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On the Edge

A play in 9 scenes

By Motti Lerner

Translated from Hebrew by Hadar Galron

©

New version written following the 2023 Gaza war

The original version of this play premiered at the Jaffa Theater in Israel in December 2022. Director & Dramaturge: Hadar Galron

Characters:

Tuvia (78) - A book publisher. Born in 1946. Studied literature. In 1980 married Rivka. In 1984 they founded a successful book publishing house.

Eitan (42) - Son of Tuvia and Rivka. Born in 1982. Joined the Israeli army in 2000. In October 2023 he was deputy brigade commander on the Gaza front and was injured a month after the beginning of the fighting. After his recovery, he retired from the army and in December 2023 he began managing the publishing house founded by his parents.

The plot

The play takes place during the 8 weeks of November – December 2024. It opens the day after the ‘Shiva’ - the 7 days of mourning following Rivka’s death. The play is set in the living room and backyard of Tuvia's house in the suburbs of Tel Aviv. In the room there is a couch, an armchair beside it, and a small table. A music system is in the corner. The walls are lined with shelves filled with books. One scene takes place near Rivka's grave.

The Music:

During the play Tuvia listens to pieces of classical music.

Note to the reader

Rivka's monologues at the beginning of each scene are extracts from a short story that she wrote and included in the anthology, which is discussed in the play. This will become clear to the spectators as the play unfolds.

Slide

"Gaza War" is the war between Israel and Hamas that started on October 7th, 2023, after the Hamas raid on Israeli villages and towns near the border.

1. VO. Rivka reads a monologue from a story she wrote.

Rivka: Night. The heart of Gaza. Two APC¹'s are racing to a mosque held by terrorists. I'm in the first. An RPG². Another one. And another. The "windbreaker"³ deflects the anti-tank missiles fired at us. We're approaching the mosque. What's wrong? The engine has stalled. Restart it! Restart it. Try again! Try!! What the hell! OK, we'll take the mosque on foot. I go over to the other APC: 'Get out and unload the munitions!' Hurry! Let's go! I turn back. No!! My APC's been hit by a missile. It explodes. I'm tossed in the air, land flat on my back. My gun is gone. Bullets fly over me. My legs!!... I can't move. Mom... Mom... Oh my God... My soldiers! My ten soldiers are still inside the burning APC...

A winter's day. Noon. The living room is empty. Classical music is playing. The doorbell rings, followed shortly after by a knock on the door.

Eitan: (VO) Dad! Daddy!

Eitan enters through the back door. He turns off the music. A moment later the front door opens, Tuvia enters.

Eitan: I've been looking for you all morning. Why don't you answer your phone?
 Tuvia: How did you get in?
 Eitan: Through the backdoor. Where were you?
 Tuvia: At the headstone maker.
 Eitan: We said we'd go together.
 Tuvia: I managed.
 Eitan: She was my mother, too. I spent the whole night thinking about what to write on her stone. **(Hands him a piece of paper. Tuvia ignores it)** Don't you want to see? OK. We'll

¹ Armored personnel Carrier

² Rocket Propelled Grenade

³ A windbreaker is a metal shell designed to protect armored vehicles from anti-tank missiles.

write whatever you want. **(Puts the paper back in his pocket)** Have you eaten?

Tuvia: Yes.

Eitan: Where? **(Tuvia does not answer)** Come, let's go to the office. We'll eat there. I left a stack of new manuscripts on your desk.

Tuvia: It'll take a few more days, Eitan.

Eitan: You shouldn't stay home alone.

Tuvia: I have things to do here.

Eitan: What? **(pause)** What?

Tuvia: Mom really wanted to publish the anthology.

Eitan: I thought we'd been through that already, dad. I sat with the readers again this morning. No one's ever heard of any of the writers she chose. **(silence)** Come on. Let's go. They're waiting for us. It's cold out. **(Tuvia doesn't move)** Do you want some tea first?

Tuvia nods. Eitan heads to the kitchen. Tuvia gets up, feels dizzy and holds on to the chair. A moment later, Eitan returns from the kitchen with a cup of tea.

Eitan: Dad! What happened?

Tuvia: Nothing.

Eitan: Are you dizzy?

Tuvia: I suddenly thought I heard her.

Eitan: Who? Mom? Of course you heard her. You haven't eaten anything all day.

Tuvia: I ate.

Eitan: Where? The sink is empty.

Tuvia: I washed the dishes.

Eitan gives Tuvia the tea.

Eitan: We'll eat in the office.

Tuvia: **(Drinks)** Thanks.

Eitan: Maybe we should consider getting you some help. Somebody to cook, clean, do the laundry.

Tuvia: I don't need any help.

Eitan: She'll be an employee of the company.

Tuvia: I'll be fine. I helped mom with the cooking in the last few years.

Eitan: **(Smiles)** Yeah. I heard. You'd be better off meeting new writers - guiding them.

Tuvia: I will not have a strange woman in the house, Eitan.

Eitan: You'll be at the office when she's here.

Tuvia: I'll think about it.

Eitan: You want an apple or something, for the way?

Tuvia: You can go. I'll take the bus.

Eitan: **(Offended)** You don't want to sit next to me in the car? **(Tuvia doesn't answer)** The "shiva"⁴ is over, dad. Stop avoiding me. I didn't want to bring it up in front of the guests, but every time I tried to talk to you, you turned your back on me. Why? Are you accusing me of something? Am I not guilty enough? **(Tuvia doesn't answer)** Fine. Stay here, I'll send you lunch from the caterer. Just open the door when they ring the bell.

Tuvia: Thanks.

Eitan: I'll pick you up for dinner at six. Monica and the girls invited you. Remember?

Tuvia: Does Monica know she invited me?

Eitan: Yes.

Tuvia: And the girls?

Eitan: They're waiting for you.

Tuvia: I think I'll be busy tonight.

Eitan: Doing what? Mom's anthology?

Tuvia: She spoke about it until the very last moment. The writers she chose are the only ones who understand what we are going through in this damn war.

Eitan: They don't understand a thing. They ran away to Berlin, and they write about us with contempt. They mock us. From Berlin of all places. Who would want to read them?

Tuvia: Anyone who wants to know why they ran away.

Eitan: I'm not sure many people here want to know.

Tuvia: Mom thought there were enough. Now I think so, too.

Eitan: Look, I was the most senior officer in the Gaza front on the morning of October 7th. No one can teach me anything about what happened there.

Tuvia: I suggest you read the anthology anyway.

Eitan: I read it. Yesterday. The first story. **(With disgust)** This guy is released from the war after four months, and instead of

⁴ Shiva- the 7 mourning days following the death of a close relative, by Jewish tradition. During these days the house is open to visitors who come to console the family.

going home to his family, he shuts himself up with his parents, so that he doesn't beat up his wife and kids?! If he is having a meltdown, he should go to the beach at night and yell into the wind.

