***A mid Azar night's nightmare***

Ayoub Aghakhani

**Characters: (in order of appearance)**

Mansour middle aged

Mother (Shirin)

Muhammad

Rahim

**Stage**

(Empty and dark. light will create a stage to act according to the story and some of these acts will be seen in personal and spot lights.)

*(We hear Mansour's voice in the darkness.)*

Mansour: I should know who I am answering to.

*(A flashlight from the audience brightens Mansour's face. His eyes are sad. Covers his face with his eyes. He is wearing a military uniform.)*

Mansour: Please… My eyes are hurt… I said please!

*(The flashlight is off and there is darkness again.)*

Mansour: I don’t want to dream in awareness. Not a dream! It’s a nightmare! The physician told to my wife: “ He has to have tranquilizer. there is no other choices.” I have. They aren't efficient. Why should I reproach myself?! You know what does war mean?!

*(The light turns on. Mother is irrigating the coleus’s pot. Muhammad is assembling a helicopter’s pieces.)*

Mother: This coleus is going to be spoiled! you didn't care it?!

Muhammad: *(Doesn't care to mother)*

Mother: *(Looks at Muhammad)* I’m talking with you!

Muhammad: I have irrigated it regularly.

Mother: What do you mean regular?

Muhammad: According to what Zia said.

Mother: Maybe it needs more sun light.

Muhammad: I put it in front of sun half an hour for every day.

Mother: Then why it is dying?

Muhammad: I don’t know!

Mother: (Angry, Whispering) Your dad loved coleus.

Muhammad: My dad loved a lot of things.

*(Mother is shocked, She turns and looks at Muhammad, he steals his gaze from his mother.)*

Muhammad: *(After a long pause still shows himself busy.)* He loved you too.

Mother: *(angry)* Well?

Muhammad: …

*(Mother puts the sprinkler down and reaches Muhammad fast and take the parts he is holding.)*

Mother: I said well?

*(Muhammad is desperate. Mother is a mess. Mansour enters with a personal cloth and sees the confrontation. He looks at them and the coleus. Muhammad saw him but mother didn’t. Mansour reaches the coleus fast then sits and show himself busy with it.)*

Mansour: Taking care of the coleus is not an easy job. Your father thought me.

Muhammad: *(Takes the pieces from mother.)* Now everyone in this house is a gardener.

*(Mother moves toward Mansour uncomfortable from what Muhammad said.)*

Mother: You returned quickly.

Mansour: I think the three of us irrigate this pot.

Mother: Maybe.

Mansour: *(stands up.)* It is better that Muhammad take care of it. Before it's too late. No Muhammad?

Muhammad: …

Mansour: *(To mother)* I came for the documents, they didn’t accept the copies. *(Exiting)* Where are they?

Mother: I'll bring them.

*(They both exits. Light is gone and there is a spot on Muhammad.)*

Muhammad: I am trying to assemble this helicopter model for some time. My dad beside the coleus loved my helicopter… He was a pilot. They say he was a hell of a pilot. He… leaved a few things for me… a coleus pot, a watch, a pilot helmet, a painting of earthquake, a bed he made it himself and his war uniform and … A few unanswered questions.

*(Light is gone. In return of light Rahim is talking on his cell phone.)*

Rahim: I begged you Muhammad. I don’t want the commander see me. What should I say to you in front of Haji Mansour? My son let me live my little life…now you are doing something that I can't be around for Ahmad's anniversary… I know dear… but I'm not the right person to answer your questions… I … myself… still… have questions ten times of my age… without answer from myself.)

*(Light turns on and off. there are Mother and Mansour. Mansour is busy with a chest.)*

Mother: You should talk to him.

Mansour: He is a big boy now.

Mother: What does it mean?

Mansour: It's not that easy to talk to him.

Mother: Then what should we do? I'm his mother!

Mansour: And I'm… Not his father.

Mother: You are his uncle

Mansour: And the husband of his mother! No! I can't talk to him.

Mother: *(With tears)* Why horrible things are always happened for me?

Mansour: Don’t say that Shirin!

Mother: *(whispering)* I won't.

Mansour: God is with us.

Mother: We have a week until Ahmad's anniversary.

Mansour: I remember it for a year now!

Mother: What are you looking for?

Mansour: Nothing!

Mother: Then what are you doing?

Mansour: *(stops)* I don’t want to… look at you… when we are talking about this.

