are!" The King caught these two men. They were caught in compromising positions.

JAVAD

Oh. Wait.

BARRY

I think I don't like this story.

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

The King was furious. And there in front of everyone he tried them. *(As King)* "You are both charged with Mohareb, as "enemies of Khoda" and for committing crimes of Lavat." A crime which requires the rope... *(A rope hangs from the ceiling.)*

JAVAD

[gasp-"death by hanging?"]

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

The King ruled! *(As King)* "Prince Shahrayar you raped Prince Shahzaman! You are guilty!" Then the King turned to the other prince. "And Prince Shahzaman you raped Prince Shahrayar!" Both of the lovers were found GUILTY!

BARRY

(To HARUN) Wait. I know I don't like this story.

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

For as they climbed up the scaffolding to the executioner, they looked at each other—right in the eyes—an undying love with unspoken words charged the air. The love in their hearts would overcome any adversity in another time. And Prince Shahrayar spoke these words aloud.

BARRY & HARUN (as NAGHALI)

“In another time. Another place.”

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

And Prince Shahzaman replied—

HARUN & JAVAD

(Harun whispers the lines with JAVAD) “Make a wish. A wish. Our wish.”

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

The executioner had them stand side-by-side. Ropes around their necks.

BARRY

And?

JAVAD

And?

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

Both were hung.

BARRY/JAVAD/HARUN (as NAGHALI)

AHHHhhhh!

HARUN (as NAGHALI)

An honor killing.

(BARRY and HARUN fall to their knees and the ropes go tight. There is the sound of applause from the café. HARUN as NAGHALI bows and moves closely to JAVAD. BARRY is in the shadows.)

HARUN

You see why we must be careful?

JAVAD

Of course.

HARUN

Good. Merci, Javad, *(As he removes his NAGHALI outfit.)* I must— I see men —.

JAVAD

They look dangerous.

HARUN

They're from the Congo.

JAVAD

I don't want you to—

HARUN

I will be where you can see me.

JAVAD

Are they selling weapons?

HARUN

Not exactly. They work with *other* things near Qom mountain.

JAVAD

Qom? But I—

HARUN

Don't ask. Okay? (*JAVAD nods.*) When I'm done, I might need to take a trip. You could come with me.

JAVAD

Where?

HARUN

I need to make some deliveries to Ankara. To meet some men in Kizilay Square.

JAVAD

For your business?

HARUN

(*Hesitantly*) Well, yes. Business expense paid, nice hotels, good food—

JAVAD

We get to fly? I've never been on an airplane.

HARUN

No-no-no. We take the bus, we don't fly. The airport has too much security. So? You want to take some trips with me?

JAVAD

Of course.

HARUN

We will make plans at the glass studio. For now: I will go work.

(HARUN moves away.)

SCENE SIX: The Bus

(The lights change to the bus.)

BARRY

Now we have a story I can use!

JAVAD

So my story is worthy?

BARRY

Not your story. Harun's. His work at the café. As the Naghali he—

JAVAD

It is not about HIM!

BARRY

Harun Hamini? Was he smuggling drugs?

JAVAD

What? Drugs? No!

BARRY

With the Africans?

JAVAD

No, nothing.

BARRY

He was up to something illegal. Something from Qom mountain.

JAVAD

No he wasn't!

BARRY

I've seen what's at Qom and you weren't around him all the time.

JAVAD

We are best friends. Over three years inseparable.

BARRY

You didn't go everywhere he went. You weren't together every day, every month-

JAVAD

(As John Wayne) I don't guess people's hearts got anything to do with a calendar.

BARRY

Nice job, pilgrim, but I'm more interested in Harun's illegal activities. Did he smuggle weapons with his company?

JAVAD

I don't know. I just blow glass. I only do vases and glasses. I don't do illegal. And he did the business. Harun would do this. I'd go to work, he'd teach me. Then we'd go to the café and he'd do more business. Over time we became best friends. Over three years inseparable. By the time I was eighteen, I was really good blowing glass.

BARRY

Really? What was your favorite color to make your glasses in?

JAVAD

Cobalt blue.

BARRY

I can imagine. You have pictures of Harun?

JAVAD

Yes. I showed you. With the pictures of my glasswork. But I don't have the most beautiful ones I made for Father.

BARRY

Why not?

JAVAD

One time I bring... I brought home...crystal glasses I made.

(The lights shift to show the past at JAVAD's home.)

SCENE SEVEN: Javad's Home

(HARUN enters with a box of glasses and a bag of three bottles of wine. As they unpack the glasses in the kitchen they get closer and closer to each other.)

HARUN

Of course you can bring home your best glasses. It's time to show your work.

JAVAD

Father will like them.

HARUN

It's time he saw.

JAVAD

He's probably never seen anything so amazing.

HARUN

Other than your mother? Before she died.

JAVAD

We still miss her. That's kinda why Father's so—

(Down the hall we hear SISTER clomping.)

JAVAD

Oh no!

HARUN

(Returns to unpacking) Princess Jasmine.

SISTER

(SISTER enters.) Hey? Harun? I didn't know you were—

HARUN

Hey. Yeah I came over with your brother—

SISTER

You look good, Harun.

HARUN

For a guy in his —

SISTER

Not at all. I don't think of you like that. You are the most handsome man I know.

JAVAD

“Zainab.” I'm here too.

SISTER

Oh. Hi Javad. *(She looks at the unpacked glasses.)* Wow. What are those?

HARUN

Your brother made them—

SISTER

At work?

HARUN

We thought your father would like them.

JAVAD

A gift.

SISTER

They're beautiful—Like diamonds—

JAVAD

As if you really think—

SISTER

No really. I like 'em. Perfect for a Princess like me.

HARUN

Maybe you'll come learn.

SISTER

I'd love to. To spend time with you. To learn how to make glass as beautiful as—

HARUN

Someday. Maybe your father will let you—

JAVAD

Will you two stop it? They aren't that good.

SISTER

Yes they are.

JAVAD

No, they're not.

SISTER

I can tell— I got eyes—

JAVAD

Well, Princess Pea, you don't know nothing.

SISTER

I know good glass when I see—

JAVAD

You don't see the flaws, where I cut too deep or—

SISTER

Stupid.

HARUN

Javad, let her like them will ya?

SISTER

Yeah. To me they're like diamonds.

HARUN

And diamonds are a girl's best— We thought you might serve your Father some a special wine in them. As a gift.

JAVAD

Wine in these?

SISTER

They are so special—

JAVAD

No way. Absolutely forbidden.

HARUN

I brought some wine. For a special occasion.

JAVAD

No. Wine's against the law.

SISTER

Well? This is a special, Javad. Look at your crystal glasses. A stunning.

HARUN

Before your Father comes home we can fill the glasses with the wine I brought.