Tuvia: That's not enough. His parents can't understand him either. In Berlin, he can talk to his friends, who ran away before him.

Eitan: He needs to get hold of himself, go back to work, to his family. I was furious.

Tuvia: That proves how powerful the story is.

Eitan: It proves that no one will read it!

Tuvia: Eitan, our readers need these writers. Mom knew it. Last month she begged me to go to Berlin to meet them, but I foolishly stayed here, to meet with the writers who kept silent.

Eitan: We can't publish the anthology, dad. It will give us a reputation we'll never be able to get rid of.

Tuvia: I see. Thank you. I'll publish it elsewhere.

Eitan: Where?

Tuvia: I already made a few calls this morning. You can't imagine how ashamed I felt - begging publishers, who I never had a good word for.

Eitan: OK. If you need help, our employees are at your disposal. Anyway, you'll be at the office, right? **(Tuvia is silent)** The anthology's ready. It'll take you only a few days. Dad, our whole reputation depends on your relationships with the writers.

Tuvia: You're doing fine without me.

Eitan: I still need you. Will you come tomorrow? **(Tuvia is silent)** Why not?

Tuvia: Because mom died only a week ago. Because I want to mourn her for a few more days. Because you won't let me mourn.

Eitan: **(Painfully)** I won't let you? You won't let me! You won't let me reconcile with her, even after her death. You don't even want to hear what I wanted to write on her stone. **(Tuvia is silent)** I'll pick you up for dinner at six. **(Tuvia is silent)** Fine. I'll bring you something to eat.

Eitan leaves. Tuvia turns on the music with the remote control. Suddenly he thinks he hears Rivka's voice.

Tuvia: **(Confused)** Rivka? Rivka...

A siren is heard. Eitan returns.

Eitan: Let's go to the safe room!

2. VO. Rivka reads another monologue from her story.

Rivka: My ten soldiers are burning in the APC! I have to get to them. Maybe I can still rescue someone. I crawl. Bullets flying everywhere. Push your head into the ground. Push it deeper!... Where the hell is the other APC? They ran off and left us here to burn to death... Voices. In Arabic. The bastards will die with me. At least I'll get a medal. Take out a grenade. Finger on the pin. It's better than being a hostage. I never thought I'd die like this. **(Hears something)** What's that? A drone? Yes. A drone. They're looking for me... **(with his last bit of strength)** I'm here. I'm here!

A week later. Afternoon. Tuvia is hanging laundry in the yard. Eitan enters the house, holding a file and a plastic box. He sees Tuvia and goes out to him.

Eitan: How are you?

Tuvia: Fine, thank you.

Eitan: The girls saw you yesterday at the Hostages Square.

Tuvia: Yes. I promised mom. You should have been there too.

Eitan: I know. Why don't you put the laundry in the dryer?

Tuvia: The sun is shining. What do I need a dryer for?

Eitan: Are you saving on electricity? And you said you'd run the dishwasher.

Tuvia: I'll run it tonight.

Eitan: Dad, the dishes have been in the sink for a week. **(Pause)** Are you sure you're okay? **(No reply)** Come in. Monica made empanadas for you.

Tuvia: Thanks.

Eitan: **(Takes out his phone)** Thank her. She'll be starting her shift in the emergency room in a few minutes.

Tuvia: I'll call her tomorrow.

Eitan: What's so difficult?

Tuvia: I want to think about what to say.

Eitan: "Thanks" is enough. Are you angry with her, too?

Tuvia: I'm not angry with anyone. Certainly not with her. She's a wonderful woman. An excellent doctor. I was surprised she married you.

Eitan: **(Laughs)** By the way, she's on duty all week. She won't be able to help you at home. The girls will help.

Tuvia: I'd love them to visit, but I can manage alone.

Eitan: Did you know that they're writing memoirs of mom? **(Tuvia nods)** They told her about their love affairs. Unbelievable. I never told her anything, although she always knew. **(Tuvia smiles)** By the way, I spoke to Hanna Lieberman this morning. Remember her? We fired her six months ago, when we closed the employees' dining room.

Tuvia: I remember.

Eitan: She's willing to come here every morning for four hours.

Tuvia: Hanna Lieberman? She doesn't even know how to make coffee!

Eitan: She cooked for you for twenty years. Mom was always jealous of your craving for her meatballs. **(No reply)** Come in. I'll show you how to run the dishwasher.

Tuvia: I know how.

Eitan senses Tuvia's body odour.

Tuvia: Why are you looking at me like that?

Eitan: When was the last time you took a shower?

Tuvia: Sorry?!

Eitan: Come on!

Tuvia: Eitan! Enough!

Eitan: Do me a favour, don't argue.

Tuvia: I can shower myself.

Eitan: It's a bad sign, dad. **(Tuvia is silent)** It's hard for me, too, without mom. But we have to go on living. You have me and Monica. You have two granddaughters. You have the leading publishing house in the country.

Tuvia: I know! **(Enters the house)**

Eitan: And is that why you resigned? Behind my back?! All morning I've been waiting for you to tell me. You thought I wouldn't find out? As soon as you notified the accountant, he told me.

Eitan follows Tuvia into the house.

Tuvia: I read our balance sheet, Eitan. In the last quarter there was...

Eitan: You are our greatest asset, dad.

Tuvia: If I don't work, I won't draw a salary.

Eitan: I will not manage the company without you. (**Opens the file he brought with him**) I brought you a manuscript I found on mom's desk. Take a look. A young girl, Muslim, from Jaffa. First novel. About her relationship with a Jewish professor at the university. She's waiting to hear your feedback.

Tuvia: There's no point, Eitan. You decide without me. I'm not angry. I knew this moment would come sooner or later.

Eitan: Dad, if you don't work, you'll go crazy. (**Tuvia doesn't answer**) All this because of the anthology? And how will you live without a salary? Your pension isn't enough.

Tuvia: I'll be fine.

Eitan: How? How dad?

Tuvia: I don't need such a big house!

Eitan: You want to sell the house?!

Tuvia: I'll buy a small apartment, publish the anthology, and live on what's left. When mom and I got married, we managed well in a room and a half.

Eitan: Are you trying to blackmail me?

Tuvia: I will never do anything to hurt you, Eitan.

Eitan: I have a better idea. Fire me and hire someone who will publish whatever you want!

Tuvia: I want to publish the anthology. You saw how important it was to her. Eight writers, born here. The salt of the earth. And they're all in Berlin.

Eitan: Whoever reads their stories will lose hope, like they did.

Tuvia: Or maybe get up and do something.

