

said Saïd

by

Kenneth Lin

Represented by:

Creative Artists Agency

Christopher Till
162 Fifth Avenue, 6th Floor
New York New York 10010
(212) 277-9000
ctill@caa.com

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.

(MORE)

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. 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.

EMILY

I'm sorry, I-

S.S.

It's time for you to go.

EMILY

Wait.

S.S.

Get out!

EMILY

No, listen to me.

S.S.

Look at him. Get out! Out!

EMILY

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.

S.S.

Out.

EMILY

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

S.S.

Wait downstairs.

EMILY

Ms. Said-

S.S.

Please! Wait for me.

Beat. EMILY exits.

S.S. (cont'd)

(holding up the photograph)

You have to tell me what this says!

SAID

Take that away.

S.S.

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

SAID

He doesn't know it.

S.S.

He says-

SAID

Nobody can read it.

S.S.

How do you know?

SAID

Only I can read that alphabet.

S.S.

How do you /know?

SAID

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

S.S.

Papa?

SAID

Shh. Shh. Let Papa sleep.

S.S.

What did you just say?

S.S. shakes HIM gently.

SAID

Shh.

S.S.

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

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. Mzab. 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?

(MORE)

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?

(MORE)

MICHEL(cont'd)
 (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. 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.

Sorry. S.S.

EMILY puts the book back on the stack.

It's alright. EMILY

Sorry. S.S.

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)

EMILY

You're welcome.

S.S.

Yes.

S.S. exits to throw away the pieces.

EMILY

(calling out to S.S.)

This is a beautiful, beautiful house.

S.S. (O.S.)

You think so?

EMILY

Yes.

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 Leteur."

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. 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)

UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

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	Enough! ...
confess I confess	... A name! ...
I confess.	... To what?! ...
I CONFESS!	... Stop it! ...
I CONFESS!	... To what?! ...
I CONFESS!	... GODDAMNIT,
I CONFESS!	GIVE ME A NAME!
I CONFESS!	
I CONFESS!	

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

SILENCE.

MICHEL

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 unearnable 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)

UHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

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.

(MORE)

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! 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. 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.

(MORE)

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.

Yes. Record. Yes.

SAID

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?

Yes.

EMILY

SAID stands.

Who is he?

EMILY (cont'd)

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.