

House at full — L 1
Pre show Music — S 1

Anatomy of a Home
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House to 1/2 — L 6

LI BEIRUT by FEYROUZ PLAYING AS AUDIENCES ENTER. RAFFI IS ENJOYING THE SONG ON STAGE. SONG IS CUT BY THE SOUND OF AN EXPLOSION AT CUE OF SHOW STARTING.

CRASH! — [S 2]
[L 11]

Min 'albi salam ya beiruuuuut!! Walla this is poetry! The voice of Fairuz, the nightingale of Lebanon. And in the original Arabic! Not in the peasant language we're forced to speak between us because of global cultural colonization, you, a multi-national group I presume, and me a Lebanese, communicating in English...

Ok, I'll try to translate some lyrics...

A greeting from my heart to Beirut
And kisses to the sea and to the houses
To a rock that resembles an old sailor's face
From the spirit of the people, she becomes wine
From his sweat and toil... She becomes bread and Jasmine
So how does her taste become a taste of fire and smoke?

Ufff... I am a man of privilege. To come from the most beautiful city in the world. Beirut, the pearl of the Middle East!

And the love of Beirut Feyrouz talks about in this song isn't unique to Beirutis. As a matter of fact, everyone in Lebanon is brought up on the fact that in Lebanon, we have four perfect seasons. A cold winter that gives us snow on our mountains. A spring of rebirth and the smell of jasmine from the balconies of Beirut. An autumn that witnesses a spectrum of colors. And a hot summer that's only soothed by the swims in the Mediterranean Sea. As a matter of fact, there are very few facts that the Lebanese people agree on, for example, we don't agree on what our history from 1975 – 1990, the period of our civil war, is. We have different versions of that. But we definitely agree that one can be skiing in Lebanon and in 30 minutes be swimming in the Mediterranean Sea. Of course, we also agree that that's a very important feat for any human to do or else it won't be mentioned in our geography books.

How can you not love Beirut when you have Gemmayzeh Street, a cobblestone paved street with buildings dating back to the Ottoman era on each side and the shops that used to be the shoemaker and the butcher and the carpenter are now an Armenian-Moroccan-Lebanese fusion restaurant, a pub, a café, or an art gallery? How can you not love Beirut when **Gemmayzeh extended** into Mar Mkhayel with newer buildings from the 50's, 60's, 70's, and 80's were at that ugly phase of their existence, but more cafes, restaurants, and pubs opened to give them life and beauty again? How can you not love Beirut when while walking through Mar Mkhayel in the morning you smell 3 or 4 different types of coffees and manakish being baked in every other foron? **And then** walking out of the street over the bridge over Beirut River, you get to Bourj Hammoud, **once a camp** for Armenian genocide survivor refugees, **now** a buzzing center of leather, jewelry, and artisanal handcrafts of all kinds? How can you not love Beirut when against **all middle eastern cliches, two men can go on a date, holding hands and walk down**

L 13

L 15

Hamra street? Where 18 sects co-exist in harmony and households of one religion have shrines from other religions? Where Muslims are the first to put up a Christmas tree and Christians fast on Ramadan? (I stopped putting bold in the next few paragraphs because I made many tiny edits, just read the whole thing carefully)

L 17 — Beirut, you magnificent city, you were so amazing you gave me **FOMO!** She did! I would go to an event with my friends and it would be one of the best events I've ever been to; a concert by the amazing 47 Soul band, or a play by the director who just directed me in a play the month before, or I would simply hang out with a friend who is visiting back from Dubai for the first time in 2 years. And all the time, no matter what I'm doing, I'm thinking about the other events I'm missing; this coffee-making workshop, that new **wine-tasting event** with a walk in the vineyard of the few-centuries-old monastery that's producing it, this weekend getaway to an Ottoman-period house in the mountains that was turned into a guesthouse, that... khalas! It's too much, you made me want it all!

L 23 — **"Nightlife"**
Oh and the clubbing scene in Beirut! The international media couldn't believe the scene we had built! The world famous DJs that would come and play! Look, just one example: The BO18. Here's how I remember going there for the first time as a student. Life changing!

L 25 — I arrive, and it's just an empty parking lot in an area called Quarantina. Now, Some people say that that area has a mass graveyard from the Civil War that was never found. But we're not thinking about that now. There are two bouncers standing in the middle of the parking lot with what looked like the frame of a door behind them. But there was nothing the door led to. I follow my friends and we walk towards them. I think to myself, "Wow, they take us to the club from here. How secretive! Do they walk with us? Is it a car that picks us up?". But then I hear the deep bass... *from under the ground*. The Bouncers check us for the dress code, This is Beirut after all, you have to look good. and they say: "Go on in". Only then I notice why there's nothing behind the door frame.. **It has stairs**, that go down! Next thing I know we're in a civil war bunker! What was once lit with candles now is lit with stroboscopes and **red, dim lighting**.

