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Parvin Daughter of Sassan

Written by: Sadeq Hedayat

## **P**lay Setting

Location Setting: A house in the ancient city of Rey (close to present day Tehran) bearing a late Sassanian style of architecture.

Period of time: After the defeat of the Sassanian federal armies at Qadissya, and Nahavand. Various cities in Iran are left to defend for themselves. With the western part of the country already overrun by the invaders, and the heartland of Iran coming under attack, the specter of the Arab army assault on the city lurks in the air.

## **A**ctors

Actor 1: Bahram: A 50 year old house servant

Actor 2: Chahreh Pardar (Sassan): 45 year old father of the house

Actor 3: Parvin: 20 year old, tall, and beautiful daughter of Chahreh Pardar

Actor 4: Parviz: 25 year old handsome fiance of Parvin, bearing his military gear

Actors 5-9: Four men dressed in Arab military costumes, speaking Arabic

Actor 10: The leader of the Arabs, a barefoot, middle aged man wearing a sword and a dagger carrying on with a loud voice.

Actor 11: Translator, a 40 year old man speaking in a thick accent

Not shown but heard and mentioned: The loyal family dog, guarding the house

## **T**he Play

Hedayat's brilliance as an able and creative writer and his sense of nationalism come together to create an emotionally charged play on the life of an upper class household in the ancient city of Rey in its last remaining days under the nominal rule of the Sassanians. The Arab forces that have taken city after city in Western Iran are now within the reach of Rey, and are expected any day. The city lies open, and has no natural defenses. A local defense force comprising of mostly young men remaining in the city has been assembled and provides round the clock vigilance against the hostile troops that might appear anytime. The sad knowledge that their small defensive force will easily be out-numbered by many orders of magnitude is heavy on everyone's mind, although not mentioned as if in self denial. Their hope is that their home terrain advantage will help them.

The citizens remain hopeful that help in the form of military assistance will come from other cities to the North and the East so they can put up a consolidated defense against the invaders. In a self reassuring manner, there is also the belief that their divine land is protected by Ahura-Mazda against the impending genocide that has already consumed the Western half of the country. The horror stories of wholesale killing, plunder, looting, and rape, and reports of female citizens being sent off to Arabia to be sold in slave auctions, have been pouring into the city by the few lucky

escapees from the other settlements to the West that were laid to waste at the hand of the aggressors. There is a sense of gloom in the air.

The three part play starts with Bahram, the household servant, attending to the large sized courtyard of the house, and reflecting loudly on the general state of affairs. He cannot apprehend the logic of his employer who seems incapable of comprehending the full weight of what is about to unfold. He wonders why Chahreh Padar, who has the means, has not left in the direction of China and Turan as have so many others of his standing. Deep inside, he has a feeling this house will be one of the first targets of assault by the plundering aggressors and is trying to figure his odds of defending the house with the help of the faithful family dog (a symbol of faithfulness and animal affection in ancient Iran) once house to house assaults in the city get underway. The news pouring into the city is not encouraging at all. The supplies are running scarce, as a breakdown of commerce seems to have occurred.

Bahram's thought process is broken by his employer, Chahreh Padar (Sassan) appearing on the scene and asking if Bahram is talking to himself. He then asks Bahram to go to the outskirts of the city looking for his future son-in-law Parviz who has joined the city defense forces. Parviz has not stopped by in quite a few days, and Chahreh Padar knows his daughter Parvin is longing to see his fiancé. Bahram expresses his reservation about the wisdom of staying on in Rey and says that there may still be time to get out. Chahreh Padar wants to hear none of that, given his childhood experience of being uprooted from the southwestern region of the country due to incursion by the Arab tribes and having moved to Rey in search of safety. Almost in a state of denial of the impending disaster that is to befall the city and its citizens, Chahreh Padar seems to have convinced himself that no harm will come. As Bahram departs, Chahreh Padar's beautiful daughter Parvin appears in the courtyard of the house and is asked by her father to play a musical instrument as a means of combating the gloom and doom.

Soon Parviz arrives, to the joy of his fiancée and her father, unaware of Bahram having been dispatched to get him. The exchange of news and views center about the defensive activities around the city. Parviz feels it is his honor and duty to defend the motherland, and that divine protection will be with them as they face incredible odds. Chahreh Padar is very supportive, and shows Parviz a small drawing of his daughter. Parviz asks if he can have the drawing and take it with him. Chahreh Padar states that the drawing is something he is saving for his old age, but as long as his daughter is still living with him, Parviz can take the drawing with him, and hands it over. He goes on to say once this temporary problem is over with, the wedding of Parviz to his daughter will take place. As Parviz is getting to depart his fiancée, she hands him the wedding ring she has been saving for their wedding day, and he gives her the gold ring he has procured for the same occasion. The departure scene is emotionally moving, as Parviz mounts his white horse to return to his observation post outside the city.

