

ROAD BLOCKS AND CHECKPOINTS

As well as prisons, concentration camps and torture chambers, under the pretext of security (the best pretext ever invented for robbery, confiscation, jailing, torture and murder), and in order to make the life of the Palestinian residents even more difficult, the Israeli authorities also use road blocks, checkpoints and most recently, the latest example, the 8 meter high so-called "Security Fence", which is as yet unfinished.

We were gathering maps and pictures and life stories of people who have been tortured, when, in late 2003, a new book appeared in Tel-Aviv. This book: "Checkpoint Syndrome", was written by a young Israeli who had just finished his National Service in the Israeli army. After he was trained, he was sent to serve on the checkpoints. When he finished his service, and was back as a civilian, he looked back on his life as a soldier at the checkpoints, and he wrote a story about his military service. Not being an Israeli official and not even being a writer, he managed, in a simple, crude and brutal Hebrew slang, to give us the atmosphere of these checkpoints, not from the viewpoint of its victims but from the viewpoint of the victorious Israelis. How they behaved towards the Palestinians. How they arrested them. How they hit them and robbed them and also how they shot and killed them when they resisted, with no fear of punishment. His story also includes his fantasies when he was bored and had nothing to do.

The book is an essential read for anyone who wants to understand what the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is about. We have translated it from Hebrew & present it here, now.

CHECKPOINT SYNDROME

By Liran Ron Furer

GAZA 1997

I was very excited, that first time on a checkpoint. We were all quite stressed. We were polite to the Arabs, we checked each car thoroughly. The Arabs immediately sensed that we were new recruits to the job. They asked us which unit we belonged to and how long we were going to stay. They smiled at us with their special derisory smiles when we let them go, though sometimes they hooted to make us nervous or frighten us. It took some time, but we soon learned how to work at the checkpoint. We felt more at ease, the Arabs didn't frighten us so much any more, gradually we realized that it was they that had to be frightened not us. After all, it was in our hands whether or not they were going to reach their place of work on time. It was we who could make their life very difficult. Someone told us that the more the Arabs were afraid of us the more order there would be at the checkpoint. As time passed we discovered that he was right.

Sometimes very late at night or at midday when there is no traffic at all, the boredom of the checkpoint can kill you. After a time, when we do 'four-four' at the checkpoint (four hours at the checkpoint, then four hours rest) we stop feeling the passage of time; the brain gets blocked and it is impossible to imagine anything new, thinking only about fucking and food. We are always in the same fixed teams and after ten, fifteen shifts (sixty hours) we have nothing left to talk about. If a car suddenly arrives we pounce on it with great excitement, and check it very thoroughly, just to pass the time. Sometimes we are quite pleased to see them arriving at the checkpoint.

Early in the morning, at sunrise, the cars start arriving slowly, like drops of water. But in the evening they arrive all together like an explosion, on their way to another day. By six o'clock the explosion turns into a long line of cars. In spite of the pressure and the hooting, it helps us to pass the time until the new shift arrives.

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A car with youngsters stops. Arabic music is playing at full volume. They take out their identity cards and wait, without lowering the volume.

"Stop the music!"

"Impossible, soldier."

"What do you mean impossible? Turn off the radio!"

The driver fiddles with the radio, as if he's trying to do something about it. It seems to me that the young men sitting in the back are laughing, they say something to the driver. I insert a bullet in my gun and let the air out of their back tire. Within a second the music stops, but this doesn't change anything. Kfir lets the air out from the other tires. They sit quietly in the car.

This will keep them at the checkpoint at least for a few hours. This is the way to teach them a lesson.

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Another night shift. Boring as hell. There is nothing to talk about and everyone is looking for a way to beat the boredom. Shahar is dismantling the machine-gun stand of the checkpoint. He is dragging sandbags and arranging them in rows of three for no reason at all. Boaz is sleeping like a baby in the look-out tower above us. I wish I wasn't the commander of the checkpoint. Then I could sleep in the tower too. I'm sitting on a chair in the cabin, looking for the millionth time at the poster with the photos of the wanted men. I already know their names and faces by heart. We all know them. Everyone has imagined himself catching an important terrorist, one of those faces on this poster. The flak jacket is uncomfortable. It is heavy and my shoulders are quite painful, I lean the flak jacket on the edge of the table to give my shoulders some rest, I'm so tired of this silence at the checkpoint, my head is heavy. A loud rattling suddenly comes from the tower, I go out, Shahar is throwing stones at it: "Wake up, you son of a bitch!"

It's Shahar's turn to go up the tower, but Boaz doesn't wake up.

"Wake up!"

