Chapter 18. Grade 12

I

The apartment at 2205 North Thirty-third Street had a yearly lease, and towards the end of the second year the owner announced a raise in rent. Malvina found an apartment just a few blocks away, at 3226 West Clifford Street that was available immediately. The rooms were large, and it was only half a block from the park. Also, it was just five blocks from Jacques's store. They signed a one-year lease and moved in.

The building had no elevator, and the apartment was on the fourth floor. The living quarters were spacious, though, with two bedrooms and a bath located off a long hallway. This connected a pair of large rooms (living room and study) in the front with a dining room and small kitchen in the back. The living room opened onto a porch that overlooked tall trees on the street below. The kitchen also had a small landing outside on the fire

escape that served as a tiny balcony. Sometimes Josy would carry a chair out there and sit reading or doing her homework outside.

The drawback, of course, was the four flights of steps they had to climb to get to the apartment. By the time they reached the top landing they were out of breath, exhausted. After a while the only visitors were Halina and Michal Wolkowicz, who continued to come weekly. They were now the Feldmarks' closest friends in Philadelphia.

Before entering the building, one had to first pass the occupant of the ground floor apartment. Like a French concierge this woman seated herself on the stone steps in front of the building, interrogating everyone who entered. At the beginning Jacques and Malvina responded to her in friendly conversation, but after a while, when her questions became too numerous and personal, they merely nodded and continued quickly inside. Soon she took to lying in wait for Josy. Each afternoon she planted herself on the front steps, accosting Josy on her return from school. Blocking the entryway, she refused to budge until she got answers to her questions.

"Where are you coming from?" she wanted to know. "What are you carrying there? Do your parents have a business? What business are they in? How many brothers and sisters do you have?" and on and on. Josy balked at the thought of arriving home to this barrage.

One day the woman positioned herself directly in Josy's path. Hands on hips, feet planted firmly on the top step, she demanded, "What country are your parents from?"

Helpless and annoyed, yet still wanting some control over this invasion of privacy, Josy decided to amend the truth a bit. Instead of answering "Poland" she replied "Russia".

"And what town in Russia are they from?" the woman persisted.

Grasping at the first city that came to mind, Josy replied, "Moscow."

The woman's jaw dropped. "Moscow!" she gasped. She was so thunderstruck that unwittingly she moved aside, and Josy passed quickly around her.

When she got upstairs and told her mother what had happened, Malvina burst into laughter.

"No wonder she was so surprised," she exclaimed. "Hardly any Jews were permitted to live in Moscow. The very few there would have been the wealthiest and most elite —the aristocrats and nobility of the country!"

From then on the Feldmarks had no trouble with this neighbor. Staring at them in awe, she allowed them to pass without comment, gazing at them in wonder, respect, and admiration.

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That yeat they endured one of the hottest summers in memory. The place turned out to be even more uncomfortable than expected because it occupied the top floor, with no apartment above to provide insulation.

Nobody had air conditioning then. The arrangement of rooms kept the wind from blowing through from front to back. When Ben Weintroub stopped by from Chicago on his yearly visit to New York, it was already well into October, but the heat inside the apartment was so intense that they gave him a cot outside on the front porch. The ballad "I Don't Want To Set the World on Fire" was in vogue at the time; they played it week after week on the Hit Parade. Josy thought no other song had ever seemed so appropriate to its time and place!

II

In twelfth grade students with high marks were offered the opportunity to take five major subjects instead of the usual four. Josy, Flora Kaplan, John Brunner, Efraim Catsiff and a few other classmates opted for English, Social Studies, Physics, French IV, and Math (the second half of Algebra I the first semester, then Trigonometry in 12B). This must have presented some problems for the rostering committee, for they assigned this small group to a guidance counselor instead of a teacher for the second semester of English. This turned out to be a disaster from Josy's point of view.

Miss Derr was one of the most colorless and dull individuals she had ever met. In addition, the woman had little to communicate about English. Completely lacking in imagination, devoid of the slightest amount sparkle or wit, she plodded through Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as if it were a collection of formulae. She went over each speech mechanically, droning on through the famous lines, never once trying to interpret them through their poetry, explain the plot, or analyze the behavior of the characters. Everyone in class agreed that they had been deprived of a true understanding and appreciation of *Hamlet*, though they had looked forward to it eagerly after having so enjoyed *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Macbeth* in the earlier grades. The remainder of that 12B English course was also lackluster. Miss Derr went through everything like a robot, refer-

ring to a teaching manual as the term progressed. That term English seemed a lost cause and a waste of time for them all.

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Much to her surprise, Josy did well in Physics. Mrs. Worrell taught the first semester, Mr. Morris the second. Remembering her difficulties in Chemistry when attention to a new typewriter had interfered with her focus on the subject matter, she now forced herself to concentrate directly on the textbook material. She reread, (often four or five times) those passages that seemed unclear at first. In this way she managed to keep up, although she often had to struggle with the homework problems, grappling with them through many class sessions while Mrs. Worrell patiently went over her explanations until everybody finally caught on.

