

Home Front

A Play about Longlasting Love Amid the Betrayal of the Body, the
Mind and the Homeland

By Sharon Stark and Ruth Borenstein

The original production, directed by Sharon Stark, debuted at Tzavta Theater, Tel Aviv, June
30th, 2025

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Cast of Characters:

Eliyahu: 84 years old

Rivka'le: 84 years old

Soldier: 19 years old

Narrator

In the original production, the elderly couple is played by considerably younger actors, portraying the couple's state of mind and self perception, rather than aging body.

At certain points noted in the stage directions, they are made aware of the limitations biology now imposes on them, and physically transform for a moment to embody and demonstrate their characters' old age.

Scene 1- Saturday, October 7th, 7 AM

Narrator (VO): Meet Rivka'le and Eliyahu Katz. They met in the Socialist youth movement and have been married for 60 years. Rivka'le was a nurse and award winning swimmer in her youth, and Eliyahu, once quite the charmer, is a former engineer. They are watching the news. Saturday. October 7th, 7:00 AM.

Gunshots are heard on the television broadcast. Eliyahu's cup starts to rattle in his hand.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu?

Rivka'le takes the cup from him, it continues to rattle in her hands. She sets it down on the table.

Eliyahu: I can't just sit here doing nothing.

Rivka'le: Me neither...Should we go donate blood at the community clinic? Or maybe we should buy shampoos and toothpaste for care packages?... Perhaps on our way there we can stop by the pool. I need to swim.

Eliyahu: To swim? With everything that's going on, in this situation? That's what you want to do?

Rivka'le: And if I don't swim, would it help the situation?

Eliyahu: We must get the situation under control.

Rivka'le: That could take a long time.

Eliyahu: We'll do whatever it takes.

Rivka'le: Who knows what it would take?

Eliyahu: Let me think. Clear a route. A diversion tactic. People's lives are on the line.

(A beat, Eliyahu starts moving towards the door)

Maybe you should go swimming after all?

Rivka'le: And what do you intend to do?

Eliyahu: Oh, don't you worry about me.

Rivka'le: I don't like this. What are you smiling about?

Eliyahu: You go ahead, I'll see you later.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu? What are you planning?

Eliyahu: Don't worry about it.

Rivka'le: Then what should I worry about?

Eliyahu: Enough Rivka'le, don't you see that everything's changed?

Rivka'le: Yes, everything has, but you haven't. I want to know where you're going.

Eliyahu: No...No, enough chattering. I'll be back in no time. What's it to me, just like taking a cold shower, like popping over to the grocery store, to the Yom Kippur War, to the Sinai Operation, to the Entebbe Raid.

Rivka'le: You didn't take part in the Entebbe Raid.

Eliyahu: Whatever you say. **(A beat)** See you later!

Rivka'le: You're not going, you're 84 years old!

Eliyahu: I'm as good as new!

Rivka'le: It's dangerous out there.

Eliyahu: For your information, most accidents happen at home.

Rivka'le: Alright then. So get me a piece of paper. I want to put down a will.

Eliyahu: A will?!

Rivka'le: Get me a pen. I leave everything to you.

Eliyahu: You're leaving everything to **me**? What are you talking about? If anything, I leave **everything** to **you**!

Rivka'le: The good china sets.

Eliyahu: Stop it.

Rivka'le: The Matrioshka dolls from Poland, my swimming medals.

Eliyahu: My pipe, the complete works of A.D Gordon.

Rivka'le: Take special care of my Certificate of Excellence from nursing school.

Eliyahu: No way. I will not have you die before me.

Rivka'le: I will most certainly die before you.

Eliyahu: I won't have it.

Rivka'le: You can't tell me what to do.

Eliyahu: I can tell you whatever I want.

Rivka'le: You're a self centered egomaniac. That's what you are.

Eliyahu: Me? I'm self centered? Fine then, I'll pass right away. I'll go rest in peace and leave you alone.

Rivka'le: I don't want to stay here alone.

Eliyahu: You'll be safe here, just listen to the Home Front Command's instructions and everything will be alright. **(Kisses her on the forehead and heads towards the door)** I'll be back.

Rivka'le: Like yesterday? When you got lost?

Eliyahu: I was not lost.

Rivka'le: You were certainly lost.

Eliyahu: I was most certainly not.

Rivka'le: You really don't remember getting lost yesterday?

Eliyahu: **(A beat)** No.

Rivka'le: I nearly lost my mind, I was so worried! You forgot to take your cellphone as well.

Eliyahu: No! Stop.

Rivka'le: I can't stop. You shouldn't leave the house...You're no longer fit to.

She places an umbrella in his hand, and he leans on it like a walking cane. They suddenly physically embody their old age.

Eliyahu: (A beat) I may have lost some of my vigor...but my seniority and experience must count for something.

Rivka'le: Of course they do. But combat is not what it used to be. Now it's all about high-tech technology and AI...It's all on these social networks... We know nothing about those things.

Eliyahu: Alright... I'm just trying to lend a hand...to see how we can assist...

Rivka'le: We can assist from here as well. So many people are frying schnitzels now for the troops. We can make a nice pie...there's so much we can do to help from here.

