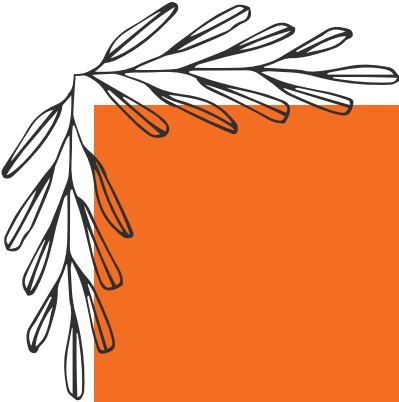




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# BORN A CRIME

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STORIES FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDHOOD



TREVOR NOAH



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First Edition

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# IMMORALITY ACT, 1927

**To prohibit illicit carnal intercourse  
between Europeans and natives and  
other acts in relation thereto.**

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**B**E IT ENACTED by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, the Senate and the House of Assembly of the Union of South Africa, as follows:—

1. Any European male who has illicit carnal intercourse with a native female, and any native male who has illicit carnal intercourse with a European female . . . shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years.

2. Any native female who permits any European male to have illicit carnal intercourse with her and any European female who permits any native male to have illicit carnal intercourse with her shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding four years. . . .

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**T**he genius of apartheid was convincing people who were the overwhelming majority to turn on each other. Apart hate, is what it was. You separate people into groups and make them hate one another so you can run them all.

At the time, black South Africans outnumbered white South Africans nearly five to one, yet we were divided into different tribes with different languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Sotho, Venda, Ndebele, Tsonga, Pedi, and more. Long before apartheid existed these tribal factions clashed and warred with one another. Then white rule used that animosity to divide and conquer. All nonwhites were systematically classified into various groups and subgroups. Then these groups were given differing levels of rights and privileges in order to keep them at odds.

Perhaps the starkest of these divisions was between South Africa's two dominant groups, the Zulu and the Xhosa. The Zulu man is known as the warrior. He is proud. He puts his head down and fights. When the colonial armies invaded, the Zulu charged into battle with nothing but spears and shields against men with guns. The Zulu were slaughtered by the thousands, but they never stopped fighting. The Xhosa, on the other hand, pride themselves on being the thinkers. My mother is Xhosa. Nelson Mandela was Xhosa. The Xhosa waged a long war against the white man as well, but after experiencing the futility of battle against a better-armed foe, many Xhosa chiefs took a more nimble approach. "These white people are here whether we like it or not," they said. "Let's see what tools they possess that can be useful to us. Instead of being resistant to English, let's learn English. We'll understand what the white man is saying, and we can force him to negotiate with us."

The Zulu went to war with the white man. The Xhosa played chess

with the white man. For a long time neither was particularly successful, and each blamed the other for a problem neither had created. Bitterness festered. For decades those feelings were held in check by a common enemy. Then apartheid fell, Mandela walked free, and black South Africa went to war with itself.

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Sometimes in big Hollywood movies they'll have these crazy chase scenes where somebody jumps or gets thrown from a moving car. The person hits the ground and rolls for a bit. Then they come to a stop and pop up and dust themselves off, like it was no big deal. Whenever I see that I think, *That's rubbish. Getting thrown out of a moving car hurts way worse than that.*

I was nine years old when my mother threw me out of a moving car. It happened on a Sunday. I know it was on a Sunday because we were coming home from church, and every Sunday in my childhood meant church. We *never* missed church. My mother was—and still is—a deeply religious woman. Very Christian. Like indigenous peoples around the world, black South Africans adopted the religion of our colonizers. By “adopt” I mean it was forced on us. The white man was

quite stern with the native. “You need to pray to Jesus,” he said. “Jesus will save you.” To which the native replied, “Well, we do need to be saved—saved from *you*, but that’s beside the point. So let’s give this Jesus thing a shot.”

My whole family is religious, but where my mother was Team Jesus all the way, my grandmother balanced her Christian faith with the traditional Xhosa beliefs she’d grown up with, communicating with the spirits of our ancestors. For a long time I didn’t understand why so many black people had abandoned their indigenous faith for Christianity. But the more we went to church and the longer I sat in those pews the more I learned about how Christianity works: If you’re Native American and you pray to the wolves, you’re a savage. If you’re African and you pray to your ancestors, you’re a primitive. But when white people pray to a guy who turns water into wine, well, that’s just common sense.

My childhood involved church, or some form of church, at least four nights a week. Tuesday night was the prayer meeting. Wednesday night was Bible study. Thursday night was Youth church. Friday and Saturday we had off. (Time to sin!) Then on Sunday we went to church. Three churches, to be precise. The reason we went to three churches was because my mom said each church gave her something different. The first church offered jubilant praise of the Lord. The second church offered deep analysis of the scripture, which my mom loved. The third church offered passion and catharsis; it was a place where you truly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit inside you. Completely by coincidence, as we moved back and forth between these churches, I noticed that each one had its own distinct racial makeup: Jubilant church was mixed church. Analytical church was white church. And passionate, cathartic church, that was black church.

Mixed church was Rhema Bible Church. Rhema was one of those huge, supermodern, suburban megachurches. The pastor, Ray McCauley, was an ex-bodybuilder with a big smile and the personality of a cheerleader. Pastor Ray had competed in the 1974 Mr. Universe competition. He placed third. The winner that year was Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Every week, Ray would be up onstage working really hard to make Jesus cool. There was arena-style seating and a rock band jamming out with the latest Christian contemporary pop. Everyone sang along, and if you didn't know the words that was okay because they were all right up there on the Jumbotron for you. It was Christian karaoke, basically. I always had a blast at mixed church.

White church was Rosebank Union in Sandton, a very white and wealthy part of Johannesburg. I *loved* white church because I didn't actually have to go to the main service. My mom would go to that, and I would go to the youth side, to Sunday school. In Sunday school we got to read cool stories. Noah and the flood was obviously a favorite; I had a personal stake there. But I also loved the stories about Moses parting the Red Sea, David slaying Goliath, Jesus whipping the money changers in the temple.

I grew up in a home with very little exposure to popular culture. Boyz II Men were not allowed in my mother's house. Songs about some guy grinding on a girl all night long? No, no, no. That was forbidden. I'd hear the other kids at school singing "End of the Road," and I'd have no clue what was going on. I knew *of* these Boyz II Men, but I didn't really know who they were. The only music I knew was from church: soaring, uplifting songs praising Jesus. It was the same with movies. My mom didn't want my mind polluted by movies with sex and violence. So the Bible was my action movie. Samson was my superhero. He was my He-Man. A guy beating a thousand people to death with the jawbone of a donkey? That's pretty badass. Eventually you get to Paul writing letters to the Ephesians and it loses the plot, but the Old Testament and the Gospels? I could quote you anything from those pages, chapter and verse. There were Bible games and quizzes every week at white church, and I kicked everyone's ass.

Then there was black church. There was always some kind of black church service going on somewhere, and we tried them all. In the township, that typically meant an outdoor, tent-revival-style church. We usually went to my grandmother's church, an old-school Methodist congregation, five hundred African grannies in blue-and-white blouses,

clutching their Bibles and patiently burning in the hot African sun. Black church was rough, I won't lie. No air-conditioning. No lyrics up on Jumbotrons. And it lasted forever, three or four hours at least, which confused me because white church was only like an hour—in and out, thanks for coming. But at black church I would sit there for what felt like an eternity, trying to figure out why time moved so slowly. *Is it possible for time to actually stop? If so, why does it stop at black church and not at white church?* I eventually decided black people needed more time with Jesus because we suffered more. “I’m here to fill up on my blessings for the week,” my mother used to say. The more time we spent at church, she reckoned, the more blessings we accrued, like a Starbucks Rewards Card.

Black church had one saving grace. If I could make it to the third or fourth hour I’d get to watch the pastor cast demons out of people. People possessed by demons would start running up and down the aisles like madmen, screaming in tongues. The ushers would tackle them, like bouncers at a club, and hold them down for the pastor. The pastor would grab their heads and violently shake them back and forth, shouting, “I cast out this spirit in the name of *Jesus!*” Some pastors were more violent than others, but what they all had in common was that they wouldn’t stop until the demon was gone and the congregant had gone limp and collapsed on the stage. The person had to fall. Because if he didn’t fall that meant the demon was powerful and the pastor needed to come at him even harder. You could be a linebacker in the NFL. Didn’t matter. That pastor was taking you *down*. Good Lord, that was fun.

Christian karaoke, badass action stories, and violent faith healers—man, I loved church. The thing I didn’t love was the lengths we had to go to in order to get to church. It was an epic slog. We lived in Eden Park, a tiny suburb way outside Johannesburg. It took us an hour to get to white church, another forty-five minutes to get to mixed church, and another forty-five minutes to drive out to Soweto for black church. Then, if that wasn’t bad enough, some Sundays we’d double back to white church for a special evening service. By the time we finally got home at night, I’d collapse into bed.

This particular Sunday, the Sunday I was hurled from a moving car, started out like any other Sunday. My mother woke me up, made me porridge for breakfast. I took my bath while she dressed my baby brother Andrew, who was nine months old. Then we went out to the driveway, but once we were finally all strapped in and ready to go, the car wouldn't start. My mom had this ancient, broken-down, bright-tangerine Volkswagen Beetle that she picked up for next to nothing. The reason she got it for next to nothing was because it was always breaking down. To this day I hate secondhand cars. Almost everything that's ever gone wrong in my life I can trace back to a secondhand car. Secondhand cars made me get detention for being late for school. Secondhand cars left us hitchhiking on the side of the freeway. A secondhand car was also the reason my mom got married. If it hadn't been for the Volkswagen that didn't work, we never would have looked for the mechanic who became the husband who became the stepfather who became the man who tortured us for years and put a bullet in the back of my mother's head—I'll take the new car with the warranty every time.

As much as I loved church, the idea of a nine-hour slog, from mixed church to white church to black church then doubling back to white church again, was just too much to contemplate. It was bad enough in a car, but taking public transport would be twice as long and twice as hard. When the Volkswagen refused to start, inside my head I was praying, *Please say we'll just stay home. Please say we'll just stay home.* Then I glanced over to see the determined look on my mother's face, her jaw set, and I knew I had a long day ahead of me.

"Come," she said. "We're going to catch minibuses."

My mother is as stubborn as she is religious. Once her mind's made up, that's it. Indeed, obstacles that would normally lead a person to change their plans, like a car breaking down, only made her more determined to forge ahead.

"It's the Devil," she said about the stalled car. "The Devil doesn't want us to go to church. That's why we've got to catch minibuses."

Whenever I found myself up against my mother's faith-based ob-

stinacy, I would try, as respectfully as possible, to counter with an opposing point of view.

“Or,” I said, “the Lord knows that today we *shouldn’t* go to church, which is why he made sure the car wouldn’t start, so that we stay at home as a family and take a day of rest, because even the Lord rested.”

“Ah, that’s the Devil talking, Trevor.”

“No, because Jesus is in control, and if Jesus is in control and we pray to Jesus, he would let the car start, but he hasn’t, therefore—”

“No, Trevor! Sometimes Jesus puts obstacles in your way to see if you overcome them. Like Job. This could be a test.”

“Ah! Yes, Mom. But the test could be to see if we’re willing to accept what has happened and stay at home and praise Jesus for his wisdom.”

“No. That’s the Devil talking. Now go change your clothes.”

“But, Mom!”

“Trevor! *Sun’qhela!*”

*Sun’qhela* is a phrase with many shades of meaning. It says “don’t undermine me,” “don’t underestimate me,” and “just try me.” It’s a command and a threat, all at once. It’s a common thing for Xhosa parents to say to their kids. Any time I heard it I knew it meant the conversation was over, and if I uttered another word I was in for a hiding—what we call a spanking.

At the time, I attended a private Catholic school called Maryvale College. I was the champion of the Maryvale sports day every single year, and my mother won the moms’ trophy every single year. Why? Because she was always chasing me to kick my ass, and I was always running not to get my ass kicked. Nobody ran like me and my mom. She wasn’t one of those “Come over here and get your hiding” type moms. She’d deliver it to you free of charge. She was a thrower, too. Whatever was next to her was coming at you. If it was something breakable, I had to catch it and put it down. If it broke, that would be my fault, too, and the ass-kicking would be that much worse. If she threw a vase at me, I’d have to catch it, put it down, and then run. In a split second, I’d have to think, *Is it valuable? Yes. Is it breakable? Yes. Catch it, put it down, now run.*

We had a very Tom and Jerry relationship, me and my mom. She was the strict disciplinarian; I was naughty as shit. She would send me out to buy groceries, and I wouldn't come right home because I'd be using the change from the milk and bread to play arcade games at the supermarket. I loved videogames. I was a master at *Street Fighter*. I could go forever on a single play. I'd drop a coin in, time would fly, and the next thing I knew there'd be a woman behind me with a belt. It was a race. I'd take off out the door and through the dusty streets of Eden Park, clambering over walls, ducking through backyards. It was a normal thing in our neighborhood. Everybody knew: That Trevor child would come through like a bat out of hell, and his mom would be right there behind him. She could go at a full sprint in high heels, but if she really wanted to come after me she had this thing where she'd kick her shoes off while still going at top speed. She'd do this weird move with her ankles and the heels would go flying and she wouldn't even miss a step. That's when I knew, *Okay, she's in turbo mode now.*

When I was little she always caught me, but as I got older I got faster, and when speed failed her she'd use her wits. If I was about to get away she'd yell, "*Stop! Thief!*" She'd do this to her own child. In South Africa, nobody gets involved in other people's business—unless it's mob justice, and then everybody wants in. So she'd yell "*Thief!*" knowing it would bring the whole neighborhood out against me, and then I'd have strangers trying to grab me and tackle me, and I'd have to duck and dive and dodge them as well, all the while screaming, "I'm not a thief! I'm her son!"

The last thing I wanted to do that Sunday morning was climb into some crowded minibus, but the second I heard my mom say *sun'qhela* I knew my fate was sealed. She gathered up Andrew and we climbed out of the Volkswagen and went out to try to catch a ride.

I was five years old, nearly six, when Nelson Mandela was released from prison. I remember seeing it on TV and everyone being happy. I didn't know why we were happy, just that we were. I was aware of the

fact that there was a thing called apartheid and it was ending and that was a big deal, but I didn't understand the intricacies of it.

What I do remember, what I will never forget, is the violence that followed. The triumph of democracy over apartheid is sometimes called the Bloodless Revolution. It is called that because very little white blood was spilled. Black blood ran in the streets.

As the apartheid regime fell, we knew that the black man was now going to rule. The question was, which black man? Spates of violence broke out between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the ANC, the African National Congress, as they jockeyed for power. The political dynamic between these two groups was very complicated, but the simplest way to understand it is as a proxy war between Zulu and Xhosa. The Inkatha was predominantly Zulu, very militant and very nationalistic. The ANC was a broad coalition encompassing many different tribes, but its leaders at the time were primarily Xhosa. Instead of uniting for peace they turned on one another, committing acts of unbelievable savagery. Massive riots broke out. Thousands of people were killed. Neck-lacing was common. That's where people would hold someone down and put a rubber tire over his torso, pinning his arms. Then they'd douse him with petrol and set him on fire and burn him alive. The ANC did it to Inkatha. Inkatha did it to the ANC. I saw one of those charred bodies on the side of the road one day on my way to school. In the evenings my mom and I would turn on our little black-and-white TV and watch the news. A dozen people killed. Fifty people killed. A hundred people killed.

Eden Park sat not far from the sprawling townships of the East Rand, Thokoza and Katlehong, which were the sites of some of the most horrific Inkatha-ANC clashes. Once a month at least we'd drive home and the neighborhood would be on fire. Hundreds of rioters in the street. My mom would edge the car slowly through the crowds and around blockades made of flaming tires. Nothing burns like a tire—it rages with a fury you can't imagine. As we drove past the burning blockades, it felt like we were inside an oven. I used to say to my mom, "I think Satan burns tires in Hell."

Whenever the riots broke out, all our neighbors would wisely hole up behind closed doors. But not my mom. She'd head straight out, and as we'd inch our way past the blockades, she'd give the rioters this look. *Let me pass. I'm not involved in this shit.* She was unwavering in the face of danger. That always amazed me. It didn't matter that there was a war on our doorstep. She had things to do, places to be. It was the same stubbornness that kept her going to church despite a broken-down car. There could be five hundred rioters with a blockade of burning tires on the main road out of Eden Park, and my mother would say, "Get dressed. I've got to go to work. You've got to go to school."

"But aren't you afraid?" I'd say. "There's only one of you and there's so many of them."

"Honey, I'm not alone," she'd say. "I've got all of Heaven's angels behind me."

"Well, it would be nice if we could *see* them," I'd say. "Because I don't think the rioters know they're there."

She'd tell me not to worry. She always came back to the phrase she lived by: "If God is with me, who can be against me?" She was never scared. Even when she should have been.

That carless Sunday we made our circuit of churches, ending up, as usual, at white church. When we walked out of Rosebank Union it was dark and we were alone. It had been an endless day of minibuses from mixed church to black church to white church, and I was exhausted. It was nine o'clock at least. In those days, with all the violence and riots going on, you did not want to be out that late at night. We were standing at the corner of Jellicoe Avenue and Oxford Road, right in the heart of Johannesburg's wealthy, white suburbia, and there were no minibuses. The streets were empty.

I so badly wanted to turn to my mom and say, "You see? This is why God wanted us to stay home." But one look at the expression on her face, and I knew better than to speak. There were times I could talk smack to my mom—this was not one of them.

We waited and waited for a minibus to come by. Under apartheid the government provided no public transportation for blacks, but white people still needed us to show up to mop their floors and clean their bathrooms. Necessity being the mother of invention, black people created their own transit system, an informal network of bus routes, controlled by private associations operating entirely outside the law. Because the minibus business was completely unregulated, it was basically organized crime. Different groups ran different routes, and they would fight over who controlled what. There was bribery and general shadiness that went on, a great deal of violence, and a lot of protection money paid to avoid violence. The one thing you didn't do was steal a route from a rival group. Drivers who stole routes would get killed. Being unregulated, minibuses were also very unreliable. When they came, they came. When they didn't, they didn't.

