

FISH

EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS FROM STREETS IN MIDDLE EAST - NIGHT

A far away, alien geography: poor suburbs, dirty roads, dirt houses. No life form in view.

O.S. BOMB! A big explosion.

A brief silence followed by gun shots.

Distant and violent voices approach with occasional cuts to a group of civilians fighting the army: fists, knives, guns, empty shells, axes, chopped arms, wood further cracking bloody heads, blood-covered hands. Women in veils dragged on the ground, children throw rocks, children fall on the ground, soldiers drag men by their beards, soldiers stoned to death... A CROWD at the verge of revolution: Iran 1979.

In cacophony the Crowd shouts one thing:

CROWD (SUBTITLE)
God is great! The Shah is not!

EXT. DESERTED STREET IN MIDDLE EAST - 15 MINUTES LATER

A deserted street, all blinds shut. Approaching foot noises followed by a shadow breaking into the street.

HASSAN, 17, runs from five soldiers. Frantically he tries to get indoors; all the doors are locked.

Curios eyes watch him through blinds.

HASSAN (SUBTITLE)
Help me, God! Help me.

A door in distance opens, light beams out. The silhouette of an ELDERLY WOMAN appears and motions him inside.

He enters.

INT. ELDERLY WOMAN'S HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Elderly Woman blows out the gas lamp. Pitch dark.

Hassan peeks through the window, sees the soldiers outside look through other windows. One approaches Elderly Woman's house. Terrified, Hassan ducks his head.

Waits. Peeks out the window once again. The soldier's body covers the window. Hassan pushes himself further into the wall; he can hardly breath.

Footsteps heard in the distance followed by a shadow breaking on the street.

The soldiers chase and shoot after the running shadow.

Relieved, Hassan falls on the ground. A match, and the gas lamp burns again. The light reveals others in the room. TWO YOUNG GIRLS in headscarves, 16 and 18, and BAHRAM, 18, stare at Hassan. Fear is all around the room.

Bahram holds a bread knife with a trembling hand.

HASSAN (SUBTITLE)

Thank you. Thank you.

BAHRAM (SUBTITLE)

Don't move!

(to his mother)

He is a Shia, why did you let him in?

ELDERLY WOMAN (SUBTITLE)

We couldn't just let him out on the street.

BAHRAM (SUBTITLE)

Why not?! They would have done the same!

ELDERLY WOMAN (SUBTITLE)

That's how your father was murdered! Because no one take him in.

(beat)

He will stay with us until these troubles pass.

BAHRAM (SUBTITLE)

Stay with us? He is a stranger, he cannot stay under the same roof as my sisters!

ELDERLY WOMAN (SUBTITLE)

You are right, he is a stranger. It is not appropriate.

Elderly Woman takes the knife from her son, motions towards Hassan. Hassan shrinks back into the wall. She cuts buttons off her shirt, takes out one of her breasts, cuts the tip of her nipple. Blood rush down her breast.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

Suck on it. Now!

Hassan is scared, others confused. She pushes the knife against Hassan's throat. He does as ordered.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

Harder!

Hassan sucks harder on the cut nipple until blood fills his mouth.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

Now, you are a son to me, and these are your siblings. In the Prophet's name and in God's eyes they are your responsibility from here on.

Hassan looks at his sisters and Bahram.

FADE OUT TO
TITLE CREDIT

FISH

FADE IN:

30 YEARS LATER

EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS OF NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

The beautiful city that never sleeps with its well-lit skyscrapers; dirty, dark alleys; crowded streets; people getting out of night clubs; cabs passing by; an apartment block.

INT. VARIOUS SHOTS OF AN APARTMENT - NIGHT

An ordinary apartment; dirty kitchen; disorganized living room; the mute TV plays a documentary on mating lions to no audience; an aquarium with two goldfish, one floating on top, motionless.

EMILY, 28, gorgeous blond is having sex with ALEX, 38, handsome and muscular. Emily is loud, very loud.

INT. HASSAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

O.S. Emily moans.

HASSAN, late 40s, nearly bald, with his ear against a cup on the ground, masturbates.

He cleans up, throws the used paper towel in a trash can, misses. It joins similarly folded old paper towels. He pulls himself back towards a nearby wheelchair.

INT. VARIOUS SHOTS IN HASSAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

O.S. Emily continues to moan at different levels as:

Hassan performs ablution; unveils a few family pictures on a nightstand; puts Sufi music on; reads the Qur'an while avoiding the pictures he uncovered.

Emily lets out an orgasmic scream.

HASSAN

Amen.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 15 MINUTES LATER

Emily inspects her stomach. She grabs little-to-no flesh on her bones and pulls it with disgust. Alex cleans himself with paper towels, crumples them and throws them on the floor. Emily shoots him an irritated look. Alex snuggles up to her.

EMILY

Do you have to do that every time?

ALEX

What?

EMILY

That! You know I have to pick it up later.

ALEX

I'll take care of it in a while.

EMILY

Now?

ALEX

You serious?

EMILY

Yes... Please?

Alex unwillingly picks up the half-wet paper towels, and disappears into the bathroom.

O.S. Noises come from the adjacent apartment: a loud male voice is echoed by a female cry.

Emily grabs a glass on the nightstand, drinks the water in it, puts her ear against the glass and listens through the wall.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Not fucking again!

O.S. Toilette flushes.

Alex comes back and starts putting his clothes on.

ALEX
You need to stop throwing me out.

EMILY
I will, once we're married.

Noises from the adjacent apartment get louder.

