

Netai Halup

And Other Stories

(for narration in four voices)



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Sculptures on the cover
Netai Halup, Artport Gallery, Tel Aviv
Curator **Naama Haneman**
Photography **Tal Nisim**

The Voices

- ≡ First voice
- ט Second voice
- ∞ Third voice
- ↪ Fourth voice

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**ART
PORT**
ארטפורט ארנוב

Foreword and/or Prologue

- ⊢ Ladies and gentlemen,
- ⊣ The **Pons** [short pause], the Pons, protagonist of our prologue — or foreword — has already accomplished a great deal in his lifetime. Although his posture is completely frozen, the Pons is graced with flow and mobility.
- ⊢ “All is lost”, the Pons whispered lying on the floor, his fears and qualms shattered around him, peeking through his wounded concrete flesh. Some go as far as saying Ponses have no spine whatsoever, yet I know full well - their spines can endure close to anything. And given that Ponses — much like **Spleenóns** and **Darglám**s — will long outlast us all, now, the fragmented Pons prostrated on the ground appeared relaxed and peaceful. Still, we must not procrastinate amongst the all-exposed scattered fractions of his humility and calm. This will not be our final meeting. I opened a used-up box and gathered his shards — remnants of sculpted creatures; ever since, and throughout their varied stories, they always remained in motion.

Showdown

- ⊣ The Spleenóns are not known to be your ordinary party animals, quite the contrary. Whenever there’s a party going on, the Spleenón would confine himself to his room, to be found commonly underneath a blanket. The Spleenóns look for nothing amidst human beings, with their chagrin frequently surpassing that of the introverted Ponses. Even in the company of other Spleenóns, a Spleenón would feel strange and estranged, and though the case be such, on Friday morning, 19th of December, our story’s protagonist, the Spleenón, stood up and decided to act: he invited to his house, on 18th Hazak street, all the Ponses he knew from the building staircase, four Spleenóns he happened to meet the previous week, a frenetic Darglám he spotted scampering several months ago,
- and also, to my joy, myself.

I took a seat between the Spleenóns’ gripes, the Darglám’s scurries and the Ponses’ pleasantries, when finally, I went over to ask the Spleenóns for their well-being. The first one lowered his head,

the second stared silently at his bent-over friend, and the third straightened his back some and murmured “Fine, thank you”. I pondered the possibility of a family relation between them and the host, but really – it really doesn’t matter.

↳ Our host kept going in and out of his room. The Ponses glared at him (having that dislike for movement) and the Darglám made an attempt at seducing him by way of dance [pause], with nothing to show for it. The scent of winter seeped through the half-open, half-closed window. The Spleenón liked the summer better.

Our story’s protagonist momentarily stood up among all the guests, wrapped in a blanket. One of the Spleenóns started humming [pause]. The Darglám hastily went over to our protagonist, offering him some wine. As Darglám’s are strangers to relaxation, he continued marching and passed by the Spleenón, not before his clumsy leg (it is well known that all Darglám’s have at least one clumsy leg) got bound in the tip of the blanket, and the Darglám skidded all the way to the other side of the room. He spilled his glass of wine.

↪ I went to see that he is alright, and slipped on the glass, or perhaps the wine. I hit the Spleenón, who also fell.

↳ The rest of the Spleenóns straightend their backs, the Ponses tried stabilizing themselves through all this commotion, and gazed at the event.

Dance

↪ He whirled in place several times, then asked me “How could you say such a thing?”
I told him it doesn’t change anything.
He shook his head as if to reject something, it didn’t change much either.
I wanted to walk away but decided to stay.
I looked at his old boots,
he spun around his self.
It was as if his legs became their own living entity.
I became briefly consumed with the precarious dance forming before me.
Suddenly he halted.
I asked him: “Why did you stop?”
Only he [pause],
couldn’t comprehend what I was talking about.
I implored him to make his legs dance again,
I wished to stay, it brought me comfort.
He grumbled somewhat, collapsed his muscles,
and sat exhausted on the couch.

Certain Uncertainty

Within eyeshot, a Pons mutinied against his nature, observed the incident, unfurled his organs — and stood erect.

- ↳ The Ponses are certain in their uncertainty, and particularly in their doubt. In contrast to their troubling frailty and precarious certainty, the Pons is known for his exceptional calm and nimbleness. Still, when Ponses stare at the figure of a cocky Spleenón, they compress on the spot, their faces spread with pallor, and unintelligible movements of searching for refuge take over their bodies. Seemingly, the product of a meeting between the two was such a foregone conclusion, that no one could say for certain whether this is an issue that existed since the dawn of time, or if it was a matter of just the last hundred, two hundred or thousand years.
- ↪ It was on a day like all days that I was hearing two figures discussing a strangely alien circumstance:
- ↳ one was telling the other that just the previous day, when he was going out to his balcony to enjoy a cup of coffee, he saw a Spleenón shouting at so-and-so, who got slightly startled and finally raised his voice back. The Spleenón's blood steamed with self-esteem, and he stood his ground.

On Dependency

≡ I have almost never seen Saba's prosthetic. It was never apparent that one of his limbs is missing. During the latter years of his life, whenever I would surprise him with a visit, he would no longer get up to greet me and invite me to sit with him at the table. In his final year, he would sit on a bed in his somber room, wearing white underpants, shirtless and legless. He would not be able to stand on one leg, and on the occasion that he did wish to hoist himself up, he needed help. Putting on the prosthetic also required assistance. Despite his withering into the mattress, he would smile at me. I would sit beside him, caress his left hand, and bid him a peaceful rest.

