

## *Out Of Control*

*Out of Control* A Play by Wael Qadour, 2009 Arab Stages,  
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### *Characters:*

*Azez: 27 years.*

*Alia: Azez's sister, 26 years.*

*Wesam: Alia's husband, 28 years.*

*Ameen: a friend of Alia and Azez, from the same village.*

*Raneem: their neighbor in the next house, 25 years.*

### *Scene One*

*The living room in Alia's house, the furniture is modest. Alia and Wesam.*

**Alia:** I have seen him today.

*Long silence*

**Wesam:** Whom?

**Alia:** While I was coming home. . . I was in the minibus, and he was in another one on the opposite side of the road . . . I saw him through the window.

**Wesam:** Azez?

*Beat*

Maybe it was someone who looks like him.

**Alia:** I know him very well.

**Wasam:** Are you sure?

*Beat*

Did he see you?

**Alia:** I don't think so.

**Wesam:** Did you notice what minibus he was riding in?

**Alia:** It was north circular.

**Wesam:** Surely you are wrong.

*Silence, Alia looks sharply at Wesam.*

Hungry?

**Alia:** No.

**Wesam:** But you haven't eaten since morning.

*Beat*

You have to eat something.

**Alia:** I'm sure.

*Silence*

**Wesam:** The rent is almost ready.

**Alia:** What?

**Wesam:** The rent money . . . we have to pay for this week. Did you forget?

**Alia:** We decided to move at the end of this month.

**Wesam:** We were just discussing . . .

**Alia:** No . . . we decided . . . haven't you found any new places yet?

**Wesam:** Not yet.

*Beat*

**Alia:** We have to leave . . . we have stayed here too long.

**Wesam:** It is not logical to change houses every three months . . . this is the third house we have used in less than a year!

**Alia:** I told you that I have seen him in the same minibus. That means he has arrived in this area. It is only a matter of time until he finds us.

**Wesam:** Bullshit! Massken Barzeh is a big area; there are thousands of houses.

**Alia:** And if he finds us?

**Wesam:** He won't . . . the area is so big . . . it's impossible!

**Alia:** And if . . . he . . . finds us?

**Wesam:** Every day thousands of people use the north circular bus. Let's suppose that he is your brother. It's not enough to say that he is here just to find you.

**Alia:** Then why was he here?

**Wesam:** How could we know? Maybe he got a job in Damascus. Maybe he is visiting one of his friends!

*Beat*

Alia, you know very well how much it will cost us to move again. The rents have increased yet again.

**Alia:** You are concerned about the rent?!

**Wesam:** Don't talk to me like this! You know that I care about you more than you do. But that's too much. We're exaggerating. No one is looking for you. They call you every day and ask you to come back and vow they will not harm you. How many times did you cry while you were talking to your mother because she was crying and begging you to come back? They would not have asked you to return if they wanted to kill you.

**Alia:** It's not true . . . never . . . they are deceiving me. I haven't believed them since the beginning, and I'm sure they are manipulating us after what I have seen today. They called me to make me feel secure, so we will fall into their trap. This is their plan.

*A cell phone rings; they are silent; seconds of silence. Wesam moves and holds the cell; he looks at the screen.*

**Wesam:** It's your mother.

*He walks towards Alia. She takes the cell spontaneously, still looking at Wesam. The ringing stops. The*

*cell is still in her hand. Seconds of silence.*

**Wesam:** What do you think of eating something? I'm hungry.

**Alia:** Are you going to find a new house?

*Beat*

**Wesam:** We haven't very much time... it's still one week till the end of the month. We will stay here one extra month.

*Beat*

Please, don't be afraid. The situation isn't dangerous. I doubt whether the man you have seen is your brother, and even if he was Azez, it doesn't mean he is looking for you. And let's suppose that's true; he will not be able to find us. That's very difficult. And even if he finds us, he can't do anything. The building is full of people.

