

THE PRIVATE GREEN

by Jeremy Gable

(The curtain is green and torn. A crescent and star are crudely painted on it.

The anthem “Allahu Akbar” starts playing, proud and triumphant.

A pop. The power goes out. The music slows and stops.

A plane flies low overhead.

The curtain is pulled back, clothesline-style, to reveal an ad hoc clinic in District Two of Sirte, Libya. It is crude, torn apart, abandoned.

There is a doorway with no door.

It is 5:00 a.m. on October 20, 2011.

AMINEH enters. She is twenty-nine years old. She wears form-fitting fatigues, high heels, make-up, nail polish, and a beret. There is a holstered gun at her hip. She is very beautiful, very tired, very scared.

Seeing she is alone, she finds a place to sit. She tries to stay calm. It’s not easy.

As she does, NAVEEN enters. She is nineteen years old, dressed similarly, but with no beret. She approaches AMINEH, undetected)

NAVEEN

Are you okay?

(Startled, AMINEH springs up, pinning NAVEEN’s arm behind her back)

No, stop, it’s me!

AMINEH

Naveen!

(AMINEH releases her)

That was stupid.

NAVEEN

I can see that.

AMINEH  
Don't sneak up on me.

NAVEEN  
Yeah, I got it  
...  
Are you okay?

AMINEH  
Of course.

NAVEEN  
Because you seem a little--

AMINEH  
I'm fine.

NAVEEN  
...  
Okay.

AMINEH  
If you're in here, there's no one guarding him.

NAVEEN  
Gaddafi?

AMINEH  
Who else would I be ...  
Yes, Gaddafi,  
and refer to him as "Our Leader".

NAVEEN  
He's fine, he's with the other men.  
They're sitting in the main room,  
talking quietly to each other.  
Like storytellers, or children.  
Something innocent.

AMINEH  
You should be in there.

NAVEEN  
Well, yeah, but ...

But ...

AMINEH

I mean ...  
You're his guard, too.  
Why aren't you in there?

NAVEEN

Because I outrank you,  
so I say you have to watch him.

AMINEH

Of course you outrank me,  
we're the only two female guards left.

NAVEEN

That doesn't matter.

AMINEH

No one's going to do anything.

NAVEEN

Tell me everyone in the room.

AMINEH

Really?

NAVEEN

I don't joke.

AMINEH

I know  
...  
There's Gaddafi--

NAVEEN

Our Leader.

AMINEH

Our Leader ...  
A man named Abu something ...

NAVEEN

That's his army chief.

AMINEH

NAVEEN

Okay.  
There's Mansour Dhao...

AMINEH

His security chief.

NAVEEN  
(Trying to hide her contempt)

I know who he is.  
And  
...  
um  
...

(Doesn't want to say it. A bad memory)

His son.

AMINEH

His name is Mutassim.

NAVEEN

I know his name!

AMINEH

...  
Just because he trusts all of them  
doesn't mean that we should.

NAVEEN

Who don't you trust?

AMINEH

...  
When I joined the service,  
we had to watch over Our Leader,  
no exceptions.

NAVEEN

Yeah, well ...  
things are different now.  
Libya's nothing but exceptions.

AMINEH

Even so

...  
I assume he's still angry at being stuck in this...  
whatever this is.

NAVEEN

Yeah, he keeps saying,  
“Everything’s stopped working,  
Why’s there no electricity, why’s there no water?”  
And he keeps asking why we haven’t left yet.

AMINEH

It’s a good question.  
We were supposed to leave three hours ago.  
The sun will be up any minute.

NAVEEN

(Just between them)

I couldn’t hear a lot of it,  
but there was something about  
...  
They’re putting some of the patients on the convoy,  
so it looks like we’re just transferring clinics,  
instead of...  
you know ...

AMINEH

Escorting the most powerful man in Libya out of the city.

NAVEEN

Right.  
...  
And if we *are* discovered,  
the patients can be human shields or hostages.  
Their words.

AMINEH

It’s smart.

NAVEEN

So you think it’ll work?

AMINEH

...  
I don’t know anymore.

NAVEEN

What are think our chances are?

AMINEH

...  
You're still pretty new.

NAVEEN

About nine, ten months.  
Right before the protests started.

AMINEH

Well I joined when I was around your age ...  
About ten years ago ...  
And back then, when he came up with a plan,  
to watch him execute it was  
...  
If you had asked me five, ten years ago,  
it would have gone perfectly.

NAVEEN

But now?

AMINEH

...  
Everything stopped working  
...  
So, just us.

NAVEEN

Yeah, Samrah disappeared this morning.

AMINEH

Ran off, like the others.

NAVEEN

I don't know.

AMINEH

But probably.

NAVEEN

Probably.

AMINEH

So much for being his favorite guard.

NAVEEN

Yeah, I guess that's you now

...

Didn't it *used* to be you?

(AMINEH shoots her a look)

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked you that.

...

But weren't you?

His favorite?

AMINEH

The other women told you this.

NAVEEN

Yeah.

AMINEH

...

Many years ago.

NAVEEN

What happened?

AMINEH

I was, and then I wasn't.

