

MINA'S REVOLUTION

BY PAUL-DAVID HALEM
Based On The Novel *Mina's Revolution*
By Mehrnoosh Mazarei
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This play is based on the book “Mina’s Revolution” by a wonderful author, Mehrnoosh Mazarei. It has been a very interesting experience to turn a 260 page novel into a 75 minute play. I would like to thank the author for her encouragement and input. With that in mind, I dedicate this play to Mehrnoosh Mazarei and women like Mina who put up the good fight.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS:
IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE**

PRESENT DAY MINA: Attractive and educated Iranian Woman age 45.

MINA: Plays all the flashback scenes.

BUSINESSMAN: Middle aged. Expensively attired. Also play Mohsen.

SHIRIN: Mina’s adult daughter. She will also play the part of the young Mina.

IMMIGRATION AGENTS: Males ages 25 to 40. Also plays Maitre D’ and Cab Driver

FATHER: Mina’s Father. Age 40 to 45. Also plays Adult Hamid

MOTHER: Mina’s Mother. Attractive age 35 to 40. Played by Present Day Mina.

MAHNAZ: Mina’s younger sister. Teenager. Also plays Zary.

PARVIZ: Very dashing communist revolutionary. Age 30. Also plays Ensemble roles.

ZARY: Student Communist. Dresses western with a flare. Also plays Mahnaz.

HAMID: Unassuming middle aged man. Also plays Mina’s Father.

HOSSEIN: Iranian/American in his twenties. Also plays Immigration Agent and Mugger.

ACT I SCENE I

*(Projection Screen "Los Angeles Airport - Sept 10, 2001")
(Two airline seats side by side SR)*

Public Address Announcer

American Airline Flight 197 Los Angeles to JFK is now ready to board. First Class and Business Class may now enter the jet way. Please have your boarding passes ready to display.

(Mina enters from SR looking at her boarding passes and locates her seat. She sits when a businessman dressed in a suit enters and finds his seat next to Mina. He nods at her and she nods back as he sits).

BUSINESSMAN

Looks like we'll leave right on time.

MINA

(She smiles at him) That would be nice.

BUSINESSMAN

Are you going home?

MINA

No, I live in LA. My company has offices in New York. Just a quick business trip.

BUSINESSMAN

I'm in the marketing research field. What do you do?

MINA

I'm a chief engineering manager.

BUSINESSMAN

Really? That's interesting. Well, New York is my hometown. Big Apple born and bread. I hope you don't mind me asking but I'm detecting a slight accent. Where are you from originally?

MINA

I was born in Iran, but I've lived in LA for many years.

BUSINESSMAN

Iran (*He pronounces it I Ran*)

MINA

Actually, it is pronounced E Raun

BUSINESSMAN

Oh, I'm sorry.

MINA

Don't be sorry. It is a common mistake. Usually I don't even mention it.

BUSINESSMAN

So you're a Persian?

MINA

Yes, by birth, I am a Persian Iranian.

BUSINESSMAN

I actually know a few words in Arabic. "Alsalaamu Alykum"

MINA

I don't know much more myself. (*He looks at her confused*) We are not Arabs. We are Aryans. That is why Hitler liked us so much. (*She opens her laptop*).

BUSINESSMAN

Really?that's very...interesting. (*He picks up a magazine*) I see you have work to do

MINA

(Mina begins to type and the text appears on the projection screen. A single spot is on Mina and another spot light is on her daughter, Shirin, who is standing looking at her phone SL).

My Dearest Daughter,

It has been 8 years since we have spoken. It is so long it is now hard for me to remember why.

SHIRIN

I must have a better memory. I remember you leaving Papa and me so you could sleep with that young South American Communist. I remember being forced to go to court where you tried to make the judge have me leave Papa and live with you. I remember choosing my father. Do you remember now?

MINA

Yes, of course, I remember. You are old enough now to know that life can be complicated and messy. I am on a plane coming to New York. I want so much to see you. I want us to talk face to face. Please have dinner with me tomorrow night? Shirin, I am sorry for the pain I caused you. I miss you so much.

SHIRIN

Tomorrow night is not good for me. *(She takes a deep breath)* Maybe for breakfast. Before we meet I want answers. Tell me the truth about everything. Tell me who my birth father is. Why you kept me. Tell me who you really are. I want to know everything. I want to know who my mother is and why you left us. If you want to go forward with me first you have to go back.

FADE OUT**ACT 1 SCENE II**

(Projection screen reads: November 13, 1979 - JFK Passport and Immigration)

(Mina steps forward and nervously hands her passport to the agent).

AGENT

(He looks at the photo and then at Mina. He then looks at her suspiciously).
Is this you?

MINA

(She nods her head several times) The picture is two years old. *(He looks at her and the photo more carefully. Mina nervously touches her hair).* My hair is different now.

AGENT

You have been issued a Visa for one year. What is the reason for your visit?

MINA

My brother lives in Los Angeles. I am visiting him.

AGENT

(He takes a long look at her. He then points SR) Take this form to Immigration.

MINA

I don't understand. Is something wrong with my visa?

AGENT

(Pointing SR) Stand in that line.

MINA

I have to go. I will miss my plane to Los Angeles.

AGENT

You have to go there now.

AGENT#2

(Mina goes SR and hands her documents to another Agent. He looks at them in a bored manner and then back at Mina) Give me your plane ticket and boarding pass and have a seat over there.

MINA

Please sir, I need my ticket to go to Los Angeles.

AGENT#2

Miss, give me your ticket and boarding pass now. *(She hands them to him)*. Sit in that seat and wait. *(Mina sits down and looks around. She rubs her stomach. The Agent returns with her two bags and puts them down in front of her)*. Open your suitcases.

MINA

Have I done *something* wrong? Please sir, I do not understand.

AGENT#2

Unlock your suitcases or we'll break the locks. I won't ask you again. *(Mina kneels down and opens her suitcases. The Agent then begins to empty the contents onto the floor. They are mostly books with a small amount of clothing)*. Why do you have so many books? Why are you bringing these books into the United States? *(Mina does not answer. He picks up a small framed picture and shakes his head)*. This looks like Khomeini. *(Mina gives him a confused look and smiles)*. You think that's funny? I wonder if you thought it was funny when they took our guys hostage. Was that funny too?

MINA

No, no not funny. That is a picture of my Grandfather with my parents.

AGENT#2

What do you think of Khomeini?

MINA

I do not understand. I love America. It is my dream to come here. I come to visit my brother.

AGENT#2

(The Agent looks again at her passport and then hands them back to her) Welcome to the United States. *(Mina is on her knees repacking as the lights fade)*.

ACT I SCENE III

(Projection Screen) AUGUST 1964- THE ROAD TO THE CASPIAN SEA (Stage Center are five chairs for their car. Two chairs in the front and three in the back. Mina, Mahnaz, and Hossein are in the back and Mother and Father are in the front. Behind them the screen projects the scenery as they drive).

FATHER

We are going to be driving across most of the country. I expect everyone will be behaving. This is the best car I could borrow from my friend, and it is not too big. So no loud talking. I have to concentrate on my driving. We are going to go by Shiraz, Esfahan, and we will make a stop in the holy city of Qom. Mother will go to a shrine when we are in Qom. I am staying in the car. You can go to if you want.

MOTHER

I made three new chadors just for this trip. This one for travel *(she points to the one she is wearing with a simple print. She then holds up two others)*. This black one for when I go to holy places, and this one black with white dots for fancy places. I made it just for this trip.

MINA

I like the fancy one.

MAHNAZ

Yes, the one with the dots is very pretty.

FATHER

Okay, we are ready to go. Everyone be quiet so I can drive. *(He turns the key and they all bounce forward as he pulls away)*. After we leave Tehran I am going to take you to the North. I was there many years ago. The North has many forest and beaches and the women swim naked just wearing bathing suits.

MINA

Father will we swim naked too? *(Father looks at Mother and they both shake their heads)*.

FADE OUT**ACT I SCENE IV**

(Screen: Tehran - 1964 - Older hotel balcony)

MINA

(Standing on the hotel roof with Mahnaz. There is the loud sounds of crowds and honking horns. They both lean over and look down as they speak).

So many people and so much noise. Tehran must be the biggest city in the world.

MAHNAZ

(Points excitedly) Look at that window. They have one of those movie boxes.

MINA

(Speaks as if she is an expert with while affecting a Tehran accent that is more precise and more quickly spoken. It is called a television. I wish we could hear what it sounds like. Someday, maybe they will have television in Borazjan too. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

MAHNAZ

Yes it is. I can't wait. Why are you talking so funny?

MINA

I am not talking funny. This is the way people speak in Tehran. Someday when I live here and I'll buy a television and a car, and I will speak like Tehrani people, and no one will know I came from Borazjan.

MAHNAZ

Father will never let you live in Tehran. Did you see him today when we were uptown and we saw that girl riding a bicycle and wearing those blue shorts showing her legs. He said the men here call them mademoiselles. Mother called out "God save us." I don't think Father will ever allow you to be a mademoiselle.

MINA

I don't want to be a mademoiselle. I want to go to school at Tehran University. Someday I will live here and go to school here.