**Alia:** I have told you that I have seen Azez, and you completely doubt that it was Azez! What are you thinking?

**Wesam:** Nothing.

**Alia:** Nothing?

**Wesam:** Yes.

**Alia:** And even if he was my brother, that doesn't mean that he's looking for me to kill me! Did you say that?

**Wesam:** Yes.

**Alia:** Did you say that?

*Beat*

**Wesam:** You are exaggerating, Alia. This is too much. You get more scared by the day.

**Alia:** Me?

**Wesam:** Yes, you. You have taken a long vacation from the hospital without a reason. You are causing trouble all day. You refuse to visit my family in the village because you expect a spy on the road. You shut the windows and close the curtains although it's summer. I don't understand all of that. What's all this about turning off the lights at night . . . closing the gas bottle and locking the doors carefully from the inside and double-checking to be sure that everything is closed well? I don't understand why have you changed all your styles in dressing. Even your hair . . . you have cut it. And it's ugly as well as dying . . .

*During his last words, the cell rings again in Alia's hand. Alia shivers without looking at the screen and she throws it away as strongly as she can.*

*Black out*

**Scene Two**

*Ameen's house, the door is knocked. Ameen appears and goes to the door and opens it. Azez appears, seconds of silence. They hug each other, they come into the middle of the room.*

**Azez:** It's been a long time.

*Beat*

Didn't you expect me to visit?

**Ameen:** Yes.

**Azez:** I don't want to hurt her.

**Ameen:** I don't know anything about her.

**Azez:** I only want to know where she is.

**Ameen:** I expected her to call me, but she didn't call.

**Azez:** The family only wants to make sure that she is alright.

**Ameen:** Maybe she will call me later. I'm wondering why she hasn't done so before now!

**Azez:** I'll go back when I'm sure she's ok.

**Ameen:** Hasn't she contacted you yet?

**Azez:** I just want to talk to her.

**Ameen:** Me too.

**Azez:** Where is she?

*Beat*

**Ameen:** I don't know.

*Beat*

**Azez:** Listen to me carefully, Ameen. I've come here to see her, and I won't go back until I've seen her.

**Ameen:** Really? When did you arrive? Today?

**Azez:** You know very well that the situation is dangerous.

**Ameen:** I do.

**Azez:** Many things have changed.

**Ameen:** But you don't intend to hurt her, do you?

**Azez:** Never.

**Ameen:** That's good.

**Azez:** Where is she?

**Ameen:** Believe me, I have no idea.

**Azez:** Impossible . . . don't try to convince me that you don't know where she is hiding. Do you want me to believe that you haven't seen her for all these past months?

**Ameen:** As you like, but you have to realize that Alia expected your coming, so she wouldn't give me any piece of information which could lead you to her.

**Azez:** I know you know everything, but you don't want to help me.

*Beat*

Look at me, Ameen. Alia has done something very dangerous, something that could not pass by peacefully, and you know that very well. Everything has completely changed and it will never be the same again. . .

**Ameen:** What has Alia done and how has it changed everything as you say? Did she get married?

**Azez:** Ameen . . .

**Ameen:** She got married . . . married . . . what's wrong with that?

**Azez:** There is no turning back now. Alia has done something forbidden.

**Ameen:** Who has shoved this bullshit into your head?

**Azez:** Nobody. I have seen everything. Wedad's fiancé has broken up with her. My mother is having strong attacks of asthma. My father has closed the shop and stays home like a woman. He doesn't dare to go out or speak with anybody. You know our village very well, they gossip a lot.

**Ameen:** She did what she thought was the right thing to do.

**Azez:** She didn't . . . she has destroyed us . . . and she'll pay the price with her blood for what she has done. She'll be dead . . . yes, dead. She very well knows what the action she has taken will do and how much harm it will cause. We have God's curse . . .

**Ameen:** I expected you to stand beside her and defend her.

**Azez:** I can't . . . this time I can't. I fought for her . . . I was the one who said no to my brother when he wanted to prevent her from studying in Damascus. Remember . . . don't say that I don't love her. I was the one who was beaten by my father when I prevented her marriage with my nephew because she didn't like him. I believed that . . . she and I were open to each other about everything. You were part of it as well. So don't say now that I should leave her alone or protect her, I did everything for her I was the one who broke Ibn Alsamawi's bones when he said that my sister seems like screen girls. But she threw all of that away. Who's that piece of shit she married?! Who?! She has never told me about him . . . I didn't know him . . . she has kept the matter a secret . . . why? She has asked me to help her in everything . . . and now she has married a man of a different religion and has ran away like a thief. She threw us in the waste can as if we were garbage. She planned everything and stabbed me in the back.

