Seagull

By

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survivors’ testimony

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1- INT. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

UK 2012. Sam (30) comes near the reception area and makes a ‘hello’ sign to the lady who sits there. She answers him by a sign and smile. Sam continues through the corridor and reaches a patient room. He goes inside and starts to talk to his father Faruq (68) who lies on the bed waiting for him. Sam opens the curtains and comes near his father bringing the wheelchair.

**SAM (IN ARABIC)**

It is a sunny day and we will have a good walk today, Dad.

Faruq looks at him accusingly.

Yes, you are right General Faruq. I am a little bit late but as you know I have to irrigate my mum’s flower first - it is Wednesday.

Faruq smiles to show his agreement. Sam helps his father to go and sit in the wheelchair. Faruq cannot move, he needs help, but Sam does his best to help him move. After several attempts Faruq can sit in the wheelchair. Sam gets tired but he doesn’t want to show it. He pushes the wheelchair to the outside. They leave the room and the door shuts.

CUT

2- EXT. A HOSPITAL GARDEN. DAY.

Sam pushes his father’s wheelchair and talks; they approach several benches near a low wall in is a bayside area. Sam stops the wheelchair and sits on a bench near his father. Several seagulls come across and land on the low wall. Sam looks at his father and starts talking.

**SAM (IN ARABIC)**

It was a busy day , I went to my mum’s grave and...

Sam stops talking, Faruq looks at him kindly to show his support, Sam breathes deeply and then starts talking again: You know, sometimes I feel that I miss her so much, and I feel I need to be near her, listening to her heartbeat while I put my head on her chest like any child.

Faruq tries to look to the other side to avoid looking at Sam in that emotional moment. In the distance, he perceives a young woman feeding seagulls. Sam notices that his dad doesn’t want to hear thoughts like that, so he stops.

(CONTINUED)
SAM (IN ARABIC)
I am sorry Dad, but you know I haven’t got anyone to talk to. I know that might annoy you, but I have no choice.

Sam perceives that his father looks at something; Sam moves a little to see the young woman who feeds the seagulls. The scene makes him feel better then he focuses on her and smiles. Faruq notices that Sam’s facial features changed, that makes him happy and he smiles.

CUT

3- INT. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

(A few days later)

Sam, in different clothes and hairstyle, pushes his father in the wheelchair. They pass some other people. A nurse passes beside them pushing a trolley holding an injured woman with a white bandage on her head.

Sam pushes the wheelchair and goes, the old lady turns to see Sam. Sam turns too and they see each other and smile. When Sam turns to push the wheelchair he perceives Sana (27, girl) who was feeding the seagulls yesterday. Sana gives soup to a lady (her mother, Tara) who lies on the bed and wipes her mouth with a white towel. Sam stops for some seconds and watches the scene in the room. His father turns to see why they have stopped.

SAM (IN ARABIC)
Sorry Dad! Here, we are going.

Sam pushes the wheelchair toward the outside. The ‘Way Out’ sign can be seen on the wall beside them. Sam and his father disappear in the crowded corridors.

CUT

4- INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

Sana puts her mother’s head down on the pillow. She is asleep and then Sana covers her and waits for a while. When she becomes sure that her mother is deeply asleep, she takes her bag and walks slowly and calmly towards the door.

(CONTINUED)
A nurse comes to check on Tara. She sees Sana and they smile. Sana nods and, in a whisper, asks if she needs anything. The nurse shakes her head and waves ‘goodbye’ to her. Sana goes out, but the nurse is still there checking some of the medicine and the schedule.

5- INT. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sana goes through the corridor; she looks from the window to see the weather outside. It starts raining. She becomes a little bit disappointed, but continues on her way. She waits at another room and looks inside; she waves as if saying ‘goodbye’ to someone. When she leaves, we see the old lady with the white bandage inside. Sana moves until she reaches a door and opens it.

A wheelchair comes inside from the door. It is Faruq and Sam they have come in because of the rain. Faruq sees Sana’s face and is shocked. Sam sees her and smiles; Sana looks surprised and continues her walk. Sam turns to see her again. Sana walks and stops for a second and turns as if she wants to go back, but when she perceives that Sam looks at her, she changes her mind and continues going out.

