SOUTH BY NORTH WEST

AyoubAghakhani

Characters:(in orther of apereance)

Ahmad 48 years old

Audry 40 years old

Homayoon 20 years old

Gilda 20 years old

Ghasem middle aged

Na’anayi middle aged

Soosan middle eged

ACT I:

Dancing With The Men

*A TINY HOUSE IN MARSEILLE.....*

Ahmad Sanapoor’s house.

He is frozen and stared at TV.We can’t see the programme but we can hear it:

VOICE OF NARRATOR:” It looks like twenty years ago, the son of this Iranian old man, became the prey of the “Karoon” river in south of the Iran and his corpse never was found; and now he paddles with his old boat on “Karoon”. Fifteen years ago he decided to do for other people what nobody did for him. He is always paddling on the river not paying attention to any fish; he is looking for floating corpses on the water.

(People talks about “Baba Ghasem”)

Through these fifteen years, he has taken more than five hundred corpses out of this roaring river. His working system is to paddle the river in carefully look every five kilometers around the places people gather or the legs of bridges. Then he takes the corpses which are mostly young, to a shelter on the cost of the river then he publishes the details of the dead body in the newspaper. For seeing the corpses he takes a little money and if it is planned to give away the corpse, he takes two million Rials …”

*(Ahmad lights a cigarette.)*

And if the advertisement, news and searching don’t work, he buries them somewhere near where he lives. Most of this Iranian old man’s costumers are from “Ahwaz”…”

(*phone rings.Ahmad hides his cigarette.)*

Audry,s voice- May you turn down the TV?

(Man talks about “Baba Ghasem”)

Audry- I’m Talking with you!

(Man talks about “Baba Ghasem”)

Audry: Since when you are interested in fishing?

Ahmad:He is not a fisher.

Audry: So what is he?

Ahmad: He is anordinary guy?

Audry: Is he more ordinary than what you are?He isn’t like you. He is weird!

Ahmad: Is he weirder than what you are?

Audry: It looks like he is. Is he dead? They took it from water?

Ahmad: Since when you have become interested in weird people?

Audry: Since I spent my whole life next to an ordinary man.

Ahmad:It’s the first time that you watch this movie. Who was it?

Audry: You bought cigarettes again?

Ahmad: I meant the phone.

Audry: If you can’t quit, don’t smoke in the house!

Ahmad:Won’t you tell me?

Audry: Your daughter.

Ahmad: Our daughter.

Audry: You still have?

Ahmad: I’m not smoking.What she was saying?

Audry: She wanted to inform you that she almost succeeded.Since when the girls share stories with their fathers? You see that girl has no connection with me.Why you made her far from “Marseille”?

Ahmad:Me?!

Audry: From out of nowhere she ended up in “Tehran”?

Ahmad: If she wants to study in her father’s land it is out of nowhere?

Audry: What for?

Ahmad: It’s about eleven years! When you will get tired of asking?

Audry:This is Iran too! If Iran was such interesting for you why you left it?! Now tell me why you were gazing at it? The fisher is Iranian!

Ahmad: He is not a fisher.

Audry: Don’t you get tired of fixing whatever I say?

Ahmad: I do.

Audry: It looks like she is going to a trip with her boyfriend.

Ahmad: Classmate!

Audry: Whatever! I wanted you to know she succeeded.

Ahmad: Actually she wanted me to know.

Audry: No…You don’t get tired!

*(Audry exits.ahmad picks the hidden burnt cigarette and lights it again.smoke!)*

Audry’s voice-AHMAD!

(*Ahmad ignores.)*

Audry’s voice- “Ahmad”! You don’t hear me or you don’t answer on purpose?

Ahmad: I have to smoke this one.

Adi- Not in this house!

Ahmad: Is there any other house?

Audry: That’s not my problem. I don’t remember saying something funny.

Ahmad: So whose problem it is “Audry”?

Audry: You!

Ahmad: I don’t have any problem.

Audry: Don’t fool around “Ahmad”!

Ahmad: I am not!

Audry: What are you doing then?

Ahmad: Actually there is nothing I can do “Audry”.

Audry:Put it off! Put your cigarette off!

Ahmad: I need it.

Audry: Why you don’t finish it? Why you don’t do it?

Ahmad: There are many things that I have to do but I don’t, honey! I have to turn up the volume of the TV to the end and watch that movie ten more times … which I don’t; I have to smoke a pack of cigarettes here; with closed windows… and few full shots…which I don’t; I have to smash this pot or that bottle in your head…which I don’t; Or maybe I have to kiss you but I don’t!I have to call Iran which I can’t!I have to argue with you on many things and possibly knock you down ...Which I won’t.

Audry: What for? I am ready.

Ahmad: I am not.

Audry: Why?

