

FLOWERS OF RED

a drama by

eliza wyatt

FLOWERS OF RED is set in Gaza, Winter 2003.

FLOWERS OF RED won Best Playwright Award 2005 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where it was first presented; it was directed by Terry Adams with Miriam Tisler and Catherine Lake. The following January, 2006, it was produced at Boston Playwrights' Theatre, Boston, with Krista D'Agostino, Caryn Lindsey, and Jonathan Myers, and directed by Marco Zarattini.

Flowers of Red

Cast of characters

SAMIA — a Palestinian girl from a large and presently impoverished Moslem family

RUTH — an American girl from a family of adopted children in Colorado Springs

JIM — a slightly older man from England, who left for America when he was nineteen

Props: map, washing-up bowl, backpack, bedroll, satellite phone, cell phone, portable CD player, cups, paper plates, bread, fried eggs, cigarettes, bag containing cigarettes, loud-hailer/megaphone

JIM is in Cyprus. He is on the phone to his boss, or he could be video-conferencing.

JIM: Look, I was carrying out what I considered my orders. Correct me if I'm wrong, but my directive was to see to it that operations continued unimpeded, with as little loss to life as possible, civilian and military. Am I right? I presumed that included Peace Activists. Okay, then I was right, I'm glad to hear you say that. Look, the point is, I diverted the main group of Peace Activists, which was my prime directive. I was stopping the other girl. I couldn't stop both of them. It was crisis control, sir. I chose to save one. I could only save one. Why don't they look at it this way? If I wasn't in place at the time, which was my idea in the first place, it could have been worse. More Peace Activists...okay, Protestors, okay, Human Shields, whatever, half-witted idiots if you want...but my job as I understood it was to prevent unnecessary loss of life, foreign and native, am I right? Okay, one girl died but how were we to know? That English boy got shot and no international incident, so there was for this one because she was female but I did my job as I saw it. I diverted the rest of the group, otherwise a dozen Human Shields would have been throwing themselves in the line of fire. They were gagging for it. As I see it, I averted a major clusterfuck!

(There's a rumble of jets from above. JIM looks up and despairs at what he sees.)

end of scene 1

Scene 2 — Winter 2003

The area in front of a cinder-block house that looks uninhabited. A round, rusty, metal gas container provides cooking fuel and a plastic tub washing facilities. There's a line of washing. Large plastic water carriers stand nearby. Some newspapers and books. Ideally, a copy of Anne Frank in Arabic.

In the cool of the evening, RUTH enters with backpack and sleeping bag. She's wearing a bright orange shirt. She is trying to follow a map and has come from Rafah. Noticing the house, she summons up enough courage to approach. She coughs near the door. SAMIA enters. SAMIA's default is washing and her hands are still wet. She smiles when she sees RUTH, which encourages RUTH to put down her stuff.

RUTH: Salaam alekhoun.

SAMIA: Alekhoun salaam.

RUTH: Do you speak English? Thank God! I mean that's good. My name is Ruth.

SAMIA: Samia.

RUTH: That's the name I have. So this is the house!

SAMIA: This is *my* house.

RUTH: Yes, good then. Good. I got here late. My friends came on ahead of me. My friends, you saw my friends? Six people like me, yes?

SAMIA: No. I see no one. No one is here.

RUTH: They went on ahead of me because I was sick, so they must be here by now. This was yesterday.

SAMIA: (*shakes her head*) No one. No. No one comes. Be careful of stones.

RUTH: I can't have got it that wrong. Look, I have your address in Arabic. (*She shows it to SAMIA, who nods.*) That's right, isn't it?

SAMIA: Yes.

RUTH: I wonder what happened to them.

SAMIA: We have no news.

RUTH: *We* certainly have no news. Do you have television?

SAMIA: No working. They. (*miming scissors*) No electricity.

RUTH: That makes sense. Given the...givens! (*She laughs.*) Don't know why I'm laughing. Sorry. I laugh at nothing.

SAMIA: You want some tea?

RUTH: Tea? Sorry, I don't drink tea.

SAMIA: No coffee.

RUTH: Water. Water'd be just great.

(SAMIA *exits*, RUTH *checks out the space*. SAMIA *enters with water*, RUTH *tastes it.*)

SAMIA: Not like America.

RUTH: Won't hurt me, I'm sure. At least I'm in the right place, I think. According to the map. It's great you can speak English. How long have you been here?

SAMIA: Me? Us? Who do you mean?

RUTH: (*taking off her orange shirt*) Whoops, sorry, loaded question. I mean in this house.

SAMIA: It is not our house. They give us.

RUTH: New? Yes, they moved you. But look at that fig tree. That must be from the old times.

SAMIA: Yes, old tree.

RUTH: Figs! Seen them in Israel loaded with figs. Is this one too old to give fruit?

SAMIA: I do not know. Maybe.

RUTH: The climate is so great here. Even in winter there are a few leaves. Not like Colorado.

SAMIA: We have bed in the house. You can sleep.

RUTH: I'm not tired. I was afraid I'd miss my friends; but if this is the house, I don't know what's happened to them. Some boys followed me but I got rattled and ran. At least I'm in the right place.

SAMIA: Where is your friends?

RUTH: Maybe they got lost. Maybe they lost the map.

SAMIA: You are welcome here, very welcome. We always give food and bed to visitors, always.

RUTH: You don't have to do the same as always.

SAMIA: But yes.

RUTH: I don't want to get you into any trouble. They told me your mother doesn't approve of us.

SAMIA: My mother? My mother, she is not here. You want to eat?

RUTH: No, no thanks. I'm not hungry.

SAMIA: But come into house, yes, please.

(RUTH follows SAMIA into the house but quickly exits.)

RUTH: I don't have to sleep in the house. I've got my roll. I'd rather sleep outside, it's so warm.

SAMIA: If you want.

RUTH: No, I'd rather, honestly! Isn't it great out here? Garden and everything. Warm fresh air.

(RUTH unrolls her sleeping bag as if she's staying.)

SAMIA: Who said? About my mother, who said?

RUTH: Oh that, don't mean to offend you. Hell, mine would be the same. More so. She's a complete control freak.

SAMIA: Your friends they say? Who says?

RUTH: Eric or Tracey I can't remember. But just as a way of introducing me to you, you know, so that I know who you are. I mean the family. The situation.

SAMIA: My father, he thinks it is good.

RUTH: I'm glad. Where are they? Your family now?

SAMIA: Checkpoint Wadi... Thirty kilometers.

RUTH: They're safe there. And you're here by yourself?

SAMIA: I have friends too.

RUTH: Of course. I saw someone down by the well.

