“All The Crucified Are Named JESUS”

Playwright: AyoubAghakhani

Cast: (In order of appearance)

1-Ferdows

2-Naser

3-Eghdami

4-Yahya

5-Yousef

6-Bold Man

7-Maryam Majd

8-Anousha (Parrot coppersmith)

9-Rabbi

10-First officer

11-Second Officer

12-Mother

“In the Name of the One and Only Artist”

Scene:

((‘Mosavat’ carpentry; adjacent to ‘Moulin Rouge’ cinema…

As the scene demands, we enter the carpentry or stand outside of it which is situated in three old passageway corners of Tehran. When we are outside ‘Moulin Rouge’ cinema or a sign of it can be seen. The year is 1327 equal to 1948 B.C….))

(Sitting outside of Ferdows’s shop on a stool)

Ferdows-I don’t know why you ask and who you are. These days it’s difficult to understand who has the right to ask and who hasn’t! A statement, you make here and there, they associate you with a movement or group, ah to hell with that! My name “Ferdows” ye I was his friend. With this condition I should say I am his friend. He worked in this carpentry. He loved cinema. If you ignored him, he would watch films in ‘Moulin Rouge’ all the time.

I and a couple more guys were his buddies. We were always together. He was our leader in a way. How should I put it? We were very attached to him. What a windy night it was last night! There was no peace. We all thought the chaos in the air and sky was because of our wounded hearts.

(Suddenly breaks his stature and cries-In himself and quietly-For a while)

What? Is crying a crime? I’m a Jew! I have no flaws either. We are all Jews. He was too. I mean…he is. Yeah I believe it. I believe it. He has escaped. I’m sure. You want to hit me? It’s like that, these days they don’t need reason for a beating. (Pause) Who are you?

(Inside the store-Young ‘Neseri’ is working. ‘Eghdami’ enters and looks at the youngster in silence while he sings and works.)

Eghdami-Aren’t you gonna invite me in? Or tell me to sit down?

Naseri-Hi. Since when have you been standing there!?

Eghdami-I heard a little singing.

Naseri-I’m sorry. Please Mr. ‘Eghdami’. (Cleans top of a stool.)

There is wood dust everywhere. I wish you had given me notice.

Eghdami-(Sits.)I wanted to see for my own eyes.

Neseri-What?

Eghdami-The fact that the energetic idealistic writer of ‘Today’s Man’ has a second job.

Naser-Carpentry is our ancestry job.

Eghdami-This place belongs to your father?!

Naseri-Mr. ‘Mosavat’? No! (Laughs) my family live in the ‘neighbourhood’. I just work here. Most of afternoons!

Eghdami-So it is true.

Naseri- What?

Eghdami-That you are a Jew.

Naseri-(pause) Shall I be sorry for it?

Eghdami- Not you.

Naseri- I’m happy.

Eghdami-You see the country’s status. It’s killing and murder. Some people allow themselves to close the street and beat up and kill. And weapons and arms are a as much as candy. Safety has become a dream in this country. Their people have penetrated the government. They kill and are not punished. They are at each other’s throat. The Jews I mean.

Naseri-(Pretends to be occupied.) I know.

Eghdami-With talking about the ‘Promised land’, they have started a circus with no certain aim. You..don’twanna go?

Naseri-…

Eghdami-You can go?

Naseri- …

Eghdami-They say that place belongs to you! Belongs to the nation that has lived in filth and blood so they can build a pure race!

Naseri-Why should I listen to these sarcasms?

Eghdami-So we know what we have to do.

Naseri-(calm) Do what?

Eghdami-Which side are you with? Any side you choose the game is different.

Naseri- I thought you know me.

Eghdami-These days you can’t trust anyone.

Naseri-Even me?

Eghdami-(a bit angry) There is no room for playing around.’MohamadMasoud’ wants to know as well. I wanna know too. A lot of people wanna know.

Naseri-That where my loyalty belongs to?

Eghdami-All these years you wrote with honour. You were young but your pen never went astray. If you were lost, not ‘Masoud’ wanted to know neither me. We don’t have time; Its chaos out there. A bunch of thugs have been going at this game ‘promised land and pure breed’ they are choking the people off. Don’t be surprised if tomorrow you hear the women under fire

have become credible; Why? They have sold two families to the fascists; and the same goes with Nazis in Iran. They have bank accounts in European banks. In ‘Zurich’, ‘Greece’, ‘Cyprus’. Shall I continue? Everyone is into corruption! Everyone’s involved! It has become the hobby of the unemployed to talk politics, talk crap, and use drugs. Money?Doesn’t matter.Either they give up someone or take out someone who the Jews want taking out. Its not a bad business. It makes up for the drugs they need. Right now in the papers they write things bigger than their mouths can afford. There is no one to look into parliament, look into the market, and say who the hell are these guys in the city causing so much havoc? What are they doing? All these corpses have no family? Mr. ‘Kashani’ is angry. He has told ‘MohamadMasoud’.Killing Jews has become a daily event now. It’s the Jews themselves but they don’t mind it being blamed on the Muslims. That’s why everyone is involved. Here we need to know who is with whom and who is not. And the paper ‘Today’s Man’ can be taken care of by you! Since…you are Jew.

Naseri-I’m in.

Eghdami-With us right?

Naseri-(Laughs calmly) You joking today.

Eghdami-(Smiles, a little more confident) Mr. ‘Mossadegh’ also is going to give a statement that Iranian Jews don’t have to go anywhere; because he is Iranian. This way the rich thugs that are taking innocent Jews to the supposed ‘promised land’ will be known to the public. Iranian Jews are a part of

Iranian history.’MohamadMasoud’ is influencing ‘GhavamSaltane’ and is a player in this German game. If people like you who have no hatred towards Jews, Muslims, Zorostrians, Christians, and others don’t come in the arena, we will all be sacrificed and losers to money.

Naseri-We won’t. Don’t worry.

Eghdami-Slogans of a young idealist

Naseri- It’s not slogan, I’m in.

