

Working version December 2023

On The Way Home | Return Sign

A Performative Piece by Danielle Cohen Levy

Inspired by Yoram Eshet Alkalai's autobiographical book **A Man Walks Home**

English Translation: Adi Drori

Premiered as part of Tmuna Theater's Small Movement Festival, Tel Aviv, December 2023. Written and directed by Danielle Cohen Levy | Created and performed by: Chen Alon, Zvi Sahar, Yotam Einstein, David Cohen Levy, Danielle Cohen Levy | Artistic advisors: Naomi Yoeli, Noa Nassie, Rotem Elroy | Stage manager and producer: Dana Molcho Fisher

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Characters in order of appearance

Noga

Yoram

Nurse (The Snipe)

Dr. Ben Aroya

Edri (A Soldier)

Itzik (A Soldier)

Lecturer

Nurse Swissa (Male nurse)

Ami (Noga and Yoram's friend)

Therapist

Dr. Eliraz (Military Physician)

The Rabbi

On page 52 Yoram writes in the footnotes: "I took the freedom to step into the shoes of some of the characters in the book and speak on their behalf. Therefore, what is brought here under their name is not an exact record of conversations I had with them, but of my experience of these experiences". I took that freedom for myself as well, this is a story in which there is much truth.

Order of scenes

1. **In the New House** - Yoram, Noga
2. **Transition** - Nurse
3. **Rehabilitation begins** - Dr. Ben Aroya, Nurse, Yoram, Noga
4. **The War Begins** - Edri, Yoram, Itzik
5. **Transition** - Noga (Voice over)
6. **Entering the hospital** - Dr. Ben Aroya, Nurse, Yoram (Not speaking)
7. **The Land Layers** - Lecturer
8. **Captivity in the Hospital** - Noga, Nurse, Yoram (Not speaking)
9. **Oath** - Edri, Itzik, Yoram
10. **In the Car** - Noga, Yoram
11. **Emerging from the Darkness (The Leg)** - Nurse, Yoram
12. **Letters** - Yoram, Edri, Itzik
13. **Shaving** - Nurse, Yoram
14. **The Canal** - Edri, Yoram, Itzik
15. **Transition** - Yoram, Itzik, Noga, Edri
16. **Learning how to get Dressed** - Nurse, Yoram
17. **Home Alone** - Noga, Ami
18. **The Next Day** - Nurse, Yoram
19. **Before meeting Dad** - Noga

20. **Golda** - Nurse Swissa, Yoram, Nurse Snipe
21. **An Egyptian Soldier** - Yoram, Lecturer
22. **Learning to read** - Therapist, Yoram, Noga
23. **A Commando Force on the Way** - Edri, Yoram, Itzik
24. **Emerging From the Darkness (Arbel)** - Yoram
25. **Falling Asleep** - Noga, Yoram
26. **Transition** - Noga (Voice over), Edri, Itzik
27. **Injury** - Edri, Itzik, Dr. Eliraz
28. **I Hitched a Ride** - Noga
29. **A Rabbi and Geology** - Yoram, Rabbi, Noga, Itzik, Edri
30. **Emerging From the Darkness (After the Injury)** - Yoram
31. **Finding a way/Almost done** - Dr. Ben Aroya, Yoram (Not speaking)
32. **Transition** - Noga (Voice over)
33. **The Land Layers** - Lecturer
34. **In the Hospital after the War** - Yoram, Edri
35. **Progress** - Dr. Ben Aroya, Yoram, Noga, Nurse Snipe
36. **Emerging From the Darkness (Injury)**- Dr. Eliraz, Yoram, Noga
37. **In the Watchtower/On the Way Home** - Yoram
38. **Video Transition** - Noga (Voice Over)
39. **What Now** - Yoram, Noga

1. **In the New House**

(Darkness, in the background are old radio recordings from the War. A dramatic soundtrack of reports, battle sounds, coming from every direction, enveloping the space, closing in on it. A small light comes on and a voice is heard in the distance)

Noga Yoram, are you coming?

Yoram?

(The stage opens, Yoram stands in the center with his back to the audience, Noga moves freely throughout the space)

The bedroom is over there, this is the shower and here there's a door to a shared yard. The kitchen still needs a dining table, I was lucky with the fridge and oven, Ami heard of someone who was giving them and he called me right away. Next week he'll stop over to turn on our gas and help with the shelves.

Yoram What do we need that for?

Noga Shelves? For jars? I don't know...

Yoram We don't need all this, let's go home.

Noga (A pause) We can't.

Yoram Can't what?

Noga It's on the second floor.

Yoram We'll manage.

Noga I thought it would make you happy, it's even closer to the center. Don't you like it?

Yoram I don't know anything here.

Noga You just have to get used to it.

Yoram When did you manage to do all of this?

Noga Rimona from the Security Bureau helped me with money and everything to get us settled, Ami came with a truck to help buy and move everything here. Yesterday we also bought this desk for your books.

Yoram What books?

Noga For your studies, you start next week. Ami said that if you want, he can come help you get ready.

Yoram I don't want Ami's help.

Noga Do you want me to make you something to eat?

Yoram No.

Noga It took me some time too, but now I like it, there's so much light. (With sudden joy) Oh! And I didn't show you Arbel's room. He has his own room here! Look how cute his bed is. Yoram, are you coming?