SAMIA: Yes, Jim. He is someone... He's not friend.

RUTH: Is there anyone else here? Anyone in the house?

SAMIA: No one here.

RUTH: That's weird, I mean for you to be alone.

SAMIA: I wait here for my brothers. My mother is at Wadi because...the boy of my sister is sick.

RUTH: He was shot?

SAMIA: Sick. He needs hospital.

RUTH: Tear-gassed? Gas? Never mind.

SAMIA: I see you before, yes?

RUTH: Me? Have you? Have you really? Great, that was last summer. I was here last summer. I don't remember seeing you but there were a lot of new faces for me.

SAMIA: At house of Doctor Lafida.

RUTH: That's right, Doctor Lafida put us up all summer. I love that man.

SAMIA: Yes?

RUTH: He has a nice house. Wonderful bathroom. We stayed a few weeks at his house all in one bedroom, so embarrassing because I snore I told them to shake me but there's no help for it really. They used to put me out the tent at dance camp.

SAMIA: I see you, yes. You say, Bush *majnoon*, Sharon *majnoon*.

RUTH: We said that a lot last summer. And they're still crazy.

(SAMIA spreads out her washing and cuts some pieces into strips. RUTH watches her.)

RUTH: You making bandages? Bandages?

SAMIA: I do not think I see you again. You go to America and come here again?

RUTH: I thought I could just go back and forget but when you've been here you look at everything differently. It was so boring all the talk and stuff we were learning that wasn't important. Thank God for Eric, he goes to U.C. too and he knew what I was talking about. We came out together.

SAMIA: You come here, I want to go.

RUTH: Where?

SAMIA: Somewhere.

RUTH: Where'd you like to go?

SAMIA: To France!

RUTH: Oh, that sounds like fun.

SAMIA: So now I learn French.

RUTH: Me too. My French is terrible.

SAMIA: Cesse du feu!

RUTH: What's that? Oh, Cease Fire. Sounds better in French. Cesse du feu. (*quick irreverent prayer*) Yes, please, if you don't mind, God! Thank you, Allah!

SAMIA: You say Allah?

RUTH: It's the same as God. Same god.

SAMIA: (*laughing with RUTH*) Same.

(*Two jets fly low over their heads.*)

RUTH: (*more seriously*) Do they come at night?

SAMIA: Day, night, same.

RUTH: I've heard they have infrared cameras and can see you outside. Maybe even inside the house, I don't know.

SAMIA: You want to eat?

RUTH: No, I've got a chocolate bar!

(*She goes to her pack and offers some to SAMIA, who politely refuses, twice.*)

RUTH: My stomach can't take real food yet because I've had a stomach thing, the runs. Eric calls it Moshe Dayan's revenge. Like Montezuma's Revenge, you know. You know him, Moshe Dayan, no? The general with the eye-patch? Six-Day War. I did Middle East History. That's why I'm here! The whole world should be here to see what goes on.

SAMIA: The whole world, yes. Where are your friends?

RUTH: Wouldn't I like to know.

(RUTH goes to her bag and gets out her phone; there's no signal. SAMIA exits with the washing. RUTH lies on her mat, trying the ground out for bumps. Then does a couple of yoga poses, child, then hare. SAMIA brings a radio out and picks up an Arabic station. RUTH looks on.)

SAMIA: You talking to God?

RUTH: Who me? No, that's yoga. Helps to stretch after a long walk, helps me sleep anyway. I do have trouble sometimes, things going round in my mind. People here, back home, in Gaza, Israel, phew!

(She tries her phone again.)

RUTH: Can't get a signal now. Look at that text from my dad. He wants a map, he wants me to send him a map. Is that crocked, or what?

(RUTH pulls a notebook and pen out of her bag.)

SAMIA: I like your notebook.

RUTH: Promised my dad I'd write everything down.

SAMIA: You have good father?

RUTH: Yeah, love him to death. What about you?

SAMIA: My father, he is sad.

RUTH: It is sad times here. And they don't get any better, that's what's so frustrating.

SAMIA: Times is bad.

RUTH: Very bad.

SAMIA: You are right.

RUTH: *(shaking pen)* Coming to the end of this pen.

SAMIA: I have pen.

(She puts her hand in her pocket, brings out a Parker.)

RUTH: Good-looking pen. Does it need ink?

SAMIA: (*giving it to RUTH*) I hope no, because I have not ink.

RUTH: Very nice.

SAMIA: It is yours.

RUTH: No, no, I couldn't.

SAMIA: Please, take it.

RUTH: I'll give it right back.

SAMIA: What you write in your book?

RUTH: I can't show you my diary. Embarrassing. You know, the odd things that are hard to believe back home, like there's a Starbucks in Gaza City. And people seem to be living a normal life in spite of what's going on here? Television, movies. Not many restaurants I noticed. An art gallery in the street!

SAMIA: My mother, too, she writes. Every day one page. She writes down her hates, things she does not like, things she hates. She sends them to Mr. Arafat.

RUTH: Lot of good that'll do.

SAMIA: For her it is good! I read it sometimes. She writes about the noise. She is frightened of the noise. I think now I have bad...

(*SAMIA points to her ears.*)

RUTH: Ears! We used to complain about bulldozers back home and snow plows! That was before I heard bombing.

SAMIA: For many days. For more nights and more days. And then, everything gone, houses, shops, people we know. She writes those things that hurt in, in...

(*SAMIA points to herself.*)

RUTH: Inside, it feels bad, yes. They say it's good to write, but I don't know. My dad wanted me to e-mail and I said, no way.

SAMIA: No way. You learn me new English.

RUTH: You must teach me some words too.

SAMIA: You want to eat something?

RUTH: I couldn't, honestly. No appetite.

SAMIA: (*referring to the sneakers tied to RUTH's backpack*) It is good you have two shoes.

RUTH: Last time I came I left a pair here and they said bring two pairs next time to leave behind.

(She laughs, SAMIA laughs and admires the shoes.)

RUTH: You want? Would they fit you? For you?

SAMIA: No, for me no. My brother likes.

RUTH: Take for your brother. Please. Please. It's the least I can do. My church paid for them. Unitarian Universalist! We raised funds. My parents aren't that rich because there are a lot of us, adopted mostly, all but the first, the oldest. And there are eight of us. That's the sort of parents I have. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

SAMIA: Four. Two brothers, two sisters, and me.

RUTH: You're the youngest one, you? The baby! I'm in the middle of eight. Number four.

(RUTH holds up four fingers and points to herself. SAMIA laughs, holds up five fingers and points to herself.)

