

Sharif

شريف

A play by **Tomer Aldubi**

Translated from Hebrew
by **Shir Freibach**

Premiered as a guest production of The Haifa Theatre, Israel, on June 2022; directed by Tomer Aldubi.

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Palestinian characters

SHARIF	<i>22 years old; born in a Palestinian village in the West Bank, which is partially ruled by the Palestinian Authority¹; the firstborn son of his family, born after his older sisters.</i>
NOUR	<i>Sharif's boyfriend; 5 years older than him, from the same village.</i>
FATHER	<i>Subchi, 50s; Sharif's father; works at the generations-old family-owned bakery.</i>
MOTHER	<i>Ilham, 40s; Sharif's mother.</i>
PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN	<i>A member of The Palestinian Civil Police Force.</i>
UNCLE	<i>Salim, Sharif's uncle. [Non-speaking part]</i>

Israeli characters

IDF ² SOLDIER	<i>Esther, 18 years old, a soldier at The Israeli Civil Administration³; a new immigrant to Israel.</i>
BAKERY MANAGER	<i>Libbi, 30s; a lesbian.</i>
SHABAK ⁴ AGENT	<i>A male agent of the Israel Security Agency.</i>
KIOSK MANAGER	<i>Kobi, 50s.</i>
CLEANER	<i>A supermarket employee; a person of unspecified ethnic minority.</i>

¹ **The Palestinian National Authority (PA)**, known as the Palestinian Authority and officially the State of Palestine, is the Fatah-controlled government body that exercises partial civil control over West Bank areas "A" and "B" as a consequence of the 1993–1995 Oslo Accords.

² **Israel Defense Forces**, the national military of the State of Israel.

³ **The Civil Administration** is the Israeli governing body that operates in the West Bank. It was established by the government of Israel in 1981, in order to carry out practical bureaucratic functions within the territories captured by Israel in 1967. It is subordinate to a larger entity known as the **Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)**, which is a unit in the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Among its functions are coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

⁴ **Shabak** is the acronym for the Israel Security Agency, which is Israel's internal security service. Its duties include safeguarding state security, exposing terrorist rings, interrogating terror suspects, and providing intelligence for counter-terrorism operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Time & space

At the start and the end of the play, Sharif is 22 and is destitute in Israel, in which he has been barely surviving for the past three years while waiting to be reunited with his boyfriend Nour, whom he had not seen all those years.

All scenes, apart from the aforementioned, occur in Sharif's mind: they are all memories and flashbacks of events from the past six years of his life, which appear in an interwoven and non-chronological manner.

Language

Sharif does not speak Hebrew when he first enters Israel, and his grasp of it slowly improves with time. This is indicated in the text (in the scenes where he is in Israel, speaking Hebrew) by intentionally-flawed grammar and syntax.

Set & directorial concept

The stage is a bare space. At its centre is a long and wide table on castors, which serves as a set for all scenes. On each side of the stage are two chairs, which serve the actors as a backstage. The chairs are visible to the audience, and so are the bits of costume and the props that hang around them.

The actors are onstage throughout the play, and change characters in full audience view – both during, as well as in between, scenes.

Scene 1.

A beach in Israel.

SHARIF is 22. He has now been in Israel two years.

He is alone, speaking to his absent boyfriend NOUR.

SHARIF. Nour? Have you ever made a mistake that changed your whole life?
I mean pleasant mistakes, caressing mistakes, intimate mistakes: like me touching the tip of the tip of the tip of your hand when you put the money on the table at a restaurant. Dropping the last ball of dough on the ground when I hear your name. Looking straight into your big blue eyes when you pass under my balcony and briefly lift up your head, and our gazes cross and immediately disengage, like blinking. Writing in dense-tight-connected letters, so that no one else will understand, "I love you", folding it into a tiny note and putting it in your shirt pocket.
Nour? Are you here? Are you listening?

SHARIF imagines that his FATHER is calling him.

SHARIF. Is someone calling me? Father? Is that you, father?

Scene 2.

A bakery in a Palestinian village in the West Bank.

It's SHARIF's 16th birthday.

FATHER is wearing an apron with the family business name: "Nassar Bakery". He is kneading some dough and occasionally takes a puff from his cigarette.

MOTHER is choosing pastries for the birthday party.

FATHER just told MOTHER he's decided to tell SHARIF about inheriting the family bakery.

FATHER. Sharif! There's lots of work to be done!

MOTHER. Please, think it over one more time.

FATHER. I can't do it anymore.

MOTHER. You know Salim. When he hears about it –

FATHER. I'm not afraid of my brother anymore. Sharif!

MOTHER. He will do anything to take back the –

SHARIF enters and stands at the bakery door.

MOTHER. Happy birthday!

FATHER. Congratulations, my son.

All three hug, dance and sing.

FATHER. Come. The day is short.

FATHER puts an apron on SHARIF and they knead the dough together. MOTHER looks at SHARIF with pride.

MOTHER. You are improving, Sharif!

FATHER. He already remembers by heart all the different types of breads.
Ilham, I want to have more children.

SHARIF. Mother, I want brothers, too.

FATHER. If after every three girls I get a son, let's have three more girls.

MOTHER. *Inshallah, inshallah*⁵.

Everyone will be at your party today, Sharif!

SHARIF. Everyone?

MOTHER. I heard they released him this morning.

FATHER. The Israeli army had no reason to arrest him.

SHARIF. Will he be coming too, then?

⁵ Arabic: "If Allah wills it".

MOTHER. I am sure Nour wants to celebrate with you.

SHARIF is excited to hear Nour will be coming to the party, and accidentally drops the dough to the ground.

FATHER. Sharif!

SHARIF. Sorry *Yaba*⁶, it was an accident.

FATHER. This is our last dough! Amir ordered it especially.

MOTHER. He is excited, Subchi. It's not every day you get to celebrate turning 16!

FATHER. That's no excuse! And just when I want to tell him –

MOTHER. Can you not wait with that?

FATHER. I waited enough.

MOTHER. You are making a big mistake. I'll see you at home. *(She exits)*

SHARIF. What were you talking about?

FATHER. Your present.

SHARIF. What is it? A clean apron? New shoes?

FATHER smiles and shakes his head to say no.

FATHER. I am counting on you that the family bakery will remain in the hands of my eldest son. That is your present!

SHARIF. Thank you, Baba!

FATHER. From tomorrow we will work together every day, from morning to evening.

SHARIF. And what about school?

⁶ Arabic: "Dad"; term of endearment for Father.

