

PROLOGUE: Invocation

DANIEL & JAHANARA in separate spaces recite the following simultaneously. DANIEL is holding a large, flat rock. JAHANARA is in the process of putting on her chadri. As they speak, lights fade up on a shabby room that stands in for two shabby rooms in California: one a motel room in Lone Pine, the other an apartment in Sacramento. The curtains are drawn....

DANIEL

In the beginning, God created Heaven and Earth. And the Earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the Deep.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good. And God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

JAHANARA

In the name of Allah, the entirely merciful, the especially Merciful
All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,/ the entirely merciful, the especially merciful.
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is you we worship and you we ask for help./ Guide us to the straight path/ The path of those upon whom you have bestowed favor./ Not of those who have evoked your anger or of those who are astray.

...the front door opens, SARAH enters. She's been wearing the same clothes for a few days, has a duffle bag in hand. She drops the duffle on the bed, kicks off her boots, opens the curtains. Sunset light pours in, revealing on the other side of the room, near the couch...

KHALID. He has pulled the cushions off, has a flashlight in one hand, is intensely searching for something in the he sees something crawl out from beneath the couch and stomps on it, lifts his foot up and watches as the thing continues to crawl.

KHALID

Ya Allah sa'edna.

SARAH exits into the bathroom. We hear the water turn on in the tub. KHALID grabs a glass and drops it over the bug, finds his cellphone and does a quick search.

KHALID

Bedbugs? This is the "developed world?"

He removes the glass, takes a breath, then picks up the bug and pinches it hard between his fingernails. Certain the bug is dead he drops it into the glass. Lying near him is a prayer mat. He moves to a spot away from the couch, tends to the carpet near where he is, clearing away Sarah's boots. KHALID rolls out the prayer mat, but he doesn't kneel down on it, just sits beside it. He gets lost staring at it, through it, like he's trying to see deep into the ground beneath it.

JAI

I could tell you a story of Heaven and Hell, *Jannah* and *Jahannam*, of the clashes fought between good and evil, Allah and Iblis, God and Satan--

But you wouldn't understand this version. Not really. Not yet. So let me tell you a story both more familiar and stranger still...

SARAH comes out of the bathroom in her underwear, trips on the boots which are not where she left them.

SARAH

The fuck?

KHALID

Hello?

JAI

It's a story that sounds like the ones you grew up hearing. A story of stone and the deep places of the Earth and the people living atop it.

SARAH starts doing push-ups. Khalid's gaze drifts out the window.

JAI

The story of how she grew up on a farm in Iowa--perched, though she didn't know it then, on the edge of a great abyss: a rift in the surface of the earth, almost thirty miles across, two thousand miles long and three thousand feet deep. She should have known but she didn't. No one did, not in her family or town--not until years after she'd left the otherwise unbroken plains for the folded and faulted lands that surround them.

SARAH stands, opens her duffle to find something but gets lost staring out the window.

JAI

Broken lands but true to themselves and the people who live there.

JAI knocks a lamp off the bedside table. SARAH jumps.

SARAH

(more to herself:)

Stop it.

SARAH finds a bottle of shampoo in her duffle, exits into the bathroom. KHALID shakes it off, bends over to begin his prayers, but Jai's words stop him.

JAI

And the story of continents colliding, ocean floors turning into mountains and climbing into the sky. A globe that could barely hold itself together, and a people living atop it, waging wars of their own. Superpowers at war with the heirs of ancient empires, the faithful fighting to define what faith was-- A lifetime without a peacetime, and a boy born into these collisions, trying to find his way through. His father tried to teach him all these things, but it was an education cut short by the Taliban. An explosion that shattered their home, and turned him from big brother into "man of the house," "guardian."

KHALID stands, goes to a backpack, pulls out a folded map, unfolds it part way, traces lines on the map with his finger. He looks back to the backpack, pulls out a lock of hair tied with an old thread.

JAI

His life would be one of provision, for himself and his sister. His battles would be the fights to keep them both alive. Each of them sensing, but never knowing about the great forces at work beneath their very own feet.

