**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey listeners, it’s Mishy. So as you know, during these incredibly difficult days, we’re trying to bring you voices we’re hearing among, and around, us. These aren’t stories, they’re just quick conversations, or postcards really, that try to capture slivers of life *right now*.

Among the thousands of people who had the terrible misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time on October 7th, there were also - as we now all know - many foreigners. People who had little, or no, connection to the long history of violence between Jews and Arabs, Israel and Hamas. Among them were Filipino caregivers, Thai agricultural workers and also a group of Nepali students who had been accepted to an 11-month-long internship at the Sedot Negev Agricultural Training Center. One of them was twenty-two-year-old Louish Rijal, who - prior to being selected for the program - had never left Nepal, and knew next to nothing about Israel. He was nevertheless incredibly excited about the opportunity, as were the rest of the students in his cohort. They had arrived in Israel on September 13th, three-and-a-half weeks before the day that would forever change their lives. Louish was one of the lucky ones - he survived the attacks and has since been evacuated by the Nepali government. Our senior producer Yochai Maital spoke to him over a crackly phone line, shortly after he arrived back home, to the western Nepali village of Bardiya Geruwa. Louish’s English is hard to understand at times, so Yochai will jump in every now and then to clarify. The anguish in his voice, however, needs no translation.

**Yochai Maital:** First of all, thank you so much for doing this, for talking to me.

**Louish Rijal:** OK.

**Yochai Maital:** Can I ask you to introduce yourself?

**Louish:** Yeah, myself. I'm Louish Rijal from Nepal.

**Yochai Maital:** And I understand you just got home, right?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, just three, four hours ago.

**Yochai Maital:** Wow. What… What was it like, getting home after all of this?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, I'm feeling quite good, but I'm totally mentally disturbed.

**Yochai Maital:** Mentally disturbed?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah,I lost my ten friends. And one is missing. And no news coming. I’m mentally not good but physically I'm quite good.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah.

**Louish Rijal:** I’m feeling better.

**Yochai Maital:** Before maybe you tell us what happened, can I ask how you found yourself in Israel?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah. We got an golden opportunity.

**Yochai Maital:** A golden opportunity?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, this one was golden opportunity. When we got the news that we are going to Israel, we are so excited. Everyone are excited and enjoyed. We enjoyed a lot. But what happened, I don't know.

**Yochai Maital:** What was your favorite thing about Israel?

**Louish Rijal:** Favorite thing is they respect each other.

**Yochai Maital:** The respect?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. They are ready to help the people at any time at any cost.

**Yochai Maital:** Maybe take me back to that Saturday, on October 7th.

**Louish Rijal:** I think it's about 5:45am when you heard the bombarding sound, and we just wake up and see in the sky the missiles are just going. We just take picture and we made video clips.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** What Louish is saying might give you a sense of just how removed, or disconnected, this group of Nepali agricultural students was from the unfolding events. For the first few minutes of the Hamas rocket barrage - they were gleeful, excited. The red streaks of the Iron Dome intercepts in the sky seemed to them like… fireworks. They took selfies and videos. They laughed and joked around. But then Louish got a call from a friend of his, Bipin Joshi - a fellow Nepali student who was staying with another group nearby.

**Louish Rijal:** He called me and he said, “Hamas attacked us in our bunker, then we lost two friends.” Then we scared.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Bipin told Louish what was going on - that they were being attacked by Hamas militants and were running to hide in a bunker. Louish quickly stopped the selfie celebrations, grabbed his cell phone and a charger and started searching for a bomb shelter. Huddled together, Louish and his group of friends listened intently, trying to figure out what was going on outside.

**Louish Rijal:** We heard the sound of helicopter planes and missiles and just bombarding sound of guns, sound of bombs. Sometimes close, sometimes far away.

