

said Saïd

by

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Cast of Characters

In VERMONT:

ANDRE (SAID) (71). Nobel Prize-winning poet. Dying of diabetes. Elegant.

SARAH (S.S.) SAID (48). Daughter of Said. Wounded. Strong.

EMILY ALLEN (25). Graduate student. Bright. Attractive.

MICHEL (GARCET) (79). Retired General of the French Army.

In ALGIERS:

YOUNG (ANDRE) SAID (31). A handsome, elegant, fiery young surgeon.

(MICHEL) GARCET (39). Major in the French Army. Good natured. Stout.

(SARAH) SAID (8). Daughter of ANDRE SAID. Suffers from memory loss.

Note:

Actors in the play will be playing the characters' older and younger selves. "SAID" is pronounced sai-yeed.

A translation of Brave Marin should be printed in the program.

"/" is used to organize overlapping.

Brave Marin (**Brave Sailor**)

Brave marin revient de guerre, tout doux,
Tout mal chaussé, tout mal vêtu...
<<Pauvre marin, d'où reviens-tu?>> tout doux.

**(Brave sailor returns from war, all sweetly,
Shoes worn out, poorly clothed,
"Poor sailor, where are you returning from?" all sweetly.)**

<<Madame, je reviens de guerre,>> tout doux,
<<Qu'on m'apporte ici le vin blanc,
que le marin boit en passant,>> tout doux.

**("Madame, I'm returning from war," all sweetly,
"Might you bring me some white wine,
that the sailor drinks passing through," all sweetly.)**

Brave marin se mit à boire, tout doux,
Se mit à boire et à chanter,
Et la belle hôtesse à pleurer, tout doux.

**(Brave sailor began to drink, all sweetly,
Began to drink and sing,
And the beautiful hostess began to weep, all sweetly.)**

<<Qu'avez-vous donc, la belle hôtesse,>> tout doux,
<<Regrettez-vous votre vin blanc
que le marin boit en passant?>> tout doux.

**("What's the matter, beautiful hostess," all sweetly,
"Do you regret your white wine
that the sailor drinks passing through?" all sweetly.)**

<<C'est pas mon vin que je regrette,>> tout doux,
<<Mais c'est la mort de mon mari... Monsieur,
vous ressemblez à lui...>> tout doux.

**("It's not the wine that I'm weeping about," all sweetly,
"But it's the death of my husband... Monsieur,
you resemble him..." all sweetly.)**

<<Dites-moi donc, la belle hôtesse,>> tout doux,
<<Vous avez de lui trois enfants;
Vous en avez six à présent...>> tout doux.

**("Tell me then, beautiful hostess," all sweetly,
"You have three children by him;
you have six now..." all sweetly.)**

<<On m'a appris de ses nouvelles,>> tout doux,
<<Qu'il était mort et enterré...
...Et je me suis remariée,>> tout doux.

("They brought me news about him," all sweetly,
"that he was dead and buried..
and I remarried," all sweetly.)

Brave marin vida son verre, tout doux.
Sans remercier, tout en pleurant,
Il regagna son bâtiment, tout doux.

(Brave sailor emptied his glass, all sweetly.
Without thanking her, all tearfully,
He rejoined his battleship, all sweetly.)

ACT ONE

SCENE I: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

A study. Andre Said (SAID), an elegant Algerian man stands in front of a full length mirror. HE fusses with a tie. HE primps HIMSELF, making sure that every inch of HIS appearance is in order. Something doesn't look right. HE pats HIS belly. HE rubs it. HE lifts up HIS shirt and looks at it. It is an excellent, trim belly for a man HIS age. HE fondles it a bit. HE disrobes.

There are scars all over HIS body.

HE admires HIS biceps and triceps. HE turns HIS body and admires it from all angles in the mirror.

HE holds HIS hands against HIS body. HIS hands are scarred too.

SAID

You're getting fat, Andre. Oh, you beautiful Fat Fuck, Andre.

HE takes an oxygen mask that is attached to a tank. HE puts the mask over HIS mouth and nose and breathes deeply. SARAH (S.S.) enters with a hypodermic needle, a bottle of insulin, and alcohol pads.

S.S.

You're very handsome, mon Pere.

SAID

Ha!

S.S.

Look at you, getting yourself half-naked all over again. Took you plenty enough time to put it all on. I saw you tie that tie for yourself three times.

SAID

It's still not right.

S.S.

Yeah, yeah. I know.

SAID

It's got to be the right length.

S.S.

Yeah, yeah. I know. Rules to clothes. Step by steps for looking good.

SAID

It looks better when it's the right length. Some rules are good.

S.S.

Okay. Sit.

S.S. begins to prepare the needle.

SAID

I want to go swimming today.

S.S.

Doctor says two more weeks.

SAID

Two more weeks! Look how bloated I'm becoming! I feel like a bag of chicken fat.

S.S.

Two more weeks.

SAID

Ah, this is molestation! Which needle are you using?

S.S.

The regular needle.

SAID

No, these are new.

S.S.

It's the same.

SAID

These ones hurt.

S.S.

It's the same.

SAID

Then you're not being gentle. It hurt yesterday.

S.S.

I'll make sure to be more gentle.

SHE gives SAID the shot. SAID winces.

S.S. (cont'd)

You should give it yourself.

SAID

I'd rather die!

S.S.

For a doctor, you are the biggest baby!

SAID

You name for me a doctor who does surgery on himself!

HE carefully begins to dress HIMSELF.

S.S.

A shot is not surgery.

SAID

You are so contentious these days. You know, when you were little, I would ask you to turn for me, and you would spin around until you got dizzy, just to make me laugh.

S.S.

How fun for me.

SAID

You loved it. I hate these damn shots. They make me irritable. They make you short tempered. I'm not taking anymore.

S.S.

Maybe if you didn't sneak so many chocolates, you /wouldn't-

SAID

(overlapping "wouldn't")
/I don't /sneak!

S.S.

(overlapping "sneak")
/Save the song, Little Birdie.

SHE kisses HIM on the top of the head.

SAID

I'd be in better shape if you let me go swimming. I'm not sneaking /chocolates.

S.S.

/I took your coat to the dry cleaners. It came back, all tin foil in the pockets. Little pieces of paper. "Hershey's Kisses." Blue block letters.

SAID

A man my age should not have to sneak.

S.S.

Hershey's Kisses! Lousy chocolates. Not that I'm saying you're allowed to have any to begin with but ... Ah! What am I going to do with you?

SAID

When I eat chocolate, I want to feel it. I want to feel the cocoa in it. I tried some of your truffles. Blech! Like chewing on slugs. Give me some grist between the teeth. Hm! (Beat.) So, she's waiting out there? The pretty one from the reading. The lecture.

S.S.

Downstairs.

SAID

Haha! Oh, here it goes Andre, Andre My Boy! (to S.S.) Okay, go get her. Go, go, go. I'm almost done here.

S.S.

Papa-

SAID

Go! Go!

S.S.

Alright. Alright.

S.S. exits.

SAID finishes tying HIS tie. HE fixes HIS hair. HE takes another deep breath from the oxygen mask. HE hides it. HE sits down in a comfortable chair. HE positions HIMSELF carefully. There is a knock on the door.

SAID

Yes. Come, come.

The door opens. S.S. enters with EMILY. EMILY wears a beautiful silk scarf around HER neck.

SAID (cont'd)

Hello. Hello. Sorry for the wait.

EMILY

Not a problem.

SAID

Sometimes when you're cooking on something, it's better to just let it run.

EMILY
A poem?

SAID
A song. Yes. A poem.

EMILY
I'd love to read it.

SAID
I'd love for it to be worthy for human consumption. But, when's the last time that could be said about any of these poems?

EMILY
You won't be able to convince me of that. I love your work.

SAID
Well, then I'll accept the gracious compliment, with graceful gratitude. It's "Emily", am I right?

EMILY
Emily Allen.

SAID
Right. Yes, I wrote that down. You've met my daughter.

EMILY
Yeah. Hi.

S.S.
Yes. Hi.

SAID
Sarah, would you mind to bring us tea? (To EMILY) Tea?

EMILY
Oh, yeah, whatever.

SAID
(to S.S.)
And some of those dates that James brought us back from Palestine. (Beat.) Sarah?

S.S.
Yes. Of course, Papa.

SHE exits.

SAID
Well, I'm so glad that you decided to call me.

EMILY
Oh, thanks for giving me the number.

SAID

Of course. Always pleased to meet ... you know, to share. You have a book that you'd like me to sign.

EMILY

Right here. Yeah.

SHE produces the book and hands it to HIM.

EMILY (cont'd)

You can write in Arabic.

SAID

Arabic? You strike me as a "French" woman.

EMILY

I read all your poems in Arabic.

SAID

Arabic. My-my.

HE writes an unusually long passage in the book. HE signs it with a flourish.

SAID (cont'd)

Don't open it until you get to a quiet place.

EMILY

Thank you.

SAID

So, you're visiting us from Dartmouth?

EMILY

That's right.

SAID

I loved that campus. Hanover.

(smiling, no edge)

That's a fair drive to come visit the terrorist poet, isn't it?

EMILY

Excuse me?

SAID

I figure there must be some reason for a beautiful young woman to visit me. I figure it must be because I'm a terrorist.

EMILY

No. No ... that's not it at all.

SAID

Surely there's something mythological about it. Andre Said, Nobel Prize Winner, Poet Laureate, *Algerian Terrorist*. That just feels so immediate, doesn't it? So ... Now.

EMILY

No ... I really love your work.

SAID

But, don't you want to know if it's true?

EMILY

What?

SAID

If I'm a bomber bard, harvester of bloody French limbs? My personal favorite is "bloody Algerian savage that only the Americans savages would choose to honor." But, the Nobel Prize is a world-wide prize, isn't it, Mademoiselle, isn't it?

EMILY

Is it true?

Beat.

SAID

Of course not! But, I love talking about it. It makes me mysterious.

EMILY

Some say you were involved with the F.L.N. and-

SAID

There is no terrorism involved in stitching up a wound. Especially when done at gunpoint. Besides, were I a terrorist, the Frogs would have given me a mark. A bullet mark, right here.

He taps his forehead.

SAID (cont'd)

You know, a few months ago, I started to hear things. Not voices or anything so frightening. I would hear little bursts of sound, like the little (onomonopia) "DAN" you hear when you backspace too many times on the computer. Music. One time, in the car, suddenly I imagined the ocean in Phillipville. It was so vivid I had to blink from the sun. I ask my friend Gregory about it. He's a psychologist. Am I going crazy? He says that in my brain, I have made neural networks. Little pathways for the electricity to shoot through my brain.

(MORE)

SAID (cont'd)

These pathways are my memory, and when I hear these things, something is getting the electricity going. I saw you walk in today and ...

EMILY

What?

SAID

It suddenly hit me. Like electricity. Something sweet.

EMILY

Sweet.

SAID

The first time I had a Coca-Cola! Don't you laugh. It was a big moment for me. I thought it was the sweetest, most delicious thing I ever tasted. That's what you bring to me suddenly.

EMILY

Thank ... thank you.

SAID

This is one of the benefits of old age. You're allowed to tell every beautiful woman that she's a beautiful woman without feeling funny about yourself. So, what else did you come all this way to talk about? Are you a writer? Do you write?

EMILY

I'm not a poet. /I-

SAID

/That's alright. Surely you will be staying and joining us for dinner.

EMILY

Oh, I don't think-

SAID

I insist.

S.S. enters with the tea and dates. SHE sets the refreshments down.

SAID (cont'd)

Ah, there she is. Thank you, Habibi.

S.S.

Of course.

EMILY

Thank you.

SAID

Sarah, my love, you'll be sure to make enough for three for dinner tonight.

S.S.

Yes, Papa.

SAID

(to EMILY)

So, you were telling me that you write.

EMILY

No, I was, ahm, well, there's actually something I came to ask you about.

SAID

Ask away, Emily Allen. Ask away.

EMILY produces a photograph and hands it to SAID.

EMILY

I was hoping that you would recognize this.

HE hands the photograph back, politely.

S.S. takes it out of EMILY'S hands and examines it.

SAID

No. What is this?

EMILY

It's ... the prison cell in Algiers where you served fifteen months.

SAID

Algiers? Right.

EMILY

It was a French prison. You were there from-

SAID

Right. I don't know.

EMILY

They've torn it down. But, before they destroyed it over thirty thousand lines of your poetry were found there.

SAID

My Dear. I think you have an overly romantic view of prison life. We did not have cells with secret chambers for us to hide our intimate treasures. That's strictly an American cinematic convention.

EMILY

It was on the walls.

SHE produces another photograph.

EMILY (cont'd)

Look. See? It's scratched into the walls.

S.S. snatches the photograph away
before SAID has a chance to see it.

SAID

The walls? No. I think you're mistaken.

EMILY

Your signature is on one of the walls. The rest is written in
this different alphabet that we can't decipher, but, here.
"Bonne nuit. A. Said." That's you, isn't it?

SAID

Okay, this interview is over. Good day.

SAID begins to wheeze.

S.S.

Pa/pa?

EMILY

/Mr. Said. I'm sorry. Please.

SAID

Good day to you!

HIS breathing becomes more labored.

S.S.

Papa, où est le réservoir!

EMILY

Mr. Said? Oh my God! /Are you alright?!

S.S.

/Papa, le réservoir!

SAID points limply at HIS hiding place.
S.S. retrieves the tank. SHE takes the
mask and puts it on HIS face. SHE
smooths HIS hair and kisses HIM on the
forehead.

S.S. (cont'd)

Yes. Yes. Silence, Papa. Sarah's, here. Sarah est la.

I'm sorry, I- EMILY

It's time for you to go. S.S.

Wait. EMILY

Get out! S.S.

No, listen to me. EMILY

Look at him. Get out! Out! S.S.

Someone has come forward. The man who took these photographs. He's working with my advisor. He says he has a translation of the poetry that proves you were a terrorist. EMILY

Out. S.S.

Please. I don't believe it. They're going to publish an article. That's why I'm here. I don't believe it! EMILY

Wait downstairs. S.S.

Ms. Said- EMILY

Please! Wait for me. S.S.

