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The Admission

A play in two acts

By Motti Lerner

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Translation from the Hebrew by Johanna Gruenhut, Ari Roth, and Motti Lerner

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The Time

The play takes place in the spring of 1988 in different places in Haifa. The prologue and the epilogue take place on a hill facing the Arab village of Tantur that was destroyed in 1948.

Characters:

Avigdor: Colonel in the Israeli army during the 1948 War of Independence. In 1988 he is the owner of a big construction company (64).

Yona: his wife (60).

Giora: Their son, lecturer at the University of Haifa. He was wounded in the Lebanon war of 1982. Both his legs are lame. He uses crutches (35).

Neta: His girlfriend, an architect (29).

Ibrahim: A refugee from the Arab village of Tantur (58).

Azmi: His son, owner of a restaurant (35).

Samya: His daughter, lecturer at the University of Haifa (30).

The Style

The play takes place in Giora's mind as he's lying on a hill facing Tantur, watching the bulldozers plowing in the Wadi. This allows for the breaking of realism and the introduction of characters able to watch scenes in which they do not participate.

The Set

The set is abstract and minimal to allow for quick changes of locations and to suggest that the events are taking place in Giora's mind.

A Note

The writing of the play was inspired by the conquest of the Arab village Tantura by the Israeli army on May 23, 1948 and by the controversy among Israeli historians about the possibility that Israeli soldiers committed a massacre during the battle or afterwards. But since all the characters in the play and its entire plot are fictitious, the name of the village was changed to Tantur¹.

¹ At least three Israeli historians wrote different versions of the conquest of Tantura: Benny Morris, Yoav Gelber and Ilan Pappé.

Act one

Prologue:

A hill in the depth of the stage. Clouds of dust drift above. The sound of bulldozers plowing down the other side of the hill is heard aloud. Giora enters on crutches, trying to climb the hill; he falls and rises, falls again and now can't get up. Lights out on the hill. The sound of the bulldozer fades out.

Scene 1

An Arab restaurant in downtown Haifa. Afternoon. Giora stands in the doorway, leaning on his crutches. Azmi wears a suit, holding a mop and cleaning the floor, careful not to wet his shoes. Ibrahim, his father, is in the kitchen, unseen.

Azmi: Damn it!

Giora: You're never satisfied! This is the nicest restaurant in all of Haifa now. Look how much light comes in through the windows. You put in air-conditioning; new tables. I see you've changed the tiles too.

Azmi: How am I ever going to repay the loan to your father? In the past month, I've had one customer a day, and he orders hummus to go! That's not even half the salary of a cleaning-lady from Jenin!

Giora: He won't say a thing. Even if it takes you two years to pay him back. Give me the broom. By the time he comes, everything will be clean.

Azmi: One more word, Giora, and I'm gonna dump this bucket on your head. (*Angrily*) This morning I asked Khaula to help me out a few minutes. Not for clients. For you. But she's like a mule: "I didn't marry you to be your maid." Her father's a lawyer. Not a cook like her husband. I washed floors in stinking restaurants when I was ten. But soon she'll see where tears come from. Tonight she's cleaning the bathrooms.

Giora: You don't have to fight with her because of us. (*Takes a broom*) My father's never been bothered by a little dirt.

Azmi: (*Grabbing the broom from Giora*) Sweep in your own house. (*Notices the smell from the kitchen*) He's in there cooking for two hundred. Yesterday I trashed ten kilos of lamb. It smelled so bad, even the zoo wouldn't take it. The entire *Intifada* is on our heads. What do they want from us? Did someone hang a flag here? Someone throw a stone? People whose weddings I catered hide from me on the street.

Giora Don't worry. I'll speak to him about the loan today.

Azmi: Don't tell him 'two years'. Tell him I'll start the payments as soon as this mess is over. In installments. *(He bumps into the bucket and the water spills)* *Yil'an din'hu* this bucket. *(To the kitchen)* Where's the rag, *yabba?* *(To Giora)* Now my shoes are fucked. *(To the kitchen)* Where's the goddamned rag?

Samya enters, dressed in an elegant suit. She finds the rag in the entrance.

Samya: Here it is.

Azmi: Glad you're here. This morning dad burned a pot of rice and broke four plates. Go help him with the fish. He's already cut two fingers.

Samya: *(To Giora)* Are you heading back to the university later? We have to talk.

Giora: Something happen?

Azmi: *Ya'allah*, Samya, go already! *(Samya turns to the kitchen, Azmi to Giora)* Tell him I have lots of other debts. Because of this shit situation I haven't paid a water bill for five months.

Giora uses the broom to push the water to the exit. Avigdor enters. Samya stops. Azmi grabs the broom from Giora.

Azmi: Hello, Mr. Avigdor. Welcome. How are you?

Avigdor: *(looking around)* How beautiful. Congratulations. *Mabruk.* *(Shakes Azmi's hand)* I see you've opened up especially for us.

Azmi: Today is the Grand Re-Opening. I've turned everyone else away. *T'fadal.* Sit. *(Cleans a chair and offers it to him)* I don't have busboys today. They were stopped on the way.

Avigdor: *(to Giora)* And I see that besides your position at the university you now have a part-time job cleaning floors. *(To Samya)* Hello, Samya.

Samya: Hello. I received your letter about the grant yesterday. Thank you very much.

Avigdor: You deserve it. *(Shaking her hand)* All the best.

Azmi: I'm bringing you something to start with. *(Pointing at the kitchen)* Dad's not feeling well. He's been talking to himself since early this morning. If he says anything strange, don't pay attention. *(To Samya)* Why are you still standing here?

Azmi and Samya exit to the kitchen. Avigdor lights a cigar.

Avigdor: How was it?

Giora: Beautiful development. The houses already have electricity. Tenants are putting flowers in their gardens. Kids are walking to school. We could build two more blocks to the south. A sports center. Cinema. Library. In another few years it'll be a city.

Avigdor: I've built enough, Giora. This one is for you to build.

Giora: Next week I'll tell the dean I'm stepping down.

Avigdor: Say it tomorrow at the board meeting. By the way, I cleared out the office next to Neta's for you.

Giora: That's what she wanted? Did she say it?

Avigdor: She doesn't need to say anything. Every morning she walks into my office and what she wants is written all over her face.

Giora: What does she want?

Avigdor: That you get married. That you start working with us. And that in April, we'll have a *bris*.

Giora: (*Laughs*) No doubt you've already gotten him a job in the company, too.

Avigdor: Naturally. With an office, a secretary, a car and expense account!

Giora: I want that in writing, dad.

Avigdor: The board will approve everything at the meeting tomorrow.

Both laugh. Ibrahim, Azmi, and Samya, enter from the kitchen carrying platters and plates of appetizers, salads, drinks, etc.

Ibrahim: *Salam aleykum*. How are you? *A'halan u'salan, abu Giora*. This is just to wake the appetite. The first olives of the season. We opened the jars just this morning.

Avigdor: *Allah y'a'tik el a'afi, Ibrahim. Shukran*.

Ibrahim: And don't be angry about the salad. Because of the curfew in Gaza, there are no cucumbers in the market, no radishes, no lettuce.

- Azmi: Even the fish are under curfew.
- Giora: It's okay, Ibrahim.
- Ibrahim: And the tomatoes are from my garden.
- Avigdor: I see you've already collected *za'atar*.
- Ibrahim: Of course. After the rains it tastes the strongest.
- Giora: Thank you.
- Ibrahim: It's all thanks to you, *Abu Giora*. For the help you've given us. With the renovations, the permits. And also for Samya.
- Avigdor: *Mabruk*, Ibrahim.
- Azmi: From now on, you're *our* guests. On the house! Whatever you want, as much as you want. Everything. The salads, the meat, the wine.
- Avigdor: Out of the question, Azmi
- Azmi: This is my restaurant, Mister, and here I decide! (*Pours wine*) *L'chaim!*
- All: *L'chaim!*

Everyone drinks.

- Ibrahim: About the *za'atar*, Mr. Avigdor. Yesterday I go to Tantur to collect some, and out of the blue I see people. I ask: "*shu hada*, who are you?" and they said they work for you. Surveyors. That you're going to dig there. That can't be, can it?
- Avigdor: We're building there, Ibrahim.
- Ibrahim: Digging for what? What's to dig? What's there to look for?
- Avigdor: People need homes.
- Ibrahim: In Tantur?
- Azmi: We're eating now, dad. Go put the fish on the grill.
- Samya: I'll do it.

- Azmi: He'll do it. *(To Avigdor)* Today we have grilled eggplant. Pickled mushrooms. Shrimps. Calamari. All fresh from this morning.
- Giora: *(to Avigdor)* That's your second glass, dad.
- Avigdor: If you're not going to drink, I'll drink the whole bottle myself.
- Ibrahim: *(Pouring wine to Giora)* About Tantur, *Abu* Giora
- Azmi: Go put the fish on the grill, *Yaba!*
- Ibrahim: Why are you building there? All of a sudden?
- Avigdor: It's a small country, Ibrahim. People build everywhere.
- Ibrahim: I'm from Tantur, *abu* Giora. I was born there.
- Azmi: Enough, dad.
- Avigdor: What are you saying? From Tantur? When I was a kid, I used to go down there with friends, with canteens and knapsacks, we would drink from the spring and rest under the fig trees.
- Ibrahim: But why dig there? It's forbidden.
- Azmi: *Cha'las.* We've already heard this story. Go put the fish on the grill.
- Lights up on Avigdor and Yona's house. Yona stands watching the restaurant.**
- Giora *(to Avigdor)* What is he talking about? We don't have the permits?
- Avigdor: *(to Giora)* Of course we have them.
- Ibrahim: The earth won't *let* you dig there.
- Azmi: We've already heard this, Dad.
- Samya: Let him speak. They're building on his village.
- Azmi: He's going to put the fish on the grill right now.
- Ibrahim: *(Exploding)* It's forbidden to build there! I am saying "forbidden." The stones are screaming "forbidden." The skies are crying "forbidden." And you are not listening.

- Giora: We've been talking about this plan for years now, Ibrahim. It's the neighborhood that will be named after my brother.
- Ibrahim: *(To Samya)* Tell him not to dig there.
- Azmi: Let's go to the kitchen, dad. *(To Avigdor)* I told you he wasn't feeling well. *(To Ibrahim)* Now's the time to climb trees? Who will pick you up when you fall?
- Giora: What's the problem? Why is it "forbidden?"
- Samya: *(To Ibrahim)* Sit and drink a little water. *(She seats him, and turns to Avigdor)* His house was there. He goes there every holiday. Maybe you could show him the plans.
- Ibrahim: *(Standing)* I'll die before he digs there.
- Avigdor: *(Standing)* I think it's best if we go.
- Ibrahim: *(Barring him)* You will listen until I am finished.
- Azmi: *Be'chiatak, Yabba. Dachil Allah.*
- Giora: *(To Samya)* What's going on with him? What does he want?
- Ibrahim: Son of a bitch. Ten years I'm cooking for you. Ten years I'm putting food on your table, and this whole time my heart is bleeding!

