

Omeed's Tapestries

By

Barry M. Putt, Jr.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

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OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

CHARACTERS:

OMEED SHAHIDIAN – 26, caring, protective, runs a tapestry shop with his partner.

AFSHAR MOSÂHEB – 24 going on 25, photographer, trendy dresser, jovial, apprehensive, runs a tapestry shop with his partner. He hides his free-flowing demeanor when out in society and only feels comfortable showing it when he's alone with Omeed.

MAHASTI HAJSAFI – Early 20s, respectful, yet energetic, repressed ball of fire, struggles to reconcile life with society's ideology, wears a chador.

FARBOD HAJSAFI – Mid 40s, patriarchal, aggressive, conservative office worker who has been continually overlooked despite his achievements and is in desperate need of recognition and advancement.

KAHVEH – Late 20s, with a beard, closeted, works in a mosque, follows society's expectations and obligations.

HOSSEIN – Mid 30s, compassionate, single, owner of an electronics shop.

FARBOD'S BOSS – Elite, status conscious.

JUDGE IRAJ TABARI

TOWNSPERSON

OFFICER QOLAM SHOJAEI – Late 20s, muscled.

OFFICER BEZHAD DABBAGH – Early 30s, fierce.

FARBOD'S NEIGHBOR

CASTING OPTIONS:

For a smaller cast doubling can be done in the following way.

- The actor who plays Hossein can also play the Townsperson, Officer Qolam Shojaee, and Judge Iraj Tabari.
- The actor who plays Kahveh can also play Farbod's Boss, Officer Bezhad Dabbagh, and Farbod's Neighbor.

TIME/PLACE:

Present day. Esfahan, Iran.

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Author's Note: This play was inspired by three-dozen firsthand accounts, interviews, and additional research. The staging and sets should be minimal to allow for a free-flowing feel between dramatic moments and scenes.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Lights up in a small tapestry shop called "Omeed's Tapestries" in Esfahan, Iran. Present day. Three large, framed photos hang on the wall. These include: 1. "A YOUNG, MODERN, IRANIAN WOMAN with subtle bruises on the back of her legs walking through a field of wild tulips towards the edge of a mountain." 2. "A POOR, YOUNG, IRANIAN MOTHER, wearing a chador, with a subtle scar on her face, holding hands with her TWO, TODDLER SONS in a picturesque field." 3. "The poor, young, Iranian Mother in the field kissing a bruise on one of her son's arms as the other son looks on with sympathy. Light bruises on the poor, young Iranian Mother's arms protrude from under her chador." Beautiful, detailed rugs drape the rest of the tapestry shop. OMEED (26) handsome, talks on a phone by a counter with a cash register on it.

OMEED. . . . In Esfahan . . . Right. Address it to "Omeed's Tapestries" . . . Thank you. (*Omeed hangs up the phone as AFSHAR (24) trendy, bops in the front door carrying a bag of bread.*) What kept you?

AFSHAR. Sorry, sir. It was a nice day.

OMEED. You're on the clock. (*Afshar nods and hands Omeed the bag of bread.*) Thank you. Your photos are up. Could bring in some good money.

AFSHAR. I hope. (*Afshar hurries through the curtain. Omeed unpacks tapestries from a box. MAHASTI (20) demure, energetic, wearing a chador, walks in the front door.*)

MAHASTI. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) سلام اميد (*English transliteration: Salâm, Omeed. English translation: Hello, Omeed.*)

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OMEED. Mahasti! Where's your father?

MAHASTI. At the bazaar. (*Omeed nods.*) I wish you were still my French tutor.

OMEED. Maybe next semester. (*Afshar enters with a box. He opens it and puts drapery material on a shelf.*)

MAHASTI. That's beautiful. (*FARBOD, mid 40s, full beard, conservatively dressed, enters with a small paper bag.*)

OMEED. (*To Farbod. Speaking in Farsi.*) خوش آمدی دوست من (*English transliteration: Khosh Amadid, dost-e man. English translation: Welcome, my friend.*)

FARBOD. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) درود (*English transliteration: Dorood. English translation: Hello.*)

MAHASTI. (*Feeling some fabric.*) I'd love to redecorate our living room window with something vibrant like this.

OMEED. You should.

FARBOD. Conventional colors are fine.

MAHASTI. Certainly, Father, but—

OMEED. Some tea, Mr. Hajsafi?

FARBOD. My order, please.

OMEED. Well—

FARBOD. My daughter told me about this place. That's why I'm here.

OMEED. I appreciate your business, sir.

FARBOD. When can I expect it?

OMEED. By Thursday.

FARBOD. That's what you said last week.

OMEED. It's being made in a small village. They had a delay. (*Farbod sighs in frustration as Mahasti gazes at a framed photo of "the young, modern Iranian woman with subtle bruises on the back of her legs who walks through a field of wild tulips towards the edge of a mountain."*)

MAHASTI. Beautiful. Where is this?

AFSHAR. Near my village in Alvan.

MAHASTI. Did you take— (*Afshar nods as Mahasti looks at the photo of "the poor, young Iranian Mother, wearing a chador, with a subtle scar on her face, holding hands with her two toddler sons in a*

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picturesque field.") I never realized there was so much beauty in our country.

AFSHAR. And struggle. (*He points to the subtle scar on the poor, young Iranian Mother's face. Mahasti nods and then gazes at the photo of "the poor, young Iranian Mother in the field kissing a bruise on one of her son's arms as the other son looks on with sympathy. Light bruises on the poor, young Iranian Mother's arms protrude from under her chador."*)

MAHASTI. So touching.

AFSHAR. And a way to start conversation. (*He notices the matting on the photo is loose.*) Oh, no. I hope I can fix it.

FARBOD. Can you guarantee my order will be ready?

OMEED. The craftsman said it would.

FARBOD. It needs to be.