Narrator: Eliyahu proceeded to the kitchen and began making a pie. That's right. Eliyahu proceeded to the kitchen and began making a pie. In recent years, Eliyahu was responsible for the cooking, while Rivka'le, who was having difficulties staying on her feet to do so, gave him instructions from the other room.

Rivka'le: Grease the pan!

(The lights go out)

Narrator: Darkness. "We need to call the electrician", Rivka'le called out. "Nonsense, I'll handle it. It's only the wiring." Eliyahu responded. Responded- and immediately forgot. Lately, he's been forgetting all sorts of things; and particularly now, with the winds of war blowing- it's become even harder to keep your focus. Rivka'le understood this, and reconnected the wires herself.

Scene 2- Saturday, October 7th, 7 AM

(The light turns on)

Narrator: Meet Rivka'le and Eliyahu Katz. They purchased this house 45 years ago. Rivka'le wanted to leave the city, to distance herself from her friends, who were all mothers now. Eliyahu found solace in thoughts about making the desert bloom in their small yard by turning it into a vegetable garden.

Now, as every Saturday morning, they are drinking tea and watching the news. It's 7:00 AM.

Gunshots are heard on the television broadcast. The teacups in their hands begin to quiver.

Eliyahu: I can't just sit here doing nothing.

Rivka'le: Right...Tomorrow, first thing in the morning we'll go buy some shampoos and toothpaste tubes and send them to the troops

Eliyahu: Why tomorrow?

Rivka'le: Because today the shops are closed, it's Saturday.

Eliyahu: It's Saturday? Are you sure?

Rivka'le: Of course...I think we'll also send over some deodorants.

Eliyahu: Deodorants? Who for?

Rivka'le: For the troops! We were just talking about it. Don't you remember?

Eliyahu: Of course I remember. I remember. **(A beat)** Of course I do. It's just that in my time we didn't use deodorants. A soldier was a soldier. Not a, a..how do you call it...

Rivka'le: Times have changed Eliyahu. Today they use all sorts of toiletries. There's no reason a soldier can't smell good, even on the battlefield...

Narrator: "Alarm Warning"¹

Rivka'le: Well? Where is it?

Narrator: **(A beat)** "Kiryat Shemona"

Rivka'le: **(Relieved)** You can die twice by the time they announce where...

Eliyahu: Kiryat Shemona. The bastards are biting into us from all sides. Trying to annihilate us! **(A beat)** Rivka'le, I need to tell you something.

Rivka'le: What is it?

¹ *An alert broadcast over the radio and television waves notifying of a missile attack/military emergency in specific parts of the country, to ensure all residents are aware. Kiryat Shemona is a large city on Israel's Northern border.*

Eliyahu: Ahem. It's not going to be easy for you to hear this. But you're going to have to be strong.

Rivka'le: Yes?

Eliyahu: You know I love you.

Rivka'le: No. It's best that you don't say anything.

Eliyahu: I have to tell you.

Rivka'le: No Eliyahu, everything's all right. Just..

Eliyahu: What's wrong with you, let me speak.

Rivka'le: No, I don't want to know

Eliyahu: But, I have to let you know.

Rivka'le: A small slip up here and there is not the end of the world.

Eliyahu: Slip up? What slip up, what are you talking about?

Rivka'le: I'm not the jealous type.

Eliyahu: Jealous? What's wrong with you? That's not what I'm talking about!

Rivka'le: Then what are you talking about? **(A beat)** Who was it with?

Eliyahu: No one, it's nothing of the sort, listen to me for a minute. We have no other choice. I can't just sit here doing nothing, everyone needs to do their part to carry the load.

Rivka'le: The load?

Eliyahu: I just want you to be prepared, so you don't say I didn't tell you anything. I'm re-enlisting to the army reserves.

Rivka'le: Please don't start...

Eliyahu: Once the emergency draft order comes, I'm going to have to leave. That's it. Now I've said it so you can't say I didn't tell you so.

Rivka'le: Alright, fine. There's no draft order on the way.

Eliyahu: Did you check the mail box?

Rivka'le: On a Saturday?

Eliyahu: An emergency order overrides the Sabbath.

Rivka'le: They won't be sending you an emergency order during the week either.

Eliyahu: Yes they will. **(A beat)** Did you check?

Rivka'le: You're making no sense.

Eliyahu: Did it come? The draft order?

Rivka'le: No, no draft order's come.

Eliyahu: Did you check the mailbox?

Rivka'le: Stop it.

Eliyahu: Answer me.

Rivka'le: I will not.

Eliyahu: Has it come yet?

Rivka'le: Enough.

Eliyahu: Tell me.

Rivka'le: (She loses her patience) Fine, yes! Yes, it came.

Eliyahu: Seriously?

Rivka'le: But of course!

Eliyahu: When did that happen?

Rivka'le: It came over Whatsapp. For me!

Eliyahu: For you?

Rivka'le: That's right. I was selected to be a C.O.R commander.

Eliyahu: What's a C.O.R?

Rivka'le: I was assigned to the L.O.R.P²

Eliyahu: I can't understand a word you're saying.

Rivka'le: What's there to understand? I'm enlisting in the army reserves.

Eliyahu: You? But **(A beat)** how is that possible? You walk with a cane.