(HARUN pulls out three bottles of wine, and gives them to JAVAD and SISTER.)

HARUN

Three bottles of the wine. I export them.

SISTER

You export wine?

HARUN

They are made of glass. The bottles. Some of them I fill with some home-made wide.

JAVAD

One red, and two white. Why three?

SISTER

You open ‘em.

HARUN

Only one’s all we should—

SISTER

They’re older than I am.

HARUN

So are my shoes. Let’s just open the white. This red one is a special one for you Javad. Keep it in a safe place. It is a Bordeaux.

JAVAD

The Bordeaux is a special grape?

HARUN

Very special in this case. Keep it safe.

SISTER

The white wine! So it is! I’m going to go change and set the table for dinner. I wonder— what does the Tehran Girls Magazine say I should wear to *this*?

(SISTER exits.)

JAVAD

I can’t believe you brought three.

HARUN

Put the other red in your backpack. I’ll take the white.

(HARUN takes the white wine. JAVAD puts the red and the white wine in his backpack)

JAVAD

Take the Bordeaux? But why?

HARUN

(He uncorks the wine bottle) For another time. The red is a special. With a jinni in it. You must keep it hidden for a special day. Grab the glasses. *(JAVAD moves the glasses so they can pour the wine into them.)* It’ll be fine. He’s going to like these. And nothing’s wrong with a little white wine.

JAVAD

Except it's against the law.

HARUN

But the law's a bit archaic don't you think?

JAVAD

Just one bottle?

HARUN

Just the white. The others go in a secret place. Here, move that glass. Hold it like...

(HARUN touches JAVAD. They make eye-contact.)

JAVAD

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... Why are you smiling?

HARUN

I've enjoyed getting to know you these ... three years.

JAVAD

(Nervous) These years went by fast.

HARUN

Fast with friends. Well, we're more than that.

(HARUN pulls JAVAD's wrist, and threads a ring on JAVAD's pinky finger.)

HARUN

Javad, this is for you.

JAVAD

What?

HARUN

From the Congo.

JAVAD

Is this a conflict diamond?

HARUN

It's a ruby, silly. As old as our history.

JAVAD

But why?

HARUN

Because. You're shaking. Are you okay?

JAVAD

No.

HARUN

It's okay. It'll be okay.

JAVAD

It's not that.

HARUN

What is it?

(FATHER, holding his glasses, walks to JAVAD.)

JAVAD

Ever try to slow your breathing, but you can't?

HARUN

Yeah. So?

JAVAD

I can't breathe.

HARUN

Come on. Javad. You've got great lips. And not a whisker. The face of Allah.

JAVAD

Naw.

HARUN

Yeah.

JAVAD

I am not worthy...

HARUN

Shhh. Can I kiss you?

(JAVAD nods. HARUN kisses JAVAD. A long kiss. FATHER "opens" the kitchen door, not wearing his glasses, but he sees.)

FATHER

(Whispered hiss) Pesar?

(HARUN and JAVAD move away from each other.)

FATHER

What is going on!? Harun? *(Silence)* Javad?

JAVAD

Father, I made the glasses. For you.

FATHER

And wine?

HARUN

The wine is mine—

FATHER

You think I'm blind!? I could've look other way, but not in my own home. Why? Tell me. He's my boy. You're older. Twenty years. Harun? I put him in your hands. *(FATHER throws a glass at the wall. We hear the **sound** of glass shattering.)* You destroyed his soul! You did it? To my only son! My son!! *(FATHER throws a glass at the wall. We hear the **sound** of glass shattering.)* You took from him! And you took from me! And now you cut me!! Cut me deep! He's all I got! Had! All I had! No more! *(HARUN tries to speak.)* No! Don't speak! Not with your Satan tongue! You killed him! Dead to me! Gone! All gone! Khoda!!

JAVAD

Father! It was —

(SISTER enters. HARUN moves closer to JAVAD. This causes FATHER to explode.)

FATHER

AS I feared! Mr. Hamini— THE DEVIL!—

JAVAD

No, Father. It wasn't like—

FATHER

The neighbors! THE MEN! WE suspected YOU with your performances at the Cafe!

HARUN

There's nothing wrong with my stories—

FATHER

YOU BUGGER!—

JAVAD

We didn't do anything—

FATHER

Khoda! All Mighty! Bring back my son!—

JAVAD

Please Father stop this—

FATHER

KHODA! You *know* ALL!—

JAVAD

You don't *know*—

FATHER

I DO TOO KNOW! Oh, Khoda! Please please *please*— Don't let my boy be a girl!

(The lights shift as HARUN, SISTER & FATHER exit.)

SCENE EIGHT: The Bus

(JAVAD and BARRY move back to the present.)

JAVAD

(To BARRY) As the wine ran down the wall... I did nothing. Harun did nothing. But it was not his fault.

BARRY

It was a gift thrown back in your face.

JAVAD

Yes. Shattered crystal all over the floor.

BARRY

Will you miss your sister?

JAVAD

No. *(Pause.)* I should have left then. *(Pause.)* Here. Your memory card. *(He tosses the memory card to BARRY.)* You know, the police never gave it to me. I picked it, from your pocket. With this cash. When you weren't looking. Sorry. "Bebakh-sheed".

BARRY

I will help you.

JAVAD

You will? Reunite Harun and I? Get me an interview? Set it up?

BARRY

Yes. I have connections. A guy I know. Hosein Ali. When we get to Ankara—

JAVAD

Yes?

BARRY

Sure. In two days.

JAVAD

And my story? Can it save me?

BARRY

My editor won't take it. But... Well... I can get you an interview with the refugee office. I know this guy: Hosein Ali. He might help.

(BARRY in the bus fades. Music is heard. JAVAD picks up his talking stick, and dons his caftan.)

SCENE NINE: Naghali Storytelling

(As the Persian music plays, photographs of the bus trip from Iran to Turkey fly across the walls of the Café of the Emirs. JAVAD as NAGHALI explains the trip.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

The Ayatollah Khamenei

Tightens his fists on so many.

It is hard enough to love our brother,

or our sister. And no one would rather

Leave their own country for a stranger land.

But more and more it happens here, in a place called ...

Iran. But not my Iran.

Not one man's story. Many escape from...

Iran. But not my Iran

He went from ... Tehran, Bandar Anzali, Kapısı Yolu, Qzavin, Takestan, Alvand, Zanzan, Meyaneh, Tabriz, Marand, Maku, Bazargan, Dogubayazit, Eleskirt, Yesilova, Horasan... Ankara.