*(A long silence, Mansour moves away from the chest. Their gaze meet for a second.)*

Mansour: I'm… afraid of talking to Muhammad.

*(Mansour exits. Mother is alone with the old chest. She moves toward it slowly and picks the watch from inside. Light turns into a spot on mother and chest.)*

Mother: This watch… was for Ahmad. I gave it to Muhammad earlier when he was little. He put it on but it was too big for him. I minimized it to the last size but still it fell from his hand. *(A bitter smile)* It broke then Mansour took it from him. He said it's your father's legacy we must take care of it. It was from then that Muhammad became hard on his uncle. He thought … *(Long pause)* … Thinks, Mansour is taking everything from his father.

*(Light opens on stage. Audiences can see Muhammad with a distance from Mother and chest , holding a baggage in front of his mother.)*

Mother: Godspeed.

Muhammad: Yeah.

Mother: Where to?

Muhammad: A small trip.

Mother: *(Looks away.)* How small?

Muhammad: I should go if you don’t mind.

Mother: Could a mother don’t mind his son?

Muhammad: Then tell me!

Mother: Where to?

Muhammad: I said.

Mother: You didn’t answer me.

Muhammad: I'll come.

Mother: *(Moves towards Muhammad.)* What’s wrong with you?

Muhammad: *(A bitter smile)* …

Mother: That was funny?

Muhammad: It was old.

Mother: But I never asked it.

Muhammad: Only you, didn’t ask it.

Mother: Now I ask!

Muhammad: It's too late.

Mother: Why?

Muhammad: I have ticket!

Mother: Don’t run away!

Muhammad: Why?

Mother: *(Looks at him)* …

Muhammad: Why everyone can run away except me?

Mother: Everyone?!

Muhammad: *(A bit loud)* Everyone!!!

*(Mother is thinking. She moves towards Muhammad and holds the watch in front of him.)*

Mother: Put this in your baggage.

Muhammad: You took back the war prizes?

Mother: …

Muhammad: How did the commander agreed with this?

Mother: *(Steals her gaze.)* You are old enough to have it.

Muhammad: But I am old enough for a long time now.

Mother: Children think they are old enough from the start.

Muhammad: *(Puts the watch in his baggage quickly.)* But you tell me this for many years: “You are old enough.” Whenever I should bare something you told me this. Whenever I should agree something you told me this. When I hit the ground you told me this. When I started to know myself you told me this. But you are giving me the watch now. The day before the commander took it, you said you are old enough now but Haj Mansour took it from me and said: “You are not old enough now son.” On that day you said nothing.

Mother: But now I gave it back to you.

Muhammad: It's broken mom. You gave me a broken watch!

Mother: You broke it yourself. Nothing breaks in that chest.

Muhammad: Are you sure?

*(Silence. Mother is frustrated. Muhammad wants to leave.)*

Mother: This week is you dad's anniversary.

Muhammad: You don’t think that I forgot, do you?

Mother: But you are leaving.

Muhammad: I go because of this.

Mother: *(Turns to him surprised)* Then you don’t want to be here?

Muhammad: I don’t want to be alone.

Mother: You are never alone.

Muhammad: But I don’t feel the same as you.

Mother: Children always think they are alone and no one understands them.

Muhammad: Children are very mistaken in your opinion.

Mother: *(Suppliant)* Tell me what you want to do? Where do you want to go?

Muhammad: *(After a long pause)* I'm going to Rahim. I want to bring him for the anniversary. He won't come. He doesn’t want to come.

Mother: Does your uncle know?

Muhammad: What it has to do with him?

Mother: It doesn’t? They were brothers in arm.

Muhammad: It's my father's anniversary.

Mother: And his brother. You didn’t forget that, did you?

Muhammad: Never! Not even for one second!

*(Muhammad leaves. The light turns into a spot on the mother.)*

Mother: Mothers think they can set the course of their children's life, but no… It can't be done. It really can't. We should bare men's stubbornness, thoughts, their absence, we should bare all of that. The day Ahmad wanted to go… (*Doesn’t continue. There is silence. It seems she is thinking about her words.)*… It seems that we born to give men their baggages even if we didn’t do this. *(Smiles)* Muhammad filled his baggage himself.

*(Darkness – Audiences can hear some voices. The sound of the train, plane, bus are merging with each other slowly, very crowded – Suddenly there is silence and light on the stage. Muhammad and Rahim are in stage. Muhammad is sitting and Rahim is standing.)*

Muhammad: This means I came here for nothing?