Standing outside Rosebank Union, I was literally falling asleep on my feet. Not a minibus in sight. Eventually my mother said, "Let's hitchhike." We walked and walked, and after what felt like an eternity, a car drove up and stopped. The driver offered us a ride, and we climbed in. We hadn't gone ten feet when suddenly a minibus swerved right in front of the car and cut us off.

A Zulu driver got out with an *iwisa*, a large, traditional Zulu weapon—a war club, basically. They're used to smash people's skulls in. Another guy, his crony, got out of the passenger side. They walked up to the driver's side of the car we were in, grabbed the man who'd offered us a ride, pulled him out, and started shoving their clubs in his face. "Why are you stealing our customers? Why are you picking people up?"

It looked like they were going to kill this guy. I knew that happened sometimes. My mom spoke up. "Hey, listen, he was just helping me. Leave him. We'll ride with you. That's what we wanted in the first place." So we got out of the first car and climbed into the minibus.

We were the only passengers in the minibus. In addition to being violent gangsters, South African minibus drivers are notorious for complaining and haranguing passengers as they drive. This driver was

a particularly angry one. As we rode along, he started lecturing my mother about being in a car with a man who was not her husband. My mother didn't suffer lectures from strange men. She told him to mind his own business, and when he heard her speaking in Xhosa, that really set him off. The stereotypes of Zulu and Xhosa women were as ingrained as those of the men. Zulu women were well-behaved and dutiful. Xhosa women were promiscuous and unfaithful. And here was my mother, his tribal enemy, a Xhosa woman alone with two small children—one of them a mixed child, no less. Not just a whore but a whore who sleeps with white men. "Oh, you're a *Xhosa*," he said. "That explains it. Climbing into strange men's cars. Disgusting woman."

My mom kept telling him off and he kept calling her names, yelling at her from the front seat, wagging his finger in the rearview mirror and growing more and more menacing until finally he said, "That's the problem with you Xhosa women. You're all sluts—and tonight you're going to learn your lesson."

He sped off. He was driving fast, and he wasn't stopping, only slowing down to check for traffic at the intersections before speeding through. Death was never far away from anybody back then. At that point my mother could be raped. We could be killed. These were all viable options. I didn't fully comprehend the danger we were in at the moment; I was so tired that I just wanted to sleep. Plus my mom stayed very calm. She didn't panic, so I didn't know to panic. She just kept trying to reason with him.

"I'm sorry if we've upset you, *bhuti*. You can just let us out here—"

"No."

"Really, it's fine. We can just walk—"

"No."

He raced along Oxford Road, the lanes empty, no other cars out. I was sitting closest to the minibus's sliding door. My mother sat next to me, holding baby Andrew. She looked out the window at the passing road and then leaned over to me and whispered, "Trevor, when he slows down at the next intersection, I'm going to open the door and we're going to jump."

I didn't hear a word of what she was saying, because by that point I'd completely nodded off. When we came to the next traffic light, the driver eased off the gas a bit to look around and check the road. My mother reached over, pulled the sliding door open, grabbed me, and threw me out as far as she could. Then she took Andrew, curled herself in a ball around him, and leaped out behind me.

It felt like a dream until the pain hit. *Bam!* I smacked hard on the pavement. My mother landed right beside me and we tumbled and tumbled and rolled and rolled. I was wide awake now. I went from half asleep to *What the hell?!* Eventually I came to a stop and pulled myself up, completely disoriented. I looked around and saw my mother, already on her feet. She turned and looked at me and screamed.

*"Run!"*

So I ran, and she ran, and nobody ran like me and my mom.

It's weird to explain, but I just knew what to do. It was animal instinct, learned in a world where violence was always lurking and waiting to erupt. In the townships, when the police came swooping in with their riot gear and armored cars and helicopters, I knew: *Run for cover. Run and hide.* I knew that as a five-year-old. Had I lived a different life, getting thrown out of a speeding minibus might have fazed me. I'd have stood there like an idiot, going, "What's happening, Mom? Why are my legs so sore?" But there was none of that. Mom said "run," and I ran. Like the gazelle runs from the lion, I ran.

The men stopped the minibus and got out and tried to chase us, but they didn't stand a chance. We smoked them. I think they were in shock. I still remember glancing back and seeing them give up with a look of utter bewilderment on their faces. *What just happened? Who'd have thought a woman with two small children could run so fast?* They didn't know they were dealing with the reigning champs of the Maryvale College sports day. We kept going and going until we made it to a twenty-four-hour petrol station and called the police. By then the men were long gone.

I still didn't know why any of this had happened; I'd been running on pure adrenaline. Once we stopped running I realized how much pain I

was in. I looked down, and the skin on my arms was scraped and torn. I was cut up and bleeding all over. Mom was, too. My baby brother was fine, though, incredibly. My mom had wrapped herself around him, and he'd come through without a scratch. I turned to her in shock.

"What was *that*?! Why are we running?!"

"What do you mean, 'Why are we running?' Those men were trying to kill us."

"You never told me that! You just threw me out of the car!"

"I did tell you. Why didn't you jump?"

"Jump?! I was asleep!"

"So I should have left you there for them to kill you?"

"At least they would have woken me up before they killed me."

Back and forth we went. I was too confused and too angry about getting thrown out of the car to realize what had happened. My mother had saved my life.

As we caught our breath and waited for the police to come and drive us home, she said, "Well, at least we're safe, thank God."

But I was nine years old and I knew better. I wasn't going to keep quiet this time.

"No, Mom! This was *not* thanks to God! You should have listened to God when he told us to stay at home when the car wouldn't start, because clearly the Devil tricked us into coming out tonight."

"No, Trevor! That's not how the Devil works. This is part of God's plan, and if He wanted us here then He had a reason . . ."

And on and on and there we were, back at it, arguing about God's will. Finally I said, "Look, Mom. I know you love Jesus, but maybe next week you could ask him to meet us at our house. Because this really wasn't a fun night."

She broke out in a huge smile and started laughing. I started laughing, too, and we stood there, this little boy and his mom, our arms and legs covered in blood and dirt, laughing together through the pain in the light of a petrol station on the side of the road in the middle of the night.

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**A**partheid was perfect racism. It took centuries to develop, starting all the way back in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company landed at the Cape of Good Hope and established a trading colony, Kaapstad, later known as Cape Town, a rest stop for ships traveling between Europe and India. To impose white rule, the Dutch colonists went to war with the natives, ultimately developing a set of laws to subjugate and enslave them. When the British took over the Cape Colony, the descendants of the original Dutch settlers trekked inland and developed their own language, culture, and customs, eventually becoming their own people, the Afrikaners—the white tribe of Africa.

The British abolished slavery in name but kept it in practice. They did so because, in the mid-1800s, in what had been written off as a near-worthless way station on the route to the Far East, a few lucky capitalists stumbled upon the richest gold and diamond reserves in the world, and an endless supply of expendable bodies was needed to go in the ground and get it all out.

As the British Empire fell, the Afrikaner rose up to claim South Africa as his rightful inheritance. To maintain power in the face of the country's rising and restless black majority, the government realized they needed a newer and more robust set of tools. They set up a formal commission to go out and study institutionalized racism all over the world. They went to Australia. They went to the Netherlands. They went to America. They saw what worked, what didn't. Then they came back and published a report, and the government used that knowledge to build the most advanced system of racial oppression known to man.

Apartheid was a police state, a system of surveillance and laws designed to keep black people under total control. A full compendium of those laws would run more than three thousand pages and weigh ap-

proximately ten pounds, but the general thrust of it should be easy enough for any American to understand. In America you had the forced removal of the native onto reservations coupled with slavery followed by segregation. Imagine all three of those things happening to the same group of people at the same time. That was apartheid.

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BORN A CRIME

I grew up in South Africa during apartheid, which was awkward because I was raised in a mixed family, with me being the mixed one in the family. My mother, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah, is black. My father, Robert, is white. Swiss/German, to be precise, which Swiss/Germans invariably are. During apartheid, one of the worst crimes you could commit was having sexual relations with a person of another race. Needless to say, my parents committed that crime.

In any society built on institutionalized racism, race-mixing doesn't merely challenge the system as unjust, it reveals the system as unsustainable and incoherent. Race-mixing proves that races can mix—and in a lot of cases, *want* to mix. Because a mixed person embodies that rebuke to the logic of the system, race-mixing becomes a crime worse than treason.

Humans being humans and sex being sex, that prohibition never

stopped anyone. There were mixed kids in South Africa nine months after the first Dutch boats hit the beach in Table Bay. Just like in America, the colonists here had their way with the native women, as colonists so often do. Unlike in America, where anyone with one drop of black blood automatically became black, in South Africa mixed people came to be classified as their own separate group, neither black nor white but what we call “colored.” Colored people, black people, white people, and Indian people were forced to register their race with the government. Based on those classifications, millions of people were uprooted and relocated. Indian areas were segregated from colored areas, which were segregated from black areas—all of them segregated from white areas and separated from one another by buffer zones of empty land. Laws were passed prohibiting sex between Europeans and natives, laws that were later amended to prohibit sex between whites and all nonwhites.

The government went to insane lengths to try to enforce these new laws. The penalty for breaking them was five years in prison. There were whole police squads whose only job was to go around peeking through windows—clearly an assignment for only the finest law enforcement officers. And if an interracial couple got caught, God help them. The police would kick down the door, drag the people out, beat them, arrest them. At least that’s what they did to the black person. With the white person it was more like, “Look, I’ll just say you were drunk, but don’t do it again, eh? Cheers.” That’s how it was with a white man and a black woman. If a black man was caught having sex with a white woman, he’d be lucky if he wasn’t charged with rape.

If you ask my mother whether she ever considered the ramifications of having a mixed child under apartheid, she will say no. She wanted to do something, figured out a way to do it, and then she did it. She had a level of fearlessness that you have to possess to take on something like she did. If you stop to consider the ramifications, you’ll never do anything. Still, it was a crazy, reckless thing to do. A million things had to go right for us to slip through the cracks the way we did for as long as we did.

Under apartheid, if you were a black man you worked on a farm or in a factory or in a mine. If you were a black woman, you worked in a factory or as a maid. Those were pretty much your only options. My mother didn't want to work in a factory. She was a horrible cook and never would have stood for some white lady telling her what to do all day. So, true to her nature, she found an option that was not among the ones presented to her: She took a secretarial course, a typing class. At the time, a black woman learning how to type was like a blind person learning how to drive. It's an admirable effort, but you're unlikely to ever be called upon to execute the task. By law, white-collar jobs and skilled-labor jobs were reserved for whites. Black people didn't work in offices. My mom, however, was a rebel, and, fortunately for her, her rebellion came along at the right moment.

In the early 1980s, the South African government began making minor reforms in an attempt to quell international protest over the atrocities and human rights abuses of apartheid. Among those reforms was the token hiring of black workers in low-level white-collar jobs. Like typists. Through an employment agency she got a job as a secretary at ICI, a multinational pharmaceutical company in Braamfontein, a suburb of Johannesburg.

When my mom started working, she still lived with my grandmother in Soweto, the township where the government had relocated my family decades before. But my mother was unhappy at home, and when she was twenty-two she ran away to live in downtown Johannesburg. There was only one problem: It was illegal for black people to live there.

The ultimate goal of apartheid was to make South Africa a white country, with every black person stripped of his or her citizenship and relocated to live in the homelands, the Bantustans, semi-sovereign black territories that were in reality puppet states of the government in Pretoria. But this so-called white country could not function without black labor to produce its wealth, which meant black people had to be allowed to live near white areas in the townships, government-planned ghettos built to house black workers, like Soweto. The township was where you lived, but your status as a laborer was the only thing that permitted you

to stay there. If your papers were revoked for any reason, you could be deported back to the homelands.

To leave the township for work in the city, or for any other reason, you had to carry a pass with your ID number; otherwise you could be arrested. There was also a curfew: After a certain hour, blacks had to be back home in the township or risk arrest. My mother didn't care. She was determined to never go home again. So she stayed in town, hiding and sleeping in public restrooms until she learned the rules of navigating the city from the other black women who had contrived to live there: prostitutes.

Many of the prostitutes in town were Xhosa. They spoke my mother's language and showed her how to survive. They taught her how to dress up in a pair of maid's overalls to move around the city without being questioned. They also introduced her to white men who were willing to rent out flats in town. A lot of these men were foreigners, Germans and Portuguese who didn't care about the law and were happy to sign a lease giving a prostitute a place to live and work in exchange for a steady piece on the side. My mom wasn't interested in any such arrangement, but thanks to her job she did have money to pay rent. She met a German fellow through one of her prostitute friends, and he agreed to let her a flat in his name. She moved in and bought a bunch of maid's overalls to wear. She was caught and arrested many times, for not having her ID on the way home from work, for being in a white area after hours. The penalty for violating the pass laws was thirty days in jail or a fine of fifty rand, nearly half her monthly salary. She would scrape together the money, pay the fine, and go right back about her business.

My mom's secret flat was in a neighborhood called Hillbrow. She lived in number 203. Down the corridor was a tall, brown-haired, brown-eyed Swiss/German expat named Robert. He lived in 206. As a former trading colony, South Africa has always had a large expatriate community. People find their way here. Tons of Germans. Lots of Dutch. Hillbrow

at the time was the Greenwich Village of South Africa. It was a thriving scene, cosmopolitan and liberal. There were galleries and underground theaters where artists and performers dared to speak up and criticize the government in front of integrated crowds. There were restaurants and nightclubs, a lot of them foreign-owned, that served a mixed clientele, black people who hated the status quo and white people who simply thought it ridiculous. These people would have secret get-togethers, too, usually in someone's flat or in empty basements that had been converted into clubs. Integration by its nature was a political act, but the get-togethers themselves weren't political at all. People would meet up and hang out, have parties.

My mom threw herself into that scene. She was always out at some club, some party, dancing, meeting people. She was a regular at the Hillbrow Tower, one of the tallest buildings in Africa at that time. It had a nightclub with a rotating dance floor on the top floor. It was an exhilarating time but still dangerous. Sometimes the restaurants and clubs would get shut down, sometimes not. Sometimes the performers and patrons would get arrested, sometimes not. It was a roll of the dice. My mother never knew whom to trust, who might turn her in to the police. Neighbors would report on one another. The girlfriends of the white men in my mom's block of flats had every reason to report a black woman—a prostitute, no doubt—living among them. And you must remember that black people worked for the government as well. As far as her white neighbors knew, my mom could have been a spy posing as a prostitute posing as a maid, sent into Hillbrow to inform on whites who were breaking the law. That's how a police state works—everyone thinks everyone else is the police.

Living alone in the city, not being trusted and not being able to trust, my mother started spending more and more time in the company of someone with whom she felt safe: the tall Swiss man down the corridor in 206. He was forty-six. She was twenty-four. He was quiet and reserved; she was wild and free. She would stop by his flat to chat; they'd go to underground get-togethers, go dancing at the nightclub with the rotating dance floor. Something clicked.

I know that there was a genuine bond and a love between my parents. I saw it. But how romantic their relationship was, to what extent they were just friends, I can't say. These are things a child doesn't ask. All I do know is that one day she made her proposal.

"I want to have a kid," she told him.

"I don't want kids," he said.

"I didn't ask you to have a kid. I asked you to help me to have my kid. I just want the sperm from you."

"I'm Catholic," he said. "We don't do such things."

"You do know," she replied, "that I could sleep with you and go away and you would never know if you had a child or not. But I don't want that. Honor me with your yes so that I can live peacefully. I want a child of my own, and I want it from you. You will be able to see it as much as you like, but you will have no obligations. You don't have to talk to it. You don't have to pay for it. Just make this child for me."

For my mother's part, the fact that this man didn't particularly want a family with her, was prevented by law from having a family with her, was part of the attraction. She wanted a child, not a man stepping in to run her life. For my father's part, I know that for a long time he kept saying no. Eventually he said yes. Why he said yes is a question I will never have the answer to.

Nine months after that yes, on February 20, 1984, my mother checked into Hillbrow Hospital for a scheduled C-section delivery. Estranged from her family, pregnant by a man she could not be seen with in public, she was alone. The doctors took her up to the delivery room, cut open her belly, and reached in and pulled out a half-white, half-black child who violated any number of laws, statutes, and regulations—I was born a crime.

When the doctors pulled me out there was an awkward moment where they said, "Huh. That's a very light-skinned baby." A quick scan of the delivery room revealed no man standing around to take credit.

"Who is the father?" they asked.

“His father is from Swaziland,” my mother said, referring to the tiny, landlocked kingdom in the west of South Africa.

They probably knew she was lying, but they accepted it because they needed an explanation. Under apartheid, the government labeled everything on your birth certificate: race, tribe, nationality. Everything had to be categorized. My mother lied and said I was born in KaNgwane, the semi-sovereign homeland for Swazi people living in South Africa. So my birth certificate doesn’t say that I’m Xhosa, which technically I am. And it doesn’t say that I’m Swiss, which the government wouldn’t allow. It just says that I’m from another country.

My father isn’t on my birth certificate. Officially, he’s never been my father. And my mother, true to her word, was prepared for him not to be involved. She’d rented a new flat for herself in Joubert Park, the neighborhood adjacent to Hillbrow, and that’s where she took me when she left the hospital. The next week she went to visit him, with no baby. To her surprise, he asked where I was. “You said that you didn’t want to be involved,” she said. And he hadn’t, but once I existed he realized he couldn’t have a son living around the corner and not be a part of my life. So the three of us formed a kind of family, as much as our peculiar situation would allow. I lived with my mom. We’d sneak around and visit my dad when we could.

