

HEAR THE DRUMS

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: THE JOURNEY

We hear a Sufi melody and a Sufi rhythm on a Ney flute and a Daf drum.

We see the shadowy, iconic figure of an adult male dancing the whirling Sufi dance.

The melody and rhythm morph into the distant sound of a military side drum beating reveille - and the figure comes to a stop.

We see images of flames and mountains, smoke and ruined places.

We see the figure more clearly now. He is dressed in Guantanamo Bay-type clothing. He stands, head bowed, absolutely still.

The lights dim.

SCENE 2: SHEILA AND JAMILA'S FLAT, TAMBURY - 24TH DECEMBER

Late afternoon. We have an impression of a living room of a high rise flat in Tambury, a market town in the Marches. There is a door to the balcony. Through the window, there is an impression of buildings, distant hills and sky on a dull winter's day. In the centre of the room are a Habitat-type glass topped table (with a wireless laptop on it and an iPod Hi-fi unit and two armchairs. Along one wall is a Habitat-type unit with an LCD tv and a DVD player on one shelf. One shelf contains books, two others CDs and DVDs and the rest are empty. To one side of the room are three packing cases. We can see that one contains books and a second contains a doll's house - we can see part of the roof. JAMILA, dressed in embroidered jeans and a crop top, is looking into the

third case. She is listening to an iPod. She kneels, leans in and brings out a miniature, artificial Christmas tree, opens out the branches and sets it on the floor beside her. Her mobile rings and vibrates. (The ring tone is a Pashtun pop song). She removes the iPod earpieces. She unclips it from her belt and answers it.

JAMILA

Lo. Oh, hi, Tom.

She pulls out a box of decorations. A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

You know I can't.

She puts the tree in the box and carries it over to the table. A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

"Indefinitely", she said. Why don't you come round to ours?

She kneels and takes the tree out of the box.. A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Don't be stupid. She's not really scary - anyway she's working days all over Christmas.

(a beat)

We could - you know.

(a beat)

Please yourself.

She presses the cancel call button and puts her earpieces back in. She starts to dress the tree. SHEILA enters. She is wearing a smart outdoor coat over a bank nurse's uniform. JAMILA has her back to her and has not heard her enter. SHEILA looks at her for a couple of beats. She moves into JAMILA's line of sight.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Mum!

She removes her earpieces.

SHEILA

Have any of your friends been round?

JAMILA

I haven't seen Tom, if that's what you mean - and I haven't been out.

A pause. SHEILA sighs.

SHEILA

Why are you doing that?

JAMILA

I thought it'd be nice. A proper Christmas. It'll keep me company - stuck here.

SHEILA

This has got to stop.

JAMILA

It's like a prison.

SHEILA

Which is exactly where you could have ended up.

JAMILA

So?

SHEILA

And that really would have helped just now.

JAMILA

So?

SHEILA

Grow up, Jamila. Start acting your age.

A pause.

JAMILA

He's a racist.

SHEILA

That's not the point.

JAMILA

Scuse me!

SHEILA

You know what I mean.

No, actually!

JAMILA

She puts the earpieces back on. SHEILA moves to the window, sighing impatiently. She stares through it for a couple of beats, turns and approaches JAMILA.

We need to talk.

SHEILA

JAMILA looks up.

Now, please.

SHEILA (cont'd)

JAMILA removes her earpieces.

We're having someone to stay over Christmas.

SHEILA (cont'd)

A pause.

You're joking me. Who?

JAMILA

Your Grandad.

SHEILA

You haven't spoken for years. I've never met him.

JAMILA

He's staying.

SHEILA

Why?

JAMILA

Because he has to.

SHEILA

Mum!

JAMILA

A pause. They draw breath.

JAMILA (cont'd)

How long's he staying?

SHEILA

Tomorrow and Boxing Day - perhaps the day after.

JAMILA

How old is he?

SHEILA

What's that got to do with anything? In his eighties. 84. I can't remember exactly.

JAMILA

I've never seen anybody that old.

SHEILA

Don't be so stupid!

JAMILA

I'm not stupid.

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Why's he coming here after all this time?

SHEILA

He's afraid he may have to go into a home.

(off JAMILA's reaction)

No, he's not moving in with us. He's no one else to talk to now.

JAMILA

Is this weird or what?

SHEILA

I owe him.

JAMILA

What?

SHEILA

I just do.

A pause. SHEILA walks to the window. JAMILA glowers after her. She takes a deep breath.

JAMILA

Why don't you ring him and say I'm ill - I've got the 'flu?

SHEILA looks at her watch and turns.

SHEILA

He'll be here soon.

JAMILA

How's he getting here?

SHEILA

In a taxi from the train station.

JAMILA

You've not even discussed this with me never mind asked me.

SHEILA moves towards her.

SHEILA

And what would you have said? Would you have helped? Would you have given me an inch?

A pause.

JAMILA

Put in a home? Does that mean he's, y'know -

SHEILA

He's going to have your room. You and me are going to share.

JAMILA kicks over the Christmas tree, breaking some of the decorations. She stares at her mother.

SHEILA (cont'd)

I'd like you to help me with this.

JAMILA goes to the iPod hi fi system, places her iPod into it and switches the system on. It is another Pashtun pop song.

SHEILA (cont'd)

And don't say a word to him about - you know.

JAMILA turns the volume up. She begins to sway to it, looking at her mother.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Turn it down - please.

JAMILA turns the volume up higher. They stare at each other for a beat.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Try to sort the tree out. Or put it back where you got it from.

The front door bell rings. SHEILA looks quickly round the room. She tidies her hair, looks at JAMILA and then exits. JAMILA stops dancing, turns the volume down and goes over to the tree. She picks it up, removes the broken decorations and starts to replace them. ALBERT and SHEILA (who is wheeling a small case) enter. ALBERT is wearing a well made suit and a white shirt and a red tie. As soon as they begin to enter, JAMILA sees them. She shuts off the hi fi system, removes the iPod.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Jamila, this is your Grandad.

ALBERT

Hello, love. It's really good to meet you at last.

He goes to embrace JAMILA, notices her reaction and lets his arms fall. JAMILA glowers at ALBERT and SHEILA. She puts her earpieces in.

SHEILA

(to JAMILA)

Make us some tea, please?

JAMILA switches the iPod on, opens the door to the balcony, goes out and slams the door shut. She stands with her back to the room.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Jamila's not normally that rude.

ALBERT

You're looking well, Sheila.

A beat. He begins to move towards her.

SHEILA

What do you want?

He stops.

ALBERT

Sheila.

SHEILA

I must have been mad to let you stay.

ALBERT

Yes, but you did.

SHEILA

What's the real reason you're here?

ALBERT

I told you on the phone, love. I've been getting very forgetful since your mother died.

SHEILA

Do you feel ill?

ALBERT

I think about the past a lot.

SHEILA

That's natural - at your age.

He notices the tree and the broken decorations.

ALBERT

I'm sorry it's such short notice. I haven't had time to get any presents.

SHEILA

We don't bother with Christmas much - usually.

ALBERT

I know it's putting you out.

SHEILA

Forget it. I owe you. This will cancel the debt.

ALBERT

I'm sorry you feel that way. There doesn't have to be bad blood between us.

SHEILA holds up her hand to silence him. A pause.

ALBERT (cont'd)
How much does Jamila know?

SHEILA
About what?

ALBERT
Oh, come on, Sheila!

SHEILA
Jamila believes her father's dead - which he probably is by now.

ALBERT
And you? What does she know about you?

SHEILA
She thinks I'm a bitch - most of the time.

A beat.

SHEILA (cont'd)
Nothing that matters. I'll fetch her in.

SHEILA goes to open the balcony door. He notices the packing cases.

ALBERT
You're moving?

She turns to him.

SHEILA
We're emigrating to America.

ALBERT
Why so far away for God's sake.?

SHEILA
What difference will it make?

She continues to the balcony door, opens it and indicates for Jamila to come in - which she does sulkily as ALBERT walks over to the one containing the doll's house.

ALBERT

(to SHEILA)

You've still got the doll's house then?

SHEILA

We're selling it on Ebay. Or at least Jamila is.

ALBERT

Ee - bay?

SHEILA

She's a real internet anorak -

She turns to JAMILA.

SHEILA (cont'd)

aren't you?

JAMILA glowers. SHEILA turns back to ALBERT

SHEILA (cont'd)

Sit down. Jamila'll make a cup of tea.

(off JAMILA's reaction)

Yes, she will . And then we'll get her room ready for you.

ALBERT sits. He takes a copy of The Guardian out of his briefcase but does not read it. SHEILA and JAMILA exit as they talk.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Won't we?

(sotto voce)

Won't we?

JAMILA

(sotto voce)

What's going on?

SHEILA

I told you. I owe him.

A beat.

SHEILA (cont'd)

We both do.

The lights dim.

SCENE 3: THE JOURNEY

We hear a fast Sufi melody and a Sufi rhythm on the Ney flute and the Daf drum, which morphs into a single air raid warning siren, followed by other sirens.

We see images of long lines of men, women and children walking, under armed guard, in a barren landscape.

We see the shadowy, iconic figure.

The lights dim.

SCENE 4: SHEILA AND JAMILA'S FLAT, TAMBURY - 25TH DECEMBER

Mid -morning. ALBERT is standing by the packing case containing the doll's house. He touches the roof. A beat. He walks to the window and looks out. JAMILA enters. He does not notice her presence at first

ALBERT

'What are those blue remembered hills?'

She watches him.

ALBERT (cont'd)

'That is the land of lost content./The happy highways where I went/And cannot come again.'

A pause. He realises she is there, half turns towards her and then back to the window.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Imagine. On market days, this town would have been full of cattle, sheep and pigs - driven along the roads on foot - crammed into the pens for sale or slaughter. All that noise - the beasts and the auctioneers and the farmers gabby with ale. And the smells.

JAMILA

Did you used to live in Tambury then?