Rahim: …

Muhammad: I counted on you.

Rahim: You don’t know how hard it is for me.

Muhammad: If I didn’t know, I wasn’t here. I could only call you.

Rahim: Visiting you is …

Muhammad: Please! you must come.

Rahim: *(Laughs)* What difference could it make? It’s a simple ceremony. I wasn’t there all these years. I was gone, what is it now?

Muhammad: I can’t wait anymore, I’m tired. Believe me that I’m tired of same words, same works… same dreams.

*(Rahim turns to Muhammad.)*

Muhammad: I dream about my father once in a while. The same dream. He holds my hands and brings me into the yard. I say: “Dad! what’s your job?” He says: “Open your arms and hold them like wings!” I am little. I hold my arms just as my dad says. He sets my wings with his hands and says: “Move!” We move together. I say: “Dad! what does it mean?” He says: “This is flying.” I am laughing. This means: “I’m flying now?” He says: “Close your eyes and think you are beyond the clouds.” I close my eyes and fly into the clouds. He looks and says: “Now you must shoot the enemy with your mouth.” I say: “What do you mean dad?” He is silent. Then he comes and holds my hands and says: “Don’t bother yourself. Your hands are too little to fire.” *(Long silence – Rahim steals his gaze.)* My mother doesn’t believe my dream; She says your dad died two months before you were born. This is one of my dreams and no one knows the meaning of them nor believe them; You were tired, You think too much before sleeping, You should eat less dinner… These are the answers they gave me.

Rahim: You think it’s creepy that a son dreams about his father?

Muhammad: Even when he never saw him?

Rahim: …

Muhammad: All of my imagination of my dad are limited to some photos and hundreds of freakish dreams, but I think he is always with me. It seems I saw him. I see him. I grow up beside him.

Rahim: …

Muhammad: If you were in my place you couldn’t bare these things. With these different words about his life, his death, his heroism, his fears…

Rahim: Are you married?

Muhammad: *(Pauses suddenly and laughs)* …

Rahim: What?

Muhammad: Even you don’t listen to me. You see?!

Rahim: I asked because I listen. I want to know that you have children or not.

Muhammad: I didn’t marry.

Rahim: Why?

Muhammad: Maybe… because I can’t trust anyone.

Rahim: What do you mean?

Muhammad: Have you ever bitten a wormed apple?

Rahim: Yes, I have.

Muhammad: You can’t see the worm but with one bite your problems begin. The worm is inside the apple and you don’t know what to do now. Spit it and throw it away or don’t bother it. And that’s not possible. Marriage for me is like biting a beautiful apple.

Rahim: You are very pessimist!

Muhammad: What would happen to your thoughts if you were in my place?

Rahim: You think they are all the same.

Muhammad: It's lies all around me. Only you can help me now.

Rahim: With coming to the ceremony?

Muhammad: Exactly, you must be there and see what kind of words they say every year. And the mourner is a commander who became commander after my father died.

Rahim: You want me to go there and tell them you all are saying bullshit let me tell the truth?

Muhammad: No… No… I don’t know. I want you there. When you are there they can't say anything they want. Because you were there too. It calms me.

Rahim: But you were talking about unanswered questions when you called.

Muhammad: Maybe when everyone tells something, you can find some answers. What's the problem?

Rahim: *(Frustrated)* You should consider my age!

Muhammad: You don’t think that if you didn’t fall from the chopper, if there was time… maybe… He trusted me with you in his will?

Rahim: No, His brother was behind us.

Muhammad: You yourself are saying behind! Ye were with him! In the same chopper.

Rahim: I was co-pilot.

Muhammad: His brother is in front now! Why?

Rahim: You start your questions!?

Muhammad: How should I say it to you? Do want me to beg to you?

Rahim: Don’t say that!

Muhammad: My father is dead! Alone! You don’t fear death?

Rahim: Not more than a bad life.

Muhammad: Is this a good life? Alone in solitude?

Rahim: …

Muhammad: Are you married?

Rahim: Are you hitting back?

Muhammad: It's terrible that your life is like death.

Rahim: You don’t speak like Ahmad! You are bitter!

Muhammad: I grew up in bitterness. Do you understand? In bitterness! I didn’t see my dad. When I was a kid when they wanted the parents in school they told me to bring my mother not mother or father, only mother. They knew it! One time the commander came instead of my mother. I was shocked when I saw him. I couldn’t look my friends eyes for many days. But life goes on and everyone shows me the things in his own way. For a life!... Lies! Isn’t this bitterness? How should I not be bitter?

