

SEEKING SHELTER

A ONE-ACT PLAY

BY

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Theresa	45, homeless woman
Rehm	35, police officer
Hussain	55, Afghani merchant

Setting

A modern-day police station in Aspinwall, Pennsylvania

A cement room sparsely furnished with a few plain chairs and a desk. Downstage right is a heavy security door. Upstage center is a window high up in wall that is secured by bars on the outside. A view of a stack of containers is visible. Upstage left is another heavy security door.

ROOM IN POLICE STATION

A view of a stack of containers is visible from window. Rehm enters escorting Theresa, who resists him.

Theresa I won't. You can't make me. It's not allowed, that container thing. The sausage trials said so. Mass anything's not allowed.

Rehm It's for your own sake, Theresa. Look what almost happened out there.

Theresa Those are my brothers. I was helping them.

Rehm They were getting ready to tear you apart.

Theresa *(pulling amulet on a long chain out from under her garment and staring at it)* I let them have everything, but they can't have this.

Rehm It can't be worth all that.

Theresa It is.

Rehm You can't give us an address, you have no ID, no means of support, no bank account. You say you have no family, no friends, no contacts. I mean, look at the state you're in. How could you end up with something that's—

Theresa holds amulet on chain out to Rehm.

Theresa See? It says it right there.

Rehm *(reads from label on amulet)* Hundred and fifteen grams. Twenty-two carat gold. North India. Twelve thousand dollars.

Theresa A hundred fifteen grams, twenty-two carat gold—

Rehm I saw what it says, Theresa. I saw. And you bought it from a Mr. Hussain.

Theresa He has a jewelry store.

Rehm Behind the Waterworks mall that nobody knows about. With a carpet for an awning.

Theresa He had three big shops in Kabul. But he had to run away because of bad things and never saw his mother or father

again. Now he just has a tiny shop in the back by the creek, full of old things from Afghanistan and Peshawar.

Rehm And North India?

Theresa Rajasthan. That's where the Rajas were. They were rich. But their children didn't like the jewelry so Mr. Hussain bought it.

Rehm And sold it to you.

Theresa I bought everything he wanted me to.

Rehm Why would you do that?

Theresa I was helping.

Knock is heard outside. Rehm unlocks door and ushers Hussain in.

Theresa *(starts to bend slowly from waist as if she's crumpling; as she does, her amulet drops out from her garment and she clutches it with both hands, holding it close)* Mr. Hussain, I can't buy any more. I'm sorry. I told you I can't. I already told you. Please don't show me anything else.

Rehm *(coaxing Theresa to straighten up)* Theresa, I asked him to come and take a look at your amulet.

Theresa Why?

Hussain To verify the piece, Theresa, because it's so unusual. That's all.

Rehm Would you show it to him, Theresa? Please.

Theresa shows Hussain the amulet.

Hussain One of my oldest and finest pieces.

Rehm From North India?

Hussain Rajasthan. There was an enormous amount of wealth there at one time.

Rehm The Rajas?

Hussain That's right.

Rehm Worth what it says here?

Theresa It's worth much more than that. But he let me buy it for cheap.

Rehm (to *Hussain*) Why would you do that?

Theresa Because I'm his best customer. I always pay cash.

Rehm (to *Hussain*) Is it gold?

Theresa Gold you can't get today. It's old gold.

Rehm (to *Hussain*) How old?

Theresa Over a hundred years old. And see this? It's an emerald.

Rehm That an emerald? I'll be.

Theresa And the eyes are rubies.

Rehm I'll be. Those are rubies?

Theresa It's a cobra. See? All handmade.

Rehm I'll be.

Theresa Handmade by Rajasthan goldsmiths over a hundred years ago. It's worth a lot.

Rehm (to *Hussain*) We can't let her keep that thing.

Hussain Why not?

Rehm With something like that around her neck, she'd get mugged in a second out there. It happened already.

Hussain Are you saying she's out on the street?

Rehm nods.

Hussain Then wearing a piece like that would be very dangerous.

Rehm A hundred years old. Handmade with ruby eyes and all. We'd be very sorry if anything happened, I'm not saying what, but the trouble would land here, for sure.

Theresa (to *Hussain*) You said it would protect me.