

# Nine

**Przemyśl • 4<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, 5679 – Friday, November 8, 1918**

GITLA WAS COLD and soaked after being caught in a cloudburst while being rowed across the river by an acquaintance. Clearing the steep riverbank, two impossibly massive piles of dirt, concrete and twisted metal loomed over the spindly pines at the far end of the field—the remains of Bolestraszyce’s two forts. Just past the trees was the road connecting the two forts. Gitla made a beeline toward what looked to be the sole surviving commercial establishment in town. Strutting by a man leaning on a rifle next to a fancy automobile, she pushed the swinging shutters aside and marched into the tavern.

Meyer was the only patron there. He stood briefly as she sat down across from him.

Gitla raked the tavern with her gaze, noting the impressive collection of stuffed game and fish on the walls, thinking that their presence must have been sheer torture to the boys during the siege. The room was dark and smelled like urine. The table was wobbly, with a permanent coating of dirt and beer over yellowing shellac. Leaning on the bar was a man

with a hideously mangled hand, head down, reading a Polish newspaper, moving only to turn the page with his good hand.

“My, oh my, how the mighty have fallen,” she said.

Meyer smiled. “Such a pleasure to see you again, Missus Malz.” He shot an order at the barman in Polish, “Lucjan, two teas, with honey,” then turned back to Gitla, “I thought you’d be more comfortable in a place like this.”

“Who you kidding? You must own this dump.”

He shook his head, “Associates, not me.”

Gitla forced a smile, “Kidding aside, Meyer, thanks for coming. I know what a schlep it is from Cracow.”

“I don’t hear from you for ages, and then from the blue my agent sends a telegram saying G. M. needs to see me. Well, M. Weiss never forgets his friends.”

Gitla cocked her head, “Friends?”

Meyer slowly nodded his head, “Friends.”

“How’s your daughter doing, Mister Weiss?”

“Zipporah’s doing—” he stopped as Lucjan brought a tea pot, cups, napkins, a honey pot with a wooden dripper and a plate of small cookies on a platter he balanced on his crippled hand. He left without saying a word.

“She’s doing well, thank you; taking a degree in French Literature at the Jagiellońian; a marvelous student. It’s not easy being a Jew there, or anywhere for that matter. But at least in the big city we can blend in easier than in Przemyśl.”

“How’s her head?”

“We, we never talk about it. She doesn’t have many friends. I suppose her books are her friends.”

“I see...”

“Enough about the Weiss family. Have I lost all manners? I’m so sorry to have missed the funerals. You must be crushed.”

“Crushed is the right word. My cousin was, was...” She averted her eyes momentarily. “Two more drops in the ocean of insanity.”

He leaned toward her and switched to Yiddish. “I truly am sorry. Our families go back half-a-dozen generations. Tanchem was more than just my friend. We played chess, we drank, and we argued politics. He was like a brother, and in business, he was a peer.”

“Thank you, Meyer. I know you don’t say that about everyone.”

“But that’s not why you’re here, Gitla.” He dropped to a whisper. “So tell me, what can I do for your nephew and his bride-to-be?”

She snorted and put her hand over her mouth.

“My agent watches the cemetery; only two graves were dug this week.”

Gitla explained what had happened. She told him what Elia had told Tomas to tell her—that their lives were in the balance, and that the only place that they would be safe was with his sister in New York. She told him all about Tomas and Malka and Lea. About Tomas’s son in Gyor. About their desire to make *aliyah*. She leaned toward him and lowered her voice, “They need papers and the means to get out of here.”

“I took the liberty of putting those wheels in motion yesterday.” Meyer leaned back into his chair, satisfied as if he had just announced “mate in four” at the tea house. “I have some pull at the Finance Ministry—I helped the Polish government secure a note.”

“Jurek?”

“Senior Advisor to the Minister of Finance, if you please.”

She shook her head, smiling.

“My agent will contact you.”

“There is one more thing.”

“There always is.”

“Help Tomas. Help him get his boy back so they can go to Palestine. It’s the only way for Malka and Lea to have a life.”

Meyer pondered for a moment. “I don’t know, Gitla.

Kidnapping is difficult business. Why don't we just—"

"Meyer," she said, staring him down. "You are going to do this."

"Really." His face became rock-hard, serious.

"Not because I took care of your daughter and you owe me, not out of the kindness in your heart, and not because you can. No sir. You are going to help us get the Lenard boy back because it's me, Gitla Arm, demanding it."

Meyer sat back in his chair, his stern gaze giving way to a wide smile. "Bravo," he said, nodding vigorously. "Brilliantly conceived and beautifully played. Check and mate."

"I'm not joking, Meyer. We've both sat on this. Two decades is a long time. You *owe* me."

"Do this and we call it even, Meyer. Everything is washed. Everything."

"No. Never," Meyer said, shaking his head.

"What? I will not take no for—"

"We'll get the child back. You have my word, Gitla. But things are not washed between us—not now, not tomorrow and not ever."

Gitla reached across the table and took Meyer's hands. Their fingers entwined as each pulled, rising out of their seats, bringing them closer until their lips met. A moment later, they were back in their chairs.

"In a different world, in some other reality..."

"I know. In a different world." It took them both a moment to regain composure. Finally, Gitla pulled a letter from her jacket. "From Cracow, post this to America, will you? It's from our boy to his sister."

"I thought you were done asking for favors."

"Goodbye, Meyer."

"Goodbye, Gitla."

She wrapped her head with a scarf, shook his hand, and headed out the door. Gitla made it to the pines before breaking down. She cried the whole way home.

When she was gone, Meyer exhaled heavily, tossed a silver coin on the table and walked out the door into the waiting Benz. He felt fortunate to have so many plans to conceive and so many schemes to hatch to occupy his mind during the long drive back to Cracow.

**Zasanie • 8<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, 5679 – Tuesday, November  
12, 1918**

“DOES THIS SAY what I think it says?” Tomas asked Rivka, handing her the note that had been slipped under the door sometime during the night. “My Polish is pretty good, but I don’t cover Cracow. And I’m never given such a specific timeframe.”

Rivka read aloud, “Tomas Lenard, work roster for twelve November. Nine-ten: Ores Transport, three Plac Kolejowy, Cracow. Overhaul. Transit papers and work order attached.” She looked up at Tomas, “Gitla got to Meyer.”

“How can we be sure?” Elia asked.

“She did.” Rivka nodded. “A reason to be on the roads and a truck to hide in.”

“Still,” Elia cautioned, “What if...”

Malka, who had been boiling water for oatmeal, interrupted, surprising the others who assumed she wasn’t listening, “We’re going. It’s Meyer. Best get ready.”

“How are you so sure?” Elia asked.

Stirring the porridge, she looked up. “Because three Plac Kolejowy is the address of the train station.” She set the wooden bowl down in front of Lea and walked over to the adults. “And the Cracow – Vienna train departs daily at ten past nine every morning, except Sunday.”

As Lea ate, everyone else made preparations to leave.

“Malka, may I have a word with you?” Elia said, barely above a whisper. He gestured toward the sleeping area. She

picked up Lea, walked over to Tomas, sitting on the sofa, and deposited her on his lap, pinning him down before joining Elia behind the curtains. “I am so very sorry for you.”

“That is thoughtful of you, brother, but I know you care.”

“It’s just, well, we don’t really talk all that much and—”

“Elia, while we might not have all that much in common, I’ve always known that you like me. Love me. And I love you too.”

He put his hand on her shoulder. “Thank you, Malka. I want to take care of you—I love you like a sister.”

“Thank you, but you really need to care for Rivka. As strong as she pretends to be, she’s soft. Such a vulnerable little girl inside.”

“I will. And I know.”

“I admire Rivka; I admire people who can sublimate their despair, their most visceral pain into anger. Anger can be shed, directed away to be absorbed by others. Not so with heartache. It never leaves. But I make no pretense. I’m not one of those who can perform such emotional alchemy. I will never recover.”

“Malka.” Elia reached to comfort her but she took a half step back.

“But life goes on. I have Lea to worry over and Thomas’s shoulder to cry on. And yours.” She moved forward and they embraced tightly.

They stepped back and Elia pulled a small book from his coat pocket. “This is difficult. I mean no disrespect; I don’t want to rub salt in open wounds.” He handed it to her. “But I think he would want you to have this.”

She took the book with both hands.

“To remember him by.”

Malka thumbed through the book, lingering on pages where Manes had written notes. She read aloud, “The workers have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political

supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.”<sup>7</sup> She looked up at Elia, “Look,” she pointed. “Look what he wrote.”

Elia read Manes’s note, scrawled in the margin, “Galicia, not Palestine.”

They embraced again, his arms around her shoulders, her head on his shoulder, Manes’s *Manifesto* in her hands, sandwiched between them.

“Elia,” she said, handing the book back to him. “Rivka is right, you are a real sweetheart.”

“No, please...”

She put her forefinger to his lips. “I love you for thinking of me, for bringing a piece of Manes’s life to me. He was my first true love and I will never forget him. But I know he was also more than just your friend, he was your brother. Perhaps even more, he was somewhere between your brother and your daddy. So we each need something of him to take with us. I have Lea, the ultimate memento, yes?”

Elia nodded.

“And I have Tomas. He loves Lea like his own. Do you know how many times he has mentioned that Lea is Manes’s child and not his own? How many times he has thrown that in my face?”

Elia shrugged.

“Never. Not even when we fight. For this, I owe him my heart. No, you take his book; it is not the part of Manes I want to remember.”

“Malka...”

“Besides, Sterner would roll over in his grave if he knew I was taking his precious Marx to Eretz Israel.”

