

Looking for the Moon by Sael Anaïs

Characters:

Ahmad Ullah:

At 17 he and his brother got locked up in Guantanamo Bay. He cares a lot about his family and turns into a man of deep principles and passion for what he cares about. He has short brown hair and a scar under his eye.

Omar Ullah:

The younger brother of Ahmad, locked up when he was 14. He is a dedicated and very good cricket player and is a lot more innocent in the real world than his older brother who protects him. He has long hair that he ties back.

Muhammed Ullah:

The father of Ahmad and Omar. He is a hard-working man who didn't know where both of his sons were for years after they got captured. He lost his wife, the boy's mother, a few years after the boys got locked up. He is bald.

Hassan Khan:

One of Ahmad's cellmates. He develops a very close friendship with each other and connects over shared trauma and art. He has a buzz cut and is very skinny.

Bennet Obaid:

A D.C lawyer that represents Hassan. His dad was locked up in Guantanamo Bay when he was 7 years old and now he dedicates his life to raising awareness about the prison and the horrors that go on there. He is originally from Yemen and has short light curly hair.

Military Commission Member:

The military commission is the judicial system that was mainly in place for a lot of Guantanamo's existence. They handle release and transfers.

Guards:

Guantanamo Bay guards; are usually jerks as they are taught to be inhumane to the prisoners

ACT I, SCENE I

Setting: Guantanamo Bay Prison in a dark room; with a single table. Omar is sitting on the side facing the audience and the military Commission Member

Time:

February 2003

Military Commission Member:

Tell us your name and your story, please

Omar:

Does get me in consideration for being released

Military Commission Member:

Answer the question Prisoner 381

Omar

sorry... My name is Omar Ullah, I came here when I was thirteen with my brother. I was with him walking in our neighborhood

Military Commission Member

Where was this?

Omar

Quetta, Pakistan

When the cops came up to us, I was scared, kind of like I am scared right now, but I was really scared then. We asked what we did over and over again. It was days we were in that jail cell, all I kept thinking about was the cricket tournament I was missing, that was more on my mind than my parents sometimes. Me and my brother did not find out that we were being transferred here for terrorism till the day of. I couldn't stop crying, my parents said I've always been sensitive but they were always really good at dealing with me, but they were not there. My brother didn't even talk to me half the time, I was alone. When we got here, he and he were separated. For weeks they put me in a super small cell with nothing but a tennis ball for fun. Every day they would take me out and ask me questions about stuff I knew nothing about. And I would tell them the truth I swear!!! I

DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE TALIBAN and neither does my brother. All I cared about in life was cricket, and my family is all I wanted to get back to, all I wanted was for things to get back to normal. Eventually, I think they gave up asking me questions then I got transferred to where everybody else is. It's cool I guess, we take classes and play sports. It doesn't matter though because every day I still miss my family

Military Commission Member

Thank you, we will take all of this into account when considering

Omar

Considering what?

(happily)

are you guys gonna release me

Military Commission Member

(makes a gesture for the guard standing in the back to take him away)

Omar

Please just let me talk to my parents to let them know where I'm at. I don't even know what I did.

ACT I, SCENE II

Setting: Same room as the scene previous but now it's Ahmad, not Omar.

Time: September 2005

Military Commission Member

Hello prisoner 382, tell us about your younger brother Omar

Ahmad

What do yall care about my brother, you guys killed him.

Military Commission Member

We didn't kill anyone. Just tell us what happened the day you guys got captured.

Ahmad:

alright well

Years ago when I and my little brother got captured, that was the worst day of my life. At first, I was just as confused as him but when we got sent out of Pakistan I heard the soldiers speaking English made the connection. We did not have a lot of money back then so being the oldest so I was responsible. I had to leave Quetta because there was no work. So I made a call to a number my cousin gave me, he told me “they will give you a good paying job just call anytime”.

This call is what got us into this situation. Just like my cousin said when I called they told me they had work for me and where to get picked up, I agreed. The day before I wanted to spend some time with Omar and that's when they got us. He wasn't built for this, all he loved was cricket and all I wanted to do was just keep letting him play it and be a kid. He couldn't take Guantanamo, but yall thought that he knew just as much as me and that's why you killed him.

Military Commission Member:

Your brother killed himself Ahmad we did not have anything to do with that

(Ahmad gets up)

Ahmad:

you are LIARS

(he's taken away by the guards)

Ahmad:

I SAW IT WITH MY OWN TWO EYES

ACT I, SCENE III

Setting: A big dark room; Ahmad is being held by a guard on the left side while he's on his knees and Omar is being waterboarded on the right side facing the crowd

Time: April 2004

(Omar's getting waterboarded and then has an out-of-body experience)

Omar

When I get the air it gets ripped out of my lungs and filled with water. I told them 3 years ago I knew nothing but that did not stop them from trying. They are certain my brother knows something and I am now bait to get him to say it. Look at my brother, do they think he is the type of person to let me get tortured before he gives them something?