Ahmad: Because after spending eighteen years my speaking is still not good for those kinds of things.

Audry: I hope you could make fooling around for at least once…

Ahmad:You know my French is not good enough “Audry”. You have always fixed my sentences….as a matter of fact it is you which is tired of fixing a normal problem of an immigrant…I guess it was a master piece for speaking these few sentences and I am tired.

Audry: I really would like you do all those things today, one by one so I could watch.

Ahmad: I can’t.

Audry: Smashing the pot or bottle in my head doesn’t have anything to do with speaking skills!

Ahmad: But needs “strength”.

Audry: What?

Ahmad: I can’t move “Audry”.

Audry:Really?

Ahmad: Yes.

Audry: Again?

Ahmad: Worse than ever!

Audry: What do you mean?

Ahmad: Very solid! Like a wooden board!

Audry: A wooden board!

Ahmad:What?

Audry: Like a piece of wood!

Ahmad:Looks like you didn’t become tired too.

Audry:You want me to bring your cane?

Ahmad: No! Let me smoke!

Audry: Don’t tell me it is a play to smoke a cigarette?! Since when?

Ahmad: Since the movie...

Audry: How would I know when this shit started?

Ahmad: Half an hour ago… almost!

Audry: Should I call ambulance?

Ahmad: No.

Audry: What for?

Ahmad: Don’t ask.

Audry: So what should I do?

Ahmad: Sit!

Audry: What for?

Ahmad: Sit!

Ahmad: After all these years I decided to make few problems clear.

Ahmad: What is wrong?

Ahmad: Why do you look at me like that? I don’t look like that?

Audry: Some matters!

Ahmad: What?

Audry: “Some matters” not “few problems”!

Ahmad: I want to make them clear.

Audry: You said so you “can’t move”…”worse than ever”!

Ahmad: It is so.

Audry: You mean now you feel worse than ever?

Ahmad: If I move.

Andry: So don’t move!

Ahmad: I can’t.

Audry: It is ridicules.

Ahmad: That’s right.

Audry: Well?

Ahmad: I can’t.

Audry- “Ahmad Ghafarpour”! You are a jerk! Ok? I’ve known it for a long timebut I don’t know why I haven’t reacted yet. Almost from the first time I told you that we should divorce; do you understand? I am not one of those little girls you gather around yourself as editor and interior manager and other shits and you forget that some of them have the same age as your daughter. Don’t play with…

Ahmad: Why all the women are the same?

Audry: This is bullshit too!

Ahmad: It isn’t.

Audry: It is not my business if they are the same or not.

Ahmad: Why did you marry me?

Audry: You purposed.

Ahmad: Is that enough? I was an immigrantwith indistinct future.

Audry: I remember.

Ahmad: I wanted to get strong with marriage.

Audry: Make your position strong.

Ahmad: Whatever; and you knew it and I never said you needed me too.

Audry: No.

Ahmad:But you did. You needed an energetic young. You needed hope. You were not in a good situation. You are not French too “Audry”. You are an immigrant too.

Audry: Don’t compare me with yourself!

Ahmad: Why? Because you are not Iranian?

Audry: I am not.

Ahmad: But you are not from here either. A Lebanese with knowing more French then me doesn’t count as a more French person than me. Like other women you too have a weak memory just like a fish. You don’t remember many things. You suddenly own the rights you never had or anybody mention that you are supposed to have; just the guy suddenly opens his eyes and realizes he is stuck to neck in mud you call it “women’s rights”! You were looking for peace and calmness and that is why you came after me! Isn’t it so?

Ahmad- Isn’t it true?

Audry: Tell me the end!

Ahmad: I don’t know the end.

Audry: So what are you saying?

Ahmad: I am saying the words which I didn’t say for twenty years.

Audry: And it is only because you can’t move? You think it is a right time?

Ahmad: It has nothing to do with it.

Audry: But that is what you said.

Ahmad: I don’t want my situation ruin my plans.

Audry: You had a plan on this!

Ahmad: To talk them out before our divorce.

Audry: And this “before our divorce” couldn’t be yesterday or tomorrow?

Ahmad: Now the courage came to me.

Audry: “You found the courage”.

Ahmad: That’s what I meant.

Audry: Why you make the girl far from “Marseille”?

Ahamd: God!

Audry: Why?

Ahmad: I have to rescue her from danger!

Audry: Which Danger?!

Ahmad: Another question!

Ahmad: I’m not kidding!

Audry: “Ahmad”! How you find this courage?!Maybe it is because of this movie. You saw Iran and you lost your mind? Look at this! It is your hometown too. It is written “Ahwaz” where the fisher lives.

Ahmad:He is not a fisher.

Audry: Maybe TV is not good for you just like “Homer Simpson”! Why I didn’t consider that you are as dumb as he is?