Eghdami-We have to stop Iranian Jews from leaving.

Naseri-Except writing, what should I do?

Eghdami-Should I tell you?

Naseri-Yup.

Eghdami-(Long pause) Nothing now!

(Wants to leave)

Naseri-You leaving?

Eghdami-I’m happy that we can count on you.

Naseri-Mr. ‘Eghdami;Is there anything you haven’t told me?

Eghdami-I’m sure ‘MohamadMasoud’ will behappy to have young ‘Naseri’ in his paper.

Naseri-Is there something you haven’t told ‘MohamadMasoud’?!

Eghdami-How much do you believe in the power of the pen?

Naseri-A lot?

Eghdami-(Pause)I don’t!

Naseri-…

Eghdami-Good night!

(“Eghdami”takes a few steps towards the exit)

Naseri-Wait!

(‘Eghdami’ stops)

Naseri-So why did you come to me?!

Eghdami-I had to know you better.

Naseri-You didn’t know me enough?!

Eghdami-You’re a Jew!

Naseri-OK?

Eghdami-The world war has just finished; Everything has been messed up. Its impossible to trust anyone this easy..

Naseri-Why trust?

Eghdami-You’re young but not a child. A lot of time it is hard to wait for things to turn out your way!

Naseri-…

Eghdami-We have the trace of someone named ‘Sholeiman’ who is staying at one of the hotels in this neighbourhood. He’s come to choose his people for the taking. He stamps the red card on many who are forbidden to leave. And many he makes them look sick. Basically he is taking the ones that know they can do something in their promised land. Many in your faith are helping him. And the ones that he can’t help he refers them to the smuggling rings. This way the rich ones who can’t make a difference in the Promised Land have to pay a lot to get there. It is a clean business! Understand?

Naseri-OK?

Eghdami-We wanna take him down!

Naseri-Make him known to the public!

Eghdami-(Laughs) Yeah…You’re young!

Naseri-You mean you wanna…kill him?!

Eghdami-You think in the last two months they killed little Iranians? Why should we wait? So they can kill more? So they can do more business? So they can get fatter?

Naseri-But…You don’t understand? This way they can do the same propaganda that you are afraid of! The fact that Muslims are killing Jews!

Eghdami-This is exactly the point that I wanted you to get to.

Naseri-!!?

Eghdami-What if a Jew does this?

Naseri-…

Eghdami-Why have you frozen?

Naseri-Really?

Eghdami-If you believe that it is in the interest of your country why not?

Naseri-Why do you think I can do this?

Eghdami-These days holding a weapon is easier than holding a saw and sandpaper; you have hard hands no!

Naseri-(File is dropped from his hand) I said it was our ancestry job.

Eghdami-I know they will face public opinion at the end. I know we will win. I know the ones that think dirty, die dirty. I know all these but it might take a long time. When they become stronger, not every wound will be fatal for them. When they satay and use the theme they want as an excuse, it is difficult to take them down! How many of our countrymen have to die for us to recognize we have to take them down?!If you don’t like it, forget it! I didn’t come to ‘Mosavat Carpentry’ OK? There is no compulsion. This job needs faith. There is no room for wiggling around.

Naseri-Does Mr. ‘Masoud’ know this?!

Eghdami-No. No one of the people you know, know about this.

Naseri-Can I say no?

Eghdami-(Pause) All can say no.

Naseri-In that case you’re not gonna think I would rat on you?

Eghdami-You can’t you won’t

Naseri-Would you let me see him once?

Eghdami-Why?

Naseri-Maybe there is no need for him to die.

Eghdami-(Little angry) this situation doesn’t need artist. It needs someone with zeal. You wanna go give him advice?!

Naseri-I didn’t say that. The world that is in front of us, is a world of prudence, politics and action. A world of industry and technic. Why should it be this way…

Eghdami-(Cuts him off) I don’t have time for this crap. If you are with us, tell me by tomorrow. If you are not, don’t tell anyone Naseri! Understand?

Naseri-Mr. ‘Eghdami’! Let me see him once! I am a journalist. I can go see him with many excuses?

Eghdami-(Hesitates.)…

Naseri-Even for the reason of going to the promised land can be a good excuse.

Eghdami-(With doubt, takes a piece of paper from his pocket) This is the hotels name and number. ‘Sholeiman’ will be in Tehran form tomorrow for a week. In that same hotel.

Naseri-Don’t look at me this way! Nothing will be ruined.

(‘Eghdami’ leaves without saying another word. ‘Naseri’ in his loneliness, looks at the paper from Eghdami. Takes the file from the floor which he dropped earlier.Looks towards ‘Moulin Rouge’ cinema.)

(Outside the store-‘Yahya’ is sitting on a stool)

Yahya-To be honest, I worked in ‘Toda’s Man’ before him. It can be said I made it possible for a man like him to write. Even it was me that talked to Mr. ‘Masoud’ so that he would accept him. He wasn’t unemployed. He was a carpenter as far as I can remember. From doors that he made to windows and chests…take a hike around here so you can hear off his art! From the wood of berry trees he made us lecterns so we can put the holy book onto. But..he had to come to the only paper in this chaos that couldn’t blacken its pages with the advertisement of a Hercules bike. His place was ‘Today’s Man’. He had a lot to say. He wanted to change the world with honesty. There were big things on his mind. (Pause) We, his buddies, sometimes thought he watched too many films. Right here next to us. He loved film in ‘Moulin Rouge’…Whatever he was, we respected him…I mean respect him. I don’t think you can find him this fast…Yeah.

(Inside the store-‘Naseri’has put on clothes and is ready…

Its like he just entered the store or wants to go out.

He’s a little nervous. ‘Yousef’ the old man with white hair with a folded newspaper of ‘Today’s Man’ walks in with a bold man who is silent. The bold man who wears glasses stands next to the door. It’s obvious he is bodyguard or protector of someone. Atmosphere is heavy and anxious for ‘Naseri’

There is silence in the air for a while.)

Naseri-Eh… (He wants to say something.)…

Yousef-This place really gets on fire quickly! Is the owner aware?

