

June 2, 2026

The Admission

A new version

By Motti Lerner

The writing of the play was inspired by the historical controversy over the conquest of the Palestinian village Tantura by the Israeli army on May 23, 1948. Since all the characters in the play and its entire plot are the invention of the writer, the name of the village has been changed to Tantur. The play was first produced in 2014 at Theater J in Washington DC, directed by Sinai Peter, who also directed the first Hebrew production in 2016 in Jaffa Theater in Jaffa.

Characters

- Avigdor (64) - Colonel in the Israeli army during the 1948 War of Independence. Owner of a big construction company.
- Yona (60) Avigdor's wife.
- Giora (35) - Their son, lecturer at the University of Haifa. Badly wounded in the Lebanon war of 1982. He is on crutches.
- Neta (29) - Giora's girlfriend, an architect
- Ibrahim (58) - A refugee from the Arab village of Tantur.
- Azmi (35) - Ibrahim's son, owner of a restaurant
- Samya (30) - Ibrahim's daughter, lecturer at the University of Haifa.

The Plot

The play unfolds in the past and present. The past plot takes place in the spring of 1988, during the height of the First Intifada, in various locations in Haifa, and deals with the conquest of the village of Tantur in 1948. The present plot takes place in October 1995, after the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and consists of e-mail correspondence between Giora and Samya. The set design is minimal and abstract. Transitions between scenes are immediate, without elaborate changes.

1. October 1995. The sound of bulldozers is heard in the background. Giora is in his apartment in Haifa. Samya is in her apartment in London. They are corresponding by computer and reading their messages aloud.

- Giora: Dear Samya, I hope you're well. I guess you're surprised to hear from me after seven years, but you've always been on my mind, far more than you think. I've followed the courses you've been teaching at Oxford. I read your book about the Palestinian national struggle. Very important and very impressive. I hope we'll have a chance to talk about it. Azmi told me this morning that your father's condition has worsened over the past week, and you're worried that if you come to visit him, you'll be arrested at the airport. I can try to arrange a humanitarian entry permit for you.
- Samya: Thank you, Giora. I really do need help. I contacted the Israeli Embassy in London two weeks ago. No one there is willing to talk to me. I need this permit urgently. I don't know how much time he has left.
- Giora: So why didn't you write to me two weeks ago?
- Samya: After seven years of silence?
- Giora: We haven't been in touch, but I always felt we were still connected.
- Samya: I didn't call you because I didn't want to get you into trouble with the police again.
- Giora: You didn't get me into any trouble. When you were arrested, I went there and got you released. It wasn't too complicated. After you left, I kept asking Azmi if there was anything you needed. I even offered to help publish your book.
- Samya: You well know that If I had accepted your support, the book would have been boycotted across the Arab world.
- Giora: No one needed to know about it. I'd still do anything I can for you. I don't regret what we went through. I hope you don't either.

2. Spring 1988. An Arab restaurant in downtown Haifa. Afternoon. Giora stands in the doorway, leaning on his crutches. Azmi, wearing a suit, is cleaning the floor with a mop, careful not to get his shoes wet. Ibrahim, his father, is in the kitchen, but is unseen.

- Giora: Why aren't you ever satisfied, Azmi? This is the nicest restaurant in Haifa. Just look at how much light comes in through the windows. And you've put in air conditioning and new tables.
- Azmi: But how am I going to repay the loan to your father? I've had one customer a day over the past month – and that one ordered hummus to go. I've made less than half the salary of a cleaner from Jenin.

- Giora: Don't worry about my father. He won't say a thing. Even if it takes you two years to pay him back. Here, give me the broom. The place will be clean by the time he gets here.
- Azmi: One more word, Giora, and I'm gonna dump the bucket on your head. **(Angrily)** This morning I asked Khaula to help me out for a few minutes. And she opened her big mouth: "I didn't marry you to be your maid." Her father's a lawyer. Not a cook like her husband. I've been washing floors in stinking restaurants since I was ten.
- Giora: You don't have to fight with her because of us. **(Takes the broom)** My father's never been bothered by a little dirt.
- Azmi: **(Grabbing the broom)** Sweep in your own house. **(Notices smell from the kitchen)** He's in there cooking for two hundred. Yesterday I trashed ten kilos of lamb. It smelled so bad, even the zoo wouldn't take it. This Intifada¹ is killing us. What have we done? Did someone hang a flag here? Throw a stone? Jews whose weddings I catered, now won't enter this restaurant.
- Giora: Don't worry, Azmi. I'll speak to him about the loan today.
- Azmi: Don't tell him 'two years'. Tell him I'll start the payments as soon as this mess is over. **(He bumps into the bucket and the water spills)** Yil'an din'hu this bucket. **(To the kitchen)** Where's the rag, yabba? **(To Giora)** Now my shoes are fucked. **(To the kitchen)** Where's the goddamned rag?

Samya enters, holding the rag she found in the entrance.

- Samya: Here it is.
- Azmi: Glad you're here. This morning dad burned a pot of rice and broke four plates. Can you help him with the fish? He's already cut two fingers.
- Samya: **(To Giora)** Are you heading back to the university later? Will you be in your office?
- Giora: Did something happen? **(She hesitates)** What happened?
- Azmi: Dad needs you, Samya.

Samya turns to the kitchen. Giora uses the broom to push the water to the exit. Avigdor enters. Samya stops. Azmi grabs the broom from Giora.

- Azmi: Hello, Mr. Avigdor. Welcome. How are you?
- Avigdor: **(Looking around)** How beautiful. Congratulations. Mabruk. **(Shakes Azmi's hand)** I see you've opened especially for us.

¹ The Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation lasting from December 1987 to 1993

Azmi: Today is the Grand Opening. I've turned everyone else away. T'fadal. Sit. **(Cleans a chair and offers it to Avigdor)** I don't have busboys today. All of them were stopped at the checkpoint.

Avigdor: **(to Giora)** And I see that besides your position at the university you also clean floors here. **(To Samya)** Hello, Samya.

Samya: Hello. I received your letter about the grant yesterday. Thank you very much.

Avigdor: You deserve it. **(Shaking her hand)** All the best.

Azmi: We're bringing you something to start with. **(Pointing at the kitchen)** Dad's not feeling well. He's been talking to himself since early this morning. If he says anything strange, don't pay attention.

Azmi and Samya exit to the kitchen. Avigdor lights a cigar.

Avigdor: How was it?

Giora: It's a beautiful development, dad. The houses already have electricity. Flowers are growing in the gardens. Kids are walking to school. We could build two more blocks to the south. In another few years it'll be a city.

Avigdor: You'll build it, Giora. I've built enough.

Giora: Next week I'll tell the dean I'm stepping down.

Avigdor: Announce it tomorrow at the board meeting. By the way, I cleared out the office next to Neta's for you.

Giora: That's what she wanted? Did she say it?

Avigdor: She doesn't need to say anything. Every morning, she walks into my office and what she wants is written all over her face.

Giora: What does she want?

Avigdor: That you get married. That you start working with us. That we have a bris² a year from now.

Giora: **(Laughs)** No doubt you've already arranged him a job in the company, too.

Avigdor: The board will approve it tomorrow.

The two of them laugh. Ibrahim, Azmi, and Samya, enter from the kitchen carrying platters and plates of appetizers, salads, drinks, etc.

Ibrahim: Salam aleykum. How are you? A'halan u'sahlan, abu Giora. This is just to wake the appetite. The first olives of the season. We opened the jars this morning.

Avigdor: Allah y'a'tik el a'afi, Ibrahim. Shukran.

² Circumcision ceremony

Ibrahim: And don't be angry about the salad. Because of the curfew in Gaza, there are no cucumbers in the market, no radishes, no lettuce.

Azmi: Even the fish are under curfew.

Ibrahim: But the tomatoes are from my garden.

Avigdor: I see you've already collected za'atar³.

Ibrahim: Of course. It's always best after the rain.

Avigdor: Thank you.

Ibrahim: It's all thanks to you, Abu Giora. For the help you've given us. With the renovations, the permits. And also for Samya.

Avigdor: Mabruk, Ibrahim.

Azmi: From now on, you're our guests. On the house. Whatever you want, as much as you want. Everything. The salads, the meat, the wine.

Avigdor: Out of the question, Azmi.

Azmi: This is my restaurant, Sir, and here I decide! **(Pours wine)**
L'chaim!

All: L'chaim!

Everyone drinks.

Ibrahim: About the za'atar, Mr. Avigdor. Yesterday I went to Tantur to collect some, and suddenly I see people. I ask: "shu hada, who are you?" and they say they work for you. Surveyors. That you're going to dig there.

Avigdor: We're building there, Ibrahim.

Ibrahim: What for? Why build there?

Avigdor: People need homes.

Ibrahim: In Tantur?

Azmi: We're eating now, dad. Go put the fish on the grill.

Samya: I'll do it.

Azmi: He'll do it. **(To Avigdor)** Today we have grilled eggplant. Cooked mushrooms. Shrimps. Calamari. All fresh from this morning.

Giora: **(To Avigdor)** Did you arrive thirsty, dad?

Avigdor: I'll finish the bottle myself, if you don't help me.

Ibrahim: **(Pouring wine for Giora)** About Tantur, Abu Giora. Why are you building there all of a sudden?

Avigdor: It's a small country, Ibrahim. People build everywhere.

Ibrahim: I'm from Tantur, Abu Giora. I was born there.

Azmi: Enough, dad.

Avigdor: Really? When I was a kid, I used to go down there with friends, with canteens and knapsacks. We would drink from the spring and rest under the fig trees.

³ Hyssop

Ibrahim: But why dig there? It's forbidden.
 Azmi: Cha'las. We've already heard this story. Go put the fish on the grill.
 Giora: **(To Avigdor)** What is he talking about? Don't we have the permits?
 Avigdor: Of course we do.
 Ibrahim: The earth won't let you dig there.
 Azmi: We've already heard this, too.
 Samya: Let him speak. They're building on his village.
 Ibrahim: **(Rising)** I'll die before he builds there.
 Giora: We've been talking about it for five years, Ibrahim. It's the neighborhood that will be named after my brother Udi.
 Ibrahim: **(To Samya)** Tell him not to dig there.
 Azmi: Let's go to the kitchen, dad.
 Giora: **(To Avigdor)** What's the problem? Why is it "forbidden"?
 Samya: **(To Ibrahim)** Sit and drink a little water. **(Seats him and turns to Avigdor)** His house was there. He goes there every week. Maybe if you showed him the exact plans, he wouldn't be so worried.
 Avigdor: We'll send them tomorrow morning.
 Ibrahim: **(Exploding)** You can't dig there. It's forbidden. The stones scream "forbidden". The sky cries "forbidden". And you don't hear it.
 Avigdor: **(Standing)** I think it's best if we go.
 Ibrahim: **(Barring him)** You will listen until I am finished.
 Azmi: Be'hiatak, Yabba. Dakhil Allah.
 Giora: **(To Samya)** What's going on with him? What does he want?
 Ibrahim: Son of a bitch. Ten years I've cooked for you. Ten years I've put food on your table, and the whole time my heart has been bleeding!

