The Teacher

or

How I got Fired from Teaching at High School

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Characters

Me, teacher

Roni, student

Johnny, student

Yoav, student

Sharon, the trip's paramedic

Udi, head of year 12

Paul, Polish guy

Yaakov, tour guide

(The text in parentheses may be treated either as dialogue or as stage direction)

(It may also be ignored)

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Sometimes, you make decisions that don't make any sense.

Maybe because you're a people pleaser.

Maybe because you expect there to be some sort of meaning.

Or maybe it's just a flash of stupidity.

In my case, this flash of stupidity led me to agree to chaperone bus 2 on the senior class trip to Poland.

Stuck with 37 horny seventeen year olds who have never heard of deodorant.

Instead of suffocating to death twice a week for six hours, you get to suffocate in Poland for 144 hours straight.

Good luck.

1.

Letter to the teachers

Dear teachers,

As we prepare for the trip to Poland, and in order to prevent transgressions that have occurred in the past, I would like to clarify the following guidelines:

- **The students participating in the trip are divided into four peer groups that have undergone meaningful preparation here in Israel.**
- **Each peer group will travel between locations on its assigned bus with an assigned local driver. A student may not be moved from one group to another without the principal's approval.**
- **Each teacher assigned to a peer group is responsible for the attendance of all students in the group at all activities, for preparing evening circles, and for ensuring that all disciplinary rules are followed.**
- **The disciplinary rules are: no smoking, no consumption of alcohol, no physical or verbal violence, no separation from the peer group at any time or place (except during the visit to the Arcadia shopping center in Warsaw), no leaving rooms after lights out.**
- **All teachers must remain vigilant regarding any violations of these rules and report them immediately to the Head of Year 12.**

- **Any student who violates the aforementioned rules will face the following consequence: a direct flight home.**

I wish you and the students a meaningful and enriching journey,

Mr. Shmuel (“Shmulik”) Berkowitz,

School Principal.

2.

<u>Hampton by Hilton, Warsaw, Day 1</u>

I walk down a long hallway.

Making my way through air thick with the smell of raw flesh and fresh semen.

On my way to deal with every teacher’s most formative experience:

Catching minors making passionate young love in the land where their great grandparents were brutally murdered.

How romantic.

I’ve passed half the hallway.

After more than twenty four hours of flights, buses, touring the Jewish Quarter, Jewish synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, Jewish brothels -

(Kidding)

All while counting

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students I’m responsible for,

I wonder if some of their youthful spirit is rubbing off on me, to compensate for all the emotional distress. And then I remember. Babe, you’re 27. Maybe in another life you could’ve maintained your youthful spirit. But no. You chose to be a teacher.

Even in my old age, my senses are sharp enough to spot the troublemakers I’m gonna send on a flight home. It’s either Johnny with his current girlfriend, or Johnny with his ex from last

year, or Johnny with literally any other female. Anyway, you get it, Johnny's on my radar. Johnny is what you'd call the "hottie" of year 12, perfectly tanned, basketball player, name of a porn star, and he's probably why they chose me for this job and not Rachel Segal, because apparently I'm the only teacher getting enough action to see him in his underwear without spending the rest of the night furiously masturbating.

(**Wow that was inappropriate)**

Standing in front of the door.

Not thinking about Rachel Segal furiously masturbating.

Hearing some weird sounds.

Not sure if this is what teen sex sounds like or if they're just watching "Escape from Sobibor".

I knock on the door.

The sounds stop.

3.

A bus, somewhere on the way to Treblinka, Day 2

Yaakov, the bus tour guide, gives his morning speech:

Yaakov: And there was evening, and there was morning, the second day for bus 2's journey, rolling through the dirt roads, heading towards Kosów Lacki district.

Yaakov is like if Shimon Peres and the old man from "Up" had a baby, it's his 24th time guiding a trip to Poland and he comes with two main features: he whispers words strategically for dramatic effect, and he breathes heavily when he walks around.

(Yaakov breathes heavily)

The problem is we're wearing headphones during this trip so we can hear him amongst all the other death camp tourists, so it sounds more like:

(Yaakov's heavy breathing causes an unpleasant distortion)

Yaakov: After we made our way through the Kazimierz Jewish quarter on day one,

(The whisper's coming)

Yaakov: And then to what remains of Podgórze ghetto,

(Any second now)

Yaakov: And then to the famous Umschlagplatz departure point, today we are visiting:

(Wait for it)

Yaakov: (whispers) Treblinka.

(There it is)

Boom.

A bottle of water falls from the overhead compartments, causes a disproportionate amount of panic and distracts from Yaakov's speech.

Roni: Sorry.

I feel for him, every educator knows that one day he'll have to compete for the students' attention against a water bottle.

Roni: Does anyone have paper towels?

The owner of the charismatic bottle is Roni Malka, Johnny's late night guest. A bit chubby. Nose ring. Training for a big shot intelligence position in the army so she's already on track to make a fuckton more money than I do.

Johnny: I do.

Sex god Johnny whips out his rod - a very sensual roll of tissue paper, and Roni bends over with a mischievous smile to soak up the water.

I catch the Polish bus driver peeking at her through the rearview mirror. He's either freaking out that she's damaged the carpeting, or he's trying to get in on the g-string action.

Roni: Thanks.

(No babe, you should really be thanking the awesome teacher who didn't have you sent home and mess up your permanent record for having wild sex in Poland)

Yaakov: Back to the point -

During the holocaust, if you didn't rat someone out, they called you "Righteous Among the Nations". Just sayin'.

4.

A gas station, halfway to Treblinka, 39 students who haven't figured out how deodorant works yet, waiting in line for a single bathroom stall

A liquid pooling in my underwear lets me know that I've been holding it in for way too long now.

I can't decide whether to face the awkwardness of waiting in line with them like sheep to the slaughter or hold it in until Treblinka.

I choose the alternative method of squat-peeing on the other side of the bus. Worst case scenario some Polish creep sees some Jewish ass.

(Standing behind the bus. Unbuttoning. Unzipping)

I spot Roni Malka trying to smoke in secret and I realize I absolutely cannot get caught with my fly open next to a student I almost caught getting to fourth base yesterday.

Me: You really want me to send you home.

Roni: You can if you want.

Me: I don't think it'll look good in your army assessments.

Roni: What do you want?

Me: You're already at three violations of the trip's rules.

Roni: How is it three?

Me: What happened yesterday, and now this.

Roni: That's two.

Me: Yesterday was after lights out. So three.

Roni:

Me:

Roni:

Me: You could have at least picked a better spot to hide and smoke.

Roni: You gonna report me?

Me: No. Not really.

Roni: Do it. I don't really care.

Me: You don't care?

Roni: Nope.

Me: Then why did you come?

Roni: What do you mean?

Me: Trip's expensive. You can fuck and smoke at home too.

(She's shocked)

(I make a serious face like what I just said was super legit)

Roni: I don't "fuck and smoke", that makes me sound like some kind of… whatever.

Me: You're right, you're not. Would you toss that thing already?

(Roni tosses the cigarette)

(Good. Still have some authority around here)

Me: And no more leaving your room after lights out. Okay?

Roni: Okay.

Me: And don't let me catch you smoking again. I mean, just, don't smoke. Even if I don't catch you. And don't do it back home either. Got it?

Roni: Okay.

Me:

Roni: And about that thing you asked about -

Me: Yeah?

Roni: I know why I came here.

Me: Why?

Roni: You wouldn't get it.

Me: Why not?

Roni: 'Cause you're a teacher.

5.

School ceremony, Treblinka extermination camp, surrounded by thousands of stones with one central stone that says: "Never Again !" in Hebrew, in Times New Roman, with a space before the exclamation point

An anemic looking kid sings a depressing cliché song in a shaky voice.

I wonder how so much money was invested in the murder of 900,000 people but not for a decent graphic designer for their memorial.