Shahar takes out the broom handle, climbs up the ladder to the tower. There's the sound of beatings and cries. Boaz comes down the ladder. He looks awful, half asleep. "Its not that terrible Boaz, it's only forty minutes past one".

We all talk about being tired, Boaz calculates that he has been awake non stop for thirty six hours. I am telling him about the vacation that they are planning for us at the end of the line. And then we are all silent. Boaz starts walking round the checkpoint in circles. I go back to sitting in the cabin, looking at the faces on the wall. They'll surely bring us hot coffee soon, the time is almost four o'clock. Nice, another eight minutes have passed.

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Going home for two days leave. Each time it is the same. Lunch with my parents and my sister, and then Dana comes and takes me to her flat. On the way we usually talk about her job and about her friends (those that I know). I have nothing to tell her. I am just stuck in this fucking checkpoint from morning to night, and anyway we also talk a lot on the mobile. We reach her place and she boils water for coffee. We go on talking until I kiss her and we fuck on the sofa in the living room. I come quite quickly and she lights us cigarettes and lies on me. "Suck me".

I close my eyes, this is happiness, this is life. This is freedom. After a while she stops and we go to bed. After that she will tell me that we are not talking like we used to and that I don't tell her anything. It's true, but it does not seem to me that she'll understand anything I say. I'm about to fall asleep while she hugs me. In the morning when I wake up I'll caress her back very gently and when she will start to wake up I'll kiss her tummy and grip her ass, and start our morning fuck. It is the last one I will have during this leave.

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In our company there are class distinctions, a bit like a pecking order. The veteran soldiers are the most important. They get the best food and don't have to stand on guard or be at the checkpoint and they are not involved in keeping the place tidy. The young ones, those who have joined the company most recently, are the wretched ones. They are destined to do a lot of guard duty, keep the station clean and have endless parades. There was a time when the youngsters were quite literally the servants of the veterans. They were abused, they were hit, they were treated like animals. But nowadays they are treated much better as long as they give due respect and behave properly.

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Today we taught the Arabs at the checkpoint to sing "Alinor". Eli checked the documents of an old twisted Peugeot and noticed that the driver looked exactly like Zohar. He took out a camera and took his picture. Then he dragged him out of the car and started to sing songs from Zohar's repertoire and made the Arab sing with him, without the lyrics of course. The Arabs who sat in the car were laughing. Then the crazy Eli shouted at them: "What are you laughing at? Start singing too!". The Arabs got frightened and started to

sing. We dragged them out of the car and arranged them in a line, like a choir. I tried to teach them the lyrics:

"...Aaaalinoor, you are beautiful, like an angel..."

What a sight to see these Arabs singing a song of Zohar Argov. It was like in a movie.

*

Sometimes these Arabs disgust me. Especially those who flatter us, the older ones. They arrive at the checkpoint with an ingratiating smile on their face and hand over their documents politely.

"How are you, soldier?"

"How do you feel, soldier?", as if it is such a pleasure for them to pass a checkpoint. It is obvious that they hate us and would gladly send us and the checkpoint to hell, but they have already capitulated, they have been tamed. The younger ones treat us with a kind of contempt, they present their documents without uttering a word. Sometimes they are laughing among themselves in Arabic. They don't hide their hatred for us, but they are also the ones who get hit most, and if they really irritate us we find a way to keep them delayed at the checkpoint for hours. They sometimes lose a whole working day because of it but this is the only way they'll learn.

*

Today I talked on the mobile with my elder sister. She is a very successful psychologist. She lives in Tel-Aviv with her husband. We've not really been in touch since she married, and we don't have much opportunity to talk. She told me again that I have to pay attention to what I do, and to remember that the people who cross the checkpoints are also human beings. She told me about various studies that have been done on soldiers who served during the last Intifada. Among them were some who had maltreated Arabs, and several years later suffered from severe delayed shock as a result of what they'd done. She said she thought that I ought to take care of myself. I agree with what she said, but she doesn't know what it's really like to serve at a checkpoint. The stress, the lack of sleep, the Arabs who are sometimes trying to drive you mad, she doesn't understand that sometimes there's no choice and in order to stay sane you've got to release some of the pressure. Most of the time it happens without us being aware. But we really are nice people in the company, we are not Nazis who enjoy hurting Arabs, as my sister really thinks. She doesn't understand what it is like to be here.

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One of the veterans brought a lot of movies to the company. We sit in the club and watch a porno film, two blond women with giant boobs, one is giving a blow-job to someone's prick and the other is pushing fingers into her cunt. The TV has no sound on because we don't want to draw the attention of other soldiers. We are sitting in silence, all five of us, we watch them fucking. From time to time Kfir says:

"Look at this bitch!"

"What a pair of boobs, what I would have done to her!"

