

**The Extras: A Thriller
Manufacturing Terror on the Stage**

by

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ABSTRACT

**THE EXTRAS: A THRILLER
MANUFACTURING TERROR ON THE STAGE**

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An American film company is shooting a thriller about the ‘war on terror’ with their set located in Toronto. When the American actors fail to show, the Canadian background performers from are asked to step up and perform their roles. Chaos, trickery, and confusion ensue when two of the background performers, one an extremist and the other a desperate actor, have two separate agendas that could potentially wreak havoc on set. *The Extras* is a play which explores the world and consequences of typecasting Muslims in mainstream news and pop-culture. The thesis investigates how the play produces meaning with regards to manufacturing a fearful sight of Muslims, within a socio-political, cultural, and performative context. In addition, the supplementary essay will also provide insight into the writing process and explore the role of theatre as a site of negotiation and dialogue for those who are considered outcasts in society.

To Fellow Outcasts and Extras

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CHAPTER I, THE PLAY

The Extras: A Thriller

Characters:

Issa- An Iraqi Kurd, has been living in Canada for two years.

Iman- An Iranian-Canadian. Born in Iran, grew up in North York.

Zain- Born in Brampton to Egyptian parents.

Din “Dino” Muhammad- Born in Scarborough, residing in Brampton, parents from Bangladesh.

Malek- Ethnicity unknown. A Canadian citizen who spent years in Syria, Turkey, and Europe.

The Director- 61

June- In charge of wardrobe, 31

Patrick- Assistant Director, 46

Silent Gary- Light and Sound Technician. 65

Paul- An Actor, 57

Haadiya- An Actress, 30

Location: Toronto

Time: Present

The Initiation

The stage is dark, dominated by a film set, with a “backstage” wardrobe/break room at a corner. A table with a coffee brewer, apples, and sheets of paper on top, a chair or a box. A clothing rack. The extras, excluding Malek walk on and lineup centre stage facing the audience with hands behind their backs. Issa looks like a happy hipster leftist militant. Dino is wearing shorts, slippers, and has headphones on. Zain’s got Timberlands on in the classic camel colour. Iman has a backpack. They all have beards. A laser beam takes turns going across each of their faces. The Director’s voice comes on.

The Director: Gare, light them up.

[A strong sound of a camera flash. Lights go on.]

The Director: To your right. *[The Extras turn to their right].* More mechanical! *[The Extras do so.]* Good. *[Camera click/flash.]* To the left. *[Extras turn to their left.]* Good. *[Camera flash/click. The lights don’t come back on. Sudden sounds of loud machine guns and flashes makes The Extras go in different stress positions. The Director demands a tableau.]*

The Director: Oh God! oh God. Hold it— Hold it —- Gare?!

[A camera flash goes off.]

The Director: Did you get a good one? *[pause.]* Good. Told you it would work on them. Patrick set them up.

Patrick the AD *[over the PA]*: Ok Listen here extras. It’ gonna be a long day, be nice, stay quiet, treat yourselves to some coffee and apples. Your job here requires your bodily presence to be used at our discretions. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to leave without pay. I strongly suggest you don’t leave your corner unless you are told to. Consider yourselves officially “On Call”. This is just in case we decide to use you in any shape, way, or form. Understood?

[The Extras, a bit shaken, look at one another. They nod.]

Issa: Understood.

Patrick: Any questions? *[short pause.]* Good. Wardrobe and make-up— one at a time.

[Transition into wardrobe with Din “Dino” Muhammad and June, the wardrobe designer with a measuring tape around her neck. A table, and a clothing rack.]

June: Ok and your name is Din...

Dino: Dino! You can just call me Dino. And yours?

June: June. Can you sign in here please? *[pointing to a sheet on the table.]*

Dino: Oh sure thing, sure thing. Gemini?

June: No. People always ask me that. *[Looking through the rack.]* Here's the jacket. *[Passes it to Dino.]*

Dino: I guess you don't have to be born in June to be named June.

June: *[Finds pants and an undershirt. Passes them to Dino.]* Exactly. It's just another name without a reason. Ok try them on while I check in the person behind you. *[Dino goes behind the curtain.]*
Ok next.

[Zain walks in. He's tall and athletic, with a new generation of hip hop flavour.]

June: Your name?

Zain: Zain. *[smiles.]* And yours?

June: June. Nice to meet you.

Zain: Nice to meet you as well. *[pause.]* I don't really do this.

June: What?

Zain: Oh nothing. just that...I don't *actually* do this thing for a living.

June: Uhm—

Zain *[Braggadociously]*: I'm in marketing—ideation.

June: Can you sign in on that sheet please?

Zain: Here? *[pointing to the sheet, she nods]* Yeah sure.

June: 44? 46? *[walks over with the measuring tape.]:* Sorry just one second, do you mind? *[She starts to measure his torso.]*

Zain: That's fine. That's fine. Take your time.

June: Yup— 46. *[Goes to the clothing rack and picks out the jacket.]*

Zain: So, you a Gemini?

June *[hesitates.]*: Yeah.

Zain: I knew it! Can smell a gemini from miles away.

[Dino walks out from behind the curtain in military attire. June surveys him. He looks at Zain.]

Dino *[subtle]*: Sup bro?

Zain *[more subtle]* : Sup?

June: Good. *[To Zain.]* Can you try them on right in there please? *[Zain goes behind the curtain. June hands Dino empty hangers for his clothes.]*

Dino: June approved?

June: June approved. Just don't forget to take a headband with you.

Dino: *[handing the hangers back.]* I won't. *[June hangs the clothes.]*. Thanks!

June: *[Dino's starts to walk off.]* Dino?

Dino: Yup!

June: Your headband.

Dino: Oh that's right. *[Walks back with swagger and takes the headband.]*

Dino: Cool, cool. So...that's it? *[As if he wants the conversation to carry on]*

June: That's it.

Dino: Make up?

June *[hesitates.]*: You look fine. I don't think you'll be needing any today. You can go to the front door to collect your voucher.

Dino: Ok. Nice meeting you I guess. *[Dino walks off.]*

June: Oh a pleasure! Ok. Next person.

[Iman walks in dressed casually, in jeans and a backpack.]

June: Ok. Eyemen?

Iman: Iman.

June: Oh gosh, sorry about that...

Iman: It's fine. Happens all the time.

June: Ok. Iman...*[looking through the rack.]* Iman, Iman, Oh, can you just sign in there please?

Iman: Sure thing.

[beat.]

June: My name's June by the way.

Iman: June. The month I immigrated to Canada.

June: Oh was it? *[Finds a jacket and hands it over to Iman.]* Can you hold this please?

Iman: Yup. June 23rd, 1999.

June: Oh so you've been here quite a while. *[Passes him a giant baggy formal ugly dark green pants.]* Where you from?

Iman: *[Reluctantly checking out the pants.]* Iran.

June: *[Hands over a shirt.]* Ok try them on. *[Iman walks in on Zain changing.]*

Zain: YO!

Iman *[jumps out]*: My bad.

June: Oh gosh that's my fault. I completely forgot.

Iman: Yeah you kind of owe me for that one. *[June pretends to laugh. Iman feels the shirt he's given.]* The material's kinda rough on this shirt don't you think?

June *[appearing concerned, feels out the shirt]*: Oh is that so?

Iman: No?

June: Well try it on and if it's too much we'll figure something out. *[Goes to the rack and takes an undershirt out.]* You can also try this if you want.

Iman *[hesitates]*: The shirt's fine. The collar's too open on that one. Don't want the camera to see all the chest hair.

June: Hey...they might actually like it...scruff makes you look more authentic.

Iman: The shirt's fine.

[beat. Zain walks out. June surveys him. He ignores Iman.]

June: Well that took a while.

Zain: Ran into some problems with the boots.

June: *[To Iman,]* Go ahead. *[Iman walks into the curtain]* Well you look great. You're good to go.

Zain: Make up?

June: Uhm...you're good for now. We'll call you if need be.

Zain: Aigh't.

June: *[Passes him the headband.]* Don't forget to put your headband on before going on set. You can go to the front door for your voucher.

Zain: Gemini June. See you on the other side.

June: Yup! bye for now. *[Zain leaves.] [June lets out a sigh of relief]* Jesus—it's gonna be a long one. *[beat.]* Next!

[Issa walk in.]

June: Hi, and you are?

Issa: Issa.

June: Great. Oh...*[surveys him]* wow. what you're wearing looks just ok. Love the pants, boots, and the jacket. Maybe something under your jacket—just in case. Can you sign in on that sheet please?

Issa *[pleasant]*: Sure.

June: Here [*shuffling through the rack and finding a shirt*]...try this shirt on. And let me see if I can find the headband.

[*Issa grabs it and walks into the curtain where Iman is changing.*]

Iman [*in shock*]. Yallah! How you doin' brother?

Issa: [*Closes the curtain.*] I'm so sorry man.

June: My goodness, totally my fault. I'm sorry Iman. Jesus, what is wrong with me today?

Iman: That was somehow expected!

[*Iman walks out wearing the outfit.*]

Iman: You can't be serious.

June: You know what? I kinda like it actually. You're like this—academic young intellectual turned revolutionary type. We'll keep it. Let me just go get the camera and come back so I don't forget this one. [*Turns to Issa*]: And you can go change. [*She walks off.*]

Issa: I'm sorry about that man. My name's Issa¹.

Iman: Iman.² So you're Jesus.

Issa: Yeah and you are faith.

Iman: Ain't that somethin'? You Christian?

Issa: Born Muslim. You?

Iman: Just two Muslims named faith and Jesus playing terrorists in a Hollywood film.

Issa: Ironic huh?

[*They share a light laugh. Issa starts changing the shirt on stage.*]

¹ Issa is the Arabic name for Jesus. A common name throughout the Middle East.

² Iman is a common Arabic name used throughout the Middle East. Translates into "Faith".

Issa [*offstage*]: Irani?

Iman: Yeah. You?

Issa: Kurdish.

Iman: Turkey?

Issa: Iraq. I lived in Turkey too. Did business there.

Iman: Which part?

Issa: Erbil. You know it?

Iman: Obviously heard the name, I know they got oil.

Issa: Oh lots of it, and then I went to Ankara and then Istanbul in Turkey, went to Munich and here I am.

Iman: Long journey.

Issa: Istanbul's my favourite place on earth.

Iman: Me too man. Went there to see my brother there a couple years ago. Drank the week away in beers, fish, and shopping around Taksim.

Issa: Yeah. That's where all the tourists go. I was on the Asian side, but on the weekends we'd usually cross the Bosphorus Bridge and party on the West side. You know Napoleon what he says about Istanbul? [*June re-enters.*] If the earth were a single state, Istanbul would be its capital.

Iman: I honestly dig that. You know what else Napoleon said? "You can't lead a battle if you think you look silly on a horse."

Issa: I heard a urologist bought his dried up foreskin for an insane amount of cash, just recently. Or maybe he sold it.

Iman: Most likely the seller and buyer were both urologists.

June: Ok then. [*To Iman*] And I'll just have you stand there to take your picture if you don't mind. [*Iman gets in position.*]

Issa: You heard about the bombing?

Iman: which one?

[camera click.]

Issa: 36 people in a theatre hall.

June: Oh my god that's terrible. *[Another click.]* Now turn the other way. *[Another click.]*

Iman: No place hurts me more than Istanbul. *[To June.]* Alright I have to ask you an honest question about this costume. *[June hands over an empty hanger to Iman.]*

June: I'm listening.

Iman *[arranging his clothes]*: Do you really think that the director would hand me a rifle so I can be more...in the scene? I have a feeling I don't look violent enough.

June: Sure, but that's ultimately his choice. Plus we already have those big guardy types. You might actually stand out for the better. They usually pick the odd ones out.

Iman: If you say so. *[Hands back the hanger.]*

Issa: Remember Napoleon!

Iman *[Sarcastically]*: Thank you June. *[Issa walks in from behind the curtains.]* Pleasure meeting you brother.

Issa: Same here habibi. *[The shake hands]*

June: Both of you...you're good to go. *[pause.]* Your headbands! *[Passes it to them.]* You can take care of your vouchers at the front door. I'll take that. *[Pointing to the shirt in his hand.]*

Iman: Make up?

June: Uhm...we'll let you know when the time's right.

Issa: Alright. *[Iman and Issa walk towards the exit and offer the other to precede through.]*

Iman: After you.

Issa: No, after you.

Iman: Impossible, after you.

Issa: No way akhawi³ after you.

Iman: Ok we'll go out at the same time then.

Issa: Fine. *[They walk out.]*

June *[in wonderment]*: Hm. *[She starts to tidy up. Patrick the AD's voice comes on.]*

Patrick: Hey June, did the actor for the first scene check in with you?

June: No, not with me.

Patrick: Christ. Alright...the extras over with?

June: Yup. All suited up for war.

Patrick: All 5?

June: uh— there were only 4.

Patrick: You sure?

June: Positive.

Patrick: Fuck. As if a Monday wasn't bad enough. Sigh.

June: Tell me about it.

Patrick: Alright, keep in touch.

[Beat. Malek suddenly walks in wearing a dishdasha⁴, a casio watch, worn out running shoes, and a backpack. He seems lost.]

June: Are you Malik?

Malek: Malek.

June: All the others are ready to go. We better hurry. *[pause. surveys him.]* Ok. Sign in there please.

³ brother/comrade in Arabic.

⁴ A Thawb. A long one piece garment worn by men.

Malek: Do you have a pencil?

June: Pen's right there. *[She looks through the rack and assembles something together. He stands idle. She passes him the clothes.]* You can try them on behind the curtains. *[He walks into the curtains. June calls on Patrick by pressing a button on the side.]*

June *[whispering]*: Patrick your last extra's here.

Patrick *[whispering through the PA]*: The guy with the dress?

June: Yeah.

Patrick: aw jes— I was hoping you wouldn't say that. Alright, alright— I'll have a talk with him or somethin'. We still got some time. Did the principle for the next scene show?

June: No.

Patrick: Ok then. I'm smoking.

The Director: Ugh! Smoking. Hi June!

June: Hey!

The Director: Can you tell Pat here to go quitsies on the stinkin' death stick? It really puts a hamper on how I view him.

Patrick: I'm quitting. Right after this show.

June: Uhu.

The Director: This is the last time I'm coming out with you. From now on, you smoke alone all by yourself beside the street like a bum.

Patrick: That's very gracious of you.

June: Wait, guys, don't leave yet. He's gonna be done soon.

Patrick *[moaning]*: Fine.

The Director: Who's gonna be done soon?

Patrick: A late extra.

[Malek walks out. June surveys him.]

June: Ok. good. Here's a headband. Don't forget to put it on if they ask for you on set. *[Hands him an empty hanger for his clothes.]*

Malek: That's fine. I can put it in my bag.

June: Ok. You can go to the front door to take care of your voucher.

Malek: Where is the bathroom?

June *[Hesitates.]*: The one here is out of service actually. You mind asking front desk for one?

Malek: Sure. Thanks. *[exits.]*

[Black out for a moment. Patrick's voice comes on.]

Patrick: Extras on set please. Extras on set.

[The extras in military attire move centre stage and form a straight horizontal line facing the audience. Voice of the director comes on.]

Director: Gare, Gary...light 'em up.

[A strong sound of a camera flash. Lights go on.]

The Director: Your headbands. *[They put their headbands on.]* To your right. *[The Extras turn to their right].* More mechanical! *[The Extras do so.]* Good. *[Camera click/flash.]* To the left. *[Extras turn to their left.]* Good. *[Camera flash/click.]*

Patrick: Off you go.

exeunt.

The Corner

[The extras are bundled up in the corner.]

Iman: What now?

Dino: We wait.

[Zain goes over to the table and pours a coffee. Issa casually sits on the floor. Iman exits. Malek and Dino are left to vie for the chair.]

Dino: Go for it man.

Malek: Are you sure?

Dino: Positive.

