

The background of the entire page is a painting. It depicts a person from the chest up, standing on a sandy beach. The person is wearing a dark, hooded garment and is looking out towards a vast, turbulent sea. The sea is characterized by dark, swirling waves in shades of deep blue and purple. In the distance, a thin line of land or a horizon is visible under a sky that transitions from a pale yellow at the top to a darker blue near the horizon. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

# EZEKIEL'S WORLD

BY MICHAEL KOVNER

The story takes place mostly in Jerusalem in the winter of 1991 during the First Gulf War. Scud missiles are landing on populated areas in Israel on a daily basis, causing extensive damage. Civilians have been given gas masks by the Israeli government in case any of the missiles contain chemical agents. People carry these masks, packaged in brown boxes, wherever they go. Jerusalem, however, is not targeted and, as a result, becomes a «city for refuge» for many Israelis.

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EZEKIEL’S WORLD

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FOREWARD

The graphic novel presented here is an attempt to depict Ezekiel's world. We meet him at the age of 75, isolated and suffering from chronic arthritis that has left him needing medical care. The figure of Ezekiel is an amalgam of the real and imagined traits of my father, Abba Kovner. My father died in 1987, just short of the age of 70.

The book describes events that took place at the time of the First Gulf War (1991). Ezekiel's past is revealed in dream and nightmare sequences that reflect the real life events experienced by my father and documented in the historical footnotes at the end of the book. The authentic voice of the poet, Abba Kovner, is present in a number of his poems that appear at different junctures of the story. My father was a resistance fighter, a partisan, a poet, and an historian. His many sided personality exerted a strong influence on all who surrounded him. In this graphic novel I attempt a posthumous dialogue with my father, a dialogue that was regrettably incomplete during our lives. In addition, I have tried to confront some of the issues that continue to absorb me with my visual view as a painter (landscapes, wildlife, females.) I wrote and illustrated this book as a way to continue speaking to my father. Each of us was preoccupied with his own inner world, and the conversation we both wanted failed to take place.

To many people my father appeared as strong, aloof, and inflexible. They pictured him as a kind of modern prophet with a harsh message for the world; a man living outside of normal society, larger than life; a man towards whom people felt respect tinged with fear and, even at times, contempt for his perceived arrogance. He stood at the crossroads of Jewish history and he attempted to provide answers to the basic Jewish dilemmas that he knew from brutal first hand experience. His own traumas informed his vision, but he always tried to see the wide picture of Jewish history and its mission in the world. It was important to me to provide a more complete picture of the man. I knew him as someone full of life, humor, doubts, and love. He lived with contradictions that had no resolution. He was dedicated to the aim of pursuing meaning in life of walking across life's narrow bridge without fear.

Ezekiel is a complex character, dragging across the stage the baggage of many failures and dreams broken by a harsh reality. His being is torn by personal and national tragedies. The secret of his strength is his determination to engage life fully despite everything. He tried to nurture and protect an optimism expressed in his love for his son, his grandson, and his attraction to beauty in the women who awere part of his life. Beauty and pain collaborated in his character to fight any surrender.

Please make use of the readings found in the book, as they may help to draw the borders of inside and outside, dream and reality. You will find descriptions of each character and note that the dialogue of each appears in a different color. Except for the historical portions of the novel (under the sign H) any resemblance between the characters described and real persons is purely coincidental. The attached historical footnotes will aid in mapping dates and the geography of the story. Unless otherwise noted the poems that appear were written by Abba Kovner.



Ezekiel

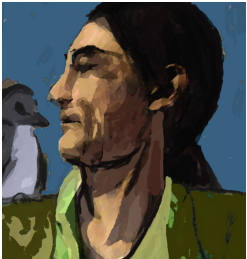
Ezekiel is a lonely old man who lives alone in a modest apartment in Jerusalem. His wife died a few years ago, his son lives abroad and his daughter took her own life when she was 26 years old. Ezekiel was an important historic figure, a resistance commander in World War II and a political leader. He was also a well respected poet and writer. These days, however, his poems, as well as his ideas, are less popular. In a way, society has forgotten about him. Ezekiel's character is based on my father,

Abba Kovner H1 p.282



Na'ama

Na'ama is a 25-year-old art student, who also works as a physical therapist. She treats Ezekiel, who suffers from chronic arthritis.