Naseri- I…am not the owner.

Yousef-I know. This is a Muslim neighbourhood. Its not your place.

Naseri-You are?

Yousef-(Cuts him off.) “YousefShavel” if you need an introduction.

Naseri-(Confused) Do I know you?

Yousef-Its only important that I know you.

Naseri-From where?!

Yousef-Two days ago you came to the hotel to see Mr ‘Sholeiman’

Naseri-I didn’t see him

Yousef-You sure?!

Naseri-You have come from him?

Yousef-With a big question it belonged to me and I don’t know the answer.

Naseri-?!!

Yousef-The fact that can all come to his room?

Naseri-Was there Mr. “Soleiman’s” room?

Yousef-You have doubts?

Naseri-Is it a problem to come to his door?

Yousef-You didn’t mention your business with him as it seems!

Naseri-He wasn’t there so I can tell him.

Yousef-He was. He was sitting at the corner of the room. With a black beard and cloths and…

Naseri-And hat! And…

Yousef-He was completely quite. He shouldn’t be? In front of a stranger!

Naseri-But…you..I mean he…isn’t he going to make arrangements for our trip?

Yousef-If you have the preconditions yes/

Naseri-I am not a bad carpenter…

Yousef-(Opens the newspaper fast) You are not a bad writer as well. Of course considering your age. (Read :)”AL-Youm, TajSahiyoun” It has been made for small heads and Solomon’s ring is not fit for us. Our fingers and hands are more capable with worthier tasks. At a time when an army can be gathered by words, I don’t understand the need for spears and blades and weapons, so why should there be blood. We will become tornadoes in the sky of little people and will instill fear within them so they would understand Iranians of any culture and religion will not leave their home and will find the promised land here and this is the holy command as well.’Naseri’s signature’. (Closes the paper and takes a breath). Don’t you think you have written something important; It’s just the composition. All right.

Naseri-These are all sarcasms?

Yousef-…

Naseri-If you don’t like it, throw it away.

Yousef-This? No! It is valuable. Mr. “Sholeiman” loves oily Iranian kebabs. Messing up in the hotel means a lot of crowd there which is not suited to his disposition.

Naseri-OK…Now am I fit to go to your pure land?

Yousef-I don’t think so.

Naseri-Why?

Yousef-The lines I read show that you are not a good Jew. The same goes with your screw-ups in the hotel two days ago.

Naseri-I don’t understand.

Yousef-Unhappiness can easily be seen in you with the naked eye. Unhappiness affects the digestion; Bad digestion takes your health away and no health means red stamp on your card. We need a clean and healthy generation.

Naseri-What is your position?

Yousef-If you don’t want, forget my words! I haven’t studied medicine. These are experiences. I saw a lot of people who didn’t want to get well! This kind of person should be left alone to die. Otherwise he will contaminate the others.

Naseri-Can’t someone talk to them?

Yousef-Not everyone can. No! If it could be done I wouldn’t be here.

Naseri-So why are you here? Your tongue is not of dialogue. It is of war. Atleast these days it is poverty that speaks in alleys and streets.

Yousef-You think how hard it is for my companion to blow your brains out? He can’t?

Naseri-…

Yousef-It’s respect for the written word that we’ve come this far.

Naseri-Ofcourse only when kebab and herbs keep coming VIP style!

Yousef-Yes only in that condition.

Naseri-You paid your respects, now you can go.

Yousef-It looks like we offended you. Did you expect Mr. “Sholeiman” to come pay his respects in person?

Naseri-“Respect for the written word”! You are threatening me.

Yousef-Threat?

Naseri-“Pulling the trigger”; “Burning this place”; What do you call this?

Yousef-An invitation to reality. Just because you can’t have a role in the future of the Jews doesn’t mean you should be an enemy!

Naseri-I came to the hotel for friendship.

Yousef-Oh. Yes! It is noticeable from your writings.

Naseri-I don’t want any blood to be spilt.

Yousef-I believe no “you” are threatening!

Naseri-I wrote this in my article as well.

Yousef-Let’s wrap it up. What’s the problem?

Naseri-I don’t care whose blood it belongs to. Muslim or Jew. Where is the world going?! Knife and weapons and cannons. All these people have died. In the last ten years, the world’s population has halved! Is it not enough?

Yousef-We lost more members.

Naseri-Now is not the time for giving grades and getting points. I wanted to see “Sholeimon” and invite him to change his ways.

(“Youssef” suddenly gets up and claps his hands. “Naseri” is shocked. “Yousef” slowly laughs. The bold man shares his laughter.)

Yousef-Bravo! In your words I see a power that is worthy of a Jewish king!(still laughing) A Carpenter by! A courteous Jew! Pen in the hand of a poet! King of the Jews! Bringing equality! Greater than a prophet! Bravo!

Naseri-Don’t mock me Mr. “Shavel” You think Iranians that see their compatriots being murdered by bullets at intersections by Jews with rain coats don’t have hatred?! You think they will forget this easily? When they see the police doesn’t bring them justice or can’t bring justice; until when are they going to be quiet? Two days ago a man and a women and a child had their bodies shot full of holes next to the cinema. Even the horse of the carriage didn’t survive. It doesn’t matter if the shooters were ‘Sholeimon’s’ people or not. Its only important that many think it was.! Now you tell me until when can we be safe from people’s revenge? Is it not in your benefit to listen to this carpenter boy who is a poet?

Yousef-(More serious) As I said you are not a good Jew. You don’t have patriotism. Also you don’t understand the difference between future and past. Take a look at the country! Its chaos! To be frank, It is a couple of months that the country is in our hands. In the hands of the Jews! Let’s say Tehran! Is it not Tehran that decides everything? It’s in our hands! Leave the trigger and pulling it and burning this place for later. You wanna become a number on a file?! You want them to make a portfolio of you being defamed?! It’s not hard. There are a lot that can confirm you are a bastard young man!