Ibrahim grabs a knife from the table and lunges at Avigdor

Samya: Drop the knife!
 Giora: Leave him alone!
 Azmi: Dad!

Ibrahim stabs Avigdor in the shoulder. Azmi and Samya pull him away.

3. Later that afternoon. Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor's wound has been sutured and his shoulder bandaged.

Avigdor: **(To Giora)** What do you want from me? You know more than the doctor? He didn't say I need a transfusion.
 Yona: **(To Avigdor)** Take a pill. In a few minutes the stitches are going to hurt.

Giora: You don't think you need an X-Ray?
 Avigdor: What for?
 Yona: Give me your hand.
 Avigdor: The moment I get there, the hospital will call the police. The whole family will be stopped and questioned. I have more important things to deal with right now. **(Swallows the pill)** The intifada has made him crazy.
 Giora: He stabbed to kill. I saw it in his eyes.
 Avigdor: Sit, calm down. You're hysterical, as if he stabbed you.
 Yona: Who knows what he's been through? Maybe he was stopped by the Border Police and got searched. Maybe a hot-headed soldier killed a relative of his in one of the refugee camps. **(Places Avigdor's arm in a sling)**
 Giora: I have known him for ten years. He's always been so kind and generous. I can't understand what happened to him. Are you going to press charges with the police?
 Avigdor: What for? He's insane. He hallucinates. He hears the ground talking.
 Yona: You want their restaurant shut down?
 Giora: I'm just asking. How can we look each other in the eye now? **(Stands)**
 Yona: Where are you going?
 Giora: I want to talk to him.
 Avigdor: We have a board meeting tomorrow. We have to go over next year's plans.
 Giora: You're not going to the office tomorrow, Dad.
 Avigdor: We'll have the meeting here.
 Giora: You lost a lot of blood.
 Avigdor: I have enough left.
 Giora: You want me to start running the company tomorrow? **(Stands)**
 Avigdor: Sit.
 Yona: Tomorrow, we approve naming the neighborhood after Udi. We've been talking about it since he fell.
 Giora: We'll approve it next week.

He turns to leave. Neta enters.

Neta: **(To Avigdor)** It looks like you're still alive. How are you feeling? **(Hugs him)**
 Avigdor: Now I feel great.
 Neta: I thought I'd find you lying in bed hooked up to an IV.
 Yona: He didn't let the doctor do it.

Neta: I hope you're not planning on eating there ever again. **(To Giora)** Too bad he didn't stab you. You'd have to stay in bed for a few days, and every morning I'd bring you coffee and a cake. **(Kisses him)**

Giora: We must go, darling.

Yona: You're not going to create a scandal now. You want the police to start investigating? You know how much time you'll spend in court?

Neta: Wait a second, honey. **(To Avigdor and Yona)** I was at the Dan hotel this morning. They have two open dates for a wedding in June, on the ninth and the twentieth. I promised them an answer tomorrow.

Yona: Great.

Giora: Maybe you and I should talk about it first?

Avigdor: We're happy to discuss it, too.

Yona: We'll do whatever they decide, Avigdor.

Avigdor: **(To Neta)** Take time off next week to find a dress.

Giora: You're talking to her instead of me? You still have blood on your shirt. **(Turns to leave)**

Neta: Just a second, Guri. We have to decide.

Giora: We've decided to get married in July.

Neta: You have that conference in Boston in July.

Giora: Fine. We'll get married on the twentieth of June. You don't want to check with your mom?

Neta: I hope she'll live till then.

Avigdor: Leave your mother to me.

Giora: The ninth is also good.

Avigdor: Excellent. Are we settled?

Giora: We're settled.

Avigdor: That's how you settle?

Giora takes the hint, kisses and hugs Neta.

Yona: Mazal Tov!

Avigdor: Now go home and celebrate. **(To Yona)** We also want to celebrate a little. Right?

Neta: See you later.

Giora: June 9th isn't too close to Udi's birthday?

Yona: It's perfectly fine.

Giora: **(To Avigdor)** I'll call later to see how you're doing.

Avigdor: Bye.

Giora and Neta exit. Silence.

Yona: I hope Giora doesn't do anything stupid. We have to watch him.
(He's silent) Does it hurt? It's best if you rest in bed. Your blood pressure is high. **(He's silent)** Don't you want to delay the groundbreaking a few days? Maybe until they remove the stitches.
(He's silent) Udi has waited many years for us to build something in his name. He'll wait another week. **(He takes a glass of wine)**
 Don't drink. You just took a pill.

Avigdor drinks, puts the glass on the table and turns to the kitchen.

Yona: Where are you going?
 Avigdor: I haven't eaten since this morning.
 Yona: Wait. I'll warm something up. What about the surveyors you sent to the wadi? They'll continue?
 Avigdor: Of course.

4. The next day. Afternoon. Giora's office at Haifa University.

Samya: He was awake all night. Tossing in bed. Crying. Talking to himself. He only fell asleep in the morning, when he heard your father was alive.
 Giora: He's lucky my dad didn't go to the police.
 Samya: I'm not sure he understands what he did. He can't explain any of it.
 Giora: He was probably carried away by the Intifada. Wasn't he? If the knife had gone a millimeter deeper, my father would be dead.
 Samya: You know he didn't mean it.
 Giora: I hope so.
 Samya: What should I tell Azmi? He wants to invite your father over for dinner. Do you think he'd come?
 Giora: He's in bed. They're removing the stitches next week.
 Samya: Good. Come next week.
 Giora: I'll come by myself tomorrow.
 Samya: I don't think my father was carried away by the Intifada. I think he remembers your dad from the battle of Tantur in '48. You never told me your father had been the commander there.
 Giora: There was nothing to tell. They fought there, like everywhere else. Once, he took us to the monument he built on the hill. Fourteen of his soldiers were killed there.
 Samya: Dozens of civilians were killed, too. Some of them our family.
 Giora: Is that what your father told you? Is that why he tried to stab my father with a knife?

- Samya: I went to the library this morning. **(Shows him a book and a notebook)** This is by a historian from Damascus. This is a dissertation that was done here, in the history department. According to his calculations, 220 civilians were killed in Tantur.
- Giora: Are you out of your mind?
- Samya: Look. These are testimonies from soldiers who took part in the attack.
- Giora: I don't need to look. I know we have too many self-hating historians. How can you believe that my father was involved in anything like that? How many people have helped you the way he has? Even after my brother was killed. Even after I was wounded. This year he built a school in Nazareth at cost. He built six schools in Arab villages without any profit over the last decade.
- Samya: I know.
- Giora: You don't know. Who do you think paid for the ad in yesterday's papers calling for an end to violence and a start to negotiations?
- Samya: I know that too.
- Giora: And you believe what's written here?!
- Samya: I don't believe anything. But my father has always been a rational man. Suddenly he picks up a knife and stabs?
- Giora: He's never talked about it until yesterday?
- Samya: Until yesterday he told us that they were expelled from Tantur. Yesterday he said his father and two of his brothers were killed there. Their names are in this book.
- Giora: I know my father, Samya.
- Samya: I'm not accusing him of anything. I know how rumors spread among us. But I know my father, too.
- Giora: If your father recognized my father ten years ago, why did he wait until yesterday?
- Samya: He doesn't want you touching the bones buried in the wadi. He wants to give them a proper burial and put up a memorial.
- Giora: A memorial for who? If there were bones buried there, someone would have talked about it. Five hundred soldiers have been quiet for forty years?! If you think my father did something like this, return the grant he gave you yesterday for your post-doctorate.

Samya moves to exit. He stops her.

- Giora: Wait a second. You can't run away like this.
- Samya: I'm leaving. You're running away.
- Giora: Until yesterday you thought your grandfather and two uncles were expelled. You never asked where they were? You never tried to see them?

Samya: He told me they died in a refugee camp in Tul Karem.
 Giora: And today you believe him that they were killed in Tantur?
 Samya: Today I don't know anything anymore.
 Giora: I've asked you about them several times, and you've always said they were expelled.
 Samya: When did you ask?
 Giora: In the hotel in London. You shut yourself in the bathroom and locked the door. I begged you to tell me.
 Samya: I think you begged for something entirely different.
 Giora: I don't think I had to beg.

Memories of London wash over them. Silence.

Samya: You know why your father gave me the grant for the post-doc?
 Giora: Because he believes in you.
 Samya: Because I have to do it abroad.
 Giora: What does that have to do with anything?
 Samya: He wants to separate us.
 Giora: He knows that we're not seeing each other anymore.
 Samya: That's what I wanted to tell you yesterday. He suspects we still are. He thinks you haven't married yet because of me.
 Giora: I don't think so.
 Samya: That's why he insisted that the grant is for the University of London. I hate the feeling that I'm being forced out of here because of you.
 Giora: You are not. He knows that in the last few weeks Neta and I have talked about our plans, and... **(Hesitates)**
 Samya: And you've decided? **(He is silent)** Have you decided to get married? Why? Because she's Jewish? Because that's what your father wants? **(He is silent)** You see me every day in the department. Why didn't you tell me?
 Giora: We decided to break it off a year ago.
 Samya: So what?
 Giora: We both know it was the right decision. What happened in the restaurant was just the tip of the iceberg. Since the intifada started, we've been arguing all the time. You go to demonstrations I can't attend, and you say things there I can't agree with.
 Samya: What can't you agree to? Shouldn't we end the occupation? Don't the people living under it deserve their freedom?
 Giora: They won't get it with this kind of violence.
 Samya: You know I'm against violence. You also know what my Palestinian colleagues think about me because of it. **(Pause)**. I

guess I was too naïve. I hoped that I'd be living in London next year, and one night I'd hear a knock on the door.

Giora: For three years, I begged you to marry me. You didn't even want to talk about it.

Samya: You know we can't live together in this country.

Giora: You know what I went through here. You know I can't live anywhere else.

Samya: Don't touch me.

Samya exits hurriedly, leaving the book and notebook on the table.

5. Evening. Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor and Neta enter. Avigdor goes to the sofa. Yona notices he's not well.

Yona: Where were you?

Avigdor: I'm just a bit dizzy.

Yona: I asked you not to leave the house.

Avigdor: It'll pass.

Yona: You want me to call the doctor?

Avigdor: I'm fine. It's because of the stairs. **(To Neta)** Tell her.

Yona: Drink. **(Serves him)**

Neta: **(To Yona)** We got the hotel.