Where most children are proof of their parents’ love, I was the proof of their criminality. The only time I could be with my father was indoors. If we left the house, he’d have to walk across the street from us. My mom and I used to go to Joubert Park all the time. It’s the Central Park of Johannesburg—beautiful gardens, a zoo, a giant chessboard with human-sized pieces that people would play. My mother tells me that once, when I was a toddler, my dad tried to go with us. We were in the park, he was walking a good bit away from us, and I ran after him, screaming, “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!” People started looking. He panicked and ran away. I thought it was a game and kept chasing him.

I couldn’t walk with my mother, either; a light-skinned child with a black woman would raise too many questions. When I was a newborn, she could wrap me up and take me anywhere, but very quickly that was

no longer an option. I was a giant baby, an enormous child. When I was one you'd have thought I was two. When I was two, you'd have thought I was four. There was no way to hide me.

My mom, same as she'd done with her flat and with her maid's uniforms, found the cracks in the system. It was illegal to be mixed (to have a black parent and a white parent), but it was not illegal to be colored (to have two parents who were both colored). So my mom moved me around the world as a colored child. She found a crèche in a colored area where she could leave me while she was at work. There was a colored woman named Queen who lived in our block of flats. When we wanted to go out to the park, my mom would invite her to go with us. Queen would walk next to me and act like she was my mother, and my mother would walk a few steps behind, like she was the maid working for the colored woman. I've got dozens of pictures of me walking with this woman who looks like me but who isn't my mother. And the black woman standing behind us who looks like she's photobombing the picture, that's my mom. When we didn't have a colored woman to walk with us, my mom would risk walking me on her own. She would hold my hand or carry me, but if the police showed up she would have to drop me and pretend I wasn't hers, like I was a bag of weed.

When I was born, my mother hadn't seen her family in three years, but she wanted me to know them and wanted them to know me, so the prodigal daughter returned. We lived in town, but I would spend weeks at a time with my grandmother in Soweto, often during the holidays. I have so many memories from the place that in my mind it's like we lived there, too.

Soweto was designed to be bombed—that's how forward-thinking the architects of apartheid were. The township was a city unto itself, with a population of nearly one million. There were only two roads in and out. That was so the military could lock us in, quell any rebellion. And if the monkeys ever went crazy and tried to break out of their cage, the air force could fly over and bomb the shit out of everyone. Growing up, I never knew that my grandmother lived in the center of a bull's-eye.

In the city, as difficult as it was to get around, we managed. Enough

people were out and about, black, white, and colored, going to and from work, that we could get lost in the crowd. But only black people were permitted in Soweto. It was much harder to hide someone who looked like me, and the government was watching much more closely. In the white areas you rarely saw the police, and if you did it was Officer Friendly in his collared shirt and pressed pants. In Soweto the police were an occupying army. They didn't wear collared shirts. They wore riot gear. They were militarized. They operated in teams known as flying squads, because they would swoop in out of nowhere, riding in armored personnel carriers—hippos, we called them—tanks with enormous tires and slotted holes in the side of the vehicle to fire their guns out of. You didn't mess with a hippo. You saw one, you ran. That was a fact of life. The township was in a constant state of insurrection; someone was always marching or protesting somewhere and had to be suppressed. Playing in my grandmother's house, I'd hear gunshots, screams, tear gas being fired into crowds.

My memories of the hippos and the flying squads come from when I was five or six, when apartheid was finally coming apart. I never saw the police before that, because we could never risk the police seeing me. Whenever we went to Soweto, my grandmother refused to let me outside. If she was watching me it was, "No, no, no. He doesn't leave the house." Behind the wall, in the yard, I could play, but not in the street. And that's where the rest of the boys and girls were playing, in the street. My cousins, the neighborhood kids, they'd open the gate and head out and roam free and come back at dusk. I'd beg my grandmother to go outside.

"Please. *Please*, can I go play with my cousins?"

"No! They're going to take you!"

For the longest time I thought she meant that the other kids were going to steal me, but she was talking about the police. Children could be taken. Children *were* taken. The wrong color kid in the wrong color area, and the government could come in, strip your parents of custody, haul you off to an orphanage. To police the townships, the government relied on its network of *impipis*, the anonymous snitches who'd inform

on suspicious activity. There were also the blackjacks, black people who worked for the police. My grandmother's neighbor was a blackjack. She had to make sure he wasn't watching when she smuggled me in and out of the house.

My gran still tells the story of when I was three years old and, fed up with being a prisoner, I dug a hole under the gate in the driveway, wriggled through, and ran off. Everyone panicked. A search party went out and tracked me down. I had no idea how much danger I was putting everyone in. The family could have been deported, my gran could have been arrested, my mom might have gone to prison, and I probably would have been packed off to a home for colored kids.

So I was kept inside. Other than those few instances of walking in the park, the flashes of memory I have from when I was young are almost all indoors, me with my mom in her tiny flat, me by myself at my gran's. I didn't have any friends. I didn't know any kids besides my cousins. I wasn't a lonely kid—I was good at being alone. I'd read books, play with the toy that I had, make up imaginary worlds. I lived inside my head. I still live inside my head. To this day you can leave me alone for hours and I'm perfectly happy entertaining myself. I have to remember to be with people.

Obviously, I was not the only child born to black and white parents during apartheid. Traveling around the world today, I meet other mixed South Africans all the time. Our stories start off identically. We're around the same age. Their parents met at some underground party in Hillbrow or Cape Town. They lived in an illegal flat. The difference is that in virtually every other case they left. The white parent smuggled them out through Lesotho or Botswana, and they grew up in exile, in England or Germany or Switzerland, because being a mixed family under apartheid was just that unbearable.

Once Mandela was elected we could finally live freely. Exiles started to return. I met my first one when I was around seventeen. He told me his story, and I was like, "Wait, *what?* You mean we could have *left?*"

That was an *option*?” Imagine being thrown out of an airplane. You hit the ground and break all your bones, you go to the hospital and you heal and you move on and finally put the whole thing behind you—and then one day somebody tells you about parachutes. That’s how I felt. I couldn’t understand why we’d stayed. I went straight home and asked my mom.

“Why? Why didn’t we just leave? Why didn’t we go to Switzerland?”

“Because I am not Swiss,” she said, as stubborn as ever. “This is my country. Why should I leave?”

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South Africa is a mix of the old and the new, the ancient and the modern, and South African Christianity is a perfect example of this. We adopted the religion of our colonizers, but most people held on to the old ancestral ways, too, just in case. In South Africa, faith in the Holy Trinity exists quite comfortably alongside belief in witchcraft, in casting spells and putting curses on one's enemies.

I come from a country where people are more likely to visit *sangomas*—shamans, traditional healers, pejoratively known as witch doctors—than they are to visit doctors of Western medicine. I come from a country where people have been arrested and tried for witchcraft—in a court of law. I'm not talking about the 1700s. I'm talking about five years ago. I remember a man being on trial for striking another person with lightning. That happens a lot in the homelands. There are no tall buildings, few tall trees, nothing between you and the sky, so people get hit by lightning all the time. And when someone gets killed by lightning, everyone knows it's because somebody used Mother Nature to take out a hit. So if you had a beef with the guy who got killed, someone will accuse you of murder and the police will come knocking.

"Mr. Noah, you've been accused of murder. You used witchcraft to kill David Kibuuka by causing him to be struck by lightning."

"What is the evidence?"

"The evidence is that David Kibuuka got struck by lightning and it wasn't even raining."

And you go to trial. The court is presided over by a judge. There is a docket. There is a prosecutor. Your defense attorney has to prove lack of motive, go through the crime-scene forensics, present a staunch defense. And your attorney's argument can't be "Witchcraft isn't real." No, no, no. You'll lose.

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# **D A R K M O N E Y**

The Hidden History of the  
Billionaires Behind the Rise of the  
Radical Right

**Jane Mayer**



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Part One

# **Weaponizing Philanthropy**

The War of Ideas, 1970–2008

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Radicals: A Koch Family History**

**ODDLY ENOUGH, THE FIERCELY LIBERTARIAN KOCH FAMILY** owed part of its fortune to two of history's most infamous dictators, Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. The family patriarch, Fred Chase Koch, founder of the family oil business, developed lucrative business relationships with both of their regimes in the 1930s.

According to family lore, Fred Koch was the son of a Dutch printer and publisher who settled in the small town of Quanah, Texas, just south of the Oklahoma border, where he owned a weekly newspaper and print shop. Quanah, which was named for the last American Comanche chief, Quanah Parker, still retained its frontier aura when Fred was born there in 1900. Bright and eager to get out from under his overbearing old-world father, Fred once ran away to live with the Comanches as a boy. Later, he crossed the country for college, transferring from Rice in Texas to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There, he earned a degree in chemical engineering and joined the boxing team. Early photographs show him as a tall, formally dressed young man with glasses, a tuft of unruly curls, and a self-confident, defiant expression.

In 1927, Fred, who was an inveterate tinkerer, invented an improved process for extracting gasoline from crude oil. But as he would later tell his sons bitterly and often, America's major oil companies regarded him as a business threat and shut him out of the industry, suing him and his customers in 1929 for patent infringement. Koch regarded the monopolistic patents invoked by the major oil companies as anticompetitive and unfair. The fight appears to be an early version of the Kochs'

later opposition to “corporate cronyism” in which they contend that the government and big business collaborate unfairly. In Fred Koch’s eye, he was an outsider fighting a corrupt system.

Koch fought back in the courts for more than fifteen years, finally winning a \$1.5 million settlement. He correctly suspected that his opponents bribed at least one presiding judge, an incompetent lush who left the case in the hands of a crooked clerk. “The fact that the judge was bribed completely altered their view of justice,” one longtime family employee suggests. “They believe justice can be bought, and the rules are for chumps.” Meanwhile, crippled by lawsuits in America during this period, Koch took his innovative refining method abroad.

He had already helped build a refinery in Great Britain after World War I with Charles de Ganahl, a mentor. At the time, the Russians supplied England with fuel, which led to the Russians seeking his expertise as they set up their own oil refineries after the Bolshevik Revolution.

At first, according to family lore, Koch tore up the telegram from the Soviet Union asking for his help. He said he didn’t want to work for Communists and didn’t trust them to pay him. But after securing an agreement to get paid in advance, he overcame his philosophical reservations. In 1930, his company, then called Winkler-Koch, began training Russian engineers and helping Stalin’s regime set up fifteen modern oil refineries under the first of Stalin’s five-year plans. The program was a success, forming the backbone of the future Russian petroleum industry. The oil trade brought crucial hard currency into the Soviet Union, enabling it to modernize other industries. Koch was reportedly paid \$500,000, a princely sum during America’s Great Depression. But by 1932, facing growing domestic demand, Soviet officials decided it would be more advantageous to copy the technology and build future refineries themselves. Fred Koch continued to provide technical assistance to the Soviets as they constructed one hundred plants, according to one report, but the advisory work was less profitable.

What happened next has been excised from the official corporate history of Koch Industries. After mentioning the company's work in the Soviet Union, the bulk of which ended in 1932, the corporate history skips ahead to 1940, when it says Fred Koch decided to found a new company, Wood River Oil & Refining. Charles Koch is equally vague in his book *The Science of Success*. He notes only that his father's company "enjoyed its first real financial success during the early years of the Great Depression" by "building plants abroad, especially in the Soviet Union."

A controversial chapter is missing. After leaving the U.S.S.R., Fred Koch turned to Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. Hitler became chancellor in 1933, and soon after, his government oversaw and funded massive industrial expansion, including the buildup of Germany's capacity to manufacture fuel for its growing military ambitions. During the 1930s, Fred Koch traveled frequently to Germany on oil business. Archival records document that in 1934 Winkler-Koch Engineering of Wichita, Kansas, as Fred's firm was then known, provided the engineering plans and began overseeing the construction of a massive oil refinery owned by a company on the Elbe River in Hamburg.

The refinery was a highly unusual venture for Koch to get involved with at that moment in Germany. Its top executive was a notorious American Nazi sympathizer named William Rhodes Davis whose extensive business dealings with Hitler would eventually end in accusations by a federal prosecutor that he was an "agent of influence" for the Nazi regime. In 1933, Davis proposed the purchase and conversion of an existing German oil storage facility in Hamburg, owned by a company called Europäische Tanklager A.G., or Eurotank, into a massive refinery. At the time, Hitler's military aims, and his need for more fuel, were already well-known. Davis's plan was to ship crude petroleum to Germany, refine it, and then sell it to the German military. The president of the American bank

with which Davis dealt refused to have anything to do with the deal, because it was seen as supporting the Nazi military buildup, but others extended the credit. After lining up the American financing, Davis needed the Third Reich's backing. To gain it, he first had to convince German industrialists of his support for Hitler. In his effort to ingratiate himself, Davis opened an early meeting with Hermann Schmitz, the chairman of I.G. Farben—the powerful and well-connected chemical company that soon after produced the lethal gas for the concentration camps' death chambers—by saluting him with a Nazi “Heil Hitler.” When these efforts didn't produce the green light he sought, Davis sent messages directly to Hitler, eventually securing a meeting in which the führer walked in and ordered his henchmen to approve the deal. On Hitler's orders, the Third Reich's economic ministers supported Davis's construction of the refinery. In his biography of Davis, Dale Harrington draws on eyewitness accounts to describe Hitler as declaring to his skeptical henchmen, “Gentlemen, I have reviewed Mr. Davis's proposition and it sounds feasible, and I want the bank to finance it.” Harrington writes that during the next few years Davis met at least half a dozen more times with Hitler and on one occasion asked him to personally autograph a copy of *Mein Kampf* for his wife. According to Harrington, by the end of 1933 Davis was “deeply committed to Nazism” and exhibited a noticeable “dislike for Jews.”

In 1934, Davis turned to Fred Koch's company, Winkler-Koch, for help in executing his German business plan. Under Fred Koch's direction, the refinery was finished by 1935. With the capacity to process a thousand tons of crude oil a day, the third-largest refinery in the Third Reich was created by the collaboration between Davis and Koch. Significantly, it was also one of the few refineries in Germany, according to Harrington, that could “produce the high-octane gasoline needed to fuel fighter planes. Naturally,” he writes, “Eurotank would do most of its business with the German military.” Thus, he

concludes, the American venture became “a key component of the Nazi war machine.”

Historians expert in German industrial history concur. The development of the German fuel industry “was hugely, hugely important” to Hitler’s military ambitions, according to the Northwestern University professor Peter Hayes. “Hitler set out to create ‘autarchy,’ or economic self-sufficiency,” he explained. “Gottfried Feder, the German official in charge of the program, reasoned that even though Germany would have to import crude oil, it would be able to save foreign exchange by refining the products itself.”

In the run-up to the war, Davis profited richly from the arrangement, engaging in elaborate scams to keep the crude oil imports flowing into Germany despite Britain’s blockade. When World War II began, the high-octane fuel was used in bombing raids by German pilots. Like Davis, the Koch family benefited from the venture. Raymond Stokes, director of the Centre for Business History at the University of Glasgow in Scotland and co-author of a history of the German oil industry during the Nazi years, *Faktor Öl* (The oil factor), which documents the company’s role, says, “Winkler-Koch benefited directly from this project, which was designed to help enable the fuel policy of the Third Reich.”

Fred Koch often traveled to Germany during these years, and according to family lore he was supposed to have been on the fatal May 1937 transatlantic flight of the *Hindenburg*, but at the last minute he got delayed. In late 1938, as World War II approached and Hitler’s aims were unmistakable, he wrote admiringly about fascism in Germany, and elsewhere, drawing an invidious comparison with America under Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. “Although nobody agrees with me, I am of the opinion that the only sound countries in the world are Germany, Italy, and Japan, simply because they are all working and working hard,” he wrote in a letter to a friend. Koch added, “The laboring people in those countries are proportion-

ately much better off than they are any place else in the world. When you contrast the state of mind of Germany today with what it was in 1925 you begin to think that perhaps this course of idleness, feeding at the public trough, dependence on government, etc., with which we are afflicted is not permanent and can be overcome."

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, family members say that Fred Koch tried to enlist in the U.S. military. Instead, the government directed him to use his chemical engineering prowess to help refine high-octane fuel for the American warplanes. Meanwhile, in an ironic turn, the Hamburg refinery that Winkler-Koch built became an important target of Allied bombing raids. On June 18, 1944, American B-17s finally destroyed it. The human toll of the bombing raids on Hamburg was almost unimaginable. In all, some forty-two thousand civilians were killed during the long and intense Allied campaign against Hamburg's crucial industrial targets.

Fred Koch's willingness to work with the Soviets and the Nazis was a major factor in creating the Koch family's early fortune. By the time he met his future wife, Mary Robinson, at a polo match in 1932, the oilman's work for Stalin had put him well on his way to becoming exceedingly wealthy.

Robinson, a twenty-four-year-old graduate of Wellesley College, was tall, slender, and beautiful, with blond hair, blue eyes, and an expression of amusement often captured in family photographs. The daughter of a prominent physician from Kansas City, Missouri, she had grown up in a more cosmopolitan milieu. Koch, who was seven years older than she, was so smitten he married her a month after they met.

Soon, the couple commissioned the most fashionable architect in the area to build an imposing Gothic-style stone mansion on a large compound on the outskirts of Wichita, Kansas, where Winkler-Koch was based. Reflecting their rising social status, the estate was baronial despite the flat and

empty prairie surrounding it, with stables, a polo ring, a kennel for hunting dogs, a swimming pool and wading pool, a circular drive, and stone-terraced gardens. Some of the best craftsmen in the country created decorative flourishes such as wrought-iron railings and a stone fireplace carved with a whimsical snowflake motif. Within a few years, the Kochs also purchased the sprawling Spring Creek Ranch near Reece, Kansas, where Fred, who loved science and genetics, bred and raised cattle. Family photographs show the couple looking glamorous and patrician, hosting picnics and pool parties, and riding on horseback, dressed in jodhpurs and polo gear, surrounded by packs of jolly friends.

In the first eight years of their marriage, the couple had four sons: Frederick, known by the family as Freddie, was born in 1933, Charles was born in 1935, and twins, David and William, were born in 1940. With their father frequently traveling and their mother preoccupied with social and cultural pursuits, the boys were largely entrusted to a series of nannies and housekeepers.