“I suppose he’d be happier knowing it was heading to New York.”

“Listen, Elia,” her tone again serious, “I don’t really care what you do with this book. Toss it in the San for all the good

it's brought us." She put her hand on his face, squeezing his flesh tenderly. "What I care about, what I want, is for you to take care of yourself." He winced as she pinched his cheek. "And what I want most of all is for you to take care of my sister."

TOMAS DROVE WITH Malka in the passenger cab and Lea between them. Rivka and Elia rode in the back of the flat-bed, covered by a thick, oily tarp, lying on a cushion pushed all the way to the back of the cargo area, behind the metal lathe and drill press.

They hit the first road block before clearing the fort. Malka did the talking, her Polish flawless, her plan simple genius. "My husband is a mechanic, here are his work papers," she said, stepping out of the cab to meet the soldiers, a gauze mask covering her mouth. "I come with to talk for my man—his lungs are not so good—Spanish influenza." Her offer to allow them to inspect the vehicle was immediately rejected by the sentries who were backpedaling as fast as they could, waving the party through.

Back in the cab Lea was sleeping. As Tomas reached to release the hand brake he was intercepted by Malka. "Wait," she said, pointing out of the passenger window. "Look." Tomas and Malka stared out of the dirty window at the unfolding vista before them. The sun was just starting to clear the trees on the crest of the hill, casting a brilliant orange light that illuminated the skyline of Przemyśl—the churches, the Old Synagogue, the bell tower, the Temple, and the castle. They watched in silence as the sun fully illuminated the city.

"We'd best be moving on. Say goodbye, sweetheart."

"Goodbye, Przemyśl," she said. "And good riddance."

She successfully repeated the influenza story in Jaroslaw, Tarnow and Bochnia, before reaching Cracow.



A WOMAN WRAPPED in an ivory-hued scarf pulled the compartment's pocket door open just as the brakes were pulled from the wheels and the train lurched forward. Settling back into the plush red banquette, Rivka, Malka, Elia and Tomas exhaled long sighs of relief while the train rumbled over a series of slip switches and veered to the west.

Soon, two policemen appeared at the compartment's window. One absently tapped his nightstick in his palm while the other counted heads.

Malka smiled and Tomas tipped his cap.

Once the officer moved on, the scarf-covered woman went to the door and opened it enough to poke her head out and look up and down the hallway. She closed the door and pulled the privacy shades closed before turning and unwinding her headdress. "We have about an hour before the border. We need to get our stories straight." Everyone, other than Lea, asleep on Malka's lap, stared at her.

"I should have known," Rivka said, shaking her head, smiling as she stood to embrace her. "Zipre, of course."

"I am, it seems to be, your tour guide."

"To where?" Elia asked, bracing the hugging women as the train lurched.

"I'm going with the Lenards." She turned to Tomas. "If that's all right with you. Daddy has friends in Palestine."

"Your daddy seems to have friends everywhere," Elia said.

"Good thing, isn't it?" Rivka added.

"I suppose so. Yes, perhaps..." Zipre said as Rivka took her seat.

"Sit," Tomas said, patting the seat next to him. "It would be my honor to accompany you to Eretz Israel."

"That is much appreciated, Mister Lenard. But before, in order to get to Jaffa, we need to get to Vienna."

"Agreed. So was your father was able to make arrangements?"

"Father said it was easy, what with all the chaos, all the

unrecorded deaths. Grease a few palms, reissue a few documents.” She sat, opening her valise on her lap. “Tomas, Malka and Lea,” Zipre said, “You are the family Lenard, coming from Korczyn.” She handed Tomas a set of papers. “Malka, you are now Missus Malka Lenard. Congratulations.”

Tomas leaned over and kissed her on the lips. “Korczyn?”

“Near Cracow, on the river,” Elia interjected. “I was there during the war.”

“Meet any Lenards?”

“I don’t remember it so good.” Elia reached for Rivka’s hand. “Us?”

Zipre examined the remaining documents. “It appears that Meyer choose not to marry you two. I’m afraid you are still a Reifer, and you, Rivka, remain an Arm.”

“Is that safe?” Elia asked.

“They think you’re dead. And the records office is a good year behind. Your passports are real, as are your exit permits.”

“And who are you, Zipre?” Rivka queried.

“I asked daddy for Sarah Bernhardt but apparently it was taken. I’m afraid I have to be content to continue to be plain old Zipporah Weiss.”

The train lurched around a bend.

“Oh, Tomas, one more thing.”

“Zipporah?”

“A man will meet us in Vienna and will travel with you to Győr to secure the return of ...” she paused, struggling to remember his name.

“Jonas. It’s Jonas,” Tomas said. He looked at Malka then back at Zipre. “God bless you and your—” He coughed hard to clear his throat, spitting up bloody phlegm into his handkerchief. “Bless your father.”

They discussed their cover stories and rehearsed for the border crossing, which turned out to be nothing more than the flashing of the outside cover of each passport and the seal

on the transit papers at the gendarme through the sliding glass carriage door, at least in the first class cars of the train.

After brief stops in Ostrava, Přerov and Břeclav the party was ensconced in a two room apartment on the sixth floor of the Grand Hotel in Vienna by midnight.

Malka and Lea slept between the finest sheets available anywhere on the Continent while Tomas sat up all night in a red velvet Victorian armchair, burning up, shivering, and hacking ominously. Elia and Rivka lay naked in each other's arms all night, alternately dozing, crying, talking, and making love.

**Vienna • 11<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, 5679 – Friday, November  
15, 1918**

DOCTOR DETRICK WAS all business. Tall and well dressed, toting a black leather satchel, he said little other than that he would perform the examination in private. Donning a thick gauze mask he entered the room where Tomas lay and shook him out of shallow sleep before firing a series of questions at him, closer in tone to that of an inquisitor than a healer. “How long has there been blood in your phlegm? When did the fever start? Any vomit? What color?” Detrick took his temperature orally, revealing nothing as he read the mercury level. Thomas's pulse was gauged, lymph nodes palpated, and a stethoscope applied to listen to the passage of air through each lung. When finished, the Doctor turned and left his patient without uttering a word.

“Where is the wife?” Detrick barked.

Malka identified herself with a brisk “*Ja*,” while Rivka, Elia and Zipre milled about, eavesdropping.

“He has the Influenza. Pulse is thin and fast and he is running at forty degrees. For now, there is little lung or bronchial involvement.”

“What should we do?” Malka asked.

“Liquids; keep him hydrated. He will recover or he will not.”

“What do you mean?” she inquired, incredulous.

“Now I must inform the manager of his guest’s,” he paused, “condition.”

“Certainly there is something you can recommend,” Malka pleaded.

Detrick returned the equipment to his satchel then looked at Malka and shrugged, “Perhaps you should pack.”

Rivka and Elia converged on the Doctor. “Now you look here, he’s a paying guest,” Elia said. “Are you telling me they’re going to throw him out?”

“Ja.”

“We’re not going anywhere,” Malka and Rivka added, speaking at the same time.

“*Herr Docktor*,” Zipre called from across the room, her German impeccable and distinctly upper class. “A word in private?” she asked, making it sound more like an order than a request. Dutifully, he followed her to the anteroom.

Zipre spoke just above a whisper, “*Herr Docktor*, how shall I put this so that you can understand? My father is a close business associate of the owner of this hotel. Do you know *Herr Haider*?”

“Everyone in Austria knows Count Haider.” The Doctor fidgeted with his tie. “Of course, I don’t know him personally but—”

“Well, I do. And I can assure you that the last thing the Count would want is a to-do over a guest’s sudden attack of the ague.”

“But this is most certainly not a case—”

She grabbed his hand and a wad of bills connected their palms. “Malaria; an episode of ague.”

He glanced at the bills, then at his patient, then quickly back to the money before closing his fingers tightly around

the banknotes.

“Thank you for your prompt attention and your swift diagnosis,” Zipre said.

The doctor turned and left, eyes glued to the floor. Zipre turned to Rivka and Elia, still giving orders, “Elia, you need to meet father’s agent downstairs, for Tomas. Please explain the situation to him.

“What’s his name? How will I know him?”

The question momentarily threw Zipre off her stride. “I don’t know. Daddy’s always referred to him as ‘The Agent.’ I’d guess he’ll find you.” He headed for the door. “Rivka, can you look after Lea? I have several appointments.”

**Vienna • 21<sup>st</sup> of Tevet, 5679 – Tuesday, December  
24, 1918**

“THERE IS A boat for Alexandria leaving on the ninth. Not much, but she’ll float. It’s an easy jump from there to Jaffa. I have been assured that the proper papers will be waiting at the Hotel de la Ville in Trieste. There are boats to New York, but not until April. The trains run from Trieste to Genoa to Nice to Paris and finally to Le Havre. Documents will be waiting for us at L’Hotel Terminus in Paris. So we’ll need to get to Trieste right away, and we’ll need to—”

“Zipre! You are amazing!” Rivka beamed. “I’m really going to miss you.”

“About that, Rivka, I—”

The door opened and Elia, Meyer’s agent, and a boy walked in. Rivka ran to Elia and embraced, kissed, then embraced again while the agent removed his hat.

“Jonas. Thank God you are safe,” Malka said. There was no reaction from the boy. She faced him and dropped to her knees, extended both arms. He stared at the floor, speechless.

Speaking in broken Hungarian, Zipre introduced herself to the boy. He looked up briefly, but still he said nothing.

Rivka released Elia and Malka came to her feet. “Come, see your father,” Zipre said, ushering them through the door into the bedroom.

Tomas’s features lit up, using facial muscles he had not used in years. “My son,” he said, standing, arms extended.