FATHER. I have been working since I was 10 years old, and have not missed a day.
Look at my clothes – so dirty and smelly.

SHARIF. But will Salim not make lots of trouble?

FATHER. Are you just like your mother? He will not come anywhere near you.

SHARIF. Maybe we could wait a few years?

FATHER. Sharif, your father has all kinds of problems.

SHARIF. What problems do you have?

FATHER. Let's just say that my heart does not work like your heart, or like your
mother's heart.

SHARIF. Maybe you'll stop smoking?

FATHER. I smoke one cigarette with my coffee.

SHARIF. And drink ten cups a day.

FATHER. I will quit for you. *(He stubs out his cigarette)*

SHARIF. You will live to 120.

FATHER. *Inshallah*. You are inheriting the bakery with the most tasty bread in all
Palestine. Are you ready to work hard?

SHARIF. I will be the best baker ever, Father!

FATHER. And if you will be diligent and persistent, you will succeed and be able to
find a good woman and start a family. Come, we don't want to keep them
waiting for us.

They take off their aprons and exit.

Scene 3.

A street in a mixed Jewish-Arab city in the centre of Israel.

SHARIF is 20. He runs away from his village in the middle of the night and enters Israel illegally. Car lights pass him and he tries to hide from passers-by. The lights become distant until they disappear as he reaches a side street. His clothes are dirty and worn out, and on his back is an old high school bag adorned with a colourful image of a bird.

During his flight, he speaks with the imaginary NOUR, recalling how NOUR taught him to find a safe space when they were both still in their village.

SHARIF. I don't have a clue where I am, Nour.

NOUR. Look at the signs in Arabic, walk towards the central station, and don't stop until you get there.

SHARIF. I've got no more strength.

NOUR. You are close.

SHARIF. If anyone notices me –

NOUR. Stay away from people, don't look them in the eye, and stand upright.

A police siren can be heard from a nearby street.

SHARIF. Nour, police!

NOUR. Run!

SHARIF. What will they do to me if they catch me?

NOUR. They will dump you at the nearest checkpoint⁷.

⁷ A temporary or fixed roadblock/barrier erected by the IDF in the West Bank with the stated aim of enhancing the security of Israel and Israeli settlements and preventing those who wish to do harm from crossing.

SHARIF. If I won't get the permit...

NOUR. I taught you everything.

The police siren fades away. SHARIF comes to a street corner and finds a quiet and secluded spot. He sits down, breathing heavily.

You made it.

SHARIF. I'm here. I made it, Nour.

NOUR. I knew you would.

SHARIF. I cannot believe I'm in Israel.

NOUR. I'm proud of you.

SHARIF. I'm totally exhausted.

NOUR. Stay awake! These are the most dangerous hours.

SHARIF. I can't hold on.

NOUR. Someone could rob your phone and take your money. Put everything in your underwear.

SHARIF shoves everything into his underwear.

SHARIF. Maybe I should have stayed?

NOUR. You had no choice.

SHARIF. How did he find out?

NOUR. He followed you.

SHARIF. I thought nothing would happen to me at home.

NOUR. It's not your fault.

SHARIF. When will I see you?

NOUR. Soon. It's too dangerous for you to come back now.

SHARIF. But I'm without you!

NOUR. I am always with you.

SHARIF closes his eyes and tries to sleep. He tosses and turns.

SHARIF. Good night, Nour.

NOUR. Sharif! Stay awake until the sun rises!

SHARIF. I'm already dreaming about you, that we are sleeping together, in each other's arms.

NOUR. Sharif? Sharif, are you asleep? Sharif?

Scene 4.

A military office of the Civil Administration at a crossing point between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Israel. SHARIF is 20. A few days after he crosses over into Israel, he attends an interview that will determine whether he can remain in Israel legally.

At the centre of the small, stuffed office is a desk with a pot of coffee and cups, both empty and full. Next to them is a full-to-the-brim ring binder with forms. There is also a recording device, Tipp-Ex and a pen.

A FEMALE IDF SOLDIER, Esther, has a heavy accent which suggests the country of origin she recently migrated to Israel from. Occasionally, she uses an air freshening spray around the room.

Her questions remind SHARIF of the violent interrogation he underwent at the hands of the Palestinian Civil Police Force, until the military questioning and the police interrogation gets muddled in his mind.

IDF SOLDIER. Sharif Nassar? Is Sharif Nassar here?

SHARIF. What?

IDF SOLDIER. You were late and then you also fell asleep.

SHARIF. I not sleep all the nights.

IDF SOLDIER. Come in. *(She presses the record button on the recording device.)*

I am Esther, nice to meet you. This conversation is being recorded. What is your name?

SHARIF. Sharif Nassar.

IDF SOLDIER. Sit down, sit down. Speak clearly into the recorder.

SHARIF. Sharif Nassar.

IDF SOLDIER. How old are you?

SHARIF. I am 20.

IDF SOLDIER. As part of this questioning, we will establish whether your application for a stay permit on the grounds of welfare needs may be granted. Did you understand what I have explained?

SHARIF. This all in Hebrew?

IDF SOLDIER. Our translator is at another checkpoint and will only be available... *(she consults a form in her ring binder)* next month. I'll set you another appointment with him present.

She closes the ring binder and gets up to leave, while SHARIF is deliberating whether he will manage to cope with the Hebrew throughout the interview.

SHARIF. No, no. I'm OK.

IDF SOLDIER. Let's begin. *(She sits back down and opens the ring binder)*

Do you confirm that you have "infiltrated Israel in an unlawful manner eight days ago"?

SHARIF. I didn't really understand.

IDF SOLDIER. *(Gesturing her explanation with her hands)* Do you confirm that you entered a foreign state when you were not allowed to do so?

SHARIF. *(Searching for the right word in Hebrew)* I did not have a –

IDF SOLDIER. Is this a "Yes" or a "No"?

SHARIF. They beat me.

IDF SOLDIER. I need a "Yes" or "No" answer.

SHARIF. Yes.

IDF SOLDIER. *(She makes a note in the form and continues to read out loud)* You claim that you are "persecuted on the grounds of sexual orientation and that it is dangerous for you to live in your village"?

SHARIF. *Shu*⁸?

IDF SOLDIER. Are you a *Looti*⁹?

Pause.

SHARIF. Yes.

IDF SOLDIER. *(Makes a note)* Is the entity that is putting you in danger "a political body within the Palestinian Authority and its apparatus"?

