

The image is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a post-apocalyptic city. A narrow, dark alleyway leads the eye towards a bright yellow sun in a grey, overcast sky. The sun is positioned centrally at the top of the frame. On either side of the alleyway, there are large, bright yellow and orange flames or smoke plumes. In the distance, a person is silhouetted against the sky, standing on a rooftop or ledge. The overall mood is desolate and somber.

**After Us  
The Frozen Desert**

**MOEIN MANSOORI FARD**

After us: the frozen desert

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## **Dedicated to:**

My dear wife, my compassionate mother and father, my lovely sister and my kind and affable brother, because any line of this book could not be written without their helps.

To all of my dear friends whom I am proud to have them, and I wish them health and succession.

MOEIN MANSOORI FARD

This book is a completely imaginary work and all of the characters, their names, places and the events are the outcome of the author's mind and his imagination, and they don't exist in reality. Any similarity of the persons, places, and events to the reality is completely accidental and is not real. The whole effort of the author in creating this book has been just narrating a story that may fit with the reality and not any other purpose. All of the aspects of the story have been told without any intention.

## Chapter 1

### The wandering wanderer

My throat and nose are irritated and my lips are dry. Strange wheezing comes out from my throat.

‘Where are you running away? Wait, you goddamn!’

His yell and cry trembles all of my body cells as an electric shock. The more I try to take my steps faster, the less my speed is. Like I’ve fallen into the swamp; the more I struggle, the more I go down. I can hear my heartbeats, it beats too fast. My toes blistered inasmuch as I have been running too much and yet I feel no pain. I can hear his smooth steps and the sound of his clothes which are fluttering in the wind flow. He shouts madly and beg me.

‘Wait! Please wait. I’ll kill you just by one shot. Wait, you goddamn, I have no remedy, I have to do this; I promise you feel no pain.’

He says such things, once threatening, once begging and once both of them. Maybe he is right, I shouldn’t scape. He may help me. He may keep me out of death. I shake my head to let the evil thoughts come out of my head. I should keep my distance from him as far as I can. I should focus on environs, but I feel giddy. My eyes go black. It seems as if black shadows are running to me and throw me off-balance.

Although the sky is a little brighter now, but I can't see the distance further than seven or eight meters. Once in a while, I lose my control and go on my way tottering. The act of the wind once brings him closer to me, so that I feel his hand touches my clothes, and another time keeps him away from me, as if he has made a dive into a ditch.

The more his shouts and the fear of him force me to run faster, the more tiredness, disappointment and the cool wind attack wear me down. I would like to sleep. I would like to die. I like to talk with somebody else in front of fireplace...I'd like...I want. The thoughts which are passing through my head, make the environs dim for me. Suddenly, I feel that the ground is coming toward me. My eyes are closed spontaneously and my hands stand in front of my chest as two levers.

I feel a soft mattress which attracts my body. Coarse grains fill my mouth. My eyes are closed and my body becomes loose. It seems as if an obscure voice from another world is talking to me. I want to reply it, but just a weak voice comes out of my throat.

A tottering shadow approaches me, it is like he has enfolded himself in a black cloth. He has put his hands on his knees and his rib cage goes up and down. He sits on his knees and brings his hand toward my face.

All of a sudden something lifts me up from the ground and stands me on my feet. And this thing is just a fear. Sometimes, fear makes human personality renitent more than bravery. Now this fear has empowered me and with its help I can see the man in front of me who has aimed a rather small knife at me. He is foaming at the mouth and with his wide eyed is looking at me. The sound of his steady, but fast, breathing

leaves the wind behind off and on, and I can hear it. He makes no move. Suddenly, his eyes' expression changes and, while he lowered his eyebrows, looks at me seriously.

'Don't panic! I'll knock you off fast.

I remain frozen, and try to consider all of his motions. I take my knife out of my belt and point it to him. I'd like to thrust my knife into his heart. I press my right foot on the ground to make a sally against him. All of a sudden something from the invisible world strikes my head and dissuade me from doing this. I shake my head to make the ominous crows fly from my shoulders.

I try not to wink my eyelids lest he can go out of my sight. I stand with my feet far from each other to be in a good position to run away. I try to stand straight, but my chest is going to blow out. My panting is not finished yet. Sometimes the images in front of me become dim and the sounds are echoed through my ears like a blast.