Eitan: Don't fool yourself, dad. (**restrained**) I read a few more stories yesterday. "Beloved Masha" isn't bad. I can understand a woman who was a hostage, coming back from Gaza, and taking Klonopin. I can understand that after all the torture she went through, she's unable to sleep with her husband. But to burst into tears every time she hears a door slamming? And that's the reason she runs away to Berlin?! Doors don't slam there??

Tuvia: She ran away because she can't live here in constant fear.

Eitan: She didn't try. The other writers ran away too, without trying. In the story "Fall," the guy's hair suddenly falls out;

he panics when a truck passes by, or someone breaks a glass. In "Notes from the Bus" this teacher runs away from the hospital and goes to the beach every morning to stare at the waves. In "Shower" the company commander rapes his girlfriend night after night...

Tuvia: Yes, but...

Eitan: And after a month in Berlin, they all have cats, and they drink coffee on Alexander Platz.

Tuvia: Most of them continue to deal with what happened to them.

Eitan: **(Contemptuously)** And you're resigning because of them?!

Tuvia: Yes!

Eitan: I don't understand you, but I've got enough of my own on my shoulders. I'm willing to compromise. Let's replace some of these stories...

Tuvia: Out of the question!

Eitan: Listen! This war is a just war. There has never been one more just. We still haven't achieved all our goals, but at least when it's over, we'll probably have ten years of quiet. If we replace some of these stories with stories of writers who didn't run away, we'll get a more complex picture.

Tuvia: No way. Literature has a purifying power. Therefore it should deal with our deepest fears. You never understood it. That's why you despise the anthology.

Eitan: Writers who didn't run away can present us with a different perspective.

Tuvia: Repressing our traumas?

Eitan: Dealing with them. Before I was injured, I took part in some horrific battles there. Twenty-eight of my soldiers were killed. I... **(rubs his temples as his head begins to ache)** I go to the memorials. I meet the families. I visit the wounded. They are coping... very well... despite the ongoing war...

Tuvia: Mom wasn't sure. I'm not sure anymore either.

Eitan: How come you're suddenly interested in my soldiers?!

Every time I tried to talk to you about them...

Tuvia: You always said everything was fine. Then, in the middle of the night we get a call from the hospital, and we find you shaking in bed...

Eitan: You found me wounded, after I'd rescued the bodies of two of my soldiers. I was back on my feet in a week. And now you're telling me that it's impossible to recover?! That we must run away to Berlin. Over my dead body. And I don't accept your resignation. You will continue working. Tonight

you'll read this manuscript, tomorrow you'll come to the office, and Hanna Lieberman will come here to cook. And now we're going to shower!

Tuvia: I'll shower myself, Eitan. I will not read any manuscripts, I will not come to the office, and Hanna Lieberman will not come here to cook. And you know very well what to do so I don't quit. Mom sacrificed her life for this anthology!

(Turns to the hallway)

Eitan: **(After him)** So now you want to sacrifice yours? Do you see why I insist that you go back to work? Why **I** insist to go back? Wait! I'll get you a clean towel.

Tuvia: **(firmly)** I'll get one myself! **(leaves)**

3. VO. Rivka reads another monologue from the same story.

Rivka: Nurse! Morphine. I don't care how much I had already. Nurse!!... The door is opened. My parents come in. They bring flowers again... Thank you. Put it on my friends' graves... They get frightened. I try to smile. But I'm in too much pain. This damn bed. My legs are in casts. My back is sewn up. A catheter in my cock. I can hardly feel it. I hope one day I'll be able to get it up... No! Don't cry! My soldiers' parents were here this morning. We cried enough. What could I say? I'm alive and their sons are dead.

A week later. Afternoon. A cold wind is blowing outside. Tuvia and Eitan enter the house. Tuvia sits down exhausted on the couch. Eitan covers him with a blanket.

Eitan: Why did you go out on a day like this, without a coat?
Without an umbrella?

Tuvia: It wasn't raining.

Eitan: You're really shaking. Maybe we should go to the doctor?

Tuvia: I'm fine. I was dizzy, that's all, I'm OK now.

Eitan: Dad, you didn't recognize me when I walked into the lobby. You couldn't remember your address, either. Lucky Sabag's secretary recognized you.

Tuvia: She called you? I thought you were following me. **(laughs)**

Eitan: Sure. I also hired a private detective... Has this happened to you before?

Tuvia: Nothing happened to me.

Eitan: I'll ask Monica to come and check you out.
 Tuvia: Are you trying to convince me that I'm sick?
 Eitan: You were dizzy, confused...
 Tuvia: I was dizzy because I didn't eat this morning.
 Eitan: It's not the first time you've forgotten to eat.
 Tuvia: I didn't forget. I was in a hurry.
 Eitan: I'm getting you some lunch. **(Dials on his phone)**
 Tuvia: I want you to talk to Sabag. He's willing to publish the anthology.
 Eitan: Ok. I'll talk to him.
 Tuvia: Now. I was already feeling dizzy when I was sitting in his office. I don't remember the terms we agreed on.
 Eitan: I'll talk to him this evening.
 Tuvia: The anthology is ready for print, Eitan. He promised to publish it within a month.
 Eitan: I don't think he promised.
 Tuvia: Of course he promised.
 Eitan: **(Puts down his phone)** His son was killed in Gaza. He won't publish a book that accuses the army of war crimes.
 Tuvia: His son was killed in Gaza?
 Eitan: Yes. Ido Sabag. He was a company commander in my brigade. He went out to rescue three of the hostages. We went to the funeral together. I was still on crutches.
 Tuvia: **(Embarrassed)** He didn't say anything.
 Eitan: You didn't think about his son when you talked to him about the anthology?
 Tuvia: He didn't say a thing...
 Eitan: He called me when you left his office. He's still broken. He thinks that most writers haven't yet digested this war. But he'll read the stories. If he thinks they're worthwhile, he'll publish the book next year.
 Tuvia: Don't try to confuse me, Eitan! If he had said that, I would have stood up and left the office. I can't wait until next year... Because I don't know where I'll be next year. I don't know where I'll be tomorrow. I don't even know what will happen to me tonight! It was mom's last request. What more do I need to do to get it published? Go on hunger strike in your office? Jump off the roof? Swallow sleeping pills? What!?

Eitan is shaken by Tuvia's reaction. He takes his hand and leads him to the couch.

Eitan: OK... OK. You're right. Come. Lie down. Get some rest. Eat something. We'll publish the anthology. We'll work day and night. We'll launch it in a month.

Tuvia: We'll publish it?

Eitan: Yes.

Tuvia: At our expense?

Eitan: Yes.

Tuvia sits down on the couch. Eitan tries to untie his shoelaces. Tuvia insists on taking off his own shoes but cannot reach the laces.

Eitan: Let me. You had a hard day.

Tuvia: In a month, you say?