The boy stared blankly at his father. What Tomas thought could have been the beginning of a smile was quickly quashed.

Elia and the agent glanced at each other, then at Tomas. “He can’t speak,” the agent said.

Almost fully recovered, Tomas walked over to his son and hugged him. “Look at you. All grown, a man.” A tear came to Tomas’s eye as he held him close. He turned to the agent, “You must be Mister Weiss’s representative. I can never repay you for your kindness.”

The agent bowed deeply. “Elia tells me you’re half Christian. So please consider this a Christmas gift.”

“I was, but no longer.”

The agent shrugged, “Same god.”

Tomas put his hand on the agent’s shoulder. “In the name of Moshe, Jesus and Mohamed, I thank you.”

“It is my occupation and in this case, my pleasure. And you may trust that I have been well recompensed for my work.” He grinned. “Besides, the political debates with Mister Reifer would have been payment enough.” He flashed a smile of surprisingly good teeth at Elia.

“Your home, I can’t precisely place it. Greece?” Tomas inquired.

“I’m from Tabriz, Persian by birth, Jewish by blood, and person-finder by trade.”

“And you work for Meyer Weiss?”

“In truth, I have never before heard of your Mister Weiss. Anonymous people pay me good money to find lost people. I don’t ask too many questions.”

“And, Mister Agent, do you have a proper name?”

“Béla Gabor’s the name I heard him use,” Elia said.

He bowed grandly, “Bakek Ben Sushan Kermanian, at your service.”

“I had expected you to be a huge man, a goon,” Tomas said, adding quickly, “I mean no offense, of course.”

“None taken. I am what I need to be—Jew, gentile, or Mohammedan, Austrian, Frenchman, or Englishman, cultured or a ruffian. Since the war, I’m sorry to say, business has been all too good. And all too often I return to my client as the bearer of terrible news. This case is anomalous; I collect my fee and everyone’s happy.”

Tomas addressed Elia, “Where did you find him?”

“Béla,” Elia raised an eyebrow, “and I went to Gyor expecting to do battle. On arrival, we found no trace of them. The house had long since been occupied by an Austrian family who either knew nothing of Jonas or weren’t going to talk to us.” Tomas sat on the bed, Jonas sat beside him, a hand on his father’s mid-section. Everyone else sat as Elia continued, “We went to the church and found the Father who talked to us—”

Babek interrupted, “After we crossed his palm with silver.”

“He told us that Martin, the grandfather, as well as his wife, his son, and about a quarter of the town had died soon after Jonas arrived home. It was during the war while you were trapped in Przemyśl. The army men brought it. Some kind of fever.”

“Quite a common tale, I’m sorry to say,” Babek noted.

“The boy was taken to the church orphanage in Tatabanya. We went there without a plan. It’s amazing we even recognized him. We didn’t know what the orphanage knew of his Jewish father or how Jonas would react so I distracted the monks and Béla spoke to him, told him his papa was alive and that we would take him to him. He showed no emotion and when it became clear that he would not speak, I pretended to be

his uncle-in-law—a *goy* from Cracow now living in Vienna. To those monks, a Polack's almost as bad as a Jew, but with a generous donation to the order, we were out the door with him in no time."

"A *goy* from Cracow?" Tomas said with a smile. "I wish I could have been there for that."

"You're lucky to be alive at all."

"I know. As bad as the years have been, today is a very good day." He turned to his son, "Jonas, welcome home. Now thank these nice men for bringing you back to your papa."

The boy sat next to his father, his mouth a horizontal line, his eyes unfocused.

"He's been through a lot. The people at the orphanage said he never spoke. Not once in three years," Elia said.

"He's a good boy," Babek added. "I've seen this before. In time, he will get comfortable living in this life rather than the one in his head."

Tomas extended his hand to Babek, who shook it with gusto.

"He is a special boy, with the makings of a grandmaster," the Persian said.

"What?"

"Chess. He may not speak, but oh does he play. Routinely destroyed your friend here and beat me like an old rug."

Tomas looked at the boy, then at Elia, then back at Babek. "He's only nine."

Elia shrugged.

Tomas went to the night table and brought back a folded cardboard slab with a checkerboard on one side along with the leather bag containing his chess pieces. He took two ivory pawns out, one red and one white then tossed the remaining pieces and the board on the bed. With his back to the boy, he quickly swapped the pieces between his hands, and then faced his son, two fists extended. Jonas tapped his right fist.



Jonas set up the board as everyone else cleared the room

Twenty-six moves later, his position hopeless, Tomas tipped his king over.

**Graz • 5<sup>th</sup> of Sh'vat, 5679 – Monday, January 6,  
1919**

TOMAS COUGHED, BABEK and Elia smoked, Malka read, Lea slept, and Jonas stared out of the train window.

“Glöggnitz, end of the old Eisenbahn line!” said the man occupying the seat next to Babek, just a bit too loudly, gesturing toward the picturesque snow-covered village passing quickly by the window. Only Malka looked up at him, smiling, then quickly returning to Mann’s *Der Untertan*. Only a few hours out of Vienna, everyone was already sick to death of the pompous Austrian’s running commentary. To hear him tell it, Austria had not only won the war but was responsible for every scientific and artistic advance of the past two centuries. Nothing, it seemed, could keep him from talking. Feigning sleep just made him up his volume, while ignoring him only seemed to encourage his jingoistic crowing.

“Yes indeed, we have arrived.” He paused, as if waiting for his audience to stop applauding. “The world said it could never be done. They laughed at us. Austria is a land-locked Empire. You may be able to take a train north, board for the east, or catch a locomotive to the west, but south? How dare you! Never!”

“I wish I had a bottle of ether with me,” Bakek whispered to Elia. “It’s forty-one kilometers from Glöggnitz to Mürzzuschlag,” the man continued. “Forty-one of the hardest, most daunting mountains on God’s earth, culminating at the Semmering Pass, an aerie fit only for the boldest of eagles.” Darkness briefly engulfed the coach as the express passed

through a tunnel. “Prepare yourself, Frau Malka, for many such interruptions to your reading. We will move through fourteen such passages.” Malka resisted the urge to look up. “Fourteen tunnels in all, bored clear through nearly two kilometers of solid rock, mostly by pick-axe, all with Teutonic sweat; sixteen viaducts, some with two stories, most with hundreds of vaults. It was first conceived back in forty-one when Minister Kuebeck entrusted Carl Ritter von Ghega to link our Capitol with the sea. They started in forty-eight, took twenty-thousand men eight years.”

Jonas followed a structure as it passed by the window before making the mistake of glancing at the Austrian.

“Guard houses, my son, one every seven hundred meters. Fifty-seven in all, including Semmering station.” Jonas looked away. “You know, don’t you, that it was the highest rail station on earth? Eight-hundred ninety-five meters.” The Austrian paused to light a cigar then resumed his lecture. “In any case, from Semmering it’s down grade all the way to Mürzzuschlag. Then to Graz, where I must leave you.”

This caught the attention of the adults.

“Then down the Mur valley to Maribor. From there, you either head east toward Budapest at Pragersko, or stay on the mainline to Ljubljana, and finally into the deep-water harbor of Trieste.”

The train pulled into Graz at twilight, about an hour late. Babek, noticing the Austrian’s limp, offered to carry his rather awkward valise to the quay. He returned with a newspaper and an assortment of pastries. “No, wait!” Babek said, in a voice louder than his usual. Malka stopped in mid-bite.

“What?”

“The torte was first conceived back in twenty-seven at the Hotel Sacher in Vienna. Its dough has been rolled no less than seven times.”

Everyone burst into laughter.

Meyer Weiss  
3 Grodzka  
Cracow, Poland

Nice, France  
January 10, 1919

Dearest Father,

*As you have by now surmised from the postmark, I did not get on the boat to Jaffa and I am not heading toward Palestine. I know that this will cause you no end of worry and aggravation but please know that I am safe, clearheaded and, for the first time in my life, looking toward the future with optimism and excitement.*

*The mitzvah you have done for dear Malka, little Lea and Tomas is beyond divine. Your agent was able to locate his boy Jonas and he is with them now. While he shows considerable emotional damage from his difficult times, what is important is that he is with his father, with his family. They will set sail in a fortnight's time.*

*I chose to follow Rivka and Elia for two reasons. First, while a proud Jewess, I have no particular passion for Eretz Israel. You, Malka and perhaps half of Przemyśl are Zionists. I am not and never will be. And besides, Palestine is for families. While ultimately they may need scholars, doctors, and scientists, today what they need are babies. This, at least today, is not my calling.*

*The other reason, and please, sweet father, do not misinterpret what I must tell you, is that I need to be, for this time in my life, truly away. Not from my dear, loving father, but away from M. Weiss & Company. In Przemyśl, Cracow, or Palestine with you, I will never be more than the spinster daughter of a wealthy man, a magnet for swindlers and cads. On my own, in New York,*

*I will have the chance to achieve in academic, commercial, and, yes, even romantic terms, as well as a chance to fail, knowing that whatever happens, it happens because of who I am, not who my father is.*

*We should be in America by May. For a time, I will reside c/o Julia Harmon, 111 Ridge Street, New York.*

*I know you will understand.*

*I love you father.*

*– Zipporah*

**Trieste • 7<sup>th</sup> of Sh’vat, 5679 – Wednesday, January 8, 1919**

“CLOSED.”

“But there must—” Tomas coughed coarsely into his scarf, drawing suspicious looks from the other stranded travelers.

The clerk across the counter checked the tightness of his face mask. “No matter how many times you ask, the answer will be the same: closed.”

