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"The mayor is crazy—mixing Gogol and Golgotha!" A laugh swells in Nathan's belly. He will soon be giggling and nowadays that could lead to a plumbing leakage.

'No uncle. It is sensible. There is no room left for burial in Jerusalem. So it is suggested to layer. What does it matter?'

Nathan wants to say, that it is about the silliness and the ceremony of death. That to lie with the bottom of your neighbour—imagine Samuel Solomon's—melting into your nose, would make his small life smaller.

'Thank you, Elijah, for the wine. Congratulations with your export order. We have our chess now.'

His nephew takes the dismissal gracefully and clatters his truck back down the hill. Like a cauldron lid, a dark cloud is closing over the Ramallah hills, over the two men at their chessboard. The red earth trembles with heat or oncoming thunder. Nathan wipes his forehead with his wrist and takes a gulp of iced water, then makes his move, offers Avi a dish.

'Here, these olives are soaked in Elijah's wine. It's not so bad.'

But Nathan knows his voice reveals envy. The young irritate him, even his sister's son. So, olives are less elegant than wine-for-export, but he has done not badly himself. His trees have multiplied and now they emboss the hillside, their silver leaves tarnished and buffed by changing skies. He does not like Avi's tone, the way he says, 'Is that really your move?' He speaks in sing-song; he could be teaching Yeshiva still.

'Yes. Rook to G6. You have something to say, nu?'

Avi's voice rises a pitch. 'Nathan! You disgrace your old teacher. Less olives in wine, more thinking. My bishop, your rook. See?'

'Teacher, smeacher. You were a year ahead in Yeshiva, two by class-hopping. It goes to your head more than the wine to mine. I'll be a great-grandfather any day and you? Not even a grandchild.'

'There is a taste of bay leaf in these olives.' Avi licks his lips thoughtfully. 'How is it your business, whether my daughter gives birth?'

'Forgive me, Avi, but your Rachel is a soldier. What sort of life is that? For a woman?'

'These bay leaves in your olives. You know what they mean?'

'They mean my olives taste better.'

'They mean, *there is change only in death.*' With this Avi takes Nathan's rook, putting his king in check.

Nathan lies back in his chair. It tilts on the uneven earth. His house stands white and plain in front of him, its front door in shadow. A white house on a red hill. From here it looks two-dimensional, a rectangle, like a child's drawing. He would like to close his eyes. He would like, perhaps, to start his life over again.

When the sound comes, it is just a sound. Out of the hillside, a sound born of heat, like the small thunder in his head.

'Move, you schmuck' Avi is yelling.

Nathan opens his eyes to see a dark flicker at the back corner of his house and now the sound is real. A low whine, smooth; it knows what it is doing. Glass breaks—the bathroom window for sure. Silence, then a softer noise, behind the house. Nathan is staring at Avi.

The chess board is upturned, kings and the rest cast to the stones. Neither wants to know what is there, out of sight. All they want is their mock battle, and to argue a bit. They turn and walk towards the house.

The man is not in uniform. He is face down, hair shining with glass, head in the drain channel as though trying to tunnel in. His back is naked, untouched. Grunting, they squat to lever him over.

'Get him there, under the shoulder.'

'Push the knees up, it's easier.'

'Leave him!' The voice is light but sure.

Two soldiers, in the greens of the IDF, rifles dangling.

'Rachel.' Avi's voice is unsteady.

'He came outside Ramallah, climbed out over the fence. Instructions.'

Nathan succeeds in turning the man, feels a pulse in his neck, beat, beat—nothing. Then a flicker.

'I'm going in, to call an ambulance.'

'Not necessary, Mr Getz.'

'Sorry, necessary, Miss Schmueli.'

'Sergeant Schmueli.'

'Certainly.'

Nathan feels his heart banging and his chest tight. He recognises anger. Not irritation. Anger, at what is happening to this country, at such...certainty.

'This man is wounded. You've done your job.'

He pulls himself tall, uncurves his shoulders. He is not shouting. Not quite. Rachel's companion says something in a low voice and the two of them turn back down the hill, rifles swinging. Nathan avoids Avi's eyes.

'I'm going to call.' It is a statement.

'Call all you like. For the good it will do.' Avi's voice is quiet too. He sits back against the wall of the house. A fly buzzes, lands on his hand, lands on the man's nose. The wound is high on his chest—he must have turned towards the bullet. Suddenly drops are falling, hard, large drops of rain, falling on the three men, drumming away silence. The olive trees glow purple as the sun hits them from under the cloud. Nathan too sits, his back to the wall. It rains on.

Some time later, he goes down to his workshed, brings out a large spade and a smaller one and points down the hill with his head.

'It's quite soft over there. There's a hollow behind the rock.'

Avi manoeuvres himself up, limb by limb.

They finish under a half moon. Their clothes have moulded to their bodies with the rain, but it stopped long ago and the thunder remains distant. In that light they can hardly see the mound, or the two twigs tied with string.

'They'll dig him up?' Avi sounds uncertain.

'Yes. They'll dig him up,' replies Nathan. 'But for now...let us say, my earth is his.'

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Agnes Kocsis.