

Rabie and Yahli

A play by Ori Inbar



Characters:

Rabie

Yahli

Liora

Siggi

Natalie

[The play is written with an option to be performed by three actors -- Rabie, Yahli, and a third actress/actor for all other characters]

Time and place:

Israel, 2023

Photos from the production of the play at Jaffa Theater, directed by the playwright, 2025. Cast: Akram Odeh (Rabia), Dor Cohen (Yahli), Negba Maor (Liora, Siggi, Natalie). Photography: Eliad Sudai / Aviva Rosen.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

[Event hall. Liora, in an evening gown, stands at the entrance with her phone in hand]

YAHLI: Mom, can you stop with the news already?

LIORA: Did you hear about the terror attack at the restaurant?

YAHLI: I heard.

LIORA: Did you know the terrorist worked there for four years?

YAHLI: Really?

LIORA: I really hope the catering company will do what I asked.

YAHLI: What did you ask?

LIORA: That they don't bring workers that are... you know.

YAHLI: No, I don't know.

LIORA: Yes, you do. You're just pretending.

YAHLI: Liora Levi – champion of tolerance, right.

LIORA: You know what, Yahli, I couldn't care less if people call me racist, as long as my family stays alive.

YAHLI: Whatever you say.

LIORA: How's the dress?

YAHLI: Gorgeous!

LIORA: Not too much?

YAHLI: No, but fix it a little, so it sits better. Yes, like that. The hair – let me fix it for you – there. Perfect.

LIORA: And the shoes?

YAHLI: Amazing.

LIORA: Great. My darling! What would I do without you.

YAHLI: And how do I look?

LIORA: Looks good.

YAHLI: You like it?

LIORA: Yes.

YAHLI: Yes, but?

LIORA: But what?

YAHLI: I can see the "but" in your eyes.

LIORA: Yahli...

YAHLI: What, Mom?

LIORA: The shirt you're wearing.

YAHLI: What about it?

LIORA: This is your father's retirement party.

YAHLI: Oh, really? I didn't know.

LIORA: Half the IDF will be here.

YAHLI: Good for them.

LIORA: Come on, Yahli... You know how important this is to him. He won't like it.

YAHLI: And what about you?

LIORA: What about me?

YAHLI: Do you like it?

LIORA: Yahli... You're grown up now... a soldier... these games aren't appropriate anymore.

YAHLI: It's not games.

[Liora looks at her phone]

YAHLI: Enough – already – with the news!

LIORA: Tell me about that girlfriend of yours from the base? What's her name?

YAHLI: Natalie?

LIORA: Yes. Didn't you say you'd bring her to the event?

YAHLI: No, you said that. I just smiled politely.

LIORA: Bring her for dinner sometime.

YAHLI: I don't know. She lives far away.

LIORA: So go pick her up. Girls love that, you know. I'll give you the car and pay for gas.

YAHLI: Come on, Mom...

LIORA: I'd just like to meet her.

YAHLI: Mom...

LIORA: What, darling?

YAHLI: Maybe...

LIORA: Maybe what?

YAHLI: You know what, okay, maybe on my next leave I'll bring her.

LIORA: Great. Who's Mommy's love?

YAHLI: Mom, please stop.



Dor Cohen, Negba Maor

Scene 2

[Event hall. Rabie enters in catering uniform. Siggi enters after him]

SIGGI: Rabie!

Rabie: Hi Siggi.

SIGGI: What are you doing? Give me back that tray.

Rabie: I want to start loading up.

SIGGI: Rabie –

Rabie: What, I just want to start already.

SIGGI: Didn't you see you don't have shifts this week?

Rabie: I saw.

SIGGI: So?

Rabie: But Siggi, I need to work.

SIGGI: I know, I'm sorry, I'll try to get you a shift next week.

Rabie: What's going on, Siggi?

SIGGI: What do you mean?

Rabie: You're always saying you're short on workers, so how can it be that you don't have shifts for me?

[Silence]

SIGGI: It's complicated.

Rabie: What exactly is complicated?

SIGGI: It's not you, I know you're a good worker.

Rabie: And you adore me.

SIGGI: Don't flatter yourself.

Rabie: So what's the problem?

SIGGI: With everything that's happening, people are afraid.

Rabie: Of me?

SIGGI: No, of course not you! You're fine.

Rabie: But –

SIGGI: But, it's complicated.

Rabie: Because I'm Palestinian¹.

SIGGI: Well...

¹ *Rabie is Palestinian. As a Palestinian citizen of Israel, he identifies as such, but the Jewish characters in the play refer to him as "Arab." This reflects the common terminology used by the Israeli state and many Jewish Israelis when referring to Palestinian citizens. The play preserves this linguistic reality to authentically portray how these characters would speak, while recognizing that Rabie's self-identification as Palestinian represents his own cultural and national identity.*

Rabie: I can't wait to get out of here. That's why I'm still stuck here, I need this job for my studies abroad.