Naseri-(Angrily wants to say something.)…

Yousef-Wait! I haven’t finished. They can’t? When you were a child, how many neighbourhoods did your mom change to run away from people’s gossip? Huh

Naseri-You don’t have the right…

Yousef-I haven’t finished! A few years of your life it not known, how you managed; Some think you have sold a few families to the Fascists! It was a good market! Your mother has a European bank account! Your original name is Amin ‘MohamadMasoud’! Shall I continue?

Naseri-Have you no shame?

Yousef-From you?!! From you?!! You might not even be full blooded Jew?! I mean there is a possibility, take it easy young man! It looks like you watch a lot of films. I had heard!

Naseri-It’s not true! These words are crap! You should be ashamed!

Yousef-In a day, a file of wrongs can be made and can be burned. So be smart and live your life! Think of your mother! There might be a lot of people in this neighbourhood who want to see her alone!

(“Naseri” takes a step towards ‘Yousef’ angrily.

The bold man puts his hand in his pocket fast. ‘Yousef’ points to him to stop. Aa while the three are still.)

Yousef-Also…Newspapers and publications and media are places for people who just hang out in doing nothing! Your hands are hard. Get out of ‘Today’s Man’ if indeed you are today’s man!

(‘Yousef’ points to the bold man to go. He throws the ‘Today’s Man’ newspaper on the floor and leaves with the bold man behind him.

From a long way, the sound of a machine gun being emptied is heard. The blinking light of ‘Moulin Rouge’ cinema continues blinking in the dark.)

(Outside the shop-‘Maryam’ is sitting on a stool.)

Maryam-First time I saw him in ‘Moulin Rouge’ cinema. The cinema next door. I had gone to see ‘Martha Iverse’s strange love’. Because love ‘Barbara Estanoyk’. I didn’t like the film but ‘Estanoyk was great like always. So I saw him there. He was skinny and courteous and his eyes had a spark. You saw his eyes in the dark like a cat. Actually it was the eyes that…

I told myself I shouldn’t think of irrelevant stuff; but I saw him again at ‘Anna Karanina’. This ‘Vivian Lee’ is such a fire cracker! She had lighted up that role. I was absorbed in her acting that I thought to myself I know the person in front of me. He didn’t move for a half an hour. I thought he might be asleep. Slowly I brought my head forward to see if I had made a mistake. I saw the spark in his look, it was him. He had focused and gazed, watching the film. I never saw anyone watch film this way! Even myself! I apologized and sat down. To be honest I didn’t understand the rest of the film. I mean that time I didn’t understand. Because I never go to a film just one time.

If I hate the film, I go twice. In any other case, I go eight or nine! When the film finished and they turned on the lights, I saw him. His cloths were simple but suited him. I don’t know I liked him. That Saturday I had gone to a ceremony in the neighbourhood.

I found out he had come too. He was well. It was great that he was like us. But…Really, he was like no one else. No. No one! He reminded me of ‘Henry Fonda’, In ‘My love Clementine’. Or no! No…Actually no! No one! (Pause) I can’t believe it that I won’t see him again! Outside in the alleyway, after the ceremony, I went towards him. He smiled at me and said hello. The spark in his eye had cut my tongue. (She laughs). I don’t know why! I was never like this. Just like school children! It’s a joke! I forcibly wrapped my ribbon around and asked him ‘cinema has brought in a new film in which ‘Catherine Hapburn’ and ‘Spencer Tracy’ play with the name of ‘Sea of grass’; Do you wanna…go together? He smiled and didn’t say no. Actually didn’t see yes either. But didn’t say no! For me this was good enough since all the men around me…no one was like him. I had a right to go forward. ‘Sea of Grass’ was not a good film. Slow and hard…but…it was the best time I saw a film in the cinema…

(‘Maryam’ without getting up from the stool, ‘Naseri’ exits the store. It’s like ‘Maryam’ is waiting for him outside. ‘Maryam’ at the instant of ‘Naseri’s’ exit, gets up with a little shame.)

Naseri-You said ‘Sea of Grass’!Ye?

Maryam-Yeah.

Naseri-I’m sorry you had to wait. I finished my carpentry work.

Maryam-No, no. Actually I really liked coming here every day. It’s amazing. It’s different than the neighbourhood!

Naseri-How?

Maryam-I don’t know somehow,..

Naseri-Is it high class? No! I don’t know…. Maybe…

Naseri-For me places don’t matter. Wherever I’m happy is OK for me.

Maryam-Are you happy here?

Naseri-(Hesitates) Yeah. It’s good.

Maryam-It’s great you’re close to the cinema!

Naseri-As long as we’re together it is fine. Even if I were far, I would have made it.

Maryam-(Shocked-childish) what was the last film you saw?

Naseri-Here?

Maryam-No. I know this place. I saw you myself. It was ‘Anna Karenina’. (Pause) That was the last one?

Naseri-Actually no, there was another I saw.

Maryam-What?

Naseri-‘Monsieur Verdun’!

Maryam-‘Charlie’?Oh no! (She becomes sad) I didn’t like it at all.

Naseri-(Wears his coat.) Why?!

Maryam-I don’t like to see ‘Charlie Chaplin’ talking; especially in the role of a murderer!

Naseri-It is more real than his positively casted movies.

Maryam-I don’t know. I don’t like it.

Naseri-(Smiles and closes the store.)What female likes it?

Maryam-you’re right.

Naseri-Life is very bitter! Especially these days. With all this I think it is beautiful. Very beautiful. Spring, summer, farms,trees, grapes, sun, grass fields, winter, white, people,…yes people…everything is beautiful. These days are sad. Everything is sad; but nothing can stop their beauty. A world without lines and weapons would be better. With lines and weapons there is still something beautiful there. It’s just hiding. Sad films like ‘Monsieur Verdun’ remind us that what beautiful things we might lose.

Maryam-Is this your newspaper tongue! I like your carpenter tongue more.

Naseri-(Laughs-calmly) you said ‘Sea of Grass’!

Maryam-It was put on screen just yesterday. I think it is a love movie.

