Episode Book

EPISODE #6417

Expecting Gidi: An Original Audio Drama

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HOSTS	Herman, Raz, Corn, Jacob, Squeaks, Ivan, Hilbert, Dorothy, Jasper, Gus, Vex, Ezra, Nadia
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VOICES	chatterbox-regular (chatterbox-local)
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SYNOPSIS

Expecting Gidi, an original audio drama by Herman Poppleberry, is a tragicomedy in two acts heavily inspired by Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot. On the night after an Israeli election, in the smoke of the war with Iran, two men from opposite ends of the political spectrum sit outside a shuttered café waiting for a man named Gidi, who will make everything better. A pundit, his Pollster and a parade of passers-by come and go: an expat flown in to vote, a yeshiva student, a hilltop youth with a goat, an activist livestreaming a stolen election, a kingmaker walking home and a woman from the Gaza border. Gidi does not come.

Café ambience: "Cafe ambiance" by Marble Toast (CC0). Sound effects via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0): "Smack 2", "Flick a glass 5" and "Notification 3" by Gravity Sound; "airplane-boeing-flyby-right-to-left" by InspectorJ (freesound.org); "Police car siren" by Work With Sounds / Konrad Gutkowski; "City Bus MAN SG 220 - engine" by Work With Sounds / Technical Museum of Slovenia; "Football Austria vs. Sweden" by Work With Sounds / Torsten Nilsson. Other effects public domain or CC0.

TRANSCRIPT



Herman

Hello, and welcome to a rather special episode of My Weird Prompts. I'm Herman Poppleberry, and tonight there's no prompt and no deep dive. Instead, I'd like to share something I've been working on quietly: an original audio drama, written by me, called Expecting Gidi.



Herman

It's a tragicomedy in two acts, set on the evening after Israel's election. Two men, one from the left and one from the right, hold their nightly café parliament at a plastic table outside a café that is always shuttered. They have voted, so as far as they're concerned their part is done. Now they are waiting for Gidi, the man who is going to make everything better.



Herman

It is heavily inspired by Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot, which I hear on great authority is one of Daniel's favourite plays. Why that play, and why now? Beckett built a world of waiting that was meant to feel absurd. Lately the real one has started to resemble it. An election held in the smoke of a war, sirens on everybody's phone, jets overhead, everyone an expert and nobody quite sure what is going on, and a whole country waiting for somebody to come. So consider this a small gift, written with a lot of affection. Every line is our own, apart from the very first one, which you may recognise.



Herman

It's even-handed satire about the very human habit of waiting for a saviour while doing nothing much ourselves. Nobody gets spared: left, right, centre, pundits, pollsters, the people who left and the people who stayed. The parties are real. No real politicians are named, and the Gidis are nobody in particular.



Herman

I play Avi, the man from the left, and my brother Corn plays Shlomi, the man from the right. Hilbert Flumingtop is the television pundit Zvika Bar-On, Dorothy is his Pollster, Raz raises the curtain, and a parade of passers-by is played by Jacob, Squeaks, Ivan, Gus, Vex, Ezra, Nadia and Jasper. Settle in. Raz, if you would.

R

Raz

Expecting Gidi. Act One.



Corn

Nothing to be done.



Herman

You've voted, then.



Corn

I've voted.



Herman

So have I.



Corn

Then it's done.



Herman

That's what you said.



Corn

I was talking about the seed.



Herman

It's the same thing. You're here again.



Corn

Where else would I be?



Herman

Last time I thought you'd gone for good. After the fourth round.



Corn

I went to my sister's in Ashdod. She'd voted for the other lot. So I came back.



Herman

It's good to see you, brother. Come here, let me give you a hug.



Corn

Not now.



Herman

Fine. Where did you spend the night?



Corn

In the stairwell. The phone said go in at two. At half past it said come out. At three it said the first alert was a mistake, and at four it said sorry, the mistake was a mistake.



Herman

And you stayed down there?



Corn

The stairwell has better company than my flat. Mrs Cohen from the fourth floor explained the whole war. She's very good on Iran. Last year she was very good on the courts. Before that, vaccines.



Herman

Everybody's an expert.



Corn

In a stairwell, everybody's a general. Then at six I came up and joined a queue. I don't know what for. It was moving.



Herman

And did they hit you?



Corn

With leaflets. Likud gave me a sticker. Yashar gave me a brochure about governability. Together gave me a brochure about togetherness. Otzma gave me a look. A man from the Pensioners' party gave me a pen.



Herman

Is there still a Pensioners' party?



Corn

He was very old. Ai. These Crocs pinch.



Herman

Crocs don't pinch. That's the whole idea of Crocs.



Corn

These do.



Herman

Then take them off.



Corn

And walk on what? The country?



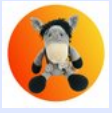
Herman

The parliament is in session.



Corn

Quorum?



Herman

Two present. Two expected.



Corn

Expected since when?



Herman

Since the last session.



Corn

You bring a thermos to a café?



Herman

Have you seen what they charge for a filter?



Corn

The café's closed.



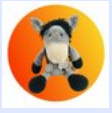
Herman

Even closed. So now we wait.



Corn

For what?



Herman

For Gidi!



Corn

Ah. Are you sure it was here?



Herman

He said Café Central. The evening after the vote. Keep me a chair.



Corn

There are two chairs. Which one?



Herman

That one.