(The projections highlight Ankara. BARRY steps out of the "bus" and walks the city streets. The music underscores the city of Ankara.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

In Turkey to live a good life,
 On must settle for a wife,
 Get a harem, maid, or whore.
 In Turkey the Law of Hodoud
 Is placed high above the clouds.
 Khoda, demands more!
 Pray! "Peace for gay's sin."
 Pray! "For these poor men."
 Our two refugees escaped the pres
 But now stay where men wear the fez.
 If our hero can flee Iran's crew,
 And its ugly peacock Persian laws.
 Maybe he'll escape The "Supreme" Leader, The Leader Supreme!

(JAVAD melts from being NAGHALI as BARRY speaks on his cell phone.)

SCENE TEN: Kizilay Square

(BARRY & JAVAD near a bench in Kizilay Square. BARRY is on his cell phone on a private conversation. JAVAD has his backpack and he is listening to the phone conversation.)

BARRY

(On his cell phone) Hey Hosein Ali, I don't favor talkin' to rats like you either, but I'll talk to you just this once. I am working on this— Yes, I have pictures. I'm tracking how the documents. From Qom. *(Listening)*—

JAVAD

(Not listening to the phone call) Day after day and nothing.

(JAVAD pulls out a black hat from his bag. It looks like there's nothing in it.)

JAVAD

No appointment— Nothing. Maybe you don't have any magic, Barry the Kid.

BARRY

(In the cell phone) Yes, from Qom. A facility. And they explain how the diagrams, and the smuggling, and how—

JAVAD

With the election coming up, I need as much magic as I can get—.

(He waves his hand over the hat, and pulls out a wine bottle and a glass.)

JAVAD

Shazam!

BARRY

Wow. A drink? (*In the cell phone*) Hosein, I think I know. But I need an appointment for an interview— A friend of mine. I told you. To confirm his story.

JAVAD

More white wine?

BARRY

Why not. Until my man comes through. (*On his cell phone- sotto-voce*) Confirm, Hosein... But I did. And now I want an exchange...

JAVAD

I brought two of Harun's bottles with me. The white one, and the a special Bordeaux.

BARRY

(*Covering his cell phone*) They're good for bribes.

JAVAD

Very Iranian of you.

BARRY

We might need to bribe my contact.

JAVAD

Is that him?

BARRY

Yeah. And not very cooperative.

JAVAD

Here! A glass of a better circumstance! "Beh Salamiy!"

BARRY

Cheers! (*They drink wine.*)

JAVAD

Let's get drunk. If Lindsey Lohan can do it at 15, I can do it at 20.

BARRY

20?

JAVAD

Okay 25. Whatever.

BARRY

(Into cellphone) Hosein, you're bluffin'. No! NO! Put me on hold and I'll not make the exchange— Yeah, the exchange. I tracked my story to... a story ... Yes.— From Qom. It might be... *(Whispered)* Yeah. That story. The runaway documents. I need you to confirm...

JAVAD

Turks don't like bribes like Iranians do. They're too European.

BARRY

What about Harun's bottle?

JAVAD

The one from our first kiss?

BARRY

Yes.

JAVAD

We're not using that one!

BARRY

You've got it?

JAVAD

Yeah. I've kept it. Harun actually kept it.

BARRY

How? How did Harun keep it?

JAVAD

When we cleaned up, after Father broke all of the glass, Harun didn't think it was safe to leave with me.

BARRY

He probably didn't want you to get in any more trouble.

JAVAD

Harun took it.

JAVAD

BARRY

He kept it.

JAVAD

Yes. And then when I left Tehran, on the bus—

BARRY

When we first met?

JAVAD

Yes, then. I went back to the apartment and grabbed it when the police let me go.

BARRY

You've had it since?

JAVAD

Yes. Saving it for a special time. But it is a special. We don't bribe with it.

BARRY

Hosein won't take a bribe of wine anyway. Maybe hashish, but not wine.

JAVAD

Then this wine— We drink.

BARRY

(On his cell phone) Hosein! If I send you the photos of Qom? Will you...? Hosein? Hosein Ali? (BARRY was disconnected.) You know I'm trying hard.

JAVAD

I know you are.

BARRY

He might come through—

JAVAD

But then the question is how do I convince him he should let me immigrate? I don't look like the stereotypical immigrant from Iran.

BARRY

You don't look like the guys in the old movie Kismet.

JAVAD

Kismet. You mean "fate"?

BARRY

No, the movie musical. They sang and rode flying carpets. You know? *(sung)* "And this is my beloved." *(He looks at JAVAD.)* No?

JAVAD

Never heard of it.

BARRY

What do Iranians look like?

JAVAD

We look like Ali Babba.

BARRY

What happened to your forty thieves?

JAVAD

(Gazing lingeringly deep into BARRY'S eyes) They joined the Republican Guard.

BARRY

You know in the case of Ali Babba, you're nothing like him. You're more like one of his Forty Thieves.

JAVAD

I am no thief.

BARRY

You did pick my memory card—

JAVAD

Well, you want Aladdin I give you Aladdin.

BARRY

Aladdin? Now he was gay. He had a Jinni in his pocket, and spanked his monkey when no one was looking.

JAVAD

And he wore parachute pants without looking like a loser.

BARRY

(Flirting) Maybe you're more like the Sheik. You do look a little like Rudolph Valentino.

JAVAD

That's not Iran. That's Arabian.

BARRY

Well, it's not even Arabian. It's southern California.

JAVAD

Was he scandalous?

BARRY

Yeah. So scandalous the film was banned in Kanas City.

JAVAD

At least it wasn't banned in Pittsburg.

BARRY

He was like you—

JAVAD

Sexy?

BARRY

Yeah.

JAVAD

And didn't he kidnap white women?

BARRY

And in the book he actually raped them and left them—

JAVAD

No wonder you were scared of me when we first met.

BARRY

(With a smile) That's not why. I didn't think that would happen.

JAVAD

No, I know. I don't fit the stereotype of a Sheik either. I'm more Shrek. *(Pause.)* I am not the kind to capture women in a desert. I'm more the kind of guy who tries to seduce men on a bus. *(Pause.)* You know, if your friend can't help I can't stay here.

BARRY

I won't let them hang you.

JAVAD

They have them every week.

BARRY

I'll hide you away.

JAVAD

Put me under Sinbad's invisible cloak?

BARRY

Right. *(BARRY gets a text on his iPhone.)* YES!

JAVAD

Yes. And I've always hid it. Being ... you know, gay.

BARRY

But now you'll have to *show* it. You got the interview! Here's your chance.

JAVAD

What?

BARRY

My contact texted me. You have appointment. *This* afternoon.

JAVAD

Merci! (*He puts the bottle away in backpack. He sees in his bag the other bottle of wine.*) Wait. I better not take my a special bottle of wine in there.

BARRY

They could take it.

JAVAD

See. (*He pulls out the bottle of wine.*) Harun signed it. Read it.

BARRY

It's in Farsi. I can't read Farsi—looks like fancy calligraphy.

JAVAD

Your first Farsi lesson. "Javad."

