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KAPO IN JERUSALEM

A play by Motti Lerner

©

Translated from Hebrew by Roy Isacowitz

This stage play is an adaptation of the screenplay “Kapo In Jerusalem,” which was directed by Uri Barbash and produced by Haim Sharir in 2014. The screenplay and stage play are partially inspired by the life of Eliezer Greenbaum, born in Poland (1908,) who was a deputy blockführer (block leader) in Auschwitz (1942 – 1945,) immigrated to Israel in 1946, lived in Jerusalem and died in the battle for Kibbutz Ramat Rachel during Israel's War of Independence (1948). All the characters in the play and all their stories are entirely fictitious. The playwright is grateful to Uri Barbash for his involvement in the development of the script from its inception and for his significant contribution to its final form.

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Characters

Bruno Kaminsky (40)	- Doctor, previously blockführer (block leader) in Auschwitz
Sarah Reich (36)	- Pianist, Bruno's wife, Auschwitz survivor
Karol Dubnov (60)	- Doctor, chairman of the Jerusalem Medical Association
Yulia Dubnov (56)	- His wife
Meir Zimmerman (45)	- Poet, Auschwitz survivor
Anton Kinstler (40)	- Unemployed, Auschwitz survivor
Dov Kovarsky (45)	- Manager of a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, Auschwitz survivor
Anshel Schwartz (30)	- Mentally ill, Auschwitz survivor
David Antman (56)	- Engineer, Auschwitz survivor
Shmuel Weissman (35)	- Shoemaker, Ultra-Orthodox, Auschwitz survivor

Style

The play is set in Jerusalem. Most of it consists of monologues by the characters. Bruno's monologues take place at the end of May 1948, before setting out for battle at Ramat Rachel during Israel's War of Independence. The monologues of the other characters take place in 1950. The monologues are primarily internal discourses which the others can see and hear and to which they can react.

Space

Each character has a separate space, which they seldom leave. Bruno's space is in the front of the stage, representing a military staging area before battle. Behind him, at a slightly higher level, are the spaces of the other characters. The central space on that level is the living room in Sarah's apartment, with a piano, couch and baby's crib. The other spaces are described in the stage directions. All the spaces are as minimalistic as possible. The battle sounds, too, are not intended to create a realistic atmosphere but to provide the minimalistic punctuation during Bruno's soul-searching.

Scenes

The play does not have scenes. The monologues are numbered in the script for simple identification during rehearsal.

1. Sarah's apartment

Night. Sarah is playing Chopin's nocturne no. 19 in e minor opus 72 no. 1 on the piano. Beside her, **Bubu**, an 18-month-old baby, sleeps in the crib.

2. Military staging area

Evening. Bruno, in uniform, is crouching on his knees with his medical pack open in front of him. But rather than arranging its contents, he is listening to the notes of the nocturne being played by Sarah.

3. Sarah's apartment

Sarah continues playing. There is knocking at the door. She ignores the knocking but it continues and becomes more insistent. She stops playing and exits to the door, at the back of the stage. Her conversation with a neighbor is heard from off-stage.

Sarah

OK, Mr. Buchman, sorry. I apologize. Good night.

She returns to the living room and sits as if to continue playing. Then she stops and closes the lid of the piano. She rises, lifts Bubu from the crib and holds him in her lap.

Sarah

Bruno really loved that nocturne. I would play it for him over and over and he never stopped asking for more. **(Silence.)** When I got out of Auschwitz, my fingers were stubborn. Arthritis. It took a full year until I could play again. He would massage my hands with almond oil, slowly and gently. **(To Bubu)** Are you sleepy, Bubu? **(She feels his forehead.)** We don't have a temperature today, right? Tomorrow we want you to be healthy. You promised.

She exits with him in the direction of his room.

4. Staging area

In the background, the sounds of explosions and firing from the Ramat Rachel battle, about a kilometer to the south.

Bruno

There are already dozens of casualties in the kibbutz. They might not make it until tonight. I'm not sure how much help I can be. In the Warsaw ghetto, we fought in streets. In houses. In basements. Not in the open ... **(Silence)** She's probably going out of her mind with worry. I hope she won't leave the house and come looking for me.

5. Sarah's apartment

Sarah enters the living room.

Sarah

When we came to Jerusalem, he worked at a public clinic. I taught at the conservatory. After a few months I got my period. We wanted a child so we decided to get married. In Warsaw, it wasn't important. I was a "bohemian." He was a communist. We loathed bourgeois rituals.

6. Staging area

Bruno is on his knees, arranging his medical pack.

Bruno

We knew we didn't stand a chance in Warsaw. When Anielewicz took a bullet to the throat, I tried to staunch the blood. Then I also got hit...
(Silence) The SS didn't want to keep us together after they captured us. I was sent to Majdanek, and from there to Auschwitz. Sarah had already been there four months. She was captured in our room during the January aktion. While they were waiting for the train, we entered the Umschlagplatz to rescue her. We shot a cop. The Germans opened fire and four of us were killed. **(Silence)** There was a carpenter in my block who worked in the women's camp. He found her. Occasionally, I would send her a note. **(Silence)** I've never heard anyone else play Chopin with such an appetite for life... **(The echo of shelling in the background)** That's Egyptian and Jordanian artillery. If the sun doesn't set soon, we won't find anyone alive out there...

7. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is sitting on the couch.

Sarah

We held the wedding in Dr. Dubnov's yard. He was chairman of the Medical Association. We didn't have family. Just a small group of friends who had survived. We invited a few doctors from the clinic and teachers from the conservatory. One pot of tea was enough for all of us.

8. Staging area

Bruno is still arranging his medical kit.

Bruno

I held out until the end. January 1945. Then I was sent on a death march to Mauthausen. The American army arrived on the fifth of May. I didn't know whether she had got out of Auschwitz alive. I didn't know if she had survived the march. For three weeks, I wandered between the shacks. I

dug through piles of the dead. **(The sound of an explosion in the distance. Bruno looks in the direction of the sound)** Something's burning there. The Jordanians have flame-throwers. They'll burn the entire kibbutz before it gets dark.

9. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov and Yulia, his wife, are sitting on a couch.

Dr. Dubnov

Bruno Kaminsky was an exceptional student at the medical school in Warsaw. I liked him, even though he was a communist. He lost his father when he was young. His mother had a fish stall in the market. He got up every morning to help her. In '32 we immigrated here and we lost touch. Then one day, a year after the war, he knocked on the door. We embraced. He said that after Auschwitz, it was necessary to build human civilization from scratch.

Yulia

We didn't know Sarah. But we'd heard of her. She was a child prodigy in Warsaw. At 12 she was already playing with the orchestra.

10. Kovarsky's office in the pharmaceutical manufacturing plant

Kovarsky pours himself a whiskey.