You have more questions about it, I assume.

NAVEEN

Well yes ...

...

but now I think I better not.

AMINEH

Good idea.

NAVEEN

...

(Subject change)

Do *you* know where we're going?

I can't get anything from their conversation.

AMINEH

Just ...

out of here.

NAVEEN

Yeah, that's fine by me.  
Sirte has been a really terrible city.

AMINEH

It has.  
This is where he grew up, Our Leader.  
I never thought it'd be so  
...  
unwelcoming.

NAVEEN  
(Going somewhere with this)

I think since Tripoli fell,  
most of the country's feels that way...  
Almost like there's no place for us to go.

AMINEH

We'll find somewhere.

NAVEEN

Yeah, but  
...  
what if we don't?

AMINEH

We will.  
There are loyalists.  
If there weren't, this wouldn't be a civil war.

NAVEEN

But it's not really anymore.  
We've pretty much lost.

AMINEH

Don't let him catch you saying this.

NAVEEN

Of course, but, Amineh ...  
there has to be a reason all the other women left.

AMINEH

Because they're traitors to the country.

NAVEEN

All of them? Because I think ...

...

I come from a farm in Zawiya,  
and we always knew when a sandstorm was coming.

You know how?

Because the rats would disappear.

It happened every time.

When the rats are gone ...

...

you get ready for something terrible.

AMINEH

You come from Zawiya.

NAVEEN

Yeah.

AMINEH

And Our Leader knows this.

NAVEEN

Yeah.

AMINEH

And he still recruited you.

NAVEEN

...

Yeah.

(A plane flying low overhead)

AMINEH

...

So you're saying that it's the end of Libya.

NAVEEN

No, just Gaddafi's Libya.

AMINEH

Gaddafi *is* Libya.

If he dies, the country dies with him.

NAVEEN

Not really, though.  
Doesn't it feel like the country's ...  
I don't know, rebuilding?

AMINEH

Rebuilding.  
...  
This isn't a broken bone, Naveen,  
it doesn't just get repaired.

NAVEEN

But this feels like the start of a new Libya.  
A free Libya.

AMINEH

That, out there ...  
You call that freedom.

NAVEEN

Of course!  
If the people are all saying, "This is wrong,"  
then that has to mean something, yes?  
Something that maybe we're not seeing  
because we're on the inside.  
You've seen what happens to the loyalists  
just for saying that they stand by Gaddafi.  
And right now ...  
who's closer to Gaddafi than we are?  
Literally.  
...  
I don't think we're guards anymore.  
I think we're targets.  
If this convoy is taken,  
we might be human shields, just like the patients.  
...  
Or  
...  
we can use this as an opportunity to start over.  
And not that I'm with the rebels, I'm not with the rebels.  
I'm just realizing that I can make my own choices,  
that I can decide to live through this.  
And if it's what you want, too,  
then we can make that choice.  
Right now.  
Rather than dying out here,

NAVEEN  
(CON'T)

we can go back to our homes,  
we can decide what we want to do,  
we can live as the Libyans that we want to be.  
*That's* freedom.  
And I think that's what I want.

AMINEH

...  
You must have spent a long time practicing that.

NAVEEN

Amineh--

AMINEH

Because you really thought that out.

NAVEEN

I'm just trying to help you.

AMINEH

You want me to abandon Our Leader.

NAVEEN

I want you to be safe.

AMINEH

You're not really going to run away.

NAVEEN

But doesn't it make sense?

AMINEH

No, I'm not asking a question.  
I'm telling you.  
You're not running away.  
The only way you're leaving here is on the convoy with me.

NAVEEN

You don't mean that.

AMINEH

I really do.

NAVEEN

But we're going to die out there.

AMINEH

That's your *job*, Naveen!  
You vowed to protect Our Leader with your life.

NAVEEN

Leader of what?  
Who is he leading?  
Tripoli has fallen,  
so has Benghazi,  
and Zawiya,  
Misrata,  
Zliten,  
Bayda,  
that's most of the country.

AMINEH

So you're joining them because it's popular.

NAVEEN

No, because it makes sense.  
Guys in the Army are leaving every day.

AMINEH

We're not the Army.  
We're his personal guards.  
The rebels aren't going to welcome us.

NAVEEN

They might if they know what happened to us.

AMINEH

...  
Ohhh  
...  
You're one of those.

NAVEEN

No, I'm not.  
...  
One of what?

AMINEH

You're not the first to get scared.  
To want out.  
To start shouting about "What they did to me".  
You're nowhere near the first.

NAVEEN

But things are different.

AMINEH

Oh, good, then tell me how.  
Tell me what happened to the other guards.  
What happened to Samrah.

NAVEEN

...  
I don't know, but--

AMINEH

No, you don't.  
You don't even know if they're still alive

...  
There's a reason you're still here.  
Whatever told you to stay,  
listen to that voice.  
It's kept you alive.

NAVEEN

But for how long?

AMINEH

Until your services are no longer needed.

NAVEEN

According to who?  
Our Great Brotherly Leader?

GADDAFI

What about me?