MAHASTI. Father, "if you focus on fun, then life has just begun."

FARBOD. That doesn't apply here.

OMEED. I'm trying my best, sir. (*To Mahasti.*) Great poem.

MAHASTI. My mother wrote it. She hoped to study at the university.

OMEED. Really?

MAHASTI. But she had a family. She read to me all the time. (*To Farbod.*) Remember, Father?

FARBOD. Yes.

MAHASTI. That sparked my interest in literature. I was accepted into school just before she died.

OMEED. I'm glad she knew you were going. (*Mahasti gives an emotion-filled smile.*)

MAHASTI. So was I. (*Farbod gently pats Mahasti on the shoulder. She holds his hand and nods.*)

FARBOD. (*To Omeed.*) Please notify me as soon as it arrives.

OMEED. I will.

FARBOD. Very well. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) خدا حافظ (*English transliteration: Khoda hafez. English translation: Goodbye. Farbod leaves. Mahasti flashes an apologetic look and follows him. . . . Lights up on the sidewalk in front of the tapestry shop as Mahasti struggles to keep pace with Farbod.*)

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MAHASTI. Wait, Father. (*She catches up to him.*)

FARBOD. I don't know, Mahasti.

MAHASTI. The tapestries will come in. (*They stop walking.*)

FARBOD. I didn't want to say this, but it's been tough getting by.

MAHASTI. This is our home.

FARBOD. It was your grandfather's and great uncle's too.

MAHASTI. So?

FARBOD. They couldn't afford it.

MAHASTI. Is that why they left?

FARBOD. Yes. Kahnuj isn't that bad.

MAHASTI. It was a hundred and ten when you went to visit.

FARBOD. It's affordable.

MAHASTI. And in the middle of nowhere.

FARBOD. Six years without a raise is a long time. (*Farbod spots a crane in the distance.*) A crane. They hanged one of those homosexuals again! (*Mahasti looks over with uncertainty.*)

MAHASTI. What does your boss say?

FARBOD. If I can't make a good impression with this dinner, leaving may be the only option.

MAHASTI. I'll miss you.

FARBOD. We both go.

MAHASTI. I can't quit school.

FARBOD. It's not proper to live here alone.

MAHASTI. Mom is buried here.

FARBOD. I don't want to go either.

MAHASTI. I won't.

FARBOD. Mahasti, lack of connection with God leads to this kind of behavior. Have you joined Mrs. Elanz's prayer group?

MAHASTI. I've been busy.

FARBOD. This week.

MAHASTI. All right. (*Farbod hands her a bag.*) Your apricots?

FARBOD. Mulberry marzipan.

MAHASTI. Thank you.

FARBOD. Grandfather always thought of me.

MAHASTI. Kind man.

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FARBOD. Indeed. Get ready for Behrouz and his parents.

MAHASTI. Yes, sir. *(She heads off. Lights out on the sidewalk. . . . In the tapestry shop, Omeed stands behind the counter stressed, as Afshar stocks a shelf.)*

OMEED. What am I supposed to do, if his order's delayed?

AFSHAR. You did what you could, sir. *(KAHVEH, late 20s with a beard, and HOSSEIN, mid 30s, enter.)*

OMEED. My friends!

KAHVEH. Appreciate the donations.

OMEED. I'm glad the mosque could use them. *(Kahveh subtly admires Omeed's appearance.)*

KAHVEH. Haven't seen you there lately.

OMEED. Lot to do here.

AFSHAR. I go.

KAHVEH. I'm glad. *(To Omeed.)* I hope you'll be back.

OMEED. *(Nods.)* Hossein, did you figure out that issue?

HOSSEIN. Eventually. Electronics is a tricky business.

OMEED. Tapestries too. *(To Hossein and Kahveh.)* Sunday still good?

KAHVEH. Saturday, after prayer, would be better.

OMEED. All right.

HOSSEIN. See you then. *(Hossein and Kahveh leave.)*

OMEED. I'm glad it's finally closing time.

AFSHAR. Me too. *(Omeed locks the door as Afshar removes the loosely matted photo from the wall. Omeed turns the lights out. They exit through the curtain and into . . . Lights up in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen. Omeed and Afshar enter. Afshar sets the loosely matted photo down near a table. Omeed wraps his arms around Afshar's waist and then rests his forehead on Afshar's.)*

OMEED. *(Motions to the door.)* Enough of that. *(They kiss.)* This is the best part of the day.

AFSHAR. Mmh hmm. *(They kiss again. Omeed slowly releases Afshar then walks over to a cupboard and takes out some vegetables.)*

OMEED. He looked at me again.

AFSHAR. Kahveh?

OMEED. Yeah.

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AFSHAR. Least there's others like us here.

OMEED. What's it matter when we can't talk?

AFSHAR. Another week and I'll have enough.

OMEED. Good.

AFSHAR. How about you?

OMEED. . . . Business has been tricky.

AFSHAR. The new inventory musta helped. (*Omeed chops up some vegetables.*)

OMEED. Shop's been in the red a lot.

AFSHAR. I thought that only happened once.

OMEED. Mr. Hajsafi's order should help. I'm going to have to tutor again.

AFSHAR. When will you have enough?

OMEED. . . . Four months.

AFSHAR. Om!?

OMEED. Best I can do. (*Afshar holds Omeed's hand.*)

AFSHAR. We could go now as refugees.

OMEED. No, hon. We'd have to leave everything behind. I promised we'd go as civilized people and we will.

AFSHAR. But—

OMEED. I'll save as fast as I can.

AFSHAR. All right. (*Omeed chops up some lamb shanks.*)

OMEED. I miss my aunt Taraneh.

AFSHAR. How can you say that?

OMEED. We were close, until she found out. (*Omeed puts vegetables and lamb shanks in a pot.*)

AFSHAR. We'd still be in Alvan, if it wasn't for her.