Malek: Thank you. *[He sits.]*

Dino *[reaches his hand out]*: My name's Dino.

Malek: Malek. *[Shakes his hand.]*

Dino: I've never seen you around before. This' your first time?

Malek *[uncomfortable]*: Yeah.

Dino: You'll get used to it really fast *[going over to the table to pour coffee]*. 'Cuz there's really nothing to do. That's the hardest part of this job—doing nothing. Coffee?

Malek: No—I'm fine thank you.

Zain: I hear that. *[To Dino]*. I've seen you somewhere else bro! You extra'd for this company before?

Dino *[remembers]*: Yeah! that's exactly what I thought when we were doin' wardrobe. "God of Kings". You were on that during the winter?

Zain: God of Kings! Exactly. Oh man that was a wicked set.

Dino: Yeah good times, expensive production—the entire day, kept like 40 of us just hangin' around doing nothing—just in case.

Zain: Just in case. That should be the job title on craigslist. Bearded Middle Eastern looking men wanted on set for an American film, “just in case”.

[Dino and Issa laugh.]

Malek: I was told we weren’t allowed to leave.

Zain: What?

Malek: The other guy. He just left. I was told we weren’t allowed to leave.

Zain: Fuck that. You gon’ sit here and listen to their bullshit? What you gotta take a piss or sumthin’?

[Iman walks in.]

Dino: Yo...where’s the washroom?

Iman *[pointing at the exit]*: Couple lefts down.

Dino *[Dino looks at Malek.]*: That’s for you. *[Malek is about to leave.]*

Issa: Allah yahmiki.⁵ *[Malek walks off without responding. Iman greets the others.]*

Iman: Iman.

Dino: Dino.

Iman *[to Zain]*: Iman.

Zain: Zain.

Iman *[to Issa]*: We’ve met. *[beat.]*. Coffee! Fuel for the poor. *[goes over and pours some. Offers to Issa]* Coffee?

⁵ “May God protect you”- a common endearing phrase used by Issa in witty way.

Issa: Motushaker.⁶

Iman: Tahta' amrika.⁷ [*Iman pours the coffees and goes and sits beside Issa on the floor. Dino sits on the chair.*]

Issa: You speak Arabic?

Iman: Not really. Just know some of the basics.

Dino: Where you from?

Iman: What, my background?

Dino: Yeah.

Iman: Persian. You?

Dino: Parents are from Bangladesh. But I was born here. From Brampton.

Zain: You mean Bramladesh?

Dino [*laughs.*]: How you' know that?

Zain: Brampton Bucks baby.

Dino: Oh shit! You went to Centennial?

Zain: Yeah, I grew up in Brampton.

Dino: Centennial...so you heard the stories?

⁶ Mutašakkir- "I am thankful". Used throughout the Middle East, the Turkish spelling used implies Issa says it in a Turkish accent.

⁷ Tahta 'amrika- An endearing way of saying "you're welcome" in Arabic. Literal translation: "at your disposal".

Zain: They're there. Seen 'em wit my own two eyes.

Issa: What? What's so special about this Centennial?

Dino: It's a high school in Brampton. There was a shooting—what like 20-30 years ago? Some whack job takes a gun to school and starts popping off rounds.

[Malek re-enters. He sees his spot is taken by Dino. He stands idle by the door, excluded from the conversation.]

Zain: Forty years ago—this schizo takes a rifle to school, loads it in the washroom, *[pretending to hold a rifle, he moves it around slowly and points to Malek. Malek watches him silently. Zain moves the pretend rifle just a tad bit away from Malek's head.]* Boom. Kills a boy. Starts going crazy with the trigger. *[pretends to reload and fire.]* schlikt schlikt boom! schlikt schlikt boom! Ends up shooting a bunch o' people, kills the art teacher.

Iman *[in shock]*: In Brampton?

Zain: In Brampton.

Issa: And you saw the ghost of who?

Zain: Ain't just me. Ask anyone. You'd hear screams and thumps, as if there's a deadly chase goin' on in the hallways—you'd wanna go take a piss during gym class at the basement, you wouldn't even make it to the washroom.

Issa: Where's Brampton?

Zain: How long you been' here brah?

Issa: Less than 2 years.

Dino: It's a small city just outside of Toronto.

Iman: An arts teacher...

Zain: They say all the sounds are the ghosts of the gun-boy chasing the teacher and a student running through the corridors.

Dino: Fucked up.

Iman: Must have really hated painting or something.

Issa: I didn't know Canada had school shootings. I thought it's only reserved for the States.

Zain: That's cuz you ain't been here long cuz'.

Dino: I mean, we really don't if you think about it.

Zain: Shootings all over the place. Little Italy, Scar, Little Portugal, Little Korea, you want me to keep listing them names?

Dino: There's shootings and there's shootings. Those are gangs and whatnot, no one would just barge in a school and start shooting randoms. When was the last time you heard that?

Zain: The guy on Parliament hill! Killed the RCMP.

Dino: He was a terrorist though.

Zain: And?

Dino: It's not like the States that's all I'm saying.

Iman: Is it just me or does the coffee taste like ass?

Zain: Hey, at least they got coffee.

[Issa takes the headband off his head and wraps it around his arm.]

Iman: What's that a Pashmerga thing you got going?

Issa: Hah! Why not huh?

Zain: It's more commie looking.

Dino: That's true. I like it. As a matter of fact, don't mind if I do. *[Dino wraps the headband around his arm.]* Huh?

Iman: Fuck it. Why not. *[Wraps it around his arm.]*

Dino: Sick.

[The set lights come on. The laser pointer jumps on Zain's face.]

Patrick *[Like a military commander]*: You. *[Zain pointing at himself.]* Stand up straight. *[Zain stands straight. A rifle is handed to him.]*⁸ On set. *[The laser is pointed at Dino's face.]* You. On guard! *[Dino stands on guard. A gun is handed to him.]* On set. *[pointing at Issa]* You. Stand Up! *[Issa stands.]* Erect!

Issa *[whispering to Iman]*: What did he say?

Iman *[anxiously]*: Just stand up straight. *[Issa does so.]*

Director: Give him a handgun. Not a rifle. *[A handgun is thrown at him from the front. Issa fumbles the handgun.]* Butterfingers. *[Issa collects himself]* I like this guy. Give me an angry face! *[Issa attempts an awkward angry face. It's more like a weird smile.]* Maybe not. Let go of your anger. *[Issa relaxes.]* On set with you.

[The laser disappears. A moment passes. Iman wonders around. Malek sits on the chair.]

Iman *[in disbelief]*: Hey what about me? You forgot about me. *[Iman scrambles around, finds the button.]* Hey asshole *[presses the button and speaks into it changing his tone]*, hey sorry to bother but did you also want us to go on set?

Patrick *[Measured and authoritative]*: Who told you to press that button?

⁸ perhaps from a hand behind the curtain, or thrown at him from the front.

Iman *[looking up the projector's room]*: It says press, here written on top of it.

Patrick: Consider this your last chance extra #4. One more disruption on set because of you and you won't be extra #4 anymore.

Iman: Fine. Can I try on some new pants?

Patrick: Excuse me?

Iman *[with poise]*: You heard me. I want new pants.

Patrick: Extra #4, please collect your belo...*[the laser comes on, pointed at Iman]*

The Director: Wait a minute Pat. *[points the laser in his eyes. Iman flinches.]* Press that button again.

Iman: What?

The Director *[imitating Iman.]*: You heard me. Press that button again, just like you did.

[Iman hesitates. He realizes this could be a test. He puts an effort to press the button as he did.]

The Director: More petrified and show more face. Action! *[Iman does so.]* Good. Keep at it, do it in slow motion. Gary take some pictures. *[Murmuring to Patrick]* He'd be good for the role we got on Thursday. *[Iman complies and starts to mime while Gary's camera clicks and flashes go off. The Director whispers to Patrick]*: Patrick ask him if he's union.

Patrick: Are you—

Iman *[stops the act and walks downstage]*: No I'm non-union.

The Director: Wait you heard that? Jesus—this mute button Gary. *[moans and grunts.]* Wait—what else did you hear?

Iman: Yeah, I heard it. Listen, just because I'm non-union doesn't mean you can lowball me on the pay.

The Director: Scruff!

Iman: What?

The Director [*muttering*]: You didn't hear anything about scruff?

Iman: Scruff?

[The Director and Patrick huff and puff a sigh of relief, and struggle not to laugh over the mic.]

Patrick [*whispering in laughter*]: Caught a break on that one.

The Director [*Collecting himself*]: ah lordy...scruff. That was a good one Pat. That was a good one. [*beat.*] Ok—extra! Can you say Allah Akbar?

Iman: Allah Akbar?

The Director: No. Not like that. Don't question it. Perform it with the truth it's supposed to imply.

Iman: No.

The Director: Oh come on. Just one time.

Iman: No. Pay me.

The Director [*mockingly*]: Abooboo! "No. Pay me." Whatever. Waste of light and sound. We still got time for what's his name to show. [*Laser comes on Iman's forehead*]. No new pants for you curly.

Iman: Fine!

The Director: Bye-bye. [*The mic is turned off.*]

Iman: Fuckin pricks.

[Malek sits still. Considers complimenting Iman on rejecting the offer but is cut off by Iman's fit.]

Iman: With their shitty coffee. It was all her fault *[pointing to the clothing rack.]*, should've never listened to her about the pants. You see what they try to pull on you? *[pause.]* If you're not sharp enough, these sharks will have you lose your integrity for a pair of used pants. *[flipping off the projector's room.]* Fuck you. You hear that? Fuuuuck you.

Malek: You did the right thing. You held your integrity up where it belongs *[pointing towards the sky.]*

Iman: Easy for you to say.

Malek: What you're angry they didn't pick you because you don't look 'terrorist' enough for them? You still get paid without the scar. Consider it a blessing.

Iman: It's your first time on set isn't it? *[Malek's silent.]* Thought so.

Malek: So you're an actor?

Iman: Apparently not.

[beat. Malek's watch goes off. He calmly gets up and walks out. Iman scrambles around a bit until he finds his bag behind the curtain. He reaches inside and grabs a piece of paper. It's Shylock's famous monologue from The Merchant of Venice.]

Iman *[Murmurs the lines as if trying to memorize them]*: "laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies—and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" *[Tries to repeat the lines without looking but he can't. He goes in his bag and grabs a small water bottle with brandy in it. He looks around to make sure the coast is clear, he opens the lid and pours some brandy into the lid. He takes the shot. Takes a moment. Then another one. Malek walks in the middle of the act, with his sleeves*

rolled up and his boots under his arms. They look at one another as if they have accepted to keep each others' secret.]

Malek: Which way's east, do you know?

Iman *[under his lips]*: Fuck if I care.

[Malek hears him but is indifferent. He tries to locate East by remembering his place in the building from the entrance where the street is. He mumbles to himself into position, and with uncertainty faces stage left towards the wall. As he starts to get in the Namaz stance, Iman interrupts him.]

Iman: That's west.

Malek: Are you sure?

Iman: Not sure that's the way you wanna pray towards. *[Iman looks at him and takes a shot out of the lid. Malek changes his position, now facing the film set. He starts to pray, with every Sajda⁹ of Malek,, Iman pours and drinks a shot. Simultaneously, the main action on set commences with the extras standing side by side facing the director.]*

Scene.

Chuckles On Set

[Dino, Zain, and Issa are facing the audience.]

The Director: Very mechanical. I like it a lot. There's potential. Patrick here's going to explain to you what's at stake. S-T-A-K-E. This one's not edible.

Patrick: Gentlemen, I'm just gonna lay it on you. As fate would have it, it seems our actors have run into some visa problems at the border. They weren't able to board their flights today. Unfortunate as it may be, who is to say we can't make clay outta mud? Huh? Who's with me here? *[The extras seem confused.]*

⁹An act in Muslim prayer where one's forehead on the ground and show respect to Allah.

Issa [*really confused.*]: I'm sorry but what do you mean?

Patrick: We want you boys to take on the roles. We'll get the paperwork taken care of, and promise you a union rate of whatever it is they pay their actors up here. Understood?

Zain: Understood.

Dino: Where do we sign? [*Zain and Dino share a laugh.*]

Patrick: Good! [*laser points to Zain*]. You're the first one we have on the list. This is your scene. Others, you are all members of a black-listed terrorist organization who've managed to capture a British citizen, that is what you boys need to know. You're still extras in this one, so feel free to drop your weapons and move to the side. Zain, hands behind your back, take 2 steps forward.

[*Zain does so.*]

The Director: Ok go back. [*Zain goes back*]. Now, imagine there's a silent roaring giant lion inside of you. A lion in the sand. Put the gun away. [*Zain follows his orders. A knife slides on the floor in front of him.*]

Patrick: Ok. Pick it up. [*beat.*] Good. Now imagine you're being introduced to an audience who are about to watch you behead another person live on camera. You're a legend in the Caliphate. Pump out your chest. Good. You are a king amongst men. You are—Iqbal the Butcher! [*Issa and Dino struggle to hold their laughter.*] That blade in your hand carries the souls of a 100 heads. And you're just about to get started.

[*Set goes into tableau. Malek's final prayer verses. Ideally done with the text in English projected.*]

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

TRANSLITERATION

fa-rtaqib yawma ta'tī s-samā' u bi-dukhānin mubīnin

TRANSLATION

So watch out for the day
when the sky brings on a manifest smoke,

11

يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

TRANSLITERATION

yaghshā n-nāsa hādhā ‘adhābun ‘alīmun

TRANSLATION

enveloping the people.

[They will cry out:] ‘This is a painful punishment.

12

رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّا مُؤْمِنُونَ

TRANSLITERATION

rabbanā kshif ‘annā l-‘adhāba ‘innā mu’minūna

TRANSLATION

Our Lord! Remove from us this punishment.

Indeed we have believed!’¹⁰

[beat. Film set comes alive again.]

Patrick: Zain—do you see that door behind you?

Zain: Yes.

Patrick: Good. You will enter with dominant, controlled violence. Kicking that door down you will step—forcefully—to the exact same spot you are standing over right now. *[beat.]* Zain?

Zain: Understood.

¹⁰ Ayah ad-Dukhan 44:12- The Quran

Patrick: Good. Extras 2 and 3. *[They stand on guard].* You play the role of his guards. You stand like two toy soldiers on each side of that door. Got that? *[beat. They get in position, Dino on the side where the door opens to.]* Good. June. *[June enters the scene.]*

Zain *[with intention]*: Gemini June...*[June puts out her hand. Zain takes it off his headband and hands it to her.]*

June *[with intention]*: I'm not really a Gemini. *[She hands him a black headband.]* Good luck! *[She hands the two others headbands as well and walks off.]*

Zain: Hm-hmmm. You just sliced the butcher's heart with that lie gurl. Ain't no blade sharper than a lie from the pressing lips of a god-dess. Hm. *[Shakes it off and collects himself, smiling].* Back to business', back to business. Kick the door down, stand here looking like a sexy ruthless butcher. I got this. Just say the word.

The Director: Gary. *[scene lights come on.]* Good. Very good. It's a beautiful scene isn't it Patrick? *[pause.]* Gary, gimme Dracula! *[The stage is darkened and lit with a white flourescent from the bottom up.]* Oh my god! Amazementé! From Gonzaga University, weighing at 290 pounds, standing 6 feet tall, ladies and gentlemen give it up for the one and only Paul!

[The door opens and Dino collapses in fear. Paul, sitting on a rolling chair with hands behind his back, and a bean bag over his head with two holes cut out for his eyes, and duct tape over his mouth.]

Dino*[petrified.]*: Holy shit. Holy fucking shit. What the fuck guys!

[A moment passes, chuckles are heard.]

The Director: I told you it'd work didn't I Gary?

Patrick *[murmuring]*: He almost pissed his pants.

Dino: Wait, you did that on purpose?