(Yoram moves the blanket, searching)

Yoram Where is he?

Noga Who?

Yoram He's not here.

Noga Who, Arbel?

Yoram (Angry) Where is he?

Noga At kindergarten.

Yoram What kindergarten?

Noga ...Tami's Kindergarten.

Yoram He's...?

Noga He's nearly four.

2. **Transition**

Nurse (From outside) Yoram, are you coming?

(She enters with a wheelchair. Yoram looks at it, sits down)

3. **Rehabilitation begins**

(Noga listens, a Nurse and Dr. Ben Aroya are speaking over Yoram who is sitting in a wheelchair)

Dr. Ben Aroya Can he button his own pants?

Nurse No.

Dr. Ben Aroya Button up shirt sleeves?

Nurse No.

Dr. Ben Aroya Tie his shoelaces?

Nurse No.

Dr. Ben Aroya Sit down?

Nurse Yes.

Dr. Ben Aroya Walk by himself?

Nurse A little bit, with a cane.

Dr. Ben Aroya Eat by himself?

Nurse No.

Dr. Ben Aroya Defecate?

Nurse Only in a bedside commode.

Dr. Ben Aroya Urinate?

Nurse Yes. In a bottle.

Dr. Ben Aroya Speak?

Nurse Yes.

Dr. Ben Aroya Find his way? (The Nurse looks to Noga for the answer)

Noga ...I don't know. Will he be okay?

Dr. Ben Aroya It's hard to know at this point. Head injuries take time. They're sneaky injuries.

Noga How long?

Dr. Ben Aroya (To Yoram) Take your clothes off.

Yoram Me?

Dr. Ben Aroya Yes, take everything off. (To Noga) Wait outside.

Please keep your underwear on.

Yoram So far they've been dressing me. I can't –

Dr. Ben Aroya Try.

Go on.

(Yoram starts taking his clothes off, slowly, others beside him begin dressing in army uniforms)

4. **The War Begins**

(Edri, Itzik and Yoram, before crossing the channel)

Edri Yoram, are you coming? (Yoram quickly begins to dress in his uniform) Itzik says this war stinks.

Yoram All wars stink.

Itzik Silence is a recipe for disaster.

Edri I'd rather get a good recipe for fish! In the end this will be over before we get one shot out.

Itzik Shut up Edri! And get some batteries.

Yoram How did you not bring another pair?

Edri It was either that or another pair of socks.

Yoram You'll end up coming back with only one leg because of that. (Itzik spits)

- Edri** They'll probably send some over in the next round of packages.
- Itzik** Let them send over some food and ammunition first, batteries are last. Come on, it's already six o one. (He gestures to Edri who turns on the radio)
- Radio** *"...an expansive reserve force draft. So far, over six hundred soldiers have been killed in the battles –"*
- Itzik** Turn it off, turn it off, we're late. It's not good to hear that.
- Edri** Wait! Let us hear a bit more.
- Itzik** There's nothing to hear, I told you this war stinks.
(A siren sounds. Everyone runs off to take cover. Yoram looks up)
- Edri** Yoram, are you coming? (Darkness, bombing)

5. **Transition**

(Out of the darkness a small video screen turns on. Only its light is flickering, the image on it can't be seen, from the video plays a sound of waves and Noga's voice)

Noga *(Voice over) Yoram?*

6. **Entering the hospital**

Dr. Ben Aroya Patient number 10557

Name: Yoram Eshet, Date of arrival 18.10.73

23 years old, born in Israel, married, one child, a guide in the Natural Preservation Society, Reserve soldier, left handed. Are you writing this down?

Nurse Yes.

Dr. Ben Aroya (Dictating as he checks) An X-ray of the chest cavity showed shrapnel in the center of the back, on the left a deep and irregular wound, crushed fracture in the left limb. In an X-ray of the skull multiple bone fragments were found reaching up to the midline, a 10 cm long open wound, exposed bone fragments and necrotic brain drain.

The patient is vaguely conscious, reacts to painful stimuli, responds in single words, disoriented, in psychomotor restlessness.

Nurse Yoram, can you hear me?

7. **The Land Layers**

Lecturer We must think of the land in layers. Each layer signifies a time period. Not a horizontal axis, but a depth axis. Imagine a slice of cake. Each layer bears witness to a story. This is where there was a

flood, here the land eroded, here there was a volcanic eruption while here the earth cracked and the layers of time collapsed into one another and you can no longer differentiate what came before and what came later.

8. **Captivity in the hospital**

(Noga, Yoram is laying in bed, Nurse Swissa enters)

Noga Excuse me!

Nurse Swissa Yes?

Noga Why is he speaking in Arabic?

Nurse Swissa Who?

Noga My husband, why is he speaking Arabic?

Nurse Swissa His body got a real shock, it takes time...

Noga What is he saying? He doesn't know any Arabic...

Nurse Swissa Water. I think...

Noga He wants water?

Nurse Swissa I guess.

Noga Give him some water.

Nurse Swissa I can't.

Noga Look, he's really begging. Yoram, it's Noga. Yoram?
Can he even hear me?

Nurse Swissa It's early to know.

Noga When will a doctor get here ?

Nurse Swissa Later.

Noga No, I think I'm losing my mind. What is he saying now?