He spins the knife in his hand, and a smile appears in the corner of his lips. He throws his knapsack on the ground and approaches me some steps. I want to step backward but yet I don't want to give him even a little chance and I say:

'Wait a minute. Listen to me. We can still endure. We're nearly there. Trust in me. Believe me.'

He comes two steps closer to me without replying a single word. I say again:

'Look. Wait a minute. Listen. This is not the way it should be. Still...'

He cuts me short and says indifferently:

'You listen to me. I haven't come this far to die of hunger...'

I cut his word:

‘I have still some food. We can...’

I can feel his feet pressure on the sands. Suddenly, he jumps on me by taking two steps. I dodge to be secure from his attack. His hand touches my back, but I manage to escape from his claws. I roll on the ground and keep the knife away from my body.

All of a sudden, I hear his yell as he approaches me. I turn and look behind. I see him just one step away from me. My foot aims at him spontaneously and I beat him at his chest. He flops aside. I want to get up, but my body is flinching. I can’t hold the knife in my hands. I experience a heaviness in my head and I feel as though my body has turned into muscles without bones.

He rubs his chest and curses. He takes his knife and stands up slowly. This time, he comes to me calmly and indifferently. Again, I feel something else, beside him, is coming toward me.

‘Come on, you goddamned! I give you everything.’

I throw my knapsack to him. It falls in front of his feet. He pushes it aside with his foot and cries:

‘I haven’t had anything to eat in five days. I can no longer tolerate hunger.’

‘So what about me?’

‘This isn’t my problem.’

Again, I feel my old friend, the fear, beside me. I recede a little, squeeze the knife tightly in my hand and sprinkle a handful of dust onto him. I take the chance and stand up immediately. I see he has covered his eyes with his hands and is cursing steadily whilst yelling.

Suddenly, my soles turn hot, my body flames up and I run to him according to my heartbeats. I lift my hand and beat him

in his leg with my knife. I feel I have fell into a frozen lake. My hands turn pale and my hair stand on end. I take a few steps backwards and just look at him that has fallen on the ground and held his thigh with his hands. His leg is red with his blood that is flowing out through his fingers.

Again, I feel my old friend, the fear, beside me which pushes me. I take a few steps by its force and then, I stop. I should help him. But my friend fear insists on going. I take my knapsack. By the will of the fear, I am forced to escape from there. His yells become muffle in the wind and his image fades out in the darkness.

I intervene my hand in front of my face to see a little bit better and to prevent wind from direct blowing on my face. The wind blows toward me faster than my movement. Blood, knife; I should helped him. His image appears in front of my eyes every second. I knifed him like a coward. His crying. Blood. No, I wouldn't be able to control myself if I back to him.

I go on my way tottering and look around. I can't see anything but my eyes are searching round spontaneously as a habit that is hard to quit. Maybe there would be a hope. I look around carefully may I find it, but it is a wild goose chase, darkness makes it impossible. Besides, the mixture of the darkness with the blue sky associates the depth of the sea.

My feet no longer obey my brain. The darkness, the blood, the knife, and the chill. I sit on my knees like someone who is waiting for his decapitation and put my hands on the ground. It is like my brain is enclosed with a fence. Nothing comes to my mind. My hands are trembling, then break like two sticks and I fall down involuntarily. The sounds turn to silence from ambiguity and a black curtain covers my eyes.

## Chapter 2

### The shadow of dawn

A sharp and prolonged whistle, along with an obscure darkness, has made a steady condition in my mind. I am looking for a light to escape from this darkness. But there are no voice and no light guiding me. I release myself until the sound and the light come to me.

Things go on the way as I want. The sharp and prolonged whistle in my mind turns into tones, then, its tones change into the sound of the wind, and a soft voice accompanies it. It seems it is approaching me. Now I dare and open my eyes.

My breath comes in short gasps from the cold air. I can't move my fingers. I can't feel my ears. The sky is still a little dark. It is like a suction device is inside me. I'd like to cry. I try to get up, but I can't even move my fingers. I bend my legs toward my breast, thrust my hands in my armpits and dip my head into my collar. My head is shaking continuously and I can hear gnashing of my teeth.

Suddenly, I hear a sound. I narrow my eyes to see more clearly. A shadow is coming toward me lamely. He drops himself on the ground. The shadow of his knife falls on my face. My body turns hot. The dry blood. I wait for my old friend, fear, comes to help me, but there is no sign of it. I just

look at his knife, which is coming toward my neck. Again the waves of a silent whistle echoes through my head.