We laugh and again we are silent and watch. After the movie Alex and Kfir went to the lavatory to masturbate. Kfir masturbated in the shower, Denis stayed in the club and I masturbated in my sleeping bag.

*

We have in our company someone by the name of Lifkin, with nice blue eyes. He is one of the wisest people in the company. He always reads books when he is not on duty. A quiet guy that we all love. One day we heard that there was a disturbance at the checkpoint, I had just returned from a patrol and all the soldiers of the company were rushing about in the rooms talking about what had happened. They were saying that Lifkin had shot a child at the checkpoint and that they were going to fuck him up badly for it. It came out that the commander of the battalion was on a reconnaissance in the region and saw two children messing about near the fence of the station. He shouted to them to stop and stand still but they ran away in the direction of the checkpoint. The commander drove after them in his jeep and when the children got onto the footpath on the Palestinian side, he called the soldiers on his loudspeaker to stop the children. Lifkin, who was a good shot, bent on his knee and without hesitation shot at one of the children. The child was hit below the knee. He lay on the ground screaming and holding his leg, which was swinging as if it wasn't connected to his body any more.

They made a great storm out of it. After the Palestinians took away the child, all sorts of inquiries and interviews started, even the commander of the brigade arrived. I felt sorry for Lifkin. He was actually one of the most relaxed soldiers in the company. He rarely hit Arabs and talked nicely to them. He simply did what the commander had told him to do. He stopped the child. Later on the commander blamed him for everything. They accused him of excessive use of his weapon, but it seems that the brigadier himself understood that Lifkin was not really guilty and he was only given a 'conditional' punishment. For two weeks afterwards he walked about as if he was in a state of shock. It seems that he couldn't get this child out of his mind.

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Today at three o'clock the regimental commander is supposed to arrive to put the company on parade. We are all cleaning the position. Our commander is telling us to polish the checkpoint. My team and I are exhausted and the checkpoint is filthy. Shahar, this Yemenite son of a bitch stops a taxi full of kids. He bends over and tells the children something in Arabic. Eight small Arab kids get out of the cab and start cleaning the checkpoint with great enthusiasm; cigarette butts, plastic bags and old newspapers. They collect everything and throw it into a bag which one of the girls is holding. The driver of the cab sits quietly and just smiles at me. The children are cleaning the checkpoint for us. It took them ten minutes and then they stood around Shahar and looked at him in silence. He took out a piece of chocolate from his jacket. They snatched the chocolate from his hand and ran to the cab arguing in Arabic among themselves. He is a genius, Shahak.

*

I hate to discuss politics. Hayim talks to me about peace, and about Rabin, who gave the Arabs weapons and caused all the bombing since then. He talks and the cars are passing without interruption. The checkpoint is full, and he is fucking my brain with peace and Rabin. What does it matter now. Actually I was thinking about this myself when we arrived at the territories. But now, at the checkpoint, I understand that it doesn't matter who is right and who is not. The Arabs hate us because we built a State over their heads, and now we sit on top of them with these checkpoints. We have taken away their will to live and this is why they turn into terrorists, to fight us and to resist. They bomb our buses and restaurants. This is a vicious circle and everybody suffers in the end. So what does it matter? What is certain is that in a situation like this it is better to be us, the Jews.

Shahar invented a game. He checks someone's documents but instead of giving them back, he throws the documents up in the air. He enjoys seeing the Arab get out of his car and bend down to collect his papers. It's a game for him and he can pass the whole shift like that. Some of the Arabs already know the game. They get out of their cars and take the documents to Shahar so he doesn't even have to move from his chair. How he's tamed them, that son of a bitch!

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Along the fence there are a lot of stray dogs, abandoned and wild. They cross the fence from one side to the other. They trigger the alarm and drive the patrols that have to check out what happened mad. Sometimes at night, the dogs trigger the alarm every ten minutes. That is why every fortnight a hunter arrives from the nature reserve society and we follow him along the fence while he shoots the dogs. He is very strange this hunter. He looks like an American cowboy with his hat and the rifle. He drives the jeep slowly and we follow behind him. From time to time he suddenly stops, jumps out of the jeep with the rifle, bends on his knee and shoots towards the fence. He doesn't even go to check if he's hit something. He just gets back into the jeep and goes on driving. We follow and I see between the bushes a big German shepherd dog, lying on its' side. I don't know if it is dead, but the hunter kills about ten dogs each time and drives on. The first time I followed him, I had pity for these dogs, I especially remember a beautiful black dog. This hunter shot him and went on driving as usual, but when we passed near I saw that he was still breathing, lying quiet without moving, just grunting at the soil, miserable. These dogs are not aware that they disturb us, they simply live their own lives. They run about and hunt, and we shoot them only because they trigger the alarm. It seems that there is no justice when you are a dog.