I spot two students holding hands on the stone path. The boy runs his shaky hand over the girl's back. He leans towards a pointy stone nearby. The stone perfectly fits into the gap between his legs. His hand makes its way to her lower back and finds its way under her shirt. He rubs himself on the stone. The girl looks like Roni Malka, but the boy isn't Johnny. He turns his head. Our eyes meet.

It's Ari Goldman from bus 4. I pull out my phone and pretend I didn't see.

Udi: Put that away, everyone can see.

Me: Sorry.

(That's Udi, head of year 12 and the trip supervisor. And soon to be school principal)

(According to him at least)

Udi: This kid is really getting to me.

(He's talking about Yoav, the anemic looking kid who they probably picked because his dad was killed recently in a military operation)

Me: His singing is fine, it's just a song about survival is kind of a weird choice.

Udi: We needed something more modern, to give the kids songs they can relate to.

Me: That's fine, it's just that only 70 people survived Treblinka so I would say the odds of survival are zero point zero zero zero zero seven seven seven eight.

(I show Udi the calculations on my phone)

(He's not amused)

Udi: It was his dad's favorite song. He sang it on memorial day. It was beautiful.

(Because everyone felt bad that his dad is dead)

Udi: It's the obvious choice for this kind of ceremony.

(Not because of the holocaust, but because his dad is dead)

Udi: Besides, it's a clever progression.

Me: A progression of what?

Udi: He sang it in Israel and now he's singing it in Treblinka. From loss to renewal.

Johnny: Here. in this carload. I am Eve. With Abel my son. If you see my other son. Cain son of man. tell him that I am. Here. In this carload. I am Eve.

Udi: What is he doing?

Johnny: With Abel my son.

Me: He's reciting the poem.

Johnny: If you see my -

Udi: He's turning it into a joke!

Johnny: Other son.

Me: No, that's just how the poem goes, it's like a loop -

Johnny: Cain son of man.

Udi: I've been teaching for 15 years, I know how the poem goes.

(Fair enough)

Johnny: Tell him that I am. Here.

Udi: How do we stop this?!

Yoav: Please rise for the national anthem.

Udi: Thank god. So, what is he?

Me: Johnny? He's a teenager. It's like a cross between a man and a baboon.

Udi: No, I mean, is he Ashkenazi?

Me: ?

Udi: Is he here to respect our history or to get laid?

(Why choose when you can do both)

Udi: You know this experience is a lot more meaningful when one has… familial ties to the subject.

Me: Why do I know that very well?

Udi: Because you have ties to the holocaust.

Me: Pretty sure everyone has ties to the holocaust.

Udi: This isn't my first class trip to Poland, I know his type. This is exactly what happened with Dana Volman.

Udi: Your grandfather, right?

Me: What?

Udi: Your grandfather was… a survivor?

Me: Who is Dana volman?

Udi: What, you don't know the story?

Me: No.

Udi: She was a student, spent the whole trip fooling around with some troublemaker who cracked jokes during ceremonies, caused disturbances at extermination camps, then one of the teachers caught them having sex and didn't report it. Poor girl got pregnant.

Me: Oh. Wow. Which teacher?

Udi: She doesn't teach anymore, she got fired. Dana's mother sued both her and the school for Professional negligence. She never finished high school, didn't go to the army, has a two year old kid, does gel manicures for a living.

Me: You can actually make good money doing gel manicures.

Udi: She was going to be a military software developer.

Me: Oh.

Udi: Keep an eye on Johnny.

Me: Teicher.

Udi: Hmm?

Me: That's his surname. German.

6.

<u>The stone path leading to where the train tracks used to be, Treblinka extermination camp. To my right, thousands of green trees, to my left, large stones engraved with country names, and through my headphones I hear the soothing voice of -</u>

Yaakov: A pregnant woman - is sent to the gas chambers immediately.

Meanwhile -

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Students walk ahead of me on the path.

(Yaakov breathes a heavy breath)

Haven't lost a single student yet.

(And another)

I'm fucking great at this.

Yaakov: The only chance a pregnant woman had to be sent to work and escape the death sentence, was if she was able to hide it well enough.

I really hope 17 year olds know how to use condoms.

Or that she's on the pill.

Yaakov: This was a double murder by the Nazis - they murder both the woman, but also the possibility of a future Jewish generation.

Wait, was I on the pill at 17?

Maybe she has an IUD?

Yaakov: If it wasn't for the holocaust, if you calculate all the children that could have been born, the world's Jewish population today would have been twice as -

Does this generation put IUDs in seventeen year olds?

That doesn't sound very progressive.

Sharon: Why is he telling them all this?

(I'm jump scared by a thin and slouching woman with an annoyed look on her face and a first aid kit on her shoulder)

Sharon: The whole pregnant women thing. I don't know, maybe I'm too sensitive.

Me: I guess this is what this trip's all about.

Sharon: Well, you're their teacher, you know better than I do. I'm Sharon, the paramedic.

Me: Oh, you're Yoav's mom.

Sharon: Yeah. And you're his teacher.

Me: I don't teach his class, I'm just chaperoning the bus.

Sharon: I mean, still, you probably got to know him during the preparation sessions.

Me: Yes.

Yaakov: The first stop for prisoners sent to work was "The Sauna" - the disinfection station.

Sharon: Hey, can you take a picture of me with this?

(She stands next to the reconstructed train tracks where our ancestors were taken to their deaths)

Me: Sure.

(She hands me her shitty Android and through the cracked screen I can tell she's actually pretty young)

Yaakov: Think of what it must be like for a young woman to be forcefully stripped, to stay silent while they shave off her hair.

Sharon: Should I smile?

Me: Whatever you want.

Yaakov: The nazis treated them like they were -

Sharon: Thanks.

Me: No problem.

Yaakov: (whispers) Sub-human.

Sharon: So… what do you think so far?

Me: About the… camp?

Sharon: About Yoav.

Me: Oh. He seems fine, you know, kind of quiet.

Sharon: Good.

Sharon: Does he get along with his classmates?

Me: I don't know, I don't teach him.

Sharon: Do you see him sometimes at school?

Me: Yeah, sometimes.

Sharon: And…?

(The fuck does she want?)

Me: Are you asking about something in particular?

Sharon: No, I just…

(Parents can be such a pain in the ass)

Sharon: I wanted to know how he's been since Ethan…

Me: Who's Ethan?

Sharon: My husband, he…

(Died, I'm such an idiot)

Me: Oh. Right. I didn't remember that he… I didn't remember his name.

(Breath)

Me: Look, I'm sure you know him way better than I do, I talked to him maybe three times during the whole prep.

Sharon: About what?

Me: I don't… I don't remember. Is there an issue you want me to know about?

Sharon: No, there's no issue, It's just that Yoav… Has had some difficulties since everything with Ethan.

Me: Of course. Makes sense.

(Pulled that one right out of the generic answers textbook)

Sharon: No. I mean, yes, it makes sense. But I can't really get to him. I mean, I try but he doesn't… he doesn't talk to me. At all. Since the Shiva.

Me: Did something happen between you?

Sharon: After the Shiva he decided he wants to be a combat soldier, and I told him I wouldn't sign the consent form. That's when he stopped talking to me.

Me: I see. Well, that's just what they're like at that age. Dramatic. One day he'll thank you.

Sharon: I backed down. I signed it right before the trip. I couldn't go with him like this.

(Don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids, don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids)

Sharon: The thing is… he still won't talk to me. I have no idea what's been going on in his life since Ethan passed. He pushed me out of his life, just like that.

Me: Have you thought of taking him to see a therapist?

Sharon: No way. That's the last thing I need, another person who'll make him hate me.

Me: I don't think that's what therapists do…

Sharon: Speaking from experience?

Me: No.

Sharon: Well that's what I hear. It's always mom's fault. Especially with boys.

