

Stephan Abarbanell

# *Orient*

[Morgenland]

Karl Blessing Verlag

c. 448 pages

September 2015

Excerpt translated by Lucy Renner Jones

*It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality.*

*-- William Faulkner*

*"As I Lay Dying"*

# 1

## Jaffa Road

1

She lifted her head and stretched. Since they had passed the castle in Latrun, she had been staring out of the window: jeeps riddled with bullet holes hunkered by the roadside, a charred truck stood with its doors wide open. She noticed shreds of tires by the embankment and scraps of dull metal that she took for cartridge shells. In the valley far below, the strip of coast was barely more than a thin line, as if drawn by pencil. Beyond it lay the sea, its illusion of endlessness in sharp contrast to the barren strip of land that seemed to doze in the shimmering heat.

The bus crawled uphill, shuddering as it took each corner, and stones flew out like bullet shots from under its tires. Through the rear window there was nothing to be seen but a cloud of dust and rocks.

From her seat on the back row she looked over the heads of the other passengers and took in the hats, frayed collars, and the cases in the luggage nets that were pasted with labels from Rotterdam, Marseille, Valparaiso, and Hamburg. She smelled camphor, stale eau de cologne, sweat. And fear.

Dusk was already beginning to fall when the vehicle came to a standstill in a dip between Deir Ayub and Bab el-Wad. The driver thumped the steering wheel and jumped up from his seat

with a canister of water in his hand. He threw open the Dodge's hood and tried to unscrew the hissing radiator with a handkerchief wrapped around his hand. None of the passengers said a word. The fanning of newspapers and hats, and the chirping of crickets, were the only sounds that broke the silence. Flies had found their way in through the open door, along with the heat that seemed to peel away from the ground on those June days like a bodiless creature.

She glanced up the hillside, scanning the rocks and undergrowth, and the trees that were doubled over as if dying. Sweat ran down her temples. She took her hair, and tied it into a ponytail with a leather strap, before clinging onto the cap in her lap again. In the distance up on the ridge, she spotted a shepherd and his son. A mangy dog with a mottled coat skulked around their heels. Shepherds were scouts, someone had told her during her training. *Don't lose sight of them – they use them for their purposes.*

At least there was a British post nearby, a few meters further up behind a wall of piled rocks. But the British were not likely to arrive here in time if there was an attack. The first shot would scarcely be heard up there; the second would wake them; on the third, a drowsy sergeant would finally fish out his binoculars. Then focus them. Peer through them. Why had that bus stopped down there? The fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh. Which one would be for her?

Then British soldiers would sally forth, carbines at the ready, and would come down the hillside. Only to count the dead bodies.

“A leak in the cooler or radiator. Egged should take better care of our buses. But they lack money. And patience.”

The man who was sitting next to her had been asleep until now. She guessed he must be a little older than she was – in his mid-twenties.

“Fewer weapons in the hands of the wrong people would suit me too,” she said, and looked back up the hillside.

“In Arab hands,” he said. “So, comrade, have you spotted anything up there that I should know about?”

There was nothing to see. Even the shepherd had disappeared behind the crest of the hill.

“We need a plan that will turn this vehicle back into a moving target. And the sooner the better,” she replied.

“A plan. Good idea.” The man smiled. He had called her “comrade.”

She hadn’t taken much notice of him up until now. When the bus had stopped in Tel Aviv, and she had got on at Carmel Market, she had spotted the empty row, and had spread out her things: rucksack, cap, a tin flask of water, and a book from the kibbutz library. Everything had happened so fast. After Petach Tikva, she hadn’t been able to keep her eyes open. Had she fallen asleep? Light had fallen through her eyelids – something flickering, like far-off signals – and her head had bumped against the window when the driver shifted gears.

The man next to her stood up, walked down to the head of the bus, and got out. Through the front window, she saw him talking to the driver who was standing by the open hood, his hands on his hips. The stranger pulled his shirt loose from his trousers, wrapped it around his hand and opened the radiator with a sharp twist. With the other hand, he took the canister. A short while later, the engine started up. The bus set off. A breeze blew in through the window, and a passenger murmured a prayer. The stranger sat down again next to her. He had white teeth, a dark, rakish shock of hair, and a handsome profile. He brushed the damp hair off his forehead and wiped his hands on his trousers.

“Shaul Avidan,” he said, “I haven’t even introduced myself. I hope it was OK to leave you alone for a moment – with our plan.”

“I do the thinking, and the man tinkers around – just how I imagined things,” said Lilya.

The stranger laughed.

“And what is your name, o Great Thinker?”

“Lilya,” she said, and stretched out her hand.

“Lilya what?”

“Wasserfall.”

He looked at her, as if he were still waiting for something. How often had she been through this? *You're not Hebrew, not one of us*, he was now thinking, *a person without a real name*.

She sighed. "Lilya Tova Wasserfall."

He smiled.

"Nice name, suits you."

"Thank you."

He looked down at her lap. Only now did she realize that she was still clinging tightly to the cap. She tried to hide the dark, almost black, stains on it. He would see that they weren't from sweat. He took out a clean, neatly folded handkerchief from his trouser pocket and offered it to her. She thanked him and pressed it to her forehead and temples, then rubbed her neck and hairline. He seemed to watch her as she did this, not with a look of longing, or craving, as she had seen in other men, but with curiosity and a sort of detached interest, as if he wanted to check whether his handkerchief was doing its duty.

The bus was on a plane now, the slope gentler, and the driver kept turning his head to one side, leaning forward, and listening to the engine.

"So you're leaving the country and heading for the Holy City? You know Jerusalem?" he asked, tucking the handkerchief back into his trouser pocket.

"Very well in fact."

"How about a little tour, comrade, and a chat? You'll be amazed how our city thrives despite all the violence. It's a miracle."

"Miracles are beautiful. But they tend not to happen in the places they're needed - with a few exceptions, like in this case..." Lilya tried to sound casual.

"Thank you," said the stranger, and smiled.

It hadn't escaped her attention that he had referred to Jerusalem as *our city*, even though this wasn't true. When her journey was over, it still wouldn't be *our city*, or the city of those who called it *our city* either, like this Shaul. The stranger looked at her dirty, mud-covered boots.

*"The idiocy of rural life. History is written in cities. We seem to forget that sometimes."*

"Well," she replied, "Karl Marx wasn't referring to kibbutz when he talked about the lack of education of country folk, as far as I know."

The man's lips formed an Oh!

"But if he'd known *this* future-haven—"

"—then world history would have taken a very different course," she said, "and Stalin would be a banana-picker in Ashkelon."

She didn't know what to make of this Shaul, but she liked talking to him, and letting him distract her. She wanted to continue the conversation, and drift in thoughts and sentences as weightless as the wind up on the hillcrest. At the same time, she felt the huge effort it required. She looked back out of the window; the sun had almost disappeared completely. Among the hills the first houses started to appear, dark shapes without shadows. The city wasn't far now.

The man was looking straight ahead again. She tried to steal a glance at his hands. Since she had lived with *her condition*, as she had started to call it, she noticed hands. She had even started to stare at strangers' hands: those of Shimon Ben Gedi, whom she'd visited in Tel Aviv, of the bus driver, of the man who had offered to carry her rucksack on board.

The bus had slowed down again. The driver gripped the steering wheel with one hand, his arm outstretched, and pulled hard to the right. They turned into a bus station. People immediately got up, pulled down suitcases and bags, pushed, shoved, and were thrown back and forth as the bus continued driving. With a jolt, they suddenly halted, but Lilya could not make out at first whether they had arrived at the bus stop. The engine shuddered once more, then died. The driver pushed the door open and jumped down.

Lilya and the stranger were the last to leave the bus. When Shaul reached the door, he turned around again. The look in his eyes had changed now: it was as cold as marble.

“*Shalom*, comrade, I hope to see you again,” he said, fixing her sharply for an interminable moment, and then turned and disappeared, striding off into the crowd.

She looked around the bus station, her rucksack slung over one shoulder. Now she had to be vigilant, and later she would think over who this Shaul was, and what his allusion to another meeting, and his penetrating gaze, meant. She kept a lookout for British patrol uniforms over the heads of the squatting traders who were hawking falafel, coffee, spices, and jewelry. Newsboys waved the evening papers in her face, and Arab children ran alongside her, their hands thrust out. The smell of diesel, soot, and burnt mutton lingered in the air. Storytellers, readers, and traveling dentists hunkered by the roadside. The poorly lit Jaffa Road led her into the city.

Elias Lind. Tomorrow she would meet him, get it over and done with, and leave the city again. The forgotten writer. It was an order from Shimon Ben Gedi to go and find him. She had tried to resist, but without success. She had lacked the strength and Ben Gedi had known that.

She walked past the Mahane Yehuda market on her right, the stalls, booths, and shutters looking like disassembled theatre sets waiting for the next day. Cats nosed at empty cans. From the direction of the Old City, Bedouins came towards her laden with baskets and bags on the way to their stores outside town. In the distance, high up on the roof, she searched for the winged stone lion of the GENERALI insurance company. ASSICVRAZIONI, the word in front of the company name, was the way she had read it as a child, thinking that the U, written like a V, was some kind of separator. Time after time, Father had told her the bedtime story of *Assic Razioni*, the Lion. His stories often started with *Assic and ... – the Wolf, the Sultan, the Poet, or the Magician*. *Assic the Lion and the Smiling Camel* was her favorite because the lion protected the small camel from the other lions. She couldn't hear it often enough. Now her father's stories seemed like tales from some foreign, far-off world, and the stone lion stared down from a mausoleum of assurance – one that had ceased to exist some time ago.

Behind the Generali building and the main military post, the street fell steeply and led to the Old City and Jaffa Gate. She had to keep to the right now. The apartment was in a side street in Nahalat Shiva, it couldn't be much farther now. Father had described it to her – barely more than a living and dining room, he'd said, with a bedroom. It was in a courtyard that smelled of mold and dankness, a home to bats on summer nights. But it was convenient. When her parents had left the city to start their “new life” in Netanya, they had rented this little apartment at low cost, and filled it haphazardly with objects from their large house in Rehavia. Everything that they had wanted to leave in the city, both useful and useless, was now harbored in this little place. It was a pied-à-terre, a place of refuge, a home and an attic rolled into one, and Lily guessed that her parents hadn't spent a single night there yet. Her father had called it *our caidal*, his shoulders sagging as he smiled weakly. He had sealed the lease with a handshake the day before they had left for Netanya. *Caidal* – the Bedouin tent or royal marquee for festivities: it was a name as senseless as it was grotesque, and it had stuck with all the baffling permanence of something that was meant to be provisional. She would seek shelter for a couple of days in this nobly christened dugout, and then she would leave the city again.

The key lay in the agreed hiding place, and her hands trembled as they found the keyhole in the dark at last. She hesitated again, then opened the door, and entered.

2

She counted ten – or was it twelve? The morning light fell into the room through thin slats, sketching bright stripes on the wall. From the bed she could see into the kitchen, and as she lay on her side after opening her eyes, she started counting the beams. She stretched out her fingers as if she wanted to stroke the strings of an instrument. It had become a habit: doing senseless things first when far too sensible, serious, or unavoidable things awaited her. But what was sensible or senseless after all? More and more, everything seemed to blur into one, the contours dissolved.



The truth was slippery – people were both right and wrong at the same time, and she was beginning to lose track of things. The same was true of guilt. Was she guilty – was Yoram guilty? Could you even act without bringing guilt upon yourself? Only dreams were harmless; dreams were always right, even when they deceived you. Perhaps paradise was nothing more than a garden for somnambulant strollers with benches that bore signs saying: *Non-dreamers forbidden*. Or: *Action unwelcome*.

She sat up, brushed back her hair, felt the soft touch of lace on her shoulders, and for a moment it felt like hands, lips, a stray kiss. *Non-dreamers forbidden*. Her feet touched the floor; it was cool.

She tried to read her watch, holding it towards the light. At ten o'clock, she would be meeting the writer, Elias Lind. He'd be waiting for her in Café Levandovsky. She still quietly hoped that he might not turn up, although at her meeting with Bed Gedi, he had said that she shouldn't count on that at all. Ben Gedi had summoned her to a secret bureau in Tel Aviv, which took her completely by surprise after her escape, and all those months in the north. His message had been a note in a matchbox, nothing more. She'd read the note, burnt it, packed her things, and had left her hideout in Kibbutz Hanita. She'd gone up to the highest point one last time, had climbed onto the entrance of a concrete bunker, the wind in her hair, the Lebanon behind her and, far below through the trees, the valley and the sea, upon which the sun was dancing. She hadn't wanted to leave, not then. After Yoram's death, she had settled into this world of work in the fields, of singing, campfires and dreamless nights, a life without future or past, a cocoon spun purely out of the here and now. But now she knew it would be torn apart.

The shutters were still closed; she heard a dog barking and voices speaking Arabic in the courtyard. Somewhere down the street, a donkey eeyored. The wind had picked up, and she felt that the *khamisin* was on its way. She looked around the room. Last night she had only been able to make out its contours, a world without depth. She had seen it by the faint light of candles, not wanting to be seen herself. Nobody was supposed to find out that she was here, in *her* city. She

opened one of the shutters and light flooded in. So this was Father's *caidal*: a table that she remembered from her parents' kitchen, plates that were damaged but still usable stacked in an open cupboard, glasses and two carafes next to them, and a hanging shelf on the wall full of books. She couldn't work out how her parents had chosen them: Hebrew, English, and German books stood next to each other in no particular order. Among them were a few that she may have dipped into now and again to improve her German: *Tonio Kröger*, *Fabian*, *Der Nachsommer*, which she'd put aside after a few pages, Vicki Baum, whom she'd devoured – *Menschen im Hotel*, *Tanzpause*, *Welt ohne Sünde*. She stood up and touched the books. They were covered in a layer of dust, as raw as sand. Was this all that was left of the Wasserfall family in this city?

Here, close by in King George Street, Lilya, her parents, and Yoram had all lived together before they had moved to their big house in Rehavia. That was 1934 and she had been ten. They had lived on the first floor in a large apartment with high ceilings. The house on Haran Street had belonged to a distant uncle of her father's, who rented it out to them for a manageable sum. Father and Mother always left the house early in the morning, as both worked as doctors for the Histadrut trade union. They came from Posen, and had made their *aliyah* in 1920 after reports of pogroms from the East began to rise again. Jews needed their own land – and there was no alternative in their view. And so, imbued with Herzl's ideas of political Zionism, they thought they would simply bring Europe over here, and unpack it.

At the beginning they had loved the house, but were soon overcome with nostalgia because it seemed so European, and so out of place in this barren country on the edge of the desert. They felt ashamed because its light, airy rooms did not match their ideals. And sometimes they did not want to invite over friends and colleagues – poorer, or more radical socialists, who regarded their kinds of privileges, which others might simply call luck, as a kind of inequality.

But they soon realized that Palestine was not Europe, and not Arabia either, but something in-between. It wasn't until 1931 however – when their friends the Lippmans were killed in a gun battle between Arab fighters and the British police – that they woke up. The Lippmans had

stumbled innocently and naïvely into the matter, and Yoram, their ten-year-old son, had witnessed the event, and was the sole survivor.

For her parents it was quickly clear that they would take in their friends' son and raise him as their own. Yoram was troubled, barely spoke, barely ate, and Lilya's mother had to strip his wet sheets every morning. She devoted all her attention to him, dragging him along to the aging Dr. Kitteler, a once-acclaimed psychoanalyst from Wrocław who silently examined the boy, but was clueless as to what to do. *Yoram this and Yoram that* – soon Lilya had had enough of it. Her parents' love was still all hers, but their anxiety, which often seemed greater, belonged entirely to her new brother. And as time went by, her father's humor – his irony and feeling for comedy – seemed to wither silently, as if his soul lacked water, sunlight, and fresh air. He became more serious with each passing day. And her mother, once a blend of love, warmth, and Pomeranian precision, tended more and more toward strictness. In the past she had often tried to curb Father's imitations of Hitler or Mussolini in front of the children, or his absurd, funny and – according to Mother – completely implausible bedtime stories about magical mice, smiling camels and winged lions. Over the years, however, she took the side of reason, as well as taking control – of everything possible, even things that were happening far away in her home country. But she was still wise enough to know that it was the uncontrollability of events themselves that had driven her along this dry path of rectitude. Lilya only seldom heard her mother Deborah laughing in those days, and yet what she said was clever, and always from the heart.

As a boy Yoram was good-looking and a good deal confused; then later, a good deal curious. Lilya watched him grow into a man, reading and studying, making new friends, and grappling with the Palestine cause. His attacks of melancholy became rarer, and more frequently she felt a tension in her stomach, or a tingling on her neck when he was near, let alone if he touched her. She liked his reserve; she thought it showed depth. And eventually, long after men and boys had started watching her with that ravenous, longing look of dogs, she was sure that she, Lilya Tova Wasserfall, and she alone, was in a position, even destined, to infiltrate and tap his

reserve. This was her vocation in life, her path. Her *duty*. Yoram's earnestness aroused her. Was it love? It came to be love, yes. A love without redemption that she had to keep hidden from other men.

She tried to stop her racing thoughts: it would be better to get up now, get dressed, and to leave. Instead she sank back into the pillows, closed her eyes, and curled up. Life. Forwards, backwards, standstill. Life. Death. *Grievers not welcome*.

During those years in Rehavia, how often had she tried to store what she felt – images, smells and caresses that she associated with Yoram – deep down so that during lean times, of waiting and insatiable longing, she would be able to reach inside and call them up. She saw herself in the garden of the big house, lying on a blanket with a book, her chin propped on her hands. The trees in this country were sturdy and closely planted together, making a protective canopy. Somewhere in the house, the clattering of a typewriter could be heard. Doctors, professors, and artists lived on Haran Street, but that was Father on his typewriter; he wrote tirelessly in his spare time – petitions, submissions, concepts for the common state of Palestine. Piano playing reached her ears from a window of the next-door house, and soon afterwards, a high-pitched violin could be heard from the other side: arpeggios, phrases, opening sequences.

“Bach on the left, Debussy on the right. That's a recipe for disaster. One of them will have to give in,” Yoram said.

He was lying next to her in the grass, a pile of newspapers in front of him – *Palestine Post*, *Davar*, *Yediot Ahronot*, *Haaretz*, and the Arabic *Al-Difa*. He was cutting out articles with a large pair of scissors.

“And who's going to win?” she asked.

Yoram laughed without looking up. “The better one. Ofer, he's the greatest.”

The piano fell silent.

“That's the way it should be,” said Yoram, “the muses are fair. Bach wins.”

She looked up at him. His dark, almost black hair hung in his face, his shirt was unbuttoned nearly halfway down, revealing his tanned chest, and his beautiful hands flew deftly around the selected articles. He smelled of leather and lemons. The sinews on his right arm were taut. If he looked up, he'd notice that she was staring at him. This thought made her go red. Perhaps he had long since noticed, but if so, he didn't let it show.

She rolled onto her back.

“The black and the white book... what will you do when one of them is full?”

“I'll buy myself a new one. And another—”

Yoram collected articles from the newspapers that Ehud read and then stacked in a corner of the hallway. Quickly and mechanically, Yoram flicked through them until he found what he was looking for: every single article about an attack, hold-up, detention, or kidnapping; police reports, background reports, appeals, commentaries, and photos; snapshots of car explosions, collapsed buildings, the injured, dead, and the maimed; photos of unearthed stashes of weapons, and prisoners sentenced to death. The black book was for articles about attacks by Arab groups, but also British strikes, raids and invasions; the white book contained articles about the Irgun's activities as well as those performed by other Jewish activists. Yoram cut them out, stuck them into his notebook, and noted the date.

