

Treatment
American Wings, Iranian Roots
By Kristin Orloff

NOTE: I have included 3 different possible endings.

KERMANSHAH 1981. The crunching of heavy boots on dirt cut the silence of an inky night. Moonlight bathes the barren courtyard of the Abedi family home, where children once played around a modest fountain. Three guards bang on the door. An automatic rifle is shoved in HAJ ABBAS's face, and he has no choice but to let them in. Waking with a start on the ground next to his sisters and mother, HASSAN a young man bolts up, but it's too dark to see who it is. It is too late to escape. A Sepah, who is a tall, thin man with a thick eyebrow and unforgiving eyes, directs the operation. He yells to grab the terrified young man and drag him through the home to the waiting truck on the street. NIMTAJ cries out "Please not my son!" as HAJI ABBAS tries to bribe the men with any trinket of value he can find. In the darkness, the truck speeds off.

1975 SIX YEARS EARLIER. Lithe and athletic, REZA, HASSAN and a few other boys drag an empty oil drum to the side of a wall encasing a posh hotel. The boys peek over and point, "The Americans". Their intentions seem nefarious, until a pale arm with freckles pops out of the 3rd story hotel window and waves at the Iranian boys. HASSAN says he wants to go with REZA, but REZA tells him it's too dangerous and he's too weak.

REZA easily scales the wall, hides in the high noon shadows from guards and slips through the back door of the westernized hotel. Once inside, REZA is greeted by an American teenager RANDY who leads REZA into the hotel. RANDY is a red headed boy and very friendly. RANDY brings REZA to meet a small squad of American athletes, not much different than he.

The two main American wrestlers are RANDY (red-headed boy) in REZA'S weight class and JIMMY who is Ardehir's weight class (the heavy weights).

Commented [1]: I want to confirm the terms used in Iran before, during and after Revolution.

Commented [2]: Option: for audience to not know who is being arrested

Commented [3]: Later in the story, he will be Mahadi Aghee's father

Commented [4]: Instead of the audience knowing it's HASSAN, only give away that one of the Abedi boys is being dragged from the home, but not giving away which one. It could be Reza, Mustafa or Hassan.

Commented [5]: These will be the same wrestlers who help them escape in Venez. One American kid should be a red head so we can distinguish him. It would make sense because they would be the same age and be the best in the world.
Randy: a red head who is Reza's weight class.
Jimmy who is Ardehir's weight class

Despite the language barrier, they have a laugh with REZA. REZA is amazed at their toothpaste, their candy, and other American items. At one point, the boys square up and begin wrestling in a good natured match. This noise brings a knock on the door and they freeze in fear. REZA is shoved under the bed. The American coach with a 70s mustache and a head of curly hair, SCOTT, enters. SCOTT is suspicious that they have an Iranian wrestler in the room, and he guides RANDY how to get REZA out safely. Although REZA and RANDY peer down from the third story window, and without words seem to indicate that maybe REZA could jump, they decide not to try. Through Coach Scott's suggestion, the team sneaks REZA out of the hotel by putting him in red and blue warm-ups and jogging with him past security.

At the gym the next day, REZA is excited to take on the Americans in a real match. But when he weighs in a few kilos over, REZA must drop weight in an exhaustive pre-match with another teammate bigger than him, ARDESHIR. It is clear that ARDESHIR and REZA are close friends, but also fierce competitors. ARDESHIR works REZA hard 'for his own good' so he can make weight. although this also means ARDESHIR will also lose weight and be at a disadvantage in his match.

Commented [6]: This character trait of self sacrifice of ARDESHIR will be developed throughout the story.

REZA defeats RANDY, the boys showing good sportsmanship. Coach SCOTT makes it a point to shake REZA'S hand and gives him a wink and a smile. ARDESHIR and JIMMY have a fierce battle when ARDESHIR, in a questionable move, crushes JIMMY'S nose for the win. JIMMY'S nose is bloodied and broken and will be deformed. ARDESHIR has a gash over his eye that will also become a scar.

Several days later, REZA and ARDESHIR, whose eye gash is now healing, climb up to the Tagh-e Bostan carvings in the Zagros Mountains. They speak of wanting more out of life, wanting a higher education, wanting to be the best athletes possible. REZA is still fascinated by the Americans, but ARDESHIR is not as impressed with the Americans. The reliefs of kings and warriors etched into the hillside stand as witness to REZA'S declaration: I will be a *ghahreman*, a champion, and I will see the world. While climbing the mountains, they show how easily they climb vine covered rocks. They also leap from rocks onto the ground at least 2 stories below-showing they know how to land without

breaking bones. REZA speaks of the upcoming Nationals and tells ARDESHIR he (REZA) would be champion of all Iran, if he was able to go. ARDESHIR will be competing because of both his father's connections and expectations.