Rahim: If… I come there…

Muhammad: What could be happen?

Rahim: Maybe they are some people who doesn’t want to see me.

Muhammad: Some people are more important than your friend's son?

Rahim: Ahmad is more important than anything!

Muhammad: Then we think the same.

Rahim: But I am not a worthless person.

Muhammad: Am i?

Rahim: I didn’t mean that. The commander is older than me.

Muhammad: And me too! But he is in a wrong place!

Rahim: Are you sure it's wrong?

Muhammad: Would you stop it please?

Rahim: …

Muhammad: I … wait for you.

*(Light is gone then with Muhammad's steps forward becomes a spot on him.)*

Muhammad: Sometimes I want to tell everyone that none can be sure of anything. Judging the people needs a courage that I don’t have, but I want to have it. War destroys many things. There is no difference between wars. We don’t have good war and bad peace.

*(Darkness – Sounds of plane, bus and train are merging again. Then there is silence. Light turns on the stage. Muhammad and Mansour are on the stage. Mansour is sitting and Muhammad is standing.)*

Muhammad: Hello commander.

Mansour: *(Smiles at him but steals his gaze.)* Hello. Your mother said you came back.

Muhammad: Yes I did.

Mansour: Were where you?

Muhammad: That's funny!

Mansour: Why?

Muhammad: You are the same!

Mansour: Who?

Muhammad: You and mom… my mother wanted to know where I was. She asked it when I came back.

Mansour: She told me where you were gone.

Muhammad: Then why you ask?

Mansour: *(Pause)* Bad habit.

Muhammad: I am trying for years to reform my habits, specially the bad ones! You should do the same!

Mansour: Did you succeed?

Muhammad: Yes, I did. I don’t have many of them now.

Mansour: I mean your trip …

Muhammad: What do you think yourself?

Mansour: You are happy!

Muhammad: And you are not!

Mansour: No, I'm not.

Muhammad: Yes, you are.

Mansour: I'm fine.

Muhammad: You are not commander.

Mansour: …

Muhammad: If you were fine, you didn’t return the watch to me.

Mansour: Your mother…

Muhammad: No you gave it to me, just like when you took it from me. But it's broken.

Mansour: It was broken.

Muhammad: I don't remember that.

Mansour: How come you remember anything except this?

Muhammad: No, I forgot many things… for example, I forgot to take my father's will.

Mansour: Don't start again. I think you are a grown up.

Muhammad: What is it matter?

Mansour: We are worried for you! Worried for your stubbornness, your attitude, your war with us, your…

Muhammad: What about my worries? Who answers them? I never saw my father but it seems that no one wants me to know or see him. What’s happened? What’s happened to him? How long can I look at the coleus instead of my father?

Mansour: But me…

Muhammad: You are not my dad, uncle! You are the commander! You remember how you became the commander, didn't you? Why my father doesn’t have a will? Why Rahim doesn’t want to see you? What is he afraid of? What’s happened in the 80? Why everyone says different stories… What are you doing here?

Mansour: *(Loud)* Do you know the meaning of war?

Muhammad: What about you? Do you know it or you only fought it? I know because I live in it. My life… This life is a war.

Mansour: *(Whispers)* A nightmare.

Muhammad: When I was a kid. I loved the Sega console like many other kids. That little video game console filled my loneliness. There was a game that we were some soldiers who go to the war. I couldn’t finish it because always I thought about the people who died in the way.

Mansour: You just played it! But I was in it! When your soldiers died you could restart the game and play more careful. But there weren't a restart button for me nor training. When someone was gone he was gone. You couldn’t train ten times and then replay. There wasn’t a lone between joking and dying. This is war. This is bullet and rocket and death! Your first mistake is your last mistake. It means you lose many things…

Muhammad: And winning other things!

*(Mansour is silent and shakes his head.)*

Mansour: Your mother… Your life… is a duty for me.

Muhammad: It’s really hard to find dutiful persons. I am happy that you are one of them commander!

Mansour: Now your life … is a nightmare for me!

Muhammad: Why you don’t finish it?

Mansour: *(Dizzy)* What?

Muhammad: This nightmare.

Mansour: How?

Muhammad: With honesty!

Mansour: I am always honest.

Muhammad: What’s happened to my dad?

Mansour: Iraqi MIG hit him.

Muhammad: Why?

Mansour: If you asked that Baathist, he would tell you: “This is war.”