He tosses the umbrella to her, they physically transform into their old, frail selves again.

² These are made up acronyms, meant to sound like military speak.

Rivka'le: So what? They're sending me a walker. Something special, with explosives in it, that you can blow up using a remote control.

Eliyahu: Come on, Rivka'le, don't be silly.

Rivka'le: I'm the one being silly?

Eliyahu: Who would send such a thing?

Rivka'le: The secret service.

Eliyahu: Stop making a joke of everything.

Rivka'le: I'm completely serious.

Eliyahu: But you're-

Rivka'le: What am I?

Eliyahu: You're-

Rivka'le: I'm what? Go on, say it.

Eliyahu: No...Let it go,

Rivka'le: Why?

Eliyahu: Because- Leave it, I don't want to say...

Rivka'le: What? Why? Go on, say it Eliyahu. Say it! Because you're old! You're so old, you can barely move, and even if you do manage to walk, you might fall, get dizzy and miss a gap in the sidewalk and fall, and your bones could break, crackle like dry leaves, just like that, snap, like Shloima'le, remember? He broke a rib with one sneeze. Then surgery and hospitalization and that's it, he was gone, and that's why old people don't go to war, and no one needs them to help carry any load.

Eliyahu: You're not old... **(He grabs the umbrella from her hand and they become youthful again)**

Rivka'le: We need help, Eliyahu. We need supervision. (A beat) We have to move to an assisted living facility, where we'll be safe. Before it's too late.

Eliyahu: (Distraught) Over my dead body. Assisted living...

Eliyahu sees a soldier appear in front of him.

Eliyahu: ...We're at war.

Rivka'le: It's not our war anymore, Eliyahu

Eliyahu: Like hell it isn't. There will be no living, assisted or otherwise, if we don't fight to protect our borders. I will not surrender my home. I've spent my entire life fighting for this home. I've seen people die. People have died in my arms. My

friends. Rami.

The soldier disappears behind the curtains.

Eliyahu: (Tries to follow him, but hits the wall) Rami? Rami?

Rivka'le: Eliyahu! Who are you talking to?

Eliyahu: If he goes, I'm going with him.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu, are you alright?

Eliyahu: I will not abandon my friends.

Rivka'le: Of course you won't. Come here, take a deep breath. Wouldn't you like to relax, sit quietly, read a good book, swim in a pool? Take a walk, or play bridge, the assisted living has all sorts of-

Eliyahu: No. No.

Lights flicker, then darkness.

Narrator: And again. Darkness. "We should have called the electrician" Eliyahu admitted silently to himself. "I bet Assisted Living has onsite electricians 24/7!" Rivka'le thought, and gave Eliyahu a reproachful look concealed by the darkness. "How are we supposed to watch television without power?! With the fog of war upon us, it's very important to watch the news! Who knows what's going on out

there.”

The power comes back on. The soldier is seen on the television screen from the battlefield.

The Soldier: “They set up an ambush, positioned themselves on the rooftops. It caught us unprepared, we couldn’t see a thing. I was hit. No, before that, I was running. I heard the bullets whistling past my ears. They were flying really close. I smelled blood, but I couldn’t feel anything. There was someone there. He was looking at me. He was watching me. I said... I called out... I can’t remember his name. He looked at me in panic. He looked at me as if I was... Like I was...What?... If anything bad happens to me, tell my mother I...**(This sound and image is stuck on repeat until the television is shut off in the next scene)** Tell my mother-”

Scene 3- Saturday. October 7th, 7:00 AM.

(The sound of the previous scene's last sentence continues to play. The sounds of the couple's teacups rattling overrides the end of the soldier's monologue. The couple's empty hands shiver, holding nothing)

Rivka'le: Shut that off! The television's out of order.

Eliyahu stands up and bangs on the television set.

Eliyahu: I can't just sit here doing nothing.

Rivka'le: That's right. Let's do our morning exercises.

They exercise to the sound of a nostalgic song about joining the army reserves.

Rivka'le: Again with the reserves?

Eliyahu: It's a great tune!

Rivka'le: Tune, shmune

A bomb siren suddenly rings out.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu! Siren! Siren!

Eliyahu: I can hear!

Rivka'le: Alarm!

Eliyahu: I'm not deaf!

Rivka'le: Siren

Eliyahu: Let go of my hand!

They sit down and cover their heads with their hands.

Rivka'le: We need to wait for the boom.

They wait.

Rivka'le: Keep going, keep moving your legs. (They continue exercising with just their legs) We should have gone to Motke and Yehudit in America. They invited us over so many times.

Eliyahu: Who?

Rivka'le: Motke

Eliyahu: (He tries to recall) Motke?

Rivka'le: Eliyahu, are you joking? Motke and Yehudit, our friends? You don't remember them?

Eliyahu: Ah, Yehudit? No no ...

Rivka'le: What do you have against Yehudit?

Eliyahu: Nothing. I don't want to see her.

Rivka'le: Why? **(A beat, Rivka'le glances at him in suspicion)** You know what, nevermind, I don't want to know.

Eliyahu: Oh, come on.

Rivka'le: What? I'm just saying, you can never really know.

Eliyahu: You can never really know what?