Beat. EMILY exits.

S.S. (cont'd)
(holding up the photograph)
You have to tell me what this says!

Take that away. SAID

You've never told me about this cell! You never told me there's this man who can read- S.S.

He doesn't know it. SAID

He says- S.S.

Nobody can read it. SAID

How do you know? S.S.

Only I can read that alphabet. SAID

How do you /know? S.S.

/Because I made it up! (murmuring, unintelligible) di ahmlah
sah diahn dim diahn lah ... SAID

Papa? S.S.

Shh. Shh. Let Papa sleep. SAID

What did you just say? S.S.

S.S. shakes HIM gently.

Shh. SAID

You have to tell me now. What did you say? Tell me what you
just said! Tell me what you said! S.S.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE II: A PRISON CELL. ALGIERS, ALGERIA.

The lights rise slowly on a small
sweltering prison cell in Algiers.
There is an electric generator. There
is a chair. There is a hose attached
to a faucet. Keys shake on a ring. The
sound of a key in a heavy lock. A door
opens. Young Andre Said (ANDRE) enters.
ANDRE is dressed fashionably for the
era, but HIS clothes are disheveled.
HIS shoes have been removed.

MICHEL, a French paratrooper dressed in uniform enters.

MICHEL

They've left your tie on you. You'll have to take it off.
(Beat.) Come on now. Take it off.

ANDRE complies. HE throws HIS tie on the ground. MICHEL picks it up, folds it up neatly, and puts it in the breast pocket of HIS own shirt.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Thank you. Do you know why you're here?

ANDRE

No.

MICHEL

(helpful, apologetic)

Right. Let me just get the information here.

HE takes out a small notebook and reads.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(matter-of-fact)

Your name is Andre Said. Mزاب. Sahara region.

(new information)

Changed your last name to "Said" when you converted to Islam.

(warmly)

Ah, I didn't think "Andre Said" sounded like a Berber name.

(matter-of-fact)

Surgeon. Education: La Sorbonne, Paris. New York University Medical School.

(warmly)

I like New York. Never been to Paris. Funny, yes? I was born there but my father moved us to Algiers before I could remember a thing. I've drunk more mint tea than red wine, and all the red I've drunk was grown right here.

(back-to-work)

Your address is 1649 Rue de Calais, yes?

SILENCE.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(knowingly)

Right.

HE flips the pad shut.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(embarrassed, enthused)

You know, it really is an honor for me to meet you. I've read all your books. My wife put me on to them. Your French? Better than mine! I hear you've a new book coming out in Arabic. When will we hear from you in Berber? Amizigh. Zenete. Amizigh in particular has such a unique poetic timbre.

Silence.

HE opens the pad.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(a little pressure, gently)

Right. Your address is 1649 Rue de Calais. Yes? Hm? You live there with your wife, your daughter and son. Leila. Sarah. Emil. No one else, right? And don't lie. We'll know. Your neighbors know. The Pied-Noir watch.

HE looks down at the pad.

MICHEL (cont'd)

("realizes" his mistake)

Oh, no, no, that's right you don't live in the Casbah. Keep the family far away. You just practice in the Casbah-

ANDRE

This is an outrage!

Beat.

MICHEL

(serious)

Right. I was told that you're not cooperating. This was ... surprising to me. Upstanding man like yourself.

(measured)

You practice in the Casbah. Hm?

(forceful)

Dr. Said?

ANDRE

(smoldering)

Yes.

MICHEL

(backing off)

Lots of bandages lately, yes?

ANDRE

You would know.

MICHEL

(serious)

Yes. Yesterday at noon, seven bombs exploded in Algiers. You know this, I'm sure.

ANDRE

Everybody knows.

MICHEL

School bus. Children, you know.

ANDRE

I listen to the radio.

MICHEL

(matter-of-fact)

There's a little girl who doesn't have a jaw anymore. Muslim. I'm not an artist like you. Haven't the imagination. I couldn't *imagine* what a person would look like without a jaw. But, I know now that I've seen it in real life. I thought she looked remarkably like a helmet. A helmet with moving eyebrows. At my estimates, it would take a thousand accomplices to plant seven bombs.

ANDRE

A thousand for seven!

MICHEL

Oh yes. Bomb-makers, trigger experts, informants, look-outs. That's not even counting the planters. Who's going to hide them? Who's going to feed them? Heal their wounds? I could go on. Everyone's hands are dirty. Thousands.

ANDRE

Maybe that will show you that thousands are against you.

MICHEL

Yes. Look, I'm going to level with you. I don't like this any better than you-

ANDRE

You like this just fine.

MICHEL

(rising)

No I don't. We're certain there will be more bombings. All of Algiers is sure. Civilians. Muslims. Doesn't seem to matter. Not to the bombers, that's clear. Hm?

ANDRE

I know nothing about it.

MICHEL

You bandage rebel wounds. Don't tell me you know /nothing.

ANDRE

/I bandage all wounds. Yours, Pied-noir, fellagha, anybody!

MICHEL

(backing off)

Look, we have no indication that you've participated in any of these attacks. If we did, this would not be so pleasant and you'd be lined up /in the stadium.

ANDRE

/That's such an easy choice, isn't it? Each one of those men had to fill his stomach and empty his bowels everyday like you. /I've done nothing and you know it.

MICHEL

(hot)

/Better a fellagha than a little school girl! God! (Beat.) I'm going to be clear. We know they're going to try another attack in the next twenty-four hours. That much is clear. Is that what you want? You tell me what I need to know.

No response.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(ferocious)

You tell me what I need to know!

SILENCE.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(sympathetic)

You'll tell me what I need to know.

No response.

MICHEL (cont'd)

(resigned)

Yes. That's a good fellow.

MICHEL lights a cigarette. Offers a cigarette. ANDRE does not accept.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Do you smoke? What am I saying? Of course you do. You're a Bohemian. That's your job isn't it? It's your job to think big thoughts. You hang about and think big thoughts. Am I right? A coffee, a pen and a smoke is to you what a salute, an order and a gun is to me, hm? That's right, Dr. Said. You are a thinker. A cigarette smoking, coffee drinking high-minded-soft-handed thinker. I have rough hands. See? Rough. Calloused. It's from horses.

(MORE)

MICHEL (cont'd)

My family is from horse people, even in France. My father, my brothers more so, but, we are all horse people. It's the holding the reins that makes the hands hard.

HE takes a long puff from HIS cigarette.

MICHEL (cont'd)

You smoke, right? I never smoke. Never. It's terrible for my running.

LIGHTS FADE OUT. HE puts the cigarette out in the palm of HIS own hand.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE III: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

The living room in a state of unpacking with open boxes everywhere. EMILY sits, nervous, on the sofa next to a stack of old books. SHE opens one of them and reads the inscription inside. SHE takes a camera out and begins to take photographs. S.S. enters with the tray of tea in HER hands. SHE pauses for a moment and watches EMILY. SHE drops the tray to the ground. It shatters.

EMILY

OH MY GOD!

S.S.

Sorry.

EMILY

Jesus. You scared me.

S.S.

Sorry.

EMILY puts the book back on the stack.

EMILY

It's alright.

S.S.

Sorry.

SHE exits and retrieves a broom and a dust pan. SHE begins to clean up the broken China.

How is he?
EMILY

Dying.
S.S.

Oh-
EMILY

Not this instant. (Beat.) He's resting.
S.S.

I had no idea he was this sick.
EMILY

He looks quite vigorous, doesn't he. After the lecture you saw, he fainted in the car. Two weeks in the hospital. We just got back Wednesday. That's why this house is still in such the state it's in. Ah, but the truth is, I'll never be a good house-keeper. Nine months here and we're still in boxes. Good house-keepers carve a place for things to scatter to when thunder claps. Me? I can't help but think the safest place is boxes.
S.S.

S.S. gives the broom to EMILY. S.S. stoops and holds the dustpan.

Okay. Come on, now.
S.S. (cont'd)

EMILY brushes the broken China into the dustpan.

Thank you.
S.S. (cont'd)

You're welcome.
EMILY

Yes.
S.S.

S.S. exits to throw away the pieces.

This is a beautiful, beautiful house.
EMILY
(calling out to S.S.)

You think so?
S.S. (O.S.)

Yes.
EMILY

S.S. re-enters. SHE has a letter in HER hands.

S.S.

I picked it for the stone fence. You can't see out. Out can't see in. When I was growing up, our house was on a big, vast, flat plain. Whenever someone was coming to visit, you could see them coming for miles and miles around. You couldn't leave without people seeing you for miles and miles. I hated that.

EMILY

It was beautiful. Driving up to it. Really.

S.S.

Papa won the Nobel Prize and the first thing I insisted on was a house. This house. This house with the prize money. No more living in dingy apartments, hotels. All brown plants and papers piled to the ceiling. I heard my old landlord erected a plaque on the door to our apartment in Alphabet City -- a door straight to the basement.

EMILY

I don't know.

S.S.

No. And now, here we are. A house. Overnight. Who knew poets earn interest on pennies left in their winter coats?

EMILY

You're ... brilliant. I ... I just wanted you to know that ... well, I just think that.

S.S.

Excuse me?

EMILY

I'm defending on "s.s." for my doctorate in three weeks. I wrote you a millions letters.

S.S.

Ah.

EMILY

You're "s.s.", aren't you? I mean, we all think you are but-

S.S.

Sarah Said. "s.s." Editor. Trying to make something of all those letters. I probably stripped them of all their genius.

EMILY

The work is brilliant.

S.S.

We'll never know. This man. Coming forward. Who is he?

EMILY

A soldier, I think. A record keeper. I'm trying to find out more. He knows something. He knew enough to take those picture before they tore the prison down.

S.S.

What's his name?

EMILY

All he'll tell us is "Un Lecteur."

S.S.

A Reader. And you're here for what? This man comes forward with dirt under his nails and you're going to what? Clip his claws?

EMILY

Your father is not an evil man.

S.S.

Well, that is a great relief, thank you.

EMILY

I'm writing an article, yes-

S.S.

Ah. Against your advisor. Big risk.

EMILY

Someone has to refute, your father-

S.S.

Look at this.

SHE hands EMILY the letter.

S.S. (cont'd)

This came in the mail for my father six years ago. The International Linguistics Institute. "Dear Mr. Said, we are writing to inform you that you are the last remaining speaker of the Tourghet dialect of Berber." I called them. A scientist answered the phone. Doctor Somebody. I thought that was strange. I didn't think that there was a science to language. I always thought language was an art that was passed down through generations. Here I was talking to some scientist about it. He said thousands of languages are going extinct, replaced in their native lands by Spanish, English, Chinese ... French. Did you know that? I didn't. He told me that they try to send out a notice to every final speaker of a language. He said they try to contact them, get them to record the language. My father ...

SHE shakes HER head. SHE holds up the photograph of the prison.

S.S. (cont'd)

This is it. The old tongue. I'm sure of it.

EMILY

It probably is! It probably is! You know the language too!

S.S.

Not anymore. And the old tongue I knew never had an alphabet, at least not one that was taught to me. It was spoken. Only spoken. Like it was sacred.

EMILY

Sacred. Of course. But, you know-

S.S.

Your Reader. He says he can translate this writing?

EMILY

That's what he says.

S.S.

I want you to bring him here.

EMILY

Ms. Said-

S.S.

Bring him to me.

EMILY

But-

S.S.

You want to write your article? You want my father to help? Everything comes through me. You bring him to me, this Reader. You bring him to me, and you get all the time with my father you want. Am I clear?

EMILY

Perfectly.

S.S.

I have faith in your ... persuasive abilities. I trust it won't be a problem.

EMILY

A problem. No. I don't think so.

S.S.

Good.

EMILY

He heard that I was coming and he got on a plane. He flew into Manchester. I can have him here today.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE IV: A PRISON CELL. ALGIERS, ALGERIA.

ANDRE is tied to a chair. HE has received a very harsh beating. MICHEL wipes the sweat from ANDRE's forehead.

MICHEL fills a tin cup from the hose. HE gives ANDRE a drink.

MICHEL

There. There. That's alright, my man. They're gone. It's just you and me. So, drink. Drink. Yes, that's the way it goes down. Like Bordeaux. Grand cru.

ANDRE finishes. MICHEL fills the cup again and drinks from it.

MICHEL (cont'd)

You are an exceptional man. We've had F.L.N. leaders spill the beans at the threat of a beating. You? No. That's not you. Horse sense tells us that the more invested a man is in the cause, the longer he will hold out. But, you criticize the F.L.N.'s tactics as much as you criticize the French. You're no terrorist sympathizer, yet you refuse to tell me what I need to know-

ANDRE

I can't tell you something I don't know! I can't tell you something I don't know! My God! My God! My God!

Beat.

MICHEL

Right. We found fingers at your clinic.

ANDRE

Fingers.

MICHEL

Yesterday, six blocks from the Milk Bar, there is an explosion in a car that crashes into a street light. Maybe it was a bomb that wasn't quite built right; maybe it was a bomb-maker with loose scraps of material. We don't know. But, the driver left us two fingers from the right hand. My men searched your clinic and found three. A thumb, and pointer and a middle finger. Amputated with a scalpel.

(MORE)

MICHEL (cont'd)

Prints burned off. So, you just told me that you can't tell me something that you don't know. Okay. Reasonable. Why don't you tell me something that you do know? You can tell me who belongs to these fingers. How did he pay? Where does he live? You must know this. You can tell me that, hm? Yes?

ANDRE

I don't know.

MICHEL

Try again.

ANDRE

I don't.

MICHEL

Now that's the type of answer to make one furious.

ANDRE

People come to me, I heal them, they go! I don't take an account of who owes me debts! I'm not a Frenchman. Typical French arrogance. I don't concern myself with who owes me debts for their life!

MICHEL slaps ANDRE viciously.

MICHEL

(composed)

You are a Frenchman.

MICHEL takes HIS keys out. HE starts a generator.