Commented [7]: This will be how they escape in 1982, by leaping from a window

That night, REZA's mother NIMTAJ makes an exceptional meal and is clearly proud and pleased to have her family together. She admonishes MUSTAFA to not talk of politics at dinner. After a silent moment, REZA announces he wants to compete at Nationals. NIMTAJ gasps. She does not want him to leave Kermanshah and expresses that he is just fine competing here. HASSAN interjects that REZA's talent and ability as a wrestler is undeniable. HAJ' ABBAS is clearly thoughtful and agrees that REZA should be allowed to compete at nationals in Tehran. But, REZA'S huge smile soon fades as MOSTAFA points out that they can't afford to fly him and in order for REZA to make weight that a 10 hour bus ride would be too long and grueling. REZA is depressed and frustrated. He hates that his lack of money stops him from competing and shows a strong will to go after what he wants.

Commented [8]: This will be later in great contrast, when during the Revolution, she cannot provide a meal of food for her family.

Commented [9]: First opportunity to show there may be some unrest coming to Iran.

Commented [10]: She is consumed with keeping the family together.

Later that night, HASSAN and REZA are settling in to sleep on the roof. REZA is frustrated about not being able to travel. He is jealous of ARDESHIR because ARDESHIR'S father has money and influence. "ARDESHIR is so lucky" and REZA says he wishes his family was more like ARDESHIR'S. About that time, MUSTAFA climbs on the roof and tells REZA he has a plan. Tomorrow, they will go into town. REZA is doubtful, but HASSAN says that MUSTAFA always comes through.

MOSTAFA, HASSAN and REZA go into their hometown Kermanshah. Through MUSTAFA'S connections and ability to persuade people, they present REZA as an elite wrestler who will bring honor to Kermanshah.

Commented [11]: An important (and very true) characteristic of Mustafa's.

One of the homes they go to is that of REZA'S favorite teacher, MR. MEHEDIN. His home is humble and full of books. He is a kind man of simple means with a kind wife and little girl, SHIRIN. SHIRIN is about three years old and has a homemade doll that looks exactly like SHIRIN. She and the doll have the same homemade dress. MUSTAFA notes that MR. MEHEDIN'S heel on one of his shoes is broken. MUSTAFA tells MR. MEHEDIN that he has a friend who is a cobbler and owes him a favor. MUSTAFA gives MR.

Commented [12]: Later, when Mr. Mehidan is hooded and hanging from the crane in the square, Reza will recognize the broken shoe.

MEHEDIN that address and encourages him to stop by to have it fixed. MR. MEHEDIN is grateful. Clearly, they don't have much, but they give all they can to help REZA.

On the way back from town, triumphant with enough money to get a plane ticket, a **political** debate is happening in the square. The boys stop to listen. MUSTAFA is able to moderate the debate by pointing out the truth and flaws of both sides. MUSTAFA is well-respected by all the locals and, through his ability to influence people, he is able to head off the potential violence while bringing clarity to the division in the conversation that the two groups of locals highlight: those who believe the Shah is ushering in a new era of progressive idealism, and those who fear Iran is losing its Islamic values and economic foothold in the East and support a new regime lead by the Ayatollah Khomeini. MUSTAFA ends by highlighting REZA and announcing that REZA will return from TEHRAN as a champion. Even though they already have enough money for the plane ticket, MUSTAFA anticipates the family will soon need more to survive. He is able to get money from both sides of the locals.

On the way home, MUSTAFA leads REZA and HASSAN to a secluded place in the nearby mountains. He moves a large boulder to reveal a hole that contains several metal boxes. In the boxes are documents and money. MUSTAFA takes out the money box and adds the extra from town. He tells HASSAN and REZA this is their emergency supplies for the family to survive, if 'things go the way' MUSTAFA thinks he will. They cannot tell anyone, not even their father. MUSTAFA says he will be the one to tell their father at the right time. MUSTAFA says that the papers, the maps, the IDs, the fake Visas and passports are more valuable than the money. MUSTAFA tells REZA to move the rock back into place, and with some effort, he is able to move it. Once in place, MUSTAFA asks HASSAN to move it. **HASSAN** cannot. MUSTAFA seems pleased.

A few days later at school, REZA and HASSAN go to see his teacher Mr. MEHEDIN. REZA wants to thank him, but he really wants the teacher to help him understand what the 'men in the streets' were **talking** about with MUSTAFA. They have an open conversation, but the teacher warns REZA to be aware of possible

Commented [13]: Important opportunity to highlight the issues occurring in Iran.

Commented [14]: Throughout, it is Hassan who is perceived as weak. Later, when Mustafa and Reza are gone, it is HASSAN who will need to get the money.

Commented [15]: Opportunity to explain the social-political state of Iran.

changes coming. REZA shares that he is nervous about flying to Tehran tomorrow. Mr. MEHEDIN reminds REZA that this will be his first flight of many and to embrace the excitement of travel. REZA notes that MR. MEHEDIN'S shoe heel has been fixed, but the heels don't quite match. MR MEHEDIN is good natured and tells REZA that heels are on the bottom so only the ground would notice.