Ahmad:You married a ghost. Why? A ghost with no family who supposed to be dead! Why? Once… you just tell me once “Audry”, how you lived with me with that cold look for twenty years? It is not short. Tell me!

Audry:In saying some sort of things your French is better than mine. Maybe it slowly got better, I don’t know. Maybe it got better because you thought a lot about it.

Ahmad: Lebanese “Fahmie” who was dancing in “Moulin Rouge” with men and for men and everybody knew her as “Audry”, why would marry a ghost?!

Audry: What’d you mean?

Ahmad: Why?

Audry: Don’t forget with just twenty years old I was a legal immigrant and I could handle myself.

Ahmad: Yeah, I remember. Once or twice while you were drunk you have told me the story of your marriage with that old lonely French guy! I know… you were not looking for money or settling. So what for? Speak!

Audry: After his death, it was like I still had to dance with men. Loneliness is a fear that never leaves the life of an immigrant. Especially in that age!...You know that I would get the most tip from the men who couldn’t dance with me step by step; they didn’t know how to dance; they were old; or they were fat or sitting on a wheelchair which I had to dance on front of them…they would give more tipthere for they were more important to me……..I wouldn’t like to keep this addiction anymore; till thenyou showed up in “Pigalle”….you gave me the highest tip. “Marriage”!That’s it!

Ahmad: We lived together!

Audry: It was a part of the tip; I don’t care if it was bad or good.

Ahmad: Our daughter…..

Audry: Your daughter! Which I was not supposed to ask much about her. Do you remember?

Ahmad: It may be the last. You don’t care about the good and bad*.* It is a part of the tip too!

Audry:Be aware that you are giving too much tip.

Ahmad: Maybe… Maybe that is why I can’t move. I can’t dance with you step by step!

Audry: As I said, in saying some sort of things, you speak French better than me. I am calling the emergency.

Ahmad: No. Call your lawyer. I can still sit for one or two more hours. When they arrive the first thing they do is to inject me. We both know how to know it till this point. Bring it from the refrigerator for me please. After your lawyer call the girl.

Audry: Why you don’t call her yourself?

Ahmad: I want her to hear it from you for the first time. The tip for all you have done is guaranteed. “Divorce”!

(*Audry picks the phone and exits in silence.ahmad still smokes.he rises TV’s voice again:)*

*Host’s voice*-“ But it also happened that the government has taken a corpse from him and never pay him for taking the corps out of the water…

Old man’s voice-“….I don’t know…..maybe they were political opposites… let’s be fare…it is possible, isn’t it? … It is not just the young lovers who jump in the river! I am sure they were opposites…any job has its torts, doesn’t it? Let’s be fare….those were my torts!”

(*Smoke..... and lonliness of Ahmad!)*

*Lights fades....*

Act II:

Wild Plums

*(Homayoon talks to us,-maybe a beautiful girl!-under the spot light:)*

Homayoon-You have a pretty name; have I ever told you that? Honestly, how many people before me have said that to you? I don’t believe it. I trust you but a pretty damned girl; there; …I don’t know. Which side of Iran you said it is? North-West?You mean from North West up to … Let me see! “West” is … I am not good in geography at all. It was shitty since the beginning… what am I saying?! Whatever! The most important thing is the attraction shaping between you and me... You know I never told you how excited and happy I am that you have sour taste. I am so attracted to women with sour taste. Which man wouldn’t like? Let the reason stay remained… Have you ever eaten wild plum? Wild plum!It has a unique taste. I remember something from my childhood. From the times we were going to “Jajroud”. It’s almost seven kilometers on the east of “Tehran”; maybe North-East! I have said my geography is so poor. My aunt was living in “Jajroud”. Aunt “Monir”!

Aunt “Monir” was fat. She used to bake bread. She baked bread in her furnace which was in the yard but she wouldn’t let us get close to it. Not me, not my sister “Nasrin” which was younger than me. She would force us, to watch her from inside of the house, behind the window. There always had hot sunshine. If you would gaze into the sun then you look somewhere else, you would think there are many dandelions floating in the air! My father has told me those dandelions are in my eyes not in the air!

Aunt “Monir” used to bake bread with the “wild plum” flavor. Do you believe that? Even I don’t know how she would do that. When we were there in the right season she would send us all to pick “wild plums”. My father would always nag but aunt “Monir” was not listening. She used to say: “we go and spend the night there in the woods. And these kids can swim in the river! She was mentioning me and “Nasrin”. My father would say, No “wild plum” can be found in that area and she is fooling us all for nothing. But I liked to go. Places she would take us used to be full of dragonflies and butterflies. It was impossible to catch them. But it was so exciting. I don’t care what aunt “Monir” would find to sell it as “wild plum” to us; the point is she would baked some breads with the exact same of the plums which we never figured out if they were normal or wild. I really don’t know how she would do it. I won’t find out anymore. They all have died in the bombings of “Tehran”, that’s why. I mean except me and aunt which have died two years earlier because of getting old. Know only “Baba Ghasem” is left for me. You’ll meet him. He doesn’t know things like that! I mean the plum bread and stuffs. I really would have liked to take you to “Jajroud” so aunt “Monir” bakes you of those plum breads. I am sure would liked it. I mean all the ladies who like sour taste would like that too. It is good that you like sour more than sweet. Maybe someday I tell you the reason… You sleep?

