

THE JOURNEY

a screenplay

by

Azita Ebrahimi

© March 2016 Azita Ebrahimi

<http://offthewallplays.com>

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MELISSA.....	a union organizer in Chicago, early thirties
MARTIN.....	Melissa's husband
JACK.....	Melissa's co-worker, early forties
THERESA.....	Jack's wife
PATRICK.....	Melissa's co-worker, late twenties
MONICA.....	Melissa's friend
DA CHUN.....	a teacher in Beijing, twenty-five years old
CHEN.....	factory manager in Beijing, Da Chun's husband
FANG.....	Da Chun's friend
FU.....	a girl student in Da Chun's class
HAKIM.....	a farmer in the West Bank, fifty-five years old
NAJWA.....	Hakim's granddaughter, five years old
ZAHRA.....	Hakim's wife
HASSAN.....	Hakim's son
MUSTAFA.....	Hakim's friend
YOEL.....	Hakim's Jewish friend, lives in Jerusalem
MOHAMAD ZAWATI.....	Father of Palestinian family
EVELYN.....	bookstore owner in Dublin, forty-eight years old
SOPHIE.....	Evelyn's daughter, nineteen years old
FR. BENNETT.....	pastor of Catholic Church in Dublin
TOUSSAINT.....	works for the NGO in Haiti, twenty eight years old
MRS. PHILIZA.....	Toussaint's mother
PIERRE.....	Toussaint's partner, bar owner, thirty-five years old
JAMES.....	Toussaint's boss at the NGO in Haiti
IVAN.....	writer in Moscow, seventy-five years old
SONIA.....	Ivan's granddaughter, thirteen years old
ANNA.....	Ivan's daughter
ALEXSEY.....	bartender in Moscow
DR. MUTAHI.....	doctor in Nairobi, forty-five years old
DALIA.....	Dr. Mutahi's wife, business owner
DR. BUSAR KAMAU.....	friend of Dr. Mutahi's
KIANO.....	Dalia and Dr. Mutahi's son, twelve years old

TIME: 2015

SETTINGS: Office of union organizers, fast food restaurant, houses, rally in Chicago
 Classroom, kitchen, living room, restaurant in Beijing
 Buddhist temple in northern India
 Outside of a house, living room, coffee shop in the West Bank, Jerusalem
 Bookstore, Catholic church, bedroom in Dublin, street, Boston airport
 Local café, NGO office, house, on the beach in Port-au-Prince, village in Haiti
 Local bar, living room, bedroom, cemetery in Moscow
 Living room, doctor's office, bedroom in Nairobi, camp hospital in Northern Yemen

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

(AT RISE we see MELISSA, early thirties, at union office in Chicago speaking with JACK, early forties.)

MELISSA

Does it even matter what we think?

JACK

Of course, it matters. Why do you talk like that Melissa? What's wrong?

MELISSA

I don't know. I guess I'm just tired.

JACK

Why don't you take some time off? You've been working really hard. You're going to kill yourself if you continue like this.

MELISSA

(With her head between her hands, MELISSA faces JACK with very tired eyes. She adjusts her glasses.)

Maybe you're right. Maybe I just need a break.

(Sitting behind her desk, MELISSA turns her rolling chair towards the window behind her and looks out.)

SCENE 2

(We see DA CHUN in a Beijing classroom)

DA CHUN

Who can tell me why it's so important to know our history?

(A girl student raises her hand.)

DA CHUN

Yes, Fu.

FU

Because history teaches us about our past, Ms. Yang.

DA CHUN

Yes, Fu. History takes us back to where we came from but is it? Is it really only about the past?

(pauses as if she is in her own thoughts and looks out window.)

SCENE 3

(In the West Bank, sitting under a tree on a small, Oriental rug, blowing his hookah, we see HAKIM speaking to his granddaughter NAJWA.)

HAKIM

Come here, Najwa. I want to tell you a story. It is about an olive tree.

NAJWA

(sitting next to her grandfather)

Grandpa, does the olive tree have a name?

HAKIM

Of course it does. Its name is Najwa.

NAJWA

But grandpa, that's my name!

HAKIM

And it's the name of our olive tree, too...Once upon a time, long, long, long time ago, there was a beautiful olive tree by the name of Najwa...

SCENE 4

(In a Dublin bookstore, we see SOPHIE, nineteen years old, speaking with her mother EVELYN, forty-eight years old.)

SOPHIE

I want to get on the road, mommy. I want to travel and see different parts of Ireland.

EVELYN

What about school? You're still interested in becoming a filmmaker, right?

SOPHIE

Of course, mommy, but I feel like I need to move around a bit before I commit myself to years of school.

EVELYN

Well, traveling costs money. How are you going to pay for it? You know I can't help you with that.

SOPHIE

I know, mommy. Maybe I can get part-time jobs here and there and pay my way around...