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Sometimes at noon an Arab dwarf sitting in a cart passes by. He has an old horse and is always dressed in rags. He smiles showing a mouth full of rotten teeth. He always makes us laugh, like a small imp in a fairy story. We exchange a few words and let him pass. Poor guy. He is suffering enough without us adding more. I was told that once, when he reached the checkpoint, another team that didn't know him were on duty. They treated

him badly: they forced him to be photographed on the horse, they hit him and humiliated him for half an hour and released him only when cars started to arrive at the checkpoint. Poor guy, he didn't deserve this.

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We are being photographed all the time at the checkpoint, on patrols. Somebody always has a camera. Shahar has a full album only of pictures from the checkpoint. The funniest pictures are those that he took when a wanted man was caught at the checkpoint. They were taken together as if he was a fish that we fished out of the sea. The Arab was bashed and hit all over. His face was covered in blood with his eyes swollen and Shahar was holding him with a giant smile on his face. He has about six photographs like this. I understand him, he wants to keep them, to remind him of this crazy time.

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After supper, we sit in the club. Andrey is telling us how he shags his girlfriend in the arsehole and how she loves it. He said that in the beginning she refused but after a time she got fired up on it and now she only wants to be fucked that way. I never tried it with Dana. She for sure wouldn't agree. She is too delicate for it. Andrey said that I need to persuade her only once and after that she herself will start asking for it. It's worth trying.

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I knew that in the end someone would go too far. It all started with these Arab prayer beads. We just got excited by them, they are so beautiful these chains with the brilliantly shining beads. Playing with them helps us to pass the time. We simply ask the Arabs to hand over the beads. If they become stubborn we just get awkward and check their car as slowly as possible. In time they understand what we really mean and the next time when they pass, they hand them over. Old Arabs you even don't have to ask, you simply say to them: "what a beautiful chain of beads you have!" They understand and give it to you. But then all sorts of young soldiers got excited and started to compete about who had the biggest collection of beads. They would see the Arab holding a chain they liked and would drive the Arab mad until he gave it to them. They would delay the cars at the checkpoint for hours only to get their bead chains. All the soldiers in the company had chains from the checkpoint. Now they began to collect cigarettes from the Arabs. The soldiers understood that this was a way of saving money, and Shahar asked for a cigarette from every car that passed. Those who recognized him and knew that he was crazy would sometimes give him the whole packet. We all laughed about it. At the end of the shift he always had about a hundred cigarettes in his jacket pocket. After Miro and Boaz were sent to the cooler though, we all calmed down a bit. That fucker Miro was on a night shift at the checkpoint when a car filled with youngsters arrived. Miro demanded their cigarettes. The Arabs refused and Miro broke the hand of one of the passengers. Boaz got excited and cut their tires. Poor guys, within two days they were thrown into jail for a month. The truth is that they really went too far. There has to be a limit somewhere.

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We are all having a shower after a shift. Andrey gets into the shower room and starts to take his clothes off. He has quite a good body, with muscles in his arms and cubes over his stomach. He was not circumcised, and his prick looked strange to me. "Why are you looking at me like that, do you want to fuck me?"

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While checking documents, a short Arab arrives, with a funny face and a smile stretching from ear to ear.

"Where are you going?"

"To the sea, soldier"

"Where do you work?"

"In the police"

"Are you a policeman?"

"No, I'm a thief. Every day I have to stay at the station!"

We all fell about laughing.

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Another shift and another shift. We are being ground down in the checkpoint without any breaks. Four on four without any rest. Days and nights are completely mixed up. Another vehicle and another vehicle and all these faces.

"Do you have papers?"

"Where are you driving to?"

"What is in the baggage compartment?"

Every fifth car is thoroughly checked. The driver leaves the vehicle, and opens the boot. We check all the bags and files, even if they are just old people, or women. The point is for the Arabs to see that we are checking them. This is hard work. I feel like a guard dog, like the cubes of concrete that surround the checkpoint. They turned us into a front line bunch of fighters, and now we stand at the checkpoint like police and inspect identity cards. Where is the action that we were promised?

ACTION

1. We were on a patrol duty. We got a signal over the radio: "a suspicious figure in segment 512". We turned the jeep around and drove there at full speed. We are usually quite stressed because at noon there is not much going on. But a suspicious figure walking about like that in daylight - we knew that it meant there would be some action. We saw him from a distance of a hundred meters: a tall Arab, wearing a military coat. He was walking slowly and apathetically and even when we hooted at him he didn't stop. Just turned his head with a dazed look. The officer cocked his gun: "this could be a suicide bomber!"