Avigdor: Tell her the deal.

Neta: They're giving us the garden and the pool too. We were about to decide on the menu. Suddenly the wound started to hurt.

Avigdor: When I asked them about the garden and pool, the manager turned his back on me. But when she asked, he melted.

Neta: Because you offered to pay more.

Avigdor: Because of your smile, dear.

Neta: **(To Yona)** when he wants something, he doesn't take no for an answer. **(To Avigdor)** I think you ought to stay home tomorrow.

Avigdor: I'll think about it.

Yona: I'll ask the doctor to hospitalize you!

Avigdor: Fine. I'll stay home.

Yona: This is for you, Neta. Congratulations.

She hands Neta a small box. Neta opens it and reveals a pair of earrings.

Neta: Diamonds!!

Yona: Put them on.

Neta: You didn't have to.

Yona: Who am I going to buy earrings for? Giora?

Avigdor: I'll put them on for you. **(He gets up)**

Yona: Sit.

Avigdor succeeds in putting the earrings on Neta.

Avigdor: **(To Yona)** I'm sitting.

Neta: **(Hugging them)** Thank you.

Yona: I called Giora this morning. He didn't answer.

Neta: His back was bothering him. Probably because of what happened in the restaurant. But he did his exercises and left for the university. I hope we don't hear about this incident anymore.

Yona: He had an appointment with the orthopedist today. I went, and he didn't show up. I hope he still believes he'll be better.

Neta: He'll go through the surgery next month. I promise you.

Avigdor: And remind him to send his letter of resignation to the university. I want to bring his appointment up with our board next week. And your promotion too.

Giora enters.

Avigdor: Congratulations!

Giora: What happened?

Neta: We confirmed with the hotel.

Giora: Nice.

Avigdor: That's all you have to say?

Giora: I'm very happy.

Avigdor: Tell me, Yona'le, who does he resemble? In my family, we knew how to celebrate!

Giora: **(To Neta)** You got earrings, darling. Very nice.

Yona: They're giving us the garden and the pool too.

Neta: **(To Giora)** I'll tell you on the way there. We still have to finalize the menu.

Giora: **(To Avigdor)** How are you feeling? Still in pain?

Avigdor: A lot. I'll probably be dead by tomorrow.

Yona: Ha. Ha. Ha.

Giora: I need to talk to you, Dad. I went to the library today. I found a dissertation that was written in our history department about Tantar.

Yona: I thought we put that affair behind us, Giora.

Giora: There are some strange things in it. **(To Avigdor)** Look. **(Showing him the notebook)** He claims that more than two hundred people were killed. **(To Neta)** I almost lost it.

Yona: You did lose it.

- Neta: You're sure you found that in the library?
- Giora: Yes. **(To Avigdor)** Read.
- Avigdor: I know this 'historian'. Two years ago, I took him to see the village.
- Yona: Daddy doesn't feel well, Guri. Don't bother him. **(Places the notebook on the table)** I saw that house down the street. They're prepared to sell.
- Avigdor: He's not bothering me. **(To Giora)** Even then I saw that he doesn't let facts confuse him. The villagers blocked the main road. They attacked cars. Buses. Ambulances. We had no choice. At four in the morning, we attacked. The first company from the wadi. The second from the road. The third stormed down from the hill. Fourteen of our men were killed. They lost twenty.
- Yona: Everything clear now? **(Continuing)** I want you to see this house. It's quite new. No stairs. You can drive your car all the way up to the doorway.
- Avigdor: At ten they surrendered. They knew that most of the Arabs in Haifa had run away. And rumors of the massacre at Deir Yassin⁴ had already reached them. The mukhtar⁵ requested they be sent to Tul Karem. At four they got on trucks. At six we returned to base and buried our dead.
- Yona: **(Firm)** I think it's best you go lie down, Avigdor, before your blood pressure goes even higher.
- Giora: **(Taking the notebook)** There are two hundred and twenty names here, dad.
- Avigdor: Are you sure there's a person for every name?
- Neta: The manager of the hotel is waiting for us, honey. We have a wedding in two months. There are a few things we need to do, besides standing under the chuppa⁶. See you later.
- Giora: And you counted only twenty?
- Yona: We counted exactly twenty!
- Neta: I don't understand why you're digging into this.
- Giora: It's outrageous that our university would print lies like these. **(To Avigdor)** Let's get testimonies from your officers and soldiers. **(To Yona)** From you, too. **(To Avigdor)** In a few months we'll publish a book to disprove all this.
- Yona: Nothing happened that is worth writing about.
- Avigdor: **(Laughing)** Now we're going to start writing books?! We have a board meeting next week. We need to be prepared.
- Giora: Everyone who reads this, dad, will believe that these are the facts.

⁴ Arab village near Jerusalem

⁵ Head of a village

⁶ The canopy under which a marriage is performed

Yona: Who's reading it? Who will ever read it?

Neta: What's gotten into you, Guri? Suddenly, I get the feeling you don't really believe your father.

Giora: Of course I believe him, darling. But if you look at this dissertation...

Avigdor: If this bastard had bothered to investigate, he'd have found these "dead" living in refugee camps in Jordan.

Yona: Why are you telling him all this? You want him to go find them?

Avigdor: Better he knows what went on there. How we fought. How we survived. How we earned the right to live here. **(To Giora)** And then maybe you'll understand that after wars like these we have to gather all our strength to restore ourselves, to build homes, start families, have children.

Yona: After all you've been through, Guri, you can't waste your life on such nonsense.

Giora: **(Angrily)** I'm wasting my life on nonsense?! Ever since I woke up in that hospital, I've been trying to live it the best way I can.

Neta: Calm down, honey. We know you're doing your best. No one doubts it.

Giora: **(To Avigdor)** And if I sit silent while you're being accused of such terrible things, it means I condone them.

6. October 1995. Giora is in his apartment in Haifa, and Samya is in her apartment in London. They are corresponding by computer and reading their messages aloud.

Giora: Good news, Samya. The Shin-Bet is willing to give you an entry permit for two weeks. You'll have to promise not to engage here in political activity during that time.

Samya: That's fine. Thank you.

Giora: I'm attaching their letter. Sign it and send it back to me. I hope to get the permit within a day.

Samya: I'm really very grateful.

Giora: Let me know when you're arriving, and I'll wait for you at the airport.

Samya: You don't need to. Azmi will meet me. He wants to talk to me before I see my father.

Giora: OK. I hope we can meet the next day.

Samya: Give me another day or two. I haven't seen my father for seven years. I must spend some time with Azmi and his kids, too.

Giora: Are you sure you want to meet me?

Samya: Yes. Of course.

- Giora: It seems you're hesitating. Why? After you left, I tried to call you several times. Then Azmi told me you wouldn't answer.
- Samya: It doesn't really matter anymore.
- Giora: It matters to me very much.
- Samya: You promised you'd join me. You knew I was waiting for you.
- Giora: Yes. I knew. And you knew how much I wanted to. But soon after you left, my father got killed in that road accident. We were in shock. My mother fell into depression. And I had to take over the company.
- Samya: Azmi wrote to me that it was suicide. Wasn't it? That's what the police said.
- Giora: No. It was an accident. He lost control on the way down to Tantur, and his car went over the edge.
- Samya: He did it on the way to Tantur?!
- Giora: He didn't. He wasn't the kind of person who would do such a thing. But I couldn't go on working on the book with you. I wrote to you about it. I couldn't bring myself to accuse him of those crimes when he was no longer able to defend himself.
- Samya: I didn't answer your letter because you got married.

7. Spring 1988. Same night. Ibrahim and Samya's house. Ibrahim, Samya, and Azmi enter after closing the restaurant.

- Azmi: You stood in front of him and told him that his father's a murderer?!
- Samya: I told him what I know.
- Azmi: What for? When I go there tomorrow to apologize, they won't even open the door for me. He's a murderer?! We almost murdered him. It's only because he has such a big heart we're not in jail.
- Ibrahim: I recognized him ten years ago, the day he came into the restaurant.
- Azmi: You recognized him and gave him food?
- Ibrahim: What could I do? Go to the police? To the court?
- Azmi: Why didn't you tell us?
- Samya: What difference does it make now? If he thinks it's him, we have to check.
- Azmi: Why? Don't we have enough to deal with because of the intifada? The policemen who see you at those demonstrations come to complain to me. When you begin looking into Tantur I'll have to shut down the restaurant.
- Samya: Don't be a coward, Azmi.

- Azmi: You're right. I'm a coward. But because "I'm a coward" you never went hungry, not a single day in your life. Because "I'm a coward" you always got new clothes for school and a new knapsack filled with books, and in it every day there was a pita with an omelet. Because "I'm a coward" you studied ten years at the university like a princess. Your brave brothers who ran away to America never once sent you a measly dollar for underwear. So don't look down on me and my fear.
- Samya: No one is looking down on you, except for yourself. We deserve to know who murdered our family.
- Azmi: And you're sure they were murdered?
- Ibrahim: Sure they were murdered, Ibn El Kalb.
- Azmi: Who saw them being murdered, yabba? You know they ran away.
- Samya: **(Scornfully)** One day they just got up and ran away?
- Azmi: Like they did in Haifa. In Yaffa. Akko. Tabariyyah. Safad.
- Samya: Gave up their homes, their sheep, their goats, their fields, their stores? They probably just got tired of living here.

Silence. Ibrahim is hurt.

- Samya: Come, I'll take you to bed, dad.
- Ibrahim: **(To Azmi)** I'll tell you who saw them being murdered. Me. With these eyes. Who could I tell? For two days I hid there between broken buildings, in the ruins. Then I escaped here, to Haifa. And here, too, there were soldiers in the streets. They shot at everyone who returned. Even people just fetching things from their homes. All day long I hid under the floor of a store in the market. At night I'd eat from garbage cans. You have no idea about that kind of fear. You have no idea what it's like to have no one. No one in the entire world. To be nothing. Anyone could point at you on the street, and you'd be shot. **(Angrily)** You want to know why I never told you? I didn't want you to live with such fear. So now his father will be afraid.
- Azmi: His father will be afraid?!
- Ibrahim: I should have stabbed him the day he walked into the restaurant. But I didn't have the courage. He deserved this knife in his heart.

Ibrahim almost falls over but rejects Samya's help and exits.

- Samya: You can go. He'll be okay **(Azmi is silent)** I'm leaving at the end of the semester. You'll have to look after him. Talk to Khaula. You might have to take him in.
- Azmi: I don't need her permission.

Samya: What happened? Did she throw you out of the house?

Azmi: I asked the kids to help me after school, and she started screaming. If they don't finish their homework, they'll be selling hummus their whole lives. **(Pause)** I don't understand why you're going all of a sudden. What are you running from? The Intifada?