SAMIA: Number Five, me.

RUTH: And they're all fine?

(SAMIA does not reply. She exits. RUTH lies back, gets her CD player out, shuts her eyes. She does not see JIM enter with water carriers. He pours water into SAMIA's buckets. SAMIA enters.)

JIM: Salaam alekhoun!

SAMIA: Salaam!

JIM: How much, two, three?

(SAMIA puts up three fingers and exits. RUTH opens her eyes.)

JIM: Hi again.

RUTH: Hi!

JIM: You found her okay?

RUTH: Yes thanks. The map was correct, like you said. But my friends aren't here. Don't know where they are. You haven't seen them have you?

JIM: There were some foreigners headed south yesterday.

RUTH: Why didn't you tell me?

JIM: You never asked me.

RUTH: I'm waiting here for them, so if you see them again, please tell them I'm here.

JIM: She'll need more water if she has any more visitors.

RUTH: Don't worry I won't be washing my hair or anything.

JIM: Pipes got bombed or they cut the electricity or the cables are down, it's not clear.

RUTH: Where's the rest of her family?

JIM: Who knows.

RUTH: Odd, isn't it, leaving her alone here?

JIM: Believe me, she isn't alone, there are eyes everywhere.

RUTH: You're joking! You aren't joking?

JIM: Eyes you can't see.

RUTH: Spooky!

JIM: Not trying to spook you. But you've got to admit it's risky, a girl alone here...

RUTH: Samia's alone here.

JIM: That's what it looks like, but don't be fooled. Don't be fooled by appearances.

RUTH: Maybe the family got news about this house being targeted and she didn't, although I can't very well ask her. Not my job to ask questions.

JIM: You're here to protest, right?

RUTH: Here to help. Followed the D9s from back home. Tried to stop them unloading at Haifa. Don't make a face. Can't stop them if we don't try. You're obviously sympathetic or you wouldn't be here making a film, we've got to get the violence on film.

JIM: I got the violence to the camera on film!

RUTH: You have?

JIM: And now I'm waiting for a new camera.

RUTH: *(a joke!)* Ordered it on the net?

JIM: Something like that.

(RUTH gets a sheet out of her bag to put on her bedroll.)

JIM: That's luxury!

RUTH: Best thing is, I can wash it every day.

JIM: You wash it every day?

RUTH: Don't worry, I don't have to. You seen any tanks around here?

JIM: Nope! There's a lot of gunfire.

RUTH: We've decided that's to frighten people more than anything. What was your film about?

JIM: Life here, life and death.

RUTH: You a real filmmaker?

JIM: Done a documentary, and the BBC are interested in this one. Won't be able to get it shown in the States.

(RUTH watches him collect empty water carriers.)

RUTH: How many times a day do you do that?

JIM: As many as it takes.

RUTH: I can go for weeks without washing my hair but I still think it's important to wash my hands, I've just been sick.

JIM: There's plenty of water in the well this time of year. It's making sure it stays there.

RUTH: Who's going to take the water?

JIM: Sabotage, vandals, all sorts.

RUTH: What's your film called?

JIM: 'War Is a Crime.'

RUTH: This war is against a civilian population.

JIM: War of attrition, but all wars are wars of attrition. Ever done the Romans? When they occupied a territory they slaughtered everything that moved, dogs, cats and ate the mice.

RUTH: Yuk! With or without ketchup.

JIM: With. They invented ketchup. That's probably why. What did you say your name was?

RUTH: Ruth.

JIM: Ruth what?

RUTH: Why'd you need to know my last name?

JIM: Sorry, out of habit. When you're filming you need last names for releases.

RUTH: What did you say your last film was about?

JIM: I didn't.

RUTH: It was no good?

JIM: I was happy with the footage but they did a hack job of editing. I wanted to be there for it, it's something you have to do yourself, but I wasn't able to be there at the time.

RUTH: So what was the film about?

JIM: A village. A village not very different from this. A group of peasants trying to protect their property with old Russian guns.

RUTH: Peasants? No one says peasants anymore.

JIM: That's what they were. It may not be politically correct but they were one generation from being nomads. They'd begun to farm. Not doing very well, not knowing much about farming and the result was, they had to defend their land.

RUTH: From whom?

JIM: Other peasants with better guns. They bought it.

RUTH: They died, you mean?

JIM: No, they bought the land. They used to be nomads roaming the hills but when they settled in one place, that's when their troubles began. They had to defend themselves against people with better guns.

RUTH: Did they win?

JIM: Still going on, as far as I know.

RUTH: Sounds like a good film. (*She thinks.*) Kurds? Were the peasants what we call Kurds?

JIM: No. Not Kurds, no.

RUTH: Where were they defending their land then? What country?

JIM: You ask more questions than a documentary filmmaker.

RUTH: Where then, which country?

JIM: Afghanistan.

RUTH: You went there? All the trouble spots? That's interesting.

JIM: Okay, let's forget last names, but your first name's Ruth and that's a Jewish name.

RUTH: If you want to know my religion, I'm Unitarian Universalist.

JIM: What's that? Never heard of that.

RUTH: Never heard...?

JIM: Unitarian, yes, but...

RUTH: (*lightens up*) You haven't lived! Or you've lived a very sheltered life.

JIM: So they just called you a Jewish name?

RUTH: Does it matter? Do names really matter?

JIM: In this situation, I'd say it does. If you don't see the significance, you don't want to, that's obvious.

RUTH: (*angry now*) Who cares what names our parents gave us? At home none of us care what we're called. It's who we are that counts: that counts with me. If they wanted to call me Elvis Presley I wouldn't care.

JIM: (*registers this for a moment*) Sorry, didn't mean to upset you.

RUTH: (*still angry*) So, what's your last name? If you think that's so important, what's yours?

JIM: Now you're just angry with me.

RUTH: Where are you from? I can't place your accent, your accent sounds phony to me. Where are you from?

JIM: Michigan. But London before that. Which explains the accent.

RUTH: In the field you don't ask last names. I don't know Samia's last name.

JIM: They won't tell you. You may not know their last names. They sure know them. They can trace back their families for generations, centuries of generations. Do you know how many words there are in the Arabic dictionary compared to the Hebrew? Do you know how many countries speak Arabic? How many Moslems there are in the world?

RUTH: I don't get it. I don't get your point at all. Am I supposed to be impressed by all this? You're not making any sense.

(SAMIA enters, watches them.)

JIM: If you get bored, come and keep me company down at the well.

RUTH: Isn't there a curfew?

JIM: It's relaxed right now.

RUTH: I hear they change the hours without warning.

JIM: Don't worry about the curfew. You'll be all right.