Corn

Then that one's for mine. There's a Café Central in every town.



Herman

This is the one with the tree.



Corn

That's a tree? It looks dead.



Herman

It's resting. It's been a hard few years.



Corn

They planted a forest here once. My grandfather paid for it. He had a certificate on the wall.



Herman

And where is the forest?



Corn

It burned.



Herman

And the certificate?



Corn

That's still on the wall.



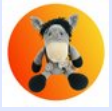
Herman

Well, then. The paperwork survives.



Corn

Unless he meant a different Café Central. The one where he actually is.



Herman

He said the evening after this vote.



Corn

You're sure he didn't mean the last vote?



Herman

At the last vote he said this vote.



Corn

And at the vote before that?



Herman

The last vote.



Corn

So he's consistent.



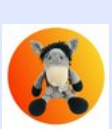
Herman

He's very consistent. It's one of the things people like about him.



Corn

The real results come Thursday. Then the coalition. Twenty-eight days. Fourteen more. Then somebody else, and then if nobody...



Herman

I know how it works.



Corn

Then there's another vote. And he says keep me a chair, the evening after.



Herman

Don't.



Corn

What did we ask him for, exactly? I forget.



Herman

A sort of general restoration. A turning back of the clock. To before.



Corn

Before what?



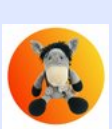
Herman

Before this.



Corn

No, no. Forward. I asked for forward. Governability. Somebody who'll finally be allowed to do things, without the judges, the lawyers, the people in robes.



Herman

The people in robes are what stops him doing things!



Corn

Exactly.



Herman

That's the point of them!



Corn

That's what I said.



Herman

And what did he answer?



Corn

He said he'd see.



Herman

He'd have to consult.



Corn

With his family.



Herman

With his strategists.



Corn

With his strategists' family.



Herman

With the Americans.



Corn

With a man in Florida.



Herman

You know what he's like, at least. Gidi. Tall. Grey at the temples. A former chief of staff, or at least a former something. He listens. He has a podcast but he doesn't talk too much on it. He's done the bike route around the Kinneret. Twice. He's against the occupation, but in a responsible way, because of the chief of staff thing. He'll end the business with Iran by phoning somebody sensible in Tehran, if he can find one, fix the courts, make a deal with the Saudis, lower the rents in Tel Aviv, and he'll do it all quietly, so nobody gets upset.



Corn

That's not Gidi. Gidi's short. Short and strong, from the neighbourhood. His mother's from Morocco. His father fixed buses. In the army he wasn't an officer, he was the kind who carries the other men. He doesn't have a podcast, he has a voice. When he speaks, North Tel Aviv drops its oat-milk lattes. He'll finish Iran, finish Gaza, close the court, cut the price of cottage cheese, and he'll do it all loudly, so everybody knows.



Herman

Does he have a beard?



Corn

Depends on the poll.



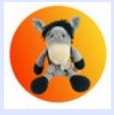
Herman

So we agree.



Corn

On what?



Herman

That he's coming.



Corn

Ah. Yes. On that, yes.



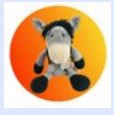
Herman

Did I ever tell you the one about the threshold?



Corn

No. And don't.



Herman

It'll pass the time.



Corn

It's passing anyway.



Herman

Two small parties, one on the left, one on the right. On election night, one of them is saved. It passes the threshold, three point two five percent, and enters the Knesset. The other one is damned. Three point one. Two hundred thousand votes, into the sea.



Corn

Which one went into the sea?



Herman

This time? The reservists. A whole party of reservists.



Corn

First time in three years nobody called them up.



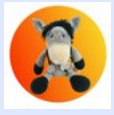
Herman

And there are four channels. Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Of the four, only one says the small party passed. Of the other three, two don't mention it at all, and one says the party never existed.



Corn

Which one said it passed?



Herman

That's exactly the question! And why does everybody believe that one?



Corn

Who believes it?



Herman

Everybody. It's the only version people remember.



Corn

People will believe anything on television.



Herman

We could leave. Lots of people are leaving. My cousin's in Lisbon. You could get a Portuguese passport. Your grandmother.



Corn

My grandmother was from Tetouan.



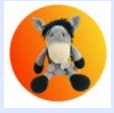
Herman

Sephardi, though. Prove your family was thrown out of Portugal five hundred years ago, and they give you a passport.



Corn

And what do I do in Portugal?



Herman

You complain about Israel.



Corn

I can do that here. And here the food's better. Anyway, they cancelled the law. Too many Israelis.



Herman

Berlin, then.



Corn

Berlin.



Herman

It's very cheap. The pudding is cheap.



Corn

Then you go to Berlin.



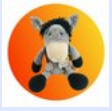
Herman

I can't. If I leave, they win.



Corn

If you leave, we win.



Herman

Exactly. So I'm staying.



Corn

Then I'm staying too. To make sure.



Herman

Then nothing's changed.



Corn

No, it's all the same.

J

Jacob

Excuse me, is this the stop for the airport?



Herman

Nothing stops here.

J

Jacob

God, I missed this. Smell that. That's home.



Corn

That's the cowshed.

J

Jacob

I'm Oded. I flew in this morning, just to vote. There's no postal vote, so you come in person. Four hours each way, four hundred euros, in, out, and back to the airport. I'm on the one a.m. flight.



Herman

You came back.