Rivka'le: I don't know. And I don't want to know. **(A beat)** If anything ever happened between you two...

Eliyahu: Between me and Yehudit?!

Rivka'le: Yes. It's not the end of the world if it did.

Eliyahu: What's gotten into you?

Rivka'le: I'm not the jealous type.

Eliyahu: There was never anything between Yehudit and I.

Rivka'le: Then why do you always avoid them when they come to visit?

Eliyahu: Yehudit's not my type at all.

Rivka'le: Then nevermind Yehudit, that's just an example.

Eliyahu: An example for what? Rivka'le, as I've always said, I have never been unfaithful to you.

Rivka'le: Even if you have, I don't want to know.

Eliyahu: But I have never!!!

Rivka'le: It's understandable, with a woman like me.

Eliyahu: What do you mean?

Rivka'le: Who couldn't have children.

Eliyahu: (A beat) We said we wouldn't talk about that. I'm telling you there was never anything between us.

Rivka'le: Then why do you always badmouth Motke?

Eliyahu: Which Motke?

Rivka'le: Yehudit's husband. Don't pretend you can't remember.

Eliyahu: Oh, Motke. Motke. That weakling dropout! As if we don't know where his riches came from?

Rivka'le: The man made it in America, what's there to be envious about?

Eliyahu: Envy Motke? On the contrary. I hope they're having the time of their life over there in Florida, him and his kids. Good riddance.

Rivka'le: Not everyone has to "Die for their country"

Eliyahu: No problem. Auf wiedersehen. There are enough people here to stand and take action bravely.

Rivka'le: Why are you getting up? There wasn't a boom yet.

A blast sounds in the distance.

Eliyahu: There. Now there was.

Rivka'le: We need to wait another ten minutes for any falling missile debris.

Eliyahu: No. I've had enough. Where are the schnitzels? Did you fry up the schnitzels? I'll take them down to the army base, to cheer up the troops. People are sacrificing their blood over here, and Motke and his sons are working on their tan in Miami. Where are the keys to the Mini Minor?

Rivka'le: The Mini Minor?!

Eliyahu: The Mini Minor. Our car.

Rivka'le: What car?

Eliyahu: Where are the keys? Did you hide my keys?

Rivka'le: Of course not.

Eliyahu: Are you hiding them in your pocket?!

Rivka'le: I don't have any pockets. You're not well. We need to call the doctor.

Eliyahu: Where are the keys?

The television switches on, the narrator is heard speaking

Narrator: "Our forces attempted to resume control of the Southern Perimeter unsuccessfully, several houses are currently in flames, their residents whereabouts are yet to be determined. We pray for their safety. Back to you, Yonit".

Eliyahu: Did you hear that? "**Pray**" for their safety"?

Rivka'le: It's just a figure of speech.

Eliyahu: That's the plan? To pray for a miracle? Where's the army? Turn it on, I want to see.

Rivka'le: I didn't shut it off.

Narrator: "Many people are currently unreachable as the cellular network has collapsed. Back to you, Yonit.

Eliyahu: Why is no one going over there to help?!!! What is this, a third world country?

Rivka'le: I don't know Eliyahu. It's a war, but please calm down, you've done your part.

Eliyahu: Rivka'le, don't you dare stop me now! Enough is enough.

Rivka'le: But, they'll be rescued, they said so on the television.

Eliyahu: That's **not** what they said.

Rivka'le: Yes, they did. **(She turns to the television)** Didn't they?...Didn't they?!

Narrator: “Many people are currently unreachable as the cellular network has collapsed. Among them, senior citizens”

(They look at one another, alarmed)

Rivka’le: That’s right...They didn’t say anything about rescue...

Eliyahu: This is complete anarchy. Where is my Uzi?³ **(Begins searching the apartment, rifling through their belongings)**

You probably threw it away.

Rivka’le: I didn’t touch anything.

Eliyahu: Oh, there it is! **(He picks up the umbrella, inspecting it as if it’s a firearm)**

And the cartridges, where are they?

Rivka’le: Your pill case? Yes, you must take them now.

Eliyahu: Where’s the ammunition?!

Rivka’le: Calm down, where are your pills?

Eliyahu: You’re always throwing out my belongings!

Rivka’le: Eliyahu, slow down, your heart. Stop it, I’m calling an ambulance!

³ A historic Israeli made rifle.

She dials the phone.

Eliyahu: The shoes. Where have you hidden my shoes? People are trapped, burning alive!

Rivka'le: Hello? Hello?...The line is dead.

Eliyahu: (To the television) I'm coming!! I'm on my way!! Hold on!

Rivka'le: But wait, Eliyahu, at least put your shoes on. You can't leave the house like this!!!

Eliyahu: (Confronting her wildly) You will not tell me what to do!

Rivka'le: (Taken aback) Of course not, I'm not stopping you.

He rushes out.

Narrator: An emotional Eliyahu exited the house. Due to his condition, Eliyahu has been suffering from outbursts of rage, and Rivka'le learned that in these situations, it is best to disengage- there's no point in trying to reason with him. Eliyahu will soon calm down and forget, though he might not find his way back home again? As she deliberates her best course of action, Eliyahu comes back inside with a grim look on his face.

