

OUM KALTHOUM

**Based on a novel by Salim Nessib**

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**Characters:**

**Old Oum Kalthoum**

**Young Oum Kalthoum**

**Achmed Rami poet**

**Sa'adiya: Oum Kalthoum's governess**

**Chaled: Oum Kalthoum's brother**

**Abed el-Wahab: musician**

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 **Radio**: "…After a long hospitalization the "Star of the East" was released today to her home. Prayers for her recovery were held in all the mosques in Egypt. Thousands surrounded the Cairo hospital in the hope of a glimpse of the famous singer. Oum Kalthoum slipped away and went to her home where she refused to talk to journalists. Although the concerts scheduled for the last months were canceled, it was published that no one would ask for their money back and everyone was waiting for the singer to come back and perform. As a blessing for her health we listen now to "YALLI WEEDADI" the first song of Achmed Rami, who wrote 137 songs for Oum Kalthoum…"

**Oum Kalthoum**: 136 songs! And this song he did not write for me. I was brazen enough to sing it without his permission. It was the hottest day I can remember. I again put on the Bedouin boy's outfit, which my father and brother made me wear, so no one will know it is a woman appearing on stage… I was singing until I almost fainted singing religious chants but then when I got to this song my feelings changed and I was overcome by a pleasant sensation. I enjoyed every word of love, every syllable. I was breathing; I did not imagine that Rami would be in the audience…

**Scene no 1: 1924**

**Rami:** The truth is that I only wanted to tell you that this was… wonderful

**Young boy (Oum):** Really? And you couldn't feel the excitement?

**Rami:** Not at all, nice meeting you, Achmed Rami

**Young boy (Oum)**: Are you the poet? And I was singing your poem.

**Rami:** The honor is mine. I composed it just before going to Paris and I am excited to hear you sing it.

**Young boy (Oum):** Will you write a new song for me?

**Rami:** Yes. I will

**Young boy (Oum**): But…

**Rami**: What is it?

**Young Oum**: Write songs that can be sung…

 **Rami**: I do not understand.

**Young boy (Oum)**: How many people understand your words? Not the peasants and not the people. My music is for them. I needed Abu Allah to translate them for me in order to understand what they mean.

**Rami:** But poetry is written in classical Arabic.

**Young boy (Oum)**: Poetry can be written as well in a language that everyone understands.

**Rami**: Then the world should make an effort to understand classical poetry. The artist's job is to give the key. To enrich the world and give it a sublime culture. Values, morals, and some hope if necessary.

**Young boy (Oum**): You are right. You will write as you feel and I will sing.

**Rami**: A woman!

**Young boy (Oum):** Tomorrow I will travel with my parents to the beach. We will spend some time at Ras El Baar. Will you come and visit me after I am back? If you will not come I'll kill myself, I swear to God I will go to the train and throw myself onto the rails. And you will be guilty**.**

 **Oum: To the audience**

I was only a child but I knew exactly what I wanted. And I wanted his lyrics, his rhymes, living poetry. He was teaching me art and theatre, he brought from Europe delicacies from Shakespeare:

"…These our actors, were all spirits, and are melted into air… we are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded with a sleep…"

 **Scene no 2.**

**1922**

 **Sa'adiya:** You are the poet? What an honor you bring us! Welcome, welcome, welcome. A thousand blessings on your head, please mister you sit down, the missis will come in a moment.

**Rami:** You are the mother?

 **Sa'adiya:** I wish I was, I'm just Saadiya the old governess. The "little one," god bless her soul, she grew up on my lap as she was sitting on her mother's lap….. Mrs. Fatma, god bless her, had to stay in the village and take care of the animals, so she sent me with the little one to this terrible city, Cairo.To take care of "Habit Eiyni" (the apple of my eye). I don't like Cairo don't like! Here they are all criminals, god forbid, in our village we sleep and leave the doors open. But here in Cairo even the costume of the little Bedouin is not enough anymore to guard her. Here they are even after little kids, god punish their black souls.

 **Young Oum**: Let's sit outside….

**Sa'adiya:** Why?

**Young Oum:** Why because it's hot here..…. this cool breeze reminds me of the village, Cairo feels to me…like fire!

**Young Oum:** I was told to be aware of poets.

 **Rami:** Why?

 **Young Oum:** Because they are innocent and dreamy. They have a man's body and a woman's soul.

 **Rami:** It is you who wanted me to come.

 **Young Oum**: I want to sing. This is my love

**Rami:** The only love?

**Young Oum:** Did you bring the song?

**Rami:** Yes I brought you the song.

**Young Oum:** What's its name?

**Rami:** "Alla ballad el Machbub Wadini"

**Young Oum**: Show me!

**Rami:** No

**Young Oum:** Then read it to me

 **Young Rami**: **(reads in Arabic**)

" Take me to the land of love, passion burns me, distance burns, my love, my heart belongs to you, he dreams of you all night, my eyes are eager to see you, I lament and you console…"

**(OUM takes the file from him and goes on reading, she feels very ashamed, laughs, a moment of embarrassment between them. To Saadia**: So what do you think?