BARRY

That's how your name looks? Like romantic cursive.

JAVAD

It is pretty.

BARRY

Your name fits you. Looks smooth, clever, and cursive.

JAVAD

And not straight.

BARRY

I read they used to believe there was magic in the letters. Maybe that's why the letters looked so magical.

JAVAD

(Flirtatious) The letters aren't where the magic is.

BARRY

If you keep this up, you'll have no problem proving anything to Hosein.

JAVAD

It's easy with you. Here. (*Back to the bottle*) "As it says in the good book..."

BARRY

One of his favorite phrases—

JAVAD

"Don't let the Jinni out of the bottle until you have only one last wish left."

JAVAD

"All my love, H. H."

BARRY

Harun Hamini.

JAVAD

You take it.

BARRY

What am I to do with it?

JAVAD

For safe keeping.

BARRY

I'll keep it.

JAVAD

And when Harun comes, we'll make a toast.

BARRY

All three of us.

JAVAD

Merci.

BARRY

You better be off— to the interview.

JAVAD

Wish me luck!

(JAVAD tosses on his backpack. Lights dim. BARRY exits with the bottle of Bordeaux.)

SCENE ELEVEN: Investigation

(INVESTIGATOR enters from the mural with files. JAVAD moves to speak to the INVESTIGATOR.)

INVESTIGATOR

Next case! Javad! We only have thirty minutes so we start. Get me? You are a homo-sexual looking for refugee status, yes? You're Iranian?

JAVAD

Iranian on my tongue and Persian in my soul.

INVESTIGATOR

Here I have your name. Your occupation?

JAVAD

Artist.

INVESTIGATOR

How do you know you're homo?

JAVAD

Like the difference between a Saudi and an Iraqi—you know it when you see it.

INVESTIGATOR

So... You... You are a... gay?

JAVAD

A G-man.

INVESTIGATOR

Damn! You don't look it. Do you have pictures?

JAVAD

Of what?

INVESTIGATOR

Of you having sex with men? With your lover?

JAVAD

No.

INVESTIGATOR

Well then how do we prove it? And you have a male lover back in Tehran? His name? *(Silence.)* Okay. How did you two meet?

JAVAD

We made eye contact in my father's living room.

INVESTIGATOR

You gays are able to talk with the eyes? I don't understand. Explain. Show me.

JAVAD

Show you?

INVESTIGATOR

Yes. Show me. Speak with your eyes. Get me?

JAVAD

It is like this. *(He tries.)* Talk with eyes is 100 percent "G". It is not easy to show.

INVESTIGATOR

You can just tell. Right. How was it? How was your first time?

JAVAD

You mean... being with...?

INVESTIGATOR

Yes.

JAVAD

I don't know. He was...

INVESTIGATOR

I need to believe. What was it like?

JAVAD

Well, after Harun and I ... the *first time*...

*(HARUN appears in the wall and moves near JAVAD.
INVESTIGATOR does not see HARUN.)*

SCENE TWELVE: Harun's Apartment

(HARUN stands behind JAVAD holding him; they face the audience like they are looking in a mirror.)

JAVAD

(To INVESTIGATOR) We stood there. Naked. Looking. And I saw myself. I was there. So was he. We existed... together.

HARUN

I don't know about this...

JAVAD

About...?

HARUN

If we should continue. It's ...

JAVAD

Forbidden or not we're together.

HARUN

Yes, we are. Two different classes.

JAVAD

Different ages.

HARUN

Don't remind me.

JAVAD

Sorry, Harun.

HARUN

Javad, I love you.

JAVAD

How much?

HARUN

Until every sparkle of the stars burn out.

JAVAD

What would I do without you?

HARUN

You know, if something does happen,

JAVAD

Like what?

HARUN

Anything. We should make a plan.

JAVAD
A meeting spot?

HARUN
Yes, a meeting spot.

JAVAD
The glass company?

HARUN
That'd be the first place they'd think of. How about the café?

JAVAD
I don't think it should be in Iran.

HARUN
How about in Ankara?

JAVAD
Okay. Where?

HARUN
Kizilay Square.

JAVAD
We'll meet in Kizilay Square. —

HARUN
Fine. (*HARUN moves to the wall mural.*) I promise.

(*HARUN fades in wall. The investigation continues.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN: Investigation

(*We return to the investigation.*)

INVESTIGATOR
So you come here.

JAVAD
Yes. As long as there is breath in his body he will come. And we will run off together.

INVESTIGATOR
Heard that before. Prove it. Drop your pants and let me see.

JAVAD

Here?

INVESTIGATOR

Yes, Javad, we must check. To prove you're gay. We need to confirm your story. Drop your pants and let me inspect your ass. I must assess whether you were penetrated or not!

(JAVAD reluctantly undoes his pants, and drops them, and he stands with his buttocks facing the INVESTIGATOR. His buttocks are facing up-stage.)

INVESTIGATOR

Bend over and let me see!

(INVESTIGATOR shoves JAVAD over the desk.)

INVESTIGATOR

Spread your cheeks! *(JAVAD does. He is humiliated.)* Wide. Wider! MORE GET ME! *(Beat. As he looks at JAVAD's ass.)* Did you play with dolls? *(JAVAD shakes his head.)* Sit while you pissed? *(JAVAD shakes his head.)* Wear girls' clothes? *(JAVAD shakes his head.)* Do you like this?

JAVAD

(JAVAD is crying.) No.

INVESTIGATOR

You can dress. Well, I don't see any proof, get me? But you might still be a homo. I just can't tell for sure. *(JAVAD slowly pulls up his pants.)* What are you afraid of in Iran?

JAVAD

The circumstances. I had to. See, I made some money, but not a lot. My friend- He ships glass all over. Africa to America.

INVESTIGATOR

He's rich? And his name?

JAVAD

I can't say it. But while I was in University we stay in this apartment... A nice one in Tehran— the most perfect life. Like magic. Love.

INVESTIGATOR

Why did you leave Iran?

JAVAD

Well ... (*A big breath.*) At our place... Really nice. My boy-friend's family had strong connections with the Shah before the revolution, so they had many nice things. Nicer than my family's. His connection to the Shah might have been one reason Father never really trusted him. At the time...

(Through the wall HARUN is seen in a bed.)

SCENE FOURTEEN: Harun's Apartment

(JAVAD moves to be with HARUN in the bed.)

JAVAD

I was in bed with my boy-friend. We'd hidden-out for a while... Father'd been lookin' for me. He'd call and call. I knew what he wanted.

(Sounds of banging on a door. FATHER is unseen.)

FATHER

(Unseen) Javad! I know you're in there!

HARUN

Oh my.

FATHER

(Unseen) Come out now! Or I am coming in!

JAVAD

Don't open the door.

HARUN

It'll be fine. *(To the door)* Get the hell out of here old man!