MICHEL (cont'd)

I was a Commander in Indochine. I would have told you this if we ever had a chance for a drink and a smoke at a cafe. I hated the jungle. Give me the ocean. Give me the sand. When I got home, I went to the Sahara like a tourist. I ate figs and dates until I dreamt about them and woke to find them in the cupboards. I read your books in the desert. "Beautiful. This is a vision of what my home can be. The French must join the cause. We must all be better men for our country. Algérie-Française! I must speak to this man." Then what happens? Bombs-bombs-bombs-bombs-bombs. France won't let this happen. I won't let this happen. Yes? And look at you. The one man I thought would understand, before me, and me here, and I don't understand you at all. Not in the slightest.

HE attaches the electrodes to ANDRE's ears.

MICHEL (cont'd)

I want a name. I want an address.

SILENCE.

MICHEL pushes a button on the machine.
The sound of electricity jolting into
ANDRE's body. ANDRE tenses in pain.

ANDRE

UHHHHHHHHHHH!

HE convulses. ANDRE's body relaxes. HE
can breath again.

MICHEL

Blowing up Algeria, I know this is not what you want. Come on
now. Andre. Listen to me. Listen to reason.

ANDRE turns HIS head away.

MICHEL presses the button. The sound of
electricity. ANDRE convulses.

ANDRE

UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

MICHEL

Andre. I want a name. A name and a street.

ANDRE

(mumbling)

A name. A street. A street.

MICHEL

That's right. That's all I need. A name. /A street.

[Note: ANDRE, run straight through
unless MICHEL stops you with
electricity.]

ANDRE

(insulating HIMSELF from pain)

/A street. A sweep. Sweep up. A sweep. a sweet street sweep
on a hill of steeples steeple /people

MICHEL

(overlapping "people")

//What?

ANDRE

(overlapping "What?")

/a crew of reapers hone to the bones of the keepers weepers
crying tying the bows on the bones of the presents for
wolves/it

MICHEL

//Enough of this Andre. Enough! Don't give me this bullshit.
You tell me whose fingers were at your place!

ANDRE

/is known it's flown home I retreat I repeat in the jungle
the bungle of bugles of beagles of /seagulls

MICHEL

//Look at me! Listen to me!

ANDRE

/dart from the glare the blare of sun splatters clatter
chatters what matter mad hatter up down turning round from
sun up to sun down-

MICHEL presses the button. The sound of
electricity.

ANDRE (cont'd)

UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

MICHEL slaps ANDRE in the face and
grabs HIM by the shoulders.

MICHEL

None of this shit! None of this shit! Now you give me a name!

ANDRE's body settles down. HE gags.
Coughs. Salivates uncontrollably.

ANDRE

HHHH! HHHH! /HHHH! HHHH!

MICHEL

/Okay. Okay. That's right. It's okay, my man. Yes? Come on.
Settle down. You're alright. I need you to tell me a name.

ANDRE

HHHHH. Hhhhhh.

MICHEL

Come on now.

ANDRE

(raging inward)

Hhhhhhh. HHHHHHunger that lunges it plunges to depth that the
sea cannot see for it's too dark to be beating beets red with
pulp red like salt red like chalk that has drawn lines in
sand lines in clay-

MICHEL presses the button. The sound of
electricity.

ANDRE (cont'd)

UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

MICHEL

This is not going to work. I'm sorry to tell you it's not going to work. You can talk gibberish all night. I need a name!

ANDRE

(an offensive begins)

my tongue can't relate to the belly that's full that's in bloom plucked placed rooms it's a ruin it's a mess I confess

ANDRE (cont'd)

MICHEL

I confess I confess I confess

Enough! ...

I confess.

... A name! ...

I CONFESS!

... To what?! ...

I CONFESS!

... Stop it! ...

I CONFESS!

... To what?! ...

I CONFESS!

... GODDAMNIT, GIVE ME A

I CONFESS!

NAME!

I CONFESS!

MICHEL unholsters HIS gun and points it at ANDRE's forehead.

SILENCE.

MICHEL (cont'd)

What do you know about the bombings? Give me a name.

SILENCE.

ANDRE

(defiant)

i confess

MICHEL pulls the hammer back on HIS gun.

ANDRE (cont'd)

I confess.

MICHEL

No!

ANDRE

(attacking)

I confess that it's best to detest what is best so you rest with the rest with your head on the hammer enamored of something of nothing discernible it is unlearnable wholly unlearnable I am no wage earner page turner I'm not your puppy uncleanly unlucky I'll never play fetch with you never be wretch with you I am a clean man I am a clean man-

MICHEL pushes the button. The sound of electricity.

ANDRE (cont'd)
UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! HHH! HHH! AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH! HHHH!

MICHEL
Goddamnit, Andre. You're going to make me kill you.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

ANDRE
(in DARKNESS)
i am a clean man a clean man in dream land i walk through the forest and find that i'm walking in eden a clean land in freedom and all i must do is to open my palms and to name every animal my eyes have found-

The sound of electricity.

ANDRE (cont'd)
UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

END OF SCENE.

SCENE V: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

The living room. Refreshments have been set on the table. S.S. is staring out of the window.

EMILY enters.

S.S.
Your Reader has a soldier's strength. This is courage.

EMILY joins S.S. at the window.

EMILY
Stubborn. I tried to help him, but he wanted to make le grande entree.

S.S.
He doesn't lift his feet off the ground.

EMILY
Cancer. It's spread to his bones.

S.S.
Courage.

EMILY

Yeah. No. He's ... I like him. You'll see. I think he's wrong. I think he's ... I don't know. But, I like him.

S.S.

He knows you're writing you own article?

EMILY

He won't tell. He likes your father's work more than I do. Wants everyone to study it.

S.S.

I never realized how many steps we have to this house. I go up and down them everyday. But, this is the first time I've realized how many Goddamn steps lead up to this house. He's so deliberate, isn't he? Planning every next step. Step by step. Like ... like a wave. Bringing in and out the tide. I need to speak to this man. You should go see my father. Get some choice words for your ... your article.

EMILY

Will he see me without you? He was furious /before.

S.S.

/He'll see you. He's asked for you. All's forgiven. When it comes to pretty girls, my father's mind is like a looping circle replaying on top of itself. He's back to the beginning of the cycle again. He's picking out ties to see you as we speak. Maybe he'll take you to his pond to look for turtles.

EMILY

What are you going to talk about?

S.S.

Literature. You may go.

EMILY

Ha-ha.

EMILY moves to exit.

S.S.

(attention at the window)

You don't know us ... you know? You really don't know us at all. My goodness, before he won some awards, did anyone care a thing about Andre Said, scribbling away in a tenement? Where were you all then? He could walk up and down the street with a stick of dynamite and no one had a thought about him being a terrorist. Go.

EMILY

I cared, Ms. Said. I don't remember a world without your father in it and I'll know you. Soon enough. In the process, I'll save his legacy. Yours too, if you let me.

EMILY exits.

Beat.

The door bell starts to ring. It is one of those door bells that is turned on a knob. It turns painfully at first.

S.S. hesitates to answer. Slowly, the doorbell begins to ring out and rumble. When it reaches the top of its crescendo. The door opens and shuts.

GARCET (O.S.)

Hello?

GARCET, forty years older enters. HE is thin. HIS clothing is comfortable and well made, but looks a few sizes too big. HE wears glasses, a knit hat and a Celtics jacket.

HE wears a morphine Patient Controlled Analgesic (PCA) device. [A pain management device.] It's plunger is clipped to HIS shirt-sleeve. In the other hand he carries a portfolio of files. HE is standing up very tall, looking dignified.

GARCET (cont'd)

Oh! Hello. Amusing, yes? It's just one of those fascinating toys. Once you start turning it, you don't know when to stop.

S.S.

Bonjour, Monsieur ...

GARCET

"Mister" is fine. Everyone says "Mister" in America. Bonjour, bonjour.

S.S.

Mister.

GARCET

My grandchildren in California roll their eyes when I speak French. "English, Granpere! English!" Perfect accents!
(Beat.) Sarah?

S.S.

Yes.

GARCET

Yes! So tall! You have your father's skeleton. You stand like him.

S.S.

Thank you.

GARCET

(looking around)

Ahm, where's your father? I was told I would see Andre ...

S.S.

At the moment, he's in his study.

Relieved, GARCET lets HIMSELF slump slightly and enters the room.

S.S. (cont'd)

He'll be joining us for dinner soon. Dinner's the same time everyday. My father's become militant about meals. Sit.

GARCET

Where will he be when he first comes in?

S.S.

(pointing)

There.

GARCET

Then I'll sit there.

HE points to the dining room table. SHE pulls out the first seat a person would see when entering the room. GARCET begins to walk over to the chair. It tires HIM to walk, but, HE is graceful and dignified.

GARCET (cont'd)

The leaves. Autumn in New England. Beautiful. I've never lived in a place with seasons, before, you know? Algeria, California. Mostly it's just the same cycle with a few minor changes. Wetter, drier. But, here. Leaves overnight!

S.S.

It's the ah ... green leaving the plants when it gets cold. There isn't enough light for the leaves to make sugar in the winter, so the trees give up and wait for Spring.

GARCET

Ah, Spring. One last orange gasp then.

HE gets to the chair and sits down. HE tries to push the button on the PCA by pressing it against HIS chin, but HE is having difficulty.

S.S.

Here, let me.

SHE pushes the button for HIM. A slight wave of relief.

GARCET

Hm. Good. Better. Whew! (referring to HIS hands) Tsk, poor things.

S.S.

Another?

GARCET

No. No. I'm allowed six per hour. Rations. (pointing to the PCA) It's nothing more than opium, you know? In Indochine, if one of us was caught with opium? it was straight to the court martial. No question. The stuff was poison. I have more sympathy now that I'm a junkie.

S.S.

You were in Indochine?

GARCET

Wretched place. Every mosquito a poisoned arrow. I tell you, whoever masters the mosquito will rule the world.

S.S.

Something to drink?

GARCET

Just a piece of ice. I don't swallow so well these days. I'll take it in a glass.

S.S.

I think we can manage that.

SHE takes a few pieces of ice from an ice bucket.

GARCET

Could you put a little sugar on it? Just for taste? A little lemon.

S.S.

Of course.

GARCET

Thank you. Sugar is all I can digest these days. Stir it for me a bit? Would you? Thank you.

SHE stirs and notices that HIS hands still hurt. SHE offers a spoonful to GARCET. HE takes it carefully.

GARCET (cont'd)

Mm, that's good. That's nice.

SHE puts the spoon down and backs away from HIM.

S.S.

I'm surprised you've come ... General Garcet.

Pause.

S.S. (cont'd)

Your little mole is not the only one who can excavate. I've done my digging. I know just what you are. Does she know?

GARCET shrugs.

S.S. (cont'd)

Too much time underground. We're going to keep it that way, yeah?

GARCET

Sarah, you are very tall-

S.S.

I want you to leave my father alone. What will it take?

GARCET

I-

S.S.

I know why you're here! Good fortune sounds a crippled cry when heard by ears of jackals. Sick and dying torturer. How much do you want?

GARCET

Don't be ridiculous.

S.S.

Haven't you done enough? Why are you trying to destroy my father?

GARCET

I have a doctorate in French Literature from the University of California Los Angeles! Thesis: Andre Said!

(MORE)

GARCET (cont'd)

Before the cancer, I was studying Linguistics at Berkley. My life has been saving his work! Yes!

SHE produces the photographs.

S.S.

Why?

GARCET

The academy seeks truth.

S.S.

What truth? Truth that he was a terrorist? This says he was a terrorist.

GARCET

Yes.

S.S.

Your truth is warped to meet your conscience. Wishing, General, does not make it so.

GARCET

You know very well that it does.

S.S.

This says he was a murderer?

GARCET

The worst kind. You know this.

S.S.

No one knows what this says. Scientists, scholars. Nobody.

GARCET

You don't know this.

S.S.

I couldn't understand it if you read it to me.

GARCET

How could that be?

S.S.

The language is dead. No one.

GARCET

But, Sarah, My Dear. You are the very one who taught it to me.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE VI: A PRISON CELL. ALGIERS, ALGERIA.

ANDRE remains tied to the chair. HE is soaking wet. A hose is taped into HIS mouth. HE coughs. HE mumbles, HIS head swaying back and forth to an internal rhythm that is playing in HIS head. The door opens. MICHEL enters. ANDRE stops for a moment.

The two lock eyes. ANDRE lowers HIS head and mumbles unintelligibly to HIMSELF again.

MICHEL

Andre. Andre. Look at me.

ANDRE does not respond. MICHEL pinches ANDRE's nose shut.

MICHEL (cont'd)

ANDRE! It's your wife and your children.

ANDRE starts to cough and sputter.

MICHEL releases HIM.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Yes. I'm sorry, but it's been leaked to the F.L.N. that we have you. Do you hear me? Yes. They know that we have you and my man reports that they've sent six armed men, drunk and high on kif to 1649 Rue de Calais. They've assumed you've talked and they're cleaning out Said!

ANDRE becomes terrified and begins to struggle in HIS seat. HE screams behind HIS gag.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Now you have to cooperate before I can help you!

ANDRE quiets.

MICHEL (cont'd)

I have dispatched my own platoon to follow them. My men are excellent marksmen, I assure you they are dead shots. They are waiting for word from me, a radio message and they will fire. But, this is war, Andre, my friend, and I can't give you something for nothing. You give me something I need to know and I will make this call for you. Do you hear me?

ANDRE nods.

MICHEL (cont'd)

A name and an address. You spout any of your gibberish to me, I lock you in here, I tell my men to go home and we all sleep a sound fucking night! Understand?

ANDRE nods.

MICHEL removes the gag. Water pours out of ANDRE's mouth. HE coughs and gags.

ANDRE

Faouzi. Faouzi Taleb. I don't know where he lives! I don't know! He's a man from the Casbah.

MICHEL

Faouzi Taleb? Goddamnit shit! Faouzi Taleb!

ANDRE

Yes. Yes.

MICHEL

Faouzi the pimp? Taleb-a-la-gauche!

ANDRE

I don't know.

MICHEL

Goddamn. Goddman shit, Andre! He's a nobody! We brought him in last month and he couldn't even write his own name!

ANDRE

I don't know!

MICHEL begins to undo ANDRE's shackles. HE gets one off and hands the key to ANDRE in disgust.

MICHEL

Here. Free yourself. All this for a fucking pimp.