**(Sa'adiya who is watching from the side embraces Oum, they both laugh and Chaled enters)**

**Chaled:** Saadiya…. Saadiya

**Sa'adiya:** Sheik Chaled! Sheik Chaled Ahlan Ahlan Sheik Chaled

**Chaled:** Where is the poet? Still here? (**to Oum**) what happened to your hair? (to Rami) ah, you are the poet..?

**Rami:** Achmed Rami. Nice meeting you, sir.

 **Chaled:** Chaled. Nice meeting you. I never understood much in poetry but I honor your work.

 **Rami:** Thank you very much.

**Chaled:** Did you write her a song? (to OUM) so what are you waiting for? Read it!

**Young Oum:** (reading) " Take me to the land of love, passion burns me, distance burns, my love, my heart belongs to you he dreams of you all night, my eyes are eager to see you, I lament and you console"

 **Sa'adiya:** Very nice!! Very modest

 **Chaled**: I'm ready to take it. But I can't pay more than two ginehat

**Rami**: but...

 **Chaled:** It is not personal Mister poet, it is all about business in this city. You know we all learn the hard way… two ginehat is what I offer.

 **Rami**: I…

**Chaled:** This is the final price!

 **Rami:** This is the first song I'm writing for your sister and I will be glad to bestow it to her as a present.

**Chaled:** What do you mean bestow?

**Rami:** This is a present for a new beginning.

**Chaled:** You don't want money for it?

**Rami:** No

 **Chaled:** You will give me the song – or the poem- and I can use it as much as I want?

 **Rami:** I'm giving her the song. With your permission.

**Chaled**: And you sign on this?

**Rami:** I will sign.

**Chaled:** Shukran (thank you)

**Rami:** Ahlan (welcome) Ya Chaled

**Chaled: Forse Ah Sa'id**

 **Rami**: I promise. I promise you will pay me for the next poems, but this poem I ask to receive as it is. I want you to sing it in two months, at the opening ceremony of the Bosphorus theatre!

 **Scene no 3: 1924**

**Older Oum**: For weeks, every Monday, he would finish working in the library and would come to me. We didn't stop working. We rehearsed on the balcony, in the living room. Everywhere and at every possible time. We looked at every word, every letter, every syllable. I knew it was my chance and I hid my excitement deep in my belly.

**(Oum sings "Alla ballad el Machbub" as a rehearsal that becomes a performance).**

 **Rami:** My pupil passed the exams with success!

**Young Oum:** Thanks to you.

 **Rami:** I did nothing. I watched how a young Bedouin girl conquered a huge theatre hall.

 **Young Oum:** I can't wait for the next time.

 **Young Rami:** Don’t worry. I promise you it won't be long before there will be a lot of offers.

**Young Oum**: Do you know Achmed Shauki?

**Young Rami**: Achmed Shauki? He is called the glory of poets. He didn’t steal this name.

 **Young Oum:** Abed el Wahab and he have a very close connection.

**Rami**: This is true,their joint creation is definitely fertile.

 **Young Oum:** Abed el Wahab has built his reputation with this connection, as a singer, as an artist.

 **Rami:** This is clear.

 **Young Oum:** Like you and me.

**Rami:** Since when are you afraid to speak-up openly?

**Young Oum:** I refrain from singing the songs of Achmed Shauki.

 **Rami:** And I will not write anymore to Abed el Wahab? is that what you want? You want to imprison me the way you were imprisoned?

 **Young Oum:** I want to have power. And power lies in the connection between a poet and a singer.

 **Rami:** A poet and a singer or a man and a woman?

**Young Oum:** If needed I will be a man, and sing about love, on tenderness and peace. Promise me you will help me. Promise me you will be with me? Promise? (**almost a kiss**)

**Rami:** I promise.

**Blackout**

**Scene no 4**

**(Sa'adiya enters, stops Chaled who is about to rush in, Rami moves to the side)**

 **Chaled:** She must be ashamed of herself. To get away with a man in a room for a couple of hours, for days? You should be ashamed of yourself!!

 **Young Oum:** I'm not going to be ashamed of something that didn't happen.

 **Chaled:** Don’t think I'm blind. I'm not blind nor stupid. And don't pretend to be innocent, as if I'm guilty.

**Young Oum:** But you are wrong!

**Chaled**: What has become of you? The air of Cairo has got into you. Like all the girls here that hang out on the streets. They forgot their god a long time ago. You are the Imam's daughter. I don't even want to think what father would do to you.

 **Young Oum:** Father would believe me.

 **Chaled:** Lower your eyes, you better lower your eyes or I will take you back to the village once and for all!

**Young Oum:** I'm not going back to the village.

**Chaled**… Recites "and your wives who sin in immoral deeds"

**Young Oum:** Continues to recite in protest: …"you will close them in their homes until the guilty ones will find their deaths" The fourth sura in the Koran

**Chaled**: Don't try to mock me Fatma don't mock me. I'll kill you with my own hands if necessary you know me. Don't play games with me. Get up now and go to your room!

**Oum returns to her room, Chaled turns to Rami**

**Chaled:** On Monday the hairdressing salons are closed Mr. poet. Here in my house you will not find hair to cut anymore.