Ibrahim grabs a knife from the table and lunges at Avigdor

- Samya: Drop the knife!
- Giora: Leave him alone!
- Azmi: Dad!

Ibrahim stabs Avigdor in the shoulder before Azmi and Samya pull him away. Blackout.

Scene 2

Later that afternoon. Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor's wound has been sutured and his shoulder bandaged.

- Avigdor: What do you want from me? You know more than the doctor? He didn't say I need a transfusion.
- Yona: His blood pressure is fine.
- Giora: You need to go to the hospital, dad.
- Avigdor: He's the chief of the department. If he thought I needed to be hospitalized he would have taken me there himself.
- Yona: *(To Avigdor)* Take a pill. In a few minutes the stitches are going to hurt.
- Giora: You don't think you need an X-Ray?
- Avigdor: What for? The moment I go there, the hospital will call the police. They'll be stopped, questioned, arrested.
- Giora: That man deserves to rot in jail for the rest of his life.
- Avigdor: I have more important things to deal with right now. *(Swallowing the pill)* What came over him, for God sake? The *intifada's* made him insane?
- Yona: I'm not at all surprised. He sees the riots in the refugee camps. He hears the Sheiks' incitement in the mosques.
- Giora: He stabbed to kill. I saw it in his eyes. Soon we won't be able to walk in the streets. They used to be our friends. Were they just pretending?
- Avigdor: Sit, calm down. You'd think it was *you* who got stabbed.
- Yona: Maybe he was stopped by the border patrol. Maybe he got searched at one of the checkpoints. Maybe a hot headed soldier killed a relative of his in one of the camps. *(To Avigdor)* Give me your hand. *(She places his arm in a sling)*
- Giora: Aren't you going to press charges with the police?
- Avigdor: He's insane. He hallucinates. He hears the ground talking.
- Yona: You want their restaurant shut down?

Giora: I want the police to investigate. I want to understand why he did it. If we don't file the complaint today, the police won't take it seriously. *(Stands)*

Yona: Where are you going?

Giora: If you're not going to the police, I will.

Avigdor: You've gone out of your mind?! We have a board meeting tomorrow. We have to go over next year's plans together.

Giora: You're not going to the office tomorrow, Dad.

Avigdor: We'll have the meeting here.

Giora: You lost a lot of blood.

Avigdor: I have enough left.

Giora: *(To Yona)* The doctor said he needs to rest in bed.

Yona: We'll see how he does over night.

Giora: You want me to start running the company tomorrow? *(Stands)*

Avigdor: Sit.

Yona: Tomorrow we're naming the neighborhood after Udi. We've been talking about it since he fell.

Giora: We'll name it next week.

He turns to leave. Neta enters. Lights up on Samya's house. Samya is watching the scene in Avigdor's house.

Neta: *(To Avigdor)* It looks like you're still alive. How are you feeling? *(She hugs him)*

Avigdor: Now, excellent.

Neta: I thought I'd find you lying in bed hooked up to an IV.

Yona: He didn't let the doctor do it.

Neta: I hope you're not planning on eating there ever again. *(To Giora)* Too bad he didn't stab *you*. You'd have to stay in bed for a few days, and every morning I'd bring you coffee. *(Kisses him)*

Giora: We're going, Neta.

Yona: You're not going to the police, Giora.

Avigdor: Because of three stitches in the shoulder?

Yona; You know how much time you'll spend in investigations? In Court?

Neta: Wait a second. I'm coming with you. *(To Avigdor and Yona)* I was at the Dan hotel this morning. They have a few open dates for a wedding in June and July. It's only two months from now. I promised them an answer.

Giora: Maybe you and I should talk about it first?

Avigdor: We're happy to discuss it, too.

Yona: We'll do whatever is good for them, Avigdor.

Avidgor: In June the weather's better. *(To Neta)* Take vacation next week to find a dress.

Yona: And a ring.

Giora: You're talking to her instead of me? Talk. Never mind. I don't understand what's going on here. You still have blood on your shirt. *(He turns to leave)*

Neta: Wait a second. We have to decide.

Giora: *(He stops)* We've decided to get married in July.

Neta: You have that conference in Boston in July.

Giora: Fine. We'll get married at the end of June.

Avigdor: Can we set a date? *(Waits for an answer)*

Giora: Yes. *(Sees that Neta is hurt)* OK. Beginning of June. The 9th?

Avigdor: Excellent.

Giora: You don't want to check with your mom?

Neta: I hope she'll live till then.

Avigdor: Leave your mother to me. It's settled?

Giora: Settled.

Avigdor: This is how you settle?

Giora takes the hint, he kisses and hugs Neta.

Yona: *Mazal Tov!*

Avigdor: Now go home and celebrate. *(To Yona)* We also want to celebrate a little. Right?

Neta: See you later.

Giora: June 9th isn't too close to Udi's birthday?

Yona: It's perfectly fine.

Giora: *(To Avigdor)* I'll call later to see how you're doing. You want me to speak to your lawyer tomorrow? You have some friends in the Police department.

Avigdor: Bye.

Giora and Neta exit. Silence

Yona: I hope Giora doesn't do anything stupid. We have to watch him. *(He's silent)* Does it hurt? It's best if you rest in bed. Your blood pressure's high. *(He's silent)* Do you want to delay the groundbreaking a few days? Maybe until they remove the stitches. *(He's silent)* Udi has waited many years for us to build something in his name. He'll wait another week. *(He goes to the bar and takes a glass)* Don't drink. You just took a pill.

Avigdor drinks, puts the glass on the table and turns to the kitchen.

Yona: Where are you going?

Avigdor: I haven't eaten since this morning.

Yona: Wait. I'll warm something up. What about the surveyors you sent to the Wadi? They'll continue?

Avigdor: Of course.

Blackout. The sound of bulldozers is heard louder.

Scene 3.

The next day. Afternoon. Giora's office at Haifa University. Giora and Samya.

Samya: He was awake all night. Tossing in bed. Crying. Talking to himself. Only this morning, when he heard your father was alive, could he fall asleep.

Giora: He's lucky my dad didn't go to the police.

Samya: I'm not sure he understands what he did. He can't explain any of it.

Giora: What's to explain? He joined the Intifada. If that knife would've penetrated another millimeter, my father would be dead.

Samya: You know he didn't mean it. (*Giora is quiet*) What should I tell Azmi? He wants to visit your father. He wants to invite you over for a meal.

Giora: My father's in bed. They're removing the stitches next week.

Samya: Good. Come next week. (*Giora isn't too excited. Silence*) I don't think my father joined the Intifada. I think he remembers your dad from the battle of Tantur in '48. You never told me your father had been the commander there.

Giora: There was nothing to tell. They fought there like in other places. When we were kids he took us to the monument on the hill. Fourteen of his soldiers died there.

Samya: Dozens of civilians were killed, too.

Giora: Dozens?! Is that what your father told you? Is that why he suddenly remembered to stab my father with a knife?

Samya: I went to the Library this morning. (*She shows him a book and a notebook*) This is by a historian from Damascus. This is a dissertation that was done here, in the history department. According to his calculations there were two hundred twenty dead in Tantur.

Giora: Are you out of your mind?

Samya: Look. He also has testimonies from soldiers who took part in the attack.

Giora: I don't need to look. I know we have too many self-hating historians. How can you believe that my father was involved in anything like that? Do you know many people who've done for you what my father's done? Even after my brother was killed. Even after what happened to me. This year he

built a school in Tamra at cost. He built six schools in Arab villages without any profit over the last decade.

Samya: I know.

Giora: You don't know. Who do you think paid for the ad in yesterday's papers calling for an end to the violence and a start to negotiations?

Samya: I know that too.

Giora: And you believe what's written here?!

Samya: I don't believe anything. But my father has always been a rational man. Suddenly he picks up a knife and stabs?

Giora: He's never talked about it until yesterday?

Samya: Until yesterday he told us that they were expelled from Tantur. Yesterday he said his father and two of his brothers were killed there. Their names are in this book.

Lights up on Avigdor office where Avigdor and Neta watch the rest of the scene.

Samya: I'm not accusing your father of anything, Giora. I know how rumors spread among us. But I also know my father.

Giora: If your father recognized my father ten years ago, why did he wait until yesterday?

Samya: He doesn't want them touching the bones buried in the Wadi. He wants to give them a proper burial and put up a memorial.

Giora: A memorial for who? If there were bones buried there, someone would have talked about it. Five hundred soldiers have been quiet for forty years?! If you think my father did something like this, return all the grants he's given you, including the post-doc you got yesterday.

Samya moves to exit. He stops her.

Giora: Wait a second. You can't run away like this

Samya: *I'm leaving. You're running away.*

Giora: Until yesterday you thought your grandfather and two uncles were expelled. You never asked where they were? You never tried to see them?

- Samya: He told me they died in a refugee camp in *Tul Karem*.
- Giora: And today you believe him when he tells you they were killed in Tantur?
- Samya: Today I don't know anything anymore.
- Giora: I've asked you about them many times, Samya. And you've always said they were expelled.
- Samya: When did you ask me?
- Giora: The hotel in London. I begged you to tell me. You shut yourself in the bathroom and locked the door.
- Samya: I seem to remember you begged for something entirely different.
- Giora: I don't remember having to beg.

She puts the books on the table, moves to him and hugs him. He responds. Lights up on Yona in her house. She watches Giora and Samya.

- Samya: You know why your father gave me the grant for the post doc?
- Giora: Because he believes in you.
- Samya: Because I have to do it in London.
- Giora: What does that have to do with anything?
- Samya: He wants to separate us.
- Giora: He doesn't know anything about us
- Samya: That's what I wanted to tell you yesterday.
- Giora: No one knows.
- Samya: He probably thinks I'm standing in the way of you getting married. (*He is silent*) Am I in your way? Are you getting married? (*He is silent*) You don't think I deserve to know? (*He is silent*) I'm not surprised. I'm surprised you haven't told me. I'm surprised how naive I was.
- Giora: I'm not sure you didn't know, Samya.
- Samya: When did you decide? Yesterday? Because of what happened in the restaurant?

Giora: I'm not the only one who decided. You did too. And it had nothing to do with what happened at the restaurant. I asked you to move in with me, years before I met her. You wouldn't even consider it. When you heard I'd been injured, you stayed in London. When you came back, you never called.

Samya: I thought we'd gotten over that. I thought next year you'd take a sabbatical and come to London with me.