SIGGI: You really want those studies, huh?

Rabie: I've been dreaming about it since I was a child.

SIGGI: Alright.

Rabie: So you're giving me the shift?

SIGGI: Those puppy dog eyes of yours - they should be registered as weapons.

Rabie: You're the best!

SIGGI: But, but! You can't talk to anyone, so they don't hear your accent.

Rabie: Tayeb. (Okay in Arabic)

SIGGI: What did you say?

[Rabie gestures to his mouth]

SIGGI: Not a word! Now get to your shift.



Akram Odeh, Negba Maor

Scene 3

[Event hall. Rabie walks around with the tray serving appetizers to guests. Yahli enters, looking bored. He approaches to take something from the tray. There's a "moment" between Rabie and Yahli. They each continue on their way but exchange glances – looking for a moment and then quickly averting their gaze. Liora enters]

LIORA: Yahli, why are you standing here with that face?

YAHLI: What kind of face?

LIORA: A face that looks like you-know-what. Be nice, walk around among the guests, talk to them, you're not just any guest at this party.

YAHLI: Fine, Mom.

LIORA: You! [Rabie looks at her] Yes, yes, you, come here.

[Rabie comes]

LIORA: Go to the kitchen, and – look at me when I'm talking to you. Go tell them to bring out more Beef Carpaccio Crostini. I paid a fortune for this and it can't be gone already. And it wouldn't hurt you to smile a bit.

[Rabie exits]

YAHLI: Mom!

LIORA: What? What are we paying them for?

YAHLI: Still, they're not our slaves.

LIORA: Focus on what's important, please.

YAHLI: Fine, Mom.

LIORA: My precious little angel face! [Gives him a kiss and exits]

[YAHLI turns to the guests]

YAHLI: So glad you came! [...] Thank you, thank you. [...] Yes, I heard, congratulations! [...] My turn soon, right? [...] Malka, you've lost weight!

[Rabie enters with the tray, YAHLI looks at him. Rabie doesn't return his gaze, he makes a round with the tray and immediately exits]

YAHLI: Still in the army, yes. [...] Computers. [...] No, closed base. [...] Dad arranged it, yes. [...] Yes, interesting job. [...] Yes, there are girls on the base. [...] No, I don't have a girlfriend. [...] I don't know, haven't found the one yet.

[Rabie enters again and still doesn't return Yahli's gaze]

YAHLI: Yes, terrible situation. [...] What will be? [...] Yes, yes, I agree with you. [...] That's the only way they understand, yes.

[Rabie enters again and still doesn't return Yahli's gaze. This time, when Rabie exits, Yahli follows him out]

Scene 4

[Behind the event hall. Rabie enters, arranging a stack of trays. Yahli enters after him]

YAHLI: Finally, some fresh air.

[Rabie is silent]

YAHLI: I wanted to apologize for my mother's behavior.

[Rabie is silent]

YAHLI: She's a good person, really, she just sometimes has this disgusting superiority complex.

[Rabie is silent]

YAHLI: What a weird situation, isn't it? Like, how am I any better than you? We could have been together in school or in the army or something.

[Rabie is silent]

YAHLI: Do you need help or something?

[Rabie is silent]

YAHLI: Why aren't you talking to me? Is there some rule that forbids catering staff from talking to guests?

Rabie: Khalas ya zalameh, khalas! (In Arabic: Enough, man, enough!)

[YAHLI is startled]

YAHLI: You spoke in Arabic.

Rabie: Yes, I spoke in Arabic. Want to go report me?

YAHLI: Of course not.

Rabie: Tell them I want to commit an attack here?

YAHLI: No, no, I have nothing against –

Rabie: Oh, great, you deserve a prize.

YAHLI: I didn't mean it like that.

Rabie: What do you want from me?

YAHLI: I don't know.

Rabie: Okay.

YAHLI: Just...

Rabie: Just what?

YAHLI: I thought that...

Rabie: Thought what?

YAHLI: Never mind.

Rabie: Come on, say it.

YAHLI: Forget it.

[Turns around about to leave]

Rabie: Wait a moment.

YAHLI: What?

Rabie: You wanted to help me.

YAHLI: Yes.

[YAHLI helps him with the box]

YAHLI: It's heavy.

[YAHLI places the box so it stands between them]

Rabie: So...

YAHLI: So...

Rabie: I'm Rabie.



Akram Odeh, Dor Cohen

YAHLI: Yahli.

Rabie: Pretty name.

YAHLI: Yours too.

Rabie: It means "spring" in Arabic.

YAHLI: Lovely.

Rabie: What does Yahli mean?

YAHLI: I don't know.

Rabie: It sounds beautiful.

YAHLI: So are you.

Rabie: What?

YAHLI: Beautiful.

[Rabie moves closer and takes Yahli's hand]

Rabie: Is this okay?