ANDRE

Wait! Wait!

MICHEL exits. The door closes and locks firmly behind HIM. MICHEL yells loudly and unintelligibly off stage in French. The sound of footsteps running. The yells fade out.

ANDRE (cont'd)

L'appel. Attendez! Attendez!

ANDRE makes for the door, but one hand is still shackled to the chair.

ANDRE (cont'd)

Il faut que vous fassiez l'appel. Il le faut. Il le faut.

HE reaches out to the door.

LIGHTS FADEOUT.

ANDRE(cont'd)

Il faut que vous fassiez l'appel! Aidez-moi. Aidez-moi. Aidez-moi. Aidez-moi. Aidez-moi. Aidez-moi. Il faut que vous fassiez l'appel pour moi. Pour ma famille! Ma famille! Aidez-moi!

BLACKOUT.

The sound of gunfire.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE VII: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

The pond in the backyard. There is a bench. There is a slim wooden box on the bench.

The sound of ravens cawing and ducks quacking. SAID and EMILY survey SAID's kingdom.

SAID

Brown trout. Next year we are going to stock the pond with Brown Trout. They are delicious. My daughter will come catch them in the morning, and I will clean and cook them at night. Fried. Sounds good?

EMILY

Yeah. Mr. Said-

SAID

Don't be so urgent.

EMILY

Listen-

SAID

Do you have a good dog?

EMILY

What-?

SAID

Don't be so urgent. Your hair will fall out. Do you have a good dog?

EMILY

~~No.~~—I don't like dogs.

SAID

I mean, can you do a good impression of a dog.

EMILY

Uhm, I don't know?

SAID

Mine is terrible. Truly terrible.

HE presses play on the tape and a very poor imitation of a dog comes on. It sounds like a man saying, "woof, woof, woof."

SAID (cont'd)

Hear that? Terrible. Think you can do better?

EMILY

I don't think so.

SAID

Give it a try.

SAID holds out a microphone. EMILY barks and SAID records.

SAID (cont'd)

Try a little deeper.

EMILY barks deeper.

SAID (cont'd)

That is not bad. I can use that.

EMILY

What's this for?

ANDRE

Ravens. They eat the turtle eggs. It's an experiment. I'm seeing if they are afraid of the sounds of dogs. I hoped they'd be more afraid of cats. I do a very sound cat. But, cats don't make any noise before they kill you.

EMILY

What works the best?

SAID takes a gun from the box. HE
fires.

SAID
That really works. They're scared of that. I think it's
because I shoot them whenever I see them. Ravens and
raccoons.

EMILY
I wouldn't have imagined that you were the shooting type.

SAID
Oh? How's that?

EMILY
I imagined you would let things be what they are. That seems
to be the more humanitarian thing anyway.

SAID
"Let things be what they are." Doesn't sound the least bit
human to me.

EMILY
I guess. I don't know. I meant humane.

SAID
I don't understand that word.

EMILY
Yeah. I don't know.

SAID
I don't understand that to do certain "nice" things is to act
more like a human. I am a man. I do what I do. Everything I
do is in the character of man. This man wants a world filled
with turtles. That's what I want. I am at a place in my life
where I only want what I want. If that means no ravens, no
raccoons, so be it.

EMILY
Okay.

SAID
Here. You try.

EMILY
Me?

SAID
A gun is a powerful tool. Change the world. Add. Subtract.
Shape it to suit your needs.

Pause.

SAID (cont'd)
Come on. Be game.

EMILY
Okay. Bang-bang.

EMILY takes the gun. She fires. A splash of water.

SAID
What were you aiming at?

EMILY
Nothing.

SAID
Nothing.

EMILY
Water. I was just shooting. I've never shot a gun before. It's not so scary once you've tried it.

SAID takes the gun back.

SAID
You have a knack for it. Hunting water. Next thing we know, there will be bottles of Evian mounted on the walls of your living room. Then heads and antlers. I worry for the creatures of the forest now you've a taste for it.

EMILY
Ha-ha. You too.

SAID
Me? I'm content to make the world a safer place for my turtles. Simple.

EMILY
Turtles?

SAID
Oh, I liked them all when we first came out here to the country. I had no allegiances. Ravens. Raccoons. Turtles. I would come out and watch for hours. Sparrows, bees, flowers, ants it all seemed like one great reasonable ... equation. One day, I was sitting there, doing the math in my head. I was sitting and watching a little turtle lay her eggs on a piece of log. A red-eared slider. My field book said "red-eared slider." I wrote it down. I made a note. Hours I watched her lay her eggs. Each one a little round, pink, marble, ping-pong ball. Then, just like that, comes down an unkindness of ravens laughing, as though they waited for her to be finished. Perching on her shell. Pop, pop, pop, each egg broken open.

(MORE)

SAID (cont'd)

When they finished, they flew away and she fell into the water. She fell into a pool of egg shell and yolk. A plop. I don't know if she swam away. This was beyond survival. No. To destroy eggs, this was ...

HE laughs at HIMSELF.

SAID (cont'd)

... this was genocide. You laugh at me. I know genocide. They have no allegiance to each other. So one must choose sides. God chooses sides between men. Said can choose sides between turtles and ravens.

Pause.

EMILY

I eat eggs.

SAID

Come now, it's not the same.

EMILY

I eat chicken eggs.

SAID

Those eggs aren't even fertilized. Their entire purpose is consumption. They exist to be eaten. (HOLD.) Well, maybe someday our chickens will rebel against their oppressors. Maybe we'll have chicken revolution here like we had native revolution in the colonies.

EMILY

Maybe. (Beat.) Mr. Said-

SAID

There you are. Urgent again. We were having such a nice conversation. Please, let's not have to talk about it, can we?

EMILY

You have to translate.

SAID

Why does it mean so much?

EMILY

Because they are the words of a great man.

SAID

Greatness in words. The world's gone mad.

EMILY

Is this how you want to be remembered?

SAID

Remembered as what? The Terrorist Poet? Far worse things to be remembered as.

EMILY

What about Sarah?

SAID

I know what's best for my daughter.

EMILY

What legacy would she have left?

SAID

I think I know what's best for what's best! Thank you very much. Thank you very much. If there's a thought out there for my daughter's benefit, I can assure you that I've had it. This is not for her. NOT FOR HER! YOU HEAR ME?!

EMILY

You're going to change your mind. It will happen. I know it. You'll regret it.

SAID

I have no regrets. Good day to you.

HE starts to exit.

EMILY

When my family first came to America, children made songs about me.

SAID stops.

EMILY (cont'd)

Poems about me. So, my father said, "No more Croatian. No more accents." So Croatian was forbidden and I was little so I slowly, slowly forgot everything. My grandmother never really caught on. She just sort of sat in a little bubble of silence listening to Croatian radio, getting smaller and smaller everyday. She died a few weeks ago. She died and I had to give the eulogy. I had to give it in English. She wouldn't have understood it. I can converse fluently in Arabic, French and Swahili, but my grandmother, who carried me on her back for two months to get me to America didn't understand a word of her eulogy. That's regret. You're going to change your mind. You have to.

SAID

So that's what we're fighting so hard for, is it? Fighting our way out of the bubble of silence before we disappear.

EMILY

No-

SAID

Only good reason for fighting these days. The fear that someone is trying to make us disappear. Someone has that power. Right? We see it happening.

EMILY

You're trying to make yourself disappear! I don't want that. I don't want that. I did a book report on you in high school. I wrote fifty pages. I never spoke a word in class but I wrote fifty pages! Can you imagine? My teachers couldn't believe it. And since ... and since ... you are not a terrorist. Do you hear me?

SAID

I hear you.

EMILY

You're not! Let me help you prove it. I can help.

SAID

Where's Mama? You didn't mention Mama.

Beat.

EMILY

I don't know.

SAID

No?

EMILY
(definitively)

No.

SAID takes HER hand. HE holds it with both hands to HIS chest. HE kisses it.

SAID

Of course. Of course, Emily Allen. Of course.

EMILY

You're not a terrorist. You're not.

SAID

Alright then. Alright. Did you have a name?

EMILY

A name?

SAID

In Croat.

EMILY

Ilya Ament.

SAID releases HER hand.

SAID

Hm. Pretty. Andre Said does not sound like much of a Berber name, does it?

EMILY

I thought it was-

SAID

No, it doesn't. You want to know secrets. Secret stories. I'll tell you a secret story and I'll do you one better. I'll tell you in a language no one else understands.

EMILY

Now? But, I won't understand it-

SAID

Just listen. Listen. It's a story about a Berber boy with a Berber name. He grew up in a muddy oasis. When the French found their way out to the desert, expeditions to cross the oceans of sand, this Berber boy fetched them water from the oasis, and sprayed it on their faces with an atomizer. He wiped their necks and foreheads with wet towels for caramels, and the French couldn't bear the thought of this bright little boy shriveling up in the desert and shipped him off to a French school in Algiers. Nuns. He received a new name. Andre. He went through seven different types of "A's" in his cursive. He excelled in his studies, especially French, and the French couldn't bear the thought of him shriveling up in Algeria, and sent him to study in Paris.

HE looks at HER.

SAID (cont'd)

What?

EMILY

You're making fun of me.

SAID

Fun?

EMILY

You're just changing the subject.

SAID

No. Just listen. You'll hear it. I promise. One day, while he is a University student in Paris, the boy receives a letter. Six weeks ago, his mother was hit by a car in the marketplace. Yes? Understand? Yes. I do not make fun. They could never find the driver. The Frenchman never stopped, he just drove away. The boy goes to the patisserie and buys pain au chocolat. Six. Do you like those?

EMILY

I love them.

SAID

I like them warm. He walks. He takes a few wrongs turns and finds himself in front of a clock factory. A group of men with brown faces are carrying out another brown-faced man. The dead man was a very short man who stood on boxes to set the time on the faces of clocks. He was only a few feet off the ground, but he landed precisely wrong on his head and broke his neck. They leave him in the dust. The boy touches the dead man's neck. It is an unusually long neck for a small man and it's covered in dirt and grease. As he walks home the boy rolls the grease into little balls between his fingers. He tries to forget the man, but, bit by bit, this little man with the unnaturally long neck creeps into his dreams. He returns to the factory a week later to learn that the man was a Muslim named Saïd. He had a daughter in Paris. She is a waitress at a cafe. The boy finds her. She's beautiful. Dark, rich, crispy brown. She serves him his first Coca-Cola. He takes her home and makes love to her, and his heart never pounds in frustration or fear. She is the first dark woman he has ever coveted and, it doesn't feel like a privilege to be having sex with her, as if she has descended, lowered herself to touch him. It feels as though they are two albatross that have found each other after years apart patrolling the seas, only to find each other over and over until one of them drops and is swallowed by waves. They marry, and he changes his name to Saïd because it is he who is given away. It is he who has changed and become worthy. And with that, this Berber boy's Berber name was washed out, covered by the letters of two conquering people. The French and the Arabs. Those who taught him to write and those who taught him to love.

EMILY

What was that name?

SAID

The name is forgotten.

EMILY

What was your name-?

SAID

Except when he comes across names in a newspaper. Some child is starving. Some father mourns. Some boy has bombed buses in Israel, Palestine, America, anywhere. He doesn't go back to read the names, his eyes charge right across the page. No regrets. "Emily Allen" is a good name. Keep it and I'll show you some good "A's" for the "Allen."

EMILY

You were my mother's favorite. The night the soldiers came I kept my eyes on our shelf, your name on the spines ... all night. I still cry before I read them. I have to hold my breath before I crack the spine. I still ... your words have meant everything to me ... to Ilya Ament.

SAID

Keep Ilya to yourself. Save it for Mama and Grandma so you will know that it's them you hear in your dreams. After I die, you'll know it's me.

HE aims.

SAID (cont'd)

I can't keep my hands steady anymore.

EMILY comes around HIM and supports HIS arm with HER arm.

EMILY

What are we shooting at?

SAID

Raven's nest. Over there in that tree. A nest full of eggs. Chicks, perhaps. I have to stop them before they turn.

HE shoots. HE makes HIS mark.

SILENCE.

HE lets HIS arm fall.

SHE takes HIS hand.

SAID (cont'd)

Dinner time. Time to go inside.

EMILY

It's a whole language.

SAID

Yes. That's right.

EMILY

A whole culture. Just dying.

SAID

At least it's me that does the killing. It's me that measures its worth. Everything dies. A conservationist is an egoist standing on the beach interrogating the waves. "Why don't you roll the way you rolled when I was a child? I liked it better that way." I'm hungry. Time to go inside.

EMILY

You don't want to let it die.

SAID

You don't know what I want.

EMILY

I know you want to keep it a secret, right? You want to keep it a secret, but if you let it die. It's not a secret anymore. It's just dead. Just gone.

EMILY removes the scarf from HER to reveal a scar where a knife was dragged across HER throat.

SAID touches the scar.

SAID

Ilya.

EMILY

I know how to keep a secret. Secrets mean life.

SAID

Ilya.

EMILY

Let me keep your secret. I'll keep it barely breathing.

Beat.

SAID

You want to know secrets? Secret stories. This is what they're missing.

HE holds up HIS hands. He unbuttons HIS shirt. HE holds HIS hands against HIS body.

SAID (cont'd)

This is the key.

EMILY

These scars.

HE holds up HIS left hand. SHE examines them closely.

SAID

I put those secret symbols on my fingers.

HE puts HIS hand back on HIS chest.

SAID (cont'd)
And laid their voice; their sound on my skin.

Emily takes the book that SAID signed for her and begins to copy the symbols into it's pages. She makes it halfway down a page.

EMILY
I have a camera.

SAID
Yes. Record. Yes.

EMILY takes out the camera. SHE takes a few pictures. SHE unbuttons HIS shirt further and begins to take pictures.

SAID takes HIS hand and puts on another part of HIS body. SHE takes a photograph.

SAID (cont'd)
Ilya.

EMILY
What?

SAID
I'm cold.

Beat.

EMILY
Okay.

EMILY begins to button up HIS shirt.

SAID
Thank you. Are you hungry?

EMILY
I brought someone with me today.

SAID
You brought someone.