(scene is unpaused)

Ahmad:

I'll get a lawyer or something, you guys won't get away with this

Guard:

Tell us the truth, what we want to know and we can pull him up right now

Ahmad:

I told you guys everything please just please stop

Guard:

We don't believe you

(paused)

Omar

don't cry for me brother, I'm supposed to cry for you. I've been begging for this for a long time now. It was so dark before this and I don't wanna live in that darkness anymore. I know it's harder for you to know I'm here so I can just go.

(unpaused)

Ahmad:
YOU KILLED HIM, YOU KILLED MY BROTHER YOU KILLED BASTARDS I
WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THIS

(the stage goes black abruptly with a thud sound to go with it)

ACT I, SCENE IV

Setting: two cells are beside each other, they are outdoor cells so a little bigger than normal

Time: May 2004

(Hassan is taken and put into the cell right next to Ahmad)

(there is a couple of moments of silence)

Hassan:
hey you awake

Ahmad:
shhh man, don't make the guards come over here.

Hassan:
sorry

(4 seconds pass)

Hassan:
My name's Hassan. I just got here. Are you usually up this late?

Ahmad:
can't sleep.

(looks around the cell)

Hassan:

Yeah, I don't think I'm going to be able either.

(3 seconds pass; you can hear the sound of Ahmad's pencil getting louder and louder)

Hassan:

Are you coloring?

Ahmad:

What's wrong if I am?

Hassan:

Nothing, nothing but it's the last thing I expected you to be doing in the pitch dark

Ahmad:

There's a little bit of moonlight

(he points up)

Hassan:

Why the hell are you allowed to have coloring supplies and nobody else is

Ahmad:

Cause I told them I would kill myself if they didn't give me atleast a pencil

(Guard starts to walk over)

Guard:

If I hear either one of you speak again, it's the hole

Hassan:

(motions for Hassan to slide him the pencil and paper)

Ahmad:

(slides him the paper through the cell hole)

Hassan:

(writing sound ensues, then he passes it)

Ahmad:

(reads it and scoots close to Hassan's cell and starts talking quietly)

When it's all done it is going to be the night sky, uncountable amounts of stars, and a moon so bright that it's illuminating the whole town below. As you go down there are rows and rows of homes, going back so far you can't even make out that they are houses. As you get closer to the front things begin to get more and more clear and you can see one boy being illuminated by the moonlight. The only other thing awake with him is a cockroach scurrying along the ground. The boy is holding a cricket bat, about to swing. But he is not the only one awake, he is so locked in he doesn't even notice his brother watching him from the top window of their house. The boy swinging is me and the boy watching is my brother. He always used to watch me play and come out with me to the field when he could, it's probably why he ended up being better than me. I don't have any pictures of him and I can't, I can't forget him, so that's why I'm drawing.

ACT I, SCENE V

Setting: In Pakistan after Ahmad gets transferred out of Guantanamo

Time: January 2021, 16 years later

(Ahmad walks in the front door)

Dad:

hey son how was being in the neighborhood again

Ahmad:

it's weird, it's really weird

Dad:

Well, you're happy to be released right?

Ahmad:

Yes, of course, I don't mean bad weird it's just a big difference you know. as much as I tried to detach from the prison I just can't I still feel this urge in me to do something

Dad:

(rubs his head)

I just don't understand, why? Why would you want to go up against the people that kept you locked up for almost half your life? I don't know why you would even risk it.

Ahmad:

Well, I can't just sit back and do nothing while my brothers rot in prison.

Dad:

you only had one blood brother though and he died in that place, everybody else in there is not your blood family you don't owe them anything.

Ahmad

I do, they are the ones that helped me through it when Omar got murdered. Even when they took away my art supplies my friend Hassan always found a way to get me a pencil so I can keep honoring Omar's memory.

Dad:

What about honoring your mom's memory and staying safe for her, whatever you plan to do puts you right in the line of fire, and I can't deal with another son gone when I just got you back.

Ahmad:

I'm sorry... But I can't leave it alone. Pakistan is home, this is my home, but the men there have also become my home. They are my family and I was theirs. Just because I left doesn't mean they can. Every time a new US president gets elected, Obama or Biden, they make the same promise to shut Guantanamo down and every new term it's still up. I don't think they are feeling the pressure. I don't know what I have to do yet but this is how I honor Mom and Omar's legacy because I know they both wouldn't want this, I can't just act like they didn't kill my brother or they denied me the right to see my mother before she died.

Dad:

I just can't do it again, I can't lose to somebody else. Ahmad you all I got. When me and your mom got the news of Omar's death, it made her sickness worse. We just found out about the cancer and without treatment, it was already a very low chance she would make it, but your brother's death was her death sentence as well. Those people are brutal and vicious and I just got you back.