Giora: I told you already, so many times. Next year I'm starting to work with my dad. *(Pause)* It's getting more and more complicated, Samya. What happened in the restaurant is just the tip of the iceberg. Since the *intifada*, we hardly speak. You protest at demonstrations I can't attend, and you say things there I can't agree to.

Samya: Can't you agree to ending the occupation?!

Giora: Not with this kind of violence.

Samya: You know I'm against violence. You also know what price I've had to pay because of it. *(Pause)*. I guess I'm not as smart as I thought. *(Painfully)* We've been talking about your sabbatical since the beginning of the year.

Giora: And what did you think would happen after? We'd come back here and keep meeting in hotel rooms?

Samya: You know what would happen if we got married. My best friends will turn their backs on me.

Giora: I couldn't keep waiting for you, Samya. *(Holds her hand)*

Samya: Don't touch me.

Samya exits. In her haste she leaves the book and notebook on the table. Blackout.

Scene 4.

Evening. Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor and Neta enter. Avigdor goes to the sofa. Yona notices he's not well.

Yona: Where were you?

Avigdor: I'm just a bit dizzy.

Yona: I asked you not to leave the house.

Avigdor: It'll pass.

Yona: You want me to call the doctor?

She takes his blood pressure.

Avigdor: *(To Neta)* Tell her.

Yona: Quiet a minute.

Neta: *(To Yona)* We got the hotel.

Avigdor: Tell her the deal.

Yona: I said quiet. *(finishing to take his pressure)* I want the doctor to see you.

Avigdor: I'm absolutely fine. It's because of the stairs. *(to Neta)* Nu, tell her.

Neta: They're giving us the garden and the pool too. We were about to decide on the menu. Suddenly the wound started bothering him.

Avigdor: This is your wedding, sweetheart, and I'm more excited than you are!

Neta: *(To Yona)* He took a painkiller. On the drive back he got dizzy.

Avigdor: When I asked them about the garden and pool they turned their backs on me. But when *she* talked to the manager, he just melted.

Neta: Because you offered to pay more.

Avigdor: Because of your smile.

Neta: *(To Yona)* when he wants something, he doesn't take no for an answer.
(To Avigdor) I think you ought to stay home tomorrow.

Avigdor: Of course.

Yona: *(Irritated)* I'll ask the doctor to hospitalize you.

Avigdor: Fine. I'll stay home.

Yona: This is for you, Neta. Congratulations.

She hands Neta a small box. Neta opens it and reveals a pair of earrings.

Neta: Diamonds!!

Yona: Put them on.

Neta: You didn't have to.

Yona: Who am I going to buy earrings for? Giora?

Avigdor: I'll put them on for you. (*He gets up*)

Yona: Sit.

Avigdor succeeds in putting the earrings on Neta.

Avigdor: (*to Yona*) I'm sitting.

Neta: (*Hugging them*) Thank you.

Yona: I called Giora this morning. He didn't answer.

Neta: His back was bothering him. Probably because of what happened in the restaurant. But he did his exercises, and left for the university. I hope we don't hear about this affair anymore.

Yona: He's working too hard over there, Neta. He didn't come with me to the pool this week. Yesterday I went to his orthopedist myself. He has a surgery next month.

Neta: He'll do it.

Avigdor: And remind him he has to send his letter of resignation to the university. I want to bring his appointment up with the board next week. *And* your promotion too.

Giora enters. Lights up on Ibrahim and Samya's house. Samya watches the scene in Avigdor's house.

Yona: Congratulations!

Giora: What happened?

Neta: We confirmed with the hotel.

Giora: Nice.

Avigdor: That's all you have to say?

Giora: I'm very happy.

Avigdor: Tell me, Yona'leh, who does he resemble? In my family, we knew how to celebrate!

Giora: *(To Neta)* You got earrings. Very nice.

Avigdor: *(To Giora)* Don't we deserve to celebrate a little?

Yona: They're giving us the garden and the pool too.

Neta: *(To Giora)* I'll tell you on the way there. We still have to finalize the menu.

Giora: *(To Avigdor)* How are you feeling? Still in pain?

Avigdor: Oh, a lot. I may die tomorrow.

Yona: Ha. Ha. Ha.

Giora: I need to talk to you, Dad. I went to the library today. I found a dissertation that was written in our history department about Tantur.

Yona: I thought we put that affair behind us, Giora.

Giora: There are some strange things in it. *(To Avigdor)* Look. *(Showing him the notebook)* He claims that two hundred people were killed. *(To Neta)* I almost lost it.

Yona: You did lose it.

Neta: You're sure you found that in the library?

Giora: Yes. *(To Avigdor)* Read.

Avigdor: I know this 'historian.' I can only imagine who financed his 'research'.

Yona: Daddy doesn't feel well, Guri. Don't bother him with this. *(Places the notebook on the table)* This morning I was at the house on the corner down the road. They're prepared to sell it.

Avigdor: He's not bothering me. *(To Giora)* This man knows he's lying. The village blocked the main road. They attacked cars. Buses. Ambulances. We had no choice. At four AM we attacked. The first company from the Wadi. The second from the road. The third stormed down from the hill. Fourteen of our men were killed. They lost twenty.

- Yona: *(To Giora)* Everything clear now? *(Continuing)* I want you to see this house. It's like new. No stairs. You can drive your car all the way up to the doorway. If you don't hurry, someone else will take it.
- Neta: *(To Giora)* We'll go early in the morning.
- Giora: Fine.
- Yona: You might have to do some renovations before you move in. I would make the bathtub bigger. And widen the doorways.
- Avigdor: At ten they surrendered. They knew that most of the Arabs in Haifa had run away. And rumors of the massacre at *Deir Yassin* had already reached them. It was the *mukhtar* who requested they be sent to Tul Karem. At four they got on trucks. At six we returned to base and buried our dead.
- Yona: *(Firm)* I think it's best you go lie down, Avigdor, before your blood pressure goes up.
- Avigdor: And now let's move onto more important things.
- Giora: *(taking the notebook)* There are two hundred twenty names in here, dad.
- Avigdor: I'm not sure there's a person for every name.
- Neta: The manager of the hotel is waiting for us, Giora. We have a wedding in two months. There are a few things we need to do, besides standing under the *chuppa*. See you later.
- Giora: And you counted only twenty?
- Yona: *(Too loudly)* He told you only twenty!
- Neta: I don't understand why you're picking at this.
- Giora: It's outrageous that our university would print lies like these. *(To Avigdor)* Let's talk to your soldiers, dad, and publish a different book.
- Yona: If you publish a book, they'll publish ten.
- Avigdor: *(Laughing)* You want me to start writing books now?! We have a board meeting next week. We must come prepared.
- Giora: Everyone who reads this, dad, will believe that these are the facts

- Yona: Who's reading it? Who will read it?
- Avigdor: If this bastard had bothered to investigate, he'd have found these "dead" living in refugee camps in Jordan.
- Yona: Why are you telling him all this? You want him to go find them?
- Avigdor: Better he knows what went on there. How we fought. How we survived. How we earned our lives here. And then maybe, finally, he'll understand that after wars like these we have to gather all our strength to restore ourselves, to build homes, start families, have children. *(to Giora)* This wound is worse than I thought. I almost fainted in the car today.
- Yona: Don't you see that our lives here can't be taken for granted? Not ours, and certainly not yours. After all you've been through, you can't waste it on such nonsense.
- Giora: I'm wasting my life on nonsense?! I'm trying to live it! I've been trying to restore myself every moment since I woke up in that hospital bed six years ago. *(To Avigdor)* And I won't sit with my hands in my pockets when you're being accused of such terrible things. If I don't bother to disprove it, it'll seem like I condone it.

Blackout

Scene 5

Same night. Ibrahim and Samya's house. Ibrahim, Samya, and Azmi enter after closing up the restaurant.

- Azmi: Why fan the fire? So that the whole house will go up in flames?
- Samya: He asked me for the books.
- Azmi: When I go in there tomorrow to apologize, his father's will be sitting on the couch reading a book that calls him a murderer. He's a murderer? We almost murdered *him*. It's only because he has such a big heart we're not in jail.
- Ibrahim: I recognized him ten years ago, the moment he came into the restaurant.
- Azmi: You recognized him and gave him food?
- Ibrahim: What could I do? Go to the police? To the court?
- Azmi: Why didn't you tell us?

- Samya: What difference does it make? If he thinks it's him, then we have to check.
- Azmi: What for? Don't we have enough shit to deal with because of the *intifada*? The policemen who see you every day at those demonstrations come to complain to me. The moment you begin checking about, Tantur I'll have to shut down the restaurant.
- Samya: Don't be a coward, Azmi.
- Azmi: You're right. I'm a coward. The biggest coward of all. But because "I'm a coward" you never went hungry; not a single day in your life. Because "I'm a coward" you always got new clothes for school and a knapsack filled with books, and in it every day there was a pita with an omelet. Because "I'm a coward" you studied ten years at the university like a princess. Your Brave Brothers who ran away to America never once sent you a measly dollar for underwear. So don't look down on me and my fears.
- Samya: No one is looking down on you, except you. You deserve to know who murdered your family.
- Azmi: You're sure they murdered them?
- Ibrahim: Sure they murdered them, *Ibn El Kalb*.
- Azmi: Who saw them being murdered, *yabba*? They ran away.
- Samya: (*Scornfully*) One day they just got up and ran away?
- Azmi: Like they did in Haifa. In *Yaffa. Akko. Tabariyyah. Safad*.
- Samya: Gave up their sheep, their goats, their fields, their stores, their homes? They probably just got tired of living here.

Silence. Ibrahim is hurt. Lights up on Giora and Neta's apartment.

- Samya: Come, I'll take you to bed, dad.
- Azmi: You see? I told you to shut your big mouth.
- Samya: Don't you tell me to shut my mouth.
- Azmi: You don't understand that if you aggravate his father he'll go to the police?

Samya: Let him go to the police.

Ibrahim: *(To Azmi)* I'll tell you who saw them being murdered. Me. With these eyes. Who could I tell? For two days I hid there between broken buildings, in the ruins. Then I ran here. And here more soldiers in the streets. They shot at everyone returning. Anyone who wanted to take something from their home. All day long I hid under the floor of a store in the vegetable market. At night I'd go through garbage. You have no idea, that kind of fear. You have no idea, to have no one. No one in the entire world. That you're nothing. That if someone points at you on the street, you'll be shot. *(Angrily)* You want to know why I never told you? I didn't want you to live with such fear. So now let him be afraid. He deserved that knife. In his heart.

Ibrahim almost falls over, but rejects Samya's help and exit.

Samya: You can go. He'll be okay *(Azmi is silent)* I'm leaving at the end of the semester, Azmi. You're going to have to look after him yourself. Talk to Khaula. You might have to take him in. *(He is still silent)* What happened? She threw you out of the house?