L 27 — The thick smoke in the air smells like cigarettes. Remember when you could smoke in clubs?. I look around and see my friends through the red smoke and loud music pointing me in the direction of our table. I follow them and get to our table; it's a coffin. The tables look like coffins. Crazy.

L 29 — A couple of hours into the night we are exhausted, sweaty, drunk. The music feels like it keeps getting louder and louder and when we are about to suffocate from the smoke **I look up** and see the ceiling starts to spreading apart from the middle. Like it's the red sea, but I'm looking up like the fishes must have done in surprise! All the club people are now looking up into the the Beirut night sky, the stars, while the red smoke and sin escapes the BO18.

I stand there, in the breeze, still being carried on the music, and I realize, fuck, this club BO18, is Beirut! Just like a civil war bunker it's always reinventing itself, resurrecting from death. Opening the coffin and getting out. Stepping from one contradiction to the next. Who would want to leave? Not me! I'll die here and be reborn, many times over!

L 33 — **Just before he sits**
Of course I can't leave when you give me so much! And not just me, all my friends, regardless of their circumstance! Look, let me show you: I have two friends, Ziad and Fadi. Fadi made \$300 a month, while Ziad made \$3,000 and we still hung out in the same places and ate the same food and enjoyed the same amazing Lebanese weather. Fadi never became homeless or ate anything different or of less quality than us. Neither did Ziad, though he could if he wanted. Fadi and Ziad both wore the same or similar clothes, bought from the same or similar stores. As a matter of fact, Fadi and Ziad would go

shopping together. Fadi would buy from the older collection of H&M and Zara while Ziad would buy from the newest collections. Sometimes he might throw in a scarf there for Fadi and they'd both laugh about how poor Fadi is, **but they both knew that one day, it will be the other way around and Fadi will be buying things for Ziad. They didn't know how or when that was going to happen. Nobody knew. They just knew that in Lebanon we say "The world is a wheel" and things, like a wheel, turn around.**

Stands — L 41

If a Turk ever tries to convince you Istanbul is the gate between East and West, don't argue with them. But we know it's really Beirut. Since ancient biblical times it's in our port where the two worlds met. No wonder that we had the best musicians for the Arab world to listen to, and when the rest of the world started listening to the Beatles, we had an answer to that too, the Bandal family. Listen to this

S 3
L 43
Music gets faster — L 45

DO YOU LOVE ME? by THE BANDALI FAMILY PLAYS. SONG IS CUT BY THE SOUND OF AN EXPLOSION.

After 1st chorus (explosion) — S 4
L 47

You see what I mean? But just like the Beatles fell because of Yoko Ono, so did the bandaly family. In this case because of the civil war. During one of the battles in Tripoli, the home town of the Bandalys, their house gets hit and their whole archive of 500 songs was lost. After that, the family broke up. Some of them ended up in Syria trying to capitalize on their fame to spread their work in the Arab World. A few others emigrated to Canada to build a totally new life, as many Lebanese people did during the Civil War. The youngest Bandal, Remi, was a child. She stayed with her father and eventually sang one of the most famous anthems of children singing against war in the world entitled "Give Us The Childhood".

I'm like that Remi, never wanted to leave when others did. I mean, I wasn't naïve, I knew that Lebanon was corrupt, sectarian, and failing at dealing with post-war issues. But that's exactly why I wanted to stay. I wanted to stay to fix all those. A contagious way of looking at life, which my friends appreciated:

One day I was at home making my afternoon coffee when the doorbell rings. I open the door and it's my friend Jimmy, with someone I haven't seen before. He introduces me to his friend Nour. And in his introduction, he tells me about what a genius of coding Nour is. How she's founded a few startups that are doing very well. And goes on to tell me that she's being headhunted by some of the biggest companies in the world and that she's moving to Germany. And he moves behind Nour's head so that she doesn't see him and he winks at me. I take a sip of my freshly brewed V60, and I start asking Nour all the usual questions I ask about lifestyle and happiness, so that I can show her how staying in Beirut makes more sense than going to Germany. I say usual questions because this wasn't the first time a friend brings me someone I don't know to convince them to stay. I kind of developed a technique for it. And indeed, Nour comes back from Germany after 3 months because she didn't like it there. (music)

L 48

S 5
L 49

DO YOU LOVE ME? by THE BANDALI FAMILY CONTINUES AND IS CUT BY THE SOUND OF AN EXPLOSION.