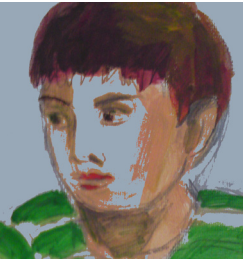
Amos

Ezekiel's son, an architect. After a traumatic experience during his army duty in the West Bank, he left Israel. He lives with his family in San Francisco.



Yvonne

Amos' wife, a schoolteacher.



Noni

Amos and Yvonne's only son. He's about six years old.



Michal

Ezekiel's daughter. She appears only in his dreams and memories.



Shlomo

Yvonne's father. He lives in Ramat Gan, a small city near Tel Aviv.



C'ella

Ezekiel's neighbor. She is taking care of his basic needs.

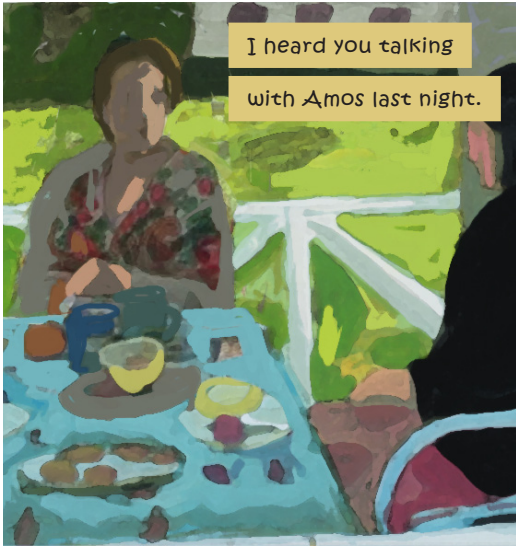
- H

- Historical notes
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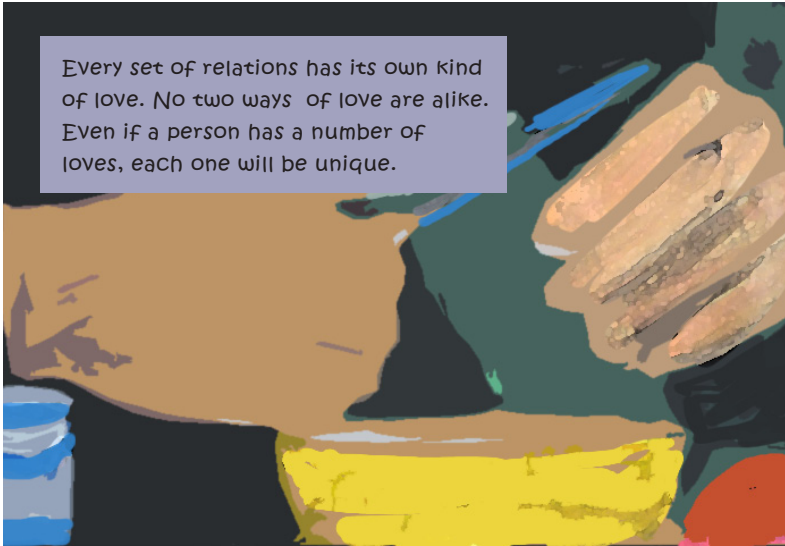
- Translations
- #