SARAH enters from the bathroom, toweling off her hair. KHALID folds up the lock of hair in the map.

KHALID

Forgive me.

SARAH stops; KHALID looks up, almost sees her.

JAI

Day vs. Night. Believer vs. un-. They faced the violence that always marked their kind, terrible wars from which they thought they would never recover--

A loud sound, like a bomb going off or a car crash or a thousand plates shattering at once. KHALID & SARAH both hit the deck. The sun sets, casting the room into darkness. They find themselves staring at one another.

JAI

But they did recover. They found ways.

This story though, this isn't the story of "East meets West" or... "Two cultures finding common ground." This is the story of how they destroy the world.

A shift: Khalid's room is now another room in Afghanistan on a sunny day.

There's a loud knocking at the door. KHALID stands quickly.

KHALID

Zalmai? Zalmai, no!

KHALID rushes off. The room returns to darkness. Then the knocking begins again.

ACT 1: Basin & Range

The motel in Lone Pine, California, Fall of 2011.

In the darkness, SARAH fumbles to get the table lamp turned on. JAI is there on the floor, posing seductively.

SARAH

Leave me alone.

JAI

This was your idea.

(more knocking)

Ignore it.

DANIEL (off)

Sarah! Come on, Sarah, answer the door.

SARAH pulls on a shirt and some pants. In full light we can see that she has a cut on her head, a hospital bracelet around her wrist, and there is a little blood on her shirt.

SARAH

Who's there?

DANIEL (off)

Who's--? It's me, Sarah.

JAI gets herself together as well and exits into the bathroom.

SARAH

Go away.

DANIEL (off)

You know I'm not going to do that.

SARAH

(quietly)

Fuckin' shit fuck...

SARAH opens the door and walks away into the room, turning the overhead back on. She turns on the TV and

collapses into a chair.

DANIEL finally enters. He waits for SARAH to say something. When she doesn't he goes to the TV and turns it off.

Killed the truck.
DANIEL

I know. Sorry.
SARAH

Killed the car last time, now you killed the truck--my truck. Only vehicle I've ever-- We've got nothing left to drive now.
DANIEL

The tractor.
SARAH

Tractor's sold
DANIEL

Good news.
SARAH

Yeah.
DANIEL

So... the John Deere?
SARAH

You gonna drive a riding lawn mower into town?
DANIEL

Yeah--
SARAH

Sarah!
DANIEL

A joke--
SARAH

DANIEL

No more of our trips to Kansas City or Des Moines or Omaha.

SARAH

We never went to Kansas City.

DANIEL

Well we're not going now.

SARAH

...Insurance?

DANIEL

I don't know. Maybe. Don't think it'll cover a new car though. Definitely won't buy me a truck I love...

SARAH

...Sorry.

(silence)

DANIEL

You okay?

SARAH

...I survived another wreck.

DANIEL

But are you okay?

SARAH

(pointing to the cut on her head)

And some bruises. Ribs'll be sore for awhile.

DANIEL

Well thank God.

SARAH

You thank him for me.

DANIEL

(shaking his head)

Where are we?

SARAH

You don't know--?

DANIEL

70 just ends.

SARAH

I don't follow--

DANIEL

I-70 crosses the whole continent, I thought I could take it all the way to the Pacific.... But it just ends in the middle of Utah. So I turned onto the backroads, kept going through the desert. It was night. The desert was glowing in the moonlight, mountains... It look ed like Afghanistan.

Are we in California somewhere?

DANIEL

Lone Pine, middle of... It's nowhere. Just a valley in eastern California

(SARAH nods.)

Were you driving back to Pendleton?

(SARAH nods.)