FATHER

(Unseen) Damn you!—

HARUN

You're embarrassing your self—

FATHER

(Unseen) What you've done is wrong—

JAVAD

(Whispering) Oh please. Oh please.—

FATHER

(Unseen) No surprise why no girls place their thighs beneath you, you pervert!

HARUN

Go home—

FATHER

(Unseen) NO! Let's stop this now. Give me what I came for!—

JAVAD

NOooo! FATHER GO AWAY!

(HARUN disappears with the bed. JAVAD steps back into the investigation room.)

SCENE FIFTEEN: Investigation

(INVESTIGATOR steps out from behind the door, no longer FATHER. JAVAD with INVESTIGATOR.)

INVESTIGATOR

So? Did he break in?

JAVAD

The Basijis knocked down the door. They rammed open the door, and attacked us. They threw things at us. Telling Harun to leave me alone.

INVESTIGATOR

They tell you to leave Iran?

JAVAD

Yes. Or kill me.

INVESTIGATOR

So you are afraid for your life.

JAVAD

And for my boy-friend's.

INVESTIGATOR

So you say.

JAVAD

Father threatened to kill him if we kept *this* up.

INVESTIGATOR

He said that?

JAVAD

And the Basijis took my boy-friend.

INVESTIGATOR

Where?

JAVAD

I don't know. To some other men—

INVESTIGATOR

So you say.

JAVAD

Men who would have their way with him.

INVESTIGATOR

I've heard of that.

JAVAD

I ran at the Basijis. To rip them apart. They held me, and said, "We don't want you. What would we want with you? You're an ugly dog! We want him. He's a pretty pussy cat."

INVESTIGATOR

They said "pussy cat"?

JAVAD

No. They didn't say "cat".

(Lights up on HARUN through the wall.)

HARUN

Wait one second. I'll wash.

(Lights out on HARUN through the wall.)

JAVAD

And he went to the bath room, and ran out the back door. Right into... *my sister*. She was standing there.

(Lights upon SISTER through the wall.)

SISTER

Quick I'll help you. Trust me. You go back in there and the Basijis get you. You go this way, to our car, and I can hide you. Your choice. You know I've always liked you Harun. As handsome as you are. I'm only here to help.

(Lights out SISTER through the wall.)

JAVAD

My sister guided my boy-friend to her car. He crawled into the back seat. My sister climbed into the front. Driving the car was Father. Harun screamed—

HARUN

(Off-stage unseen) Kizilay! Kizilay!

INVESTIGATOR

So your sister betrayed you?

JAVAD

Yes Sir.

INVESTIGATOR

Ah. But we only have your word.

JAVAD

It happened.

INVESTIGATOR

You wouldn't lie, right?

JAVAD

No! I fought for my life.

INVESTIGATOR

Really? For your life?

JAVAD

Yes. The Basijis grabbed me.

INVESTIGATOR

You fought?

JAVAD

As much as I could.

INVESTIGATOR

You look fine.

JAVAD

They hit me and hit me.

Until?

JAVAD

They kept at it until I blacked out.

INVESTIGATOR

And the Basijis?

JAVAD

They—

INVESTIGATOR

Yes?

JAVAD

Do I have to tell you?

INVESTIGATOR

Do you want asylum? (*Silence.*) Javad? How else am I to believe? I did my checking, and maybe you want me to look farther down there, see what turns you on, maybe we bring in a man and you show us in person? You must prove yourself. No other way. Save yourself my little Shahrazad. Spin a tale. I must believe 'cause, get me, right now, I don't.

(Lights fade. INVESTIGATOR freezes.)

SCENE SIXTEEN: Naghali Storytelling

(JAVAD as NAGHALI in front of the mural.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

If you want life in prison help a homo.
We know they do not exist. Khoda forbid it, oh yes. Oh no.
Earthquakes are their fault! They caused the tidal waves!
Recession is their fault! That's what they gave us.
And this story, yes, of forbidden glass.

(We hear violent music, whipping sounds, screams, and general cries as the light dim to black.)

ACT TWO

INTERLUDE: Naghali Storytelling

(JAVAD, in only his briefs, standing on a chair, his arms tied above his head, is unconscious. BASIJI ONE and BASIJI TWO stand next to JAVAD with whips.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

(recorded voice-over)

And this is what we know

So I'm sure you'll understand.
A boy falls in love with a man.
It is strange to some.
Who can say where love comes from?
But Javad, adored Harun.
Then Father found them in a bed room,
and with Sister's help, caught Mr. Hamini.
Where he is now we have no clue.
Javad was captured by the men in blue.

(The story comes to life.)

SCENE ONE: Torture

(A light hits JAVAD, and violent techno music pounds.)

BASIJI ONE

Javad. Wake up!

JAVAD

(Slowly becoming conscious) What? Where...

BASIJI ONE

Are you awake?

JAVAD

(Barely conscious) What? I guess...

BASIJI ONE

Good. Now you wait.

JAVAD

Wait? For what?

BASIJI ONE

For fate. For the dark to vanish.

(The lights go out; JAVAD is in complete darkness)

JAVAD

Please!! Please help me!

(HARUN comes out of the darkness into a spot light.)

HARUN

I will help you learn. The style of glassblowing I think you'll be really good at is off-hand blowing. It's a lot harder. But you're a natural. And it is very popular in the States. Let me show you. Basically it's five steps over and over. Gather. Marver. Cap. Shape. Repeat.

JAVAD

(Semi-conscious) Gather... Marver... Cap... Shape...

HARUN

Repeat. Five steps. Over and over.

JAVAD

(Semi-conscious) Gather...

HARUN

First, you gather or get the glass from the furnace. It's like catching honey on a stick, but you don't want it to fall off. The trick is to gather it and keep it. Keep it from falling off. Pretty tough. After all its 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit.

JAVAD

(Semi-conscious) Gathering.

HARUN

You need all these tools.

JAVAD

(Semi-conscious) Shears, puffers, and jacks.

HARUN

You place the glass, the honey, right? You place it on the marver, this steel table and roll it. It's gotta be perfectly round.

JAVAD

(Semi-conscious) Marvelous.

(In semi-darkness BASIJI ONE moves to JAVAD, and with a large plastic straw and duct-tape he secures the straw in JAVAD's mouth. The straw is the only thing through which he can breathe.)

HARUN

Then there is the pipe. This is the art of it all. You blow in the pipe. You cover the hole with your thumb to trap air inside the pipe. And with just a little air at a time, you blow.

(JAVAD struggles to breathe.)

BASIJI ONE

Breathe, you little shit.

HARUN

The heat of the glass causes the trapped air to expand.

BASIJI ONE

Feel trapped? Breathe in...

HARUN

A bubble will inflate.

BASIJI ONE

Intake some air...

HARUN

Technically there is no air.