SHARIF. What is *(he tries to repeat the word she was using; they both mispronounce it)* "apparatus"?

⁸ Arabic: meaning "What".

⁹ Arabic: a derogatory term for a homosexual.

IDF SOLDIER. Things like intelligence service, the police...

SHARIF. Yes. Police is looking for me.

The IDF SOLDIER notes his reply.

IDF SOLDIER. According to our enquiries, “community members at the Palestinian Authority are not persecuted due to their sexual orientation and no real and imminent danger is posed to their life, especially as long as their tendency is not externalized. Cases of externalization of a relationship concludes in being dispersed and in being issued a warning to not repeat their acts in public.” Does this apply to you?

SHARIF. *Shu?*

IDF SOLDIER. This is impossible. I can't do this anymore.

SHARIF. I am in danger.

A PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN enters from the opposite side, so that SHARIF is sitting between him and the IDF SOLDIER. The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN is smoking, and holds a boiling-hot cup of coffee. He pushes SHARIF off his chair, then asks him to sit back down, and then moves the chair again. He gestures SHARIF to sit back down, and as SHARIF comes near the chair, the PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN kicks the chair away from him.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Did you sleep well?

IDF SOLDIER. Does this apply to you? Yes, or no?

SHARIF. No.

IDF SOLDIER. I'm noting this.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. *(He asks the IDF SOLDIER for a cigarette and lights it up)*
Are you thirsty?

SHARIF. Yes.

IDF SOLDIER. You said “No”!

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Coffee?

SHARIF nods in affirmation.

The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN spills the hot coffee on SHARIF, and immediately refills the cup with coffee.

IDF SOLDIER. So, what is your answer?

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Are you still thirsty?

SHARIF. No.

IDF SOLDIER. No, final answer. *(She makes a note of this)*

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Do you know why you are in the police station?

SHARIF. Because of my sonofabitch uncle.

The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN pours the second cup of coffee on SHARIF and immediately pours himself a third.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Salim is a religious man, an honest soul who will not harm anyone.

IDF SOLDIER. I’m getting you a form.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Help me help you to be released from here today. I’m sure you can identify who is sitting next to you. *(He shows him blurry photos of two men sitting in a car – in the next scene it will become apparent that these photos have been previously shown to him by SHABAK AGENT)*

IDF SOLDIER. List in the form all the intimate relationships you have had.

SHARIF. It doesn’t even look like me.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Are you lying to me?

SHARIF. No, I don't know who that is.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. It is you and the mayor's son. And here it's the son of the station's Chief Officer in the car with you.

IDF SOLDIER. Write down everything you remember: When did you first meet with men? How did you meet, what did you do? We need names, addresses.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. I want to know everything: When did you first meet? How did you meet? I want names, addresses.

SHARIF. I don't know how to help you!

The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN raises the cup for the third time.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. These pictures have already been published all over the village. Are you lying to me?

SHARIF. I am telling the truth.

The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN pours the cup of coffee on SHARIF, and exits.

IDF SOLDIER. Now in this form, write in detail about every connection you have had with Israeli security entities. We must ensure that you do not pose a threat to the state of Israel.

Sharif? Did you fall asleep again? Do you want water? Coffee?

SHARIF. No, no. No coffee.

IDF SOLDIER. We are done. *(She produces another form)* Sign here that everything you have said is the truth and that everything that was discussed is acceptable to you.

SHARIF. Permits you have?

IDF SOLDIER. *(Starts to tidy the desk)* I... I only make a recommendation. The officers make the final decision.

SHARIF. My life in your hands.

IDF SOLDIER. Each application will be carefully considered.

SHARIF. How much time?

IDF SOLDIER. Each case is unique. *Yallah*¹⁰, it's lunchtime and I'm starving.

She hands him some forms. SHARIF exits. As he does, the IDF SOLDIER uses an air freshener and sprays the room.

Scene 5.

The Nassar family bakery in the West Bank. SHARIF is 18. His father is extremely ill and SHARIF is working in his stead at the bakery from morning till night to provide for his family. He takes off a heavily flower-dusted apron and cleans the counter. A SHABAK AGENT speaks to him from outside the bakery.

SHABAK AGENT. *As-salamu alaykum*¹¹.

SHARIF. *Wa 'alaykumu s-salām*¹².

SHABAK AGENT. Do you have any *Manakish*¹³ left?

SHARIF. I'm sorry, we're closed.

SHABAK AGENT. I know you make the best there is.

SHARIF. I've never seen you here before.

SHABAK AGENT. My wife always buys it – it's my first time here.

¹⁰ Arabic: "Let's go" or "Hurry up". Also commonly used in contemporary Hebrew.

¹¹ Arabic: "Peace be upon you".

¹² Arabic: "And peace be upon you".

¹³ A popular Levantine food consisting of dough topped with thyme, cheese, or ground meat.

SHARIF. I wish I could help you. Come back tomorrow.

SHABAK AGENT. Can you help me with something else? I am Captain¹⁴ Wisam. Nice to meet you.

SHARIF. I have nothing to talk to Shabak about.

SHABAK AGENT. Are you sure?

SHARIF. Don't come in.

SHABAK AGENT. You are romantically involved with a man, right?

SHARIF. What are you talking about?

SHABAK AGENT. We in the Shabak know everything about you and Nour.

SHARIF. You are making this up.

SHABAK AGENT. We have pictures. Would you like to see?

SHABAK AGENT enters the bakery and approaches SHARIF. He shows him on his mobile phone blurred photos of SHARIF and NOUR kissing.

Here you are holding Nour's hand when he puts down money the table at a restaurant. And here –

SHARIF. Are you following me?

SHABAK AGENT. Here you are at the deserted house of Abu Yasin, the diabetic who died of a cardiac arrest. You closed the curtains, the doors and the windows, and in total darkness you got naked –

SHARIF. You can't even see my face.

¹⁴ A commonly-used title by Shabak agents in the occupied territories.

SHABAK AGENT. Do you think your uncle Salim will believe you when these pictures are published all over the village? You know he's dying to take over the bakery.

SHARIF. What do you want from me?

SHABAK AGENT. To find out what your cousin has been doing for two weeks at Jihad¹⁵ meetings.

SHARIF. Never.

SHABAK AGENT. Sharif, help me help you. What do you think will happen when your father sees these pictures?

SHARIF. My father will protect me.

SHABAK AGENT. Are you sure about that?

SHARIF. Yes. I haven't told him yet –

SHABAK AGENT. You're already 18 years old. Don't be stubborn.