EMILY
Your daughter asked me to bring him. It was the only way she would let me back. He says you'll "know him."

SAID
Know him?

EMILY
"You'll know him as a un 'lecteur.'"

Beat.

SAID
He's in the house?

EMILY
Yes.

SAID stands.

EMILY (cont'd)
Who is he?

SAID finishes buttoning his shirt. He tucks it in.

SAID
Did she recognize him?

EMILY
I-

SAID
Was she happy to see him?

EMILY
I don't know.

SAID begins to walk towards the house.

EMILY (cont'd)
Mr. Said-

SAID wheels around and grabs HER by the shoulder.

SAID
Ilya, what have you done?!

Beat.

EMILY
I don't know.

Beat.

SAID releases HER. HE picks up HER scarf and wraps HER neck. Ties it back gently.

SAID

You can keep my secret, yeah?

EMILY

Yes.

SAID

Good. (Beat.) Keep it in the secret language that we share. Keep it in the language of orphans.

SAID puts the gun back in the box and exits.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE VIII: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VERMONT.

The living room. GARCET has taken HIS papers out of HIS file and spread them on the table. S.S. examines a photograph of the poetry intently. SHE holds it against the wall.

S.S.

I ... can't remember any of this.

GARCET

That's right. You had problems with your memory then.

S.S.

Nothing. How deep were these scratches?

GARCET

Deep.

S.S.

Deep.

GARCET

I was hoping you would remember your old friend from the hospital. But, your memory ... I should have realized.

S.S.

The hospital. (Beat.) No. None of that time's clear to me. I know I was there, but it's not clear.

GARCET

I used to bring you olives. All the other children wanted sweets. Cookies. You liked black olives. I'd put them on your fingers. Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq and you'd gobble them up.

S.S.

No. I'm sorry.

GARCET

The memory. The memory.

S.S.

I ... I really don't remember-

GARCET

It's fine that you don't remember.

S.S.

(suddenly)

Wait! Wait here!

S.S. exits.

GARCET struggles with the plunger and pushes it against HIS chin. HIS eyes flutter close.

LIGHTS UP on ALGERIA.

ANDRE enters. MICHEL unclips HIMSELF from the PCA and stands. HE takes HIS knit cap off. HE takes the jacket off. HE is wearing HIS uniform underneath.

MICHEL

Come on. Let's go.

ANDRE backs away and covers HIS face.

ANDRE

Please, what's happened to my family? Where's /my-

MICHEL

/Let's go. We're going to the hospital.

ANDRE

The hospital? What-why the hospital? WHY?

MICHEL

We were too late.

ANDRE

(almost a whisper)

No.

MICHEL

We were too late. They've cut your wife's throat, and crushed your son's skull. Your daughter is at the hospital.

ANDRE

No. No.

MICHEL

When we found her, they had used her and were nailing her arms to the wall. We shot them.

ANDRE collapses at MICHEL's feet and cries.

ANDRE

It can't ... It can't ...

MICHEL

Andre. Andre. I ... I'm ... We only lost them for a moment ... a ...(composed) Okay. Come on. Get up.

ANDRE grabs HIM tighter.

ANDRE

No, no, no, no, no, no.

MICHEL

Get up, get up. Get up! You're fucking my shine! Get off my shoes!

MICHEL kicks ANDRE who tumbles backward.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Was it worth it?!

MICHEL stomps on ANDRE in rage. ANDRE lunges at HIM, and MICHEL bludgeons HIM to the ground with a club. HE kicks ANDRE.

MICHEL (cont'd)

F.L.N. This is what you want to replace the French with. A throat slit, a crushed skull and a little girl raped and nailed to a wall! A phone call. All that separates us from children nailed to a wall is a phone call.

HE pounds ANDRE with HIS fists. HE begins to choke ANDRE.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Why did you do this to us? Nothing noble. Good. Sweet. For a fucking pimp. Pig, pimp, heart sinks because, you! You! You! You!

HE knocks ANDRE against the ground over and over and over again.

MICHEL (cont'd)

We killed your family for a pimp, Andre. (screaming) WE
KILLED YOUR FAMILY!

MICHEL releases ANDRE. MICHEL composes
HIMSELF. HE sits down in the chair. HE
takes out a handkerchief and wipes HIS
face, HIS hands. HE reattaches the PCA.

MICHEL/GARCET

A little girl. I'll never forgive you for it. Get yourself
together, Andre. We're going to the hospital. /We're going.

In VERMONT, S.S. returns with a doll.
ANDRE remains on stage.

S.S.

/Celia!

GARCET

What? Yes-

S.S.

Celia.

SHE hands the doll to GARCET who takes
it gingerly.

GARCET

Celia. That's right you named her "Celia." Yes. Yes. Look at
that.

S.S.

I bought this one at an auction.

GARCET

How wonderful! The one you had in Algiers was my wife's when
she was a little girl. Still so sad. Look at this face. I
always used to think that children shouldn't play with a doll
with such a sad face.

S.S.

She doesn't look sad to me.

GARCET

She must be happy with you.

HOLD.

GARCET holds up the doll and begins to
sing "BRAVE MARIN."

ANDRE stands and begins to make scratches on the wall of the cell with the key to HIS shackles. HE mumbles in an incomprehensible language.

GARCET (cont'd)

(singing)

Brave marin revient de guerre, tout doux,
Tout mal chaussé, tout mal vêtu...
<<Pauvre marin, d'où reviens-tu?>> tout doux.

S.S. joins GARCET singing quietly.
ANDRE gets louder. "Sarah ... Sarah."

GARCET/S.S.

(singing)

<<Madame, je reviens de guerre,>> tout doux,
<<Qu'on m'apporte ici le vin blanc,
que le marin boit en passant,>> tout doux.

S.S.

(excited)

I remember that song! /YES!

SHE grabs GARCET by the hands. HE drops the doll and shrieks in pain.

ANDRE

/SARAH!

GARCET tries desperately to push the plunger against HIS chin but is unsuccessful. S.S. takes the plunger from HIM and presses it.

S.S.

I'm sorry.

GARCET waves off HER apology.

S.S. (cont'd)

Why was I in the hospital? (Pause.) Do you know why I was in the hospital? My father won't tell me. He won't tell me anything.

SILENCE.

GARCET

You were very sick.

S.S.

I suppose I must have been.

SHE picks up one of the photographs.

S.S. (cont'd)

You know what this says.

GARCET nods.

S.S. opens one of the cardboard boxes and begins to take binders out of it. The binders are organized by month and year. "DECEMBER, 1988." "FEBRUARY, 1978." "APRIL, 1993." etc. The impression given should be that she has collected these binders over a long period of time. Binder after binder and binder is set before GARCET. SHE opens one of the binders and shows it to GARCET. It is filled with papers that have been marked with symbols that have been scratched in with a piece of charcoal.

S.S. (cont'd)

Lost poetry? I have a roomful. My father has made these for forty years. He won't tell me what they say. I need you to help me. Please, help me. Tell me what it says.

EMILY enters. SHE carries HER bag and SAID's coat and scarf.

EMILY

It's beautiful out there. But, it was getting cold and your father was hungry. Dinner time, right? Six fifteen.

LIGHTS FADE OUT in VERMONT.

ANDRE'S scratching and mumbling becomes louder and more violent.

LIGHTS FADE OUT in ALGIERS.

END OF SCENE.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

SCENE I: A PRISON CELL. ALGIERS, ALGERIA.

LIGHTS UP on a PRISON CELL. The walls of the cell are covered in ANDRE'S alphabet, meticulously scratched in. There are scratch marks covering the floor. The generator has been removed. The room has become lived in, seemingly by two people. There are two old mattresses in the room. There is a makeshift table made from wooden boxes. The remains of two meals sit on the table, bottles of beer, chocolate wrappers. There is a deck of cards. A chess board in mid-play. ANDRE stands on a wooden box, mumbling to HIMSELF and scratching symbols into the wall with a spoon. MICHEL, lounges on one of the mattresses.

MICHEL

You're getting fat, Andre! What have you put on, seven kilograms since you've been here? Seven kilograms in fifteen months. The appetite survives. Hm. Chocolates. What kind of prisoner eats chocolates? What kind of prisoner brings his prisoner whores? What does it matter? There are no rules these days. (Beat.) I tell you, from your books, one would never suspect that you are such a lousy conversationalist. Still, it's something to see you at work. Spinning the tale. Spinning in circles. My own private Shaherazade, Andre Said and his One Thousand and One Arabian Nights.

MICHEL lights a cigarette with and puts the lighted cigarette between ANDRE'S fingers. ANDRE smokes it. MICHEL looks at ANDRE'S non-smoking hand.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Oh, Jesus, look at these.

HE drags ANDRE down from the box and sits HIM down.

MICHEL (cont'd)

It's not bad enough you're scratching the walls, now you're going after you own fingers.

MICHEL gets a bottle of whiskey. HE wets a piece of cloth.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Have you forgotten that you're in a prison? It's filthy. You want an infection? Goddamn shit, Andre.

HE cleans ANDRE's fingers with the cloth. ANDRE smokes silently.

MICHEL (cont'd)

You have to take better care of yourself once you're on the outside. Yes. I didn't tell you? You're leaving today. My superiors tell me that this is not a cage for a pet and I'm not to keep you here as such. Nothing to keep you here for. "You have to resolve the Said issue, Garcet. Better yet, let the F.L.N. have him. Save a bullet." I suppose you're like my pet. All my pets get fat. I suppose I take pleasure in feeding them. My son, Oscar, he's a tyrant, no food from the table, no scraps from the plate. Me? Fat. I have a cat a home who shuns the mice if they don't come with a side of gravy.

ANDRE goes back to the wall.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Come on. Don't be sensitive. I'll miss you too. These are my days now: knock heads about, put bullets where they don't belong, come here. Where will I go? Home, I guess.

HE goes to at a section of the wall.

MICHEL (cont'd)

We're not finished here, Andre. I was so close, wasn't I? This mark right here. I remember it. Coming down and seeing you here, a stream of blood running down your arm and soaking your armpit red. Your fingers raw to the bone, scratching at the wall with a key that had no teeth. For a moment. I was so close. I could see it, couldn't I? I could feel myself chasing the thought in my head, through your head, and I knew I would catch it, and be able to read everything on this wall. I knew I would ... I knew I would understand ... something. (Beat.) But, then gone. It was gone. You were gone. I think I've got a few of them. This one here. This is the date isn't it. So, I think these are numbers. This one, this long one. This has to be the one you say in your sleep. "Kamshiksahsahloh." The "sahsah" gave it away. What does it mean? Please! Tell me and I'll keep you safe! I'll set you free! (SILENCE.) No. And you're leaving and you're taking all that knowledge with you. How long will you keep it until somebody puts a bullet in your head or drags a knife across your throat? Then, gone, gone, gone. The thought of it! Imagine my relief when I realized that you're not the only one who speaks this. I have a close personal friend that's fluent as well.

ANDRE stops scratching. HE turns around and faces MICHEL.

MICHEL (cont'd)

There's a sound at the door. Animals again. Yes. I'm horrified. Shall I open it, or will you tell me what I need to know?

LIGHTS begin to FADE OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE II: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

EMILY and SAID stand before S.S. and GARCET. SAID wears HIS coat and HIS scarf.

SAID

Yes. Dinner time. Six fifteen.

S.S.

Papa.

GARCET

(straightening up)

Andre.

SAID

Six fifteen. Wash hands. Time to eat.

S.S.

Papa, I ...

SAID

(to SARAH)

I see you have made a friend.

S.S.

He's here to teach me.

SAID

Six fifteen. Time to eat.

S.S.

He was at the hospital, he knows about the /hospital.

SAID

/If I don't eat, I will die. Is that what you want?

S.S.

You're not going to-

SAID

You want to kill me? You want me to die? You're killing me.
Six fifteen.

S.S.

Enough! Enough! No one's killing you.

SAID

Six fifteen. For the last forty years, dinner is six fifteen.

S.S.

Yes, yes. Even when we were eating peas for dinner, six fifteen. When we were in the dirt, six fifteen. Forty years I've been staring across a table at you at six fifteen. Everyday. Hospital, refugee camp, slum, mansion, hospital six fifteen Sarah is here. Sarah est la. The food keeps getting better but the conversation's stale. Forty years, you've said nothing to me. Do you realize that?

SAID

What's to say?

S.S.

Papa, I don't remember anything! You hold my memories in your hand like ... prisoners, you lock them away like prisoners-

SAID

You are the one making friend with prisoners! I say what you need to know. Six fifteen is past. We have special guests. Ms. Allen is a vegetarian.

EMILY

Not really-

S.S.

Starve!

SAID

I AM!

GARCET

Dinner. I am feeling hungry myself.

S.S.

You're hungry?

GARCET

Doesn't happen often anymore. Seize the moment, yes?

S.S.

Of course. Of course. Anything you like.

GARCET

A surprise. Sweet, though. Yes?

S.S.

Yes. Yes. I have just the thing. I have a fig pudding.

SHE gets up and begins to exit.

S.S. (cont'd)

(to SAID)

Stay there if you want to eat. It's killing you right, I'm starving you.

SHE exits.

GARCET

Ms. Allen.

EMILY

Hm?

GARCET

What is it? You look like you've seen a ghost?

EMILY

Who are you?

GARCET

What do you mean?

EMILY

What did you do in that prison? Who are you?!

SILENCE.

SAID

(eyes on GARCET)

Tell her.

GARCET

Retired General Michel Garcet.

EMILY

Chief Intelligence Officer for the French in Algiers. 1954-1962.

SAID

He wasn't a General when I knew him.

EMILY

(to GARCET)

We're leaving! Let's go!

GARCET

Andre-

EMILY

You should have told me! Let's go!

SAID

You should go, Ilya. Go home.

SHE puts HER bag down.

EMILY

I'm not leaving!

SAID

(eyes on EMILY)

Then at least help me with the taste in my mouth. Bitter, coppery, dry. I need something sweet. Blood sugar.

EMILY

Maybe there's something in the kitchen.

SAID

NO! She keeps the sugar like a Nazi. I have sugar cubes.

SAID hands EMILY a ring of keys.