BASIJI ONE

Slowly, slow because really—

HARUN

It's just trapped air pressure.

BASIJI ONE

There's no air.

HARUN

That's all it takes and the glass pushes out.

BASIJI ONE

(He laughs and claps.)

HARUN

That's the capping.

BASIJI ONE

Zaps you into a panic.

HARUN

The glass fills with the poetry of your breath.

BASIJI ONE

Breathe! Through that straw!

HARUN

You shape it. To whatever you want. Blow, cap, shape, breathe.

BASIJI ONE

Breathe, you little fuck!

HARUN

If you need more glass, you go back to the furnace of honey.

BASIJI ONE

Breathe! Damn you!

HARUN

And dip the pole back in.

BASIJI ONE

Try it. Take a deep breath.

HARUN

Paddle on some hot honey—

BASIJI ONE

Suck in—

HARUN

And blow, cap—

BASIJI ONE

Trap the air—

HARUN

Shape and breathe—

BASIJI ONE

Breathe!

HARUN

Sheathe the glass—

BASIJI ONE

Hold its mass!

Then cut. Cut it off.

BASIJ ONE

Cut you off!

(BASIJ1 ONE un-tapes JAVAD's mouth, and pulls out the straw. JAVAD gasps for air.)

JAVAD

(Catching his breath) Oh Allah! Please!

HARUN

(Over-lapping) You find the neckline with a jack. This helps removal of the glass from the blowpipe. If you cut too close, you'll break it. *(He slowly walks back into the darkness.)* And you'll have to start over. All over again. *(HARUN begins to leave.)*

JAVAD

Merci, "tanham nazar". *[Don't leave me alone.]*

HARUN

I won't leave you. I'm here.

JAVAD

Just don't leave me.

(HARUN slowly disappears.)

BASIJ1 ONE

Leave you? Dear boy, when I leave here, you can think about what it is I want. Think about it all day. Think about it all night. See when I leave here, I don't think about you. Standing here. *(He laughs.)* No way! I don't think about you! When I leave here I remember my grocery list, how my bird needs food, or I do my prayers. But remember you? *(Laughs.)* No fucking way! You don't exist. And to think of you? Why would I? I forget you as soon as I can.

JAVAD

Please. I have nothing.

BASIJ1 TWO

Maybe my wires will make you tell us what we want—

JAVAD

What wires? Please.

(BASIJ1 TWO "whips" JAVAD but without a real whip. We hear a horrible whipping sound.)

JAVAD

(JAVAD screams.) AHHHHH! NOOO! Please.

BASIJI ONE

Give us names!

BASIJI TWO

Or you get 100 lashes! (*BASIJI TWO “whips” JAVAD*)

JAVAD

(*JAVAD screams.*) AHHHHH!

BASIJI ONE

And such nice skin.

(They laugh. BASIJI TWO back swings her arm. The wire slides along the floor. JAVAD tenses his back. And BASIJI TWO whips JAVAD.)

JAVAD

(*JAVAD screams.*) AHHHHH! ALLAH! Save me!

BASIJI ONE

Do you wish you could disappear?

(JAVAD passes out.)

BASIJI ONE

Shit! He’s passed out. Let’s go get some smelling salts. Get done with him.

(BASIJIs fade away as a light glows on JAVAD.)

JAVAD

Harun? Are you here?

(We see HARUN in the light with JAVAD. HARUN looks like the Shah.)

HARUN *(as the Shah)*

I told you I’d never leave you.

JAVAD

Are you the Shah?

HARUN *(as the Shah)*

Why do you say that? (*HARUN reaches to caress JAVAD.*)

JAVAD

Don’t touch me. Not there.

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
Let me take care of you—

JAVAD
Why you?

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
Lose the bandages—
(*HARUN breathes on JAVAD's chest.*)

JAVAD
What are you doing?

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
Relax.

JAVAD
Don't breathe on me ... Oh... That's cold. It's making ...me... float. We're floating?

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
Take my hand. We're going away. Good. Hold tight.
JAVAD
You're the Shah.

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
If you like, Javad. How do I look?
JAVAD
I don't know. How do I ...

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
Look over there. That's you and I at the movies.

JAVAD
Wow. And over there we were at the Naghali storyteller in the café.

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
There: having dinner. See? Don't you feel better, Javad?
JAVAD
Of course. Are you okay?

HARUN (*as the Shah*)
I don't feel so well. The Chinese food in Tehran doesn't settle well.

JAVAD

I don't feel so good either. My back.

HARUN (*as the Shah*)

Don't think about it. Think about us. Our home. The view from our window.

JAVAD

So beautiful. You holding me. Merci, "tanham nazar". [*Don't leave me alone.*]

HARUN (*as the Shah*)

I won't leave you. I'm right behind you. Feel me?

JAVAD

Yes. I think so.

(Whipping sounds. The lights return to the torture room. HARUN exits. We see BASIJI ONE and TWO.)

JAVAD

(JAVAD screams.) AHHHHH!

(Loud noise fills JAVAD's the room. JAVAD is whipped three more times by BASIJI ONE. We don't hear the whipping or him scream. We only see him writhe in pain. The noise stops. The BASIJI exit.)

SCENE TWO: Investigation

(JAVAD sits, exhausted. INVESTIGATOR enters with his files and he struggles to begin and finally does.)

INVESTIGATOR

Javad? Am I to believe? My little Shahrazad. You may have told the truth, but in the end I must decide your status. We're overwhelmed. Get me? Last year we have 4,000 like you. This year alone- 18,000... It is not so easy as a sad soft story. And you: soft as an old man's slack penis moldy with spider webs. My boss believes you are not a homo, just an immigrant. *(Pause.)* The State Department knows Mr. Hamini. He's been under their surveillance for a few years. Watching him. Smuggling documents from a secret uranium enrichment plant. My reporter American friend, he confirms this. Mr. Harun was arrested by your government. He didn't say much. But our contacts in Iran said he had one thing to say to you. He did say, and I don't know what this means, *(reading a note)* "It takes more than a wish to make the magic carpet fly." That was all. It makes me wonder. Perhaps this was all a wish, get me? All you wished for? Wishful thinking, yes? You wanted something to happen. Between you two. But it didn't? Keep wishing. So. My boss, we, you see, we decided. You have three days. You can wait. You can't work, but you can wait. Then

you return. We will return you. Your Father's expecting you. Inshallah. *(Pause.)*
Good day.

(INVESTIGATOR exits. JAVAD stands, gathers his things.)

SCENE THREE: Kizilay Square

(BARRY and JAVAD at the square.)

BARRY

I am so sorry.

JAVAD

He didn't believe my story.

BARRY

What part?

JAVAD

All of it!

BARRY

And you told him everything?

JAVAD

Yeah. How I traded my ruby ring with the Basijis to let me go.