He jumped from the jeep, I followed him. He fired two bullets into the air and the Arab jumped suddenly and then froze. We shouted at him in Arabic to take his coat off, which he did. "Lift your shirt!"

He didn't have anything on him, nothing. He stood there, with his big belly exposed and he had the face of a disturbed child with a large, solid body (sure he would smash me if we had a fight). The officer walked up to him with his gun pointed and gripped him by his shoulders and started to question him. I ran towards them and with a swing landed my fist into his face. In all my life I never did such a thing to anyone. He fell down onto the road. The officer said that we had to check his papers. We twisted his hands behind his back and I tied them with a plastic cord. We then covered his eyes so he wouldn't be able to see what we had in the jeep. I lifted him up off the road, blood was trickling from his lip to his chin. I led him to the back of the jeep and threw him in. His knees got caught on the bumper and he landed inside.

2. We sat in the back of the jeep with our feet pressing on top of this Arab. He was lying there with his feet sticking out from the jeep. We drove and the Arabs were standing at the side of the road and watching. Our Arab was lying silently but you could hear that he was crying quietly to himself. His head was actually lying on my jacket. He was bleeding and his blood was running making a puddle of blood mixed with saliva. It disgusted me and made me angry so I caught his hair and turned his head on one side. He gave a loud cry so, to silence him, we stepped on his back more forcefully. This silenced him for a while and then he started to cry again. We came to the conclusion that he was mental or mad for certain. The company commander told us on the phone to bring him to the base. "You did fine, tigers..." He was just teasing us.

At the entrance to our base all the soldiers who were not on duty were waiting for us. They wanted to see what we'd managed to catch. When we came in with the jeep they whistled and clapped their hands enthusiastically. We put the Arab down next to the guard. He didn't stop crying out and someone who knew Arabic said that his hands were hurting him because of the handcuffs. One of the soldiers went and kicked him in his belly. The Arab doubled up in pain and grunted. We all giggled. It was so funny and comical. There was a great excitement among the youngsters. They stood around and giggled. They never had an Arab in their hands before so they started to harass him. The officer and I went to our commander's office for the interrogation.

3. When we left, only the duty guard and another soldier who poured water on the Arab from a bottle was there. "Drink, drink, you are disgusting!"

Our Arab was not in a good state. We beat him up pretty thoroughly and he seemed to be fainting. He sat bent over with his hands behind his back. The guard said that when they kicked him in the stomach he'd pissed in his trousers. I came close. He smelled so bad that I felt revulsion. It seems that he'd also shat himself or something. This made me angry because we still had to take him to the brigade base. His hands were completely blue and at first this gave me a fright. I was very nervous so I caught him with a pull and lifted him off the floor and he stood up like a missile and yelped. I pushed him toward the jeep but because his eyes were covered he was trying not to fall down. The guard and the

soldier next to him were laughing, and to make an impression on them I showed them how I could get him into the jeep in one neat move. I gave him quite a hard kick in his ass and he shot into the jeep just as I had intended. They shouted that I was off my head and laughed. This made me feel very pleased with myself. We took him to the brigade base and stayed there till night. It turned out that our Arab was just a sixteen year old boy and mentally defective.

4. We went back to our base. In the kitchen they'd left a special supper with a lot of fried eggs and a lot of chips in hot oil. It was great fun. Usually there are not enough chips to go round.

GAZA 1998

Saturday. The checkpoint is full of cars. All the Arabs are on holiday, driving to the beach. On Saturdays they are happier and also more insolent. They probably feel more secure. Sometimes it seems as if they stop at the checkpoint smiling on purpose, and playing their irritating Arab music as loud as they can. An old Peugeot arrives, inside is an ordinary Arab family. The Arab mother and father in the front and three children in the back. The father reminded me a bit of my own dad, with a black mustache and bushy eyebrows. I let Boaz do the checks today. I've no energy for these Arabs, I've hardly slept for the last two nights. This heat saps one's will to live. We spend four hours with these stinking Arabs who laugh in our faces on the way to the sea.

Boaz approaches the car, the usual questions:

"Where are you going?"

"We are going to the sea, soldier"

"Have you got your papers?"

He speaks to them politely. Boaz is such a relaxed person. He is nice to all the Arabs because only yesterday he came back from home leave. The Arab father gives Boaz the papers of the mother and is searching for his own. He doesn't find them. "I forgot the documents at home soldier".

What do you mean you forgot? There is no such a thing for them as forgetting identity cards. They know very well that they are in trouble if they are caught without their papers. The father talks to Boaz as if nothing unusual has happened. He doesn't even express regret or say sorry. He doesn't even smile. If they don't have an ID they must have some other officially stamped document. Boaz is looking at me as if it's up to me to decide and I get out of my chair. We will search the car, so next time they'll remember and then we will let them go. It's good for the Arabs in the next car to see it.