Kovarsky

When the Judenrat established the health service in the ghetto, he was sent to the hospital on Chista Street. I was running the pharmacy there. He was a brilliant surgeon. In '42, he joined the Jewish underground, which trained in our basement. He continued to operate, in impossible conditions. Sarah could no longer play and she'd come to help him. On hot days, she'd stand beside him while he was operating and wipe the sweat from his forehead. She'd comfort him when a patient died. Dozens died every day and he needed to be comforted for each and every one of them... **(The telephone on his desk rings and he lifts the receiver.)** Yes, Tilda ... the secretary has left ... yes. The heater is on, I'm not cold... so, light the fire in the lounge ... the matches are on the shelf ... if you didn't call every five minutes, I'd be home already. **(He puts down the phone.)** After she was sent to Auschwitz, he got hold of the two Jewish policemen who had captured her during the aktion. Rather than waste bullets, he broke their necks.

11. Sarah's apartment

Sarah pours herself a cup of tea.

Sarah

On the day of the wedding, the British ordered a curfew. Bruno was at the clinic and couldn't leave, so Dr. Dubnov sent an ambulance to bring him. A few minutes later, a postman arrived with a wedding telegram from the conservatory. It was addressed to me, Sarah Reich. When the postman saw Bruno, he began yelling that Bruno had tortured him when he was a blockführer in Auschwitz. The rabbi heard and decided he wasn't going to do the chuppah. Bruno didn't argue with him. God hadn't been with him in Auschwitz and he didn't need him at his wedding either.

The sound of Bubu crying is heard from the next room. Sarah hesitates for a moment. When the crying continues, she exits.

12. The mail sorting room in a branch of the post office

Zimmerman is seated at his desk.

Zimmerman

I open the gate, take out the telegram and give it to the bride, and all of a sudden, he's there. The groom! I fainted. That monster in Jerusalem? I was sure that he was in Argentina. Escaped with the Nazis, who he worked for. **(His anger grows.)** There was no bigger sadist than him in the whole of Auschwitz. We get down from the train at night. We are standing on the platform, confused, crushed. One of our kids has disappeared. I'm running around, searching, shouting, and he hits me with a baton. He hit a boy who was helping his father stand up. He hit a sick old man. He hit a woman. By morning, he had killed five people.

13. Staging area

Bruno is gazing in the direction of Ramat Rachel. Sounds of battle in the background.

Bruno

The fire is still raging. They have to send a sniper to get rid of that flamethrower. **(Returns to arranging his medical kit.)** When I got there, the prisoners suggested I be appointed to replace the blockführer who had been killed by the SS. They knew that I was a doctor and that I'd been in the underground. They thought I'd be able to defend them against the Germans. **(Silence)** Yes. I thought about myself, too. And about Sarah. The chances of surviving in that position were better. **(A stray bullet whistles overhead. He pauses and then continues.)** I wasn't naïve. I knew that blockführer was part of the killing machine. But when I saw

death run amok all around me, I knew I must pretend to be part of it, in order to save whoever I could.

14 Sarah's apartment

Sarah returns from the baby's room, sits on the couch and sips her tea. Her hand shakes, spilling drops of tea on the couch. She tries to clean the stain with a cloth.

Sarah

I heard the rumors about what Bruno was doing in his block. But I didn't believe them. Over time, I heard more and more. Our blockführer also hit inmates with a whip. She sold our food for cigarettes. For vodka. For soap. After the war, when Bruno came to visit me in the American hospital, I didn't want to talk to him.

15. Kovarsky's office

Kovarsky pours himself another glass of whiskey.

Kovarsky

In Auschwitz I worked as a chemist in the munitions plant. It was a safe job. The Germans needed chemists. I didn't know he was alive. On Christmas Eve in '43, one of the SS officers got drunk and began firing in my block. I ran away, looking to hide in one of the other blocks. None of them would let me in. Then, suddenly, I saw him standing in the entrance to his block. He recognized me and let me in, along with thirty others. He knew that the Germans would find out if he let any more in. Those he didn't let in accused him of working for the SS. **(Angrily)** Working for the SS? He hid the sick so they wouldn't be sent to the gas! He persuaded the registration clerks to falsify the ages of older prisoners so the SS would let them live! He demanded that I sabotage the electricity system to disrupt the manufacture of armaments! He helped everyone who wanted to escape.

16. Mail sorting room in the post office

Zimmerman is coughing. After a few seconds his coughing abates.

Zimmerman

The next day I went to the clinic and told his boss about him. But he knew I was a poet and a revisionist, and he wouldn't listen. I returned to Dr. Dubnov. I told him that the Nazis must have been happy with Bruno, if they kept him as blockführer for two years. **(Silence)** I worked in the rubber factory. One day, a metal pipe fell on my arm. I begged him: "It's broken. Leave me in the block. I'll sweep with one hand." But he wanted to please his SS friends and sent me to the sick block. From there, the

way to the gas was short. "So many poets have died, what's another one?"

17. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov and Yulia are sitting on the couch.

Dr. Dubnov

Zimmerman was an important poet in Warsaw, but he returned from Auschwitz a changed man. His entire family was killed. I had difficulty believing him, but he didn't let up. He brought more and more survivors and they also testified.

Yulia

A cousin of mine was in Bruno's block. After the war, he wrote us from America. **(She shows the letter)** "When he learned that I had stolen a blanket from a dead prisoner and used it to line my shirt, he beat me mercilessly."

Dr. Dubnov

I thought that I needed to hold an inquiry. We couldn't employ a doctor suspected of abuse. But I mainly wanted to help Bruno disperse the cloud that had gathered over him.

18. Staging area

Bruno continues to organize his medical kit.

Bruno

Yes, I beat prisoners on the night they arrived. When I heard of a transport arriving from Poland, I waited on the platform, looking for people I knew. As soon as their feet touched the ground, bright lights came on. Orders were screamed in German. Shoving. Whip lashes. Dogs. Families were separated. Their possessions were taken from them. Hats, Coats. Babies were thrown into the trucks. They didn't understand the orders of the SS. They didn't know whether to stand or to go. To turn right or left. Had I not hit them, they would have been shot. But I never killed. Those who died were those who didn't survive the journey... those who suffocated in the sealed wagons without air and water.

An explosion from the direction of Ramat Rachel. Bruno glances and then returns to his medical kit.

Bruno

I told Sarah about it when I found her in the American Army hospital. I didn't hide anything. She lay in the bed. Shrunken. Shriveled. Unable to

flutter an eyelash. Three months I fed her and bathed her and told her.
And for three months she stayed silent.

19 Kinstler's basement

Kinstler is sitting on a torn mattress, wrapped in a blanket. A street dog he has adopted is stretched out beside him.