SHARIF. Get out of here.

SHABAK AGENT. May God be with you.

(He turns to leave)

SHARIF. What do you need?

SHABAK AGENT. Today at the Iftar¹⁶ dinner at your aunt's house... I need some names and addresses, and I'll take care of everything.

SHARIF. You will not publish the pictures?

SHABAK AGENT. There, I deleted them.

¹⁵ "Jihad" is short for **Palestinian Islamic Jihad**, a member of the Alliance of Palestinian Forces, which rejects the Oslo Accords and whose objective is the establishment of a sovereign Islamic Palestinian state. It calls for the military destruction of Israel.

¹⁶ The evening meal with which Muslims end their daily fasting during the month of Ramadan.

SHARIF. Why should I trust you?

SHABAK AGENT. Do you prefer us, or you uncle?

SHARIF. I don't prefer either.

SHABAK AGENT. Take this (*he hands him a recording device*). You press here to operate. During the dinner, hide it in your underwear and no one will notice. When you get home, hide it under your pillow. There is a note with my phone number on the back. Memorise it and then destroy it. Call me only if it's a matter of life or death. Agreed?

SHARIF. Give me money.

SHABAK AGENT. I see you're not a small boy. Here (*hands him some notes*).
Sharif, it's our secret, OK? No one must know.

SHARIF. Not a word.

SHABAK AGENT. Now go, don't keep your parents waiting.

Scene 6.

*A busy street in a mixed Jewish-Arab city in the centre of Israel. SHARIF, 19 and a bit, is lying on cardboard next to some rubbish bins by a supermarket in a bustling street. He looks tired and hungry; his hair is dirty and his clothes stink. Beside him is his worn-out old schoolbag.
He is speaking with the imagined NOUR.*

SHARIF. Why are you not answering me?

NOUR. It's dangerous.

SHARIF. And Mother and Father, too... since I've been in Israel, you all forgot about me?

NOUR. We will meet soon.

SHARIF. I'm going crazy because you're not with me.

NOUR. Sharif, you are in Israel and waiting for a permit.

SHARIF. You really believe that the army will give it to me?

NOUR. In the meantime, you must look for a job. You will not survive otherwise.

SHARIF. No. I will come back to you soon.

NOUR. And what will you do until then? How much longer will you be able to stay in the street, eh? *(Beat)* Do you see that supermarket?

SHARIF in nodding in agreement.

NOUR. Come on, get up, clean your clothes, tidy your hair. Stand up straight. Smile. More. More.

A supermarket CLEANER comes out to throw out the trash. She has a bag on her shoulder.

This is your opportunity. Go help her with the trash.

SHARIF. Maybe you want help?

The CLEANER is startled. She screams and drops the bags. SHARIF picks them up and throws them in the bin.

CLEANER. Are you sleeping here by the bins?

SHARIF. Two weeks already.

CLEANER. I never saw you. *(She turns to walk towards the supermarket)*

SHARIF. I am –

NOUR. George.

SHARIF. I am George.

NOUR. Tell her you are looking for work.

SHARIF. I must to work.

CLEANER. I just finished for the day.

NOUR. Could you possibly help me?

SHARIF. You help me?

CLEANER. I'm sorry.

NOUR. Don't give up. You are young, strong!

SHARIF. I work good, I know to clean, do all the things –

CLEANER. They do not hire... *(beat)* homeless people here.

SHARIF. But –

CLEANER. It's not suitable for this neighbourhood. Also, you should go sleep somewhere else. If my boss sees you outside the supermarket, it will not be good for you. It's best if you go to the south side of the city.

SHARIF is greedily eying the bananas peeking from her shoulder bag.

Here. *(She gives him two bananas)* I must catch my bus.

She exits. SHARIF eats the bananas eagerly.

SHARIF. I'll never find work.

NOUR. You speak like an Arab.

SHARIF. What can I do?

NOUR. Speak like them. Repeat after me. (He tries to speak Hebrew without an Arab accent) Good morning, *ahalan*¹⁷.

¹⁷ A common street greeting in contemporary Hebrew. "Ahalan" is a shortened form of the Arabic greeting "Ahalan wa sahalan" meaning "Hello and welcome".

SHARIF. But *Ahalan* is Arabic.

NOUR. Try it.

SHARIF. Good morning, *ahalan*.

NOUR. Are you looking for staff?

SHARIF. Are you looking for staff?

NOUR. I am Adam from Haifa.

SHARIF. I am Adam from Haifa.

NOUR. You have a great place, *achla*¹⁸.

SHARIF. “*Achla*” is also Arabic.

NOUR. Come on, it’s their slang.

SHARIF. You have a great place, *achla*.

NOUR. I will be happy to work for you.

SHARIF. I will be happy to work for you.

NOUR. One more time.

SHARIF repeats it a few times. NOUR keeps correcting his pronunciation and accent, until SHARIF sounds like an Israeli.

Brilliant! That’s great!

SHARIF. I used to dream about becoming a baker.

NOUR. Then go from bakery to bakery until you fulfil this dream!

SHARIF. Do you remember what you always used to say to me every time we met?

¹⁸ Contemporary Hebrew, originally Arabic, meaning awesome, excellent, great, the best.

NOUR. In Abu Yasin's house?

Scene 7.

*A deserted house in Sharif's village in the West Bank.
SHARIF is 19. It is evening. On the floor of the small and stuffy
house there is a thin, deteriorating and yellowing mattress and
a dimly-glowing lamp.
NOUR is anxiously waiting for SHARIF.*

SHARIF enters.

NOUR. Did anyone follow you?

SHARIF. No.

NOUR. Are you sure? *(He is looking to check for himself)*

SHARIF. *Hayati*¹⁹... I missed you.

NOUR. I watched you all week at the bakery, you have a rare talent.

SHARIF. You always tell me that.

NOUR. And you will have the most famous bakery in Palestine.

SHARIF. *Inshallah. (Beat)* I want to share something with you.

NOUR. Anything you want.

SHARIF. I decided to tell my parents about us.

NOUR. It's not like you to talk nonsense.

SHARIF. My parents love me and want me to be happy.

¹⁹ Arabic: "My life". Said to someone who is very dear to the speaker, this term is equal to "Darling," "Sweetheart" or "Love".

NOUR. Your father will never accept that.

SHARIF. He doesn't have many years left.

NOUR. Exactly, he has enough worries as it is.

SHARIF. How much can we keep on hiding?