Then, a thunder peals in my ears. I see the knife which spins quickly in the air and sprinkles the fresh blood. Some drops of the blood splash on my face. The shadow is wounded. It goes away from me lamely, while holding his hand with another one.

I hear the fast footsteps of another shadow from the other side, which stops over my head. He puts his hand on my shoulder and begins to shake me. I do my best to say a word, but I just can wink my eyelids. He puts his weapon under his waistband and puts his knapsack on the ground. He takes a black cloth out of it and put it in front of me. I try to look at his face, but I just see the darkness. He remains still for a second, then goes to the same direction that the first and wounded shadow went. In the midway, he stops and looks at me, and again goes on his way and disappears in the darkness.

I stare at the black cloth. It seems as though it asks me to expand it. Its smell arouses me. It attracts me like a magnet. My hand moves to it spontaneously, touches it and then opens its tie. There are some spam and bread in it, and a small flask of water beside them.

All of my body organs are activated involuntary. I take a piece of bread and thrust it into my mouth. I take the opened can and empty it into my mouth. I gulp them without chewing. I take the flask, lie on the ground on my back and guzzle all of the water.

Gradually, stars lose their lights by daylight, but there is no sign of the sun yet. Ground surface is rather dark. The wind is still blowing, and if I stay this way I'll be frozen. I feel a bad

bellyache. I feel I may vomit at any moment. I can feel the taste of the foods in my throat.

Being filled, my stomach becomes warm. It is like by returning my soul into my body, the heat surrounds me with its flames. Despite, I am trembling, I still watch the stars. I think of the events that I didn't expect them to occur. The events were changed conversely just in ten days. I remember when Wildi brought his food at the table and offered it to me; with the different spirit and manner, his desire was to enter the rescue team and to achieve a big goal. But all of his ideals were changed during ten days, so that he wanted to kill me. I remember his laughter, but those laughter were forgotten so that I stabbed him in his leg without doubt, and I didn't think, even for a moment, that he is my friend. He also forgot me so that he put his knife on my neck. I don't want to think about those events, even about the man who saved my life a few minutes ago. I just want to empty my mind. I want to get out of this predicament. Gradually, clouds are gathering and covering the sky.

Mountains seem like shadows from a distance. It is like they are just a shadow as a whole, which has fallen on a vertical surface and has formed the mountains. Just the sound of the wind can be heard. The wind which is a light and chilly breeze, blowing from east to west. I don't know how long I have remained in this way and looked at the sky. It is only when the sound of bombardment suffuses the sky, I awake from my daydreams. The boom sound of the bombs splits the sky and its light brightens the ground for a few seconds. Thunder pierces the clouds and reaches the ground.

I feel a drop of rain on my face. Little by little, by increase in rain drops, the soft sound of rainfall can be heard. With

each drop falls on my body, I shiver, as if a needle is piercing my body. I feel lightness. I stop when I become wet to the skin. My body trembles thoroughly. When I close my hands to my mouth to warm them, my face becomes irritated by touching my sleeves. Again, I can't feel my ears. I feel debility in my legs. It is like I have worn a barbed trousers. The chill has frozen my blood. I go to the same way that Wildi went. I pierce the darkness and go forward.

Once in a while, a thunderbolt lightens the air. I cross my arms and dip my head into my collar while my teeth are gnashing. Something in me has made my heart clear sighted. Although I am aimless, but I listen to an inner voice. Suddenly, I see a black stain under the blast of a lightning. I bend down to look at it. It's the dried blood. Another stains are also seen in this direction. I follow the stains. All of a sudden, I see three persons in front me. Two of them have made the third one to sit on his knees and one of them has aimed his gun at him. I lie on the ground immediately to hide myself more in the darkness. The darkness also hides the faces of these three persons from me. The distance and the howl of the wind don't let me hear their voices. I haven't a good feeling.

Suddenly, one of these two men pounds the third one's face with his fist. As the latter one is collapsed, I see his face in a short second; he is Wildi. The shadow who saved me from Wildi's hands, now, with the other one were intended to kill Wildi. Why they saved only me? Why they want to kill him? I reawake before my feelings go ahead one step beyond my wisdom. I can't do anything in this condition. I can only save myself. I close myself to the ground as I can. One of

these two men lifts Wildi and delivers him another punch on his face.