“Surely there must be a way.” Tomas tried to slide a silver coin, his last, under the bars dividing them. The clerk glanced to each side, and then leaned in toward the glass transom, keeping his face to the side of the several small holes drilled through to allow him to hear his customers. Tomas leaned in too, keeping close enough to the holes to hear and be heard but, similarly, avoiding any approach that might allow for the transmission of spittle.

“Flu hit Trieste on Saturday. We hadn’t had a case here in three months. A freighter pulls in from Piraeus. The crew carouses all night, the usual things.” He turned and faced Tomas, separated by only two centimeters of glass. “You know, eh?”

Tomas nodded, "I know."

The clerk raised an eyebrow, "*Honved?*"

"Just barely. I was at Przemyśl, spent most of the war in Russia as a prisoner in Omsk."

"Lucky you," the Italian said it like he meant it. "Anyway, by Sunday night a *taverna* owner and two prostitutes are dead. By Monday morning, the port's closed; nothing in, nothing out."

Tomas looked the clerk in eyes, glanced down at the silver coin, then back to the clerk. "Surely, if I made this gold there would be a boat, a skiff or even a barge to get me and my family to Egypt?"

"Signor, if this was gold, and if there were a ship, and I'm not saying there is one, you'd be blown out of the water before you made a hundred fathoms from port."

"Blockade?"

"Complete marine quarantine, enforced by Italian, French, British and American guns, not just here, all up and down the Adriatic. Rumor is Piraeus to Trieste all the way to Messina. Marseilles, Toulon, and Malaga too."

"The whole Mediterranean?"

"Like I've been saying, closed." Lea cried in the background.

"Damn." Tomas slid the coin back into his trouser pocket before flashing a thumbs-down at Malka.

"There might be a way." Tomas's turned back to the clerk. "I have many friends in the shipping business." Both men returned to their position at the glass.

"Yes?"

The Italian clerk glanced down at the empty space below the bars and above the countertop, then quickly surveyed his fellow clerks, all of whom where otherwise occupied. Holding his gauze mask with one hand, he rubbed his thumb and forefinger together. Tomas glanced at Malka who was totally consumed at the moment, trying to keep Lea distracted lest she melted into tears again. He reached into his pocket

and slid the silver coin to the clerk, who picked it up with a handkerchief and quickly shuttled it into his own pocket. They reassumed the position.

“There is an open port. Both free of pestilence and accommodating to people of your persuasion.”

“You mean Jews?”

“Yes, many, many boats to the Holy Land.”

“Where?”

“Odessa.”

THE LENARD FAMILY walked down Corso Cavour toward the waterfront, looking for a cheap hotel for the night. Stopping to rest at a vacant bench at the Piazza Duca degli Abruzzi, Malka and Tomas sat on either end while Lea napped between them. Jonas sat cross-legged on the grass behind them, gnawing on a piece of bread.

“Yes, we have to leave here, but no, we’re not going to Odessa,” Tomas said,

“Fine. I’ll go by myself.”

“You will not.”

“Watch me.”

“Malka, do you have any idea how far away Odessa is? Do you even know where Odessa is?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“We’d have to go back through Przemyśl.”

“I’ll just stay on the train.”

“Here is peace, there is war. Russia is imploding. They’re all insane. You’re insane.”

“Maybe.”

“I spent years there. I’m not going back.”

“Then I will be heartbroken, and I’ll miss you.”

“Goddamn it!” Tomas leapt to his feet and stormed off, circling the Piazza before returning to the bench. They sat in silence, save the occasional truck passing by on its way to or

from the port. “Malka?”

“Tomas?”

She looked up at him, her face more perfect than any French postcard. “I must really love you.”

Malka began to laugh. “Yes, you must.” She was joined by Lea, who was all too happy to emulate her mother.

Tomas joined in, “I do or I must?”

Jonas joined the family, laughing. Two women pedestrians passed them, shaking their heads, mumbling disapprovals.

Malka grabbed Tomas’s coat and pulled him toward her, planting a long, wet kiss on his lips. “You do love me and you must love me, Tomas Lenard.”

They left Trieste the next morning.

# Ten

**Paris • 3<sup>rd</sup> of Adar, 5679 – Monday, February 3,  
1919**

It was dark for the afternoon; the clouds were ominously low and occasionally spit a cold mixture of rain and sleet. They walked briskly with Elia in the middle holding Rivka's hand while escorting Zipre with his other arm.

"The poster said that the exhibition is attached to a gallery that also features Negro arts, Nubian masks I think, as well as a showing of photographic art."

"I'm excited too," Elia said, squeezing Rivka's hand as they crossed Boulevard Haussman at the place where Rue du Havre becomes Rue Tronchet. "My dreams never recovered from the first time I saw Picasso's works."

When they stopped to let a motor car clear the intersection, Rivka let go of Elia's hand and turned to Zipre. "Guillaume is brilliant. It's pure genius to juxtapose the primitive with the modern abstractions of Matisse and Picasso."

They crossed the alley and made their way toward the square. "Yes, yes, it is. I agree," Zipre said, ogling the vermilion *crêpe de chine* dress hanging in a shop window.

They picked up their pace as the precipitation turned to



rain and became heavier.

“The church is so beautiful,” Rivka said, walking with her head to the monument. “So perfect, so... Greek. I love the columns.” She paused, trying to identify them.

“Doric, I think. Yes, Doric,” Elia said.

“They’re Corinth—” Zipre bit her lip. “I would have thought you two would be more enamored with the work of Arp or perhaps Tzara—the anti-artists.” The street again changed names, this time to Rue Royale.

“I’m not all that conversant in that genre,” Rivka said.

“Anti-art is just what it sounds like. Duchamp put an old urinal on display and called it art”

“Oh, please. That’s not—”

“There it is,” Elia said, pointing down the street, across the boulevard. “Galerie Druet.”

There was a small but boisterous crowd in front of the Gallery. He jogged off to investigate.

“A commode is not art,” Rivka said to Zipre.

“Right, it’s anti-art. Your reaction is exactly Duchamp’s point. He’s challenging the very definition of art, or what the masses believe is art.”

Rivka laughed mockingly. “What they’d call challenge I’d call contempt. These anti-artists have an awfully low opinion of the masses.”

“You have them figured out, Rivka!”

“I’m just anti-anti-art!”

They laughed until Elia returned.

“All I can see is two men, or an older man and a boy arguing in front of a painting, or rather a photograph of a painting,” Elia reported.

Zipre pushed into the crowd to try to pick up the French.

“It is an abomination, and it certainly is not art!” a man in a fine top coat and hat said firmly, backed by lukewarm support from half of the crowd.

“To a philistine, anything beyond the ken of his own eye is

an abomination,” a boy of fifteen years or so said. “How can you judge that which you so obviously do not understand?” Several onlookers voiced their support while others laughed.

“*Arlequin?* Are we to believe this to be, what, a portrait? Did the Spaniard hate this Arlequin? Wish to humiliate him?”

Promenading in front of the crowd, the boy, dressed in a brown suit with a wool topcoat commanded the audience like a master thespian. Articulate and dashing, with bushy brows and slightly droopy eyes, he looked like the teenage version of the Frenchmen he was sparring with. A well dressed middle-aged woman stood to his side, likewise contemplating the photograph.

“Sir, good sir,” the boy began, not looking at his adversary, “Is a photograph of a beautiful woman superior to a rendering of the feminine form by a Rubens or a Raphael?” He spun to the Frenchman, raising his voice, “Of course not!”

Zipre reported to Elia and Rivka, “Aesthetic debate.”

“The French: to war over art,” Rivka observed.

“It’s the boy from the train. From Nice. And his mother.”

Once the bystanders lost interest, the argument quickly petered out and Zipre led Rivka and Elia toward the boy and his mother. “The train, from Nice, yes?” Zipre asked her in French.

“Why yes, of course.”

“Zipporah Weiss, from Cracow.”

The woman reached for her hand and shook it. “Rosa, Rosa Pike.”

“And these are my friends, Rivka and Elia, Galicians too.”

“Of course everyone in the arrondissement has had the pleasure of hearing my son, Theodore.” Zipre and the boy smiled as Rivka and Elia moved closer. Turning to the couple, Rosa switched to German, “It is a pleasure to meet you. I am Rosa and this is my son Teddy. We come from, well, it’s a long story.”

Teddy shook hands with Elia and Rivka before lifting Zipre's hand to his lips, never allowing his gaze to wander from her blushing face. "*Enchanté, mademoiselle.*" Teddy gestured at the exhibition door, extending his elbow grandly. "Shall we?"

The five formed into language groups as they scrutinized the galleries of works by the two rising stars of the Paris art scene. Rivka, Elia and Rosa formed the German speaking contingent while Zipre and Theodore were delighted to exercise their wit and cultivation in the local tongue.

"Picasso is so clearly the master," Zipre said taking in *Homme Assis*.

Theodore scratched his chin, "I would agree, but with a caveat. Clearly, his top works are sublime, but I find much of his oeuvre to be dreadfully tedious."

"True genius can only be gauged by the artist's top works."

"Really? Is there a poor Chopin nocturne? A particularly flawed Michelangelo statue? Which ones? I thought I knew them all."

"Such chutzpah! Back home, we'd say a fellow like you *hoks a chainik.*"

"I don't think I talk nonsense, at least not about art. I'm actually quite well versed in aesthetics, a real *maven* if you will."

"Yiddish? Theodore Pike, a Jew?"

"One-half Jew, one-hundred percent boulevardier, and—"

"Quite the know-it-all."

"Why thank you, Miss Weiss."

"*MONTELBAUN*," ELIA READ from the card. "As much as I admire what Picasso is trying to say, on balance I think I'd rather have this Matisse over my mantle."