"Get out of the car!"

"Stand at the side of the road!"

The father gets out and stands. Boaz takes out their bags and briefcase, a towel, a bag with grapes, and a deflated rubber ball. The father goes up to Boaz.

"What's the problem, soldier?"

Boaz tells him to wait at the side of the road and goes on to take out towels from the bag and put them on the car. The father takes hold of Boaz's hand: "Why are you doing this, soldier?"

Boaz says something I don't hear, but this insolent Arab is still holding his hand and this fag Boaz goes on talking to him. I come up to them and give the Arab a bell-ringing slap with the palm of my hand. I grab his shirt and push him into the car.

"Get away from here, you are not passing without documents!"

The father doesn't answer. He seems completely shocked, and he suddenly starts to cry, with tears and everything. He turns his car and returns to Khan Younis. He really surprised me. He seemed to be tough and composed. How come he wasn't ashamed? To cry like that in front of everybody? Even his children sat quietly in the back and didn't cry.

*

Night duty. At last I am in the tower. Boaz and Joseph down below at the checkpoint. We are doing a double watch, eight hours shift (there aren't enough soldiers). I take the weekend supplement of the magazine out of my jacket to look for an article on this beautiful model who was recently on television. There is a good picture of her wearing a white, clingy undershirt. She is quite sexy, her nipples are erect and she seems completely horny. I start to rub my prick.

"I'll fuck you, you bitch, I'll fuck you..."

I fuck her from behind, she groans, she likes it, "yes, yes, yes...". I come, I come, I ejaculate on her picture.

I fold the paper and put it back into my jacket. A cigarette. I jerk off a lot, almost every day, sometimes several times a day. It keeps me relaxed when I start thinking of home and of Dana, but in the end it makes me sad. Sometimes I really want to cry after I come.

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On patrol we caught an Arab who once passed through our checkpoint and cursed Shahar, or something. I remembered him because he had a large scar on his cheek.

"Shahar, look, this is the son of a bitch from the checkpoint!"

We braked with a screech and jumped on him. He tried to run away and almost boxed Shahar with his fist. What a fucker! We dragged him to the back of the jeep and kicked him all over. Shahar tied his hands tight with the plastic handcuffs and I covered his eyes as usual. I said to Shahar that I would prefer not to notify that we got him. They will probably let us wait an hour and then they'll tell us to let him go. The driver of the patrol said that he couldn't be bothered to hang around now and we'd miss our lunch because of it. Shahar bent over the Arab, took out his prick and peed on his head.

"Shahar, what are you doing?"

"Teaching him not to smile at me when he crosses the checkpoint next time!"

How crazy that Shahar is. As small and slim as he is, so is he sly.

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I'm dying for a cream egg. At the checkpoint there's an Arab taxi driver, who sells us a box of forty cream eggs for five shekels. I buy a box for myself and devour it like a pig

all through my shift. Sometimes I eat only the cream and throw the rest away. I can finish about thirty cream eggs in a shift, just out of boredom.

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On patrol with mad Dado. I'm tired after a fortnight at the checkpoint. Trying to get a little sleep. We stop. Dado and the driver have a chat outside the car. Dana is hugging me, I smell her, naked in her bed, she's patting me gently on my back, then on my belly. It's a bit ticklish.

"Wake up, wake up you fag, why are you falling asleep? There's some action!" Four Arabs are standing glued to the wall with their hands and feet apart. Dado is shouting at them and Yosi, the driver, is holding their IDs and is laughing. Dado is cursing the Arabs and kicking them. His face is red. What an idiot, why did he wake me up? I hate him. He is always looking for trouble. I'm trying to get out of the jeep to keep security while he checks, but he lets them go, apart from one young Arab. I am trying to go back to sleep, but Dado's shouts prevent me. I look through the car's window. The Arab is on his fours and barking like a dog.

Dado shouts at him:

"You are a bad dog! Why did you piss on the carpet?"

Yosi is laughing his head off. Silly people, just maltreating him. In the end I will also get involved, but it is because of them.

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I want to get a hubble-bubble. I stop a taxi driver and ask him to get me a cheap hubble-bubble. This is the simplest way, to get it through a driver. He'll return in a couple of hours with my hubble-bubble. As a matter of fact I didn't ask him the price, I'll just offer him 10 shekels and send him packing. He is sure not to make a fuss.

