

Muna What happened to you, Wasim?

Wasim Happened?

Muna When I was your student, you inspired me.

Wasim When you were my student it was my job to inspire you.

Muna You made everything seem possible.

Wasim When you're young everything does seem possible.

Muna No – those were harder times.

Wasim Youth makes the world seem boundless and changeable.

Muna We all adored you. You seemed so unafraid.

Wasim I was the campus Che Guevara. How much I loved the adoring stares of the girls. It's easy to be an inspiration to students when you're young and bright and you can offer them certainty. Muna, you know that. Tell them the world is changeable and that it's in their power to change it. They will fall in love with you. It's so easy, it's almost criminal. 'You have nothing to lose but your chains.' I almost believed it myself.

Muna You went to prison for it.

Wasim I went to prison to preserve my vanity, Muna.

Muna No. You went to prison for speaking the truth about the world.

Wasim Saying something over and over again does not make it the truth.

Beat.

Muna What do we offer the students now?

Wasim I'm not sure.

Muna They look around at the world and they need explanations. What do we tell them?

Wasim I'm not sure.

Muna When the fundamentalists tell them to dress in a certain way, what do we say?

Wasim I'm not sure.

Muna When the newspapers tell them their republic is a functioning democracy, what do we tell them?

Wasim I'm not sure.

Muna When the Americans tell them their government is evil, what do we say?

Wasim I'm not sure.

Muna Not sure. Not sure. It's cowardice. It's too easy.

Wasim Call it what you like, Muna, but it's not easy.

Beat.

Doubt, hesitancy, timidity, uncertainty – these are the ways we go towards the truth. Slowly. Unsure of ourselves. ‘Is this the right way?’ ‘Are you OK?’ ‘How is it for you?’ And through the darkness we go. Slowly we walk forward putting out our hands to feel the damp walls of the cave. Looking for the light.

That is what we tell them.

Muna Do you remember the last time we were in Damascus?

Wasim Yes.

Muna We went up Mount Quissoon with Khaled and Aisha. You wore those ridiculous sunglasses. You and Khaled were dressed all in black. Aisha looked so beautiful. And you were all arguing and quoting.

Wasim I remember.

Muna I was nineteen. Out of my depth. Aisha talked about patriarchy and Khaled about imperialism and you talked about orientalism.

Wasim Dear God, we must have bored you.

Muna No. No, you didn’t. No, listening to you all it was as if the world suddenly swam into focus.

Wasim It was all pretentious . . . half-read . . . half –

Muna It was the most exciting thing I had ever heard.

Wasim Revolution.

Khaled works for a bank now. Aisha is a housewife in Dubai.

Muna You took me to a hotel. You said I was your wife.

Wasim I remember.

Muna We made love all afternoon. You refused to say you loved me because love was a bourgeois concept.

Wasim For that alone I deserved to go to prison.

Muna But I loved you.

Wasim I know.

Beat.

Wasim Let's go to Mount Quissoon.

Muna No.

Wasim It's still light. There's time.

Muna No.