Eitan: Yes. **(Trying to untie the shoelaces)**

Tuvia: **(Rises)** Let's get to work. I'll prepare mom's files for you. She wrote an introduction. She also prepared a suggestion to the graphic designer.

Eitan: I'll take the files in the evening. Now get some rest.

Tuvia: I'm not tired.

Eitan: Sit down.

Tuvia sits down. Eitan takes off Tuvia's shoes and socks.

Eitan: I need to cut your toenails.

Tuvia: I can do that myself!

Eitan: The nail of your big toe is almost breaking the skin. Do you want it to get infected?

Tuvia: I want us to go back to the office and start working.

Eitan: Would you prefer Monica to do this?

Tuvia: Leave my toenails alone! Mom thought that the characters in the anthology are looking for a safe shelter in Berlin, but in their hearts, they are still here. **(Takes a paper out of a file)** Look. She put the beach in Tel Aviv right in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Beautiful... eh? We'll send it to the graphic designer tomorrow. **(Painfully)** She had an appointment with him on the exact day that she... She was so... so...

He can hardly control the tears that flood his eyes. He leans on Eitan.

- Eitan: You know, mom wasn't as angry with me as you think. The arguments about the anthology actually brought us closer. She asked me about my injury. About the therapy. About the medication. I really wanted to tell her, but...
- Tuvia: She thought if you read the anthology, it would be easier for you.
- Eitan: I tried. Every time I started, my head began to throb. Every line reminded me of something. Yesterday I was finally able to read the story about this officer, the one who was wounded in Gaza, whose ten soldiers were trapped in the burning APC. **(Pause)** Six of my soldiers were also burnt in an APC there... Unnecessary deaths. Two weeks later we were ordered to retreat.
- Tuvia: Did you tell mom that their deaths were unnecessary?
- Eitan: Yes. Just before she... when we were sitting next to her, that night, you went out to talk to the doctor, and then... I caressed her cheek... and I told her... and she kissed my hand... I felt that she was trying to comfort me... but she was too weak to speak... she let out a sigh... and... that was it...

4. VO. Rivka reads another monologue from her story.

- Rivka: Why did you bring a cake again? I told you that I need to keep fit... because in a week the stitches will be removed and I'll return to my company... my soldiers are fighting there, mom. I need to be with them... Stop nagging. I'm not enrolling in the university... Because I don't like the bullshit they teach there... But the surgery was successful! Who told you I need another one?... Another year of surgeries?!... A whole year?!

Afternoon. A week later. It's raining outside. Tuvia is alone in the living room, on the phone with the secretary of Sabag, the publisher he visited a week before.

- Tuvia: You've been rejecting my calls all day. I want to meet Mr. Sabag. It's urgent! I will not wait any longer... so please tell him that if he doesn't get back to me today, he shouldn't bother... When he wanted to meet me, I never rejected him!... Is it because of his son?... I sent him an apology... Ok. Thank you. I'll wait one more day!

He ends the call. Deep sorrow overwhelms him. He doesn't notice Eitan who entered during the call, took off his coat and shook his umbrella.

Tuvia: Oh... Rivka... Rivka...

Now he notices Eitan's presence.

Eitan: You saw that I was in the middle of a board meeting. What's so urgent? Couldn't you wait a few minutes? **(Tuvia doesn't reply)** Well? I'm listening... **(Tuvia doesn't reply)** Dad, I'm in a hurry, I need to get back to the office.

Tuvia: I'm not stopping you.

Eitan: What are you so angry about? The whole office shook when you slammed my door.

Tuvia: When I want to talk to you, you will drop everything and listen!

Eitan: I listened. The first edition will have five hundred copies. If they sell, we'll print another five hundred, and if those sell, we'll print more.

Tuvia: Each of our first editions are five thousand copies.

Eitan: I won't invest in five thousand copies and then shred them.

Tuvia: Don't fool me, Eitan. You want to print five hundred copies just to get it off your conscience. You're still loyal to the army with all your heart, and you won't publish any book that criticises it.

Eitan: I'm not "loyal to the army with all my heart". Not anymore! But even you saw that we can't survive here without it.

Tuvia: The writers who exposed the failures of the military intelligence in October – you call them 'traitors'. And those who write about the massacre in Gaza, you call them 'collaborators'. I hear you talking to the PR people.

Eitan: **(With restraint)** I didn't say they are traitors or collaborators. I said they could cause us damage. That's why I'm cautious. Any publisher would take the same precautions.

Tuvia: You're my son - not 'any publisher'!

Eitan: Fine. If you insist, we'll print a thousand copies.

Tuvia: What do you think I am? A peddler in the market??

Eitan: Dad, I'm trying to do this sensibly.

- Tuvia: Thank you. I don't want you to do anything for me. You haven't done very much until now. It was a big mistake to make you CEO. I should not have listened to mom.
- Eitan: I don't get it - are you trying to pick a fight with me?
- Tuvia: If you hadn't forced us to agree that you'll serve as a combat soldier, you would have served at headquarters like other only children, and you would have remained a decent human being.
- Eitan: Dad... don't drag me into this argument again.
- Tuvia: You don't want to reveal what the army has been doing in Gaza, because you don't want people to talk about what you did there.
- Eitan: You have no idea what I did.
- Tuvia: I knew enough. Mom and I fought our whole lives to stop the bloodshed that is raging here, and you participated in the mass killing in the refugee camps. In the destruction of houses, schools, hospitals. In the deportations, the starvation. Thousands of innocent people were slaughtered. Women. Children. Babies. It's all over the newspapers in the world.
- Eitan: We were facing an existential threat, dad...
- Tuvia: It doesn't justify what you did there. Mom exploded with anger. You flattened entire neighbourhoods. You destroyed streets, stores, offices, mosques. She was so ashamed to see the mass graves, the piles of bodies in the blue plastic bags, the crying mothers... She begged you to retire at the start of the war, before you lost your humanity.
- Eitan: Mom never thought I lost my humanity. On the contrary, she was fed up with your self-righteousness. Your "clean conscience tyranny" as she put it. Entire kibbutzim were burned down. Hundreds of civilians were murdered, kidnapped. Old people, women, Children. That can't happen again.
- Tuvia: She never said I was a tyrant.
- Eitan: When we said that the army was doing what was necessary, you would explode and yell. That's why she remained silent.
- Tuvia: Mom and I never argued.
- Eitan: Because she didn't dare open her mouth with you.
- Tuvia: We understood each other without words.
- Eitan: I was on my way to becoming a brigadier. I retired to stand by her and save this publishing house, which I have been carrying on my shoulders for a whole year. And you despise me for the two cookbooks that I published to finance your

books of poetry. The day I was released, I should have run away with Monica and the girls to her parents in Argentina. But I thought of you...