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A wedding caravan is approaching the checkpoint. We can hear them from miles away. Twenty or thirty vehicles in one long column. They are on the way to their party. The drivers are leaning on their hooters, the noise is maddening. They're slowly passing the checkpoint and we don't bother to check them. They sing and laugh. Crowded in their cars, as if they are doing it on purpose to take the piss out of us. They seem to me like animals, with their noise and their shouts. I would have liked to release the safety catch and to spray the whole column with bullets.

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This rifle hangs on me all day, every day, and I don't feel it anymore. It seems so natural to walk around with a gun, but I look at it now and think how much damage one can do with this thing. A picture comes up in my head, to put the barrel of the gun up a woman's cunt and pull the trigger. I wonder how it would look.

FANTASIES HELP TO PASS THE TIME

We get into a house in the refugee camp, I don't know what we are looking for. We pass from one room to another. The house seems empty. A young Arab woman suddenly comes in through the door. She is covered in a veil, her body is full, her gigantic breasts swing. She is surprised to see us. We get hold of her and drag her into the kitchen. She struggles with us and tries to scream. The house is dark, a ray of sunlight is creeping in through the shutters. We lay her on the table in the kitchen, we tie her hands and spread her legs, I lift her skirt and pull her knickers down to her ankles. She cries loudly and somebody gags her mouth with his hand. We surround her with all our equipment, helmets and all. Someone takes out a knife and starts to cut her shirt. She lies naked on the table with her breast flopping over her belly. I catch a black nipple with my lips and suck. Someone sucks her second nipple. The house is quiet, the dogs are barking outside. I wet my prick with a bit of saliva and get into her at a stroke. She shakes her head, screaming into the hand. I fuck her fast. The table is creaking, she locks me with her feet, she is not fighting back. I lash at her hips, she grunts. She enjoys it. Leaning on the table with my hand I come. I catch my breath and get out of her. Now we change places. Shahar climbs on her and while cursing he takes a grip of her breasts. She grunts, she likes it. Shahar is fucking her very nicely, like an actor. We watch him move. Our Arab woman grunts aloud.

"Shut your mouth, you whore. Shut your mouth."

We want to hurt her, I grip a knife and pull her hair and cut across her forehead. I scalp her. I take off this black hair. She faints, Shahar has finished. Changing places again. Blood on the floor, on the tiles, on the kitchen utensils.

We cut her nipples. It is easy. We've destroyed her completely. We are tired now, out of breath. We've completely finished with her. We leave the house. Somebody sets fire to the room. We drive away. The flames reach the sky.

*

Yet another shift and another shift. I'm getting out of my mind here. We all are going mad. Every day more cars and more Arabs. I can't see them any more. All these dirty Arabs smiling at me. What smiles? I know what they are really thinking. They are trying to frighten me but I'll frighten them back. Stop smiling at me!

*

A fat Arab woman is crossing the checkpoint with a bag of flour on her head. She passes next to us. Her black eyes are looking at us with contempt. She almost disappears between the tin shacks but then, suddenly, she turns around and smiles at me, she's laughing at me, trying to frighten me.

"Would you like to fuck her?" Andrey points at her.

"Come and let's go fuck her..."

I'm confused. We leave the checkpoint and start to follow her. She goes into an empty alleyway. We come up behind her, Andrey kicks her in the ass and the Arab woman falls to the ground, and all the flour is thrown around. We drag her behind a large dustbin and

we lay her onto her back, she cries quietly. I lift her skirt more and then all the other layers. I lie on her:

"You fat whore!"

Andrey pulls out her huge breasts, I catch one nipple with my teeth. Milk, I'm sucking milk.

"Soldier, I have a child in my belly".

I come inside her and withdraw. Andrey puts his foot on her belly and laughs.

"Come on, Andrey, let's get out of here!"

We'll see what kind of baby she'll have now.

*

Today I was really nervous. The heat and the flies at the checkpoint, I felt as if I was going mad, I hit an Arab again without a reason - he tried to cross the checkpoint without papers. Still, I might have gone a bit over the top. I put him in the shed (so that others would not see) and started to hit him with my fists straight into his face, and kicked him all over his body. I don't think he will lodge a complaint against me (I remember his face well), but I mustn't do that sort of thing. I've got to restrain myself, I should not let wickedness rule over me. I shouldn't let these vicious urges get the better of me.

*

I received in the post a packet from my sister. It made me very happy because it reached me on a Friday and I was already fed-up of being stuck here for the third Sabbath. I was sure that the packet would be full of sweets and other goodies like the things my mum used to send me, but when I opened the box I saw only a brochure: "The Checkpoint Syndrome"; my leftwing psychologist sister! Is this what she is sending me? How will it help me? Is this going to stop me being depressed?