The Director: What the f— Gary...god damn Gare, this f— mute button. No, that wasn't on purpose. *[beat.]* Ok it may have been, for the benefit of the crew's enjoyment. Listen, it's a long

dark day and laughter's the best medicine to get through it yeah? Don't worry I'll edit out the part where you go pee pee in your pants.

Patrick^[mocking]: Hey— maybe we should call a plumber! There's leaking pipes.

The Director ^[laughing]: Yeah we wouldn't want Iqbal the Butcher to slip and fall do we? Hey Patrick, Patrick.

Patrick: Yeah?

The Director: Is there a mop? ^[Chuckling] Do we have a mop?

Patrick: Yeah! How bout curly's head?

[The Director and Patrick break out into maniacal/hysterical laughter. A loud thud; Paul falls on the floor.]

The Director: See! Even Paul's loving this. Get back up Paul. *[Paul gets up and shakes his head as a sign of laughter and sits back on the chair. He centres himself in front of Zain. At this point Iman exits wardrobe and Malek goes into his bag.]*

The Director: Lookin' good Paul. ^[pause.] How you doin' ol' pal? You feelin' good?

Paul: ^[nods and shakes his head "more or less".]

The Director: How are the wife and kids? Enjoyin' Orlando?

Paul: ^[Nods and shakes his head]

[Simultaneously in the Wardrobe corner, Malek has taken several wires and a screw driver out of his bags. Placing the chair at the head of the table where the press button is, Malek sits and starts his work with his back facing the audience.]

The Director: Must be annoying livin' near a Disneyland though with the kids growing up and all. ^[Imitatively.] Daddy take me to go see Mickey, I wanna see Goofy. Bet you get a lotta' that Paul? Frozen—They like "Frozen"?

Paul: *[Nods and shakes his head.]*

The Director: Different generation huh?

Paul: *[Nods and shakes his head.]*

[Iman reenters from the other side and eavesdrops on the action.]

The Director: Got that insulin under lock-down Paul? Diabetes under control?

Paul: *[Nods and shakes his head.]*

Director: I heard they're on the cusp of finding the cure for it.

Paul: *[Nods and shakes his head.]*

[pause.]

Patrick: Zain! *[Zain stands on-guard]* Your lines will be provided on the teleprompter in front of you.

The Director: Just do what the text tells you Zaini. Just do what the text *tells* you.

Patrick: We are going to shoot the speeches first and then the beheading. When the director yells out "Action!" and you hear the music, you will act out your lines. Then you will snatch off the duct tape from Paul's mouth. Once his monologue is finished and you hear the words "our parliament's selfish decisions", that is your cue to remove the bag and behead. *pause*. Understood?

Zain: Yes sir!

Patrick: Good.

Issa: And us?

Patrick: What about you? You stay where you are and speak only when spoken to.

Issa: Ok but I feel like we should be standing by the Butcher's side for emotional support or something.

The Director: Hm. Little one's got a point. Ok Napoleon and his friend, come stand by the Butcher's side. *[laser pointer is turned on and lands on Issa.]* Good. put your hand on Paul's shoulder—hold him in place. *[Awkward.]* No. Try it—try it with your other hand. *[Still awkward.]* Ok, I'll come back to you. *[Laser points to Dino. Dino gets it right.]* See that Pat? Kid's a natural. Let's test him for what's his face's role.

Patrick: You. Two steps forward. *[Dino complies, lights go off. Clickt. Flash. Spotlight on Dino.]*

The Director: Say "Allah Akbar".

Dino: What?

The Director: Yell out Allah Akbar!

Dino: Allah Akbar!

The Director: Louder!

Dino: Allah Akbar!

Director: Louder!

Dino: Allah Akbar!

The Director: MORE VICIOUS!

Dino: ALLAH AKBAR!

beat.

The Director: Good.

Patrick: You can go back to your place.

[Lights go back to normal set lights. The extras are all in place. Laser goes back on Issa, slowly making its way from his feet upwards to his face. It stops at his smile.]

The Director: What is that?

Issa: What is what?

Patrick: What's with the smile there? What is this, a family picture at a Sunday barbecue?

Issa: Why not?

Dino: We got the Butcher.

Zain: We got the meat.

Paul *[alarmed]*: Hey!

Issa: The smile comes naturally with the pose.

The Director: The pose? Patrick what does he mean by the pose?

Issa *[a subtle foolish pose]*: The pose.

The Director: You're playing a terrorist. Terrorists don't naturally smile! And they sure as hell don't pose like that. What are you a butterfly? Shut it off *[playing with the laser over his mouth]*. No smiling. *[Issa looks serious]*. As a matter of fact—June, be a doll and do something with that face, let's change up the facts here and save me a xanax would ya'? *[June enters with a black ski mask]*

June: I'm sorry Issa. *[She puts it on Issa's face and as she is about to exit the director interrupts her]*

The Director: Put one on all of them. *[June does so and walks off, visibly feeling guilty]*. Good. Now look serious. More. *[Issa looks more serious]*. Let's set the scene. Gary! Cue in the hymns. *[Gary cues in the hymns]*. Boom. Fog. *[a bit of fog released]*. Wowzies. Love it. Patrick.

Patrick: On 3. 1 2 3.

The Director: Action.

Iqbal the Butcher (*distorted voice*): This British man has to pay the price for your promise, Cameron, to arm the Peshmerga against the Islamic State. Ironically, he has spent a decade of his life serving under the brutal air force that is responsible for delivering those arms. Your evil alliance with America, which continues to strike the Muslims of Iraq and Syria, will only accelerate your destruction, and playing the role of the obedient lapdog, will only drag you and your people into another bloody and unwinnable war. And to you America. A nightmare is coming to you. In Arabic: “And recite to them the news of Noah, when he said to his people, “O my people, if my residence and my reminding of the signs of Allah has become burdensome upon you – then I have relied upon Allah . So resolve upon your plan and call upon your associates. Then let not your plan be obscure to you. Then carry it out upon me and do not give me respite (chapter 71). You will burn like Rome. Your exceptionalism will become ashes for our empire to build our mosques upon! Verses in Arabic praising Allah.

[Zain rips the tape off Paul’s mouth.]

Paul: My name is Paul.

The Director: Take it harder to heart Paul. Tear me up.

Paul: My name is Paul.

The Director: Gooood.

Paul (*voice shaking in fear*): My name is Paul and I would like to tell the British citizens to wage a Jihad against their governments. I declare you the citizens who support your system of government a nation of deplorables. You entered voluntarily into a coalition with the United States against the Islamic State, just as your predecessors, following a trend amongst our British prime ministers who can't find the courage to say no to the Americans. Unfortunately, it is we the British public that in the end will pay for the price for our parliament's selfish decisions.¹¹

Director *[in tears]*: Oh God Gary did you see that?

[A sudden sound of a slash. Blackout. A scream is heard.]

¹¹ Lines inspired by David Haines’s beheading by ISIS.

Director: Whoopsies. What was that? Gary turn the lights on.

[The lights come on. Zain stands tall over Paul's head, with blood running down his shirt, gushing from his neck. Dino freaks out. Issa fumbles the handgun in panic.]

Dino: Holy fucking shit! You actually fucking did it!

[Zain looks at his knife in panic. It's clean. Paul starts choking up. Chuckles are heard over the mic.]

The Director: You got us there Paul.

Gary: *[a light flickers]*.

The Director: Wow Gary you were in on it too huh you ol' nerd? That's a good one.

Patrick: I was already thinking about all that paperwork for the insurance reports. Nice one Paul —ok, thank you extras, well done.

The Director: Real nice job Zany. Real nice job. Very mechanical. Paul you planted a lily in my heart with that performance.

Dino: Are you guys fucking kidding? You're just gonna brush off faking a beheading on set?

The Director: Oh boo hoo learn to take a joke there papsipants.

Dino: Why don't you show yourself and say that to my face?

The Director: Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. Verbal assault, on a professional set. How unprofessional. Aren't there laws against that up here? Can we sue him? Patrick?

Patrick: Probably not worth it since he's union. But we can surely fire him. Should I fire him?

The Director: Do it.

Patrick: You're fired extra #3.

Dino: Good. I don't want to be here anyways. *[Starts to walk off.]*

Director: Wait, we were joking again extra number three. Come back we love you. We won't do it again. Pinky promise. We've got a role for you. The best one out there.

Patrick: That's a wrap on the run-through. Clear the set. Empty your fluids, fill up your lungs with some fresh air, regroup here in 40 minutes.

[The set is cleared. Iman walks onto the stage alone.] Iman: Make them remember you!

[Malek enters on the other side and observes Iman. Iman doesn't notice, he's now sitting on the chair Paul was sitting on, and decides to put the bag over his head and practice his monologue.]

Iman: I am an extra. We are extras. Outcasts for now. But not forever. "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"—I contend to die for my beliefs. So cut off my head. And make me a Martyr! The people will always remember it.¹²

Malek: No. They will forget.

Iman: How long you been there?

Malek: Seems you're going to sell yourself to them after all.

Iman: Just practicing some lines for an audition.

Malek: For a pair of used pants to impress the likes of them? *[Iman springs up and approaches Malek. He removes his head-bag. Malek stands firm.]*

Iman: Now that's none of your business is it?

Malek: Are you Muslim?

¹² From the 1998 Film *Elizabeth*, see bibliography.

Iman: What do you think?

Malek: It seems you're just taking some time off, that's all.

Iman: Yeah?

Malek: Because a man who walks with God can walk anywhere.

[pause]

Iman: Then I choose to sit.

Malek: You are on your way to finding God I am sure.

Iman: And how's that father?

Malek: Some people asked me how I found God. It is very simple, when people found me less and less attractive. And you are well on your way to being totally unattractive.

Iman: Oh fuck you very much.

Malek: Are you Shia'?

Iman *[stares him down and as if he's blowing out candles, blows a breath of alcohol on Malek's face.]*

Malek: Kuffar.¹³

Iman: Haram.

Malek: I would be careful if I were you.

Iman: Who are you?

¹³ "Disbeliever" in Arabic, can also imply "sinner".

Malek *[mockingly]*: A mujahed brother. Is that what you wanna hear? *[pause.]* I am what you dream to play in front of their lying cameras—

Iman: You ain't no fucking Mujahed. You don't got the balls. What you wear a fucking Casio and put on that beard, rip America and say some verses out loud, that makes you a Mujahed? *[Iman's mind scrambles around]* I came here to escape you—you...you're not a fucking mujahed, you're a mujafucking-joke!

Malek: *[pause.]* Look in the mirror, I'm not the joke. It's you. You're going to let them take you as their clown, have them toy with you like a puppet. You're going to sell your country, your faith, your family, all for a used pair of pants so you can go run and scream and disgrace Allah's name in front of their cameras, for their eyes...but don't forget there is only one path. Trust the truth in your name Iman. Faith. Faith in the man above and his plan. Your people need you.

Iman: You're not my people.

[Malek's watch goes off. beat.]

[Patrick comes on]: Did someone say Mujahed?

Iman: What?

Patrick: Don't what me extra #4, I just heard the word Mujahed come out of your mouth.

Malek: It wasn't Mujahed.

Patrick: Then what was it #3?

Malek: Mushahed.¹⁴ Not Mujahed. Mushahed.

Patrick: Extra #4 repeat what he just said.

Iman: Mushahed.

¹⁴ Meaning "observer/onlooker" in Arabic

Patrick: The meaning of it?

Iman: I don't know—a witness or something.

Patrick: You!

Malek: Onlooker. It means onlooker.

Patrick: Hm...I'm watching the two of you. No Arabic on set. As a matter of fact, nothing but English from now on. Understood?

Iman: Understood.

Patrick: You! *[To Malek]*

Malek: Understood.

Patrick: Good. Now go back to your corner and stay there until we call you.

Malek*[murmuring]*: Allahu Akbar.

Tea Under the Palm Tree

[The Extras are gathered at the wardrobe corner. Malek is sitting on the chair. Dino and Zain are standing at one corner. Iman and Issa enter carrying a bench from outside.]

Issa: Ok Just put it here.

Zain: My boy Jésus pimping up the place.

Issa *[confused]*: What'd he say?

Iman: Here good?

Issa: Good.

Iman: Khalas?¹⁵

Issa: Khalas.

[They set the bench down and sit on it. A moment passes. Issa gets up and picks up an apple. With his hands, very casually, he splits the fruit in half. As he walks by each person he offers a piece. To Malek.]

Issa: Tufah?¹⁶

Malek: Allah Yakheek. *[He takes a slice.]*

Issa: Allah ysalmak akhawi.

Issa *[To Dino.]*: Apple?

Dino: Thanks man I'm good.

Issa *[insists]*: Take, take. It's good for you. *[Dino takes a slice. To Zain.]*

Issa: Tufah?

Zain: no shukran.

Issa: Good you speak Arabic?

[The following dialogue is performed bits in Arabic and English mixed together. Zain, sounding naive speaks with a Western accent using a lot of English words, and Issa mainly Arabic. The scene is casually animated.]

Zain: Of course. I even studied in university a little bit.

¹⁵ Common Arabic term used in slang, meaning “over with, finish”

¹⁶ Apple in Arabic.

Issa: Oh is that so? Where are you from?

Zain: Born in Brampton. And then I moved to Toronto.

Issa: Brampton? Brampton is where you are from?

Zain: Yeah.

Issa: Ok but your roots?

Zain: Brampton!

Issa: Ok how about your parents?

Zain: Oh, you mean like that, my mom is Jordanian, and my father is Palestinian, Quds¹⁷.

Issa: Ok. So you speak Arabi—

Zain: Yeah.

Issa: And your father is Arabi.

Zain: Yeah.

Issa: And your mother is Arabi.

Zain: Yeah.

Issa: And you're from where?

Zain: I was born and raised in Brampton.

¹⁷ Jerusalem in Arabic.

Issa [*Mocking disbelief*]: Aeesh...Brampton, khalas, Toronto. Inti Arabi!¹⁸ [*Turns away from Zain and walks Towards Iman.*]

Zain: Don't drop your gun there Napoleon.

Issa: Vallahi¹⁹ you're right, it's not my fault, guns make me nervous, I start shaking. [*To Iman.*] Apple habibi? [*Iman takes the slice.*] How you say Apple?

Iman: Sib.

Issa: Sib—you like tea Persia?

Iman: Chai.

Dino [*imitates.*]: Chai? Chā.

Issa: How you say it? Chā.

Zain: Chā. [*To Issa.*] Shaey?

Issa: Shaey in Arabic. In Kurdistan we say Choe.

Dino: They all sound the same huh?

Issa: And you wonder how we came to hate each other so much [*pause*] What do you have your chai with?

Iman: Now—are you asking me what I have my chai with? Or are you asking me what do I brew my chai with?

Dino: Oh snap. It's a tea-off.

Issa: What? what you brew it with?

¹⁸ "You're Arab"

¹⁹ Common expression used throughout the Middle East. Arabic for "honestly".

Iman: More expensive than gold by the gram. Zaferoun.

Issa: Zafaran!

Dino: What?

Zain: Saffron.

Dino: Nice!

Iman: Works like natural viagra if you put enough. What about you?

Issa: I brew it normally 9-10 minutes and then put some fresh mints and nabat²⁰ after.

Zain: A nice orange-mint shisha²¹, some backgammon.

Issa: Dino what about you?

Dino: Cardamom and milk.

Iman: Fuck yeah.

Issa: I'd go with teen²².

Zain: Tammur.

Iman: What's that?

²⁰ special rock candy.

²¹ Also known as the Hookah.

²² Dried figs

Issa: Dates. *[To Malek]*: I know akhawi there likes ajwas²³ huh Malek? I heard prophet Muhammad —

Malek: Aleyhum-salam—

Issa: Aleyhum-salam said 7 ajwa dates in the morning can make you conquer the sunset on foot.

Dino: seven dates! That's diabetes man.

Issa: It's the good kind of sugar. You burn it. Trust me, I ate a million.