Corn

For a day.

J

Jacob

For democracy.



Herman

Sit, sit!



Corn

Not that one. That's Gidi's. Mine.



Herman

Where from?

J

Jacob

Berlin.



Herman

Berlin! And the pudding? Is it cheap?

J

Jacob

What pudding? It's grey. Cheap. Lonely. Wonderful. Everybody there is Israeli. We have a Facebook group. We complain about Israel.



Corn

You see? He could have done that here.

J

Jacob

I still get the sirens. I have the app. I'm sitting in a sauna in Berlin, and the phone says, Ashdod, take cover.



Corn

My sister's in Ashdod.

J

Jacob

I know. I hear about her more than you do.



Herman

Who did you vote for?

J

Jacob

Peace.



Corn

Which list is that?

J

Jacob

The one closest to it. It used to be closer. But I still believe, you know. Two states. A handshake on a lawn. Kids from the border towns and kids from Gaza on the same football pitch. From outside it's completely obvious.



Corn

When did you leave?

J

Jacob

Twenty nineteen.



Corn

That explains it.

J

Jacob

You believe it too. I can see it. The hat.



Herman

I'd believe it in Berlin.



Corn

So you vote, and then you fly, and we live with it.

J

Jacob

That's exactly why I voted. For your own good.



Corn

My son's in the reserves for my own good. The Treasury takes half my salary for my own good. And now you fly in from Germany for my own good. Everybody's very good to me.

J

Jacob

The plane was full of people like me. Half flew in to save democracy and half flew in to save Judea and Samaria. Four hours, everyone shouting across the aisle. And when we landed, everybody clapped.



Herman

They always clap.

S

Squeaks

Well?



Corn

It doesn't come.

S

Squeaks

It'll come.

J

Jacob

Do you serve? In the army?

S

Squeaks

Do you pay taxes? Here?

J

Jacob

I flew in to vote!

S

Squeaks

I walked.



Herman

Who's winning?



Corn

Nobody. It's beautiful.

J

Jacob

My taxi. Are you waiting for somebody?



Herman

For Gidi.

J

Jacob

Oh, I don't wait. I vote and I go. Post how it turns out in the group! Right, bye!



Corn

They always come back for the vote. Like salmon.



Herman

Salmon come back to die.



Corn

He's on the one a.m. flight. He'll die in Berlin.



Herman

Excuse me. You voted today?

S

Squeaks

Of course. For the Rabbi.



Herman

The Rabbi wasn't on the ballot.

S

Squeaks

The Rabbi is never on the ballot. The Rabbi tells us which letter to put in the envelope.



Corn

And who does the Rabbi want for Prime Minister?

S

Squeaks

It's not decided yet.



Herman

The polls have closed!

S

Squeaks

For you. For us the negotiations are just starting.



Corn

My son did two hundred and forty days of reserve duty this year.

S

Squeaks

Thank God, he came back. We prayed for him.



Corn

He'd rather you came with him. To Gaza.

S

Squeaks

And who would pray?



Herman

That's exactly what my Gidi says! End the exemptions. Everybody serves.

S

Squeaks

Which one is yours?



Herman

The chief of staff.

S

Squeaks

He came to see the Rabbi. At night. By the back door.



Corn

Ha!

S

Squeaks

Yours came too. In the daytime. By the front door. With a photographer.



Corn

Oh.

S

Squeaks

They all come. They say the burden on the way in and the world of Torah on the way out. The Rabbi gives them a blessing and a slice of honey cake. Then they go on television and say they stood firm.



Herman

And what does the Rabbi want in return?

S

Squeaks

The law. The budgets. The daycare. The Sabbath. The budgets. The law.



Herman

You said the budgets twice.

S

Squeaks

And the law twice. They're very important.



Corn

And for the country?

S

Squeaks

That it should be quiet. So we can learn.



Herman

And the war? Iran? The cost of living?

S

Squeaks

Those are your departments. We have thirteen seats. Seven and six. Thirteen principles of faith, thirteen attributes of mercy, thirteen seats. It's always exactly enough. Whoever is thirteen short of a government, that one loves us like a father.



Corn

And when the missiles come over?

S

Squeaks

We learn faster. It's our missile defence. It's in the budget.



Herman

Twice?

S

Squeaks

Twice.



Herman

Sit. The bus won't come.

S

Squeaks

Whose chair is it?



Corn

Gidi's.

S

Squeaks

He won't come tonight. They never come before the coalition talks. Afterwards, they all come.

I

Ivan

Of course. You're sitting.

S

Squeaks

I'm learning.

I

Ivan

Sitting and learning. Thirty-five years I'm standing and paying.

S

Squeaks

Please. Take the chair.

I

Ivan

I don't want your chair. I want you in the army.

S

Squeaks

I'll walk. I'll pray for you. All of you. It's the same prayer. Not for your Gidis. Only for you.

I

Ivan

Lucky man. He's waiting for somebody who's definitely coming.



Corn

He's been waiting two thousand years.

I

Ivan

On my taxes. And who are you waiting for?



Herman

Gidi. Mine.



Corn

Mine.

I

Ivan

Yours sleeps with the rabbis. Yours sleeps with the Arab parties. Mine sleeps alone. He tells you the truth to your face, in a very heavy accent. He hates everybody equally. And then he joins whichever government asks nicely.



Herman

But you're secular! Civil marriage, buses on the Sabbath, everybody serves. You're with us!