ALBERT

I was born in a terraced house in a cotton town. Full of smoke from the factory chimneys - and you could only see the hills when the chimneys were dead. When there was no work. Men silent and lost - like my dad. The first world war broke him. And the peace killed him.

A pause. He turns to her.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I appreciate what you and your mum are doing. I really do.

She shrugs. She goes to the laptop, opens it and fires it up.

ALBERT (cont'd)

It's nice to meet you after all this time. If it had been down to me -

He stops and looks closely at her.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Y'know, you've got a look of Clarice about you.

(off her reaction)

Your grandma. Something about your mouth.

They look each other for a beat. She turns back to the lap-top.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Where's the modem?

She gives him a 'get you' face.

JAMILA

This is a wireless laptop.

He laughs.

ALBERT

Wire-less - well I never!

She pulls a 'what-is-all-that-about' face.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Your mum's making sure you keep up with all the latest technology. That's why she works so hard.

JAMILA mimes putting two fingers in her mouth and pretends to vomit.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I see you obviously believe in it all then - it being Christmas Day. Y'know, goodwill on earth and so on.

JAMILA

Do you believe in it?

ALBERT

'Religion's the opiate of the people'. D'you know who said that?

JAMILA

Santa Claus?

He laughs.

ALBERT

Your Grandma liked the story. Dead of winter. A young woman about to give birth with a husband who's pretty certain the baby's not his but he sticks by her and strangers look after them. She thought it showed how good human beings could be when they tried.

JAMILA looks sceptical.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Clarice was a half full merchant. Which are you?

JAMILA

What d'you mean?

ALBERT

You're half way down a glass - coke, beer, milk, whatever. Now, is the glass still half full or is it already half empty?

JAMILA

Half full, spose.

ALBERT

Good for you.

She turns the laptop's volume up. It is traditional Pashtun music. ALBERT moves so he can see the screen.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Why've you got that on?

JAMILA

My dad came from Afghanistan.

ALBERT

Yes - I know.

JAMILA

He gave me my name. It means 'Beautiful' in Arabic. He was a Muslim. They have to learn Arabic. Did you meet him?

ALBERT

Only a couple of times.

She turns to him enthusiastically.

JAMILA

What was he like?

ALBERT

Gahez didn't say much. Well mannered.

JAMILA considers this and then looks back at the screen.

JAMILA

Some children are so hungry they're knocking bits off the mud walls and chewing them.

ALBERT nods.

ALBERT

We should never have gone back.

(a beat)

There are British soldiers dying there - for Queen and no good cause - just like they did when Victoria was on the throne.

.A pause. JAMILA switches on her mobile and begins to text.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Why don't you talk to the person?

JAMILA

Mum and me aren't speaking. Anyway, it's cheaper.

ALBERT

So what are you writing about?

JAMILA hands ALBERT the mobile. He peers at the text.

ALBERT (cont'd)

'He's had all the milk on his muesli. I can't go out.'

(to JAMILA)

Your mum said last night she'd plenty of food in for Christmas

JAMILA

I'm just making a point.

A pause.

ALBERT

Why can't you go out?

JAMILA

Mum's grounded me.

(off his reaction)

I was excluded from school just before the end of term.

ALBERT

Why?

JAMILA

I threw a book at a teacher.

ALBERT

What sort of book?

JAMILA

What d'you mean?

ALBERT

A hardback? A paperback? A history book? A book of poems?

JAMILA

Are you being sarcastic?

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

It was about computers.

ALBERT

You mean ironic. And it depends. Why'd you throw it?

JAMILA

I was talking to my - boy friend, Tom -

She looks to see his reaction. He smiles, benignly.

JAMILA (cont'd)

when he - the teacher - was talking to the class. So he threw a piece of chalk at me and said, 'I wonder if I might have the dusky maiden's attention for a moment.' He's a racist.

ALBERT

Perhaps he was making a joke.

JAMILA

Yeah - 'bout my colour.

ALBERT

You shouldn't have thrown the book. But he shouldn't have provoked you.

JAMILA

He's done it before.

ALBERT

How long are you excluded for?

JAMILA

Indefinitely. I'll probably have a home tutor.

ALBERT

Are you good at lessons?

JAMILA

I'll probably get mostly Bs - and an A for Computer Studies.

ALBERT

In spite of that teacher! Or to spite him! Get it?

She pulls a what-planet-are-you-on face. Her mobile text message tone goes off. She reads the message in a voice like her mother's.

JAMILA

'Make Albert coffee with coffeemate. Put turkey in at 2.00 on 180. (Remove packaging first). Read cooking instructions on reverse of label. Remember what we agreed.'

She switches off the mobile.

ALBERT

What did you agree?

JAMILA

She bribed me to look after you.

(off his reaction)

I can go out for a bit each day after Christmas.

ALBERT

To see - Tom?

JAMILA

Of course.

ALBERT

You successfully negotiated an enhancement to your working conditions then?

(off her reaction)

Irony.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Your mother was always a bit of a soft touch.

She returns to the laptop. A pause. He looks over at the doll's house.

ALBERT (cont'd)

We bought that for your mum when she was three.

He gets up and goes to the case. JAMILA is watching him.

ALBERT (cont'd)

A Christmas present. She played with it for hours on end.

He lifts out the house, looks round and puts it on the glass-topped table.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I expect you used to play with it.

JAMILA

I never saw it until the packing started.

ALBERT

You don't mind if I put things in it?

JAMILA shrugs.

ALBERT (cont'd)

You can help me if you like.

JAMILA pulls a 'get lost' face. He laughs.

ALBERT (cont'd)

There used to be furniture.

JAMILA

There's a box in the packing case, I think.

He goes to the case, leans in, brings it out and goes back to the table. She continues watching him. He opens the front of the house, picks out two armchairs and looks inside, deciding where to place them. He knows he has her attention. He places the chairs and picks a tv out of the box. He places the tv. He picks out a grand piano.

ALBERT

That's grand.

He laughs. She pulls a face. He places the piece in the same ground floor room as the tv.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Did your mum tell you she got to Grade Six.? Performed solo in school concerts.

JAMILA

I didn't even know she played.

He looks up at her.

ALBERT

She was a clever girl. She was going to be a doctor.

JAMILA

I know. Like Dad. She had to give up when she had me.

He looks at her briefly and then goes back to the box. She is becoming increasingly interested in what he is doing and finding. He picks out a cradle and places it on the upper floor of the house. He contemplates the house for a beat then closes the front.

ALBERT

There's a cable somewhere.

He finds a compartment in the base and produces the cable. He goes to an electric point and plugs the house in. She continues watching him.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Let there be light!

JAMILA smiles broadly at the effect - and, gradually, begins to look at the brightly lit doll's house with longing.. ALBERT turns to look at her and notices her expression. The lights dim.

SCENE 5: THE JOURNEY

We see images of a little girl on fire.

We see the figure.

We hear a heavy metal door slammed.

The lights dim.

SCENE 6: SHEILA AND JAMILA'S FLAT, TAMBURY - 25TH DECEMBER

Later. The doll's house is still lit up. ALBERT is watching JAMILA working at her laptop.

ALBERT

I'd like you to call me 'Grandad' - or 'Albert' if you'd prefer.

She continues working at the laptop but pulls a face.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I was named after my father. It was a very popular name for boys. Queen Victoria's husband had been Albert. People had a lot of respect for the monarchy then. It didn't put food in their mouths - but it did get 'em killed.

She looks at him.

JAMILA

Were you, like, a socialist? We did about that at school.

ALBERT

And a trades unionist.

He sings.

ALBERT (cont'd)

'The people's flag is deepest red

He holds up his tie.

ALBERT (cont'd)

It shrouded oft our martyred dead.

He wags his finger.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer

He gives a clenched fist salute.

ALBERT (cont'd)

We'll keep the red flag flying here.'

A pause.

JAMILA

Yeah - well.

ALBERT smiles and shakes his head. A beat.

ALBERT

I was Chief Shop Steward at Fords till I retired. I was elected unopposed for more than twenty years.

JAMILA

What did you do?

ALBERT

Sorted out disputes. Righted wrongs.

JAMILA

Like me and that teacher.

ALBERT

Yes. He needs to understand what's right and what's wrong just as you do. Correct?

A beat.

JAMILA

Correct.

ALBERT nods and smiles. A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Mum said we owe you. What did she mean?

ALBERT

That's for her to tell you.

JAMILA

Typical.

JAMILA takes her iPod from the table and is about to put in the earpieces.

ALBERT

The music you were dancing to last night?

JAMILA

It's a pop song from Afghanistan.

ALBERT

A long time ago, I was in a part of what used to be India just over the border from Afghanistan.

JAMILA

What's it like?

ALBERT

I never went there but old sweats who'd been said parts of it were like where we were. A great garden surrounded by high mountains cut through by sheer passes. Valleys full of orchards: peaches, pomegranates, mulberries. Colder than here in winter - hot as a tandoori oven in summer.

A pause. He dreams.

JAMILA

What were you doing there?

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

(louder)

What were you doing there?

ALBERT looks up at her.

ALBERT

Oh! I was a drummer boy.

(off her reaction)

ALBERT (cont'd)

I was a boy soldier in The Royal Artillery.

JAMILA

A boy soldier?

ALBERT

You could join up officially at fifteen. I was fourteen. My Mam and me lied about my age.

JAMILA

You were two years younger than me.

He nods.

ALBERT

We were hungry. All the time. There were no jobs to be had in the 'thirties. Not many in the 'twenties. When I was little, we'd had to go in the workhouse.

JAMILA

We've done it in history.

ALBERT

You'll know then.

JAMILA

Don't tell me then.

A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

What's it like to be hungry - really hungry?

ALBERT

You don't think about anything else. You can learn nothing at school. It's like being a castaway. You thieve sometimes. Scraps of food.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Enough of that. Are we having curry and rice tomorrow?