SAMIA: There is always danger.

JIM: *(startled)* What?

RUTH: What kind of danger?

JIM: YOU CAN SPEAK ENGLISH?

(The next few lines fly fast, overlapping.)

RUTH: What do you mean, danger?

JIM: She's just dropped a bomb on me! I never knew she could talk English. We used sign language.

RUTH: WHAT DANGER?

SAMIA: Curfew! Sometimes curfew is changed. One day one time, next day different. They change curfew.

JIM: She speaks English perfectly.

(SAMIA *exits.*)

JIM: You think you know people, but you don't.

RUTH: She must have her reasons.

JIM: You want my number?

(RUTH *automatically hands him her phone, he punches in the number.*)

JIM: You don't know these people. I used sign language, with the whole family.

RUTH: Where are they, the rest of the family; do you know?

JIM: I don't know. They tell me nothing.

RUTH: Perhaps because you're a man.

JIM: One thing I discovered, when I was filming...I think we make it worse, the men women thing.

RUTH: What are you talking about?

JIM: The way they run to cover up when we come but I've seen them when they think no one's looking...

RUTH: Nothing to do with us.

JIM: I think we're making them more fanatic.

RUTH: I don't think it's us. I think it's the violence.

JIM: Right, but they see you, a woman, do things.

RUTH: You think because I'm a woman here I'm doing more harm than good?

JIM: I didn't say that.

RUTH: And women don't do things like that?

JIM: You won't get special treatment from the soldiers because you're a woman.

RUTH: I don't want any, thank you.

(JIM *puts his phone away in preparation for going.*)

RUTH: What sort of phone is that?

JIM: Satellite phone.

RUTH: If I give you Eric's number, can you get him for me?

JIM: I'll try.

(He takes the number and tries it on his phone. SAMIA enters, smoking. She watches them.)

JIM: Nothing seems to be coming through. *(laughing)* No action tonight unless we go looking for some. If we get too bored.

RUTH: No thanks.

(JIM gives SAMIA a light bulb from his pocket.)

JIM: Just remembered. Let's hope they turn the power back on soon.

SAMIA: Thank you!

JIM: *(exaggeratedly)* Don't mention it!

(He exits, waving.)

RUTH: I see a television antenna!

SAMIA: There's television. No electricity.

RUTH: *(getting out her portable CD player)* Don't worry, I come prepared.

SAMIA: You have music?

RUTH: Do you want to hear?

(She puts ear-phones on SAMIA.)

RUTH: That's the song to sing when things get too much. That's the place I like to go. 'Worryin's not the answer, my friend...'

(SAMIA listens to the music, taps her foot.)

RUTH: 'We've had too much worrying before...these worries are not health-thy!'

SAMIA: America music the best.

RUTH: Better than French? YES!

SAMIA: My boyfriend likes jazz music.

RUTH: You have a boyfriend?

SAMIA: Of course, why not?

RUTH: What's his name? Oh, I forgot, we're not supposed to ask names. When are you going to see him? Tonight?

SAMIA: No.

RUTH: Sorry, mustn't ask questions. Hard to remember that.

SAMIA: And you?

RUTH: You can ask me anything.

SAMIA: You want to be girl in white?

RUTH: Get married you mean? No, much too young. In my country.

SAMIA: No friend?

RUTH: Used to have a boyfriend in College, sophomore year – they say that's the year, you know – but he keeps talking about his old girlfriend, Karen. Then we get to the end of the year and we go to the lake. Which is surrounded by mountains and the water's a deep green. We stand there looking into the water and he tells me he's in love with someone he's only just met. Not Karen, someone else.

SAMIA: He has two girlfriends?

RUTH: At least.

SAMIA: I don't like this boy, he's not good for you.

RUTH: No. I like Eric better. In some ways. At least he understands why I have to be here. Not many people do.

SAMIA: It is important for us, very.

RUTH: Thank you. Sometimes you just know you have to do something. You follow your star or something like that and every step of the way it's right. Except when you have the runs, like yesterday.

SAMIA: So, this boy, Eric. He is good for you?

RUTH: We had some laughs on the plane. Fun! We went into the bathroom together.

SAMIA: Into bathroom?

RUTH: Toilet on the plane. Don't worry, nothing happened.

SAMIA: I want to go on plane. To France.

RUTH: To France? And what about your boyfriend?

SAMIA: He can come with me if he wants.

RUTH: When are you going to get married?

SAMIA: Not a good time. Never good time for us. Things bad, get more and more bad.

RUTH: Have you finished school?

SAMIA: Not important.

RUTH: I took the kids to school here last summer. Making sure no one shot them and waited to take them back. I can do the same for you if you want to go shopping in Rafah. If you need food or want to buy books, I can go with you.

SAMIA: Thank you, but it is not necessary.

RUTH: Until we hear whether the D9s are coming, I'm free.

SAMIA: Thank you, I don't need.

RUTH: (*indicating the books*) I can see you like reading. Did you like school? Do you want to go to college?

SAMIA: No, they want me to be here. And to have babies. (*She laughs.*) Womens have only babies. More and more babies. For what?

(*She mimes shooting a rifle.*)

SAMIA: And they say this, more babies please. More babies. No, I say, No, No, No!

RUTH: I get your point.

SAMIA: I like to cook, better than babies.

RUTH: (*laughing*) You can't like cooking better than making babies! Not making the babies...

SAMIA: (*understanding innuendo*) Making babies okay but childs not. They go here, there, too dangerous. My sister has two childs now and much pain. Every day; where is boy, where is girl?

RUTH: I know, kids. I don't see the point.

SAMIA: They play, they play like...

RUTH: Too many people in the world already.

SAMIA: ...like they don't care to die. Is true. They don't care, and my sister too.

RUTH: It's awful but the terrible thing is, you have to care, don't you?

SAMIA: Thank you, for that. To understand is good. I like you.

RUTH: Thank you. What does your family do? To make money, your father, or mother?

SAMIA: We have big family and there is a shop. I work sometimes, tomatoes, strawberries. I don't like to work in shop, restaurant better. But no restaurant, my father, he says no.

RUTH: They say no, but they don't mean it.

SAMIA: How is it, you in America?

RUTH: What? Oh you mean living there? Where I live, Colorado? Mountains. Cold in winter, hot in summer. There'll be snow by now.

SAMIA: Mountains of snow, yes?

RUTH: Nothing like the first snow of winter. Suddenly, like magic you wake up and your ordinary old street's lacy white and it's so quiet. Until the snow plows start. You're happy because you just know you're soon going to be skiing. I mean when you're a kid. Now that I'm grown I prefer the spring.