"Mister Reifer," Rosa said, "It's an exhibition, not the Galleries Lafayette."

He shrugged and then smiled. "So Rosa, now that we

have some time, can you tell us the long story of where the Pikes are from?" Elia asked her while they studied Matisse's *Nude's Back*.

Rosa took a deep breath and exhaled through closed lips, making a sound like a small motor starting. "I was born Rosa Kravtsoff in Odessa. And yes, we are Jews."

"Really?" Elia said.

"My sister's husband was transferred to the east, to Shanghai. In oh-two I took a trip to Shanghai to see her and from there we traveled the Orient."

"Amazing. That must have been quite a train ride," Rivka said as they moved to the next painting, *Interior With A Violin Case*.

"Weeks to Vladivostok then a boat to China. In any case, I fell ill in Nippon, in a place called Nagasaki. Nearly died. In fact, I would have died had not a former American Naval doctor taken up residence there. He nursed me back to health. One thing led to another and I became Missus Doctor Robert Ignatius Pike in oh-three."

Rosa took a break to study the painting close-up with a small magnifying glass she kept in her purse.

"Theodore was born two years later. We lived a rich and exciting life in the sizable ex-patriot community in Nagasaki until Robert died suddenly, when Teddy was six."

"I'm so sorry," Rivka and Elia said.

"But life must go on, so we packed up and journeyed across the sea, then across Russia back to Odessa. Unfortunately, our town wasn't what it once was, especially for Jews, and I'd seen all the Russian winters I needed for two lifetimes. Robert left us with the wherewithal to go almost anywhere so we set our sights on southern France and moved to Nice."

"Which brings us to this sojourn."

"Nice was wonderful. Teddy thrived in the culture and academics. He made his old mother proud. But I knew that even as Nice was ideal for a child, soon little Teddy would grow

into Theodore and need more challenge, more opportunity. America's the future, and besides, my late husband has three brothers in San Francisco, so that's where we're headed. We sail twenty-six April on La Savoie."

"From Le Havre?" Rivka asked.

"Of course."

"You are not going to believe this."

They moved to the last painting in the Matisse salon, the *Coup de Soleil*. "So that's my tale," Rosa said. "How about you?"

Elia and Rivka glanced at each other. "It's a long story," Rivka said.

### **Southern Ukraine • 28<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 5679 – Monday, April 28, 1919**

THE WHEEL'S BRAKE locked, sending a shriek through the boxcar the Lenard family had called home for three weeks. Tomas woke, pulled unceremoniously from the middle of a dream in which figured, incongruously, a lecture on partial differential equations, mounds of chocolate, and anonymous intercourse with a woman who might have been a maid at the Hotel back in Vienna. The train stopped with a characteristic lurch which the rest of the family slept through as they lay on top of straw and under a wool army blanket. Malka was on one end with Lea against her chest, one arm reaching over her daughter to cover Jonas. Tomas lay at the other end.

While diplomats from the victorious nations divided up the carcass of the Central Powers in Paris, the East, for years the quiet front, had reignited in war. Not so much a war pitting well-drilled troops across clearly defined fire lines and trenches, but a truly civil war in which every ethnic spite, every petty jealousy, and even every neighborly feud would be settled with violence. In order to pass through Przemyśl

unnoticed, Babek had arranged for the Lenards to join with a group of several dozen Russian families—taken hostage by the Austrians early on in the war—on their rail trip back to the motherland. Conditions were abysmal, with most of their trip from Vienna to L'vov spent huddling for warmth in open cars previously used to transport horses and cattle. The Austrian guards assigned to deliver the hostages back to Russia either deserted or were put off the train by the time it reached Cracow, leaving the mostly aristocratic hostages alone to face repeated searches, shake-downs and robberies. By the time the train crossed the San nearly everyone on it was cold, hungry and had been stripped of anything valuable. By the time they reached L'vov, they had been threatened and set upon by Poles, Ukrainians, Bolsheviks and Whites, none of whom were in any way distinguishable from the innumerable gangs of common criminals prowling every station and viaduct from the Alps to the Urals. At Zhmerynka junction, halfway between L'vov and Odessa, the Lenards transferred to a much roomier Odessa-bound freighter, which would have allowed them luxury of spreading out had the temperature ever broken minus twenty.

After several unsuccessful attempts at rejoining his dream, Tomas got up just as the train again began moving. Bracing himself against the rough-hewn wooden sidewall with one arm, he struggled to keep his urine flowing through the hole in the floor. A hard bump over a bad segment of track caused him to foul the floorboard before he could redirect his stream back onto the passing ties. He smiled. As difficult as it was to navigate with the train moving, he was thankful for the forward progress of the last few days. Besides, they seemed to have left most of the more intense fighting behind them and while stops and delays were still frequent, they hadn't had a wait of more than a day since leaving Zhmerynka. Besides, the gash over his eye seemed to be healing without infection, a souvenir from a rag-tag detachment of soldiers,

Petlura's men, one of their fellow travelers thought he heard them say, who didn't appreciate his accented Ukrainian. It was cold and finding sufficient food was always a problem, but Odessa was finally within reach.

As twilight began to light a crack in the roof vent, Tomas unbuttoned his trousers, pulling them off as he slipped beneath the blanket next to Malka. Encircling her with his arms, his front to her backside, their bodies generated pleasing warmth. Tomas nibbled on the side of her neck, pausing just long enough to savor her unique aroma before working his way up to her earlobe so she would hear him whispering, "Good morning, sweetheart." Her hand found his and guided it under her blouse to her breast. "We'll be in Odessa tomorrow, then on the boat; in Palestine by Shavuot." He massaged her nipple playfully between his fingers. "I love having—" He pulled her night-dress up and began rubbing his penis along the cleavage of her rear-end, "optimism."

"Tomas?"

"She wakes."

Malka yawned. "Do you really love me?"

"Of course I do."

She moved her hips in rhythmic orbits, massaging his now erect member. "More than anything else?"

"More than a feather bed." He ran his tongue up the back of her neck, lingering on the fine wisps just below the hairline.

"Then bring me coffee. A full pot."

"With a basket of blintz?"

Malka reached behind and guided Tomas into her. "With sugar."

They made love, and then fell back into a dreamless sleep as the sun rose and the train rumbled toward the Black Sea.

**North Atlantic • 28<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 5679 – Monday, April  
28, 1919**

“THE OYSTERS WERE divine. Too bad you missed them,” Zipre said as Theodore returned to his seat.

“The maitre d’ said the Huntingtons and the Ingersolls are dining with the captain,” Teddy said, gesturing toward the large round table at the far end of the dining room. “Oh, and I abhor oysters.”

“Ingersoll? Like the pocket watch? Must be rolling in it,” Rivka said, trying not to stare.

A small detachment of waiters descended on the table. While one held a tray next to Rivka, another lifted the immaculately polished silver half dome. “*Mademoiselle, vous voulez du saumon Mouseline?*”

“*Oui, merci,*” she answered, tightly focused on articulation. “*Et un verre de l’eau, s’il vous plait.*” For weeks now Teddy and Rosa had been tutoring her and Elia in French and English. She was pleased beyond words when the plate was delivered, followed a second later by a tall glass of water. The other women were similarly served.

“Ingersoll’s a piker, no pun intended, next to Huntington, or so I’m told. His father built railroads across America. Say,” Teddy asked with his usual enthusiasm, “What did your father build, Rivka?”

“Teddy!” Rosa snapped. “Manners!”

Elia responded to another waiter, shaking his head to make his selection known. Zipre looked up at Teddy.

“I’m so sorry, Rivka. I forgot,” the boy said with sincerity.

“It’s all right, really it is. Actually I’m happy to talk about daddy; it might just do me some good.” She put her fork down and used the white linen napkin to dab her lips. “My daddy was named Tanchem and he was the finest furniture maker in Przemyśl. If you asked him, he would have told you he was the finest in all of Austria.”



Waiters engulfed the table briefly, leaving fresh breads, pats of butter and filled wine glasses.

“Growing up, all of our finest furniture pieces were made by the Arm Factory,” Zipre said. “Well not all, but most. His armoires were magnificent.”

“He was a wonderful man. I worked for him for several years. Tough but fair. He was a soldier earlier in life, but always with the soul of an artisan,” Elia said, solemnly.

“Thank you, sweetheart,” Rivka said, taking his hand under the table.

Teddy lifted his wine glass and sipped at the straw-colored liquid, then nodded his head with reverence, “To Tanchem.” They all drank.

“And Izac, her brother,” Elia added. “Tanchem was the artist, but it was Izac who actually supervised the building.”

“Here, here.” Again, everyone drank. Rivka and Elia entwined their fingers.

“Zipporah, care to divulge?” Teddy asked, setting his wineglass on the linen.

“Father would be at ease at our table or at theirs,” she gestured toward the far end of the dining room. “I think that’s what I love the most about him. He’s a chess player, and a good one at that. He can be sweet, he can be ruthless, he can lay in wait, he usually wins, but he always knows when he’s beaten.”

“Like when he tangles with his little girl, no doubt,” Teddy added.

“And what of you, Theodore?” Rivka asked. “What kind of man is father to a son of your obvious...style?”

“I don’t really remember him other than that he was a doctor and had a big bushy handlebar—”

“Teddy,” Rosa cut in, “not every mustachioed American doctor was your father. Amazing how life’s serendipity moves people around and brings them together.”

The waiters cleared the plates and delivered fresh ones,

each laden with filet mignon *lili*, sauté of chicken *lyonnaise* and vegetable marrow *farci* as well as fresh crystal and a decanter of claret.

