

AHMED. No.

YOUSSIF. She's dead.

(Pause.)

AHMED. My love.

YOUSSIF. My Hadeel...

BANA. Shut up, Youssif.

YOUSSIF. I can't.

BANA. Shut up, Youssif. Shut up. Shut up. Shut. Up.

(They surround HADEEL. Slowly, BANA opens the window, almost jumps out.)

(She takes a microphone and notes from the window. A spotlight comes up. She finds her light downstage as LAURA.)

Start

LAURA. *(To audience.)* Hello. I would like to say a couple of words... As you know the name of this play is Kiss. We discovered it not long ago, by chance, on the Internet when we were doing some research about the difficult situation for young writers in Syria during the current war...over there... We basically stumbled on this short play called Boosa, which means Kiss, originally, and we were immediately struck by its raw strength and the very interesting and indirect way in which it tries to convey the emotion of what it means and feels like to live in Damascus right now. We assume this happens in Damascus though it's not explicit in the text. So, soon after reading it we decided to stage it here, but it was really hard to secure the rights because of the language limitation and also, as much as we tried, we couldn't reach the author. The only thing we knew about her was that she was a young woman, that she had written the play in 2013, and that her name was *(Reads.)* Ameera...

ANDREA. Al Diri.

LAURA. Ameera Al Diri. Thank you. So we began rehearsing the play anyway hoping to be able to contact Ameera in the future during the rehearsal process. Well, now

I'm happy to say that finally, after several months of searching, just a few days ago, we received an email from a Syrian film director living in Turkey saying that he knew a Jordanian writer living in Cairo who actually knew Ameera and that she could be reached through a contact at the Red Cross in Lebanon. So finally, after a long time and with the help of a lot of people, they were able to contact her and arrange a call. Right now she's in Lebanon waiting to talk to us a little bit about her wonderful play so...you are all invited to stay. Please. Thank you.

End

(A screen appears on the stage. LAURA asks MARTIN to set up the connection.)

And I'm sorry but I have to say I'm a little bit nervous because we haven't been able to talk to her or email her at all before this call. So... I'm sure the actors are nervous as well. And I'm sorry, I forgot to say that aside from being an actor I am also the director of this production. Yes. Sorry. Thank you. *(To MARTIN.)* How are we doing there?

MARTIN. We're ready.

LAURA. Oh. OK. Then please go.

MARTIN. Oh. I was just waiting for you.

LAURA. I'm sorry. I thought you were...

MARTIN. No, sorry. My fault. My fault. Here...

(Skype connects.)

LAURA. Oh... Here we go.

(The call is picked up. A young WOMAN appears on the screen in sunglasses and a blonde wig.)

Hello.

(The WOMAN struggles to speak English and has a thick Arabic accent.)

WOMAN. Hello.