

ANDISHEH'S DIARY

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Draft 2.0

This play, which is largely a monologue, is based on a recent event in the life of an Iranian Bahá'í youth. The event is simple enough, and yet it points to the growing undercurrent of anxiety in the lives of the Iranian Bahá'ís and their consequent striving to transcend their situation.

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ANDISHEH'S DIARY

It is late at night. ANDISHEH, a young Iranian woman, is reading through her diary. A small trash can is nearby. She puts down the diary and speaks directly to the audience.

ANDISHEH

Have you ever felt depressed because you have something inside you that you want to share but you can't because every time you try, people just don't understand, or they take it wrong and you end up feeling worse because not only have you failed to communicate your feeling, but now you know your friends or family don't understand you? That's how I used to feel until I met my best friend... My diary.

My name is Andisheh, and I live in a country far away called Iran. It's a beautiful country with a rich cultural background, but it seems that my country is an enemy to your country. I don't understand this because I actually have family in your country and I certainly don't hate them—And all the rest of you that I don't know, I can't just assume you're bad because you live somewhere else or because you speak a different language or maybe see things a little differently.

Maybe part of the reason I think this way is because of my religion. You see, I'm a Bahá'í, and my Faith emphasizes the oneness of humanity. But because I'm a Bahá'í, my own country sees me as an enemy.

Sometimes I put thoughts like this into my diary. Sometimes I'll just write about what I did that day, or about a song, or a movie, a scene in the street, a book... I share everything with it like it's actually alive. I open it up and write "Dear diary, I'm sorry for not talking to you these past three days. My mind was so busy..." and it feels so safe to talk to it, like it starts to talk back to me.

Andisheh's brother, PAYAM, enters. He is half-awake, yet anxious.

PAYAM

Who are you talking to?

ANDISHEH

Did I wake you up?

PAYAM

I don't know, where is everyone...?

ANDISHEH

You should be asleep.

PAYAM (*Laying down.*)

I can't sleep. I'm too... (*He falls asleep.*)

ANDISHEH

This is my brother, Payam. Two years ago our Dad was arrested and put in jail for six weeks. When they came to our house and took him, they also took a bunch of our stuff, our photo albums, our books, papers, everything except some clothes & the furnishings. My diary though was safe. I had stowed it with my friend when we sensed things were getting dangerous. But then I missed it so much, I asked for it back.

Last May, my sister, my cousin and I, along with 50 others, mostly young people like me, we were arrested because we were teaching young children good things like, like math and social studies, and also virtues, just like the children here are learning. So for that, we were thrown in jail and questioned for six days. I was kept alone in a room for 24 hours. I didn't have my diary. I didn't have anyone or anything except my God and my prayer, and I realized then that I didn't need anyone or anything else. Once I knew that, I was free—free to speak the truth out loud, and not just to hide it in a secret book. And when they brought me in to ask me questions, for hours and hours, a power came over me and I didn't worry any more about what I said. The answers flowed through me like water, and I was amazed at the strength and the knowledge that came. These men had my life in their hands, and I was not afraid of them. I could see... they were afraid of me.

PAYAM (*Sitting up.*)

What? Where am I?

ANDISHEH

You're sleeping.

PAYAM

Oh. (*He lays back down.*)

ANDISHEH

Things are getting more difficult for us. I'm worried that when they come again, when they come for my father, my sister or me, or even Payam here, what if they find this? (*i.e., her diary*) What if they open to a page where I'm expressing my anger at Iran, at the

ANDISHEH (Cont'd)

society, something I can never say out loud, but that was inside of me and I needed to express? What if they use that to question my loyalty, a loyalty that is the reason I stay here and don't run away to Europe or to America, where my life could be easier, but where I wouldn't be able to help my country, my beloved, suffering, confused Iran? What if they find a page where I was mad at my sister and I talk about the reason and then they use that to try to separate us, to take advantage of that old wound to cause fresh hurt? I can't let that happen. I'm sorry, my friend.

She tears the pages out and rips them into pieces. And it hurts.

PAYAM (*Waking up.*)

What are you doing?

She doesn't answer. When she's done, she puts the pieces in a garbage can. After a moment, he gets up to leave the room.

ANDISHEH

Are you going to bed?

PAYAM

Yeah.

ANDISHEH

Will you take this? (*Indicating garbage can.*)

PAYAM

I don't know why you did that. (*Exits.*)

ANDISHEH

One day maybe you will. (*To audience.*) Maybe by the sacrifices we make here, maybe the love and unity will grow there. This is my wish, not that you would grieve for my difficulty, but that you would walk side by side with me and "love your enemies" and "do good to them that hate you," as your Bible says. Treat all the world's people as your neighbors. If enough of us take up this way of life, then we will change the world, and we will start to see there are no enemies and we're really just one world.

The End