

عذر أجمل من ذنب

A **BEAUTIFUL** EXCUSE,
FOR A DEADLY **SIN**
FILM BY **HASHIM SHARAF**



01

FILM BRIEF



LOGLINE

A young man tries to climb up with a horse through the narrow flight of stairs of his building to live with him in his apartment, while the neighbours stand against him.

A high-angle shot of a man with a mustache and curly hair, wearing a blue plaid shirt, looking up at a horse being led up a concrete staircase. The horse is dark brown with a white blaze on its face and is wearing a blue and white striped lead rope. The man's expression is one of concern or urgency. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

INSPIRED FROM A TRUE STORY

“One day I got a call from my mother asking me to urgently run to my grandfather's place, as one of the neighbors is trying to get a horse up to their apartment !”

-The Director, Hashem Sharaf

SYNOPSIS

In the heart of the city of Manama at a modest residential building, Qassem, a reckless young man, enters the building with a horse and tries to climb him up to his apartment through the stairs. While he is trying to get the horse to climb, he is met with his neighbour, Abu Ghayeb (an old man in his sixties) at the stairs and is surprised by the scene. He begins to intercept Qassem and accuses him of madness and recklessness, while Qassem does not care about his opinion. This makes the old man angry, so he goes out of his way and says to him (Over my dead body) and goes and takes out furniture from his apartment and throws it in the staircase corridor to prevent the horse from climbing up, so Qassem sits on the ground declaring his stubbornness, while Abu Ghayeb is on the other side, blocking the way.

The people of the building and the passers-by try to solve the issue until Labors arrive in a truck carrying A/Cs for one of the apartments and stop their truck in front of the building, but they cannot proceed with their job because of the horse and the furniture blocking the way. As the heat progresses between Qasim and Abu Ghayeb and the truck blocks the street, and the street begins to fill with cars, which causes great chaos in the middle of Manama. The angry passengers in the traffic get down to find out what is taking so long to open the street..

As its time for the noon prayer is called, a religious neighbor on his way to the mosque is met by the chaos in the building caused by Qassem and his horse. The religious man advises them to pause the matter to pray in the mosque. Immediately after the prayer ended, Qasem hurries out before everyone else, but Abu Ghayeb tries to catch up with him. Qassem arrives first and begins to remove the furniture off the staircase and tries to undo the horse's rope as quickly as possible, but Abu Ghayeb arrives and pushes him to the ground, and a fight ensues between them, and the people begin to gather and try to keep them away from each other.

All of a sudden, the horse defecates on the ground which instantly stops the fight due to the horrible smell that takes over the building. So everyone pulls Abu Ghayeb out of the building, and Qasim is now able to take the horse upstairs.



FILM STILLS



FILM STILL





FILM STILL



LENGTH

16 MINUTES

LANGUAGE

ARABIC / BAHRANI

FORMAT

LIVE ACTION

GENRE

DARK COMEDY

ORIGIN

BAHRAIN

TECHNICAL INFO

CAMERA

ARRI ALEXA MINI LF

LENS

ARRI SIGNATURE PRIME

FORMAT

ARRIRAW

ASPECT RATIO

1:85



02

THE CREW

Director & Writer | Hashim Sharaf

Hashim Sharaf is a Bahraini film director, graduated from RMIT University, Australia, with a Bachelor degree in Filmmaking & Cinema studies. Since then, Hashim established himself as a leading figure in the Bahraini film industry by receiving local and international awards for his short films and directing major TV shows on Shahid.

Hashims' short films won the Jury prize in Baghdad Film Festival (2016), Best Film in GCC in Sharjah Film Festival (2015), Best Director at Red Carpet Festival and was nominated for the Best film award by the National Arab American Society (NAAS) in Carthage International Film Festival in Tunis, one of the most important film events in Africa and Arab world.

On the other hand, in the last 10 years, he produced and directed TV shows and commercials in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman for the biggest corporate companies in the region and and got awarded with the Pioneer marketer 1st Place Award in Riyadh.



D.O.P | Ahmad Jalboush

Born and bred in Jordan, Ahmad Jalboush is a Cinematographer, known for his short film “The Trap” (2019) nominated in Cannes Film Festival. With a master's degree in cinematic arts from The Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts, his childhood passion for cinema grew into a career of capturing the ordinary and extraordinary of life.