(Breath)

Me: Sharon, all I can say is, I see Yoav sit at lunch, alone, with his red headphones on. Considering he doesn't talk to anyone at home, it could be… unusual. I think maybe therapy might actually -

Sharon: No, it's out of the question.

(Don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids, don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids)

Me: Okay.

Sharon: You just aren't a mom yet, so you don't get it.

(A mom's favorite argument)

Me: Well, I… I'm really sorry if -

Sharon: No, no, it's fine. I'm sorry. You must be a really good teacher if you pay attention to kids you don't even teach. Thank you for telling me.

7.

A bus, on the way back from Treblinka, driving on a narrow road surrounded by small sad looking trees

I sit on the right side of the bus in the front row, leaning against the window.

Wondering if 17 year olds who plan to fuck on a trip to Poland pack condoms.

It would be very responsible and also irresponsible of them.

God I hope they do. I don't need a pregnant teen on my conscience.

That's the last thing I need, for her to be an army dropout nail lady.

Boom.

A fallen water bottle causes mild panic among the bus passengers, except for one person - Ephraim. Ephraim is our witness speaker, which is basically a holocaust survivor we bring all the way to Poland to make the kids feel bad so they don't act like shits. I guess he's not worked up about loud noises because of all the wars he's been through. He doesn't say much. On the last day the whole group is supposed to go to his childhood home in Warsaw to hear his story. 'Till then I guess he's just trying to keep the suspense going.

The Polish driver looks at the students suspiciously through his rearview mirror.

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Maybe he's helping me count.

Or maybe he saw Roni Malka making out with Itai Fisher in the back seat.

Yeah, it's definitely the latter.

Roni: You wanted to talk?

Me: Can you sit with me for a sec?

(She begrudgingly sits. Of course. I interrupted her makeout session)

Roni: Is this gonna be a lecture?

Me: About what?

Roni: I don't know. Like… inappropriate behavior?

Me: Do you think your behavior is inappropriate?

Roni: Did I do something wrong?

Me: Do you think you did something wrong?

Roni: Can you just tell me why you called me over?

(Because I caught you getting hot and heavy with three boys in the last 24 hours and I'm trying to figure out whether you're a typical teen exploring her sexuality or if you're being passed around from one boy to another without slut shaming you)

Boom.

Another water bottle causes panic, but also provides a much needed disruption.

Me: Can I ask you something?

Roni: Yes.

Me: What's going on?

Roni: Having a blast. You know, holocaust and all.

(Good one)

Me: I'm not talking about that.

Roni: Then just tell me what you're talking about.

Me: I'm trying to understand what… I'm trying to understand if you need my help.

Roni: No.

Me: Okay. Good.

Roni: Can I go back to my seat?

Me: Not yet. Look, I know it can be awkward to talk about this stuff with your teacher, and I'm not trying to embarrass you, I just want to know if something problematic is going on.

Roni: It's all good.

Me: You sure?

Roni: Yes, that's what I said.

Me: Okay. It's just I noticed some things that I thought might be -

Roni: When senior guys make out with girls in the hallway, teachers just walk right past them and no one stops to ask if it's problematic.

(Aaaaand now I'm a slut shamer)

Me: Maybe, but I think you're a really really smart girl -

Roni: Yeah I'm smart, so what? I can do whatever I want with whoever I want and it has nothing to do with my IQ.

Me: Well right now you're on a class trip to Poland and there are some things that are appropriate and some things that aren't.

(17 year old me is throwing up on current me for saying that)

Roni: Okay. No problem. You won't see me doing anything.

Me: Good.

Roni: Great. Can I go now?

8.

Super pharm, Warsaw, 6 pm

The last time I told a class supervisor I'm having "lady problems" was in high school when I wanted to get out of a field trip. I didn't think that fast forward 9 years I would be using that excuse to get out of a school activity, only this time it's to go to Super Pharm. That's right, the Israeli drugstore. Apparently Poland has 68 Super Pharm stores. Today, in the land where my ancestors were murdered by the million, I can buy Super Pharm private label foot cream.

Stranger: Do you need help? [1]

(A man who's old enough to be my dad, without a Super Pharm employee tag, turns to me, and before I've decided if he's sexy-old or creepy-old he-)

(Old) Stranger: It's labeled by types.

(Considering the fact I'm standing at the condom section I'd say he's creepy-old)

Me: Yeah, I know. Thank you. [2]

Creepy-Old Man: No problem.

(He walks away)

Me: Wait!

(He turns around)

Me: I don't read Polish, so…

(I switched to the English accent that makes me sound less like a stupid tourist but still maintains the middle-eastern charm)

Creepy-Old Stranger: Yeah, I assumed. So this one is the thin type, this one is ultra thin, this is intense -

Me: What does it mean?

(He theatrically reads the back of the box)

[1] Highlighted dialogue indicates that the character is speaking in English. In any future translation, these lines should remain in English.
[2] In the original Hebrew text, the narrator's English is written in Hebrew letters.

Creepy-Old Stranger: "Oooohhhhhhh. Ride those waves of warming, cooling and tingling sensations. Yeahhhhhhhh. Feel those ribs and dots, designed to help unleash her orgasm. Niiiiiiiiiiiceeee"

(Definitely sexy-old)

Sexy-Old Stranger: And there is the original one, that is considered the safest.

Me: I will take that.

Sexy-Old Stranger: Not convinced by my theatrical abilities?

Me: Actually, it's not for me.

Sexy-Old Stranger: Oh. Okay.

Me: It's for my student.

Sexy-Old Stranger: ?

Me: I am a teacher in high school, in Israel, I'm Israeli, and I am here with a bunch of teenagers, in a hotel, for the… i don't know how to say it in English -

Sexy-Old Stranger: "Masa Le'Polin"

Me: Yes! How do you know?

Sexy-Old Stranger: I live here. And also, you know, in Poland, there was one of the largest Jewish communities before -

Me: The Holocaust / **Sexy-Old Stranger:** World War two.

Me: Yeah. I know. I am Polish too.

(Telling a Polish man who lives in Poland and speaks Polish that I'm also Polish just sounds wrong)

Me: Originally Polish. From one side. Of my family.

Sexy-Old Stranger: Your grandmother?

Me: Grandfather. Maybe they knew each other.

Sexy-Old Stranger: Who?

Me: Our… grandparents.

(On second thought if they met it was probably not on good terms)

Me: Never mind.

Sexy-Old Stranger: So, why are you buying condoms for your student, if I may ask?

Me: What is your name?

Sexy-Old Stranger: Paul.

Me: Paul. This story is too long for the Super Pharm.

(One flirty look and here we are half an hour later in his backyard with a Polish bottle of Pinot Noir)

Me: *Yom Aviv* - Spring day

Reychot Lilach - Smells of… flowers

Beyn Hurvot - Between the ruins

Ha-iyr shelach - Of your home town

Yom Yafe La-doog ba-nahar - Beautiful day to fish in the river

Be-tochi ha-lev nishbar - Inside of me, the heart is broken

Sham, Hayita ve-eyna - There, there was and there wasn't

yaldutech, iysha ktana - Your childhood, you little woman

Anashim she ish lo ma-keer - People that nobody knows

Eyn Afilu bayit she-yazkir - There is not a house as a reminder

Paul: Wow. Beautiful.

Me: Yes. It's a very big holocaust hit in Israel.

Paul:

(I guess Polish people don't do holocaust humor)

Paul: Did you like the wine?

Me: I planned to get drunk, but I guess my alcohol tolerance is too strong for Polish wine.

Paul: Didn't think you'd want to go back to your students drunk.

Me: Yeah, you probably right.

Paul: Although…

Me: Although what?

Paul: Seeing your teacher drunk is kind of…

Me: Kind of what?

Paul: Let's just say it's a good thing you bought them condoms.

