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The Invisible Men

By Yariv Mozer

This police van
just dropped me off.
They drove me all the way here
from Tel Aviv,
and there are no buses,
no way to get back to Tel Aviv.
There he is.
I remember the night when
Louie called me
and asked me to take him
back to Tel Aviv.
Israeli policemen had expelled
him back to the West Bank
and he was in danger again.
Louie has been living like this
for 10 years,
as a Palestinian
illegally hiding in Israel.
Every time he's expelled,
he sneaks right back in.
What does this say?
-"To the police..." -"To the police..."
"and the armed forces..."
- Yes? -That's your name.
"We are in the process of helping
Mr. Louie..."
This is your ID number, father's
name, place of birth...
It says that you're a homosexual
and you can't return to Palestine,
that your life would be in danger.
Here are some phone numbers
in case the policeman
wants to call, make inquiries.
I had this boyfriend,
and one Friday night I told him,
"Let's go to a friend, have a drink."
He said, "cool."
Camera phones had just come out.
We were both drinking and...
my friend wasn't.
So my boyfriend and me were drinking,
and we started...
to kiss...

and my friend took a picture of us.
We went into a room and...
we had sex...
while he kept on taking pictures.
We didn't notice.
Then one time
my friend and I had a fight.
My dad called me,
and said,
"We need you at home."
He told me,
"I have pictures of you kissing a man,
"having sex and all that."
And I... I flipped out.
I said,
"No, no, no."
He said, "I can tell. I'll punish you,
you'll never go back to Tel Aviv.
"There's nothing you can do.
You're finished."
They tried to tie me up,
and then my dad brought a knife.
When I saw the knife,
I just lost it.
It was as if my soul
had left my body.
And my soul was holding
my body together.
He almost slaughtered me,
like a lamb, like a goat.
He cut my face,
this scar here.
So I ran away from home.
I always wanted to know
what it's like to be gay
on the other side
of the security fence,
in the Occupied Territories.
I never imagined
that there were people like Louie
who had to escape
all the way to Tel Aviv,
forced to live in another country
where they are constantly hunted.

Louie manages to survive
by taking illegal odd jobs.
Louie will move the table and chairs to
the corner so they won't get in the way.
Louie, you're getting
a lot of compliments. -Thanks.
If I want to go to Jaffa on a Friday,
I have to pay 60 shekels for a cab.
I tell him to go around Jaffa
and then I go back home.
I can't go on foot.
A lot of people know me here.
They'll take me to my family
and finish me off.
Where does your family work?
In the kiosk. One is making drinks,
the one in the red shirt,
and there's another inside.
You can't see him.
Drive, drive faster.
Do you remember the first time
you met a man here in Tel Aviv?
Yes.
I loved him and...
He disappeared. Went abroad.
What was his name?
His first name?
I really don't feel like
saying his name.
His name was Guy.
This is me on my birthday.
This is me at the gym.
Look at those muscles...
Dubi, what are you eating?
Sour cream?
MM are you asking'!?
Good dogs. Everyone's eating.
The police are downstairs
Hi Yariv,
Listen...
The Police are knocking at my door.
I'm talking to you from the closet.
They're checking other apartments now.
Come quickly, Yariv! Come!

After Louie called me,
I got there as soon as possible.
I asked the young police officer to
be considerate of Louie's situation.
I convinced him and he left.
Who is it'? -Louie.
They came to my door...
I told them you weren't at home.
- OK.
That I saw you leave.
After that I didn't see a thing.
And that's it.
What I said is what happened.
Thank you.
- No problem.
I can't go back to work.
Should I stay here?
After what happened,
Shaul advised Louie to stay away
from his apartment for a few days.
I have no energy for this anymore.
I eat once a day.
- I can see.
I never walk through the
main streets. -How come?
Because the police don't patrol here.
You see? Stand here.
When you stand here,
every car sees you.
Stop where you can't be seen.
Yes. This is the way to do it.
It's less risky this way.
Hello.
- Hello.
I'm looking for... Levi?
- Yuval. -Yuval Levi.
How are you?
- Hi, I'm Louie.
This is Anat.
- Hey. -Hello.
Louie, we want to give you
a realistic view of your options.
Unfortunately, Israel doesn't provide
protection for people in your situation.