ALEX
They quarrel like this every night?

EMILY
Yeah. And they got a little boy too. Why the fuck do such people make kids? They should've got a dog instead.

ALEX
Shouldn't you call the police?

EMILY
It's none of my business. Besides someone did call before but nothing happened.

Alex looks out the window as he buttons his shirt. He watches the neon lights, cars pushing forward, a homeless person, unclear whether man or woman under all the dirty fabric around it. The city is sad but beautiful. And he loves it. He turns to Emily, the human reflection of this city: gorgeous, mysterious and still pulling on her non-existent fat.

ALEX
You know these walks back to my place make me wonder if you really do love me.

EMILY
I am marrying you, Alex. That should be all the proof you need.

ALEX

But it's freezing outside. Don't you feel bad for me... walking home in this weather?

EMILY

Get a cab and stop getting all emotional about it. You know I can't fall asleep with another person in the room.

ALEX

And this will change once we're married?

EMILY

Yes... Hopefully.

ALEX

OK then. I'll see you at the audition tomorrow.

EMILY

You know you don't have to hold my hand to every audition.

ALEX

Well, but I want to guarantee you saying "I want to thank my husband, who always believed in me and stood by my side through each audition" when you get your first Oscar.

Emily smiles, Alex kisses her forehead and leaves. Emily tries to listen to the adjacent apartment just when the telephone rings.

She picks it up and walks in the apartment.

EMILY

Hi, how are you? Yes, he just left. How was your day? How's the little man? Good.

(Notices the dead fish)

Fuck, not this one too! Look I gotta go, the new fish I got is dead. Wednesday, Saint Thomas Church. OK. Bye.

She hangs up.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 (to the living fish)
 Are you killing them? This was the
 fifth one!

Voices from the adjacent apartment get louder. Emily approaches to hear better.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT (NEXT APARMENT) - SIMULTANEOUSLY

A drunk, cursing male voice mixes with a woman's cries.

In the midst of this noise HENRY, 8, quietly reads a microwave manual guide. The noise pass right through him.

INT. HALLWAY THIRD FLOOR - DAY

Emily waits for the elevator. The white dress she wears highlights her perfect curves. Henry, in a private school uniform, and TINA, middle-aged mom, wearing sun-glasses join Emily.

Emily and Tina greet each other with small smiles and near-whispered "Hi"s.

HENRY
 Good morning.

EMILY
 Ah, good morning. You look very nice.

Tina gives Emily a smile of appreciation.

HENRY
 I know, thank you.

EMILY
 How do you know it?

HENRY
 Mom said so.

The elevator door opens. Inside is Hassan in his wheelchair holding a styrofoam cup of coffee.

The smile disappears from Tina's face.

INT. ELEVATOR - A FEW SECONDS LATER

Everyone is aware of each others' presence. The grown-ups exchange unwilling smiles. Henry curiously inspects Hassan despite Tina's attempts to point his face away.

HENRY

What happened to you?

TINA

Don't bother him, Henry!

HASSAN

That's all right. I was born this way.

HENRY

Why?

TINA

Henry?!

HASSAN

I don't know, Henry. Bad luck I guess.

Henry takes a moment to digest Hassan's answer.

HENRY

Are you a bad person?

TINA

Henry! I am sorry. Of course he's not.

HENRY

But you said god punishes bad people with bad things.

At last, the ground floor.

TINA

I am so sorry, he is not usually like this.

Tina pulls at Henry's arm and rushes out of the elevator. Emily slowly walks out. Hassan struggles to follow. Emily turns back to offer help, hesitates, leaves.

INT/EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS FROM EMILY'S DAY - DAY

Emily buys a cup of coffee, exchanges a few lines with the CASHIER, 18; gives change to a handicapped beggar; takes the subway; arrives at her audition, Alex waits for her at the door. She is not as excited to see him.

INT. AUDITION ROOM - DAY

A small room with a camera pointed to a black screen. Emily stands in front of the black screen, across from the CASTING DIRECTOR, male 40s, and GUY 1, mid-twenties.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Take your clothes off.

Emily is surprised.

CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Come on! We don't have the whole day.

EMILY

Wouldn't you rather hear me read a part?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Ms. Henderson we're casting for a body double for Drew Barrymore's nude scenes. So your body language should do fine. Now, if you don't mind.

Emily hesitantly takes her clothes off. She is breathtaking with perfect curves and a glowing skin.

CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Turn around.

She turns around slowly. She can feel the men behind her touching themselves, turns around.

EMILY

Did you get a good look?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Oh, yes.

(beat)

(MORE)

CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Ms. Henderson how about we add some lines to your part in return for a callback at my place, say in two hours?

EMILY
How'bout you call your mom for that back?! Pervert!

CASTING DIRECTOR
Ms. Henderson, there is no such thing as private property in acting, and the sooner you realize this the faster you talk on the screen, with your mouth at least.

EMILY
I'll pass on that.

She puts her dress on.

CASTING DIRECTOR
Look at it from the bright side, this can be practice for you and I assure you, you'll enjoy it. Even if you don't, you'll still get a talking part.

EMILY
You know what, even with your all mighty casting power I am and will be out of your reach. So fuck you very much and stay loyal to your right hand. That's the best you will ever get!

CASTING DIRECTOR
Well good luck making it beyond audition rooms in this business.

She slams the door as she leaves.

CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
(Turning to Guy 1)
What a shame.

EXT. AUDITION WAITING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Alex waits for Emily.

ALEX
How did it go?

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For the complete script (for production or representation consideration only)
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