Tuvia: You 'came to save this publishing house'?! You don't remember what state you were in after you were wounded? I offered you to come and work for us, because no one else was willing to hire you after your failures on October 7th. Even today, you are still unable to manage the company. That's why you're begging me to come back.

Eitan: I'm begging you to come back, so that you have something to do with yourself. So that you don't sink into depression. Don't climb the walls. I don't need you in the office. Don't come and don't disturb. **(Angrily)** And no one was willing to hire me because I wasn't willing to accept any offer. Because I didn't want to work. I didn't want to live. Because every morning I woke up with the thought of putting a bullet in my head. When I tried to talk to you about it, you didn't want to hear. **(Leaves)**

Tovia: **(After him)** I wanted to hear. I wanted very much. Mom wanted too. We tried, but we saw that we hurt you even more.

5. VO. Rivka reads another monologue.

Rivka: I explained this to you already. I'm not leaving the army. I'll be released from the hospital. I'll serve a year in the headquarter in a wheelchair, and then I'll return to the company... Even if you offer me double, I won't work for you... Because what I do in the army is more important than real estate... Because you'll never forgive me for what I do there. Because you're not willing to admit how much you owe me for what I do there...

Afternoon. A week later, Tuvia enters, briefcase in his hand. He locks the door behind him and remains standing, looking lost. He turns on classical music and sits down on the couch. A few moments later the doorbell rings. Tuvia doesn't open.

Eitan: **(VO)** Dad! Dad, open the door! Please take the key out. I know you're home.

Tuvia does not answer. A moment later Eitan enters through the hallway.

Eitan: Are you crazy? Do you want me to ask the district psychiatrist to decide that you're not responsible for your actions? Should I request the court to appoint me as your guardian? The lawyer you went to plays tennis with me. He immediately saw that you don't understand what you're talking about. Four million?! I wouldn't even let you sell it for seven!

Tuvia: You leave me no choice, Eitan.

Eitan: This house is your main property, dad. Are you punishing me?

Tuvia: I'm not punishing you.

Eitan: Say it already. Go on, say it! It's been hanging between us since the funeral. It's written in your eyes. Say it. Say I killed mom.

Tuvia: I never said that.

Eitan: You said it with your silence. By ignoring me. At the funeral you told Monica that mom had the second heart attack because of the anthology.

Tuvia: I didn't say that she died because of the anthology. I said that she died because of the war. Because of her grief for the victims. Ours and theirs. Because she lost the hope that we can go on living here.

Eitan: Monica was shocked when she heard you. Mom was sick. I took her to all the check-ups. I sat next to her during the treatments. You didn't even know what she had.

Tuvia: She didn't want to burden me.

Eitan: But I can be burdened. Right? I can carry everything on my shoulders. I can bear a war. I can bear death. And mourning. I can bear the accusations that I abandoned the people in the kibbutzim, that I didn't rescue the hostages, that I committed war crimes. You're wrong. I can't, and I'm not going to bear it all. Certainly not the horrible accusation about what I did to mom.

Tuvia: Look, I'm willing to stay at home, provided you...

Eitan: And you won't make me feel more guilty. The anthology will not be published. Not because it's unprofitable, but because it endangers the lives of soldiers who are trying to survive after what they went through. I won't have anyone committing suicide because of a stupid book.

Tuvia: On the contrary...

Eitan: And if you try to publish it yourself, I'll take you to court. When mom worked on the anthology, she received a salary from the publishing house. We also paid for the rights to the stories. That's why this anthology belongs to us, the publisher.

Tuvia: The publishing house is mine, Eitan, and therefore also the anthology is mine, and I will publish it with or without you. And if I decide to sell the house to do so, I will sell it.

Eitan turns to leave. A headache attacks him, he rubs his temples and returns.

Eitan: I'll tell you more than that. You're not so innocent yourself regarding mom's death! Before she died, these stories didn't even interest you. You never even tried to convince me to read them. Your silence hurt her more than my refusal. It was your silence that killed her.

Tuvia: She asked me not to interfere.

Eitan: At least I argued with her. You ignored her. She'd come to my office in tears. **(Swallows a headache pill).**

Tuvia: I didn't ignore her. I told her dozens of times that I'm at her disposal. She didn't want me to argue with you.

Eitan: You never appreciated her. You never respected her opinion. She cried that she wasn't important enough to you. **(Turns to leave)**

Tuvia: That's what she said?! That she wasn't important to me?! **(Eitan leaves)** Wait! You can't just say that and leave. It's a complete lie. I respected her very much. She was very important to me. Since I met her. She was important to me because I was important to her. We fought together against this war. We demonstrated together. Together we signed petitions for the hostages, for a political solution. She was so precious to me. We were so close to each other, so connected. She knew it. I can't live without her. **(Calls after him)** Wait, Eitan! When did she say she wasn't important to me? I want to know. It's impossible!

But Eitan is gone. Tuvia sits on the couch, sobbing for a moment. He gets up, opens a drawer, takes out a pillbox, looks at it, puts it back in its place, rushes to the door again, shouts at the top of his voice "Eitan!" No reply. He returns to the drawer, takes out the pills, takes

a glass of water, swallows them, turns on the music, lies down on the couch and closes his eyes. Suddenly he hears Rivka's voice.

Tuvia: Rivka? Rivka? Wait, don't go. Wait for me...

He closes his eyes. A moment later Eitan enters. His headache is worse. He turns off the music and approaches Tuvia.

Eitan: I'm sorry, dad. I don't know what got into me. I just lost it. **(Notices the pillbox)** What's this? Dad, you swallowed these pills? Answer me. Dad. Did you swallow them?!! How many? How many? Spit them out. Spit them out! **(Picks up his phone and dials)** Monica! Hello... Monica! Answer!!... Monica!!! **(Takes another pill from his pocket and swallows, gets Tuvia to his feet)** Come, we're going to the hospital. They'll pump your stomach...

6. VO. Rivka reads another monologue from the story.

Rivka: **(Angrily)** I sleep well every night. I no longer wet the bed. I don't cry. I'm not shaking. I don't have tantrums. I don't have panic attacks, and I don't take drugs... I take tranquillisers because you force me to... I asked you to come to the medical board to help me, and you stuck a knife in my back... Why? Do you think you know my situation better than I do? What will I do now if the army doesn't take me back? I'll put a bullet through my head?!

A week later. A sunny day. On the table is a vase of flowers. During Rivka's monologue Tuvia enters. He was just released from the hospital. He puts down his bag and goes to the hallway. A moment later he returns, holding a pile of Rivka's clothes. Eitan enters.

