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A few weeks following Josef's ill-starred, bizarre acquaintance with Fania, once more, he decided to place an advertisement in the newspaper's "Lonely Hearts" column.

Josef thought this would be the last time he would do such a thing. He was ashamed of the weakness that had assailed him in his days of loneliness. Many letters arrived. He leafed through the letters and read them and, in the end, tore all of them up — barring one, single letter written in Yiddish.

This Yiddish letter gave an address. It had been written to him by a lady from Lakewood, New Jersey. She had read the advertisement and was planning to be in New York soon. If Josef replied, she would arrive on Friday, 3rd April, at ten o'clock in the morning. She would drive up to his house in her car. If he awaited her outside holding a Yiddish newspaper in his hand, she would know it was him. It was signed "Mrs Becky Gellman".

They met as agreed upon in the letter. It was a spring morning. Josef thought to himself, "Might the sun be shining for me? Could luck perhaps shine for me like this spring morning?"

Before him, he perceived a woman of healthy appearance, as one who is always in the fresh air. Josef had heard of Lakewood and its farms, with the Jews residing there, who made a very abundant living. Josef stood in front of the car and listened as Mrs Gellman addressed him:

"Well, let's introduce ourselves once again. You already know my name, and I yours. It seems to me like that we've already known each other for a long time," said Mrs Gellman rather ashamedly, as her cheeks reddened. She alighted from the automobile and Josef shook her hand. They contemplated one another in silence. Mrs Gellman was the first to break the silence.

"Besides meeting you, Mr Szalit, I've also come to New York on business", she said smilingly., "Yes - everything's business in America. Perhaps you would like to drive [there] with me? I need to be at DeKalb Avenue in Brooklyn - we'll talk on the way".

Josef entered the vehicle and a conversation ensued - haltingly at first, as between two complete strangers, whom an advertisement in the newspaper had brought together. Gradually, however, the moods of both of them became animated and talkative. Josef spoke about himself and of his life on the other side of the ocean, and now here in New York. He held a fine position, but it is not good to be alone. And she, Mrs Gellman, nodded as if in agreement with him.

In the middle of their chat, she left him in the car and entered a shop on DeKalb Avenue, remained there for a while and then returned joyous, with a friendly "Hello", as if she had already known Josef for years.

Afterwards, sitting at a restaurant for lunch, Josef found out more about this Mrs Gellman's life in the little town of Lakewood.

She was a widow in her late thirties and, even though she lived in the Lakewood area, she was not a farmer, but worked in a shop. She had a beautiful and cherished little daughter, and owned her own house in Toms River, which is not far from Lakewood. Yes, when her husband Louie was alive, she had planned to set up a chicken farm in Toms River. She was actually living in the house she owned in Toms River, and working in Lakewood. In fact, it was at the shop in Lakewood that she had written to Josef the letter which he had received.

"Well", she concluded, "Let's write to one another, Mr Szalit. You will have to come to Toms River. As for the rest, we shall see".

Josef corresponded with Mrs Gellman. The letters between them became increasingly friendlier and more intimate. She invited him for a weekend to Toms River. Josef travelled out to take the fresh air. It was in the summer. Although the region there is a flatland, without mountains and with many woods, the air around Lakewood and Toms River is refreshing to the eye and, for the city man, it is very pleasant to spend time there.

Josef became more closely acquainted with Becky, as he now called her with all familiarity - just as she [called] him Josef. The little daughter, Fajge'le, clung to Josef. Josef thought to himself, "A home of my own, among woods and fields - a home to lay down my weary head. Becky is pleasant, clever and decent. A bit too practical, and thrifty to an extreme. Well, a person cannot have only good traits. After all, she's twenty years my junior. It's a delight to look at Becky's little five-year-old daughter. I'll raise her, and she'll grow up as my own child".

He was reminded of Sure'le, his deceased little daughter. She would have already been an adult. Woe, woe, woe! How the years wash everything away. [Even] the greatest pain gradually heals. Josef was seized by sorrow. Everything in him wept, in a great longing for the years in Warsaw, when Sure'le was still alive.

Becky worked everything out with precision. She made all the plans for him. Josef sometimes felt as if he had become younger in years, and that it was the opposite—that she, Becky, was actually the older one, and he must follow her in everything.

On the weekends, Josef would come to Becky's as if to his own home. He already felt at home in the house, which stood on one of the little streets of Toms River. Becky would take the car, and the two of them would drive out to Asbury Park, and view all the beautiful places in the little towns around Toms River.

That summer, Josef spent his fortnight vacation with her. For him, it was like a great holiday and Josef already sensed the allure of the days after the wedding, and how he would settle down. Maybe, with time, he would actually relinquish the work in New York altogether, even though he loved his work. But that is what Becky had planned for him. "It'll be too hard for you to travel there and back every day," she said, and he knew Becky would get her way. That was already the type of character she possessed.

Becky told Josef about her brother Lajbel, who was miraculously saved from Hitler's hell, and was now in Havana, Cuba. Becky desired very strongly to bring him here from Cuba.

"I'd do anything to have my brother Lajbel here with me", Becky said to Josef on one occasion. She looked at him with tears in her eyes. Josef was, by nature, prepared to help anyone, and especially now that Becky was entreating him to assist - how could he refuse her? Josef thought that, no matter what happened between himself and Becky in the future, it was his obligation to help her. Lajbel was the only surviving member of her family - how could he be indifferent to her plea?

"The only way to bring him here is to marry him to a young American citizen", Josef told Becky with a smile.

The one, who came to his mind, was Mary - the young widow whom he had met through the advertisement in the paper. She was young-looking and did not have the appearance of one who had been married, but rather of a young girl. It was a golden match! She was appealing, gentle and full of charm. As for her disability with the leg, that was a trifle - it was barely visible to the eye, and Lajbel, Becky's brother, would definitely be up for the match - the main thing was that she should appeal to him as a person.

Josef was revived. As with any other societal endeavour he undertook, in this case, too, he did not rest until he had executed his plan. That was how he had always been - the typical social worker, the activist for the good of others. When Josef needs to carry something through, he truly acquires wings. Whenever he must help someone, his imagination runs free.

Becky and her sister Tobe began corresponding with Lajbel regarding the match. They wrote to him of the virtues Mary possessed. It was truly good luck. [They] only [hoped] she would like Lajbel.

It did not take long. Lajbel and Mary began to write to each other. Josef arranged everything in a discreet manner. In the cold weeks of February, Becky and her sister Tajbla¹ travelled to Havana, Cuba, on vacation, as it were. Mary accompanied them on the trip.

Right from the first day, the encounter between Mary and Lajbel was [even] better than anticipated. They were together day in and day out. It was an auspicious match.

The deal was sealed, and Mary and Lajbel were happily wed. Following her return from Cuba, Mary did everything to bring over her husband Lajbel to the United States. Sadly, however, this did not succeed. The harsh immigration laws brought everything to naught! Lajbel remained in Havana and Mary in New York. She was unable to make the decision to leave behind her parents and the whole family and move permanently to Cuba. Nothing came of their marriage.

¹ [TN: Affectionate form of Tobe (טאָבֶע).]

Mary's bitter fate affected everyone negatively. Josef felt the beautiful Mary's pain. She was truly grateful to Josef for everything he had done, yet he could sympathise with what she had been through. "That was not meant to be", he thought to himself. Every individual with his fortune and his bitter destiny. Mary was left on her own for the second time. First as a widow, and now as a young divorcee.