Sam pushes the wheelchair with excitement but Faruq is upset and distracted. Faruq’s face changed. He looks like he is thinking about something; he tries to turn and make sure. He feels that Sana’s face comes toward him and shouts, whilst Sam, unaware, pushes the wheelchair very quickly.

SHARP MIX

6- INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

Sam helps Faruq to lie down on his bed. Faruq still looks upset as he lies down on his bed. Sam makes sure that his father lies in a comfortable position. Sam looks at his father to see if he needs anything. Faruq makes a ‘bye’ sign to Sam and is clearly still confused.

Sam approaches the room door and turns to see his father, but Faruq is busy with his memories and cannot perceive that Sam is still inside. Sam continues to look for a few more seconds, then leaves.

CUT
7- INT. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sam goes through the corridor quickly and looks around to find Sana. When he cannot find her, he waits for a while and then goes out of the building.

CUT

8- INT. THE HOSPITAL’S CAFE. DAY.

Sana sits near an out-looking window, looking at her i-Pad and drinking coffee. She is busy with some photos and a PowerPoint presentation on her device. Rains drops roll down the window beside her. A male figure passes by outside but Sana cannot see him. The figure comes back again, then his face appears - it is Sam. He looks at Sana and after some seconds disappears. The raindrops continue to roll down the window.

CUT

9- INT. THE HOSPITAL’S CAFÉ. DAY.

(Next day)

Sana sits in different clothes and hairstyle. She puts some papers and a book on the table in front of her. She looks at the i-Pad, then goes back to the papers and a book. Suddenly she stops and looks at someone who stands in front of the table. Sana looks surprised and then we hear a man’s voice.

**SAM’S VOICE (OFF)**
Can I sit down?

Sana looks around and sees several free tables, then makes a sign with her hands to say ‘yes’ and goes back to her work. Sam sits down and looks at her and what she is busy with.

**SAM**
I see you every day here, are you working here or...?

Sana looks at him surprised.

**SANA**
No! I come to visit my Mum.

**SAM**
Every day!?
SANA
Every moment if I can!

SAM
Sounds good, that means I can see you every day, every moment!

Sana smiles and goes back to her work. Sam stands and wants to go; Sana looks at him, then Sam talks again with big smile.

SAM
Would you like a hot or cold drink?

SANA
Nothing, thanks, I am fine.

Sam makes some movements to show his hesitation and surprise, and then he goes. Sana works on her i-Pad; she is busy with a project. Afterwards she puts the i-Pad on the table and looks for Sam. Sam appears from far away and comes back with two hot drinks. Sana is surprised. Sam approaches and puts the cups on the table with big smile. Sana takes the cup and smiles too.

SANA
Thanks!

SAM
No problem.

Sam starts talking with Sana. She is still working on her project, but after some words she takes the i-Pad and closes it to show her interest in Sam's speech. They both look happy and they are involved in a friendly atmosphere.

CUT

10- INT. SAM’S ROOM AT HOME. NIGHT.

Sam lies on his bed reading a book. Suddenly he stops reading and looks at his phone which has been put on the small table beside his bed.

CUT
11- INT. SANA’S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Sana works on her painting, adding more color. After a while, her phone rings and she goes to get it. She looks to see who is it and we can see Sam’s name. Sana’s face becomes shiny and she smiles. She sits on her bed and starts talking.

12- EXT. A HOSPITAL GARDEN. DAY

Sam helps Sana to feed the seagulls. They are happy—laughing, talking and playing with the seagulls.

13- INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

A nurse checks the blood pressure of Tara, Sana’s mother, and talks to her kindly. Tara looks at her and smiles.

14- INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

Faruq lies on his bed and looks at the room ceiling. He looks upset and breathes heavily.

15- INT. THE HOSPITAL’S CAFÉ. DAY.

The i-Pad screen appears, it shows some photos of genocide campaign. People in torn clothing trudge through the rain towards some mountains. An old lady holds a young man’s picture in a village house, and there is a black ribbon on the side of the young man’s picture. When the camera goes out, Sana appears; she shows Sam what she is working on. Sam looks upset and disappointed. He looks at Sana and watches her reaction to the images. Sana notices that Sam is impressed by the project, and then she starts to talk about pictures.