“The British want to abolish punishment by flogging in Palestine,” he said. “Eighteen lashes and a sentence of eighteen months will become a thing of the past. They want to turn it into twenty-eight months' imprisonment under the harshest conditions. Now that's what I call justice.”

She couldn't tell from his tone if he was angry or just desperately sad. *Both*, she thought. *And his anger will win.*

She sat up, and raised an arm. Even though she knew it was wrong, she brushed his hair back from his face. He froze. Her heart hammered. She leaned forward.

He returned her kiss timidly, then vigorously; he grabbed her around the waist, and pulled her toward him. Then quite abruptly, he let her go again, and turned away.

“I’m your brother,” he said.

“No, you’re not,” she replied.

“Lilya...”

“You’re Yoram Lippman.”

“There are no Lippmans anymore. Ehud and Deborah are my parents, and you’re my sister.”

She noticed a slight tremble in his voice, an uncertainty that gave her hope a chance to slip through the gap. He loves me, she thought: he will, he must love me. It is our happiness.

She hadn’t noticed that the violin had also fallen silent.

When Ofer Kis entered the garden a moment later, his violin case tucked under his arm, calling for Yoram, she quickly picked up her book again.

“They set fire to synagogues. In Germany, last night,” he said, slightly out of breath, then laid the case on the grass, and flopped down limply next to them.

In one of the cupboards she found tea, and soon lit the small gas cooker. She smoothed out her clothes – worn-out uniform trousers and a matching shirt from the kibbutz – and took a closer look around the apartment. The shell. There it lay, between the bookends, and it gave Lilya a jolt. Carefully, she took the shell – it was lighter than she remembered – and held it to her nose, inhaling deeply. Back then, when she had given it to her father, it had smelled of sea and salt. But now the scent had faded.

They had hiked, just the two of them, for five days: *Yam el Yam*, from sea to sea. She was sixteen and Yoram had just left home to start an apprenticeship with an irrigation company in Haifa. Mother had wanted to intervene, saying it was too dangerous, and that they should at least avoid the Arab villages. She was right, no doubt, but Father waved her concerns aside and, in the end, got his way. They had hiked from Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee, all the way to the Mediterranean, just rucksacks and caps, and by the end their shoes were worn and lopsided from

all the walking. Along the way, they talked, fell silent, sang, and laughed: never before and never again would she have her father to herself like that. On the last day, Mount Carmel stood in front of them and when they reached the summit, just before the low mountain range fell away to the coast, they saw the sea. They hugged each other and Father didn't seem to want to let go again. South of Haifa they reached the sea, and there in the sand she found a particularly beautiful shell, as pale as Carrara marble, crisscrossed with dark lines as if painted by hand. She picked it up, breathed in its scent and gave it to her father.

Shortly before their return, she realized somewhat bitterly that her father had had an ulterior motive for spending this time together – that, like her mother, he was worried about Yoram. Yoram had started doing weapon practice in the evenings, and mixing with types whose impatience was written all over their faces; men who followed Ze'ev Jabotinsky's rigid teachings, like that zealot Menachem Begin, whom her father despised. The core of these "teachings" was that a young man was supposed to speak Hebrew and carry a weapon. Nothing more. Would she follow Yoram's path, her father wanted to know, would she too put her faith in violent means? Soon she would be leaving home and going to university, where she might come into contact with these kinds of people too.

Shortly before ten, she left the house, crossed the courtyard and stepped out onto the busy street.

Ascher Levandovsky's café was situated on upper Ben Yehuda Street, right next to King George Street. It had been built under the Ottoman rule, but over the years it had become dilapidated. The windows were dirty, the ceilings low, and it was not as famous or as busy as Café Europa on Jaffa Road, a few hundred meters away in the magnificent Sansour Building; or the reputedly bohemian Atara, which was very popular among the English, just a stone's throw away. It didn't surprise her that Elias Lind had chosen this café, of all places, to meet. Here, at the end of the street, time had come to a standstill: it could have been 1925, 1930, 1936, or some other

period before the war. It was 1946, and an entire world had vanished, but not in Café Levandovsky, the *yekkes'* meeting place. Here German was spoken, debates took place about Europe and Germany, Bamberg, Hamburg, and Königsberg, frayed shirt collars that had last been mended in Wrocław or Trier were concealed, cups of filter coffee were sipped for hours on end, people murmured and listened, held forth on German coffee and black bread, or cakes and donuts from back home, and regaled others with things they'd heard – what Mendel had said, which he'd been told by Levi, who in turn had heard it from a reliable source.

Over the past months, no good news had been heard. Even if newspapers often embellished the facts, some thought that there was no choice now but to believe them. In the Steimatzky bookstore, missing notices were pinned up by Americans, English and French. Many, bitterly, had been confirmed: parents, siblings, cousins, friends, and schoolmates had indeed disappeared. The full scale of what had happened in Germany and Europe was gradually becoming apparent, and knowledge of the atrocities branded the doors of the café. But this knowledge was still too great to take in: an ogre, if drawn on a beer coaster, still remains an ogre but in miniature.

She went up Ben Yehuda Street – it wasn't far now.

Although it was only yesterday when she had received the assignment, it felt like an eternity ago. In her mind's eye, she saw Shimon Bed Gedi leaning over the table as she entered the room. His secret bureau was located on upper HaYarkon Street in Tel Aviv. He had changed since her training, when he had taught her and others how to fight for the right cause with fair means – with cunning, rigor, and an array of weapons. He glanced up at her briefly, and his expression seemed to say: *I knew that you would come.* “*Shalom,*” he said, and went back to poring over his papers. She studied him: his shoulders looked stiff and angular, as if time had gone to work on his bones. His cheekbones seemed larger, and his eyes lay deep in their sockets, as if his skull had swallowed them up. He was well over 40, but was still athletic, wore an open



white shirt, the sleeves casually rolled up, and khaki shorts; his reading glasses were a new addition. Had she liked Ben Gedi? Not especially. But she had always respected him. He was dedicated to the Palestine cause like no other, and had a sense of proportion, flexibility, severity, and skill. And he had been a good teacher, perhaps the best there was. Had the Haganah been a real army, she'd often thought, Shimon Ben Gedi would have been their general. The British feared him yet sought him out. They knew he couldn't be trusted, but knowing that he was unpredictable made him reliable in a certain way – you just knew where you stood with Ben Gedi.

The table in front of him was strewn with piles of paper, several files – fakes, for sure – as well as cards and books. If discovered, it was meant to look like a lawyer's or auditor's office, not a bare, empty table of treason or secrets. Behind the half-opened window she could hear the sea stroking the coast with a velvety hand. In the distance wailed a military patrol siren. A humid heat tasting of sea salt lay over Tel Aviv, hinting at the heaviness and inescapability of the approaching summer.

He asked her to come over to the table, looked up at her briefly, smiled and said, "Thank you." Then he pointed to the map lying in front of him. The words "German Empire" stood at the top right-hand corner, emblazoned with a swastika underneath. In the lower part of the map, Ben Gedi had marked circles with a pencil; now he tapped them with his pencil.

Germany, he said, was one big waiting room, and he pointed to the places he'd marked. Refugees mostly from the East were now escaping into Bavaria. In Landsberg, Feldafing, and Föhrenwald, huge refugee camps had been set up. Near Wolfratshausen, there was an IG Farben housing complex – sturdy buildings with central heating that had once been built by the Germans for the workers in the nearby munitions factories. The situation was coming to a head. In Russia and Poland, there had been grave incidents; he feared another mass Jewish exodus from Eastern Europe – to Germany this time. The UNRRA was not getting any new people, the Americans were willing but sluggish to act, and supplies were scarce. But in Palestine they did not have enough information about the real situation in the camps. He needed a report about the biggest

one, in Föhrenwald. With very concrete proposals. He wanted her expertise to be written with a scalpel: those who read it should wince in pain.

Report, expertise, Germany, scalpel? Before she had properly understood what all this was about, or was able to ask if he intended to send her to Germany, he had placed her ID papers on the table. *American JOINT Distribution Committee*, JOINT for short. *Congratulations, Commissioner Wasserfall*, he had said. The papers bore her photo and a stamp that covered half her cheek, like a tattoo. She stared at them.

JOINT was one of the biggest aid organizations for Jewish refugees, and it would take Lilya under its wings. *It's all above board*, he had said, *and all prepared*. The British would let her leave Palestine, with this stamp as a farewell kiss. In a few weeks, she'd be back and no one would even have noticed she'd been gone. And those who thought she was in the north – at this, he looked at her over the top of his glasses, and they both knew he was talking about her parents – would think she was fine and in good hands.

She felt the urge to get up and leave. Even though she had learned during her training that orders were to be followed and not questioned – after all, without a reliable command structure, their struggle could not be won – it was hard for her to accept. She would have liked Ben Gedi to ask if she was prepared to travel to Germany, especially after all that had happened and everything he knew about her. He had not mentioned once – and this offended her – the work she had done from her hideout in the north, and had sent by messenger: concepts, designs, and plans for the time after the major venture that she'd heard about. Operation Markolet, the destruction of all bridges and access roads into Palestine – a decisive blow against the British. She had been convinced that this was why he'd summoned her because he had read and liked her material. She, the future commander of communication, expert on secret messages, codes and pamphlets, manifestos and petitions, cryptograms and dead-end trails of paper. She was a wordsmith, he'd always said; she would be second to none if she continued. But now he wanted to send her – one of his best – to Germany to write a “report”! She quickly deciphered it all, even without *Enigma*,

perforated holes or a handbook on cryptography. The message was plain: he obviously still thought her too weak for the pending operation. She was not fit for service, not resilient enough; he presumed that she would not survive an interrogation behind British walls. She had been struck off his list, at least for the time being. Lilya Tova Wasserfall was too great a risk in his eyes.

Or were his actions guided by a fear that in the north she might have learned anger instead of composure, hate instead of grief, and had a heart of stone instead of documents scrawled with construction plans for bombs, written in the dead of the night?

*Sit down, you don't look well*, he had said: she was finding it difficult to follow what he was saying. He brought her a glass of water, stopped talking, and looked at her for a while. She had forgotten how to interpret his look. They exchanged words – she couldn't remember any of the details – but at some point she had heard the word *order*. It had cut through the air like a cold blade. Then he sat down, gave her a long look, and began to explain the Lind matter.

Elias Lind had received a message a few days previously from two representatives of the British Mandate: his brother Raphael, an acclaimed academic, had apparently been murdered by the Nazis. But Lind had evidence that Raphael was still alive. The news of his brother's death had roused Elias' suspicions and he had sought out Ben Gedi, a past acquaintance, in Tel Aviv where they had arranged to meet at the Jewish Agency.

*Go and meet Elias Lind*, Ben Gedi had said at the end of their meeting, *perhaps you will find out something in Germany that we can use against the British. It could be very useful to our cause if we know what really happened to Raphael Lind. Times are going to get harder after Operation Markolet. We'll need new weapons – different, subtler, invisible ones. And you, Lilya, perhaps you can deliver them into our hands.*

Only a few meters from the entrance to Café Levandovsky, she heard loud voices. British police came running down the street toward her. *Keep going, slowly, don't look up*, she told herself. Pedestrians stopped in their tracks. Shouts behind her, snatches of Hebrew and English,

got louder. She had reached the café. A jeep stopped on the other side of the street. Soldiers carrying carbines climbed out of the vehicle. She pushed open the café door and pulled it closed from inside, then turned, and peered out. The soldiers disappeared and came back to the jeep a short while later with a young man in handcuffs. He was wearing a ripped, unbuttoned shirt and he looked in her direction, the hand of a soldier gripping his neck. She recognized him as Yoram's friend, Ofer Kis, the violinist. He must have seen her. *Get lost, Lilya, disappear, quick*, his eyes said. Then they shoved him into the jeep.

Ascher Levandovsky was standing behind the counter, a dishcloth slung over one shoulder, looking at her. She turned to him.

"They're taking him away," she said, "just like that. I know him. He's a fan of Beethoven, otherwise a nobody."

Ascher put a finger to his lips and looked at her with almost paternal concern.

"And everyone here just watches and doesn't do anything. What a proud race. Is this the way things will go on? And on and on?"

She sensed that there was someone standing behind her.

"I agree with your point of view, young lady. But at this moment in time, I don't think there is much we can do. At least not with weapons."

She turned around. The stranger was tall, perhaps a little taller than her father, and she guessed he was in his mid-fifties. The times seemed to have left him haggard. He had spoken to her in *yekke* Hebrew, with squared consonants and vowels, spliced into manageable units.

He spoke slowly and clearly, as if reading from a spelling book. On his nose was an unusually heavy pair of tortoiseshell spectacles that magnified his eyes hugely, it was as if he was looking through the bottoms of milk bottles. His hair was still full and thick, just a little sprinkled with grey. His threadbare grey suit was too big, cut in a European style, and had once been tailor-made. He held a stick in his hand that was too flimsy even for a stroll through the city, but his

bearing was upright. His face, which showed an astonishing charisma despite the spectacles and the furrows left behind by life, years, the desert sun, and solitary struggles, wore a broad smile.

“I asked Ascher to keep the seats by the window free,” he said. “I need light, you see, much light. And from here you can see what’s going on outside, whether any further injustices occur. We will not have to wait long, I fear.”

Lilya stared at him, wordlessly.

“Come. We do have an appointment after all. Coffee has already been ordered.”

Elias Lind led her to his table next to the window, tapping each chair with his stick on his way, whether it was occupied or not. He did so with stretched-out arms as if the chairs were buoys in a sea that was invisible to her, set out by Ascher Levandovsky for his orientation.

He pulled out a chair from the table, waited until she had sat down, and then took a seat facing her. Ascher brought them coffee and two glasses of water. Elias Lind leaned the flimsy stick against the empty chair next to him, where a black briefcase already lay.

“The stick,” he said, “is my third eye. Dr. Abramssohn prescribed it. He predicts a continued, not altogether negligible deterioration of my eyesight. ‘Get used to it,’ he said, ‘sound out your environment with it.’”

He took the stick in his hand again and briefly tapped the table leg.

“So? What do you say? Cedar? Perhaps pine. Definitely conifer. It’ll never be a match for eyesight in any case.”

Lilya followed his every move, not sure what to make of him. So this was the great, almost forgotten writer Elias Lind? She knew that as a young man, many years ago, he had fought for Germany, his country, in the first Great War; and then, injured and somehow changed, had turned his back on it. Her parents had given her his novel *Joseph Sternkind* some years ago after they had both read it themselves. For weeks, the book had sat untouched among maps, schoolbooks, and her diary, and when she had finally picked it up, almost in passing, she had not been able to put it down again. In these weeks interwoven with dreams, she herself had turned

into Joseph, the foundling with prophetic powers, who roamed through the city making small miracles happen, giving others happiness, but never fortunate himself.

“Lebanese cedar wood has almost no scent, by the way – at most, a very faint one, slightly aromatic, like fresh wood. Here, smell this.”

He leaned forwards and sniffed the wooden surface of the table. Lilya also bent her head, but paused halfway without Lind noticing.

“And?” he said, looking up again. “No smell, is there? But enough of all that. Let’s talk about the matter in hand – my matter. Please decide for yourself if you think it can become *our* matter. You came as a free person and I would like you to leave as one.”

“Shimon Ben Gedi already told me–”

He interrupted her, half-amused, half-serious, the corners of his mouth pulled down.

“Ben Gedi – my God, yes – he developed a plan straight away. It’s not been a week since I went to see him, and here you are, sitting in front of me. His motives are certainly not selfless, but he’s helping me and I’m grateful for it. So I won’t ask any further questions.”

“So you presume the British lied when they told you the news of your brother?”

“Lied? I wouldn’t call it that. I think they told their truth, and I’m searching for mine,” he said.

“But there can only be one truth. Either your brother Raphael died, as the British claimed, or he’s still alive. Somewhere in Germany.”

Lind raised his eyebrows and smiled indulgently at Lilya.

“1941, that’s what they said,” he continued, ignoring Lilya’s remark, “in October or shortly afterwards.”

She waited to see if he would carry on, but instead he took his briefcase from the chair, opened it, pulled out a flat packet, and laid it on the table. He fiddled with the knot in the string, trying to open it laboriously, then reached back into his pocket and fished out a magnifying lens

the size of a whale's eye. With the lens in one hand and the string in the other, he managed to untie the knot.

"From a friend in Germany," he said, nodding in the direction of the package. "She inserted a charming letter too. But I'm afraid I've left it on my desk. Sent from the American Sector in Berlin. Please take a look at the package."

Lilya turned it over in her hands. The address was written in large, sweeping handwriting; Lilya was reminded of flowers, or something ornamental. It showed ease, generosity, and confidence.

"How long did it take to get here?"

"Not even three weeks."

She whistled appreciatively.

"May I look inside?"

"That's why we're here."

Wrapped in the paper lay a thin, leather-bound book with a gilt coat of arms on the cover. She traced it with her finger. An owl with closed eyes was perched on a pedestal made of three standing scrolls. At its feet, printed in big letters, were the words C.F. LIND.

"That's a bookplate that belonged to my father, Chaim Friedrich Lind. He had the book made shortly after the war. It was printed in 1918 by Scholem in Berlin, and a new edition came out some years after he died – around 1929, I think. It's an index of all his books. His *Book of Books*. Meticulously executed and treasured. Father named his kingdom *Alexandria*, and he mapped it out with this book. That kingdom was in Berlin, Spittelmarkt, on the third floor facing the street. A kingdom of paper, books, and folios, slipcases of collected works – thousands of them. And some valuable autographs, including a poem by Heine. An infinite treasure."

He paused as if he was wondering whether to go on. "Eventually, it was utterly worthless to me. I wasn't allowed to enter."

"Why?"

For a moment, Elias Lind seemed embarrassed. “That’s a long story. My father bequeathed everything to my brother Raphael, his entire property, including *Alexandria*. This *Book of Books* is my brother’s. But open it, right at the first page.”

She opened it carefully, and the leather creaked.

At the bottom on the left of the first page, she discovered a stamp, the letters *ERR*, and underneath it, a handwritten date: *18 October 1941*.

She looked up at him.

“Nazi gibberish, all these awful abbreviations. But the stamp is something special,” he said.

“You’ll have to help me out here.”

“Alfred Rosenberg and his people. *ERR* stands for *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*. Rosenberg, the Fuhrer’s main thinker. But also his biggest thief. The Rosenberg taskforce came with troops and stole everything of culture that was valuable – books, art, musical instruments. By personal decree from its highest commander.”

“This book is looted property?”

“From the stamp, it’s the only possible conclusion.”

She ran her fingers over the pages. They contained indexes and catalogs of hundreds of books, once according to titles, then again according to authors. She put her finger on the stamp.

“But here it says ‘ERR 1941.’ It all seems to fit. They came for your brother Raphael and took his books too, along with this index.”

“I have another idea as to what happened. No, there’s a lot more to it than that.”

He paused. Lilya drew hope from her assumption that Elias Lind was a victim of his imagination and hopes, and had nothing concrete in his hands. All she had to do was listen, then lead him. like a placid guide dog, to the right door, back out into the light. Then she would let Ben Gedi know that he had indeed followed a dead-end; and besides, it was senseless and unpolitical to put too much effort into isolated cases. Solutions were only possible as a whole. All the plans



and ideas that she had sent Ben Gedi were based on this fact; and she had indicated this in Elias Lind's case, but Ben Gedi was having none of it. When she had asked him how much time he would give her for the Lind matter, he had replied: *As long as you need*. She would be back more quickly than he wanted.

Elias Lind lifted his head, as if he had guessed what she was thinking. Then in a severe tone, almost like a teacher, but still full of warmth, he said:

“Great discoveries are first conjectured, then asserted, then proven. Sometimes it's the same with small discoveries too. I've got far with this knowledge, even if the occasional 'insight' has proven to be nothing more than an error steeped in hope. But any idea stands out for its audacity initially. You're young, you understand what I'm talking about.”