Rivka'le: Are you feeling better now?

Eliyahu: It's too late. They've set up an ambush.

Rivka'le: So you're not feeling better.

Eliyahu: There are a lot of people outside.

Rivka'le: Where?

Eliyahu: **(He directs her to look out of the window)** We're surrounded.

Rivka'le: **(Looking at the audience)** There's no one here. **(To herself)** This is what the doctor said might happen...

Eliyahu: We're done for. Unless...**(He assumes shooting position)**
Bastards. We'll flank 'em from the right. Get down, I'm opening fire.

Rivka'le: What are you doing?

Eliyahu: I'm covering for you. Run!!!

Rivka'le: How can I run, I can barely walk. Enough, Eliyahu...

Eliyahu: Come on!

He shoots using the umbrella as a rifle, with the vigor of a young soldier. The sound of gunshots ring out. Rivka'le struggles to pull it from his hands, once she is

able to grab it, she opens the umbrella and the gunshots stop .Eliyhau physically ages immediately.

Eliyahu: No! What have you done?

Rivka'le: Eliyahu, it's an umbrella. A simple, regular umbrella. An umbrella you use in the winter, for when it rains, that I bought for 10 Shekels at the grocery store. I opened the umbrella, Eliyahu, that's what I've done. That's all I've done.

Eliyahu inspects the umbrella.

Eliyahu: Oh. Yes. Of course. **(A beat)**

Rivka'le: Go on, turn off the stove, check on the pie to see if it's ready.

Eliyahu leaves the room, defeated.

Narrator: Rivka'le gazed after him in desperation. I don't have the tools to cope, she thought to herself, we can't stay here like this, all alone. We have to move to an assisted living facility⁴, before it's too late.

Rivka'le sits exhausted on the couch, she begins to doze off. Fade to black.

⁴ In Hebrew, also referred to as a "Safe House".

Scene 4- Saturday, October 7th, 7:00 am

The light rises on the Soldier repairing the wiring of the light bulb, he notices Rivka'le asleep on the couch.

The Soldier: Rivka'le?

Rivka'le (awakens, startled): Good God!...Hello.

Soldier: Sorry I startled you. Your door was open...

Rivka'le: What? The door was open?

Soldier: Is there anyone else in the house?

Rivka'le: Only my husband, Eliyahu

Soldier: Okay. And where is he?

Rivka'le: I don't know, maybe in the kitchen? Forgive me, I'm having some difficulty walking.

Soldier: It's alright, I'll go take a look-

Rivka'le: Are you hungry? Help yourself to a schnitzel.

Soldier: (He returns from the kitchen) All clear.

Rivka'le: Of course it is, my kitchen is always spotless.

But, what do you mean?

Soldier: There's no one else here

Rivka'le: Except for the two of us?

Soldier: That's right

Rivka'le: So where is Eliyahu?

Soldier: You're asking me?

Rivka'le: Maybe he stepped out to get some groceries?

Soldier: I'm afraid the grocery store is gone as well.

Rivka'le: Gone?

Soldier: It suffered a direct hit, regrettably.

Rivka'le: Oh no, how unfortunate. We were thinking about purchasing some necessities for the troops.

Soldier: Oh, that's very nice of you...

Rivka'le: What do you need?... Deodorant?

Soldier: Deodorant? **(Sniffs himself)** No, no need. All is well...Don't worry about us, we'll do whatever it takes. **(He assumes shooting position)**

Rivka'le: You look like someone I know

Soldier: Me?

Rivka'le: Yes. I'm trying to recall who, one moment **(She snaps her fingers, trying to think, but nothing comes up)**

Soldier: How long do you think it should take you?

Rivka'le: What?

Soldier: To recall

Rivka'le: Eventually, a millisecond. But sometimes it can take a few minutes to come to me.

Soldier: I'm sorry then, we don't have time for that. We have to evacuate now

Rivka'le: Evacuate? Us too? Why?

Soldier: There are a lot of people outside and only the two of us in here. Come on,

before it's too late.

Rivka'le: One moment, I'll just give Eliyahu a call

Soldier: It's a waste of time. They've set the antenna on fire. There's no reception.

Rivka'le: Oh, right... Just so you know, I told him we can't stay here any longer

Soldier: Do you have any medication? What do you need?

Rivka'le: Where are we going?

Soldier: To a safe place as a start.

Rivka'le: I told him the Army will come rescue us. But where is he? Let me see if he's taken his umbrella.

Soldier: Come on, let's go.

Rivka'le: Wait, one more minute, he has to be here

Soldier: No...It's just you, I'm sorry. Here, come, take your shawl as well **(He grabs a black table cloth and places it on her shoulders as a shawl)**

Rivka'le: No, no, no, what is this? This isn't mine...

Soldier: It's chilly out there. Come on, time is running out...

Rivka'le: No, I can't go without Eliyahu

Soldier: But Rivka'le, Eliyahu's not here. He's left the house.

Rivka'le: No, no, I didn't let him, no

Soldier: That's right, you didn't want him to, but you were sleeping, and he left. I'm sorry for your loss, he will be missed...

