

The scene is a small square, cross section of a number of alleys. Mother Ensi's hut faces the audience. It has a small, short door and a platform on each side. The other huts are all tiny and muddy. The ceilings are low. The entrance doors can not be seen but ^{all} the windows open to the square. It is very quiet, as if the ditches in the alleys have swallowed all the noises. Mother Ensi's canteen-like layout for selling baked potatoes is in front of her hut. Her business consists of a sack of potatoes, a blackened charcoal pan, giving off steam from her baked potatoes. She is clothed in rags and is busy washing muddy potatoes, putting them in a container and shouting

elegy

Scene I

mother Ensi: : potatoes, ... hey, people! Come and get it, backed potatoes ; hot, hot potatoes. [her voice echoes in the alley; she lifts her head, looks all around, listens and again hopelessly] potatoes ... hey, people! hot backed potatoes.

lady Roghie: [she appears from the alley-end, slowly coming forward, stops at alley center, a few feet from mother Ensi] Hey mother Ensi, stop shouting in vain. Don't tear your vocal chords!

mother Ensi: [she looks at her suspiciously, the threatening mood of Roghie makes her nervous, she takes note of her layout and to escape from Roghie's intimidating stare she again shouts] potatoes, I sell backed pot...

Roghie : shut your mouth, you demon.

Ensi : [puzzled and fearful] what is the matter lady Roghie? what have I done?

Roghie : what have you done? You imposter, tale bearer! Now that it is all over you have arranged this damn stand!

Ensi : what damn stand?

Roghie : Don't play dumb.

Ensi : what are you implying lady Roghie?

Roghie : You want to tell me you don't know?... You don't know!. Right now you people are riding high, but up there

There is a God. I hope he falls dead right in front of your eyes. I hope you see his Corpse in a Coffin. Just as he gave me this heart-burn, I hope God will burn his heart.

Ensi: Tell me exactly what is it, Lady Roghie. Why are you moaning and cursing so?

Roghie: What is it!? Now that you've ruined me for life, you are asking what happened? What else did you want to happen? [she nervously shakes her hands]. What did we do to you? ... what injustice had my son done you?

Ensi: Your son?

Roghie: Yes, my son. The same son that your damn son betrayed and led the government lackeys to his arrest.

Ensi: Ismail? Ismail did it?

Roghie: You want to pretend you don't know? ... I hope God will blind him in both eyes... last night he and three lackeys burst into our home ... too bad he was asleep or he would have taught them a lesson.

Ensi: [Deep in her thoughts] Are you sure it was Ismail?

Roghie: Who else? Why do you think he's gone to serve Samad Khan? Just for this sort of dirty work... to attack people like an obedient dog. But this world turns!

Ensi: Lady Roghie, God be my witness I didn't know that ...

Roghie: You expect me to believe you? You sly widemouth can teach tricks even to Satan himself! You started this layout the day your son became a lackey of Samad Khan ... You think people are dumb? ... You are sitting here, spying on people and ^{perhaps} passing on the information to your son.

Ensi: God is witness that ...

Roghie: God be the revenger ... now you are exposed and the whole world knows your dirty works [she points to the entire neighborhood]. Since the day you set up this stand here nobody has dared to come out of his house. Why? The government has a watchdog in our neighborhood ... You have turned this area into a hangout for the lackeys of Baiglarbeg and Shajaoddoleh ... You are after social status for your son, right?

Ensi: When have I interfered with other people's business?

Roghie: What else did you want to do? Shame and disgrace be on you ... You have ruined me, thrown my son into Samad Khan's dungeon, and still you say you are only minding your own business? What worse could be possible? If, God forbid, Samad Khan silences him, who is to be responsible for his murder? [tears

come to her eyes] You have a son yourself ... how could you give my dear son to those wolves? What wrong had I done you? ... I witness to God above that your son won't enjoy his prime. Just as you burned my heart, I hope God will give him a hundred burning scars. I pray to all five chosen Imams that one of your eyes be a tear stream and the other a blood stream.

Ensi: [exhausted] Don't curse.

Roghie: I am helpless, but I pray God almighty to take vengeance.

Ensi: I pray God to give you patience.

Roghie: Go and tell your son, it is easy to become a servant of Samad Khan, tell on people and cause them death. Now they are riding high ... but if your son was a real man, and had any courage, he would have dissociated himself from the government, just like the days the city was in the guerrillas' hands ... but the glare of Samad Khan's gold coins blinded him. Tell that coward, Samad Khan would pay a high price to get Mohammad - dead or alive - but he is worthless. [threatening] get up, pack up and get lost.

