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The Scream and the Silence

A play in two acts

©

By Motti Lerner

Translated by Roy Isacowitz

This version is an Americanized version of the original Hebrew version of the play

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Characters

Nathan Landau (60)	-	Author
Mira (54)	-	His wife and manager
Noga (28)	-	Their daughter, a singer
Avner Sapir (78)	-	Author, father of Mira
Meir Landau (50)	-	Brother of Nathan, ultra-Orthodox, owns a construction company
Mahmoud Diab (40)	-	Palestinian author, former prisoner, lives in Ramallah
Nadia Diab (35)	-	His wife, author and literature teacher
Boaz (50)	-	Advisor to Ehud Barak, Prime Minister of Israel
Nabil (50)	-	Advisor to Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Authority

Structure

The play has two time levels. The first takes place during the course of one week at the end of February 2001, when Nathan Landau, who has suffered a head injury, returns to his apartment in Tel Aviv after three weeks' rehabilitation in hospital. He sits in a wheelchair, his legs paralyzed, unable to speak or maintain non-vocal communication with those around him. He is only able to smile and to say a single expression – "words, words" – which he learned in the hospital. This time level is printed in Arial. The second time level comprises Landau's memories of a series of events that occurred between the end of July 2000 and the end of January 2001 in Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Jerusalem. The second time level is printed in Times New Roman. Boaz and Nabil, advisors to Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, appear in the play as imaginary characters, visible only to Landau. None of the other characters sees or hears them. In addition, members of Landau's family address the audience at different times during the play. These monologues are printed in Calibri.

The Set

The space is abstract, to facilitate the staging of the plot in various locations: the living room in the home of the Landau family, the living room in the home of Mahmoud and Nadia, the writers' center in Ramallah, the plaza in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem where demonstrations are often held, and a rock music club in Tel Aviv.

Act 1

1. The living room in the home of the Landau family in Tel Aviv.

Evening. February 22, 2001. Landau is sitting in a wheelchair. Meir is sitting next to him and mumbling Psalm 41.

Meir To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.
 Blessed is he that considereth the poor:
 the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive;
 and he shall be blessed upon the earth:
 and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing:
 thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness...

Boaz and Nabil enter against the background of the psalm.

Boaz You're back, finally.

Nabil Welcome. Congratulations.

Landau Is this my house?

Boaz Yes, this is the living room.

Nabil That's the kitchen and there's your study.

Landau My name's Nathan. Right? Nathan Landau.

Nabil Yes.

Landau I'm a social worker, right?

Boaz What are you talking about? You're a writer. Our most important writer.

Landau A writer? And you?

Boaz You don't recognize me?

Landau You're familiar. Have we met?

Boaz Many times. I'm one of your greatest fans. The novel about your tank crew in the Yom Kippur War really touched my heart. Don't you remember me? Boaz. Advisor to Ehud Barak.

Landau I think I remember something. **(To Nabil)** You also look familiar.

Nabil Nabil. I'm the advisor to the *Ra'is*¹.

Landau The *Ra'is*?

Nabil The *Ra'is* Arafat. Yasser Arafat. You met him in Romania in '86, when it was still forbidden for you to meet with us. You were indicted. Tried. Fined.

Landau Yes, I remember. I'm a writer. You're my doctors, right?

Nabil No. No, we're ...

Landau **(Remembers)** Of course, Boaz and Nabil. When you were in Camp David, I talked to you every night. I want to write about your negotiations there. What happened? Why didn't Barak and Arafat reach an agreement?

Boaz You already want to write? You just got out of hospital.

Nabil You need to rest.

Boaz Get your strength back.

Landau What happened while I was in hospital? Did you continue with the talks?

Nabil We tried.

Landau Who stopped you?

Boaz Dozens of our people are being killed every month.

Nabil On our side, hundreds.

Boaz You don't want to know.

Nabil It would be very bad for your health.

Boaz We know all about writers who think they understand politics.

Nabil Have they ever negotiated? Have they ever taken momentous decisions?

Boaz Writers see far in their imagination, but they are blind to the reality at their fingertips.

Nabil That's why they spread such dangerous illusions.

Boaz Why add oil to the fire?

Nabil Thousands will die because of you.

Boaz So let us work quietly, Landau. Don't stick your nose in this. Don't make suggestions. And don't advertise your ideas.

¹ Head of state (Arabic)

Nabil Don't disturb. Don't incite. Don't smear. And don't cast blame.

Boaz And most of all, don't write.

Mira and Noga enter. Boaz and Nabil fade into the background. Landau wants to continue the conversation with them but, despite his efforts, he doesn't succeed in getting words out of his mouth.

Meir He's trying to say something. It's a good sign. He's tough. God willing, he'll get over it. We'll pray. He'll pray. Right, Nathan?

Noga Do you want to drink, Dad?

Meir When you feel better, our brothers and sisters will come visit. At the memorial for Father and Mother we all asked them to be your advocates in heaven.

Mira Such talk irritates him, Meir.

Meir He's longing for God, Mira.

Landau Words, words...

Meir You see? **(To Landau)** I was at the Chief Rabbi on Saturday. He invited you to the engagement of my Esther to his grandson. He'll be happy to give you a blessing.

Mira Enough, Meir.

Meir Well, the hospital didn't help him much.

Avner enters.

Avner Hello, Nathan. How are you doing?

Noga It's Grandpa Avner, Dad.

Avner I saw you in hospital yesterday, remember?

Landau Words, words ...

Avner Yes. Words. You have created entire worlds with your words.

Mira That's all they could teach him there.

Noga He watched the news this morning. He's trying to understand what's going on here.

Avner You understand better than all of us, Nathan.

Mira I'm not sure, Dad. The hemorrhage caused a lot of damage.

- Noga In another few weeks he'll be back to his old self. **(To Landau)** Do you want a cigarette, Dad?
- Meir Here. **(Lights it)** He's smiling again. **(In Yiddish)** One smile from you lights up the whole world.
- Avner What are we going to tell the Prime Minister, Mira? Arafat's secretary is also waiting for an answer.
- Mira We'll tell them he's not receiving visitors.
- Meir Right now he needs his family. **(To Avner)** Look how happy he is when I speak to him in Yiddish. **(In Yiddish)** You'll feel a little better every day, Nathan.
- Avner Meeting with Barak and Arafat could jog his memory.
- Mira You don't think they had a part in what happened?
- Avner Barak should come see him. And he should make sure the novel he **(Landau)** didn't finish gets published. By the way, I don't think the title "Hassan on the Edge" is clear enough.
- Noga We're not changing it, Grandpa.
- Avner I've never decided on the title of a book before finishing it.
- Noga He'll finish it and he'll decide.
- Meir This isn't the time to finish books. Now we need to pray. We need to beg God, blessed be He. Right, Nathan?
- Landau Words, words.

Landau's face is contorted with effort. He addresses Boaz and Nabil, who can only be seen by him.

- Landau Who are you to tell me not to write? Can you order a river to stop flowing? A tree to stop giving fruit? Look at me. Can I still be silenced by threats? I'll continue to write, despite you. This war has no purpose. No-one will win it, because it's impossible to win. Because no victory will ever change anything. Blood is being spilled in vain. The dead will blame us for their deaths. They'll blame me, too ...

He chokes up. Those present in the room can't hear him, but they see his facial expressions. They think he's in distress.

- Mira I should take him to his room.

- Noga I'll take him. **(To Landau)** Do you want a bath, Dad? I can sing you something. How about I read you another piece from the Hassan novel? **(To Mira)** I'm sure he thinks about it all the time.
- Mira Wait. He's heavy. He could fall.
- Meir If you need help, Mira, just tell me. I'll give whatever he needs. I have more than enough, thank God.
- Mira Thanks. No need. We'll be fine. Thanks for coming. **(To Avner)** Thank you, dad. I'll talk to him when he calms down. Maybe here he'll return to himself. **(Takes him out)**
- Avner **(To the audience)** He was a great writer. One of our greatest. He was twenty when he immigrated from New York, and ever since then he has devoted himself entirely to the reconciliation between Jews and Arabs. It was the core of his novels, short stories and articles. It was at the heart of our conversations ever since we became a family. The night we heard about the failure of Barak and Arafat at Camp David, his heart let out a terrible scream which echoed from one end of the country to the other. I heard it. I understood it. But all my instincts rejected it.

2. The Landau living room.

7 months earlier. July 26, 2000. Landau enters. He has a telephone in his hand. He is being interviewed by a radio correspondent.

- Landau **(On the phone)** I wasn't at Camp David and I don't know what went on in the negotiations, but I'm certain all your listeners want to know why they failed. Did Barak really insist on annexing ten percent of the West Bank? What compromise did he propose for Jerusalem? Was there any agreement regarding the refugees? What counter-proposals did Arafat make?... Yes, I want to see all the protocols... We've known too many leaders who were mistaken too many times. So when our leaders decide our fate, we have to make sure they are not making mistakes... You're right, writers are not politicians, but literature explores the boundaries of what's possible, and it can expose possibilities that politicians refuse to see... Thank you very much.

He turns off the phone. Notices Noga sitting on a couch.

- Landau What are you angry about?

Noga Mom says you didn't sleep all night.
 Landau I'll sleep on the way.
 Noga Think about it for a moment before you go.
 Landau I've already told Mahmoud and Nadia. They're waiting for us.
 Noga Now the guns will talk, Dad. No-one will listen to you.
 Landau There are still a few reasonable people among us, Noga.

Mira enters from the bedroom with a traveling bag in her hand.

Mira You spoke beautifully on the radio. We'll issue the press release tonight. Do you want another Valium?
 Landau I'm fine.
 Noga Someone could shoot you there, Dad.
 Landau I've been there dozens of times, Noga.
 Mira We should go. The soldiers might delay us at the checkpoint.

Avner enters.