- Explanation
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- Inside
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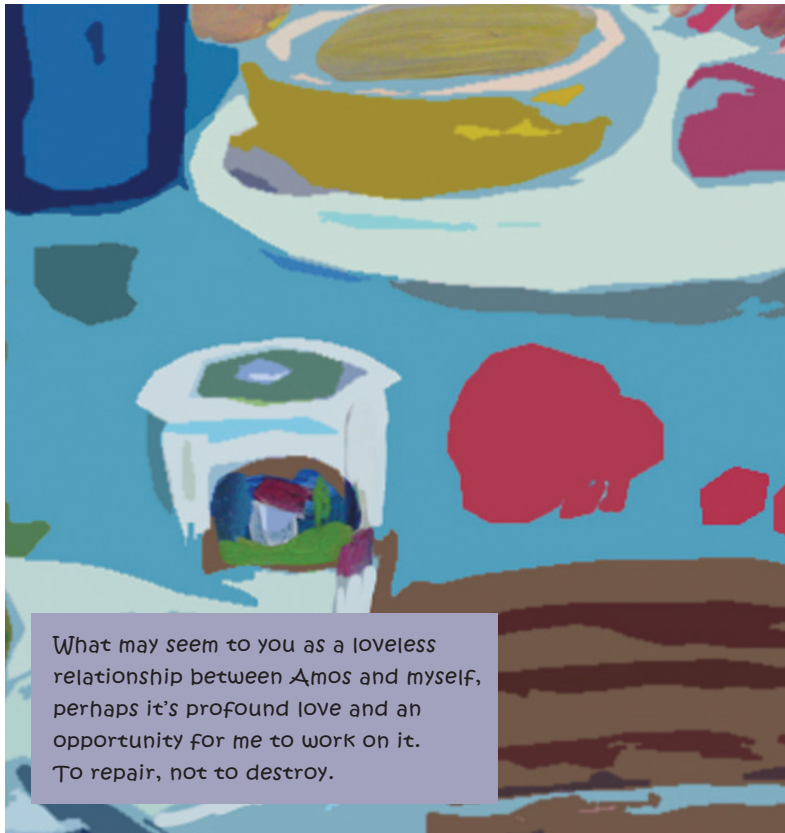








Love isn't something which has a general definition.  
Everyone finds their own definition of "love."



What may seem to you as a loveless relationship between Amos and myself, perhaps it's profound love and an opportunity for me to work on it. To repair, not to destroy.



For me, love comes from fullness, not from something broken.

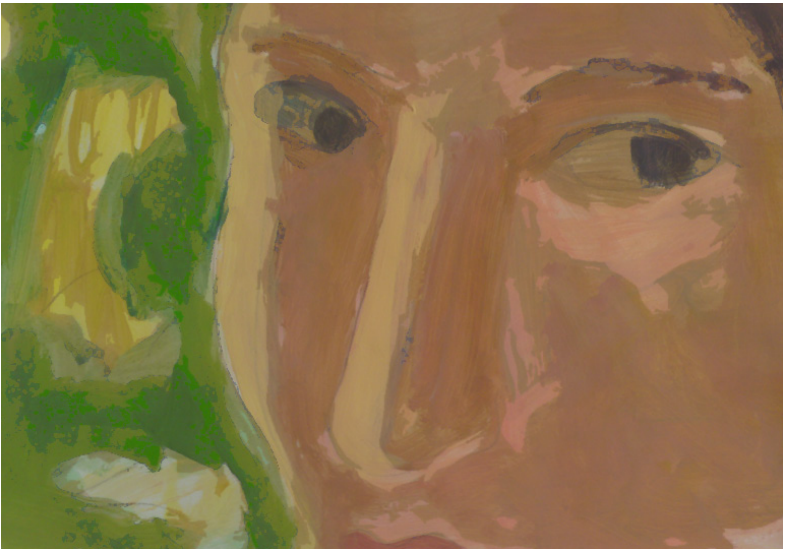
That's why repairing doesn't work.



May be you are right, but maybe not.  
Who knows what love is?



Na'ama, I'm sorry, I have to finish this letter to Amos. It won't take long.







SATURDAY EVENING

Now we are going to organize the most complex scene. The Actzia and the rebellion. In order to make it easier to understand the complexity of that situation, it is necessary to order the Lego people in groups. German = black, Jews = Yellow, The underground fighters = Blue. But there is an additional group. The Judenraat, The Jewish police.

What is that?

Jewish police helped to organize the life of their own community under the German regime.

Why did they help them?

How should we color them?



I will paint them yellow and black.



Why did they help Germans?



Some of them thought they were doing a good service for their own people.

In the end they collaborated with the enemy in a cruel situation that they



I don't like them.

I'm going to make them ugly.



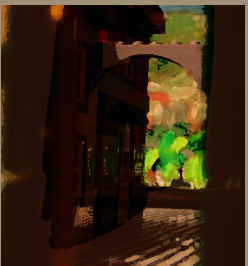
Do you remember you asked me what Actzia is?