NOUR. We have no choice.

SHARIF. Is that your solution? Keep checking that we're not being followed?

NOUR. We need to get married, and fast.

SHARIF. To each other?

NOUR. Each one to a different woman.

Pause.

We've been together two years today.

SHARIF. I didn't think you would remember.

NOUR. I bought you a present. We'll be more comfortable from now on.

(He gives SHARIF a new pillow and beddings)

SHARIF. We won't need to be standing up anymore, with –

SHARIF & NOUR. ...the hand against the wall. *(They laugh)*

NOUR. Come here, give me a hand.

They spread the beddings and turn the pitiful mattress into a lovely bed. NOUR takes his shirt off and lays down, gesturing SHARIF to join him.

SHARIF. I'm sick of being with you only in disgusting places.

NOUR. Do you understand how dangerous it is? It could spread around the whole village in seconds!

SHARIF. I will tell my parents not to tell.

NOUR. You know that Salim –

SHARIF. Always my uncle, all the time.

NOUR. ...is looking for any way to kick you out of the bakery. And I am watching out for you.

SHARIF. I don't need you to watch out for me.

NOUR. *Ya Albi*²⁰... you're already 19 years old. Have you still not realised where you live?

SHARIF. I want to live my life my way.

NOUR. Let's hold hands in the market.

SHARIF. *Yalla*.

NOUR. Yes. And also kiss in the middle of the village.

SHARIF. *Yalla*.

NOUR. I don't want to talk about this now.

SHARIF. Then when?

NOUR. Never!

SHARIF. Nour, I've been thinking about this for a long, long time.

NOUR. And what will you do if they don't accept you?

SHARIF. *(Childishly)* I'll run away.

NOUR. There is nothing for you over there.

²⁰ Arabic: "My heart". A term of endearment.

SHARIF. Cross over with me.

NOUR. There's no way I'm going back there.

SHARIF. But I want to be with you.

NOUR. Then wait with doing that. Did you think about how this would hurt me?

SHARIF. I will never do anything that will put you in danger.

NOUR. Wait a few more years.

SHARIF. Alright, maybe just a couple more years.

NOUR. Come to bed.

They undress and lay on the bed. SHARIF closes his eyes and feels NOUR's rapid heartbeat. They kiss. After a short while, steps and whispers are heard from a distance.

Someone's coming.

They switch the light off and try to identify the sounds, which are getting louder. SHARIF recognizes his UNCLE's voice. He peeps through the window.

SHARIF. It's my uncle. And the police.

NOUR. Get dressed. You must run away.

SHARIF. No way! I'm not leaving you here.

NOUR. They are not looking for me.

The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN tries to break open the locked door. He calls out to SHARIF, encouraging him to come outside.

SHARIF. I'm not ready.

NOUR. I taught you everything you need.

SHARIF. I'm scared.

NOUR. We knew this could happen; you have no choice.

SHARIF. Nour...

NOUR. I'll go and delay them.

SHARIF. Nour, don't leave me on my own.

NOUR. Trust me, I'm with you even when you're far away.

SHARIF. I love you, Nour.

NOUR exits. SHARIF is left alone in the dark. He pulls himself together and calls SHABAK AGENT.

SHARIF. *(Whispering)* Hello? Hello? It's Sharif, Sharif Nassar.

SHABAK AGENT. I can't hear anything. Hello? Hello?

SHARIF. It's Sharif, Sharif Nassar. You told me to call when it's urgent.

SHABAK AGENT. *(Indifferent)* What is it?

SHARIF. I need to get into Israel.

SHABAK AGENT. You have not completed your mission yet.

SHARIF. I did everything, please.

SHABAK AGENT. There's more.

SHARIF. My uncle is looking for me. Please, I must get away.

SHABAK AGENT. If you get in, they'll kick you right back out. Stay there –

SHARIF. You promised you'd help me.

SHABAK AGENT. Nothing will happen to you; I'll take care of it. But from now on, everything I ask – you do. Clear?

SHARIF is captured by his UNCLE and the PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN who managed to break into the house. They kick him and beat him, while he begs them to stop and let him go. They drag him offstage.

Hello? Sharif?

Scene 8.

A bakery in a mixed Jewish-Arab city in the centre of Israel. SHARIF is 20 years old. Throughout the day, as he has been doing every day, he has walked into various businesses in the south side of the city, in search of employment. Desperate, he enters one of the neighbourhood's bakeries. On the counter are baskets full of bread and fresh pastries.

SHARIF. Hello, are you looking for staff? I will be happy to work for you.

BAKERY MANAGER. I'm looking for experienced staff.

SHARIF. I have experience! I'm from Haifa. I am Adam.

BAKERY MANAGER. *(His behaviour makes her suspicious)* You came all the way to the centre of the country?

SHARIF. Not a lot of work there.

BAKERY MANAGER. In Haifa?

SHARIF. You have a great place, *achla*.

BAKERY MANAGER. I only employ people I can trust.

SHARIF. I already walk the whole city, nobody wants –

BAKERY MANAGER. Where are you really from?

SHARIF. I'm from Haifa –

BAKERY MANAGER. OK, I'm sorry.

SHARIF. I'm from Ramallah. And my name is Ahmad.

BAKERY MANAGER. Great, Ahmad. I'm Libbi. Do you want a coffee?

SHARIF. I not drink coffee.

She brings him a glass of water with mint and lemon.

I did not want to say to you that I from the West Bank so you don't tell someone about me.

BAKERY MANAGER. Do I look like a snitch to you?

SHARIF. I don't know you.

BAKERY MANAGER. *(Gesturing to his leg)* What about that, is everything OK?

SHARIF. Yes. My leg is in painful. It will be OK.

BAKERY MANAGER. I'm sure it will. Can you show me your work permit?

Pause.

SHARIF. I don't have.

BAKERY MANAGER. I can't employ someone who doesn't have a permit. Keep looking and you'll find something.

SHARIF. I... I will be your best worker.

BAKERY MANAGER. I cannot afford to take any risks.

SHARIF. I come on time, work good –

BAKERY MANAGER. My neighbours are after me. They're dying to kick out my business and build a tower here. You understand? But I think it's because I'm a lesbian.

SHARIF. What is lesbian?

BAKERY MANAGER. I like girls.

SHARIF. *(Stunned)* You are with girls?

BAKERY MANAGER. Yes, why?

SHARIF. I... am baker. The best.