Azmi: That bitch?

Samya: Don't call her that.

Azmi: I asked the kids to help me after school, and she started screaming. I should have thrown her out and taken the kids to America. Without Arabs, Without Jews. Without their wars.

Samya: If you want your kids to go to college, they should do their schoolwork, Azmi.

Azmi: In my wildest dreams she wouldn't let dad move in with us.

Samya: You want me to talk to her?

Azmi: I don't understand why you're going all of a sudden. What are you running from? The *intifada*?

Samya: I'm not running. I can't do much here. Even a little business strike in Haifa. Maybe from London we can exert more pressure. Maybe there we'll be able to talk about what happened here in '48. *(She hands him a book)* Read it. There are some interesting things in here about Tantur.

Azmi: *(Looks at the book)* You believe a book that came out of Damascus?

Samya: *(Giving him another)* This came from Nablus.

Azmi: They're even bigger liars! When I hear the news on their radio, I'm ashamed to be an Arab. Look at the books that came out on Deir Yassin. Of course the Jews murdered there. Exactly one hundred and seven people. So why say three hundred? Why say that women and girls were raped? Because of stories like that, people fled from all over the country.

Samya: That's why we need to find the truth about what happened in Tantur.

Azmi: I know people swallowed a lot of shit there. My father had to swallow a lot. His father and brothers had to swallow even more. I've got enough shit with this damn *intifada* on my head. I don't need any more.

Blackout.

Scene 6

That same night. Giora and Neta's house. He is on the sofa still holding the dissertation that Samya left in his office.

Neta: I've been working for him five years, Giora. He trusts me.

Giora: But why now?

Neta: Because his VP retired. You don't think I'm qualified?

Giora: Of course you are.

Neta: So why are you suspicious?

Giora: Is it so impossible that even these earrings are a bribe?

She takes off the earrings. Lights up on Avigdor and Yona's house. Both watch the scene in Giora and Neta's apartment.

Neta: Your father doesn't offer bribes, Giora. He knows that generosity is much more effective.

Giora: He never once asked you to convince me to work for him?

Neta: When did I have to convince you? You always wanted it. You've been waiting till the end of your surgeries.

Giora: I was always sure I'd be at the business school my whole life. All of a sudden I find myself in the company. I already have an office. I sit in board meetings. Udi wanted to run the company. He prepared himself

since the day he was born. My father knows I'm not the right one to run it. He insists because he feels responsible for what happened to me.

Neta: He doesn't feel responsible.

Giora: Every morning on the way to school we heard from him what to do when a war breaks out.

Neta: That's why you blame him? You heard on the BBC that war had broken out. You decided you couldn't stay in London while your soldiers were in Lebanon. You called him from there. You asked him to wait for you at the airport.

Giora: He knows exactly what he didn't tell me when I called. *(She's silent)* It dawned on me today that maybe I don't have to rush so much. Maybe we should move to Tel Aviv for a few years. I've got a much better offer from the university there. Maybe I'll be able to write that book about business crisis management

Neta: You know I can't move to Tel Aviv.

Giora: I don't have his stubbornness, Neta. I don't have his shrewdness.

Neta: You'll run the company your way. *(Pause)* I'm not going to leave my mother all alone, Giora. She's already lost her entire family once.

Giora: When you visit, she barely recognizes you.

Neta: That's not true. *(Pause)* You really want to go? And what about the house? We won't buy it? Won't renovate it? And what about the wedding? Postpone it again? I can't stop thinking that you're rummaging through the garbage of Tantur so you can escape it completely.

Giora: I'm not escaping the wedding. I'm trying to figure out how I survive next to him. I can't live where he wants me to. I can't work where he wants me to. Haven't you ever wondered why he introduced us?

Neta: He introduced us because *I* asked him to. Because I saw how you fought to get out of your wheelchair. Because I saw you – two days after your operation – trying to get back to work. Because I saw you standing with one crutch playing ping-pong.

Silence. He stands up and goes to her. She turns her face away. He knocks with his crutches on the floor, and manages to dance a few steps. He bows. She softens.

Giora: I'm sorry. I don't know what I'm saying. Let's go to bed. In the morning I'll come with you to the hotel and discuss the menu. I'll help you try on your wedding dress and we'll buy the house with no stairs, where we can drive all the way up to the door.

Neta: You're also trying to bribe me?

Giora: I don't have much to offer.

Neta: You do. If you trusted that, we could've had the baby. He would have been one by now.

Giora: You know how much I regret it.

Neta: What happened? The world's finally good enough for us to raise children?

Giora: Maybe our children can make it better.

Neta: Am I supposed to believe you?

Giora: I'd be so happy if you had a little belly under the chuppah.

He hugs her. She responds. They cuddle.

Neta: And tomorrow you'll resign from the university.

Giora: Okay. (*Kisses her*)

Neta: Next week the board will confirm your appointment.

Giora: Okay.

He pulls away from her suddenly.

Giora: Is it possible I'm hearing *his* voice coming out of *your* mouth? Is this what he told you to say to me?

Neta: Leave it alone.

Giora: Look at how much pressure he's putting on us. Since what happened at the restaurant he won't stop. Maybe he is trying to distract me from something.

Neta: From what?

Giora: We're not naïve anymore, Neta. Maybe things like this did happen. Maybe not just at Deir Yassin or Lod and Ramle.

He sits on the sofa. She sits beside him, caressing him. He takes the dissertation.

Giora: This historian has testimonies from five different refugee camps.

Neta: If you want to know what happened there, you have to ask your father.

Giora: I'm not sure he wants me to know. (*Gets up, takes his crutch*) I need to speak to Ibrahim.

Neta: Ibrahim almost almost killed him yesterday.

Giora: I want to know why.

Neta: Now? In the middle of the night? Every time I want to make love, you run away to her?

Giora: I'm not running to her, Neta. I haven't for a long time.

Neta: Then what's so urgent? You know your father. He wouldn't do such a thing. He would never give an order like that. Maybe what happened to him in that village is what happened to you in Lebanon.

Blackout

Scene 7

Ibrahim and Samya's house. Late at night. Azmi, in his father's robe, just opened the door to Giora. The two enter the living room.

Azmi: I'm actually glad you woke me. I'm sure my wife is worried. What time is it?

Giora: Quarter past twelve.

Azmi: Quarter past twelve?! What are you doing here at quarter past twelve?

Giora: I have to speak to your father for a second.

Azmi: At quarter past twelve?

Giora: I hope he didn't go to sleep...

Azmi: Did something happen? (*Worried*) What happened?

Giora: Nothing. It's about Tantur. I have to know what happened there. I asked my dad. He denies everything.

Azmi: Well, you can sleep tight. He's right. I'm not sure anything did happen.

Giora: What makes you unsure?

Azmi: Because my father is also unsure. After so many years he doesn't remember a thing. He doesn't remember if he was there; who died there; who fled where. The whole story hangs on a feather.

Giora: He told you he doesn't remember?

Azmi: He said it's all nothing. Clouds without rain. A sea without fish.

Giora: I'd be happy to hear that from him.

Azmi: You want me to wake him at quarter past two? Come to us tomorrow with your father and he'll tell you. We'll shake hands over good food. Good drinks. Good coffee. Good night.

Giora hesitates a moment. Samya enters. Lights up on Neta in her house.

Samya: My father told me some other things.

Azmi: He didn't tell you anything. (*To Giora*) *Kalam Fadi*. This lightning and thunder is only in her head. Good night.

Samya: *(To Azmi)* If it doesn't interest you, go back to bed.

Azmi: Just a second, Samya. What are you doing here all of a sudden?

Samya: What am I doing here? I live here.

Azmi: First of all get dressed. *(He puts his robe on her and turns to Giora)* *Dachilak*, Giora. It's almost twelve thirty. *(To Samya)* You know what they'll say all over town if they see him coming to you at twelve thirty?

Samya: If you don't like it, you can go home.

Azmi: Don't tell me to go home.

Samya: It's my house, Azmi.

Azmi: It's your house because I gave it to you.

Enters Ibrahim who couldn't fall asleep. At first he doesn't notice Giora.

Ibrahim All your lives you've been blind. You have never seen fear and what it takes to conquer it. What it's like to wake up every morning and say: "I'm alive. I'm taking a wife. I'm making children." Even if they could also be expelled or killed. You don't know how much strength you need for that. And you don't know how much strength you need to see your children run away to America because of this fear, and not visit for more than twenty years. Not even for their mother's funeral. And they marry there girls nobody knows, and their children don't speak a word of Arabic. They've never heard who we were or what happened to us. You have no idea how much strength it takes to go there after the rain and see bones scattered between stones. Maybe my father's. Maybe my brother's. *(Notices Giora and turns to him anxiously)* What happened?

Azmi: Nothing. Not a thing. He came to talk to us. Why'd you get out of bed? It must be twelve thirty by now.

Samya: Sit dad. I'll bring you some water.

Ibrahim: You're father....He's....?

Giora: He's at home.

Azmi: When he's recovered, he'll come to us and we'll make peace.

Ibrahim: Sure.

Azmi: You won't be able to stand on your feet tomorrow.

Ibrahim: Make him some coffee!

Samya exits to the kitchen to make coffee.

Giora: I saw him today, Ibrahim. He doesn't remember much of what happened in Tantur. Do you remember? People were killed there? How? During the battle? Afterward? Were they armed?

Ibrahim: Right now I'm not sure what I remember.

Azmi: *(To Giora)* See? *(To Ibrahim)* Ya'allah, go to bed.

Giora: How many people were killed? Do you remember their names?

Ibrahim: If he doesn't want me to remember, then he shouldn't dig there.

Samya *(Entering)* You told me a few things today, dad.

Azmi: *Cha'las!*

Ibrahim: If he doesn't dig, I don't remember.

Samya: You said you were hiding on the rooftop and saw how the soldiers lined them up and shot them. You said they force you to dig a pit...

Azmi: He told you he doesn't remember.

Giora: My father was there? Did he shoot too?

Ibrahim: I'm telling you again. If he doesn't dig, I don't remember.

Giora: How do you know it was him?

Ibrahim: Same voice. Same eyes. He had a hat. A big leather hat.

Giora: A big leather hat!?

Ibrahim: And a small rifle that shoots lots of bullets quickly.

Azmi: *(Impatient)* *Dachilak, Yabba.* Let's go to bed.

Ibrahim: Tell your father that if he doesn't dig, then I won't speak. I don't want more blood on the ground. He should let me put these bones under a stone, so that the rains don't wash them into the sea.

Azmi takes his father's arm and exit with him.

Giora: My father *had* a big leather hat. *And* a Tommy gun. (*Silence*) Looks like your father remembers something. (*Silence*) I must speak to someone else who was there. One of his soldiers. Or maybe one of your relatives...