He was trying to win her over to his side; it was obvious. But she had already started looking for a way out of this matter, audacity or not.

“I'm afraid, if we're going to make headway, what we need most of all are facts,” Lilya said. “Tell me what you know about your brother, about the past few years. What was he like? What made him stay in Germany? And if he really is alive still, why is there no sign of life from him?”

“Certainly. Facts,” he said and stared at the book, “But what, in the end, are facts? It's only readings and interpretations that bring the world into being. Have a look at this.”

Elias moved his coffee cup to one side and placed a photo on the table in front of her. It was stuck on thin card presumably to stop it becoming creased and ripped.

“It was marking a page in the book. It fell out when I opened it.”

Lilya picked it up. The photo showed a large house of dark wood somewhere at the edge of a forest. Smoke was billowing from the chimney. One of the windows was open and the room behind it was brightly lit, as if the photographer had intended the viewer to look in.

“Where is this?”

“I don't know. What's more interesting is the writing on the back.”

Lilya turned over the photo and tried to decipher what little she could make out. The letters, written in pencil, were smudged or had been rubbed out. “Well?”

Elias Lind looked at her expectantly. Almost impatiently, he said, “See the little note down there?”

He offered her the magnifying lens. She was astonished at how heavy it was.

“Are you sure this is your brother’s writing?” she asked as she held the lens over the letters and figures.

“No doubt about it.”

She read the numbers 9-12-5: 50. They were framed by a thin, hand-drawn rectangle. The rest was illegible – perhaps other numbers, or even letters, maybe formulae.

“I would never have discovered the notation if I didn’t have to read everything with the lens, for fear that something escapes my notice. A chest. An arca, or *Arche* in German. An arcanum. You know what I mean by that. It’s your specialty, after all.”

She sensed that he was looking at her disparagingly while she continued to decipher the signs.

“Our family arca has an abbreviation at the center,” he continued, “and that’s what put me on the right track, and has already caused me some sleepless nights.”

“A cipher,” she said, and looked up.

Lind raised his eyebrows.

“When you take numbers and letters,” she explained, “then shift, delete, or rearrange them to encrypt a secret message, you call it a cipher. Mostly a little espionage haiku. If I’m right, we should try to work out what it says in plain language.”

“Plain language – I like that phrase,” said Lind and smirked, “as much as I like facts.”

Ascher came over to the table and wanted to know if everything was to their liking, and if they wanted to order something else.

“No, thank you,” said Elias Lind, briefly touching Ascher’s arm before turning back to Lilya. He lowered his voice and looked at her through his thick spectacles. “My letters, even the ones I sent Raphael, were always signed *Eli* – that’s what they called me at home. My parents, Raphael – I went by that name to everyone. The rest is a game. Raphael loved formulas and puzzles. This one, in comparison to the ones he usually did, is quite easy – once you’ve understood that it is one.”

“The figures correspond to the order of letters in the alphabet, am I right?” she asked.

“Right,” he replied. “Just that the order of the figures has been turned upside down. 9-12-5. Take those two things, and then read...”

“*Eli*,” she said. “A cipher. And the 50 after the colon? Do you have an explanation for that?”

“I’m quite sure it refers to my birthday.”

“Your fiftieth? When was that?”

“July 1944.”

Lilya leaned back, worried that she was getting embroiled in the details. “The British claim that your brother died in 1941.”

“I don’t want to refute that possibility,” he said, “and a great deal points to it. But if the notation does not refer to me, then it begs the question why my brother wrote down my birthday as a reminder three years before the event. It doesn’t make sense. My fiftieth birthday was in 1944. So much is fact.”

“So you presume that your brother Raphael could have still been alive in 1944 and that the British lied, for whatever reason? Perhaps they didn’t know any better?”

He leaned forward and placed his arms on the table.

“I don’t know if they lied to me intentionally, but the fact is that they came looking for me to tell me the news of his death.” Elias Lind paused. “Although in this case, I never dreamed that it would be the British who would seek me out.”

Lilya looked at him expectantly and waited for his explanation.

“I have to backtrack a little,” he said wearily. Talking about Raphael seemed to drain him of all his energy. He sat back in his chair.

“I haven’t see Raphael for almost fifteen years, and we weren’t particularly close. Now and again he wrote a postcard, on my birthday or at New Year. I waited for him to ask me to obtain a visa for Palestine, after all the things that I had heard were going on in Germany. Then I thought: perhaps he’s too proud. Eventually even his cards stopped coming. I feared the worst and blamed myself for not doing anything on my own initiative. I tried to persuade myself that his standing as an academic would have provided him with a chair at Cambridge or Harvard, which would have saved him. But if that were the case, wouldn’t he have gotten in touch to say he was out of danger, and to give me his new address? To be sure, I put out a few tracing requests some months ago, via the UNRRA, the central tracing service in Arolsen, and a few others. Then Desirée’s package arrived, and just when hope had sprung that Raphael was still alive, the British arrived at my door.”

“So not UNRRA employees, or some other aid organization,” said Lilya, in the hope of structuring the conversation.

“Exactly.”

Lilya placed the photograph back on the table and waited to see if Lind would carry on. But he said nothing.

“But what have the British got to do with your brother?” she asked.

He had asked himself that over and over again, he said, and was unable to find an answer. At the same time, he hadn’t been able to get Raphael’s puzzle out of his mind. He had held out for two nights, but then called on Ben Gedi, who was prepared to look into the matter straight away. He clearly detected that there was something bigger behind it.

Suddenly he looked up.

“I suggest that we round off our conclave for today. I have already held you up for far too long. Now you know what you have to know, and you can decide whether you want to help me find my brother, or find out what has happened to him.”

He wanted to keep on talking without waiting for her to respond, and once again she sensed an unshakable will behind his mantle of humbleness and modesty – even though it was deformed by helplessness and desperation.

“Before we go, I would like to give you something to look at, although it describes more than it explains. I have already done some preparation.”

He pushed a dossier across the table that had been lying underneath the briefcase.

“It wasn’t easy for me, and it doesn’t amount to what you’d expect – I cannot claim that these are facts.”

Lilya picked up the bundle of papers. It contained a number of longer and shorter texts, written on a typewriter on carbon copies.

“A sorry effort from an orthographic point of view,” he said, “Please ignore that. Writing with the lens is like catching flies at night. And it isn’t even in chronological order. I think it starts with the last meeting.”

“May I take these papers with me?”

“That was my intention.”

Once again, he paused.

“I want to tell you something that I haven’t dared tell anyone so far – not even myself for a long time.”

His voice had changed; his tone was deeper now.

“I don’t actually feel any pain. I’m not grieving for Raphael. Instead I feel a deep sense of guilt. It’s as if I were watching my brother day and night. When I wake up in the morning, I don’t know if I have slept or dreamed, or if I’m still dreaming. I see Raphael in front of me all the time – he looks at me silently and questioningly. The days run into one another, there is no release, no

new tomorrow. Just a huge chill that seems to gradually spread from the depths of my soul. Life needs certainty and release, otherwise it isn't life. We both need you, Raphael and I."

His hands were shaking. Lilya felt the urge to touch them. But she didn't. "I'll read through the papers," she said, "and then we'll meet again."

"Thank you," he said, stood up, and reached for his stick.

### 3

Past Jaffa Gate, she ducked into the souk that smelled of cardamom, coffee, spices, meat, and rotten leftovers. She felt as if she were being watched. In this country, she thought, everyone watches everyone else. The Arabs watch the Jews, the Jews the Arabs, the British the Arabs and the Jews, and they in turn both watch the British; even the Jews watch each other – there were so many fighters for the Palestine cause.

Before she left, she wanted to see Mahmut Harouni again, if he would receive her. He had every reason not to. She had always revered him, ever since her parents had taken her to his enchanted house in the Old City. Since her childhood, he had been Uncle Mahmut to her, an admired Arab lawyer whose children, Sari and Amal, were sent to the English-language Arab College in the east of the city, and in whose house in the Old City in front of the Lion's Gate, a political salon was held. Arabs, Brits, Jews, military officers, philosophers, doctors, the charming widow Aleyna Bin Salih and the tousled-haired David Ben Gurion, had all been his guests; and once even, Chaim Weizmann, like an uncrowned king. On those evenings, maps were rolled out, demarcation lines were drawn, and musicians who had fled from Europe performed Beethoven on a Bösendorf grand, followed by local prodigies on the *oud* who played works by the young Egyptian composer Mohammed Abdel Wahab.

Only Yoram wanted to have nothing to do with it all. Lilya was rarely able to persuade him to come. He avoided the Harounis' house. And he showed her quite plainly that he didn't

approve of her fondness for Mahmut and his children, that Ehad and Deborah – *her* parents – were following the wrong path. She couldn't tell what caused her more pain when Yoram said this: the way he referred to Ehad and Deborah as *her* parents, the people who had taken him in as a young boy, and had brought him up with the same inviolable, unconditional love, and freedom of thought – even the freedom to take the wrong path – as her. Or the contempt he had for her path to understanding, reason, and the struggle for balance. For him the Arabs, the inhabitants of this country, were not people, but metaphors for evil, deviousness, backwardness, and simply darkness. Where had this come from?

Shimon Ben Gedi must never learn of her visit to the Old City. He would make her a *schaliach*, an envoy for the Palestine cause, even against her will.

The Harouni family house resembled a small palace. Situated close by was the building in which the poet Khalil al-Sakakini had lived, and with whom the Harounis had once been friends. His Arabic poetry was always the subject of heated family debates, as was his ambivalent attitude to Arab terrorism, and his love of Beethoven.

The times when she had been able to knock on the door to Mahmut's study and storm in were long gone. Almost always, even when he was very busy, Mahmut had a smile for her, and he would give her a piece of wonderfully sweet Turkish delight before he shooed her out again. Now, however, she would have to be formally announced.

"That's my Lilith," he said. "Come. Let me look at you. What a shame Amal isn't here to see you. She's still in England."

He came over and gave her a paternal kiss on the forehead.

"Abdul will bring us some drinks."

They sat at a table strewn with books, newspapers, legal essays, and the Arab College yearbook. The house had retained the chill of spring, and Lilya shivered.

"How are Deborah and Ehad?" Harouni asked. "We miss them very much here in Jerusalem. Have they settled down in Netanya?"

“They’re still trying.”

“Without them, life here is dull and empty.”

Lilya bit her lip and took a deep breath. She had gone in search of Uncle, and the onus was on her to keep the conversation going.

“The little hospital is growing and thriving,” said Lilya, trying to sound confident. “It’s their pet, their project. They talk about nothing else, as if only the present and future existed. They will set up something new there, I’m sure, although the Histadrut sets up so many rules that they sometimes don’t know how to go on. We don’t have a state, but we have trade unions, rules, and regulations, as if these were the only problems. They are worried about where all this might lead.”

“We’re living in a time of grief and worry, Lilya.”

Abdul came in and put two glasses of fresh mint tea on the table.

“All these hotheads who follow in Yoram’s footsteps, all these fighters – that’s where the worries start. But it’s not where they end. Many start off on the wrong path. Our faith in the British is all used up. They’ve even given up on themselves. The war took too much out of them, and they’ll seize the first opportunity to pull out.”

“They should...”

“Yes, they should. And then? Will Yoram’s people come to power? That’s the fear that plagues us and our friends.”

He waited for her to take a sip of tea.

“Uncle Mahmut, I will be out of the country for a while. I’m traveling to Germany to get an impression of the camps for Eastern refugees.”

Mahmut sighed. “Sometimes I feel that we Arabs have to pay for what has happened in Europe, in Germany. I look at Germany and the Jews there, and I feel a deep sense of grief. But it’s not our cause.”

“No, it isn’t. But we can’t look the other way either. No one is allowed to do that, especially not us.”



“But Palestine – our little strip of land – cannot be the only camp for the persecuted. That would be too much for all of us. America is so huge and rich. Why can’t it open its doors?”

She wanted to reply, but he raised his hand.

“First there was the great war against the Ottomans, who fought alongside the Germans and their Emperor, and see what happened? Foreign powers drew a line in the sand as if our country were the Windsor Palace riding grounds. After the troops arrived, commissioners came and wrote reports, held their flapping maps in the wind, and then all of a sudden, top hats and bowlers appeared all over the country. And men who wore white gloves and anxious expressions over their stiff collars, wiping the sweat from their foreheads with batiste scarves, and creating countries by drawing borders on paper. They have occupied, displaced, and torn this country to shreds, without so much as asking – without asking *us*. They have just left a little strip of land, a mere finger width – our country, which you like to think of as *your* country, and which was promised to you by Lord Balfour, whom you like to talk about so much. But how may he give something away that doesn’t belong to him?”

“Uncle Mahmut, you too once had a dream.”

“A dream? It was more than that. It was a concept. A plan. Matured and well-thought out. A common state for Jews and Arabs, Christians and Muslims. One country. One government. And Jerusalem under international administration. I have all the documents back there in the cupboard.”

“And now?”

“*Kismet.*”

“*Kismet?*”

“That means: get back up when you fall over. Chin up, fate bodes well for us, Allah is with us.”

They drank.

“Good, Lilya. So you want to help in Germany, make sure that those who were deported find their way home again?”

“Yes. Or a new one.”

“But in a place that is already inhabited?” Harouni began again.

“Uncle Mahmut!” Lilya was starting to feel uneasy.

“I cannot approve, Lilya. Not because I wouldn’t like to welcome every Jew who comes into our country, but because there will be too many of them, and they will want more and more; first they buy, then they steal. Our people won’t put up with that, and it’ll never end... never—”

The servant Abdul was standing in the doorway. “Sir, the Colonel has arrived. Colonel Trader and his driver.”

“Show him into my study and offer him something to drink.” He turned back to Lilya. “It would be impolite, and quite wrong of me to go to him immediately. Time is an expression of sovereignty. If he has to wait, he’ll know that we aren’t *fellahins*, or supplicants. That’s his role today.” He laughed. Coming a little nearer, he looked at her mischievously, and for a moment, the old fondness flashed in his eyes. “Anyway, he’s not here to talk about politics, but about love. That’s much worse. Because peace would fall into our hands if only we wanted it. Love, however, does what it wants.”

“The proud Colonel. So he’s seeking your advice?”

“Dearest Aleyna Bin Salih will give him no peace. And I’m supposed to help him win her over. He is quite madly in love with her, and wants to leave the service. And he is one of the commanders! Just because of our beautiful, famous widow.”

She heard footsteps, voices, and the creaking of boots. He turned serious again.

“Trader is very talkative. Often more than is good for him.”

“The widow?”

“Other worries, much greater ones.”

Her uncle looked down at his half-full glass, as if he couldn't decide whether he should drink or carry on talking. She was reminded for a moment of the old days in this house, before the long evenings began, when Uncle Mahmut and her father almost competed with their stories to win over the hearts of the children. But at the same time, she knew what Uncle Mahmut would tell her this time – and it was not a story, or a fairytale.

“The British are under pressure. Not just in this country. The war has weakened them and they have made mistakes. Keeping the Empire together is becoming more and more difficult, and the powers that want to rock them are getting stronger.”

“What are you trying to tell me, Uncle Mahmut?”

“This man, Ben Gedi – did he give you the order?”

“You know Ben Gedi?”

“Everyone in this country knows him, even the ones who don't know him. He fought with the British, and now he's fighting against them.”

“He asked me to meet a man before I left.”

“A *man*? And what's this *man's* name?”

Lilya couldn't help smiling. “Elias Lind,” she said. “Many people have heard of him.”

“Lind? Your writer?”

*Your* writer. He had never said it that clearly before. The Jews and Zionists on the one side, the Arabs on the other – *us* and *them*.

“Yes. But it's about his brother, Raphael Lind, who some say is no longer alive, and others – well, they say differently.”

Mahmut bent down in front of her and looked as if he was struggling with something.

“Do you know the story of the monkey and the fish? It's from Africa, and it's very old.”

She shook her head.

“A runaway monkey is walking along a river when he sees a fish. *Oh*, he says, *he's fallen into the water. I have to save him*. And so he pulls him out. The fish flaps about. *How happy he is!*”

shouts the monkey. But a little while later, the fish dies, still in his hands. The monkey is very sad. *If only I had turned up earlier, he says, then I could have saved him!*” Mahmut Harouni looked expectantly at her. “Alertness and caution. Particularly those who want to help others should know what they’re doing. And should decide for themselves.”

“What has the Colonel told you?”

“Well, he complains... he’s scared and nervous because so many of his countrymen are here. If the British have anything to do with your mission – and knowing Ben Gedi, he is convinced they are – then you should be on the lookout. Perhaps there’s more to it than you know.”

Lilya had to stop herself from laughing.

“Aren’t you exaggerating a little, Uncle Mahmut?”

Harouni placed a hand on his heart. He still looked serious. “The imprints of life on my heart seek purity and are besieged by sin – I have learnt how to read them.”

“The Colonel comes to you about love, you say?”

“That’s what he thinks. Perhaps I can help him see sense. Perhaps not. But I already know that he will not listen to me any more than the others, even you, Lilya. Each and every one of us always thinks we know everything. Only we all know something different.”

4

He was looking over at her quite blatantly from the other side of the street. She saw his bright teeth and shining eyes. The stranger from the bus; she had known that he would not forget her. The man who called himself Shaul – she was sure it was him. Carts and wagons kept blocking his view; then trucks, buses, jeeps and camels. He was standing in the entrance to a building. She continued on her way, Elias Lind’s dossier in her hand. It wasn’t much farther to the Jewish Agency where she was going to meet him. A day after their meeting in Café Levandovsky, she

wanted to bring the business with Lind to a conclusion. In her way – gently, but firmly.

Tomorrow she was going to leave the city again, and travel back to the north as soon as she had persuaded Ben Gedi that his plan was foolish.

She knew that the man would follow her. She recognized his athletic, striding gait. He would follow her like a shadow until he had heard what he wanted to hear. Why hadn't she seen straight away that he was one of Yoram's people, and that he had been sent to find out whether or not they could count on her? Whether she was going to continue on her way, even without him? They were called Etzel – or Irgun by the British – and they were the enemy. The British occupiers could tolerate the Haganah army – Ben Gedi and all the others – but not Etzel. No one wanted to have contact with them, but they existed, and they were strong. Impatience and the will to fight were symbolized in the organization's coat of arms, as well as the outlines of a country that they wanted to force into being, a weapon with two olive branches. Their goal was not a state for the Jews, but a Jewish state, country, soil, and people: a union.

The path leading to this goal was only through combat organized underground, using ambush to cause terror, as Yoram had once said to her; and at that, she had shivered. The Haganah and the Palmach were too weak, easily taken in; Ben Gedi and all the others still tried to fight with one hand outstretched in greeting. His eyes had glittered. Even she, Yoram said, would eventually recognize the futility of these actions.

He had asked her to climb the Mount of Olives. They had crossed Kidron Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane, and when they reached the top, they sat on a wall high above the city and looked down. "This all is ours," Yoram said, "and ours alone." He had lifted his hand, as though he wanted to place it on the roofs. The houses, alleys, and walls were bathed in a honey-colored light, and up here, where a light breeze was blowing, she thought she could still feel the heat from the stones. Below them they could see the golden cupola of the Dome of the Rock, and farther up on the other side of the city, the King David Hotel.

She had wanted to contradict him, but his expression and the tone of his voice scared her. *No*, she had wanted to say, *it might be our city but we share it with those who lived here before us*. She remembered walking along Gaza Street, King George Street, past the pines, acacias, oleanders, palms, cypresses, and bougainvillea, saw herself on the terrace of the YMCA, right across from the King David Hotel that shimmered red-gold in the evening sun, where British officers came and went, and dandified American travelers to the Orient, elegant women, and industrious emissaries from the Jewish Agency with fat briefcases under their arms. And Uncle Mahmut, with his dossier of plans. Hope. *Kismet*. A heart covered with imprints.