SAID (cont'd)

Like the kind you give horses. Cubes and a few Sour Patch Kids. Get them for me, will you? In my green Chevrolet, at the of the drive, in the glove box. Take my coat. Hide the children in the pockets.

EMILY

But, he's a-

SAID

Please, let me say my peace to him. (Beat.) Please.

EMILY

I'll be right back.

SAID

Mm, you have a good dog after all.

HE touches HER face. SHE exits. Carefully, GARCET takes a hard candy out of HIS pocket. HE puts it on the table.

GARCET

Here.

SAID turns and faces GARCET.

GARCET (cont'd)

Sugar is all I can digest these days.

SAID sits and unwraps the candy. HE
pops it in his mouth.

GARCET (cont'd)

What?

SAID

I'm looking at you.

GARCET

Anything interesting?

SAID

I'm wondering which of us will go first.

GARCET

It's a good question.

SAID

How are your teeth?

GARCET

Not bad. Yours?

SAID

All original. I smile like a centerfold.

HE smiles like a centerfold and
crunches the candy in his teeth.

GARCET

Good. Ticker. How are things?

SAID

Can't complain. Swim everyday.

GARCET

Nice.

SAID

So, you've got the cancer, hey?

GARCET

Correct, Sir.

SAID

Where?

GARCET

Started in the lungs, now it's everywhere.

SAID

Hm. Sounds like you'll be checking out first.

GARCET

I wouldn't be so sure.

SAID

Cancer vs. Heart Disease. Come on, Man.

GARCET

Heart attack comes like that, yes?

HE claps HIS hands gently.

GARCET (cont'd)

You don't know how much time you're living on.

SAID

Maybe. How many days are you numbered?

GARCET

Enough.

SAID

Right.

SILENCE.

SAID (cont'd)

What pills do you take?

GARCET

Can't keep track. Here. Look, little soldiers.

HE takes out a SUNDAY-SATURDAY pill box and shakes it. ANDRE takes it from HIM and opens the compartments.

SAID

(proud)

I don't take any of these. I take these blue ones. Right. Maybe those little white ones. Maybe. Maybe. You take a lot of pills.

GARCET

I have cancer.

SAID

Ninety seven percent of my arteries are hard!

GARCET

I'm sorry.

SAID

No need.

HE hands the pill box back to GARCET.

SAID (cont'd)

Are you still writing soporific articles about me? I came across one once. It was really quite stupid. You wrote with the soul of a travel agent.

GARCET

Yes. I write.

SAID

Anybody read them?

GARCET

Not really. There is one dedicated reader who corresponds by mail with me once a month.

SAID

Lonely, poor, mindless soul.

GARCET

Arrogant, shallow, sliver of a man. But, he knows his Said. Sometimes I think he's the only one who understands. Recently the envelopes come from Vermont.

SAID

Lonely, poor, mindless soul. What are you doing here?

GARCET holds up a photograph. SAID takes them.

SAID (cont'd)

The walls.

GARCET

As always.

SAID

What do you think this says?

GARCET

That you're a terrorist.

SAID snorts.

SAID

Nyleh saph so nahm.

GARCET

Lolo *saph so nahm.* (Beat.) I'm sorry, I have the vocabulary of an eight year old girl.

SAID thrusts the photographs at GARCET.

SAID

Read it. Read.

GARCET

I can't.

SAID

Then why am I even talking to you?

GARCET

Because we are dying, Andre. We are dying and whoever lives longer gets to re-write history. I go first and you can make me a monster. *Oppresseur des papillons*. You go first-

SAID

Sarah has forgotten. You want her to remember? I tell you she will remember monstrosity then!

GARCET picks up the photographs.

GARCET

She won't remember, if you tell me what I need to know. I can't translate this, Andre. You are right. All I have is a handful of letters, the taste of a few words. In the face of forty years, they are but a cork in the ocean, an ocean I am just about finished treading.

HE holds the photographs out to SAID.

GARCET (cont'd)

You've won. Brilliant man. I kneel to your riddle. I succumb to your torture. I need to know what's on these walls. I need to know, so I know what to say when I am judged by God. I can give you what you want. I can give you oblivion. You translate and we throw it in the fire. I won't say a word. You won't say a word. The world can forget us once we're gone.

SAID

Here we are, living steady, tidy lives. Past is past. Done is done. Again, you come with your madness. Unravel me enough, I assure you, you will know mine. I make this translation, my daughter never remembers Algiers. She never remembers what we've done. She never remembers this tongue. Clear?

GARCET

Clear. But it has to be a real translation. A good translations. To set my soul at rest.

SAID

Very well. Let's get on with it. Come my study is this way.

The two men begin to move off.

GARCET

It's good to see you again, Andre.

SAID

"Good." Is not the correct word.

GARCET

Well, I'm not the wordsmith.

SAID

Yah. It's clear that you're not.

SAID walks off.

GARCET follows. SILENCE on the empty stage.

S.S. enters with a tray and two dishes.

S.S.

Okay. Here we are, a nice diabetic meal and a fig pudding-

SHE stops, realizing that there is no one in the room. SHE sets the tray down. SHE looks around for the two men and realizes they have left together. SHE sits on the sofa. SHE looks through all HER papers, searching for some meaning. SHE finds none.

SHE buries HER face in HER hands.

SHE sees the candy wrapper.

SHE notices EMILY's bag on the ground. SHE goes to it and opens it, looking for candy. SHE takes out the book ANDRE inscribed for EMILY. SHE opens it. What is this?

A sound. SHE hides the book.

EMILY enters with SAID's coat.

EMILY

Oh, there you are.

S.S.

(composed)

There I am.

EMILY

Where are they?

S.S.

They've gone off.

EMILY

Together?

S.S.

The study, I imagine. You can go off too. Second door on the right.

EMILY

I ... haven't eaten at all today.

EMILY sits at the table. SHE takes a roll and pinches off a piece and eats it.

EMILY (cont'd)

It's good bread.

S.S.

The baker delivers it.

EMILY

I like it.

S.S.

My father can't have any, but, we can still- ... it is good bread. Get anything for your article?

EMILY

Some. Still hard to imagine that I'm here. My father never wanted me to study poetry. "What's the use?" he said. But look. (Beat.) You're father's ...not exactly what I expected. He's ... well, you know, you've worked with him pretty closely.

S.S.

I suppose.

EMILY

I mean, the work you've done. It's really, really important.

S.S.

Glorified stenography.

EMILY

No. The work changed when you started becoming involved. It got better.

S.S.

Nonsense.

EMILY

The early work, you know, Colons, colons!, La troisième force, the stuff Garcet likes, is brilliant, but, for my money, the last twenty years, that's what won the Nobel Prize. The Love Songs! The Love Songs ... they're like an overtone in a concert hall! They're like an angel that lingers after the sound and the noise and the clash has shrieked in harmony! (Beat.) My mother loved The Love Songs. She said, "Someday you will grow up and understand them."

S.S.

And did you?

EMILY

I think so.

S.S.

Good.

EMILY

Your fingerprints are all over them. Since you started editing, first person plural. Early Said never wrote anything besides, "I am, I am, I am." Some people say you inspired, The Love Songs. I believe it.

S.S.

I like The Love Songs too.

EMILY

Was he a terrorist?

S.S.

How dare you-?

EMILY

Was he?

S.S.

I don't even know what that word means. What do you want me to say? "Men would come by the house that terrified me?" They are still coming today. Are you a terrorist?

EMILY

What if he was?

S.S.

And what if he was?

EMILY

Could his work still be beautiful then?

S.S.

(disdainfully)

Beautiful.

EMILY

If it doesn't come from beauty? (Beat.) What if he's not good?

S.S.

Beauty and good are two different things! God, these questions-

EMILY

Need answers!

S.S.

Who needs answers?! You?!

EMILY

Yes!

S.S.

What do you think you're doing here!

EMILY

Saving a legacy!

S.S.

Whose?!

EMILY

Yours!

S.S.

My ... what could you possibly do?!

EMILY

I could-

S.S.

What could you possibly do?! Huh. Where are you from? Not from America, your accent's far too clean. Someone, taught you how to speak. Where? (Beat.) You are not the first to come to us, we've had a thousand girls from broken lands, razors in your heart, hands out-stretched. But, you're the only one to ever tell me that you know me, that you could save me! Save me! Save how? Parading into my home and showing us scratches, old wounds, gouges in walls? Stealing! Trying to take what isn't yours!

EMILY

I can-

S.S.

No you can't. You want to know us? Huh. Wait here.

SHE exits. EMILY sits. Looks at one of the binders.

S.S. returns with a cardboard box, a handkerchief and a hammer. Something is moving inside the box.

S.S. (cont'd)

I heard shooting in the forest. Said hunting ravens. Yes?

EMILY nods.

S.S. (cont'd)

Yes. He likes to shoot the nests. Bigger target. Shoot them down. Soon there won't be any left. You want to know something about us? Here's something to know. I hear gunshots, I search the forest for crippled birds. I try to mend them, but birds are fragile things. I found this chick yesterday. It's beak is mangled shut. Only one thing to be done.

SHE puts the handkerchief in the box and wraps up the chick.

SHE takes a wooden cutting board out of the box. SHE lays the chick on the board.

S.S. (cont'd)

You think you have the strength to save me? Save this chick.

SHE holds the hammer out to EMILY.

S.S. (cont'd)

Save this chick and maybe you can walk through the doors you unlock.

EMILY

Ms. Said, this is ... ridiculous.

S.S.

Ridiculous. Hah. Where in the world are you from?! How did you get here? You are not so naive to think that survivors have no blood on their hands. Show me your teeth! You want to know us? We kill birds. Save this chick before you save me.

S.S. grabs EMILY's hand and pulls HER over to the table. SHE puts the hammer in EMILY's hand.

Pause.

EMILY sets it down. S.S. takes the hammer and matter-of-factly smashes the chick.

S.S. (cont'd)

What do you know? Just a beggar with a gilded bowl.

SHE begins to clean up.

EMILY

I know tahlemsah bibi lah.

S.S.

What?

EMILY

And I know because your father taught me. He taught me because ... because I see him! I see him! Out in the world, they're trying to crucify him and I'm the one who's going to protect him.

S.S.

What are you talking about?

EMILY

In the past six months, seven surviving F.L.N. members have identified your father as a participant in a mob that killed a French soldier and dragged him through the streets.

S.S.

Where did you hear /this-

EMILY

/It's everywhere! And while you're having tea with his torturer, I'm going to save him.

S.S.

Stop this.

S.S. takes the coat out of EMILY's hands and takes the sugar out of the pocket.

S.S. (cont'd)

Go, talk to my father of this.

EMILY

Did you even read any of my letters?

S.S.

What?

EMILY

They were all addressed to you. God, for the longest time, I thought you were the counter-article. You were the child who escaped, untouched, who made his work kind and whole. My whole dissertation was about you! But, now, now I know. He doesn't need you. Crippled birds. He needs me.

Leave.
S.S.

EMILY picks up HER purse.

S.S. (cont'd)
Leave! I don't want you here! Go!

EMILY
He's teaching me the language. Me. Not you. I'm the one he needs. From now on, you come through me.

SHE picks up the candy and exits.

Suddenly MICHEL enters and blindfolds S.S. drops the chick.

Seamless transition into:

SCENE III: A PRISON CELL. ALGIERS, ALGERIA.

MICHEL leads SARAH, blindfolded around the cell. SARAH is touching the walls of the cell. SHE holds Celia in HER hand, and the doll touches the wall at the same time. ANDRE stands in the corner watching them.

MICHEL
That's right, My Dear. I want Celia to feel the walls. I want her to feel every letter. Does she feel it?

SARAH
Yes.

MICHEL
Good. That's good. Is it the old tongue? The old tongue you taught me? Does Celia know what it says?

SARAH shakes HER head and THEY resume walking.

MICHEL (cont'd)
Not even a letter?

SARAH shakes HER head.

MICHEL (cont'd)
That's okay. I can't read it either. Sarah, what do you ask me every morning before I bring you downstairs, and we have breakfast with Oscar and Madame Garcet?

SARAH

"Where's Papa?"

MICHEL

And what do I tell you?

SARAH

Papa is sick. The bad man in the bad room has hurt him."

MICHEL

That's right. The bad man in the bad room has hurt him. Where is the bad man? Is he here?

SARAH

I can smell him. I can hear him. Breathing!

SARAH throws HERSELF into MICHEL's arms. SHE cries.

MICHEL

(looking at ANDRE)

No, no. He cannot hurt you. Michel is here, like brave soldiers we must be, Sarah. Shh. Shh. Shh. Sarah, what would you say if I told you that you would be seeing Papa today?

SARAH

Papa?

MICHEL

I have airplane tickets for you and Papa to fly far away.

MICHEL produces an envelope from HIS coat and tosses it at ANDRE's feet.

SARAH

On an airplane?

MICHEL

I bought the tickets myself. Airplane tickets and fifty thousand francs that you can use to fly far away where none of the bad men will ever be able to find you. Start a new life.

SARAH

Mama too? Emil too?

MICHEL

You know the bad men found them already, My Dear. My Dear. The bad men have found Papa.

SARAH

Papa?

MICHEL

They've locked him away. There's a magic code to get him out. Do you know about magic codes?

SARAH

No.

MICHEL

Ali baba used one to open a door, yes?

SARAH

"Open sesame."

MICHEL

That's right. This bad man has scratched the magic code in the walls, and if I he doesn't tell me, and you can't tell me what it is, I can't let Papa out. Papa might starve. How does that make you feel?

SARAH

I don't know.

MICHEL

Does it make you feel scared?

SARAH

I don't know.

MICHEL

Angry?

SARAH

Papa is starving?

MICHEL

Do you think you might want to hurt this bad man?

SARAH

I don't know.

MICHEL

If you hurt him, do you think he might tell you the code?

SARAH

Why?

MICHEL

So that you'll stop. They've locked Papa away.

SARAH

Is Mama and my brother with him?

MICHEL

The bad men have already found them, My Dear. My Dear. You know this.

SARAH

I hate them!

MICHEL

Who?

SARAH

The bad men! They're hurting my Papa! They're bad to my Papa!

MICHEL

Right, right, of course. Do you know how they taught me to hurt bad people? It took a long time.