As a cinematographer, Jalboush has contributed to features, shorts, TV productions, music videos and commercials in Jordan, Bahrain , Tunisia, India and the Middle East region. His latest filmography includes “Al Rawabi School for Girls” (2021) on NETFLIX, “Dar Ghareeb” (2021) on Shahid MBC and his recently debuted short film “Daughters of Abdul-Rahman” (2021) winning accolades globally.



CREW MEMBERS



Producer
Nehal Eissa



**Production
Manager**
Ahmed Alaali



Camera Assistant
Abdulla Hujairi



**1st Assistant
Director**
Farah Emad



**Production
Designer**
Yousif AlAhmed



**2nd Camera
Assistant**
Abdalla Mohammed



**2nd Assistant
Director**
Hameed AlShakhoori



Focus Puller
Jaffer Hussain



**3rd Camera
Assistant**
Ahmed Juma

CREW MEMBERS



Casting Director
Aqeel Almajed



Stylist
Fatima Al Bastaki



**Poster
Photographer**
Ishaq Madan



Audio Engineer
Adel Ghuloom



Makeup Artist
Jamal BuAllay



Gaffer
Mohammed Alaali



Audio Assistant
Khaled Baou



Makeup Assistant
Suad Marhoon



Runner
Meriem Belkhayat



BAHRAINI LOCAL TALENTS

We believe that the success of this film will give senior officials and entities in Bahrain the sense of responsibility to invest in the field of the filmmaking industry, Culture and cinema in the region.

03

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



JUDGEMENTS



DREAM



THE WORLD

A SIMPLE STORYLINE, WITH A DEEP MEANING!



GENERATIONS



PRISON TO DREAMS



CHAOS AND GOSSIP



ALL WHAT HAPPENED IS...



WHEN YOUR DREAM IS IMPRISONED

They may stand between us and our dreams, But they can't stop us from telling our stories!



A REAL STORY WAR TURNED TO A FILM

This movie is based on a my true story and experience in the story of my marriage battle, so I wrote this script, which represents a simple story, but it can be similar to many. Therefore, the majority of the crew volunteered to participate in this film, we all shared a mutual belief which was a **SHOUT** for help as the film represented different dreams and goals to each one of cast and crew members.

WHY THIS FILM? WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND IT?

In our Arab societies, when we dream of marriage, our families do not take into consideration our dreams, but rather societies view of our dreams!

In Islam, there are two sects, the Sunni and the Shia. I belong to the Shia sect, and I felt in love with girl from the Sunni sect, but the families and society strongly restricted us from doing so..we were heartbroken and in so much pain! As I live in an apartment on the second floor in a family building complex, all I wanted was for the person I love to share a life with me in my home.

After a tough battle, we won, but our wedding ceremony was hidden in the presence of less than 5 people, because our families do not want society to know!

This story is still forbidden to talk about in my society, so I, a Shia, and my Sunni wife decided to produce this film with a hidden vision, a shout for help for all dreamers!

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WHY TODAY?

Today I represent many young men and women in the arab society, what they dream of! Whether in the career path, emotional life, artistic and sports ambitions, or unconventional life **CHOICES**. Our hunger and need for this film today is only to show the society our need to talk and to be heard!