Kinstler

We had roll call every morning before going to work. Our feet were swollen and battered and he would beat us to hurry us up. People died from his blows. We would throw them on a lorry that went through the camp, picking up the dead from the blocks. Anyone who complained was sent to work on it. We carried the bodies like sacks. The best bodies were those of the withered musselmen. The worst were those who still had some meat on them. We took each body by the hands and feet and threw it onto the lorry until it was full. Sometimes, they would come apart and we would have to collect the pieces by hand and put them in buckets. One morning I said to him: Enough already. Every day I die with these dead. He turned and hit me with his baton. **(Shows his broken teeth.)** Broke five of my teeth. I testified before Dr. Dubnov, so I could get them fixed.

20. Sarah's apartment

Sarah takes a pill out of a bottle and swallows it. Then she goes to the piano, sits down and opens the lid. She reconsiders, closes the lid and returns to the couch. She lights a cigarette then puts it out. Rubs the tea stain. Stops.

Sarah

The piano calls me again. Come. Come. When I can no longer stand the noise, I sit and play. And the noise fades. The screams. The howls. The cries... When the notes sound dead, I bite my hands so as not to break the keys and run to the train tracks...

21. Staging area

Bruno's medical kit is in front of him. He is unable to continue organizing it.

Bruno

Yes, I beat prisoners during the morning roll call. They stood outside in the darkness, frozen with cold. Every moment was indescribable suffering. Everyone who was late had to be punished. I also beat those who didn't want to go to work. I knew that if they were caught in the block, they'd be sent straight to the gas. Those beatings saved their lives. And I didn't give release notes to those who weren't ill. The SS used to do spot checks and malingers were punished. Me, too. Those who didn't

get a note in the morning and found out that there hadn't been a search, thought I was heartless. **(A stray bullet whistles past.)** I also beat prisoners who were too lazy to go to the latrines at night and pissed and shat in the food bowls. Going outside in the frost at night was more frightening than getting typhus or dysentery.

22. Kinstler's basement

Kinstler is still stroking the dog.

Kinstler

One time, I had a high temperature. I asked him to release me from work. He was a doctor. He knew I had pneumonia. But he wouldn't. When I healed, I was still weak. The others allowed me to go to the head of the line to get more soup. He saw it and pulled me out of the line, beat me and gave the extra soup to a friend of his. A communist from Warsaw.

23. The staging area

Bruno is sitting next to his medical kit and cleaning his rifle.

Bruno

I also beat prisoners when the food was being handed out. They would attack the soup like wild animals, pushing, knocking each other over, trampling underfoot. Sometimes, they'd even stab each other to get a little more. The other blockführers would empty the remains of the soup onto the ground to avoid the bedlam. I demanded discipline so I could distribute all the soup. So, my prisoners ate more. And I ate with them from the same vat, although I could have eaten alone in my room.

(Silence) One day, an SS officer sent me to Block 7 to get some musselmen to repair fences that had collapsed under the snow. I told him that they were unable to move. He said: We'll soon see. And threw a few pieces of bread amongst them. The musselmen began crawling around for the bread. Those who were unable to move held out their arms in the hope that a piece would fall on them. One living corpse strangled another, to take some chewed crumbs from his mouth.

24. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is sitting on the couch. She's having trouble speaking. After a short while, she begins folding the baby clothes on the couch beside her.

Sarah

Bruno tried to answer the allegations against him. He brought witnesses to the hospital who told me what he had done in Auschwitz. How he had defended them. How he had cared for them. How he saved them. But I

knew that those witnesses had remained alive because he helped them.
That's why they testified for him.

25. Room in a mental hospital

Anshel Schwartz, wearing a hospital gown, is sitting on his bed.

Anshel

Bruno was an excellent thief. No-one stole from the Germans like he did. He stole food from the kitchen. Wood to heat the block. Once he gave me new shoes and another time a coat. I told Dr. Dubnov. I also told how he beat people. When he caught one prisoner stealing from another, he would beat him in front of everyone. So they would see. The only thing we thought about there was how to steal. The strong stole from the weak. The weak died and the strong after them. People steal here as well. Yesterday, someone stole my shoes. I put them in my bed, under the blanket, when I went to sleep. In the morning they were gone. They had leather soles...

A clear memory passes through his mind.

Anshel

When the SS guards were prowling between the blocks looking for Jews to torture, he would seat me in the entrance to our block and I would sing to them. **(Sings in German)**

Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt	Kling hinaus, bis an das Haus,
Liebliches Geläute.	Wo die Blumen sprießen.
Klinge, kleines Frühlingslied.	Wenn du eine Rose schaust,
Kling hinaus ins Weite.	Sag, ich laß sie grüßen ¹

They would stop and listen, then move on to another block. They didn't know the song was written by two Jews, Heine and Mendelssohn...

(Laughs)

¹

Softly singing measures wing
Sweetly, through my mind.
Ring out, little song of spring,
Ring out unconfined!

Ring far out, where blossoms sprout
Round a house you'll see.
If you find a rose about,
Say hello for me.

26. Sarah's apartment

Sarah continues to fold the baby's clothes.

Sarah

One day, while he was sitting beside me in the hospital, Jewish Agency messengers entered and told him they had an entry certificate into Israel for him. He said he wouldn't leave without me. They explained to him that there would not be any more certificates, but he insisted and they got one for me, too. He carried me to the ship in his arms and cared for me the entire trip. I thought that if he had any doubt about what he did in Auschwitz he wouldn't go to Israel.

Bubu begins crying off-stage. Sarah calls to him.

Sarah

Sleep, Bubu, sleep. The horrible Rosa is coming tomorrow. You can't be sick. You can't be tired. **(The baby grows quiet.)** He thought that in Jerusalem, with all its survivors, they'd understand what he did there.

27. Finkelman's grocery

Finkelman is standing at the counter.

Finkelman

I had a fish shop in Warsaw, beside his mother's shop. In Auschwitz, he appointed me as his assistant. I wanted to testify on his behalf, but I knew my customers would stop buying from me. **(Silence)** No other blockführer looked after the prisoners like he did. The soup he brought from the kitchen was thicker than the others got. Every few weeks, he'd bring us clean clothes from the laundry. He even brought us underwear a few times. He organized shoe repairs in the block. It saved lives. There, death began with the shoes. If your shoes were broken and you began to limp, they immediately sent you to the gas. Those who accuse him of sending people to the gas, don't understand how the machine worked. Only the SS sent to the gas.

28. Kovarsky's office

Kovarsky has another drink.

