

Libertas
by
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3/22/26

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FADE IN:

EXT. TEHRAN -- PRE-DAWN

The city before it performs itself.

Rooftop water tanks. Satellite dishes pointed at skies they're not supposed to reach. Laundry hung in darkness, already waiting for a sun that hasn't arrived.

The call to prayer begins.

Not sacred. Not ignored.

Just sound filling space that would otherwise ask questions.

INT. UNIVERSITY PRINTING ROOM -- PRE-DAWN

A single fluorescent tube flickers.

ARIN (23) feeds paper into a machine that wasn't designed for what he's using it for.

He doesn't look nervous.

He looks like a man doing math.

Each sheet comes out face-down. He doesn't flip them. He already knows what they say. He's written it eleven times in his head before writing it once on paper.

A CUSTODIAN (50s) mops the far end of the room.

Doesn't look up. Doesn't ask.

This is the arrangement.

Arin collects the stack. Counts. Divides into three groups. Wraps each in brown paper. Writes nothing on the outside. He knows where each one goes.

He leaves. The custodian mops where Arin stood. Gone.

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM -- MORNING

Fluorescent HUM. Students in rows designed to prevent conversation.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI (60s) -- a man who has made peace with the distance between what he believes and what he teaches -- writes on the board:

"THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC: VOICE OF THE PEOPLE"

He underlines it once. The way a man underlines something he knows will be questioned.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
The Republic derives its legitimacy

from two sources.

Divine guidance.

And the will of the people.

Silence. Then -- from the back. Unhurried. Almost bored:

STUDENT (O.S.)
What happens when they contradict

each other?

The Professor's chalk stops. He doesn't turn.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
They don't.

STUDENT (O.S.)
But if they did.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
They don't.

He continues writing.

ANGLE ON ARIN -- three rows from the back. He's not the one who asked. He's watching the one who did.

A YOUNG WOMAN -- PARI (20) -- leans back in her chair. Satisfied.

Arin watches her the way a doctor watches someone describe a symptom. He writes one line in his notebook. We don't see what it says.

INT. UNIVERSITY CORRIDOR -- LATER

Students pour out. LEYLA (22) falls into step beside Arin. She's been watching him the way people watch someone they're not sure they trust yet.

LEYLA
Pari's going to get herself expelled.

ARIN
Probably.

LEYLA
You could have said something.

ARIN
I did.

LEYLA
You wrote in your notebook.

ARIN
Same thing.

She stops walking. He takes two more steps. Stops.

LEYLA
It's not the same thing.

He looks at her. She means it.

ARIN

No.
(beat)
It's more dangerous.

He walks on. She stands there. Then follows. Because she knows he's right. She hates that.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD -- CONTINUOUS

BASIJ ENFORCERS move through the courtyard. Not aggressive. Just present. The way a low ceiling is present.

Arin and Leyla adjust their route without discussing it. Muscle memory.

LEYLA

If someone's caught with one?

ARIN

They'll say they found it.

LEYLA

And if they don't believe that?

ARIN

Then it costs one person.
(beat)
Not everyone.

That logic. Clean. Brutal.

LEYLA

You've thought about this more than
you've thought about the people.

He doesn't deny it.

ARIN

Yes.

She doesn't know what to do with honesty that's also an accusation.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- MORNING

A room designed to project control. SENIOR OFFICER FARZAN (55) stands at its center. Not because he's tallest. Because everything angles toward him.

He holds the leaflet. Reads it the way a doctor reads a test result. Looking for what it confirms, not what it says.

TECH OFFICER DABIRI (30s) approaches.

DABIRI
Third location this week. Same
text.

Different paper stock.

FARZAN
How many copies?

DABIRI
At each location -- we don't know.
(beat)
We find the ones people drop.

Not the ones they keep.

Farzan sets the leaflet down.

FARZAN
Pull the units looking for the
source.

DABIRI
Sir--

FARZAN
If they find the source they arrest

one person.

(beat)

If they keep looking they tell

whoever's distributing this that
we're looking.

(beat)

Which is more useful to us?

DABIRI
Surveillance only.

FARZAN
Watch who reads it.
(beat)
Not who writes it.

He picks up the leaflet again. Studies the final line: "This is not a foreign idea. This is the only idea."

FARZAN (CONT'D)
Smart.

Not a compliment. A threat assessment.

INT. MODEST FAMILY HOME -- EVENING

Dinner. TV ON. State news. A newscaster's practiced calm.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
Foreign-sponsored elements continue
their campaign to mislead Iranian
youth--

NEDA (21) -- alive in a way that makes the room feel smaller -
- watches the screen.

NEDA
They say that every week.

Across from her -- KAMRAN (24). Protective. Coiled.

KAMRAN
Lower your voice.

NEDA
Why?
(beat)
They already think it.

Their FATHER (60s) doesn't look up.

FATHER
You think you discovered something
new?

NEDA
No.
(beat)
I think you stopped asking.

Silence.

FATHER
We learned to live with it.

NEDA
That's not the same thing.

Kamran watches this exchange. Something forming in him. Not yet a decision. A direction.

INT. BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Dim. Concrete. A single hanging bulb. Mismatched chairs. Seven students. Arin stands to the side. Not at the front. Never at the front. A cassette player sits on a crate.

ARIN
You've heard the first one.
(beat)
This one is different.
(beat)
The first one told you what to do.
(beat)
This one tells you why it works.

He presses play. His own voice -- distorted, unrecognizable:

ARIN (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)
Every system requires
participation.
(beat)
The soldier needs a uniform
supplier.

The judge needs a courthouse.

The interrogator needs a building.

(beat)

Every brick in every wall was laid by
someone who believed they had no choice.

(beat)

They had a choice.

(beat)

So do you.

Silence in the room.

MINA (20) leans forward.

MINA
How do you coordinate without a
signal?

Arin stops the tape.

ARIN
You don't.
(beat)
That's the point.

CYRUS (21)
Then how does it spread?

ARIN

The same way this room filled.

(beat)

Someone told someone who told
someone.

(beat)

No list. No record. No meeting

announcement.

MINA

And when it's big enough?

Arin is quiet.

ARIN

It already is.

They don't fully believe him. He doesn't fully believe
himself. But neither of those things stops what's already
moving.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- SAME NIGHT

DABIRI

Cassette tapes now. Three confirmed

locations. Content is more sophisticated

than the leaflets.

FARZAN

Play it.

A fragment plays: "Every system requires participation--"

Farzan raises a hand. Stop.

FARZAN (CONT'D)

One voice.

DABIRI

Distorted. We can't identify--

FARZAN
Not the voice.
(beat)
One mind.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
This isn't a committee. Committees
produce slogans.

(beat)
This is one person who has thought
about this for a very long time.

DABIRI
Makes it easier to find.