Eitan: What are you doing, dad? The doctors told you to rest today.
 Tuvia: I rested there enough. **(He places the clothes on the couch)**
 Eitan: What are you doing with these clothes?
 Tuvia: I want to donate them.
 Eitan: **(Surprised)** Mom's clothes?
 Tuvia: I don't think I'll be wearing them.
 Eitan: **(Laughs)** I'll talk to Monica. We can donate them to new immigrants.

Tuvia: What should we do with her jewellery?
 Eitan: Mom had jewellery?
 Tuvia: Whatever her mother brought from Berlin.
 Eitan: Maybe Monica would like something. Maybe the girls.
 Yesterday I read another chapter of their memoirs. They
 spent a weekend with you, and you took them to meet Arab
 youth in Nazareth.
 Tuvia: What could we do? They begged.
 Eitan: **(Laughs)** You were very brave grandparents. Did you see
 the flowers from the office?
 Tuvia: I saw. Tomorrow morning I'll surprise them.
 Eitan: They'll be happy to see you. And don't worry, they don't
 know anything about the...
 Tuvia: I want to talk to you about the anthology.
 Eitan: Sure.
 Tuvia: I decided to write an introduction. Maybe I'll be able to
 clarify what mom wanted to say.
 Eitan: Great idea. You can start tomorrow. We're almost done. I
 brought you a copy to proofread.

Takes a copy out of his bag.

Tuvia: How wonderful. **(Excitedly flipping through the pages)**
 When did you manage to finish this?
 Eitan: We worked around the clock. Now we're just waiting for
 your approval.
 Tuvia: I'll go through it tonight.
 Eitan: Wonderful. The book will be ready in two weeks. By the
 way, I spoke to the doctors at the hospital this morning.
 They recommend that we find someone to help you at home.
 A Filipino.
 Tuvia: A Filipino? What else?
 Eitan: He'll make it easier for you.
 Tuvia: I don't need any help. I dress myself, shower myself. And
 I'm not going to repeat the nonsense I did.
 Eitan: But what if you get sick? Or if you fall on the way to the
 safe room during a siren?
 Tuvia: I've never fallen, Eitan. And I'm not going to begin now.
 Eitan: You're almost eighty, dad.
 Tuvia: I'm not bringing any Filipinos into this house.
 Eitan: Fine. In that case, I'm moving in.
 Tuvia: Are you crazy?

Eitan: Just for a week or two, until you recover.
 Tuvia: You have a job, a family...
 Eitan: We'll be at the office most of the day. We'll come home in the evening, watch the news, talk. I can sleep in my old bedroom.
 Tuvia: Does Monica know? And the girls?
 Eitan: They'll come and visit. (**Tuvia finds it hard to agree**)
 C'mon, say yes, dad. It's a great opportunity for us too. We can play chess. We haven't played in years. I bet I can still beat you. Are the pieces still here?

Tuvia nods. Eitan takes out a chess board and arranges the pieces. They begin playing.

Eitan: I was really in shock last week. Each time I visited you, my head felt like it was exploding. I couldn't sleep afterwards. I was trying to figure out what I did that hurt you so much. I read the anthology again and again. Monica also read it.
 Tuvia: What did she say?
 Eitan: She was very moved. She thinks mom was trying to tell me something through these stories.
 Tuvia: What?
 Eitan: That my headaches aren't because I was wounded, but...
 Tuvia: Because you lost so many soldiers.
 Eitan: And twelve hundred civilians that I didn't reach in time. And the hostages... Those bastards tortured women. Men. Beheaded children... If I hadn't been injured, I would have spent years in prison for criminal negligence.
 Tuvia: You are exaggerating a bit. Aren't you?
 Eitan: Last night, I finally went to the square. A few people recognized me. I couldn't bear their looks. But the more I acknowledge my responsibility for what happened, the more relieved I feel.
 Tuvia: Good. (**Takes a pawn**) What's wrong? How could a player like you make such a stupid move?
 Eitan: I haven't played in a long time.
 Tuvia: When your headaches started, mom told me to play with you.
 Eitan: Me too. I must have been scared.
 Tuvia: Scared of losing?
 Eitan: Scared we would talk. (**They make two more moves**)
 Tuvia: Check!

Eitan: Unbelievable.

Tuvia: Look, if you want to play with me, don't let me beat you like this.

Eitan: Am I capable of letting anyone beat me? You know, in that story, "Gaza", about the officer whose ten soldiers were burned in the APC... When I read that the army didn't take him back to service, I felt that it was very similar to what happened to me.

Tuvia: Yes, maybe.

Eitan: Who wrote that story? I checked with our accountant. His contract has no address, no phone number, no receipt. Did we pay him? **(Tuvia is silent)** Maybe there's no such writer?

Tuvia: Of course there is.

Eitan: The contract was signed with mom's fountain pen. Only she used a pen like that. Check. **(Pause)** Did mom write the story? **(Tuvia is silent)** Mom wrote it, right?

Tuvia: She asked me not to tell you. She was afraid that if you knew, it would be difficult for you to read it.

Eitan: Of course it was difficult. In the story, the officer's mother is worried sick. She can't sleep. Every ring of the doorbell is a nightmare. Was it like that for mom too?

Tuvia: We almost lost our minds.

Eitan: And did you, like that officer's parents, testify before the medical board about my mental state after the injury?

Tuvia: What?

Eitan: You heard me, dad. Did you testify, too?

Tuvia: No. Of course not. We're not doctors, we didn't take any position.

Eitan: But you did testify there, even though you were not summoned. Only Monica was. She demanded that the army release me, so we could escape to Argentina. And you joined her.

Tuvia: Look, Eitan. We thought it would be best to tell the board the whole truth...

Eitan: And you didn't bother telling me the truth?

Tuvia: We felt terrible. But we were worried about you. About your health, your sanity...

Eitan: Maybe it's good that you testified. I was probably unable to return. My part in the failures in this war was far greater than you knew. I was there a whole year before October 7th. But I was blind. Complacent. I didn't warn. I was not prepared.

Even that very morning it took me too long to understand what was going on.

Tuvia: There were several others responsible for it, besides you.

Eitan: If I were to go back to the army, I would take on impossible missions. Your testimony probably saved my life.

Tuvia: **(Choked)** Mom saved you. Only mom. She was so smart. So brave... **(gets up to hide his tears)**

Eitan: **(After him)** Wait, dad. I want to hear more. **(Tuvia continues to his room)** Okay. Maybe you need some sleep. Do you want me to sleep next to you tonight?

Tuvia's gone. Eitan puts the chess pieces back in the drawer. Suddenly a siren is heard. Eitan is still preoccupied with his thoughts, and he doesn't move. Tuvia returns.

Tuvia: Don't you hear the siren?

Eitan: We have a minute and a half.

Tuvia: Come on already...

They exit to the corridor.