Kovarsky

In April '44, he asked me to get hold of wire-cutters for him. You don't have a chance of escaping, I told him. Better you stay here and help people to survive. But he insisted. I didn't see him for 10 days. I was certain he'd escaped. Then, on the eleventh day, I met him outside the clothing storeroom. His lips were swollen and his eyes bloody. Someone

had given him away. The SS had beaten him unconscious. The wire-cutters were for someone else, he told me. **(Pause.)** Both of us were workers the Germans needed and we knew that our chances of survival were better in the camp than in the forest. The SS hunted down almost everyone who escaped... **(The telephone rings and he answers.)** One second, Tilda... The suitcase is on top of the cupboard. I put it there... But what do you need a suitcase for? We're not going anywhere... **(She hangs up.)**

29. Sarah's apartment

Sarah continues folding the baby's clothes.

Sarah

Bloody Rosa will come tomorrow to check that the child is healthy, that he's clean, that he doesn't have any welts or bruises. That he doesn't have lice. "By order of the welfare office," she'll say, and she'll look for dust under the bed...

She stops folding.

Sarah

On the ship, I thought a lot about what Bruno had done there. I also thought about what I had done. I got out alive because when my shoes fell apart, I stole a pair from the woman in the bunk above me, even though I knew that the sergeant would shoot her in the morning when he found her barefoot. I stole clothes from women in the shower. I stole a blanket from a woman sick with fever. I pushed old women and girls in the soup queue. I stole bread from an aunt of mine with dysentery, knowing that in the morning she would die of hunger... She didn't die. She stole bread from a woman who was weaker than her... I met her again after the war. On the ship. Bruno took me out for a walk on the deck. She sat on a pile of ropes repairing her coat. She saw me ... and turned away.

She goes outside to bring clothes from the washing line.

30. Staging area

Bruno is holding one of his boots and pulling a nail out of the sole with pliers.

Bruno

Yes, I took bread from the prisoners. It happened once every two weeks, when the SS sent me the list of those going to the gas the next day. I knew that their fate was sealed, so I gave their bread to others who had a chance of surviving. I also gave their clothes to others. A good coat and

good shoes could prolong life. They hated me. They cursed me. But it was necessary... It was clear that the Nazis wanted to exterminate all of us. I tried to establish rules that would help the prisoners hold on. Most of them understood it. They saw that the death rate was lowest in my block. Those who complained to Dr. Dubnov were the ones who didn't understand, who were unable to think, due to the hunger and the cold. When a prisoner in the block died, they were the ones who rushed to take his clothes, even though they were filthy with shit, full of typhus and dysentery bacteria. They knew that if the clothes weren't washed and disinfected they themselves would be infected. But they insisted that they would die of pneumonia if they went to work in the frost without them.

31 Kinstler's basement

Kinstler is sitting on the bed and stroking the dog stretched out beside him.

Kinstler

One day, I went with him to the laundry to get blankets. Suddenly we saw a young girl, a Czech, running away from Block 24, the SS brothel. He threw a blanket over her and told her to hide in our block... She was in his room for three hours... three hours... then he handed her over to the blockführer 32, who also... **(He finds a louse in the dog's fur.)** Lice. **(He hits the dog.)** Son of a bitch! My bed's probably full of them already. **(He repents and strokes the dog.)** Sit, Yanek. Sit... He knew that in the sick block there was no chance of survival, but when someone got typhus he sent him there immediately, "so the others wouldn't catch it." When he himself got typhus, he forced us to look after him. My best friend, Yanek Tauber, caught it from him and died. **(He takes a piece of bread from his pocket.)** Take, Yanek, take. I'll clean you after the rain. **(He pats the dog's head.)** I took him in a cart to the sick block. Piles of bodies were heaped up outside. Some were already decomposing. Rats were feeding on them. Every minute, another body was thrown on the piles. The lorry that took the bodies to the crematorium couldn't keep up. The doctors registered him and sent him straight to the gas. He was 25-years-old.

32 Finkelman's grocery

Finkelman is leaning on the counter.

Finkelman

That's right. Bruno had typhus. There was an epidemic at the beginning of '44. Dozens got it in our block. They had to empty their bowels every few minutes. They couldn't get to the latrines, so they did it in buckets. When they couldn't get to the buckets, they messed the floor, their bunks, the blankets. They didn't shower, didn't wash their clothes. I knew

that if Bruno didn't recover and get things organized, we'd all die within weeks. I locked him in his room and looked after him for a month. And the whole time I had to hide him from the SS, who would have sent him to the sick block. He himself didn't believe that he would live. He couldn't eat. Out of sheer despair, he spilled the remaining food on the ground. He didn't have the strength to argue or to beat, so he informed on the prisoners to the SS. On those who ran wild. Those who stole, who were late, who avoided work. I had to guard him day and night to prevent the prisoners from killing him...

33. Staging area

Bruno puts on the boot from which he had extracted the nail.

Bruno

But there were those it was impossible to save. They lay exhausted on the bunks. Slowly sinking into hell. They didn't move. Barely spoke. Already unable to drag themselves to the electrified fence. **(Silence)** In Auschwitz, there was only one way to help these musselmen. **(Silence)** Afterwards, I hid them for a few days...to give their food to those who still had a chance...

34. Antman's apartment

David Antman, dressed in a suit, is sitting on a chair.

Antman

One day, in early '47, the poet Zimmerman approached me and asked me to testify before Dr. Dubnov. I had a belly full of stuff, but I told only one thing. **(Clears his throat)** In April '44, the Germans began building new blocks in Birkenau. I was a construction engineer and they moved me from the coal mines to the camp. One day, work was stopped because of rain. I returned to the block, where I saw Bruno put a coat over the face of a prisoner and strangle him. **(Wipes his face with a handkerchief and continues.)** When he realized that I had seen, he returned me to the mine, to the lowest tunnels, without air, in the poisonous dust... **(Pauses)** He told Dr. Dubnov that I was trying to get back at him because my son had died in his block. A sentry saw the child smiling and shot him. It took him the whole night to die. Outside. Next to the door. Bruno wouldn't let me go to him. He wouldn't let me cover him with a blanket. Moistened his lips with water.

35. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov and Yulia are sitting on the couch.

Dr. Dubnov

Bruno didn't deny that he had strangled the prisoner. I told him that I had no option but to send the protocol to our legal adviser. But he didn't let up. He locked the door and forced me to listen to him.

36. Staging area

Bruno puts leggings (puttees) on the boots.

Bruno

The prisoners knew that I helped musselmen die. They thanked me. The only one who complained to Dr. Dubnov was a survivor whose son was shot to death by the SS in front of his eyes. His name was Antman. I didn't let him leave the block to tend to his son, because I knew that the SS would shoot him if he got near the boy. He listened to his son's groans the entire night... Antman didn't forgive me and he didn't forgive himself. He didn't eat. Didn't work. When he felt he was dying, he demanded that I help him go. But I couldn't play God any longer. I told him to crawl to the fence. He didn't have the courage. Next day, he began to eat. He blames me for his guilt until today.

37. Finkelman's grocery

Finkelman is standing at the counter.