**Older Oum**: **To the audience**

 I tried to understand him to honor him. I saw his suffering and it hurt me. I couldn’t do anything. I gave him a house, money ... I never forgot he is my brother.

 **Saadiya:** Sir Rami Sir Rami It is nothing don't take it to heart. Sheikh Chaled sees trouble everywhere even when there is nothing. From when Sheik Chaled was a child he would be silent until out of the blue he would get wild a bit crazy, a bit kuku, majnun, he doesn't know what he is saying. Since we arrived in Cairo something happened to him and he became impossible.

**Rami**: I want to speak with him. I'll explain everything to him.

**Sa'adiya**: No, no, by all means. You see mister poet, we have to understand him. He is a good man, looking after his sister. But she the little one, malouna (disobedient), God gave her a big gift, a beautiful voice. It took away a little from his masculinity and as a first born, in particular when the "apple of my eye" insisted and learned the Koran by heart even better than Sheik Chaled . Don't worry sister Oum Kalthoum will wait for you on Monday same as she waits for all the others. But the truth is "ve din ay nabi (swear to god/prophet) – we both appreciate you and trust you more than all the rest, both I and the "little one"…

 **Rami:** Others? Who are the others?

**Sa'adiya:** Well you know, the poets… all those who write poems for her. I was told one has to be careful with poets.??????

**Rami:** The others!? Everyone comes on a different day and believes he is the one and only, the special one. She never said anything to me, not a word. All of Cairo turns around her, the best artists! men that magic flows through their fingers. She tears my belly and stabs my heart (writes) "many hearts yearn to be around you and wish to be at least once close to you."

**Older Oum:** For me Rami was the only one, my poet. I had to set him on fire to light the way for me. I had to let him suffer in order to write those painful poems…

# Scene no 5. 1928

**Old Oum:** Abed el Wahab - a great artist… really great. I loved to look at him as he stood on the stage, as his two legs would hold on to it, like steel, a strong personality

**(Abed el Wahab sings the next verse)**

 But he, on the other hand, could not stand the compliments I received: " In comparison to her all the other Egyptian artists sound like "cabaret singers"…

 **Abed el Wahab:** Well what do you say about my new song? I wanted you to hear it for a long time.

**Rami:** (absent minded) Yes yes, very beautiful, as always.

 **Abed el Wahab:** So, I don't sound to you like a cabaret singer? (Rami is silent) this French journalist who wrote this, is he not a friend of yours from the time you were in Paris? (Rami does not answer). My poor friend, you became blind. You don't see anything, only her, her and her.

 **Rami:** And you, Muhammed Abed el Wahab, the genius of Arabic poetry, what do you see?

 **Abed el Wahab:** I see the world as it is, Rami.

**Rami:** And what do you think the world is?

 **Abed el Wahab:** Music…music of course romantic, sensual, music of parties (chafla) music of celebrations. And this music calls out to you, you only need to open your ears and you will hear: Rami! Rami! where are you Rami? I missed you I want to take you with me like in the past to parties (chaflot) to a feast of pleasure till the morning rises.

**Rami:** You are crazy.

**Abed el Wahab:** If I'm crazy?! Tell me when have you seen another woman in the last half year? In the last year?

**Rami:** What is the connection?

**Abed el Wahab:** The little "Falachin" (village girl) plays backgammon with your heart. Come back to yourself, what has become of you, come with me like we used to, to cabarets, parties, to meet other women, see the world.

 **Rami:** I don't feel like it. This is not for me.

 **Abed el Wahab**: Have you read the news this morning?

**Rami:** No

**Abed el Wahab:** Here I brought it for you read it will interest you. Read it aloud.

 Rami begins to read outloud:

"So, does the young lady whom the "L'illustrusion" praised highly, can tell the difference between a "do" and "mi"? Is she the innovater of Arabic music?"

 **Oum:** For years I didn't open the newpaper because of this article.

**Rami:** reads on

"..What innovation does she bring us? How do they dare say that other concert halls are empty when she performs? That poets are fighting among themselves for her. You should not look for the secret of her success in the beauty of her voice but…the intrigues of her lovers… she is trying to take the place of the great Munira el Mahadia

**…**  Oum Kalthoum is playing the saint but the truth is she abandoned her village because she was escaping the shame. In Cairo she hides behind the Koran, but before leaving her village she went to the local police station to file a complaint on rape!"

 **Abed el Wahab**: Well, what do you have to say on your great singer?

 **Rami:** Her brother should not read it.

 **Abed el Wahab:** Her brother!? Who the hell is he? "fallach" (village boy) What does he understand in music? In Cairo? And besides, excuse me what do you think all her rivals will stand on the side and give up their status without a fight!?

 **Rami:** Not this way not so? This disgusts me. I can imagine how she feels.

 **Abed el Wahab:** Really?… she is the last thing you should worry about. Rami she is a devouring animal who dived into the Jungle of Cairo. Don't you see there are creatures who have the ability to adapt themselves more than you can imagine. Don't worry, give her time she will flourish in this atmosphere.