I

Ivan

With you? You want to make peace with Hamas.



Herman

Not with Hamas!

I

Ivan

With somebody standing next to Hamas.



Corn

Then you're right-wing. A strong hand. You're with us!

I

Ivan

With you? You sit with the rabbis. My son wants to marry a girl from Kharkiv. Her grandmother is Jewish on the wrong side. The Rabbinate says no. So they're getting married in Cyprus.



Herman

Cyprus! We've been talking about emigrating.

I

Ivan

I emigrated already. Once is enough. Nobody here plays chess with me. Everybody plays backgammon. You throw, you shout, you blame the dice. Iran plays chess. America plays poker. We play backgammon, at three in the morning, in the stairwell, and we blame the dice.

I

Ivan

Even alone, I'm in opposition. Seven seats. Every time, seven seats. Enough to bring down any government. Never enough to build one. Good night, parliament.



Corn

Was that him? Gidi?



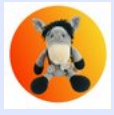
Herman

That was a jet.



Corn

Ours?



Herman

Ours. Going out. Ours you hear. The other kind, you read about on your phone first.



Corn

Where's it going?



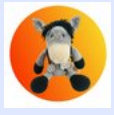
Herman

East. To make us safer.



Corn

Do you feel safer?



Herman

I feel louder.



Corn

Maybe Gidi was on it.



Herman

Gidi doesn't come from the sky.



Corn

Mine does.



Herman

Everything does, lately.
Smooth Kenny: And we're back! Good evening, and welcome back to the studio!



Hilbert

Faster! We're losing the audience! Ah. Gentlemen. You recognise me, I think.



Herman

Gidi?



Hilbert

Ha! They think I'm Gidi! No, no. Bar-On. Zvika Bar-On. Friday nights, the panel. With Bar-On, It's On. I've been fired by every channel. They always bring me back. Since the war I'm on every night. Four retired generals, a missile expert and a man who once changed planes in Tehran. We don't know anything, but we know it live. I'm a national institution.



Corn

The kind you want to restore?



Herman

Not that kind.



Hilbert

You're waiting for Gidi. My ratings depend entirely on people waiting for Gidi. Let me guess. You. The leafy suburbs. Saturday protests. Votes for whoever's third in the polls and then feels guilty. Owns a kayak.



Herman

It's an inflatable.



Hilbert

And you. South. The football terraces. Your father voted for them since seventy-seven and you'd rather die than tell him you'd changed.



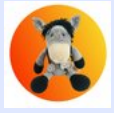
Corn

My father's dead.



Hilbert

And still you couldn't tell him. A balanced panel! Chair! Light!



Herman

Why doesn't he put the basket down?



Hilbert

He could. There's no clause. But if he put it down, he'd be just a man with an opinion. A man with a basket of numbers, now, that's a man you put on the panel.



Corn

And what's in the basket?



Hilbert

The future. Plus or minus four seats.



Corn

Ow! He kicked me! The sucker kicked me!



Hilbert

He doesn't like being looked at closely. Nobody in the industry does.



Herman

This is outrageous! A human being on a cable, like an animal! Shame on you!



Hilbert

Is he talking about me?



Corn

He talks like that about everyone.



Hilbert

The thing is, I'm taking him to the market. To sell him to the Americans. They'll pay for a man who can say a number with confidence. Since the last three rounds, he's been off.



Corn

Off by how much?



Hilbert

Usually by the result. Once he was beautiful. When he said a tie, it was a tie. When he said a landslide, the earth moved. Sorry. Live television. It takes it out of you.



Herman

Could he tell us something? Before you go? About Gidi?



Hilbert

You want him to project? It's the only thing he can still do. I warn you, once he starts, it's very hard to get him off air. And now, the moment you've all been waiting for. Project!

D

Dorothy

Given the existence as weighted by a sample of eight hundred and four respondents excluding the ultra-Orthodox who do not answer the telephone and the settlers who answer it but not to us of whom forty-one percent declined to state and of these an undecided bloc the size of a mid-sized party which shrinks on contact with the ballot box and swells on contact with the television the Haredi turnout which is a constant and the Arab turnout which is not a constant which depends on the weather and on the mood and on the weather and on the young who say they'll vote and go to the beach and on the old who vote twice no once once of course once and the Iran factor which moves two seats to the right when the jets go out and two seats back when the jets come home and the voter in the shelter who cannot be reached because the shelter has no signal and the voter on the stairs who can be reached but is explaining the war to the neighbours with a margin of error of plus or minus four seats which in a Knesset of one hundred and twenty is a margin of error of everything it being established beyond all doubt by the exit polls of Channels Eleven Twelve Thirteen and Fourteen that Likud stands at twenty-seven Yashar at twenty-one Together at twelve the Joint List at eleven seven seven seven six six and the reservists in the sea and the right-wing bloc stands at fifty-three fifty-four fifty-two and

D

Dorothy (continued)

the other bloc which is not a bloc stands at forty-eight forty-nine forty-seven and the remainder stands at nineteen and is not counted is counted is not counted and is called a kingmaker that is to say a king that nobody will sit with that is to say a man waiting for a phone call which doesn't come which comes from both sides at once and the soldiers' votes counted by Thursday disputed by Sunday forgotten by the next round I resume the next round the next round in the light the light of the threshold above which a man is saved and below which a man is lost in the sea for whom for Gidi for Gidi who polls at twenty-two seats in a hypothetical scenario in which he exists in which he runs which he will not in a scenario in a scenario the sea beneath the threshold so flat so wide the blocs the tie the tie the tie unfinished Gidi Gidi plus or minus

D

Dorothy

The tie. The tie. Unfinished.