SARAH

How long?

MICHEL

Weeks. Months.

SARAH

Why did you hurt people?

MICHEL

To stop them from hurting other people. Good people.

SARAH

Who are good people?

MICHEL

People like Papa, Sarah. Papa is a good person. Do you know what I had to do? To get used to it, I had to hold the hand of the bad people while the other soldiers hurt them. Does that sound scary?

SARAH

No.

MICHEL

I was scared. I was very scared.

SARAH

I'm brave.

MICHEL

You are. Yes, you are. Okay so I want you to hold this bad man's hand. Is that alright? It will help you get used to it.

SARAH

I'm brave.

MICHEL puts SARAH's hand in ANDRE's.
ANDRE starts to cry.

SARAH (cont'd)

He's crying.

MICHEL

Yes. He is. Okay we're going to have to stand him up.

MICHEL picks ANDRE up by the shirt.

MICHEL (cont'd)

Okay. Are you ready?

SARAH

Yes.

MICHEL punches ANDRE in the stomach.
ANDRE collapses, pulling SARAH down
slightly as well.

MICHEL

What does it say on the wall? Ask him.

Beat.

SARAH

What does it say on the wall?

SILENCE.

MICHEL lifts ANDRE up again.

MICHEL

Was that scary?

SILENCE.

SARAH

(meekly)

No.

MICHEL

Ask. Ask again?

SARAH

(softly)

What does it say on the wall?

MICHEL

Louder.

SARAH
 (louder)
 What does it say on the wall?

MICHEL punches ANDRE in the stomach.
 ANDRE collapses, pulling SARAH down
 with HIM.

MICHEL
 Slap him. His face is right here.

HE puts SARAH's hand on ANDRE's face.

MICHEL (cont'd)
 Slap him.

SARAH slaps HIM.

MICHEL (cont'd)
 Ask.

SARAH
 (to ANDRE)
 Why are you hurting my Papa?

MICHEL
 What?

SARAH
 Why are you hurting my Papa? Why are you hurting my Papa?

MICHEL
 No! Ask him what's on the wall?

SARAH
 What does it say on the wall?

SARAH slaps HIM. SILENCE. SHE releases
 ANDRE's hand and grabs HIS hair.

SARAH (cont'd)
 What does it say on the wall?

SHE slaps HIM. SHE slaps HIM again.

SARAH (cont'd)
 Tell me! What does it say on the walls?!

SARAH pulls the blindfold off.

HOLD. The men hold their breath, hand
 in hand.

MICHEL
Sarah? (Beat.) Sarah, what is it?

SARAH
My hand hurts.

MICHEL
That's okay. That's okay. (Beat.) What do you see?

SARAH
See? I see. I don't know. A bird. He looks like a bird.

MICHEL
A bird?

SARAH
His hands.

MICHEL
You see a bird here.

SARAH
No. I don't see anything. I don't see anything. It's just a bad man. (Beat.) My hand hurts.

MICHEL
That's alright. Michel says, "Stop." Okay? Michel says, "Stop."

MICHEL releases ANDRE's hand and goes to SARAH.

MICHEL (cont'd)
Come, come. Let's go home.

SARAH
My hand hurts.

MICHEL
I know. Michel says, "Stop." It's okay.

SARAH
No. I need something harder to hit him with.

SARAH picks up Celia.

SARAH (cont'd)
Celia's face is hard.

MICHEL
Sarah.

SARAH
Very hard. Madame Garcet will be angry with me?

Pause.

MICHEL

No. (Beat.) Sarah, Michel says, "Stop."

SARAH approaches ANDRE, doll in hand.

SARAH

Michel.

MICHEL

Sarah.

SARAH

Ask him.

MICHEL

Ask him what?

SARAH

"What does it say on the walls?"

END OF SCENE.

SCENE IV. THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

The study. SAID sits at his desk, working hard at the photographs.

GARCET stands before SAID's radio. HE plays "Night in Tunisia" very loudly.

GARCET

Doesn't remind me of Tunisia at all. Ah! You see, I like the beginning. But, this part, eh, this part just sounds completely American.

SAID

Jazz is American. You don't have tumors in your ears. Turn it down.

GARCET turns the music off.

GARCET

Nice radio.

SAID

Mm.

GARCET begins to wander around the study a bit. HE looks at SAID's bookcases.

GARCET

Chick-chick-chickadee. A chick in a shell.

SAID

What are you doing?

GARCET

I'm looking at your books. I'm seeing what you're reading, who you are these days.

SAID

I don't read. Output only. We're dying, remember?

GARCET

Ah, yes. For a moment. I forgot.

HE begins to play with a chessboard.
HE re-arranges the pieces.

GARCET (cont'd)

How's it going? Any problems?

Something in the photograph frustrates
SAID.

GARCET (cont'd)

Problem.

SAID

I'm sorting it through. Forty years, for God sake ... what are you doing?

GARCET

(gesturing to the chess set)

Napoleon and the Mamalukes, days before he wipes them out at Embaba. At the foot of the pyramids, at the gates of Cairo. They can battle for books. Fiction vs. Non-Fiction.

SAID

Do you remember how you found it?

GARCET

Yes.

SAID

Then put it back.

GARCET

Alright.

GARCET puts the pieces back in place.

GARCET (cont'd)

I remember, you were a good chess player. I was always in check before I even knew I was in trouble.

SAID

You favored pieces. You'd make stupid moves to keep the Knights on the table as long as possible.

GARCET

(picking up a horse piece)

Ha-ha! Clever.

HE looks around the room and watches SAID at work, admiringly.

GARCET (cont'd)

Tell me Andre, what is it like to write? I mean, is it a surge that issues from you. Are you moved by inspiration? These are the things I think about now when I think about your writing. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were such a thing as inspiration, if you were a mouthpiece of God, and you could feel his embrasure, his lips behind your every pore.

SAID

I don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

GARCET

That's the different between us. You are a poet with the soul of a soldier and I am a soldier with the soul of a poet.

SAID unbuttons HIS shirt and shows HIS scars to GARCET.

SAID

You tell me which one is more dangerous.

GARCET

A pimp, Andre. Why was it so important to protect Taleb? Low level grunt. He knew nothing. Didn't even know what he was transporting. We got nothing from him.

SAID

Nothing precludes a pimp from patriotism. You shot him, yes?

SILENCE.

SAID (cont'd)

Oh, don't tell me you were moved by pity. Maybe you were /touched-

GARCET

/I shattered both his cheekbones and threw him off the roof of a building.

SAID

Okay, let's get down to it. What do you want this to say? "I, Andre Said, healed the wounds of F.L.N. terrorists;" "I, Andre Said, taught bomb-making techniques to F.L.N. terrorists;" "I, Andre Said, shot pied noir police officers in the street!" Tell me which you like. Which makes it reasonable to shatter cheekbones and throw men off the roofs of buildings?

Beat.

GARCET

None of it. Not anymore. Do you think we can make something beautiful?

SAID

Beautiful? This can never be beautiful.

GARCET

Some would say it already is.

SAID

Those people have never seen a war.

GARCET

Couldn't we make a completely different story. A beautiful story that can be read to children in the dark.

SAID

Who would read it?

GARCET

We can make it for Sarah. Sarah could.

SAID picks up one of the photographs.
HE tears it up.

SAID

Then we must destroy them all. There is a box in the living room. Full of binders. Writings, just like this.

HE looks down at the photograph.

GARCET

I saw them. I'll get them.

SAID

Yes. And it is time for my daily prayer.

ANDRE looks out the window.

GARCET

Beautiful, Andre. Truly?

Beautiful. SAID

EMILY enters.

Beautiful? EMILY

GARCET
You see? All is well, Ms. Allen. I told you he would see me. He would know his old friend.

EMILY
Old friend. (to SAID) Are you alright?

SAID
Yes. Yes. We are ... we are ... much to discuss.

GARCET
If you'll excuse me ...

EMILY
Are you going somewhere?

SAID
Time for my prayers.

GARCET
Yes. You pray, Andre.

GARCET exits.

EMILY
Should I go?

SAID
Too late for that.

EMILY goes and sits next to HIM.

EMILY
What were you talking about?

SAID
Old times.

EMILY
Yeah. Tell me.

SAID
Long ago.

Beat.

EMILY

Mm. What are you looking at?

SAID

Flies, My Dear. Flies in the windowpane.

EMILY picks up the torn photograph.

EMILY

Why'd you tear it?

SAID

Because ...

EMILY begins to piece it back together.
Gives up.

EMILY

It's okay. I have another copy.

HE takes EMILY's scarf off and wraps it
over HER hair.

SAID

Say something for me, would you?

EMILY

What?

SAID

Say, "Andre, Andre ..."

EMILY

"Andre, Andre ..."

SAID

"Pauvre de toi, pauvre chose."

EMILY

"Pauvre de toi, pauvre chose."

SAID

"Tu ne peux jamais mentir."

EMILY

"Tu ne peux jemais mentir."

SAID

"De tes sentiments ta peau est la délatrice."

EMILY

"De tes sentiments ta peau est la délatrice."

SAID

"C'est pourquoi je t'aime."

HE pulls HER close and lays HIS head on HER shoulder.

End of Scene.

SCENE V: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

S.S. works on translating one of GARCET's photographs, EMILY's book, HER guide. GARCET enters.

GARCET

Hello, Sarah.

S.S.

Oh! Hello. Where's Papa?

GARCET

He's praying.

S.S. looks at HER watch. SHE nods.

GARCET (cont'd)

Bathroom break for me. He's praying and ... I left here one of my papers. There it is.

HE takes it out of S.S.'s hands.

S.S.

Has he eaten?

GARCET

Oh, he has a pantry in the office to make Julia Child jealous-I shouldn't have told you that.

S.S.

He's a grown man, he can eat what he wants. Let him eat what he wants.

GARCET

Yes, but, none of it looked as good as that fig pudding, so I am back for that.

S.S.

I'm glad you're hungry.

GARCET

Well, it happens from time to time. I'll think that I'm hungry, but when I sit down, I can't swallow a thing. But, it's good just to want things sometimes. I want fig pudding!

S.S.

Sit.

GARCET moves slowly over to the table and sits down. S.S. puts a bowl in front of GARCET and begins to spoon pudding into it.

S.S. (cont'd)

Mm-hm. Yes. You and my father have been very busy. Thick as thieves.

GARCET

Yes, I'm sorry we left you, but there was much to be done.

S.S.

Work?

GARCET (cont'd)

A ... translation.

S.S.

You're working on it together.

There is a lot of pudding in the bowl now.

GARCET

Two heads. (regarding the pudding) I think that's more than I could ever finish.

S.S.

Alright. Would you like some help? Your hands.

GARCET

That's kind. If you don't mind.

S.S.

Of course. Of course, not.

SHE starts to feed HIM. First, a very small taste.

GARCET

Mmm. Good.

S.S.

More?

GARCET

A little. Just enough to coat the tongue.

S.S.

Make it sweet.

SHE feeds HIM some more.

GARCET

Mmm. Tell me something about you. Tell me about all your life since you were a girl.

S.S.

What's to tell?

GARCET

Who was the great love of your life?

S.S.

My father, of course.

GARCET

No. No. I mean ... a girl like you must have had many loves.

S.S.

No. Just one. Open up.

SHE feeds HIM more now. Mouthfuls that are too big. HE finally signals HER to stop. SHE stops. HE swallows the pudding down painfully. HE gags. HE coughs. Some pudding sputters out.

S.S. (cont'd)

Are you alright?

HE waves HER off.

S.S. (cont'd)

Sorry.

GARCET

No. No.

S.S.

More?

GARCET

No. No. Would you mind? I need a little ...

HE gestures to the PCA.

S.S.

Oh. Of course.

S.S. takes the plunger in HER hand. SHE is about to press it, but stops.

S.S. (cont'd)

tahlehmsah bibi la.

GARCET

What?

S.S.

tahlemsah bibi la. What does it mean?

GARCET

I don't know-- please, press the button for me. I'm very uncomfortable.

S.S.

You don't know? You're the Rosetta Stone. You're supposed to know. tahlemsah bibi la. What does it mean? I certainly don't know.

GARCET

Please-

S.S.

How can you and my father translate if you don't know what it means? Ask him to help.

GARCET

Please, my hands.

S.S.

He's translating for you. People coming to him from the street. You can walk back into his study and say, "Andre Said, what does 'tahlehmsah bibi la' mean. I've forgotten."

S.S. takes one of the binders and empties it into GARCET's lap.

S.S. (cont'd)

While you're at it, have him translate it all.

GARCET

Sarah. Stop this. Stop this at once.

SHE picks up some of the papers.

S.S.

"This is not for you, Habibi. Not for you."

GARCET reaches out for the plunger, S.S. swats his hand away. HE yelps in pain.

S.S. (cont'd)

What's for me then? Only fences. Walls. Walls with scratches on them. Over the years, pages and pages. Book upon book. Enough to fill a house. Enough to fill a stomach. But, still empty, still starving. A Nobel Prize, a fortune later, I still don't know what any of it says. You are supposed to provide the answers. You know how to get answers, don't you?

GARCET

Sarah, don't do this.

S.S.

Maybe this will help you.

S.S. takes the papers and begins to nail them to the wall with a hammer and nails SHE gets from one of the boxes.

S.S. (cont'd)

Maybe it's all a matter of perspective. There. Is that right? Does that make it all clear?

HE reaches for the plunger. SHE slaps HIS hand away. HE yelps again.

S.S. (cont'd)

Why was I in the hospital?

GARCET

Please-

SHE grabs HIS hand.

S.S.

Why was I in the hospital?

SHE tightens HER grip.

S.S. (cont'd)

What happened to my mother? Where is my mother? I want my mother!

HE pulls HER hands to HIS chest. Tightly, painfully.

GARCET

(into HER hands)

Stop. Stop. Michel says, "Stop."

S.S.

Michel says, "Stop."

GARCET

When you torture someone, you must prove to them that there is no turning back. You must prove to them that you are willing to do something horrible. Something irreversible. Irreversible to yourself. Do you want to do that? No you can't. No you can't. My dear sweet Sarah. No you can't.