The next day, REZA flies on an airplane for the first time and experiences the big city of Tehran, a place that feels like a world away from the home he's known. He will walk past the place that will later be where the American Hostages are held. At the national wrestling competition, REZA competes valiantly throughout the tournament. He is completely dominating all his opponents. Although ABBAS warns REZA to not get too confident from his victories, REZA feels as if he is undefeatable. REZA meets MASHADI AGHEE in the final championship match. MASHADI AGHEE'S father, ALI, is in a highly decorated military uniform and watches the match surrounded by other military persons. ALI is tall and thin with a full eyebrow and dark, piercing eyes. ALI shouts to destroy REZA and show him no mercy. As MASHADI AGHEE scores points against REZA early in the match, REZA makes sloppy mistakes and loses in a crushing defeat. REZA does not know how to 'come from behind'. REZA feels even more humiliated because the match was aired on national television. He had promised the town to return a champion. He is also naively afraid the Americans saw him lose on TV. During the tournament, MUSTAFA is seen in the corners of the gym, speaking to men who nod and seem very engaged in the conversations. Sometimes, it looks like MUSTAFA is exchanging documents.

Upon returning home, REZA is filled with self-doubt and shame. ABBAS tells REZA he gave up when he was behind in the score. He is reminding REZA he lost first in his head, then in his heart long before he lost on the mat. REZA'S sisters and mother try to comfort him, but it's his father's words that stay with him. REZA is determined to work harder and to never quit. REZA and HASSAN lay on the rooftop and HASSAN reminds him of the third Ali v. Frazier fight, where Frazier was forced to quit rather than die in the ring. REZA is not sure if death would be

Commented [16]: The same Sepah from scene one of the house raid

worse than defeat. In the distance, they hear what sounds like gunfire and explosions. HASSAN wonders where MUSTAFA has been and it occurs to REZA that MUSTAFA must have stayed behind in Tehran.

1978 - The presence of the Shah's armed forces has intensified. Food scarcity and restrictive laws spark protests across Iran, and are met with violence from the *Sepha*. NIMTAJ struggles to make dinner with the lack of food. She is frustrated and tries to make dinner seem the same, but the baskets and bowls that used to overflow, are barely full.

Supply runs under the cover of darkness have become routine for the Abedi boys. MUSTAFA is adept at finding the secret routes and making deals with people in the shadows. He has a photographic memory and can see any map and memorize it in seconds. During a midnight run to bring a jug of kerosine home from a stash house at the gym, REZA and HASSAN are nearly spotted and arrested. HASSAN is again terrified at the prospect of going to prison.

REZA is upset and confused by what is happening in Iran and to his family. Without telling anyone, he sneaks over to consult his teacher, MR. MEHEDIN at his home. His wife serves what little tea they have as SHIRIN clings with fear to her rag doll. REZA is worried that he may have compromised the family's safety. MR. MEHEDIN gives a few books to REZA and emphasizes to REZA that being caught with these will mean arrest. This meeting is in stark contrast from the first where there was hope, now there is fear. They get nervous when they hear a truck approaching and keep looking out the window. They are afraid to speak openly and to share books. It's a clearly different Iran now.

As food shortages worsen, REZA, MOSTAFA, ARDESHIR and HASSAN join a raid on the Kermanshah prison to secure supplies to bring back to their families. MUSTAFA does not want HASSAN to come, but HASSAN sneaks onto the truck. At one point, HASSAN stares into a prison cell and is terrified by the chains and other torture devices he sees on the raid. He tells REZA that to be in prison would be worse than death. Because of this delay by

Commented [17]: In direct contrast to the earlier family dinner

Commented [18]: We see REZA and HASSAN going to the secret place for the money box. Hassan is still unable to move it on his own.

Commented [19]: This is true. Mustafa is a very fascinating man.

Commented [20]: schools have been closed.

Commented [21]: This is the same prison that Hassan is later brought to when arrested.

HASSAN, REZA and HASSAN barely escape being robbed of the goods that they secured. ARDESHIR and MUSTAFA intervene just in time and admonish HASSAN for being so foolish.

A few days later, REZA and HASSAN are trading the goods they got at the prison for food. During this trade, REZA hears that dissenters are being hung from huge cranes in the square in the center of town. REZA and HASSAN go to the square to see for themselves. They fight their way to the front of the crowd. MUSTAFA is there and tries to block REZA from seeing the hooded, hanging men. REZA sees Mr. MEHEDIN'S mismatched shoe heels. It is MR. MEHEDIN who is dangling from the crane in the center of the town.

REZA rushes to MR. MEHEDIN'S home but it is empty. There is a pile of smoldering books in the yard, the once kept house is in shambles, and SHIRIN'S doll is tossed in a pile of trash. There is no sign of his wife or daughter. MUSTAFA meets REZA there and tells him there is nothing that could have been done to save them. MUSTAFA tells REZA he cannot be seen here and they must leave immediately. He tells REZA if they are seen here, they will be added to 'the list' and be arrested. REZA reaches for the doll and tears off its head. MUSTAFA tells REZA it is a different Iran now and they must do everything they can to help the family survive.