Avner Are you out of your mind, Nathan?
 Mira Don't start, Dad.
 Avner What are you going to Ramallah for? I heard you on the radio. Do you really intend to write a novel about their struggle?
 Landau I don't know. First, I want to understand what's going on there.
 Avner You haven't understood by now?
 Landau There are people there, flesh and blood, who received awful news last night.
 Avner: A good writer doesn't need to meet the people he writes about face to face. He creates them in his imagination.
 Mira You promised not to argue, Daddy.
 Avner I'm trying to exorcize the demon inside him. **(To Landau)** You're no longer a social worker, Nathan. You don't have to make house calls. Read what they're writing. You'll learn a lot more about them from their literature than from what they tell you.
 Landau Sometimes I have to meet the reality I'm writing about. I'll be very happy if you join us.
 Avner I don't need to go there to see there's no-one to talk to.

Mira Maybe you'll finally see what Nathan has been seeing all along?

Avner He just thinks he sees. **(To Landau)** A writer is the reflection of his homeland's landscape, Nathan. You've lived most of your life in Tel Aviv. All your novels are set here. You're a stranger in Ramallah. You'll never be able to write something true about it.

Mira When he understands what's going on there, he'll be able.

Avner First he should try to understand what's going on with us. **(To Landau)** Come listen to the Prime Minister. He is speaking at the Labor Party convention today. I'll ask him to see you.

Landau I've already heard him.

Mira Nathan suspects that he doesn't tell us the whole truth about the negotiation.

Avner And he doesn't suspect Arafat? **(To Landau)** When you met him in '86, your father died of a broken heart. That wasn't enough for you?

Landau Without that forbidden meeting, we would never have gotten to Camp David.

Avner And what came out of Camp David? Believe me, Nathan, your obsession with politics is ruining your writing. People have stopped reading you. You'll never win the Israel Prize.

Mira He'll win it!

Landau If the prize is meant to serve the government's political goals, I'm not interested in it. **(To Mira)** We should leave. **(To Noga)** Do you like to come with us?

Noga For what? All I can think of is how to run away from here.

Landau You've already given up?!

Noga I can't live here anymore, Dad.

Mira Where will you go? What will you do? You've just begun working with the Arab choir from Jaffa. You have performances the whole year.

Noga I'll try to get work in New York.

Landau Because the negotiation failed?

Noga It wasn't the negotiation that failed, Dad. Living together failed. The Jaffa choir cancelled rehearsals today because they've lost hope.

Mira Give them a week and they'll calm down.

Landau That's why we're going to Ramallah. To figure out how to overcome this hopelessness.

Noga Better you buy yourselves plane tickets and begin packing.

- Avner **(To Landau)** If you hadn't raised such high hopes in her, she wouldn't have despaired so quickly.
- Landau **(To Noga)** Come with us and hear what they say. Perhaps they're still ready to live with us, despite what we're doing to them.
- Noga You're not going to see if they're willing to live with us. You want to convince them that we're willing to live with them.
- Landau I think many of us still are, Noga.
- Noga It's an illusion, Dad. We'll continue killing them and they'll continue killing us. Even if you write about it.
- Landau So that's it? We should return to America?
- Mira Don't preach to her, Nathan. She's a big girl. She can make up her own mind.
- Avner She should do it here.
- Mira She's already tried. **(To Noga)** Go to the embassy and apply for a visa. We'll help you find an apartment and work.
- Landau Many people here love your songs, Noga. Now is when they need you.
- Noga I hope I wouldn't care about them so much.
- Mira **(To Landau)** We have to go, Nathan,

Landau and Mira exit. In the background, Landau is heard in a radio interview in Ramallah.

- Landau **(V.O)** I came to Ramallah to see the life here. The pain. The suffering. The hope. To talk with students, teachers and writers. To hear what they're saying out loud and what they're whispering among themselves. I don't believe I'll be able to write about Palestinians without living with them for a while. The Palestinian society is very different from the Jewish community of Brooklyn, where I grew up. But I'm happy to say I feel an instant connection with my hosts...

3. Rock music club in Tel Aviv

Noga is singing.

- Noga The smiling flower in the writer's window
Means the writer planted it
Means he nurtured it
Means he fertilized its ground.

The smiling flower in the writer's window
Means he expected its buds
That he craved its beauty and fragrance
It means the writer smiled at it.

But it also means that the writer has capitulated
And despaired of writing about the blood spilled in his city
Hid his pencil in his drawer
And put a flower to smile on his window sill.

Crude and raucous voices are heard at the end of the song. "Go sing in Ramallah with your father, leftie whore, slut, traitor, etc." A brawl breaks out. Noga is forced to leave the stage.

4. Nadia and Mahmoud's apartment in Ramallah. The same day.

Mahmoud, Landau and Mira enter.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Mahmoud | Last night Arafat slept between silk sheets in his palace, woke up satisfied in the morning, drank coffee and ate baklava with his bunch of sycophants. They congratulated each other for not giving in to the Israelis and the Americans. But what will they do today, when they discover the despair in the streets of Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron? I begged the members of the Writers' Union: Don't listen to the politicians. The despair will breed fury and the fury will erupt in disaster. But they insist: Fury is sacred. Fury redeems. Fury frees. They cursed whoever gave birth to me. And Nadia kept quiet. |
| Landau | That's why we came, Mahmoud. |
| Mahmoud | She didn't mention me by name there. She mocked a writer from Ramallah who was once a member of the Popular Front and is now demanding that we return to negotiations, so that the Israelis will publish his novel. |
| Mira | Nathan won't talk politics, Mahmoud. Only literature. When I was teaching, I often invited him to my class. |
| Mahmoud | The zealots always think they're the greatest patriots. I used to see them in your prison. After a year, they take down the flag of zealotry and wave the flag of reason. (To Landau) Do you have any Valium? There's not a pill left in all of Ramallah. |
| Landau | (Giving him) We'll rent a small apartment near you. |
| Mira | For three or four months. |
| Mahmoud | What's with you two today? Have you both gone mad? |

Landau We should have done it a long time ago, Mahmoud.

Mira We selected a few of his short stories that have been translated into Arabic.

Landau I'll be happy to teach them to Nadia's class.

Mira If necessary, we're prepared to meet with the headmaster.

Mahmoud The headmaster is one of her admirers. He'll do whatever she tells him. **(To Landau)** I'm not sure the students will come hear you. Their parents will certainly disagree.

Landau Students are usually inquisitive.

Mahmoud You expect them to read something of yours, with your soldiers and settlers surrounding them?

Mira When they meet Nathan they'll be swept up by his hope.

Mahmoud These students are throwing stones in the streets. **(Frustrated)** Now is the time to teach literature? Now is the time to move mountains and reach an agreement. A few years from now, there won't be any room for a state for us.

Landau If I write a novel that takes place here, those who read it may understand your struggle better. **(Mahmoud stays silent)** Our leaders are weak people, Mahmoud. We can't put our fate in their hands.

Mira No matter what the ass-lickers in your Writers' Union say.

Mahmoud Those ass-lickers heard that my novel was going to be published in Tel Aviv, and decided that I was a collaborator. If I hadn't been stuck in Israeli prisons for so many years, they would have killed me. **(Gestures toward the bedroom)** And she... the envy is eating her up.

Nadia enters. In her arms is Mona, the baby, whom she has just finished feeding.

Nadia You're a great writer, Nathan, and your intentions are good, but at the end of the day you're one of them. **(Hands Mona to Mahmoud)** Hold her until she burps.

Mahmoud **(To Mona)** Mona, *habibti*². **(To Nadia)** When should I feed her?

Nadia At two. I'm teaching until four. **(To Landau)** And you won't take too many risks for our sake. Tomorrow your army invades here, and you'll be back home.

Landau I never said that I could stop the army, Nadia. I said that maybe I could influence the discourse among us.

Nadia When my brother went on hunger strike in jail, you couldn't even get him transferred to a hospital.

² Darling (Arabic)

Mira But we made sure that a doctor saw him.

Nadia prepares her bag before leaving for school.

Nadia I don't know how we can continue living here. Every morning I leave for school and there's a soldier in every alley. A roadblock at the end of every road. A settlement on top of every hill. Every night we hear your jeeps speeding down the streets and the cries of the women whose children have been taken in for investigation. Is it possible to write literature like that? To teach?

Landau What's the alternative, Nadia?

Mira Even if you don't believe in literature that much, it's worth trying before turning to desperate solutions.

Nadia If there is hope in literature, it is in our own literature, which encourages our struggle. Not in your literature.

Mira Students need to learn literature that asks questions, that is skeptical, that compels them to find their identity. That's the literature Nathan wants to teach.

Nadia Teaching literature is like making love. You can't expect us to love you. There are some things that can't be forgiven. For five years your Security Services wouldn't let me visit him (**Mahmoud**) in prison. They wanted to break me to get names.

Mahmoud No-one expects you to love them. I don't love them either. But they're here, and the cost of our struggle against them is too high. For you, too. In prison I read their books and I realized that we have to live with them, even without love.

Nadia When they publish a book of yours, they believe they're an enlightened nation and aren't capable of harming us.

Mahmoud When they read it, they'll discover the opposite.

Nadia After everything they did to you, you still believe them?

Mahmoud Enough, Nadia!

Nadia **(Frustrated)** How is it possible to teach on a day like this? What will I say to the students? When I enter the classroom, all I'll see is eyes full of despair. If I send them home, they'll find that their parents are even more desperate.

Landau So we'll leave them hopeless?

Nadia They need to hear someone they trust.

Landau Maybe I can meet the teachers.

Mira The teachers know who he is. They've probably read his short stories or novels.

