

Some books stay with you. This one carved itself into my memory. (Written in honor of Eli Sharabi and all those still waiting to come home).

By Rifka Epstein

קטון (*Kidnapped*) by Eli Sharabi is not just a story of survival — it's a testimony to the human spirit, even in ropes and chains.

When I began reading קטון (*Kidnapped*) by Eli Sharabi, I expected a survival story — raw, painful, and brave... What I didn't expect was the detail that would stay with me most: a bottle of orange Fanta. Not for the drink itself, but for what it became in that tunnel: a shared act of courage, a quiet rebellion, a fleeting taste of life. That single sip between fellow hostages was a moment of human connection, of dignity reclaimed, in a place built to erase it. In fact, this unforgettable scene centers on that very moment: Eli and three fellow hostages drank it together. Later, confronted by a guard, they denied it. Eli called this moment "*HaNitzachon HaKatom*" — **The Orange Triumph**.

A sip of Fanta became a quiet rebellion — against the ropes and chains, the silence, and the attempt to extinguish the human soul. So too were the friendly match of Shebesh (Backgamon), the whispered jokes, the cards passed hand to hand — **tiny, defiant sparks** of humanity in a world built to erase it.

On October 7, 2023, Eli Sharabi (a husband, a father, a brother) was taken from his home in Kibbutz Be'eri.

He left behind his wife Lianne and their daughters, Noya and Yahel, not knowing it would be the last time he would see them. All three were later murdered. His brother Yossi, also taken the same day, was killed in captivity too.

Eli survived over 490 days underground — shackled, starved, and heartbroken.

Eli writes with pain — and quiet bitterness. But even more than that, with restraint.

His grief doesn't scream; it simmers, it studies, it survives.

He rarely mentions tears. One of these moments stands out:

A news broadcast shows a woman and a child pleading for their release.

He breaks. He weeps. And then, the silence returns — heavier now. His sorrow is carried not in outbursts, but in what he leaves unsaid.

This is more than a book. It's a reckoning. A testimony. A cry that will not die.

קִטּוּן (Kidnapped) moves you through like breath. It reminds you what it means to survive — and what it costs to forget.

Eli writes, in his own language, Hebrew, with pain — and quiet bitterness. But even more than that, with a silent shame, with a suffering and unbearable pain. He speaks of his captors — naming them, studying them — not to hate, but to witness.

He recalls some younger hostages he comforted like a father.

He remembers the moment Hersh Goldberg-Polin left him his Shesh Besh (backgammon set), believing he was going home...

Moments like these, experienced by Eli Sharavi (and others who were rescued or released) became anchors of resistance — proof that memory can survive even in darkness.

And I ask you, my dear reader:

What anchors do you carry?

What small rituals, words, memories, or symbols keep us grounded?

What moments help **us** resist erasure — whether cultural, spiritual, emotional, or historical?

What do **we** hold onto when the world feels dark?

"Blindfolded, but not broken.

Silenced, but still remembering.

This is the face of captivity — and the quiet fire that survives it."

**He is every hostage who waited in silence, and
every soul who refuses to be forgotten.**

Thank you, Eli Sharabi, for sharing your story — not just from captivity, but from the depths of pain and endurance. Your words reminded me how fragile hope can be, and how fiercely it burns even when nearly extinguished. You gave voice to every silence, and through your testimony, I carry part of your memory forward.