BAKERY MANAGER. Look, I –

SHARIF. *(Resolute)* I was famous in Ramallah. When I worked in bakery, people look at me like this... I knead and knead, also make the dough, I make Ma'amoul, Manakish...

BAKERY MANAGER. Why are you here, anyway?

SHARIF. I live close.

BAKERY MANAGER. I mean, what are you doing in Israel?

SHARIF. I walked away from there.

BAKERY MANAGER. Why?

SHARIF. It was dangerous.

BAKERY MANAGER. You are too, aren't you?

SHARIF. What?

BAKERY MANAGER. One of us.

SHARIF. I don't understand.

BAKERY MANAGER. You too are, you know, gay.

SHARIF laughs, embarrassed.

SHARIF. I don't feel to talk about it.

BAKERY MANAGER. In your own time. Just know that you don't need to be afraid because of me.

SHARIF. They wait for me there. I will go back.

BAKERY MANAGER. In the meantime, do you want to work for me? You can do morning or evening shifts, from seven to five or from five till three. Half an hour break. I pay 35 shekel per hour, cash, at the end of every week. Does that sound good?

SHARIF. It's... amazing!

She brings him an apron.

BAKERY MANAGER. Do you have somewhere to sleep?

SHARIF. I every day in different place.

BAKERY MANAGER. You can sleep in the storage room for the time being; you can arrange it nicely for yourself.

She gives him beddings which remind him of the present he received from NOUR when he was 19.

And, Ahmad, remember that if the neighbours find out and make any trouble for me – you will have to leave. It is our secret, OK? No one must know.

(Beat)

Why are you crying?

SHARIF. I will make my dream true.

BAKERY MANAGER. What is your dream?

SHARIF. To be the best baker in Palestine.

BAKERY MANAGER. You're in Israel now.

SHARIF. So, in all the world.

BAKERY MANAGER. If you're diligent and persistent, you will succeed.

SHARIF. My father he always say this to me. I miss him and my mother.

BAKERY MANAGER. How long has it been since you last saw them?

SHARIF. More than a year. They also don't answer when I call.

Scene 9.

*The Nassar family bakery in the West Bank.
SHARIF is 19. After some weeks of being violently interrogated at the Palestinian Police station, he's been released. He enters the bakery limping. His leg, face and body are bruised. His MOTHER, who has been waiting for him to return, runs towards him, hugs and kisses him.*

SHARIF. *Ommi*²¹!

MOTHER. Your face is all red. And your body... what have they done to your leg?

SHARIF. They beat me up, *Ommi*.

MOTHER. I was so worried about you. Why did you not tell me that you are *mithliyy*²²?

SHARIF. I wanted to, but I was scared.

MOTHER. I would have helped you.

SHARIF. What will happen to me now?

MOTHER. I prepared a bag for you. *(She brings him his old school bag and puts some money notes in his hand)* You must get away from here.

²¹ Arabic: "My mother", meaning "mummy".

²² Arabic: "Homosexual/Gay".

SHARIF. Where is Father?

MOTHER. He went to talk to your uncle Salim.

SHARIF. I'll wait for Father.

MOTHER. Listen to me for once! You cannot stay here. I don't know what he will do –

FATHER enters. He is smoking and holding a gun in his hand.

Subchi, our son is alive.

FATHER. Are you really like that?

SHARIF does not answer.

Are you really like that?

SHARIF. Yes, Father.

FATHER slaps his face.

MOTHER. Subchi, it is a miracle he is here.

FATHER. Stay out of this.

SHARIF. I am sorry.

MOTHER. Did you speak to Salim? Did you manage to calm him down?

FATHER. My brother thinks he is in charge of everything in my house!

MOTHER. It's all because of the bakery.

FATHER. *(As he approaches MOTHER to slap her)* Get out!

MOTHER exits.

I did not raise you in this way.

SHARIF. I didn't do anything, I just –

FATHER. Salim warned me again and again and like an idiot I didn't listen to him! I would have told you to stop that nonsense right away and found a woman for you.

SHARIF. I can fix this.

FATHER. *Khalas*²³, it's over! The whole village is already talking about you. No one will come to the bakery. How will I provide for my family? You are destroying years of tradition because of this perversion you got into your head.

MOTHER is heard shouting at UNCLE who is banging on the door and demanding to be let in.

SHARIF. I will give him the bakery.

FATHER. Shut up. You are not speaking now. Did you think about your sisters? Who will want to marry them when we have a sick man like you in the family?

MOTHER's shouting becomes louder.

You've ruined your life. You have ruined your life. I need to finish you off or your uncle will finish off all of us. (He continues to shout at SHARIF until the pain he feels in his heart forces him to slowly sit down)

SHARIF. Are you alright, Father?

FATHER. You must get the hell out of the house.

SHARIF. Where will I go?

FATHER. As far as possible; you cannot stay around here.

SHARIF. I don't want to leave.

FATHER. Your uncle is already here. Can't you hear him?

²³ Arabic: "Done" or "Finished", meaning "Enough!".

SHARIF. *(Turns to leave)* I'm scared.

FATHER. Sharif, listen to me: as long as I'm alive they will never touch you.

SHARIF. When will I see you again?

FATHER. Go! That way they will not look for you.

Father shoots in SHARIF's direction. SHARIF grabs the schoolbag and runs away off-stage.

I love you.

MOTHER enters quickly, alarmed by the sound of the gunshot.

MOTHER. What have you done? What have you done?

Scene 10.

A storage room in a bakery in Israel.

SHARIF is 21 years old.

On the side of the room, which is heavy with shelves and bakery equipment and pantry items, there is a mattress with clean beddings and a pillow – reminiscent of the mattress he shared with NOUR. SHARIF's clothes are neatly folded by his schoolbag. An apron is hanging on a hook, and next to it on the wall there is a photograph of a cacti, with a house with smashed windows and a broken door in the background. Arab music is playing from SHARIF's mobile phone, while he himself is dancing and jumping for joy like he had not done since entering Israel.

SHARIF. Nour, I am happy and everything will be good from now on. We will meet again soon; I can feel it.

The BAKERY MANAGER enters. She is worried and preoccupied. SHARIF is dancing around her.

Will you dance with me?

BAKERY MANAGER. What are we celebrating?

SHARIF. I did it! I got a permit!

BAKERY MANAGER. That's amazing, Ahmad. Now you can take care of your leg!

SHARIF. In one week my appointment. I can't wait.

BAKERY MANAGER. I need to tell you something.

SHARIF. I am listening.