MAHNAZ

Mother says it is dangerous here for girls. That there are places they steal girls off the street and then sell them. I would be afraid to live here

MINA

I am not afraid. I will someday go to the University and live here. You will see. Maybe you will come and visit me too.

FADE OUT**ACT 1 SCENE V**

(The five chairs are set up as a car stage center and everyone is seated. The projection screen says: THE ROAD NORTH)

FATHER

These cars parked too close. I don't know if I can get out of here. *(He turns his wheel back and forth trying to get out of the tight parking space as the sound affects of bumping fenders and everyone jerking as they hit the cars in front and behind. At last he is able to clear the tight*

space and gets out to examine the cars). I don't see any damage. This one in the back is American. America makes the best cars. (He gets back in and they start to drive with the screen showing the windows of shops displaying Mannequins wearing Western clothing and cinemas and night clubs. As they drive, the scenery on the screen becomes countryside and pastures. A large cow appears on the screen).

MAHNAZ

Father, look a cow is on the road! *(Father slams on the brakes)*

FATHER

(Father shakes his head and shouts out the window). Madam-moo-sel be careful. You might get hit by a car. (They all laugh as they drive on) I am taking you to a very special restaurant for lunch at the Motel Qoo. It is right through those iron arches. You see where the families in swimming suits are going in that door. Everyone on their best behavior. You are all in for a treat! (Mother removes her everyday chador and replaces it with the special chador with white dots. They all get out of the car and walk SL and follow Father into the restaurant. The maitre d' comes up to them).

MAITRE D'

Ladies are not allowed to enter the restaurant wearing chadors.

FATHER

(Father smiles and laughs a bit) A chador with white spots is not a real chador.

MAITRE D'

The rule stands. *(He spreads his arms and herds them toward the front door)*

FATHER

(Angry and shouting) Who are you to make rules like this? Are you the old shah telling women they can't wear chadors. (They are all SC and looking back at the restaurant door when Father continues to shout). You motherfuckers. I will fuck your mothers and your sisters. I know what to do with you sons of bitches. When I get back to Tehran, I will go to the Ministry of Justice. I will go directly to the Minister of Justice. How dare you stop a Muslim woman from entering a restaurant? I will fuck your sisters!

FADE OUT

**ACT I SCENE VI
BORAZJAN - 1970**

FATHER

(Father, Mother, and Mina are SC) Tehran? Are you out of your mind? Who ever heard of a girl going to Tehran and living alone? You wouldn't be safe in that crazy filthy place even if you were a man. (He grabs the magazine Mina is holding and throws it and stomps off SR).

MOTHER

Haven't you read about all those terrible stories in your magazines? They trick girls and get them addicted to drugs, and then make them do a thousand bad things.

MINA

I am not one of those stupid girls!

MOTHER

I know you are a smart girl. But a girl is a girl. You cannot let a girl be alone. A girl should lay her head where her mother's head is, or there will be much gossip about her. If you go to Tehran, no honor will be left for us in this town. *(Father comes back shaking his head).*

MINA

I just want to go to the University of Tehran. I will come back as soon as I finish my studies.

FATHER

No, no, no! Student or no student. If you live in a filthy place, you become rotten. You can go to the Academy of Teachers in Bushehr. It is just two hours away. You will stay in the girl's dormitory.

MINA

I don't want to be a teacher. I want to study engineering at the University of Tehran. Let me go or I will starve myself to death.

FATHER

Shut up! What do you mean that you're not going to eat? Are you going to run away? Go wash your mouth before I slap you hard and break your teeth. I can't believe that this Missy is so hard headed. You want to go to Tehran! This is what all these garbage books and magazines put into your head. What kind of a father would I be to let a girl go to the other side of world alone?

MOTHER

I have never seen such a pushy girl in my whole life! I don't know what happened to you. You were such a quiet girl, studying all the time at school. When did you become like this?
(Mother and Father exit and Mina comes forward into a spot).

MINA

Father decided that I should take the entrance exam at Pahlavi University in Shiraz and live there with my Mother's relatives. I was still determined to go to Tehran. The exam lasted for five hours and I just sat there and did not answer one question. The next year they let me take the exam for Tehran University. I was weak from starving for months, but I answered all of the questions. The news in town spread quickly. "Mr. Sha'abani's daughter Mina is going to live in Tehran. She has been accepted in the University of Tehran and she is going to be an engineer. Some asked can a woman be an engineer? God knows! If a woman can live in Tehran, then she can become an engineer too!"

ACT I SCENE VII
TEHRAN - NOVEMBER 1972

(Mina stands SL in a spot holding several books. She is dressed in jeans and a tee shirt).

MINA

It has been a year since I arrived at Tehran University. I've worked hard and am doing well in my studies. Mostly I keep to myself, but I have been invited many times to go to events. I've always said I have to study and refused. Tonight, though, is a play called "The Teachers". Everyone at school is talking about it and I've decided to go.

(On the screen there is a crowd in front of closed gates. Mina walks up to two students)

MINA

Zary is that you?

ZARY

(Zary a petite attractive woman dressed in jeans wearing a red beret and a tee shirt). Mina, you came! *(She hugs her).* I can't believe you're here. You never go anywhere.

MINA

The play sounds so interesting I just have to see it.

PARVIZ

You should have come last night for opening night. SAVAK has shut it down. They arrested the director and the playwright and locked the gates.

ZARY

Mina this is my friend Parviz. He graduated from the School of Engineering five years ago. *(Mina smiles and nods at Parviz)* We should probably go. There are two SAVAK agents taking pictures of the crowd.

MINA

Are they taking down people's names too?

PARVIZ

Probably. They already have ours. We've been on their lists for a long time. They come to my work at least once a month.

MINA

I wonder if the play was good.

PARVIZ

Of course it was good. That's why they closed it down after one night. SAVAK closed the play for the same reason they censor books and magazines. The play is about poverty and repression. Don't you know anything about dictatorships? That is why the students go on strike and some of them disappear and never come back. There is more to getting an education than getting A's on your exams. *(He looks at her and sees she is upset)* I'm sorry I didn't mean to upset you. I just get passionate about these things. Listen, we're all going to a restaurant. Why don't you join us.

ZARY

Yes, Mina come. It will be fun.

MINA

(Mina looks around nervously). No, I better get back to the dorm and study. I have a test tomorrow. I'll see you in class.

PARVIZ

(He takes her hand and smiles) Come on my future genius engineer we can just go to a coffee shop and talk. No crowds. No SAVAK. I promise - just coffee.

MINA

(She takes a deep breath) Sure, why not? *(They walk SL and sit at a table with three chairs)*. There is something I don't understand. Why are the students so much against America?

ZARY

Imperialism and Capitalism is the way countries like America increase its power over countries like Iran. That way they can exploit their people and their resources. The Shah is their puppet.

MINA

But when I was in school we would get free milk from America.

PARVIZ

There is no such thing as free. You get American milk and they get our oil below market price.

MINA

But I don't understand. Why would we sell our oil for less than it's worth?

ZARY

The Shah gets a kickback and the Army gets military assistance. That way they undermine the influence of Russia in the Middle East. The game is all rigged. Petro dollars come flowing into the country and the people *think* they are doing better. And if the Shah takes a slice of it who is going to complain?

PARVIZ

I can tell you are not from Tehran. Where are you from?

MINA

(Uncomfortably) I'm from a small town in the south called Borazjan.

PARVIZ

Borazjan. Yes, I know it. I was there several years ago. As I remember, it is a small hot town with sandy winds. Did you ever wonder why such a small town has such a huge prison? It is filled with political prisoners. Many of them are from the Toudeh Party, one of the first Communist parties of Iran.

MINA

I only know of one person who was sent there. The father of an older boy in my town. His name is Hamid, and he liked me. When I was about 12 and he was 15, he brought me some birds he had hunted as a gift. His father was sent to the prison. I heard once he had come home and found his wife in bed with another man and he killed them both. He was sent to the prison for five years. Not for killing his wife just for killing the man.

ZARY

Of course, if he had just killed his wife, that would have been okay.

(Mina looks back and forth between Parviz and Zary as the lights fade).

ACT I SCENE VIII**MINA**

(Standing stage center) My last year in school I went home to Borazjan to celebrate the New Year. When I returned to Tehran in early April the school was, once again, on strike. Nine famous political prisoners had been executed. The government said they were killed trying to escape, but no one believed them. The Shah was visiting the United States and the rumor was he had them executed on the recommendation of the American Military Advisors. The Shah was anxious to assure the Americans of the safety of his country, of it being an Island of Stability in a dangerous region. The next morning I heard on the radio a news announcement.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

"This is Radio Iran bringing you an important announcement. A car carrying two U.S. Air Force Officers was trapped between two cars carrying armed men. The armed men told the Iranian driver to lie down and then shot and killed the Americans. The Officers were on their way to work at a military base southwest of Tehran. Police have stated that the shooters are Marxist guerrillas".

MINA

Later that day I met Parviz in a bookstore near the University. He gave me a package and told me to deliver it to a French Bakery on the other side of town. He told me not to look in the package and to act casual. I got on the bus to go across town and put the package on the floor by my feet. My hands trembled and I looked at each new person getting on the bus wondering if they were SAVAK coming to arrest me. With my foot I pushed the package under the seat in front of me and left the bus. I did not see Parviz or Zary for many years. After graduation I got an engineering job that worked with foreign firms to work on industrial development projects. I did not tell my parents about the job because I was suppose to return home after graduation. It was just easier not to tell them.