- Nadia The teachers won't meet him because in their eyes he's also responsible for the occupation.
- Landau Of course I'm responsible for the occupation, but I'm also responsible for ending it. The politicians have failed. Now is our turn. Despair is a luxury for the extremists. If you want to save your students from desperate acts, you've got to offer them hope, and there is hope in literature.
- Mahmoud You should listen to him, Nadia. Otherwise, you'll continue to wallow in the hatred that stops you from completing your novel.
- Nadia I'm not ashamed of my hatred.
- Mahmoud But how does it help you, for God's sake? You have to continue writing.
- Landau I can see your doubt in the power of literature, Nadia. I feel it on my own flesh. I see how it hurts you. Perhaps we really are deluding ourselves that literature can change things. But this delusion gives us strength. Without it we can't write. Therefore we must continue deluding ourselves, and go on writing. Who knows? Maybe we *will* change something. Please, give us a chance.
- Nadia Fine. I'll speak to the headmaster. **(Apologetically)** I'm sorry. I didn't sleep the whole night. My hopes for Camp David were too high. **(To Mahmoud)** Close the windows at noon. Her eyes burn when the soldiers throw gas grenades in the street... **(Exits)**

5. The Landau living room

February 2001. Light on Noga and Landau, who is in the wheelchair. A radio interview can be heard in the background.

- Interviewer **(V.O)** Last question, Mr. Landau. Why do you continue blaming the Israeli government for insisting on its sovereignty over the Temple Mount at Camp David, but you don't blame the Palestinian Authority for making the same demand?
- Landau **(V.O)** I blame both sides. There is no connection between sovereignty and holiness. Sovereignty has to do with ownership, with force, while holiness has to do with belief in the presence of God. A religious ritual that sees holiness in soil and bricks is idol worship.

Noga is reading to Landau from the unfinished novel "Hassan on the Edge". He doesn't listen to her.

Noga *With great effort, Hassan parked his car in a small street beside the main entrance. The previous week, the department secretary had promised him a permit to park inside the university. "She was embarrassed to admit that my curriculum vitae was still being checked by the Security Services," he thought. (Landau turns his face away) It's your novel, Dad, "Hassan on the Edge." The doctors asked me to read it to you. Hassan is a psychologist from Nazareth. He did his PhD in Chicago and married Tikva who studied law there. Remember? When they returned here, he started teaching at Tel Aviv University.*

Landau notices Nabil and Boaz addressing him.

Boaz Barak insisted on the Temple Mount?! He'd be more than happy to give it to them. Let them protect the mosques from the lunatics who want to blow them up.

Nabil You think Arafat insist on it? The preachers there incite against him every Friday.

Landau So why are they fighting to the bitter end to hold onto it?

Boaz Because Barak will be shot dead the moment he gives it up.

Nabil And Arafat will be hanged in the central square of Ramallah.

Landau Leaders can heal their nations from madness. They need to persuade them that the Temple Mount is a hill and its bricks are stones. Only the human is holy. Only the human.

Nabil You can't ignore one billion Moslems who believe that the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from this mountain.

Boaz Even members of your family believe that the temple that stood on this mountain is the Holy of Holies.

Noga is concerned that something is worrying him.

Noga Try to listen, dad. Hassan still lives inside you. Maybe he'll tell you something about yourself. **(She reads)** *Tikva, who was sitting beside him, looked at him. "Are you still worried? They're just first year students." "You're right," Hassan replied. "But when I teach childhood development, I think about my own development in the alleys of Nazareth, which was very different from theirs." "Children are children wherever they are," she tried to encourage him. "You yourself have two Jewish children whom you saw developing." Hassan was silent. He had already told her once that their children were more Arab than Jewish and he had sensed how much it hurt her.*

Nabil and Boaz address him again.

Boaz If you write that this mountain is just another mountain, no-one will read you.

Nabil If you write that its stones are just stones, they'll burn everything you've ever written.

Boaz You'll sentence yourself to death. Murderers will lie in wait for you at every corner.

Nabil Human beings may be holy, but only by virtue of this mountain.

Landau I will write that this mountain has spewed hatred into every corner of the world. Instead of bargaining over it, you should send in bulldozers to plow it, to destroy the wall and the mosques. And when the dust settles, Jerusalem will discover that she's been redeemed. That she's been freed of the hand of God and his priests. And after the first rain, weeds will sprout on the hill, and flowers will bloom, and trees will grow. And mothers will feed their babies in their shade. And children will play among them and their laughter will echo throughout this good land...

He chokes up. Mira enters, carrying a plate of food for Landau.

Noga Something's worrying him. He's not listening.

Mira He's hungry. **(She sits beside him and feeds him)** The doctors told me today that he won't write again.

Noga I'm not sure they know.

Mira And we don't know how to care for him.

Noga We'll learn.

Mira We can't even get him to make an effort, Noga.

Noga No-one else will do better than us.

Mira Even if he doesn't write again, at least he should talk. His eyes should tell us something. I can't bear to see him like this.

Landau Words, words...

Avner enters.

Avner The Minister didn't say no. He's prepared to commit that the Ministry of Culture will help in getting the novel published. After they know what happens at the end.

- Mira Nathan doesn't know either. He said that Hassan is the one who'll decide if he commits suicide.
- Avner His suicide scares them. They prefer the version that he returns to Chicago.
- Mira Ever since he's been a minister he has said over and over that he admires every word than Nathan wrote.
- Avner There is a new wind blowing there now.
- Noga We don't need their assistance.
- Avner No-one will publish this book without it. It doesn't really matter if Hassan commits suicide or returns to Chicago. Either way, he leaves his wife and children.
- Noga What are you saying, Dad?
- Landau **(Smiling)** Words, words...
- Avner His statements over the past few months haven't added to his popularity. If we drop the suicide, he'll be remembered as a more sensible writer.
- Noga **(Angrily)** Hassan commits suicide because he can't find a way to fit in here. He finds out that he is alone. Without partners. Arab or Jewish. Without a family. Exactly like Dad.
- Mira That's not true!
- Noga You don't think Dad tried to commit suicide?
- Mira No! And don't you dare say that again!

Noga exits. Mira turns to the audience.

- Mira We moved to Ramallah in mid-summer and he began collecting ideas for a novel set there. He got up early every morning and wrote a few pages. Afterwards, we walked around the city. We sat in coffee shops. Spoke with whoever we could. In the evening we met with teachers from Nadia's school, and he read them what he had written. They criticized him harshly, saying he only wrote about what he saw and heard. That he didn't get deeper, into the heart of his characters, to experience their fear and humiliation, their helplessness and despair. Perhaps they were right. But I knew how sensitive he was. How much empathy he had. I knew over time he'd succeed.

In the background Landau is heard giving a radio interview.

Landau **(V.O)** I listen to whoever will talk to me. There are those who treat me with suspicion. And those with hostility. But there are also those who speak sincerely, out of curiosity. Maybe because I came from America and my political positions are very different from those of the Americans who live in the settlements. They hope that I'll be able to explain why Jews who grew up in such a pluralistic society hate them so deeply.

6. Rock music club in Tel Aviv

September 26, 2000. Noga sings and accompanies herself on the guitar.

Noga I'm leaving
 Going to curl up in a foreign bed
 Covering my head
 Descending into darkness
 Listening to my voice.

 I'm leaving
 Running away to a foreign dream
 From the forests of ideas that you planted in me
 Burying thoughts that you mined for me
 In your forefathers' deep caverns of wisdom.

 I'm leaving
 Sinking in foreign waters.
 To extinguish the eternal flame
 That your dreams set alight in my flesh
 And I hear your heart.

Towards the end of the song, booing and sounds of protest are heard: "Go to America. Fuck Arabs. Fuck Blacks. Take your father with you." A wineglass strikes her; blood flows from her forehead.

7. The Landau home in Tel Aviv

Wednesday, September 27, 2000. Landau, Mira and Noga, who has a bandage on her forehead.

Landau We're taking you to a doctor right now.

Mira Did you go to the emergency ward?

Noga It's just a scratch. I bandaged it myself.

Landau You were hit on the head, Noga.

Mira Let me look.

Noga It's really nothing.

Landau You've got to have it checked.

Noga I'm leaving next week, Dad.

Landau You must also file a complaint with the police.

Noga I'm beginning rehearsals there.

Mira Let her go, Nathan.

Landau What they did to her proves that she has to continue singing here.

Noga What for? You, too, can stop writing. I'm not sure too many people still read you. You made a lot more difference as a social worker.

Landau That's why I have to keep writing, and you have to keep singing.

Noga When's the last time you heard one of my songs on the radio?

Mira Enough Nathan. Don't you see that she's trying to get out from under your shadow?

Landau **(Angrily)** What shadow?!

Mira She's already started writing like you.

Landau It's been two years since she read a book of mine.

Mira It's better she finds herself without your help.

Noga I want to live my own life, Dad. When you're in Ramallah, I'm busy only with you. I have to explain you to the whole world. To myself, too.

Landau You don't think I should be there?

Noga I don't want to think about it all the time.

Landau You were born here. The society that raised you, made it possible for you to be a singer, and, in return, you have to sing here.

Noga When I live here, I'm another cog in this machine.

Landau A single cog can also stop it. Come with us to Ramallah. The conversations with the teachers will encourage you.

Mira Don't push her, Nathan. Do you want her to never come back?

Landau I want her to stay here!

Avner enters.

Avner **(To Noga)** I'll kill the bastard who did this.

Noga I'm fine, Grandpa.

Avner **(To Landau)** Someone spilled her blood to retaliate for your move to Ramallah.

Mira We're not moving. We've rented a house there for a few months.

Landau Do you want to join us?

Avner I want you to stop brainwashing your wife and daughter.

Mira Don't worry, Dad. On Friday we'll all go to Jerusalem to celebrate Rosh Hashanah with Nathan's family. Every weekend you'll eat with us here.

Landau Come visit us there. We have a room for you.

Avner So I can also write how much they love us?

Landau So you can see what's going on there, and write whatever you think about it.

Meir enters.

Meir I was on the way to the office. Suddenly, I hear you on the radio. **(To Noga)** What's that?

Noga Nothing. A scratch.

Meir **(To Landau)** You're going to Ramallah when things are so tense?

