تقبرني

You Bury Me

by

Ahlam

45NORTH
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What is You Bury Me?

Winner of The Women's Prize for Playwriting 2020, You Bury Me is an explosive, political debut from Ahlam about a generation emerging from a national trauma, determined to live and love freely. Coming of age in the after- math of the Arab Spring, six young Egyptians navigate friendship, loss and secret Grindr dates in the city that made them.

What is a Care Pack?

A care pack is a collection of information about your upcoming show – from a short synopsis so you know what to expect, potential trigger warnings and further resources where you will be able to find help and support. You will also be given show dates and times with accessibility info. If you need this pack in a larger text, different colour or other format, or you have any other further questions please let us know and we will do our best to help you: charlie@forty-fivenorth.com.

Care Pack Contents:

- Selfcare
- Content warning overview
- Resources and help breakdown
- The Characters
- Full play synopsis
- Accessible show information
- Acknowledgements

NB

Please be aware that there will be information about the play ahead, and spoilers within the play synopsis. This play contains strong language, sexual references, allusions to death. There are themes of personal and political trauma throughout, and age guidance is 14+.

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Selfcare

Looking after yourself is always the first priority. Attached is a content warning overview so you can see briefly if there is anything you might find difficult. If you want to read about a specific scene without reading the whole synopsis the icons are there to show you where in the play these themes will crop up.

Reach out to someone – if you are struggling reach out to a friend, family member, or see below for contact information for confidential and anonymous support 24/7.

Ground yourself – If you can, place your feet on the floor to help ground you.
Take deep, slow breaths in through your nose for four counts, hold for four, then release your breath slowly out of your mouth. Repeat this exercise a few times.

Take care of yourself – Drink a glass of water. If you are able to, take yourself out in nature. If possible, turn off your phone and take five minutes for yourself and to drop into your body.

It can be easy when things are tough to spiral. This is a simple exercise that helps you to tune in to your senses:

- Notice **5** things you can see around you
- Notice **4** things you can touch
- Find **3** things you can hear
- **2** things you can smell
- **1** thing you can taste

Finally - you are the expert on you! If something does not feel right, you are always able to walk away. Put yourself first and do what is best for you.

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Content warning overview

These are some of the themes the play covers. If you would not like to read the full synopsis you can use this key to easily scan for specific scenes which cover the topics flagged here. There are support resources directly below this table.

Political upheaval, Trauma	
Consensual sex, Sexual references	
Homophobia, LGBTQIA persecution	
Drug use	
Assault, sexual assault	
Death, loss, grief	
Familial estrangement, separation	
Police brutality, authoritarian threat, torture	
Religious trauma, loss of religion	

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Resources and information

Samaritans

The Samaritans are free to call 24/7, 365 days a year to support you with whatever you are going through. You are also able to contact them via letter or email, and they have a self-help app.

Switchboard

Switchboard provides information and support for those within the LGBTQIA+ community. They have a phone line open 8-10pm, online chat from 18.00pm and you can email them with any queries you might have as well. Everything you tell them is confidential, and all their operators identify as LGBTQIA+.

PTSD UK

A charity which helps support anyone going through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, from helping you to identify it and steps you might want to take.

Cruse

Cruse has a helpline and online chat support to help support you through the various stages of grief and bereavement.

Free, 24/7 mental health text support in the UK

Shout offer free Mental Health support in the UK, fully confidential and anonymous safely via text.

Should you wish to learn more about the context within which the play has been written, it's helpful to read a little about the events leading up to, and the day of the Egyptian uprising in January, 2011.

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The Characters

Alia, (22). Coming from a conservative family who work in the police, she is in love with Tamer.

Tamer, (22). He comes from a Christian family, and he is in love with Alia.

Lina, (17). She comes from a traditional Christian family and is exploring her sexuality and gender.

Maya (18). Her family are left leaning, non religious. Her half brother is Osman.

Osman (25). A journalist and blogger, and active in the uprising. He's in love with Zeina.

Rafik (25). Graduated with a degree in English Literature, and is now a heavy smoker.

The City – all come together to become the city, who narrates, and creates the stories shared here.

تقبرني (to'-bor-ni): Lit. 'You bury me'.

A saying in Levantine Arabic used to express affection and love. 'May you bury me' is a declaration that one does not want to live without a loved one (or loved thing).