Muhammad: Why you didn’t look after him?

Mansour: We did. Two MIGs came after him. We did our best. He was up to clean the way.

Muhammad: Someone said the Iraqis were bombing the people. My dad went to hit them and he was alone. Someone said your dad went alone on purpose. Another one said your dad went without order to do the right thing…

Mansour: Your father did what he had to do with courage. Now what's the differ…

Muhammad: It's different commander. Everyone says something. Something is not right… Someone said Ahmad Keshvari had a will. But where is it? Do you know how many years I couldn’t sleep? I always have nightmares.

Mansour: *(Turns to Muhammad when he hears the nightmare word.)* …

Muhammad: I think of the last moment every day. The moment… When my dad had to face death… Alone.

Mansour: You think he is sad now?

Muhammad: No! I am sad! Me … *(Cries)* Me!

Mansour: *(Calm)* Be quiet! It's bad!

Muhammad: That's enough commander! Enough! Everyone always says what is bad. We only know the bad things. What is good then? To see these brave people on the walls in the streets? *(Secretly cries)* You even see a trashcan under his name some times. A full trashcan waiting for the cars to come and make it empty … So their name lives. How wonderful! But what about my questions? What about his son? He was mine too! Do you understand? He was mine too. Where is my place in this story?

*(Mansour stands up. He is sad. Moves toward Muhammad.)*

Mansour: Uncle!

Muhammad: *(Dropped his head. Slowly)* Rahim will come!

*(Mansour drops his hand from Muhammad shoulder. Surprised)*

Muhammad: I tried to bring him by myself but he didn’t accept. He has promised to come for the ceremony.

Mansour: Are you sure?

Muhammad: Are you uncomfortable?

Mansour: Why do you think that?

Muhammad: Because he was the co-pilot.

Mansour: Your dad had many co-pilots in different flies.

Muhammad: But Rahim came from the operation that my dad didn’t return from it, commander.

Mansour: *(Angry)* don’t call me commander anymore.

Muhammad: Wasn’t you the commander, commander?

Mansour: I used to be!

Muhammad: Now I know why my dad gave me a painting of a earthquake.

Mansour: Ahmad was a good painter.

Muhammad: I am the earthquake, commander!

*(Muhammad exits. Light becomes a spot on Mansour.)*

Mansour: I can't sleep at night. Some times when they all asleep I go into the streets. Shirin doesn’t know. I'm tired. Sometimes when Muhammad is looking at me, I think it's his dad. He is asking me. Then I couldn’t answer him because… I should know who I am answering to! The more I see the world the less I could think well about it.

*(Light turns on, Mansour and Mother are on the stage.)*

Mother: Something in his look bothers me.

Mansour: Everything about him bothers me.

Mother: I don’t like it when you talk about him this way.

Mansour: I can't understand! We freed the country from her enemies. What else should I do?

Mother: Who asked you to do something?

Mansour: His gaze.

Mother: You are sensitive.

Mansour: There is everything in this world except hope.

Mother: We are here together and we are talking to each other! This is hope!

Mansour: I am a loser. Because I’m still alive.

Mother: Don’t say that! Mankind always wins. The losers are the winners who lose!

Mansour: You didn’t lose against this boy?

Mother: No! No! He always likes to fly but I never let him. If I was a looser he was a pilot now. Sky is a killer. I stand against it.

Mansour: You chained his legs to the ground but his mind is up there.

Mother: What’s happened between you two?

Mansour: Nothing new.

Mother: Well?

Mansour: Except… Rahim comes for the ceremony.

Mother: After all these years?

Mansour: Muhammad went after him. He agreed to come.

Mother: Maybe he said it to make you upset.

Mansour: I talked to him.

Mother: I know.

Mansour: I mean Rahim.

Mother: What?

Mansour: I asked him to come too.

Mother: But he can mess things up.

Mansour: You think everything is all right now? I begged him, I'm sure he will come.

*(Darkness – Muhammad is under spot light.)*

Muhammad: I had to be a pilot to replace my father. *(He has a helmet in his hand.)* I thought this is my dad's helmet until I was fifteen. I wanted to put it on when I became a pilot. When I put it on my head I was filled with honor. I had felt I am an important, brave and unique pilot but… when I became fifteen my mother told me this is not my father's helmet, it's for an Iraqi pilot who my father captured. The commander says this is an honor for your dad and the army! He says dad forced the Iraqi pilot to land then he captured him… Whenever I look at this helmet, the helmet I thought was my father's until I was fifteen and then it was for an Iraqi, I fill with hate but I like this feeling. When people ask me what kind of person was your father? I always answer them he was my dad… only this is important for me. Knowing my father with these people around me, is very hard. I rather make him myself. I only trust two people: The first one is me… the second one… is not you!