FADE OUT**ACT I SCENE IX****TEHRAN - 1977****MINA**

(A knock at the door. Mina goes SC and stands back as a worn out Parviz enters. He stands there wearing dark glasses and holding an old leather jacket over his arm. Oh my god Parviz, is it really you? (She hugs him but he just stands there with his arms at his side. She steps back and looks at him). Parviz, how much you've changed. Please come and sit down. (She takes him by his hand and leads him to two chairs SL. They both sit down).

PARVIZ

Close the curtains. *(Mina closes the curtains. She looks down at her pajamas and starts to leave the room)* Where are you going?

MINA

I was going to change.

PARVIZ

Your dress is fine. As long as I'm here, you will stay in this room, and don't go near the windows.

MINA

Would you like some tea? *(He shakes his head).* Water?

PARVIZ

(Impatiently) No, I don't want anything. I'm sorry to be like this, but I've been hiding for a long time and I'm so tired. Ever since the American Colonels were killed, SAVAK has been searching and doing brutal torture. Even though none of us had anything to do it with it, they still hunt us down like animals.

MINA

Where have you been? Do you have a safe place to hide?

PARVIZ

After the Americans were killed, I hid in a safe house with some comrades. One day I came there and I spotted SAVAK agents outside the hideout. There were three men with dark glasses in a black Ford waiting at the end of the street. I turned and very slowly walked away. Ever since then I haven't had a place to stay. I've stayed with some friends and acquaintances, but only for a short time. It is too dangerous for them and me to stay too long. Mostly I just walk the streets day and night. Sometimes I don't have any food for days.

MINA

Is there something I can do for you?

PARVIZ

Do you have any money?

MINA

I cashed my pay check yesterday, but there is not much left. I keep money for emergencies in bags in the bedroom closet. *(She gets up and starts to exit. He stands and looks suspiciously at her).*

PARVIZ

Forgive me. I have to be cautious. These sons of bitches can do anything. They have interrogated some of my friends and family. *(His voice breaks)* Zary was arrested and has been in prison for over a year. I heard she is being tortured.

MINA

Oh no! I didn't know. How long did she get?

PARVIZ

No one knows. If she survives the torture they might keep her there forever.

MINA

Can I go and look for the money or do you want to come with me? *(He sits down and she leaves for a moment and comes back with a couple of bags and takes money out of each and hands it to him. He rises and starts to exit. She goes up to him and takes a necklace off and holds it out to him).*

PARVIZ

What is this?

MINA

It is an antique my mother gave me when I left home. It is supposed to protect you from the evil eye. It might come in handy. *(She puts it around his neck. He looks at the necklace and Mina bursts into tears. Parviz holds her and strokes her hair as the lights fade).*

ACT I SCENE X
TEHRAN - OCT 1977

(Mina is standing stage center. During this scene there will be news footage of protestors and the military. All of this footage is available on You Tube).

MINA

I've been invited for lunch today at the home of some friends of my parents. Their son had tried to convince me that a Caliphate was what was needed in Iran...that I should become a more traditional and righteous woman. I wasn't really thrilled to see him, but the thought of a nice homemade meal was too tempting not to accept. I listened to the radio as I drove there in the used car I had just bought with a loan from work. On the radio an announcement of Martial Law had been declared and that no one was to be on the street from six in the evening until seven the next morning. Well, at least I would have an excuse not to stay too long. When I got there, my mother's friend was frantic. Two of her children had gone to Jaheh Square to protest the curfew and hadn't come back. She wanted to go and look for them. I said I would take her. As we drove in very heavy traffic, helicopters circled above us. *(Sound of helicopters and crowds shouting "Allah o Akbar")* Jaheh Square was about an hours drive and there were a lot of cars heading in that direction with frustrated drivers constantly honking their horns. When I had gotten as close as I could get, I pulled over. I told my mother's friend to wait and I would look for her children, Bahrán and Azar. Making my way through the crowds I saw a soldier and went up to him. "Can I go this way?"

SOLDIER

(Points his rifle at her) Go away before I shoot you.

MINA

I went in another direction, but I did not think I would be able to find Bahrán and Azar in this crowd. Then there was an explosion and white smoke. It was tear gas. The white smoke settled over the crowd and people ran in all directions with tearing and burning eyes. I ran into an alley and vomited everything that was in my stomach. Then I looked down the alley and saw a young girl lying against the wall of a building. I ran up to her and saw she was holding a wound in her stomach with both hands. "Miss, can I help you?" I knelt down next to her and looked into her eyes as they faded. There was nothing I could do for her. It was too late. I walked out of the alley and heard a crowd chanting over and over "The silence of Muslims is a betrayal of the Quran" I watched the crowd, but could not stop thinking of the dead girl in the alley. The crowd was a strange mix. There were men in suits and students in jeans. There were Mullahs wearing turbans and women dressed in black chadors. Who were these women? They looked like traditional women I had seen in mosques. The crowd chanted "Khomeini our leader, Khomeini must return, Khomeini must return" I watch the crowd for about two hours. What was going on?

Isn't religion the opium of the masses? As I watched the crowd, I noticed that a large number of women dressed in chadors and black scarves. Two of the women held a large banner that read "Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic" An old woman offered me a black scarf, but I told her I do not wear head scarfs. As I walked along with the crowd, military helicopters flew low above the crowd. Two women in black chadors walked on either side of me. The crowd kept chanting slogans as we got closer to the University. A young woman security guard came up to me and handed me a black head scarf.

WOMAN SECURITY GUARD

Wear it out of respect. (*Mina takes the scarf and looks down at it*) Just to show respect.

MINA

A man on a loud speaker was calling for the return of Khomeini and for a Islamic Republic. The crowd cheered. I looked around and there were so many people on the street -mostly workers from the lower middle class...all of them against the Shah and his regime. But what about them? Were they the ones who burned down movie theaters because they said the movies were obscene? Were they the ones who wanted to take away women's rights? I looked around at these angry people and suddenly I was no longer afraid of the Savak. Could the leftists fight the Savak and take control? It was hard to believe that the CIA would let the Communists defeat the Shah. Exhausted, I went home to wait and see what would happen next.

FADE OUT

ACT I SCENE XI

January 16th 1979

(Screen shows pictures of the Shah and Shabanoo)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

This is Radio Tehran with a breaking story. Today at 1:00 pm, the Shah and Shabanoo, escorted by state officials and dignitaries, including Prime Minister Shahpoor Bakhtiyar, departed the country from Mehrabad Airport. In a brief announcement to reporters, Shaanshah, the King-of-kings, said they were leaving Tehran for a short vacation in Aswan, Egypt."

MINA

When the announcement was heard over the radio in my office, everyone jumped up and started to cheer and congratulate each other. Outside the sound of horns honking was deafening. I looked out the window and people were burning an effigy of the Shah and dancing around the flames. I went home that night and heard the news on the radio that in a few weeks Ayatollah Khomeini would be returning to Iran.

FADE OUT

ACT I SCENE XII**Tehran - Feb 10, 1979***(Throughout this monologue there is the sound of explosions and helicopters).***MINA**

Khomeini was telling everyone not to go home - to stay in the streets. The city had become a battleground. The Army was attacking the Air Force Base. Fights had broken out between supporters of the Shah and supporters of Khomeini and also ordinary people and Mujahedin Guerrillas. The government moved the curfew from 7 pm to 4 pm, but people were not going home. There was the sound of hand grenades and helicopters as the city erupted street by street. A student I knew asked me to find bottles of oil. I came back with the oil and it did not take me long to learn how to make Molotov Cocktails. We began to throw the cocktails and hit a military bus that caught on fire. The soldiers came out of the bus holding their rifles over their heads. They put their rifles down and fled. We picked up the rifles and I was given one too. We all watched the bus burn. We stayed until 5 am. I handed my rifle to one of the men and started home. I had helped to make Molotov Cocktails and threw them at the soldiers. Had I killed men? I was surprised how easy it was to become a killer. The next day I saw Zary. She had been crying. *(Zary enters from SL)* Zary you're free. I thought you were dead.

ZARY

Mina, yes I am free. The people broke into the prison and opened our cells. So I am alive, but Parviz is martyred. They tortured him to death, the bastards! We found documents in a secret interrogation house. All types of torture instruments, beam-scale handcuffs, a bed smeared with blood, leather whips. There was pictures of half burned bodies. One of the pictures someone had written Parviz Sadri, a member of one of the disloyal anti-people and anti government sub-groups.

MINA

He had come to see me. I gave him some money and a pendant that my Mother said brought good luck. I guess the luck didn't work for him *(The women hold each other as the lights fade)*

ACT I SCENE XIII**Tehran- May 1979***(Mina and Mohsen are stage center. Mohsen is chubby with a receding hairline. They are both standing in spots stage center).***MOHSEN**

You are Mina...right? *(Mina nods)*. I am Comrad Mohsen. Do you know who I am?

MINA

Yes. Zary told be you are one of the leaders of the Iranian People's Fadaï Guerrillas.