Landau I've already been there dozens of times, Meir.

Meir I'm building in that area. I would never go around without security.

Mira Don't worry. We'll arrive on time for Rosh Hashanah.

Landau I promise you I won't say a word about what I'm doing there.

Meir You don't need to say anything. Everyone's already talking about it. You're the head of the family now. We respect you and what you say. You can't do things that aggravate us so much.

Landau We are all paying a very heavy price for this conflict, Meir.

Meir We're paying a higher price because you're interfering in it. People told me in the synagogue that if I stay silent, apparently I agree with you. Who anointed you?

Landau I interfere because others are doing nothing. Instead of coming to me, you should have gone to the Chief Rabbi.

Meir When an agreement has a chance, he'll support it.

Landau That's why I'm going there. To see if it has a chance.

Avner They'll tell you it does, and you'll believe them.

Landau I've been around long enough to lose my naiveté, Avner.

Meir Please, Nathan. I don't want you at the head of the table on Rosh Hashanah with the whole family hurling unimaginable accusations against you. And for what? For an agreement that will never have any chance?

Landau Come there with me and listen to them. If you persuade the Chief Rabbi to meet with Arafat, there might still be a chance. **(To Avner)** You come, too. Their Writer's Union is holding a reading tomorrow.

Avner They invite you because you tell them what they want to hear.

Mira Why are you trying to undermine him, Dad? Because he's writing about what you're afraid to write?

Avner I undermine him? His hubris undermines him.

Mira What hubris is there in his hope?

Landau **(To Avner and Meir)** I need you there. Both of you. Not only to show them that I'm not alone, but so I'll see it too.

Avner Do you really think that if you write a book there, a miracle will happen?

Landau If you don't think that, you're no longer a writer.

Avner Don't teach me to be a writer. I discovered you. I raised you. If it wasn't for the articles I wrote about you, you'd still be a social worker in Jaffa. Now, in your hubris, you're throwing everything down the drain. Why? Just when your writing has matured and evolved, you're prostituting it for politics?

Mira You prostitute it, Dad. You and your friends who ignore what's happening around us.

Avner He doesn't know the boundaries of literature, Mira. **(To Landau)** You can write about characters in a political crisis, but you can't intrude into the crisis itself. Your preaching for coexistence with the Arabs makes you look ridiculous. Listen to your brother. Even your own family has stopped reading you. You're completely alone. **(Exits)**

Meir Father and mother are turning in their graves right now, Nathan.

Landau Father and mother never hated Arabs the way you do!

Meir They see how these bastards are fooling you.

Landau You'd think differently if you came with me to Ramallah and listened to them.

Meir I listen to them every day. They're bigger anti-Semites than those we knew in New York.

Landau You don't think that if we hated them less, they would also hate us less?

Meir We will hate them less when the Messiah comes and puts them in their place. Until then I'm asking, also in the name of mother and father, that you don't write about a world in which we live together with them. Precisely because you're a great writer, it might appear possible. Maybe it is possible in a world without Torah. Without holiness. Without God. But we couldn't live in a world like that. It wouldn't be worth living in.

Landau I have no other world, Meir.

Meir You did have. **(Silence)** You leave me no choice. If you go to Ramallah, it would be better that you don't come to us for Rosh Hashanah. **(Silence)** And another thing. The Chief Rabbi asked that you don't come to the engagement of my Esther to his grandson. **(In Yiddish)** I ask you to honor this request. **(Exits)**

Mira Don't worry. Tomorrow morning he'll call to invite you.

Landau I'll be there. Even if he doesn't invite me. **(To Noga)** And you're not going to New York. I need you beside me. You'll come with us to Ramallah, and tomorrow you'll sing to them about the writer who put a smiling flower on his window sill. If you could write a song like that, you still believe that your songs can change something.

Blackout. A radio interview with Landau is heard in the background.

Interviewer **(V.O)** Mr. Landau, don't you think that your presence in Ramallah serves the purposes of the Palestinians? That at this time it might seem as treason?

Landau **(V.O)** On the contrary. I immigrated from America to realize my dream of an enlightened Jewish society here. I have struggled for it my entire life here. As a social worker. As a social activist. As a writer. Today I am struggling to secure its future...

8. The writers' center in Ramallah. The next day.

Noga (To the audience) I went to Ramallah with them. The whole way there, he spoke about Barak and Arafat's stubborn refusal to resume negotiations. He was certain that war would break out in a few days. The following morning, he woke up with a start, as if it had begun while he was sleeping. As he calmed down, he tried to work on his novel, writing and deleting. Writing and deleting. Suddenly he gave up, went out onto the verandah, and stood there gazing at the passers-by. I asked him what happened. He said he couldn't write in the grip of such fear.

Landau, Mira, Noga, Mahmoud and Nadia are preparing a table for the participants in the reading. Boaz and Nabil approach Landau.

Boaz What the hell are you doing here? Can't you see that you're getting in our way?

Nabil That you're diminishing our politicians in the eyes of the public?

Boaz That you're undermining the public's confidence in them?

Nabil While we are struggling with all our strength to resume these exhausting talks?

Landau Don't worry. The moment you begin, the entire public will be with you.

Boaz The public will never be with us so long as you are against us.

Landau I'm trying to help you.

Nabil If you were a politician, you would know how. But you're an author, and you don't understand how cunning politics can be.

Boaz In order to help us reach an agreement, you must come out against it!

Landau Against?!

Nabil It's impossible to reach an agreement as long as there are those among us who dream of Jihad.

Boaz As long as there are those among us who are waiting for redemption at any minute.

Landau You're leaders. You have to persuade the dreamers to give up their dreams.

Nabil They'll only do that when they feel the price of their dreams on their own flesh.

Landau What price?

Boaz Only war will persuade them that the agreement is necessary.

Nabil A limited war, of course.

Landau Have you lost your minds? You can start a war but you never know how it will end. Thousands will die.

Boaz Many more will die while we beg the dreamers to sober up.

Nabil Only the angel of death will open their eyes.

Landau You're wrong. Most humans love life. They can foresee the price of their dreams without spilling rivers of blood.

Boaz Without your support, it will be very difficult to justify this war.

Landau That's why I won't support it.

Nabil Is that what you're going to say here?

Landau Yes.

Boaz In that case, we'll have to act.

Nabil And we'll be compelled to respond.

Boaz We'll respond to their response.

Nabil And we'll respond to theirs.

Boaz And after a few days, firing will erupt.

Nabil The suffering will be unbearable.

Boaz Everyone will sink into deep despair.

Nabil And in the depths of despair, the dreamers will wake up.

Boaz And finally support an agreement.

Landau You're going to war in order to reach an agreement? Don't you see that every war we've ever had has brought another war in its wake? Try not killing for a change. When the dreamers of redemption and Jihad see that there are no funerals, no orphans, no bereaved parents; when they see men and women working together, planting and harvesting together, building together, buying and selling together, they'll forget that they ever wanted war...

Landau is breathing heavily. He now sees that Nadia, Noga and Mira are seated at the table, facing the audience. He joins them. Mahmoud goes to the speakers' podium.

Mira **(To the audience)** When we got to the writers' center we heard the news. Knesset member Sharon, head of the Opposition, had visited the Temple Mount, with the prime minister's permission, of course. Protests broke out immediately. Dozens of Palestinians were killed and wounded. We were stunned. Many of the guests left in outrage. But Nathan quickly pulled himself together and insisted that Mahmoud begin.

Mahmoud **(To the audience)** *Ahlan wa Sahlan*. Welcome and greetings. We are happy to host in our center today the writers Nathan Landau and Nadia Diab. Also with us are Nathan's wife Mira and their daughter Noga. As you know, Mr. Landau was born in America and his solidarity with our struggle proves that not all American Jews in Israel are fanatical settlers, and many of them are ready for social and political partnership with us. We thank you all for coming, despite the events in Jerusalem. Sharon's visit to Al Aqsa is intended to ensure Israeli sovereignty over the holy places, and derail the negotiations on the establishment of a Palestinian state next to Israel. Our answer is this literary event, in which we'll read together from our works. We believe that this cultural dialogue with the Israelis will accelerate the political dialogue towards the solution that we all are hoping for. It is my honor to introduce Nadia, my dear wife, to read from her new book "Mothers".

Nadia Many thanks. **(Opens the book)** "Mothers" describes the last academic year of a law student at Bir Zeit University. She has four children. Her husband is an activist in the Popular Front. She insisted on continuing her studies despite... **(She is unable to continue and begins to talk about the unrest on the Temple Mount)** The Ra'is Arafat begged the Israelis not to allow Sharon to visit Al Aqsa. But the Israelis never learn a lesson. That bloody war criminal knows how deep our anguish is...

Mahmoud Maybe we'll leave that for the audience's questions, Nadia?

Nadia They see that our despair makes us hate, makes us cruel... When we began our struggle for freedom, we targeted soldiers only. Now we're murdering women and children... They want us to be murderers so they can kill us, so they can expel us, so the world will say we deserve it...

Mahmoud Please, Nadia, start reading.

Nadia The Ra'is has called on a million martyrs to march on Jerusalem. They will respond and march. Thousands will die...

She chokes up. Mahmoud quickly takes her out of the room.

Noga **(To the audience)** Rumors about the bloodshed on the Temple Mount kept flowing into the hall. The few who remained, hurried to leave and the event ended. Dad couldn't control his anger. He cursed Sharon, Barak and Arafat. As his rage got worse, he began sweating and shaking. The fear that war had already broken out was driving him mad.

As she's speaking, the long table is divided into three small ones and the room is transformed into a back room in the writers' center, with Landau, Mahmoud, Nadia, Mira and Noga onstage.

Landau You have to phone Arafat, Mahmoud. He must call for restraint. I'll call Barak. I'll also say it on the radio.

Mahmoud Arafat won't talk to me after I had promised him that there was something to talk about with you.