Me: Why?

Paul: Then your students could do something with all this… sexual excitement.

Me: They will do it with or without the condoms.

Paul: I'm sure that you giving them condoms will boost their excitement.

Me:

Paul: Unless… you'll decide to do something else with the condoms…

Me: But I need my student to not get pregnant…

Paul: You also need your student to not be passed from one boy to another…

Me: She is not, she told me it's not the case…

Paul: Why would she tell you the truth? You're her teacher…

(Fuck)

Paul: What?

Me: No, I just…

(I'm a real shit teacher aren't I?)

Paul: Don't you feel a bit dirty?

I was almost offended but five minutes later we were getting it on in the shower so as they say - water under the bridge.

9.

A long corridor at the Hampton by Hilton, Warsaw, twenty minutes after lights out

Wet and tipsy, I waddle back to the hotel, ready to catch some felons.

Signs to look out for: doors opening and closing, sudden moans, or, my personal favorite - making a loud but otherwise innocent sound to disguise some less innocent sounds.

Yaakov: Think of what it must be like for a young woman to be forcefully stripped -

Yaakov's creepy voice is stuck in my head, it's like I'm being brainwashed.

Yaakov: If a woman was pregnant - she was sent to the gas chambers immediately.

I have to stop wearing those damn headphones.

(A suspiciously loud sound from a hair dryer comes out of room 540)

(I knock frantically like a freaking Gestapo officer)

Sharon: Hi.

Me: Hi.

(She stands in front of me in a bathrobe and semi wet hair)

Sharon: Is everything okay?

Me: Yes.

Sharon: Do you want to come in? I just don't want to stand here like this…

Me: Sure, of course.

(I walk into the room with literally no excuse for this incredibly awkward situation)

Sharon: Did he say something to you?

Me: Who?

Sharon: Yoav.

Me:

(Still looking for that excuse)

Sharon: What?

Me: No, I just wanted to know if you had an Advil or something, I have a headache.

(Yes, success)

Sharon: Oh, sure. Here you go.

Me: Well, I'm on lights out duty, so… thanks.

Sharon: Listen, do you have a moment?

(Sure, it's not like I'm busy saving a student from sexual exploitation or pregnancy or something)

Me: Yeah, if it's quick, It's just I have to get back.

Sharon: Okay, another time then.

(On the other hand, saying no to a recently widowed woman also feels wrong)

Me: Is everything okay?

Sharon: Yes.

Me: You can… I mean, it's okay, I can talk if it's important.

(Recently widowed woman)

Me: Or even if it isn't important.

Sharon: I think I shouldn't have come here. I'm just ruining it for him.

Me: Ruining what?

Sharon: He's supposed to be here with his friends, I'm just embarrassing him.

(What friends?)

Sharon: I ruined his trip.

Me: He barely sees you, I don't think you're embarrassing him.

Sharon: So why is it every time I look at him he looks upset?

Me: I don't think it has anything to do with you. It's not exactly a fun trip, you know.

Sharon: His friends look like they're having fun.

Me: I mean, they're not going through the trauma of losing -

Sharon: He's not going through trauma!

(Fuck me)

Me: Well, I don't think I'm the right person for this conversation.

Sharon: I see you with the kids. You're the only one who talks to them like they're actual human beings.

Me: I already told you what I think.

Sharon: I know. But I can't.

Me: I mean about the therapy -

Sharon: I know, I told you, I can't.

Me: Why?

Sharon: Because it won't help.

(Don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids, don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids)

Me: Look, I know you want him to just move on and get over it. But I think there are things that can't be buried.

(Probably not the best choice of words for a recently widowed woman)

(Oh no, she's tearing up)

(Oh no, she's crying)

(It's my fault, it's the metaphor, isn't it?)

(The fuck is wrong with me for fuck's sake)

(Why did I have to use the word "buried"?!)

("There are things that can't be hidden", "There are things that can't be silenced", I mean, literally any other choice of words would have been better than what just came out of my mouth)

Sharon: Do you think I messed him up?

Me: I don't… I don't really know how to answer that.

Sharon: I think I messed him up.

Me: Why?

Sharon: You can't tell him.

Me: Tell him what?

Sharon: What I'm about to tell you. Promise me you won't.

Me: Okay.

Sharon: I didn't mean to get pregnant. Ethan really wanted to go up the ranks in the army and the whole baby thing freaked him out, so he would yell and break things and Yoav would wake up and start crying. When he got older and started noticing things, Ethan realized he needed to control himself. He got a promotion and was at the base a lot anyway. And then it stopped. All of the outbursts, the shouting, he stopped it. And that's how he was, all the way till the… end. But there was a long period that Yoav doesn't remember where…

Me: Did he… did he hit you?

Sharon: Yes.

Me: And Yoav?

Sharon:

Me:

Sharon: He doesn't remember. He was very young.

Me: And Yoav has no idea.

Sharon: No. I wanted him to think his dad was a hero.

Me: Do you want to tell him?

Sharon: Absolutely not. He'll hate me even more for keeping it a secret all these years.

Me: So why did you tell me?

Sharon:

Me:

Sharon: Maybe I'll feel better now that someone else knows.

10.

Standing in front of a mountain of ashes in a green field topped by a stone dome with an inscription in Polish that reads: "Let our fate be a warning to you", Majdanek concentration camp, day 3

We walk for hours between barbed wire fences, inside musty gas chambers with blue gas stains on the walls, near large containers with thousands of shoes, past crematorium ovens, near a casket with human remains that were burned in crematorium ovens, and during all this I'm supposed to keep count of -

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Students who keep moving around like a bunch of caged rats.

But now they're all standing. Easier to count. Staring at a brown pile of ashes. Some are crying. Mostly the girls. Some are hugging the crying ones. Mostly the boys. And it honestly looks pretty innocent.

I always thought ashes were black. I guess everything was brown in the holocaust. There's this shade of brown. Holocaust-brown.

Udi: Can I talk to you for a moment?

(Fuck this man scares me to death)

Me: Sure.

Udi: You okay?

Me: Yeah, it's nothing, I just zoned out for a second.

Udi: Oh, okay. Is everything all right with the kids?

Me: They're crying so I think so.

(I have to stop saying things out loud)

Udi: It's normal for Majdanek to be a difficult experience, to see everything so vividly. It's not often you feel so close to death.

Me: Yeah well, half of them are gonna be combat soldiers soon, so…

(Have to stop saying things out loud)

Me: Never mind. Is that what you wanted to talk about?

Udi: Actually, I wanted to talk to you about something else.

Me: Okay.

Udi:

Me: About what?

Udi:

Me: Hello?

Udi:

(Why isn't he saying anything?)

(Why are no words coming out of his mouth?)

(Do I want words to come out of his mouth?)

(Usually I don't want words to come out of his mouth but then they come out anyway)

(Why isn't he saying them now?)

(Does he know I didn't report Roni?)

(Did someone tell him I didn't report Roni and he's about to fire me?)

(Am I about to get fired? With a mountain of ashes in the background? in Majdanek?)

Udi: It's something kind of personal.

(Okay, not about to get fired)

(What could be personal?)

(And why did he use that deep voice?)

(And why is he giving me that look?)

Udi: I wanted to ask you -

(Hold it)

(That look. The voice. The "kind of personal")

(Is Udi hitting on me?!)

Udi: Your grandfather was in Birkenau?

(Wow. That's one hell of a pickup line)

Udi: It's just since tomorrow we're going to be there, I thought it would be nice if… If today, for instance, at the evening circle, you could tell your group your grandfather's story.

(Ooh, steamy)

Udi: You know, it's important to tell the students our personal stories, so they feel they're part of a cycle of -

(Trauma)

Udi: Heroism.

(See? I didn't say that out loud)

Udi: What do you say?

Me: How do you know about that?

Udi: Rachel Segal said that during the prep you said your grandfather was there.