However, whether or not we are heard we will continue to **climb and resist!**

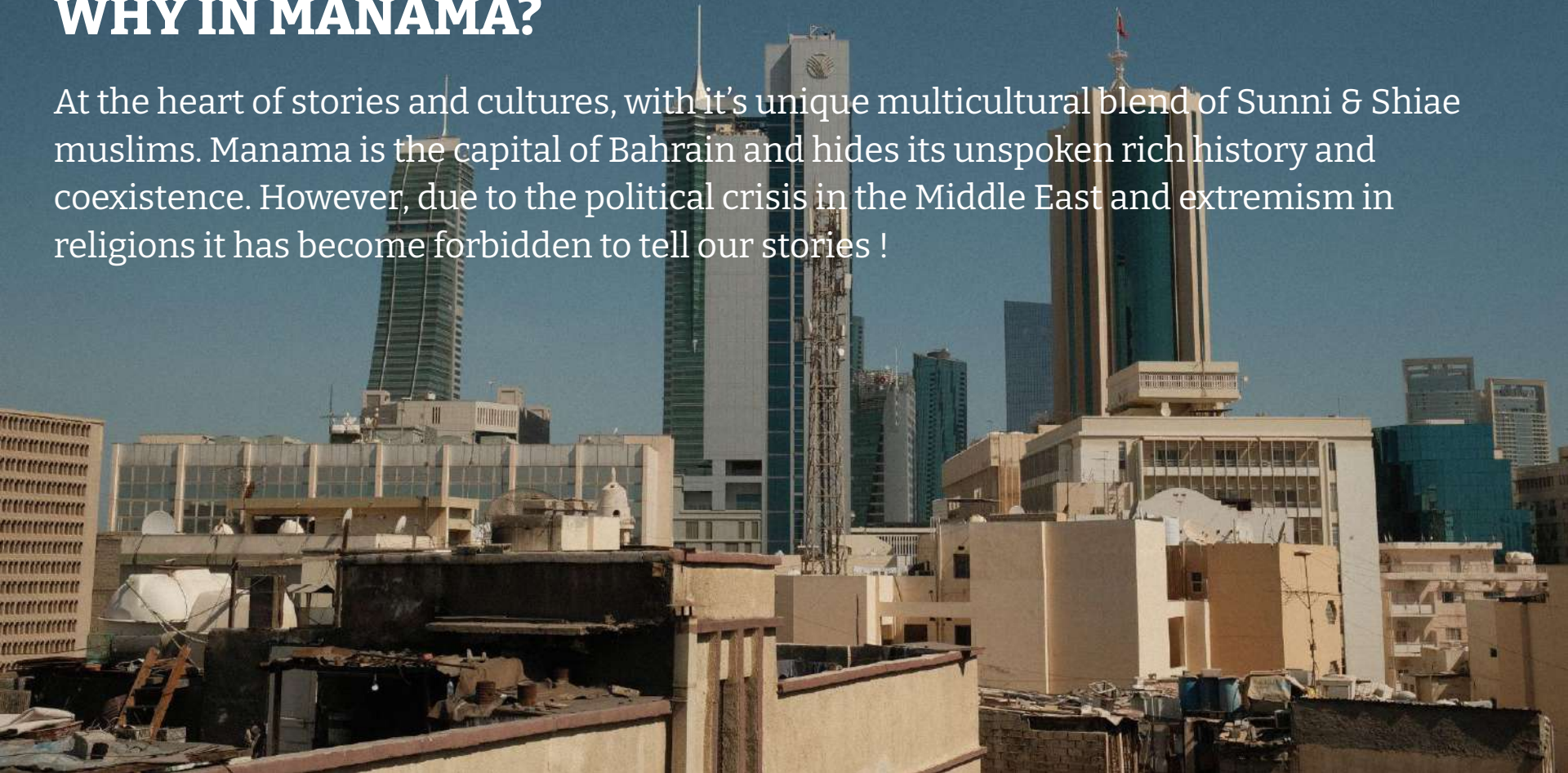
A woman with short dark hair and sunglasses on her head is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression, her hand near her chin. She is wearing a white t-shirt and a gold bracelet. In the background, a man in a white t-shirt and a cap is operating a camera on a tripod. Other people are visible in the background, some wearing headsets, suggesting a film set environment. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

As the producer of this film, I am proud to have been a part of bringing this powerful story to life. This film is deeply personal to me, as it tells the story of my own marriage battle against societal and familial pressures that sought to deny me the freedom to choose the person I loved. This film is a testament to the power of choice and the strength of the human spirit. It is a story that I hope will inspire other Arab girls to pursue their dreams, to fight for their rights, and to never give up on the pursuit of happiness.

WHY IN MANAMA?

At the heart of stories and cultures, with it's unique multicultural blend of Sunni & Shiae muslims. Manama is the capital of Bahrain and hides its unspoken rich history and coexistence. However, due to the political crisis in the Middle East and extremism in religions it has become forbidden to tell our stories !



WHY A HORSE?

In history and mythology, the horse symbolizes freedom, courage, **dream**, war.





WHY THE SHIT?

A shout out to not give a SHIT!
We really need this word.