SANA

Now you have seen what I am busy with. I am working on the Kurdish Genocide, which happened in Iraq in 1988. It is about my nation, my

(MORE)
SANA (cont’d)
relatives and myself. Do you know what happened?

SAM
Not exactly!

SANA
The Iraqi Army behaved like the German Nazis. They did everything: destruction, torture, expulsion, extermination - even rape. That which nobody wants to talk about, even the victims.

Sam notices that Sana is very keen to talk about her project, so he shows his interest and tries to see more photos. Sana shows him more and starts to talk about the problem.

SANA
See what they did with civilians and who they arrested from the Kurdish peshmarga, I mean guerrilla.

SAM
It seems so awful.

SANA
Much more than this, it was a real catastrophe that happened in front of the world’s eyes, but nobody has talked about it.

During her speech, Sana shows some images to Sam. Sam perceives a painting of an old lady in black clothes with a white scarf banded on her forehead. Her face looks like the old lady who they see every day in the hospital.

SAM
Is that your drawing?

SANA
Yes.

SAM
I think I have seen this lady here!

SANA
No! She is not who you have seen here. They look like each other, but Malak is different.
CONTINUED:

**SAM**
Who is Malak?

**SANA**
She is the angel who saved our lives.

Sana continues showing him images, Sam sees an image of a Colonel with some officers and soldiers who have arrested two Kurdish guerillas and put them down, blindfolded. Sam wants to ask Sana to let him see the photos again, but he hesitates.

**SAM**
How do you know all these happened? You have mentioned a variety of horrific things.

**SANA**
All if what I said is real, if you would like to make sure, just go and browse the word ‘Anfal’, Kurdish genocide.

CUT

16—INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sana and Sam watch Sana’s mother through her room’s gate window. Nurses are there, working busily to help her calm down. Sam looks upset and watches concernedly.

**SANA**
Mum had a worse experience in the campaign, that even a strong woman like her cannot tolerate. She needs to stay at hospital for two months, three times a year, to get treatment.

Sana’s mother, Tara, calms down and lies on her bed dejectedly. Her face is full of sweat. Sana goes inside to help the nurses. She tries to wipe her mother’s face and touch her face to give her some comfort and support. After a while she turns to see Sam, but he is not there. Disappointed, she goes back to her mother.

CUT
17- INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sam waits outside his father’s room and looks at him, while he is asleep. Sam is upset and nervous after he has seen Sana’s mother.

SHARP MIX

18- INT. A HOUSE IN A VILLAGE. DAY.

Kurdistan 1988, Tara crawls to approach a room’s wall. Her dress is smeared with blood and her face is pale and scared. Her body shakes as she goes through a thin, red curtain with a cup of water. She turns with her head down and a Colonel’s feet in army boots appear.

SHARP MIX

19- INT. SAM’S FATHER OFFICE AT HOME. NIGHT.

The office room contains a desk with two chairs in front of it. There is a computer on the desk. A shelf full of books is behind the desk. A photo of Faruq (Sam’s father) in military clothes is on the wall. A young lady’s photo with a black ribbon is there on the wall. She is Sam’s mother.

Sam is busy watching the computer’s screen, as he searches for the photos which he has seen with Sana. In the search bar we can see ‘Anfal, Kurdish genocide’ and many photos of the incident. Sam browses for more things until he finds the same photo of the Colonel with the soldiers and victims.

He stands and takes his father’s photo from the wall, then compares it with the one on the screen. Sam becomes agitated when he realises that the Colonel is his father. He tries to find more things, but after many attempts he cannot find any more information.

Sam stands and walks inside the office room. He approaches the desk again and opens the drawers. As he looks for something, he drops anything he can get inside the drawers. He has not found anything in the first drawer, so he continues onto the others. He looks anxious and upset; sweat drops from his face. He investigates everywhere in the office without any result. He gets tired and sits on the floor, distressed and angry.

Sam lies down for a while. He looks to the ceiling and thinks; his face is full of sweat.

(CONTINUED)
After a while, he turns to the bookshelf, and then he notices that there is something under the bookshelf. He concentrates more and crawls to approach the shelf, and then he finds a parcel. He sits and opens it. The parcel is full of letters and some tape cassettes. He opens the envelopes to read the letters. He looks at the cassettes and stands to find player to listen to them.