“During the war a school chum and I used to cliff dive at the far end of the quay in Nice. On my third dive, I must have hit something because my leg ripped open from knee to thigh. I passed out and woke up in the hospital, conveniently located, I might add, not more than a hundred meters from our flat on Rue Dubouchage. I was treated by an American naval doctor. We spoke about America for hours and hours. He loved President Wilson and the Saint Louis Cardinals.”

“From then on, Teddy never stopped talking about America,” Rosa said, “So here we are, on the way to San Francisco. Besides, Robert has family there.”

“I can drink to that,” Teddy said.

Affirmations were echoed by the others.

Teddy lifted his glass. “To new friends, to America!” Everyone drank.

“So delicious,” Elia sighed. “Ted, what is this wine?”

Teddy held his glass aloft and made a slow circle with his arm, swirling the wine in the crystal. “Fifteen, Bonnes Mares, Vial.”

“Sounds like wartime Marconi code.”

He set the glass down on the table and reached to the center of the table for the wine bottle. “This is from the Bourgogne of France and is rouge, so the grape is almost always the Pinot Noir. The vintage refers to the year that the grapes were picked. This is important because the quality of the finished wine is heavily influenced by the vagaries of the weather where the vines are grown.”

“Sounds like something my aunt would excel at.”

“Ideal is rain in the spring then single downpours weekly through the growing season, followed by a bone dry, hot and sunny summer through harvest-time. Even a five-minute drenching before harvest can cause ruin the vintage.”

Elia studied the label, “Because the grapes suck up water, diluting the flavor and thinning the wine.”

“Exactly, Bonnes Mares is the vineyard, the plot of earth that the grapes grow on. In this case, it’s a wonderful little plot of dirt which, over time, has produced such good grapes that it has been designated as Grand Cru, the top dirt in France and, therefore, in the world. In addition to fine soil, usually Grand Cru means the plot is well sloped, for good drainage, and faces southwest, for maximal sun.”

“And Vial?” Elia asked while everyone worked on the sumptuous array of food on their plates.

“Vial is the house who made the wine, the craftsman if you will.” Teddy and Elia picked up and clinked glasses while Rivka poked at her dinner with a fork. “Just remember, this is only for Bourgogne. In Bordeaux or Province or Loire, it’s all different.”

“To nineteen-fifteen, a great year in Bourgogne,” Elia said.

Rivka dropped her fork and stood up as the sound of silver on porcelain spread across the first class dining room, briefly turning more than a few heads. “I feel sick. I need some air.” She threw her napkin on the chair and headed out through the etched, smoked glass doors of the dining room, past the grand stair case, then out of the teak swing doors onto the foredeck.

Elia saw her about ten meters away, leaning against the railing, looking over the edge into the blackness of the North Atlantic. After draping his coat over her shoulders he joined her on the rail. “You all right?”

“So delicious.” Her delivery was slow; mocking.

“It was.”

She turned her head and a wisp of her hair whipped his face. “Nineteen-fifteen, a great year for Bourgogne?”

“Rivka, we’re here. Why not enjoy?” Elia reached around her and into the exterior pocket of his coat, retrieving his cigarette case and the bullet-shaped trench lighter he had

picked up in Paris.

“How desperate you are to be accepted by the bourgeoisie! Do you think they don’t see through you? We wear the same clothes every day, speak the same fractured French each night, and, gasp, use the wrong fork with our salad. You talk a good game, Elia Reifer, but when it really comes down to it, you’re a fraud.”

“That’s unfair, Rivka.” He tried to light a cigarette but the wind kept blowing out the flame.

“No, what’s unfair is you and I stuffing our faces with enough food to feed Przemyśl for a week and washing it down with drink made on hectares of otherwise good farmland but available only to the elites. That’s unfair. We luxuriate under silk sheets on feather beds while ten floors below the proletariat sleep on wooden cots and eat oatmeal. That’s unfair.” Rivka pointed her finger at Elia. “What’s wrong is how easily the most sacred tenets of our being are bought and sold by Weiss’s money.”

“I don’t deserve this,” he said while walking to the other side of the deck to light his cigarette. After a few good draws he was back next to Rivka, “Without Meyer, I’d be swinging from a rope and only God knows what would have become of you.”

“There you go, compromising again when it suits you.”

“We eat where we are, we drink what they serve, sleep where they house us.”

“You like it just a little too much, don’t you.”

He lowered his voice, making it barely audible against the sea breeze. “We’ve done this together every step of the way. What I’ve done, you’ve done.” Elia pointed his finger at Rivka, angrily. “May I have no pleasures other than you? That’s it, isn’t it?”

“No. And don’t you point that finger at me!”

Elia took a step back to get a deep drag on his cigarette before continuing in a more conciliatory tone, “Why are you

doing this to me, Rivka?”

She looked at him, eyes moist but not crying. “Elia, I don’t want to fight with you. But I have to.”

“Then why are you? Why are you picking a fight with me?”

“Because.” She fought back tears. “Because I am you and you are me. Because—” tears streamed down her cheek, “Because, you’re all I’ve got.”

They came together, Rivka’s arms around his waist, Elia’s over her shoulders resting on the railing. Wisps of her hair swirled around both of them. Eventually the doors leading to the grand stairs swung open and they joined their fellow first-class passengers for a post-dinner promenade around the deck.

“Rivka?”

“What.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I am too, Elia.”

“Sweetheart?”

“Yes.”

“Let’s make a pact.”

“How so?”

“Two points.”

“Only two?”

“From the moment we set foot in America, we are Socialists—revolutionaries—true to our class.”

“I love you so much, Elia.”

“We land Wednesday. Let’s celebrate May Day as husband and wife.”

“You’re going to have to ask that question in a more direct manner, Mister Reifer.”

“Thursday, in New York, will you marry me?”

**Ellis Island • 30<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 5679 – Wednesday, April 30, 1919**

THE MORNING THE rain fell in sheets, the gray obscuring the ship's bow and rendering New York City all but invisible off La Savoie's starboard as the captain steered the ship into the wind and dropped anchor.

Over a light breakfast of coffee, cheese, fresh breads, and jam, the first class passengers filled in immigration papers. As soon as the second and third class passengers were safely aboard launches, steaming their way to the Ellis Island immigration facility, a uniformed officer appeared in the main dining room, ringing a small bell. With everyone's attention, he proceeded to apologize for interrupting breakfast, then respectfully requested that the American citizens line up at the door and directed the others to queue on the port side of the room for inspection of papers.

"See you in America," Teddy said, following his mother toward the door. Four more officials appeared and began perfunctory scans of American passports and the collection of travel papers for the citizens.

Rivka looked around at her fellow aliens, "I don't like how this looks."

"I don't think they give literacy tests to First Class passengers," Zipre said, tapping Elia to get his attention. "If they do, respond with confidence, even a bit of arrogance, and be sure to keep your answers as terse as possible."

Elia and Rivka nodded.

Teddy tugged at his mother's coat, "Look." He gestured to the alien line where an elderly woman was talking with great animation to an immigration officer, occasionally pointing at Elia, Rivka and Zipre.

The three heard the officer before they saw him. "Papers!" They froze. "Don't you peoples speak English? I want to see your travel documents and immigration papers, now." He

was a large, tall man with puffy, rosy cheeks, freckles, and small, sharp eyes set a tad bit too close together. Pinned to his uniform, which looked to be a size or two too small, was a badge and above that, a name tag that read, "Meehan."

Zipre composed herself then answered, using her finest Queen's English. "My good Sir, there is no cause to raise your voice. We are fully fluent in the American tongue. French, German and Polish as well."

"Well I don't care so much for Frenchies. And I hate Krauts." He took her papers. "Weiss, eh? Says here race is Polish. None a youse look Polish. Look more like Hebrews ta me."

"Polish by nation, Hebrew by faith," Rivka said.

He looked at her and cocked his head, "Don't sound like Poles neither. Sound like Jews. And if you's Jews, then you need to put Hebrew down as your race."

Zipre crossed out "Polish" and neatly printed "Hebrew" on each of the three immigration forms. "Satisfied?"

He turned to Elia, grabbing his papers, scanning them twice, from top to bottom before looking up at him, perplexed. "Where the hell is Pressmill?"

"Austria," Elia said in remarkably good English.

"Poland," Zipre corrected, speaking before Elia finished talking.

The immigration officer bore down; his reddening face now only inches from Elia's. "Filthy kike bastard. I lost half my mates fighting your ilk at the Marne. Saw my own cousin take one of your bullets in the hip; watched his flesh turned from purple to black, rotted like bad meat; died like a dog. Now you have the gall to—"

"Sir," Zipre interrupted, "We are not people without means. Surely there is an accommodation that can be made."

"You tryin' to bribe me, Jewess?"

"Of course not, I'm just trying to..."

He turned and yelled at a group of uniformed men milling

about the door, “Reilly, Connor, over here!” Meehan turned to his compatriots, “Take these three to the island. Failed literacy test.”

Teddy turned in time to see the authorities leading Rivka, Zipre, and Elia away. He took a step toward them but stopped when his mother’s hand landed on his shoulder.

“But Mama,”

“Leave it be.”

“We need to help them!”

“Nothing to be done here. We’re more help from the other side.”

“FOUR AND A half hours waiting like cattle. My legs are killing me,” Rivka said, plopping down heavily on the wooden bench in the waiting room just past the great hall. “And I feel like throwing up.”

“Six days in First Class and you’ve gone soft,” Zipre said, dropping her valise on the ground and joining Rivka on the bench. “At least we have the stamp.” She showed off her papers with the coveted “Admitted” stamped across the front in red. They searched the vast hall for Elia, Zipre eventually spotting him on aisle seven.