OMEED. She was just confused.

AFSHAR. She would have had us arrested if we stayed. (*Omeed holds back sorrow. Afshar spots an envelope under the table and pulls it out.*)

OMEED. In case we need it. (*Afshar shakes his head, then puts the envelope back and fixes the matting on the photo.*) That's my favorite.

The concern, the love, the beauty.

AFSHAR. Reminds me of stories my mom told.

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OMEED. Of your grandfather beating her and her mom and throwing them out?

AFSHAR. So many don't have a voice.

OMEED. Your work will help.

AFSHAR. I hope it can bring change.

OMEED. I wish I could do things like that. (*Afshar rests his head on Omeed's shoulder.*)

AFSHAR. The best part of that day was you chasing me through that field after they left.

OMEED. You helped me see so much when we were out there.

AFSHAR. It was the first time I had someone to share it with.

OMEED. I hate selling your originals.

AFSHAR. I'll take more when we get to France.

OMEED. All right.

AFSHAR. Kahveh was right about mosque. You should go.

OMEED. The shop doesn't run itself. Besides, it's hard to believe in something that doesn't value you.

AFSHAR. It's our heritage.

OMEED. Yeah, well . . . I'll see—

AFSHAR. (*Mimics.*) If there's time. (*Normal.*) There never is. (*Omeed hugs Afshar from behind.*)

OMEED. We need to study more.

AFSHAR. Why?

OMEED. So you, Mr. Photographer, can continue your work when we get to France and so I can pass the translator's exam and find a job while we go through the citizenship process.

AFSHAR. I'll manage and you'll be fine.

OMEED. You need to know a lot of technical terms to be a government translator.

AFSHAR. Can't you just slap a "maw" or an "eh" at the end of a word and be done with it?

OMEED. (*Chuckles.*) People need to understand you.

AFSHAR. I wouldn't understand those big words you use even if they were in Farsi.

OMEED. The person I'm translating for will.

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AFSHAR. I guess you better study.

OMEED. You too.

AFSHAR. Eh.

OMEED. (*Speaking in French.*) Tu peux le faire. (*English translation: You can do it.*)

AFSHAR. I know I can do it.

OMEED. Good. It's never too soon to start. (*Afshar caresses Omeed's arm.*)

AFSHAR. How about right now, while dinner's cooking?

OMEED. What do you mean?

AFSHAR. Give me a lesson in French in the bedroom. I'll be a good student. (*Omeed smiles as Afshar leads him through a door. Lights out.*)

SCENE 2

Lights up several mornings later in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen as Afshar irons a shirt. Omeed, bare-chested, enters from the bedroom.

OMEED. (*Motioning to shirt.*) Thank you, hon. (*He kisses Afshar.*)

AFSHAR. Breakfast's on the table. (*Omeed nods then grabs a HARD-BOILED egg and eats it.*) If we ever get separated, Om, you're gonna be in trouble.

OMEED. Why?

AFSHAR. You'll have to learn how to iron.

OMEED. Very funny. (*Afshar hands Omeed the shirt he just ironed. Omeed puts it on. . . . Lights up in the tapestry shop as Omeed enters through the curtain followed by Afshar who carries the framed photo. Afshar hangs the photo on the wall as Omeed unlocks the door. Farbod and Mahasti, in a chador, enter.*)

OMEED. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) صبح بخیر (*English transliteration: Sobh bekheir. English translation: Good morning.*)

MAHASTI. Good morning. (*Farbod nods.*)

FARBOD. Well?

OMEED. The craftsman took ill.

FARBOD. What?!

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OMEED. You're welcome to select something here.

FARBOD. I ordered quality.

AFSHAR. I'll be glad to recommend some things.

FARBOD. I don't need your help. (*Afshar is taken aback.*) What's wrong with you? I never see you any place but here.

AFSHAR. There's— a lot of work to do.

OMEED. I've been renting him a room until he can get back on his feet.

MAHASTI. You're a good soul.

FARBOD. What am I supposed to do?

MAHASTI. Father, they're doing all they can.

OMEED. I'll let you know as soon as it comes in. (*Farbod nods in frustration and then leaves. Mahasti starts off.*)

OMEED. Mahasti.

MAHASTI. Yes.

OMEED. Do you know if the university needs French tutors?

MAHASTI. I'll ask.

OMEED. Thanks.

MAHASTI. He's changed since my mother died.

OMEED. Sorry.

MAHASTI. We may have to move. I won't be able to graduate then.

OMEED. You will.

MAHASTI. Even if we stay, he wants me to get married. I won't be able to finish my degree then.

OMEED. Have you talked with your friends?

MAHASTI. They don't understand.

OMEED. Oh.

MAHASTI. He wants me to settle while I want to soar.

OMEED. If you go along, you may find you get what you want.

MAHASTI. I don't see how.

OMEED. It's worth a try.

MAHASTI. I'll see. (*Omeed slips her a paper. Farbod enters and gives Mahasti an impatient look. Mahasti pockets the paper and follows her father off. Lights out.*)

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SCENE 3

Lights up in Farbod's office as Farbod opens a large three-ring binder, which knocks a framed photo of his beautiful, kindly wife, HAIDEH, off his desk. He picks up the framed photo and makes sure it's okay, then clutches it in relief. FARBOD'S BOSS, conservative, self-focused, approaches.

FARBOD'S BOSS. *(On cell phone.)* . . . I'll be there by eight. Tell Shahab to work it out. *(He turns off his cell phone. To Farbod.)* Well?

FARBOD. I'm about halfway done.

FARBOD'S BOSS. I need it on my desk tonight.

FARBOD. All right. *(Beat.)* Trouble at home?

FARBOD'S BOSS. Son and his wife.

FARBOD. Sorry.

FARBOD'S BOSS. You were a half an hour late coming back from lunch.

