



Josef had no desire to write any more advertisements. He did not even wish to reply to the letters, which were constantly arriving from different women in the Bronx, Brooklyn and other districts in the New York area. He received invitations and proposals.

But Josef feared meeting any of the letter writers. Who knew what disappointments he would face? Josef decided to wait a while. Maybe later. He would look around. Perhaps he would not need to seek out, in such a manner, a woman with whom to spend the few years he still had left.

Nevertheless, it seems that Josef was still destined to have disappointments and needless torments. He met a lady [named] Fania, in her forties, decked out in vinegar and honey¹. Josef made Fania's acquaintance at the home of a *landsmann*² of his, Mojsze-Mendel, on Riverside Drive.

"There'll be guests at my house – and the main thing", Mojsze-Mendel shouted over the phone, "My wife wants you to meet a beautiful widow. She'll also be at the party. Be a good [chap] and come over – do it for my wife! Don't disappoint us!"

At the party, Mrs Fania Bornsztajn sat in a corner of the room and told Josef about her life. She has two grown children - a daughter and a son. She came here from Paris on a visit to her daughter, who married an American soldier in Paris. She was widowed very young, when her two children were still in infancy. She stems from Poland, having lived in Włocławek. Her husband died young of a heart disease, and she raised the children all alone, by her own means, running her shop, by herself, in one of Włocławek's finest streets.

Afterwards, with her children, she moved to Paris. Through the Second World War, she hid from the Nazis and the Vichy [regime's] police. Now, she had made it to America and she desires, very strongly, to remain here and to bring over her son, whom she has left behind in France. She will only be able to attain this fervent wish if she marries an American citizen. This would enable her to remain in America, and later also bring over her son, because with her daughter here, she is, thanks God, already provided for.

Fania smiled coquettishly at Josef, as if to let him know directly and openly that he was to her liking and what she had wished for. Josef sensed what this woman was after. Fania hardly cared whether the two of them were a match or not. Nonetheless, she made an impression on Josef. More than anything, he was aroused by her as a woman and, within him, she had awoken the passions of a young man.

¹ [TN: Yiddish expression meaning beautifully dressed and dolled up.]

² [TN: Yid., Ger., fellow townsman.]

Fania clung onto Josef – she simply would not leave hold of him. She was aware of his position here. She also knew that, through him, she could be introduced into a better society and meet new people. Something would already come of that.

In the meantime, Fania was making efforts to obtain an immigration visa, in order to be able to stay in America. To that purpose, she needed to travel to Canada for a couple of days, to receive the visa from the consul there.

On one occasion, Josef was seeing Fania home. Travelling on the subway, something happened which utterly upset Josef. Unnoticed by Fania, a little piece of paper fell out of her handbag. Josef picked it up and cast a quick glance at it. Everything turned black in his eyes. To Josef's great dismay, it turned out Fania was a sick woman. She was currently being treated by a doctor. He hastily hid the note in his pocket. He said nothing to Fania regarding the terrible secret which he had just discovered. But he knew one thing for certain - that they would never become husband and wife!

Fania, in fact, was forced to put off her journey to Canada, at least until she was partially rid of that suspicious malady.

When Fania travelled to Canada a couple of weeks later, Josef accompanied her despite everything, in order to facilitate her return. She was not sure that they would allow her to re-enter America. On the way there, Josef did not tell her he knew her unfortunate secret, and did not let her feel that he was looking at her as at a woman with a suspicious disease.

It was only once the trip to Canada had gone through successfully, and she had crossed the United States border with the visa from the American consul, that Josef told her he was aware of her illness. He did not ask Fania much. He did not wish to know how and under what circumstances she had become sick. On the contrary, Josef comforted her. Fania sat and wept, looking dismally out the [railway] carriage window. Josef tried to soothe her, to the effect that that [particular] can be cured. It does a long time, but she would be clear of the disease; she would yet be happy with the man she would [eventually] marry. She was beautiful, and there would still be enough men rushing to ask for her hand. Upon parting from each other, Fania begged Josef, with tears in her eyes, to keep it all a secret. Josef reassured her of that.

As he left Fania, Josef reflected on his strange luck. He was glad his destiny had saved him from coming into contact with that woman.