Our only other option
is to request asylum
in another Western country.
We've had mixed success
with this process.
Some of our past applications
were accepted.
But it's a difficult process.
First of all,
there's a lot of stress involved.
You won't know until the last moment
whether you've been accepted or not.
Usually, you won't know
which country you're going to.
You'll have no control over it.
Often these countries
are completely different from here.
It might be cold, it might be
dark outside half the year...
This process is really only suitable
for someone with no alternative.
It's a last resort.
Not long ago,
someone was interviewed
by the Refugee Agency,
and in a matter of weeks
he received a positive answer
from a Western country.
It was very sudden.
He's due to leave
in just a couple of weeks.
OK, Good.
Can you tell him?
Can you be more specific?
- He's talking about Abdu...
It was the first time Louie had heard
of someone in a similar situation.
Hello, good morning.
It's Louie.
Hello.
What's up? I'm Abud.
Everything okay?
I heard you're from Nablus.
- Yeah.

From the city itself?

- No, from the area.

Where?

- Around there.

I don't like questions like that.

No, don't worry.

I'm your brother, Abud from Ramallah.

I was in Amman when it all started,
about 5-6 months ago.

Now I'm back in Tel Aviv,
but I'm leaving the country
in a week.

Yuval the lawyer told me about you,
and so did Yariv,
and I wanted to meet you
face to face first.

He told me

you may not want to meet me.

I told him you're right,
there is reason for concern.

Yeah, it's a bit...

You're telling me.

You have to be careful who you trust.

We have to keep ourselves safe,
because our situation...

we have to be careful
or we're dead.

We have reason to be frightened.

- True.

We live our life in fear.

Sometimes we pray to die,
but it passes.

So you keep going,

but eventually

you just explode inside.

Yeah. "Enough."

- Yeah.

Hi. How's it going, Louie?

Fine.

- I'm Or.

Nice to meet you.

Have you never been

to a party at the Comfort?

No.

- Everyone there is going to be Arab
so if it's not too much trouble,
take off that Star of David...
For your own sake!
I have no problem with it.
They're all Arabs?
No, there will be Jews too,
of course.

- See? My love...
I wanted to see you
and get to know you,
but I'm not in the mood.
Come for the atmosphere,
to see how Arabs party...
It's a shame to miss this opportunity.
I'm leaving in a week!

- I'll return when I want.
I even asked Yuval
and he said,
"You can't come back."
I'm a little confused,
I don't know what to do.
I can't live there
for the rest of my life.
Either I go and return
or I don't go at all.
You said you've been here for 8 years
and you're still illegal.
You're wasting your time.

- I've been here for 10 years.
Illegal for 10 years!
Every time they catch you,
you get sent to court
and to jail.
There's no justice.
To hell with them and their government.
I want to leave this place.
Take my advice.
Leave.
You can't live here.
Hello.

- Hello. -Where's the Comfort?
Straight ahead,
to your right.

Way to go!

Nice.

Is there a problem?

Holy shit...

Asshole.

Abdu convinced Louie to go with him
to the gay Arab party
that takes place once a month
in Tel Aviv,
each time in a secret location.

I was shocked that it even exists.

It's so close yet it feels
so far away.

I didn't dare to film inside.

So now we say goodbye?

- Yes.

But you must come see me on Friday
because I'm leaving.

Take care.

- Good luck.

OK, bye.

- Bye.

Palestinians can't come to the party,
because they need permits.

But all the Israeli Arabs come.

OK, back to the party.

See you, God willing. Bye.

How did you feel
at the party?

Good.

Yeah, it felt good.

If any of these people's parents
knew they were at this party,
knew that they're gay,
they'd kill them.

Really.

So they have these parties in secret,
once a month.

No one knows about it.

Honestly,

I don't want to go abroad.

I want to live in a country...
that's close...

