



At the time, a young lady by the name of Miriam Holcman was active in the Bundist club in Warsaw [sic Warta]. Miriam worked in one of the city's large cap-making workshops. Miriam was a pretty blonde. Her dark-grey eyes looked at everyone with friendliness. Life was actually not good to Miriam. She had no father - he had died young. Miriam and her mother lived in a poor, little room. With her work, Miriam was barely able to support herself and her mother. Miriam was the sole provider.

In the Bund, she revived spiritually. At the Bundist club, Miriam found her *Shabbes* and *Yomtev*<sup>1</sup>. Through the Bund, this simple, beautiful girl developed and learned a great deal. She was very committed to the Bund. She looked up to the Bund leaders with loving eyes and was prepared to do anything that they asked of her. The Bund was her content in life.

Miriam became friends with Josef and Rywka even before Rywka's departure for Paris. Josef's house was her second home. Rywka turned a blind eye<sup>2</sup> to the closeness that was being formed between Josef and Miriam. Rywka had felt guilty all those years for the manner in which she had been wed to Josef. Rywka knew that, in his heart, Josef was yearning for Mirl, and that he would never forget her. Consequently, Rywka ostensibly overlooked the close friendship which Josef was showing to the new female friend, Miriam. And when livelihood became difficult and the worries over subsistence were incessant, Rywka would never ask Josef where he was spending time so late in the evenings. "The party's work" was the response to everything.

Josef, however, soothed his embitterment - his unhappy and unsuccessful life - in long walks with the young and pretty Miriam. That was how Josef was, a romantic nature, always in love. And [no matter] how bitter life is, one can sweeten it with beautiful conversations and dreams.

Upon Rywka's departure, the friendship between him and Miriam became very close. They were always seen together. When Rywka travelled away to Paris, Miriam thought Josef would stay there and not journey to Paris. Silently, Miriam did not cease to dream that Josef would remain completely hers.

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Miriam's friendship, however, did not take away Josef's longing for his only little daughter, Sure'le. And, when the summer weeks [viz. vacation] approached, Josef already began preparing himself for the road to Paris. Did he ever think about Rywka? It was difficult for him to answer this question, which he asked himself late in the evenings, upon returning home

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Yid., "holiday", from the Heb. "yom tov", lit. "good day". The author does not mean to say that Miriam literally spent her Saturdays and Jewish holidays at the club, but that she found, in the club, the spiritual uplifting which normal families experience on said festive occasions.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: The expression used in the original Yiddish is "Rywka noticed yes and no the closeness etc."]

from the walks with Miriam. On the one side, there was the simple, beautiful and kind-hearted Miriam – the charming blonde girl with the good, soft and warm eyes, which enveloped him in love. On the other side, Rywka - his legal wife, with whom fate had bound him. Josef could not make up his mind. He let himself be led by life itself. It often seemed to him that some unseen being was turning the wheel of his life - turning it and directing it. But he had no clue where it would lead him, and he was ready for anything. Providence herself would do with him as she pleased. Being soft and yielding by nature, he was unable to withstand the test. The tender, caressing words, Miriam's love, overcame everything in him.

Josef journeyed to see his little daughter. Rywka received him coldly. Josef was not in Paris for long.

Upon arriving home, he gave up his house and took a furnished room, and it seemed to him as if he was a bachelor once more.

Days came when Josef felt he was sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss. There was no income. The home was broken. How would it all end? He saw no way out. Dark thoughts assailed him in the nights. The closer he became with Miriam, all the more afraid he became of tomorrow.

In his desperation, Josef decided to let himself be operated upon - to go through an operation, which the doctors, by the way, had told him was not so highly necessary. One could put off the operation and live without it. With time, this defect could disappear altogether. But Josef strongly insisted that the operation be performed upon him. In his heart, he was wishing for an end - that he would not come out of the operation alive! He was too weak to perpetrate a deed upon himself to put an end to his suffering. In his great despair, he thought the operation might do it for him.

Josef did not write to Rywka regarding the operation. He only let her know she would not hear from him for a few weeks. He needed to constantly travel around the country for the party, and she and Sure'le were not to think too much if they did not receive any letter from him within a month.

The operation was successful. Miriam did not leave his bedside. Immediately following the operation, when Josef could barely bring out a word, he said in a weak voice, "Now that I'm alive, I must travel to Paris to my little daughter, to my wife!"

Miriam remained seated, pale. She only waited for Josef to recover his strengths. In her heart, she decided she could no longer remain in the same city as Josef.

Miriam departed for Warsaw and Josef resigned from his positions in the city and bade farewell to all his friends and acquaintances. Saying goodbye was not easy for him, but he felt he was starting a new page in life. The family, and above all his little daughter Sure'le, was calling to him and demanding of him to think a little about his duties as a father. Yes, he had the right to enjoy the quiet, peaceful life that every simple family man enjoys.

On the way to Paris, Josef stopped in Warsaw for a couple of days. He came to say goodbye to Miriam. Their parting was painful. With tears in their eyes, they both held hands. Yes, that was what life demanded. She, too - Miriam - would start her life anew.