Samya: I'm not running from the Intifada. But I can't do much for it here. Not even a small business strike in Haifa so that soldiers stop killing children in the West Bank. In Europe I can exert more political pressure for a state. In Europe we can talk about what happened in '48. About the discrimination we've faced here. About the deprivation. **(She hands him a book)** Read it. It's about Tantur.

Azmi: **(Looks at the book)** You believe a book published in Damascus?

Samya: **(Giving him another)** This came from Nablus.

Azmi: They're even bigger liars! I'm embarrassed each time I hear their news on the radio. Look at the books that came out on the massacre in Deir Yassin. Of course the Jews murdered there. Exactly one hundred and seven people. So why say they killed three hundred? Why say that women and girls were raped? Stories like that caused people to flee from all over the country.

Samya: That's why we need to find out the truth about Tantur.

Azmi: We swallowed a lot of shit there. They drove Dad out of his village. They drove all his family out of their land. Some of them even got killed. But I'm here, and I'll dig my heels into the ground and cook until we get what we deserve. Everything. Even a state. And this Intifada is only delaying the day we'll get it.

Samya: You deserve much more than you can get by cooking.

8. That same night. Giora and Neta's house. He is on the sofa still holding the dissertation that Samya left in his office.

Neta: I've been working for him for three years, Guri. He trusts me.

Giora: But why now? Aren't you still too new at the company?

Neta: His VP retired. He needs one.

Giora: Could those earrings also be a bribe?

She takes off the earrings.

Neta: Your father doesn't offer bribes, Guri. He knows that generosity is much more effective.

Giora: Didn't he ever ask you to rush me into starting at the company?

Neta: Why would I rush you? You've always wanted it. You were just waiting to finish your surgeries

- Giora: I still have another one next month.
- Neta: He knows it.
- Giora: We agreed that I'll join the company at the end of the semester. Why is he so impatient? He knows that I've always wanted to run the company. To build homes, schools, hospitals. I'll never be able to do anything as meaningful as that at the university.
- Neta: He's impatient because he wants to be sure he can help you while you're taking over from him.
- Giora: I don't think he's worried only about that. He's not sure that after this damn injury I'll be able to replace him. And he feels responsible for it.
- Neta: For your injury?!
- Giora: Every morning, on the way to school, he used to explain to us what to do if a war broke out.
- Neta: You called him from London when the war started. You said you couldn't stay there while your soldiers were fighting in Lebanon. You asked him to meet you at the airport.
- Giora: I called him because I wanted him to tell me to stay there. **(She is silent)** I'll probably need another surgery in the fall. Maybe we should wait with all this until the end of the year.
- Neta: Why so long?
- Giora: I need to be more prepared. I don't have his stubbornness. I don't have his shrewdness.
- Neta: You'll run the company your way. **(Pause)** So you want to postpone the wedding too? My mother may not have that much time. And what about the house? We're not buying it?
- Giora: I'm trying to figure out how to survive next to him. I need to be sure that if I run the company, he won't keep making decisions behind my back, the way he's decided about the wedding, and even the way he decided to introduce you to me.
- Neta: He introduced me because I asked him to. Because I saw how you fought to get out of the wheelchair. Because I saw you, two days after your operation, trying to get back to work. Because I saw you standing on one crutch, playing ping-pong.

Silence. He stands up and goes to her. She turns her face away. He knocks with his crutches on the floor and manages to dance a few steps. He bows. She softens.

- Giora: I'm sorry, darling. I don't even know what I'm saying. I need your help to stand up to him.
- Neta: I'm giving you all the help I can.

Giora: I know. Without you, I would've remained at the university forever.

Neta: Now it's time to move on, honey.

Giora: Yes. It is. Meanwhile, let's go to bed. In the morning I'll come with you to the hotel and discuss the menu. I'll help you try on your wedding dress, and we'll buy the house with no stairs, where we can drive all the way up to the door.

Neta: So you're also trying to bribe me?

Giora: I love you too much to do that.

Neta: If you trusted that, we could've had the baby. He would have been one by now.

Giora: I'd be so happy if you had a little belly under the chuppah.

Neta: And the next day you'll regret it?

Giora: Never again.

He hugs her. She responds.

Neta: And tomorrow you'll resign from university.

Giora: Okay. **(Kisses her)**

Neta: Next week the board will confirm your appointment.

Giora: Okay.

Neta: And from now on you'll come to the board meeting every month.

He pulls away from her suddenly.

Giora: Is it possible I'm hearing his voice coming out of your mouth? Is this what he told you to say to me?

Neta: Leave it alone.

Giora: Look at the pressure he's putting on me. Since what happened at the restaurant, he won't stop talking about our wedding. Maybe he is trying to distract me from something.

Neta: From what?

Giora: We're not naïve anymore, Neta. Maybe things like this did happen. Not just at Deir Yassin.

Neta: Are you mad? Is that what you think of your father? Don't force me to think that you're suddenly poking around in this whole affair in order to postpone the wedding.

He sits on the sofa and picks up the dissertation.

Giora: This historian has testimonies from five different refugee camps.

Neta: If you want to know what happened there, you have to ask your father.

Giora: I'm not sure he wants me to know. **(Gets up, takes his crutches)** I need to speak to Ibrahim.

Neta: Ibrahim almost killed him yesterday.

Giora: I have to know why.

Neta: Now? In the middle of the night? On the day we finally set a wedding date you go to her?

Giora: I'm going to her father, Neta.

Neta: What's so urgent? You know your father. He wouldn't do such a thing. Maybe what happened to him is like what happened to you in Lebanon.

Giora: I really hope so.

Neta: Wait till tomorrow. You'll see her at the university, anyway. You meet her there every day. You eat with her. Talk to her, I have no idea what about. It cannot continue, Giora.

Giora: I'm meeting with her because we teach in the same department. At the end of the semester, it will be over.

Neta: It must be over right now.

Giora: I'll only stay there for ten minutes, darling. **(Exits)**

9. Ibrahim and Samya's house. Fifteen minutes after midnight. Azmi, in his father's robe, just opened the door to Giora. The two enter the living room.

Giora: I'm sorry I woke you.

Azmi: It's good that you did. I'm sure my wife is worried. What time is it?

Giora: Quarter past twelve.

Azmi: Quarter past twelve?! What are you doing here at quarter past twelve?

Giora: I have to speak to your father for a second.

Azmi: At quarter past twelve?

Giora: I hope he didn't go to sleep already,

Azmi: Did something happen? **(Worried)** What happened?

Giora: It's about Tantur. I have to know what happened there. I asked my dad. He denies everything.

Azmi: Well, you can sleep tight. He's right. I'm not sure anything did happen.

Giora: What makes you unsure?

Azmi: Because my father is unsure. After so many years he doesn't remember a thing. He doesn't remember if he was there. He doesn't remember who died there. Who fled from there. The whole story hangs together on a feather.

Giora: I'd be happier to hear that from him.

Azmi: You want me to wake him at quarter past twelve? Come to us tomorrow with your father and he'll tell you. We'll shake hands over good food. Good drinks. Good coffee. Good night.

Giora hesitates for a moment. Samya enters in a nightgown.

Samya: My father told me some more things today.

Azmi: Just a second, Samya. What are you doing down here all of a sudden?

Samya: I live here.

Azmi: So, first of all put something on. **(He puts his robe on her and turns to Giora)** Dachilak, Giora. It's almost twelve thirty. **(To Samya)** You know what they'll say all over town if they see him coming to you at twelve thirty?

Samya: If you don't like it, you can go home.

Azmi: Don't tell me to go home.

Samya: It's my house, Azmi.

Azmi: It's your house because I gave it to you.

Ibrahim, who couldn't fall asleep, enters. At first, he doesn't notice Giora.

Ibrahim All your lives you've been blind. You have never seen my fear and what it takes to conquer it. What it's like to wake up every morning and say: "They expelled me from home and killed my family. But I'm alive. I'm taking a wife. I'm making children. Even if they too could be killed". You don't know how much strength you need to waste on that. Until you no longer have strength to remain a decent human being. And then your children get up one day and go off to America and don't come back to visit. Not even for their mother's funeral. And they marry girls nobody knows, and their children don't speak a word of Arabic. They've never heard who we were or what happened to us. You have no idea how much strength it takes to go there after the rain and see bones scattered between stones. Maybe my father's. Maybe my brother's. For forty years I've protected them like the apple of my eye... **(with pain)** I'll never forget what those Jews did to us there, but I won't let them forget either. **(Notices Giora and turns to him anxiously)** Giora? What? Is your father...?

Azmi: His father's fine.

Ibrahim: **(To Giora)** Is he really?

Giora: Yes. He's at home.

Azmi: When he's recovered, he'll come to us, and we'll make peace.

Samya: Sit. I'll bring you some water.

Azmi: Why did you get out of bed? It's twelve-thirty already.
 Ibrahim: Make some coffee for our guest!

Samya exits to the kitchen to make coffee.

Giora: I spoke with my father today, Ibrahim. He doesn't remember much of what happened in Tantur. Do you remember? People were killed? How many? During the battle? Afterward? Were they armed?
 Ibrahim: I don't know exactly how many. Some say that...
 Azmi: **(To Giora)** See? **(To Ibrahim)** Ya'allah, go to bed.
 Giora: Do you remember their names?
 Ibrahim: Sure, I remember.
 Samya: **(Entering)** You told me a few things today, dad.
 Azmi: Cha'las!
 Samya: You said you were hiding on the rooftop and saw how the soldiers lined them up and shot them. You said they forced you to dig a pit...
 Azmi: I've never heard him say it.
 Giora: My father was there? Did he shoot too? How do you know it was him?
 Ibrahim: Same voice. Same eyes. He had a hat. A big leather hat.
 Giora: A big leather hat!?
 Ibrahim: And a small rifle that shoots fast.
 Azmi: **(Impatient)** Dachilak, Yabba. Let's go to bed.
 Ibrahim: Tell your father that I don't want more blood spilled on the ground. He should let me put these bones under a stone, so that the rain doesn't wash them into the sea. And on the stone, we'll write the names of the dead, so we won't forget them and how they died.

Azmi takes his father's arm and exits with him.

Giora: My father had a big leather hat. And a Tommy gun. **(Silence)** Looks like your father remembers something. **(Silence)** I must speak to someone else who was there. One of father's soldiers. Or maybe one of your relatives...

She moves closer to him and takes his hand. Azmi enters.

Samya: Why are you looking at us that way? Nothing happened.
 Azmi: Of course nothing happened. A dog barked and ran away. That's it. Good night.
 Giora: I want to ask your father one more thing, Azmi.