YAHLI: Yes.

Rabie: Your hands are cold.

YAHLI: That's because I'm excited.

Rabie: This is strange for me.

YAHLI: For me too.

Rabie: It's...

YAHLI: What?

Rabie: Never mind.

YAHLI: Come on, tell me.

Rabie: I've never experienced this before.

YAHLI: This quickly?

Rabie: This at all.

YAHLI: Me neither.

Rabie: So...

YAHLI: What?

Rabie: Just thought that...

YAHLI: That what?

Rabie: That maybe you'd want...

YAHLI: You work here, you know where we could go.

Rabie: Go where?

YAHLI: I thought you...

Rabie: What?

YAHLI: That you wanted...

Rabie: Oh.

YAHLI: Never mind, sorry I said anything.

Rabie: I meant to ask you on a date.

YAHLI: Oh my God, I'm so tactless.

Rabie: It's okay.

YAHLI: I'm sorry.

[Rabie is about to take the tray and leave]

YAHLI: Wait a second.

Rabie: Forget it, I understand what you want.

YAHLI: I'd love to go on a date with you.

Rabie: Really?

YAHLI: Really.

Rabie: Great.

YAHLI: But I'm going back to my army base tomorrow for three weeks.

Rabie: Where do you serve?

YAHLI: Narkisim, it's a communications corps base.

Rabie: Maybe I'll come visit you there.

YAHLI: Right.

Rabie: Why not?

YAHLI: Are you seriously asking?

Rabie: Yes.

YAHLI: For starters, I'm in the closet on base.

Rabie: Okay.

YAHLI: And you're...

Rabie: I'm what?

YAHLI: You know.

Rabie: Know what?

YAHLI: You're... uh...

Rabie: Just say it.

YAHLI: Arab.

Rabie: Congratulations.

YAHLI: It's dangerous.

Rabie: Dangerous is fun. [Moves closer to him] I like dangerous things.

YAHLI: [Moves closer too] Oh, really?

Rabie: Yes.

YAHLI: Like what?

[They move in for a kiss just as Liora enters]

LIORA: Yahli?

[Rabie quickly takes the tray and leaves]

LIORA: What do you think you're doing?

YAHLI: I –

LIORA: Why did you disappear from the party?

YAHLI: I needed some air.

LIORA: What are you doing... what is... this thing I just saw, with this waiter, what is it?

YAHLI: It is what it is.

LIORA: Why does everything with you have to be so difficult?

YAHLI: You think this is difficult? Wait until you hear he's Arab.

LIORA: What?

YAHLI: Shit.

[Liora exits. Rabie returns]

Rabie: I need to get back to work.

YAHLI: Don't hate me.

Rabie: What happened?

YAHLI: I told my mom you're Arab.

Rabie: Are you serious?

YAHLI: I'm sorry, she just made me so angry –

Rabie: What am I, some game you're playing to upset your family?

YAHLI: No... it's just...

Rabie: I'm not your token minority to parade around.

YAHLI: That's not what I meant.

Rabie: You're just another silver-spoon kid. Go dance at your party and leave me alone.

YAHLI: But –

Rabie: Go.

YAHLI: Okay.

Rabie: I mean it.

YAHLI: I really am sorry.

[Rabie is silent. Yahli exits. Siggi enters]

SIGGI: Rabie... I'm sorry.

Rabie: Siggi?

SIGGI: What?

Rabie: Can I tell you something?

SIGGI: Go ahead, talk!

Rabie: I think I'm in love.

SIGGI: Listen, this is a bit... inappropriate...

Rabie: No, no...

SIGGI: I'm flattered and all, but you understand, it's –

Rabie: No, not with you. I'm... in love with someone... With a guy.

SIGGI: Oh."

Rabie: Someone who doesn't deserve it. Anyway, never mind. I'm going.

SIGGI: Wait, Rabie, come here, come, come for a hug.

[Siggi hugs Rabie, and then Rabie exits, and YAHLI enters]

YAHLI: Are you the catering manager?

SIGGI: Tell your mother I did what she asked.

YAHLI: No, she didn't send me.

SIGGI: So what do you want?

YAHLI: Do you have...

SIGGI: What?

YAHLI: The...

SIGGI: Just say it already.

YAHLI: Rabie's phone number?

SIGGI: So you're the one who doesn't deserve it.

YAHLI: What?

SIGGI: Listen to me carefully, kid. Rabie is a pure soul. A heart of gold. A swan of pure white snow. If I hear that you hurt him, I will hunt you down across the entire country, is that clear?

YAHLI: Clear.

SIGGI: You don't know me. You don't know who you're messing with. Understand?

YAHLI: I understand, I understand.

SIGGI: I know where you live.

YAHLI: I know.

SIGGI: Good, give me your phone and I'll write down his number.

To receive the full text of the play, please contact the playwright by email:

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