7. VO. Rivka reads another monologue.

Rivka: I'm not 'depressed'. I don't leave the house because I don't want to go out. Because I have nothing to do out there. Because the stupid psychiatrist doesn't understand anything, and his damn pills don't help... because it's all for nothing. I fought for nothing. I was wounded for nothing. My soldiers died for nothing... Most the hostages are probably dead by now... and I don't want to see those "friends" of mine again. They come and sit... and drink... But no one is willing to talk about what happened there. They ran away in their APC and left me to die alone...

A week later. Tuvia stands in front of Rivka's grave, flowers in his hand. Eitan stands behind him.

Eitan: Come on, dad. It's getting dark. Let's go home. We'll go to bed early. We have a board meeting tomorrow morning.

Tuvia: I'm not going back to the office anymore.

Eitan: Why not?

Tuvia: I don't contribute anything.
 Eitan: Of course you do. You read manuscripts. You write recommendations.
 Tuvia: Last week I saw what happened when I wasn't there.
 Eitan: What happened?
 Tuvia: Mom planned to publish another two books next year. About the massacre in the kibbutzim, and about the mass killing in Gaza. This plan was canceled.
 Eitan: We'll consider it again, after we see how mom's anthology is received.
 Tuvia: And in the meantime, we silence these two writers?
 Eitan: I'm not sure they'll have readers.
 Tuvia: We owe it to mom, Eitan. I've been thinking about it for the last few days. She deserves that I write a book about her.
 Eitan: About mom?
 Tuvia: Yes. I want people to know what she did to end this war, how she supported the bereaved families, the hostages' families, the wounded... **(Puts the bunch of flowers on the grave)** I was never able to show her how much she meant to me. How I loved her. How much she did for me, too.
 Eitan: Great idea, dad. You always wanted to write. We'll happily publish this book. Come to the office tomorrow. We have all her correspondence with writers in the office.
 Tuvia: I have her diary at home.
 Eitan: **(Apprehensively)** You can't stay home, dad.
 Tuvia: Of course I can.
 Eitan: You need somebody with you.
 Tuvia: I don't want to hear this anymore.

Light change, now they are already at Tuvia's house.

Eitan: If you stay here, then I'll run the company from here. I'll set up an office. We'll have the meetings in the living room.
 Tuvia: It's totally unnecessary, Eitan. I want to mourn her. I want to write about her. Your presence doesn't help me.
 Eitan: Just two weeks ago, you...
 Tuvia: That was two weeks ago.
 Eitan: Listen dad! It's a heavy responsibility being an only child, and I'm not going to shy away from it. If you want to write, then sit down and start. When I see you writing, I'll leave you here alone. **(Turns to the bathroom)**

Tuvia: Where are you going? I won't do that nonsense again. I swear! I saw what it did to you. What it did to Monica and the girls.

He takes out a writing pad and a pen. Eitan returns from the bathroom.

Eitan: I've taken all the pills from the medicine cabinet. Do you have any other medications, elsewhere?
 Tuvia: No.
 Eitan: Good. If you need anything, ask me. Ok?
 Tuvia: Ok.
 Eitan: Do you want another glass of water? Coffee? Something to eat, maybe?
 Tuvia: I want you to stop running around me.
 Eitan: Ok. I'll be in the garden.

Eitan leaves. Tuvia stares at the blank paper.

Tuvia: Never mind. I'll begin tomorrow.

Gets up and turns on the music system.

8. VO. Rivka reads another monologue.

Rivka: I sat on the balcony and peeled an orange. That's all... I did not try to slit my wrists... Mom's mistaken. She came out after it happened... the knife slipped, dad. It was an accident. It has nothing to do with the letter from the army. I realised long ago that they would discharge me... If I wanted to commit suicide, I would lie down on the train tracks.

A week later, winter morning. Tuvia is sitting in the armchair. Eitan comes out of the kitchen, holding a tray with two cups of coffee.

Eitan: Do you want an omelette?
 Tuvia: I want you to take your things and leave.
 Eitan: I'm not leaving you here alone.
 Tuvia: We've ended that discussion. I'll live my life the way I want. You will not tell me how to live, why to live. And if I decide not to write a book about mom, I won't write it.

Eitan: It was your idea to write... to get over mourning her...

Tuvia: I don't want to get over mourning her!

Eitan: Then what do you want?! To sit here and make yourself miserable? You'll deteriorate within weeks. Your dementia will get worse.

Tuvia: What dementia?

Eitan: Look, if I'm such a burden on you, then maybe Monica should move here instead. She'll take time off until you recover. She could also help you write.

Tuvia: **(Rises)** I can't write, Eitan. And I'm not taking any 'advice' from you anymore. Since you've been here, you've taken over my life. Eat, drink, take a bath, read, write, think, look for meaning, find purpose... Enough!

Eitan: Your fly is open.

Tuvia: Pardon?

Eitan: Your fly... **(Tuvia zips the fly closed)** I'm not taking over your life. I'm worried about you. Who else will?

Tuvia: I don't need anyone.

Eitan: I'm your son.

Tuvia: I'm to blame for my defeat. Me. I let you publish novels that have nothing to do with this cursed war. With the price we're paying in it. With the atrocities we are committing. That is why fewer and fewer books are being written about it. That is why an entire country continues to fight, as if there's no way to end it. Yes. Because of people like me who remained silent.

Eitan: When our writers understand what happens here, they won't hesitate to write.

Silence.

Eitan: I heard you cry last night.

Tuvia: I didn't cry. I coughed.

Eitan: Maybe you do need some medication.

Tuvia: I don't want medication. I want to die.

Eitan: To die?! Are you out of your mind?! You have a family. You have granddaughters who are crazy about you. Isn't it enough that they lost their grandmother? Do you want them to lose you too?

Tuvia: I just can't go on anymore, Eitan.

Eitan: If I continued to live after October 7th, despite what happened to me, then so can you. **(Tuvia does not answer)**

Maybe instead of Monica moving here, you should move in with us. My study could be your bedroom. You'd have your own bathroom and balcony. You could sit in the garden. The girls would be overjoyed. What do you say?

Tuvia: I'll think about it.

Eitan: We could get you a dog. You can take it for walks in the park. Spring will soon come. You always loved spring.

Tuvia: Do you see me walking a dog?

Eitan: Why not? Dogs are the best medicine for depression. We just published a book on it.

Tuvia: On dogs?

Eitan: On depression.

Gives him his coffee.

Eitan: Are you sure you don't want an omelette?

Tuvia: Positive.

Eitan: You need to eat more. Have you noticed that you've lost weight?

Tuvia: I'll eat more bread.

Eitan: You can eat chocolate. You always loved chocolate. Now you can eat as much as you want.

Tuvia: Sure. I'll buy a bar today.

They both drink their coffee in silence. Tuvia stops, gets up.

Eitan: What is it?