Then comes the assault on the city, and with the residents of the house very much confined within the enclosure of the house. Bahram enters Chahreh Padar's room and sees Parvin sitting by her father's bed side. Bahram finds a way to tell them that their house seems to have been penetrated by the invaders. He reports that the night before, he saw the glitter of one of the intruders' eyes peeking from behind a tree in the

courtyard and looking in the direction of their rooms, lit by candle light. Apparently Bahram, and the family dog were successful in scaring the Arab off. However, Bahram was sure they will return tonight. Chahreh Pardar starts to hallucinate. Parvin insists she will stay by father's bedside to care for him. Suddenly, they hear footsteps of people walking on the roof. Anxiety builds. Bahram is wondering whether the family dog can scare the intruders away. Soon afterwards there is the sound of people walking outside. Bahram rushes to lock the door. There is banging on the door of the room. Chahreh Pardar tells Bahram, they are breaking down the door, and that he should open it. Bahram is thrown aside by four cruel looking intruders who enter the room. Speaking in Arabic, and not being understood by the three Persians, the intruders soon inflict a fatal blow to Bahram who positions himself between the invaders and the his employer. It is clear the faithful family dog was also killed by the looters. The intruders start to gather all the valuables in the room. Finally they look in the direction of Parvin. Realizing their ill intention towards his daughter, Chahreh Pardar while still in bed cries out that they can take all his material belongings but must leave his daughter alone. He then tries to shelter his daughter as the four Arabs close in. His attempt to save his daughter is met with a fatal blow. Parvin, witnessing all of these terrible events, loses consciousness.

The final and the climactic episode of the play takes place at the location in the city where the leader of the Arab invasion force is found. This episode brings out the stark contrasts between what was and what is to be.

Parvin, wrapped in a blanket, is brought into the room where the Arab leader is pacing up and down. The four assailants, having looted Chahreh Padar's house, and having stashed away their ill gotten goods, unwrap the blanket at the foot of their leader. Parvin, still fainting, comes into view. They all stare at her. Soon afterwards, she starts to come around, and as she gains consciousness, the sight of the strangers bent over to look at her shocks her. Suddenly, the memory of the murder scene comes back to her. The Arab leader throws the others out of the room, and makes gestures towards Parvin. She shrinks back in disgust. The leader, frustrated, rushes to the door, and shouts some words in Arabic. A second man comes in, and walks towards Parvin. The leader leaves them alone and walks to the other end of the room. The new arrival starts to speak in Pahlavi (the language spoken in Iran in those days) with an accent.

Parvin is trying to find out whether this man is an outsider who has learnt Pahlavi or an Iranian traitor. The translator and Parvin engage in very revealing and charged exchanges that clearly highlight the drastic changes that are about to befall the society.

He informs Parvin that the Arab leader has a generous offer reserved for her. She is to become the latest addition to his harem and all other women in the Harem will be required to serve her. She is told how lucky she is to receive this offer, given that the other women in the city are to be sent to Arabia to be sold at slave auctions. She is to be spared, and kept by the leader. All this talk is alien to Parvin who shows her disdain. She expresses her disgust at the conduct of the aggressors, and in response to the translator points out that ancient Iranians, in the course of their history, have only fought defensive wars, and have never attacked their neighbors for the purpose of looting or imposing their religion on them.

The translator insists Parvin must accept the new realities, that the Fire Temples are things of the past to be abolished, and that she should submit to the will of Allah, and learn the new language as Pahlavi will also soon be abolished. Parvin feels the defense of her country is on her shoulders and expresses her thoughts that finally good will prevail and these invaders' days are numbered. She believes strongly that her fiance Parviz will come to save her. The translator, who seems to be pressured to get Parvin to comply, suddenly shows her a ring. Parvin, recognizing the ring as the one she had given to Parviz, is panic-stricken and asks where the ring came from.

The translator, feeling he is getting an advantage, discloses that when the Arab army arrived, the defenders fought gallantly but were no match for the invading forces. After all the defenders were felled, he and a few others were trusted by the leader to enter the field and remove all valuables from the dead Iranians, interrogating and finishing off any who were still breathing. He goes on to say that while doing so that night, he saw a white stallion on a hilltop bent over his dying master. He went over to investigate. Thinking he was an Iranian speaking his language, the dying soldier, covered in his own blood, motioned the newcomer to approach him. The soldier gave him the drawing of a girl and a ring and asked him to find this girl and to tell her not to wait for him. The figure of the girl depicted in the drawing caught the eye of the Arab leader, who asked for the girl to be found and brought to him for addition to his own harem. Hearing all of this, Parvin's world suddenly comes crumbling down around her. Her last hopes are dashed. At this point the translator reiterates the offer made to Parvin before, hoping she is more amenable by then. Parvin is still defiant, and rejects the offer with the force of her conviction. The translator points out this is the last chance she is getting, and still hearing 'no,' walks to the other side of the room.

The Arab leader, impatient and pacing up and down the room, stops to hear the translator's report. With rage in his face, he tosses the translator out of the room and walks towards Parvin. There is silence as the Arab approaches Parvin. He mutters some words and then puts one arm around Parvin, and places his other hand under her chin as if appraising his prey, and then kisses Parvin. In that closeness Parvin reaches out and gently pulls out the dagger tied to the Arab leader's belt. Unaware of Parvin's action, the Arab leader, pleased at his initial success, pulls back. As he looks the other way, Parvin raises the dagger. With all the strength that she can muster and with great swiftness the dagger comes down piercing through her chest. As her blood gushes out, Parvin falls to the ground to join the rest of her family.

The Arab leader, shaken by the event, walks away, reaches inside of a big chest filled to the top with jewels stolen from the Iranian people, and pulls out a handful to cover the body of his latest victim.

منبع: [Iran Chamber Society](#)

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