JAMILA

Mum's told me to defrost a couple of packets of lasagne. Anyway, I don't think the Indian's open.

ALBERT laughs.

ALBERT

I meant currying today's turkey. Clarice used to say my curries were something special.

JAMILA

How do you know how to make curry?

ALBERT

I learned in India.. Kassim, the char-wallah, taught me.. He was a bit older than me.

JAMILA

What's a char-wallah?

ALBERT

Chap who made and served us cups of tea - all day long. Refreshing in that heat.

A beat. He is away with his memories.

JAMILA

The curry?

He turns to her.

ALBERT

Yes, Right. We used to have curry served up to us nearly every day. What meat was available. We never knew for certain. Always joked about it. But the army meant three square meals a day.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I got friendly with this lad Kassim and asked him what curry was. Y'know, he was the first real friend I'd had. The Corporal didn't like me and him being mates. He was a nasty swine, that Corporal

JAMILA

What happened to Kassim?

He stares into space. JAMILA studies him for a beat and then returns to the laptop. He stops staring, looks at her and then takes a small book out of his jacket pocket and begins to read. She notices and takes her headphones off.

JAMILA (cont'd)

What's that you're reading?

ALBERT

It's a book of poems. It was my dad's. My mam kept it for me. He had a breakdown - shell shock. Died in an asylum. He was still a young man.

He quotes from memory.

ALBERT (cont'd)

'Loveliest of trees, the cherry now/Is hung with bloom along the bough.'

A pause.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Do you like poetry?

JAMILA

Some. We did stuff this term at school I liked.

ALBERT

Do you know any by heart?

JAMILA

Not really. There's one I remember quite well because it's like a story.

ALBERT

Go on.

JAMILA

It's about the First World War. There's this young officer and he's in charge of a platoon. They're only boys really, well, very young men. Anyway, they're making their way back from the trenches after a battle. They're so tired they don't hear the mustard gas shells dropping behind them. One of them is too slow putting his gas mask on - and the officer has to watch him die. 'Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light/As under a green sea, I saw him drowning. In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,/He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning'.

(a beat)

I learnt the ending too. 'My friend, you would not tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est/Pro patria mori.'

(a beat)

It means sort of it's a good thing to die for your country. The Romans used to say that.

He nods, impressed.

ALBERT

Have you tried your hand at writing poetry?

JAMILA

Sometimes.

ALBERT

Can you read me one? I've always wished I could write.

JAMILA

They're no good.

A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Were you in the Second World War?

ALBERT

North Africa, Italy. El Alamein, Monte Casino. Big artillery battles.

JAMILA

Did you enjoy being a soldier?

ALBERT sighs.

ALBERT

It's what you did, if you had to. I learned a trade. Learned about motors.

(a beat)

No bosses, no wars!

A beat.

JAMILA

Do you hate the Germans?

ALBERT

I did for a time - but if I'd kept on hating them they'd have won.

She abruptly goes back to the laptop. He watches her. A pause.

JAMILA

Is this you?

He gets up, goes to her and looks at the screen.

ALBERT

Yeah - Chambers, A, Sergeant, 79365. Name, rank and number. Reporting for duty, sir.

He comes to attention and salutes - then laughs. Jamila looks askance at him.

JAMILA

What was wrong with just your name?

ALBERT

It wasn't unique enough.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

How've you done that? Found me?

JAMILA

Google.

(off his reaction)

A search engine.

(off his reaction)

I put The Royal Artillery in that window -

She points.

JAMILA (cont'd)
and then searched this web page!

He is impressed.

ALBERT
I'm famous then.

JAMILA
Not really. There's lots of names.

ALBERT
Can I look? There may be ones I know.

JAMILA scrolls through the page. ALBERT studies it intently.

ALBERT (cont'd)
Heh, not so fast, young lady.

JAMILA pulls a face but slows down. A pause. He straightens up.

ALBERT (cont'd)
I've seen enough, thanks. Most of the old sods are dead.

He begins to stare into space. A beat. He pulls himself back.

ALBERT (cont'd)
There's a lot of it about. Mortality.

He laughs.

JAMILA
You shouldn't laugh at your own jokes. Specially corny ones.

He waves his index finger at her.

ALBERT
Irony!

JAMILA suddenly stands up.

JAMILA

I've forgotten to put the turkey in!

He smiles. She exits. A pause. He begins to stare into space. He is lost in his memories. They are not happy ones.

ALBERT

(softly)

Mam?

A beat. Jamila re-enters but stops and stand still as soon as she sees him. He looks stricken.

ALBERT (cont'd)

(louder)

Mam!

He begins to sob.

JAMILA

(sharply)

What's wrong with you?

She hesitates, unsure whether to move towards him.

JAMILA (cont'd)

(less sharply)

What's wrong?

A beat. Albert becomes aware of her. He rubs his eyes.

ALBERT

Eh?

JAMILA

I asked what's wrong.

ALBERT

(aggressively)

Why should anything be wrong, missy?

A beat. He looks at his surroundings then back at her.

ALBERT (cont'd)

(fearful)

Where am I? Who are you?

JAMILA

I'm Jamila.

(off his reaction)

Your granddaughter.

(exasperatedly)

Sheila's daughter.

He remembers. He makes a very conscious effort to pull himself together.

ALBERT

(weakly)

Fooled you! Just testing, young lady!

SHEILA (V.O.)

I'm home.

ALBERT

(sotto voce to JAMILA)

Not a word. OK?

JAMILA looks unsure. SHEILA enters in her uniform. She looks at JAMILA and ALBERT looking intently at each other.

SHEILA

Jamila, you did put the turkey in on time?

JAMILA turns rapidly to her. SHEILA notices the doll's house.

SHEILA (cont'd)

What's that doing there?

JAMILA

He put it together.

SHEILA

I thought we had a deal.

JAMILA

We did.

A beat. She glances quickly in his direction and then back to her mother

JAMILA (cont'd)

(hurriedly)

He was talking to his 'mam'!. He'll be messing himself next. That's what they do, isn't it?

ALBERT looks betrayed.

SHEILA

Don't be so hard!

JAMILA

Me?

She flounces out. SHEILA crosses to ALBERT.

ALBERT

Am I losing it?

SHEILA

You're probably depressed - with mum dying

ALBERT

I wished you'd have come to the funeral, Sheila, love. You and your mother had no quarrel. She thought the world of you.

SHEILA

Don't go there.

A pause. She walks over and switches off the lights in the doll's house. He looks at her.

ALBERT

Do you ever think about him - y'know, Jamila's father?

Silence. A pause. She clenches her fists and takes a pace towards him.

SHEILA

How can you ask that?

JAMILA enters. SHEILA turns on her.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Get out! Get out now!

JAMILA goes, angry, hurt. ALBERT and SHEILA look at each other. The lights dim.

SCENE 7: THE JOURNEY

We see images of a soldier burned to death in the turret of his tank.

We see the figure.

We hear the sound of women lamenting, which morphs into a very slow Sufi melody and rhythm

The lights dim.

SCENE 8: SHEILA AND JAMILA'S FLAT, TAMBURY - 26TH DECEMBER

Dawn. JAMILA is on the balcony, wearing a bright orange all weather coat. She has the iPod earpieces in. A large blue cloth of some sort is draped over the railings of the balcony. She is standing at the railings, looking at the horizon. She moves to the balcony door and locks it. She sits, crossed-legged, back straight, like someone at a sit-down protest. SHEILA enters the living room sleepily. She is wearing her uniform and carrying a shoulder bag. She suddenly sees JAMILA, goes to the balcony door and tries it. She bangs on the glass. JAMILA sits still.

SHEILA

What on earth d'you think you're doing?

SHEILA gets her mobile, fires it up and summons a number. JAMILA's mobile rings. She answers it.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Are you trying to embarrass me? Are you listening? We've got the visa interviews tomorrow at the Embassy. Have you forgotten?

(a beat)

This is about the exclusion isn't it? You've always got to be right.

(a beat)

Is it about your Grandad? I can't make it up with him. He's not what he seems.

(a beat)

Say something. It must be freezing out there.

JAMILA switches her mobile off. SHEILA rings off too and watches her. JAMILA sits down again with her back to the living room. ALBERT enters. He is wheeling his suitcase. He notices JAMILA.

SHEILA (cont'd)

You've encouraged her in this. All that nonsense about racism. From you of all people. All that talk about equality. I used to think you were Jesus with a Lancashire accent.

JAMILA hears her mother's raised voice, moves round and tries to listen. He sits wearily. SHEILA notices the suitcase.

ALBERT

This exclusion.

SHEILA

What business is it of yours?

ALBERT

She thinks that teacher's a racist.

SHEILA

Did she tell you that one of her classmate's a Muslim? She even wears a hijab. And that teacher has never said a bad word to her. Never. Do you know the abuse teachers - and nurses - have to put up with these days? Do you?

ALBERT

Jamila's not usually badly behaved at school is she?

SHEILA

That's not the issue.

ALBERT

Then what is, Sheila?

SHEILA

Jamila's so angry. She lets it show at school.

ALBERT

Why's she angry?

SHEILA

She says she doesn't want to go to America.

ALBERT

Why are you going?

SHEILA

I can earn three times as much over there!

ALBERT

If it's a matter of money.

SHEILA

That's your solution for everything isn't it?

ALBERT

You've never said 'no'!

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.

SHEILA

But you did.

A pause.

SHEILA (cont'd)

I've managed to bring her up on my own so far. I'll continue on my own.

ALBERT

Your choice. But there's a fine line sometimes between determination and spite.

SHEILA

Let's drop it, ok?

She sits in the other armchair, consciously controlling her breathing. A pause.

ALBERT

I know I was wrong to get you to stop seeing him.

SHEILA

What?

ALBERT

I didn't think it would work out. Different cultures.

SHEILA

Why are you bringing that up now?

ALBERT

You had your career ahead of you. Your whole life.