Me: Actually, my grandfather didn't really like to talk about the holocaust, so I barely know anything about him. I have nothing to tell.

Udi: What do you know?

(A loud breath)

Yaakov: Bus 2 - we're heading towards the killing pits. Everyone please get closer and follow me.

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Motherfucker.

11.

<u>At the foot of the crematorium, after 3 minutes of frantic searching that end when a bright red pair of JBL headphones against a backdrop of holocaust-brown catches my eye</u>

Me: Yoav, what's the deal?

Yoav: What?

Me: What are you doing here?

Yoav: Nothing, just sitting.

Me: You know you can't leave the group.

Yoav: Sorry. I'll go back now.

Me: You want to tell me what's going on?

Yoav: Nothing.

Me: You sure?

Yoav: Don't you want me to go back to the group?

Me: I want you to go back, but… I want to talk to you first.

Yoav: I'm sorry I left the group, it won't happen again.

Me: It's fine, this isn't a lecture. Let's just sit for a second. Okay? Can we?

Yoav:

Me:

Yoav: What did you want to talk about?

Me: I want you to let me in on what's going on.

Yoav: Why?

Me: Because I have a feeling you're bottling things up that you should probably let out.

Yoav: With you?

Me: Why not?

Yoav: 'Cause you're a teacher.

Me: Well, I'm delighted to inform you that I'm also a human being.

Yoav:

Me:

Yoav: I don't know what you want me to say.

Yoav: I just, didn't want to stare at a mountain of ashes.

Me: Why?

(I just asked a recently orphaned child why he doesn't want to look at a mountain of ashes)

Yoav: It just feels like a way to get us to cry. This place is more interesting.

Me: The houses?

Yoav: Yeah. They're really close by. It's so messed up. It's like, they can see the crematorium chimneys from their windows.

Me: That is messed up.

Yoav: Do you think there are families there, with kids?

Me: Could be.

Yoav: I wonder what their parents tell them those chimneys are.

Me: I have a stupid guess.

Yoav: What?

Me: Chocolate factory chimneys.

(I got a smile out of him. Better than nothing)

Yoav: I bet when the kids grow up and they learn about the Holocaust, it breaks their hearts.

Me: Yeah, find out their history isn't so great.

Yoav: No. Because of their parents. Finding out their parents lied to them their whole lives.

Yoav: Or maybe they don't tell them about the Holocaust at all so they won't be scared to look out the window.

Me: Would you tell them?

Yoav: Tell them what?

Me: If you were a dad, and you lived in one of those houses, would you tell them the truth?

Yoav: I don't want to think about being a dad.

Me: Why not?

Yoav: Because I'm gonna be a combat soldier soon. I could die.

Me: Why are you -

(I almost asked him why he's thinking about death and then remember again I'm talking to a recently orphaned child)

Yoav: Why am I what?

Me: Why do you want to be in combat?

Yoav: Because I have to.

Me: You don't have to do anything.

Yoav: I do.

Me: You have a choice -

Yoav: Johnny says that after what they did to us here, he'd die for our country.

Me: Okay, that's Johnny.

Yoav: My dad died for our country.

Me: Yoav, don't do it if it doesn't feel right.

Yoav: We need combat soldiers so the things that happened here never happen again.

Me: The combat units will be fine without you.

Yoav: My dad stopped a terror attack that could have killed 30 people. Would they have been fine without him too?

Me: You're not your father.

Yoav: Right, because he was a hero. And I'm a loser.

Me:

Yoav:

Me:

(I hate this so fucking much right now)

Me: Yoav, you're not a loser. You're a super smart kid -

Yoav: That's such a teacher thing to say.

(True)

Yoav: Well, I hope this talk made you feel like a better teacher or whatever, but I don't think you've actually got anything helpful to say -

Me: Yoav -

Yoav: What?

(Your dad wasn't a hero, he probably ruined your childhood in ways you don't even remember, your mom's afraid you'll hate her so she won't tell you what he did and is too busy tormenting herself to help you, and *you're* the biggest victim in all this who clearly needs help from someone who's not a dumbass, clueless teacher who's only making you feel worse than you did in the first place)

Me:

Yoav: Is there something you want to say?

Me: No.

12.

<u>A bus, halfway back from Majdanek, after an hour of travel that felt like an hour of torture with a bunch of hormone crazed savages, banging on the bus windows and singing at the top of their lungs -</u>

Ki kulanu!!!! Ken kulanu!!! Kulanu rikma enoshit!!! [3]

And -

Arim Rashi!!! Essa Eynay!!! Ell HeHarim!!!!! [4]

And of course -

Tachzik chazak alle katan Sheli!!!! [5]

But now, finally, some quiet.

Everyone's asleep.

The screaming must have been to suppress the horrors at Majdanek and now they're recharging with some pornographic dreams. A relief for me and the poor bus driver.

Ephraim is sitting on the left side, his eyes closed, drool coming out of the right side of his mouth. He looks pale. I hope he's not dead. I hope the Majdanek experience didn't kill him. Or the students' screams. Not sure which is worse.

I was hoping to lean my head against the window and try to unwind with some erotic dreams of my own, but the seat by the window was taken by a very un-sexy pain in my butt -

Udi: You counted everyone when we got on the bus, right?

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Me: Yeah, of course.

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[3] Because we are all!!!!! Yes, we are all!!!!! One human tapestry!!!!! ("One Human Tapestry", Music and Lyrics by Moti Hamer)
[4] I will lift my head!!!!! I will lift my eyes!!!!! To the mountains!!!!! ("I will lift my head", Lyrics by Shay Gabso, Music by Ahuva Ozeri and Moshe Daabul)
[5] Hold on tight, my little leaf!!!!! ("My Little Leaf", Music and Lyrics by Ishay Lapidot)

Udi: Fantastic.

(Udi usually rides with bus 1)

Udi: The seats on bus 1 are way more comfortable.

(I have no idea why he's riding with us instead of bus 1)

Udi: But I really wanted to be here with you.

Me: Yeah? Why?

Udi: To see that everything's okay.

Me: Pretty sure everything's okay.

Udi: Then why didn't you tell me one of your students wandered off from the group?

Me: What?

Boom.

A bottle falls from the overhead compartment, but no one wakes up.

Udi: I saw you, with Yoav.

(He's giving me this sleazy look like he caught us fucking in the crematorium or something)

(Ew. That's gross)

Me: No, it was nothing, I handled it myself.

Udi: You have to report things like that. To me.

Me: I didn't want to bother you, it was just a little situation.

Udi: I don't care how little it is, everything has to be reported to me.

Me: Okay. Sorry.

Udi: Good.

(Why's he still looking at me like that?)

Me: Do you want to do something about it?

Udi: About what?

Me: About Yoav leaving the group...

Udi: Of course not. Leaving the group without security approval is a serious offense that gets you sent home, but Yoav, as far as I know, could go to a whorehouse and still stay on Polish soil.

(He looks very amused with himself)

Me: And that's because we encourage exploitation and misogyny?

Udi: It’s because his mom is the paramedic. No paramedic, no trip. Orders from Shmulik.

Me: Meaning what?

Udi: Yoav is off limits.

Me: Did the order come with a free pass to the nearest whorehouse too?

Boom.

(Aaaand he’s no longer amused)

Udi: Don’t these bottles get to you? Bus 1 has covers on the overhead compartments.

(I think we’d all be thrilled if you went back to bus 1)

I catch the Polish driver checking Roni out again through the rearview mirror. This time she’s getting all flirty with Ron Schwartzberg. Four boys so far, It’s like she’s trying to catch ‘em all.

Udi: Are there any other incidents you didn’t want to bother me with?

Me: No. That’s it.

Exchanging flirty looks is totally fine. It’s not against the rules. Udi’s right here and even he hasn’t said anything about it.