(EVELYN moves away from sorting out some books on a bookshelf and walks towards the door, stands behind it, and looks outside)

EVELYN

I guess it is time for you to stretch your wings a bit...

SCENE 5

(In a local café in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, we see TOUSSANT sitting on a stool talking to the café owner, PIERRE.)

TOUSSANT

I don't really want to work for a foreign organization. How many times do I have to tell you? I'd rather work with one of our local groups, but there is no money, Pierre.

(sips his drink and uses the word for "*arrogant*" in the Haitian language)

TOUSSANT

There is not enough financial support for our local groups. Money only goes to all these *aaorgant* NGOs.

(sips his drink)

PIERRE

(getting close to TOUSSANT with an angry voice using the word for “*why*” in the Haitian language)

And all they do is just clean up their own governments mess -- the French, the British, the Americans. If they would only leave us alone... Why would you want to be part of their charade... *poukisa?*

TOUSSANT

(Looks at Pierre’s eyes with admiration)

Because I have no other choice, Pierre.

PIERRE

(walking away)

Then, you don’t even know your own history, Toussaint...

SCENE 6

(In a local Moscow bar, we see IVAN talking to the bartender.)

IVAN

One always could find comfort in vodka...

(Drinking the shot, IVAN puts the glass down and looks at himself in the huge mirror on the wall.)

You are an old man, Ivan.

(Calling on the bartender while raising up his glass.)

Can I have another one?

SCENE 7

(Sitting on a big couch with his newspaper in a living room in Nairobi, we see DR. MUTAHI shaking his head.)

Dr. MUTAHI

There was another drone attack in Yemen. 3 children were killed.

DALIA

Why do you even bother reading this news? When you know there’s nothing you can do to stop it? You are only torturing yourself.

DR. MUTAHI

That is the problem. So many people think that there is nothing we can do.

DALIA

Well, is there? Is there? Without putting yourself and us in danger, Bashir?

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

(AT RISE we see EVELYN in a Catholic church in Dublin, sitting on the church pew)

EVELYN

(whispering to herself)

Is it ever going to get better?

FR. BENNETT walks in and walks toward EVELYN.

FR. BENNETT

How are you, Evelyn?

EVELYN

I am fine, Father, and you?

FR. BENNETT

Can't complain

EVELYN

Well, I've got enough to complain about for both us.

FR. BENNETT

What is wrong, Evelyn?

EVELYN

Nothing, Father—the usual bread and butter complaints—I am not sure if I can keep the store open much longer—I have not had even one sale in the past couple months.

(putting his hand on EVELYN's shoulder)

FR. BENNETT

Don't lose hope, Evelyn. You need to be strong. How is Sophie?

EVELYN

She's fine, Father. She wants to get into the movie business. Fancy that, Father, my Sophie wants to be a film maker.

FR. BENNETT

Come now, you see. It's not all that bad. Is it Evelyn?

EVELYN

No, Father, I guess not.

SCENE 2

(At dinner time in a kitchen in Beijing we see DA CHUN talking to her husband, CHEN)

DA CHUN

Do you ever think what our lives would be like if we were born in another country?

(looking at DA CHUN with a puzzling look)

CHEN

That's a strange question to ask.

DA CHUN

I don't know. Sometimes I wonder if I had been born in another country how my life would be.

CHEN

Well, I don't see any point in thinking about questions like that. I don't have the time for it either. Today at the factory, I had to deal with a bunch of unhappy workers who were complaining about the increase in their weekly hours for this month. They don't understand

that we need to meet our monthly production quota or we'll all be out of a job. So, you see I have more important things to think about.

(DA CHUN gets up to take her dish to the kitchen)

DA CHUN

Never mind—it was just a thought.

CHEN

Well, it is certainly not the best dinner conversation, I have to say.

DA CHUN

How is the fish?

SCENE 3

(at IVAN's son's house in his living room with his granddaughter SONIA)

SONIA

Grandfather, why you are so quiet?

(looking at a picture of his wife and son as a child)

IVAN

I was just thinking about your grandmother and how beautiful she was. She was also a great dancer. Do you like to dance, Sonia?

SONIA

(while texting on the phone)

No, I prefer singing grandpa.

(with a smile)

IVAN

Then maybe you can sing for me, if you can put your phone down for a few seconds.

SONIA

Of course, grandpa.

IVAN

I guess all this online stuff is the blessing and the curse of your generation. Each generation has its own.

(Sonia moves toward her grandfather to give him a kiss while Sonia's mother is being heard from the kitchen, announcing dinner is ready)

SCENE 4

(After a *Fight for \$15* rally in front of a fast food restaurant, we see MELISSA and PATRICK walking with banners and signs toward her car. MELISSA opens her trunk.)