Following the takeover of IRAN by Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran is no longer recognizable by REZA and his family. His SISTERS live in fear of being caught by the Baji (Morality police), as so many freedoms are taken away each day. The guards are going house to house to round up all the young men. REZA is told he can either join the military to fight for Iran against IRAQ or try to be accepted into the University. When they leave, REZA tells HASSAN that he cannot defend a nation he doesn't recognize.

REZA and HASSAN lay on the familiar rooftop. Bombs are heard in the distance. HASSAN says he's relieved that REZA is going into the university and not into the army. Their sister SORAYA joins them and complains how hard it is to be a girl in Iran. They all promise they will never leave each other behind, but even as

they say it, they know how impossible this will be. When SORAYA leaves them, REZA tells HASSAN that it will be up to him to protect the family.

The next day, REZA and MUSTAFA travel to Tehran by bus to inquire about the University. MUSTAFA has business in Tehran. This is when REZAA discovers that Americans had been taken hostage. Where they are held is a gathering place for Iranians to express their hatred for the West. REZA is alarmed and thinks about the Americans he knows. He tries to engage in conversations about Americans, but all the Iranians there seem to be focused on only hating Americans. REZA is about to get into a fight with one of the protestors when MUSTAFA intervenes. MUSTAFA chides REZA for 'being so stupid' and says he will get their family's name 'on the list.'

Unnerved, REZA goes into the University for his interview. He is confident about his knowledge of history, science and math. All of the questions they ask REZA are about his devotion to Ayatollah Khomeini and Islam. They note his mother is devout and his father is well-respected. REZA stumbles through the questions and asks to be excused as he begins to understand that he is not answering the way they expect him to answer. He is afraid to be added to the 'list', but they will not excuse him. Instead, the questioning becomes more intense. In desperation, REZA stands up and pounds his chest. He says that as a strong Iranian man, he would better serve Iran in the military.

REZA rushes out of there to where MUSTAFA is waiting for him. REZA collapses in frustration and fear. He feels like a trapped animal who must gnaw off his own leg. MUSTAFA says he has friends in the military who can look out for REZA. He shares ARDESHIR has already enlisted and MUSTAFA will have them in the same unit. REZA reminds MUSTAFA of ARDESHIR'S father's influence and how tied he is to this new regime. MUSTAFA reminds REZA that he has influence too. MUSTAFA will make arrangements for REZA to also wrestle for the Iranian National team and maybe drive the ambulance onto the battlefields after combat. REZA doesn't want to feel like a coward, but he realized he can't kill for Iran either.

In the military, REZA further sees the death and destruction of Ayatollah Khomeie's Iran. On the battlefield, REZA and ARDESHIR gather the bodies of the dead boys who are barely teenagers. They hardly speak. ARDESHIR is ashamed of his father's part in the government that is enlisting these young boys to die for Iran. REZA is sickened by what he sees. He thinks of HASSAN.

REZA reaches out to MUSTAFA to see if he can get smuggled out of Iran, but it's too expensive. What little money the family has must go to food and protection. MUSTAFA says the only way to leave Iran is for REZA to make the National wrestling team and escape when they travel to another country to compete. REZA is afraid of what the government will do to the family if he brings shame to Iran by escaping when he is part of the National Team. REZA understands that to be smuggled out is one thing because REZA would simply disappear, but to defect when he is part of the wrestling team and pride of Iran, would bring shame and danger to the whole family. MUSTAFA assures REZA that MUSTAFA will find a way to hide the family safely until they all can escape.

1982 - REZA competes to qualify to make the Iranian team so that he can travel and compete in the military wrestling championship to take place in Caracas, Venezuela. His opportunity for a new life rests with these matches; whoever wins the matches will compete at that weight class internationally with the Iranian national team.

REZA wrestles and wins his weight category for a spot on the national team. But ALI, now a high ranking official, challenges the results and informs REZA he must defeat his son, the menacing MASHADI AGHEE. Over the course of three days and three agonizing matches, REZA pushes his body and mind to the limit. With each match, REZA is more determined to make the team and defect. Despite the efforts of the officials to unjustly disqualify him, REZA is the undeniable winner when he pins Mashadi AGHEE. REZA is begrudgingly given the final spot on the Iranian national team.

Back in Kermanshah, HASSAN has no choice but to fill the role his older brothers have left in their absence. Under the

darkness of night, HASSAN goes to where the rock hides the family's money, but he cannot move it. He returns frustrated because the family is so hungry.

A few days later, SOROYA is very sick, and HASSAN overhears NIMTAJ talking to ABBAS that there is medicine, but they do not have enough money to buy the medicine. HASSAN is about to tell ABBAS about the money under the rock, when MUSTAFA walks in with the medicine.