MOHSEN

(He gives her a long look and then removes a flyer from his knapsack and hands it to her) Take this flyer to your office, make copies, and distribute them among your co-workers. Make sure that Hezbollah doesn't see you. The honeymoon is over. They started making lists of the leftists. We will also want to use your apartment for meetings. Zary will tell you when. You will leave the key under the doormat and don't come back until late in the evening. *(He looks at her and smiles.)* Zary says you can be helpful in our cause. We will see. *(Spot out on Mohsen).*

MINA

I did whatever Mohsen asked and after a time he trusted me more and more. Sometimes he would just show up at my apartment and stay for hours.

MOHSEN

(Spotlight up on Mohsen sitting on a chair with Mina standing. What do you think about the Masses and the Ruling Party article that was in our newspaper's editorial?

MINA

To be frank, I was surprised by it. I thought it was too harsh on Barzagan. It's too soon to criticize his government. He's different from clergy.

MOHSEN

(He rises and begins to pace) You are naive and too optimistic. You should not trust the liberals. They will serve the bourgeoisie's interest. Our collaboration with them is merely tactical.

MINA

How can you say that? The Liberals are supported by the masses. We have to cooperate with them.

MOHSEN

Cooperate? Don't you know what Radical Islam is all about? Women's rights in Islam? Political freedom? They don't believe in equality of men and women. Remember Khomeini's dispute with the Shah. He did not approve of granting women the right to vote and of land reforms. Islam respects the ownership of land by feudalism and does not believe in the distribution of wealth. The religious far right could not even tolerate those mild bourgeois reforms. So you think we should cooperate with them? Maybe. But only for a short time. The struggle is not over. It is only beginning. The clergy is just beginning. Just wait and see the bloodshed they will start.

MINA

America will stop them? America will not let them take away our rights.

MOHSEN

(Laughs sardonically) America? America closed their eyes and failed to protect their puppet Shah. You know what America wants? They want a religious government in Iran to defeat the Communists and the Leftists in the region. America first supported the Afghan's *mujahedin*, then Iran, and after that it could be Iraq, Syria, or Jordan. *(He goes up to her and puts his hand under her chin)* My revolutionary optimist, look in the mirror. They are already talking about stoning women! We have hard days in front of us. *(He then kisses her. She is confused as he takes her to a table S.R. He bends her over the table and lifts her skirt).*

FADE OUT**ACT I SCENE XIV****PRESENT DAY MINA**

(Present Day Mina stands SR in a spotlight) So, my dear daughter, that is how you were conceived. I was a virgin and was so confused by what happened. Comrade Mohsen, your biological father, was a dominant man. People just did what he told them to do. After it happened, I wondered "is this what rape is?" I didn't say no. I didn't say anything. You have always known me as a strong modern woman, but then I was younger than you are now. I didn't know what to do, so I did nothing. I said nothing. We continued to work together and, when we were alone, he would just take me. I never gave myself to him. He never asked. A couple of months later I knew something was different. I went to a doctor and he told me I was pregnant. To be an unmarried pregnant woman in Iran was a death sentence. I had brought dishonor on the family and I would die and you would never be born. *(Lights fade on Present Day Mina)*

(Lights up SC. A table with papers and two chairs. A very upset Mina and Mohsen are DC).

MINA

I'm pregnant.

MOHSEN

How do you know you're pregnant?

MINA

I went to the Doctor. I'm two months pregnant. *(Mina begins to cry very hard and Mohsen caresses her face and hair).*

MOHSEN

This will be our secret. Just between you and me. You are not to tell anyone. *(He then impatiently shakes his head and crosses to the table. He picks up a flyer and stares at it).* I got this flyer from a student on campus. Something seems wrong about it. The flyer is signed by the Muslim Students of the Iman Khomeini. I've never heard of them. It says to be at the American Embassy at 9 tomorrow morning. That there might be a takeover of the American

Embassy. *(He hands her the flyer and starts to walk out SL when he turns)*. How do you know I'm the father?

FADE OUT

ACT I SCENE XV

(On the Screen November 4, 1979 American Embassy).

MINA

(Standing next to Zary holding the flyer) The flyer says to be here by 9 o'clock. It is almost 10. It doesn't look like anything is going to happen. *(Sounds of a crowd gets louder and louder and pictures of the American Embassy being attacked come up on the screen. The crowd enter from SR shouting).*

CROWD

DEATH TO AMERICA
DEATH TO IMPERIALISM
DEATH TO THE SHAH
DEATH TO AMERICA AND ITS CHAINED DOGS
DEATH TO AMERICA, DEATH TO CARTER.

(Women take tools out from beneath their Chadors and hand them to the men).

MINA

What are they giving them?

ZARY

Wire Cutters.

CROWD

(Marching around the stage as their voices grow louder and louder. There is the sound of shooting in the background).

DEATH TO AMERICA!
DEATH TO THE SHAH!
DEATH TO AMERICA!
DEATH TO SHAH!
DEATH TO AMERICA!

BLACK OUT

RADIO VOICE

This is Radio Tehran with an important announcement. The American Embassy has been taken over. The crowd was led by Muslim students and the Iranian People. The Americans inside have been arrested. Prime Minister Bazargan and his Cabinet have all resigned. Stay tuned for new updates.

ACT I SCENE XVI

(Spotlight SR on Present Day Mina sitting in her plane seat).

PRESENT DAY MINA

A week after the American Embassy was taken over I got a call from your Uncle Hossein who lived in Los Angeles. He told me the Americans were thinking about closing the borders to Iranians. He told me I should leave as soon as I could and come to LA. He would help me when I got there. Of course he didn't know that I was pregnant. How would he react to that? If he were still here my Father might tell him he had to save the family's honor. That my sweet brother might be ordered to kill me was more than I could think about. My time was running out. I had to get to America. A week later I was on a plane leaving my country and my family and running for both our lives.

ACT I SCENE XVII

Screen says "Los Angeles Airport"

November 14, 1979

(Mina enters from stage left holding her bag looking around. Then she sees her brother, Hossein, and runs up to him.

MINA

(She hugs him) There you are little brother! It is so wonderful to see you.

HOSSEIN

(He steps back to get a better look at her) Mina, you've put on so much weight. What have you been eating?

MINA

(She self consciously puts her arms over her stomach). I guess I'm a little bloated from the long flight. They keep giving you food and lots of liquids. You, though, have gotten so thin and handsome. If Mother was here she would fatten you up. I can't believe you are my little Hossein all grown up.

HOSSEIN

(He picks up her bag) I really do miss her greasy food. Come, we'll talk in the car. You'll stay with me at my apartment until we can get you a place of your own. *(They cross down left to two chairs facing out and simulate driving in a car. He puts on his sunglasses and admires himself in the rear view mirror. On the screen are streets scenes of Los Angeles).* So, welcome to Los Angeles!

This is downtown where the rich lock their cars when they drive past the poor. Everyone in LA drives everywhere. Only the poor walk or ride buses. That tall round building is the Hotel Bonaventure. That is where I pick up most of my passengers. There is a restaurant at the top that goes round and round. I once had a drink up there. Sometime I'll take you there for dinner.

ACT I SCENE XVIII**PRESENT DAY MINA**

(Spot out on SL and up on Present Day Mina SR) We drove in his Yellow Cab to his small one bedroom apartment. I wondered if there would be room for a crib. Eventually I could not hide the fact I was pregnant and told Hossein I had gotten married in Tehran, but I didn't tell our parents because I hated all the traditions they would make me go through. I told him my husband had important work to do, but he would come and join me when he could. Hossein didn't say anything, but after a while I could see he didn't really believe there was a husband. He never said anything because then he would have to deal with a pregnant unmarried sister, but he spent most nights at his girlfriend's apartment and sometimes I wouldn't see him for days. My savings were getting low and his girlfriend, a fake blond Salvadorian, introduced me to a white man who for \$200 dollars could help me get a job as a waitress. I told the owner I had experience and he said he would pay me in cash two dollars and fifty cents an hour and I could make good tips from the old people if I treated them right. A week after I got the job I moved into my own tiny studio apartment and no longer saw or heard from Hossein. I went to see a doctor and she wanted me to bring my husband to help me with Lamaze breathing during labor. Everyone at home would laugh at the thought of an Iranian man wanting to be in the room during birth. I told her there was no husband. She then said what about the father or a boyfriend or relative? I told her there was no one. The day you were born I was working at the restaurant. I had just started to take the orders of two my regular customers, Mr. and Mrs. Adams. They were always very nice to me. Suddenly my water broke and the contractions were so strong I couldn't stand up. Mr. and Mrs. Adams took me to the hospital and stayed with me. Finally, the doctor told me I had a beautiful daughter. All my customers assumed because I was from the East that I wanted a boy, but I was relieved and very happy to have girl. And that, my daughter, is how you came into this world.

LIGHTS FADE

(Screen shows the front of an old apartment building. It is just beginning to get dark. Three men are loitering outside as Mina comes home from work. As she tried to pass them they block her way).

ACT I SCENE XIX**FIRST MAN**

What's your rush you shit Iranian?

MINA

Leave me alone. I've done nothing to you. *(She tries to get around them).*

SECOND MAN

(Blocks her) You are an Iranian Pig. Got to get home to burn an American Flag?