SAMIA: We have spring.

RUTH: You have great winters! The olive trees not even bare. Still a little green showing.

SAMIA: *(suddenly passionate)* Olive trees are dead. Many olive trees are dead, more people are dead and many olive trees. They kill them.

RUTH: I know. We heard about it. Terrible destruction of olive groves. Twenty-five years to grow the olive trees and... *(shakes her head)* some punishment! That's when the Refusnik movement started in Israel.

SAMIA: No trees more, no food, no flowers. No life.

(RUTH goes up to SAMIA to comfort her but then withdraws when she gets no encouragement.)

RUTH: Have you lost anyone? Your family? Dead, in the war?

SAMIA: Yes. My uncle. He is dead since last year.

RUTH: What happened?

SAMIA: He is sitting outside his house, talking with his friends. In the town. They are laughing. And...

(She gestures gunfire.)

SAMIA: They say accident, they say bullet is not for him. They always say, accident.

RUTH: Curfew? I can't believe 'shoot-to-kill curfews.'

SAMIA: No curfew, no. No reason!

RUTH: No excuse! I know that's written on the walls, someone translated it for me. What a mess, nothing left. Talk about saving the environment! You know that's what they talk about back home. Talk, talk...

SAMIA: I think you do not understand how it was before. I want to show you. I want to show you,...

(SAMIA exits and returns with 1940s red low-cut evening dress. She takes off her headscarf.)

RUTH: Wow! That's some dress!

SAMIA: *(putting it up against herself)* Dress of my grandmother. From before. Old, not new. Not modern.

RUTH: Where did she wear that? For parties?

SAMIA: She sings in the dress when she is young. She sings in cafe when she lived in Ramat. She sings in Café Marseilles. In French. She speaks French and English. She teach me English.

RUTH: That's amazing to think your gran was a cabaret singer. Crazy! What did she sing?

SAMIA: Edith Piaf, those songs. Mon Légionnaire.

RUTH: Sing them. Sing them for me.

SAMIA: *(shaking her head)* I have seen photo. She is in this dress with many soldiers from the war. Many English soldiers, yes, It is One Nine Four Nine.

RUTH: Nineteen-forty-nine.

SAMIA: They think war is finished. And it is The Peace. They are singing.

RUTH: My gran used to call it The Peace. I never heard anyone else.

SAMIA: It was The Peace, yes?

RUTH: It will be again, got to be. It is in Europe, and it's got to come here. You remind me of my gran in that dress. She came from Europe, or her family did... Of course she's not my real gran, because I'm adopted. But in America everyone's mixed up. Some people don't know where they come from. I miss her, my gran. I see her sometimes.

(SAMIA *puts the dress on*. RUTH *watches*.)

RUTH: Have you ever seen spirits? Real people who have died, who are dead?

SAMIA: Real people who are dead. Yes, I know some.

RUTH: Of course you do. But there's one day, one day when I feel she's not dead. In my church, Día de los Muertos, we call out the names of people we've lost. You stand up and call out their name. Anna, that's my grandma's name, and everyone says, 'presente.' And you feel no one's ever truly dead because their spirits are still with us. That's a great feeling. What was his name, your uncle? I know we're not supposed to ask names but...the name of your uncle?

SAMIA: Assad!

RUTH: Presente! I'll say it now and you say, 'presente'. Assad! (SAMIA *is silent*.)
Assad! Presente! Assad! Say his name.

SAMIA: (*with dignity*) Assad!

RUTH: Presente!

SAMIA: We have something like that. Everyone comes and we go to a special place. I take you some time. We go with my Noni.

(SAMIA *takes off the dress*.)

RUTH: I wish I could take you back home with me, you'd love it and they'd love you. You'd fit right in because we're all different you see, all different in one family, adopted, and it's difficult sometimes when there's ruptions, but mostly it's fun. You could teach us so much. Come just for the summer or something. I'm sure we'd be able to raise some money.

SAMIA: No, not possible. It is a dream. No passport. Not possible. Nothing here. I do not like dress. I like better... (*She points to her legs*.)

RUTH: Pants?

SAMIA: No, not pants. Trousers.

RUTH: Whatever. More comfortable.

(SAMIA *goes towards the house, then turns*.)

SAMIA: You are afraid to come to house?

RUTH: No, no, I like sleeping outside.

SAMIA: It is dangerous.

RUTH: What the house? Or outside? Who's going to come? No, I sleep very lightly, I can hear them.

SAMIA: You see? In the house, you see?

RUTH: What?

SAMIA: Yes, you see, so you are afraid to come.

RUTH: I didn't see anything, honestly. What?

(SAMIA mimes 'digging' but RUTH does not understand.)

RUTH: Sorry, I don't get it.

SAMIA: Come.

(SAMIA takes a reluctant Ruth's hand, exits to the house. Almost immediately they re-enter.)

RUTH: Makes sense, makes sense. How far does it go? How many miles, kilometers?

SAMIA: Many, many. To Egypt.

RUTH: Egypt! How long does it take to dig a tunnel like that? Who digs, the soldiers?

SAMIA: No, my brothers and sisters. The childrens. For many days, months.

RUTH: They don't go to school anymore.

SAMIA: Because it is stupid, to go to school. Too dangerous.

(She mimes rifles.)

RUTH: I know. And the crazy thing is that shootings in school are happening in America too. Okay for different reasons...

SAMIA: Israelis come, we go. They want us die, all of us. They want us dead.

RUTH: *(quickly)* That's not an Israeli policy! There's no policy of genocide in Gaza. They say. What do your friends bring from Egypt? Guns?

SAMIA: NO, NO! No guns. Cigarettes.

RUTH: Just cigarettes?

SAMIA: Yes, yes.

RUTH: You can speak good English and you're learning French. You could get a place somewhere. There are scholarships for Palestinian students.

SAMIA: It is stupid.

RUTH: Right now, but you may feel like it later.

SAMIA: It is always bad.

RUTH: We have to believe it's going to get better.

(She approaches SAMIA, who moves away.)

SAMIA: *(pointing to the house)* You no say, you no say to Jim.

RUTH: No one! I'll tell no one. That's not my job, thank God.

end of scene 2

Scene 3 — The next day

The passage of night is suggested by a rumble of distant gunfire. A brilliantly clear, sunny dawn. SAMIA enters with the radio, sounds of the Muezzin.

She smokes, watching RUTH sleep. JIM enters. He hails SAMIA, she retreats inside. He coughs near RUTH.