Yoram had asked her for this meeting. Meeting? An awful, stupid word. She had wanted to see him again, to touch him. And what had he wanted?

“My mind is made up,” he said. “I am going to join Zvi, Shaul, and the others.”

She had understood what he was saying: he was going underground, the British would chase him, and Ben Gedi and all the others would hate him. From now on he would try and force victory with violence. That was the wrong path, and yet she knew she would never be able to dissuade him. The wind swallowed up his words. She wanted to say that her parents would never join him on this path, and that he was about to trample over everything that they had ever taught him. *Lilya, Ehud, Deborah*, she suddenly thought, *perhaps these names have always been like a fortress for him, into which he, the addition to the family, the lost one, had never found an entrance, and would now turn away from forever*.

She frantically tried to work out what to say. *You will die. Stay with me, for our sake. Don't do this to our parents*. But she bit her lip and said nothing. She heard him say something along the lines of *no more patience*, and *they only understood one language, to settle and plough our land*.

Then he asked her if she was willing to join him. This was not something she had expected. She knew for a fact that he did not want to take her with him, that he would go alone; this was not about her, but about the cause. She would lose him, even if she followed him.

Then for a moment, her soul froze at another possibility: perhaps this was simply a ploy to be rid of her. Perhaps her love and urging had become too much. He put his arm around her and stroked his fingers across her neck, then buried his face in her hair. She pulled away, looked at him, drew herself up, and began to scream words at him: *he only thought of himself, he was a coward, he did not have the courage to commit himself to her, he was ruining everything*. Then she slapped him across the face, brisk and hard. He didn't move a muscle. She sank to her knees, crouched in the dust, and started to cry.

She had not noticed the two men who were standing behind her. Only when Yoram got up, and they all silently left to go back down into the city without once looking back, did she know that it was over.

She turned into HaNeviim Street, went past the Ethiopian House, and wanted to lose herself in the Orthodox district. Mea She'arim, a hundred gates. A hundred ways to vanish. To go underground. She did not want to join them, or have anything to do with them. She did not know what Yoram would say now if he saw her here, and she did not even want to think about it. To speak to Shaul would mean starting all over again from the beginning; to wake the sleeping memories that would eventually eat away at her if she did not watch out.

Two men came toward her, Bukharan Jews, who did not seem willing to step aside. She was forced to go around them. She did not exist for the two bearded men; they did not even look up. Hawkers squatted at the curbside, offering vegetables, spices, leather goods, and knives. Their stands were nothing more than boxes on which they had spread rough sacks. From a balcony of an Ottoman-style house, boys wearing kaftans and dark, wide-brimmed hats followed her with their eyes.

She stopped in front of a shoemaker's store, and in the reflection of the window, she tried to catch a glimpse of movement – a shadow, a tuft of hair. Had he followed her all the way here?

During her training in the Negev desert, they had been equipped with mirrors on thin poles. They had been trained to peer out of ditches, windows, and caves, and around the corners of buildings into unknown streets. *Hold it so that it doesn't catch the sun.*

The shoemaker, who was wearing a leather apron over his kaftan, looked up and smiled at her. He was so old that he was permitted to look at this young, inappropriately dressed woman. He put his work down and came to the door. In his sidelocks and beard hung the remains of brown shavings. Behind him on his store wall she spied a framed picture of a teacher, master, miracle rabbi; a photograph that was already blotchy and discolored at the edges. In the background of the picture, the beams of a wooden house were visible, in Russia perhaps, the Ukraine, or in Vitebsk, Kaunas, Vilnius or Łódź. Or Litmannstadt in Germany. Karl Litzmann had joined the Nazis at 80 years of age; they had robbed the city of its name and had given it his.

“Keep going straight on,” said the shoemaker. “You can’t miss the exit.” He waved his hand up the street, said goodbye, and disappeared back into his shop.

Suddenly a shadow appeared next to her.

“So a little tour through the Holy City after all?” he said. “I can barely keep up with you. Why didn’t you invite me along?”

She turned around. It was Shaul Avidan, just as she had suspected.

“Because our common path has no common goal,” she said, and turned back to the street.

“Stop! We haven’t even started yet.”

She knew she would not be able to shake him off. She had seen his look when he had said goodbye at the bus door. Begin and his combatants needed new blood because many of the leaders came from Eastern Europe and were no longer young; Jabotinsky was already dead, and the Lehi had split off years ago. Had Yoram put Shaul up to this? Before the day he and three other fighters had lost their lives – meaninglessly, uselessly, due to their own carelessness or wrong materials while building a bomb in some buried cellar?



Shaul proposed that she accompany him to Jaffa Gate, and listen without interruption so that he could explain his business, which, as she must know, came from the best source. Then he would say no more and she would be free to decide; he would accept any decision on her part.

She hesitated for a moment. “No, no way,” she said.

Even she was shocked by the brusqueness of her tone. He forced a smile.

“Is this Jaffa Gate already?” he asked. His eyes seemed to glow. “It’s our fight too, don’t forget. We will turn the ideas of the Haganah – Markolet – into a real war, one that they can’t fight on their own. I will explain everything to you, and you will understand.”

The bridges, the bombings: she already knew about it. And she also knew that Ben Gedi would not want these people involved, no matter what; Yoram and Shaul’s people had mercilessly fought the British and the Arabs, and had not even shied away from the idea of making a pact with Germany against England a few years ago.

Her hands were trembling. On the other side of the street, not even a hundred meters away, a jeep, clearly a patrol, was moving slowly toward them. A driver sat inside, with two soldiers, carbines propped between their legs. Shaul looked briefly down the street, sizing up the situation. Just a few meters next to the shoemaker’s shop was an opening in the wall, beyond which was a narrow alleyway.

“Your friends,” he said, jerking his head in the direction of the jeep, but before she could answer, he had reached the opening in the wall, and with three or four strides, he disappeared through it.

She turned around and left, first slowly, then gradually speeding up. The soldiers did not seem to be interested in her; she saw the jeep turn around and retreat into the distance.

On Hazanovitch Street she reached the headquarters of the Histadrut and gradually slowed down her pace. She would reach Jaffa Road via HaNeviim, and then disappear into the crowd. She would have a drink, collect herself, and then set off in the direction of the agency.

She was relieved to have gotten rid of the stranger. She would not let him get so close to her again.

Her thoughts turned to Elias Lind, and she felt herself tensing. Perhaps it was just that she did not want to say what she going to have to say. And then he would look at her through his thick spectacles and say: *At least you came to see me personally, rather than sending me a letter, or simply disappearing.*

She wanted to bring him back his documents. And say: *Write your next book, please, make something out of all of this. After looking at these papers, I feel I know your older brother Raphael, and you too, and the world you lost or turned your back on, both in your own ways. And all that connected and divided you, even Berlin, progress, your unconditional faith that linked the old century with the new, and the mission you gave yourself to unearth it. A Jewish mission because only progress would be able to lead the Jews out of these dark times. That was the idea. But I was set a different mission: to find a possible trace that would lead to a missing person. And there is none to be found in these papers.*

The main building of the Jewish Agency resembled a castle, a semicircular complex built around a large courtyard, like a slice of self-assertion and future cut out of the fortified Walls of Jerusalem: large, cleanly hewn bricks of light-colored stone, a portico above the entrance resting on square columns, upon which a balcony and an alcove for speeches rested. A drive led visitors between two crescent-shaped patches of parched lawn.

She went up the few steps and entered the hall. Inside it was cool. A watchman, not much older than herself, with broad shoulders and sharp features, was sitting behind a wooden desk. He folded his newspaper, stood up, and looked at her.

“I’m looking for Dr. Lind,” she said.

“Is he expecting you?”

“Yes.”

He looked her probingly up and down. “Any weapons?” he asked.

She acted as if to check, running her hand around her belt. “Don’t think so,” she said.

He left the desk, and came over to her. “You don’t think so – good, good,” he said and smiled, without diminishing the bureaucratic distance between them. “You are holding that dossier like a pistol. I won’t search you.”

“These are just papers, documents for the educational department, nothing more. I’m returning them.” She was still wearing her khaki-colored trousers and bulky shoes; her skin was dark from working in the fields in the sun, and her hands were rough.

“I didn’t know that you kibbutz people could read.”

“We can’t, which is why I’m returning these hieroglyphics. We still write with shovels.”

He laughed and, too casually for her liking, sauntered over to a noticeboard that hung next to the stairwell. He was much taller than she had thought, and smelled of stale cigarettes tinged with sweat.

“Lind, you say? All the way to the end of the hall, left wing.”

He told her the room number, placed his stretched index finger on the board a little longer than was necessary and then checked the clock, saying: “At this time of day, you’d better enter quietly. Or wait here if you like.”

His eyes probed her again, not searching for a weapon this time. Whatever he meant by *this time of day*, she did not feel like letting him gawk at her any longer. That’s just what he would do, even if he pretended to be immersed in his newspaper. When she was younger, she had thought of her beauty as a flaw that couldn’t be hidden, something that exposed her to others, as if they had the right to study or examine her, and assess her willingness; or to talk about her, her eyes, her body or her *caramel-colored* skin. She thought that other girls – Ofer’s sister Bosmat, school friends, or Uncle Mahmut’s daughter Amal, for example – were much more beautiful than her but she was the one that they always stared at. “Not too small for the tall men, and not too tall for the small ones,” Bosmat once said of her, “and when you laugh and show your teeth, time stands still for a moment.”

Yoram, on the hand, had never mentioned her hair, her mouth, hips or hands. For some people, only thoughts had true beauty – sentences, formulas, arguments, and ideas – and if you were lucky, the face of the person who said them was an oblique reflection of this beauty. But when it did, it was never something that you possessed, or could show off; instead, it was a gift, like sunlight that surrounded you after emerging from a dark alleyway.

She thanked the watchman who feigned disappointment, and then, clutching the documents to hide her chest, she crossed the foyer to the stairs. In the corridors on the first floor, she could hear the sound of her own boot soles. Doors opened and closed again, and a young woman, who was pushing a squeaking wagon stacked with transit files along the corridor, barely glanced at Lilya. Two men in suits carrying briefcases came out of a room. She heard voices, footsteps, and the clattering of typewriters behind closed doors. Uniformed men in short trousers and gaiters came toward her. In a stuffy conference room whose doors were wide open, men and women thronged around a large desk. Vortalex ventilators standing on chairs whirled whiningly. Two high-ranking British officers were among them, and the mood was tense.

“Don’t you dare–”

Snippets of conversation drifted to her ears.

Then it went quiet; the corridors emptied. The watchman had said *all the way to the end of the hall*. She looked around, but there was no one to be seen. It had to be here somewhere.

She read the sign and an indecipherable string of numbers – department so-and-so, a bureaucratic haiku. The door to the office was ajar. She peered through the gap and saw the tips of someone’s feet, and a pair of shoes on the floor.

Gingerly, she opened the door. In the center of the room stood a table with three chairs; lying on it were piles of papers, dossiers, newspaper cuttings, a second pair of spectacles, and a lens. Despite the open window, the heat of the dying day was stifling in the room. She saw books on the shelves, files held together by string, and an ambulatory store of pharmaceuticals, drops, tinctures, a pile of clean handkerchiefs, and an open spectacle case.

Elias Lind was lying on a divan with his eyes closed. Despite the heat, he had a blanket spread across his belly. His heavy spectacles sat like a huge sleeping insect on a chair next to him. Lilya looked at his high forehead, his long neck, and his eyes for the first time without their opaque screen. He had scars under his eyebrows, and his hands bore light-colored stains, as if he had come into contact with bleach. He had been in the war, she knew, fighting on the front in Belgium, and had come back scarred in 1917. Ben Gedi had told her that only a few years later, he had left his country after studying and writing his doctoral dissertation on Moses Hess in Berlin, and full of hope, came to start a new life here. Initially he had eked out a living in Berlin with educational projects and teaching hours at the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*, and, in the evenings he had organized meetings for the Zionist youth movement Jung Juda, eventually taking part in the 12th Zionist Congress in Karlsbad. It had been led by Nahum Sokolow, the former chairman of the Hebrew literature commission, and the first chairman to speak Hebrew at an official congress. Lind must have gone back to Berlin changed, with a fixed goal in mind.

He moaned, but did not seem to wake up. It was not right to simply come in here and watch this man sleeping, she thought. What if he opened his eyes and discovered her here? – he would suffer an unbearable shock. Should she leave again?

Something held her back.

“I have found the letter. You know, the one that was in the package from Germany.”

Lilya started. His voice was raw from sleep, and frail; he must have realized she was there without being able to see her.

“But please give me my spectacles first.”

She held them out to him; he lifted his head and fumbled with them awkwardly until they were placed on his nose, clamping each earpiece around one ear at a time. His features relaxed.

“I must ask you to be lenient with me for greeting you here like a penniless poet. Normally a quarter of an hour nap suffices, but this lunchtime I wasn’t feeling well. Perhaps it’s because of

the *khamsin*, or just life itself. Sometimes thoughts are like bacteria that course through your body and weaken it. Would you mind if I remain in this position a little longer, even if it is not conducive to receiving guests?”

“I didn’t mean to be impolite ... the door was ajar.”

“Politeness is for times of peace. In this country, that will take another few centuries. In any case it was not impolite of you to simply come in – it was extremely useful.”

He sat up a little.

“I fear that you have only come to say farewell and hand me back my documents. I would not think badly of you, and can understand your point of view very well. You want to find and save Jews, pamper them and bring them here. Your way of thinking is political and strategic, and you don’t want to be held back by individual cases. This country needs building: young strength, mass immigration is a great solution. Youth wants the future, and to shape it according to their views and ideas. Going in search of an old academic, who simply should have left his country in time, only holds it back.”

“That’s not it. I just don’t think we have enough to go on to make this a rewarding mission. Where should we begin and what goal should we have? Even the photo with the house in the woods, wherever it was taken, throws up more questions than it answers.”

“Facts. Non-facts. There is nothing in between. *Hypotheses are not facts*. That’s what Dahlia always said. You would have gotten along well with one another.”

He sat up again and cleared his throat.

“Since my wife died, I often feel that I have lost my bearings, my direction, and my courage too. We don’t really have anything to go on, perhaps you’re right. Yet I’ve been having quite different, audacious thoughts.” He grinned, suddenly looking mischievous. “If you truly should find something in our nameless country, I would up and follow you. And I would poke around in the rubble with my stick to find Raphael.”

“A stick would not be enough,” she said.

He looked at her steadily. *No bearings, no courage* is what he had said, and he had quite clearly been teasing her a little.

“There would be two of us – your eyes and my memories. What a team! Unbeatable.”

Was he being serious?

“You would really travel to Germany?”

He hesitated, and looked up again. “No, I couldn’t. But read the letter that I told you about.” He indicated an envelope lying on the table that he had already prepared.

“I have to warn you that it deals with very private matters. But the business here requires that you find out about them. Please read it and decide afterwards if you want to help me. And look at that fine envelope. That was once Berlin!”

*Berlin, 26 May 1946*

*My dear Elias,*

*In these times like these, who knows if you will ever receive this letter? Or if you even remember or want to be reminded of me? It is all so long ago, and a great dark barrier divides us from everything we once had – even each other. But I had to send you this book. My mind was made up the moment I came across it.*

*I discovered it from a trader – a black market trader, one of the ones keeping us alive these days. Just a sheer fluke. Then again, perhaps not. It was worth virtually nothing to him, but for me, it was like a summons: Alexandria, the library of your esteemed father, and part of Raphael’s one-sided inheritance.*

*It was not easy to find out where you are staying, and I was on the point of addressing the envelope to “Elias Lind, Palestine.” It’s such a small country, after all. But an Allied officer friend of mine helped me by sending the package by military post. My attitude has won me a*

*sympathetic reputation among the Allies over the years. I am just happy that you and I were spared Plötzensee, and all that happened after July 20th. It's quite a miracle.*

*This book is one of Raphael's possessions, there's no doubt about it. As you know, your brother and I were very close friends, and for a while, there was even more to it than that. I know that you were not close as brothers – you were little more than two people forced to coexist against your wills. This always pained me, but now I have to apportion Raphael, God bless his soul, a greater part of the blame for this bad state of affairs.*

*And I was to blame for yours, because I couldn't grant your wishes, and chose Raphael, even if the liaison was not blessed with happiness – both of us soon had to admit it. As a result, you chose your path – to leave – and today only you will know whether it was the right choice or not. At the time I could not have acted differently, but I did wish that Raphael had shown a different attitude and more thoughtfulness toward you. He had “won” again, even if I don't like that word. But all this is very long time ago and these present times have handed us different duties.*

*And so, to the book. How I have often asked myself what happened to Raphael after his disappearance. Since that day they turned up at his house in Dahlem. I was visiting, you know – we had long since become good friends again.*

*So, one afternoon in October 1941, SS officials turned up. The entrance gate to his house was blocked. Several cars were waiting outside on the street. Five o'clock tea was laid out for us by Aka, the housekeeper, and Raphael had gone into the garden to check his roses, as he was worried about the early frost. They demanded that he make lists of his belongings – everything, most of all, an itemization of his books, essays and lectures, all his documents, as they called them. They said they would be back.*

*From then on, every morning from half past four, he sat at his desk in his suit and tie, waiting for them to come. But they didn't.*



*I told him he had to leave the country, that he could perhaps still make it. He had money, connections – perhaps it wasn't too late. But he wouldn't hear of it.*

*He decided to stay. I had an inkling why, but he had made me promise that my lips were sealed – I am still bound to it today.*

*I set about things alone, without his consent and made inquiries, visited administration offices, queued in front of cash desks, customs investigation centers, exchange offices, and negotiated with high-up officials, low-down officials, even the lowest of the low officials, saw the desperation on the faces of people in the Palestine Office in Meinekestraße, heard talk of eligibility certificates, export refund taxes, emigration tax, and all sorts of other taxes.*

*He barked at me down the telephone. I should stop. He knew what I was doing. About what was just and right. I started crying but I said no more.*

*A few days later, he disappeared. They must have come for him in his house at night. Trucks drove up and took all his books. Everything, all packed in boxes and labeled, as if he were going on a trip to America. The huge, valuable library, the laboratory journals, notebooks, theses, doctoral dissertations, special editions, monographs, newspaper series, and the plans for unpublished research reports. His entire life.*

*Extinguished.*

*How happy I would be if you received this book, if it returned to its home where it belongs. Please write to me to let me know if my message arrives. And how you have been. Should you ever find your way back to this lifeless city, dear Elias, please know that you are more than welcome. I still live in Kleiner Wannsee; my house is bearing up, although it is really too large for me. And if anything should happen to me before then, my niece knows what you mean to me.*

*With affection*

...

“Desirée von Walsdorff. I must confess that I adored her more than anyone else before I emigrated – perhaps too much. But she did not reciprocate my affection. She belonged to *his*

circle of friends, and she was beautiful, clever, worldly, at ease. In those years, she *was* Berlin: by day, by night, the Berlin of the early hours when the newspaper vendors swarmed out, and the S-Bahn slipped out of the golden morning sun into the tunnel, squeaking and rattling; and billstickers for Orodont and Mampe balanced on their flimsy ladders, and the milkmen, with horses and carts, went from house to house, shrugging their shoulders as night revelers pushed past them into their houses ... Raphael had an affair with Desirée, but she wasn't up to his mark, with all his airs and graces." He paused for a moment. "But she wanted him, not me. Perhaps I wanted to set her free with my hopeless love. But she didn't need setting free. She always was free. What a woman!" He shook his head, deep in thought.