It is unclear what Fred Koch's views of Hitler were during the 1930s, beyond his preference for the country's work ethic in comparison with the nascent welfare state in America. But he was enamored enough of the German way of life and thinking that he employed a German governess for his first two sons, Freddie and Charles. At the time, Freddie was a small boy, and Charles still in diapers. The nanny's iron rule terrified the little boys, according to a family acquaintance. In addition to being overbearing, she was a fervent Nazi sympathizer, who frequently touted Hitler's virtues. Dressed in a starched white uniform and pointed nurse's hat, she arrived with a stash of gruesome German children's books, including the Victorian classic *Der Struwwelpeter*, that featured sadistic consequences for misbehavior ranging from cutting off one child's thumbs to burning another to death. The acquaintance recalled that the nurse had a commensurately harsh and dictatorial approach

to child rearing. She enforced a rigid toilet-training regimen requiring the boys to produce morning bowel movements precisely on schedule or be force-fed castor oil and subjected to enemas.

The despised governess ruled the nursery largely unchallenged for several years. In 1938, the two boys were left for months while their parents toured Japan, Burma, India, and the Philippines. Even when she was home, Mary Koch characteristically deferred to her husband, declining to intervene. "My father was fairly tough with my mother," Bill Koch later told *Vanity Fair*. "My mother was afraid of my father." Meanwhile, Fred Koch was often gone for months at a time, in Germany and elsewhere.

It wasn't until 1940, the year the twins were born, when Freddie was seven and Charles five, that back in Wichita the German governess finally left the Koch family, apparently at her own initiative. Her reason for giving notice was that she was so overcome with joy when Hitler invaded France she felt she had to go back to the fatherland in order to join the führer in celebration. What if any effect this early experience with authority had on Charles is impossible to know, but it's interesting that his lifetime preoccupation would become crusading against authoritarianism while running a business over which he exerted absolute control.

Fred Koch was himself a tough and demanding disciplinarian. John Damgard, David's childhood friend, who became president of the Futures Industry Association, recalled that he was "a real John Wayne type." Koch emphasized rugged pursuits, taking his sons big-game hunting in Africa and filling the basement billiard room with what one cousin remembered as a frightening collection of exotic stuffed animal heads, including lions and bears and others with horns and tusks, glinting glassy-eyed from the walls. In the summer, the boys could hear their friends splashing in the pool at the country club across

the street, but instead of allowing the boys to join them, their father required them to dig up dandelions by the time they were five, and later to dig ditches and shovel manure at the family ranch. Fred Koch cared about his boys but was determined to keep them from becoming what he called “country-club bums,” like some of the other offspring of the oil moguls with whom he was acquainted. “By instilling a work ethic in me at an early age, my father did me a big favor, although it didn’t seem like a favor back then,” Charles has written. “By the time I was eight, he made sure work occupied most of my spare time.”

# EVICTED

POVERTY AND PROFIT IN  
THE AMERICAN CITY

Matthew Desmond



CROWN PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK

Jori and his cousin were cutting up, tossing snowballs at passing cars. From Jori's street corner on Milwaukee's near South Side, cars driving on Sixth Street passed squat duplexes with porch steps ending at a sidewalk edged in dandelions. Those heading north approached the Basilica of St. Josaphat, whose crowning dome looked to Jori like a giant overturned plunger. It was January of 2008, and the city was experiencing the snowiest winter on record. Every so often, a car turned off Sixth Street to navigate Arthur Avenue, hemmed in by the snow, and that's when the boys would take aim. Jori packed a tight one and let it fly. The car jerked to a stop, and a man jumped out. The boys ran inside and locked the door to the apartment where Jori lived with his mother, Arleen, and younger brother, Jafaris. The lock was cheap, and the man broke down the door with a few hard-heeled kicks. He left before anything else happened. When the landlord found out about the door, she decided to evict Arleen and her boys. They had been there eight months.

The day Arleen and her boys had to be out was cold. But if she waited any longer, the landlord would summon the sheriff, who would arrive with a gun, a team of boot-footed movers, and a folded judge's order saying that her house was no longer hers. She would be given two options: truck or curb. "Truck" would mean that her things would be loaded into an eighteen-footer and later checked into bonded storage. She could get everything back after paying \$350. Arleen didn't have \$350, so she would have opted for "curb," which would mean watching the movers pile everything onto the sidewalk. Her mattresses. A floor-model television. Her copy of *Don't Be Afraid to Discipline*. Her nice glass dining table and the lace tablecloth that fit just-so. Silk plants. Bibles. The meat cuts in the freezer. The shower curtain. Jafaris's asthma machine.

Arleen took her sons—Jori was thirteen, Jafaris was five—to a homeless shelter, which everyone called the Lodge so you could tell your kids, "We're staying at the Lodge tonight," like it was a motel. The two-story stucco building could have passed for one, except for all the Salvation Army signs. Arleen stayed in the 120-bed shelter until April, when she found a house on Nineteenth and Hampton, in the predominantly black inner city, on Milwaukee's North Side, not far from her childhood home. It had thick trim around the windows and doors and was once Kendal green, but the paint had faded and chipped so much over the years that the bare wood siding was now exposed, making the house look camouflaged. At one point someone had started repainting the house plain white but had given up mid-brushstroke, leaving more than half unfinished. There was often no water in the house, and Jori had to bucket out what was in the toilet. But Arleen loved that it was spacious and set apart from other houses. "It was quiet," she remembered. "And five-twenty-five for a whole house, two bedrooms upstairs and two bedrooms downstairs. It was my favorite place."

After a few weeks, the city found Arleen's favorite place "unfit for human habitation," removed her, nailed green boards over the windows and doors, and issued a fine to her landlord. Arleen moved Jori and Jafaris into a drab apartment complex deeper in the inner city, on Atkinson Avenue, which she soon learned was a haven for drug dealers. She feared for her boys, especially Jori—slack-shouldered, with pecan-brown skin and a beautiful smile—who would talk to anyone.

Arleen endured four summer months on Atkinson before moving into a bottom duplex unit on Thirteenth Street and Keefe, a mile away. She and the boys walked their things over. Arleen held her breath and tried the lights, smiling with relief when they came on. She could live off someone else's electricity bill for a while. There was a fist-sized hole in a living-room window, the front door had to be locked with an ugly wooden plank dropped into metal brackets, and the carpet was filthy and ground in. But the kitchen was spacious and the living room well lit. Arleen stuffed a piece of clothing into the window hole and hung ivory curtains.

The rent was \$550 a month, utilities not included, the going rate in 2008 for a two-bedroom unit in one of the worst neighborhoods in America's fourth-poorest city. Arleen couldn't find a cheaper place, at least not one fit for human habitation, and most landlords wouldn't rent her a smaller one on account of her boys. The rent would take 88 percent of Arleen's \$628-a-month welfare check. Maybe she could make it work. Maybe they could at least stay through winter, until crocuses and tulips stabbed through the thawed ground of spring, Arleen's favorite season.

There was a knock at the door. It was the landlord, Sherrena Tarver. Sherrena, a black woman with bobbed hair and fresh nails, was loaded down with groceries. She had spent \$40 of her own money and picked up the rest at a food pantry. She knew Arleen needed it.

Arleen thanked Sherrena and closed the door. Things were off to a good start.

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# EXIT WEST

A NOVEL

MOHSIN HAMID

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and incidents either are the product of the author's  
imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance  
to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies,  
events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Nadia had long been, and would afterwards continue to be, more comfortable with all varieties of movement in her life than was Saeed, in whom the impulse of nostalgia was stronger, perhaps because his childhood had been more idyllic, or perhaps because this was simply his temperament. Both of them, though, whatever their misgivings, had no doubt that they would leave if given the chance. And so neither expected, when a handwritten note from the agent arrived, pushed under their apartment door one morning and telling them precisely where to be at precisely what time the following afternoon, that Saeed's father would say, "You two must go, but I will not come."

Saeed and Nadia said this was impossible, and explained, in case of misunderstanding, that there was no problem, that they had paid the agent for three passages and would all be leaving together, and Saeed's father heard them out but would not be budged: they, he repeated, had to go, and he had to stay. Saeed threatened to carry his father over his shoulder if he needed to, and he had never spoken to his father in this way, and his father took him aside, for he could see the pain he was causing his son, and when Saeed asked why his father was doing this, what could possibly

make him want to stay, Saeed's father said, "Your mother is here."

Saeed said, "Mother is gone."

His father said, "Not for me."

And this was true in a way, Saeed's mother was not gone for Saeed's father, not entirely, and it would have been difficult for Saeed's father to leave the place where he had spent a life with her, difficult not to be able to visit her grave each day, and he did not wish to do this, he preferred to abide, in a sense, in the past, for the past offered more to him.

But Saeed's father was thinking also of the future, even though he did not say this to Saeed, for he feared that if he said this to his son that his son might not go, and he knew above all else that his son must go, and what he did not say was that he had come to that point in a parent's life when, if a flood arrives, one knows one must let go of one's child, contrary to all the instincts one had when one was younger, because holding on can no longer offer the

child protection, it can only pull the child down, and threaten them with drowning, for the child is now stronger than the parent, and the circumstances are such that the utmost of strength is required, and the arc of a child's life only appears for a while to match the arc of a parent's, in reality one sits atop the other, a hill atop a hill, a curve atop a curve, and Saeed's father's arc now needed to curve lower, while his son's still curved higher, for with an old man hampering them these two young people were simply less likely to survive.

Saeed's father told his son he loved him and said that Saeed must not disobey him in this, that he had not believed in commanding his son but in this moment was doing so, that only death awaited Saeed and Nadia in this city, and that one day when things were better Saeed would come back to him, and both men knew as this was said that it would not happen, that Saeed would not be able to return while his father still lived, and indeed as it transpired Saeed would not, after this night that was just beginning, spend another night with his father again.

Saeed's father then summoned Nadia into his room and spoke to her without Saeed and said that he was entrusting

her with his son's life, and she, whom he called daughter, must, like a daughter, not fail him, whom she called father, and she must see Saeed through to safety, and he hoped she would one day marry his son and be called mother by his grandchildren, but this was up to them to decide, and all he asked was that she remain by Saeed's side until Saeed was out of danger, and he asked her to promise this to him, and she said she would promise only if Saeed's father came with them, and he said again that he could not, but that they must go, he said it softly, like a prayer, and she sat there with him in silence and the minutes passed, and in the end she promised, and it was an easy promise to make because she had at that time no thoughts of leaving Saeed, but it was also a difficult one because in making it she felt she was abandoning the old man, and even if he did have his siblings and his cousins, and might now go live with them or have them come live with him, they could not protect him as Saeed and Nadia could, and so by making the promise he demanded she make she was in a sense killing him, but that is the way of things, for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind.

# Lilac Girls

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A NOVEL

MARTHA HALL  
KELLY



BALLANTINE BOOKS

NEW YORK

*Lilac Girls* is a work of fiction. All incidents and dialogue, and all characters with the exception of some well-known historical figures, are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Where real-life historical figures appear, the situations, incidents, and dialogues concerning those persons are entirely fictional and are not intended to depict actual events or to change the entirely fictional nature of the work. In all other respects, any resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental.

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## CHAPTER 1

# Caroline

SEPTEMBER 1939

**I**F I'D KNOWN I WAS ABOUT TO MEET THE MAN WHO'D SHATTER me like bone china on terra-cotta, I would have slept in. Instead, I roused our florist, Mr. Sitwell, from his bed to make a boutonnière. My first consulate gala was no time to stand on ceremony.

I joined the riptide of the great unwashed moving up Fifth Avenue. Men in gray-felted fedoras pushed by me, the morning papers in their attachés bearing the last benign headlines of the decade. There was no storm gathering in the east that day, no portent of things to come. The only ominous sign from the direction of Europe was the scent of slack water wafting off the East River.

As I neared our building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-ninth Street, I felt Roger watching from the window above. He'd fired people for a lot less than being twenty minutes late, but the one time of year the New York elite opened their wallets and pretended they cared about France was no time for skimpy boutonnières.

I turned at the corner, the morning sun alive in the gold-leaf letters chiseled in the cornerstone: LA MAISON FRANÇAISE. The French Building, home to the French Consulate, stood side by side with the British Empire Building, facing Fifth Avenue, part of Rockefeller

Center, Junior Rockefeller's new complex of granite and limestone. Many foreign consulates kept offices there then, resulting in a great stew of international diplomacy.

"All the way to the back and face the front," said Cuddy, our elevator operator.

Mr. Rockefeller handpicked the elevator boys, screening for manners and good looks. Cuddy was heavy on the looks, though his hair was already salt-and-peppered, his body in a hurry to age.

Cuddy fixed his gaze on the illuminated numbers above the doors. "You got a crowd up there today, Miss Ferriday. Pia said there's two new boats in."

"Delightful," I said.

Cuddy brushed something off the sleeve of his navy-blue uniform jacket. "Another late one tonight?"

For the fastest elevators in the world, ours still took forever. "I'll be gone by five. Gala tonight."

I loved my job. Grandmother Woolsey had started the work tradition in our family, nursing soldiers on the battlefield at Gettysburg. But my volunteer post as head of family assistance for the French Consulate wasn't work really. Loving all things French was simply genetic for me. My father may have been half-Irish, but his heart belonged to France. Plus, Mother had inherited an apartment in Paris, where we spent every August, so I felt at home there.

The elevator stopped. Even through the closed doors, we could hear a terrific din of raised voices. A shiver ran through me.

"Third floor," Cuddy called out. "French Consulate. Watch your—"

Once the doors parted, the noise overpowered all polite speech. The hallway outside our reception area was packed so tightly with people one could scarcely step through. Both the *Normandie* and the *Ile de France*, two of France's premier ocean liners, had landed that morning in New York Harbor, packed with wealthy passengers fleeing the uncertainty in France. Once the all-clear horn signaled

and they were free to disembark, the ships' elite streamed to the consulate to iron out visa problems and other sticky issues.

I squeezed into the smoky reception area, past ladies in Paris's newest day dresses who stood gossiping in a lovely cloud of Arpège, the sea spray still in their hair. The people in this group were accustomed to being shadowed by a butler with a crystal ashtray and a champagne flute. Bellboys in scarlet jackets from the *Normandie* went toe-to-toe with their black-jacketed counterparts from the *Ile de France*. I wedged one shoulder through the crowd, toward our secretary's desk at the back of the room, and my chiffon scarf snagged on the clasp of one ravishing creature's pearls. As I worked to extract it, the intercom buzzed unanswered.

Roger.

I pressed on through, felt a pat on my behind, and turned to see a midshipman flash a plaquy smile.

"*Gardons nos mains pour nous-mêmes*," I said. Let's keep our hands to ourselves.

The boy raised his arm above the crowd and dangled his *Normandie* stateroom key. At least he wasn't the over-sixty type I usually attracted.

I made it to our secretary's desk, where she sat, head down, typing.

"*Bonjour, Pia.*"

Roger's cousin, a sloe-eyed boy of eighteen, was sitting on Pia's desk, legs crossed. He held his cigarette in the air as he picked through a box of chocolates, Pia's favorite breakfast. My inbox on her desk was already stacked with case folders.

"*Vraiment?* What is so good about it?" she said, not lifting her head.

Pia was much more than a secretary. We all wore many hats, and hers included signing in new clients and establishing a folder for each, typing up Roger's considerable correspondence, and deciphering the massive flood of daily Morse-code pulses that was the lifeblood of our office.

“Why is it so hot in here?” I said. “The phone is ringing, Pia.”

She plucked a chocolate from the box. “It keeps doing that.”

Pia attracted beaux as if she emitted a frequency only males could detect. She was attractive in a feral way, but I suspected her popularity was due in part to her tight sweaters.

“Can you take some of my cases today, Pia?”

“Roger says I can’t leave this chair.” She broke the shell of the chocolate’s underside with her manicured thumb, stalking the strawberry crèmes. “He also wants to see you right away, but I think the woman on the sofa slept in the hallway last night.” Pia flapped one half of a one-hundred-dollar bill at me. “And the fatty with the dogs says he’ll give you the other half if you take him first.” She nodded toward the well-fed older couple near my office door, each holding a brace of gray-muzzled dachshunds.

Like Pia’s, my job description was wide-ranging. It included attending to the needs of French citizens here in New York—often families fallen on hard times—and overseeing my French Families Fund, a charity effort through which I sent comfort boxes to French orphans overseas. I’d just retired from an almost two-decade-long stint on Broadway, and this felt easy by comparison. It certainly involved less unpacking of trunks.

My boss, Roger Fortier, appeared in his office doorway.

“Caroline, I need you *now*. Bonnet’s canceled.”

“You can’t be serious, Roger.” The news came like a punch. I’d secured the French foreign minister as our gala keynote speaker months before.

“It’s not easy being the French foreign minister right now,” he called over his shoulder as he went back inside.

I stepped into my office and flipped through the Wheeldex on my desk. Was Mother’s Buddhist-monk friend Ajahn Chah free that night?

“Caroline—” Roger called. I grabbed my Wheeldex and hurried to his office, avoiding the couple with the dachshunds, who were trying their best to look tragic.

“Why were you late this morning?” Roger asked. “Pia’s been here for two hours already.”

As consul general, Roger Fortier ruled from the corner suite with its commanding view of Rockefeller Plaza and the Promenade Cafe. Normally the famous skating rink occupied that sunken spot, but the rink was closed for the summer, the space now filled with café tables and tuxedoed waiters rushing about with aprons to their ankles. Beyond, Paul Manship’s massive golden Prometheus fell to earth, holding his stolen fire aloft. Behind it, the RCA Building shot up seventy floors into the sapphire sky. Roger had a lot in common with the imposing male figure of Wisdom chiseled above the building’s entrance. The furrowed brow. The beard. The angry eyes.