BAKERY MANAGER. Could you –

SHARIF. I'm sorry, one second. *(He turns the music off)*

BAKERY MANAGER. You are a serious and professional worker, just as you had promised you'd be.

SHARIF. It is all because of you, you give me everything!

BAKERY MANAGER. I'm very pleased and I like you.

SHARIF. Me too!

BAKERY MANAGER. But you can't work here anymore.

SHARIF. What?

BAKERY MANAGER. The neighbours are constantly talking and any minute now there will be an inspection.

SHARIF. Suddenly after six month?

BAKERY MANAGER. I wish there was something I could do.

SHARIF. I can sleep until I find a place?

BAKERY MANAGER. They could come at any minute. Sharif, they will take you back there and I... can be sent to prison for that.

SHARIF. To where I will go?

BAKERY MANAGER. I will check with some friends. Perhaps you could at least sleep there. In one week, you can come back with your permit and we will all be more relaxed.

SHARIF comes to hug her.

He receives a phone call. He answers, and hears his MOTHER on the other end. Meanwhile, the BAKERY MANAGER quickly folds away the pillow and the beddings and shoves them, alongside his clothes, into his schoolbag.

SHARIF. *Yama*²⁴?

MOTHER. “Sharif, I’m sorry I didn’t call you until now.”

SHARIF. *Yama.*

MOTHER. “It’s dangerous for me to speak with you but you should know that your father had another heart attack. He is in hospital and his condition is bad. They will look for you after he goes. Take care of yourself, *ya ibni*²⁵, do whatever you need to.” *(She hangs up)*

SHARIF. Hello? Mama? Hello? *(Pause)* My father is in hospital.

BAKERY MANAGER. I’m sorry to hear that. *(She brings him his schoolbag)* You must leave.

Scene 11.

A military office of the Civil Administration at a crossing point between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Israel. SHARIF is 21. After one year in Israel, his application for a stay permit has been approved, and he is invited to that same

²⁴ Arabic: “Mom”; term of endearment for Mother.

²⁵ Arabic: “My son”.

crossing point to receive the coveted permit. SHARIF stands in the doorway of the office, full of anticipation and excitement.

IDF SOLDIER. *(Indifferent and impatient)* I'm Esther, nice to meet you. Please have a seat. The conversation is being recorded as of this moment. Sharif Nassar?

SHARIF. That's right.

IDF SOLDIER. Speak clearly into the recorder.

SHARIF. Sharif Nassar.

IDF SOLDIER. You have been deemed eligible to receive a stay permit on the grounds of welfare needs. This is your permit –

She takes out a permit from the ring binder and lays it on the table. SHARIF examines it and smiles.

I will now read out to you some regulations –

SHARIF. Can I ask a question?

IDF SOLDIER. It's all in Hebrew. Our translator is at another base today, and he'll only be available in... a month's time.

SHARIF. It's not that.

IDF SOLDIER. Be brief. There are a lot of regulations to go over.

SHARIF. Since I come here, my leg hurts and I am waiting for the permit to go to a doctor.

IDF SOLDIER. I'm sorry to hear that.

SHARIF. It just get more bad.

IDF SOLDIER. I am not a doctor.

SHARIF. It is right here.

IDF SOLDIER. *(Averting her gaze)* I am not a doctor!

SHARIF. Can I go to a doctor?

IDF SOLDIER. Did you cooperate with the Shabak?

SHARIF recalls a similar question he was asked during an interrogation by the Palestinian Police. The PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN enters.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. The Shabak published the photos because you didn't do what they told you to.

SHARIF. I'm not a collaborator.

IDF SOLDIER. Precisely.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Our whole nation have turned into traitors!

SHARIF. I'm not a traitor!

IDF SOLDIER. That is why you are not eligible for health insurance.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. Do you really think you'd all say you are *Looties* and we would say nothing? Do nothing?

SHARIF. *(To the IDF SOLDIER)* And when I have work, I can go to a doctor?

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. You prefer to be loyal to the Zionists!

SHARIF. I don't know what you're talking about.

IDF SOLDIER. Only those who help us are eligible for a work permit.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. If you won't help us, you won't get out of here.

SHARIF. But I am in danger.

PALESTINIAN POLICEMAN. If you were my child, I would have already killed you.

(He stubs out his cigarette on SHARIF's arm and exits)

IDF SOLDIER. You are in danger and you have received a permit to stay.

SHARIF. But I cannot work, see a doctor. What good is it for me if I also don't have a place to sleep?

IDF SOLDIER. You can sleep wherever you like.

SHARIF. Is this how you treating me?

IDF SOLDIER. Did you ever think what would happen if all Palestinians would just-like-that say they are homosexuals and enter Israel?

SHARIF. This will never happen.

IDF SOLDIER. Then why are you here? What, is it better to be a *Looti* on your side? We have equality, pride marches, surrogacy.

SHARIF. Do you believe that Palestinian people will leave their family and childrens and we come here?

IDF SOLDIER. Ultimately, you will be the majority and it will be too late to expel you.

SHARIF. We are only expelled one time.

IDF SOLDIER. Look at what is happening in the world with refugees today. It's a catastrophe. And this is not Europe.

SHARIF. Are you serious?

IDF SOLDIER. Do you think I'm making this up? (*Reads aloud*) "Your application derives from your desire to benefit from the liberal lifestyle in Israel and the granting of social rights to a group of Palestinians and carries with it possible ramifications for potential future applicants".

SHARIF. I don't understand what I am doing here.

IDF SOLDIER. Not listening to the regulations, that's for sure. We're out of time. Your permit is limited to three months. There's a form here with all the regulations.

SHARIF. This is what I was waiting so long for?

IDF SOLDIER. During which time, you are requested to look for another country and emigrate.

As IDF SOLDIER turns to exit, she receives a text message. She casually reads it out to SHARIF.

I have an update: "The State has just decided that it will grant a comprehensive work permit to Palestinians who are offered asylum in Israel on the grounds of being LGBT. The new comprehensive work permit is not limited to certain types of employment, and is not included in the Government-approved quota of Palestinian workers."

SHARIF. I don't understand.

IDF SOLDIER. It means that you can work in Israel in whatever job you want, and that you'll also receive health insurance from your boss.

SHARIF. But you just said –

IDF SOLDIER. You should be happy. We're done. Sign here that everything I told you is clear to you and acceptable and that everything you said is true. *(She hands him a form)* And take my advice: while you are in Israel, do not commit any offence; no drugs taking, no drugs dealing, no drugs making, no drugs possession, no drugs theft, no theft whatsoever or all combined. No other country will accept you with a criminal record.