Saba was an expert at making fun of anything, or as they say - he was a happily content man, as much as one can. In those twilight years, when his body and mind began betraying his spirit, I started noticing how his signature sense of humor began communicating a deep sense of sorrow. That smile turned more furrowed than the skin on his hands. His eyes became hollow, idle.

His sitting posture lost its stability, and his hands would tremble. All along his last years, just like the ones before, Saba would lean back and ask: "Tell me something nice". During these moments, nothing was out of his own volition, not even his joy.

I Have Yet to Encounter a Static Darglám

- ↳ As the storms outside would not relent, in the period of “The Unforeseen Autumn Upheavals”, one Darglám lost his sanity. The Darglám is known to us all as a rather amiable creature, slightly sluggish yet possessing remarkable grace. Some would venture to call him a fool, however, the Darglám knows exactly where he’s going and what’s his drive. The Darglám never ceases to move. This fact alone is capable of driving a human out of his mind. You will never see a standing Darglám — he would march, pace, run, dance, go in some direction, whatever it might be — he would always be in motion.

Back then, the tempests would hit from every which way; cars would get washed away to the entrances of buildings, roads would dance as if they were waves. Tersely, the ocean was set on burglarizing the city, and the clouds would not stop weeping. This spell would not deter our protagonist from surfing his way over the railway sleepers, hopping from one building to the other in dance, running in those very few streets that retained

some sort of dryness, and getting washed away swimming through the flooded alleys [pause].

Habitually, when the Darglám stayed home, he would walk back and forth, and when hand-walking upside down, his hands would flow with his emblematic capricious motion. You would never catch the Darglám lying down [pause], and thinking you have seen him wither into repose, makes you wrong. Some attest to having seen him resting at the park or in a dry and narrow alley. Let ‘em say,

- ↳ I know all too well a lie inhabits their mouths, or — in the very least — they suffer from extreme confusion. Such a thing could not take place, and of this, I am certain! And where is this certainty derived from, you must be asking, ladies and gentlemen. It is a confidence emanating out of the very place I’m writing you from, at this very moment. Putting it more accurately, by the view seen from it. Quite simply, the building I live in is located exactly across the building in which the Darglám lives: apartment 3, floor 4. My window is placed right in front of his window, and accordingly, the view seen from my window is the space inside his apartment. The Darglám’s private life has become my daily entertainment, and as you might have guessed, I have never witnessed the Darglám in static form.

On the day there was not one dry road to be found (and I didn't even go out for work), I sat all day by the window and knew precisely what the Darglám was doing. Same as any other weekday opens — in the morning — he was walking quite slowly in his home, raising a cup, pouring water while prancing around, drinking as he was walking, and casually stretching his legs all the way back. He seemed to be consumed by thoughts, disoriented, possibly because he wanted to go outside — I will never know for certain. For a short while, he stood in front of the window and rocked his restless body. He proceeded to hop on his slender yet powerful hands, walked on them towards the toilet, and disappeared for some time. Finally, he came out of the bathroom, still on his hands [short pause]. I wonder how he goes about his business in there [pause]. At any rate, forget about such trivialities, as immediately afterwards an even more peculiar thing has occurred: the erratic Darglám bounced off his hands back to his feet, proceeded to walk several steps, wound his feeble body, then paced from corner to corner, each time shifting from fast to slow, and vice-versa. He strolled his small apartment for a long hour, right to left, front and back, just as he would any other day. He made a few further steps, then finally stood still.

About Ponses

- ↳ As known to all, Ponses preserve their qualms in their flesh, unlike us.
- ↪ There used to be a lean and lanky Pons, who would sit every day on the bench facing my home. Often it would seem the Pons is waiting in prolonged anticipation for something. I picked up a habit, and each time I would go out to the street, I made sure to set aside several minutes; to examine the Pons. One day I saw him holding a knife [pause]. I pondered what he was about to do [pause].
- ↳ Ponses are known to have a relatively tranquil personality [pause].
- ↪ The Pons carved out a piece of flesh off his wrinkled thigh, laid it on the bench by his side, and started pacing away from the scene for the ultimate time.

On Rolling Cycles

- There's a Spleenón who has a tendency to fall down the stairs. The floors of the building he lives in conjoin by Italian marble stairs, with the gangling Spleenón not being accustomed to step on such slippery surface.

As it has already been several months since the fatigued creature had moved into the building, dozens of bruises covered his legs, hands, and mercifully, the contusions adorning his face can be measured in the single digits. This Spleenón took a vacation off work and went to America, and as good luck has it, in America stairs get padded with rugs. During his holiday, the battered Spleenón got a bit of rest, allowing his body some respite away from the pestering marble. By the time he returned from his furlough, he completely recovered, and his flesh was tainted with very few scars. In the morning, when he woke up; he showered, ate some bread with jam, drank a cup of coffee and departed his residence. One step outside his flat is all it took... Green bruises, that will turn blue, and finally — purple.

About Roles in the Story (Side Note)

- ⇒ Saba used to tell all sorts of stories, so you could never know truth from fiction. For as long as I can remember, he would start a story, then abruptly add: “Stop me if you already heard this one”. He would claim his memory wasn't as sharp anymore, though this is quite a relative matter, considering he didn't know how far his memory would eventually crumble in later years. Even if I had already heard the story, it never crossed my mind to interrupt him. As the years went by and his memory decomposed even further, he ceased telling me stories.

Once he lost his sanity altogether, he asked me to take on the role of narrator, however, I mostly stuttered in his presence. I thought to myself that everybody has a role; you don't hang the rope on the laundry.

As time goes by, I can hardly remember most of his tales; as do my stories — they alter with him — from truth into fiction.