But the medicine quickly runs out and SORAYA is still very sick. HASSAN decides he will try first to move the rock himself, encouraged that after many days of rain the ground will be softer, and if he cannot, he will tell ABBAS to help him. In a blinding rainstorm, HASSAN is triumphantly able to move the rock. He takes a handful of money and returns the rock. He walks quickly away, forgetting to erase his muddy footprints. HASSAN is too proud of himself to be careful and he is stopped by an armed Sepah. They search him and find the money. They ask where he got this from? Why is he coming from the mountain? They take the money, rough him up, and take his name. HASSAN does not tell them his real name or where the money came from. They let him go, so they can follow him home. HASSAN is too scared, and upset with himself for giving up the money. He forgets to use the routes that MUSTAFA showed him to go home so as not to be followed.

At the military base, a quick scene of Sepah handing a paper to ALI. ALI nods his head and picks up the phone.

High from his victory, REZA prepares to return home to celebrate his wrestling win with his family and share that he made the national championship team. As he is packing, MUSTAFA comes into his room. MUSTAFA tells REZA it is almost too dangerous to go home and that REZA must not tell anyone of his plans to defect. No one must know. REZA cannot appear to be saying goodbye. MUSTAFA is not sure REZA can do that, but REZA says he can. As they are speaking, ARDESHIR comes into the room, and the two fall silent. ARDESHIR knows something is up and is irritated that he isn't trusted.

Commented [22]: Just an idea if we want to have the money 'gone' later on in the story.

IDEAS:

1. HASSAN was arrested the night before, but the audience will not know that yet. They will think that the 3 Abedi boys are all in the home and still wonder which one will be arrested.
2. OR, because MUSTAFA insists on taking the long route to the house, they are too late to save HASSAN.

At dawn, REZA and MUSTAFA are shocked by news that his brother HASSAN has been arrested and sent to prison. As MUSTAFA tries to work for HASSAN'S release, REZA visits HASSAN at the prison and is shaken by the inhumane conditions his brother is enduring. HASSAN is withering away but maintains high hopes for REZA and his international matches. HASSAN tells REZA that he (HASSAN) is strong and will survive. HASSAN tells REZA if he gets the chance to escape, to live free, to never come back to Iran, to take it. HASSAN says this has always been his dream for REZA. "Don't return here, REZA. Not for me." Heartbroken, REZA must leave the country for the world championship knowing that his little brother may die in jail.

MUSTAFA has discovered that it is on ALI'S orders that HASSAN was arrested. He does not share this information with the family from the fear they will be angry with REZA and that REZA will feel too guilty. Instead, MUSTAFA says "it's a little more complicated."

The Iranian wrestling team first lands in the International Airport in Paris for a connecting flight. They are shocked at the colors and freedom of expression they witness in the airport. As the mighty, bearded Iranian wrestling team walk through the airport, the Westerners part and give them stares. The images of the American hostages are still fresh in everyone's mind.

When the team arrives in Venezuela for the world wrestling championship, they are collapsing from hunger. Their heavily guarded hotel, traditional Muslim food and strict rules enforced by *Sepah* guards, (especially ALI who takes every opportunity to make life hard on REZA) stand in glaring contrast to the conditions of their competitors and the world around them. ALI

Commented [23]: set up that if Reza escapes, Hassan will be murdered. Maybe Hassan expresses hope that he will one day get out.

Commented [24]: Opportunity to establish lay out of airport. Later, when they need to escape, the audience will recognize places they can go. In 'real life' Reza and his teammates hid in the bathroom stalls.

orders that food be brought to ARDESHIR and other wrestlers, but not REZA. The team sneaks food to REZA.

During the competition, REZA and ARDESHIR recognize the Americans RANDY and JIMMY as they wrestle in warm up and qualifying matches. RANDY and REZA are glad to see each other, but ARDESHIR and JIMMY are clearly sworn enemies. Even their warm-up matches are brutal.

REZA is desperate to get to a phone and speak to MUSTAFA. He needs to know the status of his family. He is very closely watched by the guards and he has no access to a phone. After a practice, REZA sees RANDY and JIMMY getting car keys from Coach SCOTT and REZA figures they must be going into the town. REZA knows this will be his one opportunity to get to a phone. REZA is worried that they will interrogate ARDESHIR about where REZA went, since he was last seen with ARDESHIR. ARDESHIR tells REZA to go and find a phone, that he can handle Sepah and ALI.

REZA sneaks out with the Americans to go to the town and find a phone. They are able to drive the van anywhere because the American flag on the van allows them access to where they want to go.

REZA is able to make the call, but the phone keeps ringing. REZA is discouraged and through pictures is trying to communicate with RANDY why he is calling. REZA shows that no one answered the phone. RANDY tells REZA that must mean his family is free. REZA thinks this may be true and begins to relax. REZA says he wants to be free and to come to America with them. They are hesitant to agree to this. JIMMY says there is no way he will agree to help anyone defect. They are returning REZA tonight and that will be that.

In town, REZA gets his first kiss from a pretty Venezuelan girl, enjoys food he's never seen and even does a little dancing. There is true camaraderie between the wrestlers as the division between American and Iranian are blurred. REZA, thinking that his family is safe and enjoying these new freedoms, clearly communicates his decision to RANDY that he wants to defect.