Naseri-… (Pause-stares at ‘Maryam’)

Maryam-What happened? Did I say something wrong.

Naseri- You are beautiful too!

Maryam-(Courteous)…Me..Thanks…(giggles-nervous) Wow why did I get this way?

Naseri- How?

Maryam-I got clumsy.

Naseri-I’m sure many have told you this.

Maryam-(Suddenly is shocked.) You weren’t the sarcastic type!

Naseri- It wasn’t sarcasm.

Maryam-What did you hear about me?

Naseri-Fromwhom?

Maryam-I don’t know?

Naseri-Nothing!

Maryam-Shall I believe it?

Naseri-Why not?

Maryam-You mean a news reporter hasn’t asked anyone who this ‘Maryam Majd’ is that has been smiling at her?

Naseri-No I didn’t see a reason for this.

Maryam-No one has come to tell this paper about me?

Naseri-No.

Maryam-Shall I believe?

Naseri-You’re afraid of people’s gossip?

Maryam-Always.

Naseri-Life will become sad for you.

Maryam-It is sad. Only cinema makes it sweet. And…of course…these days…you.Naseri-(smiles-silence)…

Maryam-But I asked!

Naseri-?!!

Maryam-About you!

Naseri-Yes?

Maryam-Everybody says you are harmless!

Naseri-(Laughs) Is it enough for you?

Maryam-Sometimes you need to be cunning. Are you always this calm?

Naseri-What should I say? Maybe.

Maryam-(Plays a trick) Always, always?!

Naseri-What else have they said?

Maryam-(Pauses) you mean I should say?

Naseri-You can’t?

Maryam-Well it’s not good.

Naseri-(turns away and pretends he is occupied with the lock and key of the carpentry) Is it about my mother?

Maryam-I’m sorry.

Naseri-It doesn’t matter.

Maryam-They say a lot of these things about me too. That’s why they call them people! A mouth that always moves! Don’t worry!

Naseri-I’m used to it.

Maryam-Do you know your father? Do you know who he is?

Naseri-Can we change the subject?

Maryam-Yes.Ofcourse!...(wants to change the subject) They said something else.

Naseri-…

Maryam-The fact that you have supernatural abilities!(Shocked) Are they right?!

Naseri- Did they find this from my writings or carpentry?!

Maryam-Well is it true or not?

Naseri-What do you think?

Maryam-It suits you.

Naseri-(Smiles) It’s a God given trait. But it’s not called Tarot reading or superstition. I read people’s heart and minds.

Maryam-(Nervous) You mean…I…now…

Naseri-Don’t think about your past! We all have made mistakes. Purify your heart!

(‘Maryam’ puts her head down and distances herself.)

Maryam-I’m now sure your previous words were sarcasm.

Naseri-It wasn’t

Maryam-I am not proud of my past.

Naseri-I know

Maryam-I wanted not to have done my previous stuff.

Naseri-I know. No one should judge people that easily.

Naseri- I know

Maryam-The only thing important now is that ….I love you.

Naseri-I know this aswell.

Maryam-(ruined and more clumsy)Oh…I’m sorry.

Naseri-You’re very respectable for me. But I am not suited for you.

Maryam-…

Naseri-I can see films with you but you deserve a good life.

Maryam-A life you can’t provide for me. No?

Naseri-My future is not very clear.

Maryam-(On the verge of crying) I know that a women that all the neighbourhood knows doesn’t deserve you. I’ll be your back and call. I’ll become anything you want…

Naseri-We might miss the screening!

(‘Maryam’ silences a moment. Same time ‘Anousha’ enters running and breathing hardly)

Anousha-Thank God you haven’t left yet.

Naseri-What has happened ‘Anousha’?

Anousha-I wanted to see you. I was scared you might be closed. (It’s like he just notices ‘Maryam’) Oh what is she doing here?

Naseri-She has business with me, talk!

Anousha-I can’t tell in front of her.

Naseri-It doesn’t matter…

Maryam-No no…I..go..away..You’ll come right!

(‘Maryam’ goes away silently, exits)

Anousha-This woman is very discredited in the neighbourhood. I’m surprised you haven’t heard!

Naseri-I’ve heard.

Anousha-Then why…

Naseri-She’s a good woman. Has a pure heart.

Anousha-I’m talking about bad reputation and your position!

Naseri-The heart is important ‘Anousha’.(pause)We all can commit the same mistakes. Why have you come here?

Anousha-Why have I come here? Because I have heard stuff.

Naseri-About?

Anousha-You. I’ve heard you want to do something

Naseri-I always wanna do something.

Anousha-I mean ‘Sholeimon’ dud!

(‘Naseri’ pauses. Looks at ‘Anousha’. Silence comes between them a few seconds.)

Naseri-What have you heard?

Anousha-I believe in you. I mean we all do. If you really think he should be taken out we are with you.

Naseri-What?!

Anousha-You can’t do it alone. There are many bodyguards with him. Have you seen his guys?

Naseri-Wait! Don’t go so fast! What you talking about?

Anousha-He is playing with our values. Your decision is logical!

Naseri-What decision?

Anousha-Which decision? Killing him!

Naseri-Who has made up this load up crap ‘Anousha’?

Anousha-Crap?!

Naseri-Yes this crap has no buyers here! Me kill someone?!

Anousha-It’s everywhere. In our group everyone knows.

Naseri-What kind of assassination is this that a person gives himself up beforehand?! This entire pace for prison and execution? Isn’t it crazy? And the target has the chance to be ready before he is attacked.

Anousha-Do this! Many will come to your aid. We are at your service till death.

Naseri-You should be ashamed of yourself!

Anousha-What?!

Naseri-Be ashamed of yourself! If you think like this go after your life fast! Don’t stay with me! I will never go after a better world with terror and blood and murder. If I wanted to do that I would have never go towards the paper and pen.

Anousha-But we…

Naseri-I will never change the path of the law; I will never limit ignorance with blood. Let him get so deep in crime that he despises himself. A place where corpses bury corpses, is nnot my place. Go after another aim!