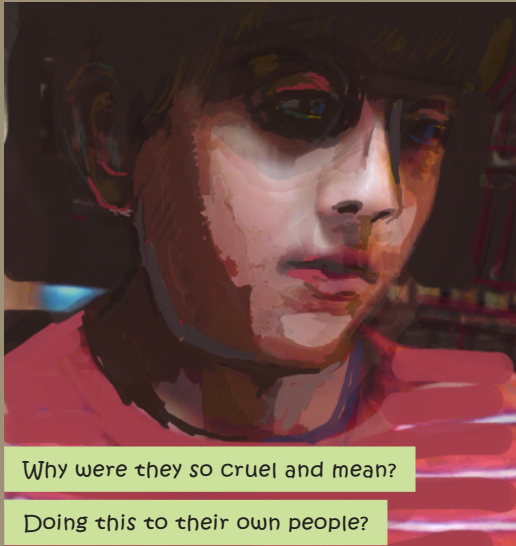
Yes



Here it comes







Why were they so cruel and mean?  
Doing this to their own people?



Yes you are right. But they were victims too.



The Jews are forced  
out of their hiding places.

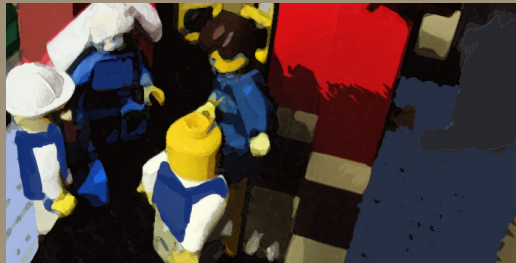


Where were you, Grandpa?

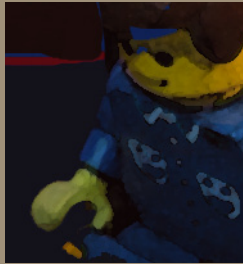


This was position No. 1

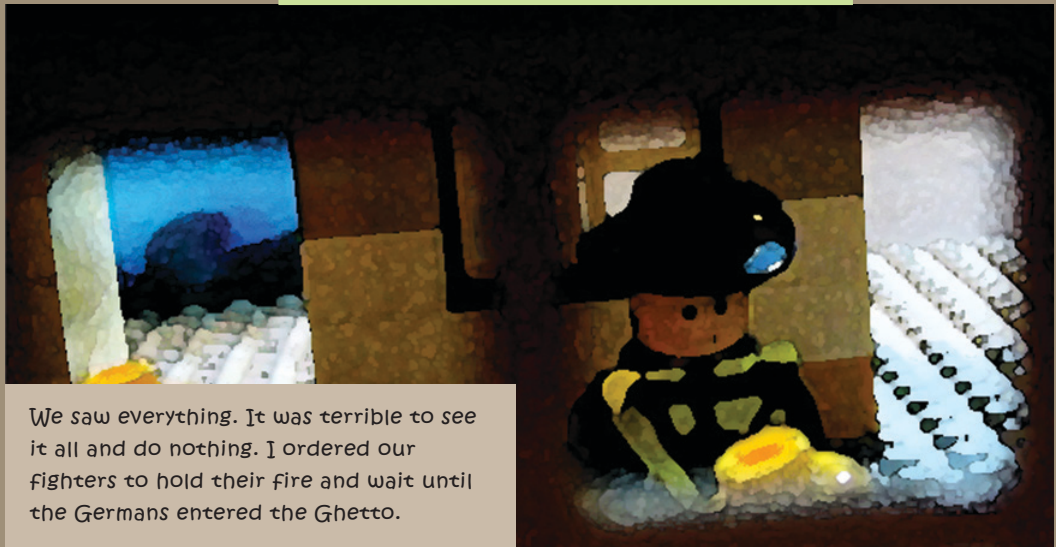
They still believed the Germans were taking them to a better place where they could survive and work. All we had to offer was honorable death. Nobody wants to listen to something like that. We were isolated from our own community.



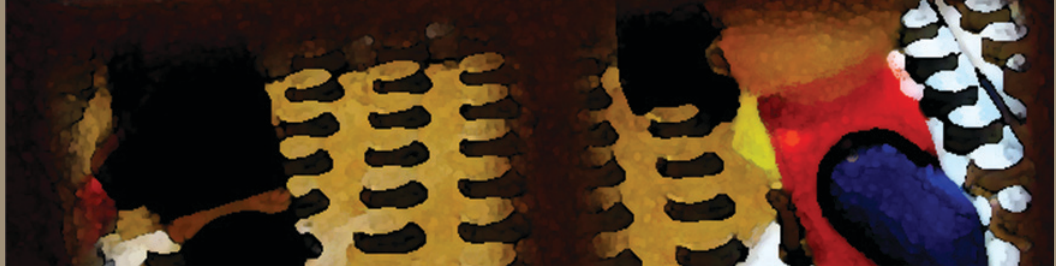
This was position No. 2. The command's position. I was the commander.