Azmi: My father's asleep. I already told him good night.
 Giora: He probably knows some people who were there. I need a few names.
 Azmi: He doesn't know a soul. Good night.
 Giora: **(To Samya)** We'll talk tomorrow in the office.
 Azmi: There's nothing left to talk about. Nobody's said anything. And no one will say anything. Good night.
 Giora: Good night.

Giora exits. Samya turns to exit to her bedroom. Azmi stops her.

Azmi: Where do you think you are? You swore to me there's nothing going on between you anymore.
 Samya: It's none of your business, Azmi.
 Azmi: You won't see him again, and you won't talk to him. Ungrateful Son of a bitch. When he was lying in the hospital, I sat with him for hours every day. I wheeled him down to the beach in his wheelchair, even after he told me about those old people and children he killed in Lebanon. Every year I stand next to him at his brother's grave with a kippa on my head. Now I turn around for one second, and he stabs me in the back.
 Samya: Nothing has happened, Azmi.
 Azmi: Except what I saw with my own eyes. If you're so eager to go abroad, you'd better leave now. Next time I see you with him, I'll break your bones. And his, too.

10. Afternoon. Neta and Giora's apartment. Giora sits at the table. Neta enters. Silence.

Neta: Your father's on the way. He heard that you are trying to speak to his soldiers.
 Giora: He can relax. They deny everything. "We had fourteen dead. They had twenty. All in the heat of battle."
 Neta: I'm on your side in all this, Guri. I'll tell you everything I heard from him. I'll go with you to see his soldiers. I'm ready to go with you to see her father. But one thing must be clear ...
 Giora: It's completely clear. We're getting married. We're buying a house. We'll have children.
 Neta: I need to be sure.
 Giora: You know how much I love you. How much I owe you.

They hug. The doorbell rings. Avigdor and Yona enter. Avigdor's shoulder is still bandaged, his arm in a sling. He is still in pain.

- Yona: We want to put an end to this, Guri. You will stop looking for dad's soldiers. You will not call them or meet them. We have nothing to hide. Dad hasn't committed any crime. I don't want lawyers and trials. Certainly not against you.
- Giora: I don't want that either.
- Yona: So make do with what Dad told you.
- Giora: He didn't tell me much. You didn't either.
- Yona: Because there's nothing to tell. It's all rumors. And the minute you start asking questions, there will be more rumors. His shoulder is swollen. He has a fever. And instead of going to the doctor, we're here begging you to believe us.
- Giora: Is that true? **(Avigdor doesn't answer)**
- Yona: I was there. I treated the wounded. I saw the dead. Your father was a survivor. Not a murderer.
- Giora: It's not just Ibrahim. It's also the dissertation.
- Yona: The bastard who wrote it didn't even try to listen to Daddy. It was a just war, Guri. No war was more just.
- Giora: Ibrahim remembers your Tommy gun and your leather hat.
- Yona: Dad doesn't deny that he was there.
- Giora: So maybe there's something to the other things he remembers.
- Yona: You believe him more than you believe us?
- Giora: I want to believe you. Just tell me how many were really killed. You know too. Why are you so evasive? What are you covering up?
- Yona: We told you how many.
- Giora: **(Turning to Avigdor)** It's no secret that for the last ten years you've been helping Ibrahim's family, Dad.
- Yona: **(Cuts him off)** We're human beings, Guri. You're busy with your own wounds, so you refuse to see ours. Two days before Tantar we lost twenty-two boys in a battle with the Iraqi army. **(She chokes up)** And Udi... who burned alive in his tank... and you... barely survived... he's surely going out of his mind now.
- Giora: He's going out of his mind because you're using him.
- Yona: **(Angrily)** Next week we're laying a stone in his memory. You'll stand with us and give him the respect he deserves.
- Giora: Mom. Enough!
- Yona: We can grit our teeth and let you keep picking at our wounds. But after you listen to whoever will talk to you, and after you realize you're mistaken, then you'll come to us and beg our forgiveness. And I'm not sure we'll be able to forgive. Then you'll know what

your Dad did. Then you won't have to believe us. And if you don't believe us, then there's nothing for us to do here anymore.

Avigdor: **(Rising)** I think it's time to end this game.

Yona: Sit, Avigdor.

Avigdor: I never thought you'd speak to my soldiers.

Yona: I'm talking to him.

Avigdor: But since you've already done it, you'd better hear from me too.

Yona: I told you not to interfere.

Avigdor: I thought that if we built there, we'd bury this affair forever.

Giora: So there was an affair?

Avigdor: I always wanted to tell you and Udi about it. I tried a few times. When I thought you were old enough to understand, I took you to the monument I built there for my soldiers...

Giora: Tell me now!

Yona: He's already told you! **(To Avigdor)** Don't you see what you're doing?

Avigdor: We killed. Not two hundred twenty like the Arabs claim. And not even the hundred fifty that the Red Cross reported. We buried seventy. There were probably some injured who died on the way to Tul Karem. All of them were shot during combat. When the trucks came, two bastards tried to stop the others from getting on. One threw a grenade that he had hidden under his shirt. Four of my soldiers were killed. Twenty years old. Just a month after getting off the boat. Survivors from the camps. The last remains. **(Pause)** So we shot those two bastards. The Arabs started screaming. Throwing stones. Fifteen hundred people surrounded us. No reinforcements. Nobody could rescue us. We continued shooting until they calmed down. If we hadn't, they would have finished us off and stayed in the village. And then they would have stayed in other villages too. And the war would have continued. Maybe until today. And we wouldn't be talking about a few dozen dead. We wouldn't be talking about a few thousand dead. We'd be talking about hundreds of thousands of dead. From our side. And from theirs. Would that have been better? Answer me. Would you pat me on my shoulder and tell me what a decent man I am? **(Giora is silent)** A week after the battle an officer came to investigate. He also determined that it all happened during combat. All of it. **(Giora is silent)** I admit that we expelled many from there. We were afraid that they'd join the Iraqis and Jordanians who invaded the week before. **(Silence)** Now you know it. And now you have to live with it. Without hypocrisy. Without pretense. I live with it every day. I worked very hard to make sure that we didn't expel them for nothing; that we didn't kill for nothing. That the killing

and expulsion would allow us to continue living here; building here; repairing ourselves and those of them that stayed here. That's why I always helped them. After Udi was killed, I even doubled my donations. You can go check. Ask whoever you want. If you find out I was wrong; that I spilled blood for no reason; that I expelled for no reason; I'll pay the price, 'til my very last breath... even though I've already paid... and you know how much I've paid. But if you find out I was right... that I did what I needed to... What everyone expected of me... then I hope you'll...

Giora: I don't understand. You shot seventy people to calm down the others? How could you?! Your hands didn't shake?! There were women, old people and children among them. They weren't armed. You saw them fall. Why didn't you shoot in the air? At their feet?

Avigdor: Of course we shot in the air. Of course we shot at their feet.

Giora: I've also been surrounded by mobs a few times. Seventy people aren't killed by stray bullets.

Yona: He yelled at the soldiers. He tried to stop them.

Giora: I don't believe you.

Yona: **(Angrily)** You won't accuse us of any crime, Giora. If we were guilty of something we've already paid enough. All of us. You, too. Who blames you, even though you also killed?

Giora: I threw a grenade into a house, where there were terrorists hiding. In the middle of battle. I couldn't have known women and children would be there too!

Neta: **(To Avigdor and Yona)** I think it would be best if you left.

Yona: **(To Giora)** This isn't very different from what we did.

Neta: **(Forcefully)** Don't say anything anymore! Please leave before you make him believe he's committed a crime too. You know he didn't!

A terrifying idea suddenly crosses Giora's mind.

Giora: Now I see the connection. Now I understand why it happened.

Yona: Why what happened?

Giora: **(Pointing to his legs)** This didn't happen by chance.

Avigdor: What didn't happen by chance? That's madness, Giora. I wish I'd been injured instead of you,

Giora: It happened because of you.

Avigdor and Yona are stunned. Neta hurries and hugs Giora. The sound of bulldozers grows louder.

11. October 1995. Giora is in his apartment in Haifa, and Samya is in her apartment in London. They are corresponding by computer and reading their messages aloud.

Samya: Hi Giora. I got the entry permit. Thank you so much. I'll arrive tomorrow. I spoke with my father on the phone. He cried with joy. He promised to keep on living.

Giora: That's wonderful. I'm very glad. After my father died, he came by with Azmi to offer his condolences. Since then, I've been eating at their restaurant almost every Friday.

Samya: He's always loved you.

Giora: By the way, the president of the university sends his regards. He thinks the political climate has improved, and he wants you to come back and teach here. He's willing to recommend dropping the criminal charges against you.

Samya: This charge is baseless. The police accused me of supporting terror just to silence me. You know I can't come back and keep quiet.

Giora: I've seen some of your interviews. You can say all of that here too.

Samya: I won't be able to live under constant fear of arrest.

Giora: The legal system here is still strong. It'll protect you.

Samya: Do you really believe that? Don't you see it doesn't protect Palestinians? Just look at how many young people were killed in Gaza this year, and no one was ever convicted.

Giora: Is that why you don't want to meet me?

Samya: It's too complicated. You have a wife. You have two daughters.

Giora: I got divorced a year ago. Azmi didn't tell you?

Samya: You got divorced?!

Giora: Neta married me to help us get through my father's death. But she probably also wanted a career in the company.

Samya: You didn't have to agree.

Giora: I probably wanted to give my mother a reason to go on living.

Samya: Azmi didn't tell me anything. I asked him several times. You should have written to me.

Giora: He told me you were living with an historian from Oxford.

Samya: I left him more than a year ago.

Giora: Did you? I wish I'd known. Please, let's talk on the phone. I can call you right now. We still deserve a chance.

Samya: We'll talk about it when we meet.

12. Spring 1988. Two days later. Yona and Avigdor's home. Morning. Yona is in the living room. Giora and Neta enter. They hug Yona.

Giora: How did it happen?
 Yona: His fever spiked after we visited you. I took him to the emergency room.
 Giora: What did he have?
 Yona: That knife was filthy. An infection spread. They opened it. Cleaned it. And stitched him up again. In the morning he fled home.
 Neta: Why didn't you call us?
 Yona: He didn't want you to know.
 Giora: He knows we're here?
 Yona: No.
 Neta: You shouldn't have let him go to the office.
 Yona: He went to stay sane. He doesn't sleep. He drinks. Smokes.
 Giora: He needs to see a doctor today.
 Yona: He doesn't need a doctor, Guri. He needs you. He loves you more than anything in the world. From the day you were born. He never tried to hide it. After Udi fell, his whole life depended entirely on you.
 Giora: Mom, stop.
 Yona: When you got injured, he sat by your bedside day and night.
 Giora: I know.
 Yona: You were always your father's son. Your first word was "Daddy." From then on you never stopped loving him. Always on his shoulders. Going to the beach with him. Playing with him. How can you hurt him like this now?
 Giora: I love him as much as I always did, mom.
 Yona: Then come back here tonight and tell him you understand why he did it, and that there's no connection between what he did and what happened to you. And that will end the discussion. And he doesn't have to know that you know he was hospitalized.
 Giora: Maybe just the opposite. Maybe he can't live with these lies anymore either.
 Yona: So far, we've lived very nicely with these lies.