SHARIF. That's it? It is finish? *(He hands her back the signed form)*

IDF SOLDIER. Yes, I'm dying for a cigarette.

Scene 12.

Near a kiosk in the same mixed Jewish-Arab city in the centre of Israel.

SHARIF is 22. He is walking glum and depressed in the street in the middle of the night, with his ragged schoolbag on his back. He speaks with the absent NOUR unenthusiastically.

SHARIF. I'm dead tired. I haven't slept for days. Moving to another place once again. I've already moved between so many places. I got no strength left. How about you, Nour? Are you alive? You haven't answered me in such a long time.

He approaches a kiosk and stands at the threshold, opposite a "Staff needed" sign. The KIOSK MANAGER invites him to come inside. SHARIF enters, looks at the pastries and counts his coins.

KIOSK MANAGER. No need. Have some. It's fresh.

SHARIF quickly gorges it.

Wow, it looks like you haven't eaten for a year, Bro.

SHARIF. Thank you. I'm starving. Can I have this also?

KIOSK MANAGER. *Tfadal*²⁶. It just came out, hot of the oven, Bro.

SHARIF. It's really tasty.

KIOSK MANAGER. Are you an Arab, Brother?

SHARIF shakes his head, his mouth full of food.

You're not Arab?

SHARIF. I'm tired of being Arab. I'm not Jewish, I'm not Christian. I am human being.

KIOSK MANAGER. *Walla*²⁷, that's funny. This can be a tattoo. I'm Kobi, Bro.

SHARIF. I am Daniel.

²⁶ Arabic word used to invite someone to take or do something, used here as in "Help yourself".

²⁷ As "Wallah", Arabic word meaning "I swear to God". As "Walla", used often in contemporary Hebrew to emphasize an expression or statement.

KIOSK MANAGER. Arabs have very funny names these days.

SHARIF. Bro.

KIOSK MANAGER. What?

SHARIF. Nothing, nothing.

They both laugh.

Tell me, do you want –

KIOSK MANAGER. *(His phone rings)* Hang on, Bro. My employee is late.

(Speaking very bad Arabic into his phone, with words randomly thrown in for “authenticity” and delivered with an exaggerated accent:) “Tell me, you, *walla* what’s up? We go to party, and you, *yaani*²⁸, don’t get up on time to do your shift? You could not find a taxi? *Yallah*, don’t make up excuses. *Khalas*, we saw your story from the party from 5am.”

(To SHARIF) How’s my Arabic?

SHARIF. *(Lying)* Very good.

KIOSK MANAGER. What were you saying?

SHARIF. I’m looking for work.

KIOSK MANAGER. *Walla*. Can I make you some coffee, Bro?

SHARIF. I don’t drink coffee.

KIOSK MANAGER. You don’t?

SHARIF. It’s hot.

KIOSK MANAGER. Ice coffee then, on me.

SHARIF. Water, thank you.

²⁸ Arabic word used in explanations, meaning “Meaning”.

KIOSK MANAGER. *(Brings him a bottle of water)* When I see people in your situation, I can't not help them. Give them work, a place to sleep; it's a good deed, you see.

SHARIF. That is not something to be taken for granted.

KIOSK MANAGER. And it's also good to have a pretty face at the door. It attracts customers.

SHARIF. Totally. So, when do I start?

KIOSK MANAGER. Come back tomorrow. We'll teach you everything you know to know about the business, Bro.

SHARIF. What time?

KIOSK MANAGER. 9am.

SHARIF. Done.

KIOSK MANAGER. What are you going to do now?

SHARIF. Sleep.

KIOSK MANAGER. You want to sleep at my place? I live just around the corner.

SHARIF. I'm OK.

KIOSK MANAGER. So let's go to the storage room for a minute.

SHARIF. No, it's OK.

KIOSK MANAGER. I thought you wanted to work here.

SHARIF. Yes, but –

KIOSK MANAGER. Roll with it; it'll be worth your while.

SHARIF. I never did this before.

KIOSK MANAGER. Here, take three hundred. *(He takes out notes and puts them on the counter)*

SHARIF. I'm totally worn out.

KIOSK MANAGER. I'll get you something to get high, so you'll wake up.

SHARIF. I don't want to.

KIOSK MANAGER. Four hundred? That's already lots of money, and you're also getting a great job.

SHARIF. Half an hour maximum.

KIOSK MANAGER. Do it well, and we will do this on a regular basis.

Scene 13.

A beach in Israel (as in Scene 1).

SHARIF is 22. After two years of trying to survive in Israel, he is now completely exhausted, desperate and frustrated. He is high from the drugs that the KIOSK MANAGER gave him. He is hallucinating and speaking to himself and the absent NOUR.

SHARIF. I'm really sorry I did that. He lied to me. I didn't want to sleep with him, I really didn't. I should have known from the start that he only wanted sex. Do you understand that he tricked me, Nour?
I made so many mistakes... all I wanted was to tell my father. And because of me Father died – heart ache, not heart attack. Now there is no one who will protect me. I was born on the wrong side of the map and of the orientation and of the family; a boy who likes boys.
What's up with you, Nour? You haven't been answering me for a such a long time. Are you alive? Are you even listening to me? Did you desert me too? Perhaps you should go. Enough. I expel you from my mind. Get out. I don't want you anymore and I don't need you anymore. We will never meet again! I'll be very successful without you!

(SHARIF is getting more stoned and his hallucinations intensify) From now on it is only Sharif and no more secrets. I am *Loti*. Can everyone hear me? Sharif the *Looti*.

And Sharif, Sharif will open a bakery. A chain of bakeries. And I will give work to everyone; anyone who wants to work can come. And then I will establish a country. Ten countries. Countries without questions. Without interrogations. A country without coffee. And I will build a giant road, a very long road between all the countries in all the world, and we will move from one place to the next on foot. Without walls, without fences, without borders.

It is so beautiful here on the beach. It is so quiet... you can hear all the way to the end of the world. The wind feels nice. The water is cold. And so many butterflies, lots and lots of butterflies. And stars. The sky is full of stars. They shine. So far. And I am a star and I fly across the sky.

Lights begin a slow fade to black.

SHARIF is looking up, counting stars.

One. Two. Three. Four. *Arba'a. Khamsa. Sitta. Sab'aa. Thamaaniya. Tis'aa. Aashara*²⁹...

THE END.

²⁹ Arabic: "Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten".