

GAZA GAD

A play by
AHMED MASOUD

ColdType



The author on a recent trip to Gaza, near the home of one of his neighbours that was destroyed during Israeli attacks in January, 2009.

THE AUTHOR

Ahmed Masoud, a Palestinian academic and writer, who has lived in London, England, since 2002, has written many articles for newspapers and magazines, including the *Guardian* and *New Statesman*. He has also written and directed a number of plays, including *Go To Gaza*, *Drink the Sea*, which was performed in London and Edinburgh during 2009. Masoud has recently completed a novel, 'Gaza Days'.

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GAZA GAD

A PLAY BY **AHMED MASOUD**

The show opens with a traditional dance, which is interrupted several times by the sound of bullets, explosion and a soundtrack in the background of Darwish reading an extract from his poem WE LOVE LIFE, IF WE CAN FIND A WAY TO IT (translation provided on projectors.) While the reading is taking place, a light shines on a girl sleeping upstage right. When the reading finishes, the music continues, but is interrupted and slowed down, dancers stretching their veils as images are shown of destruction caused by bombing. The music speeds up as two masked men dressed in yellow and green begin fighting with sticks and the girl goes back to sleep. The music stops suddenly and the girl awakes when a torch is shone directly into her face. She looks across to the other side of the stage, where an ambulance light is flashing. She wipes her face with a towel.

Prologue

Laila:

Another day, and more waiting. What is this life? We live for the waiting. We wait to stop being killed, we wait for the electricity and water to come, we wait for our salary which is always delayed, we wait for the prisoners to be released, we wait for the borders to open, we wait to get our state and we wait to leave this damn airport and the whole of Egypt. I have waited too long now, six years now I haven't now been able to go back home.

My family, do you still remember me at the dinner table? That little corner on the roof that I used to love, is it still there? Does our garden still bear flowers? And the songs we used to sing, do you still sing them?

It is the final journey to them now, once I am released from here I will be on my way to them. I can't wait, I just can't wait to look at their faces and see what the years have done to them.

We have inherited this saying from our grandfathers, that Gaza has always been cursed. But it is funny how we always want to go back there. (bless us god)

She gets up and puts on her prayer clothes. She is then joined by the rest of the girls praying. As soon as the prayer is finished, a girl carrying a backpack is thrown onto the middle of the stage. She looks around the waiting room in surprise, while and checking out each person (all actors are now on stage sitting on chairs and floor leaning on their suitcases) She turns around and puts up two fingers to the soldier who threw her in. The sleeping girl goes to greet her. SFX: continuous sound of planes landing in the background.

SCENE 1: The Waiting Room

- Laila:** *Salaam aleikom.* Hello! How you do? Hmm... Anglaise, English?
- Yasmin:** Yes, Do you speak English?
- Laila:** Easy girl. Hey guys, does anyone speak English?
- Ali:** I...English (*running fast to the pair standing in the middle of the stage*) David Beckham? (*He kicks with his foot*) You know? (*she nods but he turns around, doing the handshake, he turns around again*) Are you celebrating?
- Yasmin:** Would anyone be celebrating when they are put in this prison-like waiting room? What have I done wrong?
- Ali:** Ah, I thought you were happy when you did this (*he does the finger gesture*)
- Yasmin:** This is not celebrating, it means “up yours”.
- Ali:** But why two fingers?...It won't work, will it. I mean literally, it won't. In Gaza we do this. *He does the hand gesture, she laughs then he gets pushed by Laila back to the group of people.*
- Laila:** Come, come...hmm... sit.
- Yasmin:** I am not a dog! *She follows and join the group sitting on the floor.*
- Soumaya:** So, if you are English what are you doing here? I thought they only deported Palestinians from the airport to the border, but not English. I

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thought you guys were VIPs. What is your name?

Yasmin: Yasmin (*everyone laughs*) What is the joke? You don't like my name?

Soumaya: (*still laughing*) No, sorry, yes.

Yasmin: You guys are crazy, I should have never come here. Why on earth did I ever think of going to Gaza? Who in his right mind would do such a thing, and now I am being laughed at for my name.

Farah: No, we are not laughing at you. When you arrived, did you tell the Egyptians you were going to Gaza?

Yasmin: Yes (*They all laugh again*) But why wouldn't I?

Farah: This is funny, we haven't had a laugh like this for a long time. You see, they thought that you were from Gaza because of your name. It doesn't matter where you come from or what passport you carry, if they suspect that you are from Gaza, then you are treated like a Gazan. Welcome on board! (*All, welcome to Gaza with the sign*)

Yasmin: But this is a common name where I come from. A lot of people are called it, it means Jasmine! I am British, not bloody... *She stops while everyone looks at her.* I am sorry, I didn't mean it this way, I have come here after watching the news so closely. I realized that I had to offer my skills as a surgeon. I asked about the best way to get to Gaza and they told me via Egypt, so I packed my bag and came. That's all. I have come here to help. How long have you been here anyway?

Ala: So, it is alright to do this for a Palestinian, is this what you mean? It is because we are second class citizens, we are your slaves, we should be treated like dogs when we go back to our own country. And you are saying you are coming to help. You see, the problem with you people is that our pain is an entertainment for you, some sort of moral sport that makes you feel better at the end. Oh, let's go and help those lovely little Palestinian kids who have beautiful eyes, oh aren't they cute? Oh, but I am not like them, I am British and shouldn't be treated like this. When a British or an American get killed in Palestine, everyone goes mad but us, no...it is just terrible, we wish peace for them. In your law, killing someone in a forest is a murder, but killing and besieging a whole nation is something to be considered.

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Laila: Ala, stop it. She didn't meant it. She was just trying to explain to us what happened. Give her a break man!

Ala: Whatever!

Farah: She told you man, she is a surgeon. Why would she put herself into all of this if she wasn't genuinely willing to help. We need her there man, children are dying without enough people to treat them.

Soumaya: Don't worry about them, I am Soumaya, pleased to meet you. I have been here for three days now. We are all waiting for Rafah border to open so they can deport us on the bus to there.

Farah: Some have been here longer than others, but we can't wait to get on that bus. We want to get moving. We haven't had any shower or wash since we arrived.

Omar: Ah, I was wondering where that smell was coming from.

Farah: Leave it out!

Yasmin: But why you can't go directly, and why do you have to stay here?

Laila: This is how it has always been! I am Laila, by the way, and he is Ala.

She looks at him while he is looking down on the floor.

Farah: I am Farah, and this is Omar. And he is *(pointing at Ali)*.

Ali: Wein Ronnie, no Beckham, Beckham no...sucks...You are Yasmin, we call you Yasmina. Now you are one of us, you are a Gazan. Welcome to Gaza!
All join with the sign. Ali starts drumming and all join singing: (translation is provided on projection while Umut drums)

(Translation:) Please be gone, don't be mad and come here again
Whoever enters here is lost, whoever leaves is born again
Say hello to the tram on your way out

This life gives more to the powerful, and pity for us, the poor
We struggle hard for so little that is hardly enough to buy us bread and tea

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*This life is full of contradictions
But there are many different types of crazy ones
Everyone needs a white dress from the lowest to the highest*

Yasmin: *You guys are crazy, I never expected this in my wildest dreams! She laughs.*

Laila (Translation): *Besiege your siege with madness and more madness
Besiege your siege, there is no way out
If your arm fell down, pick it up
And hit your enemy, there is no way out
If I fell next to you, pick me up and hit your enemy
With me because you are now free of all burdens.
Our names are those of our limbs
Besiege your siege with madness and madness
Your beloved ones have gone, so either
To be or not to be.
The mask has fallen off the mask,
There is no one except you in this horizon of forgetfulness
Arabs obeying their Roman masters, Arabs have sold their souls cheaply
Besiege your siege with madness and madness.*

SCENE 2: The Bus Ride

At the end of the poem, there is SFX of a bus engine switching on, everyone turns around and runs across the stage, they form two lines facing each other, carry the chairs and put them in rows to create a bus sense. Then they sit down together at the same beat. SFX of bus ride continues. For 10 seconds, actors pretend they are on the bus by shaking bodies in reaction to different manoeuvres, like turning, breaking suddenly and beeping. Ala starts singing:

(Translation:) *The most beautiful mother is the one who waited for her son
The most beautiful mother is the one who waited for him
And so he returned
Martyred
She shed two tears and a flower
But never submitted to the black dress
The most beautiful mother is the one whose eye never sleep
She keeps awake
Watching a star*

*Floating, watching over a body
In the darkness*

Before he has finished, Laila interrupts him.

Laila: How long has it been?

Ala: Not long actually, about ten days now.

Light fades on them and go to the front of the bus on the rest of the group.

Yasmin: But why do they do this to you?

Ali: Because they love us too much, they don't want us to get lost in the desert.

Farah: The Egyptians are worried that they might compromise their good relationship with Israel if they let us travel freely. The Israelis demand that the border is kept shut, claiming we smuggle weapons.

Ali: Weapons my arse! Who would smuggle weapons through an official border!

Soumaya: You see, we don't have any airport in Palestine and the only way to travel is via Egypt. We have to travel from Rafah border to Cairo. Once you leave the border, you are taken to a bus with a police officer who takes your passport then deports you to the airport where you stay there for a few days before you have to catch your flight.

Farah: And it is the same on the way back, you are sent to the waiting room where we were until god knows when the border opens.

Yasmin: This is not right, it is like a prison.

Ali: Yeah, but without the football hour, and with the noise of the planes and continuous messages for some idiot who lost his bag, or someone to go to the meeting point. There is an announcement every minute. I was there for a long time, so I know the routine by heart. And the food.... Arrrgggh.

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Light fades on the group and goes back on Laila and Ala

Laila: And you miss your mum already? I haven't seen my family for six years now since I left Gaza. I was shot here (*pointing at her right shoulder*) in the early years of the Intifada around 2002. We used to go at Neitsareim settlement and throw stones. We thought it was like the first Intifada. But the moment, we got there they started firing low low missiles at us. They sliced off many of friends. I guess I was lucky to get a live katsar bullet. But it was too dangerous, they said it was close to the heart. So I was sent to Cyprus for medication. Since then I haven't been able to go back. The border has been shut most of the time. So 10 days is not long, cheer up man.

Ala stares at her, angry at her remark.

Ala: But I will never see them again 10 days or 6 years, it makes no difference. They are gone now...It was two days after my younger brother's wedding. We lived in Al Attatra, you know west of Khan Younis, my brother and his wife were out. They decided to spend their honey moon wondering around the corners of Khan Younis Al Balad. My brother felt happy that the borders were closed so he didn't have to pay any money for honey moon expenses. He also believed walking was good to produce more children. He wanted at least 12. My parents were visiting our neighbours but and I stayed at home with my sisters when we had a power cut.

Black out on stage, actors get up and turn the rows of chairs around creating sofas. Others grab a small carpet and a table and a TV monitor. SFX interrupted sound of bullets and explosions. We hear a knock on the door

Scene 3: The House

SFX sound of loud knock.

Sister 1: Who is it?

Ali: Walik, it is us, Ali and Ridda. Open the bloody door

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Sister 2: They are back already, this guy knows nothing about romance. They have only gone for half an hour what are they doing here. Has anyone seen where the candles went.

Sister 1: I gave them to you last night, where did you put them?

Sister 2: I didn't take anything, you moved them. Aiwa, always blame it on the mother who hasn't done everything perfect.

Sister 1: I am not blaming...

Ala: Stop it you two, let's just look together.

SFX sound of door knock gets louder. Sister 2 disappears off stage Ala, Samar and Sister 2 Laila light three candles. Ala walks from upstage left to upstage right when Ali and Ridda enter the stage.

Ali: What happened to you man, we have been waiting for almost 20 minutes. Can't you hear this war party going on outside. Seriously, this is ridiculous. Where are Mum and Dad?

Sister 3: We have been looking for candles so we could see in front of us. Come on, don't start lecturing us about how careful we should be. You shouldn't have gone anyway. Mum and Dad told you not to go out anywhere.

Ali: Oh God, I can't wait for the day I leave this house. Look, I am not a child anymore. I am married and I can make my own decisions, O.K.

Ridda: Common habebi, she didn't mean it. She was just worried about us. Don't make a problem out of nothing. I will go and put the kettle on and then we will play a card game.

Ali: We are not playing hand rimi again, I am sick of this game. We will play tarneeb tonight, and if you don't know how then you can watch and learn.

Ala: *Addressing Laila (out of the scene):* We managed to calm down a bit though everyone was still tense. You see when we have a power cut, our family gets nervous. I don't know why, it happens a lot these they should be more used to it. In fact, in our area the electricity hardly comes to visit us. We started playing cards . . .

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While Ala is talking Ridda brings a tray of tea, Sister 2 picks up a pack of cards and starts shuffling them, they sit down in a circle. Ala and Laila turn around and watch the circle of the card players. They start arguing about who won the last round until sister 1 comes in to the room reading out loud from a book Mahmoud Darwish's poem "Did We Have To?").

Sister 1:

(Translation:)

*Did we have to fall from a high place
To realize that we are not angels as we thought?
Did we have to show our parts in front of everyone
So our truth doesn't remain virgin?
To believe yourself is worse than disbelieving the other
To be friendly with those who hate us and tough with those who love us
Is the humiliation of the arrogant and the arrogance of the humiliated
Oh our Past! We haven't changed...however farther we are now!
Oh future! Don't ask us: who are you? And what do you want from me?
We, too, don't know
Oh present! Be patient with us because we are nothing but annoying passer-
bys.
Our identity is what we leave behind us not what we inherited
What we invent, not what we remember!
On its fortieth anniversary, the June war seems attractive
If we can't find anyone to defeat us, we do it ourselves
However you look into my eye you will never see my look there,
Kidnapped by a disgrace
My heart is not mine and neither belongs to anyone
It is on its own now, without becoming a stone!*

Ali:

Wallah Darwish knows it all. I told you many times, it is very simple
 Hamas should have never done what they did in Gaza. Why did we have
 to kill ourselves that way?

Sister 1:

Oh my god you are still going on about this argument. Are you really that
 narrow minded to think that! But then you have always been Fateh.

Ali:

If you don't show proper respect to your older brother, I will come and
 smash your head right now!

Ridda:

You really are in a bad mood today. Since we went out and you are just
 arguing with everyone. What is happening today?

Ali:

Nothing.

- Sister 3:** This is what marriage does to you!
- Ala:** Has he? (*She looks at Ridda*) Maybe he needs more.
- Ali:** Shut up all of you!
- Sister 2:** OK, chill out guys. You are getting on my nerves now, could we just carry on with the game with some peace and quiet!
- Ridda:** I guess what Ali is trying to say is that because Hamas took over Gaza, they are to blame for what happened in this division between Gaza and the West Bank. Now we have two governments that behave as if they are independent states.
- Sister 2:** Yes, but did they have any choice? Weren't they the ones who won the elections democratically? Then what happened afterwards, the whole world boycotted them as if they were some sort of monster. They had to recognize Israel or otherwise die in isolation. As if Israel recognizes us in the first place.
- Ala:** Besides what has Abbas and his crew in the West Bank gained from recognizing Israel but more settlements, checkpoints and closure. If it was better on the other side, then maybe Hamas would say, let's change our strategy a bit.
- Sister 1:** Besides Hamas said that they would recognize Israel within the '67 border many times, but no one has taken notice of this. They also offered a 20 year truce with Israel and it was rejected.
- Ali:** Guys, but they shouldn't raise weapons against their brothers in Fatah and other factions. We need to work with each other not fight each other, do you understand or what.
- Laila:** Did you always argue like that in your family? I mean how can you just go on about it all the time?
- Ala:** Ohhh. Politics is in my family blood, if there is nothing recent we always argued about what happened in the past and how things should've been different if this politician or that leader said or did something different. Anyway, we continued to argue, until our conversation was interrupted.

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SFX sound of F16 followed by massive explosion. Startled actors jump out of their places and candles are blown out. SFX sound of moving metal vehicles and loud gun fire. Actors run across the stage trying to take cover.

We gathered all in one corner, we didn't know what was happening. But then there was another explosion and our front door was completely smashed. *(A door, already prepared on the side wings, falls on stage)*. We ran to the kitchen which was the farthest point away from the front door. We couldn't see anything, it was pitch black.

Actors all gather upstage right, SFX sound of soldiers stomping. V/O plays in the darkness

V/O This is a closed military zone, anyone in the house should go out immediately. I repeat this is a closed military zone, everyone to get out of the house immediately.

Torches are moving fast across the stage, lighting some parts of the furniture and getting close to the actors. SFX sound of bullets and explosions continue in the distance.

Ali: I think we should go out, they will come and find us soon.

Sister 2: No one to move out of here. I think I can hear mum and dad coming back. Where are going to go anyway. The whole area is surrounded by tanks.

Sister 1: They will either kill us or arrest and torture us. I am frightened, Why Mum and Dad haven't arrived yet, did you hear them? What were they saying?

Silence interrupted by fragmented sound of bullets, while actors are looking around in confusion.

Ali: I am going to find out what happened to them.

He stands up and walks across the stage, all torches lights go straight to his face. SFX a sound of sniper bullet. Ali falls on the stage. Ridda starts shouting hysterically. crying.

Ala: The moment Ridda started shouting, the Israeli soldiers found out where we were. They came in rushing through the house. Smashing everything they found in their way.

SFX sound of furniture being smashed, glass broken and continuous bullets across the rooms. Small light goes on the actors

Then they asked my sister and Ridda to get up and blindfolded them, making them a shield from any possible gunfire. I could hear mum and dad shouting. I think they were trying to get to us, but then there were two bullets followed by silence. But then there was more gun fire.

Actors take three steps forward, gunfire starts and they all fall on the ground on the pile of bodies on the floor. Music of “to my mother” starts playing. Sister 1 gets up injured and starts checking everyone out across the stage. She starts crying, then she shouts, then she runs across to Ali and shouts for him. She falls around then gets up again and does the same thing again. On the projection screens, the video of Huda ‘zalia plays silently. Lights fade out as the music continues. Actors start rearranging the furniture on stage for the bus scene.

Scene 4: Bus Journey

Stage lights go up, actors are already on their seats. SFX bus journey continues, then SFX bus braking and coming to a stop. The actors are exasperated.

Yasmin: So what is happening now?

Ali: Money...you know, money...he needs. Driver goes nowhere without money

Yasmin: But I thought we have paid him already.

Soumaya: Yes, but he wants his tips and we don't want to miss the border and he knows this. You are lucky, though, usually he stops like five times. This isn't bad, only two times so far and we are about an hour away. Let's hope this is the last time which I am sure it will be.

Yasmin: This is just blackmail, it isn't right. Someone should complain.

All actors look at Yasmin at this remark and they all start laughing. Ali gets up and starts collecting tips from all passengers who give him the money with dissatisfaction. He goes to the left wing.

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Ali: He says he wants to take a piss, then off we go.

He exits to get changed into an Egyptian border police uniform.

Farah: Man your English is definitely getting better on this journey, next the Fateh will make you a foreign minister.

SFX bus switching on and continues the journey. Actors pretend that they are on the bus. Lights fade on the group and go back to Laila and Ala.

Laila: I am sorry to have brought this up. It is very stupid of me, I didn't realize.

Ala: (Translation): We store our pain in big pots
So the soldiers don't see them and celebrate our siege
We store them for a memory
For something that might surprise us on our path
So that when life becomes normal
We will grief, like others, on small things
Hidden underneath big titles
Since we have never paid attention
To the smallest of pains.
Tomorrow when the wound is dry,
We will feel its side effects

Scene 5: Border

SFX: Bus stops suddenly, all actors leave and re-arrange the chairs into a border setting. An Egyptian soldier appears on stage wearing a white uniform and sunglasses. He looks at everyone and points at them to be seated. A minute of waiting while all actors sit looking up at the soldier who is now at a table reading his newspaper. The actors fan their faces with their passports.

Laila: Oh, don't tell me it is closed again. Why did they bring us here in the first place? We were better off at the airport.

Yasmin: I think it will open soon, it is just a few minutes before it does. Maybe they are just finishing off the bureaucratic procedures.

Laila: I don't think so, I think it will take months before it opens again. We'd better make ourselves comfortable.