**Rami:** I don’t understand you. I feel I don’t know you anymore.

 **Abed el Wahab**: It is not I who changed…

**Rami:** Come with me.

**Abed El Wahab:** Where?

**Rami:** Let's go to her.

 **Abed el Wahab:** I go to her?! Excuse me I'm on my way to Egypt 's prima donna, to the Sultaness Munira el Mahadiya in person. We are working on a new opera. She will play Cleopatra and I Muhammad Abed el Wahab- Marcus Antonius!-….And as to your "diva" let me give you some advise go visit her yourself. (**exits**)

 **Oum:** I stayed in Cairo I fought with them. I sued the newspaper and won. They didn't know who they were dealing with. A lie is a sin for which you pay a high price.

 **Blackout**

**Scene no 6 1927**

Oum is preparing for her performance dressed as a Bedouin

**Sa’adiya:** Oh … you were causing the Prime Minister's wife to laugh on the day of the memorial of her husband. How she laughed when she heard you were performing in her house dressed in your Galabiya,(Bedouin outfit) under no circumstances not, look look what she sent you.

**Young Oum:** What is this Saadyia?

 **Sa'adiya:** It's Europe, it's Paris **"chabit eyni "(apple of my eye).**

**Young Oum:** To change the Galabiya?

**Sa'adiya**: Changethe Galabiya. Look how beautiful, how can you compare "chabit eyni." Look what a beautiful day and a very important day for her the memorial of her husband Sayid Zahlul god have mercy on us how he diedon us like this, he was the only one that showed the English, a curse on them "tfu Imach Shmam" (curses tfu erase their names)what Egyptian honor is, honor honor look "chabit Eyni"see.

**Young Oum:** No. Tell her thanks and return it.

**Sa'adiya:** I will tell her thank you and take it.

 Sa'adiya dresses Oum with a long elegant closed dress.

**Young Oum:** Saadiya I said no so no!

**Saadiya:** Of course yes the memorial day of her husband Sayid Zahlul – these are real diamonds not imitations look how beautiful "chabit eyni" also diamond earrings. I told you it is an important day for her and she wants a woman to sing for her and you "chabit eyni" are a wonderful (achla ) woman.

**Oum to herself:** When you sing don’t look at the audience. Lift your head a little upwards, to Allah. Let air fill you from your feet to the top of your head. Don't think just open your mouth.

Rami and Oum after the performance of their life.

**Oum:** I don't want it to stop, promise me ! it to go on all my life.

**Rami:** "Don't frighten yourself with doubts kidnap from the present that which is beyond doubt.."(in Arabic)

**Oum:** "Don't frighten yourself with doubts… kidnap from the present that which is beyond doubt…"

**Rami:** "Kidnap with pleasures from the present because there is no trust in the nature of the nights" (in Arabic)

**Oum:** I want to sing "Rabiyat Alchiam"

 **Rami:** What?

**Oum:** I want to sing "Rabiyat Alchiam"

**Rami:** Are you kidding?

**Young Oum:**  NoI'm totally serious.

**Rami:** No you are absolutely crazy.

**Young Oum:** Rami. For three years you were in Paris translating the poems of this great Persian poet I want to honor your art. I thought you would be happy.

 **Rami:** Do you know what the conservatives think of Omar al Khayyam? They call him a cursed heretic.

 **Young Oum:** I don't care!

 **Rami:** The Muslim brothers won't let you sing praising drunkenness. They will blame you for weakening Islam. The king will act against you!

**Young Oum:** God will be with me.

**Rami:** Will you sing: "My friend, destroy the fasting and prayer, drink wine, steal if you wish, come and fill the goblet to its brink before fate will fill the glass of your days?" Is that what you will sing?

**Young Oum:** I can sing "glass" instead of "goblet of wine?" What do you say?

 **Rami:** No way.

**Young Oum:** The deep meaning won't change

**Rami:** The power of the song is that its subversive. You can't just change the words.

**Young Oum**: But you are the king of kings, with words. If anyone can do it is only you…. I know what we will do! (Rubaiyat Al Khayyam) instead of: "Extinguish the burning of the heart with a glass of wine" I will sing: Extinguish the fire of your heart with the honey of your saliva. Rami, I prefer to fill my glass before fate empties it."

**Blackout**

**Scene 81936**

 **Sa'adiya:** Use your head before going to sing at the king's coronation

 **Young Oum:** I'm not a child ya Saadiya

 **Sa'adiya:** For me you will always be a child. If you want to hear my opinion. I think it is a bad idea.

 **Young Oum:** And if I don't want to hear your opinion?

**Sa'adiya**: This is a worse idea. I'm worried, they say the opposition will be in power, if the opposition wins it means the king will be out "El Beit" go home .

 **Young Oum:** I can't hurt the king.

**Sa'adiya**: You will hurt yourself is that what you want "chabit eyni" the apple of my eye.The people are not satisfied they feel humiliated.

 **Young Oum:** The king invited me to sing in the castle it is a great honor. I will go and "chalas" (finish) that's it.

**Sa'adiya:** Even Rami said it is a bad idea.

 **Young Oum**: Since when do you talk to Rami?

 **Sa'adiya:** I didn't… I just asked for his advice, I thought it would harm you. I said "charam" Too bad! Until "chabit eiyni" (apple of my eye)goes to the castle. And besides Sir Rami understands matters… he says it's not in your best interest its worth listening to him this once.