(*lights fade out and then:*

*A tiny and messy house...with some old and broken instrumets.Gilda is walking and curious.Homayoon took a seat in a corner and looks to Gilda.)*

Homayoon: “Gilda”! Take a seat my darling! Why you are standing? Won’t you sit?Why are you so nervous?

Gilda: Nervous?

Homayoun: Yes.

Gilda: Who? Me? No! I’m not nervous.

Homayoon: You don’t know “Baba Ghasem”.

Gilda: But you do.

Homayoon: That is the reason I am talking about.

Gilda: Is he queasy?

Homayoun: What?

Gilda: Queasy!

Homayoon: Take a look around. Is he?

Gilda: So what?

Homayoon: He has some strange habits; not angry but he doesn’t like strangers!

Gilda: Stranger?!Me!? You mean I’m a stranger?

Homayoon: Don’t be sad! You know I don’t mean it in a bad way.For him you are stranger because he has never seen you before.“Baba Ghasem” never let anybody enter to his house, No one! Got it?

Gilda: If he is so sensitive then why we came here?

Homayou: We’ve talked about it before. There is different situation! You come with me. I take a girl here who loves “Ahwaz”. “Gilda” you love “Ahwaz” because of me or me because of “Ahwaz”? If I say these to him, he will realize. I’m sure.

Gilda: We could wait for him to come then enter!

Homayoon: He never says anything to anybody when he leaves. No one knows when he returns.

Gilda: Nobody knows?!! You mean we should sit and wait for him till he shows up? And you sit right there worrying about this places and nagging to me?

Homayoon: Nagging?! Are you scoffing?

Gilda:I’m not! I am trying to realize our situation.

Homayoon: He may come back soon. It doesn’t always take long.

Gilda: And how it can be obvious if he gets back soon this time?

Homayoon: It is not.

Gilda: So what are you saying?

Homayoon: Please hold on.

Gilda: Come on!

Homayoon:Where?

Gilda: It was better if you would inform him from “Tehran” then we would come.

Homayoon: How?

Gilda: What do you mean “how”?

Homayoon: By mail?

Gilda: By Telephone!

Homayoun: Telephone?! “Baba Ghasem”?!

Gilda:He doesn’t have telephone?

Homayoon: Do you see any?

Gilda: Really?!!

Homayoon: You see so.

Gilda: It is the twenty first century!

Homayoon: “Baba Ghasem” doesn’t care about matters like this!

Gilda: He has always been like this?

Homayoon: Since I know him.

Gilda: How long you know him?

Homayoon:“The Country Wide Artistic Competition”!

Gilda: When?

Homayoun: First grade in high school,we came to “Ahwaz”.

Gilda: Is it your photo? Which one is you? … Sweaty!

Homayoun: It’ has been taken almost when I lost all my family…. This is our vicar. He told me the story.

I remember. We were by the river…..I was biting the ground. I was smashing myself around. No one could calm me. After hours I decided to suicide. I went up the bridge to jump in the river. “Baba Ghasem” was there. He didn’t let me.Somehow he calmed me down. I mean he did it. I don’t remember how! I didn’t know how he talked with them that they may me to stay here with “Baba Ghasem”. H was here about three months. He never took me by himself .

Gilda: Fisherman.

Gilda: Is he a fisherman?

Homayoon:Yes!

Gilda:That’s funny!

Homayoon: Why? You say it’s funny so why ?

Gilda: I never imagined coming to a fisher’s house!

Homayoon: A fisher’s house doesn’t have much differs with ours. It is “Baba Ghasem” who differs somehow.

Gilda: It is funny anyway.

Homayoon: You haven’t you seen him yet!

Gilda: I hope he comes sooner.

Homayoon: He will show up sooner or later.

Gilda: What if he doesn’t like me?

Homayoon: Why he should be “Gilda”?

Gilda: For a person who lives like this, girls like me look so childish!

Homayoon: Who? “Baba Ghasem”?

Gilda: Yes.

Homayoun: No. He doesn’t care about these things.

Gilda: So what does he cares?

Homayoon: Some things are important for him that I never figured out.

Gilda: Like?

Homayoon: Believe me I don’t know.

Gilda: Now would he dislike me or not?