Yasmin: I can't wait for months, I have to get back to work in my hospital back in London. What's the point of staying here anyway.

Soumaya: Where else do we go? If we can't go back to our country, do you think there is any other place in the world that would accept us? There is no way back, once you come to here. This is it, you can't go forward or go back. These are the rules made for Gazans. I don't want to scare you or anything but I know people who died here waiting for this damn gate to open. My aunt Samira was 70 years old when she went for the pilgrimage. She wanted to do it for a long time, and about six years ago the border opened suddenly so she decided to take her chance and go. She went with my cousin Arafat who was in his 40s. When they returned, the border was shut. And just like us they were deported here knowing that the border was shut. Sometimes, they do it because they don't want to keep people at the airport. There are a lot of journalists with their cameras passing by. It is better to transport people here out of sight so they can die slowly unnoticed. Auntie Samira and Arafat waited her for at least 40 days without being able to get in. Slowly my aunt's health started deteriorating. She was already an old woman and this desert didn't suit her. The nights here are very cold, she didn't pack enough clothes with her. She thought she wouldn't need them in Mecca. She didn't think she would have to wait this long at the border. All the other travelers tried to help her as much as possible. But she couldn't hold it and died on the 50th day. She was removed from her and we haven't been able to locate where her body is.

Yasmin and Laila keep staring at Soumaya while Ali walks across the stage heading towards the Egyptian soldier.

Soldier: I told you to sit down, the border is closed and there is nothing I can do.

Ala: But I want to go to the toilet!

Soldier: Sit down now, it is not toilet break yet.

Ala: I don't believe it, if we have to stay here for days, does it matter what time we go to the toilet or not.

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Soldier: Sit down

Ala: (Translation): *While you are preparing your breakfast, think of others
Don't forget the crumbs for the pigeons
While you are fighting your wars, think of others
Don't forget those who are seeking peace
When you are paying your water bill, think of others
Those who are breastfed by a cloud
When you are coming to the house, your house, think of others
Don't forget the nation of tents
While you are asleep counting the stars, think of others
There are those who don't get a chance to sleep
When you are emancipating yourself with clichés, think of others
Those who lost the right to speak
When you are thinking of the far away others, think of yourself
Say: I wish I were a candle in the dark*

Soldier: For the last time I am going to say sit down. Otherwise, I am going to make you sit myself.

Ali goes back to his place, both he and the soldier keep staring at each other. Farah goes close to him and encourages him to sit down. The soldier stands up a little bit then sits down and continues reading from his magazine.

Farah: Come on, don't make it more difficult for yourself. He will put you in prison and then you will never see the sunlight ever again. Do you want that? Just be patient and ignore him, don't sink to his level.

Ala: I am not, he thinks he can control us because he is wearing that uniform. But he shouldn't treat us this way. We are not bloody animals. Even animals get better treatment than us.

Yasmin: There must be away of getting away from here.

Farah: Well, there is! You can always try a tunnel. Why do you think they are there for in the first place?

Laila: Oh yeah, of course you can. My cousin met a girl in Al Areesh when he went for a visit three years ago when the border opened for a week. They kept in touch and a year later, he managed to get out and got engaged to her then returned to Gaza. But for two whole years, the border didn't

open at all and they were getting desperate to get married. They made so many applications to the Egyptians, Israelis, Red Cross or anyone they thought might help, but no one could help.

Actors get up and form a wedding parade, Farah to play the bride, Ali to play the tunnel digger while drumming and Ala to play the bride's father. Eventually, they meet a tunnel digger who agrees to take them. Ali comes and shakes hands and leads the parade towards the back of the stage while the rest of the actors re-arrange the seats to create a tunnel like setting. They start drumming and singing until they arrive at the tunnel digger's house. Everyone thought that his son was getting married so the authorities didn't pay enough attention to this social event. But once they were in the house ...

Tunnel Digger: We need some people to stay here drumming and singing while the rest follow me.

Father: Are you sure this is going to work?

Tunnel Digger: You Palestinians question everything? Either come up with a different plan or keep silent!