She moves closer to him and takes his hand. They hug. Lights out on Neta who was watching the scene from her apartment. Azmi enters and sees the two of them embracing. They separate.

Samya: Why are you looking at us that way? Nothing happened.

Azmi: Of course nothing happened. I see. A dog barked and ran away. That's it. Good night.

Giora: I want to ask your father one more thing, Azmi.

Azmi: My father's asleep. I already told him good night.

Giora: He probably knows people who were there.

Azmi: He doesn't know a soul. Good night.

Giora: I want to hear from them also.

Azmi: There's nothing more to hear! Good night!

Giora: (*To Samya*) We'll talk tomorrow in the office.

Azmi: There's nothing left to talk about. Nobody's said anything. And no one will say anything. Good night.

Giora: Good night.

Giora exits. Samya turns to exit to her bedroom. Azmi stops her.

Azmi: Where do you think you are? Every time I ask you, you swear it's over. He's getting married soon. Who'll want to marry you? Who will want you as a mother to his children?

Samya: It's not what you think, Azmi.

Azmi: You won't see him again, and you won't talk to him. Son of a bitch. When he was lying in the hospital, I sat with him for hours every day. I wheeled him down to the beach in his wheelchair, even after he told me about all those old people and children he killed in Lebanon. Every year I stand next to him at his brother's grave with a *kippa* on my head. Now I turn around for one second, and he stabs me in the back. If you want to go abroad so badly, you'd better leave now.

Samya: You know I can't leave now.

Azmi: What happened? He promised to come see you tomorrow? *(She is quiet)* If I catch the two of you together again I'll break your bones. And his too.

Scene 8

Afternoon. Neta and Giora's apartment. Giora sits at the table. Neta enters. Silence.

Neta: Your father's looking for you.

Giora: I know. They're already on their way here.

Neta: They know you're trying to get in touch with his soldiers.

Giora: I figured

Neta: You talked to them? What do they say?

Giora: They deny everything. "We had fourteen dead. They had twenty". *(She is quiet)* They called him. Didn't they?

Neta: I'll tell you everything I heard. I'll go with you to see his soldiers. I'm ready to go with you to her father. But one thing needs to be clear to you, Giora...

Giora: *(Cutting her off)* It's clear. We're getting married. We're buying a house. We're renovating. We'll have children. Let's get married even sooner... *(Hugs her)* One of his soldiers refused to talk on the phone. He said he wants to meet me. We'll go see him tonight.

Avigdor and Yona enter. Avigdor's shoulder is still bandaged, his arm in a sling. He is still in pain. Lights up on Ibrahim's house: Azmi, Samya, and Ibrahim watch the scene in Giora's house.

Yona: We want to put an end to this, Guri. You will stop looking for dad's soldiers. You will not call them. You will not meet them. And you won't ask them any questions. We have nothing to hide. Dad hasn't committed

any crime. I don't want people pointing in the street. I don't want lawyers and trials. Certainly not against you.

Giora: I don't want it either.

Yona: Dad said enough.

Giora: I'm not sure, Mom.

Yona: He said everything. The rest is all rumors. And the minute you start asking questions, there will be more rumors. His shoulder is swollen. He has a fever. And instead of going to the doctor we're here begging you to believe us.

Giora: Is that true? *(Avigdor doesn't answer)*

Yona: Ibrahim wants to fuel hatred, and you're collaborating. Why? To smear us? I was there. I treated the wounded. I saw the dead. Your father looked like a survivor. Not a murderer.

Giora: It's not just Ibrahim. It's also the dissertation.

Yona: We've read it. This man doesn't believe we have a right to live here.

Giora: I called him. All of a sudden he's afraid to talk, too.

Yona: It was a just war, Guri. No war was more just.

Giora: *(To Avigdor)* So why did your soldiers hurry to call you?

Yona: Because they don't understand what you want from them.

Giora: Ibrahim remembers your Tommy gun and your leather hat.

Yona: Dad doesn't deny that he was there.

Giora: So maybe there's something to the other things he remembers.

Yona: He doesn't remember anything. He's doing everything so that you'll also doubt our right to live here.

Giora: And I'm doing everything because of our right to live here. Please, let me hear dad.

Yona: Now you'll hear me. I want to know why you don't believe us.

- Giora: I want to believe you, dad. Just tell me how many were killed.
- Yona: Daddy already told you.
- Giora: *(Turning to Avigdor)* It's no secret that you helped Ibrahim's family.
- Yona: He helped them because they needed help!
- Giora: Maybe you didn't file a complaint with the police because...
- Yona: *(Cuts him off)* We're human beings, Guri. You're busy with your own wounds, so you refuse to see ours. Dozens of our friends were killed. In combat. In ambushes. From shelling. By snipers. Two days before Tantur we lost twenty-two boys in a battle with the Iraqi army. *(She chokes up)* And Udi... who burned in his tank... and you... he's surely going out of his mind now.
- Giora: *(Angry)* He's going out of his mind because you're using him.
- Yona: *(Venomously)* Next week we're going to lay the stone for his memorial. You will stand with us, and give him the respect he deserves. I don't have to remind you who made it possible for us to live here.
- Giora: Mom. Enough!
- Yona: We can grit our teeth and let you keep picking at our wounds. But after you listen to whoever will talk to you, and after you realize you're mistaken, then you'll come to us and beg our forgiveness. And I'm not sure we'll be able to forgive. Then you'll know what your Dad did. Then you won't have to believe us. And if you don't believe us, then there's nothing for us to do here anymore.
- Avigdor: *(Rising)* I think it's time to end this game. *(Moans in pain)*
- Yona: Sit, Avigdor.
- Avigdor: I never thought you'd speak to my soldiers.
- Yona: I'm talking to him.
- Avigdor: But since you've already done it, you'd better hear from me too.
- Yona: I asked you not to interfere.
- Avigdor: I thought that if we build there, we'd bury this affair forever.

Giora: So there was an affair?

Avigdor: I always wanted to tell you and Udi about it. I tried a few times. When I thought you were old enough to understand, I took you to the monument I built there...

Giora: Tell me now.

Yona: He's already told you!

Avigdor: We killed. Not two hundred twenty like the Arabs claim. And not even the hundred fifty that the Red Cross reported. Maybe seventy. There were probably some injured who died on the way to Tul Karem. All of them were shot during combat. When the trucks came, two bastards tried to stop the others from getting on. One threw a grenade hidden under his shirt. Four of my soldiers were killed. Twenty years old. Just a month after getting off the boat. Survivors. The last remains. *(Pause)* So we shot these two bastards. The Arabs started screaming. Throwing stones. Fifteen hundred people surrounded us. No reinforcements. Nobody could rescue us. We continued shooting until they calmed down. If we hadn't, they would have finished us off and stayed in the village. And then they would have stayed in other villages too. And the war would have continued. Until today. And we wouldn't be talking about a few dozen dead. We wouldn't be talking about a few thousand dead. We'd be talking about hundreds of thousands dead. From our side. And from theirs. Would that have been better? Answer me. Would you be satisfied then? Would you pat me on my shoulder and tell me what a decent man I am? *(Giora is silent)* A week after the battle an officer arrived to investigate what happened. He also determined that it all happened during combat. All of it. *(Giora is silent)* And even though it was the *Mukhtar* who asked for trucks, I'll admit that it was an expulsion. You're right. We expelled. We were afraid that they'd join the Iraqis and Jordanians who invaded the week before. *(Silence)* Now you know it. And now you have to live with it. I worked very hard to make sure that we didn't expel for nothing; that we didn't kill for nothing; that there was a reason; that there was a purpose; that the killing and expulsion would allow us to continue living here; building here; repairing ourselves and those of them that stayed here. That's why I always helped them. After Udi was killed, I doubled my donations. Now you can go check; ask whoever you want; ask whatever you want. If you find out I was wrong; that I spilled blood for no reason; that I expelled for no reason; I'll pay the price, 'til the very last drop... even though I've already paid... and you know how much I've paid. But if you find out I was right... that I did what I needed to... What everyone expected of me... then I hope you'll...

Giora: I don't believe a word you said. You shot seventy people to calm down the others? Couldn't you shoot up in the air? Aim at their feet? I've also been surrounded by mobs a few times. Seventy people aren't killed by stray bullets.

Yona: He shot in the air. He yelled at the soldiers. He tried to stop them.

Giora: I'm asking you to please get out.

Yona: (*Angrily*) You will not throw us out, and you won't accuse us of anything. If we were guilty of something we've already paid enough. All of us. You too.

Giora: Get out!

Yona: No one blames you, even though you killed too.

Giora: I threw a grenade into a house, where there were terrorists hiding. In the middle of battle. I couldn't know women and children would be there too! (*A sudden idea crosses his mind*) Now I see. Now I understand why it happened.

Yona: Why what happened?

Giora: (*Pointing to his legs*) This didn't happen by chance.

Avigdor: What do you mean it didn't happen by chance, Giora? I wish I'd been injured instead of you....

Giora: It happened because of you.

Avigdor and Yona are stunned. Neta hurries and holds Giora. Blackout. The sound of bulldozers grows louder.

Act Two

Scene 9

Two days later. Yona and Avigdor's home. Morning. Yona is in the living room. Giora and Neta enter. The sound of bulldozers fades out. They hug Yona.

Giora: How is he?

Neta: He's at work?

Giora: How did it happen?

Yona: When we left your house his fever spiked. That night I took him to the emergency room.

Giora: What did he have?

Yona: That knife was filthy. An infection spread. They opened it. Cleaned it. Put in an IV with antibiotic. And stitched him up again. In the morning he ran home.

Neta: Why didn't you call us?

Yona: He didn't want you to know.

Giora: He knows we're here?

Yona: No.

Neta: You shouldn't have let him go to the office.

Yona: He went to stay sane. He can't sleep. He drinks. Smokes.

Giora: He needs to see a doctor today.

Yona: He doesn't need a doctor, Guri. He needs you. He loves you more than anything in the world. From the day you were born. He never tried to hide it. I never told you this, but that night, when those officers knocked on our door, we came down together to open it. We knew what they'd come to tell us. He was so afraid it would be you.

Giora: Mom, Stop.

Yona: When you got injured he sat by your bedside day and night.

Giora: I know.

Yona: You were always your father's son. Your first word was "Daddy." From then on you never stopped loving him. Always on his shoulders. Going to the beach with him. Playing with him. Talking with him. Eating with him. How can you hurt him like this now?

Giora: I love him like always, mom.

Yona: Then come back here tonight and tell him you understand why he did it, and that there's no connection between what he did and what happened to you. And that will end the discussion. And he doesn't have to know that you know he was hospitalized.

Giora: Maybe just the opposite. Maybe he can't live with these lies anymore either.

Yona: So far we've lived very nicely with these lies.