04

THE CAST

LEAD ACTORS



Mubarak Khamis (Abu Ghayeb)

Khamis is a major Bahraini actor locally and regionally, who played important part in most of the major classic series and films in the Gulf region. His artistic beginning was in Qatar in the seventies, where he participated in the founding of the Al-Sadd and Al-Adwaa troupes with Qatari artists.



Omar Al Saedi (Qassim)

A rising Bahraini actor who participated in many films and series and won awards in the field of acting, including the Excellence in Acting Award at the Cairo Experimental Festival (2020), Best Actor at Al Sawari Festival (2014), Jury Award and Best Actor at Sheikh Khaled Theater Festival (2016/2017).

CAST ROLES



Gossip Lady | Fadheela AlSalman

A woman who is curious about everyone's business in the neighborhood and finds joy in aimless gossip and spreading rumors.



Religious Man | Ibrahim Malaha

A man that thinks that religion and prayer alone are capable to diffuse any tough situation regardless of the causes of the issue itself .



Um Qassim | Shatha Al Asfoor

The typical arabian mother who worries about people's judgments. hence, putting her children's dreams second afraid for their way of living to be criticised by society.



Um Qassim's Neioubour

The nousey neighbour that is on top of everyone's case and gets the satisfaction of telling on others to create a ruckus amongst the neighbors.

CAST ROLES



Pakistani Labour (Car 1)

A segment to people who believe that anything is possible with a little hard work



The Young Couple (Car 2)

The hesitant couple that hide from societies eyes rather than step up to defend their relationship



Donkey Owner (Car 3) | Taken

The owner of the donkey, which indicates the difference between the donkey and the horse. As the donkey waits for its owners orders to act, but the horse is a free spirit that cherishes its own needs



The Rich Lady (Car 4)

A segment of the upper class society that does not care about others interest but the ripple effect will eventually catch up with them

05

CINEMA LANGUAGE

POSTER DISSECTION

The film's poster explains the full story of the film within itself, where I am the negative space representing the space and the vast world.

The horse, symbolising the challenge and the dream alongside a small part of the door indicating that the ground floor is the beginning of a journey.

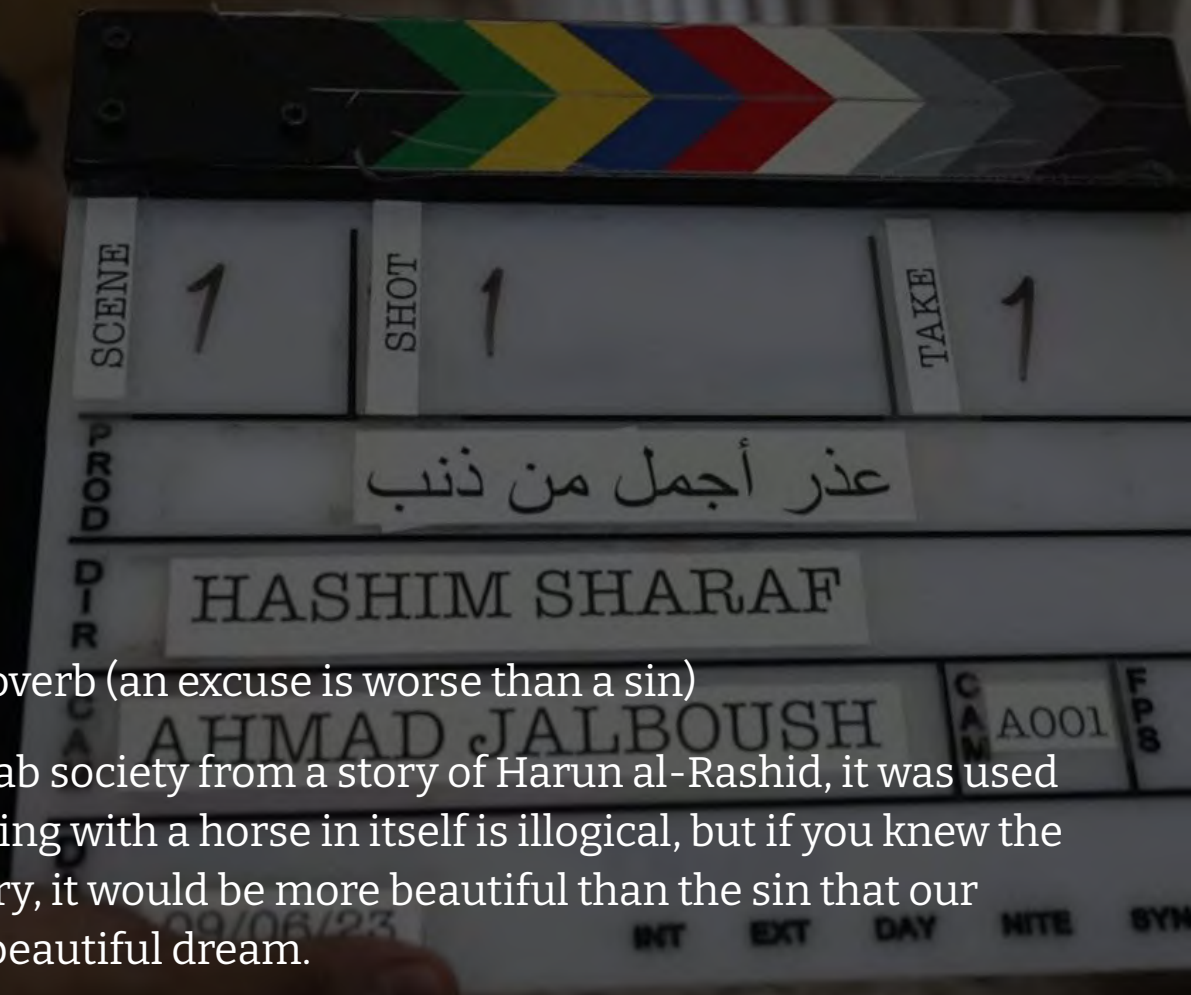
The direction of the stairs, the horse and the actor, depicts the idea of the young man's intention to pursue the dream and move forward.