“I stopped for Bonnet’s boutonnière—”

“Oh, that’s worth keeping half of France waiting.” Roger bit into a doughnut, and powdered sugar cascaded down his beard. Despite what might kindly be called a husky figure, he was never at a loss for female companions.

His desk was heaped with folders, security documents, and dossiers on missing French citizens. According to the *French Consulate Handbook*, his job was “to assist French nationals in New York, in the event of theft, serious illness, or arrest and with issues related to birth certificates, adoption, and lost or stolen documents; to plan visits of French officials and fellow diplomats; and to assist with political difficulties and natural disasters.” The troubles in Europe provided plenty of work for us in all those categories, if you counted Hitler as a natural disaster.

“I have cases to get back to, Roger—”

He sent a manila folder skidding across the polished conference table. “Not only do we have no speaker; I was up half the night re-writing Bonnet’s speech. Had to sidestep Roosevelt letting France buy American planes.”

“France should be able to buy all the planes they want.”

“We’re raising money here, Caroline. It’s not the time to annoy the isolationists. Especially the rich ones.”

"They don't support France anyway."

"We don't need any more bad press. Is the U.S. too cozy with France? Will that push Germany and Russia closer? I can barely finish a third course without being interrupted by a reporter. And we can't mention the Rockefellers . . . Don't want another call from Junior. Guess that'll happen anyway now that Bonnet canceled."

"It's a disaster, Roger."

"May need to scrap the whole thing." Roger raked his long fingers through his hair, digging fresh trenches through the Brylcreem.

"Refund forty thousand dollars? What about the French Families Fund? I'm already operating on fumes. Plus, we've paid for ten pounds of Waldorf salad—"

"They call that salad?" Roger flipped through his contact cards, half of them illegible and littered with cross-outs. "It's *pathétique* . . . just chopped apples and celery. And those soggy *walnuts* . . ."

I scoured my Wheelindex in search of celebrity candidates. Mother and I knew Julia Marlowe, the famous actress, but she was touring Europe. "How about Peter Patout? Mother's people have used him."

"The architect?"

"Of the whole World's Fair. They have that seven-foot robot."

"Boring," he said, slapping his silver letter opener against his palm.

I flipped to the L's. "How about Captain Lehide?"

"Of the *Normandie*? Are you serious? He's paid to be dull."

"You can't just discount every suggestion out of hand, Roger. How about Paul Rodierre? Betty says everyone's talking about him."

Roger pursed his lips, always a good sign. "The actor? I saw his show. He's good. Tall and attractive, if you go for that look. Fast metabolism, of course."

"At least we know he can memorize a script."

"He's a bit of a loose cannon. And married too, so don't get any ideas."

"I'm through with men, Roger," I said. At thirty-seven, I'd resigned myself to singledom.

"Not sure Rodierre'll do it. See who you can get, but make sure they stick to the script. No Roosevelt—"

"No Rockefellers," I finished.

Between cases, I called around to various last-minute possibilities, ending up with one option, Paul Rodierre. He was in New York appearing in an American musical revue at the Broadhurst Theatre, *The Streets of Paris*, Carmen Miranda's cyclonic Broadway debut.

I phoned the William Morris Agency and was told they'd check and call me back. Ten minutes later, M. Rodierre's agent told me the theater was dark that night and that, though his client did not own evening clothes, he was deeply honored by our request to host the gala that evening. He'd meet me at the Waldorf to discuss details. Our apartment on East Fiftieth Street was a stone's throw from the Waldorf, so I rushed there to change into Mother's black Chanel dress.

I found M. Rodierre seated at a café table in the Waldorf's Peacock Alley bar adjacent to the lobby as the two-ton bronze clock sounded its lovely Westminster Cathedral chime on the half hour. Gala guests in their finest filtered in, headed for the Grand Ballroom upstairs.

"M. Rodierre?" I said.

Roger was right about the attractive part. The first thing a person noticed about Paul Rodierre, after the initial jolt of his physical beauty, was the remarkable smile.

"How can I thank you for doing this so last minute, Monsieur?"

He unfolded himself from his chair, presenting a build better suited to rowing crew on the Charles than playing Broadway. He attempted to kiss my cheek, but I extended my hand to him, and he shook it. It was nice to meet a man my height.

"My pleasure," he said.

His attire was the issue: green trousers, an aubergine velvet

sports jacket, brown suede shoes, and worst of all, a black shirt. Only priests and fascists wore black shirts. And gangsters, of course.

"Do you want to change?" I resisted the urge to tidy his hair, which was long enough to pull back with a rubber band. "Shave perhaps?" According to his agent, M. Rodierre was a guest at the hotel, so his razor sat just a few stories overhead.

"This is what I wear," he said with a shrug. Typical actor. Why hadn't I known better? The parade of guests en route to the ballroom was growing, the women stunning in their finery, every man in tails and patent leather oxfords or calf opera pumps.

"This is my first gala," I said. "The consulate's one night to raise money. It's white tie." Would he fit into Father's old tux? The in-seam would be right, but it would be much too tight in the shoulders.

"Are you always this, well, energized, Miss Ferriday?"

"Well, here in New York, individuality is not always appreciated." I handed him the stapled sheets. "I'm sure you're eager to see the script."

He handed it back. "No, *merci*."

I pushed it back into his hands. "But the consul general himself wrote it."

"Tell me again why I'm doing this?"

"It's to benefit displaced French citizens all year and my French Families Fund. We help orphans back in France whose parents have been lost for any number of reasons. With all the uncertainty abroad, we're one reliable source of clothes and food. Plus, the Rockefellers will be there tonight."

He paged through the speech. "They could write a check and avoid this whole thing."

"They're among our kindest donors, but please don't refer to them. Or President Roosevelt. Or the planes the U.S. sold France. Some of our guests tonight love France, of course, but would rather stay out of a war for now. Roger wants to avoid controversy."

“Dancing around things never feels authentic. The audience feels that.”

“Can you just stick to the script, Monsieur?”

“Worrying can lead to heart failure, Miss Ferriday.”

I pulled the pin from the lily of the valley. “Here—a boutonnière for the guest of honor.”

“*Muguet?*” M. Rodierre said. “Where did you find that this time of year?”

“You can get anything in New York. Our florist forces it from pips.”

I rested my palm against his lapel and dug the pin deep into the French velvet. Was that lovely fragrance from him or the flowers? Why didn’t American men smell like this, of tuberose and wood musk and—

“You know lily of the valley is poisonous, right?” M. Rodierre said.

“So don’t eat it. At least not until you’ve finished speaking. Or if the crowd turns on you.”

He laughed, causing me to step back. Such a genuine laugh, something rarely found in polite society, especially where *my* jokes were concerned.

I escorted M. Rodierre backstage and stood awed by the enormity of the stage, twice the size of any I’d stood upon on Broadway. We looked out over the ballroom to the sea of tables lit by candlelight, like flowery ships in the darkness. Though dimmed, the Waterford crystal chandelier and its six satellites shimmered.

“This stage is enormous,” I said. “Can you carry it?”

M. Rodierre turned to me. “I do this for a living, Miss Ferriday.”

Fearing I’d only antagonize him further, I left M. Rodierre and the script backstage, trying to dismiss my brown-suede-shoe fixation. I hurried to the ballroom to see if Pia had executed my seating chart, more detailed and dangerous than a Luftwaffe flight plan. I saw she’d simply tossed several cards onto the six Rockefeller tables,

so I rearranged them and took my place close to the stage between the kitchen and the head table. Three stories of red-draped boxes rose up around the vast room, each with its own dinner table. All seventeen hundred seats would be filled, a lot of unhappy people if all didn't go well.

The guests assembled and took their seats, an ocean of white ties, old mine diamonds, and enough rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré gowns to clean out most of Paris's best shops. The girdles alone would ensure both Bergdorf and Goodman reached their third-quarter sales goals.

A row of journalists collected alongside me, pulling their pencils out from behind their ears. The headwaiter stood poised at my elbow, awaiting the cue to serve. Elsa Maxwell entered the room—gossipmonger, professional party hostess, and self-promoter *ne plus ultra*. Would she remove her gloves to write terrible things about this night in her column or just memorize the horror of it all?

The tables were almost full when Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, known to Roger as “Her Grace,” arrived, her four-story Cartier diamond necklace ablaze at her chest. I gave the signal to serve as Mrs. Vanderbilt's bottom made contact with her seat cushion, her white fox stole, complete with head and feet, draped over her chair back. The lights dimmed, and Roger lumbered to the spotlighted podium to heartfelt applause. I'd never been this nervous when I was the one onstage.

“*Mesdames et Messieurs*, Foreign Minister Bonnet sends his sincerest apologies, but he cannot be here tonight.” The crowd buzzed, not sure how to react to disappointment. Did one ask for one's money refunded by mail? Call Washington?

Roger held up one hand. “But we have convinced another Frenchman to speak tonight. Though not appointed to a government role, he is a man cast in one of the best roles on Broadway.”

The guests whispered to one another. There is nothing like a surprise, provided it's a good one.

“Please allow me to welcome M. Paul Rodierre.”

M. Rodierre bypassed the podium and headed for center stage. What was he doing? The spotlight cast around the stage for a few moments, trying to locate him. Roger took his seat at the head table, next to Mrs. Vanderbilt. I stood nearby, but outside of strangling range.

"It's my great pleasure to be here tonight," M. Rodierre said, once the spotlight found him. "I am terribly sorry M. Bonnet could not make it."

Even sans microphone, M. Rodierre's voice filled the room. He practically glowed in the spotlight.

"I am a poor replacement for such a distinguished guest. I hope it wasn't trouble with his plane. I'm sure President Roosevelt will be happy to send him a new one if it was."

A swell of nervous laughter rolled around the room. I didn't have to look at the journalists to know they were scribbling. Roger, skilled in the art of the tête-à-tête, managed to speak with Mrs. Vanderbilt and send daggers my way at the same time.

"True, I cannot talk to you about politics," M. Rodierre continued.

"Thank God!" someone shouted from a back table. The crowd laughed again, louder this time.

"But I can talk to you about the America I know, a place that surprises me every day. A place where open-minded people embrace not only French theater and books and cinema and fashion but French people as well, despite our faults."

"Shit," said the reporter next to me to his broken pencil. I handed him mine.

"Every day I see people help others. Americans inspired by Mrs. Roosevelt, who reaches her hand across the Atlantic to help French children. Americans like Miss Caroline Ferriday, who works every day to help French families here in America and keeps French orphans clothed."

Roger and Mrs. Vanderbilt looked my way. The spotlight found me, standing at the wall, and the familiar light blinded me. Her

Grace clapped, and the crowd followed. I waved until the light, mercifully quickly, whipped back to the stage, leaving me in cool darkness. I didn't miss the Broadway stage really, but it was good to feel the warmth of the spotlight on my skin again.

"This is an America not afraid to sell planes to the people who stood beside them in the trenches of the Great War. An America not afraid to help keep Hitler from the streets of Paris. An America not afraid of standing shoulder to shoulder again with us if that terrible time does come . . ."

I watched, only able to look away for a few peeks at the crowd. They were engrossed and certainly not focused on his shoes. Half an hour passed in an instant, and I held my breath as M. Rodierre took his bow. The applause started small but rose in waves like a tremendous rainstorm pelting the roof. A teary-eyed Elsa Maxwell used a hotel napkin to dry her eyes, and by the time the audience rose to their feet and belted out "La Marseillaise," I was glad Bonnet didn't have to follow that performance. Even the staff sang, hands over their hearts.

As the lights came up, Roger looked relieved and greeted the crush of well-wishers that lingered near the head table. When the evening wound down, he left for the Rainbow Room with a gaggle of our best donors and a few Rockettes, the only women in New York who made me look short.

M. Rodierre touched my shoulder as we left the dining room. "I know a place over on the Hudson with great wine."

"I need to get home," I said, though I hadn't eaten a thing. Warm bread and buttery escargot came to mind, but it was never smart to be seen out alone with a married man. "Not tonight, Monsieur, but thank you." I could be home in minutes, to a cold apartment and the leftover Waldorf salad.

"You'll make me eat alone after our triumph?" M. Rodierre said.

Why not go? My set ate at only certain restaurants, which you could count on one hand, all within a four-block radius of the Waldorf, nowhere near the Hudson. What harm could one dinner do?

We took a cab to Le Grenier, a lovely bistro on the West Side. The French ocean liners sailed up the Hudson River and docked at Fifty-first Street, so some of New York's best little places popped up near there, like chanterelles after a good rain. Le Grenier lived in the shadow of the SS *Normandie*, in the attic of a former harbor-master's building. When we exited the cab, the great ship rose high above us, deck bright with spotlights, four floors of portholes aglow. A welder at her bow sent apricot sparks into the night sky as deckhands lowered a spotlight down her side to painters on a scaffold. She made me feel small standing there, below that great, black prow, her three red smokestacks, each bigger than any of the warehouse buildings that extended down the pier. Salt hung in the end-of-summer air as Atlantic seawater met Hudson River fresh.

The tables at Le Grenier were packed with a nice enough looking crowd, mostly middle-class types, including a reporter from the gala and what looked like ocean-liner passengers happy to be on terra firma. We chose a tight, shellacked wooden booth, built like something from the inside of a ship, where every inch counts. Le Grenier's maître d', M. Bernard, fawned over M. Rodierre, told him he'd seen *The Streets of Paris* three times, and shared in great detail the specifics of his own Hoboken Community Theater career.

M. Bernard turned to me. "And you, Mademoiselle. Haven't I seen you on the stage with Miss Helen Hayes?"

"An actress?" M. Rodierre said with a smile.

At close range, that smile was unsafe. I had to keep my wits about me, since Frenchmen were my Achilles' heel. In fact, if Achilles had been French, I probably would have carried him around until his tendon healed.

M. Bernard continued. "I thought the reviews were unfair—"

"We'll order," I said.

"One used the word 'stiffish,' I believe—"

"We'll have the escargot, Monsieur. Light on the cream, please—"

“And what was it the *Times* said about *Twelfth Night*? ‘Miss Ferriday *sufficed* as Olivia?’ Harsh, I thought—”

“—And no garlic. Undercook them, please, so they are not too tough.”

“Would you like them to crawl to the table, Mademoiselle?” M. Bernard scratched down our order and headed for the kitchen.

M. Rodierre studied the champagne list, lingering over the details. “An actress, eh? I’d never have guessed.” There was something appealing about his unkempt look, like a *potager* in need of weeding.

“The consulate suits me better. Mother’s known Roger for years, and when he suggested I help him, I couldn’t resist.”

M. Bernard placed a basket of bread on our table, lingering a moment to gaze at M. Rodierre, as if memorizing him.

“Hope I’m not running off a boyfriend tonight,” Paul said. He reached for the breadbasket as I did, and my hand brushed his, warm and soft. I darted my hand back to my lap.

“I’m too busy for all that. You know New York—parties and all. Exhausting, really.”

“Never see you at Sardi’s.” He pulled apart the loaf, steam rising to the light.

“Oh, I work a lot.”

“I have a feeling you don’t work for the money.”

“It’s an unsalaried position, if that’s what you mean, but that’s not a question asked in polite society, Monsieur.”

“Can we dispense with the ‘Monsieur’? Makes me feel ancient.”

“First names? We’ve only just met.”

“It’s 1939.”

“Manhattan society is like a solar system with its own order. A single woman dining with a married man is enough to throw planets out of alignment.”

“No one will see us here,” Paul said, pointing out a champagne on the list to M. Bernard.

"Tell that to Miss Evelyn Shimmerhorn over there in the back booth."

"Are you ruined?" he said with a certain type of kindness seldom found in achingly beautiful men. Maybe the black shirt was a good choice for him after all.

"Evelyn won't talk. She's having a child, poorly timed, dear thing."

"Children. They complicate everything, don't they? No place for that in an actor's life."

Another selfish actor.

"How does your father earn your place in this solar system?"

Paul was asking a lot of questions for a new acquaintance.

"*Earned*, actually. He was in dry goods."

"Where?"

M. Bernard slid a silver bucket with handles like gypsy's earrings onto the table, the emerald-green throat of the champagne bottle lounging against one side.

"Partnered with James Harper Poor."

"Of Poor Brothers? Been to his house in East Hampton. He's not exactly poor. Do you visit France often?"

"Paris every year. Mother inherited an apartment . . . on rue Chauveau Lagarde."

M. Bernard eased the cork from the champagne with a satisfying sound, more thud than pop. He tipped the golden liquid into my glass, and the bubbles rose to the rim, almost overflowed, then settled at the perfect level. An expert pour.

"My wife, Rena, has a little shop near there called Les Jolies Choses. Have you seen it?"

I sipped my champagne, the bubbles teasing my lips.

Paul slid her picture from his wallet. Rena was younger than I had imagined and wore her dark hair in a china doll haircut. She was smiling, eyes open wide, as if sharing some delicious little secret. Rena was precious and perhaps my complete opposite. I imag-

ined Rena's to be the type of chic little place that helped women put themselves together in that famous French way—nothing too coordinated, with just the right amount of wrong.

"No, I don't know it," I said. I handed the picture back. "She's lovely, though."

I finished the champagne in my glass.

Paul shrugged. "Too young for me, of course, but—" He looked at the photo a few moments as if seeing it for the first time, head tilted to one side, before slipping it back into his wallet. "We don't see much of each other."

I fluttered at the thought and then settled, weighted by the realization that even if Paul were available my forceful nature would root out and extinguish any spark of romance.

The radio in the kitchen blared scratchy Edith Piaf.

Paul lifted the bottle from the bucket and tipped more champagne into my glass. It effervesced, riotous bubbles tumbling over the glass's edge. I glanced at him. We both knew what that meant, of course. The tradition. Anyone who's spent any time at all in France knows it. Had he overpoured on purpose?

Without hesitation, Paul tapped his finger to the spilled champagne along the base of my glass, reached across to me, and dabbed the cool liquid behind my left ear. I almost jumped at his touch, then waited as he brushed my hair aside and touched behind my right ear, his finger lingering there a moment. He then anointed himself behind each ear, smiling.

