



Shining Stars PRECEDED BY Maytal

Director: Yael Kipper, Israel, 2008, 61 minutes / 1997, 50 minutes

On March 4th, 1996, in a crowded shopping district in downtown Tel-Aviv, a suicide bomber detonated a 20-kilogram nail bomb, killing 13 people. A young woman named Maytal was seriously wounded in the attack and her younger brother, Assaf, was killed instantly. Three months later, director Yael Kipper began documenting Maytal's life as she began coping with her new body and her new life. Badly burned, with one leg amputated mid-thigh, the depth of Maytal's trauma manifests itself in her blank, disassociated gaze. As she learns to walk with a prosthesis and frets about the state of her hair, which was mostly burnt off in the attack, images from her past, in the form of family videos and pictures, reveal a very different young woman. Beautiful and carefree, she is almost unrecognizable from the damaged person she has become. Throughout her recovery, Maytal's husband Steve bears the brunt of his wife's inability to engage emotionally. As Maytal begins to recover physically, the slow dissolution of her marriage speaks to her far deeper wounds.

The film's second installment, *Shining Stars*, begins nine years later. Maytal has separated from Steve and is undergoing fertility treatments to have a baby as a single parent. Almost single-minded in her determination, she endures multiple procedures. In doing so, she triggers memories that re-emerge with all their razor-edged pain and grief. As Maytal is forced to come to terms with the impact of her brother's death and her own inability to form a lasting

relationship, the repercussions of tragedy are revealed. *Shining Stars* traces the slow movement back to empathy and love, with an astounding level of intimacy. Maytal does not spare herself from her own blunt honesty. Stubborn, harsh, and often not particularly likable, she nevertheless holds the screen through sheer force of personality. What emerges from her journey is a fascinating portrait of a woman who survived horror and somehow remade herself and her life, one slow step at a time.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Yael Kipper Zaretsky graduated from the Camera Obscura Film and Television School. Her documentary *Swawin* won the Documentary Film Award at the 2001 Haifa Festival.

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