 **Young Oum**: Sir Rami is not my husband, sir Rami not my father and sir Rami not my brother. Understood!? Good.

 **Sa'adiya:** Naughty.. lucky she didn't listen to me. She sang in the king's castle and they all applauded her. It was like a dream!

 **Blackout**

**Scene no 9 :1939**

**Abed el Wahab:** Habibi I missed you….

**Rami:** You bastard…..

**Abed el Wahab:** I missed you

 **Rami:** Are you getting married?

 **Abed el Wahab:** Why?

**Rami:** Because you appear in this beautiful suit**.**

**Abed el Wahab:** Today you and I are going dancing, I came to take you with me.

 **Rami:** Ah yes!? Where do you want to take me to?

**Abed el Wahab:** To the party of Munira Al Mahadyia.

 **Rami:** You too? What is it with everybody with Munira Al Mahadyia?

**Abed el Wahab:** Since when am I everybody.

 **Rami:** She decided to reconcile with Munira. Suddenly like thunder on a clear day, after years of rivalry. I have a question for you what is so urgent to reconcile with her and all that after she defeated her again and again? Oum Kalthoum wanted me to escort her.

**Abed el Wahab:** Rami, Can I ask you for a favor as a friend?

**Rami:** Of course.

**Abed el Wahab:** Can you for one evening not mention the name Oum Kalthoum. For one evening you and I are going out like we used to. Are you coming with me?

 **Rami:** No

**Abed el Wahab:** Because of her?

 **Rami:** Because of me. Do you want to drink something?

**Abed el Wahab:** We will drink there.

**Rami:** I'm not coming with you.

**Abed el Wahab:** I'm not asking you. You let her come between us, remember? Get dressed! We are friends, aren't we?

 **Rami:** Friends.

 **Exit together.**

**Scene no 10 - Munira's party 1939**

 On the screen there is a projection from the period.

**Scene no 11**

 **Young Oum:** How did you dare?

**Rami:** Have you gone crazy? What is wrong with you I just went with Wahab. He is an old friend of mine.

**Young Oum:** DoI have to read this? And at Muniera's party!?

**Rami:** What happened to you?

**Young Oum:** How could you do this to me!? And I have to hear about it at Muniera's party!?

**Rami:** One moment I want to explain it to you.

**Young Oum:** I don't want to know anything. I only want to know if what this nonentity writes here is true yes or no?

**Rami:** Yes, yes it's true that a year ago I did show Abed El Wahab this song then I forgot all about. I didn't think about it…

**Young Oum**: You forgot? You gave me the song that Abed el Wahab rejected, for me to sing before the whole world?

 **Rami:** You asked me to go through my papers. I came upon the text and that's it, I'm sorry. It was my mistake, I apologize. It really wasn't intentional.

**Young Oum:** In our profession the one who makes mistakes is a dead man. You don't have the right to make mistakes! I don't have the right to make mistakes! You gave me the song that Abed El Wahab spit upon! So that I would sing it before the whole world!

**Rami:** I'm sorry, I…

**Young Oum:** You have nothing to be sorry for. For betrayal you don't have to be sorry. You have to atone.

**Rami**: Me? A traitor?

**Young Oum:** You are a traitor. And now you come with this friend of yours to show him off in front of everyone.

**Rami:** At least he is a friend, you call me a traitor? Who are you to call me a traitor!? You who every evening has a different poet at your home. And then you sing for this king and that king. Once left and once right. Everybody warned me from you and said you are a monster, success freak, a little blood-sucking little falacha (village girl)!

**Young Oum**: Stay away! Don't come near me! I'm sorry I ever met you! I don't want to see you in my life ever again.

(Goes back to her chair as grownup Oum)

**Scene no 12**

**Rami:** Abed el Wahab!

You bastard! It is you it can be only you who told the journalists.

**Abed el Wahab:** Of course it was me. Come sit down, listen, she has an interview on the radio. Let's see what she has to say.

**Rami:** You bastard, as if you didn't imagine that all this will happen!

**Abed el Wahab:** Rami Rami, how are you behaving!? This woman controls your life, making your life hell. You pushed that song into her hands and out of jealousy you wanted to take revenge on her. Why don't you admit it?

**Rami:** You betrayed me.

**Abed el Wahab:** And she, she didn't betray you? Treason is her expertise. She believes she is above all, the seventh miracle of poetry and music eternal like the Sphinx.

 **Rami:** You said we were friends.

 **Abed el Wahab:** I'm your best friend, Rami. One day you will thank me for it. Come here, sit and listen to the radio.

 **Oum's voice is heard.**

… I was not aware that this song was offered to somebody else. I didn't expect such a betrayal. This poet whose name I prefer not to mention wanted to ruin me. I don't know why. Sometimes jealousy settles in a man's heart and becomes second nature, for me he does not exist…

 **Rami:** …Jealousy becomes second nature… me? Jealous? After all I did for her! Who does she think she is?!! Who is she?!!