**Ameen:** She was sure that you would have prevented her . . .

**Azez:** Of course . . . because it's a foolish act. She is a heretic . . .

**Ameen:** But she didn't do a forbidden thing . . .

**Azez:** No, she has done . . . she is against God. God doesn't want this.

**Ameen:** How would you know?

*Beat*

**Azez:** I can't stop now. I have to find her. Nothing will be the same as long as she is alive.

**Ameen:** She is your sister.

**Azez:** She was . . . but now she is my enemy.

**Ameen:** I feel I don't even know you, Azez!

**Azez:** And you have also changed, Ameen.

**Ameen:** I'm still the way I am and always been.

**Azez:** You wouldn't say that if you were in my shoes.

*Beat*

**Ameen:** Ask her to get a divorce and come back. Is that enough for you?

**Azez:** Yes it is . . . maybe this can be resolved if she gets divorced and comes back.

*Beat*

We have spent the entire past six months negotiating with her and begging her on the phone. But it was useless. We can't wait any longer.

*Silence*

You will tell me where she is.

**Ameen:** I don't know where . . .

**Azez (interrupting):** Liar! . . . you know . . . you know.

*Beat*

**Ameen:** Even if I do know, I'm not going to help you.

*Beat*

**Azez:** I will tell everyone that you refused to help me.

*Beat*

**Ameen:** As you wish. Yes, I didn't give you my help in killing your sister. I prevented you from becoming a criminal who would spend the rest of his life in prison.

**Azez:** I will never be in prison. The lawyer said that I will never be sentenced to be imprisoned my whole life.

**Ameen:** What?

**Azez:** Yes, he said that the law will protect me. He spoke about that and mentioned to us some similar cases and some statutes of law, and he read them to me. Imagine, even the law considers her death legal. It's fair.

*Beat*

**Ameen:** Please Azez . . . reconsider . . . you have the time.

**Azez:** And I will not waste it here. You reconsider as well. Everyone will know you refused to help me. You will open a door upon yourself that will not be closed easily . . .

*Silence, Azez walks towards the door.*

**Ameen:** Where are going to stay?

**Azez:** Not here.

*Azez continues walking to the door, he stops and turns back at Ameen.*

Tell her to leave him and return . . . it's her last opportunity . . . she has to do it quickly before I find her . . .

*Black out*

### **SceneThree**

*Alia's house. Alia and Raneem.*

**Alia:** Did he beat you again?

*Raneem shakes her head in an almost unnoticeable way*

Look at your eye; it's blue and inflamed.

**Raneem:** It was good that I fainted, so he stopped beating me. I think I will pretend to faint the next time.

**Alia:** I'll sterilize it, you have to take an anti-biotic.

**Raneem:** Are you a doctor?

*Beat*

**Alia:** Not at all . . . but I know about this.

*Beat*

But, what happened?

**Raneem:** I don't know . . . he was asking me strange questions as if he were a detective . . . interrogating with me about things I don't know anything about . . . names, places, dates, and I was answering that I don't know . . . and then he threatened me and said he would torture me. I started to cry because I was

sure that he would beat me as usual.

**Alia:** You have to end this situation very soon, whatever it takes.

*Beat*

**Raneem:** It got worse recently. In the beginning he used to beat me with his hands. But now . . . he uses another objects. He could use anything or any objects.

*Beat*

**Alia:** I wish I could help you.

**Raneem:** I don't need any help. I just need to talk.

**Alia:** Do your parents know about this?

**Raneem:** They won't do anything. They only made sure that they disposed of girl number six. They will not be happy if I came back to them.

**Alia:** You are exaggerating a little. Would they be satisfied with your situation?

**Raneem:** It seems you have a good relationship with your family. I envy you. You have a wonderful husband; you live together without any disturbance from anyone. . .

*Beat*

You know . . . sometimes I can't believe that what's happening is true. I ask myself, why is this happening to me? I don't think that God is punishing me. Maybe it's a test . . . I have to be patient. But I want to share it with someone else . . . I want to tell someone about what's happening to me to make sure that I'm not imagining it.