Commented [25]: There might be someone in town who knows some FARSI who could help with translation.

JIMMY and RANDY have hesitation about how to return REZA to the barracks. RANDY also talks about REZA actually escaping with them. Although they discuss what that might look like, JIMMY says it's not possible and far too dangerous, but doesn't go so far as to say that he would turn them in.

They drive the van into the parking lot of the barracks of where REZA is held and the guard waves the van through since it has an American flag. REZA points to his window on the third floor indicating this is where he and wrestlers stay. There are bushes below the window and vines. REZA motions that he can climb up and down those vines. Tonight he will climb to return, but tomorrow night he will climb down them to escape. JIMMY shakes his head no to RANDY when REZA looks away.

JIMMY and RANDY are amazed at REZA'S strength, but quickly realize this isn't climbing ropes at practice, this is him trying not to be caught and killed.

When REZA comes through the window, ALI threatens REZA with a gun to the face. ARDESHIR, who has a bruised and swollen face, continues to insist that REZA got lost. ARDESHIR emphasizes that REZA did, in fact, come back when REZA could have stayed in Caracas. ARDESHIR tells the ALI that REZA has to get his sleep so he can win the gold and bring honor to Iran. ALI looks out the window and notes the vines.

Ali returns to his office in the barracks and orders the vines to be removed the following day and the window be sealed.

In the showers, where no one can hear them, REZA tells ARDESHIR that he thinks RANDY AND JIMMY will help them defect. REZA shares that he's snuck a call to MUSTAFA and that since no one answered at his house, that must mean they are safe and in hiding. ARDESHIR opens his mouth as if he is about to share something, but then he closes it. ARDESHIR flashes back to being beaten by the ALI the night before when ALI said, "We will find your little friend. We will execute his family in front of him. Don't think we don't know that HASSAN is rotting in prison." REZA shares that RANDY and JIMMY can get the American van, they can crawl down the vines and jump in the van. ARDESHIR is angry

and tells REZA he should have just stayed in Caracas. REZA said he came back for ARDESHIR.

ARDESHIR continues to argue that a defection will never work. ARDESHIR also expects that he will meet JIMMY in the finals and thinks JIMMY still holds a grudge about this nose (clearly deformed) and that JIMMY can't be trusted. ARDESHIR also reminds REZA who his (ARDESHIR's) father is and that if ARDESHIR escapes with REZA it will only make it more dangerous. ARDESHIR says he will 'cover' for REZA so that REZA can escape. REZA tells ARDESHIR that surely they kill or imprison ARDESHIR because they will know they helped REZA. ARDESHIR simply shrugs. REZA is adamant that they do not have a choice. REZA suggests that ARDESHIR lose to JIMMY as an act of goodwill, but ARDESHIR says he will never lose to any American. ARDESHIR says when he returns home it will be not as a coward, but as a champion.

The finals are grueling. REZA is locked in a fierce match with RANDY, and REZA is clearly letting RANDY score points. But, in the isolation of the mat, RANDY tells REZA to not let him win, but to fight to the end. RANDY also tells REZA that he can help him escape. REZA will have to leave from the window tonight. REZA wins the gold.

ARDESHIR and JIMMY have the **final** match. It's a battle from the first second. It's a bloody, bruising battle with both wrestlers giving it their everything. In the final seconds, ARDESHIR lets JIMMY win in a take down for the gold.

During the tournament, JIMMY and RANDY are noticing how the Iranian wrestlers are being treated by their coaches (half-starved, yelled at, punished). When the final tournament **photo** is taken, the Iranian coaches will not allow the Iranian wrestlers to stand next to the American wrestlers. This truly bothers RANDY and JIMMY that REZA and ARDESHIR are not allowed to take their place on the stand of champions.

RANDY still has to convince JIMMY to help him steal the American van and drive to the Iranian barracks. JIMMY is seen holding his gold medal that he won from ARDESHIR, and with a single nod, agrees to help. RANDY and JIMMY sneak into Coach Scott's room to

Commented [26]: In my mind, I've also seen this scene as a montage against the song "Welcome to the Jungle" with scenes of the Revolution against the intensity of the match.

Commented [27]: Reza has a copy of this photo with a clear 'seam' down the middle where it was altered to make it look like they were standing together.

steal the keys and the van. When they pull into the Iranian barrack's parking lot, they see that the vines are gone.

ARDESHIR and REZA go through the escape plan, not realizing the vines have been removed. REZA is still hesitant because he is afraid that MUSTAFA hasn't secured HASSAN'S release. ARDESHIR lies to REZA and tells him that when he was being interrogated over REZA's disappearance, the guards said that they thought REZA had defected because his family was missing and his brother was freed.

Overjoyed, and ready to defect, REZA tries to convince ARDESHIR to escape too. ARDESHIR says he will distract the guards, but he can't defect. He adds that he is too large to fit through the window, even though together REZA and ARDESHIR were strong enough to bust out the reinforcement. REZA tells ARDESHIR again that he will be killed, if he's lucky, when he returns to Iran.