Nurse Swissa "Water"... "Don't hurt me"... "I'm a good boy"...
"Water"... He's asking that we don't beat him, it
seems he doesn't exactly understand where he is.

Noga Does he think he's in Egypt?

Nurse Swissa Maybe...

Noga Yoram, it's Noga. You've come back home. Can you
hear me? You're not in Egypt anymore, you are
back. (Suddenly worried) Do you think there's a
chance that it'll stay like this?

Nurse Swissa What?

Noga The Arabic! I don't even know Arabic! Help me!

Nurse Swissa I really don't know.

Noga Why does no one here know anything?! How am I
supposed to speak with my husband?!

Nurse Swissa It's still very early on, give it time. It's a miracle that he's even alive.

Noga What miracle? He's lying here all bandaged up, certain that he's in captivity, speaking to me in Arabic like I'm an Egyptian soldier, I can't understand a word! What am I supposed to do, go study Arabic so I can speak with my husband? And Arbel..? How will he speak with our son?

Nurse Swissa Here, wet his lips a little bit.

Noga But he'll go back to speaking Hebrew, right?

9. **Oath**

(In a military vehicle)

Edri We're not shaving until the war is over.

Itzik Cut the bullshit Edri, be quiet for a minute.

Edri I'm serious, now we take an oath that once we're released we shave together.

Itzik You're an idiot. That's bad luck, don't talk about that.

Edri Everything is "bad luck" with him, just an innocent suggestion to lift our morale.

Yoram We can shave our head too, come back all fucked up.

Edri I'm serious.

Yoram Me too.

Edri Okay. When we go back we all meet at a restaurant in Tel Aviv and shave together in the bathroom.

Yoram Deal.

Edri Deal. Itzik?

Itzik What?

Edri We take an oath or I'm throwing this out the window?

Itzik Careful, you'll drop it!

10. **In the Car**

(Now Noga is sitting in the car)

Yoram Be careful!

Noga You scared me!

Yoram You're too close to the right.

Noga I'm not.

Yoram From here it looks like you are.

Noga You're not used to sitting on this side of the car.

Yoram What do we need to go there for?

- Noga** We don't need to do anything, we were invited for dinner.
- Yoram** We don't have to do every thing –
- Noga** We don't have to do anything. I want to.
- Yoram** We're not staying long.
- Noga** We stay how long we want to stay. Maybe you can try enjoying yourself for once?
- Yoram** It's too many people.
- Noga** These people are our friends...You should try speaking with them a little bit
- Yoram** I have nothing to say to them.
- Noga** Tell them about your studies. Or ask them how they are. Radical suggestion...
- Yoram** I want to go back.
- Noga** We're getting there in a minute.
- Yoram** It's better that you take me back home and go by yourself if you want to.
- Noga** I want to go with you!
- Yoram** Watch it! You almost knocked off the side mirror.
- Noga** Will you please stop nagging me?
- Yoram** You need to be more careful.

- Noga** I am being careful! All I am is careful!
- Yoram** It doesn't look like it..
- Noga** (Stops the car) Do you want to drive yourself? I'd prefer that too. .
- Yoram** I can't...
- Noga** So now we're going. And you're going to enjoy yourself! And we get back when we get back. Or you can walk home.

11. **Emerging from the Darkness (The Leg)**

- Yoram** I can't, it doesn't exist.
- Nurse** It's definitely still connected.
- Yoram** No. There's nothing there.
- Nurse** I'm telling you, I definitely see your left leg.
- Yoram** I can't feel anything..
- Nurse** Try shifting your weight slowly.
- Yoram** Shift my weight where? I'll fall over.
- Nurse** Dr. Ben Aroya said it's fully functional considering the circumstances.
- Yoram** Tell him it's fully functional except for the fact that I can't feel it..

- Nurse** He says it's possible.
- Yoram** Tell him he's welcome to step on it himself.
- Nurse** Try looking at it.
- Yoram** Hello slab of flesh attached to my left side that has nothing to do with me anymore.
- Nurse** Hold on to the bed.
- Yoram** Quiet!
- Nurse** What happened?
- Yoram** Can you hear that?
- Nurse** No.
- Yoram** Ksh, ksh, ksh. It's the lunch trolley, it just entered the first room...
- Nurse** Okay.
- Yoram** That means there are only two rooms until it gets here.
- Nurse** Two rooms is plenty of time, come on. Lean forward and lift it up.
- Yoram** It's not moving.
- Nurse** Speak to it.
- Yoram** Move!
- Nurse** Again.

- Yoram** Move , piece of shit, move!
- Nurse** Again.
- Yoram** Move, you useless, parasitic, filthy piece of meat, move! Stinking, rotted, lump of flesh, Free loading, bastard piece of shit! (He yells suddenly) Ahhhhhh!
- Nurse** What happened?
- Yoram** What are you doing? Stop!
- Nurse** I'm not doing anything.
- Yoram** You're stabbing me, stop it.
- Nurse** Stop what?
- Yoram** These stabs, make it stop! Help!
- Nurse** I'm not doing anything.
- Yoram** You're stabbing me!
- Nurse** (Yelling) It's not me, it's the leg! It's moving! It's moving!

12. **Letters**

- Itzik** Did you write?
- Yoram** Me?
- Edri** I don't write. It's bad luck.
- Yoram** I thought you don't believe in that.