PATRICK

I think I'm in love with you.

MELISSA

(looking at him with a smile)

And I think you're crazy.

PATRICK

No, I am not.

MELISSA

Then, I'll pretend you are.

(with a smile)

PATRICK

You can't deny the attraction between us.

MELISSA

It was a successful rally. You are a good organizer, Patrick.

(Putting two bullhorns in the trunk, MELISSA closes the trunk and kisses PATRICK on the cheek.)

MELISSA

I will see you tomorrow.

PATRICK

I will not give up that easy.

MELISSA:

You want to tell that to my husband? Good night.

(MELISSA gets in her car and leaves while
PATRICK stands and watches.)

SCENE 5

(In DR. MUTAHI'S office, we see DR.KAMAU
speaking to DR. MUTAHI.)

DR. KAMAU

Can't you just be happy with saving people's lives? Leave the world of politics to politicians.

DR. MUTAHI

How can you be so indifferent to what they're doing to our Muslim brothers and sisters?

DR. KAMAU

I am not, but I also see what we're doing to each other. Don't be so naive, Bashir.

DR. MUTAHI

Why would you say that? Look what is happening in the whole of Africa, in the Middle East?
Are you completely blind or are you refusing to see what's going on?

DR. KAMAU

I see that, and I see more. I see desperation, madness, and the vicious cycle of violence with
no foreseeable end, and I have to ask myself how did we get here, Bashir...

DR. MUTAHI

We have been driven to it, Busar

(taking a deep breath)

DR. KAMAU

I have to go, Bashir. I have to get ready for my next surgery.

(continuing)

I don't see any point continuing this conversation. You are a good man, Bashir, but the world is very ugly, or at least I think so.

DR. MUTAHI

We are expecting you for dinner tonight.

DR. KAMAU

I will be there. I would never miss Miss Dalia's cooking.

SCENE 6

(We see TOUSSAINT and his mother, MRS. PHILIZA sitting on chairs outside of her little house in Port-au Prince.)

MRS. PHILIZA

You have nothing to fear, Toussaint. Desperate, destitute as we seem, but our hearts are full.

(continuing)

Don't forget who you are, Toussaint. Don't ever forget who you are. Your name carries the heart of a nation—a proud nation, my son. Follow your heart and you will find your way.

TOUSSAINT

Mommy, I have been meaning to tell you something.

(MRS. PHILIZA looking straight, not at her son)

MRS. PHILIZA

You don't have to tell me anything. I know. You are a good son, Toussaint, and that is all that matters to me.

(TOUSSAINT looks at his mother, grabs her hand and holds it and they both just sit there quietly.)

SCENE 7

(In HAKIM'S living room in the West Bank speaking to Yoel, an Israeli with Committee Against House Demolitions. YOEL is invited in by ZAHRA.)

HAKIM

Come, come, Yoel. Just in time for afternoon tea and homemade baklava.

(YOEL sits next to HAKIM while ZAHRA brings tea and baklava.)

HAKIM

To what do we owe the honor of your visit?

YOEL

The group that is coming from the United States and Europe to help us build the new house for the Zawati family is larger than I was expecting. Can a few of them stay in your house, Hakim?

HAKIM

Of course, Yoel, with pleasure. When are they arriving?

YOEL:

Next week on Tuesday.

HAKIM

Where is the Zawati family staying now?

YOEL

With Mohamad's cousin. Hopefully, we will get their house up in two weeks.

HAKIM

Inshallah, now drink your tea.

ACT THREE

SCENE 1

(In SOPHIE'S room in Dublin, we see her searching for information on her laptop behind her desk, EVELYN is sitting on the bed.)

EVELYN

I had to make some hard choices when I was younger—your age. I'm older now, and I suppose I am wiser. (she pauses)

(continuing)

You see my love, no one wants to come to this world feeling they are less than others--less important, less visible, less fortunate... When you put people into those situations, there will be consequences.

(SOPHIE turns around to face her mother)

SOPHIE

Yes, and we should be glad that our troubles are in the past, Mommy?

EVELYN

I'm not sure about that... but I'm glad that you live in a different time.

(SOPHIE gets up and walks toward EVELYN.)

SOPHIE

I am so proud of you, mommy.

(and SOPHIE gets up and hugs her mother ...)

SCENE 2

(We see IVAN drunk and talking to himself in the same bar in Moscow. He is sitting on a stool next to a beautiful girl and he turns to her.)

IVAN

Love to have you for dinner. I mean to have dinner with you.

(The girl looks at him and says nothing.).

IVAN

I don't blame you. Why would you want to have dinner with an old sack like me.

ALEKSEY

Ivan, you've had enough now. Maybe you should go home. Should I call your son?

(IVAN continues to drink, holds his glass up and shouts.)

IVAN

I am fine, Aleksey. Could use another one.