Finkelman

There were two Slovak Jews with us who planned to escape. Bruno got them wire-cutters, knives, clothes. Some food. They waited for the rain. There was a better chance of getting away in the rain. One night I heard two musselmen discussing how they would betray these Slovaks to the SS for some bread. I told Bruno. He questioned them and told me to strangle them... I saw that he could no longer do it himself... so I strangled them... the Slovaks escaped... **(Silence)** Until today, I think it was the best thing I ever did. And until today I thank him, Bruno, for giving me the strength to do it.

38. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov and Yulia are sitting on the couch.

Dr. Dubnov

I asked him how many he killed. He thought for a moment and said five.

Yulia

He killed more.

Dr. Dubnov

I lifted the phone and told him I was calling the police. He took the phone from me and said that no judge on earth was capable of judging him as he judged himself. He asked for another five minutes and promised that if, after that, I still wanted to go to the police, he would go himself.

39. Sarah's apartment

Sarah returns with more baby clothes from the clothesline on the balcony. She sits and begins to fold them.

Sarah

In my block, we had kapos who kept alive those who begged to die. We called them "murderers." There were kapos who helped people die. We called them "angels." The Nazis didn't demand that Bruno kill. They wanted the Jews to suffer as much as possible. Had they known, they would have killed him.

She picks up the folded clothes and leaves the room.

40. Staging area

Bruno is sitting beside his medical kit.

Bruno

I knew why Dr. Dubnov was so shocked. He was unable to conceive of a world in which killing is an act of kindness. Where being compassionate means inflicting suffering. People who I took pity on and prolonged their lives hated me because I had prolonged their suffering. Even those who survived hate me, because they continue to suffer today, as if they were still there. And I didn't strangle with a coat. I strangled with my bare hands. So I could see their faces. So that if they were to change their minds, I could stop. They couldn't speak. They barely opened their eyes. Only a thin crack would open between their eyelashes. None of them changed their minds. Their eyes thanked me.

Sudden firing is heard close-by. Bruno lies on the ground. After a few moments, he stands up.

Bruno

Those are stray shots. The Arabs are busy with the kibbutz. Not us.

41. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov pours himself water from a pitcher and drinks.

Dr. Dubnov

After I heard him, I understood that I don't understand; that I can't understand. The witnesses against him were very persuasive, but so were his answers. I was unable to decide whether he acted to save himself or for the benefit of the prisoners. It was clear that he wanted to be saved, but in many cases he also saved. **(Painfully)** Is it possible that the order he maintained in the block helped the Germans conduct the extermination? Or maybe it was that order that enabled the lucky ones to work and prolonged their lives? Did he try, as he said, to create a moral code in Auschwitz, or were his moral arguments born here, in Jerusalem, to justify his actions there? I couldn't decide, and therefore I was unable to expel him from the association. I thought that the Jewish Agency should have established a special court to investigate all suspicions of collaboration with the Nazis.

Yulia

It was a big mistake. Because he was not expelled, he was able to fool himself that his actions had been understood and that he could continue to live here. I was not fooled by his charm. It was clear to me that he had been corrupted by the power the Nazis gave him. I've never believed communists, especially a communist who suddenly becomes a Zionist. The Nazis weren't fools. It makes no sense that for two years he could persuade them that he was working for them, while behind their backs he was working for the Jews.

Dr. Dubnov

Enough already! Please.

42. Staging area

Bruno is still sitting beside his medical kit.

Bruno

Appelbaum was 46. From Katowice. Tarnopolski was 42. From Wroclaw. Kantor was 40. From Bedzin. Zuckerman and Edelman were both 38. From Warsaw. They were musselmen. In Auschwitz I took pity on them and I shortened their suffering. But I also despised them and hated them

because they gave up. **(Silence)** Today, when I think of the gratitude I saw in their eyes, I'm no longer certain that they gave up. I'm not sure they thanked me for relieving their suffering. They thanked me for giving them one last moment as human beings, in which they were masters of their own fate. Them, and not the SS.

43. Sarah's apartment

Sarah enters. In her arms, she's holding Bubu, who is just waking up. She scolds him gently.

Sarah

You must sleep, Bubu. If you don't sleep, you'll be tired tomorrow. You'll cry. Your eyes will be red. Horrible Rosa will say that mommy doesn't look after you and will want to take you... **(She regrets what she said.)** Don't worry, Bubu, mommy won't give you to anyone... Not to anyone in the whole world... **(Bubu calms down.)** He had a bad dream. Soon, he'll fall asleep. He needs his father. **(Silence)** He would lie on the bed beside me and listen to the movements in the womb. He would sing me Mordechai Gvirtig's song "Yankele." He thought of naming the baby Yankele, after his father, who was also a communist and died in a Polish prison. But I called him Bruno. Sometimes I call him what he calls himself – Bubu. I'm sure he remembers his voice. **(Sings in Yiddish.)**

Sleep, my child, shut your eyes
Sleep, sleep, my Yankele
A little boy who already has all his teeth
Doesn't sleep without a lullaby?

You're still a baby, my child, but you must be careful of mommy. Be careful of her and look after her. When she goes out to the balcony to hang up washing. When she cuts bread with a knife. When she lights the oven. When she cries and when she laughs and when she's silent.

44. Room in a mental hospital

Anshel Schwartz, agitated, is standing on his bed.

Anshel

I don't need to be here. Bruno will look after me. He'll give me pills, bread and water and I'll wash the floor at his clinic. Bruno is a mensch, even when no-one else around is. **(Sits)** When my father died there, they threw his body onto the pile. I knew that he had a piece of bread in his coat, so I rushed to the pile to get it. But another bastard understood. He ran faster than me and took the piece for himself. Bruno saw and forced him to give it to me. **(He gets up and shouts at an unseen nurse.)** Call Bruno, nurse. Now. I want to talk to him. I want him to get me out of

here. **(Sits)** When we used to return from work, he would distribute the soup. Good soup. Thick. One vat was enough for a thousand people. At night, he would go from bunk to bunk, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead.

45. Staging area

Bruno is cleaning his rifle.

Bruno

We set out on the death march on January 18, 1945. Sixty-six thousand skeletons wrapped in rags. Fifty-six kilometers until the railway station in Wadzislav. Most of the Germans had already fled the advancing Russians. Several hundred prisoners took advantage of the chaos to hide in the deserted buildings of the camp, where they waited for the Red Army. In my block, no-one stayed behind. They all went with me. Nearly all survived. **(Silence)** The sun is finally going down.

46. Mail sorting room

Zimmerman is coughing.

Zimmerman

When I saw that Dr. Dubnov was not going to suspend him, I went to the press and told them about his actions in Auschwitz. Haaretz published a small article on its back page and even quoted a verse from my song "Our Graves."

Here lie my father and mother, here my sister
On this stone descended the ashes of my wife
This wind carries the dust of my son and daughter
Above these linden trees my soul steals.

