EXTRACT

The Wall

A play

By

Alex Broun

(Based on an original play by Beejan Olfat)

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Characters

ZAN	eighteen
BENZIR	his father, 40s
BRUCE	a foreman, 20s
GREG	a Health Worker, 20s

(PLEASE NOTE: The roles of BRUCE and GREG should be played by the same actor.)

Scene

A factory site

and

A street in Darlinghurst

Time

Today

Scene 1. Morning.

Lights up on a half painted wall on a factory site.

BENZIR and **ZAN** enter hurriedly, dressed in overalls.

BENZIR carries a large paint can, a bag, a roller on a long pole and a paint tray. **ZAN** struggles with a large undercloth.

BENZIR places down the roller, tray, tin and bag. **ZAN** leans against the wall, breathing heavily. **BENZIR** goes to **ZAN**.

BENZIR: We must hurry. He will be here soon.

BENZIR TAKES THE UNDERCLOTH FROM **ZAN** AND LAYS IT ON THE GROUND IN FRONT OF THE WALL.

THEN HE SLOPS SOME PAINT QUICKLY INTO THE TRAY. **BENZIR** ROLLS THE ROLLER IN THE TRAY. HE LOOKS UP TO SEE SOMEONE APPROACHING.

BENZIR: Quickly. He is coming.

ZAN STUMBLES ACROSS TO THE PAINT TIN. **BENZIR** HANDS HIM THE ROLLER.

BENZIR: You must paint.

ZAN HESITATES.

BENZIR: Begin. Just begin.

ZAN WALKS SLOWLY TO THE WALL AND WITH SOME DIFFICULTY RAISES THE ROLLER. HE PLACES IT TENTATIVELY AGAINST THE WALL AND BEGINS TO WORK IT UP AND DOWN SLOWLY.

BENZIR TURNS TO FACE SOMEONE APPROACHING. HE REMOVES HIS CAP.

BRUCE ENTERS. HE PACES SLOWLY ACROSS STAGE WATCHING **ZAN**. HE STOPS, STILL WATCHING **ZAN**. **BENZIR**, FIDDLES WITH HIS CAP, ANXIOUS.

EVENTUALLY **BRUCE** TURNS TO FACE **BENZIR**. HE TAPS HIS WATCH.

BRUCE: Late … again.

BENZIR: I am sorry Mr Bruce. My daughter, Fatima, she is sick.

BRUCE: How many daughters you got?

BENZIR: Two.

BRUCE: They're not very well are they? Always seem to be coming down with something. You should take better care of them.

BENZIR: Yes Mr Bruce.

BRUCE: That's twice this week Ben-seer. Can't happen again. Get it?

BENZIR NODS.

BENZIR: It won't Mr Bruce. Never again.

BRUCE: It's Bruce. Not Mr Bruce. Just Bruce.

BENZIR: Sorry Mr … (SMILES AWKWARDLY) Bruce.

PAUSE. **BRUCE** PACES.

BRUCE: How do you spell that – Ben-seer?

BENZIR: It is not important.

BRUCE: Course it is. Tell me.

BENZIR: B-e-n-z-i-r. Ben-zir.

BRUCE: Where you from again?

BENZIR: Turkey.

BRUCE: Yeah? Ben-zir sounds a bit further East than that.

BENZIR: No. We are from Turkey. Turkey is in Europe. We are Europeans.

BRUCE: Not from the Middle East then?

BENZIR: No. Europe.

PAUSE. **BRUCE** LOOKS AT **BENZIR** THEN AT **ZAN**. **BENZIR** SUDDENLY GOES TOWARDS HIS BAG.

BENZIR: Would you like to see my passport?

BRUCE: Not really.

BENZIR: (SEARCHING THROUGH BAG) I will show it to you.

BRUCE: It's fine. Thanks.

BENZIR: (STILL SEARCHING) I have it right here.

BRUCE: Hey Ben-zir. Forget it. I don't want to see your passport.

BENZIR STOPS SEARCHING. HE STANDS. PAUSE.

BRUCE: Look, I like you. You're a good bloke. Little problem with punctuality but overall you're a good bloke. I just don't want any problems okay? I just want you to turn up – on time – and paint the wall. No complications. A nice, simple life. You get me?

PAUSE. **BENZIR** NODS.

BENZIR: No compli-cation.

ZAN COUGHS LOUDLY. HIS BODY BEGINS TO SHUDDER. **BENZIR** GOES TO HIM.

BRUCE: Is he alright?