MINA

I don't know what you are talking about. I love America.

THIRD MAN

(Hold up a noose and waves it in front of Mina) This is what we use to deal with a whore like you. (Mina screams as she pushes past them and runs off UC. The men all laugh and high five each other).

LIGHTS FADE**ACT I SCENE XX****MINA**

(Sitting at a table in her apartment and writing a letter. She reads the letter she's been writing. Mahnaz is standing in a spotlight SL).

My Dearest Sister, Salaam,

I have missed you and everybody else so much. It has been more than three years since I've seen your kind eyes. I've missed everyone, especially Mother. How is she doing? I have not called her in the past couple of months. The calls are just too expensive, but I am thinking of you all everyday and wish I could hear your voices. Last time I spoke to Mother I lied about seeing Hossein. I am not a good liar. He doubted the story I made up about Shirin's Father. He doesn't talk to me anymore. I am so thankful that you did not push me about Shirin. I promise I will tell you about it someday. You are the only one I can trust with this secret. Now just think about me having a daughter, who is your niece and is as sweet as her name, and whose eyes are as beautiful as yours. Please don't tell Mother and Father about Shirin. They would ask a hundred questions and I don't want to give them more lies. I am sure if they guess the truth they would disown me. I just can't bare something like that now. I would not be able to bare Mother's heartbreak and Father's anger. The situation is not good here now. Many American people blame us for the hostage taking. The men who live upstairs I am sure think I was personally involved in taking over the Embassy. That I tied up the hostages. I worry that they will do something and Shirin will be hurt. There is a rumor that Reagan is going to sign a law to imprison all the Iranians living here and put us in concentration camps like they did to the Japanese in World War II. At work the owner told be to tell people I am from Afghanistan. You would not believe how many people ask me if I rode Camels and if I was allowed to go to school. I wonder what they would think if I told them I lived in a modern city, drove a car, and graduated from college as an engineer. They only see me as a waitress who speaks broken English. Maybe it is time I come home. Officially, I am on leave and I could get my old job back. How are you doing with your poetry book? Have you found a publisher? With all my love, Your lonely sister, Mina.

(Lights fade on Mina and spot comes up on Mahnaz SL dressed in a long black coat)

MAHNAZ

My Dearest Sister, my Mina, Salaam;

It is so hard to describe how happy I was to receive your letter, and how worried I got when I read it. This is first time you opened up about your difficulties. What made you wait so long to tell me about your pain and troubles and at the same time of the sweetness of Shirin? Didn't you love me or trust me enough to tell me your secrets? Who is the Father of my dearest niece? Is he Iranian or American? Two months ago when you told me about Shirin I thought you were teasing me or I heard it wrong. Then you hung up so quickly. Since I got your letter I've written two poems for Shirin a little girl I've never seen, but who face is always in my mind. Does she look like you? Is she a little Mina who speaks English. Does she speak Farsi too. I miss you both so much. I have not told Mother your secret. She had enough trouble and pains of her own. Let her believe she has a daughter completing her PhD and a son who is successful in the transportation business. Please you must forget about coming home. Since you left, the situation has changed so much. Even we who are living through it cannot digest all that has happened. I don't know how you would be able to do it. Just imagine that it is 104 degrees and you are wearing a black scarf and a long dark coat and waiting under the burning sun for a taxi that might not even pick you up because of your hair showing. Believe me, under those scarfs and coats it is much hotter than home in Borazjan under its burning sandstorms. Hijab and Islamic dress code are strictly enforced. Guards stand at the entrances of offices to check women's nails and makeup. The taxis and restaurants hesitate to let in women who have unsatisfactory hijab. Poetry readings and poetry clubs have disappeared. You can't believe such misery. I have hidden the drafts of my poems, never mind about publishing them. As for coming home, forget about getting your old job back. The new managing board of the company has fired you and most of your colleagues. Don't even think about finding a new job. I am sure they have lots of information about you and your past political involvement. I did not want to give you this news; I am only just telling you this now to make sure you do not come back. More than half of the Engineering Department of your company and other people you know have been imprisoned. Mr Mahmoodi got executed three weeks ago, and so has your friend Ezat Tabaian and several others. Over here we are getting used to this kind of news. Most of the activists who have not been jailed are in hiding or have already fled the country. The prisons are once again full mostly with young students who helped to free the Shah's prisoners. The damn bloody war has stopped everybody's life. They call it the war against Imperialism, a war against Saddam, the puppet of America. Those who go off to fight believe they are supporting the deprived masses! They are right we are deprived, but not in the way they think. If Mother knew of Shirin, she would die from sorrow and shame. I don't want to think about what Father would do. Don't lose your hope in Hossein. You are expecting too much from him. Just remember he is a man who grew up in a culture where if a girl is not a virgin they could behead her. In a small village near Borazjan, they stoned a woman to death. They said she had cheated on her husband. Father, who never believed in the rules or religion, disagreed with stoning her but would have been okay with hanging her. I cannot say this enough. Please do not come back. Here is a poem I've written for you and Shirin:

*The night is long and the hope to see the morning keeps me vigilant.
 May it be that the breeze of the morning brings me your scent.
 I wonder why the love's roots doesn't bear fruit.
 Though with a rain of enthusiasm I shower it.*

Your faithful sister, Mahnaz.
(She picks up a head cover and covers her head and face as lights fade).

ACT I SCENE XXI

(Lights up on Mina SC in her apartment. She puts down the letter from Mahnaz on the table and walks to the window DC. She opens the window and looks outside. On the Screen in Large Print is a banner that she turns and reads): GO HOME FILTHY IRANIANS. (She hurriedly closes the window and begins to pace. Throughout the play the young Shirin is never physically seen).

MINA

Go Home? Where is my Shirin's home? If this is not her home, where is her home? In Iran she is the child of a sinful woman. Here she is the child of a filthy Iranian. Where is our home? Should I just wait until soldiers come and put us in a camp? My sweet Shirin was born here in secret with no father and no homeland. *(She walks DL and looks at the stove which is not actually there and reaches out for the knobs)* I could turn on the knobs and lie down next to Shirin while she sleeps. The gas would be a painless way to find a home. We would just go to sleep and maybe wake up in a kinder place. The police would find us and my Passport. I would leave Hossein's phone number and he would tell my parents. My father would be furious and blame Mother. "I told you Tehran was no place for a girl. I told you a girl would be fooled and would create a scandal and disgrace her family. It is your fault our daughter committed suicide in a dirty poor neighborhood in Los Angeles with a bastard child". Mother would just stand there. What could she say? *(Mina backs away from the stove shaking her head. She picks up her purse and takes out an envelope. She takes money out of the envelope and counts it)* Three hundred twenty-six dollars -all the money I've saved. Is it enough? It will have to be. I owe it to Shirin whom I couldn't even afford to take to Mc Donald's to have something special in her young life. We will not die poor filthy Iranians with no home and no hope. For one night we will be rich Americans.

FADE OUT

ACT I SCENE XXII

(Mina is DL nicely dressed. She holds her hand out as if she is holding hands with Shirin)

MINA

(They stroll around the stage as Mina talks to Shirin) My dear sweet daughter. You look like a Princess in your new dress. Tonight we are going to a very fancy hotel. We will take the elevator all the way to the top where there is a very special restaurant. This restaurant turns around like a carousel and we will be able to see the whole city. Hold my hand tight. The elevator goes very fast. *(They pause and then step forward out of the elevator. She walks forward).* Good evening.

My daughter and I have a reservation for two. Please put us near the window so we can enjoy the view. *(The screen shows the cities lights).*

MAITRE d'

(The Maitre d' smiles at them. He speaks with a slight accent). Of course, Madam. We have a lovely table for two right by the window. *He walks them over to the table DR and holds out a Mina's chair. He then bends over and lifts Shirin into her chair).* Your server will be with you shortly. Here is a menu and the wine list. I hope you enjoy your meal. *(He stares at Mina for a moment and then walks away. Mina looks at him with a look of curiosity).*

MINA

(Mina studies the menu and then smiles at Shirin). The prices here for one meal is more than we would spend in a week for food. But don't worry I've figured out exactly how much everything will cost and we have just enough money for everything.

WAITRESS

(The waitress dressed in a black skirt and a white blouse with a black bow tie comes up to their table) Good evening. My name is Becca and I am your server. May I get you something from the bar?

MINA

No thank you. I think we are ready to order. This lamb dish looks very good. How is it prepared?

WAITRESS

The lamb shank is one of our Chef's special dishes. He marinates the lamb the day before in special spices, then serves it grilled with asparagus sauteed in butter. How do you like it grilled?

MINA

I like it prepared just a little pink. My daughter will have the chicken breast with mashed potatoes. Would you also bring her a glass of orange juice. Is there a glass of white wine that is good, but not too expensive?

WAITRESS

Yes, the Kendall Jackson Chardonnay is \$11 by the glass and it would go very nicely with the lamb.

MINA

(Smiling she bends over to talk to Shirin) Isn't this a beautiful restaurant? I bet the waitresses make much bigger tips than I do. Look at that view. All the lights in the city are shining like stars. Well, my Princess Shirin, after dinner we will take a walk through all the hotel shops. Then we can go to our room on the 8th floor. Tonight we will be staying at this wonderful hotel just like rich Americans. Won't that be fun? *(She looks around)* I guess this is what paradise looks like.