Ensi: What do you want from me? Let me sell my potatoes.

Roghie: How come when that damned son of yours was selling charcoal and was penniless you weren't selling potatoes? Now that he has turned into club-swinging and is well provided you have started this?

Ensi: I only want to make a living

Roghie: How? living off your executioner son? ... or win your bread through my tears? God will give you what you deserve. Just wait. Those in power don't have mercy even on themselves. It was only the day before yesterday that the head executioner chopped off the head of Abbas, his assistant, because poor Molla Manaf had managed to escape from under his chopping knife and take refuge in the holy shrine. You can be sure that all these unwarranted bloodshed will catch up with your son too. But also remember that if anything at all happens to my son, I will choke your son to death with these hands. [She starts to leave]

Ensi: Where are you going now?

Roghie: [Turns back, exhausted, points to a bowl in a handkerchief] I am going to your Ismail, may be he can take it to my son... do you think he will? ... he is the only connection I have to my son.

Ensi : He'll do it for sure... take some potatoes for him too.

[Takes the lead off the potatoe pot, puts a few potatoes in a bowl and offers it to Roghie. Roghie looks at her hesistantly, goes forward and takes the potatoes]

Roghie : [with a low and choking voice] I'll go and throw myself at Samad Khan's feet and beg and cry till he lets my son free. God willing, he will [she looks at Ensi with a mixed feeling, as if she does not know whether to hate her or not. Quietly she moves away. Mother Ensi glances at the empty windows and deserted houses and alleys. then with a frightened and begging voice] Cooked potatoes ... Cooked potatoes.

Scene II

[Mother Ensi stares at the steam rising from the potatoe pot, is deep in thought. Two young men arrive, they notice Ensi, slowly come forward, hesitantly look at each other and stop near her]

First youth : [with broken and intermittent voice] Mother Ensi ! [Ensi snaps out of her gaze and looks at them. They look down upon her and inquisitively] Where is Ismail ?

Ensi : [Embarrassed] I don't know. [Tries to act normal] Don't you care for some potatoes ?

Second youth : You don't know where your son is? Don't know where he's gone to?

Ensi : I suppose he's gone to work

First youth : Work !!? [the youths laugh] who is the unlucky guy he is after today ?

Ensi : [Desperate] I swear to the lordship of Master ... I don't know anything.

second youth : I hear Beiglarbeigi is very pleased with your son!

first youth : Because he has arrested Mohammad, a very cunning guerrilla

second youth : Mohammad had gone to visit Roshie, his mother .

First youth : Ismail had been waiting for this for a long time

Second youth : This is the advantage of being a neighbor!

Ensi : [Shouting] what do you want from me?

First youth: What is wrong mother Ensi? Aren't you feeling well?

Second youth: You must be very pleased ... Beiglarbeigi is ~~very~~ ^{quite} happy with your son after his daring act.

First youth: Or because of his cruelties.

Second youth: He is up for promotion.

Ensi: [Desperate] I don't know anything. God knows I know nothing.

First youth: We have news for you ... listen well mother Ensi [Turns his face to the second youth. they appear rough and harsh.]

Second youth: Tell him the whole neighborhood is after him. If He wants to save his neck he better let Mohammad go.

First youth: otherwise ... otherwise we'll shred him to tiny pieces.

Ensi: How can it be done?

Second youth: You just give him our message.

Ensi: It is impossible that I ...

first youth: [Seizes the old lady by the collar and, threatening] If He doesn't do it, we'll kill him like a dog. We are not cowards like him. He better know that he can not hide from us. Wherever he goes, he is in our shooting range. [Two soldiers appear from the end of the alley; seeing Ensi in that situation, they pull out their glaives and attack the youths. The youths let Ensi go and ~~run~~ run

away. The soldiers want to chase them but Ensi will not let them.

First soldier: Who were those two?

Ensi: Nobody, let them go.

Second soldier: They were choking you.

Ensi: No they were joking.

First soldier: What? We saw it! Who were they? Don't be afraid, tell us.

Second soldier: Tell us so that we can cut them open.

First soldier: Right here in front of your eyes we'll chop 'em to halves.

Second soldier: We should have gone after them.