HE touches HER cheek.

SILENCE.

S.S. pulls the plunger out of GARCET's arm. GARCET gasps.

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE VI: A PRISON CELL IN ALGIERS

ANDRE kneels, battered. SARAH stands before HIM, a blood-stained Celia in HER hands. SHE is tired. MICHEL sits in a corner, exhausted, aghast.

SARAH

(breathless)

Ask him again.

MICHEL

You're tired.

SARAH

No.

HE goes to HER.

MICHEL

You are, My Dear. Come on, you cannot hurt him anymore. You are just a little girl. Come.

SARAH

No.

MICHEL

You're too tired. You cannot hurt him.

SARAH

No! I hurt him. He'll tell me. (To ANDRE) What does it say on the wall?

SILENCE.

See? MICHEL

MICHEL begins to lead HER away. SARAH struggles with HIM.

Let's /go home- MICHEL (cont'd)

/WHAT DOES IT SAY ON THE WALL? SARAH

He can't- MICHEL

SARAH grabs the gun from MICHEL's holster and points it at ANDRE.

What happened to Mama?! SARAH

Sarah. MICHEL

Where's Emil?! SARAH

Sarah, that is not a toy. MICHEL

There are no toys! What does it say on the walls?! SARAH

Stop it, please! MICHEL

(hysterical)
WHERE'S MY PAPA?! SARAH

Tell her, Andre! MICHEL

Where's my Papa?! SARAH

STOP IT! Please, stop it! Michel says, "Stop!" Stop! MICHEL

I want my Papa! Give back my Papa! Give back my Papa! SARAH

SARAH pulls the trigger. ANDRE gasps. There is no bullet.

SHE pulls the trigger over and over and over again. The gun is completely empty. ANDRE moves over to SARAH and holds HER. SHE fights HIM and wails.

ANDRE

Sarah.

Exhausted, SARAH clings to ANDRE, sobs in HIS chest.

SARAH

Don't hurt my Papa. Please, don't hurt him anymore.

ANDRE

Alright. Since you are so brave, I will stop.

SARAH

Stop.

HE rocks HER in HIS arms.

ANDRE

(Eyes on GARCET)

Since you are so brave. Shhh. Shhh.

(Whispering in HER ear.)

Eh leh. Eh leh, Sarah. Eh leh, cici Papa.

SARAH

Papa?

ANDRE

Eh leh.

SARAH

Papa, where did they hide you?

ANDRE

Nehp saph cici ahndoh.

SARAH looks up. SHE examines HIS face.

SARAH

I hurt you.

ANDRE

No.

SARAH

I did.

ANDRE

Forget it. Forget it all. Forget. Will you do that for me? Clean your mind of all of it. You are clean.

HE covers HER ears and kisses HER forehead. HE leads HER over to the envelope on the ground.

ANDRE (cont'd)
 (eyes on GARCET)
 Pick that up for me, Habibi.

SARAH reaches down and picks up the envelope. ANDRE leads HER towards the door.

MICHEL
 Fifteen months, Andre. I'm ... I'm ... why did I do this? Outside these walls, outside, you ask and they'll tell you. "Garcet is a good man! The rest of them animals, not Garcet. He doesn't bite just to taste the blood, he doesn't like the taste!" Why would I do this? Tell me I stopped you. Tell me it was never Taleb. Tell me it was you. Tell me you would have killed thousands if I hadn't stopped you! TELL ME WHAT'S ON THESE WALLS!!! (pleading) tell me what's on these walls

ANDRE
 I am a terrorist!

MICHEL
 A terrorist.

ANDRE
 I am a murderer.

MICHEL
 A murderer.

ANDRE
 The worst kind.

MICHEL
 The worst kind.

MICHEL drops the gun. HE sits down in the middle of the room. HE looks at HIS hands. HE lets out a weak cry on anguish and crumples to the ground.

END OF SCENE.

Seamless transition into:

SCENE VII: THE SAID RESIDENCE. BENNINGTON, VT.

LIGHTS UP on the living room.

GARCET remains crumpled on the ground.
HE lets out another weak cry.

S.S. is examining the writing on the
papers carefully. SHE writes on a legal
pad.

S.S.
What does it say on the walls? (reading from the pad) Di ...
ahm ... loh ... sah diahn ... dim ... diahn ... lah. What is
this?

SAID and EMILY enter.

EMILY
Oh my God!

SHE makes to go over to GARCET but S.S.
stands in HER way. Brandishes the
hammer.

S.S.
(to EMILY)
Don't you dare! (to GARCET) Di ahmlah sah ... diahm ... no
... diahn dim diahn lah. Is it a will and testament? A
confession?

SAID
(weakly)
"Today the weather was cold."

SAID clutches HIS arm in pain.

S.S.
Papa!

EMILY
Mr. Said!

S.S.
Long breaths. Long breaths. Yes. Yes.

EMILY
(to S.S.)
Please, stop.

SAID
"Di ahmlah sah. Diahn dim diahn lah. Today the weather was
cold. Cold as cold can be." What are you doing?

S.S.
He's translating for me.

SHE grabs one of GARCET's hands,
roughly and drags HIM to the table.
SHE holds it down on the table.

S.S. (cont'd)

He's going to translate for me, or I'm going to break his hands.

SAID

NO!

EMILY

I'm going to call the police!

S.S.

Fitting end for a book. Tell them that you brought him here. I would turn that page. (to GARCET) Tahlehmsah. Bibi lah. Hm? You tell me what I need to know!

SAID

"Hello. Good-bye. Hello-good-bye," Sarah! Stop!

HOLD. SHE looks at HER pad.

S.S.

"Tun tun." "Tun tun."

SHE puts the hammer to GARCET's head.

EMILY

Mr. Said!

SAID

"Tun tun" is "shoes."

S.S.

"Kish."

SAID

"Spoon." Stop this! Stop this! Forget all this!

S.S.

Forget. No! No, I won't. Forget. How can I forget when they're killing me?! These words. They're killing me and I don't even know what they mean.

SAID

This is madness!

S.S.

No! No. This is reason. Everyday, your heart comes closer to stopping I come closer to disappearing. Every bit of who I am is buried, deep, inside of you.

SHE picks up some of the papers.

S.S. (cont'd)

Is this all that's left of it? Well, I can't read it. It's diseased. This is my survival. I could not be more reasonable.

SHE returns to GARCET. SHE looks down at HER pad.

S.S. (cont'd)

"naimen."

SAID

No good can come from this.

S.S.

"naimen!" "naimen!"

SAID

"February."

S.S.

"toh."

SAID

"Four."

S.S.

"lech."

SAID

"Blood."

S.S.

"threhm."

SAID

"Six."

S.S.

"bech."

SAID

"Fist."

Beat.

S.S.

"Eh-meel."

Pause.

"Ghost."
SAID

"Leila."
S.S.

"Mother."
SAID

Pause.

"sahp." "sahp!"
S.S.

"sahp" is a possessive.
SAID

"kamshiksahsahloh!"
S.S.

SILENCE.

S.S. smashes the wall.

NO!
EMILY

"kamshiksahsahloh!"
S.S.

"kamshiksahsahloh" is rape.
SAID

Rape. (Beat.) What is the word for "Sarah?"
S.S.

There is no "Sarah."
SAID

What does it say about me, Papa?
S.S.

Nothing!
SAID

All these years. You are never here with me and I don't remember. I don't remember! Couldn't they say something about me? What does it say on these walls?
S.S.

Stories. They are stories. A little girl who lived on a vast plain and she could see the locusts come from miles around. Every story I ever learned as a boy. "
SAID

(MORE)

SAID (cont'd)

What I had to eat today. My throat is sore today." They are me, my thoughts. They are nothing. They are fables!

S.S.

Fables that say "rape" twenty times.

SAID

Fables that say "rape" twenty times!

S.S.

(to GARCET)

I don't believe you.

SAID

Please.

S.S.

A girl who lived on a vast plain, and she could see the locusts coming from miles around.

SHE puts a nail to GARCET's head.

S.S. (cont'd)

What does it say on the walls?

SAID

Why are you doing this?

S.S.

To find you. Forty years. I've lost you somewhere. I am in a small room, with bad men and I think that I can hear you, maybe, on the other side of the wall. But, I don't know. All I know is bad men.

SAID

Bad men.

S.S.

I want to kill them. I'm going to kill him. I think I will.

SAID

No. You won't. No-

S.S.

PAPA, I'M GOING TO KILL HIM!

SAID

You mustn't say that!

S.S.

Papa. I ... I mean ... mean flowers to spring from the heads of sphinxes jinxes wink at me with eyes that know blows that implored I implored I implored and I want something ...

(MORE)

S.S. (cont'd)
 beautiful, beautiful, beautiful beaut- but I never ... popo
 ... hailin lonhep ... lisoom sahpsosim tahshlo lo-

SAID slaps HER viciously, almost
 knocking HER to the ground.

SAID
 Shh, Habibi! We do not use such words anymore!

S.S.
 cheeh woh ai bilih-

HE slaps HER again.

SAID
 No! You forget this! You listen to Papa!

S.S.
 Lolo saph-!

Another slap.

SAID
 No.

S.S.
 Nahm nip sahm!

SHE goes and picks up a photograph of
 the cell.

SAID
 Please, Sarah. You must forget.

HE moves towards HER. SHE brandishes
 the hammer at HIM.

S.S.
 (reading)
 Dit! "Naimen toh. yi wahlih nemp. Di ahmloh sah. Diahn dim
 diahn lah. Bech, threhm, saph hanhan teemeeloh ..."

SHE falls to HER knees.

S.S. (cont'd)
 (reading, quietly, more to
 HERSELF)
 "... debeh lo enteh sah kan beibei nahm sahsah meh teh
 kamshiksahsahloh woh kamshiksahsahloh woh /kamshiksahsahloh
 ah kamshiksahsahloh ..."

SAID
 /Shh. Habibi. Shh. You mustn't say that. Ehr tu su saph
 hemse yonohlo /ponohlo

/No. SAID (cont'd)

SHE pounds HERSELF in the chest with
HER fist.

S.S.

(sobbing)

YONOHLO PONOHLLO GHEE HEEPOHN SAPH SOLO ...

SHE continues to pound HER chest.
Rocking HERSELF. Forty years of pain.

SAID

(pleading)

That is not my girl. That is not my Sarah. My Sarah is a
turtle.

S.S.

NYLO SEEHP CHOOP LOHAH! MAMA! EMIL! MAMA! EMIL!

SAID

No. Sarah. You cannot blame yourself.

S.S.

MAMA! CHOOP LOHAH!

SAID

Blame Papa! Papa is to blame! Papa will die and you will
live clean! Papa should have died! Papa should have killed
himself, but he loved you so!

SHE sobs. Wretched.

SAID (cont'd)

How could you know those were bad men coming? What could you
have told, Mama? You were a little girl. How could you even
know there was such a thing as bad men? How will you go on
now?

HOLD.

HE picks up the gun.

GARCET

Andre ...

SAID

No more tears, Habibi. No more tears.

GARCET

This was our chance at something beautiful.

SAID

Papa is here. No need to stay in the room with bad men.

GARCET

You said we can make something beautiful.

SAID

No more. We are leaving the bad room with the bad men, yes?
/Yes.

GARCET

/Your books say that there is beautiful!

SAID

And we are waiting for an airplane at an airport. And what's
the first thing you want to do, Habibi?

GARCET

This is the ugliest way.

SAID points the gun at HIS temple.

SAID

You wanted to turn. Do you remember? Remember that.
Remember how it made us laugh.

EMILY

No!

GARCET leaps up and pulls SAID's arm
down. SAID drops the gun. GARCET
throws HIS arms around SAID.

SAID

Let me go!

GARCET

No!

SAID

Leave me!

SAID punches at GARCET's hands.

GARCET

No! Listen to me!

SAID

Who are you?!

GARCET

I am your brother!

SAID spits on the ground.

Pied-noir!
SAID

No.
GARCET

PIED-NOIR!
SAID

GARCET
No, I am your brother, don't you see? Forty years of
terrible deeds.

The men collapse together onto the
ground, exhaustion, GARCET holding on
for dear life.

GARCET (cont'd)
Can there at least be fraternity in that?

They lean up against the wall, GARCET's
back to the wall, HIS hands clasped
around SAID's chest. They breath
together, in unison, in exhaustion.

SAID begins to weep.

GARCET (cont'd)
Shh. Shh. Andre, Michel sees.

SAID
Three months before Faouzi arrived at my clinic. I saw a
French soldier hit by a car. I let him die in the street.
Dragged through the streets. I cheered from my soul when
they burned him. My ugly, black soul. And then, one day, a
bad man I had never seen before arrived at my door and I knew
that God had sent him to punish me. Even so, I healed him.
Hid him. Kept my silence because ... they suffered for my
sins. (Beat.) I miss my wife. My son. My ...

HE looks up at his daughter.

SAID (cont'd)
Sarah.

HE begin to unbutton HIS shirt.

SAID (cont'd)
Let me go.

GARCET
Andre-

Ilya, help.

SAID

EMILY goes to HIM and separates GARCET's hands.

No, let him go.

EMILY

SHE unbuttons SAID's shirt. SAID reaches out for S.S.

What is this?

S.S.

EMILY

The key to the language. It's on his skin. He wrote it on his skin.

SAID puts HIS hands on HIS chest. HE holds HIS hands out to S.S. SHE takes them.

Papa, you're trembling.

S.S.

GARCET

It's because we are men. Men terrify themselves when facing death. Lions don't, yes? They are not afraid. They are not ashamed. We are not meant to kill. We are meant to be eaten. Some magic piece of fate has brought us to the top, but it cannot last for long. For some bit of us, some undeniable bit of us is still terrified that there is something in the shadows, waiting to catch us, to devour us while we are still alive.

What can be done?

S.S.

Write. Record.

SAID

Where do we begin?

S.S.

Sehm seelie woh. Reebibi neph hanhan dehmiloh san.

SAID

"With something sweet," Papa. Yes. "That's where it always begins."

S.S.

SAID closes HIS eyes. LIGHTS FADE OUT in VERMONT.

END OF SCENE.

END OF PLAY.