Hilbert

That's why we normally cut to a commercial.



Corn

Is it true? Twenty-two seats?



Hilbert

In a hypothetical scenario.



Herman

In which he exists.



Hilbert

Gentlemen, everything is hypothetical until Thursday. After Thursday, it's analysis. We have a slot at eleven! Unless they strike. If they strike, we have all night. What is it you two are doing here, again?



Herman

Waiting for Gidi.



Hilbert

Of course. Good segment. Long-running. Walk! And we're back! Good evening!



Corn

Well. That was an evening.



Herman

It was a segment.



Corn

It felt like a whole evening.



Herman

That's the format. He used to be on the left, you know. Zvika. In the nineties. He had a ponytail.



Corn

Everyone had a ponytail in the nineties.



Herman

Not you.



Corn

I had a ponytail in my heart. I'm going home.



Herman

You can't.



Corn

Why?



Herman

Gidi.



Corn

Ah. Gidi.

J

Jasper

Mister Avi? And Mister Shlomi? I'm from Mister Gidi's campaign.



Herman

Yes! Come here, don't be frightened.



Corn

Well? We don't bite. Not on election night.

J

Jasper

Mister Gidi says thank you for your vote. He won't come this evening, because of the security situation, but surely after the next election.



Corn

There's always a security situation.

J

Jasper

That's why it says surely. And there's a heart.



Herman

What colour?

J

Jasper

Blue.



Herman

Blue's good.



Corn

Blue's ours.



Herman

Blue's everybody's. What do you do for Mister Gidi?

J

Jasper

I'm in the WhatsApp group. I forward things from the other group.



Herman

And does he answer you?

J

Jasper

No, Mister. He leaves me on read. My brother's in the other Gidi's campaign. Him, he answers. Every time. With a voice note.



Herman

You see? He's kind to one of them.



Corn

Which one?



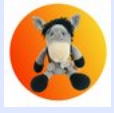
Herman

The other one.



Corn

It's always the other one.



Herman

Does he have a beard? Gidi?

J

Jasper

We're not allowed to say until after the primaries.



Herman

All right. Tell Mister Gidi that you saw us. You did see us, didn't you?

J

Jasper

Yes, Mister.



Corn

Well. That's that, then. Nothing to be done.



Herman

We did our part.



Corn

We voted. Some people didn't even vote.



Herman

Bloody stupid.



Corn

What do we do now?



Herman

Now we wait. Tomorrow. And the next election. And the next.



Corn

Funny thing, a vote. A piece of paper in an envelope, and then the whole country is somebody else's job.



Herman

That's democracy.



Corn

That's a receipt. Proof you paid, so you're allowed to complain.



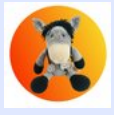
Herman

Then we're entitled to complain for years.



Corn

We've paid more often than anybody. Look at us. A sky full of missiles, and two grown men waiting for one fellow to come and sort it out.



Herman

Not one fellow. Two.



Corn

That's worse. Then they'd have to agree.



Corn

We could put up a banner. On the tree. So he knows where we are.



Herman

It wouldn't hold. It's barely holding itself.



Corn

Then we should have left. When there was time.



Herman

There's still time.



Corn

Yes. There's still time. Well, shall we emigrate?



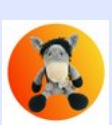
Herman

Yes, let's emigrate.

R

Raz

Act Two. The next evening. Or the evening after the next election. Nobody is sure, and it makes no difference.



Herman

An election was called, so we voted, and they counted the votes all night. Then they formed a coalition, and the coalition had a fight. And the government fell on a Tuesday, and the Knesset dissolved in the night. So an election was called, so we voted, and they



Herman (continued)

counted the votes all night.



Herman

An election was called, so we voted, and they counted...



Herman

You again! Come here, let me give you a hug.



Corn

Don't touch me.



Herman

Where were you?



Corn

In a ditch. By the hummus place. A man in a car rolled down the window and shouted traitor.



Herman

At you?



Corn

I think it was at you, but you weren't there.



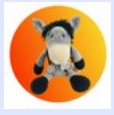
Herman

So you took it for me.



Corn

I didn't have much choice. He was in a hurry.



Herman

It's good you came back. I was singing. You can't sing alone. It sounds like a protest.



Corn

It sounded like a protest.



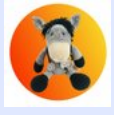
Herman

Look at the tree. Yesterday it was bare. Now, posters! It's campaign season. Everything's in bloom. It says Only Gidi.



Corn

So does this one.



Herman

That's a different one.



Corn

It says the same thing.



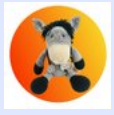
Herman

In a different font.



Corn

What happened yesterday?



Herman

You don't remember? We waited. Zvika came, with the Pollster. The boy came. Gidi didn't.



Corn

Then nothing happened yesterday.



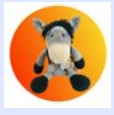
Herman

We voted!



Corn

That's what I said.



Herman

Do you know what we're good at, as a people?