SHEILA

Stop it!

ALBERT

I thought he'd probably got a wife back home.

SHEILA raises her hands to silence him.

ALBERT (cont'd)

You were only nineteen - and very young for your age. He was a fair bit older than you.

SHEILA

For God's sake, stop.

ALBERT

I was trying to do my best for you.

SHEILA

Stop.

A pause. He looks at the balcony.

ALBERT

I'll say goodbye to Jamila.

He walks over to the balcony and knocks on the glass.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Jamila?

She turns her head.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I'm going.

He looks more closely.

ALBERT (cont'd)

What're you doing out there in the cold?

JAMILA gets up and pulls up the sheet. Upside down is 'SAVE JAMILA' crudely in black felt tip. He laughs. He makes a fist with his right hand - and waves his tie with the other.

ALBERT (cont'd)

The people's flag is deepest red/It shrouded oft our martyred dead.

JAMILA grins. ALBERT smiles. He turns to SHEILA.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I'd like to stay a bit longer. OK?

SHEILA shrugs as JAMILA opens the balcony door and tumbles in with her gear. SHEILA turns quickly.

SHEILA

For God's sake, Jamila.

ALBERT winks at JAMILA, who looks at her mother and sighs.

The lights dim.

SCENE 9: THE JOURNEY

We see images of a group of soldiers planting a flag on a mound.

We see the figure.

We hear a very fast Sufi melody and rhythm, which morph into the sound of helicopter rotors.

The lights dim.

SCENE 10: AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON, 27TH DECEMBER

Lights. We see SHEILA and JAMILA standing as in a queue. They are dressed in winter clothing. SHEILA is carrying a plastic wallet. JAMILA has a small, pink crocheted bag across her body. At the opposite side of the stage, THE INTERVIEWER is seated at his desk. He is reading a document.

US CONSULAR OFFICIAL (V.O.)

Your time slot was 12.00 to 12.30. It is 11.20. Now return at 12.30.

SHEILA looks apologetic - JAMILA cross. They turn, walk a number of paces and stop. They stand in a queue again.

US CONSULAR OFFICIAL (V.O.)

(cont'd)

No mobiles, Blackberries, iPods, cameras or laptops.

SHEILA looks questioningly at JAMILA, who opens her bag and show it to her mother in a defiant manner. SHEILA sighs.

US CONSULAR OFFICIAL (V.O.)

(cont'd)

Wait for your number to appear on the screen. Then go immediately to the interviewer indicated.

They remain in the queue and start staring as if at a screen.

SHEILA

Do you like your grandad?

JAMILA

He's all right.

SHEILA turns to her.

He'll hurt you.

SHEILA (cont'd)

She turns back. JAMILA glances at her mother - and then looks back at the screen. A beat.

Remember not to say anything here about that business with the teacher.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Mum!

JAMILA

Or about the Americans in Afghanistan.

SHEILA

That's our number.

JAMILA

SHEILA looks, as it were, along a line of interviewers.

Ours is at the far end.

SHEILA

They walk quickly towards THE INTERVIEWER. SHEILA and JAMILA stop in front of his desk. He gestures for them to sit. They do so. He holds out his hand for the wallet. SHEILA passes it over. He takes out the documents, selects one and reads it. He looks up.

Ms Sheila Chambers?

THE INTERVIEWER

She nods and smiles. He remains impassive. He turns to JAMILA.

Miss Jaymyla Chambers?

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Jamila.

JAMILA

He looks down at the documents and starts to go through them. SHEILA gives JAMILA an admonishing look - which her daughter pretends not to see.

THE INTERVIEWER

What is the post you're taking up, Ms Chambers?

SHEILA

Senior operating theatre sister at the Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles.

THE INTERVIEWER

Where are you going to live?

SHEILA

We've got temporary accommodation.

She leans over slightly.

SHEILA (cont'd)

The details are on the form.

He nods.

THE INTERVIEWER

You've got your certificate from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools.

SHEILA

Yes. I -

THE INTERVIEWER

Do you know why the United States of America goes to all this trouble and expense?

JAMILA

9/11.

He turns to JAMILA.

THE INTERVIEWER

Right, young lady. And your very own 7/7.

Silence. Both JAMILA and SHEILA look at him warily. He leafs through the pile of documents and extracts one. He looks back up at them. A beat.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Let me read you paragraph 30c from Part II of the application form for an immigrant visa and alien registration - the one you two have completed.

He reads quickly, automatically.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

'An alien who seeks to enter the United States to engage in espionage, sabotage, export control violations, terrorist activities, the overthrow of the Government of the United States or other unlawful activity; who is a member of or affiliated with the Communist or other totalitarian party; who participated in Nazi persecutions or genocide; who has engaged in genocide; or who is a member or representative of a terrorist organization as currently designated by the U.S. Secretary of State

A beat.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

(deliberately)

is ineligible to receive a visa'.

He looks up. A pause.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Ms Chambers, I want you to read from the document now. I've highlighted the sentence in red.

He passes the document to her. A beat.

SHEILA

I understand - that any wilfully false - or misleading statement or wilful concealment - of a material fact made by me - herein - may subject me to permanent exclusion -

JAMILA glances at her mother and then away.

SHEILA (cont'd)

from the United States.'

She passes it back to him.

THE INTERVIEWER

Thank you.

A pause. He looks carefully at the completed application and then at another document on his desk. He looks up at SHEILA.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Jaymyla's father, Gahez.

A beat. They look at him.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Are you in touch with his sister in Kabul?

JAMILA turns quickly to her mother.

JAMILA

I didn't know dad had a sister.

SHEILA continues looking at THE INTERVIEWER. He turns to JAMILA.

THE INTERVIEWER

Her name's Gulalai.

SHEILA

I'm not in touch with her.

He turns back to SHEILA.

THE INTERVIEWER

How did you find out Gahez was dead?

SHEILA

From his family.

THE INTERVIEWER

In Kabul? From his sister?

SHEILA

I don't know. It might have been.

She moves in her seat.

SHEILA (cont'd)

It was so long ago.

He turns to JAMILA.

THE INTERVIEWER

Gulalai is very critical of the coalition forces - to the point of being libellous. She sends emails every week to the White House, Downing Street, the Kremlin. Do you know what about?

JAMILA shakes her head.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

She claims your father is in extraordinary rendition. Do you know what that means, young lady?

JAMILA stares at him and then shakes her head. She turns quickly to SHEILA, who is also staring at THE INTERVIEWER. She has her hands tightly clasped in her lap. He turns back to SHEILA.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Ms Chambers?

She shakes her head.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Gulalai claims the Coalition Forces are torturing Gahez. Lies, of course. Just like yours, Ms Chambers, on your daughter's birth certificate.

He picks it up and reads from it.

THE INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

'Father - deceased'.

JAMILA

He died in all the fighting there.

She looks quickly at her mother and then back at THE INTERVIEWER. SHEILA is staring straight ahead.

THE INTERVIEWER

He almost died - fighting us.

Blackout.

SCENE 11: THE JOURNEY

We see images of infantry men 'going over the top'.

We see the figure.

We hear a hectic, excited Sufi melody and rhythm, which morph into the broken rattle of rifle fire.

The lights dim.

SCENE 12: SHEILA AND JAMILA'S FLAT, TAMBURY - 27TH DECEMBER

Evening. JAMILA, still in her outdoor clothes, is working at her laptop. She is excited. ALBERT enters. He looks uneasy. She turns quickly to him.

JAMILA

She's got a blog.

ALBERT

A what? Who?

She turns back to the laptop.

JAMILA

Dad's sister.

ALBERT

Your mother's lying down. She's very upset.

JAMILA
'Cos she can't go to America.

ALBERT
There's a bit of that.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)
She thought he was dead.

JAMILA turns quickly to him.

JAMILA
She didn't know though. She's told me a lie my whole life.

A pause. She looks back to screen. SHEILA enters. She has been crying. Neither JAMILA nor ALBERT notice her come in.

JAMILA (cont'd)
I'm going to write to her - Gulalai - my aunt. I'll ask her if I can go and see her - stay for a bit.

SHEILA
Oh no you won't!

JAMILA is about to turn to her but changes her mind and continues looking at the screen. Her reaction surprises SHEILA. A beat.

SHEILA (cont'd)
Don't be ridiculous!

(a beat)
Who's going to pay?

JAMILA
Now we're not going to America we've got plenty of dosh.

SHEILA
You're not having that.

JAMILA
I'll save the wages from my Saturday job.

SHEILA
You've lost it, remember.

JAMILA
Because you grounded me.

SHEILA
Because you assaulted that teacher.

A beat.

JAMILA
I'll get another job.

A beat.

SHEILA
It wouldn't be safe for you to go on your own.

ALBERT
I could pay for both of you to go.

They turn to him.

ALBERT (cont'd)

(to Sheila)

I've got a bit of money put aside - soon be yours anyway.

JAMILA get quickly to her feet.

JAMILA
Would you?

SHEILA

(to ALBERT)

Keep out of this!

ALBERT
It's important for both of you.

SHEILA
How can you say that?

ALBERT

There's things I must do before it's too late.

SHEILA

Quite the bloody hero now, aren't you! You go with her then!

Silence. SHEILA suddenly realises what she has done and turns away. JAMILA looks expectantly at ALBERT, who turns to her.

ALBERT

Is that all right with you?

JAMILA

Yeah! When?

ALBERT

Hang on! Hang on! There's planning to do.

He nods in SHEILA's direction.

ALBERT (cont'd)

(mouthing)

Go on. Talk to her.

JAMILA looks reluctant. ALBERT encourages her with a nod of his head. He exits. JAMILA goes to her mother.

JAMILA

Why have you always told me dad was dead?

SHEILA

Because I thought he was.

JAMILA

But you never knew for sure, did you?

SHEILA

Things were in a mess there.

JAMILA

You lied to me.