- Edri** They give me goosebumps, walking around here like black ghouls...
- Itzik** After we cross the channel, it'll take some time, Yalla, jot down a few words.
- Yoram** I'm sending mine to Noga. I want to let her know everything's okay.
- Edri** These aren't letters, they're wills.
- Itzik** You'll regret it later.
- Yoram** Edri, have some Halva.

13. **Shaving**

(Nurse Swissa is hiding something)

- Nurse Swissa** I have a surprise for you.
- Yoram** What is it?
- Nurse Swissa** A new blade.
- Yoram** What for?
- Nurse Swissa** For you to start getting back to yourself. Take a shower, shave, we'll get you dressed. You can feel like a person again.
- Yoram** I'm not shaving.
- Nurse Swissa** You wouldn't believe what it could do for you.

Yoram No.

Nurse Swissa Look at the sight of you.

Yoram I don't care.

Nurse Swissa You can't go on rolling around in bed like that.

Yoram I can't shave.

Nurse Swissa I'll help you.

Yoram Swissa, I'm not shaving. Period.

Nurse Swissa Noga's coming tomorrow.

Yoram (Silence) I took an oath not to shave until the war ends.

Nurse Swissa The war is over.

Yoram No, it's not.

Nurse Swissa For you, it's over. You're back, that's it. And now you shave.

14. **The Channel**

Edri You know what's most fucked up?

Yoram What?

Edri That it will never connect.

Yoram I don't know.

- Edri** They're trying to connect this shit and it's shit. It's all shit. Shitty shit.
- Itzik** Edri, calm down.
- Yoram** Would you rather swim?
- Edri** In the meantime everything is moving forward, and we're stuck here. It won't be long until they bomb us and to hell with everything.
- Itzik** You want to lead the charge?
- Edri** This channel is shit. These weapons are shit, when will they let us get in already?
- Yoram** Itzik kept saying this war stinks, I think this may be the first time you agree.

15. **Transition**

(From within the darkness, a small video screen turns on, we hear the video playing Noga's voice and the sound of waves)

Noga *(Voice over) Yoram, are you coming? Look at Arbel...Be careful, don't get wet!*

Yoram Noga?

Edri Yoram?

Yoram Did we cross, Edri?

- Itzik** Yoram, can you hear me? Edri, pick him up! Lift him up, quickly! Yoram? Somebody get a stretcher!
- Yoram** Are we there?
- Edri** Are you coming? We're out.
- Noga** Yoram? Are you coming? It's ready.

16. Learning to get Dressed

(Yoram sits down to eat by a tray, his shirt is buttoned up crookedly, the sleeve buttons are undone)

- Nurse** This is how you're sitting?
- Yoram** Yes.
- Nurse** And the buttons?
- Yoram** What about them?
- Nurse** What are buttons for?
- Yoram** I did them up.
- Nurse** No. No. No. You have to put your clothes on properly. It's not "come as you are".
- Yoram** I've done them up as best I can.
- Nurse** Come on, button your shirt up fully.
- Yoram** I can't. The left hand...

- Nurse** Where do you think we'll get if everyone were to give up on anything that's a bit difficult?
- Yoram** I'm not giving up, I can't do it.
- Nurse** If I let you sit down like that I'm not doing my job. What am I here for?
- Yoram** I also ask myself that sometimes...
- Nurse** Go on. Do them up.
- Yoram** I already told you that I can't.
- Nurse** And how is that supposed to help?
- Yoram** What?
- Nurse** Saying that.
- Yoram** It'll help that you leave me alone.
- Nurse** I'll leave when you can do it properly.
- Yoram** Okay, I'll try again tomorrow.
- Nurse** (Lifts up the tray) Alright. I'll be taking this.
- Yoram** Wait! I'm not done eating.
- Nurse** That's okay, you can try again tomorrow.

17.

Home Alone

- Noga** He's decided that he wants to go hiking in the desert.

Ami Good.

Noga Ami, that's a bad idea.

Ami If he thinks he's up to it, he should do it.

Noga And you'll carry him on your back if he falls?
Because I don't have the energy anymore.

Ami What do you think, that he wants you to carry him?
Let him fall.

Noga How could I?

Ami Because if you don't you'll go down with him. He
needs to do it alone.

18. **The Next Day**

(The Nurse arrives again, holding a tray. Yoram is dressed in a long t-shirt)

Nurse What is this?

Yoram A shirt.

Nurse That's how you dress?

Yoram That's how I dress.

Nurse Are you trying to be smart?

Yoram I'm trying to eat.

Nurse You can't dress like that.

Yoram Why not?

- Nurse** You look like a bum. Where's your button down shirt? Put it on over this.
- Yoram** I threw it out.
- Nurse** Yesterday's shirt?
- Yoram** All of the shirts.
- Nurse** You threw away all of your shirts?
- Yoram** I threw away anything that has buttons. This is how I dress from now on.
- Nurse** That's a pajama shirt.
- Yoram** I don't care.
- Nurse** And how exactly would that work?
- Yoram** We'll live and learn.
- Nurse** You're never going to use buttons again? What about pants?
- Yoram** Zippers.
- Nurse** Did anyone ever tell you you're stubborn?
- Yoram** Did anyone ever tell you you look like a bird? A snipe, to be exact. Did you know I used to be a guide at the Natural Preservation Society? I know birds.

Nurse If you were to put in only half of your hard headedness into doing up your buttons you would have been able to do it by now.