**Alia:** Come here anytime you want.

**Raneem:** I know very well that you and your husband don't like to socialize with the neighbors . . . but I was afraid of speaking with anyone else. . . I felt you would keep it secret. My other neighbors wait for any story to gossip about it . . . and I don't want my story to be their entertainment. If I tell anyone of them, my husband will know in a few days, and I wouldn't even want to imagine his reaction.

**Alia:** I do understand.

*Beat*

**Raneem:** I've come here for another reason. Yesterday somebody asked about you.

*Beat*

I wouldn't open the door because of my husband's warnings, but he was knocking constantly. So I opened. He asked me who lives in your house. I asked him why he is asking. He said that he is looking for an address. For some reason I got suspicious . . . maybe it was the strange look on his face that made me uneasy. I told him that I don't know anything about the neighbors because I moved here recently.

*Silence*

**Alia:** Did he believe you? . . . I mean what did he say then?

**Raneem:** He didn't say anything.

**Alia:** And what . . . did you tell him?

**Raneem:** Nothing.

*Beat*

**Alia:** And what was that strange look like?

**Raneem:** I'm not sure, it was strange and uncomfortable.

**Alia:** Angry?

**Raneem:** No . . . I felt he was confused.

*Beat*

I'm sorry, I really don't know why I answered him like this. Maybe it would have been better if I gave him your names when he asked for them.

**Alia:** Never mind, if he wants us he'll return. Can you describe him to me?

**Raneem:** Medium-sized, rather tan . . . with short black hair.

**Alia:** Had he a beard?

**Raneem:** A short one . . . yes, short . . . do you know him?

*Beat*

**Alia:** I don't think so.

*Beat*

**Raneem:** Sorry, but I must tell you that the people are talking.

*Beat*

Since you have arrived you haven't socialized with anyone. That's not setting right with the people here. They want to know . . .

**Alia:** What do they want to know?

**Raneem:** Everything . . . job, religion, family, where are you from? And the most important thing—why haven't you exchanged visits with anyone?

*Beat*

I don't like to visit anyone either . . . I try to avoid them.

**Alia:** Why?

**Raneem:** If you haven't presented all the information during a limited period, they will create their own and in their perception. So don't be shocked after a while if you discover that you are conceited, stingy or a psychopath. Maybe you are a whore and your husband is your pimp. Or maybe you are running away from your family . . . you know . . .

*Beat*

**Alia:** What do they say?

*Beat*

**Raneem:** What's your story?

*Black out*

#### ***Scene four***

*Alia's house. A middle-sized suitcase is situated in the middle of the living room. Wesam enters holding a piece of chocolate and a nylon sack which contains a bottle of coke. He tries not to make any sound or noise. He puts the stuff on the table, looks at his watch, and enters the kitchen. After a few seconds he returns with two dishes and a large knife. At this moment he notices the suitcase. He stops his actions and forcefully puts the stuff on the table. Hearing the noise, Alia comes out from the bedroom. They look at each other for a long period of time . . . the silence continues.*

**Alia:** I didn't hear you; you scared me.

*Beat*

It's hot.

**Wesam:** Maybe we can open the window.

*Beat, they don't move.*

I called you while I was coming to ask if we need anything, but...

**Alia** (*interrupting*): Ah yes, my cell was turned off.

*Beat*

We don't need anything.

**Wesam:** Good.

*Beat*

I'm going tomorrow to see a small house in the Qodsaia suburb.

**Alia:** Really?

**Wesam:** Living room, bedroom, and small kitchen . . .the same rent . . .

**Alia:** As usual.

**Wesam:** Yes, as usual.

*Beat*

**Alia:** I'll make some tea.

**Wesam:** We have cola.

*Beat*

We'll move there before the end of this month. We can move by the end of this week if you want.