I want to breathe my culture,

my land.
In short,
this is painful for me.
I really don't want to go abroad.
Ga...
I don't know.
You've got to live
like a human being.
After the party,
I went to meet Abdu
in the apartment where he was hiding.
He was leaving Israel soon
and I wanted to know more about him.
Who's this hottie?
Hassan Hason...
'New...
He's 18, 19. Young.
Fine.
You don't check IDs
before having sex.
Do you know how many gay Palestinians
there are out there?
Look.
But Palestinians
never post pictures
Cute, huh?
Nice.
Iraq? -Iraq.
- Lebanon. -Iran?
Iran.
Wow, Iran has really hot guys.
There are really hot guys in Iran.
I've never seen anything...
Nice.
This is a real turn-on.
This letter says we are handling
Abdallah Rawashda's case,
we are looking for a
third country to give him
asylum as a humanitarian refugee.
I'll start a new life there.
My whole life is in this bag.
This is my Palestinian Passport.
Have you ever seen a Palestinian

Passport? -No. -Take a look.
What happened that night
in Ramallah?
The Palestinian Police
took me from my home.
First they caught my boyfriend.
Then they came to my apartment
at 2 AM.
I was sleeping.
They came in and trashed the house.
They took me to the police station
in Ramallah.
I was detained for 15 hours.
They beat me up every hour
and questioned me all over again.
They put my head in the toilet,
poured water on me,

and asked me:

"Do you work for the Mossad?"
"No," I said.
They said, "But you're gay. How is it
that you don't work for the Mossad?"
I said, "Yes I'm gay,
but I don't work for Mossad!"
They wouldn't listen. They kept beating
me and asking me over and over again.
"You deal with the Mossad! You're gay!
You sold your soul to the Occupation!"
I never disrespected anyone.
This is me. Accept me as I am.
It's their problem.
In order to apply for asylum abroad,
Louie was asked to write down his story.
Thin k about things
that are relevant to your case.
Take your time, we're in no rush.
When I was 8,
I would go to school.
I had a friend the same age,
in the same school.
When we would come home,
after school,
we'd go home,

and play like friends.
And slowly,
he had an older cousin,
and once,
he started to touch me.
Onetime he took my clothes off.
My Pants.
I didn't know what he was doing.
And he raped me.
This is my story,
that's what happened.
And he said if you ever tell your
parents or anyone,
I will kill you.
I was scared.
He started to have sex with me.
He would call me to have sex.
For 2 years.
And then he got married.
From then on,
I loved...I mean, I felt that I'm
93)'-
I've never told anyone this story.
Wow! So many gays!
I can't believe my eyes!
I can't believe my eyes!
Thousands of gays and lesbians.
Walking in Jerusalem!
Do you know what this means?
The holiest city, to all religions
Muslims, Jews, Christians.
This is the holiest city in the world.
What will happen to me if my picture
appears in the paper tomorrow?
My picture will appear in the

paper tomorrow:

"A gay Palestinian participates
in the Jerusalem Pride Parade."
Oh my god.
If gays ran the Israeli
and Palestinian governments,
all the problems would be solved.
Because they don't care if you are

Muslim or Christian or Jewish.
Or Palestinian or Israeli or American.
"Beast Parade"
Go to the synagogue and pray.
Live and let live.
It's so much fun here.
I have goose bumps all over my body.
I was thinking last night.
If I want to participate in this parade.
But today I decided that
I'm not afraid anymore.
That's my decision.
I'm not afraid.
I'm not afraid anymore.
Are you saying I should go?
Put your faith in God.
There's no other way, darling.
Do you have relatives in Jaffa?
- My cousins live here.
Do they know you're in Tel Aviv?
They caught me once.
They live near here.
On the border
between Jaffa and Tel Aviv.
One of them hit me,
so I zapped him
with a stun gun and ran off.
It was about 5 months ago.
Did he want to beat you up?
- With this stun gun. See?
I always carry it with me.
It knocks you out.
Oh, it's electric.
It's only 22 volts.
Here, I'll show you.
You put it against
someone's stomach...
Don't do that.
- No. -I'm kidding.
You use it on someone...
They get electrocuted?
Yeah. It electrocutes them
and knocks them out.
But it doesn't kill them.

