

## Excerpt from “An Equal and Opposite Reaction”

A Play About Israel and Palestine

By Jenny Crakes

### Cast of Characters

- KINERET: 22, a female lieutenant, platoon leader in the Caracal combat battalion. Desperate for a temporary escape from the reality of war.
- SHIRA: 18, Arab-Israeli private in Kineret’s platoon. Of Palestinian heritage, has relatives in Gaza. Subdued, distressed over the choice she must make.
- HADAR: 30, captain of the Caracal combat battalion. Her commitment to the Zionist cause is unwavering.
- LEYLA: 18, Palestinian, Shira’s childhood friend from a Gaza refugee camp, who has become a militant for Hamas.
- SOLDIERS: Eynat, Shuva, Galit. Recent Israeli draftees, age 18.
- MOTHERS: Mothers of Shira and Kineret.

### Setting

Israel Defense Forces (Tahal) army post near Gaza Strip.

### Time

Post-2000, unspecified

Circumstances could fit either the 2014 Operation Protective Edge, 2006 Operation Summer Rains, or other missions with the goal of stopping rocket fire from Gaza and destroying tunnels used to infiltrate Israel.

### **Excerpt:**

Kineret’s unit has finished weapons training and received orders to aid with airstrikes on Gaza.

(Shift to a small party. Israeli pop music blares briefly and then quiets to a soft level. SHIRA sits alone center stage. KINERET enters with a glass in her hand. A couple of drinks have made her intense, though she’s still in control. She is animated, electric.)

KINERET

Thought you disappeared.

(She sits down near SHIRA.)

Did you ever see the stars so bright? And the full moon. It was nice of them to give us a little party, wasn't it?...Oh, nobody gave you a drink. You want vodka, champagne?

SHIRA

Oh no, I'm all right.

KINERET

Aren't you having fun? That's why I made you come out here.

(She stands, taking SHIRA's hands, playfully.)

Shira, Shira, let's go dance. They're playing music inside, lighten up. You're so pretty, so sweet. Your skin's the color of olives, they'll think you're the enemy. Make sure you hold on to your gun. Remember, seven years in prison if it's lost or stolen— by the time you get out you'll be an old maid!

(She laughs, but the joke falls hollowly. SHIRA is silent.)

Don't look so horrified. You've got to learn to laugh. What's the matter, you miss your family? You've been quiet for days.

SHIRA

I'm just a little tired.

KINERET

I can't sleep either lately. Fucking stars, they're like alarm clocks. Don't be shy. I know we're not allowed to answer personal questions during training, but here you can ask anything you want...

SHIRA

About the mission ...

KINERET

Uh-uh. No! We're not talking about that. Can't you let me relax tonight? I get worried too, I'm not stupid, but you have to blow off steam or you'll go crazy.

SHIRA

I don't understand how you do that. How you just box off that part of our lives and then come here and laugh.

KINERET

That's what you have to learn to do, Shira. Trust me. We can only control the way we feel. Everything out there –

(She waves her arm toward the distance.)

We can't control any of that. If the Palestinians want to fire rockets at us, abduct our soldiers, what do they expect us to do?

SHIRA

It's like what we learned in physics. "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction."<sup>1</sup> Equal and opposite. But what if it's not equal, Kineret, what then?

KINERET

Captain Hadar didn't want an Arab soldier to join our unit, you know. She thought you'd be disloyal. I told her you wouldn't. Was I wrong?

SHIRA

I don't want to let you down.

KINERET

Are you scared? It's all right to be afraid.

SHIRA

I'm scared. But not so scared I wouldn't do what she's asking, if I thought it was the right thing.

KINERET

You chose to join the army when you didn't have to. Why did you join?

SHIRA

This is my homeland too. I felt left out when everyone else in my class got their draft letters. I wanted to belong.

KINERET

And now?

SHIRA

I think I made a mistake. When Captain Hadar explained they want us to help with the airstrikes...I want to change my mind. I don't want to go on the mission to Gaza.

KINERET

It's too late for that! It doesn't matter what you want.

SHIRA

What if I refuse to go?

KINERET

I don't want to hear that.

SHIRA

I'll tell Captain Hadar I can't do it.

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<sup>1</sup> Newton's Third Law.

KINERET

Shut up, Shira.

SHIRA

My home village isn't far from here. I have family in Gaza. Can you imagine what that's like, to know some of them might not make it through this?

KINERET

I know you have family across the border. But I'm still your commander, you can't talk to me this way.

SHIRA

We have to be the ones to try to keep the peace, or the fighting will never stop.

KINERET

How hard do you want us to try? Hamas is bombing us!

SHIRA

And we're bombing them! I'm sick of the war.

KINERET

And you think I'm not? You have to realize that our existence comes at a cost. Don't get so full of yourself with your ideals. We're here to guard and protect Israel.

SHIRA

You think it's that simple –

KINERET

Yes! I believe in our homeland. Everything else is collateral. So you'll do as you're told! If they tell you to dump trash in a Palestinian yard, you'll do it –

SHIRA

I'm not going –

KINERET

– shut up! Bomb a house, shoot some idiot approaching the base, you'll do that too. But not till tomorrow! Tonight we get away from it all. Is that so hard for you to do? You think I don't notice you moping, dragging your feet like your boots are made of lead... That's why I brought you here.

So drink! Drink, goddamn it! Drink!

(KINERET shoves her glass violently at SHIRA, then turns away in frustration. The tension crashes down around them. KINERET sits and puts her face in her hands.)