FILM NAME STORY

A Quote from the famous arab proverb (an excuse is worse than a sin)

It is a well-known saying in the arab society from a story of Harun al-Rashid, it was used for the film because the idea of living with a horse in itself is illogical, but if you knew the excuse and the purpose of the story, it would be more beautiful than the sin that our society considers a sin, but it is a beautiful dream.

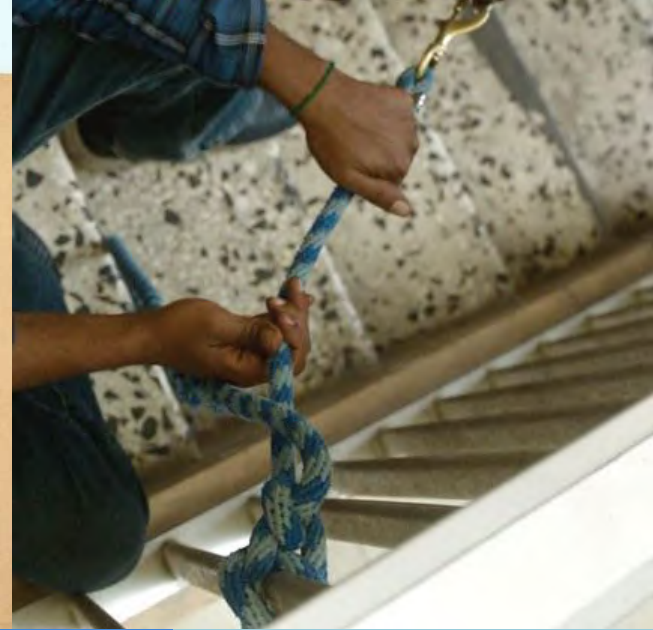


OPENING SCENE

The decision for the **long take** in the opening scene was to show the difficult and long journey that the protagonist must undertake to reach his goal.

The use of the shoe cabinet as the first frame is a visual motif to establish the central theme of the film. The shoe cabinet is a metaphor for the building and Cinderella single pair shoe is the horse who is the ultimate goal. The broken guitar is a symbol to establish the theme of shattered dreams and tone of the film.





COLOR SCHEME

In contrast to the dull colours of the building and other characters, Qasim's BLUE symbolises the color of **UNITY**.