Suddenly the door opens and Avigdor enters, his arm still in a sling. For a moment it seems like there might be a miracle and Avigdor and Giora will rush to hug each other. But the miracle doesn't happen.

Avigdor: *(To Yona)* What is he doing here?

Yona: He came to talk to me.

Avigdor: Behind my back?

Giora: I want to talk to you, too, dad.

Avigdor: *(To Yona)* I don't want him in this house.

Yona: He came to apologize, Avigdor.

Avigdor: When I left this morning I could see it all over your face that you were waiting for him.

Yona: *(Assertive)* He's thought about what you said. He understands why it happened. He knows it has nothing to do with what happened to him. This affair is over and done with. He's coming back to sit on the board at the company. We have a groundbreaking in three days.

Avigdor understands what happened behind his back.

Avigdor: I see that a little bird told him I got sick.

Yona: I asked them here to go over our speeches for the ceremony.

- Avigdor: *(To Giora)* She told you that they hospitalized me and your heart broke.
- Giora: Please, dad.
- Avigdor: Look at my chart. I'm perfectly healthy. I don't need your pity.
- Giora: I'm not offering any pity. I came to listen. I came to understand.
- Avigdor: If you wanted to understand, you'd have heard me then. Instead you pronounced your verdict, and tied a noose around my neck.
- Giora: I'm sorry about what I said, Dad.
- Yona: Listen to him, Avigdor.
- Avigdor: I've already heard him. Let him go home and think about what I've told him. Let him come back when he understands what happened there. *(Assertively)* This morning I met with four officers from my regiment. They confirm every word I've said. None of them had the slightest shadow of a doubt that there was another choice.
- Neta: If you think he doesn't understand, explain it to him. Tell him what they said. That's why we came. We had no idea you were in the hospital.
- Giora: I think I understand pretty well already. I read the General staff's plan. I saw the command to deport villagers who opposed the takeover of their village. I assume those were the same orders you got from the brigadier.
- Avigdor: You want me to tell you I was just following orders? Put the responsibility on the brigadier?
- Giora: You said the report from the investigating officer cleared you completely. I'd be happy to see it.
- Avigdor: I told you what's written there.
- Giora: I'd also be happy to read the report from The Red Cross.
- Avigdor: The Red Cross report was written from Arab testimonies. They never even spoke to us.
- Giora: Fine. Show me whatever you want me to see.

Avigdor: You don't want to see anything. You want to accuse. I'm also responsible for what happened to *you*. It's my fault you got on the first plane out of London. I'm to blame for getting you to Lebanon.

Giora: I don't blame you for anything.

Avigdor: You got injured because when you broke into that house, and saw the children and the old people who were killed by your grenade, you panicked, left your soldiers and ran outside.

Giora: Maybe we could just not talk about this right now?

Avigdor: This is what you've been talking about since you got injured.

Giora: Now I'm talking about something else, Dad. The dissertation I showed you has already gone to print. In another couple of weeks it will be published. We need to be prepared. When the battle broke out there was a government already. There was an army. There are transcripts from its meetings. Orders to the front. We must expose them.

Avigdor: Have you gone out of your mind?

Yona: Nobody wrote transcripts in those days, Giora.

Giora: Don't dismiss this idea so quickly. Why do you have to protect the government? The chief of staff? The brigadier? You don't have to carry such guilt.

Avigdor: I'm not carrying any guilt!

Yona: No one was guilty in that war, Guri. We killed a few hundred civilians. Less than they killed of us. We expelled a few thousand. We were very surprised when hundreds of thousands started running away.

Giora: If you don't publish your version of this affair, it'll become just like the massacre at Deir Yassin.

Avigdor: Like Deir Yassin?!

Giora: I want to write a book with you, dad. It'll include everything you tell me.

Yona: For what? Whose purpose is it going to serve?

Giora: Not only to absolve you, dad...

Avigdor: I don't need to be absolved.

Giora: My injury puts certain responsibility on me...

Avigdor: Get out of here!

Yona: Enough, Avigdor!

Giora: Only when we find out what happened there, will we be able to understand how to live here.

Avigdor: Get out of here now!

Giora: *(To Neta)* Come.

Neta: I'll come later.

Giora turns to leave. But he loses his balance and falls. Neta and Yona rush to him and help him to his feet.

Giora: Come with me.

Neta: Wait for me at home.

Giora exit. Avigdor takes out a cigar. A long pause.

Avigdor: We fought for our lives. And he thinks that we slaughtered like those murderers at Deir Yassin.

Neta: He didn't say that.

Avigdor: That's what he meant.

Neta: That's not true. He loves you. He knows how much he hurt you. He's sorry about that. He wants to come to the board meeting this week. You didn't hear him? He accepts your version. He wants to publish it in a book.

Avigdor: He wants to write that it was a massacre.

Yona: He won't write that.

Neta: If you think he doesn't need to write a book, then explain to him why not. We'll come here tomorrow evening. He won't argue with you.

Yona: And we'll finally bury this affair forever.

Avigdor: I'll think about it.

Neta: I need an answer now. (*Firmly*) I don't care about that war. I don't care who died in it. I don't care how they died. I don't care who's guilty or who isn't. I'm fighting for his life now. So that he won't give up. So that he'll want to have children. So that he believes he can raise them.

Avigdor: I said I'll think about it.

Neta: We don't have time, Avigdor. If you push him, he'll write the book himself. Don't make him settle accounts with you. (*Silence*) We'll come here tomorrow evening. I'm sure you'll know what to tell him. (*exits*)

Yona: I don't think we should wait until tomorrow

Avigdor: Let him write his book. No one will publish it.

Yona: You're playing with fire, Avigdor. Talk to him now, before he gets us all into trouble. He'll only understand what happened in Tantur if you explain it.

Avigdor: I tried. You didn't hear? What I did is appalling to him. He'll only forgive me if I confess I was following orders. If I relinquish responsibility. Blame others. He doesn't want to understand what I did. He's not prepared to consider the possibility that it was the right thing to do. That I didn't have other options. Didn't you see how he avoided me? He wouldn't apologize for throwing me out of his house. He wouldn't even shake my hand.

Blackout

Scene 10

Late afternoon. Ibrahim and Samya's house.

Giora: Try to remember, Ibrahim. Where did you sleep that night? In the house? On the roof?

Ibrahim: On the roof?! There's wind on the roof. From the sea. (*He laughs*) When I was a boy we'd make kites. Out of paper and rags. And they'd fly in that wind. And then we'd let go of the string. Once I flew my kite at night, and the next morning I found it outside our store in Haifa. (*Laughs*)

Giora: When did you wake up that morning? What did you see?

Ibrahim: In Haifa we had a fabric store next to the port. A thousand square meters, and a storage room. People came to us from Jaffa, Ramallah, Lud. My father was a big merchant. With a belly like a mountain. After lunch he would lie down in the storage room and snore.

Samya: Dachilak, Baba.

Ibrahim: That night we didn't sleep. We knew they'd come. They had some Jews with them who used to buy their vegetables from us before the war. They knew the way. The Ducks heard them and started screaming... *(Silence)* Now my head aches.

Giora: *(To Samya)* I have some pills.

Ibrahim: This isn't a headache for pills.

Samya gestures to Giora to put the pill back in his bag. Lights up on Yona and Avigdor's house. They sit in the living room watching the scene in Ibrahim's house.

Ibrahim: *Yil'an din'hu* this head of mine. I wish it were empty.

Giora: Where were you when the shooting began, Ibrahim?

Ibrahim: I was in the tower of the mosque. When they saw the fire coming out of my gun, they... *(Pause)* Better if you came tomorrow.

Samya: Baba, I also want to know.

Ibrahim: What for? So the dead will come back to life?

Samya: So we'll know their story. It's the story of all of us.

Ibrahim: Nobody's interested in the story anymore.

Azmi enters.

Azmi: *(To Samya)* I told you I don't want him here anymore. *(To Giora)* Take your legs and get out.

Samya: *(To Azmi)* You get out.

Azmi: And you shut up. His father's heard you two are talking to him about a book, so now he's issuing a complaint against us for Assault.

Giora: How did he hear?

Azmi: And he wants a million in compensation. *(To Samya)*

Giora: It's just a threat. He knows what'll be found out the minute he gets to court.

- Azmi: He's not afraid of any court. He knows I'm a tiny little Arab and he's a big Jew. And no court will defend a tiny little Arab against a big Jew. If you were a tiny little Arab you'd know it.
- Samya: I know a couple of good lawyers who...
- Azmi: I'm not getting any lawyers and I'm not going to any court. *(To Ibrahim)*
And you won't tell him another word.
- Ibrahim: *(To Samya)* So I shouldn't tell?
- Samya: Yes, you should.
- Azmi: There's nothing to tell.
- Samya: On that day they determined the course of our life, Azmi.
- Azmi: They didn't. He's making everything up. *(Angrily)*
- Samya: We know him well enough to know he isn't.
- Azmi: *(To Ibrahim)* And I'll tell you why you're making it up. Because you don't want us to know the truth. You ran away from there. All of you ran away. Like pecking pigeons who fly away the minute a kid chucks his apple core at them.
- Ibrahim: We didn't run away, Azmi.
- Azmi: And how you ran away. You heard the echo of their shoes and threw your guns into the well. And then you started telling stories about how they killed you and raped your women and drank your blood.
- Samya: Enough, Azmi.
- Azmi: I saw the stones there. Each one is still in place. You didn't even pick up a pebble.
- Ibrahim: You don't know a thing, *ya ahabal*. They ran from Haifa. From Akko. From Yaffa. Like mice from a drowning boat. We fought for six months. With a hundred old rifles, and a few boxes of bullets. We shot them on the roads. In the fields. We put mines under their trucks. Even if we wanted, we couldn't run. Lebanon took in only the wealthy ones who could pay for visas. The rest of us stayed until the end and fired till our last bullet.