- JIM: I've heard troops are on their way here. Today. Listen, no, I can't hear them. But they're coming.
- RUTH: (*awake at once*) Any news of my friends?
- JIM: Couldn't get through to them, but did get through to Gaza and they confirmed troops are on their way.
- RUTH: Who in Gaza?
- JIM: Does it matter? I'm telling you the truth, but you don't have to believe me.
- RUTH: I don't know what to do.
- JIM: You can't do anything by yourself.
- RUTH: I don't know about that.
- JIM: I'm sure your friends are waiting for you somewhere.
- RUTH: Probably do more good staying here and finding out what they intend to do, be a witness.
- JIM: You won't stop them destroying houses, or even people if they've a mind to.
- RUTH: Why?
- JIM: This isn't a safe house. There's a tunnel in there.
- RUTH: How do you know?
- JIM: You've seen it then? The tunnel? There's sixty miles of tunnels.
- RUTH: No, I slept out here, wanted to sleep under the stars.
- JIM: Go and find your friends. Do you want me to go with you?
- RUTH: That's a very generous offer.
- JIM: I'm a generous man.

RUTH: I don't know why they haven't texted me at least.

JIM: Have you got a signal?

RUTH: *(looking at her phone)* Nothing!

(SAMIA enters.)

JIM: What about Samia?

RUTH: *(still with her phone)* So where are they? It's so frustrating.

JIM: If the tanks come, she better be long gone.

RUTH: I can't tell her to leave her own home,

JIM: She won't listen to me. Doesn't even admit she speaks English.

(SAMIA exits.)

JIM: Do you have any idea what could happen to you? Even if you're obviously white... *(He corrects himself.)* ...American, if you meet an Israeli in heat it won't matter.

(RUTH doesn't want to hear this and moves away, he follows her.)

JIM: I was interviewing someone last week. A young boy and the soldiers came up and wrenched my hands behind my back and put a gun to my head. Smashed the camera and there I was with a pistol aimed right at my head looking at his fingers which were itching to pull the trigger.

RUTH: *(unsure of him)* Frightening.

JIM: Fortunately for me the soldier was young, more unsure of himself, but his finger was on the trigger! I was that close to being dead. This war isn't for amateurs.

RUTH: Why are you telling me this?

JIM: I know they have a tunnel in the house. That's why it's targeted.

RUTH: How do you know?

JIM: She has food, eggs she's cooking for smugglers or soldiers. She's...

RUTH: She's just a kid, doing what she's told.

JIM: Doesn't make any difference, does it?

RUTH: To me it does.

JIM: I don't want her to die before my eyes, either, believe me.

RUTH: They wouldn't, oh my God! Sometimes the world's so bad, I agree with her, it's too bad to live in.

JIM: I'll probably get caught in the cross fire.

RUTH: Go then, if that's what you're afraid of. Don't stick around. I wouldn't if I were you...

JIM: It's not only the house that's going to go up in smoke.

RUTH: I know that, I know being a kid isn't going to save her, or me.

JIM: What are you really doing here?

RUTH: I don't know what you're doing here.

JIM: Unless it's some sort of survivor guilt?

RUTH: *(This enrages RUTH.)* What do you mean? I'm here for a reason, to see war crimes are not committed, I thought that was what your film was supposed to be about. What the hell right do you have to talk about survivor guilt? I think it'd be just great if we were all survivors and we all suffered from that. I'm a survivor and proud of it.

(SAMIA enters, carrying a small bag.)

JIM: I'm not interfering with you Peaceniks. But Samia's in danger and she ought to leave with me.

RUTH: *(addressing SAMIA)* Do you want to go to your family?

SAMIA: No, I stay here. But take please. To my brother.

(She gives the bag to RUTH, JIM takes it from RUTH.)

JIM: What's in here?

(JIM opens the case.)

JIM: Cigarettes. Where do you want me to take these?

SAMIA: You know where he is. To my brother.

RUTH: Look, Samia, there's no reason for you to stay. Why don't you go with Jim?

(SAMIA shakes her head and comfortably sits.)

JIM: Let's all three of us go?

RUTH: She obviously has no intention of leaving.

JIM: Okay, I've said my piece. If you won't do as I say, or listen to me, on your head be it. I won't bother you anymore. It's your funeral, as they say.

(JIM exits. RUTH is anxious about this but bravely smiles to SAMIA.)

RUTH: Where is your brother?

SAMIA: Jim, he knows.

RUTH: It's bad for you to smoke so much.

SAMIA: I know. Dangerous.

RUTH: *(exaggeratedly)* Very dangerous!

(They laugh. SAMIA runs back into the house. RUTH tidies up her stuff. SAMIA returns with fried eggs on a paper plate.)

RUTH: There used to be more Israelis around here. I think the situation's getting worse. You're right. It's TERRORISM! You remember last summer there were some Refusniks in Rafah. Remember Danny, the Israeli Refusnik, with the green eyes?

SAMIA: Ah yes, with the green eyes. I remember.

(SAMIA gestures for her to eat and produces bread. RUTH eats.)

RUTH: Ah, this bread, I love your bread! Don't you find bread calms you down? I told them back home that food tastes better here but I don't think they believed me.

SAMIA: You like here more than America?

RUTH: In a way, I suppose.

SAMIA: For how long you stay here?

RUTH: I don't know. I have no plans. Until I get too upset or sick or something. In my last year and I've promised to write about what's happening here.

SAMIA: Yes, that is good. Thank you!

RUTH: You're more than welcome.

SAMIA: I am glad you like it here.

RUTH: You see that's what people back home never will NEVER, in a million years, understand. Even those people at church who got me here. They still feel sorry for me 'running risks for other people,' 'not thinking of myself,' the way they go on makes me laugh. They never guess how good it feels: don't believe me when I tell them. They just can't imagine it. And I feel sorry for them going every day to their office and home and church to make themselves feel happy when they could be here.

(SAMIA has been taking a note from her pocket during this speech and reading it intently. She shows it to RUTH.)

RUTH: What?

SAMIA: I have find this. This writing from my mother. She says they bomb the house. The house of Haddidi. He is in the bed asleep and is bombed.

RUTH: When? When did you get that note?

SAMIA: Five days since. She writes since five days.

RUTH: *(suspiciously)* Who is it? Someone you know?

SAMIA: She says many people there, in his house. All dead.

RUTH: Five days ago. But not your family?

SAMIA: He is friend of my family. His rice, his rice was the best. That is why we called him Chef. Chef Haddidi. They send him bomb because he is great man. I get English wrong, he WAS great man. Every day a people you love maybe here, maybe not.

RUTH: That must have been just before I arrived. I've been here almost that long and no one told me about any bombing. But you've had that note five days you say?