Homayoon:sure he likes. “Gilda”! My darling! Come here and take a seat! Am I not important for you?! I just wanted you to meet “Baba Ghasem”. He is the only relative that I have. Just that!

Gilda-do i made you sad?

Homayoon-.....

Gilda-homayoon!

*(An oldman entered.a beared oldman with frozen face.he stared at them.)*

Homayoon: Hello “Baba Ghasem”! This is “Gilda”!She is my friend. My classmate.

Gilda: Hello!

Homayoon: I wanted you to meet her.

Ghasem: Hi.

Homayoon:Sorry I took this photo to show it. Do you remember that day which ….“Baba Ghasem”?

Ghasem: What for?

Homayoon:pardon me?

Ghasem: Why you wanted me to meet her?

Gilda: We don’t disturb you more. We leave here.

Ghasem: Why you don’t take seat girl?

Homayoon: Take a seat “Gilda”!

Gilda:It’s ok.

Homayoon: I’m sitting too, sit down!

(*baba ghasem exits and returns with two glasses.)*

Ghasem: It is “Cichorium”.

Homayoon: You will like it!

Gilda: What is “Cichorium”?

Ghasem: Drink it!

Gilda-.........

Ghasem: Drink it!

*(Gilda drinks it fast.)*

Ghasem: That’s it!

Homayoon: Was it good? It is “Baba Ghasem”’s favorite drink!

Ghasem: It is good for you.

Homayoon:Yes! It’s very good! He says it to everybody! Yes.

Ghasem: You didn’t say.

Homayoon:What?

Ghasem: Why should I have to meet her?

Homayoon: Well…me….

Ghasem: Do you love her?

Ghasem: Yes girl?

Gilda:Pardon?

Ghasem: He loves you?

Gilda: He says so.

Ghasem: Is he saying the truth?

Gilda: You know him better.

Ghasem: Who said this?

Gilda: He say that himself.He has said since when he began high school.

Ghasem: That is true, but nobody knows anybody. Be sure about it!

Homayoun: Baba!

Gilda: What’d you mean?

Ghasem: Welcome.

Gilda:You are scaring me!

Ghasem: Do you know “Mark Twain”?

Gilda: Sure… What is its relation to the subject?

Ghasaem: You go to college so you should know.

Gilda: Well?

Ghasem: He is a good boy honestly.

Gilda: “Mark Twain”?

Ghasem: “Homayoon”!

Homayoon: Thanks “Baba Ghasem”!

Ghasem: At least till the last time that I saw him he was good.

Gilda:You gave me hope!

Homayoon: Don’t you know me?

Gilda:“Baba Ghasem” says I shouldn’t take it serious.

Homayoon: How many days you have not been home?

Ghaem- I was.

Homayoon: Seriously?

Ghasem: I went out in the morning.

Homayoon: The fire place out there didn’t have any ash in it. It was all dust!

Ghasem: I didn’t cook anything.

Homayoon: Why?

Ghasem: Are you hungry?

Homayoon: No no…I am talking about you. You have to take care about you eating.

Ghasem: Are you worried for me?

Homayoon: If you get sick who is there to take care of you?

Ghasem: I don’t get sick.

Homayoon: How you are so sure?

Ghasem: You can’t be sure about anything in this world …and we don’t have the right to be sure about ourselves too?

Homayoon: Same old scars again?

Gilda: Which scars?

Gilda: I can see the innuendo in his words, but I just don’t know the roots!

Ghasem: And you shouldn’t know.

Homayoon: “Baba Ghasem” works on the river.

Gilda: Well all the fisher’s work on the river.

Homayoun: Sure they workbut “Baba Ghaem” …

Ghasem: “Homayoon”!

Homayoon: You mean not to tell it?

Ghasem: Don’t bother you fiancé by these things!

Homayoon:Fiancé!

Gilda: But I…actually I came here to know you.

Ghasem: I guess you made the wrong decision at the first. Knowing me is not interesting for any one. Especially for people in your age!

Gilda: Why then they made a movie about you?

*Silence!*

Ghasem: Who said that?!

Gilda: I have seen it!

Homayoon: When?!!

Gilda: All of it!

Homayoon: Where?!!

Gilda: So? You are quite!

Ghasem: You haven’t answered yet?

Gilda: What answer?

Ghasem: He asked where?

Gilda: What is the difference?

Ghasem: It may do if he asks.

Homayoon:Speak it out!

Gilda: At my friend’s.

Homayoon: Which friend?!!

Ghasem: Who is it?

Gilda: Why you are confusing me? I just wanted to say I know some.

Ghasem: So why you came to know me?

Gilda: You are not a fisher!

Homayoon: What is the difference?

Gilda: It differs a lot.

Ghasem: I am a baker! Is it ok? So what?