FARZAN
Makes it harder to stop.
(beat)
You arrest a committee -- the idea
dies.
(beat)
You arrest a philosopher--

He sets the transcript down.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
--you make him permanent.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
Don't look for the voice.
(beat)
Look for the person nobody notices.

INT. ARIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Maps. Pins. Connections. And a grid -- three pages. Names he
doesn't know. Locations. Days.

He folds all three pages. Burns them over the kitchen sink.
Watches them go.

LEYLA appears in the doorway.

LEYLA
Pari was arrested this afternoon.

Arin goes still.

ARIN
Is she--

LEYLA
Released. Two hours.

They questioned her.

ARIN
She held.

LEYLA
This time.

LEYLA (CONT'D)
She was questioned for two hours.

ARIN
I know.

LEYLA
Does knowing change anything?

He looks at the ash in the sink.

ARIN
It has to.

Not an answer. A hope dressed as one.

Leyla watches him. She sees the gap -- the place where his philosophy meets his humanity and flinches. She doesn't name it. Not yet.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

The Father at the kitchen table in the dark. A glass of tea gone cold. He holds the leaflet. Reads it slowly. The way a man reads something in a language he used to speak fluently and has spent years forgetting.

Kamran appears in the doorway. Sees. Neither speaks.

FATHER

Where did this come from?

KAMRAN

Neda found it.

FATHER

You should have burned it.

KAMRAN

I know.

FATHER

Then why didn't you?

KAMRAN

Because she'd already read it.

FATHER

I was twenty-three in 1979.

(beat)

We believed we were ending something.

(beat)

We were.

(beat)

We didn't know what we were beginning.

KAMRAN

This is different.

FATHER

Everyone who starts something says that.

KAMRAN
Is it wrong?

The Father looks at the leaflet.

FATHER
No.
(beat)
It's just not enough.

He stands. Folds the leaflet. Opens the cabinet beneath the sink. Places it inside a tin behind the cleaning supplies. Doesn't burn it. Keeps it.

Kamran watches that. His father is not a man who accepted the system. He is a man who survived it. Those are not the same thing.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD -- NEXT MORNING

Neda finds a small folded paper on the ground. She unfolds it.

INSERT -- THE PAGE: Farsi text. Below it: "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." Below that: "This is not a foreign idea. This is the only idea."

She reads it twice. Folds it. Puts it in her jacket. Looks around. No one watching. Or so she thinks.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Across the courtyard -- Arin watches her. Leyla beside him.

LEYLA
She'll show someone.

ARIN
Yes.

LEYLA
That's the point.

ARIN
That's always the point.

LEYLA
What if the wrong person sees it
first?

ARIN
There's no wrong person.
(beat)
Only wrong timing.

He walks away. Leyla watches him go. Something in her expression: not doubt, not admiration. Recognition.

INT. UNIVERSITY CANTEEN -- MIDDAY

Loud. Crowded. The ideal cover. Arin and Neda sit across from each other for the first time. He studies her. Looking for weakness. Finding less than he expected.

ARIN
Eight leaflets. Same block?

NEDA
Three blocks. Different buildings.

ARIN
What did you use to carry them?

NEDA
A textbook. Hollowed second half.

He didn't tell her that. She arrived at it.

ARIN
Who taught you that?

NEDA
No one.
(beat)
I read history.
(beat)
Specifically -- people who did this

before us and got caught.

(beat)

And why.

ARIN
Why did they get caught?

NEDA
Three reasons.
(beat)
Trusted too many people. Moved too
fast.
(beat)
Or believed the idea protected
them.

ARIN
One block. Weekly. You report to
Leyla.

NEDA
I can handle more--

ARIN
I know.
(beat)
One block.

NEDA
Why?

ARIN
Because I need to know how you
handle

being told no.

She looks at him. Understands.

NEDA
One block.

She stands.

NEDA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

The hollowed textbook.

(beat)

I already changed the method after

the first run.

ARIN

Excuse me?

NEDA

Same method twice is a pattern.

She leaves. He watches her go. Something crosses his face. Not pride. Something quieter and more dangerous: the recognition that she might be better at this than he is.

EXT. ROOFTOP -- NIGHT

Leyla alone. She photographs the city. Not for distribution. For herself.

Arin finds her here. He stands at the door to the rooftop and doesn't come forward. Just watches her for a moment first. She knows he's there. Doesn't turn.

LEYLA

Arin.

(beat)

When does it stop being strategy

and start being--

ARIN

What.

She sets the camera down. Turns. Looks at him.

LEYLA

Indifference.

The word between them. He doesn't flinch.

ARIN
It's not indifference.

LEYLA
What is it?

A long pause. He looks at the city. As if checking whether his answer will hold up against it.

ARIN
The cost I agreed to pay on behalf
of people who didn't know
they were agreeing.

Silence. The most honest and most damning thing Arin has ever said. And he knows it. His hands stay at his sides. Nowhere to put that.

LEYLA
I'm going to witness this.
(beat)
All of it.
(beat)
Not just the parts you designed.

ARIN
Leyla--

LEYLA
Someone needs to have seen it.
(beat)
When it's over.
(beat)
Whatever over means.

ARIN
The difference between documenting
and witnessing--

LEYLA

A document can be used.

(beat)

A witness can only be silenced.

She takes the photograph. The shutter clicks. The city in her lens. Real. Recorded. Alive.

He watches her. Something he won't say. She doesn't ask him to.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- LATE NIGHT

Neda at the kitchen table. The Father joins her in the dark.

FATHER

Your mother had a study group.

(beat)

In 1998.

(beat)

It met on Wednesdays.

NEDA

What happened to it?

FATHER

It stopped meeting.

NEDA

Why?

FATHER

Because one member told someone

who told someone.

(beat)

And then there was no more group.

(beat)

And no more Wednesday.

NEDA
 (carefully)
 Is that why she--

FATHER
 No.
 (beat)
 That came later.
 (beat)
 But it started there.

He stands.

FATHER (CONT'D)
 I'm not telling you to stop.
 (beat)
 I'm telling you the distance
 between

starting and stopping is shorter
 than you think.

(beat)

And the cost isn't always paid by you.

He goes to bed. Neda sits. With the tea. With her mother.
 With what she's going to do anyway. Not a decision made
 tonight. A decision she was always going to arrive at.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- NIGHT

Farzan reviews the week's reports. He adds a single word
 beside the university pin. Written in small, precise letters:
 "Patient."

He picks up a photograph. A YOUNG MAN. Unremarkable.
 Photographed three times in three different locations. Each
 time -- unremarkable.

FARZAN
 (to himself)
 There you are.

He doesn't pin it to the board. He puts it in his jacket pocket. Close. Personal. This one is his.

We don't see the photograph clearly. But we know who it is.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. TEHRAN -- THURSDAY -- DAWN

The fourth Thursday. The city assembling itself the same way it always does. But Arin is already awake. Has been for hours.

