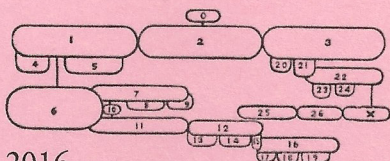


Twenty-Four Exits

(A Closet
Drama)

by Mike Lala



2016

A Present Tense Pamphlet

TWENTY-FOUR EXITS

(A closet drama)

A theater. White noise from the speakers, white light under the curtains. They part to reveal a large, brightly lit screen.

[applause]

MALE VOICE (center): I know my entire state
is looking forward to heat...*[tape cut]*

heat without humanity

[tape scrub]...heat without humidity.

[applause]

heat by steam production
commensurate with fuel-rod insertion

kept from our neighbors to the east.

[wild applause]

MALE VOICE (left): Things happen...*unnaturally*.

MALE VOICE (right): Traffic's always...*[static]*.

“Like a hot knife to butter,” the ENGINEER chirps.

[enters stage left, thumbs through a file]

“Motorcycles overheat. Gasses leak. Uranium’s a mysterious business.” *[HE exits]*

The reel begins, the audience shifts.

PICTURE START

8 7 6 5 4 3 *[beep]*

[pompous music]

On-screen: A montage. Bodies in labcoats. Flags and brass bands.

ENGINEER’S VOICE (stage left, in an echo): Majid Shahriari, Ardeshir
Husseinpour, Massoud Mohammadi, Darioush Nejad.

*Wiping her brow at the heart of intelligence
the SECRETARY’s knuckles in blue.*

[cut]

*Dust blowing. Cracked dirt and shrubs.
An envelope changes hands.*

[music out]

THE MOSSAD: Go.

STUXNET: Going.

CENTRIFUGE: Whatever you say.

[wild applause]

The aisles light up. The screen goes white.

INTERMISSION

*The aisle lights flash. The audience settles.
The screen fades on, white, over one chair.*

PICTURE START

8 7 6 5 4 3 [beep]

On-screen: Int. Diner and gas station.

*[MAN in glasses & white taqiyah
enters stage left, moves center toward the chair]*

MAN (sitting): Put this in your underwear.

Three men at a table, eating.

FEMALE VOICE (right): This is JSOC to flight control.

MAN: Belligerents
who also happen

to be

U.S. citizens
do not enjoy

immunity where
non-citizen belligerents

are valid military objectives.

*On-screen: Ext. Dirt road. A Jeep weaving.
Hills and roving crosshairs.*

MALE VOICE (right): *Saba* reports

FEMALE VOICE (left): Al-Awlaki killed.

MALE VOICE (right): Two weeks later, at a cookout...

FEMALE VOICE (left): ...his 16-year-old son.

The screen pans out to frame another. A sharp tilt, then, an explosion.

FEMALE VOICE (right): Fox 2. Splash!

FEMALE VOICE (left): *Fox News* reports...

MALE VOICE (right): Abdul-Rahman...

FEMALE VOICE (left): his 21-year-old son.

[pause, then applause, building up to a crescendo]

MALE VOICE (right): *Saba*—

[MAN exits]

FEMALE VOICE (left): ...a number of his fellow *[static]*—*[applause]*. Samir Khan,
a U.S. citizen...

MALE VOICE (right): ...to *Inspire* magazine:

MALE VOICE 2 (offstage, un-mic'd): I am proud to be a traitor to America...

[curtains]

“...If you give Satan an inch, he’ll be a ruler.”

notes and acknowledgements

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