

Production notes: SHADOW character is emulated by sound design and only exists in the RAYA's head, so all actions of the SHADOW are only written down for actor's understanding)

Soft warm light (like from a candle). RAYA is meditating sitting on the pillow. Birds singing is heard from afar. Explosion sound is heard. Lights off. The set is covered in smoke.

FOG

RAYA is taken from her thoughts (like dragged into reality, but not super bothered, to little energy to care). Looks for the lamp powerless.

Lights on.

RAYA on low energy, leaning against the blocks. At some point slides down, fighting against it.

RAYA: What do you want to take from me now?

 You have already taken

 Everything you could -

 My husband, daughter, sister...

 I thought I am building my life up...

 Can I live a little? For once! (I need to recover)

 Just be a bit selfish...

RAYA breaking down, powerless, still fighting against it. Crawls to the cushion to lie on it.

I was hoping - I am strong enough to protect them this time.

No -

I believed I won't let them die!

.

And yet I am sent to square one... zero maybe.

My life fading - was it even worth it?

Is it the world or just me who got crushed?

.

So that's how it ends...

RAYA standing on her knees, fighting the fall, head down.

All I ever did - seems not to be enough.

Trying to protect everyone - yet losing them all.

RAYA crawls back to the long block. RAYA notices something, facing up.

The smell of fire worn off...

Just concrete dust in my lungs.

Is it how loneliness smells?

.

Beat. Blank stare.

Always trying to make things just,

living up to ideals, following rules -

And what for?

Justness doesn't always bring good to the one who plays righteous

And the one who is in the wrong.

Who decides what is right or wrong?

.

Killing might be wrong.

.

But what if they hold a gun to your head...

I watched a man hesitate once.

His squad at gunpoint.

He waited too long...

The man was me...

The only one to ever opened their eyes again...

Was I in the wrong for not killing?

.

The thought itself is annoying.

I have always thought I am the winner

I am the good one.

Yet everyone I ever cared for gets taken from me.

Have I ever lived up to my potential?

Creaking sound. SHADOW enters and stays at the back of the stage next to the projection wall - stage left.

RAYA crawls up the blocks. RAYA facing up, says each word separately.

Always following someone

Or something.

Hoping one day this mask will grow into my skin

So I will believe these lies myself.

On the grand scheme of events one life against many will always lose.

Unless it's the one you care about... (sigh)

Creaking sound, breath. During RAYA's speech SHADOW comes in.

And yet Kei's words still haunt me:

"Couldn't do much better than that?"...

Dragging sound, like a chain. SHADOWS walks to the centre stage RAYA stops mid sentence, tensed. RAYA notices SHADOW. Turns to Shadow. RAYA climbs up onto the box she was sitting on

(she is scared of it, although at this point she denies being scared of it).

Not you again.

I really, really don't have time for this today.

.

You're not gonna leave, are't you?

RAYA and SHADOW keep an eye contact for a while

No.

No.

I don't need to feel any worse now!

No.

RAYA turns away from shadow, hoping it disappears.

Creaking sound, dragging sound. SHADOW leaves, RAYA is relieved, climbs down, tries to gain her composure again.

Creaking sound, dragging sound. RAYA distressed in disbelief.

Why did you have to come?

Out of all times - now?

Why do you always come when all I want is to be alone?

RAYA turns around to face Shadow..

You're not gonna be helpful, won't you?

(In big pretentious voice)

For I have to make my own choices and learn /

Lights off. Projection 1 off.

FOG

Breath. Electric cracking sound.

Projection 2 on.

YEKHE is sitting in mediation facing back against RAYA and camera.

RAYA enters the room.

YEKHE YUUN: I could sense your presence from three floors down. You should calm your anxieties or you'll disturb more than merely my meditation.

RAYA: (fast paced) That is a way to say hello, nice to see you week and alive. Anyways, we are gathering in the underground hall in an hour and...

YEKHE YUUN: Stop... hurrying for a moment. Rushing only brings new problems, rarely solutions. Poor self control is even more dangerous for people like you.

YEKHE tries to get back to meditation.

RAYA: But it's not dangerous for you? Not any more?

YEKHE YUUN: I learnt my lessons long ago. Now it's time for you to do the same.

YEKHE stands up and walks towards exist / RAYA.

You can do whatever you wish, of course.

YEKHE approaches RAYA and turns head towards her.

I am merely trying to shield you from what comes unless you change.

YEKHE almost leaves the room.

RAYA: You never told me why people like me, like us, have to change in the first place?