Tuvia: I think I want to add some sugar.

Eitan: I'll do it.

Tuvia: I can do it myself.

Tuvia heads towards the kitchen. Eitan sips his coffee and continues to speak.

Eitan: We could even go and get a dog right now. At the "SOS Pets". Any dog you choose will love you forever. Do you want a big dog or a small one? **(Eitan hears a sigh and the sound of something falling)** Dad?

No reply. Eitan gets up hastily, and goes to the kitchen, where he sees that Tuvia has cut the veins in his wrists with a knife.

Eitan: What did you do? Drop the knife. Raise your arms! Put your hands up! Are you crazy? Keep your hands up high! **(Takes off his shirt and tries to wrap Tuvia's hands with it)** So much blood! I can't take it. Hands up!! Stop yelling! Stop yelling! What's the ambulance number? Damn it. What's the ambulance number? Come on. I'll take you in my car.

9. VO. Rivka reads another monologue from the story.

Rivka: Berlin is a big city, mom. There are psychiatrists there, too. They also have medication... I'll come back when I calm down... when my head clears a bit... When these unnecessary wars are over... When I want to live here again...

A week later. A winter day. Tuvia sits gloomily in the armchair. His hands are bandaged. Eitan is standing in front of him, holding a copy of the anthology that has just come out in print.

Eitan: Well? What do you think? **(Tuvia is silent)** You can at least look. Open it. Feel it. Smell it. You've been getting drunk on the smell of new books your entire life.

Tuvia: I smelled it.

Eitan: At least look at the cover. Mom had great taste.

Tuvia: Yes.

Eitan: Look what I wrote about her: "She believed in the power of literature to make our lives better." That's what I wanted to write on her stone. **(Tuvia doesn't look)**. I don't get it, dad. Yesterday you said we'd go to Berlin and ask the writers to write about their recovery. Did you lie to the psychiatrist, so that he'd release you? Do you want to go back there?

Tuvia: You know exactly what I want.

Eitan: You've been waiting for this book since mom died. It's here, on its way to the bookstores. Anyone who reads it will try to be a better person.

Tuvia: I'm not sure anyone will read it.

Eitan: I sent it to all the officers in my brigade.

Tuvia: The officers in your brigade are reading books now? They're in Gaza. They're killing and being killed in this damn war, which only yesterday we were informed that we don't intend to end.

Eitan: We'll continue to publish books that mom chose, until we end it.

Tuvia: Even those who'll read them will go on fighting.

Eitan: If mom heard you say it, she'd be very disappointed.

Tuvia: You're wrong. After the war broke out and she had her first heart attack, we decided we'd leave this world together. When she died, I didn't have the courage. Perhaps I deluded myself that this book would strengthen the protest against the war. A month ago, I used my pills. Now I want to use hers.

Eitan: Mom collected pills?

Tuvia: Please, let me swallow them.

Eitan: You can't ask me for such a thing.

Tuvia: And don't take me to the hospital. It's not your fault. You did everything possible to make me want to live. You're much stronger than I thought. Much stronger than you think. You'll do fine. Let me end my life with dignity.

Eitan: Don't you trust me to help you **live** with dignity?

Tuvia: I don't trust myself.

Eitan: I can help you get rid of these thoughts.

Tuvia: You know you can't stop me.

Eitan: Did you hide her pills? You hid them! Where are they? Tell me where they are! **(Tuvia is silent)** Your life is important to me, dad. It's important to you too.

Eitan searches in the drawers, on the bookshelves. His headache attacks him again. He pulls a headache pill from his pocket and swallows it.

Tuvia: I'm not afraid to die, Eitan.

Eitan: I can see that. You're afraid to live.

Tuvia: If my life had meaning, I would live it happily.

Eitan: If you don't tell me where the pills are, I'm taking you back to the psychiatric ward. **(Rubs his temples)**

Tuvia: Mom also lost her taste for life. That's why she died. Not because of the arguments with you. She died because she gave up. Because of the monstrosity of our enemies, because of our lust for such cruel revenge. She did not want to live in a country whose army killed twelve or thirteen thousand children. Me neither.

Eitan: Her anthology talks about it.

Tuvia: Very few people will read it. It's probably impossible to write good books during such a war. And when literature sinks, everything sinks with it.

Eitan: Please, dad, where are the pills?

Tuvia: Try to understand me, Eitan. Mom was right. This isn't the country we knew.

Eitan: You don't understand me. You don't see that this war is not yet over for me. You don't see the dead that lurk around every corner. All those I couldn't save. And the hostages. Them and their families. And the wounded. And the mad. And those that I killed with my own hands. One day they'll all show up and settle accounts with me...

In his search for the pills, Eitan goes to the corner of the room. Tuvia quickly pulls out a pill box from inside one of the books, pours them into his mouth and begins to chew them. Eitan sees him.

Eitan: Take the pills out your mouth. Spit them out, dad! Spit them out.

Tuvia: Let me go!

Eitan: I promised the hospital to take care of you!

Eitan tries to get them out of Tuvia's mouth. Tuvia pushes him away.

Eitan: I love you, dad!

Tuvia: So show me.

Eitan: I still need you.

Tuvia: And don't take me to hospital!

Eitan: **(His headache intensifies)** Enough, enough. Damn this pain. I can't anymore... I can't...

Tuvia: Come, Eitan... put your head on my shoulder... maybe it'll make it easier for you... here. Let me hug you. This is how you used to fall asleep when you were little...

Eitan puts his head on his fathers' shoulder. After a long moment, he calms down. Suddenly he looks up at Tuvia.

Tuvia: It's OK. I still have a few minutes.

Eitan: You did it.

Tuvia: I had no choice.

Eitan: I did everything I could for you, right, dad?

Tuvia: And now you can do something else. On the bottom shelf there's a bottle of cognac that mom and I saved for this moment. Bring two glasses.
Eitan: You thought of everything, didn't you?
Tuvia: After I fall asleep, drive home to Monica and the girls. Come back here only in the evening.
Eitan: You thought of that, too?
Tuvia: Of course.

Eitan brings the bottle of cognac and two glasses. Tuvia pours the cognac.

Tuvia: Cheers!
Eitan: Cheers.

They drink.

Tuvia: Another one?
Eitan: Another one.
Tuvia: You still have to drive.
Eitan: I know.
Tuvia: And you're not taking me to the hospital.
Eitan: I can't force you to live for me.
Tuvia: Goodbye, my boy.
Eitan: Goodbye, dad.

Tuvia closes his eyes, then opens them.

Tuvia: I think I can hear mom...
Eitan: What's she saying?
Tuvia: She... She's telling me to tell you how much I love you... She's saying I never told you that... Can you put some music on? Something happy, boy...

Eitan turns on the system. Music is heard. They sit holding each other.

End