INT. ARIN'S APARTMENT -- DAWN

The grid again. Larger now. Three pages. Forty-seven names he doesn't know across nineteen locations. He draws no lines between them. That's the point.

He folds all three pages. Burns them over the kitchen sink. Watches them go.

Then he goes to the window. The street below. Normal. The fruit vendor. The school children. The bureaucrats.

And one man. Standing still while everything moves.

Arin steps back from the window. Moves to the back of the apartment. A second door -- the building's service exit. He's known about it since the day he moved in. He leaves through it.

The man on the street keeps watching the front door. Waiting for something that isn't coming.

EXT. TEHRAN -- SERIES OF SHOTS -- MORNING

--- A MINISTRY OFFICE. Four desks empty. A supervisor already on the phone.

--- A MUNICIPAL TRANSPORT OFFICE. Routes delayed. Citizens adjusting without complaint. This is becoming ordinary.

--- A STATE SCHOOL. Two administrative staff missing. A teacher erases the day's lesson plan and writes something different.

--- A GOVERNMENT PRINT FACILITY. Seven workers absent. The foreman in the middle of the floor. The workers who showed up look back. Nobody speaks. The machines stay off. Not because the foreman ordered it. Because nobody turned them on.

That's new.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- MORNING

Farzan at the board before Dabiri arrives. Standing completely still. Looking at nothing. Thinking at everything.

DABIRI

Forty-three confirmed so far. Still

coming in.

FARZAN

There is no pattern.

DABIRI

Sir--

FARZAN

That IS the pattern.

(beat)

Nineteen locations with no geographic logic.

No transit connection. No shared infrastructure.

(beat)

Which means the connection isn't physical.

(beat)

It's social.

(beat)

Each absence connected to another
by exactly one person.

(beat)

A chain with no center.

He moves to the board. Draws a circle around the entire
board.

FARZAN (CONT'D)

We've been looking for a hub.

(beat)

There isn't one.

(beat)

Which means we can't destroy it

from the outside.

(beat)

We get inside it.

(beat)

Not surveillance.

(beat)

Participation.

FARZAN (CONT'D)

Find me someone already inside.

Or someone we can put there.

Dabiri writes. Farzan keeps looking at the board. Something
has shifted in his posture. It's almost reluctant respect.

INT. UNIVERSITY CANTEEN -- MIDDAY

Arin and Leyla. The specific silence of people waiting for numbers.

LEYLA
Forty-three.

ARIN
I heard forty-one.

LEYLA
Two more from the south.

LEYLA (CONT'D)
The print facility. Seven workers.

The machines didn't run.

ARIN
I know.

LEYLA
You didn't plan that.

ARIN
No.

LEYLA
So the idea is moving on its own
now.

ARIN
It was always going to.
(beat)
That was the design.

LEYLA
Then why do you look like that?

He is quiet. He is quiet the way a man is quiet when what he feels doesn't fit the argument he's built.

ARIN
Because designing something to move

on its own--

(beat)

and watching it actually move--

(beat)

are different experiences.

LEYLA

There's someone watching your building.

ARIN

I know.

LEYLA

Two days. You didn't tell me.

ARIN

I needed to know if it was fixed or

rotating.

(beat)

Rotating.

(beat)

Which means they're not certain yet.

(beat)

If they were certain they wouldn't watch.

(beat)

They'd move.

LEYLA

So we have time.

ARIN
A little time.

ARIN (CONT'D)
The fourth tape can't come from my
voice anymore.

(beat)

Too consistent. They'll have it analyzed.

(beat)

The next tape needs a different voice.

He looks at her. She understands.

LEYLA
No.

ARIN
You're the only one I trust to
carry
the idea without changing it.

LEYLA
Find someone else--

ARIN
There is no one else.
(beat)
And if they find a tape -- I need
it

to be someone who can survive the finding.

LEYLA
You've already decided which of us
is expendable.

ARIN
I've decided which of us the
movement

can survive losing.

LEYLA
(quietly)
And you think I can survive it.

ARIN
I think you're the only one who
might.
(beat)
That's not a compliment.
(beat)
It's the truth.
(beat)
And I owe you the truth more than I

owe you comfort.

She doesn't respond to that. She looks at the table between
them. The cost has just been named without being named.

LEYLA
If I do this--
(beat)
you tell me everything.
(beat)
Not what you decide I need to know.
(beat)
Everything.

ARIN
Yes.

LEYLA
My voice. My words. My version.
(beat)
The idea stays.
(beat)
Everything else is mine.

ARIN
Tonight.

INT. PROFESSOR HOSSEINI'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Arin and the Professor. The office of a man who has learned to keep his books alphabetized so that nothing suggests a pattern.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
A colleague visited me.

ARIN
This is the last time I come here.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
In 1988. The labor coordinations.

The ones who lasted--

ARIN
Became invisible before they needed to.

(beat)
You told me.

(beat)
What's the difference between

stepping back and abandoning it?

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
Whether you step back into the crowd--

(beat)
or out of the building.

At the door--

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI (CONT'D)

Arin.

(beat)
The colleague who visited me.

(beat)
He asked if the voice on the tapes

sounded educated.

ARIN
What did you say?

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
I said I hadn't heard them.

ARIN
Had you?

A long pause.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
Good luck.

Not an answer. The only answer that keeps both of them safe.

EXT. SIDE STREET -- AFTERNOON

Kamran walks with REZA (26). Reza has the physicality of someone who resolved long ago that ideas weren't enough.

REZA
You've been watching the ministry
building.

(beat)

Three times this week at shift change.

Kamran doesn't deny it.

REZA (CONT'D)
There's a group. North of the
university.
(beat)
The kind that doesn't write things
down.

KAMRAN
I'm not joining anything.

REZA
I didn't say join.
(beat)
I said they could use someone.

KAMRAN
My sister is involved in something.
(beat)
She could get hurt.

REZA
She already could.
(beat)
The question isn't whether she's in
danger.
(beat)
It's whether you're going to do
something

about the thing creating it.

Kamran looks down the street. The city that has always been
exactly what it is.

KAMRAN
When?

INT. LEYLA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

She sits at her desk. Arin's outline in front of her. She
reads it once. Picks up a pen. Sets it back down. Reads it
again.

On the wall opposite her desk: photographs she's taken. The
city. Ordinary moments. A man sleeping on a bus. Children
playing near a ministry wall. An old woman reading a
newspaper with the headlines torn out.

She looks at them. Then at Arin's words. Then at the
recorder.

She crosses out the first line. Rewrites. Crosses it out
again. She's not struggling with the idea.

She's struggling with the fact that once she speaks it -- in her own voice, for real -- she can't unspeak it.

She picks up the small photograph she keeps face-down on the desk. Turns it over.