- Azmi: Of course. Now you're all heroes at my expense. The moment you open your mouth they'll throw us out of the restaurant and weld the doors shut. Where would we go? To sell *za'atar* at a refugee camp in Tul Karem?
- Ibrahim: *Wallah el Azim*. You aren't such a fool as I thought, Azmi. I'm the fool. I never told you what happened there because I didn't want you to be afraid to live here. And look what's happened. You're more afraid than me.
- Azmi: I'm afraid?
- Samya: Let's just hear him.
- Azmi: (*Furious*) I've heard enough.
- Samya: We won't do anything without you.
- Giora: You've just been in his office, Azmi. Haven't you? You told him that I'm here.
- Azmi: Come on.
- Giora: All my life I've seen people leaving his office with an offer they couldn't refuse. Don't you understand that he's more afraid than you?
- Azmi: I'm not afraid. I'm looking to see which way the wind blows. I know what happened in Tantur. I know everything. They killed. Not just there. Everywhere. And those they didn't kill, they expelled. From every city. From every village. We won't forgive it the rest of our lives. But I'm also not going to talk about it. (*To Ibrahim*) And you're not going to build any memorial there. Because I'm thinking of you. And her. And about the kids she'll have. And about my kids. I know that if we start settling accounts with those who killed, then we should forget about our lives. (*To Samya*) So instead of forgetting about our lives, it's better to forget about those dead. (*To Giora*) You think I don't know that your father was responsible for that mess? The day he came to the restaurant and arranged a permit for me and offered a loan, paid for her university and gave her a grant, that day I asked myself "what happened? How did I win the lottery if I never bought a ticket?" I didn't have to spend ten years in school to figure it out. The first jerk I sent to the library told me your father was the commanding officer in Tantur. So I understood what was cooking in his pot. Maybe they didn't kill two hundred twenty people like some of us say, and maybe they didn't rape women or girls. But hundred twenty people they did kill. They shot them like sick dogs. I asked my aunt in Tul Karem. She knows everybody. But I wanted to live like a man. Not die like a dog. So I kept my mouth shut. (*To Samya*) And that's why you kept your mouth shut, too. You could've also checked why his father was

paying for your studies. But you didn't. You didn't check because you didn't want to know. Because you wanted his money and you wanted his son. *(To Giora)* You too could have figured out what your father did there. But you also didn't want to know. If you knew, how could you eat with us? How could you look at her face? So don't teach me what to remember or what to forget. You're not the hero you think you are. Maybe against a few kids and some old people who were hiding under the steps in a ruined house in Lebanon. If you had to live my kind of life, you wouldn't only shut up. You would run away. And don't ever come to my restaurant again. I wouldn't give you stinking hummus on a rotten pita.

Azmi exits. Lights out on Yona and Avigdor.

Ibrahim: Make him some coffee for the way home.

He exists after Azmi. Silence.

Samya: He's right. I could have known everything a long time ago. I should have known it a long time ago. Instead, I shut up. Just like him. When I talked, I lied to myself. I lied because I wanted to be with people like you, because I didn't want to upset people like you, because I wanted to belong with people like you. That's why I always despised myself around people like you. *(He is silent)* They're probably sitting downstairs. I think I should calm him down a little...

Giora: Do you think your father will be more willing to talk now?

Samya: I'll ask him tomorrow. *(Turns to exit)*

Giora: If he won't talk, ask him at least to show us where their bones are.

Samya: What for?

Giora: So that we can gather them and bury them. So we can build the memorial that he wants. We'll bring some students, give them shovels. In a day or two we can uncover the bones. I can't promise it will comfort your father, but at least he'll be able to mourn. *(Samya is silent)* I think we should write this book together, Samya. Together we'll be able to make sense of what we can't comprehend separately. We don't have to agree on everything. Our differences will clarify the complexity of the truth. Why are you crying?

She wipes her tears. He hugs her.

- Samya: I need to know what's going on with us, Giora. I decided to give you up and go away. Now suddenly you're back. You're coming here every day. Trying to understand. Trying to help. Offering me such a partnership. Why?
- Giora: I thought we're together in this. Aren't we?
- Samya: Together? How much? Where? Here? In another country? Are we going to London at the end of the year? I don't want to lie myself anymore.
- Giora: You think we'll be able to live together there knowing what happened here?
- Samya: Maybe because we know.
- Giora: I'm not sure we understand what we know.
- Samya: I saw how you dealt with what you did in Lebanon. I see how you're dealing with what he did.
- Giora: His blood courses through my veins. Wherever you look, you'll see the writing on the wall, in every corner of the world. You'll never forget and never forgive.
- Samya: So you don't think we can live together anywhere. Do you?
- Giora: You know how much I wish we could.

Scene 11

Night. Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor sits on the sofa, one hand in a sling, the other holding a drink. Yona stands opposite him. Light on Giora and Neta's apartment. He watches his parents.

- Avigdor: That's what he wants?! He's lost his mind?!
- Yona: He thinks it's a simple human gesture.
- Avigdor: He doesn't understand the repercussions?
- Yona: If you withdraw the complaint to the police, he'll stop all this and meet you.
- Avigdor: He won't uncover any bones and he won't build any memorial. The guards won't let him enter. By the way, the old man hasn't told him anything yet. And he never will. His son will send the sister out of the

country. Giora won't lay eyes on her ever again and won't be writing any books with her either.

Yona: Stop fighting with him, Avigdor. He went there to understand you, not them.

Avigdor: That's what he told you?

Yona: Yes. Sit with him. Show him the orders you received. Tell him you regret it. That you're sorry you obeyed them. He'll hear you and realize there's no reason to write anything.

Avigdor: I was there for the discussions of those orders, and I took part in writing them.

Yona: I know.

Avigdor: We killed. But it was not a massacre.

Yona: I know.

Avigdor: And I don't regret it.

Yona: I said that you'd *say* you regret it.

Avigdor: We did the right thing.

Yona: I know.

Avigdor: He also has to know. Where the Jordan legion was. Where the Arab Rescue Army was. He has to understand that the Iraqi army was planning to use Tantur as their base to attack Haifa.

Yona: And if he doesn't? You'll keep chasing him until he does something to himself? I don't want to return to those days in the hospital when he was hiding sleeping pills in chocolate boxes.

Avigdor: (*Drinks his whiskey*) We had to expel those people and destroy the village. It was cruel. It was inhuman. But those are the rules of war. Any war.

Yona: I don't care about those rules anymore. We lost Udi. I don't want to lose him, too. I never blamed you for what happened to the children. I've blamed myself. Only myself. That I didn't know how to protect them from you.

Avigdor: Please, stop it.

- Yona: Udi had a shorter leg. He didn't have to enlist.
- Avigdor: He wanted to.
- Yona: You didn't give him a choice.
- Avigdor: He wanted to be like his friends.
- Yona: When he fell, Giora should have been released from his unit.
- Avigdor: He didn't want to be released.
- Yona: You didn't give him a choice either.
- Avigdor: When he came home with his beret, you were proud just like I was.
- Yona: You lit this fire in them both. Giora didn't have to go back to Lebanon. When he called from London, I begged you to tell him to stay in the hotel.
- Avigdor: I told him.
- Yona: You didn't. I should have locked the door so they couldn't get out of the house. But I was afraid of you. I was so afraid that I gave in to their lust to sacrifice themselves. They were still boys. What did they know?
- Avigdor: We're not to blame for what happened to them.
- Yona: We can still save him, Avigdor. *(He doesn't answer)* If you don't go and show him all the orders you received, and tell him how sorry you are that you followed them, then I'll go and tell him what I know. What I saw with my own eyes. Everything you don't want him to know.

Avigdor stands and throws his glass against the wall. A sharp pain in his shoulder.

- Avigdor: I'm hiding something from him to protect myself? How can you accuse me of such a lie? It doesn't hurt me that Udi is dead? It doesn't kill me that Giora can't walk!? I wanted them to sacrifice themselves?! My hands are clean. In spite of what happened at Tantur. Even though I thought that Udi should enlist. Even though I waited for Giora at the airport. Even though I took him to his company. He didn't even want to stop at home to get his boots! Both of them knew very well that if we didn't win, we wouldn't live. Every night I see Udi burning in that tank... I see Giora getting hit with the bullet...

Long silence.

Avigdor: You think I don't want to talk to him? I went there. When I parked, I saw you coming out. He walked you to your car. When he saw me, he went back inside the house. I knocked on the door. I said I want to listen. To find out what he thinks. Maybe there's something I don't understand. He wouldn't open...

Blackout. The Bulldozers sound becomes louder.

Scene 12

Neta and Giora's apartment. Morning. Neta enters.

Neta: They're on their way here. He's already dropped the charges against Ibrahim and copied all the documents in the archive.

Giora: And what about the grave and the monument?

Neta: He wants more details.

Giora: And about the book?

Neta: He'll give you an answer after you've looked at the documents. *(Pause)* I think it's worth listening to him. He's never talked this way about that war. About the fear. The despair. The doubt. He was sure they wouldn't win. A hundred and ninety soldiers from his regiment died. He remembers their names. He showed me the total number of dead. They killed two thousand of our civilians in that war.

Giora: I know.

Neta: The week before the battle in Tantur, they massacred two hundred and forty members of kibbutz Kfar Etzion who were waving white flags.

Giora: And that justifies what he did?

Neta: It means you can't judge what he did. Not out of context.

Giora: My father himself doesn't believe the context justifies what he did. If he believes it, then why did he hide it from me all these years? If he had told me, I wouldn't have returned to Lebanon and I wouldn't have been injured.

Neta: He didn't tell you to return.

Giora: He didn't tell me. He programmed me. If I knew what happened in Tantur, I might have given it more thought. Maybe I would have understood that

the case for invading Lebanon wasn't so clearly. Maybe I wouldn't have rushed to throw that grenade. I knew those bastards used to hide among civilians.

Neta: He'll tell you everything now.

Giora: He must also do some questioning. What is he so afraid of?

Neta: He's running a very high fever, Giora. The infection's spread through his shoulder.

Giora: So he should go to the hospital.

Neta: He wants to speak to you before.

Giora: To convince me not to write?

He gets up and turns to leave.

Neta: Where are you going?

Giora: I want to be prepared for my meeting with him.

Neta: If you're going now to look for bones, you'd better hold on for a second. (*He stops*) I'm telling the hotel we're postponing the date.

Giora: Postponing? Why?

Neta: Because you're scaring me. You're punishing the people closest to you because they want to live. Don't you see how you've become obsessed with this pursuit of justice? How you've lost touch with reason? If they had expelled more, there wouldn't be an intifada today. If they had killed more, maybe their war would have been the last war. If you had killed more, you wouldn't have been injured. When I see what you're doing to him, I'm not sure what you would have done, if you were in his shoes.

Giora: I'm absolutely sure. I'm not better than him. I would have killed just like him.

Neta: You're right you're not better than him. You're ruthlessly hurting him. And you're mother. And me. I have done everything for you since the minute we met. Nothing has scared me. But I will not help you destroy yourself and I can't marry you if you keep persecuting him.

Giora: I'm not persecuting him, Neta. I'm trying to understand what happened to us. I'm trying to find a way to repair what went wrong. I'm trying to do whatever I can to continue living here without dying over and over again every day.

Neta: We're all doing whatever we can to continue living here.

Giora: I don't see that.

Neta: So sit down and listen to him. And if you still want to save what you've ruined, tell him you accept his every word. And you won't see them again, or eat with them anymore. You won't look for any of their bones in any grave, and you won't work with them on any book.

Giora: So you'll only marry me if I accept his every word? Haven't I accepted enough? Haven't you accepted enough? Don't you see how he's been using you against me all along? If you're so faithful to him, then what's the sense in us getting married?