 **Abed el Wahab:** You fed her with your own hands, you raised her protected her as if she was a child, and now she blames you in front of the whole world!

**Rami:**  A she devil !

 **Blackout**

 **Scene no 13**

 Oum sings "Reani li shuwi shuwi"

**Scene no 14: 1942**

**Sa'adiya:** Ya sir Rami! sir Rami!

 **Rami:** Who is it?

 **Sa'adiya:** It is me, Saadiya

 **Rami:** What are you doing here?

**Sa'adiya:** It is three months now we haven't heard from you. I said I would visit you, I brought some fruit. Shall I prepare tea for you? We have to open the windows it is stuffy in here.

**Rami:** I don't want fruit and please leave the windows.

**Sa'adia:** You have to eat something.You are very pale.

 **Rami:** I don’t want anything. Stop it.

 **Sa'adiya:** Look at yourself. Even I can't recognize you. Where is sir Rami, the great poet with the sense of honor, with fire in your eyes? Where are you sir Rami?

 **Rami:** How come, she worries about me? I thought I don't exist for her anymore.

 **Sa'adiya:** It's time we put all the quarrels behind us. We heard you are about to starve. That you don't leave home.

 **Rami:** What do you mean "we heard"? You and she? Who did you hear it from?

 **Sa'adiya:** I met your sister Salwa, on the street. I brought you some money from the revenues from your songs. (gives him an envelope)

 **Rami:** So that's why she sent you? To give me money? Not for apologizing and humiliating me!?

 **Sa'adia:** She doesn't know I'm here.

 **Rami:** Ah She didn't send you!?... Saadyia you make me laugh…. All these years she gave me two Ginhat for a song. She took all the revenues to herself. Made a fortune at my expense… (turns away, opens the envelope)

 **Old Oum:** It was I who took a financial risk… I traveled throughout the country, from the Nile to the canal,… I rented halls I paid the musicians I paid everyone on time and everybody wanted to get out of me more and more… but how could I know that Rami was on the verge of hunger?

**Rami:** What does she want from me? How come she sends me so much money? What is she planning?

**Sa'adiya:** I told you she does not know I'm here.

**Rami:** So from where do you have the money?

 **Sa'adiya:** I have my sources…. Sir Rami You are a great poet, a world renowned poet, everyone loves and admires you, it won't harm you to write a small letter of apology in the newspaper. I promise I will take care of her and the two of you will work together again.

 **Rami:** Ah, that's what she wants that I should apologize in the newspaper?! Tell her I will never apologize… and (hands her back the money) and I sure don't want her charity! Let her keep it to herself – and may god be with you.

**Scene no 15**

**Abed El Wahab:** Rami, Rami

**Rami:** What are you doing here?

**Abed El Wahab:** And what are you doing here?

 **Rami:** I live here

**Abed el Wahab:** There are rats that live in better conditions.

 **Rami:** I'm sorry, I didn't know you were coming.

**Abed el Wahab:** Apology accepted now get up.

 **Rami:** Get up, where to?

**Abed el Wahab**: Don't you want to live? It is now nine months that you shut up yourself in your room.

**Rami:** Nine months? Nine months have passed without my noticing?

**Abed el Wahab:** You were attacked, and that was your answer proudly, and then you shut yourself up in your room, enough. Come on, get up, get dressed, quickly, you don't want me to die of boredom here. Right?

 **Rami:** Get dressed? What for? For whom?

**Abed el Wahab**: She is in hospital. Before an operation. Tumor in her throat. I'm sure that if you go there, like this, without announcing she will be crazy with joy.

 **Scene no 16 1952**

**Young Oum:** You lost weight.

**Rami:** You too.

 **Young Oum:** And the face? Pale?

 **Rami:** Beautiful. Like before, 9 months ago.

 **Young Oum**: Nine months I could have given birth. Rami?

 **Rami:** What?

**Young Oum:** Do you think the operation is dangerous?

**Rami:** In 5 days you will be back on your feet.

 **Young Oum:** Really? Are you sure?

**Rami:** I'm sure

**Young Oum:** Are you angry with me?

**Rami:** No. and you are you angry with me?

**Young Oum:** No

 **Rami:** Then I'm happy

 **Young Oum:** I'm getting married, Ya Rami

 **Rami:** What?

**Young Oum:** One says – congratulations

**Rami:** Getting married? To whom? With whom are you getting married?

**Young Oum:** It is my physician, Dr. Chifnawi. For six months he came every morning to treat me daily. At the beginning I found it hard to undress in front of him, but then I got used to him, he is gentle, kind and good hearted. He really cares for me.

**Rami:** You are going to marry your physician?

**Young Oum:** You know how little honor I have for men. Without them the world would be quieter.

**Rami:** You who talks about love, on truth, … you are getting married because it's comfortable I don't get you. You are simply driving me crazy….

**Young Oum:** I also return to an empty house every evening

.

**Rami:** So don't. I will build us a house. I will build us a house from paper and glue. From what I have. And it will be the most beautiful house in the world. And it will have songs and music and wine. Only don't do this I implore you don't do it.