BENZIR: Yes. He is fine.

BRUCE: What's wrong with him?

BENZIR: It is a cold. Just a cold.

BRUCE: Well don't give it to me.

ZAN COUGHS AGAIN.

BRUCE: Jesus, what is it with your kids Ben-zir? They're all crook. Think you should take better care of them.

BENZIR LOOKS UP. HE FIXES **BRUCE** WITH HIS EYES.

BENZIR: That's why I need to work for you, Bruce.

ZAN HAS STOPPED COUGHING. **BENZIR** URGES HIM BACK TOWARDS THE WALL. **ZAN** BEGINS TO PAINT AGAIN.

BENZIR: There. He is okay. He paints.

BRUCE: No complications Ben-zir. Just paint the wall. Nice and simple.

BENZIR: Nice and simple.

BRUCE EXITS. **ZAN** IMMEDIATELY BUCKLES AND BEGINS TO COUGH AGAIN. **BENZIR** TAKES THE POLE.

ZAN STUMBLES TO THE CORNER AND FALLS TO HIS KNEES. WE HEAR HIM THROWING UP. **BENZIR** GOES TO HIM.

BENZIR: Quiet, Not so loud.

ZAN: I'm spewing.

BENZIR: Well try to do it quieter.

ZAN THROWS UP ONCE MORE, TRYING TO DO IT QUIETLY. **BENZIR** PATS HIM ON THE BACK.

ZAN: I need a smoke.

BENZIR: So you will cough more?

ZAN: Just get me a cigarette.

BENZIR: Smoking is why you do this.

ZAN: No Dad. Smoking is not why I do this.

ZAN BREATHES HEAVILY, RECOVERING. **BENZIR** HELPS HIM TO SIT AGAINST THE WALL.

BENZIR: You sit. Watch for Mr Bruce. I will paint.

BENZIR GOES TO THE WALL. HE BEGINS TO PAINT. PAUSE.

BENZIR: This is what happens when you stay out all night.

ZAN: I'm here aren't I?

BENZIR: Yes. But you can not work. Where did you go?

ZAN: Out.

BENZIR: But you just disappeared.

ZAN: Just out. (PAUSE) Don't even know why I'm here. Better off without me.

BENZIR: One man, one wage. Two men –

ZAN: The great Australian way. Bloody stupid. You don't need me.

BENZIR: Who else will help me carry the cloth?

ZAN: Great. Glad I could be useful. Can hardly manage to do that.

BENZIR: It is good to have a job.

ZAN: Some job?

BENZIR: You say this now.

ZAN: Yes I do.

BENZIR: But you could have gone to University. You got enough points.

ZAN: Well I didn't want to go to University did I?

BENZIR: Then you could have gone to TAFE or –

ZAN: I didn't want to alright?

BENZIR: So now you must work with me.

ZAN: Maybe.

BENZIR: (TURNING TO HIM) And because you are angry, you stay out all night.

ZAN: You got it.

BENZIR: All night long.

ZAN: That's right.

BENZIR: Worrying your mother.

ZAN: She's alright.

BENZIR: She cries half the night.

ZAN: That's not my fault.

BENZIR: And then you cough and cough like your insides will come out and all you have to say is "Do you have a cigarette?"

ZAN: Look, I've got a shocking friggin' hangover and my head is about to explode so will you just give it a rest for two minutes! Okay?

PAUSE. **BENZIR** TURNS BACK TO THE WALL. HE PAINTS.

ZAN: Dad, I'm sorry. I just don't feel so good and you're going on and on at me.

BENZIR: It is okay.

ZAN: I just gotta sort a few things out alright.

BENZIR: You are nineteen. Nine-teen.

ZAN: What's that supposed to mean?

BENZIR: When I was your age – I already had a family to care for.

ZAN: Well hoo-bloody-ray for you.

BENZIR TURNS TO HIM.

BENZIR: A father wants what's best for his son.

ZAN: Doesn't bloody sound like it.

BENZIR: Will this make you happy? Cigarettes and smoking and out, out , out.

ZAN: Jesus Dad just back off. I know your concerned alright. I'm fucking concerned too.

BENZIR: And swearing. Always swearing.

ZAN: I know what I'm doing alright? Anything's better than this.

BENZIR: Is it?

BENZIR LOOKS AT **ZAN**. PAUSE. **ZAN** IS QUIET. **BENZIR** GOES BACK TO THE WALL.

ZAN: Anyway, who are you to lecture me? Why do you have to lie?

BENZIR: Lie.