- No.
It's legal.
It even comes with a ashlight.
You do this.
You do this,
and put it against someone's stomach.
'Nam m, w...
Do that again.
Wow,
No, I want one
where you can see the sea!
This one's nice.
How about here?
- Sit down.
Sit, sit.
Look at me.
Just lift your head.
Handsome.
Did you tell your mother
you're leaving?
Yeah.
I told her I want to leave,
that I'm sick and tired of this.
She said,
"Do whatever you want,
"but take care,
don't make trouble.
"Take care of your health."
You know,
the way mothers talk.
Don't you miss them?
You know...
I miss them,
but there's nothing I can do.
I can't go back.
I'm afraid.
Maybe things will calm down
in a few years
Who knows?
They might calm down.
Maybe they'll think it over
and forget the whole thing.
In a few years.
I can only hope for the best.

Only the one who brought us together
can tear us apart
Only the one who brought us together
can tear us apart
This is my love
who captured my heart
Oh, father,
who captured my heart...
Do you sing Umm Kulthum?
Do remember any of her songs?
Your eyes took me back
To days gone b)'
Taught me to regret
The past and its wounds
What I've seen...
Tell me about it...
- Tell me about it
Before my eyes saw you...
What a beautiful song.
I was lost...
You know, Abdu,
I've been here for 10 years,
a long time...
and I never thought I'd meet
another Arab like me,
you know?
And that we'd be singing in Arabic.
I never thought it would happen.
I said... "That's it."
"I'll never have Arab friends again."
Let me tell you something.
Fuck it, no matter what happens.
- Don't curse.
I'm not.
No matter what happens,
I'll stay a Palestinian.
Even if I get caught
by the Israeli Secret Service,
or the CIA, or the Mossad,
I don't fucking care.
I'll never stop being a Palestinian.
- Of course.
I'll never change.
Even if they make me wear

a Star of David,
even if they put a yarmulke on my head,
I'll always be a Palestinian.
You know why I wear
a Star of David?
I get it, I get it.
I wear it to keep the police
off my back.
I get it.
The Palestinians won't accept us
because we're gay,
and the Israelis won't accept us because
we're Palestinians without a permit
and we're "illegal."
It makes me sick.
Go live abroad.
Fuck the Middle East.
We don't need Israel or Palestine,
Jews or Christians or Muslims.
Everyone here hates everyone else.
Why? Why should I hate you?
To Abdu!
To Abdu!
You'll now be reborn and free
in a new country.
To freedom!
I hope you come back and visit.
God willing.
Everything will be all right,
God willing.
You just take care.
Talk to the lawyer,
and we'll keep in touch
through email.
OK.
- Take care.
I will,
you take care of yourself.
With God's help,
I'll be fine.
Goodbye.
We'll keep in touch.
Abdu left Tel Aviv
and Louie was still waiting

for a final answer on his asylum.

Abud.

Louie, habibi, how are you?

- I miss you.

What's up?

- All's good, God bless.

But how are you doing?

Is it cold there'?

Yes, it's a bit cold at night.

I've got something to tell you. I have
a friend in Ramallah, he's in trouble.

He's what?

He's in trouble. He's also gay.

He's in a bad situation.

I need you to call him
and see if he needs help.

Give me his phone number.

I can bring him to Tel Aviv,
to live with me.

Teach him about life here,
explain how it is...

You know, the way things work.

OK. I'll call him tonight.

I'm also very homesick.

It's hard.

My mom calls me and cries. She's
the only one that knows where I am.

Listen, you talk to your mother, right?

As long as you speak with your mother
and she's healthy,
and everything is fine,
you have nothing to worry about.

I don't have a mother",
and here I am, living my life.

Your mom wants the best for you.

I know that.

She tells you she misses you,
We all live in yearning. I miss you,
I miss my father:.

It's natural.

Don't worry about it.

It'll all pass.

Hello.

- Hello, Faris?