Udi: What do you know about your grandfather?

Flirty looks aren't a violation right now, but they definitely will be tonight. Or not tonight. Or in a gas station bathroom. Or in a gas chamber. Or literally right now.

Me: What?

Udi: You said you don’t know much about him -

Suspicious movement between Ron Schwartzberg’s hand and Roni's shirt -

Udi: So what *do* you know?

A shirt that says "Never Forget" -

Boom.

Another bottle falls.

Me: Why are you asking?

The driver also notices the suspicious movement -

Udi: I just want to know if for the evening circle, there’s anything you *can* share with the students.

Udi’s the only one who hasn’t noticed, he’s too busy with -

Udi: You don't remember anything?

He puts his hand under her shirt -

Udi: I'd really like them to feel the teachers are connected to all this.

He unzips his jeans and starts rubbing -

Udi: You don't remember anything?

Faster -

Udi: You're sure you don't remember?

Faster -

Me: It's not that I don't remember, I just don't know.

I can't say anything -

Udi: There must be something you can tell.

I can't tell -

Udi: I'm sure you can tell.

You can't even see the "Never Forget" anymore, just bare skin tingling from a cold hand's touch -

Udi: Tell me.

The driver keeps looking at the rearview mirror, he keeps looking back at the mirror -

Udi: Tell me.

He rubs faster -

Udi: Tell me.

He drives faster -

Udi: Tell me.

Me: He had a little sister named Erika, He looked after her in Birkenau, until they were put in a line, he hugged her tight and one of the soldiers came by and tore her from his arms, and that's it. She died. That's all I know.

Boom.

13.

The side of a dark road on the outskirts of Warsaw, 37 students' heads pressed against the bus windows, looking at me with wide eyes

Standing over an elderly Polish woman and a bright blue bicycle.

I mean, what was an elderly Polish woman and a bright blue bicycle.

I hear European ambulance sirens, police cars, and Yaakov's slow breathing, even though he's not even next to me.

The Polish paramedics put the woman into the ambulance, the Polish police put the driver into the police car, and they all drive off together, leaving us with 37 terrified students and a bright blue bicycle.

Sharon: I'm afraid to say it's certain.

Me: You sure?

Sharon: The paramedics said there was nothing they could do.

Me: What are we going to do with the bike?

Sharon: I don't know, leave it here.

(Here comes the most comforting man in the world)

Udi: Okay, we need to move them to the other buses, now.

Sharon: Get them to stop looking at it.

Me: They won't stop. They saw it happen.

Udi: So bus 1 can take another 12 students -

Sharon: How? It was dark.

Me: Some of them said they saw her on the bike and then felt the bus swerving and heard the boom.

Udi: Bus 3 can take another 10 -

Sharon: My god.

Udi: Are you listening?

Me: They're gonna want to know if she died.

Udi: Absolutely not.

Me: What do you mean?

Udi: We are absolutely not giving students that kind of information, it's none of their business.

Me: They saw it happen.

Udi: They saw her get hit, they didn't see her soul leave her body.

Me: What am I supposed to tell them?

Udi: That we don't know. That she's in the hospital and being treated.

Me: But we do know.

Sharon: I don't think it's appropriate to tell them, this trip is hard enough as it is.

Me: How can we take them on a trip all about death, but not tell them about *this* death?

Udi: It's not like that.

Me: Right, because *this* death isn't part of our agenda.

Udi: No, no, not at all. These kids are in a foreign country, being bombarded all day with awful stories about their families' past, bearing witness to the horrors, and death isn't exactly a foreign concept back home either.

(I hear Yaakov's breathing inside my ear)

Udi: Do you really think it's right to add even more to that?

(Yaakov's breathing gets faster)

Udi: Don't you care how this will affect them?

(He's almost choking on his own breath)

Me: They're not kids.

Sharon: They are kids. And we aren't hiding anything, we're protecting them.

(I don't know what you keep telling yourself but you definitely failed to protect your son)

Me: I don't know what you keep telling yourself but you definitely failed to protect your son.

Sharon: What?

Me:

Sharon: Did Yoav say something to you?

(I'm a terrible person)

Udi: Okay, this is not up for discussion.

Sharon: Did something happen?!

Udi: It's not up for discussion.

Me: Nothing happened, I shouldn't have said that.

Udi: This is not a discussion!

(Breath)

Udi: Look. I don't know how you picture me in your head -

(As a weird evil man, if you must know)

Udi: But I'm not some evil man.

(Okay. Just weird then)

Udi: I'm only thinking about what's best for the kids, and this is with 15 years of experience. There is no educational reason to tell them about this.

Me: Except it's the truth.

Udi: Truth is not an educational reason!

Me:

Sharon:

Udi: Sorry.

Udi: The police talked to me. They said that according to the driver, one of the students was taking her shirt off on the bus and the teachers didn't do anything. That's why he lost focus and swerved off the road. So no one is going to tell a single student that she died, because if they start making a whole thing out of it, and their parents start pressuring Shmulik, and Shmulik starts doing some digging - you and I are going to pay for it. Got it?

Me: Yes.

Udi: Good. That's it, we can't talk about this anymore. So here's what we're gonna do - we'll split them into the buses in an orderly fashion, get back to the hotel, and relax.

Me: Sure, relax.

Udi: Maybe you should go out and get some air, what do you say?

Me: And do what?

Udi: I don't know, you'll think of something.

Me: And what about the kids?

Udi: I'll get Rachel Segal to have a talk with them. You just make sure to go out and do something fun.

14.

Doing something fun: an evening of drowning my sorrows with a Polish guy with the potential for mediocre sex and some Polish wine that's also mediocre

Paul: So how old was she?

Me: Who?

Paul: The woman who got killed?

(When I texted him that I wanted to do something fun, I thought he knew I meant sex and not irritating small-talk)

Paul: Was she young?

Me: I told you I don't wanna talk about this anymore, I just want to do something fun.

Paul: Sorry.

(Stop with the sorry and take your clothes off, thanks)

Paul: Can I just ask you one thing?

(No, Paul, I'm not into anal, I thought we were past this)

Paul: How did the students react?

Me: For what?

Paul: To the death of the woman.

Me: I didn't tell them she died.

Paul: Why not?

Me: It's complicated.

Paul: Did they ask?

Me: All the time, it was a nightmare.

Paul: So tell them.

Me: I can't!

Paul: Why?

Me: Paul, I'm too drunk for this conversation!

Paul: I thought you said you have tolerance for Polish wine.

Me:

Paul:

Me: I don't understand, why do you keep -

(How do you say, lecktor? Lucktor?[6])

Paul:

Me:

Paul: What?

(No, my brain can't do this right now)

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[6] In the original Hebrew text, "Lecktor? Lucktor?" was the word "to lecture" in Hebrew. In future translations it should be replaced with the word "to lecture" in the translated language.

Me: Can we just do what we did yesterday and then I'll go home?

Paul: We can. But I just want you to think of it this way - if the situation was reversed, and a group of Polish students ran over a Jewish woman, and their teacher hid the fact that she died from them - how would that look to you?

Me: Paul, I don't need you to lecture me about moral values.

("Lecture". Found it)

Paul: Because I'm Polish?

Me: What?

Paul: Because you think we killed your grandfather or something so I can't talk about moral values?

Me: No, I meant -

(Fuck)

Me: Paul, believe me, my grandfather has nothing to do with this -

Paul: Really? Is that why you care so little about death when it's Polish and not Jewish?

Me: I do care! I'm the only one who cares!

Paul: It doesn't seem like that.

Me: I think you are drunk and talking bullshit -

Paul: What are you doing?

Me: I'm going.

Paul: No, don't go like that.

Me: I told you I don't wanna talk about this, I just want to have sex!

Paul: So why did you tell me this?!