 **Blackout.**

Projection: Nasser's rise to power

**Scene no 17: 1952**

**Saadia:** Chabit Eiyni,  **(Apple of my eye)** a telegram from the Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser.... what happened? Where is everybody?

 **Young Oum:** Everyone Left.

 **Saadiya:** What do you mean? Left to where?

 **Young Oum:** To the village. I send them all home. I don't want to see anybody anymore ”chalas" (finish). I wanted to strengthen the revolution with my voice and they forbade me to sing on the radio.

 **Saadia:** "Chabit Eyni" And you didn't tell me anything!?

**Young Oum:** You too, go. "chalas" Our story is over. Go back home.

 **Saadiya:** Go back home "Chabit Eiyni" My home is here. Here you are, you received a telegram from the Rais Gamal Abdel Nasser

**Young Oum:** What now? They exile me? (reads aloud)

 It has been brought to my attention that stupid story that you are forbidden to sing on the radio. I immediately called the chief of broadcasting and told him that the sun too, the Nile and the pyramids were under the old regime and no one was thinking of boycotting them. The revolution will open a new radio station and she will be heard in Bagdad, Casablanca, in Damascus, in Haifa and in Jaffa. We will make the opening of "The Kul (Voice of) Al Arab" in a festive concert in a special broadcasting straight from our main head office in Alexandria, El Wahab will open, afterwards you will sing and then I will announce the opening of the new station.

(10m "Watani Habibi" (my beloved homeland)

**Scene no 18, 1953**  El Wahab sings

**Scene 19: 1964**

 **Young Oum:** You can forget about it! That I should sing with El Wahab? Not in this world.

 **Rami:** You are just being stubborn. It is the right combination, ideological and musical as well.

**Saadiya:** You can't refuse him, this is Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser. You forgot what he said: You artists can't shake off your responsibility in this revolution! it is time to unite!

 **Young Oum:** Did you forget what El Wahab did to me? How he spread his poison all over? I never understood this friendship between you two. I don't trust him. He is a snake.

 **Rami:** This is all over. It is time for reconciliation between my two friends.

 **Young Oum:** Does he even agree to sing with me?

**Rami:** Yes! I persuaded him!

 **Young Oum:** Okay this is not right, there is no connection between his music and mine.

 **Rami:** Just because of that. It is the right way to go.

 **Sa'adiya:** Also because of Nasser …

 **Young Oum:** What do you have with Nasser? Did you fall in love with him?

**Rami:** Besides, I will be happy to write a song for both of my best friends.

 **Scene no 20**

 **Abed El Wahab:** I read the song it's an excellent song… Kamal Shafik knows how to write he is a great poet!...We can't take his song Rami won't like the idea that we are taking a song from another poet, it is not nice.

**Young Oum:** Rami won't be hurt if we take another poets' song. It is he who taught me that art comes first. Both you and I were singing tens of Rami's songs. It is time to move forward….

**Abed El Wahab:** I already dream about the introduction. Something instrumental. A prologue, a beginning of an epos, the opening of a story of an impossible love. something like… this melody does not leave me… it has to have an …electronic guitar.

**Young Oum:** Excuse me?

**Abed El Wahab:** An electric guitar. You know the instrument, or it has not reached your village yet?

**Young Oum:** No guitar and no electronic. This is a classical Arab love song and so it will stay.

**Abed El Wahab:** I understand that you insist it stays traditional. You must understand this is a very important instrument, one of the most important instruments of the 20th century. They do wonders with it in Europe and in America.

 **Young Oum:** But you are neither in Europe nor in America. You are in Egypt. We must not forget for whom we are singing.

**Abed El Wahab:** The world is changing. Ya sit (sister) habits, the language, even clothes. The Arab world steps forward. One cannot ignore influences the Western culture has on the world. We will be a joke.

**Young Oum:** So maybe we stop singing in Arabic and sing in English instead?

**Scene no 20**

**Abed El Wahab**: An excellent idea learn English and we will perform a duet and conquer Manhattan. I heard that there, dollars are pouring out of their fingers.

**Young Oum:** Our tradition is spiritual, not materialistic like in the West, Mister Muchamed El Wahab, you are just a merchant ready to sell the Arab world for a few dollars?

**Abed El Wahab:** It depends on how many dollars they offer?

 **Blackout**

**Scene no 21**

 **Oum Kalthoum**: Saadiya! Saadiya! Where are you?

**Sa'adiya:** What are you shouting? In the middle of the night, you woke up all of Egypt.

 **Oum Kalthoum:** I will wake up the whole world if I need to. Get up! Get up! Go bring the suitcases. Tomorrow morning you and I are going to Paris.

 **Sa'adiya:** Tomorrow morning!? What happened?

**Oum Kalthoum:** Nasser gave me a Diplomatic Passport.. He made me his roving Ambassador around the world!

**Sa'adiya:** But don’t forget that you are a singer, not a politician. All the Arab world admires you. You have to guard this.

**Oum Kalthoum:** Poetry is politics and politics is music. Too many years we are ruled in the world by rulers from Europe who don't have a clue about our culture and besides it's time that you and I go to Paris!