Gilda: I mean something else!

Ghasem: Well what is it?

Gilda: My friends have made that film.

Homayoon: Which friends?!

Gilda: You don’t know them.

Homayoon: And what friend it is that I don’t know?!

Gilda: “Homayoon”! You talk so if you know me since I was a child!

Homayoon:I just want to know who they are?

Ghasem: I still what do you want here?

Gilda: I have a message for you!

Ghasem: Fromwho?

Hmayoun: From your artist friends?

Gilda: No. It is a long time that I have not heard from them. I heard the arrested one of them.

Ghasem:What do you want then?

Gilda: Don’t search anymore.

Ghasem: What?!

Gilda: I said. Don’t search anymore.

Ghasem: Is this someone’s message?

Gilda: Yes.

Ghasem: Who?

Homayoon: Who?

Gilda:“Homayoon” don’t interfere!

Ghasem: Say it!

Gilda: You know it yourself.

Ghasem: I don’t know.

Gilda: It is impossible.

Homayoon: “Gilda”!

Gilda:Didn’t you hear me?

Ghasem: What is your relation to it?

Gilda: Guess!

Ghasem: “Homayoon”!

Homayoon: “Gilda”, would you stop it or not?!

Gilda:Stop what?

Homayoon: What kind of behavior it is?!

Gilda: I have done nothing wrong.

Ghasem: What is your relationship?

Gilda: Guess……

Homayoon:He can’t guess!

Ghasem: No one can say what relation you can have with a dead.

Gilda:Dead doesn’t send messages sir!

*Silence!*

Ghasem:Why should I don’t search anymore?

Gilda: Obviously because you can’t find him here!

Ghasem: Where is he?

Gilda: In a Europe country; In the Northwest of Iran.

Ghasem: Where?

Gilda: “France”. I should not give the details. I mean … him…

Ghasem: Where?!!

Gilda: “Marseille”

Hokayun- “Gilda” have been there for a long time. I mean she was born there. She has come here for studying. Everybody go there to study she has come here! She loves “Ahwaz”. Jst imagine you were born in “Marseille”, grew up in “Tehran” then you love “Ahwaz”! That’s why we are friend now myclassmates think I come from “Ahwaz”. I told them my Dad is from “Ahwaz” …

Ghasem: You are his daughter?

Gilda: It looks like this.

Ghasem: From whom?You said you are his daughter.From whom?

Gilda: “Audry”!

Ghasem: She is a foreigner? Son! Isn’t “Audry” a name for females?

Gilda: You were expecting it to be a man’s name?

Homayoon: Gilda!

Ghasem:Whose daughter you said you are?

Gilda: My name is “Gilda Ghafarpour”!

Homayoon: What did you say?!!

Gilda: I’ll describe it later to you honey.

Ghasem:You are “Ahmad’s” daughter?!

Gilda: They say.

Homayoun: What does it mean? Who say? What say? You mean “Baba Ghasem”’s son is alive? The one who…all these years…he was looking for his corpse in “Karoon”?!And you have a message from him?!Don’t search anymore?!! I can’t realize it!

Gilda: This is how he got out of Iran. By pretending to be dead, he never told me why. But he was always suffering that his dad has not accepted it and is always looking for his corpse. When I told him about the movie he got so upset and asked me to do my best to deliver his message; but….

He has told me not to say any details. He doesn’t want you to ever go after him or anything… He just wanted you to know!

Homayoon: Let me know if I did bring you “Ahwaz” or you brought me?

Gilda:“Homayoun” I didn’t mean to play with you.

Homayoon:I have insisted so much to bring you here to “Ahwaz”! I don’t remember you insisting on it

Ghasem: What do you eat?

Homayoun: I don’t remember you have ever said a word about “Ahwaz”!You just wanted to meet him. The “Ahwaz” boy’s father…. I can’t understand.

Gilda: Don’t bother yourself.

Homayoon: I don’t get it. If I wasn’t from “Ahwaz” did you fall in love with me?! “Gilda”! I’m talking with you!

Ghasem: Eat it!

Gilda: Thanks a lot! What is it?

Homayoon: You like it! It is Wild Plums. She has a sour taste.

Ghasem: It is as much Wild Plum as I am fisher! It’s date.Have it.Eat girly! You delivered your message!

Gilda: I hope you have become happy.

Ghasem: Tell “Ahmad” ….

Homayoon: Where are you going “BabaGhasem”?

Ghasem:Do you want anything?

Homayoon: Well, no….Where are you going to?

Ghasem: I’m going back on water.

Homayoon: Now?!

Ghasem: Always, ‘till I find it.

Gilda: Didn’t I ask you not to search anymore? He is alive!

Ghasem: I saw her. She is Ok. Not pretty well for you but….she is a good girl. She is raised in a good family! It also looks like I am her grandfather! Tell Ahmad I was not looking for him. Never!