Ensi: They were asking about the price. [Soldiers look at each other]

First soldier: Come on, Mother Ensi, don't tell me you're afraid to give 'em away? ... You especially shouldn't be! You know how Beiglarbeigi likes your son? If anybody touches him, Beiglarbeigi will take out his eyeballs.

Second soldier: I envy him. Today Beiglarbeigi asked him over and told him he is up for promotion because of his role in Mohammad's arrest.

First soldier: Ismail is now financially well secure. You must be very happy, Mother Ensi, right?

Ensi: Why should I be happy?

Second soldier: Because of your son.

Ensi: I wish I had given life to a rattle snake instead. [the soldiers laugh hard]

Second soldier: I don't know why she is so cranky [They go to the potatoe pot, stick their hands in it and take out some potatoes]

First soldier: Your potatoes taste excellent today, mother Ensi.

Second soldier: Good as egg-yoke [He ~~sticks~~^{puts} his hands in the pot again]

Ensi: Take your hands off.

Second soldier: We want to eat

Ensi: What do you want to eat?

First soldier: [laughing] what else, potatoes.

Ensi: They are not to be plundered, you have to pay first, then eat.

Second soldier: [Turns his head, looks at the first soldier] pay!!?

Ensi: Yes, pay! [soldiers laugh very hard]

First soldier: Oh, mother Ensi, have you lost your head? Soldiers never pay for these things.

Second soldier: You think this is our first time?

First soldier: We are your son's coworkers anyway.

Second soldier: If Beiglarbeigi finds out that you've asked us to pay...

Ensi : [who had kept her cool till now, blows her top] Your Beiglarbergs
can go and jump in the lake ... get lost, do what the hell you
want, you impudent parasites [The soldiers, their mouths full,
look surprised. she takes a stick and chases them] Go, go...
greedy, filthy dogs [The soldiers leave hurriedly. they go to
another alley] You pests are killing me. why don't you let me
die of my own pains.

Scene 3

[Two young men arrive - The scene is deserted. Mother Ensi has
removed her things and left. Her house door is ajar]

First youth : mother Ensi !

second youth : Hey, mother Ensi ! [Bangs on the door]

Ensi : [Appears at the threshold] what's up ?

First youth : Give me a reward.

Ensi : Reward ?

First youth : Yes a good reward.

Ensi : What for ? [Comes out into the alley]

second youth : Your son has been appointed assistant to the head executioner.

Ensi : [As if hit by a bullet, sits on one of the platforms, she can
not believe it] What did you say ?

first youth : Didn't you hear ? He said your son has been given the
Job of assistant to the head executioner. Since the last assistant, ^{Abbas,} was
beheaded, the executioner has been short handed. Now, on Beiglarberg's
order, Ismail has become the new helper.

Ensi : Who told you ?

first soldier : No need to name the source, everybody knows.

Ensi : God ! [helplessly leans on the wall]

First youth : She is overtaken with joy.

Ensi : God have mercy.

first youth : You see what a capable son you have.

Ensi : [Bends on her hands] For God's sake don't pour salt on my
wounds

2nd youth : All right, mother Ensi

1st youth : Not mother Ensi anymore. Now we must call her executioner's mother.

Ensi : Why do you want to torture me to death?

2nd youth : Your son will save you.

Ensi : What do you want me to do? Anything which pleases you.

1st youth : What can you do? You've brought upon yourself the curse and damnation of a whole city.

2nd youth : Don't worry, it won't be long before they wrap his head in his own skin and kick you out of the city too.

1st youth : You know if you die they won't even let your body to be buried in a Moslem Cemetery?

2nd youth : Take Abbas, they didn't even perform the washing ritual on his body!

1st youth : Soldiers buried him.

Ensi : What can I do? ... How can I resolve this?

1st youth : Don't ask me.

Ensi : What do you think might happen?

1st youth : Nothing will happen ... this sort of thing has a short life span. It is shedding blood unjustly, and the follow-up is obvious.

2nd youth : If it were my eye-ball I would have taken it out and thrown it away. If it were my dearest relation I would have choked him to death with my own hands.

Ensi : [Frightened] choke him? [Ismail arrives. Seeing the youths pauses. He is wearing his red executioner's uniform. Seeing him, the youths back away and disappear in the alley bend. Mother Ensi stands up and looks at her son with hatred and contempt. Ismail is still looking in the direction of the youths.]

Ismail : What did they want?

Ensi : What is this you're wearing?

Ismail : It is my new uniform.

Ensi : New uniform?