BARRY

How they put you on the bus?

JAVAD

Yeah. But it didn't work. Maybe if I'd made something up.

BARRY

This isn't over.

JAVAD

But that U. N. guy didn't believe I was "G".

BARRY

I'm sorry. I didn't think he'd... I thought he'd confirm it, let you have asylum.

JAVAD

(Very angry and explosive) Damn! Damn!

BARRY

We might go over his head. Go to higher authorities.

JAVAD

Go higher? Even Khoda is against me!

BARRY

Oh, I should've seen it!

JAVAD

You helped—it's not your fault—

BARRY

I might get my boss to make some calls.

JAVAD

It won't help.

BARRY

My boss might know someone.

JAVAD

You've done so much already.

BARRY

It's my pleasure. Really.

JAVAD

Really?

BARRY

Yeah. I'll help.

JAVAD

Please.

BARRY

I'll help you get to the USA.

JAVAD

No. Help me find Harun. *Please...*

BARRY

Sure. You can do this.

(Long silence as he gathers his things.)

JAVAD

You're right. I can do this. And you can help one last time. Do you still have my a special wine?

BARRY

The one from Harun?

JAVAD

My last wish.

BARRY

Yes.

JAVAD

Tomorrow? Can you bring it?

BARRY

The bottle? Sure. What do you have in mind?

JAVAD

Write my story. Put it in every paper, magazine, tell it to anyone who will listen.

BARRY

I don't think—

JAVAD

They'll read it.

BARRY

It's risky.

JAVAD

It's all I've got.

BARRY

Okay. It'll be the best damn story they'll ever read.

JAVAD

Just please... don't use names.

BARRY

No names.

JAVAD

Make some up. I've always thought of myself as a Sylvester Stallion.

(JAVAD slides down the wall as the lights dim.)

SCENE FOUR: Execution

(Music sets the mood. JAVAD and BARRY remain in the square. We see pictures of the men's executions. A noose falls from the rafters. BASIJI ONE stands at the stairs leading up to the hangman's platform. BASIJI TWO stands on the hangman's platform dressed as an executioner.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

(To the audience) Our boy's story was published immediately. All over the internet, and every newspaper. It was...

BASIJI ONE

(To the people at the execution) If two men lie naked under the same cover...

BASIJI TWO

(To the people at the execution) Ali Vakili.

BASIJI ONE

Punished!

BASIJI TWO

Mir-Javad Soleimani!

(Recorded sounds of whipping and screams.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

99 lashes of the whip! The story, the article led to a witch hunt. And all he could do—

BASIJI ONE

If a man kisses another man—

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Was read about the trials.

BASIJI ONE

When two men kiss with lascivious intent...

BASIJI TWO

Mohammad Asemipour.

BASIJI ONE

Punished!

(Recorded sounds of whipping and screams.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Only fifteen years old.

BASIJI ONE

Punished with 60 lashes of the whip.

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

They were all over the news. A dozen men and boys. All found guilty for being “G”. For being gay. And everyone claimed it was because of Barry’s story. As if he’d done it. As if Barry’d led them to Harun. Did they have his name? Didn’t they arrest him before the newspaper story?

(HARUN enters and walks up to a level of the “café”. BASIJI ties HARUN’s hands behind his back. HARUN quietly weeps. Tears stream down his face. BASIJI takes a black hood and places it over HARUN’s head.)

BASIJI ONE

If two men engage in sodomy! Punishment!

BASIJI TWO

Hossein Najjari!

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Twenty years old. He was—

BASIJI ONE

Executed!

(Recorded sounds of the floor opening, and a body falling. There are recorded screams.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

The executions were in the public square.

BASIJI ONE

If either penetration or if just genitals touch!

(BASIJI puts the noose over HARUN’s head.)

BASIJI ONE

The punishment is death! —

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

The penalty —

BASIJ I TWO

Hakim Momen Tabrizi—

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Just nineteen.

BASIJ I ONE

The punishment is death by hanging!!

BASIJ I TWO

Foroohar Larijani!!

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Twenty-eight.

BASIJ I ONE

EXECUTION! Punishment is DEATH!

(The lights go out!) (Recorded sounds of the floor opening, and a body falling. There are recorded screams.)

BASIJ I TWO

Harun Hamini —

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Harun's execution was—

(We hear the floor open, and a body fall. There are screams and HARUN's voice [recorded].)

HARUN (recorded)

(recorded) “In another time! Another place!”

BASIJ I TWO

HARUN HAMINI!

BASIJ I ONE

IS DEAD!

(The lights return and a body hangs from a rope above the platform. BASIJ I cuts down the body as the music plays. She throws the body over her shoulder and exits as the music fades.)

SCENE FIVE: Kizilay Square.

(BARRY and JAVAD sit on the bench with the bottle of wine. JAVAD has his backpack.)

JAVAD

Tell me, Barry, when you wrote my story- did you use names—

BARRY

No. None—

JAVAD

Harun's?—

BARRY

Never—

JAVAD

You did too—

BARRY

We don't use names—

JAVAD

You led them right to Harun.

BARRY

That's not what—

JAVAD

Yes it was. You published my story.

BARRY

A story full of lies.

JAVAD

I never—

BARRY

You lied about your age.
About picking my pocket.
I dropped it, didn't I? Didn't I?
And you weren't at the university.

BARRY

GOD!

JAVAD

My age? And how's that a crime?

And so what? It wasn't as bad as—
I thought about school—

JAVAD

But I never lied about the torture.

BARRY

Really?

JAVAD

I said what I needed to!

BARRY

You wanted your story told! And it was told to save your ass!

JAVAD

You didn't have a story to tell so you stole mine!

BARRY

You gave it to me for the memory card!

JAVAD

And your god-damn story put the rope around his neck! He's all over the news. Him. His body, his hands, his legs— His face... covered in a black hood. He's hanging. Dangling. Limp. Dead. My friend! Hung! For what?

BARRY

Don't make me feel like I killed Harun!

JAVAD

BUT YOU DID!!!

(JAVAD throws his backpack on the ground and we hear glass shatter. He smashes the glass and his art in his backpack. He does not shatter the red wine bottle.)

BARRY

(Over JAVAD's temper tantrum.) Javad! Don't!

JAVAD

No! no! (While smashing his backpack) THEY MURDERED HIM! MURDER!! ALL because of what they say we can't do. Don't do this, don't do that! Don't! DON'T! That's all I hear! DON'T! Don't do this! Don't hold hands in public! Don't touch his face in front of the family! Don't kiss! Don't love! Don't tell! DO! NOT! EXIST! And The "Supreme" Leader says that the gays burned the cars- That the gays destroy the shops! That the gays stole the election away from the people! That the gays cause all this confusion! How can we if we don't exist? How? And they murdered my Harun! MURDERED! HIM!! *(Silence.)* And now ... I return... to the devil's...harem. *(He rests and catches his breath. He is worn out.)* I must deserve this. I always believed he was too good for me, I don't deserve his love. Father could not accept me, and I knew my country could not accept me, so why should Harun, why should I, why should you, accept me? This is my fate.