Me: Because you asked me how was my day, and I preferred to tell you about *this* instead of talking about what it's like to stand inside of a gas… gas…

(I swear I knew this one [7])

Paul: Gas chamber?

Me: Yeah.

Paul: And how was it?

Me: Pretty sucks.

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[7] In the original Hebrew text, she asks: "How do you say chamber? Gas chamber?", with the word "chamber" being in Hebrew, as she can't remember the word in English.

Paul: I'm sorry.

Me: It's okay. You don't need to.

Paul:

Me:

Paul: Can you just stay here for a bit?

Me: For what?

Paul: I want to show you how sorry I am.

Me: No, Paul, I lost my mood.

Paul: So maybe you can just… take off your shirt and let me look at you?

(Breath)

I take off my shirt.

(Wet breath)

It says "Never Forget".

Paul: Thank you.

Why never forget?

(Deep breath)

Forgetting sounds a lot better to me.

15.

Strange Voice: How are you?

Me: What?

Strange Voice: How are you feeling?

Auschwitz-Birkenau, Day 4, walking along a railroad track where people on the left side went to their deaths and those on the right got to live

Johnny: After what happened with the Polish woman and stuff…

Me:

Johnny: I mean, you were right there. You saw her, like, between life and death, twitching... that can be really traumatizing.

Me: Johnny -

Johnny: What?

Me: Cut it out.

Yaakov: After traveling for days and even weeks in crowded cattle cars, the prisoners who survived the journey arrived at the largest extermination empire ever built on Polish soil -

Johnny: What…? I'm just looking out for you.

Me: I'm fine, thanks.

Yaakov: While supposedly, those sent to the right side were kept alive, we must not forget that this wasn't really "living" -

Johnny: And is the Polish woman… okay?

Me: You actually care?

Johnny: Are you for real? Of course. I've got principles. I care about people.

Me: Does a Polish woman count as "people"?

Johnny: Definitely.

Yaakov: In Auschwitz 1 there were so-called "hospitals", where, among other things, human experiments were performed, including sterilization -

Johnny: Seriously, it's not just me. Everyone wants to know if she's okay.

Me: Who's everyone?

Johnny: I mean, you know…

Me: Your friends?

Johnny: Yeah, the guys.

Me: I'm sure they care a lot.

Johnny: Well, yeah, obviously.

Yaakov: …performing surgical procedures on patients without anesthesia -

Me: You think being a teacher means I'm stupid?

Johnny: What?

Me: I know exactly what you and your friends are doing.

Johnny: What are we doing?

Me: You think you can bullshit me with your principles and caring about some Polish woman while this whole trip I've seen you guys pass Roni around like she's some kind of toy of yours.

Johnny: What are you talking about?

Yaakov: …injecting toxic substances -

Me: I have eyes! I see you with her! All of you! On the bus, at the camps, in the hotel room -

Johnny: You think I did something with Roni in the hotel room?

Me: I know you did, I just hope you know what a condom is.

Johnny: I've got a girlfriend.

Me: So?

Yaakov: …prolonged exposure to extreme cold -

Johnny: You think that's what I'm doing during this trip? What's wrong with you? I would never, ever do something like that. My grandmother stood right here on these tracks. I'm here for her, not to fuck. Sorry.

Yaakov: …killing twins to perform autopsies and compare organs -

Johnny: She came to me on the first night crying. I thought it must have been hard for her to see the square where they sent people to die. Suddenly she gets close to me, starts touching me, taking her clothes off. I stopped her right away. And then you walked in. I thought she was gonna be sent home that night. She doesn't even have any connection to the Holocaust. She just came here to get laid.

Me: And what about all your friends?

Johnny: What am I their supervisor? If they want to go with her, that's on them. But it's not some plan or something. She's just some horny girl.

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(Looking for Roni among all the patients)

(pregnants)

(parents)

(students)

Sharon: Did you tell Yoav?

Yaakov: …waking up every day between four and five and lining up outside for long periods -

Sharon: Did you tell him something?!

Me: What?

Sharon: What was that thing you said yesterday?

Me: What did I say?

Yaakov: …sometimes in extreme cold, for the morning count -

Sharon: That I failed to protect him.

Me: Listen, I'm really sorry, I shouldn't have said that to you.

Sharon: Did you tell him?

(Yaakov breathes a wet breath in my ear)

Sharon: Answer me.

(And another one)

Me: I didn't tell him anything.

Yaakov: …forced labor until late in the evening -

Me: But you should tell him. He needs to know about his father.

Sharon: He doesn't need to know anything, he needs to grow up without more trauma.

(Don't criticize parents on how they educate their kids. Don't criticize parents on -)

Me: You can't just make trauma disappear, you can't expect everything to be fine without treating it. His dad is dead, he thinks he was a hero and that he needs to be a hero like him so he's going to combat even though he's scared to death, he has no friends here, and I don't know what needs to happen for you to realize you made a mistake and you need to take responsibility and fix it, because you're his mother.

(I feel like throwing up a little)

Sharon: Because of your negligence a woman was run over and killed yesterday. How can you even pretend to know anything about education or children?

I see Ephraim from the corner of my eye, almost falling over the ruins of a destroyed block.

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He could have died just now but he doesn't seem to really care.

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He’s probably just waiting to see his childhood home in Warsaw so he can die in peace.

Udi: I thought we could do it now.

Me: Do what?

Yaakov: …thin soup with dry bread and a few potato peels -

Udi: Which block was he in?

Me: Who?

Udi: Your grandfather.

Yaakov: …going to the bathroom only twice a day with (whispers) dozens of other prisoners at the same time -

Me: block 7.

Udi: Okay, so here’s the plan - let’s bring everyone outside block 7, and you’ll tell them exactly what you told me yesterday, I know it’s not much, but I just think the visual experience can really -

Me: I don’t have anything to say about this, what don’t you understand?!

(Breath)

Udi: What’s going on with you?

Me: Do you think it’s my fault she got killed?

Udi: Who?

Me: You know who.

Udi: We can't talk about this.

Me: We were there. We know she’s dead.

Udi: Don’t say that! No one could have prevented it. That driver is just a liar. and this is the last time you speak of this.

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Udi: Understood?

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Yaakov: …"The Sauna" - the disinfection station.

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Yaakov: The Nazis treated them like they were (whispers) sub-human.

Roni: What now?

Me: Are you kidding me?

Roni: What?

Me: You realize I could have kicked you out of here on day one?

Roni: Is this because of what happened yesterday on the bus?

Me: It's because of what happened yesterday on the bus, and two days ago on the way back from Treblinka, and at the ceremony at Treblinka, and in the hotel room on the first night, and at the gas station -

Roni: I don't understand -

Me: It's all the times I looked out for you while you lied to me.

Roni: I didn't lie to you.

Me: You said you wouldn't do anything and you did!

Roni: Why are you yelling at me?

(Because it's your fault someone was killed yesterday)

(Because it's my fault someone was killed yesterday)

(Because someone is dead now and it's my fault)

(Because I wanted to protect you from Udi)

(Because I wanted to protect you from the guys in your class)

(Because you made me think you're some troubled teen who's being exploited)

(Because I should have reported you on the first night and kicked you the hell out of here)

Me: Because I'm a teacher! That's why I'm yelling! Because I'm a teacher! And that's what teachers do!

Roni:

Me:

Roni: Do you want to kick me out of here?

Me: Yes!

Roni: Then do it. I already told you.

Me: Okay. I'm going to call Shmulik.

Roni: And how are you gonna explain that you knew about all this and didn't report it sooner?

Me: I'm not going to explain…

Roni: Then he might fire you.

Me: You have got some nerve. And that's all the more reason for me to call him.

Roni: Wait.

Me:

Roni: I can't have that on my record. They'll drop me from the intelligence program.

Me: So you do care?

Roni:

Me: Why didn't you think about that sooner?

Roni: Why didn't you think about sending me home sooner?