Landau Speak to his aides.

Mahmoud About restraint? You're killing us as we speak!

Landau If your struggle is not violent, many of us will support it.

Mahmoud First you stop your violence.

Nadia We've got to get home, Nathan. The baby is with the neighbors. They're probably throwing stones from their balcony already. The army could open fire on them.

Landau Hang on. What about your Writer's Union? They should also call for restraint. The teachers need to get the students back to school.

Nadia The teachers have taken to the streets with the students.

Landau I'm prepared to speak to the headmasters.

Mahmoud Who's going to listen to you here today?

Landau But they'll listen to you.

Mahmoud I'm working for my readers now, Nathan.

Mira We should go, Nathan, before the roads are blocked.

Landau For sure. Go quickly. And drive safely. **(Gives her the car keys and turns to Mahmoud)** Can someone escort them to the checkpoint?

Noga You're not coming with us?

Mira Tomorrow is Rosh Hashanah dinner at your brother's.

Landau We'll see tomorrow.

Noga Are you out of your mind? We're not leaving without you.

Mahmoud You should also be working for your readers now, Nathan.

Landau I need to see what happens here.

Mahmoud You don't understand our rage? You have to see it?

Landau I want to know what to write about it. **(To Mira)** Get into the car and go.

Noga Do you think anyone will read what you write?

Mira If you want to influence your readers, Nathan, they need to believe in you. They need to know that you understand their fears.

Landau Their fears I understand perfectly.

Mira They'll accuse you of crossing the lines. You'll never be forgiven.

Nadia I'm also asking you to go, Nathan. We can't protect you now. Nor can we invite you to our home. The whole of Ramallah knows of our friendship. Someone is liable to interpret it wrongly. **(To Mahmoud)** Why don't you say something? Why do you leave me to say these terrible things?

Mahmoud She's right, Nathan. We'll discuss literature when your army stops firing.

Nadia Stop misleading him. Tell him the cultural dialogue is over. Tell him we won't revive it before we have a state. Until then, he won't teach his books here. Until then, you won't publish your book there...

Noga Don't you hear what they're telling you? They don't want you to stay here.

Landau We can't give in to our politicians, Nadia. Now is the time to create an alternative ...

Mahmoud Look outside, Nathan. Chaos all around. Even if we shout at the top of our voices, we won't be heard. Even if you burn yourself, the smoke won't be seen. What has come of all those books your writers have written? Nothing. Not a thing. Now you'll have to spill blood to save yourselves from what you're doing to us.

An immediate light change. Landau sits in his wheelchair.

Landau Words... Words... Words... Words... Words... Words....

Blackout

Act 2

9. The Landau home in Tel Aviv

Light on Landau in his wheelchair. February 25, 2001. Meir is sitting next to him and mumbling Psalm 41. With the psalm in the background, Avner addresses the audience.

Meir	To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness...
Avner	(To the audience) He returned from Ramallah defeated and gave up the idea of writing a book set there. In the meantime, the Second Intifada erupted. The bloodshed was terrible. In December 2000 President Clinton tried to revive the negotiations and published a framework for a permanent agreement: A Palestinian state would be established on 96 percent of the territory of the West Bank and Gaza. Jerusalem would be divided. The Jewish neighborhoods and the Western Wall would be under our sovereignty. Arab neighborhoods and their holy places under their sovereignty. Israel would recognize the suffering of the Palestinian refugees, participate in their rehabilitation, and accept an agreed number of them in its territory, but the focus of their return would be the Palestinian state. Nathan was suffused with hope. He was certain that an agreement was at hand.

Towards the end of Avner's words, Boaz and Nabil enter.

Boaz	Good evening, Mr. Landau. How are you?
Nabil	You're looking excellent.
Boaz	I hope you're not too busy.
Nabil	We urgently need your help.
Boaz	I assume you've heard that we decided to continue the negotiations.
Landau	Yes, I heard. I'm very happy.
Boaz	But Barak can't move ahead without public support. Even his coalition has disintegrated in despair.

Nabil And their despair has caused many of us to despair as well.

Boaz So Barak was compelled to call elections.

Nabil You surely understand how momentous they are.

Boaz Barak will only win them if the public is persuaded that we have a chance to reach an agreement.

Nabil After so much of our blood has been spilled, our public is already convinced that an agreement is crucial.

Landau What exactly do you want me to do?

Boaz In a few days, we will renew the talks.

Nabil At the Hilton Hotel in Taba.

Boaz I'm certain we'll be able to sign an interim agreement.

Nabil Which will persuade everyone that a permanent agreement is possible.

Boaz And will guarantee Barak's victory in these elections.

Landau Yes, the elections are very important, but...

Nabil So are you with us?

Landau I still have a question...

Boaz Your moral authority will persuade all the writers in the country to support Barak. Maybe you'll even be able to persuade the Chief Rabbi.

Nabil If your writers support him, ours will support Arafat.

Landau Certainly. But I still want to understand something...

Boaz **(Interrupting him)** One more request, Mr. Landau. You are an enlightened man, an eminent humanist. Barak would very much like you to join his government as Minister of Peace Affairs. I'm sure you'll make a big contribution to the negotiation in Taba.

Landau Minister of Peace Affairs?

Nabil You're hesitating?! Now, when we need you so badly?

Boaz Because of your hesitation, another war will break out!

Nabil Thousands will be killed!

Landau I'm not sure I can save them by sitting in the government, sir. I first want to think about it. I'm not made of ministerial material. Before I answer, I'd like to know why you are insisting on an interim agreement. Why can't we begin discussing the comprehensive agreement right now? A comprehensive agreement for the end of the conflict?

Mira, Noga and Avner enter.

Mira Time for supper, Nathan.

Noga **(To Meir)** Were you reading him psalms? I told you that he doesn't like it.

Meir He actually liked it. I saw it in his eyes.

Landau Words, words.

Mira feeds him.

Avner **(To Mira)** Maybe we can finally speak rationally for a moment?

Mira I'm not capable of being rational now, Dad.

Avner His drawers are full of manuscripts. If we don't publish them, they'll fade and crumble. I'm prepared to stop writing in order to edit them.

Noga Grandpa's the most appropriate editor, Mom.

Mira I can't appoint an editor until I have a publisher.

Avner If I edit the manuscripts, we'll get a publisher and he'll get the Israel Prize next year. I know what I'm talking about.

Landau suddenly thrusts away the plate and addresses Boaz and Nabil.

Landau You're insisting on an interim agreement because you're scared of taking an historic decision. Because you're scared to fight for it. You're scared of losing power because of it. I'm willing to come with you to Taba only on condition that you announce an immediate ceasefire and armistice. That you revive negotiations toward a comprehensive agreement on the end of the conflict. Not tomorrow. Not someday. Not in the future. Right now...

Everyone can sense his agitation. Noga sits beside him and takes his hand. He calms down.

Noga I think he wants a cigarette.

Meir **(He puts a cigarette in Landau's mouth and lights it.)** I'm telling you again. I can't keep coming here every day. I can get him into the best institution. I'll pay for everything.

Noga We heard. Thanks a lot.

Meir Why? Because it has a synagogue? Because the food is kosher? He needs God's mercy.

Noga Dad is staying at home!

Meir This is his opportunity to return to God. **(They are silent)** Fine. We'll wait another week. **(To Avner)** Don't look at me. I'm not giving anything to publish another book of his. He's already written too much. **(To Landau in Yiddish)** Feel better. See you tomorrow. **(He exits)**

Mira His diaper needs changing.

Avner I'll do it. Why don't you two go to a movie? And regarding the manuscripts in his drawers, Mira, do yourself a favor. Try to think what he would say, if he could.

He exits with Landau.

Noga Dad's manuscripts belong to me as well, Mom, and I want us to publish them.

Mira Do you have any idea of the anger the Hassan novel will cause? Just because of the rumors that it's about an Arab marrying a Jewish woman, he won't get the Israel Prize.

Noga That's precisely why we need to publish it.

Mira I can't. I just can't. I've admired him my entire life. I sacrificed everything for him. Now, suddenly, this ... **(She chokes up)** What will I do with myself? Go back to teaching?

10. The Landau home in Tel Aviv

Morning. January 8, 2001. Avner, Mira and Landau enter.

Avner I don't understand, Nathan. I finally manage to persuade Barak to appoint you a minister, and you reject his offer and organize a conference against him?

Landau Barak wants me in the government to give the impression that he wants an agreement.

Avner With you as minister, he'll get many more votes and there'll be an agreement.

Mira If he's a minister, he won't be able to speak his mind.

Avner He'll speak it in the government.

Landau How can I join such a government? The only reason Barak wants an interim agreement is to win the election. He's not going to negotiate on a comprehensive agreement. That's why we're holding the conference.

- Avner If you want to influence politics, you have to think like a politician. Not like a writer. The settlers will let us sign a comprehensive agreement? Hamas will let the Palestinians? But if you join the government, Barak will win the election, sign an interim agreement, and in another year he'll sign another one.
- Landau We have a miraculous opportunity, Avner...
- Avner I'm not signing that petition.
- Mira Nadia and Mahmoud will arrive at any moment, Dad.
- Avner Why should I sign? Because you've enslaved yourself to every idea of his for the last thirty years?
- Landau Don't talk to her like that.
- Mira It's OK, Nathan.
- Avner I'm giving you a way to make progress toward an agreement, and you're waiting for a miracle? Maybe you don't really want an agreement, after all. I wouldn't be surprised if one day we discover that you actually wrote about it to increase the sales of your books.
- Mira That's enough, Daddy!
- Landau I wrote so we would do some soul-searching. So we would examine our lives with the Palestinians with an agreement and without it. So we'd talk to them about our lives together with humility. With compassion. Instead, you offer them Barak's arrogant campaign slogans. Because of this arrogance you write so little. Because of it, nothing you write has any value.
- Mira Nathan!
- Landau Your writing will have value only if you stop being so arrogant. Only if you write with modesty. Only if you recognize the boundaries of our power. If you can't recognize them, don't write. If you can't recognize them, don't come to the conference. If you can't recognize them, don't come here anymore.