LIGHTS BRIEFLY FADE TO SHOW PASSAGE OF TIME

(Lights up on Mina sitting at the restaurant table adding her check. She takes the money from her purse and carefully counts it as she places it on top of the check. She then rises and holds out her hand for Shirin and starts to exit towards the front of the restaurant when the Maitre d' approaches her)

MAITRE d'

Madam you are leaving so soon? I was hoping to speak with you before you left.

MINA

That is very nice, but unnecessary. Everything was perfect. The food and service were excellent. *(She smiles and passes by him)*

MAITRE d'

Mina please wait! You don't recognize me, but I know you. You are Mina from Borazjan. *(Mina steps back in shock and stares at him)*. Please, I do not mean to frighten you. We were children together. My name is Hamid. I don't expect you to remember me, but I have never forgotten you.

MINA

Hamid? Of course I remember you! You brought me the birds as a gift. What a surprise to see you. I haven't seen you since...

HAMID

Yes, I know. When my Father killed my Mother I was sent away to live with an Aunt in Shiraz. Tonight I was so shocked when you came in I couldn't think of anything to say. To see you after all these years is so amazing. *(He looks down and smiles at Shirin)* And this beautiful young lady is your daughter? So are you married to an American?

MINA

No. Shirin's Father was an important Communist in Iran. He helped to overthrow the Shah, but then the government executed him.

HAMID

I've heard from my relatives that things are very difficult at home. We're lucky to be here.

MINA

(Ironically) Yes, lucky.

HAMID

(He holds out a paper and pen to her) I have to get back to work. Please write down your address and phone number so we can get together and talk some more. I've dreamed for years that we would meet again. *(Mina takes the pen and paper and hesitantly writes her information and hands it back to him)*

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I SCENE XXIII

(Mina and Shirin are in their hotel room. There is a bed for Shirin and she is asleep as Mina walks to a table and puts on classical music and then sits on the bed and talks to the sleeping Shirin)

MINA

So my sweetheart. You've had a big day. Hopefully it will be enough happiness to last you forever. I have nothing else to give you. I have tried to be a good Mother, but it is too hard here. Maybe if we had some family to help us or at least care for us things would have turned out differently. To be alone in a country where everyone thinks you are a criminal is just too hard. I am so tired and sad. I can not bare the thought of you being alone without me.

(She crosses to a table and picks up a large knife and then crosses back to the bed where Shirin is sleeping. She holds the knife high over Shirin as a black image of death appears on the screen)

I am so sorry. Please forgive me! *(Minor key crescendo)*.

BLACK OUT**ACT I SCENE XIV**

(Spotlight up on Present Day Mina SR. She is seated on the plane with her laptop open. She speaks as she types).

PRESENT DAY MINA

I know it sounds melodramatic to think I almost killed us, but it was a very dark period in my life. I had planned to open the hotel window and just hold you as we flew through the night. When I got to the hotel I discovered that modern glass hotel windows don't open. So we are both alive today because the thought of stabbing you was unthinkable, and also the fact the windows were hermetically sealed. Now, as for your biological father, that part I told Hamid was true. How I found out is even more strange. I thought many times about contacting Mohsen, your father. If he saw you and how you resembled him, he could not deny that you are his daughter. When I first came to LA I started to go to meetings of a group called The Student Supporters Group of the Democratic Movement in Iran. The group had rented a meeting room from the supporters of the Nicaraguan Socialist Revolutionaries, the Sandinistas. We had the room two nights a week for cultural gatherings and study groups. I hoped I would meet someone who knew of Zary or Mohsen. I could not afford a baby sitter so I always took you to the meeting. People were used to you being there and I just let you crawl around the room. This one night I arrived and there was a tripod with a large photo of Mohsen in the front of the room. As you crawled away to explore and tell everyone you saw that you were there with your Mommy and that you were three, everyone smiled at you. I stared at Mohsen's picture in disbelief. I asked the man next to me if he knew about the picture. He said the man was arrested distributing a political newsletter to college students. On the way to the prison he swallowed a cyanide pill. Then a woman stood up in front next to the picture of Mohsen. She pointed at the picture and proudly announced that this was her husband, the great Comrade Mohsen. You crawled up to the tripod and reached for the photo and

it fell to the floor. For a moment you stared at the photo and I ran and picked you up. So, my dear daughter, that is how you met your father. A couple of weeks after our dinner at the Bonaventure Hotel I sent a note to the restaurant and invited Hamid to come by our apartment for dinner. He was so quiet when he came not unlike the fifteen year old boy who shyly handed me his gift of two birds he had hunted. The second time he visited he brought me flowers and chocolates, and a toy talking doll for you. As weeks went by, the apartment was filled with all of the toys he brought you. He took you to Mc Donalds. He was on a mission to rescue both of us. After nine months we were like a little family. One night after you were asleep I told him about Mohsen and how I had become pregnant. I didn't know how he would react. After all, he was still an Iranian man and I had sex with a man before marriage. He just lowered his head and smiled shyly. For the first time we looked at each other in the eye. I had finally told someone. At least now there was at last one person who accepted you and me. Hamid had gone to college in the United States and had gotten a degree in civil engineering. He told me he never wanted to be an engineer and only did it to please his father. His dream was to open his own French restaurant and then franchise it someday. Shortly after our first serious talk, he spoke to a lawyer he knew from the restaurant. This lawyer suggested I apply for asylum. In short order, I had a work permit and financial aid for being a single mother. In Iran, they would have stoned me to death. Here, they gave me money so I could go to school. I took night classes at UCLA, and eventually finished my MBA. And while there, Carlos came into my life. He was a very handsome and sexy student from Venezuela. He spoke fluent English even though he pronounced his z's as s and his V's as b. He helped me with my English I helped him with math. The temperature would rise when I was with Carlos. He was so handsome -a mix of European and the indigenous people of Latin America. His eyes were light and his skin was dark, and his shoulder length hair brown and curly. Yes, he was nothing like Hamid. After class he would always ask me to join him for dinner or go to a movie. I wanted to, but I always said no. I was just too busy. After a while he began to spend time with other single women and I was jealous and would flirt with him to get his attention back. For the two years of Graduate School we danced this dance. Always reaching out, but never quite touching.

ACT I SCENE XXV

(The screen reads Bonaventure Hotel Restaurant. A table for three is set up DL. Mina, Hamid, and the imaginary Shirin enter. They each hold their arms out from their sides as if they are holding Shirin's hands. They cross to the table DL. Hamid holds the chair for Mina. He then bends over and picks up Shirin and places her in the center chair. He smiles down at her and strokes the top of head. Hamid and Mina sit facing each other with Shirin's chair in the middle)

HAMID

So here we are at last. I am so proud of you Mina. To have a Masters from UCLA. I know you haven't come back here to the Bonaventure since I first saw you and Shirin even though I've tried to bring you before. I just felt this was a special place for tonight. To look out of these windows at the city lights and rejoice in our happiness. You have made me so happy and proud.

MINA

Yes, it is very nice here. (*Looking at her watch*) I don't want to rush dinner, but some of my classmates are planning to have a celebration party and I thought it might be fun to join them.

HAMID

(*Uncomfortable and disappointed*) You want to rush through dinner and go to a party? I thought you would want to spend this evening with us. Shirin and I have made special plans for tonight.

MINA

Special plans? I'm sorry I didn't know. I thought we were just going to have a dinner. (*She looks at Shirin and reaches out and touches her cheek*). Please don't be upset Shirin. Of course I will stay with you tonight. We will have a lovely dinner and enjoy the view.

HAMID

Good, that is wonderful. (*The server comes over with menus*). That won't be necessary. I know what we will be ordering. (*Looking at Mina*) With your permission I will order for all of us. I've already made special arrangements with the Chef for tonight's meal. (*Mina nods. Hamid speaks to the Server*) For our graduate, the roasted salmon with capers and garlic mashed potatoes. For my lovely Shirin, the hamburger with pineapple sauce. I will have the lamb shank. (*The Server smiles and walks away. Hamid bends over towards Shirin as if she is whispering in his ear. He smiles and puts a finger over his lips*) Yes Shirin, after dinner with dessert. I know sweetheart you are excited, but good things are worth waiting for. (*Mina looks at him in a questioning way and he smiles back in his shy way*). Here comes a special appetizer the chef has prepared just for us. Bon Appetit. (*Lights fade briefly to indicate the passage of time*).

MINA

(*Looking at her watch*) Well that was a wonderful meal. Hamid this has been so nice of you to take us out tonight. I couldn't think of a nicer way to celebrate.

HAMID

But we are not quite done celebrating. Shirin it is now time. Come sit on my lap. (*He lifts Shirin onto his lap and whispers in her ear. He then takes a ring box out of his jacket pocket and places it on the table*) Shirin you may give your Mother her gift.

MINA

(*Mina awkwardly opens the box and removes the ring. She is clearly shocked*). This is a...

HAMID

Yes. Shirin wants to know if you will marry me?