Yoram I have better things to do.

19. **Before we meet Dad**

Noga Arbel, come sit by me for a minute, you remember where we're going tomorrow? I want us to play a little game. It's called "Where's Dad?". Here, look at this (She pulls out a clown doll) Let's say this is Dad. And now we take a bandage and wrap it around his head. Like Dad's head. And his left arm as well, just like Dad's arm. And now his back. Do you want to try? Here, I'll do it, you can look. You see, it's not scary at all. Because underneath all of these bandages, it's still Dad, right? Do you want to stroke his head? Or maybe we measure his temperature...? What do you think? Like they do to Dad. He's nice, isn't he? Maybe we can sit him down in the stroller? Like Dad's stroller, and take him for a walk in the garden? Do you want to get the stroller? No? Okay.

Alright. Do you want to hold Dad's hand? No? Okay, so I'll hold Dad and you hold my hand. There's nothing to be afraid of.

20. **Golda**

Nurse Swissa If you don't hurry up you're going to miss breakfast.

Yoram I'm on my way.

Nurse Swissa The Snipe will kill you for missing it.

Yoram My plan is to get to lunch first, so I may actually be very early.

Snipe What are you standing for, get back inside.

Yoram I'll miss lunch if I go back inside.

Snipe We have a visitor today, I ask you all to be on your best behavior. Including you, Yoram.

Yoram I'm always on my best behavior.

Snipe Get back inside. We have to be in top shape today. And I'd prefer you wear a button down shirt.

Yoram I'd prefer to be at home.

Snipe I will not have any of your funny business today. Golda Meir is coming, where are your shirts?

- Yoram** Where was Golda during the War?
- Snipe** I'm being serious.
- Yoram** So am I. And so are Itzik, Menahem, Shaul, Natan-
- Snipe** Enough! You're making such good progress. Now go back inside.

21. **An Egyptian Soldier**

- Yoram** I'm such an idiot.
- Lecturer** There's a hypothesis according to which astrophysicists speculate that the specific gravity of the material found in black holes is so great that a small teaspoon of it weighs millions of tons.
- Yoram** Idiot, idiot, idiot, who enters a bunker alone?
- Lecturer** It can be assumed that in the future we will be able to use tiny specs of black holes as stabilizers for ships or giant bridges.
- Yoram** I had a feeling it's a bad idea. But I still went in. Idiot.
- Lecturer** Imagine a tiny spec falling from great height onto the roof of a house, passing through the cement

ceiling and crashing to the floor with a great explosion...

Yoram

In a small room to my left, I saw him.

Just a man. With a dark mustache. And black hair.

Just as surprised as I was. Holding a rifle.

He instantly raises it. And so do I.

I shoot first. I hysterically pull my trigger again and again. He falls.

Lecturer

Imagine a tiny fragment made from black hole matter creating a giant crater, its enormous weight sucking us into the depths in a colossal gravitational pull that we cannot resist, plunging us down-

Yoram

From a distance I hear **Lecturer** Further and

"Who shot there?" further and

I go outside and throw up. further, deeper

No one asks. And I don't tell. and deeper

I leave him on the floor of the and deeper...

Bunker behind me and run.

22. **Learning to read**
- Therapist** I want you to have a purpose.
- Yoram** What purpose?
- Therapist** A direction you can begin moving towards.
- Yoram** I'm moving just fine.
- Therapist** You're a geology student.
- Yoram** I was.
- Therapist** Why do you say you were.
- Yoram** Now I'm here. (She pulls out a book) What's that?
- Therapist** I asked Noga to bring me one of your books. Let's try.
- Yoram** I don't know what to do with it.
- Therapist** (She hands him the book) Here, what does this say?
- Yoram** Yoo...
- Therapist** That's right.
- Yoram** En...
- Therapist** Yes.
- Yoram** Dee, Ee, Ar...
- Therapist** Okay, good. What does that spell out?
- Yoram** ... I don't know.
- Therapist** Go on, what does that mean? U, N, D, E, R
- Yoram** ...U, N, D, E, R...

Therapist Put the letters together.

Yoram I can't!

Therapist U- N- D- E-R

Yoram (Quietly repeating) U- N- D- E-R.

Therapist That's right. Continue here.

Yoram G, R, O, U, N, D

Therapist Wait, but what does that spell?

Yoram I don't know.

Therapist Ground. Underground.

Noga I watch him, off to the side. He can't see me. I listen to him sounding out the letters. He slowly connects one letter to another. And the letters to words. And I slowly begin linking the words to a horrifying sentence. Y, O, R, A, M, C, A, N, T, R, E, A, D - Yoram can't read.

23. **A Commando Force is on the way**

Edri They said purple cock, turns out it's just another hill.

Yoram I'm dying to know who comes up with these names. (Turns around to pee)

- Itzik** Turn it on.
- Edri** Is it four already?
- Itzik** Yeah, yeah, come on. I don't want us to miss the beginning again, the rest of it doesn't matter.
- Radio** *"...Israeli Commando forces have been working through the night, encroaching on the Egyptian Army West of the Suez Canal."*
- Edri** Yoram are you coming? They're talking about the crossing.
- Itzik** Shut it, Edri! We're trying to hear.
- Edri** Do you understand what that means?
- Yoram** What?
- Edri** A Commando force is on the way. We can get some sleep tonight!
- Itzik** Edri, shut up!
- Edri** A bit of good news, what's wrong? Is that bad luck too?
- Itzik** Just shut up.
- Edri** Say, what's your problem? A man can't say it's going to be okay? Finally some aid is on the way, let us enjoy it.