The next day, two English policemen arrived at the central post office on Jaffa Street, where I was working. "You have tuberculosis," they said and took me to a hospital in Netanya. I had suffered from TB, but only he knew about it.

47. Staging area

Bruno continues cleaning his rifle.

Bruno

The complaints against me didn't stop. One day, I found the word "Kapo" scribbled on my door at the clinic. Doctors asked questions. Nurses gossiped. Patients kept their distance. Again and again, I was asked why I hadn't urged the prisoners to revolt or escape... **(Silence)** Once, I entered

a block with four-hundred political prisoners consigned to death. Two guards watched over them. I advised them to escape. I said that if four-hundred stormed the gate, at least some would get through and make it to the forest. But if they waited to be taken to the gas chambers, none of them would survive. They didn't answer. Each was locked inside himself, hoping for a miracle. They had heard from the Germans themselves that the Russians were close. That the war would soon be over. That there was no point in escaping. The greatest cause of death in Auschwitz was hope.

48. Antman's apartment

Antman is sitting on a chair.

Antman

When I saw that he was still working, I went to his boss at the clinic. But he said it was impossible to fire him without a hearing. Then, one morning, before the public began arriving, I went and wrote "Kapo" on his door, in black.

49. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is holding Bubu in her arms.

Sarah

The rumors about his investigation got to the conservatory as well. Some of the teachers began asking questions. Students, too. Then the director called me in and told me she was cancelling my end-of-year concert. Because of the war, she said. Because of the Arab shooting. I said to her: But other concerts are being held. Sometimes it is possible, she said. The next day was the concert of another pianist. As the audience was arriving, I went on stage and played. He understood and waited. The director sat in the first row. When I finished, she applauded. She didn't dare fire me. I never told Bruno.

Bubu begins crying and she again tries to calm him.

Sarah

Enough, Bubu, enough...

50. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov and Yulia are sitting in their chairs.

Dr. Dubnov

The head of the clinic told me that he didn't intend firing him. But a few weeks later, Bruno told me that he had resigned.

Yulia

He knew that they were going to fire him.

Dr. Dubnov

He resigned because the suspicions against him were intolerable.

Yulia

And also apparently because he didn't have the right answers.

Dr. Dubnov

They weren't right for us because we didn't know enough. Maybe he was right. Maybe in a place of such cruelty, one also has to be cruel in order to save. **(Silence)** Eventually, he opened a private clinic in Musrara. Opposite his apartment. I visited them sometimes. Unfortunately, I couldn't invite them here.

51. Sarah's apartment

Sarah speaks while trying to calm the crying Bubu.

Sarah

One day, an ultra-Orthodox couple came to the clinic. She had a throat infection. When the husband saw Bruno, he became enraged. I could hear his shouting from here.

52. Weissman's shoe repair shop

Shmuel Weissman is an ultra-Orthodox shoe-maker, with a beard and side-locks. He is wearing an apron.

Weissman

He forced us to shave our beards and side-locks. Forbade us from praying. Mocked us for not eating treife. Once, it was Sabbath eve, he entered the block and saw us standing and praying. He beat us with a baton and warned us that we wouldn't get bread the following day if we didn't stop. "God can't save you. Only I can. So, don't worship him, worship me," he barked. On Rosh Hashanah, he demanded that our rabbi, Rabbi Yisrael Mintz of Krakow, cancel the prayers. He informed him

that if he didn't forbid us from fasting on Yom Kippur, he wouldn't give him the ointment he needed for the sores on his legs. When he saw that we all were fasting, he sent Rabbi Mintz, may God avenge his blood, to the sick block, where they stuck a needle in his heart... **(Silence)** And now that murderer, in his clinic, in a white gown, smiles. My body began to boil. I grabbed a pair of scissors and tried to stab him. Suddenly, his wife appeared and began shouting...

53. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is pacing the room with Bubu in her arms.

Sarah

When we got home, we discovered that he had actually managed to stab him. In the shoulder. The blade of the scissors went right through his coat and his shirt. I licked the blood from the wound, like we used to do there.

54. Staging area

Bruno finishes cleaning his rifle.

Bruno

I wanted to go to the police, but I was concerned that other ultra-Orthodox survivors would come out against me. I knew that they hated me. They didn't understand that I demanded they shave their beards and side-locks so the Germans wouldn't abuse them. I forbade them from praying because, had the SS seen them, they would have dragged them outside, in the cold and rain, for roll call. And afterwards they would have forced them to do "exercises" until they collapsed. **(Silence)** They hate me because they're too scared to hate their God, who didn't save them. It's easier to hate me. **(Silence)** But I bought a pistol. The salesman saw the number on my arm and said: You're among the lucky ones. I had luck? Weissman had luck. And Zimmerman. And Kinstler. I counted them. Two-hundred and thirty-eight men from my block survived the death march and made it to Mauthausen alive. Those who were here say: So few? Those who were there say: So many? I waited. I thought they would stand up and speak.

55. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov and Yulia sit side-by-side. The tension between them is palpable.

Dr. Dubnov

I rushed to his clinic when I heard about the attempt to stab him, but it was locked. He only opened the door after identifying me through the spy-hole. I told him he was risking his life and that of Sarah, and

suggested that he leave the country. I had contacts with the British and could organize him a visa to England. He refused.

Yulia

If you had told him the truth, he would have left.

Dr. Dubnov

I told him.

Yulia

You didn't tell him that they were boycotting him. That there was no way anyone would forgive him. That everyone who had been in his block was waiting for a chance to kill him.

Dr. Dubnov

(To Yulia)

I should have acquitted him and cleared his name. I didn't, because I didn't want to interrogate him. I didn't, because my parents, my brothers, my sisters and all their children had been there. I didn't want to know how they were tortured. How they were killed, while we were here...

He gets up suddenly and exits.

56. Kovarsky's office

Kovarsky is sitting behind the desk with his head in his hands.

Kovarsky

He went to Israel after the war. I stayed there, with a few other survivors. We had lists of SS men who had been in Auschwitz. Over time, some officers and soldiers who had been with the British Army's Jewish Brigade also joined us. We killed many Nazis. In April '46, we managed to get into Stalag 13, near Nuremburg, where German prisoners were being held, and spread arsenic on 3,000 loaves of bread. Nine-thousand SS men got sick, though only 200 died, unfortunately. Then I came to Israel and began to work here. I knew of the allegations against Bruno, but I hesitated about defending him. I wanted to erase the past. I didn't want to be asked questions about how I survived. I didn't want rumors to begin about how I took revenge. **(The phone rings. He answers despairingly.)** The suitcase broke because you over-fill it... Why do you need two coats?... I don't need a coat, Tilda... OK... Fine.... Maybe you should take a pill? ... OK. I'll bring you a new suitcase.