Suddenly Avigdor enters, his arm still in a sling. For a moment it seems like there might be a miracle and Avigdor and Giora will rush to hug each other. But the miracle doesn't happen.

Avigdor: (To Yona) What is he doing here?
 Yona: He came to talk to me.
 Avigdor: Behind my back?

Giora: I want to talk to you, too, dad.
 Avigdor: **(To Yona)** I don't want him in this house.
 Yona: He came to apologize, Avigdor.
 Avigdor: When I left this morning, I could see on your face that you were waiting for him.
 Yona: **(Forcefully)** He's thought about what you said. He understands why it happened. He knows it has nothing to do with what happened to him. This affair is over and done with. He's coming back to sit on the board at the company.

Avigdor understands what happened behind his back.

Avigdor: I see that a little bird told him I got sick and his heart broke.
 Giora: Please, dad.
 Avigdor: I'm perfectly healthy. I don't need your pity.
 Giora: I'm not offering any pity. I came to listen. I came to understand.
 Avigdor: If you wanted to understand, you'd have listened to me before. Instead, you pronounced your verdict and tied a noose around my neck.
 Giora: I'm sorry about what I said, Dad.
 Yona: Listen to him, Avigdor.
 Avigdor: I've already heard him. **(Assertively)** This morning I met with four officers from my regiment. They confirm every word I said. None of them had even the slightest doubt. We didn't commit any crime.
 Neta: If you think he doesn't understand, explain it to him. That's why we came. We had no idea you were in hospital.
 Giora: I think I understand pretty well now. I read the General Staff's plan. I saw the order to expel the inhabitants of villages that opposed us. I assume those were the same orders you got from the brigade commander.
 Avigdor: You want me to say I was just following orders? Put the responsibility on the brigadier?
 Giora: You said the report from the investigating officer cleared you completely. I'd be happy to see it.
 Yona: He'll show you.
 Avigdor: I told him what's written there.
 Giora: I'd also be happy to read the report from The Red Cross.
 Avigdor: The Red Cross report was written from Arab testimonies. They never even spoke to us.
 Giora: Fine. Show me whatever you want me to see.
 Avigdor: You don't want to see. You want to accuse. Yes, I'm also responsible for what happened to you. It's my fault you got on the first plane out of London. I'm to blame for getting you to Lebanon.

Giora: I don't blame you for that.
 Yona: Leave it now, Avigdor.
 Avigdor: You got shot because when you broke into that house and saw the children and the old people who were killed by your grenade, you panicked, left your soldiers and ran outside.
 Giora: Can we perhaps not talk about that right now?
 Avigdor: This is what you've been talking about ever since that day.
 Giora: Now I'm talking about something else, Dad. The dissertation I showed you has already gone to print. In a couple of weeks, it will be published. We need to be prepared. When the battle broke out there was an Israeli government already. There was an army. There are transcripts from meetings. There are copies of the orders you received. We must publish them.
 Yona: Nobody took minutes in those days, Giora.
 Giora: Don't dismiss my idea so quickly. Why do you have to protect the government? The chief of staff? The brigade commander? You don't have to carry such guilt alone.
 Avigdor: I'm not carrying any guilt!
 Yona: No one was guilty in that war, Guri. We killed civilians. Much less than they killed. We expelled a few thousand. We were very surprised when hundreds of thousands started running away.
 Giora: If you don't publish your own account, this affair will be remembered like the massacre in Deir Yassin.
 Avigdor: This was nothing like Deir Yassin.
 Giora: So let's write it together in a book.
 Yona: For what? Whose purpose is it going to serve?
 Giora: Not only to absolve you, dad. My injury puts certain responsibility on me to try and understand...
 Avigdor: Get out of here!
 Yona: Enough, Avigdor!
 Giora: Only when we find out what happened there, will we know how to live here.
 Avigdor: Get out of here now!
 Giora: **(To Neta)** Let's go.
 Neta: Give me a few more minutes, honey. Please, Wait for me at home.

Giora turns to leave. But he loses his balance and falls. Neta and Yona rush to him and help him to his feet. Giora exits. Avigdor lights a cigar.

Avigdor: We fought for our lives. And he thinks that we slaughtered like those murderers at Deir Yassin.
 Neta: He didn't say that.
 Avigdor: That's what he meant.

Neta: That's not true. He loves you. He knows how much he hurt you. He's sorry about it. He wants to come to the board meeting next week. He accepts your account. He wants to publish it in a book.

Avigdor: He wants to write that it was a massacre.

Yona: He won't write that.

Neta: If you think he doesn't need to write a book, then sit with him and explain why. He won't argue with you.

Yona: And we'll finally bury this affair forever.

Avigdor: I'll think about it.

Neta: I need an answer now. **(Firmly)** I don't care about that war. I don't care who died in it. I don't care how they died. I don't care who's guilty or who isn't. I'm fighting for his life now. So that he won't give up. So that he'll want to have children. So that he believes he can raise them.

Avigdor: I said I'll think about it.

Neta: We don't have time, Avigdor. If you push him, he'll write the book without you. **(Silence)** You know how much I love him. If you force him to confront you, I'll have to stand by him. And it might be very hard for me to continue working with you.

Yona: No one is forcing him, Neta.

Neta: **(To Avigdor)** We'll come back tomorrow evening. I'm sure you'll know what to tell him. **(Exits)**

Yona: I don't think we should wait until tomorrow evening.

Avigdor: Let him write his book. No one will publish it.

Yona: You're playing with fire, Avigdor. Talk to him now, before he gets us all into trouble. Eventually he'll understand.

Avigdor: He doesn't want to understand. Didn't you see? He'll only forgive me if I confess I was following orders. If I place the responsibility on others. He's not prepared to consider the possibility that it was the right thing to do. That there was no other option. Didn't you see how he avoided me? He wouldn't even shake my hand.

13. Late afternoon. Ibrahim and Samya's house.

Giora: Try to remember, Ibrahim. Where did you sleep that night in Tantur? In the house? On the roof?

Ibrahim: On the roof? There's wind on the roof. From the sea. **(He laughs)** When I was a boy we'd make kites. Out of paper and rags. And they'd fly in the wind. And then we'd let go of the string. Once I flew my kite at night, and the next morning I found it outside our store in Haifa. **(Laughs)**

Giora: When did you wake up that morning? What did you see?

Ibrahim: In Haifa we had a fabric store next to the port. A thousand square meters, and a storage room. People came to us from Jaffa, Ramallah, Lud. My father was a big merchant. With a belly like a mountain. After lunch he would lie down in the storage room and snore.

Samya: Yaba...

Ibrahim: That night we didn't sleep. We knew they'd come. They had some Jews with them who used to buy vegetables in Tantur before the war. They knew the way. The ducks heard them and started quacking madly... **(Silence)** Now my head aches.

Giora: **(To Samya)** I have some pills.

Ibrahim: This isn't a headache for pills. **(Pause)** Yil'an din'hu this head of mine. I wish it were empty.

Giora: Where were you when the shooting began, Ibrahim?

Ibrahim: I was in the tower of the mosque. When they saw the fire coming out of my gun, they... **(Pause)** Better if you came tomorrow.

Samya: Baba, I also want to know.

Ibrahim: What for? So the dead will come back to life?

Samya: So we'll know what happened to them.

Ibrahim: If I could, I would have told you the day you were born.

Azmi enters.

Azmi: **(To Samya)** I told you I don't want him here anymore. **(To Giora)** Take your legs and get out.

Samya: **(To Azmi)** You won't kick him out, Azmi.

Azmi: Of course I will. His father's heard you two are helping him with his book, so now he's filed a complaint against us for assault.

Giora: How did he hear?

Azmi: And he wants a million in compensation.

Giora: It's an empty threat. He knows what will come out the minute he goes to court.

Azmi: He's not afraid of any court. He knows I'm a tiny little Arab and he's a big Jew. And no court will defend a tiny little Arab against a big Jew. If you were a tiny little Arab, you'd know it.

Samya: I know a couple of good lawyers who...

Azmi: I'm not getting any lawyer and I'm not starting any trial. **(To Ibrahim)** A trial like this would start a war that would never end. Is that what you want?

Ibrahim: **(To Samya)** So I shouldn't tell?

Samya: Yes, you should.

Azmi: There's nothing to tell.

Samya: His life fell apart that day, Azmi.

Azmi: He's making it up.

Samya: You know him. You know he's not making anything up.

Azmi: **(To Ibrahim)** And I'll tell you why you're making it up. Because you don't want us to know the truth. You ran away from there. All of you ran away. Like pigeons who fly away the minute a kid chucks his apple core at them.

Ibrahim: You don't know a thing, ya ahabal. They ran away from Haifa. From Akko. From Yaffa. Like mice from a drowning boat. We fought for six months. With a hundred old rifles, and a few boxes of bullets. We shot them on the roads. In the fields. We put mines under their trucks. Even if we wanted, we couldn't run away. Lebanon took in only the wealthy ones who could pay for visas. The rest of us stayed till our last bullet.

Azmi: Of course. Now you're all heroes at my expense. The moment you open your mouth they'll throw us out of the restaurant and weld the doors shut. Where would we go? To sell za'atar at a refugee camp in Tul Karem?

Ibrahim: Wallah el Azim. You aren't the fool, Azmi. I am. I never told you what happened because I didn't want you to be afraid to live here. And look what's happened. You're more afraid than me.

Azmi: I'm afraid?

Ibrahim: But my fear is gone. When children are throwing stones at tanks in Jenin, we can't be afraid to open our mouths here. From now on, I walk the streets and tell everyone. Even those who don't want to hear. **(Turns to leave)**

Azmi: Sit down! **(Ibrahim sits)**

Samya: We won't do anything without you, Azmi.

Giora: You've just been in his office. Haven't you? You told him that I'm here. All my life I've seen people leaving his office with an offer they couldn't refuse. Don't you understand that he's more afraid than you?