*

Last night I was already in Dana's bed, wrapped up fast. I breathed in her ear and she fell asleep quite quickly. I looked at her white smooth neck. Everything was so delicate, the complete opposite of what everything is like when I'm there. I almost woke her up with my foot when I turned around. If she had woken up I would have asked her: "Dana, do you think I'm a nice person?"

She would certainly have kissed me and said yes. I could tell her a few things that she would not believe.

*

What a stupid thing I've done. Dana and I were fucking at her place yesterday and when she turned around so that I could enter her from behind, I pushed my prick very forcefully into her arsehole. She screamed in pain, I quickly withdrew and said that I was sorry and asked her to forgive me. She cried and was miserable, and I felt like a rapist. I don't know what I was thinking of.

GAZA 1999

I shot someone today. They dispatched us to some disturbances at the fence, a problematic area, where there were some demonstrations and stone throwing. We drove in a convoy in the direction of the fence. On the way we prepared the ammunition required to disperse demonstrations: smoke grenades, tear gas, rubber bullets. I put in my gun a magazine of plastic bullets (in spite of being forbidden to use them we all have such a magazine. It hits like an ordinary bullet but doesn't kill). We reach the disturbance, and see about a hundred Arabs running amok, but they are mainly children, throwing stones at a patrol jeep that was stationed there. The soldiers on the patrol were out of ammunition because they had been shooting in the air to frighten them. We stopped in a line and started to shoot at them with tear gas, but the Arabs have got used to this. The kids just cover the grenades that we throw at them with sand. I look at all this through the eyepiece of the gun and suddenly among the children I see an adult Arab encouraging the kids and giving them directions. This is exactly what I've been looking for. The officer standing by sees him too. "We have to hit this son of a bitch".

For a few seconds I pointed the gun directly at his belly, took a deep breath then puffed the air out to empty my lungs (as we were told to do when I was instructed how to shoot accurately). I fired only one bullet, and through the sight I saw him falling towards the sand. At first, the children around him ran away. He shouted, holding his belly, looking agonized. Two boys arrived, they lifted him and retreated. The disturbance dispersed. People were clapping on my shoulder: "Well done, you're a real man!"

This is what I had been waiting for since my training. To shoot somebody. That's the real thing. It was not like killing an armed terrorist but still I felt quite proud of myself for some time when everyone in the company came to me. I was a hero, and after the debriefing I went up to the tower to telephone my sister on the mobile to tell her what had happened, that I had shot somebody. She asked me how I felt about it. I can't remember what I told her, but I do remember what I wanted to tell her: I didn't feel anything.

*

I knew that we would separate in the end, Dana and I. We hardly talked to each other over the last few months. We had a fight last time I was at home. She rang me afterwards and said that it would be better if we didn't see each other any more. I told her that it didn't matter to me and cut the conversation. It really didn't disturb me that much because Dana hadn't been in my mind much lately. I wasn't thinking about her. So that's that then! I won't have a guaranteed secure fuck any more when I return home.

*

I'm standing in the watch tower and looking down on the soldiers at the checkpoint. It's a month and a half since I've done a shift at the checkpoint. It seems to me as if a year has passed. The soldiers are checking a van, and three Arabs are facing the wall with their

hands up. One of the soldiers is keeping an eye on them and the other goes into the cabin to check their papers. I'm looking at the one who guards the Arabs. When he believes that no one is watching, he goes up to one of the Arabs and hits him in the ribs with the barrel of his gun. The Arab slips down on the floor while the soldier stands, completely indifferent. I understand him. I know that it is terrible, that it is forbidden, but I also had Arabs in my hands and when nobody else was around it was such a temptation to let them have it, it is so easy. The other soldier got out of the cabin and started to talk with his friend and didn't pay any attention to the Arab lying on the ground. They said something to the other standing Arabs, who lifted their friend up, got inside their van and drove away. I know that they were not guilty, not the soldiers and not the Arabs. That is it, that is the routine of reality. I can't stand this shit any more.

Counting the days to the end of our service. Eighty six days. I hardly carry out any duties (they give the veterans the chance to rest) and we spend most of the day in the club watching movies on the video. I've become overweight. I've put on about ten kilograms because I eat sweets all day and don't move. We all became apathetic. We are walking around the station like a bunch of old people. Shahar is the only one who is still excited about going on patrol and catching Arabs. I have no strength in me to even write. I am only waiting for this ghastly movie to come to an end.

*

The day of our release. A long queue of people. Hot. A hamsin is blowing. A lot of flies, they stick to our neck, they are after our sweat. We have to fill in a lot of forms, hundreds. But the feeling, we can just feel it in our bodies, is of freedom. It's a kind of a shivering feeling of pleasure. That's it. The end.

The Army conscripted me at the age of eighteen and released me at the age of twenty-one.

END