NAMES

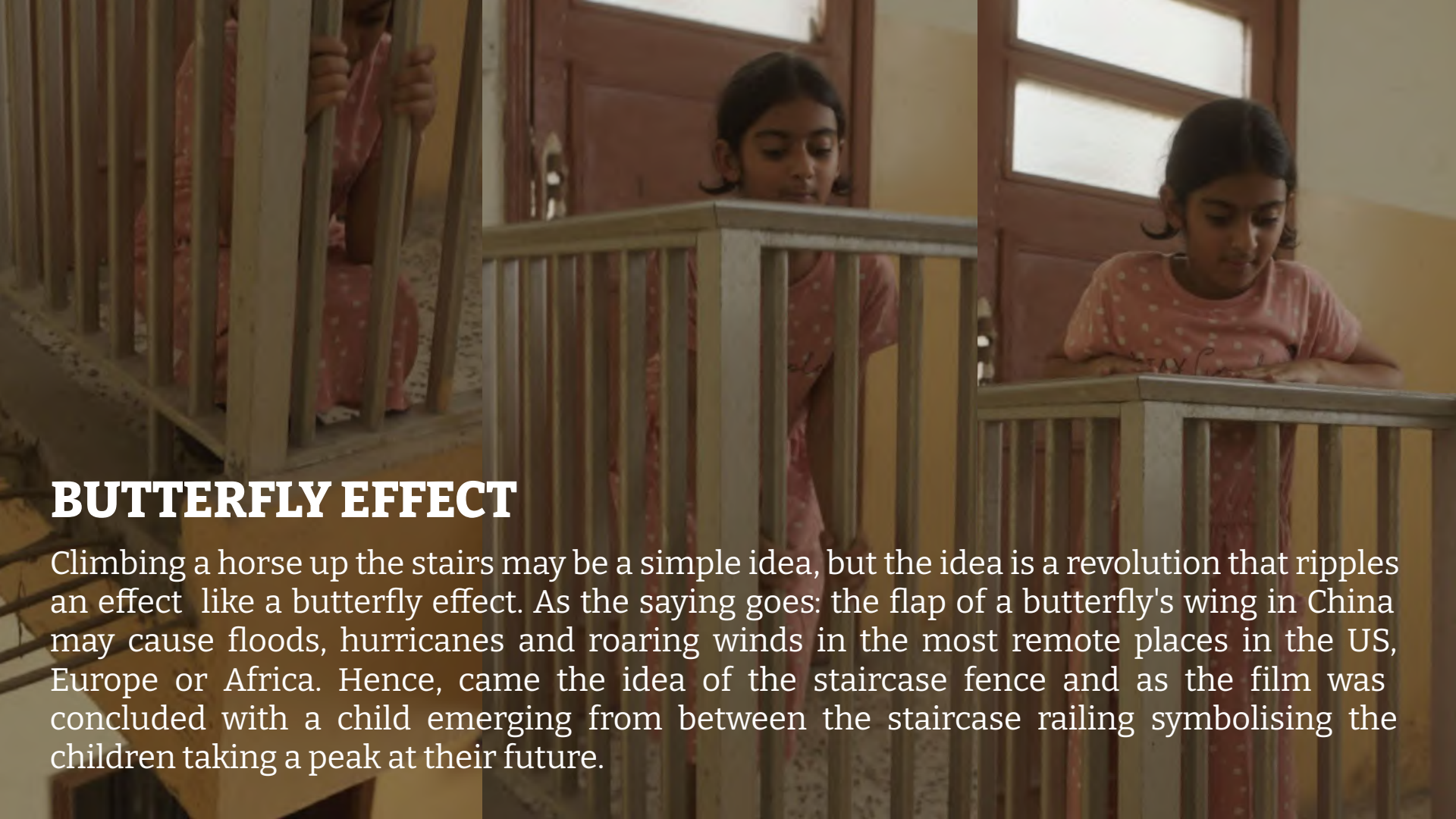
Qassim is a name in the Shiite history of a character from the battle of Karbala, who is a young man whose dream was to get married, but was killed in the war, and to this day the followers of the Shiite sect hold a traditional wedding for him in the days of Ashura because he never got the opportunity to marry .