FARBOD. Naqsh-e Jahan Square was crowded with tourists.

FARBOD'S BOSS. Make it up.

FARBOD. Of course. *(Farbod's Boss starts off.)* Sir. *(Farbod's Boss stops.)* An issue came up. I need to reschedule.

FARBOD'S BOSS. Aren't all you claimed to be, huh?

FARBOD. It's not that, but—

FARBOD'S BOSS. Knew it. You're lucky to be here. *(He struts off. . . .*

Lights up to a DIM in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen as Afshar enters through the back door with a bag of groceries. As he shuts the door, Omeed flips on the light revealing party decor everywhere. A wrapped gift sits on the counter near a cake and champagne.)

OMEED/HOSSEIN/KAHVEH. Happy birthday!!!

AFSHAR. *(Setting bag down.)* Wow!

OMEED. Happy birthday, twenty-five.

AFSHAR. Thank you. *(On the sidewalk, Mahasti, in a chador and carrying some books, enters an alley. Laughter and chatter cause her to look up at Omeed and Afshar's open apartment window. Her cell phone*

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RINGS. She answers it. . . . Farbod sits at his desk with his cell phone to his ear.)

MAHASTI. Hello, Father.

FARBOD. Dinner's off.

MAHASTI. Sorry. There'll be other opportunities.

FARBOD. I doubt it. (*Omeed and Afshar's distant chatter increases.*)
What's that noise?

MAHASTI. One of the meeting rooms.

FARBOD. At the library?

MAHASTI. Yes.

FARBOD. Voices sound familiar.

MAHASTI. Really? I'll be home by nine-thirty.

FARBOD. All right. (*In Omeed and Afshar's kitchen, Afshar spots the wrapped gift on the counter.*)

AFSHAR. A gift!

OMEED. Of course.

AFSHAR. I don't remember seeing anything that size in the apartment.

HOSSEIN. I had it at my place.

OMEED. So curious eyes couldn't peek.

AFSHAR. Cake. Champagne! How'd ya get that?

OMEED. No questions on your birthday. (*A KNOCK on the door.*)

AFSHAR. Who's that? (*Omeed opens the door.*)

OMEED. Mahasti, you came!

MAHASTI. Certainly. Thanks for sneaking me the invite. (*To Afshar.*)
Happy birthday, Afshar!

AFSHAR. Thank you.

OMEED. I'm glad he let you out.

MAHASTI. (*Motions to her books.*) Just to the library. The school doesn't need any more tutors right now.

OMEED. Thank you for checking. (*He lights the candles on the cake.*)
Come on, everyone. (*Singing in Farsi.*)

تولد

(*English transliteration:*)

TAVALLOD . . .

(*English translation:*)

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

BIRTH . . .

OMEED/HOSSEIN/KAHVEH/MAHASTI. (*Singing in Farsi.*)

تولد تولد

تولدت مبارک

تولدت تولدت

تولدت مبارک

(*English transliteration:*)

TAVALLOD, TAVALLOD,
TAVALLODET MOBAREK
MOBAREK, MOBAREK,
TAVALLODET MOBAREK.

(*English translation:*)

BIRTHDAY, BIRTHDAY
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
YOUR BIRTHDAY, YOUR BIRTHDAY
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

(*Afshar blows out the candles. Everyone claps. Omeed dishes up cake and pours champagne.*)

OMEED. Here's to a great birthday! (*Everyone toasts and then sips some champagne.*)

AFSHAR. Very good.

MAHASTI. I've never had champagne.

AFSHAR. Me either! (*They laugh.*) Is it gift time?!

OMEED. Don't you want to finish your cake?

AFSHAR. (*Smiles.*) No, I'd like to open my gift!

OMEED. All right. (*Afshar unwraps his gift to find a DIGITAL CAMERA.*)

AFSHAR. Wow! How could you—

OMEED. Hossein got me a deal on a secondhand one.

AFSHAR. What about your savings?

OMEED. It barely made a dent.

AFSHAR. Yeah?

OMEED. Promise. It will let you take pictures again 'til you get something better.

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AFSHAR. I want my first one to be of you. (*Omeed smiles. Afshar takes his picture, then stuffs cake in Omeed's mouth and takes another.*)

OMEED. You better delete that one.

AFSHAR. I'm gonna blow it up poster size. (*They laugh. Afshar holds Omeed's hand.*) Thank you, Om. (*Mahasti notices and flashes an uneasy look at the others. Kahveh shifts uncomfortably and returns a surprised look. Hossein shrugs. Afshar pulls Mahasti over.*) Stand next to Omeed. (*Mahasti reluctantly does.*) What are you a bunch of dummies? (*To Mahasti.*) Mahasti. Strike a pose. (*Mahasti slowly strikes a fun pose. Everyone else follows. Afshar snaps a picture.*) I want everyone near the door. Peeking out, crouching down, anything, as long as it's fun. (*They pose as Afshar puts the camera down and sets the timer. Afshar jumps in the shot and tickles Mahasti. She giggles. The camera's shutter clicks.*) I knew you could do it. (*Mahasti smiles at him.*)

MAHASTI. Let me take one of you two.

AFSHAR. Okay. (*Mahasti takes a picture of Omeed and Afshar as they laugh . . . Farbod approaches the front of the tapestry shop and tries the door. It's locked. He hears distant chatter and follows it towards the alley. . . . In Omeed and Afshar's kitchen, Omeed and Afshar stand with Hossein, Kahveh, and Mahasti at the back door.*)

AFSHAR. Thank you all for coming.

MAHASTI. I wouldn't have missed it.

HOSSEIN. Happy birthday again! (*Afshar nods as they leave. Omeed puts the cake away.*)

AFSHAR. Tonight was great, but you shouldn't have.