SHEILA

You have no idea what it was like. You cannot begin to imagine what I went through.

I want to try. JAMILA

A beat.

We don't know where he is. SHEILA

His sister might. JAMILA

You wouldn't be able to see him. Not in the sort of prison he's in. SHEILA

How do you know? JAMILA

A beat.

Anyway, I'd be a bit closer to him over there with her. JAMILA (cont'd)

What about school? SHEILA

I'm excluded, remember! JAMILA

You've still got exams. SHEILA

I'll go at Easter. JAMILA

A beat.

What about Tom? SHEILA

You don't approve! JAMILA

(scoffing)

You don't approve!

A beat.

SHEILA

You're not going. That's final.

JAMILA suddenly backs away, her fists clenched.

JAMILA

I've got my own passport. Are you going to physically stop me? Are you?

SHEILA slaps her across the face. JAMILA holds her face, her mouth open. SHEILA begins to sob.

JAMILA (cont'd)

You've never ever hit me.

A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

It's not too late.

SHEILA tries to control her sobbing.

JAMILA (cont'd)

I mean - for you to come too.

SHEILA

I can't.

JAMILA

Why not?

SHEILA

Because I'm scared. I'm scared to death of being hurt - again. I can't bear the thought of it. Is that enough for you?

A pause. JAMILA holds out her forearms to her mother.

JAMILA (cont'd)

What d'you see?

SHEILA

Is this some sort of silly game?

JAMILA

No, mum. I'm trying to explain something. Just tell me what you see.

SHEILA

Your arms.

JAMILA

What about them?

SHEILA

They're quite pretty - like the rest of you.

JAMILA

'Quite'. Get you. And that's it?

(a beat)

What colour are they?

SHEILA

That doesn't matter.

JAMILA

Not to you. You can't see it. But it matters to the world out there. I've got to work out who I am. I've got half the answer. Meeting my dad's sister could give me the other half. Don't I have the right? To know who I am?

A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Come with me, mum. Please! Come with me!

The lights dim.

SCENE 13: THE JOURNEY

We hear distantly the original Sufi melody and rhythm on the Daf drum.

We see images of flames and mountains, smoke and ruined places.

We see the figure.

We hear a child sobbing..

The lights dim.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: GULALAI'S WALLED GARDEN, KABUL - 1ST APRIL

Early morning. Bright sun. We have an impression of a walled garden in Kabul. There is a mulberry tree in leaf and a cistern with a fountain at its centre. One of the cistern's low walls has collapsed and the fountain is dry. There is the muffled noise of people and traffic on the other side of the walls. There is a wooden bench in a shaded part of the garden. JAMILA, dressed in cut-offs and a top and with the pink crocheted bag across her body, is slowly walking round the garden, entranced. She stops, looks into the distance, over one of the walls, as it were, then continues. ALBERT enters and goes quite quickly to her. He seems energised.

ALBERT

I said it'd be like this.

JAMILA

I just love it here.

She half turns and points in the distant direction she was looking earlier.

JAMILA (cont'd)

There's snow on the mountains - but it's so warm.

ALBERT

I'm so glad I've been able to do this for you and your mother.

She turns fully to face him and smiles.

ALBERT (cont'd)

It's given me a new lease of life. A chance to make amends.

A beat. She stops smiling.

JAMILA

What do you mean?

ALBERT

(a little flustered)

Well - y'know. Your mother's had a hard life.

JAMILA is about to speak again when GULALAI, wearing a light green shalwar kameez and removing a covering from her head, enters. JAMILA sees her and waves. GULALAI joins JAMILA and ALBERT.

GULALAI

(indicating the cistern's broken wall)

A mortar shell destroyed this part of the fountain when the mujahadin took over the city. Now, even if I had it repaired, there is not enough water for fountains.

JAMILA

It's still wonderful.

GULALAI turns to ALBERT and smiles. He nods enthusiastically. Suddenly, there is the noise of a loudspeaker crackling - from somewhere beyond the walls. JAMILA looks around to see where the noise is coming from. The speaker broadcasts some bars of Pashtun music followed by an announcement in Pashtun: 'Elam Atal ra'y'.

GULALAI

It is a political broadcast. There are elections soon.

A beat.

GULALAI (cont'd)

(to JAMILA)

Did you sleep well?

ALBERT

Like a top, thanks.

GULALAI and JAMILA exchange glances. ALBERT does not notice.

JAMILA

I couldn't. There's so much to think about -

GULALAI nods sympathetically - as does ALBERT.

JAMILA (cont'd)

and talk about to you. *(pointedly)*

A beat.

ALBERT
Right. Well. I'll let you good people get on.

He moves. The loudspeaker crackles again, broadcasts, as before, some bars of Pashtun music followed by an announcement in Pashtun: 'Elam Atal ra'y' - as ALBERT, shaking his head good humouredly, heads for the bench, and sits.

JAMILA
What's it saying?

GULALAI
'Vote for Amal Etal' - he is the local candidate now.

JAMILA
Does it go on all the time?

GULALAI laughs.

GULALAI
Only a couple of times in the morning and the afternoon. He wants his neighbours to vote for him - not hate him.

JAMILA
Do you know him?

GULALAI
Yes.

GULALAI takes JAMILA's hands.

GULALAI (cont'd)
How like Gahez you are!

JAMILA smiles.

JAMILA
What's he like?

GULALAI

When he was your age, he was a mixture. He was a champion kite flier - and he wrote stories. He had always wanted to be a doctor from a very early age.

JAMILA

I think I'd like to be a doctor.

GULALAI

That's a good thing to want to be.

She studies her, smiling.

GULALAI (cont'd)

I am so happy we have found each other. My name means 'Beautiful' too.

They smile. A beat.

GULALAI (cont'd)

I've acquired two more relatives at the same time!

JAMILA

Mum said I couldn't come without her and he's paid for us.

GULALAI

It's fine. The house is large. It was our parents' house.

JAMILA

Are you married?

GULALAI

I am a widow.

JAMILA

Sorry.

A beat.

GULALAI

My husband was an MP. He was assassinated.

JAMILA

Why?

GULALAI

He was a champion of women's rights. Women are not free here. Some become so desperate they burn themselves to death.

JAMILA nods. A beat.

GULALAI (cont'd)
He had many enemies. A drug lord ordered him killed.

JAMILA
You know who it was?

GULALAI
Yes.

JAMILA
Have you told the police?

GULALAI laughs.
GULALAI
Everybody knows.

JAMILA
Aren't you afraid?

SHEILA enters, wearing a light sweater and jeans. She looks over at JAMILA and GULALAI, sees that they are deep in conversation and turns towards ALBERT. He seems to be lost in his thoughts. She stays where she is, watching JAMILA and GULALAI.

GULALAI
When I go out, I travel everywhere in a car. I have a nephew by marriage who acts as a bodyguard.

JAMILA
Does he have a gun?

GULALAI
Of course.

A beat.

GULALAI (cont'd)
For most of the time, I am a recluse - I only leave the house virtually.

JAMILA smiles.

GULALAI (cont'd)

I'm an internet - is 'geek' the right word?

JAMILA smiles and nods.

JAMILA

Like me.

GULALAI

That way, I can travel all over the world.

JAMILA

But aren't you angry?

GULALAI

I try not to be. Anger is a wasteful emotion.

A beat.

GULALAI (cont'd)

Do you know that 'paradise' is from a Persian word meaning 'garden'?

She indicates the garden.

GULALAI (cont'd)

This is still paradise. You thought so when you first saw it.

JAMILA smiles and nods. GULALAI notices SHEILA, who waves.

GULALAI (cont'd)

I must go and see that your mother has everything she needs.

GULALAI moves towards SHEILA. JAMILA takes her iPod from her pocket and puts the earpieces in. She sits on one the cistern's intact walls and turns her back on the rest of the garden., ALBERT and GULALAI. SHEILA moves towards GULALAI as she approaches.

SHEILA

This is very inconvenient for you. Jamila was so insistent -

GULALAI

It is lovely to meet her - at last.

A pause. They look at each other. GULALAI is appraising, critical. SHEILA looks away.

GULALAI (cont'd)

Why didn't you tell him he had a child?

SHEILA looks back at her directly.

SHEILA

We - lost touch.

GULALAI

You wrote him a - what do you call it? - a 'Dear John' letter.

SHEILA looks down. ALBERT notices them and begins to listen.

GULALAI (cont'd)

He showed it to me. It was cruel.

SHEILA

(defensive)

I was very young.

GULALAI

You must have been carrying his child.

A beat.

GULALAI (cont'd)

He wrote to you, begging you to change your mind.

SHEILA is genuinely incredulous.

SHEILA

I didn't get any letters.

GULALAI

He wrote to you many, many times.

A beat. They look at each other. SHEILA is shocked.. ALBERT shakes his head and becomes self-absorbed once more.

GULALAI (cont'd)

Over the years, I kept on encouraging him to marry but he never would.

SHEILA shakes her head.

No. SHEILA

He'll be married. ALBERT

GULALAI and SHEILA turn quickly to him, at first surprised and then puzzled. SHEILA moves quickly towards him and stands over him.

What did you say? SHEILA
(*sotto voce*)

He looks up at her. He has been lost in his memories.

What? ALBERT

She sits by him and looks quickly at GULALAI, who is watching them, and JAMILA, who is still engaged with her iPod.

You said, 'He'll be married.' You said that before - over and over. SHEILA

GULALAI moves towards JAMILA.

I was just thinking back. You rejected him. He never replied. There you are. ALBERT

Gulalai said he wrote - SHEILA

I know. I heard her. He couldn't have done. ALBERT

A beat.

Or, if he did, we didn't get 'em. ALBERT (cont'd)

SHEILA is watching him intently. He pats her hand.. She moves her hand immediately.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Anyway, that's water under the bridge.

As he speaks, he looks over to JAMILA and smiles.

