



The matter of Lotte became the theme of the day with Gołda and Josef. In her hand, Gołda held the letters which had arrived from Germany, without knowing what to do with them - give them to her brother or maybe tear them into little pieces - just like her heart was torn when she remembered what this Hitler land had done to her and her people!

Now a new fear gripped her - she would lose her brother. The German woman would come and take him away. She did not speak of this with Mordche, but she took the letters from the German woman and did not hand them over to Mordche. Not only that, she wrote a letter to Lotte's father, saying that Mordche was sick. She advised the father to have a talk with his daughter, that she should stop hoping of ever coming to America. No more letters arrived. Evidently, Mordche also did not write and, gradually, he forgot his love for the German girl.

A quiet, peaceful family life was established in Josef's home. Mordche found employment in a garment factory and began earning well. In the evenings, all three of them - Gołda, Mordche and Josef - sat at the English evening courses. They learned the English language and strove to become American citizens. Avidly, they avidly studied the history of the United States and their wonderment at the country rose from day to day.

Mordche would spend his free days with his friend Karl - he felt at home there, both with Karl and with his wife Gertrude. However, the close friendship with Karl, and particularly with Gertrude, came to an end with a dramatic event, which was rather shocking to Josef. It was something which he had not expected.

It was on a Saturday morning. The telephone suddenly rang. Mordche ran up [and answered it], and Josef noticed how he became increasingly agitated during the conversation. The caller was Gertrude, Karl's wife. From Mordche's response, Josef and Gołda comprehended that there was "trouble", as they say in American parlance.

Mordche said, "Come here right away - come to the house where I live. I'll stand downstairs and wait for you. You'll be able to be with me here - come here!"

"What's wrong?", Josef and Gołda asked Mordche in unison, as soon as he had put down the receiver.

In a half-ashamed tone, with a veneer of calmness and a forced smile, but internally quite perturbed, Mordche told them what had happened with Gertrude. "Gertrude's leaving her husband", he began.

In half words, void of brazenness and ashamedly, Mordche informed them that Karl had found out regarding the very close friendship which he had lately been having with Gertrude. Gertrude was prepared to separate from Karl and come here to be with him.

“I’m happy with that - I’ve got to help her. After all, I cannot leave Gertrude in the street.” As he ended these words, Mordche went down to the street to meet Gertrude.

Josef and Gołda were left sitting in shock. Try this new calamity on for size! They could not believe their own ears, as to what the quiet Mordche had shamefacedly told them.

“This is true debauchery”, Josef thought to himself, “and this is the dark legacy that the Nazis, may their name be obliterated, have left us.”

But he had not expected this is of the quiet and upright Mordche. It is perhaps possible to fall in love with a married woman, but to betray a friend, in whose house you have found so much friendship - that is unheard of! Was she, Gertrude, perhaps actually to blame for everything? There was friendship between the newly-arrived young people - and at the gatherings and little festive occasions, there were even games and flirting between one couple and another. Josef had seen this, too. But that such flirtations should lead to debauchery and betrayal - that, he had never imagined.

Gertrude arrived. Josef saw tears. He heard Gertrude’s words of love to Mordche and the words of comfort which he said to her. She was prepared to stay here - yes, to divorce Karl and be Mordche’s wife. Mordche promised her that he would do everything to make her happy.

Josef and Gołda, however, viewed this entire conversation very differently - with self-composure. In it, they saw light-headedness and youthful naivety on the part of the two inexperienced individuals, who had been seized by a wild madness.

Weeks and months passed before something changed between Mordche and Gertrude. The two of them regained their senses<sup>1</sup> and listened to Gołda and Josef. It cost Gołda and Josef much health, until they were able to convince both Gertrude and Karl to come together again. Naturally, the friendship between Josef and Karl’s households was subsequently torn asunder, although they remained friends at heart.

Mordche stops seeing Gertrude. But a fissure is left in his heart. This is already the second time that happiness has eluded him, and he is, once more, left on his own. Things are good for him with his sister and brother-in-law at home. Yet he still remains alone within himself, with all his thoughts and ideas after so many years of suffering. He often feels guilty towards his sister and brother-in-law for the unhappiness he has caused them - first with Lotte, the German girl, and now with Gertrude.

But what can he do? He is weak. He is a failure in life. He is lonely, alone in the big world, which does not wish to grant him a drop of luck. His sister is loyal to him, yet her faithfulness and Josef’s friendship bring him no happiness. On the contrary - Gołda’s affection often agitates him and reminds him of his inept character.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: The expression used in the original Yiddish is “sobered up”.]

He fills in the little bit of free time he has with long walks down the New York streets. He spends hours at the cinema and comes home with an emptiness in his soul. Life has no meaning for him. Why did he survive? His nerves are unscrewed. In this way, days and months stretch in emptiness, without any contentment in his young life. It often seems to him that he is not the only one. It is [the same for all] the Jewish youth, who seemingly managed to save themselves from Hitler's murderers, but the Nazi killers left the poison of death in the few surviving Jews everywhere - here and also there, in the new Land of Israel, where there are many young refugees like himself.

Gołda and Josef were worried about Mordche. "In all his life, he still hasn't had a single minute of happiness", Gołda would quietly sigh to Josef. And there was some truth in what Gołda said, because from childhood onwards, Mordche had worked and helped at home.

Afterwards, when the great misfortune occurred, all the suffering and pain in the world came upon him. True, he was not the only one. Most of the youths, who had been through that hell, had practically had the same experiences as himself. Gołda now had a single wish - to see Mordche married to a respectable, fine Jewish daughter. Josef promised to assist her in this.