REZA barely squeezes through the window with only his clothes and gold medal. He is alarmed that there are no vines, and chooses to jump. With a slight limp, REZA gets in the van. RANDY wants to leave immediately, but REZA begs them to wait for ARDESHIR. At the last minute, ARDESHIR is seen trying to get through the opening in the window as the searchlights blast the parking lot. It looks like he won't make it. It's JIMMY who makes the van wait. JIMMY leaves the van and calls to ARDESHIR to jump. ARDESHIR is injured when he jumps and JIMMY gets ARDESHIR into the van. When ARDESHIR gets in the van, JIMMY says 'this is for you' and gives him the gold medal.

In Tehran, ABBAS and MUSTAFA wait at the airport for REZA, but as the team walks off the plane and into the terminal, REZA never arrives. They realize REZA defected from Iran. MUSTAFA showed some surprise because he didn't actually speak to REZA. Does REZA think that HASSAN was free? Since HASSAN is still in prison, ABBAS is angry at REZA. MUSTAFA and ABBAS were surprised that ARDESHIR had chosen to defect too. ARDESHIR'S father is outraged and immediately vows to have them arrested and returned to Iran. He orders to dispatch the Revolutionary Guard to Caracas. With more of a focus on ARDESHIR, it gives MUSTAFA some cover to work on getting HASSAN and his family hidden. ABBAS is trying to understand why REZA defected, but

with ARDESHIR also defecting, ABBAS and MUSTAFA agree that there must be something they don't know. Their focus now is HASSAN and the family. ABBAS looks weak and tired and is continuing to cough. As they quickly walk out of the airport, trying to not be seen and then questioned by the guards there, MUSTAFA turns to ABBAS and tells him 'We must hurry to the mountain'.

Commented [28]: With Hassan's footprints, the story can have the money there, or missing.

When RANDY and JIMMY have REZA and ARDESHIR in the van, they are terrified with what to do next. After much discussion, they go to their trusted American Coach Scott who then reaches out to the Ambassador for next steps.

REZA and ARDESHIR are taken to a safe house, where the Iranian ambassador arrives. ARDESHIR is terrified, thinking they have been tricked and will be immediately sent back to Iran. ARDESHIR knows his father will dispatch a team to capture them. The ambassador tells the wrestlers he too is defecting and gives the boys information on where they will be staying and their visas. It is clear though, that REZA and ARDESHIR are on their own in a country where they don't speak Spanish and don't know anyone. They live off of some money the Americans and ambassador gave them, but it's clearly going to be a struggle. There is an emotional goodbye with the American wrestlers.

As REZA and ARDESHIR are barely surviving the mean streets of Caracas, MUSTAFA is struggling to save HASSAN and the family. REZA and ARDESHIR are befriended by a young, hard-working family who remind Reza of Mr. Mehedin. The family gives them food and shelter, but they also want the young, strong REZA and ARDESHIR to help them survive the passage of freedom from Venezuela to America. REZA and ARDSHIR believe this may be their best opportunity to get to America since this family knows Spanish and the right people and REZA and ARDESHIR can carry supplies and fight off bandits. REZA believes once he gets to America this way, he can begin to find ways to bring his family over. It also, in some way, make REZA feel that since he couldn't help MR. MEHEDIN, he can save this young family. For once in a long time, REZA has hope.

Commented [29]: Not part of their true story, but I wanted to make the choice for REZA and ARDESHIR to leave a little more difficult than just 'well, nothing is happening for us here, we have nothing to lose, let's try the airport plan.

REZA'S mom, NIMTAJ, had a heart attack and is too weak to travel. Realizing she is holding the family back, she dies in her daughter's arms.

REZA and ARDESHIR have connected with people who know of travel paths to America. It's a grueling, long and arduous journey, but with their physical and mental strength, they are good candidates to be considered to join the 'smugglers' travel group. The smugglers will only take the strongest who won't delay the journey. REZA and ARDESHIR are waiting to hear.

Knowing the truth about the family not being free, ARDESHIR called MUSTAFA to see if there was anything that could be done to save HASSAN. ARDESHIR tells MUSTAFA that REZA thought they were free and safe because he had lied to REZA. With this knowledge, MUSTAFA comes up with the plan that will give MUSTAFA leverage to free HASSAN. MUSTAFA'S plan is to have REZA and ARDESHIR say they are going to return to Iran and claim they were 'young, stupid kids' and realize they love Iran and want to be in full support of the regime. MUSTAFA had told ARDESHIR that this would buy him the time and support to get HASSAN released and the family into hiding. Since there is no direct flight to Iran, ARDESHIR and REZA would elude capture when the plane landed for the connecting flight in Paris. ARDESHIR is aware that his father will not rest until ARDESHIR is dead. He thinks this plan will be his death sentence, but he wants to help REZA and his family. Just before they hang up, MUSTAFA tells ARDESHIR that REZA'S mother has died of a heart attack and this was the main reason for the delay in getting the family to safety.