*(Darkness – The sound of a moving chopper that merges with the sound of a MIG, explosion and falling and then there is absolute silence. Light turns on. Mother and Muhammad are talking in front of the coleus.)*

Muhammad: Please.

Mother: I want to know.

Muhammad: Why he shouldn’t come?

Mother: Why he should? And with you and your uncle begging him.

Muhammad: My uncle??

Mother: Yes! He called and asked him to be here the day after tomorrow.

Muhammad: He became brave.

Mother: What do you want to know?

Muhammad: The things that no one tells me.

Mother: Maybe there is a reason for that.

Muhammad: Maybe there is a reason for me to know them.

Mother: What do you want to know?

Muhammad: The thing that Rahim knows and went into the solitude because of that.

*(Mansour enters again and goes to the coleus with a jug)*

Muhammad: I have irrigated it commander!

Mansour: You know the way now?

Muhammad: If I didn’t know it was spoiled now.

Mansour: *(Looks at the pot.)* But its soil is dry.

Muhammad: *(Angry)* Why always when my mother and I are talking, you remember the coleus?

Mansour: I pretend that I didn't hear your insult.

Mother: Do you want to speak alone?

Mansour: We have nothing private.

Muhammad: Anyway! we don’t want to talk now mom.

Mother: *(to Mansour)* Did you eat your pills?

Mansour: Yes.

Mother: All three of them?

Mansour: Five!

Mother: Five sedatives? Together?

Mansour: I need more calm today.

Muhammad: So that's why he says the wet soil is dried up!

Mansour: *(To Shirin)* Look at this soil.

Muhammad: *(Suddenly)* Where is dad's helmet?

Mansour: Are you talking to me?

Muhammad: Yes commander.

Mansour: It's in a safe place.

Muhammad: Where is this safe place? That old chest?

Mother: We need it for the ceremony.

Muhammad: So why did he return me the watch?

Mansour: I need that too. Please give it back.

*(Muhammad leaves the stage with anger. Mansour and mother are in silence. Mansour is busy with the pot.)*

Mansour: It's dry. *(He irrigates the pot and cries.)*

Mother: Mansour!

Mansour: *(Controls his tears)* Where are my pills?

Mother: You said you had five of them.

Mansour: Did you believe me?

Mother: *(Exits in a hurry)* Oh my God!

*(Mansour sits on the ground alone. Mother returns with some pills and a glass of water)*

Mother: Have it! Are you joking with your life?

Mansour: *(Takes and has them.)* It's terrible that your life depends on some pills!

Mother: Don’t say it!

Mansour: Do something for Muhammad!

Mother: What should I do?

Mansour: Each time that I wanted to say my prayer today, I started crying Shirin.

Mother: Praying while crying is good.

Mansour: I can't believe that my pain doesn’t bother you.

Mother: I washed and ironed your cloths.

Mansour: Shirin!

Mother: I made Gheimeh for you.

Mansour: Shirin!

Mother: The house is clean. *(Cries)*

Mansour: What's wrong with you Shirin?

Mother: When you wanted to play hero where were we in your plan?

Mansour: …

Mother: Were anything more important than your own words, for you?

Mansour: …

Mother: When you wanted something else from women beside washing and cleaning and food that now you want it? With tears! You know a woman can't bare a man's tears.

Mansour: …

Mother: We women are the audience only. So if you could do it, don't turn back to us. Because we only can cry. *(Mother exits with the empty glass.)*

Mansour: Shirin!

*(Darkness- Spot light turns on Rahim)*

Rahim: I didn’t want to be in Ahmad's anniversary. A simple phone call could bring back a thirty years old memory. You have no way to go. You don’t know what to do. If you go you could mess everything up and if you stay, it could be worse. I had my nightmare in these years too. Muhammad said he has nightmares. My dreams are not bad at first then suddenly… They become bitter. I dream that we are in a chopper and Ahmad is singing. The guys are listening with wireless. His voice was very good. Then I fall from the chopper like that day. And I shout: “Can you do it alone?” Nothing. He is singing! Then there is no sing! Before I become unconscious I look at the chopper. There is no one in there. No one! I shout and call: “Ahmad!” Nothing! Only the wind. The chopper is right there without moving left or right. Then I call him again. Nothing. I grab the wireless. It's broken. I shout but no one is around me. Then I see a snake. It's looking at my eyes and crawls slowly towards me. I can't move. Then it attacks me… and I wake up. *(Long silence.)* When Muhammad came and found me, when the commander called me, I felt that my dream has been brought to life. I should bare a great bitterness. Questions that have no wrong answer. The answers you tried to forget in years. I couldn’t say the same things that others say. I should tell that they abandoned Ahmad. Who? Why? Why should I bring the dead back to life?