OMEED. It will work out. (*Omeed gathers party leftovers and puts them in the trash.*) Ready to turn in? (*Afshar nods as he shuts a window. Omeed turns off the main light. Afshar takes Omeed by the hand.*)

AFSHAR. Thank you. (*He embraces Omeed. Omeed pulls away and looks towards the back door.*) What? (*Omeed hesitates for a moment.*)

OMEED. Nothing. (*They kiss. Lights out.*)

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SCENE 4

Lights up in Mahasti's bedroom. Mahasti sits at a desk reviewing a page in a library book. Farbod approaches.

MAHASTI. Hello, Father.

FARBOD. Did you find what you needed at the library?

MAHASTI. Yes.

FARBOD. Were you there the whole night?

MAHASTI. Mmh hmm.

FARBOD. You sure?

MAHASTI. Of course. *(Farbod takes his cell phone out and scrolls to a photo. He shows it to Mahasti.)*

OMEED. Who's that?

MAHASTI. I stopped by on my way home. It was just a birthday party.

FARBOD. Given by two men who live together.

MAHASTI. So do Grandpa and Great Uncle Nasser.

FARBOD. Your grandfather's a widower and your great uncle's divorced.

MAHASTI. You were glad they raised you, right? Said it made you who you are.

FARBOD. It did. Omeed and the other one are faggots, Mahasti. Criminals. *(He shows Mahasti another photo.)* Kissing! *(Shakes his head.)* I have to turn them in.

MAHASTI. Why? They haven't hurt anyone.

FARBOD. That's not the point.

MAHASTI. They were in their own home.

FARBOD. You need to go to prayer group more.

MAHASTI. Think about it, please.

FARBOD. I—

MAHASTI. Please, Father. *(Farbod sighs in frustration.)*

FARBOD. . . . All right. *(Lights out.)*

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SCENE 5

Lights up in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen as Omeed sits at the table staring at a page in a French book. Afshar enters from the bedroom with a prayer rug.

AFSHAR. Morning. (*Omeed continues to stare. Afshar caresses Omeed's arm.*) Good morning, Om.

OMEED. (*Regaining focus.*) Hi, hon.

AFSHAR. What were you thinking about?

OMEED. My aunt.

AFSHAR. And studying?

OMEED. (*Speaking in French.*) Oui. Allez-vous prendre un petit-déjeuner? (*English translation: Yes. Are you going to eat breakfast?*)

AFSHAR. Huh? (*Omeed stands up and holds Afshar around the waist.*)

OMEED. You really should study.

AFSHAR. I only have a minute.

OMEED. That's better than nothing.

AFSHAR. All right. How do you say armadillo?

OMEED. That's just armadillo.

AFSHAR. Omelet?

OMEED. Omelet is French too. (*Afshar pulls away and takes a step towards the door.*)

AFSHAR. See, I know more than you think.

OMEED. Even so, you should study.

AFSHAR. I will. Come with me to morning prayer.

OMEED. I have a lot to do.

AFSHAR. Have fun memorizing those big words while I'm gone. Hydrochloride-maw.

OMEED. Very funny.

AFSHAR. (*Speaking in French.*) Tu peux le faire. (*English translation: You can do it.*)

OMEED. I can and better than you.

AFSHAR. (*Speaking in French.*) Au revoir. (*English translation: Goodbye.*)

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

OMEED. (*Laughs. Speaking in French.*) Au revoir. (*English translation: Goodbye. Afshar kisses Omeed. Omeed flashes a loving smile as Afshar leaves. Omeed struggles to learn a term, then shuts the book. . . . Lights up in the tapestry shop as Omeed walks in and unlocks the main door. He straightens up a messy prayer rug display as Farbod enters.*)

OMEED. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) سلام دوست من. (*English transliteration: Salâm, dost-e man. English translation: Hello, my friend. Speaking in English.*) Your order is being packed as we speak.

FARBOD. Really?

OMEED. I appreciate your patience.

FARBOD. No matter. (*Omeed gives a quizzical look.*) The opportunity is over.

OMEED. I'm sorry to hear that. Hopefully you'll be able to reschedule.

FARBOD. I saw you.

OMEED. What?

FARBOD. Kissing that man you call your roommate.

OMEED. You're mistaken. (*Farbod pulls up a photo on his cell phone of Omeed and Afshar kissing and shows it to Omeed.*)

FARBOD. Sex with another man is a capital offense.

OMEED. We didn't have sex. (*He shows Omeed another photo.*)

FARBOD. Your bedroom.

OMEED. You can't make it out!

FARBOD. You've put me in a difficult position.

OMEED. Your order will be here.

FARBOD. Not that. (*Motions to photo.*) I could be seen as an accessory.

OMEED. I don't see how.

FARBOD. I need something to make up for it. (*Beat.*) Fifteen million Tomans.

OMEED. What?!

FARBOD. Or I'll have to go to the police.

OMEED. I don't have that kind of money. (*Farbod starts off.*) Wait! I'll— see what I can do. (*Omeed runs through the curtain . . . and into the kitchen. He rummages in one drawer and then another. Omeed scans the room in desperation, then pulls an envelope from under the table. He*

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

gazes at it with consternation then exits to . . . the tapestry shop where Farbod waits.)

FARBOD. Well?

OMEED. My entire savings. Twelve million. (*Farbod counts the money.*) It's over, right?

FARBOD. I'll be quiet.

OMEED. I get the pictures?

FARBOD. Phone companies back everything up these days. But I'll be quiet. (*He pockets the money and leaves. Omeed looks concerned. Lights out.*)

SCENE 6

Lights up later that day in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen. Afshar runs in carrying a box.

AFSHAR. Omeed!

OMEED. (*O.S.*) In the shop!

AFSHAR. Omeed! (*Omeed walks in as Afshar catches his breath.*)

OMEED. We don't close for two— Are you okay?

AFSHAR. I barely got away.