"The photograph of the house in the woods. There's no mention of it in her letter. Not a word," Lilya said.

"She didn't find it."

"It would have been useful to hear her thoughts on it."

"Yes, it would have. Perhaps we would already be a step further on. Perhaps not."

When she left the agency, she began to run. It was as if Shaul Avidan, Ben Gedi, the shoemaker, Elias Lind, all of them were all pursuing her, even the young watchman who now had Yoram's face, and who clutched a paper plane in his hand. He was shouting, almost crying something like *Weapons, weapons!* She stopped, unable to breathe. Slowly she turned onto Jaffa Road. *Her condition.* But this time it was different. No tears came, just a dry gagging. She leaned against the wall and clutched her belly. The sun began to disappear behind the roofs, traders passed through the city with their camels from the market uphill from the Old City, their cries and clicking tongues sounding muffled as if through gauze. Metal shutters in front of the stores and workshops rattled to the ground. The echo of a muezzin rang across the roofs, and was lost among the walls and alleyways on which night had already settled.

She felt a cramp, as if she was being grabbed in the belly by steel fingers, and vomited.

In the distance, she heard the impatient honking of a car that was trying to force its way through the hustle and bustle on the streets. Its headlamps shone briefly, lighting up the interior of a haberdashery store on the street opposite. Then she ran her hand across her face. She closed her eyes.

“*Joseph Sternkind*, what a book!” was the last thing she had said to Elias Lind before leaving. “Why are you making us wait so long? The story has to go on. It’s all laid out. We have a right to it!”

“Have you ever tried writing a book?” he had answered.

“Texts, essays, shorter academic papers. But no, not a book.”

“But it’s *all laid out*.”

“What do you mean?”

Elias Lind looked at her with a cryptic smile. “Think about it. Imagine you wrote a novel. A young, pretty soldier comes across evidence that can save a life, thanks to a blind old man. *Whose life?* you might ask. *Well, that depends on your story in the end*, would be the answer.”

“Do you really think that we will end up with something concrete against the British? It seems to have been Ben Gedi’s obsession ever since I went to visit him.”

He smiled at her, smirking slightly.

“Imagine that’s true, but you wished you’d never even started on and wasted this opportunity. If that is too difficult, imagine it doing it for ... well, someone else.”

# 2

## Whitehall

1

The brakes squealed; the doors flew open. Marble Arch, at last.

Up on street level she had a perfect sense of direction. But down here, deep below the city, it often failed her. After Battersea Power Station loomed like a castle in the window on her right, and the Central Line carriage glided into the tunnel, her inner compass stopped working for a few minutes. The walls of the Tube carriages seemed to be closing in on her, and the tunnels were so narrow that she fancied she could hear the grinding of metal on stone.

Lilya thrust her way out of the carriage, took deep breaths, and scanned the crowded platform for the stairs to the exit. A muggy, warm wind announced the approach of a train on the facing platform. The smell of smoldering cables hung in the air, mingled with cologne from lawyers and businessmen; somewhere, a child was screaming. She looked up at the steep escalator. Oxford Street – it was somewhere near here.

She had memorized Dr. Albert Green's address, which was a few minutes' journey on foot from Marble Arch. Whether Green would be a target, a witness, or a dead-end, she wasn't sure, or even if her visit would prove worthwhile. But she seemed to be on to something. She had visited the British Library to get an idea of who Raphael Lind was before leaving for Germany; his

research and scholarly papers had also been published in England. In doing so, she had come across the name Albert Green – in connection with biochemistry, resistance research, and gaseous compounds. It wasn't long before she had developed a hypothesis, a rather audacious one.

*Great discoveries are first conjectured, then asserted, then proven,* Elias Lind had said.

Albert Green was a professor, a biochemist, and a doctor. In Germany, the family had still been called Grün – but that was a long time ago. In London, where they settled in 1910 after the Great War, they had changed their name to Green. They were not the only ones at the time who wanted to wipe out the traces of Germany from their names: Battenberg became Mountbatten, Grün became Green.

Grün's academic essays, still in German, were written in his youth. But it was Green's English publications that roused her curiosity. Not only that, but she discovered something quite by accident, which she wasn't able to explain: there was some connection between Raphael Lind and Albert Green. This was her hypothesis, and she had set off to meet him from her lodgings in Clapham to find out whether she was right.

Buses as high as the buildings on Jaffa Road shunted their way down Oxford Street. Black sedan cars, taxis, and army vehicles coursed along the streets. She walked past the entrance to Hyde Park, with Marble Arch on her left. She had read that it had been too narrow for carriages to drive through in front of Buckingham Palace, which was why it had been moved. She sized it up: *nonsense*, she thought, *that's just a myth*.

She was happy to have firm ground under her feet again. Traveling by sea was not for her. Neither were journeys through manmade tunnels in rattling tin boxes. But she had had no choice but to take the route via London.

“To England?” Ben Gedi had asked, and laughed. “No problem. At home the British behave quite decently. You could say they have a kind of democracy.” Besides, there was no direct connection from Palestine to Germany.

Before she had been able to say anything, he had continued, ignoring the last-minute objections that she had made in a final attempt not to go.

Ben Gedi told her to report immediately to the JOINT office and ask for her transfer to Germany to be arranged. *A ship is usually scheduled in a few days, or you will be given permission to fly.* The US Air Force had set up a bus connection across the canal – Egged with wings, as it were. Officers, officers' wives, or those who trying to pass as such – black-market profiteers, troupes of musicians, congress delegates, medics, people from the alphabet soup of international aid organizations, German rocket scientists with one-way tickets to Fort Bliss – all used this connection. *You will be well entertained,* he had said, adding that she should use her time in the capital wisely, researching and studying her English friends. They had kept the Führer from the throats of the people in Palestine, after all; they'd fought alone when Hitler had seized nearly the whole of remaining Europe. They'd sacrificed blood, sweat and tears, as well as excellent Hawker Hurricane and Spitfire pilots. This commanded respect. "We'd be dead without the British. But with them, life is impossible. That's the fate of us Jews," Ben Gedi had said. Did she follow what he was saying? She did.

On the ocean crossing from Haifa, she had felt as if she were in a nightmare. They had docked for a night in Limassol harbor where she had not been allowed to leave the ship. British soldiers stood guard all night in front of the gangway. Goods were loaded and offloaded. She saw wooden crates against the dark backdrop of the sky; floodlights streaked across the ship, traders peddling wares called out, and trucks drove up to quay, and rumbled away again. She soon realized that the dockers' cries and the cursing of the loadmaster were going to carry on all night. Her cabin was right next to the crew's berths and barely larger than a traveling trunk. It was unbearably hot below deck and, although her porthole was open, she was scared she might suffocate.

The next morning when she heard the bell being rung, orders being called, and the vibration of the running engines, she went up on deck. The sun was beginning to peer over the horizon, and there was not a cloud in the sky. The freighter seemed to be moving at an angle, tilting to one side as if unsure whether it dared sail out again onto the open ocean, which was spread before them like a cloth. Behind her in the distance, she saw the pier of Limassol – a thin strip on the water, a foreign city by the sea, with its ancient fortress beyond which lay mountains. And she realized for the first time that she had indeed left her country, and that she would do everything she could to see it again as soon as possible.

“You have to leave behind your home country to rediscover it – it may not be relevant, but it’s true.”

The stranger had appeared next to her quite suddenly, and was looking out to sea in the same direction as her. She was standing at the stern by the railing, her eyes shielded from the sun with a hand. Gusts of wind buffeted her hair. She wasn’t sure if he had spoken to her or aloud to himself. He was the only passenger on the freighter besides her and only left his cabin for meals. When he ate, he did so silently and without looking up, spooning soup into his mouth, or stirring about in the colorless stew, cutting his bread into slices with the sharp, broad, jagged blade of his knife. Then he would clean off the knife with a handkerchief, touch the blade with his fingers, and slide it back into its leather sheath. Finally, with a gesture that reminded her of feeding animals, he would toss the bread that he had cut and piled next to his plate into the soup. On his left hand he wore a glove made of thin, brown leather, but it did not seem to hamper his movements; he was equally deft with both hands. His remoteness and reserve suited her only too well; yet she often had the feeling that he was watching her out of the corner of his eye, as if she had prompted him to ponder over something.

“You don’t talk much.” Now he turned to her and looked her in the face.

“I wasn’t sure if you were speaking to me.”

“I was,” he said. “Well, at least I know now that you can talk.”

She hoped that this would be the end of their conversation. And the stranger did in fact fall silent, and looked out to sea several times. He was wearing a gray suit that was slightly too large; he was small and stocky, with short, almost black hair, and she guessed he was in his late forties. And the glove? Perhaps he had some kind of skin condition, she thought. A seagull in hope of food was swooping near to them. The stranger let it come close, and when the bird dared to fly dangerously near to his outstretched hand, he darted to grab it as quick as a flash, but only managed to catch the tip of its wing before it flew away with a screech. He laughed, baring his teeth: he had smoker's teeth, and one incisor was missing. As unexpectedly as he had come, he disappeared again. When he reached the stairs, he looked back at her one last time before vanishing into the hold.

The next day Lilya went back up on deck, hoping she was not being watched, and looked out to sea again while holding on to a porous lifebelt that had been repainted many times. By now there was no land to be seen. The blue of the sky and the sea met somewhere in tacit consent.

"I thought I'd find you here."

Lilya turned: again the stranger had appeared without warning by her side.

"You like this spot, don't you? The wind's not as fierce here as on the bow, and you can see what you've left behind. Don't think I've introduced myself: Colm O'Madden," he said, and looked at her from the side. "From Ireland. And yourself?" Lilya told him her name, feeling that it was a mistake. But the way he looked at her suggested he'd known all along anyway – perhaps he'd asked the crew members. "The Orient," he said, and looked down at her. "No offence, but the way I see it, there's not much to it. It's a big disappointment. Just sand, heat, crazy commanders, and people from all over the place at each other's throats. Can't wait to be out of here."

He fished a cigarette out of a packet and tried to light it, asking Lilya to shield the match from the wind. Trying not to show that he made her feel uneasy, she took the matchbox, and in a practiced way, pulled the matchbox halfway out, and then held the kindled match in the hollow. She invited him to light his cigarette. O'Madden stared at her in amazement.



“It’s a useful trick,” she said, “and it doesn’t show up in the dark either. A glowing cigarette always gives away where your head is.”

O’Madden inhaled deeply, and then blew out a cloud of smoke that flew up in the wind.

“Solid training,” he said.

“A tip from friends...”

“They had your best intentions at heart.”

The following day, he sat down next to her in the mess without being asked, and poured some water. Where would she be going next, if they actually managed to get to England, and what would she be doing there, he wanted to know. She was surprised by his directness.

“In England? Nothing,” she said.

Would she be traveling on to Germany? He then went back to cutting his bread again with his knife.

What made him ask that? she thought. He looked expectantly at her. And when she didn’t answer straight away, his expression grew cold. The veins on his temples bulged, as if he were struggling with something.

She decided to turn things around.

“Have you ever been there, or did you fight against the Germans?” she asked, looking at him, wide-eyed.

He hesitated for a moment, then stuck out a leg from under the table, and rolled up his pants.

“A bullet, clean through my calf, with a bone lesion. Summer 1940,” he said, “aerial gunner for the RAF. After that, the war was over for me.”

She looked at the scar. It was actually too small for the injury O’Madden described. A machine-gun strike on board a plane would surely have ripped his leg apart. And his gloved left hand? Perhaps it was also a souvenir from the war. “After I left the military hospital, I entertained

the troops for a while on the front,” he said. He had played Hitler, Montgomery, Roosevelt, and Clark Gable in some scenes, which had challenged him and his voice. In the end, he had quit the services. He had been told that he would find work in the British mandate territory, so he had ended up in Palestine – until deciding to leave a few days ago, which he supposed she had done too.

For the rest of the journey, she managed to stay out of O’Madden’s way. When they reached Southampton, and the stranger disappeared into the crowds on the quay, she breathed out. She hoped she would never see him again. She reached for her rucksack, glanced around one last time, and headed down the gangway.

Before she had set off on her journey, she had twice met Elias Lind and let him talk – of his time in Berlin, his childhood under the Kaiser, of Chaim Friedrich Lind’s kingdom, his *Alexandria*, that became Raphael’s after his father died. His only tie to his brother were their shared family origins, Lind emphasized, and after the war, his parents’ belief in the future and their German values had come between them too. For Elias, the only future lay in Palestine. That is where he met Daliah, fell in love with her, and they had lived happily together, childless, until her premature death. After that he began writing, but had never fully grasped why *Joseph* had been such a success.

Lilya had listened attentively, making notes, and always pinpointing the gaps in his stories. They were often so large that her assignment could have been easily swallowed by them. Then she had laid a catalogue of questions on the table, which she had jotted down on a sheet of paper on those lonely evenings in her parents’ small apartment. *Raphael Lind: distinguishing characteristics or physical features, last-known address, contacts, book titles from the Lind family library, research subjects, friends, girlfriend/wife, peculiarities, vocal mannerisms.* It had hardly

been worth the effort as the results were so paltry. Lind's memories provided very few clues as to where she should start looking.

At least he had brought a photo with him, on the back of which was written "Berlin, 1932." It was almost fifteen years old, but better than nothing. It showed both brothers, staring with surprise into the camera, each in his own, different way. Raphael was wearing a dark, tailored suit, the height of fashion during the period, and a watch could be seen sticking out of his waistcoat pocket. He was as tall as Elias, and had the same full, black hair, combed back with Brillantine. He had a monocle stuck in one of his eye sockets, and his expression showed pride, self-assurance, and what looked like haughty severity. It was as though he wanted to fill the photograph all on his own. His brother, in his too-large gray suit, stood next to him with slightly stooped shoulders, as if trying to hide his height, or as though he had ended up in the photograph by accident, and was looking for a way out. She had seldom seen brothers so different to one another.

She would have to live with the fact that Elias Lind knew very little about his brother, and that the two men had been strangers to one another. She was alone in her investigations, and would have to rely on whatever she could find out herself.

On her last visit, he had pushed the bundle of documents back into her hands. They were stapled together and properly sorted this time. He had done some more work on the *matter* and had compiled a kind of travel guide for her. It was divided into stages rather than chapters. "Read one whenever you arrive somewhere," he recommended. "But I'm afraid you won't find the answers to all your questions among them."

In London, not long after her arrival, she had spent a few days buried in the British Library under the arched dome of the large Reading Room. JOINT had told her that it would be six days until the next available flight – at the very least. Officer Cordelia Vineyard, who was supposed to brief Lilya about her work, had looked through her papers, smiled at her in a friendly way, and then scrutinized her from top to bottom, as if sizing her up. And this, in fact, was precisely what

she was doing: the clothes unit was in the neighboring building and stored all kinds of uniforms, skirts, shirts, boots, and ties – the longer ones for men, the shorter ones for women. A dark badge had been roughly sewn onto the uniform sleeves, with A.J.D.C. in large, highly visible letters. Cordelia put together a well-fitting combination for Lilya, and helped her knot the short necktie with a practised hand.

Looking in the mirror, Lilya had the fleeting suspicion that this uniform, even the blouse and socks, had been sewn by Cordelia herself. She felt like a stranger in these clothes. In Palestine, she had come to see ties as something bourgeois – anti-Zionist relicts worn only by the occupiers. But Cordelia said that from the outset of her journey on the Continent, a uniform would be obligatory. Then she looked almost reproachfully at Lilya’s rough hands and fingernails.

“The country air gives you nice red cheeks,” said Cordelia winking, “but everything else you have to take care yourself.”

Lilya nodded. Finally, Cordelia had embraced her briefly and promised that she would soon be in touch about the transfer to Germany. She was looking forward to working together, she said, and Lilya should certainly visit her again. “There is so much that you should know,” Cordelia added. “And I can show you around the city while we talk.”

With the uniform under her arm, hastily stuffed into a canvas bag printed with the words *Wellington Hotel*, they had said goodbye.

“We might even be traveling together,” Cordelia called out after her. “I’m waiting for the next flight to Germany too. Just so you know, I’m terrified of flying. It’d be nice to know there’s someone to hold my hand.”

After meeting Cordelia, Lilya immediately started on her research: Lind, Raphael, scientific papers, books, research descriptions, expert reports. She ordered all the available editions of *Die Naturwissenschaften* and pored over them in the milky light of the British Library’s reading room. Paul Rothaus had been the journal’s editor since 1933, and it had once been the German answer to the acclaimed *Science and Life*.

Lilya took each year of *Die Naturwissenschaften* and noted all the essays that Raphael Lind had written. Then she ordered *Nature* to find the essays he had published before the war. While looking through them she made a discovery – by accident, but thanks to her trained eye. She noticed that a certain Professor Albert Green often wrote on the same subjects as Raphael Lind: biochemistry, protein research, but above all, gaseous compounds. And that wasn't all: some of the formulations and phrasings in his language were very similar to Raphael Lind's, almost as if one had copied the other. Could it be true?

At first, she cast this possibility aside. But again and again, she came across stylistic and structural similarities. It was as though many of the essays had been written by the same author. But there didn't seem to be a plausible explanation for her theory, no matter how long she thought about it. Perhaps Professor Green would be able to supply her with one; but for that, she would have to go in search of him.

She had tried looking through the London telephone directory at random, and found at least a dozen Albert Greens. But there was only one Prof. Dr. Albert Green, GP, and it seemed very likely that he was the man she was looking for. His surgery was only a few minutes' walk from Great Cumberland Place. When she called to make an appointment in the guise of a patient, Green's assistant seemed to be under orders to fob patients off rather than help them. No, she was told, the professor was not taking on any new patients. Lilya described her condition as *acute*. She made it sound like an emergency. That way the doctor would not be allowed to refuse her.

She left Marble Arch station and turned right into Oxford Street. A legless newspaper vendor on a small wooden cart rolled along beside her: *Republic of Italy declared!* he cried out. *Interim government in India fails due to Congress Party!*

She suddenly sensed she was being followed. She stopped in front of a shop window and tried to peer down Oxford Street out of the corner of her eye. In the end she changed the side of the street twice. Who could it be?

There was no one there – she had been mistaken. This was London, not Jerusalem.

Nevertheless she tried not to speed up, leaving the lively street behind, and in no time, she came to a large, light sandstone building. A helmeted knight looked down at her from the eaves.

After she had glanced about, she went into the entrance hall: silence. Only the echo of a rattling moped filtered into the hall from outside. A lift made of wrought iron resembling a birdcage seemed to be waiting for her.

But she took the stairs, which had a lingering odor of lavender and fried fish; as if in a *laterna magica* from a stranger's childhood, she passed pictures of Greek myths on the walls as she went up: Dionysus with his pitcher and grapes, Hermes with his winged helmet, Artemis carrying a bow and arrow, and finally, Apollo with his lyre and laurel wreath. This is what it must have looked like in the Lind household, before the first Great War in Berlin Spittelmarkt. She imagined two boys with leather school satchels, short trousers, and rumpled socks, storming up the stairs; a daily race that Raphael, the older brother, won no doubt every time.

In the center of a large door, embedded in a brass hollow, she gripped a well-worn knocker in the form of a lion's head, and rapped. The receptionist, a violet-scented woman no longer in her youth, greeted her coolly. It was the voice from the telephone.

Somewhere she heard the ticking of a grandfather clock. In the hallway stood a vitrine with glass doors in which glasses, cups and porcelain figures were lined in rows. A half-opened sliding door revealed the library on the right-hand side. None of this looked like a doctor's surgery.

When she entered the room that the receptionist had referred to as the consulting room, Green was standing with his back to her in front of a bookshelf that reached all the way to the ceiling.

*Consulting room*, she thought. Well, let's see about that.