(silence)

Ahmad:

well I can't do nothing

(Ahmad walks into the next room, sits down on his computer, and starts typing slowly since he's not used to it)

Ahmad:

I won't rest until that prison is closed. I've been home for 3 months now and nothing seems normal, not even talking to Dad feels normal. Every night I'm taken back there so I never really left, my friends are there so I never really left, my brother was killed there so I never really left. I can't let them get away with it, I don't CARE if I have to fight the whole damn country, I won't let y'all forget until I forget.

(looks towards the door and deletes the whole thing)

maybe I shouldn't...

you know what
this is my story I can tell who I want,

(says it like a statement)

So I'm going to tell everybody, I am going to write a book or something or I am going to honor his memory and find a way to raise awareness and let the people in that hell of a country know what they are doing to us. The lies their presidents have sold them on that all of us were, "terrorists" and "enemy combatants"

I was just trying to provide for my family. Coming back has shown me that us being taken was the worst thing to ever happen to Mom and Dad. When they get old you're supposed to retire from your parents, but with no kids, they just keep working and working, I didn't want that for them. goddammit, that's the only reason why we even got mixed up in all of this.

Maybe this is my purpose, what I'm supposed to do, help others. Why did my brother have to get burdened with that purpose, why? it could've been me, it should've been me. So it has to be me to fight.

ACT I, SCENE VI

Setting: In Washington D.C in a lawyer's office; papers all over the place desk in the middle; Bennet is talking on a phone with a wire and is moving around his desk while talking

Time: June 2021

(Bennet is waiting impatiently, the cell phone rings)

Bennet

Hello, my name is Bennet Obaid, thanks for calling me back I am Hassan's Khan lawyer but today I am not calling about him.

(rustle through papers)

It has been made apparent to me that you have former prisoner Ahmad Ullah's artwork in your possession, like many others. I was wondering what were the processes for getting that released

You can't?

but you released Hassan's so I don't understand.

His cooperation?? What does that have to do with artwork?

Excuse me but I am failing to see how if the prisoners made the artwork it is US property

Hello? Hello? If you don't have an answer then find me somebody that will

Do I need to remind you of the seriousness of Ahmad's case? I looked into it and I do not think you guys would want the fact that you killed his brother, Omar, and covered it up to come out, would you? It is despicable what you have done to him and he has never even been charged with a crime to come close to justifying all of it, the least you can do is send his artwork over. He isn't allowed to leave his home in Pakistan and would love to have something that he cared immensely for back. Just find it in your hearts, please.

You have to talk to your superiors? I got time.

(Leans back on his desk as the clock goes faster showing time is passing)

Hello yes did you make a decision

Yes!

Yes, I perfectly know that this is government property and the rule on not displaying it.

Okay, you guys can send it too

(stage goes dark)

ACT I, SCENE VII

Setting: In Pakistan in the house we saw before

Time: July 2021

(Sitting at the kitchen table and his dad is reading the newspaper; pops open a beer using a knife. You hear a door close, and then Ahmad comes into the room holding a letter He sits at the table, takes that same knife, and opens the letter)

Bennet:

(his voice coming from the heavens)

You don't know me but my name is Bennett Obaid. I am the Lawyer of Hassan Khan, your friend, who you were locked up with for some time. He told me about your case and all it took was a mere description of your artwork and I knew people had to see it.

Bennet:

So I have them, I have 8 paintings that you made. I have made it my personal goal in life to expose the wrongdoings of Guantanamo Bay and with everything I have been told about you, I would think you would want that too. My dad was locked up in Guantanamo when I was young and he is still in there. One day he was here and then he wasn't, it pushed me to become a lawyer and fight the fight. I am going to be honest it has been an uphill battle but the artwork I am looking at right now, your artwork, and the others we have acquired is going to change things.

To contact me further my Instagram is @bennetthelawyer

Ahmad:

What did you have in mind?

Bennet:

We are going to show the people what really happened

ACT I, SCENE VIII

Setting: A large crowd of people stretching offstage to simulate the scale of it. Ahmad's drawing of Omar that he describes is everywhere and he is sitting in a class box on stage kind of like his computer screen

Time: April 2023

Ahmad:

(over a Zoom call)

Hello everybody, I am so happy that the exhibit raised so much support. Never in my life would I have thought that my story could inspire 10,000 people. I have always wanted to fight, and it is nice to know you have people fighting for you too. My goal is to get justice for my brother Omar Ullah and I will not rest until I have it. I will not rest until Joe Biden releases every single prisoner still in that hell and shuts it down forever. I know that the government does not regret what they have done or think that this is an urgent

matter and that's why we have to show them that this is a huge problem. For years I had my human rights stripped from me, I won't let that be for nothing. All I want to do is live in peace but my heart won't settle until I know my brother is proud of me. So keep putting the artwork up around the streets, showing the people of America who my brother was through my work. Make riptides, make Biden see this because he is responsible. Let them know that we won't stay quiet. My art is my humanity that they so graciously took from me and the life that they took from Omar so it has to survive. We won't let them take it again, this is just the first step.

The End