57. Mail sorting room

Zimmerman sits at his desk, coughing.

Zimmerman

I was hospitalized for several weeks. When I returned to Jerusalem, I knew that the Jewish Agency wouldn't do anything. He was one of them. He fought in the ghetto with Anielewicz. So I went to the revisionists and they agreed to deal with him. I thought that shooting was too good for him. I wanted them to beat him to death. We waited outside his clinic. When he left the clinic, we approached him, with balaclavas over our faces and clubs under our clothes. It was night. One streetlight was lit. When they started beating him, I suddenly saw his face. It showed no sign of fear. Only insult, as if he was being wronged. And suddenly a sound came out of me. A sound that was foreign to me. It's not him. It's a mistake. The revisionists let him go and walked off. He never saw my face, because of the balaclava, but he heard my voice. **(Coughs heavily.)** Pity, I used to tell him there. Every day. Pity, Bruno, pity. The Nazi bastards have no pity. If only you had a little more, people would have had the strength to suffer. **(He takes a piece of paper off the desk and begins to read it.)**

At night, God hurried to the platform
To see his sons; is it really so terrible?
The engine's siren blared, deafening his ears
And he didn't hear their cries.

He saw immense flames
Leaping from the chimneys,
But the cold froze his nostrils
To the smell of their burning bodies.

He petted the heads of the dogs
Wagging their tails for him,
Smiled at the faithful guards
Whose belts were engraved with his name.

And as the smoke burned his eyes
And tears wet his cheeks,
He dried them with the edge of his coat
Turned, and continued on his way.

58. Staging area

An explosion is heard close to the position. Bruno doesn't react.

Bruno

Yes, I recognized Zimmerman's voice. I wasn't surprised. He was an excellent poet. I respected him and his poetry. But he thought that he deserved special status because of that. That he'd get easy work. New shoes. Extra soup... **(Silence)** His wife was pregnant when they got there. She was sent to the gas that same night. With their two small children... His chances of survival were also low. He wasn't used to working. He didn't know how to dig with a shovel or use a hammer. He didn't know how to steal. He spoke loftily about the spirit of man, about belief, hope and compassion... but eventually he became a petty SS informer. For a piece of bread, he informed on shirkers, on the sick, on thieves, on black-marketers. And on me.

59. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is pacing with Bubu in her arms, trying to get him to sleep.

Sarah

That night, Bruno came home hurt. He stitched the cut in his cheek by himself. I suggested that we move someplace else, perhaps even a distant kibbutz where we wouldn't meet people who knew him there. But he was convinced of his innocence and said that leaving would be an admission of guilt. **(She sees that Bubu has fallen asleep. She doesn't want to let go of him but is afraid he might wake up again.)** I should put him to bed.

60. Staging area

The sound of artillery fire is growing louder.

Bruno

I didn't want to run away, because there was nowhere we could hide. There were thousands of survivors in the country. I had to clear my name. I went to the party headquarters in Jerusalem and asked that I be put on trial. They said they were too busy with the rebellion against the British and the expected war with the Arabs. They didn't have time for the past. **(Silence)** Sarah accompanied me from home to the clinic every morning and from the clinic home every evening. She imprisoned me every night. She played for me. She tried to teach me to play. I loved being her prisoner.

61. Weissman's shoe repair shop

Weissman is sitting at his work-bench.

Weissman

I couldn't continue living, with him just two streets away from me. I went to Rabbi Landau. He said to me: "Forget, Weissman. Fix shoes. Pray. Give to charity. The Lord will give you the strength to continue." I repaired shoes. I prayed. I gave to charity. But every day, when I went to the synagogue, I had to pass his clinic. One night I saw him leaving it with a fresh loaf of bread in his hand; he was tearing pieces from it and eating them. **(Silence)** At midnight, I returned with a can of paraffin. I poured it on the door and lit it. I wanted to burn his house, too, but his wife came from a family of rabbis, all of whom died in Treblinka. I didn't want to harm her.

62. Sarah's apartment

Sarah returns to the room. Unable to sit still on the couch, she paces backwards and forwards.

Sarah

We had a good idea who had burned the clinic, but Bruno refused to go to the police. He didn't want to settle a score. Didn't want to punish. He started receiving patients at home. I told him that I was afraid someone might burn down our apartment, but he said it was too close to other apartments and those bastards would be careful about harming neighbors. Then I found out that I was pregnant. I have never seen Bruno so happy. We went to a bar on Ben Yehuda Street. Luckily, no-one recognized us. Bruno was a wonderful dancer. The band played fox-trot... **(Silence)** But when we passed the burned clinic on the way home, I knew that I couldn't bring up a child in a home that could be burned at any moment. I had seen enough burned people.

She is not in control of herself. She sits at the piano, lifts up the lid and begins playing Chopin's Fantaisie-Impromptu opus 66. After a moment, knocking is again heard at the door. Her anger is at boiling point. She stops playing and hurries to the imaginary door.

Sarah

Go hang yourself, Buchman. I'm not afraid of the police. If you don't stop knocking, I'll poison those cats of yours that howl all night...

She returns to the living room, takes a pill from the drawer and swallows it. She sits on the couch, notices the stain and smells it.

Sarah

The bitch is coming tomorrow. She'll smell that damn stain and ask why the child vomited. She'll say that I'm not looking after him. That I'm neglecting him. She'll call me irresponsible. Mad...

She gets up, wets a cloth and tries unsuccessfully to clean the stain. After a few moments, she gets frustrated and stops. She sits bewildered on the couch.

Sarah

Take me in your arms, Bruno. Allow me to lie with you. Slip off my nightgown and whisper in my ear. Whisper wonders that will sweeten my spirit...

63. Staging area

The sun is setting. Bruno is putting on his webbing (belts, packs and pouches).

Bruno

After we discovered that Sarah was pregnant, we went to the American consulate to apply for visas. I didn't want the child to have to carry my hump on its back. I hoped that, in a few years, people would understand and we could return. **(Silence)** An American official questioned us. Medicine is a favored profession. He was also impressed that Sarah was a pianist. But he wanted to make sure that we weren't communists. And most of all, he wanted to understand how we survived the camps. **(Silence)** He was Jewish. Members of his family had apparently died there. It was clear that we had no chance.

64. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is sitting on the couch.