“Zu-ca-ro,” Elia read from the name tag before the officer instructed him to put his valise on the table at the final examination station. Picking up the inspector’s accent, Elia tried a few words of Italian which seemed to soften the uniformed man’s steely cold demeanor.

“Italiano?” Zucaro asked, looking almost welcoming until he scanned to the part of Elia’s papers that listed his ethnicity. He unlatched the case and flipped it open.

“I have an Italiano friend in America. Living in Pildefa,” Elia said while the inspector fished through his bag.

Without looking up, he corrected, “Philadelphia. It’s pronounced Philadelphia.”



“That’s what I meant, Phil-a-del-phi-a.”

Seemingly satisfied, Zucaro inked his stamp on a soaked sponge sitting in a shallow metal tray before smacking Elia’s papers, “Admitted.”

While Rivka and Zipre readied to collect Elia in anticipation of making the next launch to the Battery, Elia tried to close his satchel, but was unable to get the latch to engage cleanly. He tried again, forcing the two sides of the valise together to no avail until the immigration officer handed Elia his admission papers. Forced to take a break and stow his documents in his jacket, Zucaro interceded, opening the case and probing the perimeter until he came to the source of the blockage—brown wax paper around a small book.

Elia grabbed for the book but the inspector moved it out of his reach. He’d been carrying the book ever since Malka declined to take it, never considering how in these exactly wrong circumstances it could ruin his life, like an incoming shell missing the field and landing in a meter-wide trench.

Zucaro unwrapped the package and opened the book; the text was nothing but scribbles to him. “Hebrew?”

“No, Yiddish.”

“What is it?”

Elia’s stomach knotted and his throat felt like it was coated with dirt. “It’s a religious book.”

The officer leafed through it, spinning the pages by in reverse order before stopping at the title page. In the middle of the page was an engraved portrait of two older men. One was balding, while the other with thick black hair. Both of them sported full, bushy grey beards and moustaches. But it wasn’t the two profiles that caught the officer’s eye, it was the fact that in a book of smudged black on dull white, the two men were rendered in that most nefarious of primary colors, red. “Stern!” he yelled to the man inspecting on aisle nine. “Come here.”

“What’s going on?” Rivka asked, concerned. “What are

they doing? Who is that?”

Zipre climbed up on the bench to get a better view. “God, please no!”

“What! What is it?”

“The book, it’s the book.”

Zucaro turned to Stern, “Says it’s religious.”

Stern opened the book to the title page and scanned the text. He looked up at the officer, then at Elia, then turned toward a small group of uniformed men near the doors, “Guards!”

From behind the inspection table, Elia yelled, “Rivka!”

Rivka tried to run toward him but was blocked by the luggage of a large group of newly admitted immigrants.

Zipre leapt off the bench and caught her, wrapping her arms around her waist.

“Rivka!” Elia cried again as he was escorted away by four guards, disappearing through a reinforced door just past aisle ten.

Rivka began to shout his name, but Zipre put her hand over the mouth before talking calmly into her ear, “No, Riv.” Rivka struggled briefly. “Not here. We’re no good to him in jail. We’ll get him in.” Rivka began to shake. “Quickly, let’s get out of here.” Zipre dragged her toward the pier and the Battery Park launch, stopping briefly to allow Rivka to vomit on the grass flanking the cobblestone walk.

“YEAH, THE MARITIME’S a nice building. Should be, it’s the first place everyone sees commin’ into New York,” Julia said, pointing to the leaded patterned-glass laylight on the ceiling.

“Cepting Ellis,” Milton added.

“Stamped zinc, rolled iron, plaster, glass, steel, and, of course, the harbor view,” Teddy said with enthusiasm. “The architecture speaks of—”

“Money,” Julia said, finishing his sentence.

“Nothing more quintessential than that!”

Rosa noted the puzzled look on Julia’s face and discreetly whispered to her, “Nothing more American.”

Julia smiled broadly at the boy. “There is only one thing more American than money, and that’s baseball. Tomorrow’s opening day for the Giants, but it’s also May Day so Milty and I got some work to do. Some of my tenants will be, how can I put this?”

“Moved out,” Milton said hoarsely.

“Yes, out. But it doesn’t really matter anyway ‘cause they’ll probably postpone the game on account of the rain.”

“Please, mother, let’s stay through the weekend,” Theodore implored.

“Teddy, we have a train...”

He seized his mother’s hand and with an arm around her waist, pulled her into a gentle waltz and sang in an exaggerated upward arpeggio. Spinning her around three-quarters of a turn, he sang, “There’s a fine ship to San Francisco, sailing mid-month.”

“It’s only the Phillies, but it’s supposed to clear up and be nice by Sunday,” Julia continued. “Game’s a historical event, the first ever Giant game on Sunday. Hell, it’s the first Sunday baseball game in New York, ever, I think. And I can get hold of six tickets in the boxes. And if that’s not enough, the oil magnate’s back, and he’s probably pitching. Teddy abruptly stopped dancing but didn’t let go of his mother. He sang, “Oil magnate?” in his best operatic flair, lengthening the final syllable and bringing it to his highest register, then re-engaging the waltz.

“Pol Perritt won eighteen games last year for McGraw. Anyhow, off season he went home to Louisiana and struck oil, and now he’s a millionaire. Probably moved to a spiffy place up by the Park; showed up at the field in a chauffeured car. Great arm and a million easy dollars. Luckiest bastard on earth if you ask me.”

“How quintessentially American, again!”

“All right, all right all ready!” Rosa said, pulling away from her twirling son.

“It’s settled then,” Teddy said. “We’re going to the Polo grounds. Can you think of a better way to spend our first weekend in the States?”

“Theodore,” Rosa said, patting her son’s cheek, “You know I can’t resist a waltz.”

“They’re getting off,” Milton said, pointing toward the quay.

The travelers disembarked from two gangplanks, slowed by many joyous reunions as they first set foot on Manhattan Island. “I don’t see ‘em,” Julia said.

“There!” Teddy yelled, pointing at the aft debarkation point, “Zipporah and Rivka.”

Julia pushed past Milton to be next to Teddy, “In the grey dress with the white shawl?”

“That’s Zipre. Zipporah Weiss.”

Julia squinted. “Next to her is Rivka.”

“Yep.”

Julia walked into the rain, toward the dock. “So then where the hell is Elia?” A minute later, after hugs, handshakes, and kisses in the rain, they all huddled back under the eaves while Zipre recounted what happened in the hall. Julia shook her head and spoke, sounding like Der Captain from the Katzenjammer Kids, “*Oy, vere sunk.*”

“What say we get on that there boat and just go get him?” Milton suggested.

“Milty,” Julia said, resting her arm on his shoulder, “They think my Elia’s a Red. They’ll have him surrounded by a hundred guards.” She turned to Rivka. “You had the same ashen look on your face last time we met. You probably don’t remember. What were you, eight? You lost your dolly.”

Rivka reached out and hugged Julia.

“Listen to me, everything will be all right. We’ll have this red nonsense cleared up in time for the opening pitch. Beer,

Cracker Jack, and pop—”

“Julia?”

“Yes, Rivka.”

“He is one.”

“One what?”

“Elia’s a Red, a socialist. And so am I.”

### **Ellis Island • 1<sup>st</sup> of Iyyar, 5679 – Thursday, May 1, 1919**

THERE WERE SEVERAL hundred men in the prison, little more than a dormitory with bars on the windows and a lock on the door. While some had been jailed for months waiting for a hearing date and others had just spent their first night, the common thread between nearly all of them was the “Red” label, the vast and finely articulated spectrum of political flavors represented being lost on the authorities. The detainees naturally sorted themselves, first by language, then by political affiliation, and finally by nationality. Within an hour of his arrival, Elia had been introduced to a dozen or so Yiddish speaking Bundists from what had been Austrian Galicia. While not the Savoie, Elia found that the accommodations far outclassed anything he had become accustomed to during the war years.

They unlocked the doors at six in the morning, allowing the Reds into the mess hall. Elia sat on a long wooden bench swapping war stories with David, a Jew from Łodz, and John, a Pole from Brody. It wasn’t easy to talk amidst two hundred men rattling tableware and arguing politics with full vigor in nearly a dozen tongues.

“They’re deporting us all,” John said nearly yelling at Elia. “They’re calling the ship ‘The Red Ark’. No hearings, no appeals. Palmer’s out for blood.”

Elia felt like his heart hit an iceberg. “Who? Where to?”

“Russia—” David said.

“Palmer’s some kind of legal General making war on the Reds, mostly the Wobblies,” John added. “Hoover’s his muscle.”

Elia pushed his gruel aside and put his hands on his face and his head on the table. “Rivka’s having coffee just across the bay.” He had a knot in his stomach and a growing headache. A shiver ran down his spine.

“There, there, comrade, every man here looks across the harbor the same way,” David said.

Elia lifted his head and saw that the men at his table were all looking to the far wall where a short, portly older man was climbing up on top of one of the tables. The man raised his arms and the din in the room dropped to where a strong orator would have had a chance to be heard.

“Comrades!” his voice boomed in German-inflected English. Few in the hall could believe such volume had come from a man of such small stature. “Welcome to America!” The room exploded with laughter, clapping, and cat-calls. “This morning, we celebrate May Day!” The room again went wild. “We will sing ‘The International’ but in a special way. We will sing the verses in English. The chorus we shall do in all the languages of the revolution. The people’s choir!” The room let out a collective murmur, and quieted as he repeated his instructions in French and German.

He began to sing, his voice dominating the room even as everyone stood and scores and scores of men joined in the tune. Feeling a bit dizzy, Elia nonetheless stood and mouthed along with the English.