FADE OUT

ACT I SCENE XXVI*(Spotlight up SR on Present Day Mina)***PRESENT DAY MINA**

So that was how Hamid and you proposed. What could I say? You both looked so happy. You already looked like a father and daughter. The next chapter of our lives had us moving to upscale suburbia. Hamid bought us a big house and personally decorated it with garish gold crusted French provincial furniture. Even though it was not my taste, I never complained. It wasn't that I was unhappy with his choices. I just didn't care. For the next eight years I tried to be a good mother and wife. My mother had sent me a cookbook with all the classic Iranian dishes along with a samovar, rice cooker, and the beautiful Persian rug in our living room as our wedding gifts. I was never a good cook. I want you to know I tried my best. As an engineer, I could make anything. As a housekeeper, I was a total failure. Hamid opened his French restaurant and there was no doubt the man could cook. Every time I had another culinary failure, he would smile and shake his head. Some women would become upset by his patronizing manner. The fact is I didn't care enough to even become upset. One day I was cooking my latest failure when I heard the news broadcast that Khomeini was dead. Was he really dead? One more page of history had been turned. What would happen now? I never told you but I was in Tehran during the overthrow of the Shah and the taking of the American Embassy. Hearing the news of Khomeini's death I had flashbacks of a soldier standing on top of tank and pointing an automatic rifle at me... women dressed in black chadors marching to the gates of the Embassy... making and throwing Molotov cocktails at a bus carrying the army troops. I never told you I threw those bottles of burning oil and shot a rifle when I was about your age. Yes, your mother was a revolutionary. Now I just burn rice.

ACT I SCENE XXVII**WOODLAND HILLS - 1989***(Mina is putting cereal bowls on the table as Hamid enters in suit and tie. He comes behind her and hugs her).***HAMID**

Good morning my beautiful wife. Did you sleep well? I didn't even hear you get up this morning.

MINA

(Mina turns to face him and disengages from his embrace) I couldn't sleep. I came down and watched the news about Khomeini's funeral. Seeing Tehran after all of these years seems so strange. Its hard to believe I lived there. *(She sits down at the table and he sits next to her)*

HAMID

We live in a different world. There is no point in losing sleep over what is happening there.

MINA

We both have family there. I worry about them. What will happen now?

HAMID

Another Ayatollah will take Khomeini's place. Life there will continue the same as before. Just be happy we have found a place here with a wonderful life. I only wish our relatives could be here with us and see my restaurant and our beautiful home. *(He takes her hand)* Speaking of family, my Aunt keeps asking when we will have a child of our own. Shirin is my daughter now too, but I want a son to carry on my name and someday take over the restaurant. You have stopped taking the birth control pills like I asked, didn't you?

MINA

(She takes her hand from his) Yes. I have stopped taking the birth control pills. Your Aunt should stay out of our personal affairs. I am not so young anymore. It is much easier to become pregnant when you are younger - especially when you have been on the pill for a long time. If it is meant to be, it will be.

HAMID

(Rising from the table) I have to run. I have a meeting this morning with some investors who are interested in possibly franchising us. *(He bends over and kisses her on the cheek)* You are right. If it is meant to be, it will be. I will drop Shirin off at school. Have a good day. *(He exits. Mina sits at the table looking sad when her cell phone rings).*

MINA

(She is sitting at the table when she answers the phone. SR in a spot is Zary) Hello.

ZARY

Mina, is this really you?

MINA

Yes, this is Mina. Who is this?

ZARY

Mina, it's me. It's Zary. Do you remember me?

MINA

(She stands) Zary? Oh my God! Of course I remember you. I thought you were dead. Where are you?

ZARY

I'm here. In Los Angeles. I've been here for a couple of years, but I just got your phone number. I want to see you. When can we meet? I live downtown. Are you free for lunch today?

MINA

Of course I'm free! I will meet you in front of the Disney Concert Center at 1 o'clock and we can find a restaurant near by. Zary, I've missed you so much. I need a friend more than ever and here you are out of blue. You are the answer to my prayers!

FADE OUT**ACT I SCENE XXVIII****TEHRAN - 1983****EVIN PRISON***On the screen***NAME: Zary Ahmadi - a member of the traitor group OIPIFG.****CRIME: Distribution of May 1st Commemoration Flyers and Conspiracy against the Islamic Republic****SENTENCE: Ten years in prison****PRISON: Evin Prison****ZARY**

(Zary is sitting cross legged on the floor of her cell. She is staring at a piece of paper and talking to another prisoner. They are both dressed in long plain dresses and no shoes)

It is a temporary release permit. It must be some kind of trick. They are just trying to get my hopes up so they can then take it away. I still have five years left on my sentence. Maybe they are going to act like they are letting me go and take me for execution just like they took Kobra and Sepideh and Afkham and Ester.

(The other woman just slowly nods her head). The guard who gave it to me said my Father is dying and I am being allowed to go home for one week to be with him. Father hasn't come to see me in over a year. If he is really so sick that would explain why he stopped coming. I hope Father is not dying, but I do want this pass to be real. Both my brothers have been killed. My younger brother, Ahmad, supported the Mujahedin and he was killed in a street fight. My older brother, Reza, was arrested for collaboration with the Peshmerga guerrillas. I heard there was a trial and then they hanged him. I am the only one left. Maybe that is why they are letting me go to see him.

(Zary rises and walks forward though a gate that can be a projection on the stage floor. Standing on the other side is an old man with a full white beard. Zary walks up to him). Uncle, is that you?

HAJJ AMOO ABDULLAH

Yes my niece. It has been ten years and I did not think I would see you again. I thought you would die in this place and with your death your family's shame would die with you.

ZARY

Hajj Amoo Abdullah, it is good to see you too. Did you arrange my release? How is father? Please tell me he is going to be alright.

HAJJ AMOO ABDULLAH

Yes. I have known the Prison Superintendent for many years. I used to supply him with metal when he was in the faucet business. My brother, your father, is dying of colon cancer. It is near the end. He missed you so much. He would have come to see you if he could have survived the long trip here. You and your brothers have caused him pain. I warned him. This is the consequence of letting children be free to do whatever they want. How many times I told the man! Be careful, look closer, watch what these children are doing! Both your brothers were wasted, and you turned out like this! Your Father was always so proud that he was the first in the family to have a University degree. He thought he knew better. If it was up to me I would not have asked for your temporary release. I would have let you stay in that place, but your Mother begged my wife to ask me to bring you home so he could see you one more time. The Doctors have lost hope. The cancer has spread. They sent him home to die.

(Zary steps DC in a spot)

ZARY

My Uncle, Hajj Amoo Abdullah took me home to see my father. Father died two days later. He was very weak, but so happy to see me. *(She kneels on the floor.)* He was so small and old at the end, but he smiled at me and held my hand. I stayed at his side the whole time holding his bony hand and feeding him light soup which he managed to keep down. In the end, I cried so hard as we said goodbye and he closed his eyes. Seeing him one last time was gift for both of us. *(She rises)*

The day after he died, all the relatives came to see us. Many of them I had never met and some I had not seen since before I went to prison. The Hajj's sons Mojtaba and Ahmad were there with their wives and children. They were a couple of years younger than me and we all had been childhood friends. Many years ago I brought home political flyers and the boys had distributed the anti Shah leaflets. When I went into the kitchen to get some tea Mojtaba followed me. There was no one else in the kitchen. He took my arm and whispered in my ear "If you want I can help you escape". I nodded yes in disbelief. The next day friends and family came for the third day commemoration. Hajj Amoo was to take me back to prison tomorrow. My Mother was sitting on the sofa and I sat close to her. I embraced her and whispered in her ear "Please forgive me. I must go". Mother raised her head and looked at me. She asked where? To the prison? I stared at her and answered no, no, not there. I will never go there even if they kill me. Don't worry just trust me. Mother looked at me with an intense gaze I had never seen before. I then got up and walked to the door. I turned and looked back at her. I needed her approval. My Mother nodded and I left. I am sure she had blessed my departure. Mojtaba waited for me outside. He took me to his apartment where he shaved my head and gave me a sheet to wrap around my body to hide my breasts. When I looked in the mirror we both smiled. I looked like Ahmad. My sixteen year old brother had come back from the grave. He then drove me to the airport and introduced me to a middle-aged frail man who was to hand me over to a Pakistani smuggler. After Mojtaba left the man introduced me to a couple who were supposed to play the part of my parents. He gave us our passports and put us on the plane to Zahedan. It was a one hour flight and when we arrived another man met us and took us to the bus stop and we traveled to Zabol. Eventually, we got to Kuwaiteh at the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. From there we would go to our destination.

ACT 1 SCENE XXIX

LOS ANGELES

1989

(Zary and Mina are sitting at a table drinking coffee)

MINA

My God! What a story! You should write a screen play.

ZARY

Yes - from freedom fighter to escaped convict.

MINA

I would buy a ticket.

ZARY

Maybe someday. When I figure out the ending. Who knows? Maybe I'll wind up in Woodland Hills.

MINA

Back to another prison.

ZARY

Is it really so bad?

MINA

Nothing like what you suffered, but yes, it is a prison. At least to me. Now Hamid is pressuring me to have another child. He loves Shirin, but he wants one of his own too. I can understand how he feels, but I'm just waiting for Shirin to get a little older so we can escape and I can live the life I want to live. Hamid is a good man, but there is no passion in our marriage. I married him for Shirin. I'm just waiting for the time I can leave and live the life I want. Is that so wrong? Am I being selfish?