Azmi: I'm not afraid. But I'm not looking out through the window. I go up to the roof to see far away. I know what happened in Tantur. I know everything. They killed. Not just there. Everywhere. And those they didn't kill, they expelled. From every city. From every village. We won't forgive it for the rest of our lives. But I don't want to settle accounts over the past. I want to give a chance to what's still to come. That's why I don't talk about it. **(To Ibrahim)** And you're not going to build any memorial there. Because I'm thinking of you. And of her. And about the kids she'll have. And about my kids. I want this place to be their home. They won't be second class tenants here. **(To Giora)** You think I don't know that your father was responsible for that mess in Tantur? The day he

came to the restaurant and arranged a permit for me and offered a loan, paid for her university and gave her a grant, that day I asked myself, "what happened? How did I win the lottery if I never bought a ticket?" I didn't have to spend ten years in university to figure it out. The first guy I sent to the library, told me your father was the commanding officer in Tantur. So I understood what was cooking in his pot. Maybe they didn't kill two hundred and twenty people like some of us say, and maybe they didn't rape women or girls. But one hundred and twenty they did kill. I asked my aunt in Tul Karem. She counted them all. They shot them like rabid dogs. But I wanted to live like a man. Not die like a dog. So I kept my mouth shut. **(To Samya)** And that's why you kept your mouth shut, too. You could've also checked why his father was paying for your studies. But you didn't. Because you didn't want to know. Because you wanted his money, and you wanted his son. **(To Giora)** You too could have figured out what your father did there. But you also didn't want to know. If you knew, how could you eat with us? How could you look her in the face? So don't tell me what to remember or what to forget. You're not such a big hero. Maybe against a few kids and some old people who were hiding under the steps in a ruined house in Lebanon. And don't ever come to my restaurant again. I wouldn't give you stinking hummus on a rotten pita.

Azmi exits.

Ibrahim: Make him some coffee for the way home. **(Exits after Azmi)**
 Samya: He's right. I could have known everything a long time ago. I should have known it a long time ago. Instead, I shut up. Just like him. When I talked, I lied to myself. I lied because I wanted to be with people like you, because I wanted to please people like you. That's why I always despised myself around people like you...
 Giora: Those days are over, Samya. You don't have to shut up anymore. On the contrary. We have to admit what we did. **(Embraces her)** Your father will show us where the bones are. We'll bring a few students, give them some shovels and uncover them. We'll bury them, build the memorial that he wants. For you and for us. **(She is silent)** We'll write this book together, Samya. For you and for us. Maybe that way we can begin to end these damn wars...

He wipes away her tears

Samya: I'll return the grant to your father. I can't touch his money.
 Giora: Will you postpone the trip?

Samya: My family will need me here.
 Giora: I will, too. **(He takes her hands)**
 Samya: I thought you gave up on me. I have already done everything to give up on you. Now suddenly you're back.
 Giora: We're in this together. Aren't we?
 Samya: What do you mean together? Struggling for the same cause? Every time we meet, I want so much more. And you do too.
 Giora: Yes. I do.
 Samya: I don't want to lie to myself.
 Giora: You've always known how much I wanted to live with you. But now it seems even more complicated. Could you live with me, knowing what he did? His blood runs through my veins. Wherever you look, you'll see the writing on the wall.
 Samya: We can try. When I see how you're dealing with what he did, I believe we can live here together.
 Giora: And your family? Your friends? They'll make your life unbearable.
 Samya: I can handle them. **(They embrace)**

14. Night. Avigdor and Yona's house. Avigdor sits on the sofa, one hand in a sling, the other holding a drink. Yona stands opposite him.

Avigdor: He won't uncover any bones, and he won't build any memorial. The guards won't let him in.
 Yona: Forget the guards. If you withdraw the complaint to the police, he'll stop everything and meet with you.
 Avigdor: That's what he told you?
 Yona: Yes. Sit with him. Show him the orders you received. Tell him you regret it. That you're sorry you obeyed them. He'll listen and realize that there's no point in writing about it.
 Avigdor: I was there for the discussions of those orders, and I took part in writing them.
 Yona: I know.
 Avigdor: And I don't regret it.
 Yona: I said that you'd say you regret it.
 Avigdor: We did the right thing.
 Yona: Even if it wasn't the right thing, it was the only thing we could do.
 Avigdor: He has to know it. He has to know where the Jordan Legion was. Where the Arab Liberation Army was. He has to understand that the Iraqi army was planning to use Tantur as their base to attack Haifa.

- Yona: And if he doesn't? You'll keep chasing him until he does something to himself? I don't want to return to those days in the hospital when he was hiding sleeping pills in chocolate boxes.
- Avigdor: **(Drinks his whiskey)** I don't either.
- Yona: But you're forcing us to return. I never blamed you for what happened to the children, Avigdor. I've blamed myself. Only myself. That I didn't know how to protect them from you. Udi had a shorter leg. He didn't have to enlist.
- Avigdor: He wanted to.
- Yona: You didn't give him a choice.
- Avigdor: He wanted to be like his friends.
- Yona: When he fell, Giora should have been released from his unit.
- Avigdor: He didn't want to be released.
- Yona: You didn't give him a choice either.
- Avigdor: When he came home with his beret, you were proud just like I was.
- Yona: You lit this fire in both of them. Giora didn't have to go back to Lebanon. When he called from London, I begged you to tell him to stay there.
- Avigdor: I told him that the decision was his.
- Yona: You didn't. I should have locked the door so they couldn't get out of the house. But I was afraid of you. I was so afraid that I gave in to their lust to sacrifice themselves. They were still boys. What did they know?
- Avigdor: I'm not going to hear such accusations from you. We're not to blame for what happened to them.
- Yona: We can still save him, Avigdor. **(He doesn't answer)** If you don't go and show him all the orders you received and tell him how sorry you are that you followed them, then I'll go and tell him what I know. What I saw with my own eyes. Everything you don't want him to know.

Avigdor throws his glass against the wall.

- Avigdor: What do you know? What did you see with your own eyes? We massacred?! Now you're spreading these lies too? I am not hiding any crime. And I do not have to defend myself against any accusation. And when the hell did I want Giora and Udi to sacrifice themselves? My hands are clean. In spite of what happened in Tantur. Even though I thought that Udi should enlist. Even though I waited for Giora at the airport. Even though I took him to his company. He didn't even want to stop at home to get his boots! Both knew very well that if we didn't win, we wouldn't live. Every night I see Udi burning in that tank... I see Giora getting hit by the

bullet... **(Long silence)** You think I don't want to talk to him? I went there. I knocked on the door. I said I want to listen. To find out what he thinks. Maybe there's something I don't understand. He wouldn't open...

The Bulldozers sound becomes louder.

15. October 1995. Giora is in his apartment in Haifa, and Samya is in her apartment in London. They are corresponding by computer and reading their messages aloud.

Samya: Hi Giora. Sorry I didn't answer. I went to buy gifts for Azmi's kids. I didn't have a chance to talk to him today. Have you heard anything about my father?

Giora: He is much better. The cardiologist I took him to, changed his medication, and he walked all the way to the restaurant.

Samya: That's wonderful. Thank you. It's not taken for granted that you're helping us so much.

Giora: And still, you won't meet me?

Samya: We'll meet when I'm ready.

Giora: Why is it so difficult for you? What are you holding against me? After my father died, I asked you to return here and move in with me. But you were busy collecting donations for your wounded in the Intifada.

Samya: You should have donated to them too. The occupation is your disaster no less than ours.

Giora: I know it inside out.

Samya: You won't come to meet me alone, Giora. You'll come with your power. With your money. With your connections. With your father's spirit behind you. You'll offer me temptations I won't be able to refuse.

Giora: You don't have to refuse anything.

Samya: I wish I still believed we could live together.

Giora: Why can't we? Because you're afraid I'll accuse you of pulling me into the affair that led to my father's death?

Samya: I am not afraid. I am proud.

16. Spring 1988. Neta and Giora's apartment. Morning. Giora turns to leave. Neta enters.

Neta: Wait a second. **(He stops)** You came home very late last night.
 Giora: Yes. Sorry. I didn't realize you were awake.
 Neta: You've already started working on the book with her.
 Giora: We only talked about it.
 Neta: I suggest you don't rush. I just talked to your mother. They're on their way here. He's already dropped the charges against Ibrahim and copied all the documents from the archive.
 Giora: And what about the grave and the monument?
 Neta: He wants more details.
 Giora: Will he write the book with me?
 Neta: He'll give you an answer after you've looked at the documents. **(Pause)** I think it's worth listening to him. He's never talked this way about that war. The fear. The despair. The doubt. He was sure they would be defeated. Ninety soldiers from his regiment were killed. He remembers their names. He showed me the final count of the dead. They killed two thousand of our civilians in that war.
 Giora: The ones we killed, he prefers to forget.
 Neta: The week before the battle in Tantur, they massacred two hundred and forty members of kibbutz Kfar Etzion who were waving white flags.
 Giora: And that justifies what he did?
 Neta: Your father's soldiers didn't kill for the sake of killing. They weren't even retaliating. They were trying to get out of there alive. To survive. You can't judge them without understanding the context.
 Giora: You really think so? Even he doesn't believe the context justified what they did. If he believed it, he would have said so long ago. And maybe then I would've thought more honestly about my own wars and maybe I wouldn't have gone back to Lebanon.
 Neta: You chose to return there.
 Giora: He programmed me to return.
 Neta: Don't you see how much you're torturing him with this accusation?
 Giora: I thought you were on my side in all this. I hoped that together we could get him to admit what happened in that village. That somehow it might stop this from happening again.
 Neta: I am on your side! I've always been!
 Giora: You're denying it together with him! **(Turns to leave)**
 Neta: Wait. If you're going to her again now, you'd better hold on for a second. **(He stops)** I want to tell the hotel we're cancelling the date.
 Giora: Cancelling? Why?

- Neta: Because you're scaring me. You're punishing the people closest to you for some stupid guilt. That's why you keep seeing that woman, who filled your head with it. Don't you see how obsessed you've become with this "justice"? If we had expelled more, maybe there wouldn't be an intifada today. If we had killed more, maybe that war would've been the last. And if you had killed more, maybe you wouldn't have been injured.
- Giora: Is that what he told you?
- Neta: When I see what you're doing to him, I'm not sure what you would have done, if you were in his shoes.
- Giora: I don't know. I'm not better than him. Maybe I would have killed just like him.
- Neta: You're much crueler than him. You're ruthlessly hurting him. And your mother. And me. I can't marry you if you keep on persecuting him.
- Giora: It's not just between me and him, Neta.
- Neta: It's only between you and him. And if you still want to save what you've ruined, tell him you accept his every word. And you won't see that family again or eat with them anymore. You won't look for any of their bones in any grave, and you won't work with them on any book.
- Giora: So you'll only marry me if I accept everything he says? Haven't I accepted enough? Because of him, I fooled myself that I wanted to marry you. Because of him, I fooled you as well. I wanted, because he wanted. You too wanted because he wanted.

Neta grabs him by the shirt and shakes him in anger.