SAMIA: Yes, old note. But I do not like to read.

RUTH: Of course not. Do you know why they were bombed?

SAMIA: Why? There's no why, there's just...death. It does not matter.

(SAMIA puts the note away and collects the paper plates.)

RUTH: Can I see?

(SAMIA hands her the note.)

RUTH: Well, of course I can't read it. But probably wasn't a bomb. More like a grenade or rocket. (*touching SAMIA*) Anyone else there, someone you knew?

SAMIA: I do not know. Maybe some friend, some cousin.

(*SAMIA exits to the house. The tension in RUTH is now increasing and to relieve the pressure she does a yoga 'downward dog.' SAMIA enters and sees her.*)

SAMIA: What are you doing?

(*RUTH stops and laughs, SAMIA laughs.*)

RUTH: I love the way you Moslems pray. How is it?

(*RUTH goes down as if she's on a prayer mat, holding out her hands.*)

SAMIA: (*laughing*) No, like this. (*She turns RUTH's palms downwards.*)

RUTH: I read the Koran at school and the Imams... (*making a face*) but...are you religious, really? Or like Doctor Lafida, he wasn't. An atheist. What do you think?

SAMIA: You want to know...

RUTH: ...about Allah!

SAMIA: Allah? But is not possible.

RUTH: Yes, because everything is good! But not some things, right? So you can't love Allah, but...

SAMIA: No, never. Of course, no.

RUTH: ...we do.

SAMIA: No.

RUTH: You don't? You do, Moslems do. I don't mean the romantic love. A different kind of love. The other kind of love, a bigger love. The Christian kind, well not only Christian, of course, but the big love!

SAMIA: The big love. You mean for everything, yes?

RUTH: Everyone feels it here. Under the blue sky. You've probably never been to a really really busy city. It's very difficult to feel the big love there.

(*This conversation has helped RUTH, and she relaxes on her bedroll.*)

SAMIA: I want to do something too. Like you. But I think you do not want to know. I think you are not woman. You are not mother. You are like soldier.

RUTH: I'm not a soldier.

SAMIA: A good soldier.

RUTH: Not me. I am not hypnotized to kill people like a robot.

SAMIA: To fight is good. My boyfriend is fighter.

RUTH: You don't have to tell me about him. We're not supposed to get involved in politics.

SAMIA: I want to fight too.

RUTH: I'm a pacifist. You know that word, right? Antiwar. No fighting, no killing. My church is a pacifist church. Not all are, although I don't understand why if you read the Bible it's quite clear, for Jews and Christians and Unitarians, no killing.

SAMIA: (*shaking her head*) You know what I mean?

RUTH: No, tell me.

SAMIA: My name is in their hands.

RUTH: What? What are you trying to tell me?

SAMIA: They ask me.

RUTH: What are you trying to tell me, Samia, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

SAMIA: I can do like you.

RUTH: I'm not doing anything. My church sent me to promote peace.

SAMIA: They say, are you a soldier for Allah? I say no, but...maybe.

RUTH: Wait a minute, let me get this straight. Are you telling me, are you trying to tell me you want to...no, I don't believe it..., Samia, you can't, you can't want to be a *shaheeda*, no, you're joking. That's what you call them, right? Suicide bombers, girls, women.

SAMIA: Sure, why not? I want my picture on the wall. Why not me?

RUTH: You're not serious. I can't tell, I can't tell if you're serious. Tell me.

SAMIA: You think I have not enough pain, perhaps? You think that I can live like this. You do not live like this. Every day someone I love is maybe here, maybe not here. You think it is easy?

RUTH: No, but that's no solution, that's not going to make anything easier: that for sure is going to make things worse.

SAMIA: If...if... Look. They kill us. Not soldiers, my family, my uncle, the childrens. Like we are soldiers. So we are soldiers. They make us soldiers, yes?

RUTH: How can you think that way? They got to you, did they? The Istishadahadiya? They got to you? No, no.

SAMIA: I can think. I am thinking. That is not wrong. You are not one of us.

RUTH: I am. I want peace. The Peace, remember?

SAMIA: You will go soon. I have to stay here, no house. NO HOUSE! No passport, no airport. No country. No flowers, oh yes, when soldiers come then we have flowers on the street, flowers of red. (*She recovers.*) I do not want to live and hate, hate, like my mother. It is better not to live like that.

RUTH: I agree. Then don't, learn not to. That's what you have to learn and I agree it's not always something you can learn at school. Forget school but don't...the awful thing about killing is you won't know who. There are many Israelis on your side, the Refusniks. Israelis who are helping you rebuild. Or children, think of that.

SAMIA: Don't tell me this. It makes my head sick.

RUTH: Because it isn't you. You're like me, you're not a violent person.

(SAMIA runs inside, tearfully. RUTH grabs her phone. SAMIA re-enters, more calmly. RUTH puts her phone away.)

RUTH: Trying to call Eric. Been trying to call him for a while now.

SAMIA: You tell someone now and I go to prison, yes? Like my cousin, I have two cousins in prison for saying something like this.

RUTH: No, I'm not going to send you to prison. You think I'm going to shop you? Oh my God, this is getting out of hand. I don't believe this. You'll be dynamiting me next. If you really want to be a *shaheeda*.

SAMIA: (*laughing*) No, not you.

RUTH: (*not sharing the joke*) Oh sure, that'd be perfect.

SAMIA: Forget, forget what I say.

RUTH: Maybe that's why we're alone here. Is that why you stayed behind? I don't KNOW anymore, I don't know.

SAMIA: Why do I want to kill you?

RUTH: To get in the news. Boy would that get in the news. Killing a Human Shield. That'd make headlines. For all I know you already have a bomb.

SAMIA: I think do not like me now.

RUTH: I LIKE YOU BUT I CAN'T DEAL WITH THESE THREATS!

SAMIA: DON'T BE AFRAID! Please, please, don't be afraid.

(SAMIA grabs hold of RUTH, who stops pacing.)

RUTH: I'm not afraid.

SAMIA: You are good now?

RUTH: Sorry! I lost it for a moment there. Miles from home, and hearing wild wild things. I thought you were trying to warn me.

SAMIA: No, no. We are friends, yes?

RUTH: I'd like us to be real friends. I feel a bit dizzy.

SAMIA: You are sick?

RUTH: No, I'm fine.

SAMIA: I get water.

(SAMIA exits and returns with some water. RUTH is curled up on her bedroll. SAMIA sits beside her.)

SAMIA: *(hugging herself and rocking back and forth)* Allah Akhba, Allah Akhba...

