(Sound effects) Shells exploding. Whistling of bullets, shouts heard from afar and… silence.

We’ve crossed the border. I feel my heart pounding. The chill that grips me for a split-second lets me know that this is no movie, it’s for real.

It occurred to me to write a letter to my parents… (pause) you know… (pause) just in case …

“I write. I have no idea what I’m doing… I can’t, I write only one sentence…

I love you.

Suddenly, we’re blasted with fire. I start to hear people shouting. A grenade has exploded with a huge blast nearby, and I didn’t know if I was dead or alive. I start to feel pain, terrible pain. I don’t say a word.

I look around and realize: I’m in Hell.

I remember the smell most of all. The stench of death. I hold my gun tightly. I pray that someone will come to rescue me.

The past few days pass quickly before my eyes.

I’m travelling to visit my family in America. I hear that war has broken out, and I decide to get on the first plane to Israel. My mother hugs me tightly. “Take care of yourself,” she says.

I promise to do that. My commander doesn’t want me to join the combat. I insist. I have to go in. I feel like it’s my home. We went in.

(Intensive gunfire that continues until it fades out)

I have no air in my lungs. My thoughts are disconnected from my body. Time doesn’t exist… Not just physically. I don’t feel like I’m there, I’m hoping that time will stop. We’re moving ahead… Walking and moving forward, it’s hard to breathe. Fear, I know we’ll get out of this okay.

We clung to each other. We’re friends, and friends stick together, but we paid a heavy price for our closeness.

A tough battle, people have died, been wounded. There was shooting from that alleyway onto the street. There was a firing position at the far end of it, and from there they sprayed bullets at everyone who came in. I went in… I had to pull my friend out, he was dead.

I hear screams… Another friend is hurt, I have to get there, I have to get us out alive.

We didn’t cry, we had no tears in our eyes, but inside our hearts were burning with pain.

(Smoke machine – effect on the stage)

Outside, there was the light of a half-moon. Inside the tiny room, it was as dark as death. The grenade that exploded and the subsequent smoke made the room into a black hole, dense and invisible.

I heard the heavy cover fire shooting towards the tower. There were flashes of light and a deafening sound of fire and explosions. (Flashes of light) I feel a tremendous explosion and burning heat, (orange lighting on the actor’s face) shrapnel flying everywhere. For a second, I couldn’t talk. I tried, but I just couldn’t.

There’s a sharp pain piercing me, between my right shoulder and my head, like a grenade going off on my shoulder; at least that’s what it seemed like. I look back at it and see that my shoulder is covered with blood.

I ran toward my platoon and suddenly see someone lying on the ground in front of me, blocking my way. I saw shoes sticking out from under a blanket. I understood that this was a dead body and wondered, who is this? Do I know him? I moved on. That’s war: No time…got to keep going.

I move between the wounded, trying to help them, encourage them. When you take care of a wounded person, he becomes “your” wounded person. I became attached to him. I was sure he’d be okay, but God decided otherwise.

(Noise of walkie talkies) Suspected infiltration, death is slowly creeping in, running down my face like a cold sweat. We start to move, suddenly everything sounds so close. Right next to us. (Whistle of bullets.)

A mortar fell behind me, but didn’t blow up because of the mud. (Noise of mud and splashing water) It was so close; I froze right there. Everything got suddenly quiet, we glance at each other, I’m flooded with fear, I try to move my legs, to yell “Forward, attack,” like I’d been trained to do, but my legs don’t move, and no sound leaves my throat. I’m petrified. My legs refuse to move. With tremendous effort, I find the strength to shout.

Sound effect – deafening, thunderous explosion

He stands directly across from me, squeezing the trigger again, and the bullet singes the ends of my hair. Another shot brushes my vest; I wake up from my frozen trance, and I start to fire. Another bullet and another, there’s a scream of pain from the other end of the alleyway, he runs away, but I continue. My feet are fixed to the ground like I’ve grown roots in the asphalt. I keep on shooting, changing magazines, with every shot I take proving to myself that I’m still alive.

My battalion commander said that we wouldn’t go back to Israel without him. That was clear to all of us. We started to comb the area, meter by meter. It was scary, we wanted to find him so badly, and we were willing to search for hours. But it was in vain, we found nothing. It’s dark, there’s the noise of the helicopter continuing the search. Each of us wrapped up inside ourselves, and all of us thinking only of him. He was a lone soldier; we were his family. We were shattered.

And now, every word holds significance. Who would have thought? “I never thought I ‘d write this kind of letter. I don’t know why… I felt that I had to. I’m glad I enlisted in Golani, and I did my very best. If you’re reading this, it means that my career is over, but at least I fought with honor, and I’m happy. You can be sure that I’m happy. There’s no one happier than I am that I have you. I lack for nothing, I love you so much, and I already miss you…. And please tell my soldiers that I love them, too.