- Itzik** No one is coming.
- Edri** What are you talking about? One more word about bad luck and I'll burn off your eyebrows! They just said Commando forces crossed the channel.
- Itzik** There are no Commando forces.
- Edri** What, they're lying on the radio? You'll see them soon, "West of the Suez Canal", that's in a minute...
- Itzik** They were talking about us.
- Edri** What about us?
- Yoram** We're the Commando Force that crossed the channel...
- Edri** ...We're what...?
- Itzik** No one's coming. We're what's left. You were in such a hurry to move forward. Turn it off so we have some power left for later.
- (Edri turns off the radio, silence, and then Edri starts laughing, Yoram follows, and finally Itzik)
- Edri** Commando forces yeah right! Itzik wishes.
- Yoram** It's my first time in the Commando!
- Itzik** Purple Cock, here we come!

24. **Emerging From the Darkness (Arbel)**

Yoram

Swissa is the only nurse that can lift me. He sits me in a wheelchair and wheels me to the entrance. He doesn't tell me why. The elevator door opens. Since I came here I haven't come down even once. Where is he taking me now? I really hope this is not another one of the Snipe's attempts (as the Chief of Staff) to encourage me to make progress. Are they going to leave me down here and make me get back up by myself? They're going to torture me until I learn to walk or read or do up buttons. The daylight streams in from the main entry's large doors. So many people. I can barely understand where to look. There's so much noise. I hear Swissa behind me: Here they are.

A little boy runs to me.

I look at him.

Without hesitation he climbs up to sit in my lap.

He's holding a bandaged up doll in his hand.

I don't say a word.

Swissa holds on tightly to my shoulder and doesn't let go. He has that rare sense to know that if he were to release me now, I'd fall.

25. **Falling Asleep**

Noga Yoram. You fell asleep.

Yoram When?

Noga Just now. Friends came over. And you fell asleep.
On the table.

Yoram I was tired.

Noga You're always tired.

Yoram I have to study, it makes me tired. I told you I don't want them to come over.

Noga We can't go out. We can't have anyone come over here. What am I supposed to do?

Yoram I don't know.

Noga We have to meet people, I want to meet people, eat, talk, drink. Why are you so angry?

Yoram I'm not angry.

Noga It's not their fault that this happened to you.

Yoram I never said that.

- Noga** It's not my fault either!... Ami says we need to separate.
- Yoram** What does Ami know?
- Noga** He says we're not compatible anymore. That everyone sees it.
- Yoram** Ami needs to stay out of it.
- Noga** What if I want his opinion? I can't always do it alone.
- Yoram** Is that why you invited him over?
- Noga** This has nothing to do with Ami.
- Yoram** (Explodes) It's not my fault that I'm tired!
- Noga** It's not my fault either...I'm tired too.
- Yoram** I'm not as I was.
- Noga** I know!
- Yoram** I don't know what to do.
- Noga** Neither do I.

26. **Transition**

(In the darkness a small video screen switches on, Noga's voice is heard from the video)

Noga *(Voice over) Wait! Wait! Be careful...*

Edri Where is he? Where is he?

Itzik Lift him up! Hurry!

Noga *(Voice over) Wait, I'll help you...*

27. **Injury**

Edri The shell exploded right by us.

Itzik It happened just as I was on my way to our dugout.
I ran there.

Edri I was sure Yoram's dead. I couldn't understand why Itzik was dragging him out and starting to dress his wound.

Itzik The entire right side of his skull was crushed. He needed to be bandaged up as quickly as possible, so his brain wouldn't get infected.

Edri There were actual parts of it left on his helmet. I couldn't touch him.

Itzik I screamed at Edri to pull himself together. We turned him over.

Edri He was hurt in so many places.

Itzik His head, his arm, his lungs. He kept moving the whole time.

Edri The sand around us turned to brown mud and stank of blood and burnt metal. I'll never forget that smell.

Itzik We headed to the aid station with a stretcher that had what looked like pieces of Yoram on it. I heard him grunting and I knew if we don't run, I'm losing him.

Edri And the whole time I'm thinking we have to get to Purple Cock. We have to get to Purple Cock. We have to get to Purple Cock.

Dr. Eliraz I'd never lost a patient until October 18th. I wouldn't have even stopped to treat him if he didn't keep moving like that. It was clear he had no chance. And yet he didn't stop moving. Like he was possessed. Maniacally kicking and shoving anyone who tried to touch him. I found a vein and put in the last infusion bag I had, knowing this was a mistake.

28. **I Hitched a Ride**

Noga I hitched a ride from the city exit. I got on the first car that stopped, sat in silence and gazed out the

window. This is not the man I married. I don't deserve this. I'm so tired. Near Sha'ar HaGai I suddenly began shaking. I felt like I couldn't breathe. What happened to me? Where was I going? What was I thinking?

The driver didn't understand what was going on, I started crying, begging him to take me back. I don't know what made him agree to do it. But he turned around and drove me all the way back home. Right to the entrance, without saying a word. I quietly went back inside. Yoram was sitting on the rug. Arbel was sitting beside him. Two little kids building a tower from blocks.