*(Baba ghasem exits.Homayoon looks gilda shortly and then exits after baba ghasem fast.......lights fade and then Gilda talks under the spot light:)*

Gilda: I didn’t get to know him much. He was really as strange as he was in the movie. Now either he knows that he is my grandfather, also I know it. He is further to you than me. I mean it looks like you are still closer to him. You speak with him easier. It is so bad to be this much far from your family. That’s enough. You frown like I have tricked you. I couldn’t tell you. I shouldn’t have told you; I didn’t mean to upset you. Listen! I love the sound of a moving train. It strangely affects my mind. I get calmed. You said your aunt “Monir” used to bake breads with the taste of “Wild Plums”?! You didn’t learn it by gazing to making it for hours with your sister?You want to be silent all the way to “Tehran”?You are tantrum? Why you close your eyes? You are sleeping? If he knew the truth what he would do?! Even you! Since I’ve known the reality I become crazy. It’s about three months. His son message was just an excuse. I went there to meet my father! But he didn’t let me. I didn’t… I think I didn’t meet him.

Even you don’t know what is “Baba Ghasem” is looking for in the “Karoon”?

*Lights fade...*

Act III:

Jumping frog of Calaveras Cont neighborhood

*A tiny flat in Berlin...very clean and cold...*

Na’anayi: Don’t act like strangers. You’ve not pay the bills Dear “Susan”?I heard they call you “Suzan” here! Yes?

Susan: How did you find me?

Na’anayi: You are right. It was hard. Very hard! I just knew you were going to come to “Berlin”.How many years have you been here?You are right, what it has to do with me?

Susan: How did you find me?

Na’anayi: In lots of places there are still people found that will bend down when they hear the name” Na’anayi”. If they don’t at least they will nod.

Susan: How did you find me?

Na’anayi:Didn’t I tell? I just told you! Asking few questions making some calls and a begging! What is the difference? The point is that I am here!

Susan: What do you want?

Na’anayi: That’s what I’m talking about! Good! Are you fine?

Susan: What do you want?

Na’anayi: You have to leave Germany.

Susan: Why?!!

Na’anayi: Don’t ask!

Susan- Why shouldn’t I?!

Na’anayi: I don’t get all into it. It is none of my business. This is an order! They have said “Susan” most not be in Germany and France.

Susan: I am not making trouble for anybody. Why they are bullying?!

Na’anayi: How many years you have been living here with no parasite? How many years?

Susan: It has been twenty years!

Na’anayi: It’s not enough?

Susan: What you mean?

Na’anayi: Why you have this? Haven’t you become deaf in these twenty years?

Susan: I have married. I have a husband.

Na’anayi:Oh! I am scared. Where is he? Is he hiding in this rat house? Maybe he is hidden under this. Come out! Susan’s Husband!Does he call you “Suzan” too or you are cool with him and he calls you “Susan”? Maybe he is in bathroom!Come out! Susan’s Husband!If you don’t come out I will close the door! Not there?!It looks not there! The big guy you are talking about is always muted! Not even …

Susan: He is out.

Na’anayi: My dearest!Why you don’t know who are you dealing with? It is me!” Na’anayi”! And you are playing with me? If you don’t know me I know you well. The fact that you think if I take orders from some bosses it doesn’t mean you have the right to take me cheap!

Susan: What do you want?!

Na’anayi: I have told you.

Susan:What for?

Na’anayi: If I was supposed to understand these kinds of deals, now I was sitting on the top. They told me and I crossed you from the border; I took you to “Berlin”! You had fun here for twenty years. Now they are telling me that “Susan” should leave Germany and she can’t back to France either.

Susan: I have never been in France!

Na’anayi: Anyway you should forget these two.

Susan: What it will have for you?

Na’anayi: You’re asking too much!

Susan: What if I don’t leave?

Na’anayi: What?!

Susan: What if I don’t accept?Didn’t you understand what I said?

Na’anayi: I wouldn’t laugh if I wouldn’t understand it!

Susan: I am not leaving.

Na’anayi: You are.

Susan: I am serious.

Na’anayi: Either I am.

Susan: How much you earn?

Na’anayi: I delivered the message to you. The rest is up to you!

Susan: Why you don’t leave me alone? Isn’t it enough?

Na’anayi: Isn’t it late to ask this question? I guess it is twenty years late for it!

Susan: Tell them I won’t leave. Nowhere! I will not move.

Na’anayi: Then they make a contract with him! The guy is looking for you so bad. And we think dead or alive he will find you. If he finds you the story gets worse. Hardly everything is settled.

Susan: How you can deal with him?

Na’anayi: If “Na’anayi” would know such things his name wouldn’t be “Na’anayi”! Don’t you worry!