Dino: A million?

Issa: At least thousands. I grew up on a date farm.

Iman: Nakhlestan²⁴.

Issa: Nakhlestan. The palms are the easiest to climb.

Zain: They got dat' grip.

Issa: That's right. You go up, start kicking dates down, sing a song break some arms, now what? I never see kids climb trees anymore.

Iman: What songs?

Issa: You want me to sing for you?

Dino: Do it!

Issa: Ok, you know the two finger clap? *[He goes in a circle and makes sure everyone does it in beat. Malek seems hesitant at first.]* Come on, for me brother, it won't kill you.

²³ Dates in Saudi Arabia.

²⁴ Common term for Date Farm in the Middle East. Translates into "Palm Garden"

*I've got a friend above
I don't know if that's the shine of your cheek or a shine above (ie the moon)
I swear I don't even want her
It's ruining me/It's causing me a problem*

فوق إلنا خل فوق يابا فوق النا خل فوق
مدري لامع خذك يابا مدري لامع فوق
ولله ما ريده باليني بلوة

[Patrick comes on.]

Patrick: I said no Arabic.

Issa: But it's a song.

Patrick: Not on this film set it isn't. Understood?

Issa: Yeah fine understood just calm down.

Patrick: I am calm.

Issa: Hate to see how you talk if you get angry.

Patrick: Good. *[Pause.]* Din Muhammad.

Issa: What?

Patrick: Who is Din Muhammad?

Issa: What is this a game?

Patrick: No, this is not a game. Which one of you is named Din Muhammad?

Dino: Dino. You can call me Dino.

Zain: Wait, what? Your name's what?

Dino: Din Muhammad.

Zain *[with sympathy]*: hm...my brother.

Patrick: On set with you Dino. This is your scene. We're going to go over it.

Scene.

Holes

[Dino walks over on set. He faces the audience with the laser pointed to his forehead.]

The Director: A natural. Great walk. Great walk. Dino Amigo I believe we got off to a very wrong start and we certainly hold ourselves accountable in sharing some of the blame. Please accept our sincerest apologies. *[pause.]* We're sorry. And we hope gifting you this role will make up for it.

Dino: Yeah that's fine.

The Director: Real emotional. Patrick hit him.

Patrick: You are an assassin about to become a martyr by killing a general. Under this general's rule, your teacher was shot dead on the streets of Damascus while the two of you were peacefully protesting. You were a soldier under this general's rule once upon a time—but you deserted, and joined the militant opposition to take revenge when you were very young. Clear?

Dino: Yeah.

Patrick: This is a letter written by you to your sister who lives abroad. Recite the words with all your life.

The Director: Yeah! give it all DM.

Dino: Dino. Call me Dino.

The Director: Give it all Dino!

Patrick: Are you ready?

Dino: Yes.

The Director: Gary. *[Gary sets the scene. Malek, lit up, watches from corner stage right as if he's hearing his own story]* Good. 3, 2, 1, Action!

Dino *[in character]*: Maryam. I write this letter with the hopes that one day you will read it after my death. Stay where her majesty's face on your monies keep you safe. But don't forget what happened to us. We were once happiness pursuers. What hopes we had when we marched the streets together that spring? What aspirations we felt in the stomps of our feet, the songs of our hearts chanting towards freedom from the choking hands of those who never understood. For the silent and the unspoken, we chanted from the bottom of our hearts, cheering for the lonely, the gentle, the mute, the cold and the ugly. Our fire couldn't be put out. *[beat]*. But then they shot her and hundreds more. She lay on the asphalt with her hand on her chest, blood coming out of her mouth, in my arms, with her eyes reciting the petrified anthem of silence before death, and I could do nothing but scream out her name. Salma! They shot her right in the forehead. *beat*. Salma. *beat*. Everyone outside of Damascus seems to be fleeing. Maryam, tell the world we are not just cannibals or preyed upon victims, or refugees who pack nightmares in their bags and carry them over their backs across frozen lands, boiling deserts, and simmering oceans. We are humanity's dreamers not their nightmares. You will hear me from the news, and inshallah then we will be a step closer to freedom again. Allah protect you my dearest sister.

Malek *[To the audience]*: Some people asked me how I found God. It is very simple, when people found me less and less attractive. *[Lights go off on Malek]*

The Director: Whoooooaaaaaaaaa—What anger! What calm! What magnificence! You're gonna be a star Dino. You've outdone anything that was expected of you. "You will hear from me on the news." Great theatrics, beautiful set up, real spooky there buddy. That was the most important line and you banged it out like a real tiger!

Dino: Seriously, you thought that was the most important part? Not the bombs and the shot in the forehead—

The Director: Yeah...no, no I did not. I stand by my gut—"you will hear from me on the news"! Repeat that line 5 times and maybe you'll actually know what your intention is. *[beat.]* Maybe not. Maybe it's best you never learn what your actual intention is.

Dino: Can I ask you a question?

The Director: You can ask me two.

Dino: The text has holes.

The Director: That is not a question.

Dino: But do you see that the text has holes?

The Director: No I only see your holes! You have holes not the text.

Dino: So do you.

The Director: Hit me.

Dino: Trust me, I wish I could.

The Director: With a line god damn it. If you're gonna be a dumbbell, don't be a dumb dumbbell. Hit me with a monologue tough guy, let's see what you do. Interpret the text and make it your own how bout that DM²⁵? Here's a taste of performative democracy: Interpret the text and create from it however you wish!

[The light goes on Malek.]

Dino: At night when most of you are asleep, I lay awake and pick at the scabs of my memories. I fight a different war now. I fight to recover my soul. Night by night, I pick up a small shattered piece within a pile of a hundred at my feet, and slowly build myself a new mirror to look into. I start from one piece. What if I landed this piece at the perfect spot on the wall? What if every other piece will fit in perfectly thereafter? Then I could look at myself again, and befriend my reflection

²⁵ Din Muhammad

piece by piece, a reflection stitched together by faith and hope—and between the cracks, the labels, I’ll come to find myself torn by years of war, blood, violence. This was not how it was supposed to be, brothers throwing acid on her face because her hijab wasn’t tight, hung from a noose because she refused to be raped, soldiers biting into each other’s hearts in the name of “he who makes us laugh makes us weep”, this is not his will, for us to kill one another in his name.

[The light on Malek goes off.]

The Director: All good, but that’s not gonna sell Dino. This is not free open mic wednesdays at the Firkin for your slam poetry session kido. But I got a plan for you. Another scene. More akin to your mildness. Can you pray?

Dino: Like actually?

The Director: No *Love, Actually!*

Patrick: Hah.

The Director: See what I did there Pat? *[beat]* Yes, like actually. Can you pretend to pray at least?

Dino: I guess.

The Director: Are you ok by being pretend tortured a little bit? Just a little.

Dino: Depends.

The Director: A mopping scene. Interrogation sort of deal.

Dino: What’s the pay?

The Director: Patrick what’s the pay?

Patrick: Eight grand.

Dino: Eight grand?

The Director: Whoa—that's a lotta chedda'!

Patrick: The most anyone's getting paid on this set today.

The Director *[With persuasion]*: Hm—surely others will step up if Dino here won't show up for work.

Dino: Yeah fine.

The Director: Good.

Patrick: Good. Let's set the scene up.

[Blackout. Wardrobe lights up. Iman napping on the floor; Issa on the bench.]

Issa: Persia.

Iman: What is it?

Issa: You got some great poets huh?

Iman: I guess.

Issa: You guess? You should know.

Iman: Fine. I know.

Issa: Ok who is your favourite?

Iman: What from the older guys?

Issa: Yeah.

Iman: I don't fucking know man—I barely understand what they're sayin' anyways.

Issa: Give me one.

Iman: I've reached the end of this great history
And all the land will fill with talk of me
I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save
My name and reputation from the grave
And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim
When I have gone, my praises and my fame.

Issa: You actors and your fame. Out of all the poetry your country has about love and wine and god,
you pick the one about fame. Who is that?

Iman: Ferdowsi. Whoever drinks the wine of youth can see
Only himself, and in that stupor he
Will throw away his life.
What about you? Who's your favourite?

Issa: Ibn' Arabi.

Iman: Ibn' Arabi.

Issa [*in Arabic*]: Dearly beloved!
I have called you so often and you have not heard Me
I have shown myself to you so often and you have not seen Me.
I have made myself fragrance so often,
and you have not smelled Me.
Savourous food, and you have not tasted Me.
Why can you not reach Me through the object you touch
Or breathe Me through sweet perfumes?
Why do you not see Me?
Why do you not hear Me?²⁶
[He recites the last verse in English]

[beat.]

²⁶ Underhill translation

Iman: Ay, ay, ay. Hopeless romantic huh Issa?

Issa: Spiritual my friend. And it's better than you looking for fame.

Iman: Do you pray?

Issa: I used to, when I was eighteen, nineteen.

Iman: So not anymore?

Issa: If I'm feeling really down or something, it's sunset, and there's just a hole in my heart sure why not? But I meditate now. What about you?

Iman: Nah man, never even learned.

Issa: So you're not Muslim?

Iman: Does it matter to their eyes?

Issa: But for you it does—are you?

Iman: What do you think?

[beat.]

Iman: What about you?

Issa *[smiles]*: I'm a little bit of everything.

Iman: A little bit of everything eh?

Issa: Why not? Take what works from wherever you can!

Iman: That's the spirituality you're talking about. You tell that to al-Baghdadi, before you know it Zain's gonna come here and slice your neck.

[beat]

Issa: How did we get to here man?

Iman: If my mom was here, “it’s how god wanted it.”

Issa: You know what’s ironic?

Iman: You wearing a face mask and holding a gun!

Issa: That too. But the fact that we only realize how similar we are to one another once we come to somewhere like Toronto.

Iman: Or you could say we realize how different we are from the others.

Issa: Still, it works.

Iman: So I’m guessing you like living in Canada huh?

Issa: It’s beautiful. I love it here. And you? How you like it here?

Iman: It’s home.

Issa: How old were you?

Iman: Eight or nine.

Issa: With family and everything?

Iman: Yup—what were you doing back home? Business?

Issa: *[pause]*—yeah.

Iman: Between Iraq and Turkey?

Issa: Iraq, Turkey, Syria.

Iman: Smuggling?

Issa: *[beat.]* We had to.

Iman: What?

Issa: Appliances. *[pause.]* Home appliances.

[Back on set. Dino on the floor restrained in a stress position by two leather belts wrapped around him, one around his torso and hands and another at his thighs.]

The Director: You ok there bud?

Dino: I'm fine.

The Director: That's the spirit Dino. Patrick hit him.

Patrick: Dino, imagine this moment you are in—to be a couple hours after you have been water-boarded over a toilet seat.

The Director: Have you ever been water-boarded?

Dino: Excuse me?

The Director: Do you swim?

Dino: Yes.

The Director: Do you remember when you didn't? *[pause]* Think about it. *[Sudden sounds of waves and choking, Dino falls to his knees]*

Dino: Great.

Patrick: Before you managed to carry out your assassination plot, your compound was bombed by American forces. You were captured and put into prison. You are also falsely charged with killing

an American Staff Sergeant during the battle. You've spent years here being interrogated and tortured. Got it?

Dino: Uhu. What now?

The Director: Just lay still and let us do the work for you. That's my advice if you ask me.

Dino: Do I act?

The Director: You're a natural.

Patrick: Ready?

The Director: Dino?

Dino: Ready.

Patrick: 3, 2, 1.

The Director: Gary! *[Gary cues in the lights.]* Action!

[Two U.S. army personnel enter with masks on, a special strap in hand.]

The Director: Mechanical! *[They walk militarily.]* Good.

U.S. interrogator: Hey Scatman. We got your brother my little amigo. He's an informant for us now. Not like you, did you piss yourself? Look at this! How long has it been huh? See what happens when you don't cooperate? Let his fate be a lesson to you, help me help you or—and that's a painful “or”—we keep on playing this game neither of likes very much. It's undeniably in your hands. Did you throw the grenade that killed our Staff Sergeant? *[beat.]* Not the president's, Canada's, Allah, not your father's, no one but you chooses your future.

The Director: Dino! Like a punch.

Dino: I want to pray.

U.S interrogator: You want to what?

Dino: I want to pray.

U.S interrogator: You're having a tough time understanding the consequences—*[beat.]*—it wreaks in here. Looks to me like you got some cleaning to do. *[They hook the strap onto Dino's belts and start to drag him on the floor as if they're mopping the floor with him.]*

The Director: Music Gare. *[Baghdad Night come on.²⁷]* The lights. *[Gary cues in subtle lighting.]* Beauty. Absolute beauty. This one's a real tearjerker with the empathy crowd. *[A minute or so passes with Malek being dragged around]* Ok, let's do the praying scene now.

Banu Nadir

[Lights go off on set and on at wardrobe with Iman and Issa. Issa starts to stretch in various yoga positions.]

Iman: You remember the war?

Issa: Which one? It's kind of hard picking a favourite.

Iman: With Iran.

Issa: Yeah. I had an uncle who fought in it.

Iman: Sorry to hear that man.

Issa *[brushing it off]*: I was a kid anyway.

Iman: Which war burned down your farm?

Issa: Kuwait. First Gulf.

²⁷ A song performed by Naseer Shamma, solo oud.

Iman: I heard a massive number, something like twenty million palm trees burned down in Iraq because of all the wars.

[Malek enters going to his backpack.]

Issa: The trees will come back alive one day. But the people never will.

Malek: Americans. The day will come when they're no longer able to invade our lands.

Iman: Here we go—

Issa: What? He's right. Don't you hope for that day?

Iman: Sure but I don't blame our fate on the Americans. It seems like the easy way out wouldn't you say so? Look at Banu Nadir.

Malek: Of course you take their side. You want to be their product. You want them to consume you.

Iman: And you? You're not here selling yourself? *[Malek doesn't respond.]* That's what I thought—keep on preaching.

Issa: Who cares? Out of our hands. Always was always will be.

Iman *[To Issa]*: We always find a way to blame it on them. As if we didn't kill each other before that, as if we didn't burn down palm trees ourselves. As if Muslim,, Jew, and Christian, Turk, Kurd, Persian, and Arab, Afghan, as if we love each other and we were all peaceful before they showed up.

Issa *[reciting]*: I am neither Muslim nor a Hindu

I am not Christian, Zoroastrian, nor Jew

I am neither of the West nor the East

Not of the ocean, nor an earthly beast.²⁸

You know whose poem?

²⁸ Shahriari translation

Iman: Rumi?

Issa: Mevlana.

Iman: You know at one point he was America's top selling poet?

Issa: Yes, Madonna and Demi Moore even recited his poetry. But they really did a number on filtering him down, from a Muslim Sufi to just a Sufi. Hey, they have to sell I guess. Same thing with Ibn' Arabi.

Iman: Got that right. You don't become American's top selling poet 800 years after your death with verses from the Quran.

Malek: The Quran isn't up for sale. But your integrity seems to be.

Iman: At least my ignorance isn't.

Issa: Whoa what is happening here?

Iman: You know about the Banu Nadir Issa?

Issa: No what is it?

Iman: The Muslim expulsion of the Jews from Medina, straight from the Book. Their army didn't have a good view of the Castles because of the palm trees, so they were ordered to burn and cut them down.²⁹

Issa: Ok good to know. But I'm sure they weren't ordered to burn down twenty million of them.

Iman: Because they didn't need to.

Issa: We can't keep going back to the past to justify the present shit we're in. Twenty million, at least, just Iraq, what—that would make, for every ten trees burned down one person died? War, what do you expect? Flowers?

²⁹ "What you (O Muslims) cut down of the palm-trees (of the enemy), or you left them standing on their stems, it was by leave of Allâh." 59:5

Malek: Why not? *[a pause. Iman and Issa seem uncomfortable.]*

Iman *[in confusion]*: What?

Malek: Red tulips.