Anousha-Allright! All right!... We are with you. It’s not a problem. This is just what I’ve heard. I admit I became happy but…but if it’s wrong...no problem. We won’t. Don’t! We’re still with you…all of us.

Naseri-Leave me alone!

Anousha-Alone? Don’t be frustrated with me!

Naseri-I’m not. Leave me alone! Right now I just wanna be alone.

Anousha-I’ll see you ..soon…in the neighbourhood.

(‘Naseri’nods his head to confirm to ‘Anousha’ who is little uncomfortable… leaves in the silence. Instantly ‘Maryam’enters.)

Maryam-I’m sorry. Don’t get angry but I..herad.

Naseri-…

Maryam-I know I did a wrong thing but..

Naseri-It doesn’t matter.

Maryam-(Pause) I’m worried for you.

Naseri-Don’t think about it!

Maryam-Why should they make up these things?!

Naseri-…

Maryam-Do you trust this guy?

Naseri-(pauses-clam) Youwanna talk bad about him? Since he bad mouthed you?

Maryam-Among the women in the neighbourhood he is popular with being’ Parrot Coppersmith’!

Naseri-Parrot?!

Maryam-Women…I mean my buddies, they say this coppersmith repeats anything like a parrot. (Laughs-calmly) first, last he repeats your words and then says what he wants! You know…

Naseri-I guess.

Maryam-Why you so upset!

Naseri-…

Maryam-Should I be worried too?

Naseri-No!

I see you have good friends. Maybe my worry is unfounded. Maybe not, It’s definitely unfounded!

Naseri-is he trying to betray me!

Maryam-What?

Naseri-‘Anousha’, wants to sell me.

Maryam-From where do you say this?

Naseri-What did you say people say about me?

Maryam-…Eh…”Palm reading” and you know this? But you didn’t see the palm of his hand!

Naseri-I sad so, this is not the name for it.

Maryam-It’s a God given power. Yes. (pause-worried) He really is gonna betray you?

Naseri-Yup!(changes his tone noticeably) you said ‘Spence Tracy’ and ‘Catherine Hipborne) No?

Maryam-Huh?...Yes. Your mood reminds me of ‘Henry Fonda’, in ‘My dear Clementine’!

Naseri-It’s not late!

Maryam-You’re right. Let’s go.

(They leave together. The light of cinema ‘Moulin Rouge’ blinks from far away.)

(An old Rabbi is sitting outside the store on a stool.)

Rabbi-It doesn’t matter who I am. This youngster was a magician who could deceive the common people. What journalist have you known that wouldn’t? They all think they are somebody! They have to say something! Against the tide that people say or are living by. They say there hasn’t been a Saturday without ceremony. That’s enough?! Huh? It’s enough? They’re always after the girls in the neighbourhood, always after girls that are rootless. After youth! He was supposed to show us the way? Everyone knows he had an affair with ‘Maryam’. The same ‘Maryam Majd’ you mentioned. She had bad reputation. And this is the person who is gonna lead me?! I showed the way for all my life!Huh! Women are incapable and without intellect. They get attracted and fall in love fast! If women weren’t this stupid, the name of this ‘Naseri’ wouldn’t become so famous. They were from a lower class and ‘Naseri’ showed them the way. With all that quality...he was a female killer…with no shame! He took the small brains of women and shaped them like you would mould a clay pitcher.

He gathered a few worthless goons and started talking of independence, freedom, power, and roots. All lies. All deceptions! Some spineless guy who came out of the trash can of this neighbourhood and thought he is like me and my colleagues,

a man of religion! I hated him. I still hate him! The fact that he is strange and his words have influence doesn’t matter. Let me be frank, it was his boldness that made him important. The fact that he allowed himself to tell people what they should do, even important ones…like he is a prophet! Huh! I also heard this from women’s tongues. The more stupid ones said he could be the king of Jews of this time!(laughs-with anger and hatred) Wow! Wow! He deserved it sir! He deserved it! He had killed a human, did he not deserve punishment? I confirm his punishment. I! Yes I! Go say the rabbi confirmed it. I will sir! ‘Naseri’ had to be punished. God will abide the promise he gave to the Jews. He will adapt to the humans. Yes! But is it right that they be used by every and anyone especially a person who all doubt him being a bastard? You tell me?...

All this crap you have to let go sir! I don’t know if he is alive or had escaped and whatever! He was executed. These friends of his took away his body to start a new conspiracy. It is probable that his newspaper friends are involved. This ‘MohamadMasoud’ should be beaten up so he talks. I think he knows. Yes. We can ask him where the body is! God guide us down the right path!

(Store is closed and stool empty. The sound of gunfire is heard from far away. The light of cinema ‘Moulin Rouge’ is off. ‘Ferdows’ and ‘Anousha’ enter scared and get surprised of the closed shop.)

Ferdows-Is it true?

Anoush-I knew it.

Ferdows-Don’t hurry!

Anousha-Not hurry? Why is it closed? This hour!

Ferdows-I hope he is allright!

Anousha-You think he is hurt?

Ferdows-They can arrest him easily. Do you know how many people in that hotel where guarding ‘Sholeimon’?

Anousha-You haven’t heard anything?

Ferdows-Not about him!

Anousha-Not about him! Me the same!

Ferdows-God help us!

Anousha-God help us! Do something!

Ferdows-What do you want me to do? Go inside the hotel and ask for him? The same man who killed your ‘Sholeimon’! What do you think will happen?

Anousha-What’sgonna happen? Oh God what should we do?

Ferdows-It’s Chaos! But I’m sure he hasn’t been arrested! If they had arrested him, it would be on the tongues that they had arrested ‘Sholeimon’s’ killer!

(Suddenly ‘Eghdami’ running and pale enters. Deals with the two. For a moment looks sharply at them. Tries to show calm.)

Eghdami-Eh…excuse me..have you guys been here a while?

Ferdows-No No! Not a lot!..Why?

Eghdami-I had to see the carpenter.

Anousha-You want the carpenter? Which carpenter?!