SHEILA

How can you -

ALBERT

What a lovely girl she is! A credit to you. I'm so glad you never, y'know -

SHEILA

(standing)

What did you say?

He looks trapped. Suddenly, we hear automatic gun fire. GULALAI looks in the direction of the street. The noise startles ALBERT and shocks JAMILA and SHEILA into stillness. There is another burst of gun fire. JAMILA, SHEILA and ALBERT look wildly in the direction of the sound. We hear a recorded British voice through a loud haler:

NATO MILITARY POLICEMAN
(V.O)

This is a NATO patrol. Keep off the streets.

We hear a diesel engine revved and a half tracked vehicle move off.

NATO MILITARY POLICEMAN
(V.O.) (cont'd)

This is a NATO patrol.

GULALAI

Come closer to the house, Jamila.

JAMILA quickly joins the other three.

GULALAI (cont'd)

(to all)

You will be safe here. It is only small arms fire.

They look at her.

The lights dim.

SCENE 2: THE JOURNEY

We see images of a single track railway line leading in the distance to heavy gates with guard towers on either side.

We see the figure.

We hear women keening.

The lights dim.

SCENE 3: GULALAI'S WALLED GARDEN, KABUL - 1ST APRIL

Late afternoon. GULALAI is examining the mulberry tree as JAMILA enters and goes to her. GULALAI turns to her and kisses her on both cheeks..

GULALAI

Are you rested, Jamila?

JAMILA

I feel great, thanks.

GULALAI

Tell me about your mother.

During the ensuing dialogue, JAMILA and GULALAI stroll slowly arm in arm round the garden, stopping occasionally as their conversation ebbs and flows.

JAMILA

She's not calm like you.

GULALAI

There are different ways of being unhappy.

JAMILA studies her briefly.

JAMILA

I used to really hate her at times.

(a beat)

Now - since I heard about dad - and you -

She sighs.

GULALAI

I resented my mother for a long time. She was very ambitious for me. I could not see that she wanted a freedom for me that she dare not have for herself.

JAMILA

I used to think she didn't love me.

A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

When she had me, she was only a few years older than I am now.

They stop. GULALAI briefly puts her hand on JAMILA's cheek. They continue..

JAMILA (cont'd)

We like watching DVDs together.

GULALAI

Do you like the same music?

JAMILA

Not really. I like Pashtun music. I've downloaded lots of stuff onto my iPod.

GULALAI

May I look?

JAMILA hands the iPod over. GULALAI examines it.

GULALAI (cont'd)

That is state of the art.

A beat.

JAMILA

Have you got any children?

GULALAI

We had a daughter. She would have been your age almost. A little younger.

A beat.

Meningitis.

GULALAI (cont'd)

Sorry. I shouldn't have asked.

JAMILA

You are my niece.

GULALAI

They smile. A pause. GULALAI gently puts her hands on each side of JAMILA's face. She looks intently at her.

Can you be brave?

GULALAI (cont'd)

JAMILA nods.

We will not tell your mother or your grandfather yet what I am going to tell you.

GULALAI (cont'd)

She puts her hands down.

Your father may be released soon.

GULALAI (cont'd)

JAMILA embraces GULALAI, who strokes her back, tears in her eyes.

I said 'may'. I cannot be certain.

GULALAI (cont'd)

A pause. She holds JAMILA.

Even if - when he is released it may not be right for him to come here.

GULALAI (cont'd)

JAMILA lifts her head. They part.

He may be sick. I shall need time to tell him about you.

GULALAI (cont'd)

JAMILA nods, understanding. Suddenly, close to, a muezzin begins the call to prayer. JAMILA is enchanted.

JAMILA

Is that the call to prayer? There are five a day aren't there?

GULALAI

(laughing)

Yes. That's the midday. I must go.

She hands the iPod back to JAMILA, smiles and exits. JAMILA sits on the cistern wall, takes out her mobile phone from the crocheted shoulder bag, hesitates for a beat and then scrolls through her address book and finds the number she wants.

JAMILA

Hi, Tom!

(a beat)

Soz. Didn't think about the time.

(a beat)

No, I didn't know you were dreaming about me!

(a beat)

Oh, yeah!

(a beat)

It's really great here. You'd love it. Gulalai's so nice - and her garden is lovely. It's got a fountain. And -

SHEILA and ALBERT enter. SHEILA looks over to JAMILA.

I might see my dad soon!

Has SHEILA heard? JAMILA, unaware, puts in her earphones, selects the music and begins to sway. SHEILA and ALBERT sit on the bench. ALBERT nods in JAMILA's direction.

ALBERT

Happy as a lark!

(turning to SHEILA)

And how you are, love? Good siesta?

SHEILA

I couldn't sleep.

ALBERT

Why ever not? The air here's a right tonic.

SHEILA

(vehement)

Why? Why? How can you ask that? Gahez wrote to me, over and over, and not one of the letters got through. I've been thinking how different things would have been. That's why! And how if I'd listened to you she -

She moves her head quickly in JAMILA's direction.

SHEILA (cont'd)

would never have been born! God. It's all coming back. Your own daughter. I had to run away. At nineteen. In 1992!

ALBERT

(suddenly angry)

And what did you do after you'd had her? You'd have drunk yourself to death in that seedy bedsit if I hadn't found you.

JAMILA has heard something. She half turns, removing an earphone.

SHEILA

Mum found me.

A pause. JAMILA turns back, but is still listening. They glower at each other. This is a reprise of rows from that time - but it is ALBERT who backs down.

ALBERT

Yes, well.

A pause. He stiffly gets up and walks much more slowly than we have seen him do before and exits. SHEILA looks after him, full of anger. JAMILA puts the earphone back.

The lights dim.

SCENE 4: THE JOURNEY

We see the figure.

Suddenly, we hear, for two beats, music at a sonic torture volume. It stops as suddenly.

Immediately, we hear a man screaming.

The lights dim.

SCENE 5: GULALAI'S WALLED GARDEN - 2ND APRIL

It is early morning ALBERT, wearing a pashmina shawl but otherwise dressed as before though a little dishevelled, is standing by the fountain and looking into the distance. Suddenly, the loudspeaker crackles, and again broadcasts some bars of Pashtun music followed by an announcement in Pashtun: 'Elam Atal ra'y'. JAMILA enters, her iPod earpieces in. ALBERT is oblivious of both JAMILA and the repeated broadcast. Silence. JAMILA goes and sits on the bench.

ALBERT

'Wake: the silver dusk returning/Up the beach of darkness brims

JAMILA realises he is speaking - but not to her. Anxious, she removes the earpieces and listens.

ALBERT (cont'd)

And the ship of sunrise burning/Strands upon the eastern rims.'

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

'Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;/Breath's a ware that will not keep./Up, lad: when the journey's over./There'll be time enough to sleep.'

A beat. He suddenly drops the shawl. Slowly he begins the dervish dance. JAMILA is entranced.. He begins to circle the garden. Suddenly, he stumbles. She rushes to him, and steadies him.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Jamila?

JAMILA
You were dancing.

(off his reaction)
You know.

She holds her arms up and does a half turn. He shakes his head, violently.

JAMILA (cont'd)
Where did you learn it?

ALBERT
Kassim. He was -

JAMILA
The char-wallah. Your mate. I remember.

ALBERT looks pleased.

ALBERT
Yeah, that's right. He was a Sufi. That's a special sort of Muslim.

JAMILA
Show me, Grandad.

He shakes his head again but is softening.

JAMILA (cont'd)
Please. The one Kassim showed you.

He looks at her and then begins to dance. She follows. We hear, distantly, the original Sufi melody and the Sufi rhythm on a Ney flute and a Daf drum. They dance around the garden, weaving slowly in and out of the tree and the cistern. They stop. JAMILA picks up the shawl. ALBERT goes to the bench and sits. JAMILA follows him, drapes the shawl round his shoulders and sits beside him. They smile. He pats her knee.

ALBERT
'Grandad'. I like that.

A beat.

JAMILA

Did you stay mates with Kassim?

A beat. He becomes suddenly distraught.

ALBERT

There was this earthquake. A big one. Major.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

We were tasked with burying the dead. The natives.

A pause

ALBERT (cont'd)

We were trying pull bodies from this pile of rubble. I realised one of them was Kassim. His head and the upper part of his chest were free - the rest of him buried. I called the Corporal over. I said, 'Corp! There's one still alive here under the rubble. ' He comes strolling over. I said, 'It's Kassim, Corp.' And start to pull the stones off. The Corp's still standing there, the bastard. I said, 'It's the char-wallah, Kassim, and he's still breathing.' He just lifted the butt of his rifle and -

ALBERT mimes a rifle butt crushing someone's skull, violently, over and over.

ALBERT (cont'd)

'He's dead now,' the bastard said when he'd finished. 'The little wog's dead now,' he said.

ALBERT begins to sob uncontrollably. JAMILA is nonplussed at first, anxiously wondering what to do. Then she begins to stoke his arms. He stops eventually, catches his breath and wipes away the tears with his hands.

ALBERT (cont'd)

We were dancing, Jamila.

He sees the look on JAMILA's face . A pause.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I came to see your mother at Christmas to ask her to forgive me. But I couldn't get the words right.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I went on and on to get her to write to your father telling him it was over. She gave in in the end.

JAMILA is angry, hurt.

JAMILA

She didn't have to do it.

ALBERT

I bullied her.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Later I tried to get her to -

A beat. He looks away.

ALBERT (cont'd)

have an abortion.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

She left home - pregnant with you. Gave up her course. Disappeared. Clarice found out where she was. It was Clarice always made sure your mother had enough money to look after you. Pretended it was from me.

A beat.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Clarice sent her the doll's house - for you.

He looks at her.

ALBERT (cont'd)

Your mother's got a lot of guts, y'know.

A pause.

ALBERT (cont'd)

She'll never forgive me. But you might.

JAMILA

You must talk to her.

He grabs her hand.

ALBERT

You do it.

