



In the building on Second Avenue, where Josef lived, he made the acquaintance of a young man, Grojnm Nomberg - a refugee from Poland, who had formerly lived in the room which Josef now occupied. A waiter by trade, Grojnm was working in one of the restaurants on Second Avenue. Grojnm had also been through enough in his life.

Mrs Friedman, in whose house Josef lived, gradually became aware of Josef's lonesome life. Every day, she would go down to help her husband for a couple of hours in the grocery, which they ran on Fourth Street, not far from First Avenue. The rest of the time, Mrs Friedman would be at home, reading *Forverts* - particularly the *Bundle of Letters* and the novels of the writers describing the Jewish refugees and their lonely life in New York.

Mrs Friedman would comfort Josef, that he should not think it was already the end of the world and that the heavens were already lying on the ground.

"One mustn't give up", she would argue, as she held out a glass of tea to him. "Take a seat, Mr Szalit, and drink a glass of tea. Ben's coming from the store¹ soon - we'll sit and chat a little."

She was friendly to Josef and saw how lonely he was, going down into the street and coming back up disquieted, not being able to find a place for himself.

"Sit down, Mr Szalit. I will tell you about my former boarder, Grojnm - you'll see there are worse things in life". And Mrs Friedman began to recount:

"During the War years, Grojnm was somewhere in Uzbekistan, deep inside Russia. He later relocated to Iran, Persia, until fighting his way to the Land of Israel, where he married a relative of his - a cousin from America, who travelled to him to the Land of Israel, to enable Grojnm to come to America.

"But they did not live well together. They would constantly fight over silly things. Yes, Mr Szalit, when the match is not suitable, it's to no avail. In a nutshell", said the good-natured Mrs Friedman, "they were separated and he gave her a divorce. Now he's living alone again and working here in a restaurant.

"Go see him, Mr Szalit and make his acquaintance. He's a fine young man, full of life. Give him my regards. He should come [visit] sometime. He lived here in the room that you have now."

A couple of days later, Josef went to have supper at Geler's restaurant. A waiter, a likeable young man, materialised and asked in a familiar-sounding Polish Yiddish, "*Vus vet etz esn?*" [What will you eat?]

¹ [TN: Both "Mr" and "store" are in English in the original.]

Josef contemplated him, spoke with him, and perceived, both in his speech and in his whole demeanour, that he was a “greenhorn”. In him, Josef sensed a kindred spirit. After exchanging a few words, Josef suddenly exclaimed, “If your name is Grojnm, I know you a little”.

Grojnm was intrigued. “What do you mean? Where have we met? In Russia?²”. Josef told him he was living in the same room, where he had lived earlier, [and that] Mrs Friedman sent her regards. “Now I know,” Grojnm smiled.

From that day onward, Josef was a frequent visitor in the restaurant, where Grojnm worked. They became friends. Both of them had stories to tell one another. The loneliness of those who are left on their own and do not know what to do with themselves in the free hours in the evenings – and even more in the free days – bound the two of them together. They were often seen together. Grojnm was a few years younger than Josef and did not have Josef’s experience. He also had not gone through such a tempestuous life as Josef. He would therefore sit and listen, with bated breath, to all the stories that Josef told him. They confided in each another.

On one occasion, Grojnm said to Josef, “I beg you, Josef, do me a favour. You’re a writer, you know how to write a letter in the paper – so write!” Josef looked at him in wonderment, not comprehending what Grojnm wished of him.

“Very simple”, said Grojnm, “Write an announcement, to make it understood that I’m looking for a bride - young, beautiful, with a good profession in her hands, as things go, and with a bit of money in the bank. Without that, brother, it’s no good!”

Josef wrote an advertisement for him in a Yiddish newspaper and, while doing so, he thought, “What if...?” If Grojnm would succeed in finding his destined one [in this manner], it would not be a bad thing at all should he also try his luck.

[He was] lost! He was in America and, here, the loneliness was beyond imagination. Here, one could go out on Second Avenue, without a chicken [even] clucking! This was not Warsaw, Łódź or Warta, where people knew you and knew who you were. Your whole pedigree was utterly worthless here. So, Josef thought to himself that, were he to succeed in making the acquaintance of a simple Jewish woman here, whom he liked – even if she was not an intellectual – he might even get married, so strongly did the loneliness torment him.

Dozens of letters from women arrived in reply to Grojnm’s advertisement, and each letter told of a different life. In addition, there were photographs attached to some of the letters. Grojnm sat in Josef’s room, and the two of them read the letters and examined the photographs of young widows, divorcees, and just regular women with pleasant, still rather young faces.

Josef had discovered something new. Grojnm told him how the dates began with him. Every evening he met a different woman - that was how he wished it. Sometimes, Josef would

² [TN: The author renders all of Grojnm’s words with a special orthography, to emphasize his strong colloquial accent in Yiddish. We have reproduced these dialogues in normal English for the sake of clarity.]

accompany him and have a look at the woman with whom Grojnm had his rendezvous. After making her acquaintance, Josef would leave. He would make an excuse to the effect that he was very busy and left them alone. He would gaze after Grojnm with the female stranger as they disappeared among the trees in Central Park. Usually, they would actually meet at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street by the fountain - the romantic spot the two green Jews had sought out for themselves and of which they were very fond. The fountain, with the spraying water and the doves flying around it, reminded Josef of Paris.

From these dates, at long last, Grojnm found his destined one. Josef continued to remain on his own, although he was pleased, in his heart, for the other's good fortune. From time to time, he visited the freshly furnished dwelling of his friend Grojnm with his pleasant, American-born little wife Phyllis, whose first husband had fallen in the War, in the Philippines.

Josef decided he would also try his luck. [Just] maybe...