Issa *[laughs]*: Tell that to my uncle has one of them on top of his grave.

Malek: You call it a grave with that tone? Don't you think that's a bit disrespectful? His martyrdom so you could be free? The flower represents the life he gave so you could be emancipated.

Issa: Free from what? I'm here because I wasn't free.

Malek: Free from the Persian invasion.

Iman: Wait—what the fuck did you just say? Persian invasion? Is this guy for real? *[pause]* Saddam attacked us first.

Issa: That's true but then he gave up and you went on the offensive.

Iman: That may be true but I don't like the way he said "Persian".

Issa: Whatever. Persian invasion, Saddam, Baghdadi, American invasion, British, all the same to me.

Iman: Where you from?

Malek: Whatever I am I am Muslim first.

Issa: Sunni?

Malek *[looking at Iman.]*: Not Shia'.

Iman: *[Springs towards Malek's face]* Yallah.

Malek *[Smiling]*: Looks like someone had a bit too much.

Issa *[comes in between them]*: Find inner peace gentlemen, not good for your hearts. Who gives a shit what we are, we used to be, where we came from, most important second is now we are together, in the same fake army they put us in. You can call my uncle a martyr, he could call him a murderer. Potato- potaato.

[Zain walks in and reacts quickly to the commotion.]

Zain: Yo—*[grabs Iman and pulls him back]* Chill brah, what the fuck?

Iman: This guy—

Zain: What did he do?

Iman: He's fucking racist.

Zain: Racist? Towards you?

Iman: Listen to this—*[To Malek]*—Say "Persian invasion" again!

Zain *[confused]*: Bro' you trippin'? Come here. *[As he takes Iman downstage, he nods to Issa to take Malek off.]*

Issa *[in Arabic]*: Let's go friend. We're all gonna be pottery made from the same bloody soil after this. *[They walk off. Zain and Iman downstage.]*

Zain: Why you lettin' this asshole ruin your day?

Iman: He's mental.

Zain: He's just fresh off the boat, that's all. Chill. Dude's tryin' to pull in some cash. He's struggling like all of us standing here doing nothing. Just stay out of his way.

Iman: He keeps talking shit about this gig, he keeps talking about God, looks all funny at me like he's on a crusade against Shias man. He even told me he was a mujahed. And you want me to stay out of his way?

Zain: God damn! You goin' off the rail on this boy huh? *[pause]* A mujahed? Like real mujahed jihadi?

Iman: He said it jokingly—but who the fuck makes that joke? Especially nowadays.

Zain *[bursts out in laughter]*: Mujahed my ass.

Iman: Yo quiet!

Zain: What?

Iman: Don't say it out loud.

Zain: Why not? You scared someone's gonna hear you?

Iman: Them! *[pointing at the back.]*

Zain: You' paranoid brah! And I know you got a shot for me, I smell that on you like a mosquito smells blood. Lay it on me.

Iman: Whiskey?

Zain: One shot, quick.

Iman *[takes the bottle out of the bag and passes it to Zain.]*: How's work on set?

Zain: They keep feeding us roles to be honest. You know how they say something's too good to be true? This one of 'em. Can't complain. *[pause.]* Don't worry though, you'll get yours soon I'm sure.

[beat. Zain takes a shot.]

Zain: Respect.

Iman: Salute. *[pause]* Can I trust you?

Zain: Depends.

Iman: With a plan.

Zain: What?

Iman: I'm gonna take Paul's place.

Zain: The prisoner?

Iman: Yeah—and you're gonna help me.

Zain: How bout I just give you six dollars for the whiskey?

Iman: It's brandy actually, I won't take less than nine.

Zain: How much is your plan worth?

Iman: Thousands.

Zain: And?

Iman: You get a cut.

Zain: Listening.

Iman: I trick Paul into leaving the set and take his place. They won't know, I'll be hidden beneath his headbag. I'll do his monologue, add in some lines of my own to spice it up, and they'll have no choice but to use the footage. Think about it. It'll be too expensive for them to do another day of shooting this with Paul, I'll make sure I play the part perfect, get paid, get screen time, Cha—Ching! That's the sound of mulla in your pocket, couple months rent least!

Zain: Persian invasion, I like it, very sly. But don't count on me for help. You do you! I do me. Got that? I didn't hear nothing, see nothing, eat nothing of this act you've cooked up.

Iman: Yeah that's fine—don't tell, don't behead.

Zain: But you're not white.

Iman: I'll paint my face or something. I don't know—I'll figure something out.

Iman: Keep it [*referring to the almost empty bottle.*]. Need to practice some of the lines. Hopefully I don't see that shit face anymore. [*walks off.*]

Scene.

Synchronicity

[Dino is sitting on the floor. The laser comes on pointed at the floor in front of him.]

Patrick: Alright Dino. After spending years in this prison, you are set to become free and go to Canada where you once lived as a child. You are now in rehab mode even though you are still in prison. You're allowed letters, and you are especially intrigued by a girl named Haadiya. Got it?

Dino: Sure.

The Director: Do you see that light?

Dino: Yes.

The Director: Good. That's where your forehead belongs. [*Dino goes into position.*] Gare, light it up and give me a violin [*lights come on.*].

Dino [*sits back up*]: A violin? He's praying over a violin. Don't you think that's a bit cliché?

The Director: Gary the violin. [*The violin comes on.*] You hear that? You don't hear the spirituality in that? Does that hurt your little cliché bone right there? You came in as an extra, a stand in for a

bearded middle eastern man, literally that was the job title. And now—pop! light bulb—epiphany, the man does not want to be a cliché. Bravo Dino! *[The laser comes on his forehead.]*

[Malek enters from the corner and watches remotely]

Dino: Fine. *[The laser moves to the ground in front of him. Dino goes back into praying position.]*

The Director: A tungsten on top of the door Gary. Give me some fog. Haadiya are you ready to grace us with your angelic presence?

Haadiya *[offstage]*: Yes!

The Director: Good. Lights. Camera. Action. *[Fog, Haadiya enters.]* Beauty! Lines.

[Haadiya walks in wearing a red hijab, covering all of her hair. Dino, stunned springs up from the praying position.]

The Director: CUT!

Haadiya: What?

[The laser comes on Dino's groin and makes it way up to his heart and his eyes.]

The Director *[mockingly]*: This was not your position Dino.

[Haadiya looks at Dino and smiles.]

Haadiya: Hi.

Dino: Hi.

tammur

Haadiya: We never agreed to the fog. I'm in my room. I don't have fog in my room.

The Director: It's to add a bit of this "mystique dreamy like feel" to the scene ok?

Haadiya: It takes away from her character.

The Director: No. The fog embraces the atmospheric presence of THE SCENE, not the character. Now please go back and re-enter. This is called being an auteur. My style. Now can we go on! 3, 2, 1, *[Haadiya walks out]* Action!

[Haadiya re-enters and walks downstage.]

Haadiya: My dearest friend who has me staring at my ceiling when the lights are off in the middle of the night. I can not wait for your return.

The Director: Haadiya—

Haadiya: Yes.

The Director: June, can you fix the scarf a bit please?

[June enters.]

June: I'm sorry Haadiya.

Haadiya *[To The Director]*: What do you mean? *[June loosens the hijab, letting out a strand of hair.]*

The Director: More at the bottom. *[June does so.]* Good.

Haadiya: I didn't imagine her like this.

The Director: Yes, but we did.

Haadiya: But this isn't how she wears it!

The Director: Well, use your imagination again, this is how we want her to be seen.

Haadiya: By loosening her hijab?

The Director: It's just for the visuals really. You look friendlier this way.

Haadiya: Friendlier? As if the extent of her hijab dictates her level of "friendliness"?

The Director: Well, when you say it with that tone, no! Look, we've got producers ok? Tours. America. Europe. Don't kill me now. Don't ruin your potential. I thought we talked about this.

[beat.]

Haadiya: Fine. But she should be sitting down.

The Director: She looks better standing up. Why would she be sitting down?

Haadiya: It's after her prayers. She's talking to him through the letter after her talk with God.

The Director: Hm. Hold on let me think—*[thinking]*—Patrick take care of it. Ok Haadiya. You win. See I'm reasonable. You help me, I help you.

Haadiya: Actually, it's more like I help you, by helping your lame ass scriptwriter and your film.

Dino: Damn.

The Director: 3, 2, 1, *[Haadiya goes back]* enter Haadiya! *[Haadiya walks and gets into position. Dino in praying position]* Pause—intention—inspire, love, and friendship—*[Haadiya acts melodramatically]* Gary, music *[Kamancheh comes on]*. Angelic Haadiya. Lines.

Haadiya: My dearest friend who has me staring at my ceiling when the lights are off in the middle of the night. I can not wait for your return. I hear you are doing well—ready for your return? I'd imagine the butterflies are really starting to kick in. I bought you a jacket to keep you from catching a cold when you step foot off the plane. I'm sure you won't mind the cold after all the heat you've lived through. There's some sour skittles inside, the ones you like, hope they bring back good memories. Everyone's ecstatic to see you. Even my mother can't wait to see you. Don't worry, she doesn't know we write to each other. You've become a source of hope for a lot of people, including me. You're a symbol of peace now not war, and your story is proof that it's possible to fight and recover, with a smile and patience. You told me in your last letter that you're afraid of this big change and you have every right to be. Don't worry. Those walls and ceilings you've befriended

and confided in during all those sleepless nights in prison will always be with you in your heart and mind, keeping you safe from all the extra noise on the outside. One brick at a time, we'll either tear them down, or if you want, we can just paint flowers over them. Can't wait to take you out for a drive by the countryside. Or better yet, have you drive me.

Allah protect you.

The Director: That was something else huh Gary?

Gary: *[flashes a light]*.

Haadiya: Thanks.

The Director: Really. *[Points the laser on Dino's forehead.]* Lines!

Dino: My dearest Haadiya, I owe you my warmth in this cold world. You are a gift from his most gracious hand. The saliva in my mouth is erupting over the sour skittles. And I look forward to the wind chill. I think it will heal some of my wounds. It will feel good over my scars. Your anticipation makes me a bit anxious, come to think of it, everything is starting to make me anxious. What if I am not what you imagined? I don't know to which world I am being released to. I just want to be left alone at first. I can't bare to witness the look on people's faces when they look at me and think to themselves that I want to cause them harm and hurt their children. I expect people will not like me very much in Canada, and I hope that my arrival will not upset them...especially to violent degrees. But one thing I promise is to come with an open mind and peace in my heart. You have given me the best present in the world with your friendship and loyalty. May Allah give me the strength and chance to repay every ounce of your kindness with that of my own. I will bring a souvenir with me—hand-made. I hope it will bring a smile on your lips. I am sure they look their best like that. I can't promise to you that I am a good driver. Maybe that is also too soon.

Haadiya: A souvenir, I have always wanted a souvenir from Guantanamo and God is gifting me the best one from there. I am sure you will bring the energy from all that Sun with you. We need that kind of heat and light here at this time of year. Don't worry about the world you are being released to. Be excited by it. Try to release the stress that you were never in control of anyway. Look at your scars like a reflection of where you've been, but don't let them dictate where you'll go. Out of scars have emerged the deepest souls; The silently roaring nocturnals of the night bearing the brunt of humanity's vices in their screams, howls, and sweats. We'll share nightmares together at first. But

we will dream through it with our realities. We will become one with seconds and moments and gain back all that we have missed during your absence. You will come and become a father. You will come and become a husband. You will become a believer in humanity again, and Allah will put before you a path that leads to beauty, beauty which only you will absorb, eternally dancing in your heart. And then you will finally sleep. And dream of nothing. We—we will finally just sleep, in peace, and dream of nothing, together.

The Director: Patrick. Tissue. Oh my god. My beautiful Haadiya. Haadiya. Amazementé!

Haadiya: Really?

The Director: You tickled the tear bud there I'll tell you that. [*Laser on Dino's forehead.*] Natural. You're a natural kid. Patrick!

Patrick: Dino, in the film, your character is now free and rehabilitated. He will be blackmailed and coerced into co-operating with terrorists to bomb the city centre. This is the dinner before the offer is given to you, when you think you're on the right path for a normal life.

The Director: Keyword Dino: "Naive". You didn't really think you'd have a chance for a normal life after what they did to you? Remember the mop. "Naive". You with me?

Dino: Got it.

Patrick: Bring in the dinner table. [*A dinner table is placed on set for a romantic dinner between Haadiya and Dino, with two chairs.*]

Dino: Are we gonna do the bombing scene today?

The Director: Ambitious much?

Dino: Just want to mentally prepare that's all.

The Director: Remember, at this point you don't even know you're going to relapse and become a terrorist again. So I would say not, not today.

Patrick: Ok here's what's happening. The two of you are now in Saskatoon on your 10th date. Got that? *[They nod.]* Sit. *[They sit.]* Look at one another. *[They do.]* Hold hands. *[They do.]*

The Director: Dino, lose the sadness. You're madly in love but you don't want to show it. Haadiya, you're going to manipulate him into taking your offer. You're flirting on the power boundaries. Gary. *[Sets the scene up with romantic lighting and background atmospheric sound, the two at the end of their meals.]* 3, 2, 1. Action.

Haadiya *[in character]*: I had an idea.

Dino *[in character]*: Oh no way?

Haadiya: Why? Why do you ask that?

Dino *[gathers himself]*: Wha-What do you mean?

Haadiya: Why did you say "Oh no way" like that? *[mimicks him]* Did it surprise you?

Dino: It's just something I said!

Haadiya: So you were making fun of me?

Dino: No!

Haadiya: Just say it. It's ok. We'll laugh together.

Dino *[struggles to talk]*: I may have tried to make fun of you.

Haadiya: You think I have too many ideas?

Dino: Better than scars.

Haadiya: Who says ideas don't come with scars?

Dino: I think you and I have different ideas about what ideas mean.

[beat]

Haadiya *[pause]*: Don't get me wrong. It's ok to make fun of me, honestly, especially with having too many ideas. But while you're laughing, don't forget, you also started out as one.

Dino: See, my point exactly, you think of some terrible ideas!

[They laugh.]

Haadiya: Do you like driving?

Dino: Driving? I've never driven before to know.

Haadiya: I know but you must have thought about it.

Dino: I guess so. But not like a sports car or anything.

Haadiya: How about a Honda?

Dino *[smiling]*: Why are you asking me this? The thing you wrote at the end of the letter.

Haadiya: I want to take you somewhere where you can drive. It's really nice. *[Dino shows reluctance]* Oh come on...It's just a big empty parking lot in the middle of nowhere. No one will be watching you there. And if they are, they won't care.

Dino: Or we just go for a walk.

Haadiya: Your choice.

Dino: Thank you.

Haadiya: It's true.

Dino: What?

Haadiya: *[pointing to his plate]* You are what you eat.

Dino: Are you implying that I'm a chicken thigh?

Haadiya: Not really. Still a potato head.

Dino: Majdi used to call me that all the time. You really think my head really looks like a potato?

Haadiya: Just enough to make a poutine out of it.

[They laugh. Dino looks at his watch.]

Dino: It's almost 9.

Haadiya: Yeah. Let's go?

Dino: Don't we have to pay?

Haadiya: Oh it's been taken care of that by the family who just left. They passed on this note. *[Dino stares at her]* What? You were peeing.

Dino: Sh—people might hear you say that! *[Reading the letter]:* "We're sorry for what we did to you."

Haadiya: They actually paid for our bill. *[whispering]* And they were White!

Dino: Wow. That's very nice of them.

Haadiya: Told you Saskatoon's a nice place to live in. *beat.* So...are you in or out? *[mimicks driving.]*

Dino: I'm walking.

Haadiya: It's cold!

Dino: We'll get used to it. Better for our immune system. I'm not returning to prison for driving without a license. I don't even know how to drive, I might break your car.

Haadiya: I have insurance! You just let go of your fear and put your foot on the gas. And if you need to stop, you put your foot on the break...you can do that! Come on, we won't do it if someone follows us.