Avner is stunned. He has difficulty swallowing the insult. After a moment, he exits. Silence.

- Mira I want you to take another Valium.
- Landau I've taken.
- Mira **(Offers him a pill)** When?
- Landau **(Rejects the pill)** He still doesn't understand that his moral positions have ruined his writing.
- Mira Yelling at him certainly won't get him to understand. Now he'll go home and knock back a bottle of vodka.

Landau Better he's not here when Mahmoud and Nadia come.

Mira Take a pill anyway. You don't sleep. You're angry. You argue. Accuse. Preach. Our book sales are way down since we returned from Ramallah. You haven't touched the Hassan novel for a month. You promised to finish it by May.

Noga and Mahmoud enter

Noga The soldiers kept us waiting at the checkpoint.

Mahmoud **(To Mira)** I said hello to your father on the stairs, but he just kept on walking.

Landau He won't be coming to the conference.

Mira If you apologize to him, he'll come.

Noga We need him, Dad. If he doesn't come, others won't either.

Landau Those who don't come because of him, shouldn't come at all.

Noga I'll speak to him.

Landau I don't want him to come. **(To Mahmoud)** Where's Nadia?

Mahmoud At home. With the baby. It's hard for her. She needs more time.

Mira I'll bring you coffee.

Landau We'll drink there. **(To Mahmoud)** Did you bring the resolution from the Writers' Union?

Mahmoud Yes. **(Shows him)** I also brought a letter of support from Arafat.

Mira **(To Landau)** We should translate it.

Landau We'll translate it on the way. **(To Mira)** Should we go?

Nadia enters with the baby Mona in her arms.

Landau Nadia?

Mahmoud What happened? How did you get here? Is the baby OK?

Nadia She's sleeping.

Noga She's so cute. Can I hold her? **(Takes Mona in her arms)**

Nadia Sorry for bursting in like this. **(To Mahmoud)** I'm not sure you can take part in their conference.

Mahmoud Why?

Landau Your writers reached a very important decision, Nadia.

Nadia They decided what Arafat forced on them.

- Mahmoud The resolution was approved by a large majority.
- Nadia It doesn't reflect the truth, Nathan. The majority of us are opposed to the clause about the refugees. Every refugee must have the right to return to his home.
- Mahmoud The union didn't demand it.
- Nadia The moment you left the house, I understood that we're fooling ourselves. And them, too. I called you from the balcony, but the child started crying...
- Mahmoud The union discussed this exact clause for three days, Nadia. You know as well as I do that the refugees in Europe and America don't want to return here. Even those living in Jordan prefer to remain there.
- Nadia They very much do want to return.
- Mira Our writers won't accept such a demand, Nadia.
- Nadia And we can't sign a petition that abandons it.
- Mahmoud None of the superpowers supports it. You know that.
- Nadia We're writers. We provide the moral principles that influence those in power.
- Mahmoud **(To Nadia)** Last summer, we visited twelve camps. We heard the refugees. They hate Israel. They don't want to be second class citizens in it. That's why they've given up on returning to their homes. That's why they want reparations, to build themselves other homes in other places, to open businesses, to raise their children...
- Nadia They were ashamed to say that they've given up on their homes because exile exhausted them. **(To Landau)** You're a moral person, Nathan. You know that the American proposal is immoral.
- Landau It enables the rehabilitation of all the refugees. It suggests that an agreed number of refugees will return to live here.
- Mahmoud I'm not sure we'll ever receive a more moral proposal. If you don't support it, you're sentencing the refugees to life imprisonment in the refugee camps.
- Nadia We've waited for fifty years. We'll wait another fifty.
- Mahmoud Do you know how many of us will be killed during those fifty years? How many will sit in prison? How many will be tortured?
- Landau We have an opportunity to save thousands of lives, Nadia.
- Nadia You demand concessions because you're strong. Because you've won. Only when you feel defeat, will you be able to be more humane.
- Landau I've spent a lifetime writing that we need to be more humane and stop killing you. I've spent a lifetime looking for partners among you who would write that you also have to stop killing us. And when I hear you, I'm not sure that I've

found such a partner. You don't write in order to save human beings. You write to save a dream.

Mira Just a minute, Nathan. I think we need to postpone the conference for a few days.

Noga Drink some water, Dad. **(Hands him a bottle of water)**

Landau Literature has power, Nadia. If you continue to write about false dreams, people will continue to die for them. What will you do when you see long rows of graves of people who would still be alive if you hadn't sold them illusions?

Nadia I hope that if I continue to write about our dreams they'll come true. **(To Mahmoud)** And you will not renounce them in our name. **(Takes Mona from Noga)** Let's go home, Mahmoud.

Landau You can't go now. The conference is about to start. Sit a minute. We'll let them know that we'll be there soon.

Nadia **(To Mahmoud)** I waited for you for so many years when you were in prison. I don't want to lose you now. Don't do something that will separate us forever.

Mahmoud You're not losing me.

Nadia If we can't continue this struggle together, then we'll leave it to others. We'll take Mona and flee to the first country that will have us.

Landau You're not going anywhere. We'll sit here until we agree. If we can't, the politicians won't even try.

Nadia **(To Mahmoud, in tears)** There's no point remaining here, in this small and pitiful country, and be always dependent on the grace of the Jews. What sort of life will our daughter have here? Like ours?

Landau You have the opportunity now to offer her a better life.

Mahmoud **(Embracing her)** She's going through a difficult time. Her brother has gone on hunger strike in prison again. They won't let her see him.

Landau I'll try to see him. I'll call the director of the prison. We'll appeal to the High Court. **(To Nadia)** We're writers, Nadia. We understand human nature better than the politicians. We're more sensitive to suffering than them. You yourself said that we have to try to influence them... **(But Mahmoud and Nadia have exited)**

Mira Take a pill. **(Landau doesn't respond)**

Noga Take it!

Mira We have to cancel the conference.

Landau We're not cancelling anything. **(Takes the pill)**

Noga What's the point if they don't sign the petition?

Landau I'll sign it.

Noga Perhaps he'll persuade her by tomorrow.

Landau If we wait, we create the impression that we're hesitating.

Noga What's the point of a petition which only you sign?

Landau If I'm the only one willing to sign it, then I absolutely must sign.

Mira Without fanaticism, Nathan. Too many people are dying around us because of fanaticism.

Landau Don't preach to me, Mira.

Mira This fanaticism is harming your writing, Nathan. You're losing your reputation. You won't be able to influence.

Landau I'm prepared to give up my reputation.

Mira It's not only yours. I have a part in it, too. I worked very hard to build it. I won't allow you to destroy it.

Noga OK, Mom. Enough.

Landau Are you staying here or coming with me?

Mira I can't work with you like this, Nathan.

Noga It's only a conference, Dad. It's not a cabinet meeting. I doubt if anyone will even listen to what you have to say.

Landau You needn't come either. **(Turns to leave)**

Noga **(Blocks his way)** I won't let you go.

Landau Move out of the way, please.

Noga I cancelled my plans for New York and stayed here to help you, even though I gave up on this place long ago...

Landau If you've given up, you can go.

Noga Wake up, Dad. We're your most faithful supporters. We're prepared to give up everything for you. But you must remember that you're only human. Flesh and blood. You must be more forgiving to yourself. You're not a character in a book of yours.

But Landau exits. His address to the writers' conference is heard in the background.

Landau There is no argument between us about our right to self-determination, like any other nation. Nor is there any argument between us that our struggle for independence in 1948 was a just struggle. But despite that, we need to recognize that the result of our struggle was a disaster for the Palestinian people. It makes no difference whether the refugees fled or whether we expelled them. Nor does it make any difference that the Arab countries didn't raise a finger to resettle them. We're living on their land and their suffering lies at our door. Therefore, we must internalize the painful insight that, on the one hand, Israel can't resettle all the refugees on its territory without endangering its own stability and identity. But, on the other hand, as long as there is no end to the suffering of the refugees, there will be no peace between us and the Palestinian people. Therefore, we have to agree that a certain number of refugees will return to here, on a humanitarian basis. We have to open our hearts to those who won't return, recognize their suffering and participate in their rehabilitation. Literature must prepare the hearts for it...

11. Rock music club in Tel Aviv

Light on the stage. January 9, 2001. Noga is singing.

Noga My father recedes between the hills
His posture is stooped, his shoulders slumped
I call to him
He turns his face, his eyes are empty
His lips murmur
"Go my girl, by your blood you shall live."

He hurries between the boulders
His face pale and bitter
I lengthen my footsteps
Call after him
His voice echoes:
"Go my girl, by your blood you shall live."

He climbs to the top of the hill
I beg him
He spreads his arms and lifts off
His face appears above the clouds
Twisting into floating letters:
"Go my girl, by your blood you shall live."

The song is greeted by applause and shouts of “bravo”.

12. The Landau home in Tel Aviv

The light comes up in the living room. February 26, 2001. Mira is sitting opposite Landau in the wheelchair, holding a pill and a glass of water.

Mira Please, Nathan. Take it already. It's just a sedative. It will make you less angry and you'll be able to sleep a little. **(He refuses to take it)** Your anger won't make any difference. Dozens of people will continue to be killed here, even if you're angry.

Boaz and Nabil enter. As always, only Landau sees and hears them.

Boaz It's a pity you didn't join us for the Taba talks, Landau. We reached some very important agreements there.

Nabil On just about all the issues.

Boaz And on all the issues, in almost all the clauses.

Nabil Almost.

Landau You did or you didn't?

Boaz We did. They agreed that we would annex four percent of the West Bank, including most of the settlement blocs, in return for alternative territory.

Landau **(To Nabil)** And what about Jerusalem?