Why didn't you call other Jews to help you fight?



We saw everything. It was terrible to see it all and do nothing. I ordered our fighters to hold their fire and wait until the Germans entered the Ghetto.







The Germans are leaving the Ghetto.  
The Jewish police is replacing them.  
The BASTARDS. The big hunt is on.  
From every hole they will drag the  
Jews to the boxcars.

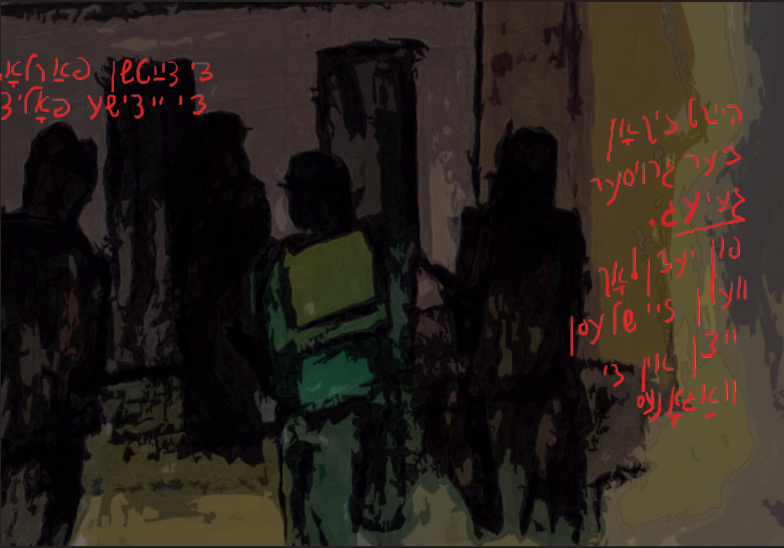


I've got them in my sight.

אויף דעם דעקלערס  
חבר'ה  
Who?  
אויף  
אויף

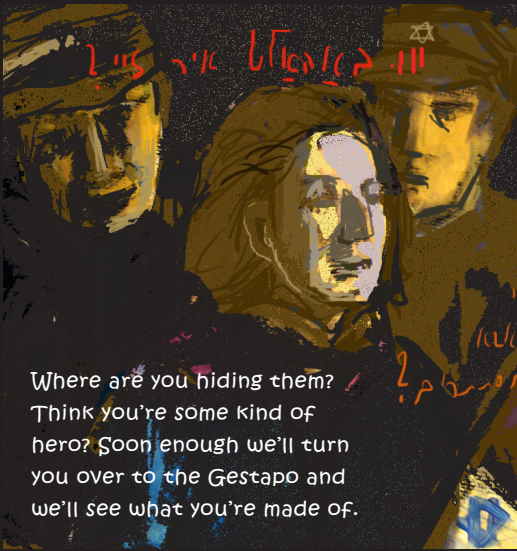


\*Deckler was the chief officer of the Jewish police.

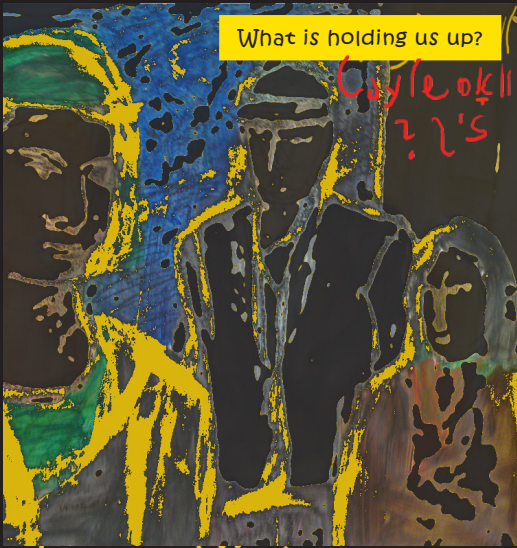


Nobody fires until I give the order!

What are we here for?  
What we are waiting for?