Why did I suddenly feel warm all over?

"Does Rena ever visit?" I asked. I tried to rub a tea stain off my hand only to find it was an age spot. Delightful.

"Not yet. She has no interest in theater. Hasn't even come over here to see *The Streets of Paris* yet, but I don't know if I can stay. Hitler has everyone on edge back home."

Somewhere in the kitchen, two men argued. Where was our escargot? Had they sent to Perpignan for the snails?

"At least France has the Maginot Line," I said.

"The Maginot Line? Please. A concrete wall and some observation posts? That's only a gauntlet slap to Hitler."

"It's fifteen miles wide."

"Nothing will deter Hitler if he wants something," Paul said.

There was a full-blown ruckus in the kitchen. No wonder our entrée had not arrived. The cook, mercurial artiste no doubt, was having a fit about something.

M. Bernard emerged from the kitchen. The portholed kitchen door swung closed behind him, flapped open and shut a few times, and then stood still. He walked to the center of the dining room. Had he been crying?

"*Excusez-moi*, ladies and gentlemen."

Someone tapped a glass with a spoon, and the room quieted.

"I have just heard from a reliable source . . ." M. Bernard took a breath, his chest expanding like leather fireplace bellows. "We have it on good authority that . . ."

He paused, overcome for a moment, then went on.

"Adolf Hitler has invaded Poland."

"My God," Paul said.

We stared at each other as the room erupted with excited exchanges, a racket of speculation and dread. The reporter from the gala stood, tossed some crumpled dollars on the table, grabbed his fedora, and bounded out.

In the hubbub that followed his announcement, M. Bernard's final words were almost lost.

"May God help us all."

# Kasia

1939

**I**T REALLY WAS PIETRIK BAKOSKI'S IDEA TO GO UP TO THE BLUFF at Deer Meadow to see the refugees. Just want to set straight the record. Matka never did believe me about that.

Hitler had declared war on Poland on September 1, but his soldiers took their time getting to Lublin. I was glad, for I didn't want anything to change. Lublin was perfect as it was. We heard radio addresses from Berlin about new rules, and some bombs fell on the outskirts of town, but nothing else. The Germans concentrated on Warsaw, and as troops closed in there, refugees by the thousands fled down to us in Lublin. Families came in droves, traveling south-east one hundred miles, and slept in the potato fields below town.

Before the war, nothing exciting ever happened in Lublin, so we appreciated a good sunrise, sometimes more than a picture at the cinema. We'd reached the summit overlooking the meadow on the morning of September 8 just before dawn and could make out thousands of people below us in the fields, dreaming in the dark. I lay between my two best friends, Nadia Watroba and Pietrik Bakoski, watching it all from a flattened bowl of straw, still warm where a mother deer had slept with her fawns. The deer were gone by then—early risers. This they had in common with Hitler.

As dawn suddenly breached the horizon, the breath caught in my throat, the kind of gasp that can surprise you when you see something so beautiful it hurts, such as a baby anything or fresh cream running over oatmeal or Pietrik Bakoski's profile in dawn's first light. His profile, 98 percent perfect, was especially nice drenched in dawn, like something off a ten-*zlotych* coin. At that moment, Pietrik looked the way all boys do upon waking, before they've washed up: his hair, the color of fresh butter, matted on the side where he'd slept.

Nadia's profile was also almost perfect, as was to be expected of a girl with her delicate features. The only thing holding her back from 100 percent was the purple bruise on her forehead, a souvenir from the incident at school, less of a goose egg now, but still there. She was wearing the cashmere sweater she let me pet whenever I wished, the color of unripe cantaloupe.

It was hard to understand how such a sad situation could lead to the prettiest scene. The refugees had fashioned a most elaborate tent city out of bed linens and blankets. As the sun rose, like an x-ray it allowed us to see through the flowered sheets of one tent to the shadows of people inside, dressing to meet the day.

A mother in city clothes flapped open her sheet door and crept out, holding the hand of a child dressed in pajamas and felt boots. They poked the ground with sticks, digging for potatoes.

Lublin rose beyond them in the distance, like a fairy-tale city, scattered with old red-roofed pastel buildings as if a giant had shaken them in a cup and tossed them on the rolling hills. Farther west was where our little airport and a complex of factories once sat, but the Nazis had already bombed that. It was the first thing they hit, but at least no Germans had marched into town yet.

"Do you think the British will help us?" Nadia said. "The French?"

Pietrik scanned the horizon. "Maybe." He ripped grass from the ground and flung it in the air. "Good day for flying. They better hurry."

A string of spotted cows sashayed down the hill toward the tents to graze, bells tanging, led by kerchiefed milk women. One cow lifted her tail and scattered a troop of lumps behind her, which those following stepped around. Each woman carried a tall silver milk can against one shoulder.

I squinted to find our school, St. Monica's Catholic School for Girls, a tangerine flag swaying from its bell tower. It was a place with floors so polished we wore satin slippers inside. A place of rigorous lessons, daily mass, and strict teachers. Not that any of them had helped Nadia when she needed it most, except for Mrs. Mikel-sky, our favorite math teacher, of course.

"Look," Nadia said. "The women are coming with the cows but no sheep. The sheep are always out by now."

Nadia noticed things. Though only two months older than me—already seventeen—she seemed more mature somehow. Pietrik looked past me at Nadia as if seeing her for the first time. All the boys liked her, with her perfect cartwheel, flawless Maureen O'Sullivan complexion, and thick blond braid. Maybe I was not as beautiful and a miserable athlete, but I was once voted Best Legs and Best Dancer in my *gimnazjum* class in an informal poll, a first, at our school anyway.

"You notice everything, Nadia," Pietrik said.

Nadia smiled at him. "Not really. Maybe we should go down there and help dig potatoes? You're good with a shovel, Pietrik."

She was flirting with him? A direct violation of my number-one rule: *Girlfriends first!* Pietrik pulled *my* wreath from the river on Midsummer Eve, gave me a silver cross necklace. Did traditions mean nothing anymore?

Maybe Pietrik was falling for her? It made sense. Earlier that month the Girl Guides had been selling dances with local boys for charity, and Pietrik's little sister Luiza told me Nadia bought *all ten* of Pietrik's dances. Then there was that awful dustup outside the school gates. Nadia and I were leaving school when street boys

started throwing rocks at Nadia and calling her names because her grandfather was Jewish. Pietrik had been so quick to rescue her.

People throwing rocks at Jews was not something unusual to see, but it was unusual for it to happen to Nadia. I'd never known she was part Jewish before that. We attended Catholic school, and she'd memorized more prayers than I had. But everyone knew once our German teacher, Herr Speck, made us chart our ancestors and told the whole class.

I'd tried to pull Nadia away that day as the boys hurled rocks, but she'd stood firm. Mrs. Mikelsky, pregnant with her first child, had rushed out, wrapped her arms around Nadia, and shouted at the bullies to stop or she'd call the police. Mrs. Mikelsky was every girl's favorite teacher, our North Star, since we all wanted to be like her, beautiful and smart and funny. She defended her girls like a mother lion and gave us *krowki*, toffee candies, for perfect math tests, which I never failed to get.

Pietrik, who'd come to walk us home, chased the street boys away waving a shovel in the air but ended up with a little chip off his front tooth, which in no way damaged his smile and in fact only made it sweeter.

I was startled from my daydream by a peculiar sound, like the buzz of crickets all around us. It grew louder until the vibration soaked the ground beneath us.

Planes!

They zoomed over us, flying so low they turned the grass inside out, light bouncing off their silver bellies. Three abreast, they banked right, leaving an oily smell in their wake, and headed for the city, their gray shadows gliding across the fields below. I counted twelve altogether.

"They look like the planes from *King Kong*," I said.

"Those were *biplanes*, Kasia," Pietrik said. "Curtiss Helldivers. These are *German* dive bombers."

"Maybe they're Polish."

“They’re not Polish. You can tell by the white crosses under the wings.”

“Do they have bombs?” Nadia asked, more intrigued than afraid. She was never afraid.

“They already got the airport,” Pietrik said. “What else can they bomb? We have no ammunition depot.”

The planes circled the city and then flew west, one behind the other. The first dove with a terrible screech and dropped a bomb in the middle of town, right where Krakowskie Przedmieście, our main street, wound by the town’s finest buildings.

Pietrik stood. “Jezu Chryste, no!”

A great thud shook the ground, and black and gray plumes rose from where the bomb had fallen. The planes circled the city again and this time dropped their bombs near Crown Court, our town hall. My sister Zuzanna, a brand-new doctor, volunteered at the clinic there some days. What about my mother? Please, God, take me directly to heaven if anything happens to my mother, I thought. Was Papa at the postal center?

The planes carousoled around the city and then flew toward us. We dove to the grass as they passed over us again, Pietrik on top of Nadia and me, so close I felt his heart beating through his shirt against my back.

Two planes circled back as if they’d forgotten something.

“We need to—” Pietrik began, but before we could move, both planes dove and flew closer to the ground, across the field below. In an instant, we heard their guns firing. They shot at the milk women. Some of the bullets hit the field and sent puffs of dust up, but others hit the women, sending them to the ground, their milk spilling onto the grass. A cow cried out as she fell, and the pup-pup-pup of bullets punched through the metal milk cans.

The refugees in the fields dropped their potatoes and scattered, but bullets found some as they ran. I ducked as the last two planes flew back over us, leaving the field below strewn with bodies of

men and women and cows. The cows that could still run bucked about as if half-mad.

I tore down the hill, Nadia and Pietrik behind me, through the forest along pine-neededled paths, toward home. Were my parents hurt? Zuzanna? With only two ambulances, she'd be at work all night.

We slowed at the potato field, for it was impossible not to stare. I walked a milk can's length away from a woman Zuzanna's age, potatoes scattered around her. She lay on her back across hoed rows of dirt, left hand across her chest, shoulder steeped in blood, face splattered with it too. A girl knelt next to her.

"Sister," the girl said, taking her hand, "you need to get up."

"Compress the wound with two hands," I told her, but she just looked at me.

A woman wearing a chenille robe came and knelt near them. She pulled a length of amber rubber from her black doctor's bag.

Nadia pulled me away. "Come. The planes might come back."

In the city, people were running everywhere, crying and yelling to one another, evacuating by bicycle, horse, truck, cart, and on foot.

As we neared my street, Pietrik took Nadia's hand. "You're almost home, Kasia. I'll take Nadia."

"What about me?" I called after them, but they were already off, down the cobblestones toward Nadia's mother's apartment.

Pietrik had made his choice.

I headed for the tunnel, which ran under the ancient Cracow Gate, a soaring brick tower with a bell-shaped spire, my favorite Lublin landmark, once the only entrance to the whole city. The bombs had cracked the tower down the side, but it was still standing.

My math teacher, Mrs. Mikelsky, and her husband, who lived close to me, cycled past, headed in the opposite direction. A very pregnant Mrs. Mikelsky turned as she rode.

"Your mother is frantic looking for you, Kasia," she said.

"Where are you going?" I called after them.

"To my sister's," Mr. Mikelsky shouted back.

"Get home to your mother!" Mrs. Mikelsky shouted over her shoulder.

They cycled on, disappeared into the crowd, and I continued toward home.

*Please, God, let Matka be unhurt.*

Once I arrived at our block, every cell in my body tingled with relief to see that our pink sliver of a building still stood. The house across the street had not been so lucky. It was razed to rubble, now just a mess of concrete, plaster walls, and twisted iron beds strewn across our road. I scrambled over the wreckage and, as I drew closer, saw one of Matka's curtains blow gently out the window in the breeze. That's when I realized every one of our windows had been blown out by the bombs, blackout paper and all.

There was no need to fetch the apartment key from behind the loose brick, for the door was wide open. I found Matka and Zuzanna in the kitchen near Matka's drawing table, gathering fallen paintbrushes scattered about the floor, the smell of spilled turpentine in the air. Psina, our pet chicken, followed behind them. Thank heavens Psina was not hurt, for she was more like our family dog than a hen.

"Where have you *been*?" Matka said, her face white as the drawing paper in her hand.

"Up at Deer Meadow," I said. "It was Pietrik's id—"

Zuzanna stood, holding a pile of glass shards in a cup, her white doctor's coat gray with ash. It had taken her six long years to earn that coat. Her suitcase stood next to the door. No doubt she'd been packing to go live at the hospital for her pediatric residency when the bombs had dropped.

"How could you be so stupid?" Zuzanna said.

"Where's Papa?" I said as the two came and brushed bits of concrete from my hair.

"He went out—" Matka began.

Zuzanna grabbed Matka's shoulders. "*Tell* her, Matka."

"He went looking for you," Matka said, about to dissolve into tears.

"He's probably at the postal center," Zuzanna said. "I'll go find him."

"Don't go," I said. "What if the planes come again?" An electric eel of fear punctured my chest. Those poor women lying in the field . . .

"I'm going," Zuzanna said. "I'll be back."

"Let me come too," I said. "They'll need me at the clinic."

"Why do you do such stupid things? Papa's gone because of you." Zuzanna slipped her sweater on and stepped toward the door. "They don't need you at the clinic. All you do is roll bandages anyway. Stay here."

"Don't go," Matka said, but Zuzanna rushed out, always strong, like Papa.

Matka went to the window and bent to pick up shards of glass but gave up because her hands were shaking so badly and came back to me. She smoothed my hair, kissed my forehead, and then held me tight, saying, *Ja cię kocham*, over and over like a skipping record.

I love you.

MATKA AND I SLEPT in her bed that night, both with one eye open, waiting for Papa and Zuzanna to walk in. Psina, more dog than fowl, slept at the foot of our bed, her head tucked beneath one downy wing. She woke with a squawk when Papa did come home, well before dawn. He stood in the bedroom doorway, his tweed jacket powdered with ash. Papa always had a sad face, like that of a bloodhound. Even in his baby pictures, those creases and folds of skin hung down. But that night the light from the kitchen cast a shadow on his face, making him look sadder still.

Matka sat up in bed. "Ade?" She threw back the blanket and ran

to him, their silhouettes dark against the light from the kitchen. "Where's Zuzanna?"

"I haven't seen her," Papa said. "When I couldn't find Kasia, I went to the postal center and took my files outside to burn. Information the Germans will want. Names and addresses. Military lists. They've occupied the postal center in Warsaw and cut the telegraph line, so we're next."

"What happened to the staff?" Matka said.

Papa glanced in my direction and did not answer.

"Our best guess is German troops will be here in a week. Chances are they'll come here first."

"Here?" Matka gathered her housecoat around her neck.

"Looking for me. I may be useful to them." Papa smiled, but his eyes stayed dark. "They'll want to use the postal center for their communications."

No one knew the postal center like Papa. He'd run it for as long as I could remember. Did he know secrets? Papa was a patriot. He'd rather die than tell them anything.

"How do they even know where we live?"

Papa looked at Matka as if she were a child. "They've been planning this for years, Halina. If they take me, hopefully they'll need me enough to keep me alive. Give it two days. If you don't hear from me, take the girls and go south."

"The British will help us," Matka said. "The French—"

"No one is *coming*, my love. The mayor is evacuating, taking the police and fire brigade. For now we need to hide what we can."

Papa pulled Matka's jewelry box from the dresser and tossed it on the bed. "First, wash and dry any tin cans. We need to bury anything of value—"

"But we haven't done anything wrong, Ade. Germans are cultured people. Hitler has them under some kind of spell."

Matka's mother had been pure German, her father half-Polish. Even woken from sleep, she was beautiful. Soft but not fragile, a natural blonde.

Papa grabbed her by the arm. “Your cultured people want us gone so they can move in. Don’t you see?”

Papa went about the apartment gathering our most valuable possessions in a metal box with a hinged lid: Matka’s nursing certificate, their marriage license, a small ruby ring from Matka’s family, and an envelope of family pictures.

“Get the bag of millet. We’re burying that too.”

Matka pulled the canvas bag from under the sink.

“They’ll probably do a house-by-house search for Polish soldiers in hiding,” Papa said, keeping his voice low. “They’ve broadcast new rules. Poland no longer exists as a country. No Polish will be spoken. All schools will close. There will be curfews. A pink pass is required to violate them, and we are not allowed weapons or ski boots or any food over our ration limit. Secretly possessing these things is punishable by—” Again Papa looked at me and stopped speaking. “They’ll probably just take whatever they want.”

Papa pulled his old silver revolver from the dresser drawer. Matka stepped back, away from it.

“Bury that, Ade,” she said, her eyes wide.

“We may need it,” Papa said.

Matka turned away from him. “Nothing good comes of a gun.”

Papa hesitated and then placed the gun in the box. “Bury your Girl Guides uniform, Kasia. The Nazis are targeting scouts—they shot a pack of Boy Scouts in Gdansk.”

A chill went through me. I knew not to argue with Papa and placed my prized possessions in tin cans: the wool scarf Pietrik once wore that still smelled like him, the new red corduroy shift dress Matka sewed for me, my Girl Guides uniform shirt and neckerchief, and a picture of Nadia and me riding a cow. Matka wrapped one of her sets of Kolinsky sable-hair paintbrushes, which had been her mother’s, and added them to a can. Papa melted wax on the seams of the tin cans.

That night only stars lit our back garden, a patch of dirt surrounded by a few planks of wood held up only by the weeds around

them. Papa stepped on the rusty shovel blade to push it into the ground. It cut through hard soil as if it were cake, and he dug a deep hole, like a baby's fresh grave.

We were almost done, but even in near darkness I could tell Matka had kept her engagement ring on her finger, the one her mother had passed on to her when Papa was too poor to buy her one. The ring was like an exquisite flower, with a big center diamond surrounded with deep blue sapphire petals. It glittered like a nervous firefly as Matka's hand moved in the darkness. "The diamond is cushion cut—from the seventeen hundreds when they cut stones to react to candlelight," Matka would say when people admired it. React it did, shimmering, almost alive.

"What about your ring?" Papa asked.