He goes back to the drawers and looks for a tape player. He finds a small one in the last drawer and brings the cassettes, then puts one in the player. He waits, but nothing can be heard from it. He pushes the fast-forward button and stops to listen, and then we hear something.

**FARUQ (V.O) (IN ARABIC)**

In the name of God, I am General Faruq Alkhezragy. Today is the 19th of April 2006. I would like to explain something before I get sick. I know I will lose my voice someday, so I have decided to record some of my memories here. Then I can listen to them again at any time. To avoid any confusion...

The sound gets deficient; it seems that the tape has twisted. Sam stops the player and tries to fix it. He brings the cassette out, but a part of the tape sticks to the player head and Sam tries to pull it. After several attempts the tape cuts and some part of it is damaged. Sam puts the tape on the table and tries to fix it.

He brings glue and sticky tape and starts working. We will see him in some different conditions as he fixes the damaged tape.

After that, he gets tired and gets some rest on the sofa in the office. He waits for the glue to dry. Sam is confused and thinks about something, he looks to the ceiling. He changes his position. After a while, he stands and puts another tape into the tape player; he waits for a while, but no voice is heard. He presses the fast-forward button and then ‘play’ again. There is still nothing on this tape, so he takes it out and puts another one into the machine. He pushes the ‘play’ button, but the new tape is empty too.

Sam becomes more nervous and goes back to the parcel. He searches again, but there are no more cassettes inside. After some moments, he goes back to the old cassette and checks it to see if it is dry, and then he puts it in the tape player again. We hear some other words:

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

FARUQ (V.O) (IN ARABIC)
1988 was full of missions, we did as our leaders ordered; we did everything as a soldier. I was proud to contribute to resolving what our leader calls ‘the Kurdish problem’.

The tape twists again, making Sam nervous. He tries to resolve the problem, but he cannot. He is disappointed and hits the tape player with his hands, then he leaves the tape player and goes out. The tape player is left there and the rollers still work. Some words come out then cut off. Sam is out of the room.

FARUQ (V.O) (IN ARABIC)
Yes, we are doing our duty toward our nation Srrrrrrr [Tape twists] I have ordered the soldiers to kill anyone who tries to escape (Silence)... arrest a large number of them, prove your loyalty to your nation, to your leaders. Sssssrrrrrrrr [Tape twists] even women. SSRRRRRR.

A hand comes to return the tape. Sam has got a hot drink in his hand and tries to hear more words.

FARUQ (V.O) (IN ARABIC)
We were brave enough to do what nobody could do, Ssssrrrrr even women. Srrrr [tape twists] I believe their women deserve men like us. Ssssrr.

Sam becomes angry and hits the player; the cassette switches off. Sam takes the cassette out then puts it back in to play the other side. He pushes the ‘play’ button.

FARUQ (V.O) (IN ARABIC)
I smelled humans, their breath, their sweat of fear, that urged me on to go inside the house to see what was going on there. My sense as a man pushed me to go and check by myself, then I have found that pretty woman. Oh God! What is this! She deserves to be treated as a real female.

His voice tainted by sadness and regret, he sighs and continues:

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
FARUQ (V.O) (IN ARABIC) (cont’d)
I don’t know what exactly I did, but I know something happened. I have not talked about this to anyone, because of my standing as an Army Colonel. Shsh.

During these words we see the tape player and in the background we see Sam’s mother’s photo, which is on the wall. When the speech ends, we see Sam sitting on the floor, looking at his mother’s photo. He is upset. A minute of silence puts its hallmark on the scene. Sam is confused and doesn’t know what to do. He stands up for a while; after that he sits again. He starts to talk intermittently.

SAM
You stayed smiling after you heard these words. (Silent) I can’t believe that, Mum, I can’t believe that. How you tolerated this? How, Mum?

Sam stays on floor talking, but we do not hear any of his words. He raves with some other words. Sam’s phone rings, he hears that but doesn’t want to take the call. After several rings, Sam stands to take the call; the phone screen shows Sana’s name. Sam is confused and doesn’t know what to do. He breaks down and sits on the floor again. He puts the phone on the floor and looks at his mother’s photo, then raves with some incomprehensible words.