Ismail : Yes, a present from Beiglarbeigi.

Ensi : Why did he give it to you?

Ismail : Well, it is a robe of honor.

Ensi : Why is it red then? What is that glaive hanging on your side?

Ismail : They are the tools of my trade.

Ensi : What trade?

- Ismail : It is a servant's uniform.
- Ensi : Then what was the one you had on yesterday?
- Ismail : That was another one.
- Ensi : The head executioner has a uniform on exactly like this!
- Ismail : Yes, he sometimes wears one like this too.
- Ensi : But after all these years I can tell the difference between a servant's uniform and one of executioner.
- Ismail : What are you trying to tell me?
- Ensi : After ^ahard life of poverty and suffering I raised you with so much hope and look at what you have become, an executioner! Samad Khan's executioner!
- Ismail : I've got no choice. I must follow orders
- Ensi : Even if they tell you to murder? Will you do it?
- Ismail : Can I not do it?
- Ensi : [with hatred] Then you kill too? Do you?
- Ismail : I ... I don't kill myself, I am a helper, I lay things out on the table cloth, get the big chopping knife ready and that sort of thing.
- Ensi : All head executioners begin as apprentices. Once they learn the tricks of the trade, they become the chopping knife users.
- Ismail : But up to now I have not ...
- Ensi : I will never forgive you, you are a disgrace. Understand I ^{disown} ~~disinherit~~ you.
- Ismail : [nervously tries to change the subject] Now this is no time for such talk. Don't get uptight. Give me something to eat. I am starving.
- Ensi : Instead of you helping me, I have to feed you?
- Ismail : I was busy all day, didn't make any tips.
- Ensi : What about your wages?
- Ismail : Wages? The new helper must pay his wages to ^{his boss} ~~the head~~ for a whole year.
- Ensi : And what is the man to do in that year? Eat his old mother's bread? Is that it?
- Ismail : But my situation is different, beginning tomorrow I'll get rich. Beiglarbeigi has said so himself. You mustn't sell potatoes anymore. It is a disgrace.
- Ensi : Disgrace you said? You with this uniform and glaive. Aren't you ashamed? Even if you don't give a damn about my feelings you should worry about people's moaning and cursing.

How can you have a productive life?

Ismail: No matter what you do, people talk.

Ensi: Not anything.

Ismail: Whoever has the guts should say it in my own face so I can break his teeth [Goes to the square-center and shouts] Who has the guts to ~~speak~~ talk behind my back? Who has the gut? [mother Ensi backs away, enters her house and shuts the door. Ismail approaches the house and tries to enter but the door is locked. He knocks] open up. How come you lock it?

Ensi: [From behind the door] Go to the lockers, go to Beiglarberg. There is no place here for you anymore.

Ismail: I tell you to open up. Will you or not? [He bangs on the door]

Ensi: No

[Ismail is desperate. He turns back. Sounds of laughter are heard from far off windows in the square. Ismail is frozen on the spot, frightened]

Sibzamini ... āhāy Sibzamini pokhteh garm va daghēh
potatoe hey potatoe COOKED warm and is hot is

Sibzamini [Sedāyash dar Kucheh mipichad sar boland
potatoe her voice in alley turns head high

mikonad va hamēh Ja negāh mikonad, goosh midahad
does and all place look does ear gives

va nomidaneh] Sibzamini ... āhāy dāgh va pokhteh
and no-hope potatoe hey hot and cooked

[az tah kucheh peidā mishavad, ārām Jelo miaya
from bottom alley find becomes slow front Comes

vasate Kucheh dar faseleh chand ghadami naneh Ensi
middle alley in distance few foot step mother Ensi
(female name)

miistad] āhāy Naneh Ensi galooto pareh nakon
stands hey mother Ensi throat your tear do not do

[bā tardid negahash mikonad, hālate tahdid
with hesitation watch it does Condition of threat

Roghie dastpachehash mikonad motavajjeh basātash
Roghie (female) name hasty does Careful goods exposed he

mishavad va baraye inkeh az zir feshār negāh
becomes and for so that from under pressure look

Roghie farar konad faryād mizanad } Sibzamini ... Sibzamini
Roghie escape to do shout hits potatoe potatoe

pokhteh dar (am) Sedato bebor efriteh
COOKED ha (ye.) Voice your Cut fiendish woman

[ba tars va taajJob] Chi Shodeh masht Roghie magel m
with fear and surprise what has become a title Roghie I
like Roghie lady