The firefly flew behind her back, protecting itself. "Not that," Matka said.

As children, when crossing the road, Zuzanna and I had always fought over who got to hold Matka's hand that wore that ring. The pretty hand.

"Haven't we buried enough?" I said. "We'll be caught out here."

Standing there arguing in the dark would only attract attention.

"Suit yourself, Halina," Papa said. He flung shovelfuls of dirt into the hole to cover our treasures. I pushed earth into the hole with my hands to make things go faster, and Papa tamped it down smooth. He then counted his steps back to the building so he'd remember where we buried our treasure.

Twelve steps to the door.

ZUZANNA FINALLY CAME HOME with terrible tales of the doctors and nurses working all night to save the wounded. Word was many were still alive trapped under rubble. We lived in fear of hearing the sound of Germans at our front door, our ears to the radio in the kitchen, hoping for the best news but hearing the worst. Poland

defended herself, sustaining great losses, but in the end could not match Germany's modern armored divisions and airpower.

I woke Sunday, September 17, to Matka telling Papa what she'd heard on the radio. The Russians had also attacked Poland, from the east. Was there no end to the countries attacking us?

I found my parents in the kitchen peering out the front window. It was a crisp fall morning, a light breeze blowing in through Matka's curtains. As I drew closer to the window, I saw Jewish men in black suits clearing the rubble from in front of our house.

Matka wrapped her arms around me, and once the road was cleared, we watched a parade of German soldiers roll in, like new tenants in a boardinghouse with their mountains of luggage. First came trucks, then soldiers on foot, then more soldiers standing tall and haughty in their tanks. At least Zuzanna did not see this sad sight, for she was already at the hospital that morning.

Matka heated water for Papa's tea as he watched it all. I did my best to keep us all quiet as could be. Maybe if we were silent, they would not bother us? To calm myself I counted the birds crocheted on Matka's curtains. One lark. Two swallows. One magpie. Wasn't the magpie a sign of imminent death? The rumble of a truck grew louder.

I breathed deep to quell the panic inside me. What was coming?

*"Out, out!"* a man shouted. The terrible clatter of hobnail boots on cobblestones. There were lots of them.

"Stay away from the window, Kasia," Papa said, stepping back himself. He said it in such an offhand way I knew he was scared.

"Should we hide?" Matka whispered. She turned her ring around and closed her hand so the stones hid in her palm.

Papa walked toward the door, and I busied myself with prayer. We heard a good bit of yelling and orders, and soon the truck drove away.

"I think they're leaving," I whispered to Matka.

I jumped as a rap came at our door, and then a man's voice. *"Open up!"*

Matka froze in place and Papa opened the door.

“Adalbert Kuzmerick?” said an SS man, who strode in all puffed up and pleased with himself.

He was two hands taller than Papa, so tall his hat almost hit the top of the door when he entered. He and his underling were dressed in full Sonderdienst uniform, with the black boots and the hat with the horrible skull emblem with two gaping holes for eyes. As he passed, I smelled clove gum on him. He looked well fed too, his chin held so high I could see the blood through a little piece of white paper stuck on his Adam’s apple where he’d cut himself shaving. They even bled Nazi red.

“Yes,” Papa said, calm as could be.

“Director of the postal center communications?”

Papa nodded.

Two more guards grabbed Papa by the arms and pulled him out without even time for him to look back at us. I tried to follow, but the tall one blocked my way with his nightstick.

Matka ran to the window, eyes wild. “Where are you taking him?”

Suddenly I was cold all over. It was getting harder to breathe.

Another SS man, skinny and shorter than the first, stepped in with a canvas bread bag across his chest.

“Where does your husband keep his work papers?” asked the tall one.

“Not here,” Matka said. “Can’t you tell me where they’re taking him?”

Matka stood, fingers locked at her chest, as the skinny one went about the house opening drawers and stuffing whatever papers we had into his bag.

“Shortwave radio?” the tall one said.

Matka shook her head. “No.”

My stomach hurt as I watched the skinny guard fling our cabinet doors wide and toss what little food we had into his bag.

"All provisions are the property of the Reich," the tall one said. "You will be issued ration cards."

Tinned peas, two potatoes, and a sad little cabbage went into the skinny one's bag. Then he grabbed a rolled paper bag that held the last of Matka's coffee.

She reached for it.

"Oh, please—may we keep the coffee? It's all we have."

The tall one turned and looked at Matka for a long second. "Leave it," he said, and his underling tossed it onto the counter.

The men stepped through our three little bedrooms and pulled drawers from bureaus, dumping socks and underclothes on the floor.

"Weapons?" said the tall one as the other searched closets. "Any other food?"

"No," Matka said. I'd never seen her lie before.

He stepped closer to her. "You may have heard that withholding that which is due the Reich is punishable by death."

"I understand," Matka said. "If I could just visit my husband . . ."

We followed the men out to the back garden. The yard, fenced on all sides, suddenly seemed smaller with the SS men standing there. It all looked normal, but the ground where we'd buried our things the week before was still beaten quite flat. It was so obvious something was buried there. I counted the guard's steps as he walked into the yard. *Five . . . six . . . seven . . .* Could they see my knees shaking?

Our chicken, Psina, moved closer to our buried treasure spot, scratching near it, looking for bugs. My God, the shovel was there, leaning against the back of the house, dirt still clinging to the blade. Would they take us to Lublin Castle or just shoot us in the yard and leave us for Papa to find?

"Do you think I'm stupid?" the tall guard said, walking toward the spot.

*Eight . . . nine . . .*

My respiration shut off.

"Of course not," Matka said.

"Get the shovel," said the tall guard to his underling. "You really thought you'd get away with this?"

"No, please," Matka said. She held on to the St. Mary medal she wore on a chain around her neck. "I am from Osnabrück, actually. You know it?"

The taller guard took the shovel. "Of course I know it. Who hasn't been to the Christmas market there? Have you registered as Volksdeutsche?"

Volksdeutsche was the German term for ethnic Germans living in countries other than Germany. The Nazis pressured Polish citizens with German heritage like Matka to register as Volksdeutsche. Once registered, they got extra food, better jobs, and property confiscated from Jews and non-German Poles. Matka would never accept Volksdeutsche status, since that showed allegiance to Germany, but this put her at risk, because she was going against the Reich.

"No, but I am mostly German. My father was only part Polish."

Psina scratched the soil around the smooth spot and pecked something there.

"If you were German, you'd not be breaking rules, would you? Withholding what is due the Reich?"

Matka touched his arm. "It is hard dealing with all of this. Can you not understand? Imagine your own family."

"My own family would have handed what they had to the Reich."

The SS man took the shovel and continued toward the spot.

*Ten . . . eleven . . .*

"I'm so terribly sorry," Matka said, following him.

The man ignored Matka and took one more step.

*Twelve.*

How far would he dig before he hit the box?

"Please, give us another chance," Matka said. "The rules are so new."

The guard turned, leaned on the shovel, and gave Matka a thorough looking over. He smiled, and I could see his teeth clearly, like little chewing gum tablets.

He leaned closer to her and lowered his voice. "Maybe you know the rule about curfew?"

"Yes," Matka said, a tiny crease between her brows. She shifted in her shoes.

"That is a rule you can break." The SS man took Matka's medal between his thumb and forefinger and rubbed it, watching her the whole time.

"One needs a pink pass to violate curfew," Matka said.

"I have them here in my pocket." He dropped the medal and put his hand over his heart.

"I don't understand," Matka said.

"I think you do."

"Are you saying you will let this go if I come visit you?"

"If that is what you heard—"

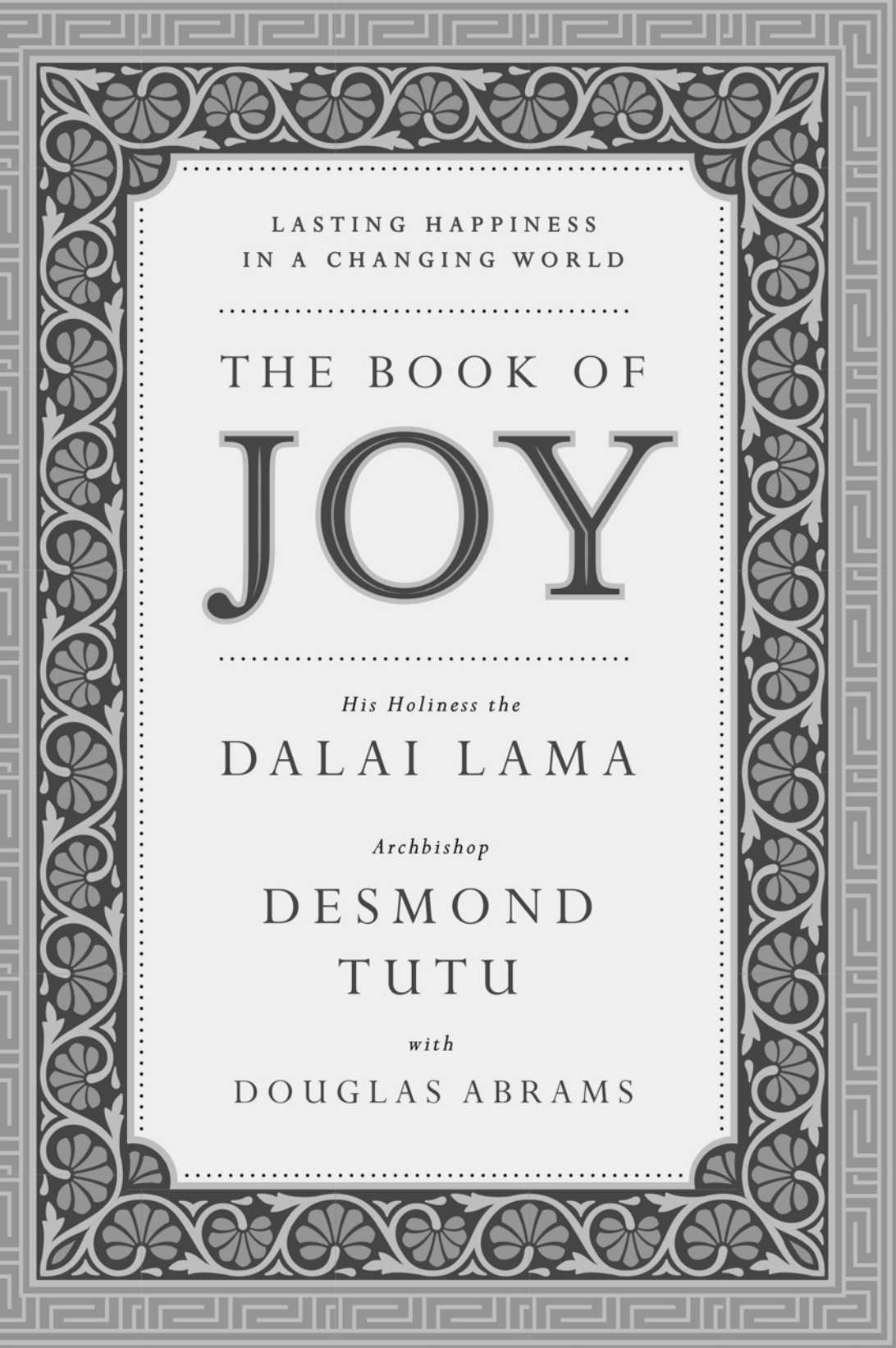
"The Germans I know are cultured people. I can't imagine you would ask a mother of two to do that."

The man cocked his head to one side, bit his lip, and picked up the shovel. "I am sorry you feel that way."

"Wait," Matka said.

The man lifted the shovel into the air above his head.

"My God, no!" Matka cried. She reached for his arm, but it was too late. Once the shovel was in the air, there was no stopping it.



LASTING HAPPINESS  
IN A CHANGING WORLD

.....

THE BOOK OF  
JOY

.....

*His Holiness the*  
DALAI LAMA

*Archbishop*  
DESMOND  
TUTU

*with*  
DOUGLAS ABRAMS



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## Why Are You Not Morose?

To begin, I invited the Archbishop to offer a prayer, since, in his tradition, that is the way to open any important conversation.

“Yes, thank you,” the Archbishop began. “I always need all the help I can get.

“Let’s be still for a moment. Come, Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of thy faithful people and kindle in them the fire of thy love. Send forth thy spirit and they shall be made new and thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Amen.”

“Amen,” the Dalai Lama added. I then asked the Dalai Lama to share his hopes for our time together. He sat back and rubbed his hands. “Now we are in the twenty-first century. We are improving on the innovations of the twentieth century and continuing to improve our material world. While of course there are still a lot of poor people who do not have adequate food, generally the world is now highly developed. The problem is that our world and our education remain focused exclusively on external, materialistic values. We are not concerned enough with our inner values. Those who grow up with this kind of education live a materialistic life and

eventually the whole society becomes materialistic. But this culture is not sufficient to tackle our human problems. The real problem is *here*,” the Dalai Lama said, pointing to his head.

The Archbishop tapped his chest with his fingers to emphasize the heart as well.

“And *here*,” the Dalai Lama echoed. “Mind and heart. Materialistic values cannot give us peace of mind. So we really need to focus on our inner values, our true humanity. Only this way can we have peace of mind—and more peace in our world. A lot of the problems we are facing are our own creation, like war and violence. Unlike a natural disaster, these problems are created by humans ourselves.

“I feel there is a big contradiction,” the Dalai Lama continued. “There are seven billion human beings and nobody wants to have problems or suffering, but there are many problems and much suffering, most of our own creation. Why?” He was speaking now directly to the Archbishop, who was nodding in agreement. “Something is lacking. As one of the seven billion human beings, I believe everyone has the responsibility to develop a happier world. We need, ultimately, to have a greater concern for others’ well-being. In other words, kindness or compassion, which is lacking now. We must pay more attention to our inner values. We must look inside.”

He turned to the Archbishop and raised his hands, palms pressed together in a gesture of respect. “So now you, Archbishop Tutu, my longtime friend.” He extended his hand to the Archbishop, who took it tenderly between both of his. “I think you have great potential—”

“*Potential?!?*” the Archbishop responded with feigned outrage, retracting his hand.

“Great potential, yes. I mean great potential, you see, to create a happier humanity.”

The Archbishop threw his head back, laughing. “Ah, yes.”

“When people just look at your face,” the Dalai Lama continued, “you are always laughing, always joyful. This is a very positive message.” Now the Dalai Lama reached over and took the Archbishop’s hand again and stroked it.

“Sometimes when you see political leaders or spiritual leaders, they have a very serious face—” He sat up in his chair frowning and looking very stern. “It makes one hesitant, but when they see your face—”

“It’s the big nose,” the Archbishop suggested, and they both giggled.

“So I really appreciate your coming to have this conversation,” the Dalai Lama said. “In order to develop our mind, we must look at a deeper level. Everyone seeks happiness, joyfulness, but from outside—from money, from power, from big car, from big house. Most people never pay much attention to the ultimate source of a happy life, which is inside, not outside. Even the source of physical health is inside, not outside.

“So there may be a few differences between us. You usually emphasize faith. Personally I am Buddhist, and I consider faith very important, but at the same time the reality is that out of seven billion people, over one billion people on the planet are nonbelievers. So we cannot exclude them. One billion is quite a large number. They are also our human brothers and sisters. They also have the right to become happier human beings and to be good members of the human family. So one need not depend on religious faith to educate our inner values.”

"It's very difficult to follow your very profound pronouncements," the Archbishop began. "I thought you were going to say that, in fact, when you are pursuing happiness, you are not going to find it. It's very, very elusive. You don't find it by saying, I'm going to forget about everything and just pursue happiness. There's a title of a book by C. S. Lewis called *Surprised by Joy*, which I think expresses how it works.

"Many people look at you," the Archbishop continued, "and they think of all the awful things that have happened to you. Nothing can be more devastating than being exiled from your home, from the things that are really precious to you. And yet when people come to you, they experience someone who has a wonderful serenity . . . a wonderful compassion . . . a mischievousness—"

"That's the right word," the Dalai Lama added. "I don't like too much formality."

"Don't interrupt me," the Archbishop elbowed back.

"Oh!" The Dalai Lama laughed at his reprimand.

"It's wonderful to discover that what we want is not actually happiness. It is not actually what I would speak of. I would speak of joy. Joy subsumes happiness. Joy is the far greater thing. Think of a mother who is going to give birth. Almost all of us want to escape pain. And mothers know that they are going to have pain, the great pain of giving birth. But they accept it. And even after the most painful labor, once the baby is out, you can't measure the mother's joy. It is one of those incredible things that joy can come so quickly from suffering.

"A mother can be dead tired from work," the Archbishop continued, "and all of the things that have worried her. And then her child is ill. That mother will not remember her exhaustion. She can

## WHY ARE YOU NOT MOROSE?

sit at the bedside of her sick child the night through, and when the child gets better you see that joy.”

What is this thing called joy, and how is it possible that it can evoke such a wide range of feelings? How can the experience of joy span from those tears of joy at a birth to an irrepressible belly laugh at a joke to a serenely contented smile during meditation? Joy seems to blanket this entire emotional expanse. Paul Ekman, famed emotions researcher and longtime friend of the Dalai Lama, has written that joy is associated with feelings as varied as:

- pleasure** (of the five senses)
- amusement** (from a chuckle to a belly laugh)
- contentment** (a calmer kind of satisfaction)
- excitement** (in response to novelty or challenge)
- relief** (following upon another emotion, such as fear, anxiety, and even pleasure)
- wonder** (before something astonishing and admirable)
- ecstasy or bliss** (transporting us outside ourselves)
- exultation** (at having accomplished a difficult or daring task)
- radiant pride** (when our children earn a special honor)
- unhealthy jubilation or *schadenfreude*** (relishing in someone else’s suffering)
- elevation** (from having witnessed an act of kindness, generosity, or compassion)
- gratitude** (the appreciation of a selfless act of which one is the beneficiary)

## THE BOOK OF JOY

In his book on happiness, Buddhist scholar and former scientist Matthieu Ricard has added three other more exalted states of joy:

**rejoicing** (in someone else's happiness, what Buddhists call *mudita*)

**delight or enchantment** (a shining kind of contentment)

**spiritual radiance** (a serene joy born from deep well-being and benevolence)

This helpful mapping of the kingdom of joy conveys its complexity and its subtlety. Joy can span from the pleasure of others' good fortune, what Buddhists call *mudita*, to the pleasure in others' misfortune, what the Germans call *schadenfreude*. Clearly what the Archbishop was describing was more than mere pleasure and closer to the relief, wonder, and ecstasy of birth. Joy certainly does embrace all of these human experiences, but lasting joy—joy as a way of being—that one witnesses in the Archbishop and the Dalai Lama is probably closest to the “shining contentment” or the “spiritual radiance” born from deep well-being and benevolence.

