

## Introduction

### *The Seven Good Years*

by Etgar Keret



When a writer says that a book he has written is especially important to him, he isn't saying much. For a book to exist, it has to be especially important for at least one person. With a bit of luck, it will be one of its readers, but even if it isn't, there's always the writer, who will be as excited about his book as a proud parent. I think it took me less than books to realize that, and now I know it very well. And yet, this book is especially important to me. Because it is the first non-fiction book I am publishing after more than twenty-five years of writing; because it is about the people who are dearest to me in the world; because it puts me in a new place as a writer, an unfamiliar place, vulnerable and intimate. And that new place is so frightening that I have decided not to publish this book in my mother tongue (Hebrew) or in the place where I live (Israel), but to share it only with strangers.

For as long as I've known myself, I've always had two types of stories: the ones I liked to tell my close friends and neighbours, and the ones I've always preferred to tell someone sitting next to me in a plane or on a train. These stories are of the second kind: stories about questions my son asked me and I could try to answer; stories about my father, who was always there to save me whenever I needed saving, but when he took ill, I couldn't do the same for him; stories about a moustache I grew in the middle of my face when my father was sick just so people wouldn't ask me 'How are things?', a question that was too much to handle at the time; stories about strong desires never fulfilled, about an endless war that has imperceptibly become my young son's childhood landscape.

For the next couple of hundred pages, you will share a railroad car with me. And when you come to the last page, I'll get off at the station and we'll probably never see each other again. I hope that something from this seven-year journey, which begins with my son's birth and ends with my father's death, will touch you as well.