Play Synopsis

Prologue

The City and the full cast welcomes you to the sounds, sights and energy of Cairo.

Scene 1

We meet Osman, who is writing about the city of Cairo for his blog. He tries to describe his contradictory, overlapping feelings about his home, the life and energy it contains alongside the constant fear of death. He is craving a way forward to find harmony in juxtaposition and finishes with a call to others that the revolution lives on inside the hearts and minds of Cairo's citizens.

Scene 2

We meet Tamer. He is described as craving love, the type of love that is met in rom-coms, with romantic notions of himself as the leading man – ready to meet 'The One'. He is with Alia, and she is asking for them to get back together, finally telling him she loves him. The tension is fraught, and he pushes back, but they eventually share a joyful kiss after checking the coast is clear.

Scene 3

We come to Osman's home. The city describes him as woke, blogger, who strategised for the uprising – where he met Zeina and fell in love with her. Zeina is described as an activist, and that he worries for her when she is not with him.

Rafik arrives at his house, but Osman initially panics that the police have arrived for him. He finally lets Rafik in, who after joking finally reveals that his father has kicked him out for being caught dating men and bringing them home. They chill out together, smoke weed, and Osman agrees that Rafik can stay if he is careful.

Scene 4

We meet Lina and Maya, both in their last year of high school, in detention. The City describes Maya as fighting back when a boy tries to kiss her, who then insults her. She is told that she does not behave in a respectable fashion, but her mother when contacted supports her actions and tells her to fight back harder if it happens again.

Maya chats with Lina while they are trying to write lines. She compliments her looks and asks if Lina has ever considered having a makeover. She suggests a night to drink a little and try it, and Lina hesitates but accepts.

Scene 5

The City talks about Osman grappling with religion as a child, his belief in God as he grew older, and how it transformed throughout meeting Zeina, and experiencing the revolution.

Rafik is attempting to read when Osman bursts in, hurling profanities about the city, the lack of electricity, and the heat. Rafik teases Osman, and Osman asks if he has a plan to get a job, or any next steps. Osman warns Rafik that the police are monitoring Grindr. They discuss how the authorities are also monitoring journalists, and how they are both worried for each other's safety. Osman wants to leave to join Zeina for the night, but Rafik persuades him to stay and watch a movie.

Scene 6

The City describes Alia as not wanting to be duped by a false love, a love that is portrayed in films and in poetry.

She is with Tamer, moaning about doing all the work for a project, but he is distracted by how beautiful she is and tells her. He wants to kiss her, and she has fears they may be overheard. They talk about wanting to take things further, and gently reach out to each other. He demands she stop, as he will not be able to stand up, and she is affronted, eventually leaving.

Scene 7

The City explains how Lina had switched schools to come to an international one, but that her parents had not realised how big an affect this would have on her. She is confused by the more open touching that boys and girls do, and the social rules and punishments that still exist, so she keeps herself to herself as much as possible.

Lina and Maya talk about their families, and their different approaches to their daughters. Lina has had her makeover, they talk about going to university and Maya pushes Lina to accept some makeup. She asks Lina if she is gay, and Lina rejects this, shocked. Maya explains she has some experience with men and women, although she is still a virgin, and Lina says she has never even explored her own body. Maya tells her that it's great because of the orgasms, and describes them to her. She then makes plans for the girls to both meet again at the weekend.

Scene 8

Osman is writing about overthrowing military rule for his blog, railing against police brutality and political oppression. Rafik comes in and tries to warn him against being so open about his views. They share their days, and Rafik sings Nina Simone's *I Got Life,* at him until he finally relents and joins in, relaxing. After the outburst Osman finally admits he needs to escape the city.

Scene 9

The City talks about the fear that permeates Cairo, naming the oppressive presence we have felt since the beginning of the show, and revealing fear was what finally gave way to the revolution.

Alia and Tamer are sitting in a car together, navigating each other's bodies and boundaries in fear and lust. She starts to touch him outside of clothes, when Alia hurts Tamer accidentally when she thinks someone is there. As he screams in pain she tries to silence him, finally revealing that all the men in her family are in the police. Tamer is shocked, stating that they've been together for two years and he's never known that her family could have him disappeared at any point, and tortured.