YEKHE comes close to RAYA and looking her directly in the eye says lines as something super important that she must remember for the rest of her life. (Slow pacing)

YEKHE YUUN: You will never be able to see the world as it is unless you get rid of your filters. And how do you think you get rid of something so engrained into you, something you've nurtured your whole life? It's the lie, the illusion you've been taught to cherish.

Pause

RAYA: But what's behind those filters?

Pause

YEKHE YUUN: Truth.

Projection 2 off.

Projection 1 on.

Lights on.

(RAYA and SHADOW are in different places now). SHADOW lies on the floor with the head on the cushion - stage right. RAYA is next to the door frame looking at where the shadow was a moment before. RAYA looks for SHADOW, it is in a different place now.

RAYA: I never asked for it.

Isn't it enough how I nearly died inside in that garden in bloom.

A perfect place, or so it seemed

until I saw the details.

The barren tree, dying on the fruitful ground,

and it was mine - so I've been told!

I hated the idea, and so I ran away, to find another to call my own.

.

You must've seen it, don't act like you didn't.

RAYA sits next to shadow (in meditative pose). Tells the story as a fairy tale.

And the further I got so more barren and destroyed the landscape
became -

broken trees, burnt ground.

.

And air... filled with the smell of iron.

The further I got, the darker were the skies,

yet somehow I could see pretty well.

RAYA lies down.

Well enough to see through the fog,

which dragged me in,

there was no point in fighting it.

Like in a nightmare,

where you use all your power to run faster but your goal only gets
further away.

Sometimes I wish I could get further away.

Not to see the river carrying the bodies of Alker youths.

(SHADOW gets up and moves to stage right) Creeking, Dragging sounds

Or at least forget...

Everything I saw, just for a moment.

RAYA getting stressed. Pace up.

Forget I didn't figure out in time.

Sometimes I think their deaths are on me.

RAYA sits up, stressed.

I thought I knew what I was doing. I really did.

Thought I had it all figured out. I was the smartest one.

RAYA drifts away in her thoughts again, blank stare.

A constant sense of duty.

I was sure I'm doing what needs to be done

And so I forgot what really mattered to me

Who really mattered to me.

Maybe that's why

Everything I ever cared for is in ruins again...

RAYA looking for SHADOW, finds it.

You fight for what you believe in, right?

It's that simple.

.

Yet easier said than done.

For now I'm not so sure anymore.

I can't help but wonder... if I stop fighting now,

follow Kei's advice, settle for a normal life...

SHADOW comes closer. Dragging, creaking sounds. RAYA moves away from it to the blocks, stressed.

What is normal anyways?

I used to have a normal life - husband, children, friends.

Saw all of them perishing.

That's a wrong term... murdered.

.

But now the choice is mine -

am I willing to sacrifice everyone just to save a few?

When the few are the ones I care about -

Yekhe, Nurai, Anna, Rustam...

.

RAYA looking at Shadow.

I've seen it all

How we kept fighting, and survived through bloodshed

The ravens circling above mountains covered in bones

Scared to step onto the burnt land.

Watching from afar, so unreachable.

(pause)

We were the ravens.

To the floor.

How lowering our heads was our downfall.

Entangled, drowning in river,

Yet water was stale,

Like a moment, frozen in time.

The last thing we saw were raindrops

Hitting the grass

And every impact lit like stars

Yet light has never touched us.

In her head, face up.

I stretched my arm, grasping for.

Life.

And it's gone dark.

.

.

To Shadow.

It might be wrong or selfish even,

but I don't want to see my friends flowing down that damned river.

.

SHADOW moving to stage left, creaking, dragging sounds. RAYA looks at SHADOW's movement. Facing SHADOW.

Isn't funny, after all this time,

after all the battles I've fought, the losses...

I am still no different from when I started?

A scared kid hoping someone else will come and save me...

SHADOW turns on projection again (it starts with stars while RAYA is talking about the stars and the cuts to the scene)

Lights off.

Ext. Field at night

RAYA and NURAI walking in. NURAI stops.

RAYA: Please don't tell me we are lost.

NURAI: OK.

NURAI is checking her wrist like something was bothering her.

RAYA: Wait, but are we?

NURAI: Of course not. Look, see that star out there? It's the polar star. It never rises or sets like the other stars hence you can always find North. Now, if you turn from Polaris and look at Orion, over there, you'll see his belt—those three bright stars in a line. Just below that, there's Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky. It's in the southeast right now. We just keep Sirius in our sights and move toward it.

RAYA: So the sky is like a constantly moving map for you?

NURAI : (amused) Well, that's one way to look at the stars.

We were taught to see them as guidance. As our ancestors keeping an eye on us, leading the way.

RAYA: (serious) You think yours are guiding you as well?