Abu Ghayeb is a nickname given to a person who does not have children, indicating that the child is absent and did not come to the world for Abu Ghayeb to experience fatherhood. This gives a dimension to the personality of Abu Ghayeb in his dealings with a young man



MORAL OF STORY

An essential part of the concept is that everyone was indifferent to Qasim's goal, but rather everyone was invested in achieving their own goals, whether by passing through the stairs or the street. We do not pay attention to the problem of the people that surround us in life as long as they do not affect us, but we live in one world and one day others' problems may catch up to us, so let's come together to support the causes of others.



BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Climbing a horse up the stairs may be a simple idea, but the idea is a revolution that ripples an effect like a butterfly effect. As the saying goes: the flap of a butterfly's wing in China may cause floods, hurricanes and roaring winds in the most remote places in the US, Europe or Africa. Hence, came the idea of the staircase fence and as the film was concluded with a child emerging from between the staircase railing symbolising the children taking a peak at their future.

07

BEHIND THE SCENES

FILM IN NUMBERS

30+

CREW ON SET

38_{HOURS}

FILMING / 2 DAYS

14_{DAYS}

HORSE TRAINING

20+

ACTORS ON SET

3_{MONTHS}

PRE-PRODUCTION

65%

PERSONAL FUND



CASTING





REHEARSALS



PRE-LIGHT

The director insists to film the scenes in the real building which is **too tight** to convey the message of the film, therefore we had to pre-light it for one whole day before the shoot. Because we could not light from building from the inside, in order to maintain natural sunlight after sundown, the light had to be fixed on the exterior on the building on scaffoldings. .



BEHIND THE SCENES



BEHIND THE SCENES



08

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

The Bahraini short film tells the story of a young man trying to climb a horse up the stairs of a very narrow building to live with him in his apartment and oppose him to the neighbors of the building. Although the film appears as a fictional story, it is based on true events that took place in the heart of Manama, Bahrain. The story reflects the genuine experience of its director, Hashem Sharaf. The film also reflects the cry of young people in Arab societies who are facing difficulties in realizing their dreams because of the societies that oppose them.

The film includes a clear message about the need to pay attention to people's issues and not neglect their minor problems, as caring for others benefits the entire community, and silence will one day affect the masses, eventually. The film vocalises the voice of the dreams of the Arabic youth, and is a cry for societies fighting for their dreams.

The film is starring Omar Al-Saeedi and Mubarak Khamis, directed by Hashem Sharaf and also contributed to the production was the Isa Cultural Center. The production was filmed over the course of two days in Manama, Bahrain. The short film is 16 minutes long. More than 40 local talents, aspiring and professional filmmakers participated in the production of this film, and many of them volunteered to produce it because of their belief in the idea and the message the film conveys.

The film is a distinctive addition to Gulf and Arab cinema, as it is characterized by an impressive concept and message, but with a local comic character that makes viewers think about the issues facing Arab youth and their choices in life paths.

FAQS

01 What were the challenges you faced while filming?

One of the most important messages of the film is the difference between how wide and spacious the world is in comparison to how our thoughts and beliefs make it seem narrow and shallow. Hence, the director's deliberate choice to find a very narrow building to film at. With a limited budget we managed to find a building but it was challenging to fit a large crew in such a tight space in the scorching summer with a horse in the middle of the building for more than 16 hours over the course of two days. Note that the lighting of the building was difficult to control, so we had to close a part of the street in which the Ministry of Interior and the Traffic Department cooperated with us to put external floors for lighting to maintain daylight even after sundown.

02 What are the challenges you faced with the horse?

To be honest, I expected to have great difficulty controlling the horse, but it was normal, but the biggest difficulty was with the timing of the horse's excrement, which took a long time and was the biggest struggle in the movie.



03 How did you deal with the horse ?

The process of climbing the horse up the staircase is very complicated, and we had to do a training course for the horse for two weeks before filming. All thanks to the horse trainer, Jalal, for his training and patience until he reached this result, as the horse faced difficulties to stand on the tiled floor he provided special shoes to avoid slipping. Also, great credit goes to the art department as they trained to assemble and disassemble a slope on the staircase in a matter of minutes to make it easier for the horse to get back on the ground safely.



PHOTOGRAPHY



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**“SUPPORTING STORYTELLERS IS A
WAY OF SUPPORTING CULTURE,
AND CULTURE WHAT MAKE US
HUMAN”**

Neil Gaiman