*[Video recording from shelter]*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** That’s a recording they did in the shelter. Since Louish was the only one with a cell phone, he instantly became the group's life line, their only source of communication with the outside world. And while they remained safe inside the shelter, the news they were receiving - through increasingly frantic voice messages, texts and videos - was simply unfathomable.

**Louish Rijal:** In every time when my friends are getting hurt, they call me and: “Louish please help us!” then “send ambulance.”

**Yochai Maital (narration):** One of the video calls was from another close friend of his, who was hiding in the same shelter as Bipin.

**Louish Rijal:** And he just begging, “save me, save me.” Then after 30 minutes I lost him when he got bled.

**Yochai Maital:** He was on the phone with you dying.

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, yeah.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Louish was frantically calling any number he could think of, asking for help.

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, I messaged to embassy and Nepal Government everywhere. I begged for my life and my friend's life. I call and said: “Just save us. Please save us. Please save us, and there is no more time.” But nobody just they are giving hope: “Don't worry don't worry we will manage. It will take time.”

**Yochai Maital (narration):** At this point, Louish made a brave and important decision. He chose not to relay any of the horrific information that was coming in over his phone to the other members of the group that were stuck in the bunker with him.

**Louish Rijal:** Just I told them “don't worry, everything will be fine, we'll get rescued after two or three hours.” I don't know what will happen if I had told them that bad news to my friend. I kept all the worries inside me.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** For hours on end, Louish and his friends stayed put, even after they had stopped hearing from the other group. All the while Louish tried to encourage his friends to hold on to hope. Help, he kept telling them, was on its way, just around the corner. But after no less than 48 hours, he reached his breaking point.

**Louish Rijal:** After two days, I just lose the hope. Then I called my family and I cried a lot. I didn't show my face to my family, just I turn off the camera and I cried a lot.

**Yochai Maital:** You didn't want them to see your face?

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah, because if they saw my face then they will also cry then… yeah.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** After two-and-a-half days in the bunker, IDF forces finally got to them. They found them huddled together, hungry, dehydrated and in a complete state of shock.

Louish quickly learned that the other bunker had been discovered by Hamas terrorists, who had thrown hand grenades inside.

All in all ten of Louish’s friends had been killed, a dozen others were injured, and one - his close friend Bipin Joshi - had been carried off into Gaza.

*[song]*

After eating some food and drinking some water, the first thing the group did was… sit down together and sing.

*[song]*

**Louish Rijal:** We just want to share our emotion.

**Yochai Maital:** What are the words for the song? Can you translate the words that you're singing?

**Louish Rijal:** Just we are chanting: “We are missing you, we are quite happy but we're not fully happy because we are missing you. come back soon and we enjoy our life.”

*[song]*

**Yochai Maital:** Tell me about your friend who is missing.

**Louish Rijal:** His name is Bipin Joshi. Bipin Joshi threw back the granade and he save all friends. Because of his courage, remaining six friends are alive.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Bipin Joshi had successfully thrown back two live grenades before they managed to explode inside the bunker. But he was not able to do so with the third or the fourth grenades that were tossed in, and that exploded, killing many of the group and wounding others, including Bipin himself. Louish sent me the videos Bipin sent him after the first explosion. It’s very hard to watch, and we won’t include the audio in here. It's another one of those videos I will never be able to get out of my head. In any event, after the blast, Hamas terrorists entered the shelter and…

**Louish Rijal:** They just take off Bipin Joshi and put on the vehicles and they just randomly shoot all the friends.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Louish is, understandably, traumatized.

**Louish Rijal:** Yeah after the event, I just scared about the small sound. I can't sleep for nine days.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** He wasn’t able to sleep for nine days.

**Louish Rijal:** I have a request that you have to help us try to find out Bipin Joshi, as soon as possible. You have to request them I think that they will listen you. I haven't imagined that it would happen into my life. Just I saw this event only in the movie. It was so scary. Yeah, it was so scary. I already said that I have only one hope - that I don't want to lose my one friend Bipin Joshi. Please try to find out - is he good or not?