They finally realise it is a policeman and work out that they will have to bribe him to get him to go away. They gather all the money they have, and he steps out of the car, while Alia prays that she will never touch another man again if it isn't anyone who knows her father.

Scene 10

Lina and Maya are in a parked car in the dark, with Maya drunk and throwing up into a bag. Maya apologises, then begins to cry about a man called Shady. She eventually passes out before Lina can get Maya back into her room, and while she is unconscious Lina tells her how disappointed she is that she is always having to run after her to parties, to try and meet 'complete douchebags', and how Maya never cares about doing fun things like going to the beach, or considering what Lina would like to do. We get the sense there is more beneath her frustration.

The City talks about Rafik's first experience with a man, during the revolution, when he was recovering from being injured. They locked eyes, went for a smoke on the balcony, and shared a kiss while the city raged beneath them.

Scene 11

Maya and Rafik are watching *Titanic* while Rafik smokes a joint. Maya pressures him to try some, and he gives in. Osman comes back to find his half-sister stoned and is furious. He tries to kick them both out. He walks out to make a call, and they discuss their fears for him writing so openly. She slowly passes out and sleeps, and while Osman is still out of the room Rafik takes his laptop and starts to delete his blog posts.

Scene 12

The City talks about Maya being 13 years old when the revolution started, and talks of her family being active within it so trying to keep her sheltered from it. She feels distant from her older half sibling, and anger at her father for coping with his pain by drinking. She decided to live her life fully as an act of defiance.

Maya and Lina are dancing in a car, blasting loud music. Maya swears at people watching them, then swears at the city for the traffic. She makes Lina climb into the front so that she can get into the back and change outfits and apply makeup for the party they are going to. Lina finally tells her how much she hates these parties and the people they meet there. Lina says she is going to go home, and Maya threatens to pee in her own car until Lina agrees to come along.

Scene 13

Tamer and Alia are making out in a dark building, aware of the risks of being caught together. They profess love to each other. After growing zealous, Tamer breaks Alia's hymen, and they both panic about her no longer being a virgin. Tamer suggests surgical options, and Alia begins to cry. Tamer offers her the suggestion of getting married, and Alia, shocked as if he is serious. He is, and explains they could escape the city while he could convert for her. She agrees, and they hear a noise and flee the building with a plan to meet later.

Scene 14

Maya confesses to Lina that she has been secretly seeing a man called Amir, and they have plans to go away to his family home in Ras Sedr with the intention of having sex for the first time. Lina is repulsed by the man, and the idea of Maya having sex with him, telling her she will be 'ruined'. When Maya says she thinks she might love him, Lina is even more upset. She tells Maya that people will talk, her family could disown her, and what if she got pregnant. They argue and Lina finally calls her a slut, they fight even more, and Lina finally bursts out to tell Maya that she is in love with her. Maya tells her that she isn't gay, and therefore cannot love her back.

Scene 15

Osman confronts Rafik about deleting his posts and takes Rafik's phone to delete Grindr as payback. They argue as Rafik believes deleting who is is as a person - 'his life' and deleting Osman's work to keep him safe is different. Rafik has seen agents walking past the building. They clash about their changing ideologies, and their differing approaches to the revolution – Osman wants to still

fight but Rafik says that it is already all dead, and that those people who were killed died for nothing. Osman kicks Rafik out of the house.

The City talks of the revolution, of the uprising in Tahrir square, talks of police brutality, death, community coming together, desperation and fear.

Scene 16

Rafik walks into the night and speaks with The City directly. He knows what is going to happen, and he talks of how he is finally not afraid anymore. He asks if he will ever be found. He begs The City to not forget him, and walks with it into the night.

Scene 17

In a shop, Tamer is looking at inflatable rafts to escape the city on, and meets a drunk Osman. He feels guilty for Rafik dying, for being vanished because of the words that he had shared. Tamer tries to comfort the stranger, encouraging him to let it out. Osman notices what Tamer is trying to buy, and advises him on where to buy a better raft to escape with. They share a tender moment wishing for hope.

Scene 18

Maya asks Lina if they can be friends again, and holds her hand. Lina apologises for what she said, and Maya tells her she can't stop thinking about her. Lina admits that if her family knew she was gay, she would be shipped off immediately to a rehabilitation centre, and that it would destroy her mother. Maya confesses that since Rafik has gone, she's been missing Lina, and that being with her is the only thing that feels right. After looking around to make sure no one is about, they kiss.