(GADDAFI is at the doorway. He is sixty-nine years old, smokes a cigar, and carries an air of regality. However, he is also very tired)

AMINEH

Long live Gaddafi!

NAVEEN

Long ...  
Long live Gaddafi!

GADDAFI

Let's hope so  
...

(He gives an "at ease" gesture and loosens up)

Why's there no electricity? Why's there no water?

AMINEH

Everything's stopped working, Papika.

GADDAFI

I was just saying that.  
I grew up here, you know.  
When I was a young boy, it was like this.  
No power, no running water  
...  
I'd like to think it improved under my rule.

AMINEH

This was not you, Papika,  
this was the rebels.

GADDAFI

True.  
What they've done to my town  
...  
It was difficult to live this way,  
but we managed back then,  
and we can manage now  
...  
There's nothing more to do but wait,  
so everyone else is resting.  
But I can't.  
My head is racing with ...  
too many things.  
...  
So I'm checking up on my girls  
...  
Is it just the two of you?

AMINEH

Yes, Papika.

Have you seen Samrah?  
GADDAFI

Samrah?  
NAVEEN

Yes, I haven't seen her all day.  
GADDAFI

...  
No, we  
...  
have not seen her either, My Leader.  
NAVEEN

...  
I see  
...  
And that is that  
...  
Loyalty is a weak branch,  
isn't it?  
...  
You, you're new, yes?  
GADDAFI

About nine months, my Leader.  
NAVEEN

Right.  
You're the Zawiyah girl.  
GADDAFI  
(Realizing)

Yes, My Leader.  
NAVEEN

And yet you're still here.  
GADDAFI  
(She does not answer this)

Your name is ...  
I never forget  
...  
Nala.

NAVEEN

Naveen.

GADDAFI

Sometimes I forget.

Naveen.

Means something new, better than the rest.

Indeed

...

You always had a friend with you, yes?

I remember, her name was Fa ...

Fa ...

NAVEEN

Fatha.

GADDAFI

I was going to get it!

...

Yes, Fatha.

Beautiful girl.

She ran off, as well, I presume?

NAVEEN

No, My Leader,

she was ...

(Can't bring herself to say it)

GADDAFI

...

Oh

...

I see

...

Poor girl.

Such beauty.

We will have revenge on the monsters who did that to her.

NAVEEN

I know.

GADDAFI

...

(To AMINEH:)

I remember your name, at least.

GADDAFI  
(CON'T)

Assalamu alaikom, Amineh.

AMINEH

Hello, Papika.

NAVEEN

When is the convoy leaving?

AMINEH

Naveen!

GADDAFI

No, it's okay, I'll allow questions ...  
They tell me in a few hours.  
I tell them the sun will be up by then,  
the whole point is to leave when it's dark.  
But the other patients should keep the rebels off our scent.

AMINEH

Yes, Papika.

GADDAFI

You think it'll work, Puppy?

AMINEH

I ...  
think that it's a good plan.

GADDAFI

...  
Always hiding your cards from me ...  
Makes you a good soldier,  
but a terrible conversationalist.

...  
Naveen, what do you think?

NAVEEN

...  
I ...  
don't know that it will.

GADDAFI

...  
You don't.

GADDAFI  
(CON'T; To AMINEH:)

See?  
Honesty.  
I like this one.

(To NAVEEN:)

And tell me why not?

NAVEEN

...  
It's like you said,  
the sun will be up.  
And I keep hearing planes,  
but we're in a no-fly zone.  
That seems weird to me.

GADDAFI

Yes, first the rebels,  
now NATO.  
Calling themselves a treaty organization,  
some *treaty* this is.

...  
So you don't believe in this convoy?

(NAVEEN hesitates)

Please, be honest.

NAVEEN

...  
No, My Leader, I don't.

GADDAFI

So it's safe to assume  
that you don't want to be on this convoy.

NAVEEN

...  
No, My Leader, I wouldn't.

GADDAFI

And what would you rather do instead?

(She really doesn't want to do this)

Please.  
I want to know.

NAVEEN

...  
I can't say.

GADDAFI

Oh, I think you can.  
And I'd like you to.

NAVEEN

Right now?

GADDAFI

Right now.

NAVEEN

...  
I really, I don't,  
I don't have anything.

GADDAFI

I find that hard to believe.  
It's simple deduction.  
You don't want to be on the convoy,  
and I imagine you don't want to stay, because

...  
well, this place is shit.  
So what does that leave you?

(NAVEEN doesn't answer)

Tell me.

NAVEEN

That would leave  
...  
running away.

GADDAFI

Yes!  
That's it!  
Running away.  
Is that what you want to do?  
Run away?

...  
Like maybe the other rats?

NAVEEN

...  
You heard what I said before?

GADDAFI

What did you say before?

NAVEEN

About why the other women ran?

GADDAFI

...  
It's funny.  
You say,  
"Why the other women ran".  
What you *should* say is,  
"Why *I* want to run."  
Because that's what you were talking about,  
yes?

NAVEEN

...  
Yes.

GADDAFI

You wish to leave, like the others?

NAVEEN

...  
Yes, My Leader.

To read the full script or to inquire about rights,  
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