RUTH: I don't usually, but I can pray too.

SAMIA: When I am in old house, my old house for ten days. We are afraid. We are afraid because the bombs. Every day, every night, the same noise. Terrible. We are very afraid. We do not speak, we do not walk, we sit and look. We eat everything in house, we eat leaves. Then no water. We take water from the toilet, no, not toilet, the...

RUTH: ...tank.

SAMIA: It is bad. No one can... (*She mimes.*)

RUTH: ...breathe.

SAMIA: And I say to myself, I don't like this afraid, afraid, I want to stop this afraid because I feel in here is more bad, more bad and hurts. It hurts me. I close my eyes and try to...

RUTH: ...meditate!

SAMIA: Nothing is possible, nothing. Then I think, ha, ha, I am dead. I am already dead, I think I am dead. Then I feel very good. (*She laughs.*)

RUTH: You felt better imagining you were dead?

SAMIA: (*nods*) I feel much, much, much better. (*She laughs again.*)

RUTH: But that's awful really. I don't think I could have put up with that. Not feeling dead, like that, for how many days?

SAMIA: But it is okay.

RUTH: For a day, maybe, but how many days were you like that, in the house like that? With your family?

SAMIA: Family, yes.

RUTH: For how many days?

SAMIA: Ten, ten days.

RUTH: I couldn't do it unless my father tied me down or something. No, I know I couldn't have done that. I'd have run outside like a crazy woman. I know myself. That's what I would have done. I'm a bit claustrophobic. (*realizes SAMIA doesn't understand*) You know, don't like being inside, don't like being in school, had a hard time at school, always inside. College is better, you can skip class and study on the grass, or in the cafeteria. I can't sit still while I'm being bombed. I'm sure I'd have run out or at least tried to do something. I like doing things.

SAMIA: Yes?

RUTH: I like trying to figure out the right thing to do.

SAMIA: Yes?

RUTH: Have the satisfaction that I'm doing something.

SAMIA: Yes?

RUTH: Not that I'm trying to influence you or anything. I admire you for holding on, for all of your family for surviving. For surviving and being here now, today, and I'm glad, very glad you didn't do anything foolish. *(She laughs to herself.)* Thank you, thank you for imagining you are dead or we wouldn't be laughing about it now.

(She goes to SAMIA and they hug.)

RUTH: It's so quiet. Not even birds.

SAMIA: We have no birds here. Bombs make birds go.

RUTH: Yeah, they can fly away.

(in the distance the rumble of tanks and D9s, coming closer)

RUTH: They're coming! You mustn't let them see you. They may have guns.

SAMIA: They have guns. No way, yes, guns.

RUTH: Go into the house and stay there.

SAMIA: And you, where are you going?

RUTH: Nowhere. I've come to meet them. Don't worry, I'm going to be okay. They've never killed an unarmed American.

SAMIA: You have passport?

(RUTH goes to her backpack and searches.)

RUTH: They know who I am. They can tell, by my orange for one thing. Hunter's orange.

SAMIA: What are you looking for?

RUTH: *(holding up her passport)* My passport. I've found it.

(Growing noise of D9s and tanks. RUTH runs to her backpack to retrieve her loud-hailer/megaphone)

SAMIA: I stay with you.

RUTH: That will do us both more harm than good. The soldiers will shoot us both. Please go inside, please. You don't want to die.

SAMIA: Yes, that is stupid. If I die, I want them to die too.

(RUTH pushes SAMIA inside.)

RUTH: You don't want to die. Remember! You want my sneakers.

SAMIA: Too big. Your shoes are too big.

(They laugh.)

RUTH: I'll get you more.

(She gets the megaphone and shakes it.)

RUTH: I hope the battery works.

SAMIA: Where are your friends?

RUTH: That doesn't matter. I have the authority to represent an international group which says killing innocent people in warfare is wrong.

(JIM enters at a run.)

JIM: Why are you still here? They're coming in this direction.

RUTH: Make sure Samia stays here. She's not safe.

SAMIA: I do not stay with him.

JIM: They're not playing.

RUTH: I think she knows that, she lost an uncle.

(Noise suddenly stops, deep voices.)

RUTH: Are they backing up, what?

JIM: There's a tank protecting the D9s. Those monsters are huge, bigger than two-story houses!

RUTH: I've seen them before.

JIM: They're targeting this house, don't you get it? And if they are, there's a reason.

RUTH: Oh, ha ha, a very good reason! One girl against tanks!

SAMIA: I go with you, Ruth, Ruth...

RUTH: Sorry, you can't.

(RUTH runs out with the megaphone. We hear the next speech without seeing her. She runs past the audience.)

RUTH: You are violating the International Humanitarian Law of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

(The tanks and D9s start up again, the noise reaches an unbearable pitch. JIM grabs SAMIA to stop her.)

JIM: She's a Peace Activist, she's here to run risks. Not you!

SAMIA: Let me go.

JIM: I've spent too long looking after you, no, no.

(SAMIA breaks away and picks up stones to throw.)

JIM: You know they'll kill you if you throw stones.

(He chases her and catches her, she struggles.)

SAMIA: Who are you? I don't know you.

JIM: Yes, you do. My name's Jim.

SAMIA: Why are you here?

JIM: *(angrily)* What do you mean? You have no right to ask me that!

(JIM has difficulty restraining her.)

SAMIA: Ruth...

JIM: Don't mess with governments. They know what they're doing.

SAMIA: They are wrong! I am right, they are wrong to be here.

(offstage, RUTH's voice: 'You are violating the International Humanitarian Law of the Fourth Geneva Convention.' SAMIA and JIM tussle. Two shots ring out.)

SAMIA: AHHHHH!

(Blackout. Slowly lights up. Music of solemn chords on Arabic scales are heard. SAMIA enters with the radio. She piles up RUTH's things. JIM enters and watches her. It is the next day.)

JIM: There's going to be a solution, a two-state solution, Israel, Palestine. There are two flags and there will be two states.

SAMIA: They tell me. They say you are enemy.

JIM: Me? I saved your life. I couldn't save you both...

SAMIA: You are not our friend.

JIM: I don't care what you say. I was doing a responsible job. Saving lives.

(SAMIA shakes her head. He exits taking out his satellite phone. SAMIA re-piles RUTH's things.)

SAMIA: *(hugs RUTH's bedroll and whispers to herself)* Ruth...

(SAMIA sways to the music until it fades out, lights dim to one spot. SAMIA addresses the audience.)

SAMIA: I say thank you to all those who die fighting peace and justice. I say thank you and I say... 'presente,' 'presente,' 'presente.'

end of play