*Arise ye pris’ners of starvation, Arise ye wretched of the earth...In English, the chorus! ‘Tis the final conflict, Let each stand in his place The International Union, shall be the human race. Verse two! We want no condescending saviors, to rule us from their judgment hall... En Français! C’est la lutte finale, Groupons-nous, et demain... And three! The law*

*oppresses us and tricks us, the wage slave system drains our blood... Völker hört die Signale, auf zum letzten Gefecht... Behold them seated in their glory, The kings of mine and rail and soil... Sing any language! We toilers from all fields united, Join hand in hand with all who work...*

Elia felt the room began to spin as cheers and slogans filled the air at the end of the song. A lightning bolt ran from the small of his back up the length of his spine hitting him in the base of his skull, reverberating like a hammer hitting a frozen anvil. The lights went out.

“Reifer? You all right? He’s burning up. And bleeding.”

“Hit his head on the way down.”

“You, you, come and help. Let’s get him back to the dormitory.”

### **North Atlantic • 6<sup>th</sup> of Iyyar, 5679 – Tuesday, May 6, 1919**

IT TOOK SEVERAL wipes of a handkerchief for Elia to clean the crystallized yellow crust from his lashes so that he could pry his eyes open. Vision blurred and head pounding, there was a sharp pain in his temples with each beat of his heart. A hand to his eyebrow noted bandage; slight pressure confirmed the wound was stitched. Elia closed his eyes, abandoning his attempt to sit up and tried instead to focus on the low rumble coursing through his body.

“*Buenos días, el sol,*” a male voice said. Elia sat up, straining to focus. There were small, round windows spaced about five meters apart over about twenty cots, three-quarters occupied by men in varying stages of illness. Some were sleeping, a few puking into tin pails, and a handful sitting up or sitting on a cot with their feet on the deck. An orderly and a nurse milled about them. It wasn’t until he felt the unmistakable sensation of being lifted by a swell that it all began to make

sense.

*“Buenos días, Señor.”*

The man turned to the nurse and her orderly who had walked over to Elia’s bed, *“¡El vive! ¡El habla! El...”*

*“Por favor, yo no hablo español,”* Elia offered. *“Deutsch? English? Parlez Français?”*

The man laughed. “What do I look like, Nimrod?”

“You speak English?”

“You’ve been sleeping for too long, my boy.”

“I’m sorry, I must have passed out.”

*“Señor, por favor,”* the nurse interrupted, putting one hand on Elia’s forehead and the other on his wrist, searching for a pulse. She turned to the tall, obese orderly and peeled off a string of words while the orderly scribbled mightily on his clipboard before abruptly moving to the next cot.

“You are, apparently, fully recovered,” the man said, thrusting his hand across the void between the cots. “I am *Señor Miguel Salgado Ochoa.*”

“Elia Reifer.”

“Pleasure to meet you, *Señor Reifer.*”

Elia rubbed his eyes vigorously. “Please, call me Elia. Say, you wouldn’t happen to have a cig would you?”

“I wish. I’m trying to quit.”

Elia yawned. “So Miguel, what happened?”

“You and I missed the boat.”

“What day is it?”

*“Lunes. Monday.”*

“What boat?”

“The Ark.” The man reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a package of gum, “Spearmint?” Elia accepted without hesitation. “So you were detained too?”

*“Si, si.* I was arrested at the Worker’s Hall over on East Fifteenth, in the March raid; punched in the mouth by Detective Geren himself. You? Elia?” he was concerned, “You all right?”



The room spun; images of death and gore knifed through his consciousness.

“Elia?”

“Sorry. My mind was wandering.”

Miguel unwrapped a stick and popped it in his mouth, “Is all right. The ague will do that.”

“We’re not heading for Russia, are we?”

He laughed, “No, no, not yet comrade. Depending on how you want to look at it, we both got either lucky or unlucky, you with the ague, me with the flu. Too sick to depart. We missed the Russia boat so they tossed us on the next one leaving. Short ride for us. Make port by three tomorrow afternoon.”

“Where?”

“*Habana.*”

“Cuba?”

“*Si comrade amigo.*”

“Oy.” He covered his face with his hands and eased his head back to the pillow and reconstructed the past few days for Miguel. “We arrived on La Savoie on Wednesday. We, oh, I came from Przemyśl, in Austria via Paris. With my fiancée and friends.”

“I’ve heard of Przemyśl. Big fight there early in the war.”

“Bloody battles. Like everywhere.”

“I managed to miss almost all the fun. I made shoes in Barcelona. You?”

“Wood, furniture maker. Rivka, my fiancée, is, um, was, a baker.”

“Picture?”

Elia removed his hands from his face, sat up and swung his legs to the ruddy, irregularly varnished mahogany floorboards. Reaching under the cot, he located his valise and brought it up to the bed. “Looks like a few things have gone missing. The money for starters. All of it,” he said after fishing for a while.

“Borrowed by some Mick, no doubt.”

Elia pulled a postal card from his valise and looked at it. Tears forced their way out of his eyes as he fell back on the cot, his hands on his head, the card resting on his stomach. Once again, the room began to rotate.

“*Amigo?*”

Elia clutched the card, mumbling, “Two months ago we had three sepias made by a photographer in Paris. At the shop, I selected an open-air Renault as the backdrop but Rivka thought that an automobile was too bourgeois a setting for true socialists to be memorialized in so she led everyone on a five minute march across Rue Saint Michel that ended in brilliant sunshine on a gravel path in the Jardin du Luxembourg where we were framed by budding rose bushes and jonquils. A few days later we returned to *rive gauche* to pick up the cards, this time in a cold light rain. Over coffee, tea, and a pack of cigarettes at the Café Modern, Rivka and I wrote on the back of one of the cards and posted it to my aunt in Poland.” Elia stared blankly at the ceiling, thinking about the rest of that day in Paris. *The long walk back to the hotel in the cold drizzle. Running up three flights with Rivka to the room, disrobing, entangling under the quilt, making love, napping, and then making love again. Bathing that night face to face with Rivka’s legs wrapped around me. Laughing, caressing, and sharing a cigarette.*

“*Amigo.* You all right?”

“Damn this world. Damn it to hell.”

Miguel took the card. “She is beautiful. Life is unfair.”

“Five years, five meters,” he said, between gulps for air.

“¿*Qué?*”

“We were apart for five years.” He rubbed his eyes, “I was five meters from her, five lousy meters from Rivka, from a normal life. It’s not fair. Not after what we’ve been through.” He sat up. “Now I know there is no God. I’m sure of it, there is no—”

“Don’t say it, comrade. Please.”

Elia exhaled loudly.

“Elia, Elia my son.” He looked down at the photograph, “Look at this. Such magnificence. How can you look into her eyes and believe this to be a mere accident of nature? Can’t you see God’s handiwork in her face?”

Elia looked at the card, “We are quite the couple, yes?”

“She looks... Spanish.”

Elia laughed. “She’d be flattered to hear your estimation.”

They each chewed another stick of gum.

“So Elia, tell me, how did you come to be here?”

“We were pulled from the first class line and ferried to—”

“First class?” the Spaniard whistled.

“Rivka and I are not bourgeois. We’re dedicated socialists and proud to be of the working class. The passage was, was...” He searched for words. “We had problems getting out of Galicia. We hated the crossing but had no choice. It was—”

“Elia,” Miguel interrupted, “You don’t owe anyone any excuses so don’t apologize. In the world we live in, just getting by is a major accomplishment. No one has the luxury of staying pure to their ideals.” He paused, eyes cast down to the deck, “Not you and certainly not me.” There was a long pause.

“They found the *Manifesto* Manes gave to me. He was my friend, my comrade; he fell in the war.”

“And off to detention.”

“I remember the dormitory at Ellis on May Day.”

Miguel began singing, “*Agrupémonos todos, en la lucha final. El género humano es la internacional.*”

“That was something, wasn’t it?” Elia said

“A magnificent moment to be sure.”

“I felt it coming on. I must have collapsed.”

“That would explain the bandage. What else?”

Elia racked his brain but could find no other memories.

“That’s it until I woke up, not five minutes ago.”

“Well, my friend, we are on the *Esperanza*, pride of the New York & Cuba Mail Steam Ship Company. One might say we have been posted from New York to Havana. One way.”

“Damn!”

“What?”

“She won’t know where I am, will she?”

“Rivka? Unless they fixed the deportation list at the last moment, all of America thinks you’re on the way to Petrograd.” Elia again covered his face and fell back into the pillow. “*Señor* Reifer, you know what means *Esperanza*?”

Through his fingers Elia mumbled, “Experience? Excitement?”

“No and no. But you know what?” He inched closer to Elia, lowering his voice, “This is a mail ship. They dump us with the mail at Havana tonight, then turn around and steam back to New York. A few hours in port, at most. One of the stevedores is a comrade; many of us are sending word to loved ones in a letter to my wife. If you have an address, she’ll see that your note is delivered.”

“So—”

“Rivka will know where you are by Thursday, at the latest.” Miguel reached into his leather bag for a pen and a sheet of onion skin.

Elia looked at Miguel and smiled, “*Gracias, mi amigo.*”

“*Viva la revolución*, comrade Reifer. Now write. I’ll be back in an hour.” Miguel turned and began to walk away.

“Miguel!” The man from Barcelona stopped and looked at Elia. “*Señor* Salgado, you never told me what *Esperanza* means.”

He began to laugh. A chuckle at first, then a hardy howl as he turned his back on Elia and began to walk away. As Miguel reached the bulkhead, he stopped, and with a pump of his right fist, shouted, “Hope!”