OMEED. From what?

AFSHAR. After prayer, I went to the Khaju Bridge. Some men yelled (*speaking in Farsi.*) کونی (*English transliteration: Kuni. English translation: Faggot. Speaking in English.*) at me and chased me.

OMEED. What?! (*Omeed embraces Afshar.*)

AFSHAR. I out ran them.

OMEED. Please, don't go out alone anymore.

AFSHAR. . . . I'll take a different route.

OMEED. It's too dangerous.

AFSHAR. You worry too much.

OMEED. Afshar, this morning—

AFSHAR. Shh. (*Afshar hands Omeed a box.*) These are for the shop. The rest can be put around town.

OMEED. But—

AFSHAR. Stay here and relax. I'll tend to the shop.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

OMEED. I—

AFSHAR. Relax. Things will look better after you do. (*Afshar exits as Omeed watches with concern. Lights out.*)

SCENE 7

Lights up in Jarchibashi Restaurant, represented by ornate, high-backed chairs and tables. Farbod and Mahasti, in a chador, sit at a table drinking tea. Farbod's Boss sits a few tables away perusing a menu.

MAHASTI. Are you sure we can afford this?

FARBOD. The shop returned some of my deposit to make up for the delay.

MAHASTI. That was nice of them.

FARBOD. It was the least they could do.

MAHASTI. I'm glad you reconsidered. Does this mean we might be able to stay in Esfahan?

FARBOD. I don't know. I invited Behrouz and his family over on Wednesday.

MAHASTI. No, Father.

FARBOD. He has a lot to offer.

MAHASTI. His cousin told me he has a bad temper. I'd be miserable as his wife.

FARBOD. . . . All right. (*Farbod spots his Boss.*) I'll be back. (*Farbod approaches his Boss's table.*) Good evening.

FARBOD'S BOSS. I didn't know you had a second job.

FARBOD. I don't. (*He motions to Mahasti.*)

FARBOD'S BOSS. Is your daughter's husband well off?

FARBOD. She's not married. May I treat you to some hors d'oeuvres?

FARBOD'S BOSS. This isn't a food stand. (*Farbod pulls a wad of cash out of his pocket.*)

FARBOD. How about some (*Speaking in Farsi.*) دلمه برگ مو (*English transliteration: Dolmeh Bargeh Mo? English translation: Stuffed grape leaves?*)

FARBOD'S BOSS. All right.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

FARBOD. Your leadership has inspired me.

FARBOD'S BOSS. Really?

FARBOD. Given me some good ideas.

FARBOD'S BOSS. Well— (*Mahasti approaches.*)

MAHASTI. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) سلام (*English transliteration: Salâm. English translation: Hello. Speaking in English.*) Father. (*To Farbod's Boss.*) Sir. (*Farbod's Boss nods at her.*)

FARBOD. I'll see you at home.

MAHASTI. But—

FARBOD. I'll bring something for you. (*Mahasti grimaces.*)

MAHASTI. (*To Farbod's Boss.*) Good night. (*She leaves.*)

FARBOD'S BOSS. Well mannered.

FARBOD. Thank you. How is your family?

FARBOD'S BOSS. Shahab will have his Ph.D. soon.

FARBOD. A degree in chemistry and a family!

FARBOD'S BOSS. They haven't had time for that yet.

FARBOD. Of course. May I join you?

FARBOD'S BOSS. I'm expecting—

FARBOD. Just until they arrive. (*Farbod's Boss nods. Farbod sits.*)

New technology could make our department much more productive.

FARBOD'S BOSS. We can't afford it.

FARBOD. What if we could? (*Farbod's Boss looks intrigued. Lights out.*)

SCENE 8

Lights up in the tapestry shop as Omeed stands behind the counter talking on the phone.

OMEED. . . . You're sure? . . . Thank you. (*Omeed hangs up as Farbod enters. Speaking in Farsi.*) سلام (*English transliteration: Salâm. English translation: Hello.*)

FARBOD. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) درود (*English transliteration: Dorood. English translation: Hello.*)

OMEED. I received confirmation. Your order will be here tomorrow.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

FARBOD. Cancel.

OMEED. It's a custom order.

FARBOD. I need five million more.

OMEED. We settled this the other day.

FARBOD. The risk is becoming greater.

OMEED. I don't have anymore.

FARBOD. You don't want to go to jail, do you?

OMEED. No, but—

FARBOD. Maybe you have something in the back. (*Omeed hesitates.*)
Let's see. (*Omeed approaches the curtain. . . . Lights up in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen as Omeed peeks through the curtain.*)

OMEED. Afshar? (*Farbod pushes him into the room.*)

FARBOD. I only have a few minutes. (*Omeed opens a cabinet and searches.*)

OMEED. How about some frying pans?

FARBOD. No bartering. (*Omeed takes flatware out of a drawer.*)

OMEED. These are very nice.

FARBOD. I'm serious.

OMEED. It's all I have. (*Farbod spots a camera on the table.*)

FARBOD. That digital?

OMEED. Yes.

FARBOD. Where did you get it? (*Omeed picks up the camera.*)

OMEED. You don't want this.

FARBOD. Where?

OMEED. From a shop down the street.

FARBOD. Let me see. (*Omeed hesitates.*)

FARBOD. I don't want to go to the police. (*Omeed reluctantly gives the camera to him.*)

OMEED. No more, right?

FARBOD. As long as this sells. (*Farbod leaves. Omeed slumps in a chair. After a moment, he looks up and spots Afshar's prayer rug. Omeed walks over slowly, lays the rug down, and kneels on it with hesitation and conflict. Lights out.*)

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

SCENE 9

Lights up in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen as Afshar walks in the back door. Omeed looks up from praying on a rug.

AFSHAR. I'm glad you're connecting.

OMEED. Afshar, we need to—

AFSHAR. It's Saturday.