Dino: One condition?

Haadiya: Ya allah. Are you not tired of negotiating?! What?!

Dino: Tell me why.

Haadiya: Why what?

Dino: Why did you write to me? Why choose me? Weren't you afraid?

Haadiya: Of what? Being told that I'm a terrorist because I'm helping one. Look I wasn't alone. It was never about you killing that guy or not. You were meant to grow up here, your fate could have been any of ours. We had protests for you, open debates, your name is bigger than yourself whether you like it or not. And when I realized that, I saw that we have that in common. I never became what my father or society wanted from me. I never got to choose who to become until now. Your freedom gave me purpose in life. I didn't *choose* you. Life chose us.

Dino: You made the decision to write the letters didn't you?

Haadiya: Synchronicity.

beat.

Dino: Synk-oriniocity.

Haadiya: Synchronicity.

Dino: Synch

Haadiya: Synchro

Dino: Synchro

Haadiya: -nocity.

Dino: -nocity

Haadiya: Synchronocity.

Dino: Synchronocity.

Haadiya: Say it again.

Dino: Syncno...*[They share a laugh.]* What does it mean?

Haadiya: When my brother died back home, only a couple of us in Canada held an absent funeral for him, a grave without a body. And right as the crane poured the last patch of Earth on top of his grave, on the coldest greyest day imaginable, the sun shined through the clouds and birds, these magnificent birds, maybe a hundred of them came down to his grave and flew away in synchronized dance as if they were taking his soul to heaven. I felt the peace in his chest blossom into mine at that moment.

Omar: Synchronocity.

Haadiya: Synchronocity. *Throws the key to Dino. Dino catches.*

[beat]

The Director: Start writing your thank you speeches, you're gonna be stars I'll tell ya! Stars. Cut!

Patrick: Haadiya, thank you. We won't be needing you on set anymore. Everyone else, take ten.

Scene.

The Limelight

Paul: Hey pal you haven't seen June have ya'?

Iman *[startled]*: Paul!

Paul: That's me. And your name?

Iman: Adam.

Paul: Pleasure meeting ya' Adam.

Iman: Same here.

Paul: So, June.

Iman: The wardrobe girl?

Paul: That's June.

Iman: Not anywhere that I can think of.

Paul: Ah well that's a bummer. Can't find my headbag. So how you likin' the job?

Iman: It pays.

Paul: Sure does. This is a nice little room she's set up. A bench and everything.

Iman: It's fine I guess. So what are you going to do without the headbag? Kind of a big change of face there huh?

Paul: You don't say!

Iman: Did you lose it?

Paul: Gosh I hope not. That'll really piss 'em off. Probably just left it there and June picked it up or something. Well, might as well give her a minute. Take these darned medications keeping me alive while I'm at it. *[Paul goes through his fanny pack and gets the medication out and puts it on the table. He frantically searches for his injector pen. It's not there. He takes off the fanny pack and*

empties it on the table. The pen's not there.] Darn it, must've left it in the trailer or somethin', be back in a jiffy I guess. [Paul walks out. beat. Iman walks over to the fanny pack and looks at some of Paul's medication. He opens the lid on one of them. Takes a couple pills out. He crushes them on the table. Issa's voice comes on in his mind. He blows the crushed pills off the table. He takes in what he was about to do, and Paul enters.]

Paul: One of the signs you're gettin' old? You forget stuff you never did before, *[referring to the injector pen]*, even if it's keepin ya' alive. *[Starts to clean up the table.]* You a basketball fan?

Iman: No not really.

Paul: Ah yeah? Into hockey I suppose? *[Taking his medication.]*

Iman: Not a big sports fan.

Paul: Ah yeah I wasn't either but my son, he's nuts for basketball.

Iman: Yeah?

Paul: And as luck would have it, the Magic are playing in Toronto tonight down at the ACC arena? Got that name right?

Iman: Yup.

Paul: So, I tell the kid, Zachary pack your bags we're goin' to Toronto to cheer for the Magic. Should've seen him—was ready to do a backflip off the wall, had to stop him.

Iman: Proud papa eh?

Paul *[Finishes with the insulin]*: You betcha', sweet kid too, oh yeah. *[pause.]* He's probably called me five times already even though I told him I won't be off for another hour.

Iman: Oh he's alone?

Paul: Oh no, staying with Katy. The casting director's daughter. You met Marsha?

Iman: No unfortunately not.

Paul: Real sweetheart that one. *[pause.]* Ah, I'm sure they're fine. Anywho—good meetin' ya there bud. If I don't see you, “asta la vista baby”.

[Paul exits.]

Iman: Asta la vista baby. *[He runs to the sign in sheet on the table. He flips through the pages. Goes through what seems to be a contact list.]* Paul McManneman 407-248-6050. *[He goes to the “press button” that Malek had previously set up. As he's about to press the button, he stops.]* No, don't get them involved. *[He looks at Malek's bag, takes out the headbag he hid, and rushes through the rest. He finds Malek's dishdasha, in its pocket an old flip phone.]* Jesus, when is this guy from? Think, think, think, blocked call was *, prank calls, think prank calls, *, *67! *67! *[He dials *67. Three beeps.]* Yes! It worked. *[Dials]+1-4-0-7-2-4-8-6-0-5-0, 6050. [He waits. Paul answers.]* Hello? Mr. McManneman? Paul McManneman? This is officer Raminsky from the Toronto Police Department calling you. Is your son's name Zachary? *[pause.]* You're from Orlando? *[pause.]* I hate to break it to you but no, unfortunately your son has been admitted to an emergency room because of a broken rib *[pause.]* He may need surgery but you'd need to speak to the doctors yourself for more information. *[Pause.]* I'm sorry Paul. *[pause.]* Yes, can you write it down? 399 Bathurst Street. *[Pause.]* I will see you when you get here. *[He hangs up the calls and puts back Malek's phone and bag pack.]* I'm sorry Paul. Hope you catch your game Zach. *[Paul enters in a panic, Iman is one again startled]* Paul!

Paul: Listen kid, I can't seem to find anybody here. Do me a favour will you?

Iman: Of course, anything. You ok?

Paul: It's—It's Zach. Poor kid broke his ribs. May need surgery.

Iman: Oh my god!

Paul: Yeah. Anywho, *[a piece of paper in hand]* see this address?

Iman: 399 Bathurst Street.

Paul: Could you call me a cab or something?

Iman: Sure. You got uber on your phone?

Paul: Yeah why the fuck not? Is it faster? *[Handing Iman the phone.]*

Iman: Of course. *[Looks at the paper again and puts in Uber.]*

Paul: Is it working?

Iman: 2 minutes. Your driver's got a 5 star rating don't worry.

Paul: Oh yeah? Ok good. I mean, jesus, had a gut feeling about this I'll tell ya'. Sixth sense you'll only have when you're a parent.

Iman: Sorry to hear that man. Hopefully he'll be ok.

Paul: Oh god. Imagine the pain he must be going through. What's the car?

Iman: A red Corolla. Toyota.

Paul: Thanks pal huh? I owe you one.

Iman: Oh—don't mention it.

Paul: Wish us luck.

Iman: I'm sure he'll be fine. You want me to walk out with you and make sure the driver takes the fastest route?

Paul: That would be reassuring.

Iman: I'll be right there.

Paul: See you at the front door I guess?

Iman: Sure thing.

[Paul exits. Iman runs to Malek's bag and pulls Paul's headbag out. He exits. Zain, Issa, and Dino come in the corner. Issa is singing a Kurdish tune. Zain takes an apple. Dino lies down on the bench.]

Zain: I'm telling you she was giving me the eye. Gotta jump on dat ting' fast. You know?

Dino: Get her number, stop talking shit.

Zain: I will once I'm alone with her for a minute—away from the limelight.

Dino: The limelight? Really? You got a ski mask on, no one sees your face.

Zain: What are you saying bro? The light is shining straight at me! *[as Iqbal]* So watch out America. Your exceptionalism will become the ashes Zain walks on when he makes it big in Hollywood.

Dino: You're delusional. Like playing Iqbal the Butcher is gonna' land you a part beside Vin Diesel.

Issa: Unless he's being kidnapped or taken for hostage or beheaded or bombed or shot or run over by a truck. That could work.

Zain *[To Issa]*: See! Now you're startin' to believe! *[To Dino]* Cha Ching! Ya heard the man.

Dino: Still...no one's gonna' recognize you with that mask on.

Zain: You know who is gon' recognize me?

Dino: Who?

Zain *[taking it in]*: My moms man—she's gonna be pissed if she ever watches this crap.

Dino: Yeah I don't even tell my parents I do this shit.

Zain: Your mom ever smack you upside the head?

Dino: No bro. Slippers.

Zain: Slippers.

Dino: Broke a brand new lamp with a soccer ball in the dining room when I was eight, nine. She's like 20 yards away, throws it at me all the way from the KITCHEN and *splash!* Smacks me dead centre on the forehead.

Zain: Respect!

Dino: But wait—you know what happened after?

Zain: What happened?

Dino: The slipper boomeranged its way back into her hand.

Zain: Mad skills!

[Iman walks in visibly anxious.]

Iman: Has anyone seen Malek?

[beat. They look at one another.]

Zain: Not recently. You good?

Iman: Yeah I'm fine. What's up? What are you guys talking about?

Issa: Mothers.

Iman: Mothers?

Issa: Yeah Dino and Zain were talking about the slipper throwing skills of their mothers. Did your mother ever throw a slipper at you?

Iman: Yeah, one time. I was cornered—looked helpless. I think she felt sorry for me. Missed on purpose.

Dino: Dude, you sure you're ok?

Iman [*snaps out of it*]: Yeah I'm fine.

Issa: My grandmother used to broom us.

Zain: Your grandmother used to broom you?

Issa: Yeah, we used to play cards with the cousins—around a circle, sunflower seeds, cigarettes, the whole deal. She didn't like it, you know, haram—1,2,3 she would go grab her broom and I swear, her soul rest in peace, you see the curling they show on tv here? Vallahi, she would have been a champion if she played it. firrt—firrt—fiirt. [*Acting it out. They laugh*] God bless.

Zain: God bless.

Dino: God bless.

Iman: God Bless.

Issa: Dino cigarette?

Dino: Yeah might as well. [*To Zain*] You coming?

Zain: Nah—Imma stay back just in case she shows up or something'.

[*Dino and Issa exit.*]

Zain: What'd you do?

Iman: Nothing man. Keep it on the downlow.

Zain: You smell like fear.

Iman: I called him and pretended to be a cop and told him his son had a broken rib.

Zain: Hm. Could have done worse, but still—

Iman: And I may have ubered him to Brampton, accidentally.

Zain *[in shock]*: Brampton?

Iman: It was the closest thing that came to my mind when he asked me to uber for him! And it's far!
[pause.] What? It's perfect!

Zain: Where'd you get his number? *[Iman points to June's booklet]* Ah! Slick. Well, at least you didn't murder anybody. *[beat.]* Almost showtime eh? You memorized the lines?

Iman: Yeah. I'm just gonna go practice them a couple more times. *[They give props]* Kill it!

Zain: You too brother, shine bright shine bright.

[Blackout. Scene.]

[Malek crosses the stage and appears to plant something beneath Paul's chair. Seconds after he's finished, a spotlight goes on him with a laser pointed at his head.]

The Director: Hey what's your name?

Malek *[Startled]*: Malek.

The Director: What you doin' there bud?

Malek: Sorry I just wanted to see what the stage looks like from upfront.

The Director: Who told you you can stand there?

Malek: No one.

The Director: So why are you standing there?

Malek: Because no one told me I couldn't.

The Director *[gasps]*: How rude! That's like me coming into your home and standing right in the middle of it because no one told me I couldn't? How would that feel Malek?

[Malek remembers his home.]

The Director: Is that your logic?

Malek: I learned it from the history of *your* land.

The Director: Uh-oh! Jennifer sweetheart be careful—this puppy bites! *[Malek turns around and starts to walk off.]* You know what? *[Malek stops.]* You're good you. How 'bout a role?

Malek: I'm just an extra.

The Director: Pays well.

Malek: I'm just doing this for fun.

The Director: You don't seem to be having fun!

Malek: It's fine. Thank you for your offer though, much appreciated.

The Director: Thirty grand?

Malek *[thinks about it.]*: What's the role?

The Director: I just had an idea. "In the Mood for Sharpness"! How bout that for a title eh Malek? That title draws your paws to the fish grizzly bear?

Malek *[smiles]*: I'm not an actor. I do construction.

The Director: True. Answered like a true director! What's your favourite movie?

Malek: You know, I should get out of your hair!

The Director: How do you know I have hair? You can't see me. Can you see me?

Malek: No, you're fine.

The Director: Ok, good. So what's your favourite movie?

Malek: I don't really watch that many movies. Can I leave?

The Director: Hey Gary?

Gary: *[Flashes a lightbulb.]*

The Director: Knock-Knock!

Gary: *[Double flash.]*

The Director: The guy—

Gary: *[Triple flash.]*

The Director: The guy who is an extra on a movie set and doesn't watch that many movies.

Gary: *[Spurt of flashes.]*

The Director: Ok, fine. Actors. What? Pacino, De Niro, who else?

Malek: Pesci.

The Director: Pesci. Stallone?

Malek: Tom Hanks.

The Director: Tom Hanks? What like Gump? No? The spaceship one? No. Uhm...The Terminal one. That one! You seem like a terminal kinda fella!

Malek: That was a good movie.

The Director: But it's not *the* movie!

Malek: The Cast Away.

The Director: The Cast Away. That's it isn't it?

Malek: *[quiet.]*

The Director: How fitting. Come on, gimme' a Wiiiiiiilllssoooooonnnn! *[Malek smiles.]* You like that scene? On the boat. Wilson's out in the ocean. Is that how it went?

Malek: Yeah. I think so.

The Director: Come on', say it with me. Wiiiiiiilllssoooooon! Wiiiiilssoooooon!

Malek: That's—thanks, I'm good.

Malek: Come on, it won't kill ya' will it? Wiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiillsssoooooooon! I bet you've always wanted to yell that out! Wiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiillsssoooooooon! *[Malek mimicks the line at first, then mumbles it, he starts to repeat it softly gradually getting louder and more passionate.]* Wiiiilsooon!

The Director: Vroom! Vroom! Drive us home baby!

The Director and Malek: Wiiiillsooon! Wiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiillsssoooooooon.

[Malek drops to his knees. He goes into a sajdah position, beating the floor every time he says her name.]

Malek: Salma! Saalmaaaa, SAALMAAAA!

[beat. A moment passes]

The Director: Are you joking me? Was that real or did you just explore that?

Malek *[Snaps back from the trauma]*: What?

The Director: What happened to you there? Was that an act or you got some problems you need to speak to someone about?

Malek: Obviously an act. Like you said, I've always wanted to do that.

The Director: Well...do you feel better now?

Malek: Yeah. *[a chuckle.]*

The Director: *[a chuckle back.]*

The Director: Why did you call out Salma?

Malek: I was eavesdropping on the action on set.

The Director: Yeah clearly I can tell with you being centre stage and all. Listen, that was good. We got your number right?

Malek: Yes.

The Director: You met Marsha?

Malek: No.

The Director: Ok I'm gonna have Marsha the casting director call you some time soon— a cup of coffee at her office, discuss the offer at length, huh?

Malek: Sure.

[beat.]

The Director: Yes, to answer your question: yes, you can leave.

Malek: Thank you.

The Director: No more eavesdropping.

[Malek exits.]

The Director: Wait! Come back!

[Malek reenters with uncertainty.]

Malek: Who, me?

The Director: You said your name was Malek?

Malek: Yes.

The Director: You're the guy who was late for wardrobe?

Malek: What?

The Director: What's with the accent?

Malek: What accent?