Laila: You see, the tunnel was in the digger's house. So they went in, the bride, her parents and 50 of her family. At the same time on the other side in Gaza, the wedding party had already started. They were all joined together and they got married. The rest of the family returned back to Al Areesh in exactly the same way unnoticed by the authorities.

Actors re-arrange chairs back to the border setting and sit at the same position they were in.

So, here is a way for you.

Soumaya: Or you could just try to call your embassy and tell them what happened and they will arrange a way out for you. I am sure that they won't let a good British citizen go through this.

Yasmin looks at Soumaya in anger for 2 seconds. SFX sound of gunfire and explosions mixed with sirens.

Yasmin: Where did that stupid soldier go?

Farah: I don't know but it seems that there are some troubles going on.

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Ala: Look there are some people trying to cross the border (*looking to the other side*) Oh no, the Israeli tanks and helicopters are coming.

Images of people crowding at the border, video of bombing the Rafah border and images of buses are displayed. SFX: busy border, people shouting and cheating. Umut enters the stage and starts drumming, weird metallic beats. Actors start running across the stage in confusion. They go back to grab their bags and carry them, they drop them, then pick them up again. Drumming is getting louder and louder. They all run from upstage right to upstage left and then stop in the middle. They stomp with their feet and stop along with the drumming.

Omar and all:
(Translation):

*To those passing between the fleeting words:
Carry your names and be gone
Take your hours from our time, and be gone
And take what you like from the blueness of the sea
And the sand of memory, so you know
That you never will! How a stone from our land
Can build the ceiling of the sky!*

*To those passing between the fleeting words:
From you the sword – From us, our blood
From you steal and fire – from us, our flesh
From you yet another tank – from us, a stone
From you tear bombs – from us, rain
We have what you have of air and sky
So take your share from our blood and be gone
And go a fancy dinner party – and be gone
As for us, we have to guard the flowers of martyrs
We have to live as we like!*

*To those passing between the fleeting words:
Pile your illusions and bury it in a forgotten hole – and be gone
And take back the handle of time to the golden calf
Or to the timing of a pistol
For we have what you don't like here – so be gone
We have what you don't – a homeland bleeding
A nation bleeding, a homeland fit for forgetfulness or memory
For we have some work to do in our homeland
We have the past, the present and the future
So be gone from our land – from our land, from our sea
From our wheat, from our salt, from our wound
From everything and be gone!*

Drumming becomes faster, SFX bullets and explosions in the distance. Actors start running around the stage, some taking cover and some throwing stones. Lights coming on and off rapidly. Projectors play videos of Egyptian and Israeli politicians saying that the borders would be shut as long as Hamas is in control.

Yasmin: What is happening? What is this?

Laila: Some people are trying to cross the border and the police are firing at them. We'd better take shelter and wait, maybe they will let everyone in. This could be our chance. Come on, follow me!

Soumaya runs across and leaves stage, still shouting at Yasmin to follow. Yasmin stays in the middle while other actors run around, urging her to take cover. Laila comes close to her, Yasmin starts moving and asks Laila to come with her. Laila stays in her place.

Soumaya: Is it time to hide now? If I take one step away from here, I might not ever be able to cross this border. They might control the situation and the whole thing would be over. Then they will say that because of today the border will be shut for six more months. Mum and the rest of my family are about 50 meters away from here, which way do I go? I want to see them, where are they standing? It's been a very long time without seeing their faces, do they still look the same or have the years changed them a little bit? Will my dad be able to carry me in his arms when he sees me running across or maybe he can't let go of his walking stick. Mohamed, Rashid, Soha, Nagham are you all there? Can you see me?

The sound of bullets and explosions intensifies, ambulance sirens are heard in the distance.

Maybe not, maybe they hadn't come in the first place, maybe they knew that this cursed border will never open.

Yasmin: Come on, we have to go, they are getting closer, they've started throwing tear bombs now, hurry up you will be hurt.

A single sound of sniper bullet, Soumaya falls down. Yasmin runs across the stage. Yasmin falls dead. Soumaya is in shock. She bends down, checking that she is dead. A playback of Darwish's "I Don't Know the Stranger". At the end of the soundtrack, Ala covers the body with a Palestinian flag thrown from the side wing. Black out.

The End

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