*(Darkness and lights – Muhammad is sitting in front of a painting alone. Mother enters with hurry. Muhammad is looking at the painting.)*

Mother: Where is it?

Muhammad: What?

Mother: You don’t know what I am talking about?

Muhammad: *(Looks at her.)* Are you alright?

Mother: Where is your uncle's military uniform?

Muhammad: Is it lost?

Mother: …

Muhammad: Look inside the chest. Everything lost in this house is in that chest.

Mother: I think you are responsible.

Muhammad: Why didn’t you bring this painting to the ceremony all these years?

Mother: Answer my question.

Muhammad: But I will put this with the other things tomorrow.

Mother: Sometimes I believe that you are not a grown up. What does it mean?

Muhamad: Ask him what does war mean, commander?

Mother: …

Muhammad: Prizes are part of the war. He knew it but I understand it now.

Mother: So you have the cloths?

Muhammad: Just like many of me and my father's things that he has.

Mother: Shame on you.

Muhammad: Tell him to bring everything then he can have his uniform.

Mother: O God!... I can't Muhammad! How can I say that to him?

Muhammad: That's your problem.

Mother: The ceremony is on tomorrow. That's enough! For your dad's sake…

Muhammad: *(Angry)* Don’t bring my dad into this game again mom… please.

*(Goes and brings Mansour's uniform and holds it in front of his mother.)*

Muhammad: Take it! I wanted to say something to him when he comes after this, but I won't. Give it to him. Tell him put it on and tell the story of Paveh operation for the thousand times tomorrow. In Paveh operation Ahmad went alone in the dark, even if you flied once you know how much it is dangerous for fighter to fly at night. Tell him to make a long story about 80's mid Azar.

*(Mother takes the uniform frustrated.)*

Mother: What did you want to tell him?

Muhammad: That's not important anymore.

Mother: Say it.

Muhammad: Mom you have the uniform now. Please leave me alone!

*(Mother wants to exit. Stands in front of Muhammad.)*

Mother: Any news about Rahim?

Muhammad: He is here tomorrow.

*(Mother exits. Muhammad is alone and looks at the painting – light turns into a spot on him.)*

Muhammad: I am always excited the day before the ceremony. I don’t know why. I was the same every year. One time, a shepherd came to the ceremony, he told me the fighters didn’t kill your dad, his kindness killed him. I just looked at him. He wasn’t wrong at all. He knew him. He said my dad has been going to him after his flight every day and they had breakfast together. Shepherd was albino. His eyes hurt in the light. That time my father was younger. My dad knew that he wanted to see the choppers in the sky and wave for them. My dad gave him his sunglasses. That day the shepherd had the sunglasses with him. He showed it to me. He wanted to give it back to me. I didn’t take it. When that poor guy found out that my mother had to see the ashes of my father, cried. I hadn’t seen so much honesty around me for a long time.

*(Darkness – Then the ceremony of the martyrdom of Ahmad Keshvari. Mansour is wearing the military uniform, mother and Muhammad are wearing black and Rahim wore something simple.There are a few lanterns on the stage. They all are looking at us they talk to each other and the audience.)*

Mother: *(To the outside)* Bring the tea sister. Someone bring the date with walnut someone bring the date without walnut.

Mansour: In Paveh operation Ahmad went alone in the dark even if you flied once you know how much it is dangerous for fighter to fly at night.

Rahim: You are tall dear Muhammad. That day I didn’t notice you.

Muhammad: What’s happened? Tell me!

Rahim: I shouldn’t come.

Mansour: I thank all of you for coming here because of that great man with all my heart. You all are welcome here.

Mother: Don’t let the tea boils. Don’t let people be thirsty. It's bad!

Rahim: No one here wants to see me.

Muhammad: How did you make it alive?

Mansour: God will protect your family *(Touches his chest)*

Rahim: We were three choppers.