The Director: Oh is that how it is? You know that's very disrespectful. I take the offer back, seems like uncle Joe here's not quite the bowler he thought he was. I've worked with actors you couldn't even play their fart doubles kid, kapish? Tryin' to lay a lying line on me like that! What's with the accent change? Patrick!

Malek: You're wrong. You're thinking about the other guy! The guy who pressed the button was late not me.

The Director: Curly?

Malek: Yeah. He was the one with the accent?

The Director: Are you positive? I mean, he was funny looking with the pants and all so I was a bit distracted...

Malek: It was *him!*

The Director [*genuinely confused*]: It was?

Malek: Sure.

The Director: Ok then—I will have Marsha call you. Nice chat. Sorry about the little confrontational doozy there.

[*Awkwardness.*]

Malek: That's fine. [*Malek walks off.*]

The Director: Hey Gary did that guy seem odd to you?

Gary: [*Double flash.*]

The Director: Where's Patrick? He's smoking. You know he smokes and comes sits right beside me. He smells like a cab ride I took once in Columbia twenty years ago. [*Gary does not flash.*]

The Director: Gary you there? [*Gary flashes.*]

Scene.

[*Iman exits. Zain wonders around a bit practicing his lines. Malek walks in.*]

Zain: Hey man, practicing my lines. You mind?

Malek: Just need something from my bag.

Zain: Sure. [*Malek goes towards his bag.*]

[*Zain walks over to the coffee table and pours himself a coffee.*]

Zain: How long you been here brother?

Malek: Almost two years.

Zain: Refugee status? *[Malek doesn't respond]* Hate the coffee here.

Malek: Then why do you drink it?

Zain: Habit I guess.

Malek: Bad for your eyes.

Zain: Thank you doctor. I'll take your prescription and wipe my ass with it.

[Malek laughs. Zain is surprised by his laughter.]

Zain: What do you do?

Malek: Construction.

Zain: Of what?

Malek: Structures for trade shows, exhibitions, whatever.

Zain: Oh yeah—I'm in marketing, 'ideation'. We should definitely link up. You on Linkd In?

Malek: No.

Zain: You should get on that. *[Puts his drink down.]* We're going on in ten. Better go to empty the tanks before. *[Takes his mask, and the knife off his belt and puts them on the table.]*

Malek: You Muslim?

Zain *[Turns around]*: What?

Malek: Do you pray?

Zain: Who wants to know?

Malek: Curios.

Zain: No. I never learned. But I fast sometimes—I don't eat pork though. That's gotta cover my ass to some extent when the time comes. *[He exits. Malek walks over to Zain's cup and puts something in it. He takes the mask and knife. He leaves. Dino enters. Pours himself a coffee. Trying to take make sense of what may be happening on stage. Zain enters.]*

Zain: You good cuz?

Dino: I don't know.

Zain: You don't look so good.

Dino: I don't know if I'm traumatized or in love.

Zain: Same shit if you ask me.

Dino: They just tortured me by dragging me around like a mop on the floor—

Zain: They did what?

Dino: —and then I saw the most beautiful girl I've ever seen.

Zain: June?

Dino: No. Haadiya.

Zain: Who?

Dino: Haadiya! The actress I just did a scene with.

Zain: What? They chose you and not me? Fuck. I get Iqbal and you get the scene with the girl?

Dino: She's beautiful.

Zain: Where is she?

Dino: She just came, did the scene like a pro, and left. *[beat.]* Strong. Intelligent. The way she spoke and stood up to them.

Zain: To who?

Dino: The director and Patrick.

Zain: They tortured you with a mop?

Dino: More like they made me into a mop, wrapped me and dragged me around with this strap thingy. Supposedly I was cleaning my own piss.

Zain: You pissed yourself?

Dino: Well, technically my character pissed himself.

Zain: That's fucked up. On second thought, I'll stick to Iqbal. Just wanna get it over wit', go home, light one up and watch some Chef's Table or somethin'. You seen that dude in Argentina, the chef? The guy cooks smoked fish in a clay oven. It's insane. Lives off the coast of Chile, one hour boat ride from the nearest village. Imagine that, Zain, puffin' on a big Cubano with a fine glass of Shiraz chillin' through the sunset on top of a hill, looking at Argentina on the right, and Chile on the left. Lakes, trees, hills, sun and the Argentinian chef. That's my kinda sunset right there.

Dino: You know sometimes they use grenades to give fish concussion?

Zain: Fuck yeah. Sucks to be that fish. Nah man, this guy does it proper, stabs 'em with a stick.

Dino: You don't find it kind of fucked up? I mean, just out of nowhere they hire *us*! Are we actually that lucky? Or are they up to something?

Zain *[picks up his laced coffee and drinks]*: You heard the man. Visa problems.

Dino: Visa problems. What? Not enough real actors in Toronto, they pick us?

Zain: Seemed convenient. Look they probably didn't know until the last second. Plus, what could they possibly be up to? There's a reason we're not in the big leagues, it's because we don't understand it. Look at it as an entry ticket, that's what's keeping me going.

Dino: What if it's a reality show or something?

Zain: Like hidden camera shit?

Dino: That's it!

Zain: I don't fucking care. I'm wearing a mask anyway. No one's gonna recognize me.

Dino: But they'll know your name.

Zain: Oh come on, you know no one ever watches the credits right? Plus, you know how many Zain Abouellas there are in the world? And, all of this [*referring to the setting*], what could they possibly invest so much in for?

Dino: To set us up—we crap our pants in front of their cameras, people like it, they get paid! They already did it twice with the beheading. And remember the line-up at the beginning? And the dude rolling in with that fucking headbag! [*In realization*] They got us! I'm so fucking stupid. I ain't falling again—watch. They could behead the guy in front of us and I'll stand still.

Zain [*gives it a second.*]: As long as we get paid. [*Appearing nauseous*] This coffee bro! I just got back from the washroom, now I gotta go back again. Fuck!

Dino: Maybe it's the stress.

Zain: Maybe it's the milk.

Dino: Maybe it's maybeline.

Zain: No—just stop. Don't ever say that again. Don't go on without me.

Dino: Hurry up.

[They both exit]

Patrick: Chosen extras on set please for Iqbal the Butcher.

[Scene.]

The Shootout

The Director: Home runs. Home runs all around.

Patrick: Gentlemen take your places!

The Director: It's the finals! Put your game faces on. Extreme emotions, that's what the characters are about. Extremists. Except for you Napoleon. You just basically stand still. Take us home boys, take us home!

[Iman sits on the chair as Paul with the head bag on, Malek comes in behind him as Zain, joined by Issa and Dino as masked extras.]

The Director: Does something look different to you?

Patrick: I don't know.

[Gary lights them up.]

The Director: There we go! Beautiful job there Gare. De la musica por favoré! *[The hymns come on]* Hit 'em where it hurts Zaini. 3, 2, 1, Action!

Malek: You helped kill our sons and daughters, justifying the theft of their lives by labelling them as "human weapons". And you expect Allah not to avenge your greed? Not by our swords. You cowardly destroyed weddings and funerals, you tortured and left, but you forgot the will of Allah's messengers and their strength in unity to hit you back. The blood of his neck spills from your hands, this is done by you, not us!

The Director: Harder!

Malek: A nightmare is coming to you. So watch out for the day when the sky brings on a manifest of smoke, enveloping the people. Your villages will burn like the palms of Banu Nadir. Inshallah, the day will come when the nation of Islam pray in mosques built over the ashes of your banks and cathedrals. The Crusaders and their apostate followers must be aware that the bill between us and them is very large, and they will be paying it with a river of blood from their sons, if God is willing. I urge you the citizens, especially our muslim brothers and sisters living on their lands not to blatantly give into their lie in becoming products of fake news and consumers of fake ideologies, muse for dealers of weapons, oil, and opium, join us instead. Long live the Caliphate, eternal the light of the all- knowing, to the mercifull. Allahu Akbar.

The Director: Wow! Different but good. Great accent change! Zany I like it now, remove the tape!

[Malek removes the tape from Iman's mouth.]

The Director: Paul!

Iman: My name is Paul and I would like to tell Western governments to stop supporting the Pashmerga in the fight against the Caliphate and to stop their support for America's greedy agenda in the Middle East. I declare you the citizens who support your system of government a nation of deplorables. You entered voluntarily into a coalition with the United States against the Islamic State, just as your predecessors, following a trend amongst the British and the French who can't find the courage to say no to the Americans. The blood of my neck spills from both your hands, I am an extra, an outcast. We are outcasts, for now but not forever. I contend to die for my beliefs, so cut off my head and make me a martyr. The people will always remember it.

Malek: No, they will forget.

[The lights go off. The sound of the blade is heard. Lights come on. Malek reaches for Issa's gun and loads it with a bullet. He points the gun to his own head. A special units officer runs in. Right as Malek is about to shoot himself, Issa tries to grapple the gun out of his hand. The officer points at Malek's forehead. Schlick Schlick Boom. Issa fumbles the gun in panic and a shot is fired. Schlick Schlick Boom. The officer shoots Issa down.]

Dino: Yeah right. Ain't falling this time! Hah. Hey why don't you shoot me? Look, I'm a suicide bomber! *[He opens his jacket pretending to be one. Schlickt schlickt boom. Dino is shot down. Another officer enters and walks in the wardrobe corner, a flashlight on his forehead, with a device in his hand beeping louder as he gets closer to the press button. He starts to diffuse Malek's bomb while the other walks over and checks the corpses,. Sounds of footsteps running through the corridors behind the door are heard. The combat officer hides beside the doorframe, Zain kicks the door down and runs on stage, he sees the bodies and in disbelief he turns around, schlickt schlickt boom. Zain falls. Radios of the officers are heard. A moment passes.]*

The Director: Hm...he was a good actor.

Patrick: Who, curly?

The Director: Should've just given him the pants.

Patrick: Was that Shakespeare he did at the end?

The Director: I don't know—nah! probably not. Did we get all that?

Patrick: Yeah—*[in disbelief]*the paperwork—how are we gonna spin this?

The Director: We'll discuss it over dinner? Gare you in? *[pause.]* You in Gare? *[pause.]* Oh... probably peeing or something.

Patrick: Sushi?

The Director: Steak.

Patrick: Cut?

The Director: Cut.

Patrick: Cut!

[A news reel voice over comes on while the officers go over the bodies randomly like a video game, very mechanical.]

A reportage: Torontonians are broken-hearted tonight after an unforgettable tragedy struck a film studio in the downtown area, claiming the lives of five people. A terrorist plot like no other, reports referring to the incident as history's first terror attack caught in front of hollywood cameras. A tale literally framed for the limelight: with a bizarre beheading about to take place—before officers managed to break in and shoot the killer down. The potential victim or culprit of the beheading, Iman Farmani, is a 28 year old Iranian-Canadian with an acting degree, and a criminal background. Farmani was charged with a DUI back in 2008, and later on admitted to a rehab centre in Toronto for substance abuse and mental illness. Police have yet to confirm any background suspicions regarding Farmani's religious past and affiliations with terror groups, but speculations are on the rise that his act may have been one of wilful attempted suicide, on behalf of ISIS in front of hollywood cameras. The Beheader, Malek al-Jawaheri, was a 34 year old construction worker. A Canadian citizen who spent most of his life in Afghanistan and Syria before returning to Canada in 2015 to work, after a stop-over in Germany. Al-Jawaheri had been on intelligence radars for a short period of time with investigations yielding questionable results. The president of the United States has tweeted a statement paying respect to the family of Gary McManneman, a senior lighting and sound engineer on set who was shot down by a bullet from a handgun. Authorities know little about the shooter, 32 year old Issa Nakhlestani—a Kurdish Iraqi who also arrived as a refugee back in 2015. Police believe the close arrival dates of al-Jawaheri and Nakhlestani may lead to other clues about possible co-operations and contacts between the two men, since both had spent time in Syria, Turkey, and Germany. Din Muhammad Keshawarz is believed to have posed as a suicide bomber before agents shot him down, killing the 22 year old Brampton native whose parents immigrated from Bangladesh back in the 80's. University student Keshawarz was a salesman at TrendElectro, while studying psychology. Police have yet to confirm reports that special forces diffused a planted bomb on set connected to a timer, perhaps one engineered by Din Muhammad Keshawarz; a heroic act which potentially prevented even more innocent blood from being spilled. Din Muhammad's father issued a statement requesting the family be left alone to mourn in solitude and pay respect to their lost son, declining any further access to comments before investigations conclude. Fortunately, the rest of the film crew managed to survive and escape. Information on the 5th male suspect shot by the officer is being held for security purposes until further notice. Authorities encourage residents to call hotlines with any tips and stay patient until this tangled web of questions unweave themselves with facts and answers. The President's office has called for a halt on co-operation between American and Canadian film companies until further notice, highlighting a strong need to reconsider the security practices used at the Canadian border. They also emphasized the option of military response as a top priority against those responsible for this horrendous act. The President is to lay out a plan of action during a press conference scheduled for the American people later on

tonight, which you can watch live here on your favourite network. Stay with us for the commercial break and we'll be back shortly with more on the life of the fallen loving husband and father of two, Gary McManneman.

[The officer pulls the bag off Iman's head. He is alive and in disbelief. Lights go off. The Extras gather in a line facing the audience. They move to the left. To the right. Flash.]

The End.

CHAPTER 2, THE ESSAY

Manufacturing Terror on the Stage

The Extras is a manifestation of my experiences and thoughts as first a Middle Eastern male in Canada, then as an Iranian-Canadian playwright and actor. I emphasize on prioritizing “Middle Eastern” because the term’s implications are the central to the main issue on hand here, the purposeful manufacturing and distribution of an Islamophobic image by Hollywood and mainstream news that paints Middle Easterners and visible “Muslims” using the same brush regardless of their cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. With writing this play, I intended to explore the method and process by which this image is created to fulfill the need of having a Muslim enemy to be protected from. My intention was also to explore the consequences of such methods when put into practice, and explore how they work to produce meanings that not only alienate the Western Muslim youth in their societies, but also further strengthen the cause for radical violent Islamism.

When I refer to Islamophobia, I imply to use the term as a social, racial, and political construct, enlivened through a purposeful lens meant to manufacture and distribute a violent image of Islam and its followers, which also happens to be the lens of The Director in the play. But what this lens eschews is the obvious fact that it is not only practicing Muslims who fall victim to its gaze, but also those minutely associated with the image it is trying create regardless of their religion. In a blogpost titled “One of “them” or one of “us”?”—Arun Kundnani on Islamophobia, racism and terrorism”, Kundnani provides a clear platform for understanding the term’s implications, especially relevant in our discussion and context of *The Extras*:

A social body dependent on imperialist violence to sustain its way of life must discover an ideology that can disavow that dependency if it is to maintain legitimacy. Various kinds of racism have performed that role in the modern era; Islamophobia is currently the preferred form. The usual objection to defining it in this way is that Muslims are not a race. But since all racisms are socially and politically constructed rather than reliant on the reality of any biological race, it is perfectly possible for cultural markers associated with Muslimness (forms of dress, rituals, languages, etc.) to be turned into racial signifiers.