Nabil They agreed that the Arab neighborhoods would be ours, including Al Aqsa, while the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall would be theirs.

Landau So you're signing? When?

Boaz We need a few more days.

Nabil Very few.

Mira is closely observing Landau's facial expressions.

Mira You think that if you don't take the pill, death will stop its rampage? You've spent your entire life trying to soothe its hunger. When will you understand that it will always be hungry?

Landau addresses Boaz and Nabil.

- Landau What do you need a few more days for? Because of the refugee problem?
- Nabil The opposite. We agreed that most of the refugees in Lebanon will be resettled in the Palestinian state.
- Boaz We ourselves agreed to absorb a certain number of refugees. As a humanitarian gesture.
- Nabil And to participate in the resettlement of the others.
- Boaz Together with the Western countries.

Mira again tries to persuade Landau to take the pill.

- Mira Please, Nathan. Don't force me to hate you.

Landau addresses Boaz and Nabil.

- Landau So, if you've reached these agreements, why don't you sign?
- Nabil We're concerned that our people aren't yet ready for such an agreement.
- Boaz Most of our people will also see it as a defeat.
- Nabil Hamas will claim that Arafat capitulated. They'll overthrow him and chaos will reign here.
- Boaz Barak could lose the elections because of it.
- Landau The opposite. This agreement will strengthen both of them.
- Nabil Not as much as if they blame each other for the failure...
- Boaz And postpone the negotiations until after the elections.
- Nabil As long as you don't intervene or attempt to mediate or to reconcile...
- Boaz And don't make proposals that are more moral, more rational or more just...
- Nabil Then, in a few months, there will be an agreement.
- Boaz Politics is the art of the possible, Landau, not of the just.
- Landau Are you blind? You have a fateful opportunity in the palms of your hands. If we don't sign now, we'll lose all hope of ever reaching an agreement. If this hope is lost, hatred will take over. And when we hate, we slaughter...
(His body is trembling)
- Mira Stop it, Nathan. For God's sake, stop! What do you want? To die? Why? To punish me? For what? I am to blame for what happened to you?

Don't look at me like that. I'm not going to help you die! I'm not prepared to even think of it. Take this damn pill before I go mad!

She tries to give it to him. Meir enters.

Meir I'll give it to him. **(To Landau)** I'm asking you to take the pill, Nathan. It will calm you down so you can sleep. You might also eat something. You haven't eaten a thing in two days. I really don't want to force you to take pills. Like I had to do with Mother, may she rest in peace. Is that what you want? Fine. Open your mouth.

He manages to force the pill into Landau's mouth. Landau spits it out.

Meir It won't help, Nathan. We're not going to let you die. You're going to live, even if you don't want to. **(In Yiddish)** You hear me?

Distraught, Landau beats his head with his fists.

Mira Nathan...

Meir Nathan!

They grab hold of his arms and try to calm him. Noga enters.

Noga Leave him.

Mira He thinks his death will shake the world. **(To Landau)** Do you want us to tie you down?

Noga Stop it, Mom.

Mira Open your mouth. **(He refuses)**

Meir Open your mouth.

Mira If you really want to die, then die. But keep in mind that we'll bury you secretly. In silence.

Noga **(To Mira)** Take a cigarette and go to the balcony! **(To Meir)** Go with her. I'll give it to him.

Mira and Meir exit. Noga picks up Landau's novel.

Noga Shall I read to you from the novel about Hassan, Dad? We got to the moment where he goes to the beach in Tel Aviv, remember? **(Landau turns his head away)** *The beach was already full with bathers. The elderly, men, women and children. Hassan sat on the sand, took off his shoes and dipped his feet in the water. Beside him were excited toddlers*

and their anxious mothers. An old woman floated on her back, her face pointed toward the setting sun. Passionate youths squirted jets of water on laughing girls in tiny bathing suits. Here and there, a surfer could be seen in the midst of the waves. (She notices that he's listening) You hear me, right? You understand? Understand? (He doesn't respond. She continues) A soft smile spread over Hassan's face. The surrender of the bathers to their pleasures aroused hope in him. Slowly, tranquility spread through his hands, his feet, the roots of his hair and the drops of sweat on his forehead. He wiped his face and he knew. He will stay here. Yes. He will stay. He has nowhere else... (She notices tears streaming down his cheeks) You understand, dad. I can see. I know you understand. You've always understood. You're crying because of Hassan. It's the first time he feels that Tel Aviv has become his home. It's a moment filled with hope. You, too, are filled with hope. I can see, dad, I can see...

13. The Landau home in Tel Aviv

Avner **(To the audience)** As I expected, the Taba talks ended in failure. Nathan was desperate. We worried about his health. He refused to see a doctor. We brought the doctor to him, and he refused to be examined. He refused to eat. He sat all day beside the phone, trying to persuade whoever would listen to him to call for a return to negotiations. What could we do? Hospitalize the country's most important writer by force?

Living room. Night. January 28, 2001. Landau is sitting in the armchair. Meir is standing opposite him. Mira is sitting on the couch. Noga is seated at the table.

Meir I told the Chief Rabbi. I gave him your letter.

Landau He doesn't think the negotiations should be resumed immediately?

Meir He's convinced that transferring land to the Arabs is a mortal danger.

Landau Now that the negotiations have collapsed, dozens are dying every week.

Meir He prays that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will strengthen the soldiers.

Landau Prayer isn't enough, Meir. We need to do something. Call him and tell him I want to meet with him. I'm prepared to leave for Jerusalem right now.

Meir It's 10 PM.

Landau He has to speak with the prime minister urgently.

- Meir Who are you to tell him what to do? You're just a writer. He's never read any of your books.
- Landau I won't try persuade him to read.
- Meir In his eyes you're a heretic, Nathan.
- Landau Fine. We'll go to the social activists in the religious sector. A new generation is growing there. I see them in the government offices. In the universities. They're aware of the terrible poverty in their communities. They know that an agreement will benefit them, and they'll pressure him to support it.
- Meir I'm not sure they've read your books either.
- Landau They're no longer naïve, Meir. They read books, and they understand that the damn Orthodoxy he forces on them relegates them to the bottom of the society. In New York, we weren't Orthodox. We were Jews. Our father travelled to the synagogue on Saturday by bus.
- Meir I'm Orthodox, Nathan. You won't tell me that my Orthodoxy is damned. Your heresy is damned. Your heresy toward the Master of the Universe. Your heresy toward our father. Toward the Chief Rabbi. How dare you talk about him like that? I only agreed to give him your letter because you're my brother. You'd better know. He won't support negotiations which all his followers are opposed to. **(Forcefully)** Just one of the neighborhoods I'm building in the settlements will influence the negotiations more than all your books combined. **(Turns to leave then returns)** Next week we're visiting the graves of mother and father, may their memories be blessed. We don't want you to come with us. We'll cry there for you, too. I never thought father died from embarrassment after you met with Arafat. Now I'm not so sure.
- Landau Father died because most of his children became fanatical fundamentalists here and forgot the Judaism on which he raised them!

But Meir exits. Silence.

- Mira OK. Let's go to sleep, Nathan.
- Noga **(Firmly)** Mom has asked you to go to sleep!
- Mira We've had enough of politics. Tomorrow morning we're going to the Sea of Galilee. You'll rest. Wander around. And you'll get back to writing the book about Hassan.
- Landau I'll write it here.
- Noga You haven't written one word all week.
- Mira We'll stay there until you finish it. Come to bed.

Landau I'm not tired!

Noga Why do you torture yourself? Are you responsible for the failure of the negotiations? You did as much as any mortal can do. No doubt you're a great author, but since humans first began to write, there has never been an author who succeeded in stopping a war.

Landau What happened tonight in Taba was a terrible disaster, Noga. It wasn't predestined. It happened because of human blindness.

Noga And you're going to open their eyes? What have you achieved in thirty years of writing? We're becoming more nationalistic and more cruel, day by day. We hate more and more. We're being hated more and more. I only stay here to help Mom, so she doesn't have to hospitalize you...

Landau I won't have you speak to me like that!

Noga If I stay with you one more day, I'll have to be hospitalized myself.

She exits.

Landau Noga... **(To Mira)** I should go after her.

Mira **(Stops him)** For what?

Landau It will hurt her less, if she understands more.

Mira Maybe you should try to understand her for a change?

Landau Enough, Mira!

Mira I'm going to ask the doctor to change your pills tomorrow morning.

Landau I'm absolutely fine!

Mira So show me you can get into bed and sleep for a few hours.

Landau **(Angrily)** Sleep? Now? **(He turns to leave)**

Mira **(Stops him)** Wait a second. Take a look at yourself. You don't see the mad fanaticism that has taken hold of you? You accuse your brother and his rabbis of a distorted perception of reality, but what about you? You're fighting for an agreement that only exists in your imagination. Thinking that you can impose it is megalomania. No author can write from such hubris. You know that perfectly well. Your entire life you've advocated writing from humility.

Landau I'm in a hurry, Mira.

Mira You're not going anywhere. This fanaticism is not in your blood. You're not the same as your brothers and sisters. You were always able to overcome it. That's why you became a writer. So now you will swallow your frustration and continue writing. You hear?

Landau I heard!

Landau turns to leave. Avner enters.

Avner We've got to put an end to this, Nathan. Noga spoke to me. She couldn't stop crying. This struggle of yours has become ridiculous. Your family is falling apart. You've destroyed the reputation you spent a whole life building. You're lucky you don't hear what publishers are saying about you.

Landau Thanks. We'll talk about it another time.

Avner We're talking about it now. Listen. I read the recent chapters from "Hassan on the Edge." It's a very moving novel. I cried when his family disintegrates, when his children deny their Arab identity, when they refuse to see him, when he loses hope and commits suicide. But when I read his eulogy to himself, as he's walking along the train tracks at night, I felt that he was encouraging me to confront the despair within myself. That's why the book is so important. That's why you must give up politics and finish it. I'll make sure it is published within a few months.