Silence. Giora exits.

Scene 13

Ibrahim and Samya's house. Afternoon. Ibrahim sits next to the table.

Giora: *(To Samya)* If he can't tell us exactly, he should tell us approximately.

Samya: He doesn't remember.

Giora: Did my father send someone over?

Samya: No.

Giora: Where did you dig, Ibrahim? How far down the Wadi? *(Ibrahim doesn't answer. Giora turns to Samya)* You don't see that he's slipping away?

Samya: He doesn't feel well.

Giora: Then let's call the doctor.

Samya: He doesn't need a doctor. He didn't sleep last night.

Giora: He'll tell us and go to sleep.

Samya: Don't you see that he's afraid to remember?

Giora: He's not afraid to remember. He's afraid of my father. *(To Ibrahim)* We can still find the bones, Ibrahim. Tomorrow my father will build a city there, and we won't be able to dig underneath it.

Samya: Enough. Leave him alone.

Giora: *(Vehemently)* If you don't tell me where they are, I'll bring tractors right now and dig up the entire Wadi.

Samya: Don't threaten him, Giora.

Giora: He's going to tell us where they are!

Samya: He'll say whatever he pleases. *(Taking Ibrahim by his arm)* Come, dad. Go rest in bed.

Giora: *(To Ibrahim)* So you don't think we should take our students to look for these bones?

Lights up on Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor, Yona and Neta are watching.

Ibrahim: I don't even remember if there are bones, Giora. And if there are, I don't remember whose. Maybe there was a village. Maybe not. Maybe soldiers came and killed. Maybe not. Maybe it was someone who only looked like your father. Who can remember such things today?

Giora: *(To Samya)* I don't understand what he's saying. If there are no bones there, then where are they?

Samya: I don't know.

Giora: *(To Ibrahim)* We've already planned a memorial. With names. With flowers. That's what you wanted.

Samya: We can't force him to remember. *(To Ibrahim)* Come, Dad.

Samya walks Ibrahim out, Giora blocks her way.

Giora: This is our chance too, Samya. I'm moving out.

Samya: He can hear you. *(Takes Ibrahim by his arm again)*

Giora: He's known this forever. *(To Ibrahim)* Sit!

Samya: Leave him alone.

- Giora: I thought you wanted to move in with me.
- Samya: Don't you see that he can't breathe?
- Giora: We just talked about it yesterday.
- Samya: Come, dad.
- Ibrahim: *Dachil Allah, Giora. Forget the bones. The knife that stabbed your father cut my heart too. It's almost empty of blood now. Why spill more? Your father's heart is almost empty too. So tell him to come here tomorrow. We'll sit. We'll talk. We're old men. We don't want more blood on the ground. Even the bones lying there want to rest. If someone digs there, a fire will come out from the stones and burn him. Your father already understands it. He'll do whatever is needed to guard them from the rains, so that they won't be... (Pauses and exits.)*
- Giora: I see my father spoke to him.
- Samya: He didn't speak to him. His lawyer came here last night, knocked on the door. I didn't let him in.
- Giora: Why didn't you tell me?
- Samya: So you could think sensibly. Leave your father alone. We don't have a chance against him.
- Giora: And we'll go on living with this lie?
- Samya: We don't have to uncover the bones to expose the truth. Let's go to London. There there's no writing on the wall. There we can expose the truth in the book.
- Giora: The book will only have meaning if it has my father's version in it.
- Samya: The book will force him to talk.
- Giora: He'll talk only after we find the bones. *(He turns to leave).*
- Samya: Don't go alone. We'll dig there together. In a couple of days. In the meantime I'll try to convince my father that he can remember. That he can live with his memories. You'll find nothing without him.
- Giora: I have to.

Samya: Wait, Giora. I'm ready to live with you here in Haifa. My father has seen who you are. Now he'll understand. My brother will, too.

They hug. After a moment Giora lets go of her and leaves.

Scene 14

Giora's apartment. Avigdor and Yona sit and wait. Avigdor holds a bag in one hand, the other is still bandaged. He has a fever and is suffering pain. Giora enters, the events of the past few days have taken a toll. Lights up on Ibrahim's house where we see Ibrahim, Samya, and Azmi. Lights up on Avigdor and Yona's house, there we see Neta. All are watching the scene at Giora's apartment.

Giora: I see she already gave you back her key.

Yona: We borrowed it from her.

Avigdor: I brought you the documents. I'll be happy to show them to you. But first I think it best you tell your students to stay at the university.

Yona: And tomorrow we'll all stand together, with Neta, for Udi's ceremony. And the day after you'll come to the board meeting.

Giora: We're only talking about a few hundred square meters, Dad. A stone with names. A flower bed. An olive tree and a bench. *(Showing Avigdor a plan)* Look. I'd need a bulldozer for two days and a pile-driver for another three to install pillars for the fence.

Avigdor: *(refusing the plans)* I don't understand why you are being so stubborn. Even Ibrahim and his family don't want it anymore.

Giora: They will.

Avigdor: When they want it, we'll talk about it.

Giora: I'm doing it for us too, Dad.

Yona: We definitely don't want it. *(To Avigdor)* Show him.

Avigdor opens his bag and takes out a stack of documents.

Avigdor: I brought you government plans, orders of the general staff and the investigating officer's report on Tantur. There was a general guideline to expel villagers who resisted the takeover. There were no written orders to kill so that other would flee, but there were winking eyes and shrugging shoulders from commanding officers who made clear what was expected. I'm ready to tell you everything, but only you.

- Yona: If you build a memorial and write a book, everyone will talk about it.
- Avigdor: You're a smart boy, Giora. When you hear me you'll understand why it has to stay between us.
- Giora: The book isn't only about the facts, dad, but also about their implications.
- Avigdor: It'll risk everything we've built here.
- Giora: If the truth becomes known it might create a chance for reconciliation.
- Yona: Dad has come a long way to meet you, Guri. Meet him halfway. Stop your students and we'll begin talking.
- Avigdor: I'm beginning to think that maybe you don't really want to see all these documents. Maybe you're afraid you'll be convinced I had no choice? That what happened in Tantur wasn't a massacre in any way.
- Giora: This isn't just between you and me, Dad. I'm not the only one who has to be convinced.
- Yona: They didn't have a choice, Guri!
- Avigdor: The responsibility on my shoulders was too heavy, Giora. I was a twenty four year old construction engineer. I was taken to the war from my office. After a year and a half I became a regiment commander. All of a sudden I discovered that I'm responsible for the fate of hundreds of thousands. I couldn't always deliberate. Against fire. Under attacks. Under terrible fear. In helplessness. In despair. I couldn't always be reasonable. I didn't always know how to refuse what this war permitted.
- Giora: The war permitted such shooting?
- Avigdor: Perhaps we were too quick to shoot. Perhaps we shot too much.
- Giora: Perhaps?!
- Avigdor: Yes. I shot too much. Yes. In rage. In revenge. In madness. Yes. We stormed their streets. Yes. I got swept away by my soldiers. I couldn't control them. Yes. I couldn't stop. Yes. We hit some who weren't armed. Yes. I hit them too. Yes. Ones who were just throwing stones. Maybe even some women and old men who just peeped from their windows. Yes. Some who were running away. But even so, it was a battle. It was not a massacre. And two days later there was another battle. We killed there too. We got killed there too. And then there was another one. And another one

after that. Again we killed and again we got killed. But never slaughtered. Yes. Never slaughtered. I will not lie to you. I did not mourn the dead. Not theirs and not ours. We buried them and wiped away the sweat and the dust. And the blood. Yes. To mourn was a luxury... (*Pauses*)

Yona: (*To Giora*) What else do you want to hear?

Giora: That you're sorry. That you regret it. That the killing was unnecessary.

Yona: Of course he regrets it.

Avigdor: You'll only be satisfied when I put a gun to my head?

Yona: Avigdor, please.

Giora: I'll be satisfied when you come with me to the Wadi, and dig with me until we uncover the bones, and we erect a stone with the names.

Avigdor: You know that's impossible.

Giora: And you'll explain in the book what you did there. You'll ask for forgiveness. You'll atone.

Avigdor: All my life I've struggled to atone, Giora.

Giora: You struggled to deny. To silence. To hide. From me too. And I closed my eyes. I always knew this village was destroyed and its people were expelled. I never asked why. Never checked how. And I ended up killing. Just like you.

Avigdor: You didn't have a choice either.

Giora: Maybe I did? Maybe you did too?

Avigdor: "Maybe" isn't enough for us, Giora.

Giora turns to leave. Yona blocks Giora's way.

Yona: Wait. We'll look for the bones, and bury them in one of their cemeteries.

Avigdor: We're not looking for any bones!

Yona: How much longer will we be able to keep them underground, Avigdor? A year? Two? It's better we dig there ourselves, while we can still explain what we did.

Avigdor: Is only the truth important to you? What about the thousands of people who will die because of it? Aren't they worth anything? If we learn how to live here, these open wounds will scar and heal. If we learn how to live here, these open wounds will scar and heal.

Giora: You made that promise to me before I was born. **(Turns to leave)**

Yona: Wait. We're coming with you.

Avigdor: There's no need. There is no Wadi. The tractors went out today. They flattened the hill. Filled the Wadi. You won't find a thing there.

Giora stops, shocked. Yona, too, is stunned.

Yona: *(To Avigdor)* How could you do that? Stop them! Stop them! Stop them!
(to Giora) I didn't know, Guri. I swear to you. I didn't know.

Giora: That's how you want to explain what you did? With tractors plowing the Wadi? What you did must be more horrifying than what you're willing to admit. You're even ready to trample me in order to hide it. But I inherited a few things from you, as you know. It's not so easy to crush me. You will never succeed in hiding these dead, even if you build skyscrapers on top of them. I'll dig with my hands and fingernails. Until they're found. Then maybe the wounds will begin to heal. **(He exits)**

Epilogue

The three houses are still lit. Lights up on the hill of Tantur. The Sound of bulldozers is heard in the distance. Giora is crawling to the top of the hill. When he reaches it he begins to dig with his hands until strength gives out. In the distance, above the bulldozer's sound, we hear Yona.

Yona: Today we place this groundbreaking stone in memory of our eldest son, Udi. Udi was born at the end of the War of Independence. He fell in the beginning of the Yom Kippur War. Three months after his twenty fourth birthday. Before he could graduate. Before he could go out and work. Before he could savor the fullness of our love. Before we could savor the fullness of his. Udi was a company commander in the armored forces. His tank was hit. He died on the spot. His light went out. The neighborhood he wanted to build here will be built in his memory by his younger brother, Giora, whose light has filled our lives ever since...

Yona's voice dies out. Lights out on all the homes. Lights out on the hill.

End of Play