Before ARDESHIR can share this plan with REZA, REZA calls home and speaks to his sister. REZA discovers ARDESHIR lied to him about HASSAN and that HASSAN was not free and is about to be executed. He hangs up before he learns about his mother. REZA is furious and abandons ARDESHIR.

ARDESHIR desperately searches for REZA to tell him the plan before all is lost. ARDESHIR finds REZA in the wrestling room where the tournament took place. REZA attacks ARDESHIR with fury as ARDESHIR begs REZA to forgive him. ARDESHIR shares

Commented [30]: This is not part of their actual journey, but I thought it might be worth exploring because it would make Reza and Ardeshir have to make a 'choice' between this path and the one that would fly them to Paris.

Commented [31]: Maybe, Reza has found out that they have been accepted to the travel party taking them to America. He called home to share and then he finds out about Ardeshir's lie about Hassan.

MUSTAFA'S plan with REZA. REZA agrees to go along with the plan, although both boys think it will never work and that they will be caught in the airport, but they believe that this is the only way to save REZA's family.

They spend some time talking about what they miss about Iran—the family dinners, the tea, climbing up the mountains and sleeping on the roof tops. They hurt for their country and their families, but have a steady belief that they will see their families again and enjoy their favorite foods again. REZA misses his mother most of all. ARDESHIR knows this won't be the case for him and chooses not to tell REZA that his mother has died. Instead, he shares REZA's memories and dreams with their flashbacks.

REZA and ARDESHIR walk into the Iranian Embassy to claim they want to fly back to Iran and return to the regime. At the same time, MUSTAFA is working to trade REZA and ARDESHIR for HASSAN'S freedom and get the family into hiding.

ENDING OPTIONS

OPTION 1 (This is closer to what actually happened).

On the plane, REZA hides a can opener in his pocket from the cart, in case he needs to fight off the guards. There is trouble with their Visas and the pilot does not want to take off. Due to this delay, the plane must dock at the National terminal instead of the International terminal. This throws off the guards and gives them enough time to find the 'safe person' at the same time that HASSAN is freed.

OPTION 2

REZA and ARDESHIR land in the airport, and are arrested by the Guards. They call into Kermanshah and HASSAN is freed. REZA and ARDESHIR use the hidden can opener and escape.

KERMANSHAH - A phone on the floor in the middle of the Abedi home rings. A gaunt young man with a scraggly beard answers the call. REZA speaks into the phone. On the other end is HASSAN. He is home.

OPTION 3

Commented [32]: This would be a choice over the path to America from the smugglers—which would be dangerous, but not as dangerous as this one

Commented [33]: This scene should take place outside of Iran. Or we can have the family actually see each other and then 'fade out' with actual family photos....

REZA and ARDESHIR land in the airport, and are arrested by the Guards. The guards call into Kermanshah and HASSAN is freed. REZA and ARDESHIR use the hidden can opener and escape. ARDESHIR is badly injured in the escape and is taken to the hospital.

Two weeks later, REZA goes to the rally point where he is supposed to meet his family, but only MUSTAFA is there. MUSTAFA tells REZA that they were caught at the border. The sisters, HASSAN and ABBAS were taken to the refugee camp. MUSTAFA has spent the last two weeks learning everything he can about the camp. MUSTAFA destroyed their Visas just before they were arrested and told the family to claim they are refugees from Afghanistan. MUSTAFA shares that once they are discovered to be Iranian, they will be sent back to Iran. MUSTAFA shares with REZA that the only way to take the family out of the camp is on Sunday because it's visiting day. MUSTAFA was able to steal and then memorize a map used by smugglers through the mountain pass to a train station. From the station, they can buy tickets to ride as cargo to a friend who will meet them in Germany. REZA says 'what about mom?' and learns she has passed away.

On Sunday, MUSTAFA takes the girls and HASSAN to the path that will lead them across the border, but ABBAS is stopped by a guard. REZA turns back for his father who signals with his hand for REZA to keep going with the family. Instead, REZA stays with ABBAS who is weak and tired. He continues to cough and struggles to walk. REZA knows his father will not make the journey along the path without his help. ABBAS tells REZA to go with the family and to leave him, but REZA refuses. He is determined more than ever to keep his family together.

REZA uses ABBAS'S health to say they need to see a doctor. When they are waiting to be seen in the less guarded medical wing, REZA sneaks ABBAS out a window and they climb the fence into the woods. REZA carries ABBAS through the snowy paths, telling him if he quits, they will die, and REZA will never give up. REZA and ABBAS get to the train station where they are met by HASSAN in the dark of the morning. Together, HASSAN and REZA carry

Commented [34]: This could also be because when Mustafa went to get the fake paperwork he had hidden under the rock, it was gone thanks to Hassan's footprints.

their father to the train station where they finally rest on an old wooden bench lit by a full moon. In the distance, they hear the train whistle.