Simply put, this explains the nature behind the stereotyping and type-casting of Muslims, and the reason I chose to incorporate the play within the play in the dramatic structure. The extras all come from different backgrounds, yet they have one essential cultural signifier in common: beards, and maybe non-White-European complexions, thus the racial typecasting provides a visual base for their “Muslimness” to be manipulated on different levels and layers by The Director. Dino, for example, who is really a Brampton native, cares little about the religion he was born into, and for the most part, complies with all The Director’s demands without a sense of moral guilt. We don’t realize his real name is Din Muhammad until Patrick calls for him; his name literally translates into “the religion of Muhammad” from Arabic, a name he insists on hiding from the others. And yet, it is Dino who is ordered to put his head where it belongs, with a laser pointed at his forehead working its way to the ground in front of him, as controlled by The Director. I have worked as an extra and I can vouch for the fact that those two signifiers are all one needs to possess to be hired on set as “Muslim/Middle Eastern Male” background performer. The Director is the puppeteer in control of the performers’ bodies. This is blatantly referred to at the beginning of the play:

Patrick the AD *[over the PA]*: Ok Listen here extras. It's gonna be a long day, be nice, stay quiet, treat yourselves to some coffee and apples. Your job here requires your bodily presence to be used at our discretions. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to leave without pay. I strongly suggest you don't leave your corner unless you are told to. Consider yourselves officially "On Call". This is just in case we decide to use you in any shape, way, or form. Understood? (1)

I have deliberately placed many cultural markers and racial signifiers which affirm many clichés regarding the Muslim image. The characters share familiar memories, language, music, and poetry to find a common ground for human connection. The incorporation of such clichés (dates, tea, palm trees, etc.) could be interpreted as an appeasement to a Western orientalist gaze, and they may very well function as such for some. But what is important to understand is such common signifiers, or clichés, are essential in developing Canada's role as a site of negotiation and reconciliation for minorities whose nations and cultures have been at war with one another, as is the case between Issa and Iman. Racism is common and openly practiced throughout the Middle East, and it is fuelled by centuries if not millennia of ethnic, religious, and cultural rivalries enmeshed with political violence and propaganda. But once populations emigrate to a multi-cultural urban landscape in the West such as Toronto, an Iranian and an Iraqi for example, have the opportunity to sympathize and befriend one another after realizing each other's common cultural markers. Suddenly, what would once be considered as an Arab versus Persian rivalry, now has the potential to be transformed into a friendship through shared traits, dialogue, and peaceful co-existence, as manifested in the play in the scene titled "Banu Nadir":

Iman: Where you from?

Malek: Whatever I am I am Muslim first.

Issa: Sunni?

Malek [*looking at Iman.*]: Not Shia’.

Iman: [*Springs towards Malek’s face*] Yallah.

Malek [*Smiling*]: Looks like someone had a bit too much.

Issa [*comes in between them*]: Find inner peace gentlemen, not good for your hearts. Who gives a shit what we are, we used to be, where we came from, most important second is now we are together, in the same fake army they put us in. You can call my uncle a martyr, he could call him a murderer. Potato- potaato. (56-7)

The alienation of the extras is spatially signified on the stage by placing them in the “corner”, only allowed to be centre-stage when asked to play terrorists. This is where I see the role of theatre being essential, as a humanizing force in an era of de-humanization in the media for Muslims. For every terrorist attack by Islamic extremists anywhere in the world, Western immigrant Muslim youth become more cornered and isolated in their societies. This is in part due to the reactionary expectation society places on them to be “good citizens” (Orofino 7), and more importantly to *not be* those ‘bad ones’ who make the news. I have attempted to reverse this formula and explore what happens when we make the ‘good’ seem ‘bad’, most notably through Issa, Zain, and Dino. Ironically, in order for them to do a ‘good’ job in their roles is to seem ‘bad’—an issue at the heart of the actor’s struggle in the typecast industry. Patrick and The Director repeatedly use the word “good”, to affirm the ‘badness’ they seek from the performers.

Theatre allows these actors, in their flesh and blood, to stand and speak as they are in front of audiences, only to be manufactured as violent and unfriendly when filtered through the cinematic lens. The Director uses animal names for Zain (Lion) and Dino (Tiger), he bullies Iman (curly, “scruff”) and

Issa (Little one, Napoleon), he orders Haadiya to loosen her hijab, and plays absurd pranks on the team. The dark comedy incorporated in The Director's language and actions are intended to allude to the normalization of stereotyping Muslims in the West; in this sense, the comedy is more of a critique on hateful attitude and the 'othering' of the Muslim image. After Issa, the wise fool of the bunch, fails to look 'more' vicious, The Director orders them all to uniformly wear the same black masks. And this is where the political becomes the personal for the extras.

Riz Ahmed is an inspiring figure for me, a British actor and rapper of Pakistani descent. He is one of few from the visibly Muslim minority to break through into Hollywood to perform roles that are either completely free of racial typecasting, or roles that challenge the status quo regarding the Muslim image. In an essay titled "Typecast as a terrorist" published by the *The Guardian* in 2016, he wrote: "You see, the pitfalls of the audition room and the airport interrogation room are the same. They are places where the threat of rejection is real. They are also places where you are reduced to your marketability or threat-level, where the length of your facial hair can be a deal-breaker, where you are seen, and hence see yourself, in reductive labels – never as "just a bloke called Dave". The post 9/11 Necklace tightens around your neck."

Iman, as an ambitious and struggling actor, is impacted by this "necklace" the most. He is sadly aware of the status of his body as a commodity present to serve Islamophobic content, yet the limitations put on by his race prevents him from succeeding in the industry outside of this type-cast. Outside of his acting career, I have tried to develop Iman's character as an immigrant struggling with a cultural bipolarity. He neither completely fits in the West nor the East; he isn't even 'terrorist-looking' enough to be chosen as an extra on set. This alienation paired with acculturation stress leads Iman to a different form of radicalism in his behaviour. His vengeance on the film industry is manifested in his

coup-d'etat of Paul's role. He is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve the goal of receiving "screen time", just stopping short of threatening Paul's life by changing up his insulin levels. The play's main drivers are Iman and Malek albeit The Director owns the car. We know little about their backgrounds other than that Iman is an Iranian immigrant, a struggling actor who grew up in Toronto, and certainly not a practicing Muslim. This is in stark contrast to Malek who is a devout believer and follower of his faith.

Iman struggles to find his 'accent' throughout the play. He puts on different masks and accents depending on who he's talking to, or which lines he is practicing. He's a desperate character in search of a spotlight to prove his passion for the art, yet painfully aware of his status as a type-cast background performer. He tries to do the right thing by refusing to yell out "Allah Akbar" when the director asks him to, and his attempt to perform Shakespeare draws on his limits or ambitions as an actor, depending on how he's performed. The anger bottled up in him is symbolized by the brandy he drinks when Malek prays. It is only after he takes the first sip that he starts to lie, steal, and cheat his way into a role, and to a degree, become an accomplice in the death of the extras. We could say his actions arise from his faith in fame and acting more than anything else, and he willingly forbids his own sense of morality from interfering with his plan from that point on. Iman, whose name literally means 'faith', is religiously faithless and to an extent intolerant, arguably extremist with his words and actions:

Malek: Which way's East, do you know?

Iman *[under his lips]*: Fuck if I care.

[Malek hears him but is indifferent. He tries to locate East by remembering his place in the building from the entrance where the street is. He mumbles to himself into position, and with uncertainty faces stage left towards the wall. As he starts to get in the Namaz stance,

Iman interrupts him.]

Iman: That's West.

Malek: Are you sure?

Iman: Not sure that's the way you wanna pray towards. *[Iman looks at him and takes a shot out of the lid. Malek changes his position, now facing the film set. He starts to pray, with every Sajda³⁰ of Malek, Iman pours and drinks a shot. Simultaneously, the main action on set commences with the extras standing side by side facing the director.]* (23)

Iman and Malek are both marginalized outcasts in Western society. They are, to an extent, alter-egos of one another, both seeking glory, one from God and the other from Hollywood. The Ferdowsi poem incorporated allude to both their intentions:

I've reached the end of this great history
And all the land will fill with talk of me
I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save
My name and reputation from the grave
And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim
When I have gone, my praises and my fame. (48)

Although it is hard for me to pick out a protagonist between the two, if I had to choose, it would be Malek. The play as a whole is greatly inspired by several essays, one being that of Harold Pinter's *Nobel Lecture: Art, Truth, and Politics* in 2005. He notes: "The author's position is an odd one. In a sense he is not welcomed by the characters. The characters resist him, they are not easy to live with, they are impossible to define. You certainly can't dictate to them." This rings true in my relationship with Malek. The moment I labelled him a "terrorist" from the beginning, I struggled to humanize him, and that was supposed to be the whole point of writing this play. To humanize these characters, as seen in their off-camera moments hanging out in the wardrobe room, and then to

³⁰An act in Muslim prayer where one's forehead is on the ground to show respect to Allah.

dehumanize them in front of the hollywood cameras. With respect to Malek, he didn't fit the bill like the others did. He wouldn't converse with anyone, he wouldn't let me in on his background, and most importantly, he wouldn't make his intentions known to me. He came in with pre-planned notion to terrorize the set and he kept his cards close to his chest. If this was going to be a play exploring Islamophobia, Malek's character was defeating that purpose. Here was the only practicing Muslim on set and to no one's surprise, it would be him who would terrorize and murder.

The unnamed character Dino plays on-camera plays a key role in shaping Malek's character for the audience. He stands in the corner and watches Dino's monologue as if he's hearing his own story, "Malek [*To the audience*]: Some people asked me how I found God. It is very simple, when people found me less and less attractive. [*Lights go off on Malek*]" (44). He is traumatized and in search for redemption, with the height of his vulnerability being the scene in which he kneels on the floor and screams "Salma", when playfully asked to yell out "Wilson" by the director (p. 80). This is the play's most pivotal scene, it is the one meant for us to connect with Malek, who can potentially make us laugh, and feel his pain as we see him break down, exposed in front of our eyes. Malek's favourite film is *The Castaway*, he's an outcast even amongst a team of extras, and he's purposefully usually located on stage to be on the periphery looking in. From the "Reportage" at the end, we find that Malek was a Canadian citizen who had travelled back to the Middle-East and returned. This is intended to emphasize two things: the first being Malek's hidden and internalized guilt for being a citizen of the West, and second, to provide an untold history of Malek for audiences to imagine.

I am well aware that Malek's development can be interpreted as the very thing the play attempts to tackle, the manufactured image of an angry male Muslim extremist. To those who hold this view, I offer the alternative: Malek symbolizes all that we in the West did wrong in the Middle East by

furnishing extremist ideologies with weapons and political support to dictators who radically interfere in people's lives. Malek's anger symbolizes that of countless unnamed and unheard of innocent victims killed by drones, bombs, and "accidents" which we stood by silently and ignored. His demise is the price we have to pay for allowing our governments' interfering, throughout modern history, with the rise of independent thought, coup d'états, wars, and economic sanctions. Malek is essentially as much a product of extreme Islamism as he is of Western Islamophobia. As put forth by Kundnani in his blogpost:

"To comprehend the causes of so-called jihadist terrorism we need to pay as much attention to Western state violence, and the identity politics that sustains it, as we do to Islamist ideology. What governments call extremism is to a large degree a product of their own wars."

The battle, or the 'duel' between Iman and Malek also explores the internal tension between the world of Islam, especially for first or second generation Muslims growing up in the West. Iman is an overt example of a Muslim youth detached and hostile towards the religion they were born into. On the other hand, Malek represents the youth who reject the idolatry of American culture and way of life. Malek's extremism is verbalized when he explicitly shows distaste for Iman, with a keen insistence on showing him the "righteous" path:

Malek: *[pause.]* Look in the mirror, I'm not the joke. It's you. You're going to let them take you as their clown, have them toy with you like a puppet. You're going to sell your country, your faith, your family, all for a used pair of pants so you can go run and scream and disgrace Allah's name in front of their cameras, for their eyes...but don't forget there is only one path. Trust the truth in your name Iman. Faith. Faith in the man above and his plan. Your people need you.

Iman: You're not my people.

[Malek's watch goes off. beat.] (34)

The greatest challenge and muse involved in writing this play happened to be the election of Donald J. Trump into the U.S White House. I was in Iran, teaching English and working on the original idea for the play when the “Muslim ban” was proposed, directly hitting home for ordinary Iranians who, as always, once again made the top of the ‘bad’ list. When the ban was proposed, it had severe impact on travel and work plans for many citizens from the designated countries. Those inside U.S borders without a U.S passport could not risk crossing out of the border, and those who had planned to enter could no longer afford to do so. This inspired the “visa complications” in the plot, whereby the Middle-Eastern American actors could not leave the U.S, leaving the crew no choice but to use the Canadian background workers instead.

At the same time, we entered what seems to be a revolution of “post-truth” and “post-media” world, and right before our eyes, the line between truth and “alternative facts” began to blur in the media. Within all this noise, operation “Unified Trident” largely went unnoticed and under-reported. It was a joint military manoeuvre between the U.S, U.K, France, and Australia in the Persian Gulf, designed to simulate war games and combat against Iran. This was not the first time I had heard of such manoeuvres, but it was the first time I *felt* it, being exposed to the social anxiety and the economic instability the Iranian people experienced by such actions. Such decisions in foreign policy can cause immense internalized rage and guilt for the immigrant youth of the West who see their source cultures and countries under attack by their host countries’ and cultures’ foreign policy—a post-colonial psychological conundrum for vulnerable individuals, acting as a catalyst for radicalization.

In her essay “Understanding Radical Groups and Radical Youth in the West: A Literature Review”, Elisa Orofino explores and investigates the theories put forth by various authors that relate to the rise of Muslim radicalization in the West. In looking at the emotional factors of radicalization, Orofino draws on the theory of *acculturation stress* as a stress-inducing “phenomenon” which can potentially lead to negative consequences for first and second generation immigrants (4). This stress is caused by first-hand contact, interaction, and reaction to and with the new culture, including the psychological friction presiding over an individual’s adaptive measures throughout the process of self-negotiation and compromise between dominant cultures. For the “Muslim” or visibly “Middle Eastern” youth, this stress is undoubtedly heightened by the symbiotic relationship between the rise of violent extremism in the Islamic world, and Western foreign policy toward the matter. This relationship is what I have attempted to construct in the world within the play, whereby the American propaganda machine controls the “Muslim” image in the West, to justify neo-colonial violence and interference in the region.

It is a stressful time to be a Western Middle-Easterner, an identity as tense as the term sounds; especially as an Iranian-Canadian dual national at a time when the two countries refuse to acknowledge one another on diplomatic levels. Ten days after Trump’s election, the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec was terrorized by 27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette, shooting six people dead and wounding 19 others, without condolences or words of sympathy from Trump, who in the days following tweeted about Arnold Schwarzenegger doing a terrible job as host of *The Apprentice*. The rise of Islamophobic content and attitude portrayed by the media in the West is arguably unparalleled in modern history, as is the rise in extremist Islamism throughout the world. It should come to no one’s surprise if angry “Muslim” roles will also be on the increase in the mainstream film and television

industry, for Islamophobia is “a form of structural racism directed at Muslims and the ways in which it is sustained through a symbiotic relationship with the official thinking and practices of the war on terror” (Kundnani), which brings us to the ending of the play.

I have deliberately left an open and ambiguous ending by having the extras line up in their initial position before the drama commenced. This can imply that this was all a flash, a glimpse into what could have occurred, instead of what did occur. Or, it could be interpreted as a stylistic choice to frame the narrative symmetrically in terms of the imagery of the extras. If we were to go by either interpretations, then the tragedy at the end can be argued to be brought on by the hubris of Iman, Malek, and The Director. They were all complicit in the murders by engaging in extremisms of different kinds, and they were all able to achieve their goals at the expense of innocent lives. But the clear winner is The Director, the symbol of establishment politics who proposes to discuss how the massacre will be ‘spinned’ in the media with Patrick over dinner; in typical political and diplomatic fashion, reminiscent of Donald Trump enjoying his chocolate cake while more than fifty tomahawk missiles were being fired at a Syrian airbase under his orders. In order to better understand the ending, it helps to look at the very beginning, at the play’s title, *The Extras: A Thriller*. The absurdism seen in The Director’s actions and words is exemplified in his calm demeanour after the massacre. The puppeteer succeeded in manufacturing a thrilling image, while the establishment succeeded to feed off this image and instil fear using alternative facts, through the language used in the reportage at the end. Thus, the massacre and the story of the extras at the end take a back seat to how they are framed and portrayed in the media. And for a touch of dramatic irony, it was Silent Gary, the man who saw and heard, but stood by silently, who also fell victim to the violence.

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