Me:

Roni:

Me:

Roni: You could have done it after the first night and be done with it.

Me: I guess I thought you were a bit like me.

Roni: I'm not.

Me: I know.

Roni:

Me:

Roni: Can I tell you something first?

Me: Yes.

Roni: You wanted to know why I came here.

Me: For a heritage trip?

Roni: Can you just be a normal teacher for one second? I'm trying to tell you something.

Me:

Roni:

Me: Well?

Roni: The day before we flew to Poland, Yoav texted me. He said he's going into combat and he's afraid of dying like his dad. It sucked seeing him sitting alone at lunch since everything that happened, so I started sitting with him sometimes. We weren't really friends but I thought he needed someone, so I came to his place when I got the text. I saw him lying in bed. He looked awful. I've never seen him like that, not even at his dad's funeral. So I hugged him. And then he just didn't let go.

Me:

Roni:

Me: Did he do something to you?

Roni: Yes.

Me: What did he do?

Roni: I don't know. I'd never done it before.

Me: Did he hurt you?

Roni: Yes.

Me: Then why did you come here afterwards?

Roni: I wanted to.

Me: What did you want?

Roni: To be here.

Me: With him?

Roni: Yes.

Me: Why?

I look ahead.

I see two Polish parents holding the small hands of a girl in a red dress.

She walks in front of us before a half-destroyed "Holocaust-brown" coloured block.

Me: Did you tell anyone about this?

Roni: No.

Me: And you don't want to?

Roni: No way. I just want to get back home and forget about it.

Me: It doesn't really work that way.

Roni: I need it to work that way. I can't have people find out and think I'm messed up.

Me: No one's going to think you're messed up.

Roni: The army will. You think they care whose fault it is? My score will drop automatically.

Me: So you don't want to report it.

Roni: No way. And neither will you.

Me:

Roni: Really. It'll ruin my life.

Me: It won't.

Roni: It will. I didn't tell you so you would ruin it yourself.

Me: Roni, I… I have to report things like this.

Roni: You have to report a lot of things you haven't reported.

(Breath)

Roni: I need you to not tell anyone.

(Breath)

Roni: Promise me you won't tell.

(Breath)

Roni: Promise!

Me: Fine. I won't.

(She takes a pack of cigarettes out of her pocket and puts it next to my hand)

Me: Do you seriously think you're giving your teacher cigarettes right now?

Roni: Not at all. I'm just leaving what's left so you can see that I quit.

Me:

Roni: You can throw them away if you want.

I look ahead.

The girl with the red dress is still there.

She's standing next to a small sign with the number 7.

Udi: This is the place, right?

Me: What place?

Udi: This is your grandfather's block, block 7.

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Students walk toward me slowly.

Udi: We have about 3 minutes here for you to tell them.

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Cigarettes in the pack inside my pocket.

Udi: Now's the perfect time, before their bathroom break.

Ephraim sits on the side. He doesn't look at me.

Sharon stands next to me, a cold look on her face.

(Breath)

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Students sit in front of me and stare.

I look at Ephraim.

His head is tilted to the side.

He's drooling.

Or maybe he's dead.

1

2

3

4

5

Cigarettes in the pack inside my pocket.

I think I'm gonna start smoking again.

I deserve it after this trip.

Udi: Well?

Me: Tell them what?

Udi: What you told me on the bus.

(Breath)

The girl with the red dress.

She's staring at me too.

Why did they bring her here?

Does she know what happened here?

Udi: We're waiting.

I had a dress like that too when I was little.

Grandpa bought it for me.

He put it on me after the shower.

(Breath)

He sits on the side, drooling.

His face. Wrinkled and ugly.

He said they took her from him while he hugged her.

Tore her from his arms.

(Breath)

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Students sit in front of me and stare.

I'm starting to get wet.

Red is a really striking color against Holocaust-brown.

That son of a bitch Spielberg knew what he was doing.

Udi: Tell the story already, we don't have much time.

His drool drips on my forehead.

I need to thank grandpa for the dress.

Udi: The students want to hear.

The students are banging on the windows and shouting. They're banging on the windows and shouting.

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Where is 37?

Yoav.

He's sitting alone.

Him and his red JBLs.

He's looking at something.

Not at me.

Someone.

Not me.

He's looking at Roni.

Udi: They really need a break already, tell them.

He looks at a hand touching Roni.

The hand is trying to take the red dress off her.

A wrinkled hand. Covered in drool. They took her from that hand.

Tore her from his arms.

We have 2 minutes, tell them.

He unzips his pants and starts rubbing.

He always said he should have hugged her tighter.

And tighter.

And tighter.

One more minute.

She tries to hold onto the dress but the wrinkled hand is stronger.

He closes his eyes and drools out of the side of his mouth.

My skin shivers from his cold, wrinkled hand.

Boom.

50 seconds.

Ari Goldman. Ron Schwartzberg. Itai Fisher.

I don't know whose hand it is.

Yuval Stern, Omer Gold, Alon Adler, Gabriel Levy, Doron Roth, Roy Katz.

Boom.

40 seconds

They're banging on the windows and shouting. Everyone is banging on the windows and shouting.

(Breath)

Adam Pearl, Michael Stein, David Rosenberg, Adam Silver ,Guy Lavi, Shai Liberman.

He rubs faster.

Tomer Rosen, Daniel Levine, Itamar Horowitz, Ran Fisher, Nadav Kaplan, Ido Schwartz, Lior Klein.

And faster.

Boom.

30 seconds

(Breath)

Mom told me to thank Grandpa for the dress.

I don't want to thank Grandpa. I don't want to thank him.

I don't want a dress.

I just want to stop hearing his wet breath in my ear.

I just want him to stop.

Boom.

20 seconds

And then he looks at me.

He’s breathing.

He’s not dead.

It’s my fault he’ll never go back to his childhood home in Warsaw.

It’s my fault he can’t die in peace.

Boom.

10 seconds

Emanuel Spector, Ori Feld, Gil Shapiro, Dor Leibowitz, Eli Marks, Eyal Gross, Rafael Berman, Nathan Weiss, Liam Ronen, Tal Meyer, Aviv Green, Assaf Cohen, Yair Feldman, Omri Greenberg, Amir Kravitz, Ben Friedman, Dan Tamari, Ilan Tepperberg, Yonatan "Johnny" Teicher, Yoav Barak.

(Breath)

Well fuck me.

I remembered all their names.

I’m a great fucking teacher.

And Spielberg too

A great fucking son of a bitch.

Just tell them!

Me: She died. The Polish woman died. She died right after the bus hit her. There was nothing they could do. I'm sorry. I just had to -

(Silence)

(Udi takes the students out for their break)

(Sharon walks toward me, takes a small step and whispers -

Sharon: Why did you do that?

Me: It was either that or throwing up in the middle of Birkenau.

Sharon:

Me:

Sharon:

Me:

Sharon: You know, I don't think you should be educating children.

Me: I know. And soon you're gonna find out why you shouldn't either.

16.

<u>Letter to the teachers</u>

Dear teachers,

As you were informed verbally, we are forced to terminate the trip due to a report received from the paramedic regarding a serious criminal offense committed by one of the students prior to the trip.

The paramedic was forced to return to Israel immediately for personal reasons. Since we were unable to find a replacement medical professional, and in order to prevent panic among the parents - also in reference to the traffic violation that occurred last night - you are requested to explain to the students the termination of the trip.

In addition, I would like to inform you that after talks with relevant parties, it was discovered that the head of year 12 and one of the accompanying teachers acted with professional negligence that contributed significantly to the traffic violation incident.

In light of this negligent conduct, the school has decided to terminate their employment immediately.

The position of Head of Year 12 will be taken by Ms. Rachel Segal.

Thank you for your cooperation and wonderful educational work,

Mr. Shmuel ("Shmulik") Berkowitz,

School Principal.