NURAI: No, never believed it. But when life comes crushing you it's easier this way - just look at the stars and they'll guide you.

RAYA: (being a pain in the ass) What if it's cloudy?

NURAI: Then it's all down to you.

Projection stops. (RAYA and SHADOW are in different places now).

After a silent moment.

RAYA: (bitchy) If it was all down to me, you wouldn't be here in the first place.

Creaking, Breathing sound. SHADOW points with the remote to the ceiling. Lights go off.

Humming sound. Bumping noises.

RAYA: : You are not kicking me out of my own head!

Lights go on. SHADOW in the middle of the stage, gives her a whatever look and moves to the side. Awkward silence.

RAYA: What?

What are you trying to achieve now?

Throwing memories at me

Throwing me out of my realm.

.

My realm...

.

It's mine, so I have powers here, not you.

So maybe...

.

OK, let's talk.

RAYA gets a second chair and sits on it facing the SHADOW with the chair spine between the legs. Raya takes a deep breath, speaking as though she's talking to the Shadow

You don't have to tell me I'm stupid.

I see it myself -

It's just hard to see the truth when you're in the eye of the storm.

It's too much at once

But I... I have to find my own way

It's my decision,

It has always been

.

And yet you still expect something from me

Like I know what's right.

All this time, growing through losses, through pain

Was it worth it?

(pause)

I would like to think it was...

Looks towards the Shadow as if searching for an answer

sometimes

Kei offers me to walk away from my past patterns,

Review my morals...

Don't get me wrong I know I make morally ambiguous choice

Take siding with Obsidian vanguard.

Did I believe their ideals? No.

Were they the enemy?

They killed my family. Guess.

.

Did they know about it?..

.

Jokes on them

.

But see, I don't see a problem with this.

Yet Kei does.

.

(Staccato)

And as much as I don't want to agree with him

There is that tingling sensation somewhere here

He might be right.

.

But I can't (confess I was wrong)

RAYA stands up, about to leave.

No. I can't.

RAYA turns around, gets back to Shadow.

I've fought my way through every loss, every wound,

Every fire burning me to ashes from the inside.

I had to build myself from scratch.

taken?
Only to give it all up for some... peaceful life that might as well be

.

No.

I can't just let go of the person I had become

I can't let the world

If I follow Kei, I'm giving in to the same system that tried to break me...

And I will not let it change my core.

SHADOW stands up facing RAYA, she looks at SHADOW's movement. Lights go off.
Projection on.

RAYA: No way it actually worked!

RUSTAM: Mhm, next time you might not be as lucky, passing the firing squad head on and still making it here. Today must be your day!

RAYA: Look, I don't like how half the Alker turned to dust but, if it was inevitable, at least we made it out. So now we can make sure that doesn't happen again. Have you seen their equipment? Its different now...

RAYA stops and gives RUSTAM a look.

RAYA: I understand...

RUSTAM: You don't!
You could've died!

.

If you continue living like you have nothing left to lose,
Don't be surprised when your life comes crashing down on you.

And I mean it in more than just literal sense.

You think you're broken now? Have nothing to lose?

Stop running from your past.

Yes, it hurts,

It might seem you have nothing left to fight for.

But if that storm comes, it'll show you the other side -

A mere reflection of the memories in the wreckage of your life.

Everything you've built so far...

Will come to nothing in a blink of an eye.

How's that for motivation?

RAYA: If the end has come there's nothing left to fear...

 The catastrophe has already happened -

 we are here with what's left of us,

 what's left for us to salvage -

 if there is even anything.

 It's not about what lays in the future -

Projection stops. Projection shows pause and flickering. Only SHADOW is on stage, lying on the floor playing with strings (voice over continues). RAYA is stage far right.

RAYA: ... (contd)

 If I have to lose it all tomorrow, so be it -

 I still have today.

 I might not know the details of the days to come,

 But I see how I can affect the flow of events at this given moment

 And hopefully no one will die tomorrow.

 And if I fail I will know I've tried,

 I didn't run away but faced the uncertainty

 with the fire still burning here.

 And as long as its burning I will not stop,

 Not until I reach the goal.

RAYA on stage right, arms crossed, facing the SHADOW.

RAYA: (Haha) you're very funny.

.

You know, I'm done playing these games.

We spend so much time fighting that in the end we both lose.

RAYA comes to SHADOW.

The choice is yours -

Maybe we cannot afford to lament this time.

And maybe I should stop running away from myself.

For if the time has come, and we have nothing left to lose,

We can as well lose the fear of tomorrow.

Or...

.

Well, actually there is no or.

RAYA about to leave. Takes a breath facing up. Turns to the SHADOW.

You waiting for a special invitation?

Lights off.