(explosion) — S 6
L 51

It was October 17, 2019 and just like any other day in Beirut, I am stuck in traffic, in an Uber, on my way to a rehearsal. And just like any other day in Beirut, the Uber driver doesn't really care about his 5-star rating and prefers to socialize instead. Or maybe he thinks socializing will actually help his 5-star rating. I don't know.

Driver: So what is this new tax they're adding?

Raffi: It's a tax on using WhatsApp.

Driver: So the internet will be more expensive?

Raffi: Yes, but if you don't use WhatsApp it doesn't become more expensive.

Driver: The motherfuckers. I always tell my children they know everything that goes on on that phone. They're watching everything we say and do on that WhatsApp. I assure you!

Raffi: Yes, maybe.

Driver: So they can tax just one of the things you do on your phone?

Raffi: It seems they can.

As I said that, my phone rang. There's no rehearsal today. There's a protest in Downtown Beirut and the roads are blocked. I was already a bit close, so I ask the Uber driver to drop me there so that I continue walking looking for where that protest is. When the driver knew I was about to get off, he made sure that I know his last thoughts about this.

Driver: So they're demonstrating again? Everything that's happening in the country and they're demonstrating about \$6 per month for WhatsApp?

Pause

The internet. It's ruining people. Look. They took their food and they didn't move. They took their jobs, they didn't move. When they tried to take their internet, they go to the streets. Is here okay?

Raffi: Yes, thank you. Have a great day.

L 56 — Getting out of "car"

I didn't understand why they cancelled the rehearsal. It was a small protest of tens of people. Barely enough to stop one car, let alone close any roads. We've had these kinds of protests for as long as I remember. There's always a minority or a sub-group in Lebanon that has unmet demands. Since I'm already there, I join them.

That evening, protestors in Downtown Beirut wanted to make their voices heard. Everyone gathered on the street and blocked some cars from passing. Well, maybe blocked is a big word. Let's say they slowed them down. Except for that one black SUV with tinted glass and a license plate that said it belonged to a member of the parliament. When that car arrived, everyone gathered to make sure this one doesn't pass. The actually succeed. The car comes to a stop and the mob of protestors attack the car and they start shaking it with all their might. When the driver gives up trying to get through the people, someone does get out of the car! But it's not the parliament member. It's his bodyguard; a big, muscular man holding an M16. Some of the protestors disperse at the sight, yet others decide to stand their ground. The bodyguard starts attacking the protestors and hitting them with his big machine gun. The rest of the protestors scatter around the car, except for one very brave young woman. She decides to stand her ground while the mountain of a bodyguard runs in her direction. When people see that, they all stop in their places and wait for something that has never happened before to happen. Some of them take their phones out and start to film, not knowing what or why they're filming but knowing that they should be filming. As the bodyguard gets close enough to her, she raises her hands for balance and kicks him in the gut! The bodyguard moans with pain and runs back to the car, gets inside, and locks the doors. In 10 minutes, the footage of that kick goes viral. In 10 minutes, every person in Lebanon realizes that these bodyguards with guns are actually cowardly thugs who hide behind their guns and bullet-proof SUVs. 30 minutes later, tens of thousands of people join that protest and that was the beginning of our October

L 61 — Revolution.

People stayed in the squares of Downtown Beirut for weeks and weeks. People from all walks of life; Sunni, Shia, Christian, atheist, queer, straight, poor, not so poor, leftists, centerists, and even some

rightists, ... I know it's weird, but it's true! All these groups with their decades of unmet demands came together with a glimpse of renewed hope.

October 17, 2019 was a Thursday. The weekend that followed was euphoric. It was the highest high that the Lebanese people have ever felt! We even had people that support parties which are in the government join us. Wait. It gets better. We had Hizbullah supporters with us. Of course, on Monday their leaders went on TV and social media and pulled harder on their leashes and they went back home. But that initial EVERYONE is in the streets weekend. That was a sneak peek into what Lebanon could be.