A WOMAN. Mid-30s. Leyla's resemblance is unmistakable.

She looks at her mother for a moment. Then places her face-down again. Not grief. Decision.

She picks up the recorder. Holds it.

LEYL
 (into recorder)
 They want you organized.
 (beat)
 Don't be.

She stops. Plays it back. Listens to herself. The strangeness of your own voice as instrument.

She presses record again.

LEYL (CONT'D)
 (into recorder)
 They want a center.
 (beat)
 Be everywhere instead.
 (beat)
 You don't need permission to stop.
 (beat)
 You need enough people to stop

at the same time.

(beat)

That's all a movement is.

(beat)

Enough people.

(beat)

Same moment.

(beat)

No signal required.

She stops. Plays it back. Listens all the way through.

Something in her face: not pride. The specific feeling of a person who has found the thing they were made to do at exactly the moment it's most dangerous to do it.

She opens the desk drawer. Takes out an envelope. Inside -- older photographs. She sets one on the desk beside the recorder.

Her mother. In 1998. In a room that looks very much like this one.

Leyla looks at it. Nods slowly. Not in agreement with something said. In recognition of something that was always true.

She presses record a final time.

LEYLA (CONT'D)
 (into recorder -- quieter
 now)
 This is not the beginning.
 (beat)
 We have always been here.

She stops the recorder. She puts her mother's photograph back in the drawer. She doesn't face it down this time.

EXT. TEHRAN -- SERIES OF SHOTS -- DAYS

The movement finding its own language:

--- Walls painted overnight: "WE DO NOT WORK FOR THEM"

--- Cassettes passed through car windows. Through market stalls. Slipped under classroom doors.

--- A government office: lights on, no one inside. A supervisor alone at a desk, making calls that don't get answered.

--- Karaj. A message arrives back: "We heard the question. We're asking it here too."

--- A WOMAN at a bus stop. She passes something to the WOMAN standing next to her. Neither acknowledges it. The bus comes. They board separately.

The idea has found its own geography. And its own grammar.

INT. ARIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

He hears it from his neighbor's radio. Through the wall. A Revolutionary Guard officer. Navab district.

He stands in the middle of his room. Very still.

The kind of still that happens when two realities collide and the body doesn't know which one to inhabit.

He picks up the phone. Puts it down. Picks it up. Calls Leyla.

LEYLEA (O.S.)
I heard.

ARIN
Where are you?
(beat)
Stay there.
(beat)
Nothing moves today.

LEYLEA (O.S.)
It means they have a reason now.

He doesn't answer. Because she's right. And there's nothing to say after that.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- MORNING

Farzan reads the report standing. Sets it down. His face doesn't change. But something behind it does.

FARZAN
Which officer.

DABIRI
Massoud Shirazi. Revolutionary
Guard.

Grade four.

(beat)

Family. Wife. Two children.

FARZAN
Not professional.
(beat)
Prepared.
(beat)
Different thing.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
The paper movement.
(beat)
There isn't one.
(beat)
The paper movement is nonviolent by
design.
(beat)
This isn't their work.

DABIRI
How can you be certain--

FARZAN
Because whoever designed the paper
movement

understands that violence is the one thing
we can respond to without ambiguity.

(beat)

They've spent months building something
we can't touch.

(beat)

They would not throw that away.

(beat)

This is someone else.

(beat)

Possibly a fracture within the same
broader impulse.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
Get me the Navab district footage.

(beat)
We're looking for someone who was
there

before it happened.

(beat)

Not after.

He opens the file. Arin's photograph.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
This isn't you.

He closes the file.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
But you know about it.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- MORNING

Neda hears the news from the kitchen radio. She listens. Her face doing the math. The textile quarter. The pre-dawn timing.

She looks at Kamran's closed bedroom door. Doesn't knock. Goes to the table. Sits. Waits.

INT. KAMRAN'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

He's been awake since he got home. Lying on his back. Staring at the ceiling. The radio audible through the wall. He listens to the state describe what he participated in. "Terrorist elements..."

He closes his eyes. Neda's face. His father's face. He opens them. Gets up. Dresses. Opens the door.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- CONTINUOUS

Neda at the table. Looking at him. He stops. The space between them contains everything they won't say to each other for the rest of this film.

KAMRAN
Don't go out today.

NEDA
(quiet)
Why.

KAMRAN
Because I'm asking you.

NEDA
Kamran--

KAMRAN
Please.

That word. She looks at him.

NEDA
Are you safe?

He almost says yes.

KAMRAN
Don't go out today.

He takes his jacket. Leaves. Neda sits. With what she knows. With what she can't prove. With what she's going to do anyway.

INT. LEYLA'S APARTMENT -- AFTERNOON

Arin enters through the back. Leyla has tea ready. Bread on the table. He sits. Doesn't eat. Drinks.

LEYLA
The tape. We release it now or the
movement looks broken.

ARIN
Tomorrow night. Then it goes out.

LEYLA
Tomorrow night.

ARIN
Leyla.
(beat)
Do you know who did it?

LEYLA
No. Do you?

ARIN
I calculated probabilities.

LEYLA
And you didn't warn anyone.

ARIN
 I had no evidence--
 (beat)
 You can't accuse someone of a
 probability.

LEYLA
 No.
 (beat)
 But you can tell their sister to be
 more careful.

That lands. He absorbs it. Fully. No deflection.

ARIN
 Yes.
 (beat)
 I could have done that.
 (beat)
 I could have done that and I
 didn't.

He says it plainly. No defense. Just the fact of it. And for
 a moment she sees what it costs him to say it plainly --
 which is not nothing. Which is not enough.

INT. UNIVERSITY CORRIDOR -- NEXT DAY

Neda moves through the campus. She said she'd stay home. She
 didn't. She passes PARI.

PARI
 (low)
 Go home.

NEDA
 I'm fine.

PARI
 That's not what I mean.
 (beat)
 Things move fast today.
 (beat)

(MORE)

PARI (CONT'D)
 Even if you haven't done anything.
 (beat)
 Especially if you haven't.

NEDA
 Are you scared?

PARI
 (simply)
 Yes.
 (beat)
 You should be too.

She walks on. Neda stands in the corridor. Two speeds around her. She turns. Goes home. Not because she's stopping. Because she's thinking. Thinking requires somewhere quiet.

INTERCUTTING BEGINS.

INT. ARIN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Maps. Pins. Leyla in the doorway. She doesn't say it. He sees it in her face.

LEYLA
 Neda's been picked up.

EXT. STREET -- SAME NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS IN MEMORY

Neda walking home. A PLAINCLOTHES OFFICER falls into step beside her. She senses him before she sees him. Her pace doesn't change.

OFFICER
 You were at the university today.

She turns. Studies him once. Measures the distance between here and options she doesn't have.

NEDA
 I'm a student.

OFFICER
Where did you get the leaflets?

