

Israel

Jerusalem, Kiryat Yovel—My Friend's Story

To my friend Igor Cohen, the witness

“Sorrow heaps pain, love, sacrifice onto one single day for easy reference.”

Yehuda Amichai

*A car—a ship in an empty sea of a parking lot,
loaded with cargo of food from the supermarket,
and a father with happy hands on a steering wheel
were ready to take off.*

*A mother, warmed inside the family, softly said,
“Varlit, my darling, would you mind?
Run back to the store and buy olives. Sorry, I forgot.”*

*There was no reason for three of them to go back
and pass again the security checkpoint.*

*Varlit, about twelve, grown between the war and childhood,
all thin legs and arms, wild spiky hair
and carefree wind between her shoulders,
sprinted from the car across the underground lot,
as if hurried before herself, competing with time.*

*A few immeasurable, unchained minutes later,
the parents, in the middle of the silence, heard a blast.
They ran, stumbled—stones of fear rolled under their feet—
Varlit, their beautiful Varlit, lay in deathly blood.
Mother's chest was too small for her heart.
Would she ever forgive herself?*

*At the memorial service the weeping desperation
of mother's eyes gaping at the girl's picture.
There was no vengeance, just lowered, shaking shoulders,
and clean pavements two hours after bloody horror.*

Natalia Zaretsky, born in Moscow, currently lives in the United States. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *Iliad Press* and *Sensation Magazine*. She is the author of *Autumn Solstice* (RBC Publishing Co., 2003).

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Note: Kiryat Yovel—is a neighborhood in Jerusalem.

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