EXTRACT

THE ARRIVAL

A short play by Beejan Olfat

(Dramaturgy by Alex Broun)

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CHARACTERS

SHOHREH in the good side of her fifties. A nurse.

REZA Twenty. A photography Student. Her son.

SETTING
An Apartment unit in Maroubra, Sydney.

TIME
Half past twelve, on a Saturday in summer.

LIGHTS UP ON A BASIC DOMESTIC SETTING. CENTER STAGE IS A CREAM COUCH. REZA SITS ON IT LISTENING TO MUSIC ON HIS APPLE IPOD. IT IS “FREE’S ALL RIGHT NOW” FROM THE AMERICAN BEAUTY SOUNDTRACK. HE SIPS ON A RED BULL AND MUNCHES ON SOME CHIPS. THE MUSIC IS CRANKING. THE ROOM IS A MESS.

AFTER A MOMENT SHOHREH ENTERS, CARRYING SHOPPING BAGS. SHE IS PUFFED OUT. SHE SEES THE MESS AND IS FURIOUS. SHE GOES TO REZA AND PUSHES HIM ON TO THE FLOOR.

REZA: What are you doing ?

SHOHREH: How can you do this !?!

REZA: Do what ?

SHOHREH: Look at the time. Twenty minutes. Twenty minutes ! And you have destroyed everything.

REZA: Mommon, calm down. It’s like one bag of chips.

SHOHREH: All over the floor. All over everywhere. You make our house messy.

REZA: Alright, calm down. I’ll clean up. Let me help you with the shopping.

SHOHREH: What does it matter ? I’m already late. I will never be ready. Ring him and tell him not too come.

REZA: I haven’t got his number.

SHOHREH: Look at me. I have been working in shit job all day. I look shitted.

REZA: The word is shitty – I think.

SHOHREH: I can not meet him today.

REZA: Mommon – relax. You look fine.

SHOHREH PUSHES REZA AWAY

SHOHREH: What is this word ? “Fine” ? Why can you not understand ? I can not look “fine”. I must look beautiful. I must look elegant. Do you not understand how important this man is ? He is my chance for a new life.

REZA: What’s wrong with the one you’ve got ?

SHOHREH: Do you know my job ? Do you understand what I do ?

REZA: Sure.

SHOHREH: You do not understand. Today another one dies.

REZA: Yeah? I’m sorry.

SHOHREH: I am sick of seeing people die.

REZA: You’re a brave woman.

SHOHREH: I see all these old people and they just sit there. Like old potatoes. I wish I could run away.

REZA: You always say that.

SHOHREH: I mean it this time.

REZA: You always say that too.

SHOHREH: Nothing is secure in this country.

REZA: And you think you will find security back in Iran? Iran is no longer the ‘golden country’. It’s changed.

SHOHREH: Yes, for the better.

REZA: Do you really believe that? Look, mum, the world is insane. And scary. Especially now. The world has *changed*.

SHOHREH: What would you know about the world?

REZA: I know that nothing is secure. You think going back to Iran will help? Look at the newspapers mum. It’s all stuffed.

SHOHREH: What would you know ? You sit here stuff your face full of chips. Listen to your shitted music – destroy my home.

REZA: The music’s pretty good actually.

SHOHREH: You don’t care. You don’t care for your mother!

REZA: What would you know ?

SHOHREH: I hate my life. I hate my life. I hate my life.

SHOHREH SITS ON THE SOFA. SHE COVERS HER FACE, PERHAPS IN TEARS. AFTER A MOMENT REZA SITS NEXT TO HER.

REZA: Mommon, what's wrong ?

SHOHREH: He will hate me. He will hate me.

REZA: No he won't. He'll love you. I love you.

SHOHREH: What will he want with me ? I am old, I am tired, I am lonely.

REZA: You're not old, everyone's tired and you're not lonely. You've got me.

SHOHREH: You are a good son. A messy, shitted son but a good son. Tell me about it again.

REZA: What ?

SHOHREH: When you saw him. The first time. I love to hear it. It sound so full of hope.

REZA: That's stupid.

SHOHREH: Please Reza. Please. I will not cry anymore.

REZA: Okay. It was on Oxford St. Across the road from that café. You know, that one you took me to for lunch for my birthday.

SHOHREH: What time was it ?

REZA: It was about lunch time. I was walking past this construction site and I looked up. I saw this guy hanging off some scaffolding above me. He looked familiar but at first I didn't recognize him. Then he turned around and I saw him. It was David.

SHOHREH: But he is old now. How can he work on a building site ?

REZA: He still looks in pretty good shape. Then he started to climb down the scaffolding towards me. I remembered how much you talked about him and how much you wanted to see him – so I waited.

SHOHREH: How could you ? How could you ?

REZA: Mommon - you never shut up about him.

SHOHREH: And then what happened ?

REZA: He reached the bottom of the scaffold, just a few feet away from me –

SHOHREH: (COVERING EARS) I can't listen.

REZA: He turned around and our eyes met. At first I don't think he recognised me.

SHOHREH: (LAUGHING) How could he ? It was ten years since he saw you. Before we left Iran. You are so stupid.

REZA: Do you want to hear the story or not ?

SHOHREH INDICATES FOR REZA TO GO ON.

REZA: But I recognized him.

SHOHREH: From my photo.

REZA: I said: "Salam David." He was surprised and he came over to me. He had no idea who I was. "I am Reza, son Shohreh."

SHOHREH: What did he do ? What did he do ?

REZA: His eyes went wide, sort of like he was amazed, and then he realised who I was.

SHOHREH: And then he asked about me ?

REZA: He was full of questions. He wouldn't stop. "How is she ? What does she do ? Is she still married ?"

SHOHREH: I am tingling all over.

REZA: Then he tells me -

SHOHREH: Yes ?

REZA: That he has separated from his wife.

SHOHEREH: My lucky day.

REZA: So I said to him he should come and see you. At first he said "No."

SHOHREH: Why would he say that ?

REZA: Because he wasn't sure if you would want to talk to him or not.

SHOHREH: But why ?

REZA: Come on Mommon – you know why.

SHOHREH: I was alone. Your father had already left us. And he was friendly. Too friendly. He could see my love growing for him - then he too left. I swore I would kill him if I saw him again.

REZA: So that's why he didn't think you'd talk to him. But I convinced him. Convinced him that he should come.

SHOHREH: You are a good son.

REZA: So I gave him our address and he said he would come on Saturday at 1pm.

SHOHREH: Such a stupid time ? Why that time ?

REZA: I don't know. It was all I could think of.

SHOHREH: He should come for dinner ? When I can make a feast for him.

REZA: Okay – so I'm sorry.

SHOHREH: No it is good. I am proud of you. Thank you my son. You have made me so happy.

SHOHREH TAKES REZA'S HANDS. SHE SITS LOOKING INTO HIS EYES, SMILING. REZA IS SUDDENLY UNCOMFORTABLE.

SHOHREH: Tell me, where is this building site ?

REZA: You know, like on Oxford Street ?

SHOHREH: But where on Oxford Street ? I go down past there everyday on the bus. I don't see building site.

REZA: It's like a small building site. You'd hardly notice.

SHOHREH: But you said it was near the café.

REZA: Yeah, well it is. Shouldn't you like be getting ready or something ?

SHOHREH: Oh ! Yes ! Ten minutes. Ten minutes.