Sarah

When we left the consulate, we didn't notice that we were being followed. Then, as we crossed the old Muslim cemetery in Mamilla, he suddenly appeared from behind one of the gravestones with a drawn pistol. His name was Mishka Weiss. Bruno was stunned. He was certain that Mishka had died. But Mishka was very much alive. He said that Bruno had sent him to the gas and he had only survived because the Nazis were more fair, and attached him to the zonderkommando in the crematorium. Bruno was afraid that he would shoot us, so he pulled out his own pistol and fired. Mishka fell. Bruno went over to him; he was still alive. Bruno fired again and took his pistol and documents. **(Silence)** I was petrified. Not because of Mishka. Suddenly, I saw in Bruno a cruelty that I had never seen before. Which I didn't believe he had in him. On the way home, he told me that Mishka had killed four prisoners in his block. For a

piece of bread. For shoes. For a coat. **(Silence)** Bruno always avoided my questions about the scar on his cheek. When we got home, he told me that Mishka had broken into his room with a gang of thugs one night, and tried to kill him with planks they had pulled from the bunks. Mishka himself stabbed him with piece of sharpened tin. Had the other prisoners not heard Bruno's screams, Mishka would have slaughtered him. I listened to him. I understood him. But I also feared him.

She suddenly rises and goes into the baby's room.

65. Antman's apartment

Antman is sitting in his chair.

Antman

I met Mishka while I was trying to buy food on the black market. Jerusalem was already under blockade. There were shortage of everything. He knew where to find things. I told him that Bruno was in town. **(Silence)** Yes, I paid him to kill Bruno. But in the end I was happy he didn't. I'm a victim and I'm a witness. But I'm not a judge. I'm certainly not a hangman. The state has to pass a law that will bring people like him to trial, sentence them to death and execute them.

66. Staging area

Bruno puts on and adjusts his webbing, tightening the buckles and fastening the belt.

Bruno

After we left the consulate, one of the survivors tried to shoot us. Mishka Weiss. A disgusting killer. I had no option... **(Silence)** Sarah didn't shut her eyes the entire night. Every time I looked at her, she looked away. Just like she did when she was in hospital after the war. She didn't say much. But her face said: You were too quick to shoot him. This isn't Auschwitz. Other people's lives aren't worthless. Like they were there. Her silence resounded with the sound of her doubt. **(Silence)** We tried to get visas for Sweden, Belgium, France. She could have got a visa for herself. I begged her to do it, for the sake of herself and the child. She refused. **(Silence)** In the meantime, the war broke out. I decided to enlist.

67. Sarah's apartment

Sarah returns. The baby is sleeping in her arms. She paces up and down.

Sarah

I understood why he wanted to enlist. It was written in the lines of his face. But he had already fought enough. Wounded in the ghetto. Survived Auschwitz. He was forty years old.

68. Staging area

Bruno fills his pouches and puts on his helmet.

Bruno

She was in a state of panic. She had outbursts of crying and rage. She stopped eating. She vomited everything she swallowed. One day, she threatened to abort if I enlisted. I didn't leave her for a moment. I would lock my medicine case and hide my pistol...

69. Sarah's apartment

Sarah is agitated. The sleeping child is in her arms. She has difficulty controlling her voice.

Sarah

The Arab armies attacked on the 15th of May. Bruno decided to go ahead and enlist. I pleaded. I cried. I followed him when he went to the enlistment office. I shouted. I told the clerk that Bruno had been a kapo in Auschwitz. That he collaborated with the SS. That he had also killed in Jerusalem. Suddenly I saw the pistol in Bruno's belt. I grabbed it and threatened to shoot myself... **(Silence)** Bruno hugged me and took the pistol. Then he took me home. **(She wipes her tears.)** Without this child, I would have gone mad a long time ago...

70. Staging area

Bruno hesitates for a moment. He takes off his helmet.

Bruno

She apologized. Cried. Promised. But I know that she meant everything she had said. I could understand the doubt of someone who had not been there and had not known me, but she had been there. She knew me... **(Silence)** She wanted to kill herself because she understood that I would never be clean in her eyes.

71. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov returns and sits on the couch. Yulia serves him a glass of water. He drinks.

Dr. Dubnov

When the war broke out, he told me that the enlistment officer had refused to sign him up. He asked me to help him. He didn't say much. His eyes spoke. I thought of the musselmen he had helped die. Of the courage he needed to find inside himself to help them... And I knew that I, too, needed to find such courage...

72. Staging area

Bruno is holding the helmet. He looks at it. He is undecided about whether he should wear it.

Bruno

She was there. She saw how they were beaten as they got down from the trains. How they were humiliated when they got undressed and put on the uniform. How, when their heads were shaved and they were branded with numbers, they turned into a herd of beasts. Doesn't she understand that they are blaming me to cover up their own cowardice, their own helplessness and wretchedness, their self-disgust and their shame? I, who tried to save them, I am responsible for their suffering and degradation? I am responsible for their deaths? From the moment I was captured and until the moment I was freed, I forced myself to believe that human beings can maintain their humanity, even in the face of inhuman evil. I forced myself to hope that even in the shadow of death, it is possible to fight for life with reason, sanity and solidarity. Is the belief in the human spirit false? Does the human spirit really leave us at the moment of truth? **(Silence)** I told her how I had struggled to remain human. How I fought for *their* humanity. But what weapons did I have in that struggle? Mercy? Was I meant to abandon the sanctity of life in the name of the sanctity of mercy? **(Takes off his backpack and drops it on the floor.)** If she is right and there was really no meaning in reason, no value in thought, no importance in will... if every choice was worthless and contemptible from the start, if there was no advantage in sanity and solidarity, if every action just brought us closer to a meaningless death... I should have run for the fence on the day I got there...

He hesitates for another moment, then puts on his helmet and leaves.

73. The Dubnov family home

Dr. Dubnov is sitting in silence. A tear glistens on his cheek.

Yulia

After what happened, she tried to kill herself. I sat with her day and night. I tried to save her from herself. And the child in her belly. **(Silence)** We had a daughter her age. An only child. Dina. In the summer of '39, she went to visit her grandmother and grandfather. In Warsaw. The war broke out in September and she never returned.

74. Kovarsky's office

Kovarsky is exhausted. The phone rings. He picks it up and puts it aside.

Kovarsky

As soon as I heard, I went to her. I knocked on the door. She opened. When she saw me, she slammed it shut. Since then, I send her packages on the holidays. Food. Clothes. Toys...

75. Sarah's apartment.

Sarah sits. The child is still sleeping in her arms. She can't let go of him.

Sarah

Two days later, at night, there was knocking at the door. It was an officer, apparently a doctor, who came to inform me. They almost got to the kibbutz. The Arabs ambushed them. Opened fire. Mortars, too. Bruno got up to help one of the wounded. He ran to him, his body upright, despite the fire and the shelling. He knew why he was running upright. **(Silence. She bursts out crying. After a moment, she calms down.)** I could have saved him ... I could have... I didn't fight enough to persuade him that I believed him... **(She pulls herself together.)** It was difficult for me to care for the child after the birth. Sometimes, I cried so much that I couldn't hear him crying. Then they came from the welfare office and took him to some kibbutz. I went after them and snatched him back. I knew that I couldn't go on living without him. Since then, I hardly cry...

THE END