OMEED. But—

AFSHAR. We closed early. I climbed a tree in the bird garden and saw this amazing field. I have to take some pictures there.

OMEED. Not today.

AFSHAR. It's isolated. We can relax, have a picnic.

OMEED. Even so—

AFSHAR. I can't wait to use my new camera.

OMEED. It's been a stressful week. (*Afshar holds Omeed's hand.*)

AFSHAR. I'll get everything ready.

OMEED. I appreciate it, hon, but—

AFSHAR. Then it's settled. (*He lets go of Omeed's hand and grabs a basket off a shelf.*) We'll have some crackers. (*He puts them in the basket.*) I'll brew tea and . . . (*Looks around.*) My camera. Did you see it?

OMEED. Mr. Hajsafi.

AFSHAR. What about him?

OMEED. I've been trying to tell you. He knows.

AFSHAR. What?

OMEED. About us. He took pictures from outside after the party. He's been demanding money.

AFSHAR. Really?

OMEED. He said if he sells it, we're square.

AFSHAR. Yeah?

OMEED. We need a change. (*Afshar turns away.*) Let's go on that picnic.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

AFSHAR. This is serious. (*Omeed embraces him and motions to the window.*) Do you know what's out there? (*Afshar shakes his head.*) Freedom.

AFSHAR. When will it be ours?

OMEED. Soon. We can have a taste of it.

AFSHAR. How?

OMEED. By enjoying today.

AFSHAR. All right. (*Lights out.*)

SCENE 10

Lights up in Farbod's living room as Farbod folds a prayer rug and sets it near a wall, then walks over to a table and opens several envelopes. Each is a past due notice for a bill he owes. He looks concerned. A TOWNSPERSON KNOCKS on the door. Farbod walks over and opens the door.

FARBOD. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) درود (*English transliteration: Dorood. English translation: Hello.*)

TOWNSPERSON. I'm here about the camera.

FARBOD. Yes. (*Farbod shows the camera to him.*)

TOWNSPERSON. Never heard of that brand.

FARBOD. It's a good price. (*The Townsperson examines the camera then hands it back to Farbod and leaves.*) How about a hundred less?

TOWNSPERSON. It's not quality.

FARBOD. Two?

TOWNSPERSON. I'm not interested.

FARBOD. Sir! (*Farbod sighs in frustration as Mahasti, wearing a chador, approaches carrying the Quran.*)

MAHASTI. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) سلام (*English transliteration: Salâm. English translation: Hello. Speaking in English.*) Father.

FARBOD. How was prayer group?

MAHASTI. Good.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

FARBOD. And the Jarchibashi's (*Speaking in Farsi.*) گنجشکی کله
(*English transliteration: Gheymeh Rizeh? English literal translation: Sparrow head?*)

MAHASTI. Wonderful. I had it for lunch. (*She takes the camera from Farbod.*) Afshar, at the tapestry shop, got one like this for his birthday. (*She scans through photos on the camera.*) These are his photos!

FARBOD. What?

MAHASTI. Why do you have his camera?

FARBOD. He didn't need it.

MAHASTI. He loved it.

FARBOD. It was a consolation for the delay.

MAHASTI. What's going on?

FARBOD. I'm trying to keep us here.

MAHASTI. Not this way.

FARBOD. I deserve something for staying quiet. (*Mahasti hastily deletes photos.*)

MAHASTI. They're nice people. They work hard.

FARBOD. That's beside the point.

MAHASTI. Why?

FARBOD. You know why.

MAHASTI. You need to give it back. (*Farbod takes the camera.*)

FARBOD. I don't want you seeing them anymore.

MAHASTI. Father—

FARBOD. Go inside and study. (*Mahasti sighs in frustration.*) Now. (*Mahasti goes in the house. Farbod tries to view the photos on the camera but can't get it to work. He smashes the camera on the ground then walks inside. . . . Omeed, picnic basket in hand, and Afshar stroll towards Farbod's house.*)

AFSHAR. So?

OMEED. It was wonderful!

AFSHAR. Wasn't it?!

OMEED. Just like you said.

AFSHAR. If only I could keep helping those poor people.

OMEED. I'll get you a new camera. Promise. (*Afshar smiles.*) Have you been studying?

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

AFSHAR. (*Speaking in French.*) Un peu, mon ami. (*English translation: A little, my friend.*)

OMEED. Really?

AFSHAR. Well—

OMEED. Afshar.

AFSHAR. Soon.

OMEED. All right. (*Afshar notices his camera smashed in front of Farbod's house.*)

AFSHAR. Look! (*Omeed spots the camera.*)

OMEED. Let's go. (*They hurry off. Lights out.*)

SCENE 11

Lights up soon after in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen as Omeed and Afshar enter.

OMEED. We need to seek asylum now even if it isn't in France. (*Afshar holds Omeed's hand.*)

AFSHAR. Leaving as refugees takes planning, Om.

OMEED. We'll check on-line.

AFSHAR. What about the government filters?

OMEED. Hossein showed me how to bypass them.

AFSHAR. Really?! When?

OMEED. Just the other day. (*He turns on his laptop and types.*)

AFSHAR. So easy. (*Omeed nods.*) Start with the U.N. (*Omeed searches the internet.*)

OMEED. Here. (*Afshar reads the computer screen to himself.*)

AFSHAR. . . . We don't have proper I.D. (*Omeed opens a link, then reads.*)

OMEED. We can go to Turkey without a visa and seek asylum.

AFSHAR. Click there. (*Omeed clicks on a link, then reads.*)

OMEED. They don't let refugees work!

AFSHAR. We have my savings.

OMEED. Look. . . . (*Reading.*) "In Turkey, gay refugees stand a higher chance of being beaten up than other refugees."