I talked to Abdu today
and promised I'd take care of you,
check that everything was all right.
He told me about you.
Tell me, do you have a profession?
Did you study anything?
We'll try and find you some work,
a place to sleep.
I can work in a restaurant.
A restaurant, huh?
- Yeah.
Do you speak Hebrew?
- Not at all.
Do you speak English?
- Yeah.
Do your parents know you're gay?
- Yeah.
They do?
Is your mother alive?
Yes.
Why don't they take you back in,
sort things out'?'
They kicked me out of the house,
nearly killed me.
Now they're after me.
They want to kill me.
I see.
I've been on the run
for two months.
Also, my father
reported me to the Palestinian Police
and now they're after me too.
Because you're gay?
- Yeah.
It'll be all right.
Why did you ask
about my parents?
I thought your mother
might show some sympathy,
but from what you've told me,
there's no way you're going back.
I'm in danger here.
If I could leave,
I wouldn't be here.

I get it.
Fine, I'll talk to you later.
I'll show you what to do.
Trust me. -OK.
Good night.
- Goodbye.
I don't know if I can help him.
I don't know...
It's too much pressure.
Stop filming.
It's hard to hear a story like that.
It's sad.
But what can I do?
After hearing Faris,
I traveled to Ramallah
where it's illegal
for Israelis to go.
Ramallah is only an hour
from Tel Aviv,
but it feels like a distant country.
One moment.
Hi Faris,
what's going on?
Someone I know,
he made a profile for me on Facebook.
He wrote that I'm gay.
My dad and my brother...
He came from Nablus to Ramallah
to hit me.
And now you are hiding?
Yes.
God had mercy on me,
I managed to escape.
I took all my stuff, and ran away.
There he is.
Hello. -Hi.
My father, he called me
and said,
"if I find you in any place
"in Palestine, I will kill you.
"And I will find you.
"And when I find you
I will kill you.
"I promise you."

He told me that.
My dad is very crazy.
He is a dangerous man.
I feel "my smile" is not good.
Because my situation
is not good here,
and I don't have a boyfriend,
my boyfriend died
two years ago.
He died in an accident.
I loved him so much.
Really.
I saw him at the hospital
when he died.
It's too hard.
I'm sorry.
What was his name?
I can't tell you, sorry.
Because I promised him
before he died,
"I will not give your name
to anyone".
I'm sorry.
I left Ramallah and couldn't stop
thinking about Faris,
when I got a phone call from Louie.
Welcome.
Do you know what it says?
Application for asylum
in a third country.
His file was transferred for urgent
consideration in Geneva.
We await their reply.
That's it. This means you're leaving
the country. -it's a big problem.
A really big problem.
For someone who was born here...
I was born here.
Wave...
you know, a hospital stamp from the
State of Israel. I have it in my bag,
I'll show you.
A Thai can work here, can come and go,
an Ethiopian, no problem.

I was born here! So not
in Tel Aviv, in Nablus.
But still, why dont l have rights?
But you've been waiting
for this for a long time,
and now you're hesitating?
I prefer to be here,
go in and out of jail.
I'll manage.
What frightens you
about going there?
I don't feel like
learning their language,
their culture, all that...
I don't know... All that.
I'm sick of it. I'm 33 years old soon.
I'm tired.
I was surprised, even angry at Louie
for not wanting to leave.
A few days later, I saw Israeli-Arab
families celebrating Eid Al Adha,
"The Festival of Sacrifice"
on the Tel Aviv promenade.
It's the week
God forgives all Muslims.
They smile at you
but don't really forgive.
It's so nice to be
there with your family.
To grill, drink, sit together.
It's a good thing.
This is sad.
What can I tell you?
So sad.
You brought me to a tough place.
Shaul?
Yes, Yariv.
Louie's gone.
I can't find him.
He hasn't been answering
his phone for a few days now.
I'm worried
because he told me
he ran into a cousin of his

around the neighborhood,
and when he saw the cousin,
he pulled out a stun gun
and shocked him.
There was some sort
of confrontation.
I'm worried he's been kidnapped
or something,
What do you think?
I wouldn't worry so much.
They tend... to disappear for a bit.
They need to be alone sometimes,
calm down a little.
It doesn't necessarily
mean anything.
Where have you been?
I have my sister's phone number.
I decided I'm going to call her.
When she picked up
I said, "Good morning."
She said,
"Good morning. Who is this?"
"Louie."
She said, "You're alive?"
I told her I was.
I said,
"Why do you ask?"
She said, "Dad...
"I mean,
why are you calling now?"
I said,
"I don't know. I just woke up
"and wanted to give you a call."
Then she told me
my dad had died two months ago.
I said,
"I don't believe it!"
But...
I didn't even...
She didn't even hear it,
she just hung up on me.
I was hoping that one day
I'd be able... to tell him,
"Forgive me, my father.

