

# Barrel Wave

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Revised November 1, 2016

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## BARREL WAVE

### CHARACTERS

Rawand - a teenage surfer girl, from Gaza

### SETTING

Today or tomorrow. On the other side of a barrel wave.

### PRODUCTION NOTES

The play takes place in an imaginative space, with real surf. Rawand is fearless, funny, and intelligent. She's no prisoner nor powered by anger: The sea is her fuel. Today is a good day and she's glad to be surfing.

*Barrel Wave* was originally written for Theater For One and produced at Signature Theater in 2016, with Jenny Koons directing and Tala Ashe playing Rawand.

*No more can I be sever'd from your side  
Than can yourself yourself in twain divide.*

-Shakespeare, King Henry the Sixth.

**SCENE:**

Rawand and her board have just surfaced after crashing out of a barrel wave. She takes a huge breath and fills her lungs, then quickly recovers: She's a pro. She's uncertain where she is but this doesn't scare her and she remains calm and curious.

**RAWAND**

Whoa!... What the-- That was a-- Where am I?

The audience member tells her.

Cool. Strange (in Arabic). Never been here before...

I was just paddling out to this A-frame surf: early, early, dawn patrol for the best waves, avoiding the small stuff, the ankle busters. I was looking for a wave that's got a barrel; I was looking to surf the tube, ride the green room.

But I don't see my wave yet-- barrel waves are rare on our beach-- so I'm carving up some other waves, doing my best to avoid the chowder, which is, excuse me, the shit floating in the water. And let me tell you, it's thick in the sea off Gaza. Each time we get the chowder plants up and running, they get blitzed, so that stuff pours into my sea every day. Funny thing is, this chowder floats north. Whole islands of it were recently spotted off the beaches in Tel Aviv. Hey, shit travels, even if we can't.

So I'm out early looking for my wave, duck-diving, me and my board, which really isn't a board anymore; it's more like my body: cutting through the shit as if it didn't exist. Pardon me. Now the sun is coming up, the beach is starting to fill.

It was my brother Sumoud who taught me to surf. We first used a broken closet door. It sank. Then a door from a fridge. It floated but, well, it was a fridge door! Sumoud could stand on his head and surf a wave. When they'd tease me for surfing, 'cause I'm a girl, he'd make them shut up.

And now my two best friends, Heba and Ameina, are paddling out to me! And we're looking for a party wave so we can ride it together.

We catch the waves high in the pocket and from up here on our boards, we've a clear view of the land. There are a few tall buildings still standing. On a good day, on a good wave, I feel like I can see all twenty six miles of my home, even inland to the wall, and all two million of us packed in close, even the piles of stone that were our homes. After the last round of bombings, my father says that at this rate it'll take a hundred years to rebuild Gaza, that in a few years life won't be possible here: No jobs, no services, most of it crushed, again. One hundred years to rebuild Gaza! You and I we'll both be dead by then. My father brought a list of banned goods home. For ten years now: no cement, glass, steel, lumber, paint, plastic, or metal pipes allowed in. Prohibited.

And!... The greatest security threat of all: surfboards. Surfboards are prohibited! There's this American surfer, Matthew, and once he wrangled 30 surfboards across the border. What luck! But now no more are allowed in. There are 33 real boards in all of Gaza; we fight over the boards.

She recites more of the list again.

Castor oil, X-ray machines, fishing nets, fabric (for clothing), parachutes, hearing aid batteries, paper, horses, seeds and nuts, goats, crayons, chickens and kiwis. Banned. Lucky for me I don't ride a chicken or a kiwi.

Back to her story.

Finally we get a gnarly pitchin' wave and we're riding high. We all wipe-out. We're laughing and swallowing water when I see it coming: *my wave*.

I've never seen a wave that big. It looks a giant hill rolling, or an apartment block that just ate a missile!

I hear people shouting. Heba and Ameina are paddling out of the way, along with the other surfers 'cause good tube riding is really tough. I'm tough! Some of the neighbors think we surfer girls are 'aib', a disgrace, and shouldn't be out here on the water. But my mother braids my hair so it won't get in my way and my father stays close by when I surf, to warn any busybodies not to mess with me.

I think: *I got to move. There isn't much time.*

My brother Sumoud could not only stand on his head, he could do a rodeo flip. Oh yes he could! Thing is, he'd only do it for me 'cause he didn't like to show up his friends. So he would rodeo flip early, early morning when it was just me and him on the water. Round and round til upside down he'd go, then land, still standing. Almost no one anywhere can do a rodeo flip. Sumoud was going to teach me. When a missile hit him on the beach, his surfboard was blown up in the air like an arrow sent to split the clouds.

This is Sumoud's shirt, these my Aunt Rawya's leggings, and my eight year old cousin Samira's (whispers) underwear. So many of us are dead. I wear their clothes. That way they can surf with me.

She snaps back to her story--

Well, I turtle roll out to meet this mountain. And as the wave and I get closer to one another, I feel like I been waiting for this tube all my life. Listen, you got to have timing and skill to surf, but for a barrel wave, most important thing is, as my brother said, but I can not 'cause I'm a girl: *You gotta be willing to eat chowder*. Confidence.

And suddenly it's like someone's peeled the sea off the ocean floor and thrown it into the air. The wave reaches, curls, and pitches over me and . . . I'm in! I'm inside the wave! Completely enclosed behind a curtain of falling water with a foam ball at my tail! And I'm doing a single-handed drag on the wave's face and hurtling thru this green room and for a moment I'm just a liquid whistle inside a tunnel of green.

I'm inside but out of this world!

And then I eject: I flip, dunk, crash and everything goes black. I open my eyes, and here I am. My family must think that wave ate me! I need to get home. I love my home. Even if its like a lock-up and we can't leave. Only our chowder makes a successful escape: (whispers) Right of Return...

So please, which way is the beach? I think I'm gonna have to find another barrel wave to get back. Wish me luck. Or... Come with me? I mean it. I've got a cousin who can get you in thru one of the tunnels and most likely you'll make it, God willing.

She reaches her hand out to take the audience members hand:

We'll have fun. I will teach you how to surf a wave to another world.

END PLAY