*(Rahim points to the front of the stage where Ahmad's belongings are gathered.)*

Rahim: That helmet is belong to an Iraqi commander, Ahmad captured him.

Muhammad: Then it was true!

Mother: Bread, cheese and vegetable. Bring the food. God forgives all of the dead.

Mansour: Ahmad was important in Paveh operation; they don’t remember him much these days. The memories are weak now. God forgives all.

Rahim: But none was like the last operation, that damn operation.

Mother: Don’t tell the bad memories, please have some tea with date.

Mansour: Please.

Rahim: We were three choppers. One of the commanders was your dad the other one was Mansour and the last one Was Sohrab. I was with your dad.

Muhammad: I close my eyes. I am with you in the sky.

Rahim: There were a few tanks… Two MIGs… Were killing people… Ahmad was so angry.

Muhammad: Where were you commander?

Mansour: I should know who I am answering to!

Muhammad: To me! His son!

Mansour: I was the chopper behind him.

Rahim: Ahmad used the wireless.

Muhammad: To whom?

Mother: To all. Everyone who is hungry or thirsty; this tea with cardamom and cinnamon is for the guests. Give it to them. The vegetable are cleaned in a shrine. Please have some!

Rahim: To commander, to your uncle, to Sohrab. He said: “Cover me, so we hit the MIGs.”

Mansour: *(Loud)* Fatiha!

Rahim: There was no answer. We saw that Sohrab and your uncle are gone and we are alone.

Mother: Fruits! Have some fruits!

Muhammad: Why they were gone?

Rahim: I don’t know.

Muhammad: *(louder)* Why you were gone?

Mansour: Do you know the meaning of war?

Rahim: MIG fired the rocket, it hit the wings and the chopper became weightless.

Mother: Bring the fruits.

Rahim: We hit a rock!

Muhammad: Dad!

Rahim: I fell out.

Mansour: Anyway some people like my brother fought and died, so we could live in peace.

Rahim: I became unconscious.

Mother: *(Covers his face and cries)* …

Mansour: God forgives all of the veterans.

Muhammad: My dad was alone.

Mother: *(Stops crying)* But be sure Muhammad that he is not alone now.

Muhammad: Why did you abandon him?

Mansour: We don’t want to upset you. You are here for us for his son and we are not alone.

Muhammad: The will, where is the will?

Mother: *(With tears)* It's terrible! They put my love's ashes in front of me and said: “This is your Ahmad.” *(Covers and cries)*

Muhammad: Even my mother didn’t see the will!

*(suddenly there is a line of light on Muhammad and Rahim who sat near each other. Rahim grabs Muhammad's hand hard. In Rahim's monologue the lanterns are gathered outside the stage.)*

Rahim: I dream a lot too Muhammad. I dream about your dad. I saw it last night too. He was with his chopper and wearing his uniform with his sunglasses that gave to the albino shepherd. We had an old InstaNet camera. I took a picture of him. It was dim. Again. I took eleven times but it was dim. He was laughing at me. I only had one film left. I didn’t want to screw that one. I thought maybe the lens is dirty and I brought a cloth to clean it, then he grab my hand just like now that I am grabbing yours and said in my ear: “Don’t touch! it’s my ash on the lens don’t clean my ashes!”

*(Rahim and Muhammad look at each other in silence. Muhammad is crying now. silence – darkness – we can hear Mansour's voice who sat in front of audiences with military uniform and audiences can't see him.)*

Mansour: I know who I am answering to for a long time.

*(A flashlight from the audience brightens Mansour's face. His eyes are hurt. Covers his face with his eyes)*

Mansour: Please turn it off! *(Flashlight is off)*

Mansour: Me! Yes! Me! Now I dream even when I am awake. Enough! The sedatives don’t work. I know the meaning of war. But I don’t know why there are always questions! Other's questions, family's questions, people's questions and the worst is my questions. You can imprison yourself in the darkness, in a room. Separate yourself from the others and see no one. Then you don’t have to act. It's you and yourself! But the truth will pass the darkness and becomes the nightmare. If you don’t want to accept it, it becomes a nightmare. Then it brightens the places in darkness that it wants. And it doesn’t think about how much it can hurt. You must accept it or pass the time baring it until the end with pills, drugs… I won't have them anymore.

*(Darkness, Muhammad moves towards us with a lantern)*

Muhammad: I finished it mom. I completed the helicopter model last night. But it's lost. Do you know where it is?

*(Darkness)*