I knew this complex topography of joy was what we were here to discover. Research conducted at the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology at the University of Glasgow suggests that there are really only four fundamental emotions, three of which are so-called negative emotions: fear, anger, and sadness. The only positive one is joy or happiness. Exploring joy is nothing less than exploring what makes human experience satisfying.

| s joy a feeling that comes and surprises us, or is it a more dependable way of being?” I asked. “For the two of you, joy seems to be something much more enduring. Your spiritual practice hasn’t

made you somber and serious. It's made you more joyful. So how can people cultivate that sense of joy as a way of being, and not just a temporary feeling?"

The Archbishop and the Dalai Lama looked at each other and the Archbishop gestured to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama squeezed the Archbishop's hand and began. "Yes, it is true. Joy is something different from happiness. When I use the word *happiness*, in a sense I mean *satisfaction*. Sometimes we have a painful experience, but that experience, as you've said with birth, can bring great satisfaction and joyfulness."

"Let me ask you," the Archbishop jumped in. "You've been in exile fifty-what years?"

"Fifty-six."

"Fifty-six years from a country that you love more than anything else. Why are you not morose?"

"Morose?" the Dalai Lama asked, not understanding the word.

As Jinpa hurried to translate *morose* into Tibetan, the Archbishop clarified, "Sad."

The Dalai Lama took the Archbishop's hand in his, as if comforting him while reviewing these painful events. The Dalai Lama's storied discovery as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama meant that at the age of two, he was swept away from his rural home in the Amdo province of eastern Tibet to the one-thousand-room Potala Palace in the capital city of Lhasa. There he was raised in opulent isolation as the future spiritual and political leader of Tibet and as a godlike incarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. After the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, the Dalai Lama was thrust into politics. At the age of fifteen he found himself the ruler of six million people and facing an all-out and desperately unequal war. For nine years he tried to negotiate with Communist China for his peo-

ple's welfare, and sought political solutions as the country came to be annexed. In 1959, during an uprising that risked resulting in a massacre, the Dalai Lama decided, with a heavy heart, to go into exile.

The odds of successfully escaping to India were frighteningly small, but to avoid a confrontation and a bloodbath, he left in the night dressed as a palace guard. He had to take off his recognizable glasses, and his blurred vision must have heightened his sense of fear and uncertainty as the escape party snuck by garrisons of the People's Liberation Army. They endured sandstorms and snowstorms as they summited nineteen-thousand-foot mountain peaks during their three-week escape.

"One of my practices comes from an ancient Indian teacher," the Dalai Lama began answering the Archbishop's question. "He taught that when you experience some tragic situation, think about it. If there's no way to overcome the tragedy, then there is no use worrying too much. So I practice that." The Dalai Lama was referring to the eighth-century Buddhist master Shantideva, who wrote, "If something can be done about the situation, what need is there for dejection? And if nothing can be done about it, what use is there for being dejected?"

The Archbishop cackled, perhaps because it seemed almost too incredible that someone could stop worrying just because it was pointless.

"Yes, but I think people know it with their head." He touched both index fingers to his scalp. "You know, that it doesn't help worrying. But they still worry."

"Many of us have become refugees," the Dalai Lama tried to explain, "and there are a lot of difficulties in my own country. When I look only at that," he said, cupping his hands into a small

circle, “then I worry.” He widened his hands, breaking the circle open. “But when I look at the world, there are a lot of problems, even within the People’s Republic of China. For example, the Hui Muslim community in China has a lot of problems and suffering. And then outside China, there are many more problems and more suffering. When we see these things, we realize that not only do we suffer, but so do many of our human brothers and sisters. So when we look at the same event from a wider perspective, we will reduce the worrying and our own suffering.”

I was struck by the simplicity and profundity of what the Dalai Lama was saying. This was far from “don’t worry, be happy,” as the popular Bobby McFerrin song says. This was not a denial of pain and suffering, but a shift in perspective—from oneself and toward others, from anguish to compassion—seeing that others are suffering as well. The remarkable thing about what the Dalai Lama was describing is that as we recognize others’ suffering and realize that we are not alone, our pain is lessened.

Often we hear about another’s tragedy, and it makes us feel better about our own situation. This is quite different from what the Dalai Lama was doing. He was not contrasting his situation with others, but uniting his situation with others, enlarging his identity and seeing that he and the Tibetan people were not alone in their suffering. This recognition that we are all connected—whether Tibetan Buddhists or Hui Muslims—is the birth of empathy and compassion.

I wondered how the Dalai Lama’s ability to shift his perspective might relate to the adage “Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.” Was it truly possible to experience pain, whether the pain of an injury or an exile, without suffering? There is a Sutta, or teaching of the Buddha, called the Sallatha Sutta, that makes a similar distinc-

tion between our “feelings of pain” and “the suffering that comes as a result of our response” to the pain: “When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed, ordinary person sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical and mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he feels the pain of two arrows.” It seems that the Dalai Lama was suggesting that by shifting our perspective to a broader, more compassionate one, we can avoid the worry and suffering that is the second arrow.

“Then another thing,” the Dalai Lama continued. “There are different aspects to any event. For example, we lost our own country and became refugees, but that same experience gave us new opportunities to see more things. For me personally, I had more opportunities to meet with different people, different spiritual practitioners, like you, and also scientists. This new opportunity arrived because I became a refugee. If I remained in the Potala in Lhasa, I would have stayed in what has often been described as a golden cage: the Lama, holy Dalai Lama.” He was now sitting up stiffly as he once had to when he was the cloistered spiritual head of the Forbidden Kingdom.

“So, personally, I prefer the last five decades of refugee life. It’s more useful, more opportunity to learn, to experience life. Therefore, if you look from one angle, you feel, oh how bad, how sad. But if you look from another angle at that same tragedy, that same event, you see that it gives me new opportunities. So, it’s wonderful. That’s the main reason that I’m not sad and morose. There’s a Tibetan saying: ‘Wherever you have friends that’s your country, and wherever you receive love, that’s your home.’”

THE  
LITTLE PARIS  
BOOKSHOP

A NOVEL



NINA GEORGE

TRANSLATED BY SIMON PARE

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# 1



**H***ow on earth could I have let them talk me into it?*

The two generals of number 27 Rue Montagnard—Madame Bernard, the owner, and Madame Rosalette, the concierge—had caught Monsieur in a pincer movement between their ground-floor flats.

“That Le P. has treated his wife shamelessly.”

“Scandalously. Like a moth treats a wedding veil.”

“You can hardly blame some people when you look at their wives. Fridges in Chanel. But men? Monsters, all of them.”

“Ladies, I don’t quite know what . . .”

“Not you of course, Monsieur Perdu. You are cashmere compared with the normal yarn from which men are spun.”

“Anyway, we’re getting a new tenant. On the fourth floor. Yours, Monsieur.”

“But Madame has nothing left. Absolutely nothing, only shattered illusions. She needs just about everything.”

“And that’s where you come in, Monsieur. Give whatever you can. All donations welcome.”

“Of course. Maybe a good book . . .”

“Actually, we were thinking of something more practical. A table, perhaps. You know, Madame has—”

“Nothing. I got that.”

The bookseller could not imagine what might be more practical than a book, but he promised to give the new tenant a table. He still had one.

MONSIEUR PERDU pushed his tie between the top buttons of his white, vigorously ironed shirt and carefully rolled up his sleeves. Inward, one fold at a time, up to the elbow. He stared at the bookcase in the corridor. Behind the shelves lay a room he hadn’t entered for almost twenty-one years.

Twenty-one years and summers and New Year’s mornings.

But in that room was the table.

He exhaled, groped indiscriminately for a book and pulled Orwell’s 1984 out of the bookcase. It didn’t fall apart. Nor did it bite his hand like an affronted cat.

He took out the next novel, then two more. Now he reached into the shelf with both hands, grabbed whole parcels of books out of it and piled them up beside him.

The stacks grew into trees. Towers. Magic mountains. He looked at the last book in his hand. *When the Clock Struck Thirteen*. A tale of time travel.

If he’d believed in omens, this would have been a sign.

He banged the bottom of the shelves with his fists to loosen them from their fastenings. Then he stepped back.

There. Layer by layer, it appeared. Behind the wall of words. The door to the room where . . .

*I could simply buy a table.*

Monsieur Perdu ran his hand over his mouth. Yes. Dust down the books, put them away again, forget about the door. Buy a table and carry on as he had for the last two decades. In twenty years' time he'd be seventy, and from there he'd make it through the rest. Maybe he'd die prematurely.

*Coward.*

He tightened his trembling fist on the door handle.

Slowly the tall man opened the door. He pushed it softly inward, screwed up his eyes and . . .

Nothing but moonlight and dry air. He breathed it in through his nose, analyzing it, but found nothing.

—'s *smell has gone.*

Over the course of twenty-one summers, Monsieur Perdu had become as adept at avoiding thinking of — as he was at stepping around open manholes.

He mainly thought of her as —. As a pause amid the hum of his thoughts, as a blank in the pictures of the past, as a dark spot amid his feelings. He was capable of conjuring all kinds of gaps.

Monsieur Perdu looked around. How quiet the room seemed. And pale despite the lavender-blue wallpaper. The passing of the years behind the closed door had squeezed the color from the walls.

The light from the corridor met little that could cast a shadow. A bistro chair. The kitchen table. A vase with the lavender stolen two decades earlier from the Valensole plateau. And a fifty-year-old man who now sat down on the chair and wrapped his arms around himself.

There had once been curtains, and over there, pictures, flowers and books, a cat called Castor that slept on the sofa.

There were candlesticks and whispering, full wineglasses and music. Dancing shadows on the wall, one of them tall, the other strikingly beautiful. There had been love in this room.

*Now there's only me.*

He clenched his fists and pressed them against his burning eyes.

Monsieur Perdu swallowed and swallowed again to fight back the tears. His throat was too tight to breathe and his back seemed to glow with heat and pain.

When he could once more swallow without it hurting, Monsieur Perdu stood up and opened the casement window. Aromas came swirling in from the back courtyard.

The herbs from the Goldenbergs' little garden. Rosemary and thyme mixed with the massage oils used by Che, the blind chiropodist and "foot whisperer." Added to that, the smell of pancakes intermingled with Kofi's spicy and meaty African barbecued dishes. Over it all drifted the perfume of Paris in June, the fragrance of lime blossom and expectation.

But Monsieur Perdu wouldn't let these scents affect him. He resisted their charms. He'd become extremely good at ignoring anything that might in any way arouse feelings of yearning. Aromas. Melodies. The beauty of things.

He fetched soap and water from the storeroom next to the bare kitchen and began to clean the wooden table.

He fought off the blurry picture of himself sitting at this table, not alone but with —.

He washed and scrubbed and ignored the piercing question of what he was meant to do now that he had opened the door to the room in which all his love, his dreams and his past had been buried.

*Memories are like wolves. You can't lock them away and hope they leave you alone.*

Monsieur Perdu carried the narrow table to the door and heaved it through the bookcase, past the magic mountains of paper onto the landing and over to the apartment across the hall.

As he was about to knock, a sad sound reached his ears.

Stifled sobbing, as if through a cushion.

Someone was crying behind the green door.

A woman. And she was crying as though she wanted nobody, absolutely nobody, to hear.

# The Thirst

JO NESBØ

*Translated from the Norwegian by Neil Smith*

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# Prologue

He stared into the white nothingness.

The way he had done for almost three years.

No one saw him, and he saw no one. Apart from each time the door opened and enough steam was sucked out for him to be able to glimpse a naked man for a brief moment before the door closed and everything was shrouded in fog.

The baths would be closing soon. He was alone.

He wrapped the white towelling bathrobe more tightly around him, got up from the wooden bench and walked out, past the empty swimming pool and into the changing room.

No trickling showers, no conversations in Turkish, no bare feet padding across the tiled floor. He looked at himself in the mirror. Ran a finger along the scar that was still visible after the last operation. It had taken him time to get used to his new face. His finger carried on down his throat, across his chest, and came to a halt at the start of the tattoo.

He removed the padlock from his locker, pulled on his trousers and put his coat on over the still damp bathrobe. Tied his shoelaces. He made sure he was definitely alone before going over to a locker with a coded padlock, one with a splash of blue paint on it. He turned the lock until it read 0999. Removed the lock and opened the door. Took a moment to admire the big, beautiful revolver that lay inside before taking hold of the red hilt and putting it in his coat pocket. Then he removed the envelope and opened it. A key. An address, and some more detailed information.

There was one more thing in the locker.

Painted black, made of iron.

He held it up against the light with one hand, looking at the wrought ironwork with fascination.

## T H E   T H I R S T

He would have to clean it, scrub it, but he already felt aroused at the thought of using it.

Three years. Three years in a white nothingness, in a desert of empty days.

Now it was time. Time he drank from the well of life again.

Time he returned.

Harry woke with a start. Stared out at the semi-darkness of the bedroom. It was *him* again, he was back, he was here.

“Nightmare, darling?” The whispered voice by his side was warm and soothing.

He turned towards her. Her brown eyes studied his. And the apparition faded and disappeared.

“I’m here,” Rakel said.

“And here I am,” he said.

“Who was it this time?”

“No one,” he lied, and touched her cheek. “Go back to sleep.”

Harry closed his eyes. Waited until he was sure she had closed hers before opening his again. He studied her face. He had seen him in a forest this time. Moorland, wreathed in white fog that swirled around them. He had raised his hand and pointed something towards Harry. He could just make out the demonic, tattooed face on his naked chest. Then the fog had grown thicker, and he was gone. Gone again.

“And here I am,” Harry Hole whispered.

# Part I

Elise walked down Thorvald Meyers gate, past plain four-storey buildings that had once housed the working classes in a poor part of a poor city, but where one square metre now cost as much as in London or Stockholm. September in Oslo. The darkness was back at last, and the drawn-out, annoyingly light summer nights were long gone, with all the hysterical, cheerful, stupid self-expression of summer. In September Oslo reverted to its true self: melancholic, reserved, efficient. A solid facade, but not without its dark corners and secrets. Much like her, apparently. She quickened her pace; there was rain in the air, mist, the spray when God sneezed, as one of her dates had put it in an attempt to be poetic. She was going to give up Tinder. Tomorrow. Enough was enough. Enough randy men whose way of looking at her made her feel like a whore when she met them in bars. Enough crazy psychopaths and stalkers who stuck like mud, sucking time, energy and security from her. Enough pathetic losers who made her feel like she was one of them.

They said Internet dating was the cool way to meet new people, that it was nothing to be ashamed of anymore, that everyone was doing it. But that wasn't true. People met each other at work, in classrooms, through friends, at the gym, in cafes, on planes, buses, trains. They met each other the way they were supposed to meet each other, when they were relaxed, no pressure, and afterwards they could cling to the romantic illusion of innocence, purity and quirks of fate. She *wanted* that illusion. She was going to delete her profile. She'd told herself that before, but this time it was definitely going to happen, that very night.

She crossed Sofienberggata and fished out the key to unlock the gate next to the greengrocer's. She pushed the gate open and stepped into the darkness of the archway. And stopped dead.

There were two of them.

It took a moment or two for her eyes to get used to the darkness, and for her to see what they were holding in their hands. Both men had undone their trousers and had their cocks out.

She jerked back. Didn't look round, just prayed that there was no one standing behind her.

"Fucksorry." The combination of oath and apology was uttered by a young voice. Nineteen, twenty, Elise guessed. Not sober.

"Duh," the other one said, "you're pissing all over my shoes!"

"I was startled!"

Elise pulled her coat more tightly around her and walked past the young men, who had turned back to face the wall again. "This isn't a public toilet," she said.

"Sorry, we were desperate. It won't happen again."

Ping.

A match on Tinder.

The triumphant sound your phone makes when someone you've already swiped right on swipes *your* picture right as well.

Elise's head was spinning, her heart was racing.

She knew it was the familiar response to the sound of Tinder's matchmaking: increased heart rate as a consequence of excitement. That it released a whole load of happy chemicals that you could become addicted to. But that wasn't why her heart was galloping. It was because the ping hadn't come from *her* phone.

But the ping had rung out at the very moment she'd swiped right on a picture. The picture of a person who, according to Tinder, was less than a kilometre away from her.

She stared at the closed bedroom door. Swallowed.

The sound must have come from one of the neighbouring apartments. There were lots of single people living in the block, lots of potential Tinder users. And everything was quiet now, even on the floor below where the girls had been having a party when she went out earlier that evening. But there was only one way to get rid of imaginary monsters. By checking.

Elise got up from the sofa and walked the four steps over to the bedroom door. Hesitated. A couple of assault cases from work swirled through her head.

Then she pulled herself together and opened the door.

She found herself standing in the doorway gasping for air. Because there wasn't any. None that she could breathe.

The light above the bed was switched on, and the first thing she saw was the soles of a pair of cowboy boots sticking off the end of the bed. Jeans and a pair of long legs, crossed. The man lying there was like the photograph, half in darkness, half out of focus. But he had unbuttoned his shirt to reveal his bare chest. And on his chest was a drawing or a tattoo of a face. That was what caught her eye now. The silently screaming face. As if it were held tight and was trying to pull free. Elise couldn't bring herself to scream either.

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