- Neta: I wanted. Me. There was nothing in the world I wanted more. You didn't want. You only wanted me to get you back on your feet. And, out of love, I let you use me, throw me away, and go back to her.

17. Ibrahim and Samya's house. Afternoon. Ibrahim sits next to the table.

- Giora: Where is the grave, Ibrahim? How far down the wadi?
- Samya: In front of the mosque? In front of the school?
- Giora: If you don't remember exactly, say approximately.
- Samya: Try to remember, Yabba.
- Giora: He's evading again.
- Samya: He doesn't feel well. He didn't sleep all night.

Giora: He'll tell us and go to sleep. **(To Ibrahim)** In front of the mosque or the school?

Samya: Maybe he's afraid to remember.

Giora: He's not afraid to remember. He's afraid of my father. **(To Ibrahim)** We can still find the bones, Ibrahim. Tomorrow my father will build a city there, and we won't be able to dig underneath it.

Samya: He can't speak, Giora.

Giora: If you don't tell me where they are, I'll bring tractors and dig up the entire wadi!

Samya: Don't threaten him.

Giora: He's going to tell us where they are!

Ibrahim: I'm not telling you anything. Enough blood has already been spilled in this intifada. I don't want it to go on. I'll guard the bones until the end of it, so the rain won't wash them into the sea. If we win, we'll gather them and place a stone there, with the names. And if not, I'll keep guarding them until the next intifada.

Giora: This intifada will be over in a few weeks, Ibrahim. The army is crushing it with force. By the next intifada, there'll be nothing left there.

Samya: He thinks that if we reveal the bones now, the army will use even more force.

Giora: Because of a stone with flowers?!

Samya: Because it'll tell you all something you don't want to know. **(to Ibrahim)** Come, Dad.

Samya walks Ibrahim out, Giora blocks her way.

Giora: This is our chance, Samya. I told you. Neta chose my father's side. I'm moving out tonight. We can live together now.

Samya: He can hear you. **(Takes Ibrahim by his arm)**

Giora: He's known for a long time.

Ibrahim: Min Shan Allah, Giora. Beware of these bones. You and your father. If either of you dares to touch them, fire will rise from the ground and burn you. **(Exits)**

Giora: I see my father spoke to him.

Samya: He didn't speak to him. His lawyer came here last night. I didn't let him in.

Giora: Why didn't you tell me?

Samya: So you could think sensibly. Leave your father alone. We don't have a chance against him.

Giora: And we'll go on living with this lie?

- Samya: We don't have to find bones to expose the truth. Let's move to London. There's no writing on the wall there. We'll write a book. And publish it. Teach it in university. **(Hugs him)** In London we can live together. Without fear. Without shame. Without guilt.
- Giora: And we'll forget my father?
- Samya: There's no statute of limitations for crimes like these. In some countries people like him can be put on trial. All the evidence will be in our book.
- Giora: If he's put on trial, he'll find a way to deny everything. But if we find the bones, he'll have to admit it. To feel remorse. To make amends. I'll call my students right now. Bring your father. When he sees us digging, he'll show us the grave.

He disengages from her and exits.

18. Afternoon. Giora's apartment. Avigdor and Yona sit and wait. Avigdor holds a bag. He no longer needs an arm sling. Giora enters.

- Avigdor: I brought you the documents. I'll be happy to show them to you. But first I think it's best you tell your students to stay at the university.
- Yona: And tomorrow we'll all stand together, with Neta, for Udi's ceremony. And the day after you'll come to the board meeting.
- Giora: We're only talking about a few hundred square meters, Dad. A stone with names. A flower bed. An olive tree and a bench. **(Showing Avigdor a plan)** Look. I'd need a bulldozer for two days and a pile-driver for another three to install pillars for the fence.
- Avigdor: **(Rejecting the plans)** I don't understand why you are being so stubborn. Even Ibrahim and his family don't want it anymore.
- Giora: They will.
- Avigdor: When they want it, we'll talk about it.
- Giora: I'm doing it for us too, Dad.
- Yona: We definitely don't want it. **(To Avigdor)** Show him.

Avigdor opens his bag and takes out a stack of documents.

- Avigdor: I brought you government plans, orders of the general staff and the investigating officer's report on Tantur. There was a general guideline to expel villagers who resisted the takeover. There were no written orders to kill so that others would flee, but there were eyes winking from commanding officers who made clear what was expected. I'm ready to tell you everything, but only to you.

Giora: This is not a private dispute between us, dad.

Yona: Dad has come a long way to meet you, Guri. Meet him halfway. Stop your students and we'll begin talking.

Giora: And what about the book?

Avigdor: When you hear me, you'll understand why these things must remain between us.

Giora: Everyone who lives here must know what happened here.

Yona: You know very well what will happen when they know.

Avigdor: The responsibility on my shoulders was too heavy, Giora. I was a twenty-four-year-old construction engineer. I went to war straight from my office. After a year and a half, I became a regiment commander. All of a sudden, I was responsible for the fate of hundreds of thousands. I couldn't always deliberate. Against fire. Under attack. Under terrible fear. In helplessness. In despair. I couldn't always be reasonable. I didn't always know how to refuse what this war permitted.

Giora: The war permitted shooting such as this?

Avigdor: Perhaps we were too quick to shoot. Perhaps we shot too much.

Giora: Perhaps?!

Avigdor: Yes. I shot too much.

Yona: Enough, Avigdor.

Avigdor: Yes. We retaliated. In rage. In revenge. In madness.

Yona: Avigdor!

Avigdor: Yes. We rampaged through the streets. Between the courtyards. Yes. I got swept away by my soldiers. I couldn't control them. Yes. I couldn't stop either. Yes. We shot those who hid in their houses. Yes. Those who were just throwing stones. Maybe even some women and old men who just peeped from their windows. Yes. Those who were trying to get away. But even so, it was a battle. Not a massacre. And two days later there was another battle. We killed there too. We got killed there too. And then there was another one. But we never slaughtered. Never slaughtered. I will not lie to you. I did not mourn their dead. Nor ours. We buried them and wiped away the sweat and the dust. And the blood. Yes. To mourn was a luxury... **(Pauses)**

Yona: **(To Giora)** What else do you want to hear?

Giora: That you're sorry. That you regret it. That the killing was unnecessary.

Yona: Of course he regrets it. That affair soured our lives.

Avigdor: You'll only be satisfied when I put a gun to my head?

Yona: Avigdor, please.

Giora: I'll be satisfied when you come with me to the wadi, and dig with me until we uncover the bones, and we erect a stone.

Avigdor: You know that's impossible.
 Giora: And you'll explain in the book what you did there. You'll ask for forgiveness. You'll atone.
 Avigdor: All my life I've struggled to atone, Giora.
 Giora: You struggled to deny. To hide. You, and your soldiers. That is why, to this very day, we continue to kill, to expel, and to destroy. That's why most of us continue to close our eyes and to remain silent. Me too. I always knew this village was destroyed and its people were expelled. I never asked why. Never checked how. And when my turn came, I also killed. Just like you.
 Avigdor: You didn't have a choice either.
 Giora: That's where our cruelty was born, Dad. Since then, it has grown with every war. Theirs too.
 Avigdor: If we learn to live with them, it will fade. It will fade and the wounds will heal.
 Giora: Your denial of what you did blinded all of us, Dad. **(Turns to leave)**
 Yona: **(Blocks him)** Wait. We're willing to uncover those bones.
 Avigdor: We're not uncovering any bones!
 Yona: How much longer will we be able to keep them underground, Avigdor? It's better we dig there ourselves, while we can still explain what we did.
 Avigdor: There's no point in going there. There is no wadi. The tractors went out today. They flattened the hill. Filled the wadi. You won't find anything there.

Giora stops, shocked. Yona, too, is stunned.

Yona: **(To Avigdor)** How could you do that?! Stop them! Stop them!!
 Giora: **(To Avigdor)** You will never succeed in hiding the dead that you buried there... Even if you build skyscrapers on top of them, I'll dig for them with my hands and fingernails. Until they're found. Then maybe the wounds will begin to heal. **(He exits)**

19. October 1995. The sound of the bulldozers grows louder. Giora is in his apartment in Haifa, and Samya is in her apartment in London. They are corresponding by computer and reading their messages aloud.

Giora: Hi, Samya. Azmi just called me. You cancelled your flight?!
 Samya: I meant to write to you.

Giora: He said you saw an ad in the paper about apartments for sale in the neighborhood named after my brother. I don't understand why you're so shocked. We've been building there for seven years.

Samya: I know.

Giora: My father started it. After he died, I couldn't stop it.

Samya: Or maybe you never wanted to. It suddenly dawned on me that you're wiping us out, just like he did.

Giora: I'm not wiping you out. Come and see the schools I built in your towns.

Samya: That neighborhood speaks for itself.

Giora: I built it because the population is growing. Because people need homes. You too.

Samya: Don't lie to me. That neighborhood was never meant for us.

Giora: It is. Why would I lie?

Samya: Because you always have. Where are the ads in the Arabic newspapers? You won't find there even a tiny one. And you know why. Because you don't want to sell to us. We lived on that hill for generations, and now we can't even buy an apartment there.

Giora: I offered Azmi a very good apartment.

Samya: You knew he wouldn't agree to be the only Arab there. The truth is that deep down, you don't want us as neighbors. You want us far away, in our villages, where you don't have to see us.

Giora: I employ thousands of Palestinians in the company.

Samya: Because they're cheap labor.

Giora: Because I'm trying to integrate them.

Samya: That's another lie. It took me seven years to realize that despite all these ads against the occupation you pay for, you still live very comfortably alongside it.

Giora: You know I'm doing everything I can to end it.

Samya: You pay for those ads only to ease your conscience. I always suspected you slept with me so you could believe you weren't complicit in the crimes against us. But you are. Just like your father. His suicide didn't atone for the massacre he committed.

Giora: He didn't commit suicide.

Samya: You know very well he did. And you know very well why.

Giora: I see. **(Short pause)** So you won't come to see your father?

Samya: I don't want any favors. Not from you. Not from your country. I already bought him a ticket. Azmi will bring him here tomorrow.
(Turns off her computer)

20. A hill in Tantur. The sound of the bulldozers grows louder. Yona and Avigdor are conducting the cornerstone-laying ceremony for the new neighborhood.

Yona: Today we place this groundbreaking stone in memory of our eldest son, Udi. Udi was a company commander in the armored forces. He fell in the Yom Kippur War. His tank was hit. He died on the spot. His light went out. Before he could savor the fullness of our love. Before we could savor the fullness of his. The neighborhood he wanted to build here will be built in his memory by his younger brother, Giora... his younger brother Giora... whose light has filled our lives ever since he was...

Yona's voice dies out. Lights out on the hill.

End