Then for weeks, we stayed in the streets. When you hear the word revolution, you think of the French revolution, or maybe you think of Che Guevara. Some of you might even think about the Orange Revolution, thanks to Netflix. When I hear revolution, I think about a festival. A celebration of life. People dancing and singing in the streets in an expression of hope and joy for the existence of that hope in an otherwise hopeless place. I think about an opportunity to explore alternatives. Alternatives that were explored every day in different tents set up in downtown Beirut. Discussions about economy, society, religion, its place in politics. I think about school and university classes taking place in the square. □ — "Rubber bullets & tear gas" ————— (music)

[S 7
L 63]

YA BEIRUT by MAGIDA AL-ROUMI PLAYS. IT IS CUT BY THE SOUND OF AN EXPLOSION.

□ ————— (explosion)

[S 8
L 65]

I've always hated this song. I've hated the singer and the music and most of all, I hated the lyrics. I felt they were cheap and sensational. They've never resonated with me. But during the writing of this very show, I rediscovered this song and it started to grow on me. In fact, what I like the most about it, is the lyrics. Let me give you a rough translation:

O Beirut

Oh lady of the world, oh Beirut

We confess before the one God

We admit that we were jealous of you,

And your beauty used to hurt us

We admit now

Because we did not do you justice... ah... And we did not have mercy on you

Because we did not understand you... And we did not excuse you

And we gifted you a knife in the place of the rose

We confess before the just God

Because we did not do you justice... ah... And we did not have mercy on you

Because we did not understand you... And we did not excuse you

Because we hurt you... And we tired you

Because we burned you and we made you weep

We made you carry, O Beirut, our sins

Raffi Stands

L 67

Then they go on to tell Beirut to rise. To rise from under the rubble like an almond flower in April. To rise for the rivers, for the forests, for the valleys, and for all mankind, to end with one of the most famous and iconic lines about revolutions in the Arabic language "The revolution is born from the womb of sorrows".

And then I got it. Then I got why this song keeps coming back in every protest and every uprising and why it came back in the revolution. It is this exact sensationalism that drives the honeymoon phases of revolutions. They are as necessary as that trip you take with your spouse after you get married. You could've gone on so many trips before, but that one is different.

A few months into the revolution, Lebanon started falling apart. The economy just collapsed. The value of the Lebanese Pound started deteriorating and now it is about 20 times less than its value in 2019. And because of that, we started losing everything else little by little. We lost our savings to the banks, who refused to give us our money except at half and now less than half of its value. We started lining up in 5-hour queues, at least, to fill our cars with gas. And mind you, I come from a country that doesn't have public transportation. So if you don't have gas, you don't have a way to go to work or visit your parents or even go to the hospitals. Speaking of hospitals, we were running out of medicine and good doctors, who were all just leaving. And we were getting long, very long power cuts!

As you can see our lives became a series of calculations we've never done before. My group of friends and I would try to get the schedule of electricity we'd each get so that we spend time at each other's houses trying to be productive.

L 69 — One day in August 2020, it's extremely hot and a couple of my friends and I were sitting at my place because it was my neighborhood's turn to get a couple of hours of electricity and I can turn on the air conditioner. We're sitting there enjoying every second of just normal living and trying to keep any political talks or nagging about the situation to when we don't have electricity, when I hear a deep rumble. I ask the guys and they say they didn't hear anything. I very clearly remember that rumble. It sounded like the rumble I heard only one time before; at the beginning of the explosion that assassinated the prime minister in 2005. I open the balcony door and go outside to make sure. Facing my balcony is another apartment building. Everyone was outside on its balconies looking in the direction that's behind and that I can't see. Then, I see the scariest faces I've ever seen in my life! Everyone looked like they were looking death in the eyes. And instantly I hear the loudest, most deafening sound I've ever heard. L 73—Stand
[S 9] (BIG explosion) L 81] And I've heard a lot of loud sounds in my life. I've been through a Civil War, a couple of wars with our neighbors. So when I say the loudest, it's pretty loud. Right after that, the whole building started shaking. I look inside the house where my friends were trying to join me on the balcony and I see them move left to right and right to left as if the building was falling. When we realized that the building was still standing, two of us automatically went through the civil war routines of running to the bunkers. Our younger friend later told us that he felt we have rehearsed that a hundred times and that he just followed without understanding anything. On our way down the stairs, the screams and cries made us certain that this was a missile that hit the building next to us. We arrived to the street and we're looking for the buildings that were hit by the missile. I'm trying to call my wife and when the lines finally get through, she tells me she's alright. It's just some minor bruises but she's alright and working. Being a journalist, I understood that she couldn't talk long in such a situation. But I was calling to tell her that I'm alright. What does she mean that she's alright? So in a quick question before she had to hang up I mustered the courage and asked her, "What was it?" L 83] And she said, an explosion at the port. Later on, I learned that every person in the greater Beirut area thought that it was a missile that fell on the building next to them. It's the biggest explosion measured in recent human history. So apparently, our politicians thought that it was a good idea to stack a few tons of ammonium nitrate in our backyards. And because of that we had to remove a few hundred dead bodies from under the rubbles of their own homes. Another few thousands were injured and some still are until today.