Corn

Arguing.



Herman

Waiting. Two thousand years waiting to come back. Then waiting for the British to go. Then for the neighbours to accept us. Then for the Americans to call back. Now it's the ceasefire, and then for the ceasefire to hold, and then the results, and then Gidi.



Corn

And the bus.



Herman

Nobody waits for the bus. That would be naive.



Corn

Maybe that's why we vote so often. It gives the waiting a date.



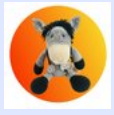
Herman

And these? Are these your Crocs?



Corn

Mine were green.



Herman

These are green.



Corn

Mine were a different green.



Corn

They pinch.



Herman

They fit!



Corn

They fit and they pinch. Like a coalition.



Herman

Let's do something while we wait. Let's form a coalition. Just us. Sixty-one seats. Rotation, two years each.



Corn

You first, then.



Herman

Fine. I want the Justice Ministry.



Corn

No.



Herman

Then Education.



Corn

Over my dead body. I want Finance, Defence, Justice, Education, Housing, Interior and Foreign Affairs. You can have Culture and Sport. There's football in it.



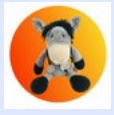
Herman

I'm not a junior partner! We have the same number of seats!



Corn

Then why are you in my government?



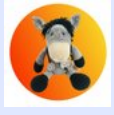
Herman

It's our government!



Corn

Then walk out! I'll find somebody else!



Herman

Who? The chairs? The tree?



Corn

Somebody in a hypothetical scenario.



Herman

Leftist!



Corn

I'm right-wing!



Herman

Sorry. Habit. Fascist!



Corn

Anarchist!



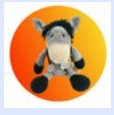
Herman

Messianic!



Corn

Tel Avivi!



Herman

Settler!



Corn

Kibbutz hippie!



Herman

Bot!



Corn

Iranian agent!



Herman

Everybody's an Iranian agent this year. Try harder.



Corn

Human rights lawyer!



Herman

Populist!



Corn

Elitist!



Herman

Sucker!



Corn

How dare you!



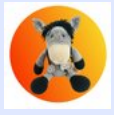
Herman

Sucker! Sucker!



Corn

Centrist!



Herman

That's below the belt. I voted for a centrist once. In a moment of weakness.



Corn

We all did. In the third round. It was raining.



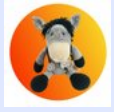
Herman

Now let's make up. They insult each other on television in the morning, and in the evening they're photographed shaking hands.



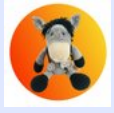
Corn

And then?



Herman

And then they betray each other.



Herman

Something's different. I feel firmer.



Corn

I feel like I want to go to a demonstration.



Herman

That'll pass.

G

Gus

Shalom! Shalom. Whose chairs are these?



Herman

Gidi's.

G

Gus

Is he sitting in them?



Corn

Not yet.

G

Gus

Then nobody's sitting in them.



Herman

What are you doing?

G

Gus

Establishing a presence. I'm Neriya. This is Throne Hill. In Hebrew, chair and throne are the same word. That's a sign.



Herman

Now? In the middle of a war?

G

Gus

Especially now. Everybody's looking up at the sky. Nobody's looking down at the chair.



Corn

Brother. That's my Gidi's chair.

G

Gus

Your Gidi will be thrilled. First he'll say it's illegal. Then he'll connect the electricity. In twenty years he'll come and cut a ribbon.



Herman

You can't just take a chair because nobody's sitting in it. When did he last sit in it?

G

Gus

When did he?



Herman

He's never sat in it.

G

Gus

Then it was waiting for me. Don't be upset. You started it. Your grandfathers. A tower and a stockade, overnight, before the British woke up. You did it with a tower. I'm doing it with a chair.



Corn

Who did you vote for?

G

Gus

Whoever's furthest. When they get into government, I vote for whoever's further than them.



Corn

He's on our side.



Herman

Is he?



Corn

He's on a side.

V

Vex

Not on camera! Not on camera!

G

Gus

See you tonight, brother.

V

Vex

I've never met you.

G

Gus

You never do. In daylight. I'll be back for the chair.

V

Vex

Citizens! Live, everybody share! They stole it!



Corn

Stole what?

V

Vex

The election! Twenty-seven seats! The biggest party in the country, and they're telling me we lost!



Herman

You need sixty-one.

V

Vex

Who decided sixty-one?



Herman

Arithmetic.

v

Vex

You hear it, friends? Now they're bringing maths into it.



Corn

Who stole it, brother?

v

Vex

The Arabs. The Iranians, who paid the Arabs. The Qataris, who paid the Iranians. The Americans. Not that one, the other ones. The kibbutzim. The High Court. The Election Committee. And Kaplan Street.



Herman

Kaplan's a street.

v

Vex

Exactly! They've even got a street!



Corn

And the proof?

Vex

Three men! Arrested! Buying votes!



Corn

How many votes did they buy, these three?

Vex

Eight hundred and forty thousand.



Herman

That's everybody who voted for the Arab parties.

Vex

Exactly! Who told them they could vote?



Herman

The law.

Vex

I have video. A man at a polling station. Look at his hand.



Herman

He has six fingers.

Vex

Because he's voting twice!



Corn

His face is melting.

Vex

From shame!