JAMILA

You can't ask me that.

ALBERT

Think about it. Please.

A pause. He looks away.

ALBERT (cont'd)

You have a lot to forgive me for. Your dad wrote back to your mum - and I burned the letters. I made Clarice go along with it.

*She moves away from him, her expression hardening.
ALBERT does not notice at first.*

JAMILA

How many?

(off his reaction)

How many letters did he write?

ALBERT

I don't know.

(off her reaction)

I can't remember.

JAMILA

You've used me! To get try to get round mum!

He reaches towards her. She backs further away.

ALBERT

You're my grand daughter.

They look at each other. A beat. He looks away.

ALBERT (cont'd)

I've betrayed people, ruined their lives.

Silence.

JAMILA

What did you have against my dad? Was it the colour of his skin?

ALBERT

I've always fought against racism. I've treated everybody as my equal.

JAMILA

Were you afraid of him?

He begins to sob.

ALBERT

I loved Kassim.

As she studies him, she struggles with a range of conflicting thoughts and feelings. The lights dim.

SCENE 6: THE JOURNEY

We hear distantly a new Sufi melody and rhythm on the Daf drum.

Occasionally, distant sheet lightning illuminates the garden - and JAMILA swaying as if to the music. Gusts of wind disturb the leaves.

The lights dim.

SCENE 7: GULALAI'S WALLED GARDEN - 3RD APRIL

Early evening. JAMILA and SHEILA are standing near the bench on which ALBERT is sitting and following their conversation intently.

SHEILA

She said it would be days - even a week.

JAMILA

Gulalai said she couldn't be sure.

SHEILA

I can't see him. I can't.

JAMILA tentatively strokes SHEILA's arm.

SHEILA (cont'd)

(distracted)

I thought he didn't care.

A beat.

SHEILA (cont'd)

I didn't get any of his letters.

(noticing Jamila's reaction)

What? I didn't.

A pause. JAMILA looks quickly at ALBERT, who looks away. SHEILA notices.

JAMILA

(indicating ALBERT)

He destroyed them. He told me.

Silence. SHEILA looks in ALBERT's direction. She walks over to him.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Mum?

SHEILA stops a few feet away from him. ALBERT is still looking away.

ALBERT

I thought it was for the best.

SHEILA laughs suddenly, hollowly and then begins to sob. JAMILA rushes to her mother, puts her arm round her shoulders and leads her back to the fountain.

JAMILA

Perhaps he did.

SHEILA shakes her head violently, gasping for breath between the sobs.

JAMILA (cont'd)

(gently, quickly)

Gulalai will tell dad all about us. She won't bring him if she doesn't think he's all right.

SHEILA controls her sobbing, wipes her tears with a handkerchief and looks at her.

SHEILA

I know you're excited.

JAMILA

And scared.

SHEILA

I'm just scared. And full of guilt.

JAMILA

But he got rid of the letters not you.

SHEILA

I wrote to you dad, telling him it was over.

JAMILA

He made you do that. He told me.

SHEILA

He didn't hold my hand and move it across the page!

A beat.

JAMILA

What will you do?

SHEILA

I'll hide.

JAMILA

Mum!

SHEILA

(pleading)

Just for a bit. In my room.

JAMILA

But you will come down - eventually?

SHEILA

When you've had plenty of time to talk to him.

(a beat)

I don't know.

She looks pleadingly again at JAMILA, who nods. They are both tearful. SHEILA turns to go and then turns back and gives JAMILA a quick hug, then puts her from her and studies her.

SHEILA (cont'd)

He'll be very proud of his daughter.

(off her reaction)

He will.

She exits quickly. JAMILA wipes her eyes.

ALBERT

I'm going to stay - if that's all right.

She has forgotten him. He gets up.

ALBERT (cont'd)

(anxiously)

Just for a bit.

A beat. She studies him. He begins to pace to and fro in front of the bench. He stops, tries to take both her hands. She puts them to her sides.

ALBERT (cont'd)

(a beat)

I've got things I need to say to him.

JAMILA

I don't think you should say anything.

ALBERT shakes his head, becoming increasingly self-absorbed. JAMILA watches him - part irritated, part concerned. GULALAI enters with GAHEZ. She is holding his elbow -part leading him, part encouraging him. GAHEZ is very gaunt and looks much older than his years. He is in desert khaki overalls slightly too big for

him. JAMILA is visibly shocked. ALBERT, unaware, is muttering to himself. GULALAI and GAHEZ stop when they see JAMILA, who is beginning to cry, and ALBERT. GAHEZ slowly touches his chest with his finger tips and then opens his arms in a gesture of salaam. GULALAI is tearful now.

GULALAI

This is Jamila.

JAMILA smiles. GAHEZ nods, beginning to smile. A long pause. They look at each other. GULALAI turns to ALBERT.

GULALAI (cont'd)

You remember Mr. Chambers?

ALBERT looks up. Reluctantly, GAHEZ turns from JAMILA and nods a greeting to ALBERT, who goes to GAHEZ - and stops a yard or so from him.

ALBERT

I'm sorry, Kassim. I mean -.

A beat. GAHEZ briefly looks enquiringly at GULALAI, who is nonplussed, and then JAMILA, who is alarmed. He turns back to ALBERT, who has stopped a yard or so from him.

GAHEZ

(politely smiling)

Kassim?

ALBERT

About -

He looks wildly round.

ALBERT (cont'd)

The Corporal.

JAMILA and GULALAI look alarmed and JAMILA begins to move towards ALBERT. A beat. He looks quickly at JAMILA and then exits.

GULALAI

I think you should rest a little, Gahez.

GAHEZ

I want to talk with my daughter.

He looks at JAMILA.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

Ok?

JAMILA nods enthusiastically.

GULALAI

Then you must sit.

They move to the bench. JAMILA follows.

GULALAI (cont'd)

Do you need anything? Tea? A blanket?

GAHEZ

I'm fine.

He looks at her.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

Thank you. Thank you.

GULALAI

(to JAMILA)

I shall go after your grand father.

JAMILA smiles, nods. GULALAI smiles at each of them in turn and exits. GAHEZ sits.

GAHEZ

Will you sit by me, Jamila?

She goes quickly to him and sits. They look at each other. He shakes his head. A pause.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

What was the old man trying to say to me?

JAMILA

He's done things he wished he hadn't.

GAHEZ

What things?

He suddenly waves his hand dismissively.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

I'm making small talk. I don't really care about the old man.

(a beat)

I don't know what to say to you.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

Yesterday, I didn't know I had a daughter.

JAMILA cannot speak.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

I don't know what I feel. I feel so many different things. Do you understand?

JAMILA nods.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

You look like your mother.

JAMILA

She says I've got your eyes.

A beat. He looks round suddenly.

GAHEZ

Where is she?

JAMILA

She'll come down later. I expect.

A pause.

GAHEZ

How is she?

JAMILA

Unhappy, I think. She wanted us to emigrate to America.

He laughs

JAMILA (cont'd)

Do you hate America?

GAHEZ

America is inevitable. It is not what it is but what it does that's wrong.

(a beat)

GAHEZ (cont'd)

You said 'wanted to go'?

JAMILA

We probably can't now because - of you.

He laughs again.

GAHEZ

I'm sorry.

She shakes her head.

JAMILA

It doesn't matter.

GAHEZ

You didn't want to go?

JAMILA

I wasn't sure.

A beat.

GAHEZ

Are you happy?

JAMILA

I am now.

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

I'm really nervous as well. I want you to like me.

GAHEZ

You're my daughter, Jamila.

JAMILA

I've wondered for so long what it would be like for you to say my name.

He puts his hand to his heart.

JAMILA (cont'd)

I'm very happy.

She laughs, sniffs and wipes her face with her hand.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Really - now.

She opens her bag and takes out a folded A4 sheet.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Last night, I wrote you a poem.

She opens it out and passes it to him. He takes it, looks at it and his hands begin to shake. He is overwrought. He passes it back.

GAHEZ

Please read it to me.

She takes it from him. Her concern is palpable.

JAMILA

(reading aloud)

'When I was young, I knew you were alive - somewhere,/knew you would find me - wherever I was,/knew you would love me.'

A beat. She breathes deeply.

JAMILA (cont'd)

'When I was older, I always hoped you were not dead,/always hoped you would find me,/always hoped you would love me - whatever I was.'

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

'Now I know that we will meet/I know I shall love you.'

He becomes distraught. He pulls at his clothing. JAMILA goes to touch him. She hesitates, begins to cry.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Please don't. Not now. There's no need.

He looks at her. He controls himself. A beat. He nods.

GAHEZ

Wise words.

She offers the poem to him. He takes it, folds it into four and puts it in the breast pocket of his overalls.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

It is almost the best gift I have ever had,

He looks at her.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

The best is discovering that there is life after the wilderness.

They embrace each other. A beat. They part. A pause.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

Your mother named you 'Jamila'?

JAMILA

She said you did.

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

But, of course, she did.

GAHEZ

D'you know what the name means?

JAMILA nods.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

It must have mattered to her. She and I. To have your name always to remind her. So why

-

A beat. JAMILA waits. He says nothing.

JAMILA

(gently)

Why didn't you come to find us?

GAHEZ

I returned to Afghanistan to help my parents and Gulalai. Your mother wrote telling me it was over - that she didn't love me. I wrote, of course, again and again. I even tried to call but it was impossible. I still planned to return to the UK if I could. But when she didn't reply to any of my letters -

A beat.

JAMILA

She didn't get them. The old man burned them.

GAHEZ

When did she find out?

JAMILA

Just now. He told me yesterday morning. I didn't know if I should tell her - if it would make things worse for her.

He nods.

JAMILA (cont'd)

But I decided she had right to know. It made her very upset.

A pause. He puts his hands to his face.

JAMILA (cont'd)

She feels guilty about the letter she sent to you. He bullied her into that. I hate him. Despise him.

He shakes his head.