29.

The Rabbi and Geology

(Yoram's on the bed, the Rabbi is beside him. Yoram pulls the information he's lost from his memory. The Rabbi listens intently)

The Rabbi You pull them out from the wall?

Yoram Not exactly the wall.

The Rabbi Then from where?

Yoram From between the layers of limestone.

- The Rabbi** In the mountain wall?
- Yoram** On the slope.
- The Rabbi** And how can you distinguish that from just a rock?
- Yoram** It winks at you.
- The Rabbi** And you immediately know what it is?
- Yoram** A fossil weighs differently. It's more condensed.
Like a point in time. Heavy...
- The Rabbi** A heavy rock then.
- Yoram** No no... A fossil is... seashells. Dead shells gathered on the ocean floor that fill with mud and shrink and fossilize. (He smiles) I thought I'd forgotten that.
- The Rabbi** That's beautiful. And how do they get to the mountain slope?
- Yoram** There are forces... Powers that push the layers of rocks together... Lifting up the ocean floor from the ground... Forces... Tectonic forces.
- The Rabbi** And how did everything come to be?
- Yoram** Tectonic... That's a word that just came back to me out of nowhere. One moment it wasn't there and then it suddenly was. These conversations awaken words in me.

The Rabbi I'm glad. And now I ask you how it all began. One must also ask that at some point, everyone must ask themselves where the starting point, the Genesis of creation is, and who created everything, created the world's order.

Yoram Oh you mean that beginning... I know that...

The Rabbi We all know.

Yoram No. I mean Darwin...And even before that... The solar system, the moment of... The...

The Rabbi HaShem. God, Yoram, that we have to believe in and trust in. HaShem is giving and wise and takes care of all of us...

Yoram Wait, not God. I wanted to say-

The Rabbi We're all a generation of sinners and until we don't repent, God won't forgive us. We must lay Tefillin and pray together. And believe Yoram, we must believe. Come, give me your hand...

(The world suddenly changes)

Yoram Who are you?

The Rabbi What?

Yoram What are you doing here?

- The Rabbi** We must ask for forgiveness together.
- Yoram** Where is the letter I sent Noga? Did you give it to her?
- The Rabbi** What letter?
- Yoram** Edri was right, you're black demons collecting
wills. (He climbs out of the bed, removing his hospital gown)
I don't have a God! He died in Abu Sultan! Get out
of here!
- Noga** Yoram, where are you?
- Itzik** We have to go back quickly.
- Edri** Yoram, are you coming?

30. **Emerging From the Darkness (After the Injury)**

- Yoram** I go back to see Dr. Ben Aroya. I enter the ward. I'm
still limping but I'm steadier than I ever was. I
finished my studies. In my bag I have a degree to
prove it. I'm a doctor too. I cross the hall that once
seemed so long. I don't know what I'm returning
for. To prove a point? To say thank you? I step inside
the room. Nothing's changed here. He looks at me
blankly. I'm Yoram, I say. I was once a patient of
yours. He nods, preoccupied with something else.

I want to scream at him, it's me who was dead and now I'm here!

Instead I say quietly, I was injured in my hand, leg and head. On the left side. Suddenly he jolts up, looks at me with shining eyes. He comes up to me and touches my head with prying curiosity. He sees the healed wound. Examines the scar. He's pleased with himself. To him I was just an arm and a leg and an open head wound on the left side. Now closed.

31. **Finding a way/Almost done**

(Yoram dresses in his uniform/undresses from his uniform as the doctor asks questions and marks the answers on the page)

Dr. Ben Aroya Can you button your own pants?

Button up shirt sleeves?

Tie your shoelaces?

Sit down?

Walk by yourself?

Eat by yourself?

Urinate?

Speak?

Find your way?

32. **Transition**

(Out of the darkness a small video screen turns on. From the video plays a sound of waves and Noga's laughter)

Noga *(Voice over) Yoram, are you coming? (Sound of a laughing child) Yoram, look!*

33. **The Land Layers**

Lecturer I want us to imagine a slice of land under the Earth. In order to examine the landscape underneath the ground, we must insert a tube and take out a sample of land. This land that we pull out will allow us to get a sense of what the layers underneath the ground are made of, leaving a hole in its place. Say here, at 20 meters we can find a layer of limestone, while here we can find the layer of limestone at 15 meters. We can assume that underneath the surface between these two layers, the ground has lifted. The more areas we examine, the better we can deduce the ground's movement from them. The more earth we remove, the more we can know about it. The paradox we face

suggests that only what is no longer part of the ground can tell us something about it. The only areas that we know for certain behave in a specific way are areas that we've removed, and are now just empty holes.

34. **In the Hospital After the War**

Yoram You shaved?

Edri Yes.

Yoram Oh.

Edri You asshole, I thought you were dead.

Yoram I ended up living.

Edri Itzik came back without a leg.

Yoram I came back without a brain.

Edri You're lucky that you're so smart that you managed to get into university with only half a brain.

Yoram What are you so dressed up for?

Edri I was at a funeral. When you get out of here, you're taking me for a trip in the Judea Desert, to see the Great Crater or something.

Yoram I'm never going back to the desert. I don't want to see any sand.

Edri So not the desert, wherever you want.

Yoram I hope I manage to stand up.