NEDA
What leaflets?

He takes her arm. She doesn't struggle. Not because she's afraid. Because struggling is evidence. She goes. Controlled. Already thinking ahead.

INT. ARIN'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

LEYLA
You know where she is.

ARIN
Yes.

LEYLA
Then we go.

ARIN
No.

LEYLA
Arin--

ARIN
If we move while she's in there
we confirm there's something to move for.

LEYLA
She's twenty-one--

ARIN
She knows exactly what to say.
(beat)
She's the most prepared person

in this network.

LEYL
You calculated her into a network.
(beat)
She's a person.

ARIN
I know.

LEYL
Then act like it.

Silence. He doesn't move. That's the choice. Leyla turns.
Leaves.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- SAME NIGHT

A room with no windows. No clock. NEDA across from a JUNIOR OFFICER. She folds her hands on the table. No fidgeting. She's done the math too.

JUNIOR OFFICER
Where did you get this?

He places the leaflet on the table.

NEDA
From a wall.

JUNIOR OFFICER
You had it in your bag.

NEDA
I picked it up. I was curious.

JUNIOR OFFICER
The voice on the new tape.
(beat)
It's a woman.

NEDA
I've heard that too.

JUNIOR OFFICER
Young. Educated. Tehran accent.

NEDA
That describes half the city.

He studies her. She holds it. The room is very quiet. This is what courage looks like when no one is watching.

JUNIOR OFFICER
You understand what we do to people
who aren't cooperative.

NEDA
For what?
A flicker. He didn't expect that.

JUNIOR OFFICER
Excuse me?

NEDA
You'd do something to me.
(beat)
For what?
(beat)
Walking past walls?
(beat)
Being a student?

JUNIOR OFFICER
We'll continue this tomorrow.

He leaves. Neda sits alone. Hands shaking. Not visible. Contained. She breathes. Counts the seconds between breaths. Already rebuilding.

INT. ARIN'S ROOM -- SAME NIGHT

Arin sits. The map in front of him. Neda's node -- frozen. He stares at it.

Then takes the map down. Not anger. Recognition. The map is his need to believe he controls the movement.

He folds it. Picks up his notebook. Writes: "The movement needs to forget mine." Adds: "Before it's forced to."

He reads the words back. Then reads them again. Sits with them. The weight of authorship meeting the weight of consequence.

EXT. HOLDING FACILITY -- NIGHT

Leyla stands across the street. Too many guards. Too open. But she doesn't leave.

A TRANSPORT VAN pulls up. Detainees moved. She scans faces -- then -- Neda. For a second. Their eyes meet. Recognition. Relief. Fear. Then Neda is pushed inside. Gone.

Leyla doesn't think. She follows the van.

INT. ARIN'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Arin hears a sound from the street. Goes to the window. Sees Leyla's back disappearing around the corner. He understands immediately. He picks up the phone. Calls her. It rings. She doesn't answer.

He stands at the window.

This is the moment. He could go. He could follow. He could do the thing that costs him everything he's built.

He stands at the window. And doesn't.

He puts the phone down. Goes back to his desk. Opens the notebook. Reads what he just wrote: "The movement needs to forget mine." "Before it's forced to."

He sits with those words. Knowing exactly what they cost. In this moment. Right now. With Neda in a van and Leyla running and himself at a window doing nothing.

That's Arin's wound fully open. Not strategy. Not calculation. A man who has built a philosophy of withholding and is now paying for it with a person.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PERIMETER -- NIGHT

The van pulls behind a low concrete structure. No signage. Leyla stops at distance. Breathing hard. She watches. Two guards open the van. Detainees pulled out. She finds Neda. Alive. She moves. Circles the perimeter. A service entrance. Unlocked. Too easy. She enters.

INT. CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Dim. Narrow. Voices echo ahead. Leyla moves carefully. She finds a room. Looks through the gap. Another detainee. Breaking.

DETAINEE

I don't know them -- I don't--

She watches. This is not a rescue. This is witness. She steps back.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Neda. Same Junior Officer. Different energy.

JUNIOR OFFICER

You had time to think.

NEDA

Yes.

JUNIOR OFFICER

And?

NEDA

And nothing changed.

JUNIOR OFFICER

Tell me who made the tapes.

NEDA

I don't know anything about tapes.

JUNIOR OFFICER
We know you do.

NEDA
Then you know more than I do.

JUNIOR OFFICER
(quiet)
You're protecting someone.

NEDA
I'm telling you the truth.

JUNIOR OFFICER
(quietly)
For you.

She looks at him.

NEDA
(quieter)
For you?

That flicker again. She didn't deflect. She questioned the premise. He has no answer for that.

JUNIOR OFFICER
Stay here.

He exits. Neda alone.

INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Leyla at the door. She opens it.

LEYLA
Come on--

NEDA
You shouldn't be here--

LEYLA
Move.

They move.

INT. EXIT CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Almost clear -- a GUARD turns the corner. Sees them.

GUARD

Stop--

Leyla freezes. Neda doesn't. She shoves Leyla forward--

NEDA

Go--

The guard raises his weapon -- Leyla turns --

BANG.

Silence.

Neda drops.

EXT. PERIMETER -- CONTINUOUS

Leyla runs. Can't look back. She runs.

INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Guards flood the space. Neda on the ground. Still.

No last words. No speech. Just -- gone.

The idea didn't protect her. She knew it wouldn't. She went anyway.

EXT. ROOFTOP -- NIGHT

Leyla. Blood on her hands. Not hers. She looks at the city.

Something breaks. Not grief. Certainty.

She takes out her phone. Calls Arin.

INT. ARIN'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

His phone rings. He answers.

LEYLA (O.S.)
(barely)
She's gone.

He doesn't move.

ARIN
Where are you.

LEYLA (O.S.)
Rooftop. South building.

ARIN
Stay there.

He moves.

EXT. ROOFTOP -- LATER

Arin arrives. Leyla sitting. Still looking at the city. He sits beside her. Neither speaks for a long moment.

LEYLA
You didn't come.

Not an accusation. A fact placed on the table between them.

ARIN
No.

LEYLA
Say it.

A long pause. He tries.

ARIN
I made the--

He stops. That sentence doesn't finish. He tries it from the beginning.

ARIN (CONT'D)

I--

Still doesn't finish. Because there's no version of it that's true. "I made the right decision" -- isn't true. "I made the wrong decision" -- isn't sufficient. What's true is: I made the only decision I knew how to make. And that's the most damning thing of all.

He doesn't say any of it. He sits in the silence.

LEYLA

She changed her method after the first run.

(beat)

Without being told.

(beat)

She knew more than any of us

about how not to be found.

ARIN

I know.

LEYLA

And they found her anyway.

ARIN

I know.

LEYLA

So what did you save?