He Sits

L 85

About 3 weeks ago, Bassam Al-Sheikh Hussein learns that his father needs hospitalization and he can't afford it. The bank is already not giving him his savings, so he was stuck with very few choices. The next day, he grabs a gallon of gasoline and an automatic rifle, goes to the bank takes 6 people hostage and demands a portion of his savings in order to pay his father's medical bills. This lasts for 6 hours. And in these 6 hours, the news starts spreading and tens of people gather outside the bank in support of his actions. His wife and brother who were outside the bank were trying to tell everyone to do the same in order to get their money back! 6 hours later, he was able to reach an agreement with the bank that he gets part of his money and a no-charges-pressed deal from the bank to release the hostages. Of course, he gets arrested, but he's released without any charges. And even though the bank did press charges afterwards, he's still hailed as a hero.

STAND
L 91

My parents have never lived outside of Lebanon. As a matter of fact, it wasn't until their 50's that they traveled in an airplane for the first time. And I was someone who had my eyes on traveling from a very young age. People in Lebanon generally love to travel. As a matter of fact, people in Lebanon generally love to leave. There are at least 3 times more Lebanese people around the world than in Lebanon. We even have a statue of the first Lebanese guy who migrated. We don't even have a single monument to commemorate the civil war, but we have a statue for the first person to leave. I guess it's safe to say that we are a people that leaves.

L 93

And my mother knows that. And every now and then she would ask me about one of my friends who she hasn't seen in a while.

What happened to Tro?

He moved to Australia. He's going to university there.

Australia! Pfft... It's in the end of the world. Every time they want to go somewhere, it takes them days of travel. They're not happy there.

Tro says he's happy.

Of course, he'll say that. But he's not happy.

Then a few days later, she'd remember someone else. What happened to Abdo?

Abdo is in the US.

Ah the US! What's in the US? They all go and work at gas stations. They don't see other people. If you want to see your friend, you have to take an appointment. Do you think you can just show up at their place like you go to Fida's?

Yeah. That's how they start. Then they find better jobs.

After what? After they're old and have no one? Amerka is a bad place.

Joelle is in Canada? They might as well just live in the snow!

France! People are cold. Their children leave their parents as soon as they're 18 and they don't know them anymore.

But mom, Lebanon is a shithole. Do you see how we're living?

Yes, but at least we have good weather. Good food. We have communities and families. Children stay with their parents and take care of them and respect them.

But we're dying here just to have good weather and good food?

Oh, it will get better. It always gets better.

This argument has survived 20 years so far!

Of course, my mother knows that Lebanon isn't the best country in the world, even though her arguments make it look like that. But she knows that I'm prone to leaving and she can't stand the idea and wants to keep discouraging me.

One day, I decided to trick her. She asked me about a friend and I told her he's in Armenia. My mother is a second-generation Armenian genocide survivor. So, I was trying to put her in a pickle there. It's

Armenia. It's the motherland. We've been brought up to proudly speak the language and appreciate the culture and dream about the motherland. And here it is now, independent and accessible. People are already going.

So she takes a moment that seemed like an infinity to me and she looks away and says, "Yeah, but Armenia is different than us. It has a lot of Russian influence. People aren't as warm as we are. Even their food and language is different."

Really mom? Even Armenia?

She looks down to the floor with sadness on her face as if she knows exactly what I'm asking her and she says, "Even Armenia."

My mother was prepared to talk down any country in the world and make me see the shithole that is Lebanon as the best country in the world just so I don't leave.

Until now...

My mother has been through the whole 15 years of the civil war, a couple of wars by Israel, the death of her brother after losing his leather factory and becoming a drug addict until he died with an overdose, multiple economic restarts, and she was still able to keep showing Lebanon as the Pearl of the Middle East.

Until now...

When I told my mother that I'm moving to the Netherlands and she said "God make it easy for you", I knew that the country has become hopeless. If even my mother can't sell me Lebanon anymore, no one can.

— L99 Blackout —

LI BEIRUT by FEYROUZ PLAYS AS THE AUDIENCE EXITS.

L101 — Applause

[S10
L109] — He exits
+ house lights!