Rivka'le: No...He just can't find his way back home

Soldier: Ma'am, please, it's extremely dangerous here

Rivka'le: I can't leave

Soldier: He's not coming back.

Rivka'le: I mean, I can't walk. My legs.

Soldier: I'll carry you, quickly, they have snipers

Rivka'le: No, no, let me go, that's very kind of you, but-

Soldier: Ma'am, you're refusing a direct order

Rivka'le: What order? I'm not leaving without him! Just a few minutes more.

Soldier: We're out of time. They're already here.

He points the rifle at her, the lights flicker in a nightmare. A figure enters wearing a gas mask, holding a pie. They circle around her ominously. She's very frightened and confused.

Rivka'le: Who? What?

Soldier: One,

Rivka'le: What are you doing?

Soldier: Two. **(A beat)** Three!

Rivka'le: **(Screams)** No!!!

Scene 5- Saturday, October 7th, 7:00 am

Eliyahu takes off the gas mask and offers her the pie.

Rivka'le (awakens, startled): Eliyahu? Eliyahu!! Oh my Goodness, there you are!

Eliyahu: You dozed off again. You have to get up!

Rivka'le: Did you burn the pie? What's that smell?

Eliyahu: It's coming from outside.

(They both walk cautiously towards the window and look at the audience)

Narrator: Meet Rivka'le and Eliyahu Katz. They've been married for 60 years. Lately, Rivka has been dozing off often. Sometimes even immediately after breakfast. Eliyahu, on the other hand, hasn't been able to get a minute of sleep. Saturday morning, October 7th, seven am-

Four gunshots are heard. The sound of the trembling glasses is heard, their bodies shiver.

Rivka'le: Oy vey. We're completely surrounded.

Eliyahu: I told you so.

Rivka'le: What a disaster...What are we going to do?

Eliyahu: You didn't believe me...

Rivka'le: Fine! You were right!... So what are you giving me a pie for now?

Eliyahu places the mask back over his face.

Rivka'le: What are you doing?

Eliyahu: Just like on a plane, I'm putting my own mask on first before assisting others

He hands Rivka'le a second gas mask, his speech is unintelligible from behind the mask.

Eliyahu: (Trying to say something) Mmm

Rivka'le: I can't understand what you're saying

Eliyahu: (Pulls off his mask) I said eat your pie first, because with the mask you won't be able to.

More gunshots are heard.

Rivka'le: (To herself) Rivka'le, you're okay. Take the reins. Oh, that horrible smell...

Eliyahu: It's Saddam Hussein.

Rivka'le: Nonsense, Saddam Hussein?!

Eliyahu: (Distraught and confused, uttering senselessly) They're trying to annihilate us. Bastards. We will not go like sheep to slaughter! We have an Atom bomb. We have seventy of them. We'll destroy everyone with our gas. History's repeating before our eyes.

More gunshots are heard. Eliyahu rushes away from the door, hurriedly places the mask on his face, terrified.

Rivka'le: Shhh! Be quiet. Come on Eliyahu, we need to block the door so no one could come in

Eliyahu: (Cowering in fear like a child) No..No...I don't want to

Rivka'le: Take that mask off already, there's no gas! ***(Desperately trying to drag the furniture to block the door)***

Come my dear, help me, these are the Home Front Command's instructions. Please, I need your help.

Eliyahu: You didn't say sorry.

Rivka'le: About what?!

Eliyahu: I told you we were surrounded!

Rivka'le: Please Eliyahu, I'm begging you, now's not the time for that

Eliyahu: I told you this is what would happen

Rivka'le: Alright Eliyahu, but please come help me, so Saddam Hussein doesn't get in!

Eliyahu snaps into action and helps her move the furniture, leaving the stage bare.

Rivka'le: There... That's much better, isn't it? You can take your mask off now.

Eliyahu: (Pulls his mask off and clasps it to his chest for comfort) But now we can't go to the grocery store...

Rivka'le: There's no more grocery. It suffered a direct hit.

Eliyahu: A direct hit? (Gazes at the empty space around them) Does that mean we're actually dead?

Rivka'le: Of course we aren't.

She pinches him

Eliyahu: Ouch! What are you doing?

Rivka'le: Does it or does it not hurt?

Eliyahu: It hurts

Rivka'le: Then you aren't dead.

Eliyahu: Maybe dead people hurt too?

Rivka'le: No. That doesn't make sense. What's the point then? Why die if it's exactly the same?

Eliyahu: (A beat) It's quiet.

(They wait)

Narrator: Rivka'le and Eliyahu sat and waited.

Rivka'le: Let's sit down

Narrator: And waited.

Rivka'le: We'll wait.

Narrator: And waited.

Rivka'le: We're waiting...

Narrator: How much time had passed? Hard to say. No one came to their rescue, and nothing happened that could mark the passage of time. Quiet. Silence.

(A beat)

Rivka'le: Eliyahu, remember when I started to have difficulty walking, how we searched the whole city for comfortable shoes?

Eliyahu: No. Maybe.

Rivka'le: And I kept trying on and buying shoes and it was still difficult for me to walk. Do you recall?

Eliyahu: No.

Rivka'le: No? You'd say, "Come Rivka'le, I'm sure we'll find the right shoes for you to feel comfortable in" and we'd try again. You don't remember?