The question. Arin's silence is the answer. Not a defense. Not a calculation. A man sitting with the full weight of what his philosophy costs when it meets the world.

Leyla stands.

LEYLA (CONT'D)

Tomorrow the tape goes out.

(beat)

(MORE)

LEYLA (CONT'D)

Not yours.

(beat)

Mine.

(beat)

The movement doesn't stop because she did.

(beat)

That would make it about her death.

(beat)

It's about what she believed.

ARIN

That's my argument.

LEYLA

Yes.

(beat)

Isn't it terrible that I'm right

and so are you.

She leaves. Arin sits alone. On the rooftop. The city below. Neda somewhere in it. Gone.

He stays there a long time. Long enough that the light changes around him.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

The Father sits at the kitchen table. Kamran enters. Sets something on the table. The gun.

FATHER

What did you do?

Kamran doesn't answer.

FATHER (CONT'D)

You think this brings her back?

Kamran finally looks at him.

KAMRAN

No.
(beat)
I don't know.

That's the honest answer. Not defiance. "I don't know." The most devastating thing he could say.

FATHER

(quietly)
God help us.

He reaches into his shirt pocket. Takes out the leaflet. The one he kept in the tin. He unfolds it. Places it on the table. Beside the gun.

Two things his children believed in. Both on the table now. Both real. Both insufficient.

He looks at them. A father in a kitchen in Tehran. Measuring the distance between what he hoped for his children and what the world required of them.

He picks up the leaflet. Folds it. Puts it back in his pocket. Against his chest. Leaves the gun on the table. Walks to his room.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- NIGHT

DABIRI

A student. University.
(beat)
Killed during a transfer operation.

FARZAN

Name.

DABIRI

Neda Sadeghi.

Farzan is still. A long beat. Long enough to mean something.

FARZAN
Pull the junior officer.
(beat)
She was twenty-one.
(beat)
A student.
(beat)
And now she's on a wall by tomorrow
morning.

He stands. Moves to the board. Adds a pin. Not a location.
Just a name. Written in small letters: Neda.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
(to Dabiri)
Do you know what we just did?

DABIRI
We removed a distribution--

FARZAN
We made her permanent.

He looks at the board.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
Find me the brother.

EXT. TEHRAN -- DAWN

A wall. Fresh paint. Neda's face. Below it: "SHE DID NOTHING"

Someone walks past. Stops. Looks. Keeps walking. The face
remaining. The city waking into a different version of
itself.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

ACT THREE

EXT. TEHRAN -- MORNING -- THREE DAYS LATER

The city at a different temperature. Not hotter. More pressurized. Neda's face on seven walls. Eight. Nine. The city counting its own dead.

INT. ARIN'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

He enters only to collect what matters. The notebook. Two cassettes. A photograph -- small, worn -- that we don't see clearly. He moves quickly. Knowing it's the last time.

At the window -- the street below. The surveillance man is gone. That's worse than if he were still there. Gone means they've moved to something less visible. Less visible means more certain.

He takes the photograph. Pockets it. Leaves.

The apartment behind him. A room that has already forgotten the person who thought in it.

EXT. BACK STREETS -- MORNING

Arin moves. He passes the wall. The graffiti they painted over. Someone has painted it back. Not the same hand. Different lettering. Slightly different words:

"WE DO NOT WORK FOR THEM"

We. He reads the change. The movement has conjugated itself. Found its pronoun. He didn't do that. He keeps walking.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- MORNING

DABIRI
Sixty-one absences confirmed.

Twenty-six locations.

(beat)

And Karaj. Nineteen independently.

(beat)

And we're receiving reports from Tabriz.

FARZAN

Tabriz.

DABIRI

(beat)

Forty.

The room goes quiet. Farzan sits. For the first time in this film -- he sits like a man who needs to sit.

FARZAN

Tabriz.

(beat)

We missed it.

(beat)

I anticipated the source. The architecture.

The fracture into violence.

(beat)

I didn't anticipate Tabriz.

(beat)

Because Tabriz wasn't part of the design.

(beat)

Which means the design is no longer
the thing that matters.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
Pull the university surveillance
team.
(beat)
All of it.
(beat)
There is no longer a source.
(beat)
Get me the Interior Minister.

DABIRI
What do I tell him?

FARZAN
Tell him we have a different kind
of problem

than we thought we had.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- MORNING

Professor Hosseini. The same room. The same light. Across
from him -- not the Junior Officer. Farzan. He came himself.
The Professor registers this without showing it.

FARZAN
The leaflet in your desk.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
I confiscated it from a student.
(beat)
I intended to report it.

FARZAN
You didn't.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
(beat)
No.

FARZAN
Why not?

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
Because I was weighing whether
what it says is actually dangerous--
(beat)
or simply inconvenient.

FARZAN
Those aren't different things.
(beat)
The student who gave you the
leaflet.
(beat)
When you remember which one--
(beat)
call us.

At the door--

FARZAN (CONT'D)
(without turning)
Neda Sadeghi was in your faculty.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
She attended one of my seminars.

FARZAN
Was she--

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI
She was a good student.

Farzan turns. Looks at him.

FARZAN
Yes.
(beat)
She was.

He leaves. The Professor sits alone. With the word was.

EXT. PROFESSOR'S BUILDING -- LATER

He walks out. Two blocks. Stops at a public phone. Dials.

ARIN (O.S.)

Yes.

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI

He came himself.

(beat)

I'm out. For now.

(beat)

Arin.

(beat)

The ones who step back into the crowd.

(beat)

Do it now.

(beat)

Before they look up and see you standing.

ARIN (O.S.)

I already--

PROFESSOR HOSSEINI

Further.

(beat)

Step back further than you think

you need to.

He hangs up. He has done what he can.

INT. KAMRAN'S SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

A rented room. Sparse. Temporary. Kamran sits with the news from a small radio. Sixty-one. Twenty-six locations. Karaj. Tabriz.

He listens. His face doing something complicated. He didn't do this. He participated in something that runs parallel to this. He thought his path and Neda's were separate things heading toward the same place.

He's beginning to understand they were never separate. They were always the same argument. Different sentences.

He takes out a piece of paper. Writes. Not a plan. A letter. To Neda.

We don't read over his shoulder. We know what it contains: the things you say when you need someone to know you before they know what you did.

He finishes. Folds it. Puts it in his pocket. He'll find a way. Or he won't. Either way -- he wrote it. That's the part he could control.

INT. MINA'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Leyla. Mina. Hassan. Davar. The core. What remains.

MINA

Eighty-one confirmed as of last night.

Thirty-four locations.

HASSAN

Karaj confirmed nineteen independently.

(beat)

We didn't contact them this week.

LEYLA

(absorbing)

They organized themselves.

DAVAR

Tabriz.

Everyone looks at him.

DAVAR (CONT'D)

Someone drove the tape to Tabriz.

Mina got a message.