35. **Progress**

Dr. Ben Aroya This is our best patient.

Note his rehabilitation. His ability to walk, to operate his left hand to some extent. His rehabilitated speech.

Comprehension of time, identification and association of words, reading, writing. That's what I call success.

Yoram I don't understand anything for some time now.
But no one feels comfortable to admit it.
They think I'm going back to school, Yechiel comes over to teach me math. Some lady comes over to help me cut and paste.
I can't even read.

Noga What do you mean he doesn't know how to read?

What does that mean?

He knows the letters, he just needs to connect them to words, to go back to what he was, to reconnect everything.

I got back parts of a broken up Yoram, pieces and pieces, bits and bits.

Snipe What's this?

Yoram Alef.

Snipe And this?

Yoram Alef, the whole row is Alef, Alef, Alef, I practice writing the letters.

Snipe It looks terrible. Look at this, like ant droppings, I can't even understand what you wrote here, and here, what's written here? And why aren't you completing the row until the end of the page?

Yoram I spent all afternoon writing this.

Snipe You want me to give you compliments for nothing? You didn't come to breakfast either. Let me tell you something.

Yoram Do I have a choice, Snipe?

Snipe If I hear you complain one more time, I'll...I'll be damned if you're not one of my most stubborn patients yet, stop feeling sorry for yourself. That's not writing! Start from the beginning please. 3 pages of the letter Alef. Exactly in the center of the row, no travelling between the lines like last time. I'll pull you up by your hair if needed.

36. **Emerging From the Darkness (Injury)**

Dr. Eliraz I'd never lost a patient until October 18th. I wouldn't have even stopped to treat him if he didn't keep moving like that. I found a vein and put in the last infusion bag and hoped. It was the bet of my life. And to this day I think it made my entire choice to become a doctor worthwhile.

Yoram There was a terrible noise and the world became dark in an instant. I'm sinking into darkness. I don't feel any pain. It's difficult to breathe. My body slowly drops into oblivion. Then, for a moment- I feel mud in my mouth. I wake up in terror. From afar

I hear "He's gone, let him go". I'm alive, I'm alive! I scream with no power, scream with no sound. No air. I'm sinking.

A moment before I let go, I see Noga and Arbel on the beach, he's walking for the first time. I start kicking like a maniac. So they don't let me go. I'm alive! I'm alive! Give me a hand to hold onto. I want to return. I'm alive!

Noga

I don't remember why I decided to go visit Yoram's parents that day. I couldn't stay home any longer. I packed my bag and got on a bus. As soon as I approached the house I could see the driveway was empty. Strange. I called in advance to let them know I'm coming. I ring the bell. No reply. Arbel is starting to get impatient. You can say a lot of things about Yoram's parents, but one thing's certain, order is everything. Between two and four pm they take a nap, and at four they sit on the porch and have coffee. Or eat watermelon. I walk around the house. There's no one there. That's impossible. A

woman approaches me, didn't you hear? She scolds me. The City Military Officer came to their house. I can't breathe, the younger one or the older one, I whisper. The older one. She replies and I take off running.

37.

In the Watchtower/On the Way Home**Yoram**

It's early morning. The night shift ends in a minute. I'm starving. I closed my eyes for less than a second, suddenly, I see through my binoculars an Egyptian soldier in front of me, my heart is racing. I grip the gun to my cheek, about to pull the trigger. I look again- it's a lone soldier, with no helmet, no weapon, indifferent, walking in the opposite direction. I brace myself, my finger's shaking on the trigger and then I realize. He's walking away. This man is going home. His war is over. He's going back to his wife, his children. I think about my mom and dad, about Noga, about Arbel. About the ocean at the end of all this sand. And I'm jealous.

My finger hesitates. I shift my barrel to the right. Pull the trigger.

A dust cloud rises up dozens of meters before him.

He starts running.

He trips on a stone and nearly falls, but immediately straightens up and disappears, running on his way South.

On his way home.

I watch him until he disappears.

38. **Video**

(We hear the sound of waves. Then, for the first time we see the video footage that we'd only heard until now. The waterfront is revealed, Noga's laugh sounds from afar as she calls)

Noga *Yoram? Are you coming?*

(A child's laugh. Noga's voice is heard again)

Noga *Yoram look! He's walking. He's really walking.*

(The camera turns away from the shore, a boy's feet can be seen walking along the shoreline, from afar Noga's voice is heard again)

Noga *Yoram, are you coming?*

(The camera turns to the horizon, a child's laugh is heard in the noise of the waves)

39. **What now**

Noga We've been trying to do something impossible for some time.

Yoram What's impossible?

Noga Going back. Returning to the beginning. Like in music, when there's a sign noting that you need to go back and play the same part again. We're standing in front of this repeat sign and it's destroying us. Because we can't do anything with it. It's keeping us locked in place because we can't move forward and we can't go back. We can't return to the beginning. There's nothing there, everything's burnt up.

Yoram So what can we do?

Noga I don't know. Try different music.

Yoram Yeah. (He writes on a page)

Noga What's that?

Yoram Alef.

Noga Alef?

Yoram Yes. We start with Alef. And then another letter and another letter. Until a different word is created. A new one.

(In the background, slowly rising in volume from silence are home videos of family, children. The back wall fills up with tiny screens playing home video footage from current day)

The End