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

AFSHAR. It's our ticket to something better. Move over. (*Afshar sits in front of the laptop and reads.*) "The asylum process takes between nine months and two years. All documents are in Turkish. There aren't many translators available."

OMEED. We don't have enough to survive that long.

AFSHAR. What if we scrimp?

OMEED. We have to keep saving and try to settle things with Mr. Hajsafi.

AFSHAR. How? (*Omeed puts his hand on Afshar's shoulder to comfort him.*)

OMEED. We'll find a way. (*Afshar nods. Lights out.*)

SCENE 12

Lights up in Omeed and Afshar's kitchen a few days later as Omeed reviews the tapestry shop's financial records. He glances at his cell phone with angst, then looks back at the books. Omeed picks up his cell phone and dials a number.

OMEED. (*On cell phone.*) Hello. Aunt Taraneh . . . It's Omeed . . . I know . . . (*Slowly becomes upset.*) . . . All right. I won't. (*He turns his cell phone off as Afshar walks in from the tapestry shop with a tapestry.*)

AFSHAR. You okay, Om?

OMEED. My aunt.

AFSHAR. Does she know where we are?!

OMEED. She doesn't care.

AFSHAR. How do you know?

OMEED. She said I was dead to her. (*He looks down in sorrow. Afshar caresses Omeed's face causing him to look up.*)

AFSHAR. Isn't easy. (*Omeed shakes his head in pain. Afshar embraces him.*) We have each other. (*Omeed nods and then takes a breath.*)

OMEED. I— saw a sign for a job.

AFSHAR. What kind?

OMEED. Not sure. I'm going there today to find out more.

AFSHAR. If it's good, I'll do it too.

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

OMEED. All right. (*Afshar motions to the tapestry.*)

AFSHAR. Isn't this Mr. Hajsafi's order?

OMEED. He said it arrived too late.

AFSHAR. Why was it on the bargain rack?

OMEED. It's specialty. We'll be lucky to break even.

AFSHAR. We better. How are you doing?

OMEED. Made two-hundred this week.

AFSHAR. Really?!

OMEED. The new job will help.

AFSHAR. If you get it.

OMEED. I'm doing all I can. (*Afshar gives him a consoling nod. A Truck's BRAKES come to a stop O.S.*)

OMEED. Delivery.

AFSHAR. I'll handle it. (*Omeed nods as Afshar leaves. A door is heard opening O.S. . . . Lights up in the tapestry shop as Omeed enters through the curtain to find Farbod waiting near the counter.*)

FARBOD. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) درود (*English transliteration: Dorood. English translation: Hello.*)

OMEED. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) درود (*English transliteration: Dorood. English translation: Hello.*)

FARBOD. No luck. I need five million more.

OMEED. One of my regulars said he's helping you acquire software for your company.

FARBOD. So?

OMEED. What if he heard you were untrustworthy?

FARBOD. What if your new home was jail?

OMEED. Looks like we're at a crossroad.

FARBOD. I need more. Now. (*Omeed pours the meager contents of his cash drawer onto the counter.*)

OMEED. That's every last toman I have. (*Farbod pockets the money.*) We're even, right? (*Farbod nods and leaves. Omeed sighs in relief. Afshar enters through the curtain and looks over at Omeed.*)

AFSHAR. Who was that?

OMEED. Mr. Hajsafi. I don't think he'll bother us again.

AFSHAR. What makes you say that?

OMEED'S TAPESTRIES

OMEED. I spoke to him on his level.

AFSHAR. Good. There's a question about the delivery. Can you help?

OMEED. All right. (*Afshar leads Omeed through the curtain. Lights out.*)

SCENE 13

Lights up in the tapestry shop that afternoon as Afshar straightens a messy prayer rug display. Omeed walks in the front door.

OMEED. (*Looking at the rug display.*) Good job.

AFSHAR. Thank you, sir. How was the interview?

OMEED. Piece work. The more shirts you make the more you earn.

AFSHAR. Then we can make as much as we want!

OMEED. They wouldn't confirm a rate.

AFSHAR. Oh.

OMEED. I'll keep looking.

AFSHAR. Okay.

OMEED. Hope you took some time to study when it was slow.

AFSHAR. I thought about it.

OMEED. Afshar.

AFSHAR. I could use some help.

OMEED. All right. After we close. (*OFFICER QOLAM SHOJAEI, late 20s, muscled and OFFICER BEZHAD DABBAGH, 30s, fierce charge in.*)

OMEED. (*Speaking in Farsi.*) سلام (*English transliteration: Salâm. English translation: Hello. The officers shove Omeed and Afshar against the wall.*)

AFSHAR. What's going on?

OFFICER SHOJAEI. Shut up, faggot. (*Officer Shojaei pummels Afshar in the head and on his shoulder with a POLICE BATON.*)

OMEED. Get off him, you asshole! (*Officer Shojaei pummels Afshar harder. Omeed reaches for Officer Shojaei's police baton. Officer Dabbagh restrains Omeed. Officer Shojaei and Officer Dabbagh shove tapestries over Omeed and Afshar's heads and beat them with police*

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batons.) Stop! (Officer Shojaee continues to beat them as Officer Dabbagh trashes the tapestry shop. . . . Outside, Farbod and his Boss stroll along.)

FARBOD'S BOSS. . . . She's become very unreasonable. That's why my son filed for divorce.

FARBOD. Sorry. I've always encouraged Mahasti to listen.

FARBOD'S BOSS. He'll do fine on his own for now.

FARBOD. Of course. What did the committee think of the software?

FARBOD'S BOSS. I'm waiting to hear. It better improve things.

(Farbod nods. The officers push Omeed and Afshar out of the tapestry shop.) What's going on there?

FARBOD. I don't know. *(He glances at Omeed. Omeed lunges at Farbod. The officers beat Omeed, then push him and Afshar off. Farbod and his Boss exchange a curious gaze and then walk off. Lights out.)*

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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