**Alia:** There are four days till the end of this week.

**Wesam:** We can't move till I get my salary.

*A knock at the door, a short silence, another knock. Wesam goes towards the door and exits. Alia is still standing at her place. She holds the knife. Silence. After a while Wesam returns. He seems puzzled.*

**Wesam:** Nothing. Don't be scared, it's . . .Raneem.

**Alia:** What's wrong with her? Why didn't you open the door?

**Wesam:** Everything is over now. I looked through the door. I saw her husband pulling her inside. She got away from him and knocked at our door, but he recaptured her, held her tightly, pulled her very violently and shut the door. Everything is over now, don't be scared, everyone has gone.

**Alia:** Who is everyone?!

**Wesam:** The family that lives upstairs. They were coming up . . . they stopped for a while and then they continued.

**Alia** (*throws down the knife*): I want to go.

**Wesam:** Where to?

**Alia:** I don't know . . . any cheap hotel would be safer than here. I've told you, he arrived. That means he's here and looking and you are telling me about the end of the month and the end of the week and . . . I don't want to hear this shit!

**Wesam:** How could you be sure that the man who talked to Raneem was Azez? He could be a postman, garbage man, public servant, tax collector, or a delivery man. Why do you ignore all that and seem very sure that he is your brother?

**Alia:** Raneem described him to me.

**Wesam:** There are a million people in this city that have the same features. Mrs. Raneem is just unbalanced.

**Alia:** Don't say that . . . I'm alive now because of her!

**Wesam:** It's not true, she would have told Azez what she knows if she were a normal person.

**Alia:** Azez!

**Wesam:** No, I mean that man. She should have told him what she knows like any neighbor, but she is mentally ill and a freak, and she's affecting you.

*He walks towards the suitcase and kicks it.*

You were planning on leaving without telling me!

**Alia:** No!

**Wesam:** You knew very well that I wouldn't be here before midnight.

**Alia:** I didn't intend to leave, I've just prepared the suitcase and I was waiting for you.

**Wesam:** It's not true. I remembered your birthday and I left work early tonight to spend it with you, but you are leaving!

**Alia:** I didn't forget that today is my birthday.

**Wesam:** You are lying! You forgot . . . you forgot the date of our first meeting as well . . . you forgot what my zodiac sign is . . . my father's name . . . your score in high school . . . what size feet I have . . . that I like Fayroz in the morning and that you drink coffee in the afternoon . . . the beginning of Nizar's poem. You forgot that I like reading newspapers in evening. You are going to forget more and more, Alia . . .

*Silence*

We didn't expect that, Alia. We didn't plan our life in this way when we decided to run away. Do you remember?

**Alia:** I do . . . I remember very well . . . and because of that I want to keep fighting. This is not a punishment . . . but it's painful.

**Wesam** (*hugs her*): Don't be afraid . . . I'm with you.

*Silence*

**Alia:** When I saw Azez that day, it was hot . . . very crowded. I was waiting for the minibus . . . many people were standing around me . . . bumping into me . . . I was scared of them. There was an old woman standing next to me. I stuck near her. When the minibus arrived I got on quickly and shut the door. There was one empty place and I took it. The old woman couldn't get on. I felt ashamed of myself . . . I shouldn't have done that . . . but I didn't notice that. After a few minutes, I saw Azez. I'm not sure if he was Azez or not, but he looked like Azez. I don't know . . . maybe I shouldn't have ridden . . . but I was scared . . .

*Silence*

**Wesam:** Forget about it. Let's think about what we can do about it now.

**Alia:** Yes . . . let's think. Maybe Raneem is playing her fainting trick again. The neighbors upstairs are talking about what they have seen on the stairs, mentioning that she had knocked on our door but we didn't open. They are wondering why . . .

*Beat*

That's exactly what is going to happen when Azez finds me. I'll run out of the apartment crying for help. I might be bleeding. I'll knock at Raneem's door, but she won't open. Maybe she'll be unconscious or tied up . . . or maybe she won't because she hesitates to get into trouble. She'll keep watching me while Azez is pulling me inside. The neighbors will watch as well. They will not interfere . . . but they will see everything . . . they will not miss a single detail. The most important thing for them if that happens is

watching and filing away all the details for informing everyone about today's show. And of course the police will arrive too late . . . the ambulance as well. You will also arrive too late . . . and the neighbors will tell you the whole story . . . yes, the whole story . . .

*Black out*

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