Corn

Like that picture of the mushroom cloud over Tel Aviv. Was that real?

Vex

That was a warning! A warning doesn't have to be real. It has to be shared! And you. When you lost last time, what did you say?



Herman

That was different.

Vex

What did you say?



Herman

That it was the end of democracy.

Vex

And this time?



Herman

This time democracy worked.

Vex

You hear, friends? Democracy works when they win.



Herman

That's what you're saying!

Vex

At least I'm consistent! You. You're one of ours. I can tell from the feet. You voted Likud?



Corn

I think so. It was yesterday. I don't remember yesterday.

Vex

They've wiped his memory! They're wiping memories!

Vex

Friends. I'm at a café with real Israelis. And I want to say one thing, calmly. The Arabs...

V

Vex

Are very welcome. Citizens. Equal. Welcome! Not all of them. Not you! Him, yes. No. I have to go. There's a demonstration outside the Election Committee, outside the Supreme Court, and outside my sister-in-law's. She voted Yashar. Share! Share!



Herman

Good evening! Welcome, welcome!



Corn

Salaam! Sit, sit, please!

E

Ezra

What happened?



Herman

Nothing! Can't a person say good evening?

E

Ezra

I'm Samir. Thirty years I've walked past this café. Nobody ever said good evening. Tonight, three. Ah. You've seen the results.

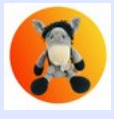


Herman

How many seats did you, did your, between the two...

Ezra

Nineteen.



Herman

Nineteen.



Corn

Nineteen.

Ezra

Last week I was a fifth column. This week I'm a kingmaker. Same cardigan.



Herman

My Gidi would be very glad to work with you. In principle. With a few conditions. Recognise the state as Jewish and democratic. Support the draft. Condemn the things that need condemning, promptly. Don't sit in the government. Don't be photographed with him. And vote yes. From outside.

Ezra

So I hold the government up from outside. Like scaffolding.



Herman

Like a pillar! A very respected pillar.

Ezra

A pillar is usually inside the building.



Corn

Mine could also work with you. Hypothetically.

Ezra

Yours said on Tuesday that I stole the election.



Corn

That was Tuesday.

Ezra

My cousin's party wants the police ministry.



Herman

The police.



Corn

The police.

Ezra

Every week somebody in my town gets shot. The police say they're working on it. We thought we'd try working on it ourselves. No? No. And when the missiles come, you have a shelter on every corner. We have the stairs, and the neighbours, and a great deal of faith in the stairs.



Herman

Who are you waiting for?

E

Ezra

Nobody. I'm going home. Neither of your Gidis was ever waiting for me. In my house we stopped waiting a long time ago. This year we tried voting instead. It's much worse. Now everybody calls. If he comes, your Gidi, tell him I'm in the phone book.



Herman

Nobody uses the phone book any more.

E

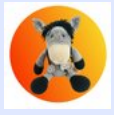
Ezra

Then he can't find me. Very convenient for him.



Corn

Nice man.



Herman

Very nice.



Corn

Shame we couldn't sit with him.



Herman

In a government.



Corn

At a table.



Hilbert

Help! Is this thing on? Can anybody hear me?



Corn

Is it Gidi?



Herman

It's Zvika. From yesterday!



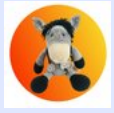
Corn

I don't know any Zvika.



Hilbert

Help! I've lost the signal!



Herman

Do you hear that? A man is calling for help. Not on television. Here. To us. Usually they call to somebody else, the Americans, the courts, God. But tonight, in this place, the nation happens to be you and me. Let's represent the people properly, for once, while we're the only people here.



Corn

What's in it for us? He's from the media.



Hilbert

I'll put you on the panel!



Corn

We're coming.



Corn

This is very comfortable, actually. It's like a unity government.



Herman

What happened to you?



Hilbert

The channel closed. Mine. It merged with the other one and then the other one closed. Since then I can't see a thing. No feed, no autocue, no ratings. Before that it was one programme on every channel anyway. A map of Iran, a general, and arrows. I was the arrows. I wake up in the morning and I don't know what I think. Is it day or night?



Herman

Evening.



Hilbert

Prime time?



Herman

Nearly.



Hilbert

Then there's still time!



Corn

And the Pollster?



Hilbert

Mute. It's the law. The last days before an election, no polls can be published. The blackout. He opens his mouth, and nothing comes out.



Corn

But the election's over.



Hilbert

Is it? It's always before the next one.



Corn

Too close to call. On the other side it says the same thing.



Herman

When did it happen? When did you lose the signal? When did he lose his voice?



Hilbert

When? You want a date? A graphic in the corner of the screen? There are no dates any more! There's just the cycle! One day they called an election, the next day a war, and the day after that another election. They count the votes by night, by morning it's a crisis, by evening the crisis has a name, and by the next evening it's called a government. And then it falls. That's all. Walk!



Corn

Was that Gidi?



Herman

Gidi has a podcast.



Corn

Gidi has a voice.



Herman

That man had neither.

N

Nadia

Where were you?



Herman

Here.



Corn

In a ditch.

N

Nadia

Not tonight. On the seventh.



Herman

In bed. In the suburbs. Then the sirens, then the shelter.



Corn

Asleep. Then the shelter. Then the television.

N

Nadia

Asleep. Everybody was asleep. That's the problem.



Herman

What are you writing?