Scene 19

Tamer and Alia are on a beach, while Tamer is attempting to put up a big raft, carefully selected to keep them safe. Alia wonders if the long time it's taking to put up is a sign from God to stop going, and she makes him read her the list of reasons they are leaving. They worry about their plan, while Tamer points out his father can and probably will kill him. They argue, and he tells her he's going with or without her. She is furious, and feels like he used her for money to escape, the fight and reconcile, affirming their love.

The City breaks in and out of this scene, describing how Rafik's family finally noticed he was missing, how Alia's absence was discovered. Lina speaks of her favourite hope, which was that the couple escaped on a raft and made a beautiful life together in Italy. Of how she doesn't actually know if the beach scene is real or not, but that she hopes it is. Sometimes she has different versions of where and how they landed, but tells us that they are always happily ever after in her mind.

Scene 20

Maya is trying to get information out of Osman, and he apologises for putting them all in danger with his blog, and how he blames himself. She tells him that she is proud of him, and of being his sister. Lina arrives to come and get her, and Osman stands alone. He speaks to Rafik and to us, telling us that it's been years since Rafik disappeared, and that he has started the process of immigrating to Canada.

The City appears around him, while he talks of dreaming to dance at Lina and Maya's wedding, with Rafik, totally free. The girls continue to dance while The City watches on, until the stop, and gaze out, into the audience.

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Accessible show information

The play will run for 90 minutes with no interval.

Bristol Old Vic: 24th February - 4th March
The Lyceum, Edinburgh: 7th March - 18th March
The Orange Tree Theatre: 27th March - 22nd of April

Bristol Old Vic

The main entrance is at street level on King Street in Bristol, leading you to the foyer, kitchen and Bar, and Box office which are all fully wheelchair accessible. There are lifts offering full access to the public areas of the building. Blue Badge holders will find parking spaces available on Queen Charlotte Street around the corner – please note that King Street itself is cobbled.

There are two allocated wheelchair spaces in the Dress Circle, where there are accessible toilet facilities and step free access to seats and the foyer. Tickets can be booked in person at the Box Office, online, by phone or email. Please visit Booking Information or should you require more information feel free to contact BOV on access@bristololdvic.org.uk.

Monday to Saturday 7.30pm (28th February at 7pm)
Thursday 2nd March and Saturday 4th March 2.30pm.

The Lyceum, Edinburgh

The main entrance is on Grindley Street, Edinburgh. There are blue badge designated parking spots in the street opposite the building. There is street level access to the Lyceum Foyer, and the Zucca café and bar. Lifts are available to all levels, and there is a wheelchair accessible lift and toilet in the main foyer. There is an induction loop available at the box office, and hearing enhancement radio sets are available. Guide and hearing dogs are welcoming in the theatre.

Information on productions and the theatre is available in audio format, in large print and in Braille. For further information you can look at the Access Brochure, or contact the Lyceum Box Office team directly on 0131 248 4848 and boxoffice@lyceum.org.uk.

Tuesday to Saturday 7.30pm
Wednesday 8th and 15th, Saturday 11th and 8th 2.30pm
Post show talk on Tuesday 14th March

BSL Interpreted: Wednesday 15th March, 7.30pm
Audio Described & Touch Tour: Thursday 16th March, 7.30pm (TT timing tbc)
Captioned, Audio Described & Touch Tour: Saturday 18th March, 2.30pm (TT timing tbc)

The Orange Tree

The main entrance is found on Clarence Street in Richmond, and the building is wheelchair accessible. To book accessible seats, and for audio described and captioned performances, please call the box office on 020 8940 3633 (Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm) Alternatively you can email the team at: box.office@orangetreetheatre.co.uk. If you're on The Orange Tree theatre's Access List, you can log in and book online.

Monday to Saturday, 7.30pm (30th March at 7pm)
Thursday and Saturday, 2.30pm (from 1st April)
Post show talk on Tuesday April 4th

Relaxed performance: Wednesday 5th April, 7.30pm
Distanced performance: Thursday 13th April, 7.30pm
Captioned Performance: Friday 14th April, 7.30pm
Audio Described Performance: Monday 17th April, 7.30pm

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Acknowledgements

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