Eliyahu: Perhaps.

Rivka'le: You'd say, the previous store had shoes that weren't good enough, now I've found a new one, with special shoes from overseas, especially for you! You'll be running and jumping with the right shoes, you said. Remember that?

Eliyahu: No.

Rivka'le: I finally had to tell you, it's not the shoes that are bad, it's my legs!

Eliyahu: (Vaguely recalling) We went to watch a movie...Gone with the Wind

Rivka'le: It was at the cafe' that I told you that, and you laughed

Eliyahu: I laughed?

Rivka'le: You laughed so hard, your soda came spraying out of your nose. We had such a wonderful day.

You said I always tell the truth, but make it funny!

Eliyahu: (A beat) Who moved the furniture? Did I wash the floor?

Rivka'le: We really must do our memory games. Before you forget any more... **(A beat)**

Eliyahu, can I ask you something?

About Yehudit.

(Eliyahu doesn't respond)

Yehudit and Motke, our friends. Remember?

Did anything ever happen between you two? It's not the end of the world if it did, it's been fifty years

Eliyahu: Fifty? What time is it?

Rivka'le: Since they left the country.

Eliyahu: That weakling quitter...

Rivka'le: Yes, Motke. But I don't like it when you talk like that. Not everyone has to sacrifice their lives for the country.

Eliyahu: Like Rami did

Rivka'le: ... I didn't mean Rami

Eliyahu: (But Eliyahu is already immersed in a distant memory) At Rami's funeral, his mother went crazy when she saw us there, carrying his coffin. She started screaming: "Where's Rami?!" She couldn't understand why he wasn't standing there with us, his friends, who were all carrying his coffin! I can still hear her screaming- "Where's Rami?! Where's Rami?!" **(A beat, his focus suddenly shifts to a figure in the distance)** But you're not Rami. You look nothing like him. I immediately realized it wasn't you...

Rivka'le: Who are you talking to?

Eliyahu: I don't know. Is it...our son?

Rivka'le: (Shaken) But, we don't have a son

Eliyahu: No? Are you sure?

Rivka'le: I'm sure, we tried and tried and it didn't work. Don't you remember?

Eliyahu: It didn't?

Rivka'le: No.

Eliyahu: Not even a little bit?

Rivka'le: No. Not at all. We agreed we wouldn't talk about it.

Eliyahu: Oh. What a shame

(Eliyahu begins weeping)

Rivka'le: *(Gathers herself to console him like you would a child)* Shhh...There, there...That's all in the past now...What's done is done...That's all water under the bridge now...This is it...

(She hugs him)

Eliyahu: So now what?

Rivka'le: Now we wait. What else can we do?

Narrator: Rivka'le pictured the nice soldier that would come get them soon. She'll ask him for a Valium to ease Eliyahu's nerves. She wondered what vehicle he'd be using. If it's a Jeep, it may be harder on her back, but that would surely be better than squeezing into a tank- God knows what it smells like in there. Though they could see it as an adventure that Eliyahu and her could reminisce about someday and have a big laugh. She could almost hear his footsteps coming-

(A massive explosion is heard. Rivka'le and Eliyahu are thrown to the floor. Darkness.)

Scene 6- Saturday, October 7th, 7 AM

Dim emergency lights flicker on. Rivka'le and Eliyahu are lying on the floor, their hair is disheveled and their faces are covered with ash.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu, are you okay? Eliyahu?

Eliyahu: *(Calling out)* Rivka'le? *(To Rivka'le)* Where's Rivka'le?

Rivka'le: What?

Eliyahu: My wife. Have you seen her?

Rivka'le: It's me

Eliyahu: Who are you?

Rivka'le: You don't recognize me?

Help me up

Sounds are heard coming from the roof.

Eliyahu: They're on the roof...Do I know you?

Rivka'le: It's me, Rivka'le...

Eliyahu: No, you're not Rivka'le. You're old.

Rivka'le: Oh, Eliyahu, honestly...

Eliyahu: What a crummy situation. *(A beat)* I should have listened to her, taken her away from here while we still had a chance...

Rivka'le: Where to?

Eliyahu: Anywhere. Anywhere she wants. Somewhere safe. Now everything's turned to ashes.

Rivka'le: It's not too late.

Eliyahu: But I can't find her.

Rivka'le: I'm here. I'm Rivka'le.

Eliyahu: She must be terrified...grasping at some fantasy that soldiers are coming to her rescue...She doesn't deserve to live like this.

Rivka'le: But Eliyahu, they're coming. They're on their way.

Eliyahu: No, no one's coming. **(A beat)** Listen to me, I had a friend, Rami. He was shot. In the back. I didn't abandon him. I stayed to guard him, he bled for hours in my arms, and no one came!

Rivka'le: This time it'll be different.

Eliyahu: Forgive me, I have to go find her.

Rivka'le: No, don't open the door, there are snipers on the roof!!!

Eliyahu: Damn it, where are my keys? She's always hiding things away from me.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu, please, don't go, stay with me.