Wish you'd give this up--

SARAH

I'm gettin' healthier every day. Just gotta show 'em, gotta get strong again. I need that focus back, that the Corps gave me--

DANIEL

Your episodes, Sarah? How do we stop--

SARAH

This wasn't an "episode--"

DANIEL

You said that last time--

SARAH

It was a dream. If I could figure it out--

DANIEL

Sarah, I can't help you get better like this--

SARAH

"Dream" is the wrong word, I was awake. It was a vision. There was a woman, her voice... I couldn't make out what she was saying--

DANIEL

Sarah, you took my truck without asking, drove it a thousand miles to here, and then, what? Passed out and drove it off the road? Saw the face of God and were blinded? I don't know because you never tell me. All I know is that you're never drunk when you kill the cars--which is surprising... but kind of reassuring, I guess.

(silence)

Guess you're not going to tell me now either--

SARAH

How are we getting home?

DANIEL

I rented a car.

SARAH

How?

DANIEL

Opened another credit card.

SARAH

Another phone call to ignore.

DANIEL

Yup.

Well, too late to get on the road tonight. Mind if I crash here with you?

SARAH

Bed's yours if you want it.

DANIEL

Thanks. Hungry?

(SARAH nods.)

I'll buy you dinner.

SARAH starts pulling on her boots.

SARAH

I'm gonna get back into the Corps, go back to Afghanistan, Danny--

DANIEL

You're hearing voices--

SARAH

Having visions. You "talk to God," why can't I have a vision--?

(No response.)

Don't ignore me.

(No response.)

Well it's not like that...whatever you think it is.

(No response.)

I'm sorry, Danny. Don't mean to be a burden.

DANIEL

I know. You just... I have... You've gotta get better, Sis.

SARAH

I know. I'm gonna. I am.

DANIEL

Good. I need help taking care of the farm.

SARAH

I'll do what I can. But only until they let me back into the Corps.

DANIEL

(shaking his head)

Come on, Sarah.

SARAH

Until then, you better lock up the lawnmower.

They exit the room, turning off the lights as they go, the door swinging shut behind them--

But the door is caught by someone and the air in the room changes: A bombed out building on the outskirts of Kabul in 2010. JAI enters; KHALID pokes his head into the room, backpack slung over his shoulder, checking to see if anyone is in there. When he's convinced the room is safe, he enters.

JAI

A great city in the mountains, Khalid, a vibrant center of commerce and culture, two rivers running together here, people bustling, making deals, languages from every corner of the globe...

This is the Turquoise Mountain! The center of a Silk Road empire, right here, in our Afghanistan...

KHALID returns to the door.

KHALID

(whispered)

Ok.

JAHANARA enters, wearing a chadri, also with a bag slung on her back. KHALID closes the door behind her. He drops his bag and hauls the mattress off the bed, lugs it across the room, and uses it to block the big window. Collapsing against it, he pulls a cellphone out of his pocket and checks it.

JAHANARA throws off the chadri, digs a water bottle out of her pack and drinks deeply, offers some to KHALID.

KHALID

Go easy on that. We don't have a lot.

JAHANARA

Sorry. Is it far enough? Are we safe here?

KHALID

Yes, I think so. For now. No one comes to this part of the city anymore.

JAHANARA

Let me look at you.

KHALID

What? I'm fine, Jahanara--

You're bleeding--

JAHANARA

I'm not--

KHALID

JAHANARA
(getting a hold of his face)
There's blood on your forehead.

I--

KHALID

Let me see.

JAHANARA
(She wipes it away.)

Oh...

It's not mine is it?

KHALID

No. Did you kill him?

JAHANARA

No.

KHALID

Khalid?

JAHANARA

KHALID
I'm sure of it, Jahanara, he was breathing. Zalmai will wake up. And when he does, he'll tell the Taliban.

What happened, Khalid?

JAHANARA

He showed up unexpectedly.

KHALID

What did he say?

JAHANARA

KHALID

He didn't really say anything--

JAHANARA

Why did you fight?

KHALID

He saw these.

KHALID pulls a number of satellite photos from his backpack. They are marked in both Pashto and English.

JAHANARA

Are these--?

KHALID

They're detailed maps of Kabul, yes. I've been translating for the Americans--

JAHANARA

Khalid!

KHALID

And I helped them make these maps of the city. I left them out in the front room, for a moment. Then Zalmi barged in, saw them, and it was mostly shouting after that.