Where are you hiding them?  
Think you're some kind of  
hero? Soon enough we'll turn  
you over to the Gestapo and  
we'll see what you're made of.



What is holding us up?



Are our people in positions?

Everything's falling apart. The whole plan is  
collapsing. Our struggle has failed.  
The situation has changed. There's nothing we  
can do. We can't kill our own people even if  
they're in the devil's service. They are victims like  
us. The Jews believe they're  
heading for work camps and not for liquidation.  
For them it isn't extermination and maybe it even  
seems like a rescue. They won't revolt...is it  
possible they are right??? I've made my decision.



Where is your Family?

אין שום סיכוי  
אין שום סיכוי



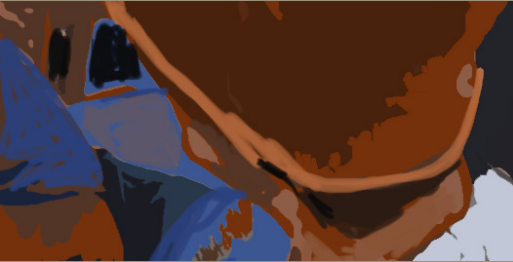


What are you reading?

Medieval liturgical poems - piyyutim.



C'ella, why don't you take off your strange hat?



Don't you like it?

You look better without it.



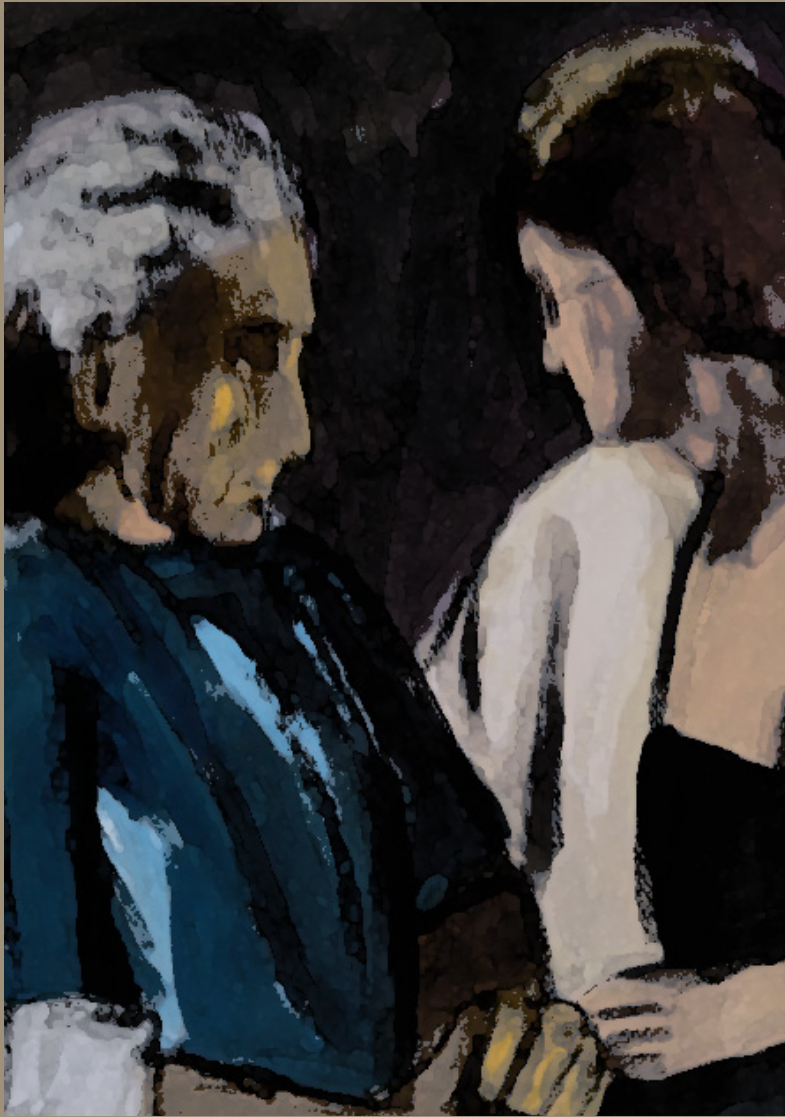
Is that better?



So, what happened between you and Noni  
that he's so frightened and upset?