GAHEZ

I should have tried harder.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

In my first year at medical school, we were required to attend philosophy lectures. Our professor felt the sooner we were faced with moral dilemmas - if only in the abstract - the better.

A pause.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

The philosophy lecturer used to set us moral problems by telling us a story or reading us a poem. I remember one in particular. The title was ' Travelling in - ' no, 'Travelling thru the Dark'. The writer was an American.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

He's driving along a very, very narrow mountain road at night. He suddenly sees a deer in his headlights. It's lying in the road. He stops, gets out and goes to the animal. It's a doe and it's dead. Normally, it would be best to push the creature into the canyon below. A vehicle swerving to avoid it on such a narrow road might go over the edge. But there's a fawn in it's belly. And the fawn's alive. He thinks hard for us all. He pushes her over the edge.

A pause. He looks at her and takes her hands in his.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

After all this, I am blessed.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

When the Soviet backed regime collapsed and Kabul was occupied by the Taliban, chaos descended. I was involved with various revolutionary groups - first as a doctor then

He makes the quotes signs on 'freedom fighter' and 'terrorist'.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

as a 'freedom fighter' or a 'terrorist' or both at the same time - in order to put your mother and everything else completely out of my mind, and out of my heart.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

I continued out of conviction. Then in response to threats.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

For three years, I've been imprisoned by the Americans.

A beat.

Were you a Taliban? JAMILA

I grew a beard and pretended. GAHEZ

Did you kill anyone? JAMILA

Yes. I was a soldier. It was a war. GAHEZ

Do you disapprove? *(off her reaction)*

I don't know. JAMILA

Silence. He looks away. A long pause. She studies him.

Were you ill in prison? JAMILA (cont'd)

He turns vehemently to her

I was tortured. Waterboarding. Do you know about that? GAHEZ

She nods.

For weeks. GAHEZ (cont'd)

A beat. He bow his head.

I mention it now only because torture kills the soul. I wouldn't want you to think this is all I ever was. GAHEZ (cont'd)

She automatically puts her hand on his. He looks at her. They both silently acknowledge what she has done. A beat.

You are disappointed? GAHEZ (cont'd)

She shakes her head vigorously. He looks away.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

After all this time and this is all you have to show for your belief.

JAMILA

There are people that can help.

(off his reaction)

There are. I saw a programme on the tele and this man, he'd had all sorts done to him, his finger nails pulled out, the souls of his feet electrocuted, and he became well eventually.

GAHEZ raises his hand and smiles.

GAHEZ

Ok. Ok. I'm convinced.

She smiles. A pause.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

Do you watch much tv? What a silly question! I meet my daughter for the first time and that's all I ask her.

JAMILA

It's like we're just chatting. It's great.

A pause.

JAMILA (cont'd)

Are you a Sufi?

GAHEZ

Who told you about Sufis?

JAMILA

The old man - sort of - told me. And he showed me the dance.

Off his reaction, JAMILA gets to her feet and whirls slowly. She stops. GAHEZ claps. She sits by him.

GAHEZ

I'm not religious - any more. In spite of everything, I believe in humankind not in gods.

A pause. They look at each other.

JAMILA

What should I call you?

GAHEZ

Gahez would be fine.

JAMILA

Oh.

GAHEZ

You could call me Abba - father - if you would prefer.

She smiles.

JAMILA

Is Ab like Dad?

He smiles.

GAHEZ

Not really. But that can be your special name for me.

They look each other and smile.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

So, Jamila, my daughter, what do you like watching on the tele?

JAMILA

Well, Ab, my dad -

She suddenly laughs without restraint. This is the first time we have seen her laugh at all. She recovers.

JAMILA (cont'd)

I don't watch much really.

She laughs again. So he does.

JAMILA (cont'd)

I get a lot of information from the web - on my laptop. I know a lot about Afghanistan - and the Pashtun.

He nods approvingly, appreciatively. She passes the IPod over and the earpieces. He listens. He nods his head in time with the music - then is overcome and quickly removes the headphones, and hands them and the IPod back.

JAMILA (cont'd)

(hurriedly)

Mum and me watch a lot of movies - on DVD.

A beat. She studies him, concerned.

GAHEZ

I'm OK. Go on. Please, Jamila.

She smiles.

JAMILA

Just before Christmas we saw one about a doctor - in Russia. At the end of the movie, he's having a heart attack on a crowded tram and the woman he'd loved and lost all those years before was walking by on the pavement and neither of them knew.

GAHEZ

I think he'd seen her - but she didn't see him.

(remembering)

Sheila and I saw the film together.

JAMILA

Mum cried when we watched it.

GAHEZ

And when we did.

JAMILA

I pretended not to.

A pause. SHEILA enters. They do not see her. She watches them. He is crying. JAMILA begins to. He puts his arms around her and she hers around him. JAMILA is ecstatic - GAHEZ wretched. They stay thus for perhaps for five beats. Suddenly, JAMILA realises SHEILA is there.

JAMILA (cont'd)

(smiling)

Mum!

SHEILA and GAHEZ look at each other. JAMILA looks from one to the other, expecting them to move towards each other. They do not.

I'll go. JAMILA (cont'd)

They turn quickly to JAMILA.

No. SHEILA

Please don't. GAHEZ

They turn back and smile awkwardly. JAMILA begins to cry silently.

I didn't know you'd written. SHEILA

If I'd known. *(a beat)*

Yes. GAHEZ

A pause. He begins to sob. SHEILA begins to stretch a hand out towards him - then withdraws it.

It's so much. GAHEZ (cont'd)

I'm sorry. SHEILA
(crying)

JAMILA
(to Gahez then to Sheila)
You could come back with us. We'd look after you - wouldn't we, mum?

A pause. SHEILA looks at them both and then reluctantly nods, still crying. He shakes his head.

GAHEZ

When I thought about being free again, I'd assumed that I would - that I should stay in Afghanistan. I also assumed, I'm ashamed to say, that Gulalai would look after me.

SHEILA

Of course. She would want to. You mean so much to her.

JAMILA

(to SHEILA)

But we can't just go home. As if nothing's happened.

(to GAHEZ)

You can't disappear from my life now.

SHEILA and GAHEZ, move to her, one on each side of her.

SHEILA

(to JAMILA)

We're not the same people we were sixteen years ago.

She looks at Gahez. He nods.

GAHEZ

(to JAMILA)

We need to get to know each again. Before we plan for the future.

A beat.

SHEILA

(to JAMILA)

You could come and stay here - for part of your holidays.

GAHEZ nods.

GAHEZ

(to SHEILA)

And you could come with her.

SHEILA

Yes.

GULALAI enters quickly and goes to SHEILA.

GULALAI

I am concerned about your father, Sheila. He is very distressed.

SHEILA

Distressed!

She begins to wipe her eyes.

SHEILA (cont'd)

He bloody well should be!

(off GULALAI's reaction)

Sorry.

(to GULALAI)

I'll go with you.

GAHEZ

I shall come.

JAMILA

Should I?

SHEILA

No, you two must stay together.

She smiles at JAMILA then at GAHEZ, She exits. GAHEZ takes JAMILA's hand.

GULALAI

A reporter from Al Jazeera rang to speak to you. Do you want to talk to him?

GAHEZ nods. GULALAI hands her mobile to GAHEZ. He calls up the number and, as he does so, GULALAI walks over to JAMILA and hugs her. JAMILA hugs her back and then begins to wipe away her tears with her hands. GAHEZ finishes the call and turns to them.

GAHEZ

He would like to interview me tomorrow. I have said I will.

A beat.

GAHEZ (cont'd)

He knows about you, Jamila..

GULALAI

(to GAHEZ)

You know how things are in Kabul.

He nods.

GAHEZ

(to GULALAI)

He would like to interview her. I said no.

GULALAI

(firmly)

Jamila must decide.

JAMILA nods. GAHEZ looks at GULALAI and then at JAMILA.

GAHEZ

Well?

JAMILA

I want to do it. For us all.

He nods. A beat. The lights dim.

SCENE 8: THE JOURNEY

We see images of JAMILA speaking to camera. We see the actual JAMILA, a black scarf round her shoulders, standing in a dim light. Behind her, in a dimmer light, are the outlines of ALBERT, GAHEZ, GULALAI and SHEILA as tableau. GAHEZ and SHEILA are at the centre, ALBERT and GULALAI at either extreme.

JAMILA (V.O.)

Since I can remember, I've always dreamed that my Dad was really alive and he'd come and find me. I didn't really feel I had a mum never mind a dad. Now I know I have both. I'll be a bridge.

The images continue but the sound decreases on the next line.

JAMILA (cont'd)

I've learned so much. I've learned to dance.

And increases again on the first half a dozen words or so.

ALBERT(V.O.)

'Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:/Hear the drums of morning play;/Hark, the empty highways crying/ Who'll beyond the hills away?'

On 'hills away', the video images of JAMILA morph into images of flames and mountains, smoke and ruined places.

We hear the original melody and rhythm on the flute and drum.

We hear a cacophony of extracts from speeches about the by Bush, Blair, Brown and Obama - the words and phrases repeated: 'terror', 'security', 'freedom', 'sacrifice', 'the West', 'the Afghan people', 'our cities', 'our streets'.

And we see paper ashes and roses, as if torn from a book, flutter slowly down. As the paper begins to fall, the music and the speeches cease and the actual JAMILA begins to speak.

JAMILA

'The leaves of the mulberry tree rustled like silk./ Like gold, the sunlight touched the mud walls of the garden./The fountain flowed like silver. In the shade,/ there was peace. Soon, the music would begin.'

A beat.

JAMILA (cont'd)

'The walls have been shelled./Fire has destroyed the tree./The fountain is dry./A loudspeaker crackles.'

JAMILA raises her arms as if she is about to begin the dervish dance. She holds them there for a beat - and then takes the black scarf from her shoulders and places it loosely over her head - and then she dances.

THE END