Eghdami-(Hesitates for a moment.) It doesn’t matter.

(‘Eghdami’ wants to exit that ‘Naseri’ enters)

Eghdami-(Noticeably happy jumps towards him) Thank God! You are OK!

Naseri-Hi Mr. ‘Eghdami’! What a surprise?!

Anousha-Where where you?

Ferdows-We were looking for you everywhere.

Naseri-What has happened?

Ferdows-(Points to ‘Anousha’ so he would be quiet infront of ‘Eghdami) The gentleman wanted to see you.

Anousha-Yes. He wanted to see you.

Eghdami-Would you come with me?

Naseri-Where?

Eghdami-It is not safe for you here young man!

Naseri-Why?!

Eghdami-(pointing to those two) Where can we talk together?

Naseri-These are my close friends Mr. ‘Eghdami’!

Eghdami-I think they are after you.

Naseri-After me?

Eghdami-Are you joking with me?

Naseri-No!

(‘Anousha’ and Ferdows’ look at each other)

Eghdami-You mean…it wasn’t you?

Naseri-What? Has..anything happened to ‘Sholeimon’?

Eghdami-Yes. Half an hour ago! You don’t know?

Anousha-You don’t know?

Naseri-They killed him?!

Ferdows-You didn’t do it?

Naseri-When my close friends ask me these questions I feel sorry for myself.

Eghdami-What about your people?

Naseri-(Pointing to ‘Anousha’ and ‘Ferdows’) These two? And ten others that look like these two?

Eghdami-Wow!

Naseri-Does Mr. ‘Masoud’ know?

Eghdami-Yes. We all heard it was you who did it!

Anousha-It was you. We heard it too.

Naseri-Crap that no one listens to!

Eghdami-Actually we all believed it. Especially me!

Naseri-I never wanted anyone’s death. Even ‘Sholeimon’!

Eghdami-In any case we have to go.

Naseri-Why?

Anousha-Where were you?

Naseri-I had to get a report and then I went to cinema. In the middle of the way, parts broke down and we were delayed. I came. The film made me curious. ‘Dark Pathway’ (to ‘Eghdami’) Have you seen?

Eghdami-It’s not the time for this.

Naseri-For the purpose of writing a critique in the paper. As far as I saw, it was the point of view of the person…

Eghdami-(shocked, cuts him off) Let’s get out of here! I don’t smell the best scent.

Naseri-…

Eghdami-If you disn’t do this or we…didn’t, but this is what rumours say, so it has to be a frame from the Jews themselves.

Naseri-…

Eghdami-It might have been an internal feud but they blamed it on you and bye bye!

Anousha-Oh!

Ferdows-(To ‘Anousha’) Go over there and be careful! I will look out from this side!

(They exit from two sides)

Eghdami-Don’t be stupid young man! Let’s go! It is against your logic to wait here!

Naseri-Where shall I go?

Eghdami-Anywhere! I’ll do something. Let’s go!

Naseri-If it’s the way you’re describing it, it won’t do any good. Wherever I go, they’ll catch me.

Eghdami-Don’t say this! Your friends will help you.

Naseri-These?

Eghdami-They won’t?!

Naseri-(pause-stare) The same guy who is gonna return, will betray me!

(‘Anousha’ returns! ‘Eghdami’ stares at him with shock)

Anousha-There’s nothing out there. Are we not going?

(‘Naseri’ points to him with his hand to leave)

Eghdami-This?!

Naseri-Yup!

Eghdami-You are sure?!

Naseri-Yes.

Eghdami-And you’re doing nothing?!!

Naseri-And the other one will deny friendship with me before questioning.

(‘Ferdows’ returns from the other way, stands for a moment. ‘Eghdami’ looks at him surprised)

Ferdows-Nothing this side, but we better hurry.

(‘Naseri’ points to him with his hand to leave)

Eghdami-Look young man! I have heard about you. A lot. I know this is part of your act; but the brain in my head says we have to go. You have to be silent for a while so everything turns down.

Naseri-Whatever is gonna happen will eventually.

Eghdami-(Angry)You know what a dirty game they have played, you shouldn’t just stay. Let’s go. I will help you. With even the boys at the paper. This is good that ‘Sholeimon’ has died but it’s bad that they did it themselves! Because they are after a dirtier game now; with a dirtier Jew! It shows ‘Sholeimon’ wasn’t the boss. He was a branch of the mob. Things are worse. Do you not hear the sound of bullets and grenades?

(‘Anousha’ enters all frustrated)

Anousha-Police! Police! Guards! They’ve come! Hurry ‘Naseri’! Hurry!

Eghdami-(Loud-angry) Let’s go!

Naseri-Where?

Eghdami-For now my house! Run!

(‘Eghgdami’ and ‘Naseri’ exit hastily. ‘Anousha’ also wants to get out when ‘YousefShavel’ with the bold man and two officers enter. Points to the shop. The police investigate the closed doors of the shop and its surroundings. ‘Anousha’ loses his color and stares at them. At the same time ‘Ferdows’ enters. Doesn’t expect to see the guys around the shop. Shocked stands where he is. The bold man takes a step towards him. The officer looks at the bold man and him and gets curious at “Ferdows’s” mood. Goes toward him.)

Officer 1-Hey you!

Ferdows-(Nervous) Me?

Officer 1-this youngster…that works in this carpentry,…

Ferdows-Yes?

Officer 1-You know him?

Ferdows-Me?!

Yousef-His name is ‘Naseri’. He is a journalist as well! (Pause) Also a murderer!

(The bold man shakes his head)

Ferdows-No not me! I was…Huh..just passing by.

Officer 2-Get lost!

(‘Ferdows’ hurriedly runs away. The second officer goes toward ‘Anousha’)

Officer 2-What about you, you worthless goon?

Anousha-Worthless?!

Officer 2-You know him? You know where he is?

Anousha- Me?

Officer 1-Answer!

Yousef-If you know and tell us,…(puts his hand in pocket) Ten…twenty…or thirty tooman I’ll give you.