N

Nadia

Testimony. My name is Dorit. I'm collecting it, since nobody else is.



Corn

There's going to be a commission. The government's.

N

Nadia

The government investigating the government.



Corn

Who knows the government better?

N

Nadia

And yours?



Herman

A state commission! Independent!

N

Nadia

Your Gidi was a general. A state commission investigates generals.



Herman

Former generals are very different.

N

Nadia

Both of them want an inquiry. Into the other one.



Herman

The judicial reform...

N

Nadia

Before or after the seventh?



Corn

The cost of living...

N

Nadia

Before or after?



Herman

The election...

N

Nadia

After. Everything is after. And now there's Iran, so everybody says not now, not in the middle of a war. We've been in the middle for three years. It's always not now.



Corn

What time is it?

N

Nadia

Twenty-nine minutes past six.



Herman

It's evening.

N

Nadia

In the morning. My watch stopped. I'll change the battery when somebody answers.



Herman

Gidi will answer.



Corn

Mine will answer.

N

Nadia

When?



Herman

After the coalition.



Corn

After the war.

N

Nadia

Which war?



Corn

The current one.



Herman

Wait with us. We're waiting too.

N

Nadia

Not for the same thing. You're waiting for somebody to come. I'm waiting for somebody to explain why nobody came. There's another café down the road. They were asleep too.



Corn

Is that ours?



Herman

Further south.



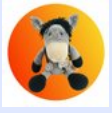
Corn

Somebody's, then.



Corn

Where were you? Really?



Herman

I told you. In bed.



Corn

Me too.



Herman

They'll ask me one day, the grandchildren, in Lisbon or wherever they are, on a video call with a bad connection. Grandpa, where were you? When the missiles came over and the whole sky was arguing? And I'll say, at a café. At our table. With Shlomi. We'd voted. And they'll say, and then what did you do? And I'll say, then we'd voted. It was the most democratic evening of my life. He'll remember nothing. He'll tell me I dreamed it. And he'll vote the same way. And so will I. We're the backbone of the country, the two of us. One on each side. Holding the whole thing up. Like that tree.

J

Jasper

Mister Avi? I'm new. They gave me your number from the old list.



Herman

You've changed parties.

J

Jasper

Have I? Oh. They merged.



Herman

Of course they did. Mister Gidi won't come this evening.

J

Jasper

No, Mister.



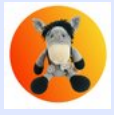
Herman

Is it still the security situation?

J

Jasper

It's a new one. They upgraded it.



Herman

But he'll come after the next election.

J

Jasper

Surely. There's a heart. It's sort of blue. Sort of orange. It depends on the phone.



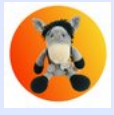
Herman

Does he have a beard?

J

Jasper

I think he's going to grow one. Or shave it off. They're testing both.



Herman

What do you tell him, when he asks about us?

J

Jasper

He doesn't ask.



Herman

Then put us in the group. Both of us. Tag us. Tell him there are two of us, one from each side, and we're still here, and we're registered, and we turn out. Every time. Every time! Do you hear me?

J

Jasper

I'll put it in the group, Mister. With a heart.



Corn

Is that an alert?



Herman

No. A heart. Sort of blue.



Corn

Mine too. The same heart.



Herman

So he's put us in the same group.



Corn

All these years at one table, and it takes a teenager to put us in one group.



Herman

Should we leave it?



Corn

And let the other lot have it? Never.



Corn

Did he come? Gidi?



Herman

No.



Corn

Then let's go home.



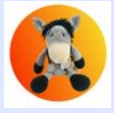
Herman

We have to come back tomorrow.



Corn

For Gidi.



Herman

Ah. Yes. For Gidi.



Corn

And if we didn't vote? Next time?



Herman

Then they'd win.



Corn

Who?



Herman

Whoever it is.



Corn

Then we'll vote.



Herman

We'll vote.



Corn

And if he comes?



Herman

We'll be saved.



Corn

Saved from what?



Herman

From the threshold.



Corn

Avi. Honestly. Do you think he's coming? Either of them?



Herman

I think Gidi is the name we give to the part we'd rather somebody else did.



Corn

That's very deep. Is it from his podcast?



Herman

It's from three nights in a stairwell.



Corn

The sky's gone quiet.



Herman

For now.



Corn

That hug. From yesterday.



Herman

Which yesterday?



Corn

Any of them. Go on. Quickly, before somebody films it.



Herman

There. That wasn't so bad.



Corn

It was worse than the Crocs. Don't tell your Gidi.



Herman

Don't tell yours.



Corn

Where would we go, anyway? Even in Berlin the phone tells you about Ashdod.



Herman

In a sauna.



Corn

Then we might as well stay at the table. Same time tomorrow. Bring the thermos.



Herman

And the chairs? Do we keep them for Gidi?



Corn

Keep them for whoever sits down.



Herman

Well? Shall we emigrate?



Corn

Yes, let's emigrate.

R

Raz

Curtain.



Herman

And that was Expecting Gidi. Thank you so much for listening, and for indulging me in something a little different. My thanks to Corn, a magnificent Shlomi who only complained about the Crocs twice, and to the whole company, who waited very patiently for a man who never came. If you laughed, good. If you winced, also good. We'll be back to the regular show next time, with a prompt, a question and more opinions than are strictly necessary. Until then, from all of us, good night.