JAHANARA

Is that how you've been making money?

KHALID

Yes.

JAHANARA

Why didn't you tell me?

KHALID

You were safer that way.

JAHANARA

Safer? We're out of the security zone!

KHALID

Keep your voice down.

JAHANARA
This is my fault.

KHALID
What? No--

JAHANARA
I was with him and Fawzia...before he left. I should have stopped him--

KHALID
Why would you do that?

JAHANARA
If I'd known what you were up to, I could have stopped him coming here. Or warned you. Now our cousin is going to help the Taliban track us down and kill us-- And Fawzia--

KHALID
Fawzia will be fine.

JAHANARA
How do we fix this? There has to be a way.

KHALID
The Americans are going to take care of us.

JAHANARA
(scoffs)

KHALID
They promised us visas.

JAHANARA
...We would go to America?

KHALID
Yes.

JAHANARA
What would we do there?

KHALID
Live for once. In a peaceful place...

In America--

JAHANARA

They said they would get us there, set us up, help us find job--

KHALID

Would we have to become Christians?

JAHANARA

No.

KHALID

Aren't they all Christians in America?

JAHANARA

No!

KHALID

Ya Allah, they have Jews too, don't they?

JAHANARA

Yes, but there are Muslims--Afghanis even--and Hindus--

KHALID

It sounds like an awful place--

JAHANARA

That's Taliban propaganda. You hate them almost as much I do, you can't believe that--

KHALID

It's a sinful place.

JAHANARA

...We are strong enough to resist.

KHALID

Are we?

JAHANARA

All right, *you* are strong enough. Maybe I'll take up drinking alcohol--

JAHANARA

Khalid!

KHALID

Budweiser beer and hot dogs on the 4th of July!

JAHANARA

You're being stupid.

KHALID

I'm trying to make you laugh.

JAHANARA

You aren't funny.

KHALID

You're just a tough crowd.

(silence)

JAHANARA

You should have told me.

KHALID

Perhaps.

I'm sorry, Jahanara, but it's our only choice now. We've nowhere else to go. No other family... Once Zalai tells the Taliban they'll keep coming after us.

JAHANARA

I wish I trusted the Americans as much as you do.

KHALID

Then trust me--trust Father. I talked to him last night--

JAHANARA

More of your "visions?"

KHALID

No. A message of reassurance. A way out. A map.

We are on the right road. I just have to send a message to my unit. But there's no signal right now. I'll try in the morning.

JAHANARA

And once you've sent your message?

KHALID

They'll come for us, get us out--they're my friends, Jahanara, we helped each other. They won't let us down.

JAHANARA

But what if I do?

KHALID

Jahanara--

JAHANARA

You don't know me as well as you think you do--

KHALID

You're my only family left in the world. We have carried each other since those monsters killed our father, and everything I've done...has been to keep you safe.

JAHANARA

You need to do more for yourself, think more of your own happiness--

KHALID

I will. Once we are proper Americans, sunbathing on the sunny coast of California, drinking Coca-Cola by the liter, roasting whole pigs over a fire--

JAHANARA

No, gross!

KHALID

Or just enjoying a quiet moment, reading some of dad's poems, dreaming of what we want our lives to be.

JAHANARA

Khalid--

KHALID

We should get some sleep while we can. Take this blanket. You can sleep in the inner room there. I'll keep an eye out here. Go. We can talk more about the future tomorrow.

(smiling, a joke:)

...Trust me. I've been trained by the U.S. Marines.

JAHANARA

(she smiles)

KHALID

Go. Sleep.

JAHANARA

I will but... Say your prayers.

KHALID smiles, nods. JAHANARA goes. KHALID holds the smile until she's gone. Then he returns to his cell phone-- still no signal.

KHALID

Shit!

He tries different places around the room, no luck. Finally, he goes to the door, eases it open, peers through the crack. He extends the phone through the doorway... Nothing.

He frets a bit more, and finally goes outside, leaving the door cracked behind him.

A moment... and then the sound of the toilet flushing.