FADE

20- INT. SAM’S FATHER’S OFFICE AT HOME. DAY.

The sun’s light comes in from a window, to give a soft light to the room. Sam is asleep. He sits on the chair in front of the desk and has put his head on the desk. The tape recorder and several damaged cassettes are there; some threads of tape are around the cassettes. Many letters and photos are beside them.

Under Sam’s hand there is a letter that Faruq has written to Sam. We can see some words by Sam’s hand and between his fingers. The words are ‘Dear Sam, when you find this parcel, don’t panic and stay calm (...) it was some incidents which (...) your Mum cannot speak because of...’

Sam wakes up gradually and sees what is around him. He looks at the parcel for a while, and then he gathers the letters and the cassettes and puts them in the parcel again. He puts his hand on the parcel, takes it and leaves.
21- INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sam walks quickly in disturbed steps; he is confused and nervous. He holds the parcel in his hand. He goes towards a door. As he opens it, he clashes a wheelchair which the old lady from the previous scene used to sit in, but there is a sheet on the wheelchair and the nurse looks sad. Sam knows that something has happened to the old woman. He looks at the nurse and she looks at him, then Sam makes an apology sign with his hands and continues on his way.

He reaches Sana’s mother’s room and looks from the window. She is asleep and nobody is there. After a while he goes through a corridor in the same nervous condition.

He approaches his father’s room and as he reaches the room sees a doctor come out. Sam stops at the door; he hesitates for a while and then goes in. Faruq is ready for his daily outing. Sam approaches with the parcel and looks at his father. When Faruq sees the parcel his face changes; he tries to avoid Sam’s gaze. Sam puts the parcel on the small table beside his father’s bed, and looks at him but cannot do anything. He helps his father to sit in the wheelchair as he does every day, but this time it is done in silence. Faruq is in the wheelchair, Sam pushes him and they go out.

CUT

22- INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sam pushes the wheelchair along the corridor towards the outside; he is upset and apprehensive. He looks around, then continues. He stops for a while and stays near the wall, and then he remembers that his father is in the wheelchair. He continues pushing without saying anything. Faruq looks confused, sad and regretful, but he cannot say anything. He continues his silence and shame.

CUT

23- EXT. THE HOSPITAL’S GARDEN. DAY.

Sam stops near the bench and sits; he looks at his father who avoids Sam’s look. Sam looks to the other side and finds that Sana is there, feeding the seagulls. He regards the scene in disappointment. He comes back to see his father who looks to the other side. Faruq tries not to see Sana. Sam turns his back on his father and looks at Sana. Sam and his (CONTINUED)
father are looking to different sides. We can see Sana from afar, feeding the seagulls and then sitting on the bay wall to play with them. Sam and Faruq are still avoiding each other’s looks.

CUT

24- INT. THE HOSPITAL’S ROOM. DAY.

Sam takes his father to his room; when they arrive Sam wheels his father to the small table to show him the parcel. Faruq turns his face to avoid seeing it, but Sam turns the wheelchair to make him see it again. Faruq turns away again and Sam turns the wheelchair again to force him to acknowledge his past.

After several attempts Faruq stops resisting and tries to go near the bed to lie down. Sam helps him to lie down and looks at him from the opposite side of the parcel, which forces Faruq to look to the other side and see the parcel. Sam leaves the room. When Faruq is sure that Sam is not there, he turns to avoid seeing the parcel. After a while he takes a peek at the parcel then turns away again. He tries to reach the parcel and throws it away from him.

CUT

25- INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Sam walks down the corridor dejectedly, his confusion obvious on his face. As he goes near Sana’s mother’s room, he looks at her; she lies looking at the ceiling. Her face is impassive, without any type of reaction. After a while Sam leaves and walks down another corridor. When he reaches a glass door, he stops for a while and looks at the floor. When he brings his head back up he sees Sana approaching, which makes him more confused and embarrassed.

Sam wants to go back through the corridor, he turns to the other side, but he comes back for a second and then we see Sana open the door. When she sees Sam, she smiles and Sam is still shocked and confused.

FADE

END