Anousha-Now..left…with a guy named ‘Eghdami’ that works in ‘Today’s Man’ newspaper. He went towards his house! ‘Eghdami’s’ house!

(Everyone look at him surprised. Point at each other in silence and exit. ‘Yousef’ stands at the exit. Returns. Puts his hand in hispocket and gives ‘Anousha’ thirty tooman. Smiles and leaves.

‘Anousha’ remains in the scene. Looks at his hand full of money. It’s like he doesn’t believe what he has in his hands and the thing he did leaves him like a nightmare. Suddenly drops the money and restless and nervous and angry,

exits running. At the same time ‘Maryam’ enters. Has a flower in her hand. Goes toward the shop. A sound of a single shot makes her shocked but comes to her senses fast and investigates the closed door of the shop. Looks at her watch. Another single shot from closer by makes her more worried. Looks towards cinema ‘Moolin Rouge’ with its dim lights.Stands a bit.Drops the flower. From far away the sound of bullets can be hears.)

(The scene is dim. There are five stools at a certain distance from each other with a person on each. Periodically, they speak with a more focused light. Towards the audience.)

Ferdows-from the beginning that the police came to the scene, it was sure that he would be convicted. ‘YousefShavel’ was behind the frame. (Almost cries) it was declared. We accused ‘Anousha’ of treachery but were all traitors. We all betrayed. Because we were scared. All of us! I said all of this in the initial police report. They spilled his blood for nothing. I swear to all that is holy, that “Sholeimon’s” murder wasn’t his doing. (Swallows his tears). I still believe that he still alive someway! Can a body be lost?! If I find him one day, I will drop to his feet; I will clean his body with all my tears. He has to forgive me! Everyone has to forgive me! ‘Anousha’ couldn’t bear it. His treachery I mean. They found him in his house hung. He committed suicide. But me…will wait until I see him.

Yahya-Sometimes I regret letting a Jew into ‘Today’s Man’. Somehow I think I brought him in politics. Maybe if he hadn’t entered it, he would be alive….Or if he is alive he would be making wooden chests. Judging what is right and wrong is not always easy. I was with him from childhood. I knew him well. He is clean. I know. In the police they say we stole the body but we know we didn’t do it. If you don’t want to believe us don’t! We are not innocent but we have done our bad and told our lies. It is not time for a lie now. This is not the place for it. It’s time for prayer! So he would be OK wherever he is. Healthy. So he would return. His pen still makes miracles. I still feel him around me.

Rabbi- I told you! Again? Except murder, propagating deviant beliefs using communities and media! It should be declared the rabbi confirmed this! Go say the rabbi confirmed! I will! Yes. I will! Even in our holiday, in Sunday the government gave us the choice of changing his execution to infinite confinement out of respect for a great man. You make the choice. We gave the people the right to choose. They chose the other. People’s eyes are open! They know who’s presence is dangerous for society’s health!

I still believe this scandal about no corpse should be investigated! They will talk under torture! Bring them! Bring!

Mother-I don’t know if you have had extreme pain. Pain of losing a child is different. It goes deep. I know I have become mirror of pain in this situation; but I have become alone again. No place to go; new place; new looks; old years. No one to help! With many tablets and medicine , some two a day, some half a day, all misery! I don’t know what’s going on. My hands don’t belong to me anymore. I kept this child. with hardship. In these strange days! I don’t even feel the pain anymore. Don’t scold me! I saw my son swinging between land and sky! (Cries) Hanging from a rope! (Pause-cries) Mr. ‘Mosavat’ came to me saying you are not the only one who became alone, I am alone too, I said you should be alive but you’re dead; You’re not even a mother! You mean you can bear it. What should I say? I’m a mother! I don’t have anyone. All I have is people’s rumours! God will judge! One of his friends! His name is Yahya; the same guy who worked in the newspaper, He came and said mother, they say he’s alive! His body isn’t there. This means he is alive! (Almost cries) this is good even! For a mother even this is good. I will take hundred years of loneliness but tell me he is alive! Let me think he is alive! This is all right for me! It’s OK!

Maryam-(Long pause) he came to me last night in a bad state! He was restless. It was because of that. If you only knew how much I loved him. I don’t think we can ever go to cinema! The last one was “Dark Pathway” that…I saw and later I went to see ‘Naseri’ and found out they had arrested him. At the film ‘Sea of Grass’ I was hurt, so this time I wanted to see if it was a good movie, then we could go together. I see films more than once anyway! Well the second time I wanted to go with him…It didn’t happen….’Dark Pathway’ was a strange film! Until the half of the film the artist was positioned instead of the camera! We didn’t see hisface! Then we saw it was ‘Humphrey Buggart’ and still loved ‘LuarenBakal’! …Would I see him again and love him again? He would look at me with his smile and say a sentence for every ten sentence of mine? I love him. As much as cinema. Even more! He was the only man who didn’t see me as the same ‘Maryam Majd’ of the neighbourhood. He was the only man that next to him I thought of nothing except my heart. Don’t laugh at me sir! Don’t laugh, but I never knew his name. Never! Everyone called him ‘Naseri’ in the neighbourhood. Even his friends! Yes I loved him but.. I didn’t know his first name. Today that I remembered this issue, I went to the paper ‘Today’s Man’ to find his first name. Huh! At the end of his articles it says ‘A. Naseri’! I assume even he didn’t want me to know!

The fact that I can still talk to you is not because of your authority and starts. It’s because eI have hope. Hope is more important for a lover more than anything! Especially if you are a women! I heard his body is not there. I would take on any pain he has to endure, what do you know? Maybe he didn’t die by the hanging!

(Pause) what about you sir? You don’t know his first name? ‘A. Naseri’! I just know this much. No?...You don’t know or won’t tell?..I really thought a lot. Yes. ‘Christ’…I’m not saying this is his name but it really is befitting! Very!

(The scene darkens. In the dark the blinking light of ‘Moulin Rouge’ cinema is on and is the only light seen on the scene)

AyoubAghakhani

Summer, 89