(beat)

"We heard the question.

We're asking it here too."

Silence. The room understanding what that means.

LEYLA

We don't acknowledge Tabriz.

(beat)

They're safer without the connection.

(beat)

Today we do exactly what we've always done.

(beat)

Nothing different. Nothing louder.

(beat)

Go home.

(beat)

Don't come to work.

(beat)

That's all.

DAVAR

And Arin?

LEYLA

Arin stepped back.

(beat)

That was the right decision.

(beat)

He's where he needs to be.

(beat)

Which is not here.

EXT. SOUTH TEHRAN -- DAWN

Arin in a district that doesn't know his face. He walks. Past a tea house. Past a school. Past a government office.

He stops. Watches. Workers arriving. Two. Three. Then -- four in a row who pass the entrance. Don't go in. Keep walking. A fifth. A sixth.

The office with three people instead of nine.

Arin watches. A stranger. Just a man on the street watching the morning. Nobody knows him here. Nobody knows he is the reason for what he's watching.

That's the design. That's the cost. That's the thing he can't fully grieve and can't fully celebrate and has to simply hold.

He watches until the morning shift is complete. Then he walks. Into the crowd. One of them.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- AFTERNOON

Farzan alone. The board. He begins removing the strings. One by one. Not destroying the board. Dismantling the theory.

The theory that said: find the source, remove the source, end the movement.

He removes the strings. The pins remain. The locations. The evidence. But the connections between them -- gone. Because there are no connections anymore. There is only the movement itself. Which is now the same thing as the city.

He removes the last string. Looks at the board. Just pins. Dots on a map. Each one a decision made by a person he will never find.

He takes out Arin's photograph. Puts it on the board. Just another pin. One more dot.

FARZAN

(to himself)

You built something that works.

(beat)

I built something that can't stop it.

He looks at Arin's photograph among the pins.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 I don't know whether to find you--

He stops. Straightens his jacket. Picks up the phone.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hold the Sadeghi warrant.

DABIRI (O.S.)
 Both of them?

FARZAN
 Both.
 (beat)
 Watch them.
 (beat)
 Let them lead us to what this
 becomes.

He hangs up. Sits. Just a man in a room. Tired. Not defeated.
 Just -- finally -- human.

He opens the desk drawer. Takes out Arin's photograph. Looks
 at it one more time. Puts it in the drawer. Closes it.

Not on the board. The drawer. Personal. Like the Professor
 and the leaflet. The parallel landing without announcement.

He sits back. The board empty of strings. Full of pins. The
 city in the window. Still moving. Still itself. Still
 deciding.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- AFTERNOON

The Father at the kitchen table. The radio on. The reports.
 He listens. Eighty-one. Thirty-four. Karaj. Tabriz.

He reaches into his shirt pocket. The leaflet. He unfolds it.
 Reads it. He's read it many times. This time differently. Not
 as a warning. Not as a threat. As a document.

"Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

He puts it on the table. Flat. Looks at it for a long time. Then picks up the radio. Turns it off. The kitchen quiet.

He sits in the quiet. And does something we haven't seen him do in this film. He allows himself to feel what he feels. All of it. His wife. His children. 1979. The cost of surviving. The cost of not surviving.

He sits with all of it. Without resolving it. That's not weakness. That's the oldest and most honest form of courage in this script.

A knock at the door. He opens it. A young man. Holds out an envelope.

YOUNG MAN

From Kamran.

He takes it. The young man leaves. The Father closes the door. Opens the envelope. Inside -- a letter. And below it, folded -- another piece of paper. He unfolds it. Reads.

It's Kamran's version of the leaflet. Not copied. Rewritten. In Kamran's hand. His own words. His own argument. Arriving at the same place.

The Father holds both pieces of paper. His son's letter. His son's conviction. He folds them together. Places them in his shirt pocket. Beside the original.

Three documents now. Against his heart.

EXT. ROOFTOP -- LATE AFTERNOON

Leyla. The city below completing its Thursday. She takes out her phone. Opens the camera. Holds it up.

The city in the frame. The walls with their writing. The streets with their absence. The rooftops with their dishes pointed at skies they're not supposed to reach.

She holds the frame. Steady. This time -- she takes it. The shutter click.

She looks at the photograph on the screen. Tehran. Thursday. The city that decided.

She puts the phone away. Sits on the edge. Lets the city be what it is.

Below -- a WOMAN hangs laundry. A BOY kicks a ball against a wall. An OLD MAN tends a plant with the specific attention of someone who has kept things alive through difficult seasons.

Leyla watches them. The city in its ordinary motion. Persisting.

Her phone. A call. Arin. She answers.

LEYLA

I know.

ARIN (O.S.)

Tabriz.

LEYLA

I know.

ARIN (O.S.)

How does it feel?

She looks at the city.

LEYLA

Like the beginning of something.

(beat)

Not the end.

ARIN (O.S.)

(quietly)

Yes. That's exactly what it feels like.

LEYLA

Come back.

ARIN (O.S.)
Not yet.

LEYLA
It may not get safer.

ARIN (O.S.)
I know.

LEYLA
There's a new group.
(beat)
Listening tonight.
(beat)
They're taking notes.
(beat)
Not on what you said.
(beat)
On what it made them think.

ARIN (O.S.)
(quietly)
Good.

LEYLA
They have questions you didn't ask.

ARIN (O.S.)
Better.

A silence between them. The kind between two people who have been through something together and don't need to name it.

LEYLA
Arin.

ARIN (O.S.)
What.

LEYLA
The thing you didn't say.
(beat)
On the rooftop.
(beat)
After.

A very long pause.

ARIN (O.S.)

Yes.

LEYLA
You can say it when you come back.

ARIN (O.S.)
(barely audible)

Yes.

LEYLA
Good night.

ARIN (O.S.)
Good night.

She hangs up. The city below. Everything that happened to it.
Everything still happening.

INT. SMALL ROOM -- EVENING

A new group. Not Arin's original circle. Younger faces.
Sitting around a cassette player. Leyla's voice fills the
room.

LEYLA (ON TAPE)
They want you organized.
(beat)
Don't be.
(beat)
They want a center to destroy.
(beat)
Be everywhere instead.
(beat)
They want you to demand.
(beat)
Withdraw instead.
(beat)
You are not asking for permission.
(beat)
You are demonstrating

that you never needed to give it.

The group listens. A YOUNG WOMAN -- maybe nineteen -- takes notes. Not the text. Ideas sparked by the text. Her own.

The YOUNG MAN beside her -- passes her a pen when hers runs out. Without being asked.

That small act of noticing someone's need and meeting it. The seed of everything this script has been about.

INT./EXT. TEA HOUSE -- SOUTH TEHRAN -- DAY

Arin, in his new anonymous life, sits at a table near the window. A man enters. Sits two tables away. KAMRAN. Neither knows who the other is.