Green turned to her. He was balancing a pile of books in his hands, and held out his elbow to greet her.

"Nothing is more permanent than provisional arrangements," he said. "When you move, do it all straight away – take everything out of the boxes, otherwise it becomes a life project."

He deposited the pile of books on a wooden stepladder, crossed the room to his mahogany desk that was covered with an array of papers, busts and tobacco pipe utensils, and invited her to sit down. In front of the table stood a dark green leather armchair: the patient's chair.

"Are you here for the first time?" he asked, looking at Lilya while he rooted around on his desk for a fountain pen and a blank index card.

He was a small man with thinning, almost white hair, and he spoke with a German accent that hardened the edges of his words. *Yekke* English.

"You are still out of breath. Mrs. Richards will call the caretaker about the lift ..."

She waved away his suggestion.

Mrs. Richards brought a glass of water and put it on the table in front of her.

"What can I do for you?"

"I have come here from Jerusalem," she said.

She had thought long and hard about how to approach Green. In the end, she had decided to come straight out with it, presenting her hypothesis as fact, and see what happened. Lind and Green must have known each other, perhaps even very well. This was her starting point.

"Europe is very far away. And the war has made traveling particularly difficult," replied Green, rather impatiently. "But you said your pains were *acute*?"

Lilya sat up straight.

"I am healthy, as far as I can tell, not being a medical expert. I'm here for a different reason. Not to see the doctor Albert Green, but the scientist."

He raised his eyebrows.

"First of all, Elias Lind asked me to pass on his regards."

"I am sorry to say that I do not know an Elias Lind. And my journey in life has so far never taken me to Jerusalem. I am afraid you have me mixed up with someone else."

"Elias Lind – he's the brother of Raphael Lind."

Dr. Green seemed immobilized for the blink of an eye, but regained his composure straight away.

“Lind? We were colleagues for a while. He was a great scientist. I didn’t know that he had a brother. We barely spoke about private matters.”

“Elias Lind received the news a few weeks ago that his brother is no longer alive.”

“That, to be honest, is something I had already feared. Please offer him my sincere condolences,” Green said.

“I am here in the hope that you can help me and Raphael’s grieving brother with some information. About his last years. In Palestine, we’re cut off from almost everything.

Green took off his glasses and looked at her severely.

“What is it that you want from me?”

“Your help. I am looking for traces of Professor Lind’s final years – what he worked on last, what he spent his time doing, when he had to stop working. I know that you are not obliged to tell me anything, but—”

“My help?” Green interrupted her. “First you sneak in here on pretense of acute illness, then you send me regards from a stranger, and now you want to march through the German history of science. Everything I have to say has been published. You can find it all in the relevant libraries. Once you have read it, we can gladly meet again for a professional conversation.”

“I have already read your works,” Lilya said.

“Sorry?”

“Not all of them, but many of them – yours, and Raphael Lind’s essays, in English.”

“And you are disappointed to find that essays are not autobiographies? They talk about *facts* – not friendships, journeys through life, or mistaken routes, for all I care. They follow the path of reason.”

Green stood up suddenly.

“Lind and I have not been in contact since the war.”



It was imperative for Lilya to be on guard now. She couldn't afford to make a false move. The professor was on the point of asking her to leave.

“Professor Green, I sat in the British Library for several days. I cannot claim to have understood everything I read – formulas, compounds, aggregate states, useful materials, dangerous materials, what do I know, I'm not a natural scientist. Yet it made interesting reading – I'd go as far as to say it was fascinating.”

“I'm happy to hear it. I always took great pains to write in a way that even those who were not familiar with the material could gain something from it.”

Lilya paused for a moment. Then she pressed on.

“What surprised me the most was that yours and Lind's research findings were so noticeably similar.”

“Scientists are not monads who live in the dark. Research involves communication, exchanging views. Even stimulating adversaries sometimes.”

“My impression was not that there was a scientific race going on between you, but that you were a very tightly coordinated research team.”

“Research team? I'd have liked nothing better. It's just that the times weren't in favor of it. We were at war, and I am English. And a Jew. What's more, Lind was not officially allowed to work from the mid-Thirties on. How could we have managed it?”

“He might have left for England in time?”

“I invited him, and the Committee for the Protection of Science and Learning, of which I was also a member, made him several offers. There is even a personal letter from our Chairman, Cecil Roth, as far as I know. That door was wide open. He would have benefitted England, and our research.”

“So why didn't he take them up on the offer?”

He gave her a searching look. It was obvious that he didn't want to reveal any more information, and that he wanted to end the conversation as quickly as possible. But something

against his will drove him on. She detected from the expression in his eyes that he was afraid of something, and was looking for orientation at the same time. He sighed, lifted his hands, and then let them sink back onto the desk.

“I have no answer to that question. I have asked myself many times.”

“Did he believe in Germany to the very end?”

“Raphael wasn’t naïve.”

“He could have saved his life and continued his research in freedom.”

Green straightened up and leaned forward slightly.

“I wouldn’t say that it belongs to my immediate experience, but as someone who has seen something of life, I know that there are all kinds of reasons why people do things that so obviously appear to contradict their interests, or put themselves in danger, in a way that inevitably catches up.”

She was going to ask what he meant, but Green carried on.

“Some people want to make up for something. Their motives, if you like, are shame, guilt or love or perhaps all three, my God. But as I said, Raphael Lind and I were not even in contact as scientists all those years.”

“Which makes it all the more astonishing that your essays up to 1941 sound as though you and Raphael Lind had – if I am to put it carefully – coordinated your research. But that was hardly possible, the way that you describe the situation.”

“Coordinated? What leads you to make this ludicrous assumption?”

“What I’ve read. The similarities in the structure of your texts. Lind and Green, Green and Lind. Two sides of the same coin. I have no explanation. But I am still hoping that you might be willing to help me. It’s not about you; it’s about Raphael Lind and what happened to him. Yes,” and here she paused for a fraction of a second, wondering whether you should say it or not, “I sometimes wonder whether he’s still alive.”

Green blanched. He steadied himself on the desk, stood up, crossed the room and closed the large double doors. Then he went over to the window and stared out onto the street with his back to her. Lilya heard something like a dull humming sound, and watched Green take out his handkerchief to blow his nose

“It is—,” he said, and then broke off.

The telephone on Green’s desk rang. He didn’t seem to hear it. Still facing the window, he said: “Raphael wrote for us in the Thirties, and was published in *Nature*. In 1937, the journal was banned in Germany. It was even banned in university libraries under the Third Reich. Rust’s ministry and his people in Berlin saw to that. English science had attacked German science, and had insulted it. Ridiculous.”

He turned back to her.

“About two years later, in early 1939, I received a surprising, but let’s say *official* summons to ensure Raphael Lind continued to be published in *Nature*. But he wasn’t allowed to publish under his name any more. Not in Germany, nor in England. I asked how I was supposed to manage this, even if we would have been only too glad to use his research results.”

Green blew his nose again and sat back down at his desk.

“They insisted that I gave him access to the journal. They would have his work delivered to me from Berlin. Someone there was still in contact with him, and that’s how Raphael began publishing under my name, with my agreement. His subjects, his theses, his insights. They wanted him to continue publishing in England, but anonymously.”

“Who asked you to do this? Who were they?”

“If only I knew! It wasn’t the universities, that’s for sure, nor the scientific world. It was our people – Baker Street or Whitehall, I don’t know. I did what I was told. There was a war going on and by the end of 1941, England stood alone against Germany. No one knew how long we would hold up. What was I supposed to do? I saw it as my duty. And I even gained recognition and acclaim. For Raphael’s ideas and thoughts! It was terrible.”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand.”

“There were people who needed Raphael’s research results. And I was his mouthpiece.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“*On Uranium*. Does that ring a bell? It was in the year 1939.”

Lilya was startled to hear Green speaking in German.

“No, I’m afraid not.”

“I’ll help you along. That’s the title of a seminal treatise by Otto Berg and Hans Sassmann. January 1939. It was the path to the German bomb – their article described it. But the amazing part was that everyone, all over the world, could read it – and that may have been intentional. Specifically Paul Rosbaud, the chief editor, saw to it that it was published, and he knew what he was doing. But nothing could be proven; what’s more, he was believed to be a Nazi, and loyal to the cause.”

“A smokescreen?”

“Let me put it this way: Rosbaud wanted those who read the treatise to understand where the Germans stood, and where this path could lead. Einstein and many others in exile were alarmed when they read the essay. They understood.”

For a moment, Green looked expectantly at Lilya, as if trying to read her expression.

“And in case you wonder why I’m speaking German to you, my father, Aaron Grün, was the representative of a large shipping company in Hamburg, and my family stayed in England, changing from Grün to Green in 1917. But none of this has much to do the matter at hand – except for the insignificant fact that I, a German Jew, had to show my new country where I stood, more than most. So, Raphael Lind and noble English science. Perhaps I’ve been able to help you a little. And if so, probably more than I should have done.”

“Did you turn your back on science then?”

Green gave a bitter laugh.

“After the war, when it transpired that I had published under the name of a colleague, I was advised, regrettably, to renounce all academic honor and privileges. I had stolen someone else’s thunder, deceived people. Whatever the reasons.

He gazed at Lilya with an empty expression.

“It hadn’t been my idea, but I had to keep that to myself. Since then I have been running this surgery. Albert Green, your local doctor. If your arm itches, or you have a cough, come to me. But hardly anyone comes.”

He stood up.

“What are you going to do with all this information?”

“I don’t know. It’s all very confusing still. But I’m very grateful for your openness.”

“Openness? You are only free when you have nothing left to lose. But as one who has witnessed many things, let me tell you this: sometimes it’s better to leave things alone. What’s done is done. We have to look forward, there’s no going back. Never.”

Green saw her out. When they came to the door, she stopped again for a moment.

“Could you tell me when you had direct contact with Raphael Lind for the last time?”

Green replied so quickly that it seemed as though he’d been waiting for her to ask.

“Before the end of the *Blitz*.”

“1941?”

“It must have been summer. A postcard came from Berlin, for my birthday, unsigned. But I knew his handwriting. A few weeks later, the last article of his to be published under my name was leaked to me.”

Lilya reached into her bag and pulled out the photo of the house in the woods, showed him the back, and asked if he recognized anything apart from the figures.

Green went over to his desk, and came back wearing his reading glasses.

“With the best will in the world – it’s illegible. It’s as if someone has written letters and rubbed them out again. Not a chance.”

“Could you at least tell me if it’s his handwriting? The legible figures, I mean.

He took his glasses off again and held the postcard at arm’s length.

“I wouldn’t rule it out.”

Scientists, she thought to herself: they searched for as long as they could for a navigable path between what was falsifiable and verifiable, right and wrong. Did that mean yes or no? It was so simple.

“Is that a yes or a no?”

“A yes, but—“

“But?”

“The empirical material is too thin to build a hypothesis on. In other words, it’s completely illegible.”

“What does your heart say?”

Green gave her an enigmatic look.

“It is silent.”

“Elias Lind is sure that it’s his brother’s handwriting.”

Green gave her back the photo.

“Then believe him. But in the end, you already have done for a long time. Otherwise you wouldn’t be here.”

She found herself back on the street, exhausted. But her assumptions had been right.

Perhaps she had gone too far by visiting Green; perhaps it had been a mistake – a time-wasting, energy-draining detour, because Raphael Lind was perhaps long dead. Every step she took from now on would take her further away from her resolution since meeting Ben Gedi: to get to Föhrenwald as quickly as possible, to listen, ask questions, look around, write the report – and return.

Now a wholly different voice entered her thoughts, one that she thought she had managed to silence for once and for all since Yoram's death: should she have taken the chance to follow Shual Avidan and his people, and disappear? After all, he'd given her to understand that he wanted her to join in the fight for his cause, on a local level – in contrast to Ben Gedi who, when irrevocable things were about to happen in Palestine, had sent her to Europe at short notice on a completely futile assignment. No Ben Gedi, no Lind, instead men and women who admired Yoram, and who had followed him. But she had followed Ben Gedi, who had wanted her out of the country, and she'd let herself get involved with the Lind affair, which would eat her up if she wasn't careful. Was there a way back?

As far as Lind was concerned, perhaps: the conversation with Green had simply never taken place. She thought about whether she ought to go back to the JOINT office and send a telegram with Cordelia Vineyard's help to the Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, last door at the end on the right:

REGRET+STOP+SEARCH LACKS RESULTS+STOP

She imagined Elias Lind sitting at his half-opened window in his office, bending over her telegram with his lens. Warm air would be streaming in, the scent of pines, blossoms, the sounds of the city, a police siren in the distance, the rattling of tank tracks. She suddenly visualized all the things that could neither be seen nor heard – the run-up to the major Operation Markolet, which Ben Gedi had excluded her from; the noiseless errand-runners from the Palmach exiting in streams, the fighters in tacit agreement, destroying the plans for the weapon arsenal without a sound and synchronizing watches; the lines of blacked-up faces marching silently through the night; the reels of wire with buzzing ignition cords, the explosives sewn into jackets and trousers, the secret messengers. The hour of the specialists had come: the spies, radio operators, explosives experts, saboteurs and political strategists. It was *her* hour.

But it was too soon to communicate with Lind – even though it would be much more difficult to reach him from Germany. He would never believe that she had already undertaken any serious research.

She crossed to the other side of the street, saw Hyde Park's green lawns, and searched for a park bench. Her body began to tremble. On Speakers' Corner, pigeons fluttered up into the air as if a shot had gone off, and she heard the distant yet distinct cries of a speaker; she saw a figure standing on a soapbox, waving his arms and legs about, and suddenly felt the ground beneath her tilt. Then the hard grasp of a stranger, grabbing and holding onto her arm. She made out a blurred dark uniform and helmet – a policeman. The man spoke to her; she tried to reply.

He made her sit her down on a bench and told her to go steady.

“Thank you,” she said. “I'm feeling better now.”

The London bobby shook his head and left.

She kept her eyes closed. She heard some footsteps fading into the distance, others getting nearer, noises coming towards her as if from a far-off time, the clacking of horses' hooves, the shouts of *So-ho!* from the coachmen of royal processions and parades through Hyde Park; then gun salutes, the cold stillness of secret duels at dawn, the calls of those due for execution at Tyburn Tree. She saw King Charles II exhibiting Cromwell's exhumed corpse before a shuddering audience in Westminster Abbey, his rotten head speared on a pike. But it was Yoram's head. He gazed at her empty.

She opened her eyes.

“It wasn't easy finding you.”

A man was sitting next to her on the bench.

“I had to follow you for a very long time”, he said “just to be sure it was really you. I know it wasn't very courteous of me, but it was the only way possible. Are you feeling any better?”



He had a conspicuously straight nose, an almost youthful voice and was wearing a light gray suit and a hat. He sat next to her, one leg crossed over the other, turned to face her and handed her a business card.

Major Desmond Terry, Foreign Ministry employee.

“We’d like to invite you over. To Whitehall.” Lilya looked quizzically at the stranger and Major Terry smiled, a little patronizingly to Lilya’s mind.

She felt her strength returning.

“And to what do I owe the honor, Major?” she asked.

“A friend of a friend of yours would like to get to know you.”

“I didn’t know I had friends with connections in the British Foreign Ministry.”

The stranger laughed.

“Your friend Ben Gedi has had the best connections to Sir Lucious Honeywell for years. And he would like to meet you for tea.”

“With or without handcuffs?”

He smiled and leaned back slightly on the bench.

“With sugar. And if you like your tea English style, then with a little milk.”

“When?”

“Tomorrow. A car will pick you up in Clapham. From there, it’s just a stone’s throw to the city. Shall we say ten o’clock?”

“Do I have a choice?”

“You may say no.”

“And then?”

“A different car will come tomorrow. Without leather upholstery and chauffeur. Sir Luscious Honeywell can be awfully stubborn. I should know.”

She turned off the light and fell asleep, but awoke again a short while later and listened to the rattling of the trains. To fall back to sleep, she tried counting the carriages that she could hear rumbling over the train tracks at Clapham Common station. The noises seemed like a distant, unintelligible knocking, as if someone were trying to send her a message. The moon cast a cold light on the floor. The walls seemed to lean in, and a silver platter with lavender blossoms on the table looked like a toad shimmering in the moonlight. Her room was on the first floor in a narrow street not far from the station. Laura Todd was a widow and in need of money, like so many in these times. Lilya had noticed her sign stuck to a tree, a little slip of paper in careful handwriting that held a promise of the fragrance of biscuits, wilted flowers, and a place of undisturbed peace. No one would guess she was here in Eckstein Road, she had thought, among the narrow rows of houses and chimneystacks black from soot, and so after a short negotiation, she'd taken the room.

What time could it be? She pulled the blanket higher, shivered, and let her thoughts drift and was back in the desert, lying in a tent and waiting for Yoram, not knowing if he would ever come. At that time, he still hadn't joined forces with Zvi and the others; back then he had been devoted to Bed Gedi, the Haganah and their fighting troops, the Palmach. It was even rumored that he was to be Ben Gedi's successor one day.

It was a deep, dark-blue night; there were no clouds in the sky filled with stars, and the air was fresh and clear. Next to her, she could hear Shoshana breathing. Through an opening, she could see the silhouettes of the other tents, as well as the hills, rocks, and the sparse trees. How many hours away could morning be? There was no lamp in her tent: the light would have given her away.

A stick leaned against her camp bed, her constant companion during exercises in place of a real weapon. She wasn't allowed to drop it; she had to be able to run, climb, crawl on her belly, and stalk, all without losing it. If she did, she had to do the exercise again as a penalty.

When dawn broke, three instructors from the Palmach would join them and bring Sten machine guns that they had captured from the English, or had replicated. Then they would start proper firing practice – first without cartridges, and then with them, setting the firearms to shoot singles.

Since she'd heard about this, she hadn't been able to sleep. Would he be with them?

Early the next morning, they saw a cloud of dust approaching from below in the valley. It was the vehicle with the Palmach instructors. The sun was rising over the crest of the hill; in an hour, the heat would be sweltering.

The men walked up to her: Shimon Ben Gedi, Yoram and one other, whose name was Udi. Yoram's hair was cut short, his shoulders had broadened, and around his neck he wore a light blue, washed-out scarf. Shmuel, who ran the camp, pointed to a hollow behind the camp of tents. A *wadi*. Yoram nodded. Ben Gedi and Udi went to the vehicle and fetched the weapons. *Come, help them with carrying*, said Yoram's expression.

When she was lying on the ground, propped up on her forearms, she could smell the weapon grease. He showed her the rear and front sight, and the safety release catch, which could fire either single shots or, when shifted, up to five hundred rounds per minute. They would load the ammunition later. Two magazines were planned for that day, no more. Ben Gedi stood with his binoculars on a rocky precipice scanning the landscape. English patrols seldom found their way here, but one had to be sure.

As if it were the most natural thing in the world, Yoram lay his hand upon hers, guided her to the trigger, and explained everything. She felt the warmth of his skin on her body, his breath on her neck, and for a moment, she felt the impulse to take her hand off the weapon and open herself so that he would be touching her and not the cold metal. The gun went *clack*. "Grip it more tightly when you fire, otherwise it'll start jiving all over the place," he said, and then stood up and went over to Shoshana. She heard her friend laughing with him. Then Shoshana rested her head on the stone so that the others couldn't see her. Shoshana knew all about him and her – Lilya had told her.

But she had no idea how much it hurt to be so near to him without being able to nestle against or touch him.

Except in the midday heat, they lay all day beneath the cloudless sky in the hollow; then they had to run, weapons in hands, throw themselves on the ground, and shoot at a stationary target. Before dusk fell like a black scarf across the hill, they fired with live ammunition from different angles at a dead tree stump. Her shoulder throbbed, but she hit the target several times in a row. They stood in a circle around the tree trunk to wait for Ben Gedi's reaction to their performance. He held a short speech, gave some warnings, praise, and then handed over to Yoram. They'd done a good job. *Well done*, he said.