"I was born this way.
"Don't turn my life
into a disappointment.
"Don't do bad things to me.
"Be a father."
I wanted to tell him,
"Maybe one day
"you'll be able to hold me,
like any other father."
Bu guess...
My dream...
will never come true now.
His father's death pushed Louie
to accept asylum abroad
after hiding in Israel
for over 10 years.
Got my plane ticket.
I'm really stressed.
Moving to a different country.
I've been living here for 10 years.
Now I have to leave everything behind
in one week.
I'm sad. It's not easy.
I hope I'll manage
to start a new life there.
Good dog.
Hi. how are you?
Remember when you first came in...
I told you there is no other way.
It's the only solution.
You must leave this country.
OK then...
I'm going now.
- I'll miss you.
They caught me at the train station.
The Police.
They didn't care.
You didn't show them your ticket?
-Yes! They didn't care.
There were two policemen,
they didn't understand a thing.
So they deported you
to the Palestinian side?
Yes, into Palestinian territory.

- So now you're facing a big problem.

Yes, a serious problem.

I'm scared.

I called the lawyers.

They're handling it.

They're in contact with Israeli
army. I'm waiting to hear from them.

I'm on my way, bYe-

Louie.

- Yes, Yariv.

Let's talk by the fence.

The soldiers won't mind.

But can you pass me
through the border?

No, we can only talk.

Hello?

You need to leave this area.

I'll try to call him one more time.

- You can't film here anymore.

Not the fence, not the border:.

My orders are to take your camera
and arrest you.

I'll make one more
phone call and I'll leave.

"It has not been possible to connect
your call, please try later."

Once again, Louie somehow
reappeared in Tel Aviv,
just days before his departure.

He wouldn't tell me
how he made it back.

I haven't seen the village in years.

If you left a place
that gave you a hard time,
you wouldn't miss it.

You see the light at the far end?

That's it right there.

Let's go.

It's sad.

No filming.

No filming.

All of a sudden you're shy?

- No filming.

Hello, hello.

- Hello.
Hi.
Hello.
What's up?
- I'm OK.
Louie, it's freezing.
Freezing?
I'll turn the heat on.
I'll make some coffee.
Abud, I need a pot.
Give me a hand.
You know I can't cook.
- I need a pot and some plates.
You think we're married
so you keep sending me down there?
Abud, go down and get a pot.
- Up and down, fetching pots?
Come on,
it's a long way down...
Abud, you bastard.
- Damn you!
What a life!
Get some olives and pickles, too.
Yariv,
search for lvri lider's
song "I Was Lucky."
Do you know that song?
- Yeah.
Type it in for me.
I want to listen to it.
lvri lider?
lvri Lider's
"I Was Lucky to Be Loved."
Name a street in Tel Aviv
and I'll tell you where it is.
Name one! Come on.
The Arabs in Jaffa
don't even know the street names.
Nahalat Binyamin St. To
walk around on Fridays,
have a beer, eat hummus.
I will return one day, you'll see.
My house is tidy.
I like it this way.

Faris, how did you run
from Ramallah to Tel Aviv?
I sold my laptop
because, you know
I don't have money.
I went from Ramallah to Bethlehem,
from Bethlehem to Chusan,
from Chusan to Jerusalem,
and then from Jerusalem
to Tel Aviv.
I am talking as a person,
as a gay person,
I need my...
I need my life back
as a gay person.
This is my wish.
A few months later,
Faris also received asylum
and was forced
to leave his homeland.
Louie, Abdu, and Faris
have each agreed
to reveal their faces
as long as they are under
the protection of a foreign country.
Their courage
is what inspired this film.
gay

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