They continue doing that until he almost faints. I feel a power in myself, which induces me to help him. Maybe they give up when they see me. But my wisdom doesn't allow this. I also have no chance with them. They are armed with guns and they may not give me another chance to survive.

They suddenly stop beating Wildi, and then, knife in hand, move toward Wildi without saying a word. I see in absolute disbelief, one from forward and one from backward, plunge their knives into Wildi's body. They stab their knives into his stomach, chest, flanks and waist ceaselessly. After that, they leave him while his clothes are red. Blood is flowing from his mouth and nose, and his body is trembling.

One of those two men give Wildi a strong kick to the back and he falls on the ground like a boneless body. They shake their knives several times to clean the blood off the knives. Then they talk to each other for a short time, lift Wildi off the ground, and after taking some steps throw him into a well.

I look at them aghast. I can't believe those who have saved my life, have done this. I tremble involuntary and gnash my teeth. I feel myself hollow. My chest burns and I feel pain in my stomach. I don't know how long I have remained in this way. All of a sudden, I see them are coming to me. They are dressed in long gray rainwear and their faces are covered by black cloth. They are armed to the teeth with grenades and guns. I can't move. It is like I am tied to the ground. I remain that way, and don't move even my eyes; that is to say, I can't. They come closer by each second. I close my eyes and hold my breath. Although they have saved my life, maybe they won't give me this chance again. Maybe they haven't saved

my life. What was the difference between my life and Wildi's that they killed him but saved me? Now I can smell the death.

The only way to escape from death is that I go toward it. This is the only way. I can die here without any resistance or I encounter it. Maybe there is no difference between them and I die in both way, but at least I won't lost my life like cowards. The thought of taking revenge on them, makes me more determined. They should pay penalty for killing Wildi. I open my eyes and clench my fists. I gather all of my power in my legs to attack them.

I push the ground with my feet and my hands and make a lunge toward them. Suddenly I freeze in midway, and stand in front of them like a statue and stare at them. They are nomads and gazed at me like two death angels. So the nomads have back. My body is inflamed.

My eyes just slide over the faces of those two men. They aim their guns at me. Then, one of them lower his gun and approaches me with taking four steps and stares at me. I feel my legs are losing their power bit by bit. Along with weakness, tremor appears in my legs. I didn't think that one day I meet the nomads; the nomads who I heard about them just in fables. Now I realize the reason why Wildi was killed so awfully. With each his breath, it is like a bomb is blasting near my ear. I expect that something stabs into my body, but only his eyes are probing all over my face. Suddenly I see that his knife is coming toward my face. His knife, after passing by over my lips, is drawn from my right cheek to the left one. I feel no pain and just my cheeks become warm. He cleans his knife with my clothes and says: 'Watch yourself!'

While is laughing, he goes away from me, toward his comrade. Suddenly, by hearing the wavy sound of gunfire,

they bend their bodies and aim at the voice side and begin to fire nonstop to the end of their cartridges. I also lie on the ground as a shelter. After changing the cartridge, they wait for a short time and then leave there for an unknown destination.

I rub my hand on my face, it becomes red. The more I think, the less I realize his intention of making such a wound on my face. Did the nomads save my life? They don't know anything but killing. Saving the life of a common man like me is incredible. I can't understand none of the events which occurred at dawn. I go to the well immediately. Everywhere is covered by blood. The rain scatters the blood.

I bend over the well. Call Wildi several times but there comes no response. I look for a way into the well. Its wall are sound and without any gap. I take some pebbles and throw them into the well. They clash with hard earth. As can be guessed, it should be very deep.

I take a piece of cloth out of my knapsack and ignite it. A delightful heat warms up my fingers. I try to prevent the fire from extinguishing by the rain. I lie on the ground and dip my hand into the well as much as possible. Just a little light reaches to the bottom of the well. I can't see anybody there. Only when the cloth is almost burnt, I leave it to secure Wildi from harm. It goes out midway. I call him several times, but again there is silent. I can't do anything alone. Maybe this well is more comfort and safer for him than everywhere; that is to say, his everlasting house. I bid farewell to him and then proceed on my way to nowhere.

It is like I am in a dark corridor which is endless. Nothing can be seen and only with the lightning the ground becomes a little bright. My eyes search in the dark hopelessly. The vapor which is coming out of my mouth obstructs my eyesight for a

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