At supper, which consisted of dried fruit lined up on a cloth and a canister of water, she could feel him looking at her. The following morning, the men would be setting off again. She knew she wouldn't be able to sleep that night.

Ben Gedi had ordered half of the group to go on a night march. They wouldn't be back until dawn. She had been allowed to stay. "Lucky you," Shoshana said, heaving her khaki-colored rucksack onto her shoulder.

She lay in her tent, Shoshana's bed next to her empty. Could she call this sleep? It felt as if she were swimming and diving, plummeting fast. But there was no one to catch her.

Then she heard a noise, very faint footsteps, and felt her blanket get lighter. She was lying facing the wall of the tent. He touched her, crawled under the blanket, and put his arm around her belly, very gently. Without moving, he just lay there. She felt his face, smelled his skin and his breath, and lay her hand on the one with which he held her.

"Yoram," she whispered.

"Yes," he said.

She wanted to turn around towards him, search for his mouth and give him what he wouldn't ask of her. Her body shuddered as if a current of damp warmth had surged from her insides, finding its way out of her pores, moistening her skin. He gently held her close to him.

“It’s good this way,” he said quietly, pressing his lips to her neck, “let’s sleep.”

“Miss Wasserfall, breakfast!” From the kitchen a floor below, the BBC fanfare to *Music While You Work* blared from the radio. A broadcaster announced Henry Hall’s “The Teddy Bear’s Picnic”, and a song by Les Paul and Mary Ford.

“Thank you Mrs. Todd,” she called through the closed bedroom door. She heard steps and the creaking of the stairs.

A cup of instant coffee and two wafer-thin slices of bread spread with Meadow Lea margarine and artificial honey were waiting on a tray outside her door. Weekly rations of butter, cheese, sugar, milk and meat were limited, and then you had to be registered with a shop before you could buy groceries there. Eggs were in scarce supply. But if you were lucky, you could buy a tin of Mullins powdered eggs from America. Or powdered milk called Sweet Today, manufactured by the Lost Company in New York. On the sinking ship of the great British Empire, food stamps were almost the only way to buy groceries, even bread – in the form of the brown, calcium-enriched, bland National Loaf, two slices of which Mrs. Todd had placed on her plate.

“How do I split an egg four ways?” screeched a woman on the kitchen radio. Mrs. Todd collected the recipes in a small book covered with grease stains, which she named the Woolton Bible after the Minister of Food, James Woolton, and which she’d shown Lilya on her first evening.

Over the window in her room still hung the thick felt drape that Bernard Todd had fixed there for the blackout – before he had been swept to his death on the beaches of Dunkirk. Lilya had discovered him in a black-framed photo that hung in the hallway. He was wearing a tight-fitting sergeant’s uniform, and his face bore an expression of surprise at his new role that would end in his premature death: a silent guest in a lonely house.

They would give up Palestine, she thought that morning. A country that doesn't have enough bread for its own people won't want to – or be able to – wage war on others. But what would happen if the British withdrew overnight, while she was still in Europe? That would mean war, and what should she do then? She still had Uncle Mahmut's voice in her head: *They've even given up on themselves. The war took too much out of them, and they'll seize the first opportunity to pull out. And then? Will Yoram's people come to power?*

But what did the English want from her now? Why this curious invitation and the allusion to Ben Gedi? She was inclined to think it was Green. He had scarcely finished telling her that high-up people had been behind the *Nature* affair when a shadowy employee from Whitewall had turned up next to her on the bench in Hyde Park, inviting her to a talk over tea. If it could be called an invitation. Were they interested in her meeting with Green? Or actually in Lind? That would explain why the English had delivered the news of his death to his brother.

She got her JOINT papers ready, which she thought she should put in a safe place just in case, checked her ID again and glanced at the clock. At ten o'clock, the car was supposed to arrive. She poured water into the basin and began to wash. The cold water did her good. She looked at herself in the mirror: had she changed? Her skin had gotten lighter, and she looked tired. She pulled up her shirt, turned to one side and looked at her breasts in profile. Then she stretched, took the comb, and tied her hair to a ponytail.

After she had dressed, she peered out of the window. The coffee had gone cold and tasted bitter. She ate a slice of bread, stirred her coffee again, this time with a spoonful of artificial honey, but it wouldn't dissolve. There was no one to be seen. No car with leather upholstery. It was only nine o'clock.

She still had time to read Elias' texts. STAGE 1 was written in bold, crooked letters on the first sheet. The text itself was written on a typewriter. It was an outline of his early life, and his brother's, Lilya realized as she flicked through it, and an attempt to understand the paths which his

life and Raphael's had followed. An attempt to orient himself, and a sketch of Lind family life at the same time. To Lilya, it was very clear after her meeting with Lind that she could not expect anything tangible from him, barely a fact. It was obvious that he had little use for plans and concepts, or an objective and a structured approach to problem-solving. He handled things differently to her, more emotionally and intuitively. He seemed to think that you could only comprehend and conquer the world through narrative. She hadn't forgotten his *Joseph Sternkind* and its message. But this was not about fiction and invention, miracles and cures, but about life and death – and time, which was working against them all. And about his brother's life, despite the distance between them. What would Elias Lind tell her here? Most of all, she wanted to understand who the two men were.

*Perhaps you are somewhere at sea. You are standing at a railing, and the sun is still low over the horizon. You look back in the direction from which you have come – but perhaps already forward to whatever the future holds, so it is therefore invisible, and can only be sensed. Even by those who have vision. Seagulls escort the ship for a brief moment longer, then turn around, and fly back to land. You are alone, and you still don't know if you're doing the right thing. This feeling won't leave you anytime soon. I am all too familiar with it. Every step we take is between two eternities – memory and hope. Where do we belong?*

*Or perhaps you have already arrived in England's capital, which I have never seen but which was something like an intellectual home to my brother – and which could have saved him.*

*Then you might sit on a bench in Hyde Park, or in a small room, at the edge of the bed, and you hear the landlady one floor below you – perhaps she owns a radio, and music blares up to you. Here in London, your search could begin – our search. If it didn't already begin a long time ago, which seems more likely if you will excuse my presumption.*

*All wisdom begins with a question, as does every search. But every answer throws up a new question too. Often many of the same, among them quite new ones, previously unknown,*

*unsuspected or unexpected. One may get caught up in them if one isn't careful. I want to try and make it easy for you. But I don't have any answers.*

*Our first stage is also a last one of sorts: my meeting with Raphael in October 1932 in Berlin. I never saw him again after that.*

*In June 1932 I received a telegram with the news of the death of our father; a few weeks later – Berlin was shrouded in heat, dust and uncertainty – a second one, this time mother. Our parents died quickly and unexpectedly, one after the other, as if they had fled from whatever was preparing to rear its head in Germany.*

*I felt numb during the days that followed.*

*Like a sleepwalker, I wandered through the streets of Jerusalem, waiting for the tears to come. But they didn't. There was just a hard knot in my belly. I wanted to believe it was grief, and began to feel ashamed that I didn't feel more stricken. But something held me back from feeling what a son is supposed to feel.*

*In the fall, I decided to go to Germany. Perhaps, in Berlin, I would be able to grieve, at my brother's side. I secretly hoped that the death of our parents would bring us closer together.*

*In the meantime, Raphael had made all the necessary arrangements: the notices, the funerals, the thank-you cards for the letters of condolence.*

*He had sold our parents' apartment on Spittelmarkt. It was too large for him as a pied-à-terre in the city center. I wanted ask him to wait until I arrived to do this, but it was already too late. It was his decision alone, as after all it belonged solely to him.*

*He didn't say a word about our father's library, Alexandria. For him, this room was a fortress, a church, a temple – his sanctuary.*

*The library had also been bequeathed to Raphael alone, and with it, the book of books, which found its way back to me of its own accord, and which I know to be in your safe hands. The bitter will and testament that father wrote in 1925 with a shaky hand before I emigrated, and*



*which he left with notary Dr. Schlesinger, now took its full effect: Raphael was the sole heir of all his property. That is what our father had laid down, and that's what his will stated.*

*I disembarked the ship in Hamburg and took a train to Berlin. Telegraph masts flashed past like matches in the wind, the meadows were green, trees, fields, farms as neat as if cut out with a fretsaw. It was shortly before the elections and flags were hung from windows.*

*Raphael picked me up from Lehrter Bahnhof. He looked as elegant as ever, just a little stockier, and wearing a suit made of fine fabric; on his waistcoat hung a golden chain of a pocket watch – Father's watch. The scar on his left cheek that ended just before his upper lip shone redly: he had earned it in a childish duel as a young man.*

*We shook hands. He suddenly pulled me towards him, as if he wanted to embrace me, then stopped midway and pushed me away again.*

*A porter planted himself in front of us with his wooden cart. Raphael sent him away with an almost contemptuous wave of his hand.*

*The next time I traveled to Berlin, he said, I would be able to cover the stretch in one and a half hours with the Fliegender Hamburger. Perhaps it would be possible even before the Reichstag elections in November. Science and technology would make it possible.*

*I had thought for a long time about whether I should travel without a ticket. I had had to buy a suit for the journey alone, and even that was too much expense for me. Dahlia had wanted to give me her savings, but I refused. She should save them for times to come, I said.*

*Raphael had come to the station in his new Wanderer, a black convertible, with a brown, wooden trim, leather seats and what I thought were excessively large headlamps.*

*He threaded his way through the traffic, drove down Invalidenstrasse towards Weißensee, and explained that the car was as good as new – he'd just had the headlamps changed in favor of these larger versions because Berlin was so dark at night. He laughed, then his tone changed.*

*"It's nice that you made it, Eli, It would have been better if you'd come earlier, but never mind," he said.*

*He didn't wait for a reply, but wanted to know how the journey from the Orient had been, and whether there was a faculty of natural sciences or even biochemistry at Hebrew University – he said “at your university”. Judging from its publications, it must be rather rudimentary, he said, adding that without a doubt, Chaim Weizman was a prominent scientist, and even more skilled in natural sciences than in the field of state policy, in which he was currently trying his hand. As an award for his invention of making gunpowder from ammonia, the British should bear him on their hands to Palestine – our King of the Jews. After all, he had helped seal their victory against Germany in 1918.*

*I looked out of the window. For me, this victory had come too late, and Raphael knew that. In Ypres, I nearly lost my eyesight from gas our own troops: the new invisible weapon.*

*There was a crowd of people standing on a square: a uniformed man was holding a speech on the bed of a truck, and policemen wearing shako caps watched impassively from the sidelines.*

*Raphael noticed me looking at this scene and said quite abruptly that things weren't so bad – good scientists were needed by every government, even bad ones. Jews were good German scientists. Otto Warburg, Richard Willstätter, Fritz Haber, Otto Stern, and all the others. His place was here, in Dahlem, and the Kaiser Wilhelm Society was like a family to him. Governments came and went, that's just how it was in these times, but science stayed.*

*We parked the car at the entrance to the cemetery. Raphael asked the uniformed man to keep an eye on it until we returned, and stuffed some notes into his hand. We walked down the avenues with their tall trees, and the nineteenth century displayed itself in all its peaceful ignorance. According to tradition, there were stones lying on the graves,. On Father's grave, there were a great many.*

*“Every time I come I take two stones – one for me, one for you,” said Raphael.*

*“Why one for me?”*

*“To show them that you haven't left them behind, Eli.”*

*“Me? Left them? That’s ridiculous. It was Father who—“*

*“It’s all right, Eli. Let’s not discuss it now.”*

*There were suddenly tears in Raphael’s eyes. The corners of his mouth drooped. He took a handkerchief and wiped his eyes. It surprised me to see him that way and at the same time, I had the feeling it wasn’t just grief for our parents that he was struggling with. For a moment, I sensed awkwardness, as though something was weighing him down, but he didn’t want to talk about it – certainly not to me. I didn’t dare ask him.*

*We went back to the car in silence. He’d pulled himself together and we walked alongside each other – he with his head held high and a spring in his step, just like always. But he radiated tension.*

*“Let’s take a picture,” he said, trying to sound casual. “We have to record this historical reunion of ours. Who knows when the next will be?”*

*The Baumüller photographer studio was on Schönhauser Allee. Raphael had often had photographs done here for friends and family, but mostly for congresses and journals; as a doctorate student with Fritz Haber, dressed in a black suit with a band collar at a lectern, then later in a doctor’s coat, a microscope next to him on the table in his laboratory. Knowledge changes the world. Knowledge is progress and new beginnings. Science leads us into a new era. He said he would either give me the photo to take with me, or send it on.*

*When we arrived back to the car, I made a suggestion, even though I didn’t think that Raphael would go along with it. But I wanted to rescue something, to build on something, even though I wasn’t sure what.*

*We had always been completely different. Our similarities in terms of height and hair color had been deceptive when we were young boys; they had only hidden the fact that we could have come from different worlds. Raphael was four years older and was always in charge of our small universe. He was a born leader, very purposeful and decisive, and I barely had a choice but to bow down to his authority, or withdraw deep inside my own world, which no one could access.*

*Later, when we were growing up, and our horizons began to broaden – when we began taking part in society and meeting young ladies – all the women fell in love with Raphael. He was witty and charming, stylish in both manners and clothing, and had a great career ahead of him. Young women from good families, like Desirée, whom I so dearly loved myself, wanted to be close to me and sought conversation, but as a man they preferred Raphael: I was Raphael Lind's little brother. Nevertheless, in a certain way, he was loyal to me, took me to places, and wanted to show me the world, even if it was his world. And I admired him, and wanted to please him. Perhaps it wasn't so much his love that I wanted, but his respect. And closeness.*

*In summer 1914, war broke out and nothing stayed the same. Father signed war bonds, and on 1 August, he stood with Raphael, waving his hat in the cheering crowd in front of the Crown Prince's Palace on Unter den Linden. Raphael's research at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute took a new, patriotic direction, as he called it. As for me, I wanted to do my part too, and signed up voluntarily. And now, many years later, at our reunion in Berlin, I didn't want to accept that we had lost the intimacy of our childhood and youth forever. Why had I made this long trip that I couldn't even afford?*

*My suggestion was both ridiculous and futile. I had remembered the 'Iron Lake' and the Luna amusement park in Halensee. Little electric cars drove around in a circle on the Iron Lake, and you had to try not to collide with the others. The 'lake' was made of steel. There were bars, a hippodrome, and the famous 'Shimmy Stairs' which had a fan that blew the ladies' skirts.*

*Father had stolidly refused to take us there as children. But our mother, on the other hand, gave in after we begged her for a long time. She put on her 'sports clothes', as she called them, a dark-blue anorak, underneath which her finer skirt looked oddly out of place. As if there were two mothers – the upper and the lower one. The upper one laughed and screamed when she stood on the Shimmy Stairs and the fans were switched on, or when she narrowly avoided a pile-up in the electric cars, her sons to the left and right in front of her.*

*“Halensee? The Tarts’ Aquarium? Count me out!” Raphael retorted. He had to go the institute. After all, we were no longer children, he said. We’d see each other at suppertime.*

*I stayed in Berlin for three weeks in the guestroom of Raphael’s house in Dahlem, which was very close to the institute. He had a large parlor with a conservatory, three bedrooms, a separate bathroom for guests, and a servant’s room. He had begun to cultivate roses, and showed me proudly around his garden. Most of the time, however, he was at the institute, and I didn’t see much of him – I have to admit that that was fine by me, and he probably felt the same. Our interaction was difficult and tense. Raphael has always been concentrated and industrious, but now he came across as driven and restless; that fall in 1932, it almost seemed like a lone hiker out on an open field, looking into the distance and hearing thunder. We went out together a few times, and met old and new friends of his. Among them was a strikingly beautiful young woman, a Dane, Desirée’s successor, or so I guessed. She had an aura of melancholy about her, which only made her more intriguing. Raphael was not the type for serious relationships, let alone marriage; besides, he was much too caught up in himself, and not prepared to make compromises. And he would never have declared his love for a woman in public. But the way he looked at her, and sought her in a crowd, left no doubt that she was more than an acquaintance.*

*During that time, I did a lot of walking through Berlin, visited a few former fellow students and people I knew from before the Zionist Youth movement, or from the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus. I had been in close contact with some of them before I emigrated to Palestine. The city had changed: it had grown, had become louder, more crowded and busier, and uniforms dominated the streets. I soon felt a pang of homesickness for Jerusalem, and now I knew for sure that I belonged there, and no longer in Berlin.*

*When we said goodbye at the station one morning, not without a certain relief, he gave me the index book – Alexandria – to take with me to my country. I couldn’t understand why he did that. “Please, Eli,” he said, and I noticed that the corner of his mouth was twitching. He pressed it into my hand, embraced me, and left.*

*A few weeks later, I sent it back to him. I didn't want it. It had been father's book, and now it was Raphael's, not mine. Wrapped in newspaper, and tied up with string, I brought it to the post office on Jaffa Road.*

She put the text to one side and took out her catalogue of questions; under the section *Characteristics*, she wrote: *Scar (!), left-hand side red, to the corner of mouth.*

After she had packed her papers in her rucksack, she looked out of the window again.

A large, black car was waiting in front of the house.

*Talk without saying anything*, that was her plan. She was nervous about the meeting, but curious all the same. Whitehall wasn't the Tower of London, and they didn't have anything concrete to use against her. *Tov*, she thought, *good*, and pulled the door shut behind her.

In the driver's seat of the car, whose front windscreen reflected pale, scudding clouds, sat a man in a gray chauffeur's uniform, his gloved hands resting on the wheel. A small, rotund, bald man was standing next to the car, looking at his watch.

"Miss Wasserfall?" he said, "My name is Mason, from the Empire Chauffeur Services. Please get in."

He opened the back door, let Lilya settle in, then climbed in after her.

Noiselessly, the car set off. They drove past the station at Clapham Junction. Women with baskets, rucksacks, and disused baby carriages were standing in a long queue in front of a bakery, holding food stamps. The wind had died down and London's sandy-gray skyline – the streets, storefronts, chimneystacks, garages, churches, warehouses, post offices, and hospitals – seemed to be glazed in a thin sheen of Technicolor.

"Big car," said Lilya, after she noticed that Mr. Mason was watching her with ill-disguised curiosity.

"Oh, yes," replied Mason. "Before the war, England still built automobiles."

They drove across a bridge. On the right-hand side appeared the Houses of Parliament: there was a gaping hole in the roof. They passed Westminster Bridge on the right and turned left near a large cenotaph. On the front, Lilya thought she read the words *The Notorious Dead* as they drove past, crowned by a stone wreath. At the archway of King Charles Street, they stopped and a sentry greeted them through the windscreen, waving them in after casting a quick glance inside the car.

Mason led her through lobbies and corridors, before finally leaving her alone in a large vestibule. She examined the oil paintings on the wall. They depicted battles at sea, navy parades and views of harbors. Five chairs upholstered in red velvet stood along one wall, as uninviting as if they had been cordoned off.

She heard a noise that sounded as though a heavy curtain were being pulled to one side. A door opened. In the semi-darkness, two men were standing at a round, brown table, looking expectantly at her. She walked past the valet who had opened the door, and entered the room.

One of the men was Desmond Terry, who had talked to her in Hyde Park. He was wearing the same well-tailored, gray suit.

The other must be Sir Lucious Honeywell. He was gaunt, tall and about Ben Gedi's age. He had a red, pointed nose, and small, sparkling eyes. He was wearing a pair of beige-colored pants, a gray jacket made of Donegal tweed, with a dark gray handkerchief peeking out of one pocket; his shoes were so thickly soled that it looked as if he was used to strolling around his estate like a lord, or to cutting roses in a remote part of his park.