**Sa'adiya:** You and I, excuse me. Forgive me I won't be able to accompany you.

**Oum Kalthuom:** Why what happened?

**Saadiya:** Nothing happened "Habit Eiyni" (apple of my eye) but age age takes its toll. My legs aren't as before. I won't be able to accompany you. But I found somebody "sweet"who will be able to accompany you.

**Oum Kalthoum:** Rami was here?

**Sa'adiya:** Rami was also in Paris he knows each stone in Paris. He speaks French and he will be your translator. Achla (great) translator for you. I only trust him.

**Oum Kalthoum:** The poet who despises political art, the one that calls me a "propaganda" singer is ready to represent Egypt in Paris!? If he wishes so much to come with me, so where is he?

 **Sa'adiya:** It is now your turn to show him that you care for him too. Don't forget "Habit Eynie" that sir Rami is the one who followed you from the beginning of your career, taught you so much Sir Rami invested in you so much, he loves you and will defend you with his body if necessary.

**Oum Kalthoum:** Sir Rami, Sir Rami, Sir Rami. With these my two hands I built myself. Alone, Alone. And I don't need any man to hold my hand not here and not in any other place in the world. Forget about your fantasy. Understood?

**Sa'adiya:** Don’t be stupid. They say that the Zionists are getting stronger now in Europe. They say that they can sabotage your performance.

 **Oum Kalthoum:** You can relax. I'm not alone. I don’t need a bodyguard. There is someone who guards me, from very close. Bonne Soiren (twice Bonne Soire) Paris!!!

 **Old Oum:** Next day I flew to Paris, without Rami and without Saadyia. It was more than anything I ever dreamt to have. The streets, the music, the people. The Hall was beautiful the audience stood for ovations the curtain rose seven times. Most of the tickets were bought by Jews from Arab countries who live in France. And to think it was an evening of reconciliation.

 **Scene no 22 : 1967**

 **Young Oum screams behind the scenes. Saadyia Rami and El Wahab enter running.**

 **Sa'adiya:** It is ok. The doctor gave her a calming injection.

**Rami:** What happened?

 **Sa'adiya:** She didn’t feel well. Sir Rami I just came into her room and then, it was as if old age suddenly seized her. She looked into my eyes and said "Saadyia do you see" and fell down to the floor.

**Rami:** I'm going to see how she is.

 Saadiya: let it be Rami. She has to rest.

**Abed El Wahab:** You know Rami this is a conspiracy. A fraud. These Russians. One can't trust them. They made a deal with the Americans behind our backs and sold us damaged weapons that is why we lost to the Israelis.

 **Rami:** The one who can't dance says the floor is crooked.

**Sa'adiya:**  Sir El Wahab it is us who spent our time singing "Ya Leiel" (the night) We ate in restaurants, laughed at jokes and talked about our enemies and they at the same time, waited in the wings and taught us in 6 days what a real war is. What a humiliation.

**Abed El Wahab**: In other countries art represents the conscience. But with us it puts our people to sleep. We should have sung national songs, war songs, songs of homeland.

 **Sa'adiya:** This is exactly what the Jews know how to do. They don't spend time singing "Ya Leyle" "Ya Eyni " (my love) love songs of Achmed Rami.

 **Rami:** Sa'adiya you want to blame me for the defeat of Egypt?

**Sa'adiya:** A million people die of hunger under our windows, and we sing nostalgic songs…

 **Rami:** Now I understand the conspiracy: the Americans and the Israelis mobilized our Star of the East Oum Kalthoum as a bait to seduce and drug the people, give them a sedative…

**Young Oum**: She is right Rami. If not for your romantic, poetry maybe our nation would have power. I wasted my time in emotional hymns, and uncompromising love lamentations. You said this voice put people to sleep? So now this people is going to wake up and Nasser will win!

 **Rami:** What do you have with Nasser? You fell in love with him? Did you forget? He was defeated in 6 days?

 **Young Oum**: And what do you suggest? A tour dedicated to self -punishment? Is this what you suggest? Weak people shame me. They shame my nation! Go! it is time you went! Yes you also go it is the only thing you are capable of doing, running away!

I closed myself in my house, and didn't want to see anybody. But one can't stay in the dark forever.

I asked myself: What can I give to my wounded country, to the mother of the soldier who died in battle. To the young orphan? And this is my answer: I decided to sing everywhere so as to bring back hope! And in order to win the next battle, I ask you, all the good women of this country, to take an example from me and donate your jewelry to the war effort, and all the money we collect on my concert tour we will donate to the defense of our country.

 Sings (28v) El Atalal,…"give me back my freedom. Release my hands"

**Blackout**

 **EPILOGUE 23. 1975**

 Older Oum, says bitterly to the audience:

… the recital in Demanhur made an income of 283 thousand Ginhat

 In Mazura it made 120.000 and in Alexandria 100.000 Ginhat. and that does not include the jewelry…

 Music STARTS: YAMSAHRANI

 MY Sa'adia died two years ago. Nasser died five years ago. And Rami- Rami went away and left only words… and I, my time too has come.

 On the back screen the funeral of Oum Kalthoum is projected, she steps back and disappears into the screen.

 **Blackout**

 **THE END**

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