Susan: So you think he will find me.

Na’anayi: Yes. If you obey we all will be relax.

Na’anayi:I’m entering! … We are somehow longtime friends; even maybe with same beliefs! No?Were there any tissues in my packets? I want to ask a question.

Susan:Do you become friend with all of your costumers?

Na’anayi: Just with those who have the potential! Is he really after you just for love matters?

Susan: Why you don’t ask him?

Na’anayi: I thought you won’t like it if we deal with him. Isn’t it ridicules? After all these years!

Susan: Is it me fault that he is not letting it go?

Na’anayi: It is madness! It is a while that he is after other guys Workmates who cross people from the border. He has not come to me yet…but sooner or later…he will!

Susan: When he comes can’t you tell him I’m dead?

Na’anayi: He knows you are not! He maybe knows that broken hearted young folk or political young loser which has jumped into the “Karoon”, is alive! If not he wouldn’t come to “Na’anayi”!

Susan: Go from here!

Na’anayi: What?!

Susan: Get out!

Na’anayi: So our negotiation with “Susan” is finished! The result is negative!

Susan: What happens then?

Na’anayi: We go to him! He will find out you are alive and he will have the address and phone number and specifications. He has to “exactly” do what we want.

Susan: What is it?!

Na’anayi: Don’t be afraid! It is not a complicated job. He has to leave and never look behind!

Susan:And he is supposed to accept it? It looks like you don’t know him!

Na’anayi: He will. Be sure!

Susan:I’m not! You don’t know that bucket head. Tell me how he is going to be convinced!

Na’anayi: What is”Jumping Frog of Calaveras Cont. Neighborhood”? What happened?! When he was after you he has told this ridicules name to some of our folks; as a secret word or anything. He has asked if this name is familiar for them or not.

Susan: Was it?

Na’anayi: What?

Susan: Was it?

Na’anayi: Please louder!

Susan: Has it been familiar?

Na’anayi: Not as much familiar it was for you! What is it? Won’t you say? Because of our friendship!

Susan: Would you leave if I tell it to you?

Na’anayi: I would leave now if you want me to. I was leaving before it. You are the one who doesn’t want us to go to the old man!

Susan: It is the ridicules name of a novel by “Mark Twain” which neither of us has read. I mean it never was translated. We both don’t know what it is about but…we bothas a joke… about what this story may “probably” be about, made many theories and jokes… We both liked this name… without any Idea what it is… To the point that he thinks I may use it anywhere, for any reason, use it even maybe as a code name.

Na’anayi:You are right.

Susan: A name which showed up out from among my college books…I told him…he has no education…

Na’anayi: It is a man who keeps a promise.(*picks the glass and taste it:)* “Cichorium”!(*he leaves the glass on the table)* I’m leaving.

(*He approaches to leave.Susan calls him.he stops.)*

Susan- Wait!You haven’t told me how you are going to convince him!

Na’anayi: You are right! Butwhy you care?

Susan: I want to know.

Na’anayi: Don’t worry! We will find a way.No one should know that those five guys who were floated in “Karoon” are alive.I don’t want to lose the game!

Susan: “Na’anayi”!

Na’anayi: When you call me, I like it! Don’t make it a big deal! Forget it!

Susan: Talk!

Na’anayi: I remember when you were pretending dead for that fool, I remember then you hid something from him.It was five months that you have not seen him. You always wanted to end with notes and messages…

Susan: Me or you?

Na’anayi: Anyway…And when you jumped in the river; you drownedthis seven month old secret with you.

Susan: Me or you?

Na’anayi: Then they took you with closed eyes to a house. Like a prisoner;Quarantined. Had to no idea where you were…till the story ended.

Susan: You said…it is…finished.

Susan: There was “Madeline” from “Paris”. You just didn’t figure this out. You were not supposed to realize. You were always unconscious or sick. Then you came to “Berlin”. She is twenty years old now. Her name is “Gilda”! She doesn’t know who her parents are. But that fucking “Ahmad” told her and it’s about eleven years that she is in Iran. Now she knows and after his father she will looks after her Mother!

Susan: You told me she’s dead! There had to be abortion…

Na’anayi: It was better to save her for days like this. Don’t worry she is well raised. By the son of her father! Is it a brother? Step Brother? Something like that! I don’t know why he didn’t tell about you to her! She has studied literature just like you. And just like you she may doesn’t know what “Jumping Frog of Calaveras Cont. Neighborhood” is about! Don’t worry; there are some possibilities to deal with that crazy old man!(*he mentions to the glass on the table.)* Drink! It’s good for you. I think the stupid guy really loves you! But he doesn’t know what he loves…or whom!

(*Na’nayi exits.Susan is alone....she will always.....)*

*a.aghakhani*

*spring and summer 2011*