Arin reads from his notebook. Kamran looks at the street.

A CASSETTE plays from the tea house radio. Arin's original tape -- the distorted voice, familiar to us, anonymous to everyone in the room.

Kamran listens. Arin doesn't react. He wrote it. It's been inside him so long he doesn't hear it anymore.

ARIN (ON TAPE)
(distorted)
Every system requires
participation.
(beat)
You cannot arrest absence.
(beat)
You cannot interrogate a decision.

Kamran looks at the radio. Something in his face. His sister. Everything she knew that he's still learning.

He picks up his tea. Drinks.

Two men in the same room. The idea between them. Neither knowing.

Arin writes something in his notebook. Kamran watches the street.

The tape ends. Silence.

Arin closes his notebook. Stands. Leaves.

Kamran watches him go. Just a man. Unremarkable. He looks back at the street. The city.

The cassette clicks off.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. SOUTH TEHRAN -- NIGHT

Arin walks. He passes a wall. New graffiti. He stops. Reads.

"YOU DON'T OVERTHROW SYSTEMS."

Below it -- different hand: "YOU OUTGROW THEM."

His words. On a wall. In a hand he's never seen. In a district that doesn't know his name.

He reads them. Once. Twice.

He doesn't write them in his notebook. He doesn't photograph them. He just stands there.

A man reading his own idea back from a wall that received it from someone who received it from someone who received it from a cassette that traveled from a room to a hand to another hand to here.

He keeps walking. Into the crowd.

INT. FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

The Father at the door. The street empty. He steps outside.

Looks left. Looks right. The city quiet. Then -- down the street -- Neda. Walking toward home. Her pace unhurried. Alive.

He sees her. She sees him.

They don't wave. Just see each other across the distance. She walks to him. When she reaches the door:

NEDA
Tabriz.

FATHER
I heard.

NEDA
Did you read Kamran's letter?

FATHER
Yes.

NEDA
Is he safe?

FATHER
I don't know.

NEDA
Are you going to tell me to stop?

He looks at his daughter. Her mother's certainty. Her mother's eyes. Her own specific courage that belongs to no one who came before.

FATHER
No.

NEDA
Then what?

FATHER
(quietly)
Then I'm going to tell you

I'm proud of both of you.

(beat)

Even though it frightens me.

(beat)

Even though I don't know

what comes next.

NEDA
That's everything.

FATHER
No.
(beat)
It's what I have.

She goes inside. He stands at the door. The street. The city.
Thursday completing itself.

He reaches into his pocket. Three documents. He doesn't take
them out. Just touches them. Through the fabric.

He goes inside. Closes the door.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- NIGHT

Farzan returns from the Minister. Sits.

DABIRI
The Minister wants a public
response.

Arrests. Visibility.

FARZAN
We're not in control.
(beat)
We can't arrest an absence.
(beat)
We can't interrogate a decision.
(MORE)

FARZAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

We can't paint over an idea

that's already on walls in Tabriz.

FARZAN (CONT'D)

Tell him we're monitoring.

(beat)

Tell him it's contained.

DABIRI

Is it?

A long pause.

FARZAN

No.

(beat)

But he needs to believe it is.

(beat)

For now.

Dabiri nods. Leaves. Farzan alone. He opens the drawer. Takes out Arin's photograph.

Studies it. The unremarkable young man.

FARZAN (CONT'D)

(to the photograph)

You stepped back into the crowd.

A beat.

FARZAN (CONT'D)

(to the photograph)

Good.

He means it. Not defeat. Recognition. One strategist acknowledging another.

He puts the photograph back. Closes the drawer. Looks at the window. The city.

FARZAN (CONT'D)
(quietly, to himself)
What do we do with something

that doesn't need a head?

He doesn't have an answer. That's new. He sits with it.

After a moment -- he opens the drawer again. Takes the photograph out one more time.

He looks at Arin's face. Young. Ordinary. Already gone into the crowd.

Then Farzan does something strange.

He turns the photograph over. On the blank back, with the same precise hand he uses for his board annotations, he writes two words.

We don't see what he wrote. He puts the photograph back in the drawer. This time face-down.

He sits back. The board empty of strings. Full of pins. The city in the window.

Still moving. Still deciding.

EXT. TEHRAN -- DAWN

Aerial. Same framing as the opening.

The city before it performs itself.

But now -- across rooftops -- subtle signals:

A light flicks on, off, on.

A figure leaves a door slightly open.

A paper tucked into a crack in a wall.

A woman hanging laundry who pauses -- tucks something into the fold of a sheet -- continues.

No coordination. No leader. No signal required.

Just -- enough people. Same moment. Deciding.

EXT. SOUTH TEHRAN STREET -- DAWN

Arin moves through the crowd. Workers heading to the same government building he watched yesterday. He falls into step among them. Unremarkable. One of them.

A WORKER beside him glances over. Just a glance. The instinctive look of people moving in the same direction.

The worker nods. Not recognition. Just acknowledgment. We are going the same way.

Arin nods back.

They walk. Past the government building. Both of them. Not going in.

The worker peels off down a side street. Arin continues. The crowd absorbs him. He disappears into it.

EXT. UNIVERSITY GATE -- DAWN

On the wall beside the entrance. In chalk. Just three words: "THEN LET SPEAK"

The chalk rests on the ground beneath it. Unclaimed.

A student passes. Stops. Reads. Picks up the chalk. Looks at it.

Then -- slowly -- adds four words beneath.

We don't see what they write. The student sets the chalk back down. Walks on.

Another student arrives. Reads all of it. Stands for a long moment.

Picks up the chalk.

INT. SECURITY COMMAND CENTER -- DAWN

The room empty. Just the board. Farzan's board.

Pins. No strings. Dots representing every location where the movement has surfaced. Every city. Every ministry. Every school.

A CLEANING WOMAN moves through the space. She's been cleaning this room for years. She knows better than to touch anything on the board.

But she stops at it. Just for a moment.

Looks at the pins.

Her hand goes to her pocket. Instinctively. The way hands go to things that matter.

She takes out a folded piece of paper. Small. Worn at the creases. She's carried it for a while.

She unfolds it. Just slightly. Reads one line.

Folds it. Puts it back.

Picks up her mop. Keeps working.

The board behind her. Full of pins. Each one a person. And now -- one more person in the room the board was built to stop.

She mops. The fluorescent light flickers above her. The sound of a city waking outside.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. TEHRAN -- FULL AERIAL -- DAWN

The city.

The call to prayer begins.

And beneath it --

Not silence. Not chaos. Something in between.

The sound of a city thinking.

The sound of people deciding.

Quiet. Persistent. Uncontrolled. Not unified. Alive.

The most dangerous sound in the world.

HOLD ON THE CITY.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

LIBERTAS

FADE OUT.

LIBERTAS