Eliyahu: I can't, Yehudit. **(Rivka'le is stunned)** You understand? I have to go get the Mini Minor, to drive Rivka'le, she can hardly walk...**(He calls out)** Rivka'le? Rivka'le?
(Eliyahu disappears behind the curtains)

Rivka'le: Eliyahu! Eliyahu! **(Follows him out)**

Eliyahu: **(Returns from another direction)** Rivka'le? Rivka'le? **(She reappears, he addresses her)** The problem is I can't remember where I parked the car.

Rivka'le: Eliyahu...

Eliyahu: If I don't find the Mini Minor right away, she'll say we sold it back in the

1980's! You know how stubborn Rivka'le can be...

Rivka'le: Don't you recognize my face? Can't you remember the sound of my voice?!

(She tries to stroke his face) There...

Eliyahu: (with great care) I'm sorry, Yehudit, but that's as far as I'll go. My sincere apologies, Yehudit, you are very fetching, and I really am sorry that Motke is such a wimp, you deserve more, but I will not do anything behind Rivka's back. I love her.

Rivka'le: And she does you...

Eliyahu: What a disaster... Rivka'le dozed off for a moment when I heard gunshots, I grabbed my Uzi and went outside, even though she doesn't like it. I tried to push them away, but I wasn't able to. I was shot. I feel terrible leaving her alone, and now I can't find her. Where are the keys? Where did Rivka'le put my keys? I need the keys!

(Eliyahu exits searching, and disappears. Rivka'le understands something)

Rivka'le: Very well... Here, Here, take the keys. *(she hands a non-existent key to no-one)* Get the Mini Minor. Go save your Rivka'le.

Rivka'le opens the door to exit. Light floods the room.

Rivka'le: Rivka'le will join you soon. She'll just turn off the light.

Rivka'le takes a last look around, then walks towards the door. She takes a deep breath and exits. Four gunshots are heard.

Narrator: Once Rivka'le crossed the threshold, the world suddenly came to a still, like in days of old, when she dove headfirst into the pool. Only her and the water, her and the whimsical bubbles rising with every exhalation as she sliced through the distance. Is this what the afterlife looks like?

Scene 7- Saturday, October 7th, 7 am

The sound of a basketball being dribbled sounds in the distance. The Soldier enters, dribbling an imaginary ball.⁵ Young Rivka'le re-enters the stage, looking around in wonder.

Soldier: He shoots, he passes...Step and a half...*(Attempts to score, comes to a halt)*
Where's the hoop?

Rivka'le: Excuse me? Hi! You look like someone I know

Soldier: Hey, did you see the basket? I have the full move lined up, quick here, pass it there, catch, pass again, layup to a dunk and then, suddenly, I don't know. Can't find the basket.

Rivka'le: There's a court over there. I mean, there used to be. There, at the end of the road

Soldier: What street is this?

Rivka'le: Heron Lane.

Soldier: Oh, I'm so sorry.

Rivka'le: What about?

⁵ In Hebrew, the word for ball and bullet is the same. The same word is also used to describe the back of the neck and the home front.

Soldier: That I got shot. Right on my way over. But no worries, all is well, come on, again, new game, new game

Rivka'le: New game. Pass it to me.

He passes her the ball, they play for a minute, but then he launches an offensive play.

Rivka'le: Come on.. Come on. I'm free!

Soldier: No, I can't play right now. I have to lead a charge. ***(A beat)*** Quick, get to it, assist, cover me...He throws, he catches, watch out, offensive foul!...They're shooting! Block! Improving my position...Duck and cover! Layup, side step to the right! Here it comes, and...Here it comes...And...***(He comes to a halt)*** I can't see the hoop. I can't find the basket.

Rivka'le: Maybe they took it?

Soldier: Who?

Rivka'le: I don't know...Someone.

Soldier: Someone who doesn't want us to win. Listen, if you see my Mother, tell her I-

Rivka'le: What?

Soldier: Tell her I-

Rivka'le: What should I tell her?

Soldier: *(He passes her the imaginary ball)* To catch the ball

Rivka'le: *(Laughs)* And what would she do with it?

Soldier: Come on, new game, I'm not a quitter, free throw, here we go, step and a half, here it comes, clutch play, from the right...Here it comes, on the offensive, and...No!!!...No... How could I have missed. You both. I got shot. In the back. I'm so sorry.

Rivka'le: Don't be sorry, it could happen to anyone

Soldier: Yes. **(A beat)** Tell her- Tell her I love her.

He exits the stage. A running motor is heard in the distance.

Narrator: "Come on Eliyahu! Where are you? Get going, we're going to miss the screening." Rivka'le turned back and saw Eliyahu driving up in the Mini Minor from the end of the street.

Young Eliyahu enters the stage.

Narrator: Eliyahu exited the car, hopped around the hood and opened the door for her. Rivka'le giggled and slid inside. The car's interior was stuffy. It was a hot summer day and a device to cool off air had not yet been invented.

A light moustache of perspiration graced her upper lip. Her eyes lingered at her husband's silhouette beside her. She was enamored by the way he squinted when looking into the distance, and by his slim fingers resting on the steering wheel-

We hear the sound of radio static when Rivka'le searches for a station. She switches past snippets of news broadcasts from Israel's past wars, until she finds the desired station, playing the theme song from "Gone with the Wind". The light begins to dim.

THE END