ZAN: I heard you. Before. To Mr Bruce.

BENZIR: It is not a lie.

ZAN: You told him we come from Turkey.

BENZIR: Our family does come from Turkey originally. We were part of the Ottoman Empire.

ZAN: About a zillion years ago.

BENZIR: He would not understand. You do what you need to survive.

ZAN: You sound pathetic.

BENZIR: He wants it nice and simple. Turkey is simple.

ZAN: What do you think he's going to do if he finds out where we really come from? Shoot you?

BENZIR: No but he may find someone else to paint his wall.

ZAN: Good.

BENZIR: Then who will pay for your sisters? Who will pay for you?

ZAN: So you want me to feel guilty now?

BENZIR: Some are not so lucky.

ZAN: Here we go.

BENZIR: Some do not have your oppo-tunities.

ZAN: It's opportunities.

BENZIR: Some have never even seen this country. Some have never even seen the outside. We were lucky. We arrived before things … changed.

ZAN: Alright I know. So what do you want me to do? You want me to go down there and change places with them? Would that make you happy?

BENZIR: I am happy. I am happy that I am free and my family is with me. Many men do not have such gifts. I am happy we have a new life.

ZAN: Some life. Don't you read the papers? They don't want us here.

BENZIR: It will change. They will see we are not so bad.

ZAN: Turn on the radio sometime. They hate us. They don't want us here. They hate us!

BENZIR: Not all are like that.

ZAN: Most of them.

BENZIR: But not all. There are some good people.

ZAN: You mean like those nutcases who came to the house.

BENZIR: No. They were from the University. They have a support group.

ZAN: And you wonder why I don't want to go there.

BENZIR: They want to help us.

ZAN: Like Mr Bruce wants to help us?

BENZIR: Even he is not so bad.

ZAN: They will send us back.

BENZIR: They can not.

ZAN: One day. One day.

BENZIR: But today. Today we are free.

ZAN: How can you live like that?

BENZIR: I try to remember what I have. I try to be grateful.

ZAN: Well I'm sorry but I'm just not that good a liar.

PAUSE. **BENZIR** GOES TO **ZAN**.

BENZIR: Son, I know you think I am a stupid old man.

ZAN: No Dad I don't it's just …

BENZIR: But I am not that old. Or that stupid. It is a bad situation. I know it is hard for you. Hard for all of us. The world is not a simple place now. The clock is ticking. But we must be patient and always keep our eyes towards the sun. We must hold on to our hope and never let go. We must make the most of everyday.

PAUSE. **ZAN** MOVES AWAY.

ZAN: Great speech Dad but it just ain't gonna cut it. You want to know what happened last night? Why I disappeared? I went down to the

ZAN: (CONT) shop. Remember? You asked me to get some milk. And I was standing at the counter waiting to pay and these two little kids were over in the corner, picking out some lollies. They must've been six or seven. Local kids, from our street. I've seen them before. A girl and a boy. I was handing over the money and I heard the little boy say "Why do you come here? We don't want you?" A little kid. I couldn't really believed what I heard so I turned around to face them. The little girl was looking at me and she said:

BENZIR: They are children.

ZAN: She said: "Get back in your boat and go home to Saddam." A little six year old girl. "Go home to Saddam." (**BENZIR** STARTS TO SPEAK.) No wait. This is the best bit. The woman behind the counter, you know the one with the red hair? You know what she does? She looks at me and laughs. She laughs in my face! I just put down the milk and walked out. They don't want us here. Even the kids. They hate us.

BENZIR: They are children. They only say what they hear.

ZAN Exactly.

PAUSE. **ZAN** STARTS TO LEAVE. **BENZIR** HOLDS HIM BACK.

BENZIR: This is why you stay out all night. We will find a new shop. We won't go there again.(GRABBING **ZAN**) Look at me Zan. Look at me my son. You never have to go there again.

ZAN: That's right I don't.

ZAN STRUGGLES AND BREAKS AWAY FROM BENZIR. HE RUNS OFF.

BENZIR: Zan. Zan!

BENZIR STARTS TO FOLLOW HIM BUT SUDDENLY HE STOPS. HE QUICKLY PICKS UP THE ROLLER AND BEGINS PAINTING.

BRUCE ENTERS.

BRUCE: Problems?

BENZIR: No. No problems. I paint.

BRUCE: (LOOKING TO WHERE **ZAN** HAS EXITED) Where did …

BENZIR: My son is ill. He has a sick stomach. I told him to go home.

BRUCE: One man …