He introduced himself by offering her his hand, and with that minimal gesture reserved for aristocrats, indicated that she should sit down at the table. Desmond Terry pulled out another chair, waited until she had taken her seat, and then sat down himself. "I trust we haven't caused you too much inconvenience," said Honeywell, who was sitting across from Lilya, "but it would have been outright rude not to have invited you at all."

Lilya looked around. Next to the meeting table, she discovered a bookcase that ran along the wall and reached all the way up to the ceiling, in front of which stood two leather seats and a somewhat oversized globe standing on a wooden lion's foot. Framed by the books was a portrait of a man in an old-fashioned wig; in the back part of the elongated room stood a desk, simply covered with a leather blotter, as if it were never used.

"The car journey was comfortable and very short," she said. "London is a remarkable city."

"Is this your first time to the United Kingdom?"

She nodded.

After this overture of politeness, Lilya was waiting to see whether the two gentlemen would maneuver her into the interrogation they had already rehearsed in their minds. In any case, she wasn't going to make it easy for them.

The valet, who must have approached noiselessly from behind, poured three cups of tea from a silver teapot, which he served on a tray with two artistically interwoven antelope horns for handles. He placed milk and sugar on the table, and then, as if he had been erased from the picture with a click of the fingers, he vanished again.

Honeywell dropped three sugar cubes in his tea with a pair of tongs, seemed to gaze after them for a moment, then looked up.

"We are interested in having an exchange with you," he said, "which is why, I admit, we were rather forceful about inviting you here."

He paused, as if to examine whether the expression *forceful* had ruined the careful balance of their discussion.

"Palestine presents us with many puzzles," he said finally. "Perhaps you can help us get a better understanding of the country and its inhabitants." Honeywell's features assumed a rueful, rather strained smile, and he sipped his tea.



“Your friend Ben Gedi is also causing us some concern,” said Terry, before she could speak, earning him a reprimanding look from his superior.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Lilya said coolly, looking Major Terry straight in the eye, before turning back to Honeywell.

“When our Major here speaks of concern,” explained Honeywell, steering his way back into more placid waters, “what we mean first and foremost are the arrangements for our coexistence in the Mandate. Particularly when we look ahead to the near future. We would all do better to come to an arrangement. Not to jump the gun.”

“I am presently in Europe,” she said, “so you’ve come to the wrong person with your concerns, whatever they may be.”

“We are under the impression, or shall we say, we *assume* that Ben Gedi has another plan, this time with the entire underground Zionist movement in tow, even though they are sworn enemies. I know Ben Gedi – he’s always three moves ahead in everything he does. The war in Europe is barely over, the corpses just about totted up, and he is already envisioning the national flag waving over Mount Zion, and arranging rehearsals for a hastily assembled brass band to play the Hatikvah at the state foundation celebrations.”

Operation Markolet. Had they got wind of it? Or were they just throwing rocks in the water at random, as they often did, to see how far the ripples spread?

“I’m not aware of any plan,” she said. And you seem to know Shimon Ben Gedi much better than I do.”

“Inasmuch as one can know him at all,” said Honeywell, giving a short laugh, before looking at Terry, who returned his look with a weary smile. The Major was leaning back in his chair, legs crossed, and was surveying Lilya with interest.

“Now, I see that you are not keen on talking to us about Ben Gedi and his plans,” Honeywell remarked, “and the old soldier and patriot in me completely understands.”

He took another sip of tea, set his cup down, braced his fingers again and leaned back.

Terry took a silver case from his jacket pocket, flipped it open, and offered Lilya a cigarette. She declined with thanks, but her hands shook, and she wondered whether she should have taken one after all.

Since she didn't respond to Honeywell's remark, he spoke again.

"Well, perhaps you would prefer to talk to me about your travel plans instead? One tells me that you traveling to Germany?"

He paused, and gave her a probing look. This was an abrupt change of tack: so he knew she was on her way to Germany.

"Exactly. Where the need is the greatest," she said.

"I see. Your country wants people to lend a hand there. The need is immense. And it needs people *from* there, as long as they can hold a shovel or a gun."

He stood up and went over to the bookcase. By pressing the frame of the bewigged man, the case slid to one side as if on rails, and a small bar appeared, complete with glasses, bottles, mixers and stirrers.

"May I offer you something to sweeten the day?" he asked, and turned to Lilya and the Major. "No? Major? You neither? My God, this war has made us all so serious," he said, shaking his head. As he poured a glass of sherry, he said casually, "I take it that you and Albert Green talked a little of the home country?"

Lilya flinched and hoped that neither of the men had noticed. She waited a moment before answering: "No, not really. I went to see him about my sinuses."

Terry stifled a laugh. Honeywell paused for a moment, frowned, then sat back down and smiled with an almost paternal expression on his face.

"You are traveling alone to a country that cost many armies to conquer. You have no idea of the situation there. Don't overestimate yourself. It can't be ruled out that you will be faced with circumstances – or should I say dangers – that you will never have heard of in Ben Gedi's training camps."

Honeywell was changing his strategy yet again; he was trying to get to her by any means possible. Lilya cited JOINT, who had dealt with her needs very well and discreetly up till then: she had a point of contact if she ran into danger.

“Well, in case you change your mind and would like to talk to us about your trip to Germany,” said Honeywell, “or if we can be of service in any way, don’t hesitate to contact us. You have Major Terry’s card.”

Terry saw her out to the gate at the two guard posts. He was about to wave over the car that was already waiting, but she thanked him politely and said she was in the mood for a walk.

“Good decision,” he said, and gave Mason a sign before he got out of the car. Then he said goodbye, turned around and went back into the building.

As soon as she was back on the street a short distance away, she stopped and leaned against the wrought-iron fence that bordered the sidewalk. She breathed deeply in and out again, fetched a scarf from her bag, and wiped her forehead and neck with it. Slowly, the strain of the last hour began to ebb away; she looked in the direction of Trafalgar Square and was able to read properly this time what was engraved on the cenotaph of Whitehall: *The Glorious Dead*.

3

When Lilya entered the departure hall, she heard voices, curses, laughter; some travelers were sleeping upright on the benches, beads of sweat around their temples. The air was stifling and damp. A ceiling ventilator ploughed its way through thick clouds of cigarette and pipe smoke. The hall was slowly filling up, and the jostling constantly increased.

The thunderstorm came like salvation: but then they were stuck there.

Lilya put her rucksack in front of her and looked around. A US army clerk thrust his way through the crowd of waiting people with a clipboard in his hand. “Wiesbaden Airbase, new

departure time nineteen hundred hours,” she cried out, and then repeated it for the military members: “Nineteen hundred hours! Please do not leave the departure hall!”

In response, the crowd murmured.

“Attention!” shouted someone at the entrance.

A US army general flanked by two adjutants strode into the departure hall, and took in the scene as if inspecting a military camp for which he would declare himself not responsible. He squeezed himself into a seat between two large military police officers after a red-haired GI stood to give up his seat. The MPs, who had their berets fastened underneath their epaulets, stood up, saluted, and sat down again, their eyes to the front.

Cordelia Vineyard was sitting on one of the benches facing the airstrip, engrossed in a book. Lilya was relieved to see her.

The two women had met twice in London at the JOINT office to talk about the details of their trip, and to familiarize Lilya with the conditions in Föhrenwald, which were worsening every day. Cordelia had called their briefing sessions “A Basic Course in Germany”. She advised Lilya to register her arrival not only in the JOINT office in Möhlstrasse in Munich, but also in the nearby UNRRA headquarters in Siebertstrasse. UNRRA was ultimately responsible for the camp, and it was the only place where all the information converged. For some weeks, the office for South Bavaria had been run by the American officer David Guggenheim, about whom many things were said, all of them different. In any case, there was talk of him, and that was both good and bad.

One time Cordelia took Lilya to Camden Market “to look at the suffering of the victors,” as she had called it. Lilya had quickly noticed that she and Cordelia got along without having to say much. When one of the market stands fell over as they were standing there, but the trader did nothing except for cursing “Jesus!”, they both helped the man set up his table again. After walking on a few steps Cordelia suddenly started laughing and said that *Jesus*, thanks to their help, had been resurrected. Lilya joined in her laughter, and the two of them had to stop, doubled

up and gasping for air, while the tears ran down their faces. Just when one of them had calmed down, the other would shout “Jesus!”, and they would be off again. Then Cordelia linked arms with her and pulled her into a pub. They were the only women, and they could feel the inquisitive looks of the drinkers on them. Cordelia ordered two glasses of lager, which had no foam and were filled to the brim, and they sat down to drink them at a small table scattered with ash. The barman eyed them suspiciously.

“Women don’t drink beer. Especially not in public,” Cordelia said, winking and lifting her glass. “That’s the way the world is. But we’ll show these guys that they’re wrong. Because in the end, we’re saving the world that they’ve destroyed. Here’s to Jesus and our journey into the Dark Continent.”

Lilya wove her way through the crowds in the departure hall to where Cordelia was sitting. A fat man offered up his seat to her.

“Thank you,” said Cordelia quietly, without looking up from her book.

“You’re welcome,” Lilya replied, surprised, then sat down next to her and looked out at the airstrip through the window, which was streaming with rivulets of rain. And rain too was still lashing like sea spray over the plane, which was fixed by ropes to the ground at the wings and tail like Gulliver by the Lilliputians. The storm already seemed to be moving away, and the horizon was brightening up. The thunder had died down to just a distant rumble. The crew of the silver DC 4 was already standing, cloaked in rain capes, under the roof of the departure hall.

“Dick Troutman is a congressman from Dakota, and a terribly penetrant man,” Cordelia said. “That’s why I didn’t look up when he gave you his seat. When we were living in Washington, he was a regular guest of ours. But that’s a long time ago. My hair was braided into monkey swings. He used to put his finger into the loops and swing them back and forth. Until Father got angry and wouldn’t let him do it anymore. Troutmann didn’t recognize me just then, thanks to my uniform. Lucky for him.”

Cordelia looked at Lilya, and from her expression, she was proud of the makeover she had done. Cordelia herself had black hair and almond-shaped eyes, and she wore dark red lipstick. The JOINT's sand-colored uniform was tight-fitting on her, pulled in at the waist almost like a dress: there was no doubt that it was tailor-made. She gave off a scent that Lilya couldn't name – somehow American, Lilya thought, fresh and bright, powerful, and excitingly exotic.

“Once, when I was very young still, Troutmann called me ‘Daddy’s little souvenir’. I didn’t understand what he meant by that. Father threw him out after that. Everyone could see, of course, that I was different from the other blue-eyed, white girls at school, that I came from somewhere in the Far East. I never got to know my mother. She died shortly after I was born. That’s how I became a child of the military. As a general, Father had connections and money, and he could take me or have me brought anywhere. Until I started studying Economics at Harvard, in the middle of the war, anyway. He said that if the war had gone on any longer, he would have employed me as a quartermaster. That way I could have worked for him like Mary Churchill did for her father, in Potsdam during the conference. I would have been his aide-de-camp. And everyone would have noticed that I was his daughter!”

She looked out at the airstrip. Still nothing was happening.

“In the end, dad became advisor to the commander-in-chief. When I told him at the end of the war that I was going to sign up with JOINT, because I wanted to travel to Europe and help there, he handed me a list of his comrades and contacts in Germany. Mostly high-ranking officers, people in the new administration or economy, or Vice Governor Clay’s employees. I’m sure that he sent the occasional cable too. Then he hugged me before I left and said something that I’d never heard him say before: *Good luck, my darling. I’m proud of you.*

“Your father was right,” Lilya said and smiled at her.

“I’m happy that you’re sitting next to me in the airplane,” Cordelia carried on. “People don’t know how to fly, and we sometimes forget that.”

She shut her book. *Look Homeward, Angel*. “It’s written by a very gifted young man,” Cordelia said. “But unfortunately, he’s no longer alive.”

She closed her eyes, as if she was already practicing her flight posture.

Then she said quietly, but with determination:

“Before I sit next to you in the airplane, sweating and not saying anything, you have to tell me what you’ll be doing in Germany. I mean, apart from the fact that you’ll be writing a report, and putting the world’s nations under pressure so that they open Palestine’s gates,” said Cordelia, opening her eyes again, and looking at her invitingly. “There’s something else going on in your life apart from world politics, I can sense it. So, come on Commissioner Wasserfall, spit it out. Is it a man?”

Lilya blushed. Before she could answer, a sergeant had planted himself in front of them, standing to attention.

“Miss Vineyard, General Brendon would consider it his pleasure if you would grace his company with your presence.”

She looked over at the General, who was smoking and now had his two adjutants sitting next to him instead of the MPs.

“That’s very kind, but I am in conversation,” she said. “At ease, Sergeant. And give my regards to the General.”

The sergeant bowed slightly and left.

“When Seymour Brendon was still a major, Father saved him from a court martial. Now he wants to show me that he knows it’s his duty to show gratitude. All just a game. And I just kicked the ball off the field. He’ll love me for that. But it’s good that he’s traveling to Germany, perhaps he’ll come in useful. So, come on. JOINT is helping you, and I’m helping you – so I’ve got a right to hear your story. In this chapter of your life, I’m something like your superior.”

Cordelia sat up, turned toward Lilya and looked at her expectantly.

*Talk without saying anything.* It would be a clear violation of orders to tell Cordelia about her assignment – she pictured Ben Gedi’s sharp features in her mind. But in Cordelia’s case, it wasn’t easy to pretend, not least of all because she would have been more than happy to share what she’d been through up to now: the peculiar stranger on the ship, her visit to Green, the subsequent invitation to Whitehall, the realization that Honeywell knew about her seeing Green. She could no longer ignore that Whitehall was interested in her search for Lind, since it was the British, and not the UNRRA or the missing persons service, who had delivered the death notice; and after all, it confirmed her suspicion that Green had been in contact with Lind for a few years. But she couldn’t work out exactly what was behind it all.

Perhaps the clever, worldly-wise Cordelia would have an answer to one of her questions, or at least an idea. She seemed beyond doubt to be the right person to take stock of what had happened so far. And her connections in military circles might be of benefit to Lilya. But still, she had to be circumspect, and could not blurt out too much in a filled departure hall, not least of because Lilya was sure that Uncle Mahmut had been right, and that her assignment was not nearly as harmless as she had first thought. On the other hand, there were pragmatic considerations: she could trust Cordelia – of this she was sure – and she had offered to help her. Something in her told her not to spurn this offer, but to keep talk to the minimum.

“The longer you sit there saying nothing, the more curious you’re making me,” said Cordelia.

So Lilya began her story with Yoram’s death, and told her about her time in Hanita, in the North, the work on the land and her nights of disturbing dreams. She told her about the order that had brought her to Tel Aviv after all those months, and of Ben Gedi’s assignment, and the report on Föhrenwald. She didn’t hide that she was disappointed to have been sent away from Palestine at a time when so much was being set in motion, and when the outline of the future was beginning to emerge.



Cordelia listened. Here and there she asked questions if she hadn't understood properly, or wanted to know something in more detail. Then she looked eagerly at Lilya and smiled, her head tilted to one side. "Carry on, is that really everything?" she asked.

Lilya wondered how far she dared to continue, and after hesitating briefly, she decided to go one step further.

Ben Gedi had also asked her to look for a missing Jewish scientist in Germany, she added shortly. Cordelia seemed to prick up her ears.

"It's a personal matter," she said. "The British claim he's dead, but his brother in Jerusalem believes he may still be alive."

"The British claim he's dead? What has a Jewish scientist missing in Germany to do with the British?" asked Cordelia.

"That's what I've been wondering too. And I want to try and find out." Lilya paused briefly, then moved in closer to Cordelia. "Not least of all because I was invited to Whitehall a few days ago."

"It gets more and more interesting," said Cordelia, and looked at her in curiosity.

"They mentioned Ben Gedi," Lilya continued, feeling the relief of talking about these matters with Cordelia, "and later they made it perfectly clear that I'm under surveillance. They'd clearly hoped I would make a mistake and start spilling the details. And they wanted to show me that no matter what I do here, they'll find out and know where I am."

"I don't like the sound of all this at all," said Cordelia, and reached into her pocket to fish out a black notebook, held together with a large elastic band. Paper clips flashed between the pages.

"I'm a child of the military, and that means I make a plan before starting anything. Up to now, you've worked with your intuition and instinct – very cleverly, especially in your talk at Whitehall. But perhaps that won't be enough in the months to come."

She opened her book. It was an alphabetical address book, but just a short glance revealed to Lilya that it wasn't ordered by name. Quite randomly, Cordelia's finger lay on the letter *H*. Below it was written *Honolulu*.

Cordelia explained that she had found it hard-hearted to list her friends according to the alphabet, so she had sorted them into places and themes instead. This book was like a map of her life. She had lived in Honolulu with her father from 1937 to 1939, so this was where her childhood friends were listed. Under *B* for *Books*, there was a list of her few bookworm friends.

The pages with the letter *L* were held together by a paperclip, as if locked away. Cordelia smiled.

“Well?”

“*L* as in Love,” Cordelia explained. “Only the best and only a few. I could have placed Jeff Clinton under *K* because he gave me my first kiss in Virginia at the tender age of 13. But he made it into *L* – the ultimate discipline of life. My God, he was beautiful. And he smelled of almond oil.”

Lilya felt uncomfortable, and would have liked to change the subject.

Under *V* were General Vineyard's contacts. Cordelia wrote some of them down on a sheet of paper: officers, high-ranking employees from SHAEFT and USFET, the US military supreme command, army doctors, representatives of aid organizations, such as Care. They might all be of use, according to Cordelia, if she needed help in her work in Germany; she could mention the General and his Asian “souvenir.” But only if it was really serious, she added, and closed the book with a smile.

Things around them got moving: the ropes on the airplane were unleashed by the ground crew, and the boarding engineer walked around the plane, looked into the engine and turned the rotor blades. Then came the call to move towards the exit. Vapor started to rise from the puddles on the airstrip; the sun stood low and clear in the sky.

During the flight, Cordelia kept her eyes closed. Lilya sat next to her by the window. She saw the country disappearing below her: fields, church spires, the coast, and then the gray sea, choppy with wind. For a moment she hoped that the plane would change course and head south toward a different sea. She saw it all in her mind's eye: Cyprus, then the descent along the coast, the shadow of the wings on the blue of the water. And then the wind from the sea or the desert, like a velvet-gloved hand on her cheek once the cabin doors opened. To touch the earth. The earth of her beloved, restless country.

She must have fallen asleep. When the plane lost altitude, she opened her eyes and saw dusk fall, watched the light sinking for the first time on this foreign country: meadows, forests, farms, the crest of the uplands, a street that wound its way uphill, scarcely a light, and everything in deep peace. Could this be Germany?

The pilot prepared for landing when they were above Frankfurt, and for the first time she saw it as if she could touch it – the skeleton of a town.

“Take a good look,” said Cordelia, without opening her eyes. “You won’t ever forget it again. Ever.”

Lilya stared out of the window. Cordelia was right. She had never seen destruction of such magnitude.

About the translator:

Lucy Renner Jones was born in England. She has a BA in German and Film from UEA where she was tutored by W. G. Sebald, and completed an MA in Applied Linguistics from Surrey University in 2010. In 2004, she founded Transfiction, a translator's collective based in Berlin. She has translated two novels by Annemarie Schwarzenbach, *Death in Persia* and *Lyric Novella*. She is currently working on a translation of *Die Stunde Zwischen Hund und Wolf* by Silke Scheuermann and the diaries of Brigitte Reimann. She writes reviews of German books in English for CULTurMAG and Words Without Borders, and blogs at [www.transfiction.eu/blog](http://www.transfiction.eu/blog).