ZARY

Sometimes to be happy you have to be selfish. Just don't get pregnant.

MINA

Too late.

ZARY

How pregnant are you?

MINA

It's early. Maybe four to six weeks. I just took the test from the drugstore. When I was a student I was so good at tests. This one I flunked. Zary, I don't want to start over again with a baby. I love Shirin, but I don't want to have a baby. I will have to wait 15 years before I would be free to start my life. Am I being selfish to want something new for me?

ZARY

Of course you are. What does that have to do with it? You're entitled to have happiness too. The fact is children eventually leave and most of them don't want to be bothered with their parents. So the question is - what are you going to do?

MINA

I was hoping you would tell me.

ZARY

(Laughing) No, no, no. I will support your decision whatever you decide. If you want to talk to someone, there is a clinic about five blocks from here. I'll go with you if you like.

MINA

Let's go. I really didn't need you to decide for me. I've already decided.
 LIGHTS BRIEFLY FADE OUT AND THEN LIGHTS UP AS MINA AND ZARY ENTER FROM S.L. *(Screen projects Anti Abortion Protestors shouting and chanting. There is a News Camera Man SR. He is filming a protestor with a Megaphone shouting.)*

PROTESTOR

ABORTION IS GENOCIDE! WE MUST STOP THE KILLING OF BABIES! GOD WILL CURSE THEM FOR THIS SIN AND CURSE US IF WE DON'T STOP THEM! *(He blocks Mina and Zary)* Are you here to kill your babies? You don't have to do this. We can help you keep your babies. God will curse you if you do this.

ZARY

What do you know about God? Does he speak to you personally?

PROTESTOR

Yes, God speaks to me personally. He has told me to stop murdering babies.

ZARY

Really? Does he also tell you to help feed the hungry children who live in their cars? You people only care about the unborn and after they are born you forget about them. What about the ones who are born without love or hope? You are nothing but a bunch of religious hypocrites. You think some white man with a long beard is up in the sky looking down on you and smiling and blessing your hypocrisy? *(She wraps her arm around Mina. The sound of Protestors loudly shout.)*

PROTESTORS

(Loud shouts from off stage. Can be piped in over the speaker system)

Stop them! Don't let them in! Block the door! Stop the killers! *(Mina looks around in terror and Zary just stares straight out unafraid). (Sound of Police Sirens)*

ZARY

Back off you fuckers! *As they enter the Camera Man points his camera at them.*

(On Projection Screen)

T.V. NEWS WOMAN

Earlier today at Women's Clinic here on 30th Street Anti-Abortion protestors blocked the door of this clinic. Two protestors laid down in front of a pick up truck trying to park in the lot. The driver did not see them and ran over them. One sustained bruises; the other appears to have a broken leg. Protestors began to attack the driver and the Police arrived in force. Two women *(Show on screen Mina and Zary entering the clinic)* pushed their way through the hostile crowd into the clinic. Four of the protestors were arrested for disturbing the peace. The driver of the pick up truck was not charged and was allowed to leave. There will be a further update on the 11 o'clock news. This is Andrea Parsons for Eyewitness News.

FADE OUT**ACT I SCENE XXX**

(Mina enters from SR. Hamid is sitting on chair SC. There is a T.V. Set DL. He turns off the TV with a remote as Mina enters the room)

MINA

(Surprised to see him) Hamid, why are you home in the middle of the day? Are you sick?

HAMID

(Remains seated) Yes I am sick. I am very sick. *(He stands up)* I was at the restaurant preparing the menu for tonight's specials. Just an ordinary day. Then Shirin called me. She said, "Papa turn on the local news." I thought this was strange, but she sounded so upset. I went into my office and turned on the TV just in time to see a story about a big protest at a abortion clinic downtown. Why would Shirin want me to see this? Then you know what I saw? I saw my wife going into this clinic. Isn't that strange? Why would you be going into this clinic? Why is my wife on the news? What have I ever done to you except give you a good life and a beautiful home? Am I a drunk? Do I beat you? Have I ever denied you anything? And yet there you were on my TV going into this butcher shop!

MINA

(He walks toward her and she backs up) Hamid, let me explain.

HAMID

Yes. Please explain. *(Shouts)* DID YOU KILL MY SON? YOU PULLED THE HEART FROM MY CHEST. DO YOU HATE ME SO MUCH THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT MY NAME TO LIVE ON? PLEASE MINA, EXPLAIN THIS TO ME!

MINA

It had nothing to do with you. It was about me not you. I just didn't want to have another child. I want to live a different life. With a new child, I would be a prisoner in this one.

HAMID

(He charges at her with his hand raised. She covers her head) It had nothing to do with me? GODDAMN YOU!

MINA

(Mina straighten ups and looks him in the eye) Are you your father? Are you going to kill me like your father killed your mother?

HAMID

(He stumbles backward as if she had hit him) You bitch. *(He turns and exits UC)*

BLACK OUT

New York City - September 10, 2001 (On Screen)

ACT 1 SCENE XXXI

(Lights quickly up on Present Day Mina sitting on the plane with laptop) So Shirin, now you know the whole story. I am not a bad person. I was just so desperately unhappy. I know you think I was selfish and I probably was. I wanted another life, but I always wanted you in it. I never meant for us not to be together. I decided to take away Hamid's future child and he took you. There are no winners just survivors. As you get older you will find that life is a trade off. I chose not to be with Hamid and to have a new life. You chose to stay with Hamid. You said you wanted to know the whole story so here it is. After the fight I had with Hamid there was nothing more to say. I moved out to a small condo in Culver City. I was on my own and also alone. Another trade off. Professionally I was successful and moved up in the company. I don't need a man to support me and I enjoy the freedom. Over the years I have had men in my life. I've enjoyed their company and sometimes even their love. I know you love Hamid and he has always been wonderful to you, but there was no passion in our marriage. I wanted and needed to have passion. You are now a grown woman. I hope you will grow to understand that what I did was not out of spite or cruelty. My plane is going to land soon and I have to turn off my computer. I will be at the Windows-On-The-World in the Trade Center tomorrow at 9 o'clock. It is on the 107th floor. Lets just have a wonderful breakfast and talk about the future. I love you Shirin. I'll see you tomorrow.

FADE OUT

ACT I SCENE XXXII
MANHATTAN - SEPT 11, 2001
8:45 a.m.

(There are four chairs facing out toward the audience simulating a cab with Present Day Mina in the back and a Cab Driver in the front. He hold his hands up as if he is driving)

PRESENT DAY MINA

Driver, I need to be at the World Trade Center by 9 o'clock.

DRIVER

I will do my best, but it is 45 blocks away in morning traffic. Are you visiting New York?

PRESENT DAY MINA

Not a visit. Just a business trip.

DRIVER

So you are late for a business meeting. Don't worry. This time of day everyone is late. *(He honks the horn)* Unbelievable idiots. *(He shouts out his window)* Where did you learn to drive! *(He talks to Mina)* I'm getting too old for this. So do you live in a nice place without this traffic?

PRESENT DAY MINA

(She smiles and shakes her head) I live in LA.

CAB DRIVER

LA? Never been. In the movies I see they have plenty of traffic too.

PRESENT DAY MINA

Please, sir, it is very important that I not be late. Can you go faster?

CAB DRIVER

Must be a very important business meeting. I will do my very best to get you there on time.

PRESENT DAY MINA

Thank you. You are very kind. Its not a business meeting. I haven't seen my daughter in eight years and we are having breakfast this morning. I'm afraid if I'm late she will leave.

DRIVER

Children...they have no patience. They must have everything immediately. They are always running to tomorrow and never enjoy today. Eight years is a long time not to see your daughter.

PRESENT DAY MINA

Yes. It has been too long, but I have hopes today will be a good day. Maybe a new beginning. *(She dials her cell phone)* Damn, Shirin why don't you have your phone on? Hopefully, you

check your messages. It is 8:45 and I'm stuck in traffic. I'm coming so please wait. If you get there before me just go up to the restaurant. It is on the 107th floor. There is a reservation under my name. I'll be there as soon as I can. Can't wait to see you. I love you.

DRIVER

Don't worry. She'll wait. We should be there by 9 o'clock. I know a short cut. Just relax.

PRESENT DAY MINA

Thank you. Why does she have her phone off? *(She dials again)* More voice mail. Maybe she's in the elevator and there is no reception. That must be it.

DRIVER

Okay Madam...here we are. One minute before nine.

PRESENT DAY MINA

You are a miracle worker! *(She hands him money)* Keep the change and thank you. *She exits and walks SL. The Projection Screen shows the World Trade Center. She enters and pushes a button for the elevator and steps forward. She dials her cell phone.* Shirin there you are. I am in the elevator I'll be there in a minute.

SHIRIN

(In a spot SR) I decided not to come. I'm not ready to forgive you yet.

PRESENT DAY MINA

Shirin just know that I love you. I will always love you. *(There is a loud crashing sound and a flash of bright light)*

(Shirin moves stage center in a spot light.)

SHIRIN

My mother's Revolution ended on that day. In the end, she became a statistic. She died too soon and my forgiveness came too late.

FADE TO BLACK

END

