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Along with hundreds of other American soldiers, Wiktor spent a few months in an army camp, from where he was later sent off to somewhere in North Africa. Where exactly - he did not know himself.

Before Wiktor's departure from New York Harbour, Josef asked him to make efforts, at the first opportunity - once France was liberated - to look for his wife Rywka, who was currently somewhere in a small French town, but was sure to return to Paris as soon as the city was liberated. Josef would write him Rywka's address. Wiktor promised he would not forget this. He would write letters, and only [hoped] he would emerge alive and well from the combat that the American army was now facing. Who knew where he would end up?

As Providence would have it, Wiktor made it through all the perils of the War. He participated in the famous Normandy invasion. Josef received letters from Wiktor, to the effect that he had emerged from all the dangers safe and sound and was currently in Germany. It would not be long now. The American army was approaching Paris. He could not write much, but he had come out of Normandy alive, and hoped to make it through everything safely.

Days and months race by. Josef is working and, at the same time, absorbs himself in continuous communal activity. Victory approaches. The Nazi barbarians are beaten on all fronts. They are chased like beasts back into their lairs, in Germany's half-destroyed cities, which are being constantly bombarded. France is liberated and Wiktor is now in Paris.

He has been given leave and has received a permit to stay in Paris for a fortnight. He writes to Josef that the meeting has been a great, happy surprise for Rywka, whom he refers to as "Mother". She received him joyously. He entered the house, according to the address he had and, there, found Rywka, her elderly father Reb Szmul and her brother-in-law Vladimir.

Immediately upon entering the residence, Wiktor inquired, "Are you Rywka Szalit, Josef's wife?".

"Yes", was her reply.

"And I am Wiktor, your son!", he said smilingly.

Rywka embraced him. "I already know everything, I already know everything", she greeted him with tears of joy. They sat for hours on end. She recounted to Wiktor her experiences during the years the Nazis were in power there [in France].

In this letter, Wiktor writes that he is unable to recount everything in detail - the rest would already be told by one of the two of them, whoever arrived in America first. The way things looked, Rywka would be in the United States before him, as it appeared the American army would still need to continue to remain in Europe for a long time to come.

Josef awaited Rywka's arrival with mixed feelings. He did everything so that Rywka's voyage should be comfortable, and that she should have all her travel expenditures in the best manner.

Money was the least of the things that gave him unrest. Money comes and goes. He would work and earn for his sustenance - of this his was sure. This was not Poland or France. Here, he had friends and acquaintances, and he would not be lost. What did give him unrest and caused him inner turmoil was the foreboding he had regarding coming together with Rywka once again. Since their marriage, their life had been far from happy. It had been thus from the start.

Their life had gone in zigzags, in joy and in grief - minutes of happiness, accompanied by estrangement and filled with sorrowful experiences. The strangeness between them had intensified to even a higher degree, particularly following the death of their only daughter, Sure'le. It was as if a wall had risen higher and higher, [until] completely separating the two of them.

Nevertheless, despite the estrangement between them, the sense of responsibility now came. He was her husband and he needed to do everything to drive away this feeling of alienation, and break down the wall that had grown between them during the years of the War. How would Rywka react to all that he had done - his sham marriage to Miriam, to enable him, Miriam, Wiktor and Stefa to save themselves from Hitler, may his name be obliterated, and from Soviet Russia, to find a refuge in the free land of America?

Would Rywka comprehend that he could not have done otherwise? These questions tortured Josef, as he waited for Rywka to be here in New York any day now.

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Mirl, too, awaited Rywka's arrival with great impatience. Rywka, once her close friend, had indeed won Josef and taken him away from her - all the same, Mirl was waiting to see Rywka face to face. Rywka's brother Aron, who had not seen Rywka for years already, since he had left his *shtetl* more than thirty years before, when Rywka was still practically a child, was also waiting for Rywka.

And here Josef is already standing by the ship on which Rywka is to have arrived. He sees her from afar. He recognises her step on the stairs. She is made up and very beautifully dressed. His heart is pounding inside him and he does not know if it is from joy, or from the fear of the unknown awaiting him with Rywka's arrival. They exchange kisses. Mirl falls on Rywka's neck. They weep and they laugh. Aron recognises his sister Rywka from the photograph. She looks at her brother Aron, whom she barely remembers. And now she contemplates Josef. She smiles wordlessly. In her silence, Josef senses that she is carrying a secret in her heart - a secret she cannot articulate to him.

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On the way home, Josef is full of talk. He asks Rywka one question after another, without waiting for a reply. He tells her that, for the time being, she will have to live with him in the single room, where he is living as a boarder. She will repose for now - he has tended to everything. Rywka sat in the taxi without a word and smiled tiredly. She spoke as little as possible.

On the following day, Rywka was more loquacious. She understood everything. She asked about Miriam, but was not too insistent.

“You do not have to tell me everything – I understand it all. After all, it could not have been any other way. The dark War is to blame for everything. Since we were wed, there has always been someone. First Mirl, and now Miriam. Yes, Josef, you could not have done otherwise. You had to save Miriam’s life. Well, I also have something to tell you.”

And Rywka began to tell Josef about her life in France during the years of the War.