BARRY

No, it's not. You deserve love. You, yourself, more than anyone deserves your love.

JAVAD

I do?

BARRY

You do. And I'll help you.

JAVAD

"Tanham nazar." *[Don't leave me alone.]*

BARRY

I won't leave you. ... I can't. *(BARRY removes his knit cap.)*

JAVAD

You can't?

BARRY

No. I can't just abandon you now. *(JAVAD smiles.)*

JAVAD

(Pause.) You know, with ... Harun, for the first time, I felt I existed. I felt that sex and love go together. I want to find that spark again. But—

BARRY

You will.

JAVAD

Yes. I believe you.

BARRY

(Putting his cap on JAVAD) And Harun will guide you.

JAVAD

I like that. *(Silence.)* A glass of wine?

BARRY

Sure. *(He pours another cup full of wine.)* Let's honor Harun.

JAVAD

I can't go back.

BARRY

They will return you. I thought maybe with the *new* President...

JAVAD

No new president. The same old.

BARRY

I have a long shot, but maybe you could get a visa.

JAVAD

I'd like that. Some more?

BARRY

Why not? (*As JAVAD pours the wine into a glass*) What's that noise in the bottle?
The wine?

JAVAD

Oh that's just sediment. Harun says sometime the sediment gets hard.

BARRY

That hard?

JAVAD

I don't know. I guess so.

BARRY

(*Taking his wine from JAVAD*) To something better. (*They finish off the glass of wine.*)

JAVAD

The last of the wine. The very last. (*He pours the last of the wine into his cup.*)

BARRY

This Broudeax is really good but... You have the rest.

JAVAD

(*Making a toast*) To Harun!

(*JAVAD slams the wine, and holds it in his mouth.*)

BARRY

What's wrong? (*Pause.*) What is it? Are you okay?

(*JAVAD spits the wine into the cup, using his hands to filter the wine. In his hands he is holding large gems.*)

BARRY

Oh my god. What are those?

JAVAD

“Only when I have one last wish left.” Oooh. Harun. The Jinni’s out of the bottle.

(JAVAD shows BARRY the gems.)

BARRY

These will pay your way to America.

JAVAD

I can buy my way with these.

BARRY

Diamonds, rubies.

JAVAD

You seen a diamond this big?

BARRY

Never.

JAVAD

So that’s what he was doing at the café.

BARRY

With all those guys from the Congo.

JAVAD

The Naghali was just a distraction.

BARRY

All the time.

JAVAD

And this?

BARRY

Ahhh—maybe a topaz?

JAVAD

It is a stunning. ...

BARRY

He did it. We will have difficulty getting you out of Turkey—

JAVAD

I have an idea. I could be a storyteller, and you can get me a scoundrel disguise.

BARRY

I've always had a weakness for scoundrels.

JAVAD

We are well matched.

BARRY

You have an idea?

JAVAD

And an honest new job. Help me change my look. Trust me. My idea is complete.

(BARRY helps JAVAD completely become NAGHALI.)

SCENE SIX: Naghali Storytelling

*(NAGHALI speaks to the audience as the music slowly grows. The café, is NOT a café, but a theater, and it is **this** theater. He made it to London and is here telling us how. He holds the backpack.)*

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

Heaven is incomplete without a heavenly romance. Our loves light it up. Waiting for us. The stars look down on us like our lovers' eyes; they love us and Khoda loves us. And we keep that love here. *(NAGHALI shakes backpack- sounds like broken glass.)* It sounds like they broke me, shattered my spirit, but I am whole from his sacrifice. With the gems, and with more help from Barry, who is somewhere here tonight, I made it to Great Britain! To tell my story. To tell Harun's story. Maybe I will stay here, or maybe I'll try Pittsburg.

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

I may cry over Harun, but someday he shall answer. The moaning of Harun's bones will respond to my story. And be proud of me. *(NAGHALI unzips the backpack.)* I will someday see his love sparkle. I will again feel his hands, and breathe his breath. But as for now? I let go of him and all those pains, all those stings, I leave them to sparkle on the wind. I toss them all. I toss it into your hands.

(NAGHALI throws what is in the bag; out comes silver glitter, not broken glass. Glitter falls from the sky.)

JAVAD (as NAGHALI)

In another land, another time,

another day of our lovers' enticing perfume.

Another day of our lovers' waists white as the moon.
Another day of these dreams.
Schemes of being born into a better class.
Hopes that may or may not fail.
Another day of where the bright sun, before our loves, is pale.
Another day of love perchance,
and of a better glass of circumstance.

(The lights fade to black. We hear Persian music.)

END OF PLAY

SYNOPSIS:

What story would you tell to get your freedom and your love? When Javad escapes from Iran, he needs help attaining asylum in Turkey. He encounters American reporter, Barry. Through stories of forbidden passion Javad sweet-talks Barry into reuniting Javad with his true love, Harun, and getting him an interview at the embassy. Unluckily, Barry's thoughtful assistance has unforeseen consequences for everyone.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

The Iranian tradition of Naghali is an age old art form practiced in Iran in the streets, cafes, private gatherings, and on stage. The play draws on this style to present the obscured Iran. Importing and updating Naghali, and fusing it with Western dramatic influences, this play gives voice to and reflects the hybrid-Iranian experience in contemporary society. Although the play is written with only one actor playing all of the parts the play can be done with other actors. Thus, the casting of the roles and the directing should try to convey the Naghali practice.

The casting may be done with as few as five or as many as nine. The actors can play other characters in the scenes. They can be on the bus, in the park, in the prison, or other places. They could come to life from the projections/murals. They could be used in tableaux or as shadows of the Naghali paintings. The actors need not be traditionally Iranian in look. With that said, Iranians vary in appearance as much as people in any other country. To only look for Middle-Easterners to cast will limit the play and its message. Use a broad range of ethnicity in the casting.

There should be no break between Act One and Act Two. Intermission is between Act Two and Act Three.

The words in “...” are the English of a Farsi word. I've written them how they would sound in English.

“Bebakh-sheed” means “excuse me” or “pardon me” or “I'm sorry”.

“Pesar” means “dear son”. “Aghaieh”

means “honored”. “Dokhtar” in Farsi

means “girl”. “Babba!” is like

“Pappa” or “Father”. “Saaket” means

“quiet”.

“Harun” is said “Ha-roon”.

“Haerfe cizi ra zaed aaen!” is written phonetically. It means “Where are your manners?”

“Zainab” is like saying “dummy” or “stupid”.

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