You know how children are. They can unintentionally  
touch a raw nerve of yours.  
How do you explain it to a 6 year old  
when sometimes you can't explain it to yourself?  
I really regret what happened. I lost control.

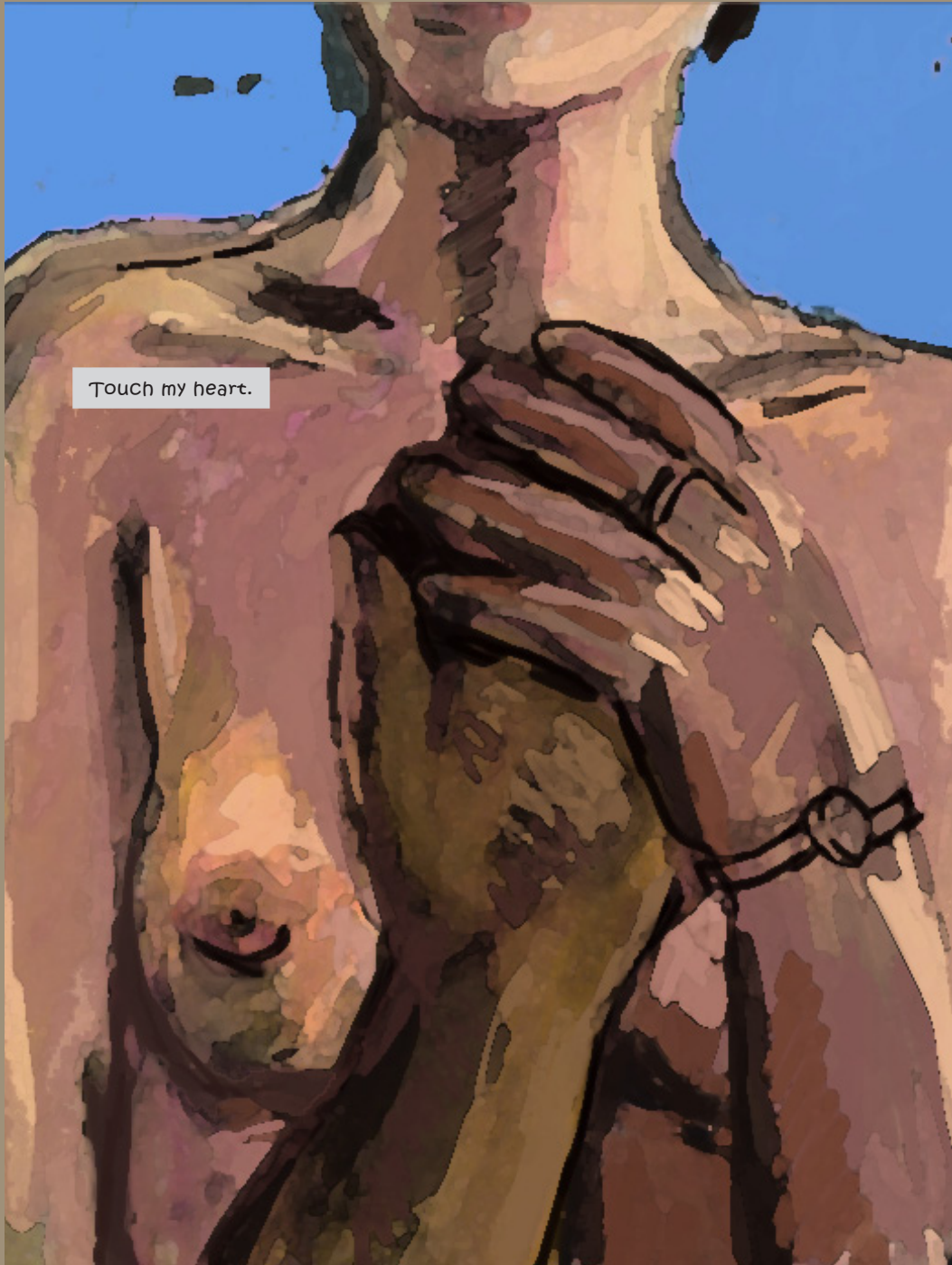
May be you can explain it to me.



I'll quote to you from a poem that  
I wrote. That will help you understand.







Touch my heart.



There is pain which perhaps only  
the body can heal.



There is pain that has no relief.