Landau And what will happen here over those months?

Avner You'll continue writing, and we'll read what you've written.

Landau I hope you're right. **(Turns to leave)**

Avner Sit! We're going to choose a chapter from the book and send it to the literary supplements!

Landau I need to talk to Noga.

Avner She also thinks that the book offers hope.

Landau We need hope now!

Avner You know very well that literature only gives hope for the future.

Landau Yes. Of course. But it has the power to strengthen the moral backbone of the readers, and that moral backbone can give us hope now, isn't that so? Everyone who has ever read a book knows that. That's why most people continue to read. Because most of them want to be moral.

Avner What planet are you living on, Nathan? People want to be moral? They want to live!

Landau That's right, but most of them know that every immoral society will eventually crumble from within and vanish. They know this could happen to us here, too. Sometimes our readers are too weak to be moral. Sometimes they make mistakes and fail. Sometimes their moral sense goes awry. That's the moment we need to be there to help them.

Something seems to be troubling Landau. He paces to and fro.

Mira What's going on, Nathan?

Landau Nothing.

Mira You don't feel well?

Landau I feel very well. I think you're right. I really am very tired. I should go to bed.
(Exits to the bedroom)

Avner He'll be OK. Go get some sleep. I'll stay with him tonight.

Mira Can you bring some of the mugs to the kitchen, Dad?

They exit. Landau enters. He's wearing a coat and is carrying an old backpack. He crosses the living room and exits the house. Mira hears his footsteps and enters from the kitchen.

Mira Nathan? **(Searches for him)** Nathan?

14. The plaza in front of the prime minister's office in Jerusalem.

Landau stands and addresses the crowd, which has gathered to hear him. January 29, 2001,

Landau Writers don't have political power but they have moral power, because those who want to be moral, listen to them. At such a fateful moment, writers are obliged to wield this power of theirs, and persuade the public to take moral positions. And what is more moral than saving human life? And if the negotiations that were stopped could save human lives, I will go on hunger strike until they are resumed. I call on all the writers who are exasperated with war to join me in demanding a political solution from the government. Now, when death is rampant around us, we need to leave our writing desks and halt it with our bodies.

Mira and Noga enter.

Mira I brought your medicines.

Landau Thanks.

Mira And something to eat. **(He remains silent)**

Noga At least drink. **(Offers him the bottle)**

Mira You haven't eaten anything for three days!

Noga Do you want us to take you to hospital?

Mira Even Mahatma Gandhi drank during his hunger strikes.

Noga **(Angrily)** He's not Mahatma Gandhi

Landau I hope my hunger strike will be shorter.

Mira You can already end it. The prime minister heard you and asked Dad to come see him. If you hadn't spent the morning accusing him, he would have invited you as well.

Landau I'll only stop striking when the negotiations resume.

Noga If they resume because of your blackmail, they'll fail immediately.

Mira You're destroying your reputation, Nathan. Who'll read your books after this?

Landau There are more important things in this world than my books.

Mira **(Forcefully)** Drink!

Avner enters, having just left the prime minister's office.

Avner He's ready to meet with you, Nathan. The moment you end the hunger strike.

Landau And what about the negotiations?

Avner He has elections in another week.

Landau The negotiations are more important than his elections.

Avner You're a writer, Nathan. You can't give orders to a prime minister. On whose behalf are you making these demands? Your own moral power? Who stands behind you? Divisions of readers? There's never been a reader who took to the barricades because of a writer.

Landau Many took to the barricades because of books they had read.

Avner So go write another book. Hunger strikes are for people who have no other means of expression. Even Tolstoy didn't hold a hunger strike outside the Tsar's palace.

Noga And he's no Tolstoy.

Mira Drink!

Mahmoud and Nadia enter with Mona in Nadia's arms.

Mahmoud Hello, Nathan.

Noga First tell him to drink.

Mahmoud He'll drink.

Mira Tell him.

Mahmoud We all want to strike with you, Nathan. We approached Arafat yesterday.

Landau What did he say?

Mahmoud He asked for more time.

Landau Until when? Until I...

Mira You see? Let's go home before you make a fool of yourself.

Mahmoud Your strike gives us hope, Nathan. Let's not waste it, when it can't influence.

Nadia The Writers' Union won't allow us to strike.

Landau So you're leaving?

Mahmoud If it's just us here, the world will see how few we are.

Noga Tell him to drink!

Mahmoud Drink, Nathan. Please. The big struggle is still ahead of us.

Nadia You'll still need to write a lot for it.

Landau The struggle is now, Nadia.

Nadia We can't be part of it now.

Landau Do you want to?

Mahmoud Nadia has found work in Berlin. She'll teach Arabic at the University. We'll return when you Israelis are prepared to listen to us.

Nadia My brother died in jail last week.

Landau He died?! Why didn't you call me?

Nadia We buried him last night.

Mahmoud We want a better future for our daughter.

Landau That's what I'm striking for!

Mira Drink already. **(Angrily)** I have no more strength for your wars! **(To Noga)** Tomorrow he'll want us to set ourselves on fire together with him.

Avner You're a great writer. Isn't that enough for you? Do you have to be a martyr as well?

Mira I'm to blame for this pride of yours. If I hadn't believed in you all my life, you wouldn't believe in yourself so much either.

Noga Enough, Dad. I'm sick of this pride of yours. Of this cruelty. Of this self-righteousness and pretentiousness. If you don't come home with us right now, you'll never see me again.

Mira If you don't come home with us right now, you won't have anywhere to return to.

The two of them turn to leave. Avner, Nadia and Mahmoud join them. Landau tries to prevent Mira and Noga from leaving.

Landau No. Wait a moment. Wait. I can't continue without you. Our fate is being decided right now in that building there. All my life I've written about people who took their fate into their own hands and paid a heavy price for it. Now my time has come. I can't evade what I have demanded of others. What kind of people would we be if we abandon responsibility for our own fate?

They continue walking towards the exit. Landau stands alone, desolate for a moment, and then heads off at a run towards of the prime minister's office. As he exits, we hear him shout:

Landau: I want to tell you something... I want to tell you something...

Noga Dad!

But Landau has already gone. The sound of a vehicle braking sharply is heard.

Noga **(To the audience)** We ran after him. We weren't able to stop him. He got to the Prime Minister's Office. The gate opened. He wanted to go inside but the prime minister's limousine suddenly appeared right in front of him. He tried to stop it, but the heavy car picked up speed. Daddy jumped in front of it. He knew that the driver would not be able to stop in time. **(Silence)** I guess we didn't leave him any other option...

15. The living room in the Landau home, Tel Aviv

February 28, 2001. Landau sits agitated and fuming in the wheelchair, bound in a straightjacket. Noga is beside him, trying to calm him.

Landau **(Roaring at full volume)** Words... Words...

Noga We tied you down because you keep on hurting yourself. We'll take it off when you relax.

Landau Words... words...

Noga Watch out. You'll fall off the chair again.

Landau Words... words...

Noga Do you want to drink something? Do you want a cigarette?

Boaz and Nabil enter while she's talking and address Landau.

Boaz I suppose, Landau, that your family has concealed the election results from you. Right?

Nabil Just so you know, Barak suffered a resounding defeat. Arafat's defeat is on its way, too.

Boaz There'll be no negotiations in the foreseeable future.

Landau Words, words...

Noga We can see how difficult it is for you, Dad, but we can't look after you anymore.

Boaz They were defeated, Landau, because they were ahead of our time.

Nabil Because too many around us aren't yet ready for their ideas.

Boaz Because their appetite for land is greater than their will to live.

Nabil Because their fear kills all hope.

Landau Words, words ...

Noga You won't let us feed you. You won't let us bathe you. We can't bear to see you like this.

Boaz Unfortunately, you didn't help us much. The opposite, in fact. You mislead too many people that an agreement was at hand.

Nabil That is was possible to reach it in the blink of an eye.

Boaz So they're blaming Barak and Arafat for the failure.

Nabil They're tired of waiting. Force is their only solution. On your side as well as on ours.

Boaz And what they can't achieve by force they'll try to achieve by greater force.

Nabil Without compassion and without mercy.

Boaz By terrible cruelty.

Nabil Not only because of us, Landau.

Boaz Because of the illusions that you've been kindly spreading here your entire life.

Nabil In your naivety.

Boaz In your blindness.

Nabil In your hubris.

Landau Words, words ... Words, words ...

Landau bursts into tears. Avner, Meir and Mira enter.

Meir The ambulance is here,
 Avner He understands where we're taking him?
 Noga Can't you see how angry he is?
 Meir Don't worry, Nathan. It's the best institution in the country. The nurses are the most compassionate. The Chief Rabbi will visit you next week. Next month you'll come to the engagement of his grandson to Esther.
 Avner We'll publish all the manuscripts in your drawers, Nathan. I've already begun editing them.
 Mira We're not sending you away. I swear it. Within a year we'll bring out a new edition of all your writings. People will finally understand what you've been fighting for.
 Noga Don't cry, Dad. There's a beautiful garden there. With flowers, bushes, birds. We'll walk the paths. And we'll read your books. I'll visit you every day until you return to yourself. Soon, Dad. Yes. Very soon you'll be able to write.
 Landau **(Crying)** Words, words...
 Mira He won't survive there. I see it in his eyes. He'll die within a few days.
 Meir He'll survive for many more years. **(To Landau)** Right, Nathan? All of us are reciting psalms for you.

Mira hugs and kisses the sobbing Landau. Meir wheels him to the doorway. Suddenly, when he is in the doorway, Landau straightens in the wheelchair and strikes his head against the doorframe with all his might. The force of the blow knocks him unconscious.

Mira Nathan! **(Rushes over to him)**
 Meir **(To Noga)** Call the paramedic in the ambulance!
 Mira No. No need.
 Meir He's still alive.
 Mira No need!
 Noga Dad? Daddy?

THE END