Mrs. Worrell frequently sent groups of students to the board to write out their solutions there. Once when Josy was up front, she overheard the teacher laughing quietly to herself. Frank Manrol, another pupil, was standing on the far side of the room at a different blackboard, a bored look on his face. Wearily he responded to all the teacher's inquiries, writing out answers whenever she asked a question.

"He's so smart," Mrs. Worrell kept murmuring to herself, "but he didn't do his homework!"

Noticing Josy staring at her, she leaned over and confided, "I can tell he didn't study last night. He's using the English system to solve the problem, but the book gave it in metric!"

The 12B Physics teacher Mr. Morris was even better than Mrs. Worrell, explaining each item so well that everything made sense to Josy the first time. By the end of the year, however, he had only begun to introduce the chapter on electricity, and there was no time to finish the topic. Two years later, in College Physics, this would cause a problem for Josy, since she would then find herself without the needed background when electricity was presented as the major part of the course.

III

One of the innovative projects that Dr. Hoffman, Head of the English Department, introduced at Gratz was the English Honors Program. This was designed to enrich the curricula of high achieving volunteers. At the end of their junior year, those interested were asked to come to school early one Saturday morning to take a three-hour test much like an SAT exam. At the end of the multiple-choice question-answer part of the test they had to write an essay explaining why they wanted to participate in the program. Those accepted would research a topic of their own choice throughout their senior year and write a thesis on it, working under the guidance of a faculty adviser and later defending this thesis before a committee of teachers. Later Josy would come to realize that the project was modeled after the process involved in working towards a Ph.D. degree in college.

She was delighted to be accepted. Others picked topics (some with faculty assistance) like Elizabethan poetry, history of the ancient world, and aviation. With her parents' encouragement, Josy chose "A Comparative Study of German and Russian Music". She had always felt partial to Russian music, particularly the folk tunes. She had become acquainted with many through a fifteen-minute radio program every Sunday morning that started and ended with "Meadowland", the theme song of Russian soldiers fighting in World War II. During one of his yearly visits to Philadelphia, Ben Weintroub had given her a book of folk music that he had brought back from an earlier tour of the Soviet Union. This contained a number of colorful ballads like "Kazbeck", "Kaleenka", "Dark Eyes", "Two Guitars", and "Song of the Volga Boatman", all of which captivated her completely. On the other hand, so many important composers fell into the German part of the project (many, like Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven already her favorites) that the topic seemed a perfect choice.

From that day back in tenth grade when she first had heard about the English Honors Program, Josy had her heart set upon asking Miss McCleary, her 10B English teacher, to be her advisor if she ever got accepted. But one year before Josy got into the program, Miss McCleary was promoted to the job of Vice-Principal at Gratz. As an administrator now, she explained to Josy, she had to disqualify herself.

Disappointed and unprepared for this, Josy was uncertain whom to ask. Dr. Washco, the music teacher, would have been the logical choice. But after their earlier encounter when she had auditioned in tenth grade for the job of school orchestra pianist and he had dismissed her after hearing only six measures of the simple theme on which Beethoven's

complex variations were built, she now had little trust in him. Nevertheless, because Dr. Hoffman urged her, she did approach Dr. Washco. He was evasive and acted annoyed that she had even encroached upon his time.

She resorted to working on her own. With no faculty member to guide her, she spent hours frequenting the huge music room on the third floor of the Public Library, gathering material by the ream, becoming more and more engrossed in her subject. As the months rolled by she worked persistently, while the data she collected grew to almost three hundred pages.

The mechanics of copying musical phrases proved almost too much for her. The musical staffs, the G and F clef signs marking key signatures, the sharps and flats, and the notes all were frequently needed to illustrate a point and had to be transcribed into her text. This mundane task proved almost insurmountable, especially since no copying machines were readily available in those days.

Jacques bought her a five-pronged pen, designed to draw the five lines and four spaces in a staff of music. This proved cumbersome, and it solved only part of the problem. It had to be dipped into a bottle of ink after each use, leaving her to still draw and fill in the notes, sharps, flats, and key signatures by hand. By the time she turned in the finished copy of her text, it contained dozens of blank spaces where musical phrases still needed to be inserted.

At last, just weeks before her presentation Dr. Hoffman intervened. He convinced Miss Voigt, an English teacher and sponsor of the yearbook, to take over as Josy's adviser. She must have been the only one on the faculty willing and qualified to help. In looking back, Josy guessed that probably few teachers were sympathetic to Dr, Hoffman's project, since they remained uncompensated for their time.

Miss Bertha Voigt.

Despite all these problems, Josy enjoyed the project thoroughly. The committee accepted her paper and presented her with a certificate, although Dr. Hoffman indicated that he wished she had ended with a more in-depth study accompanied by her own personal conclusions, rather than simply the compilation of music history anecdotes that she turned in. Perhaps this was too much to ask of a high school student working without

any guidance. Yet it left her with some sense of what research must be about, as well as some idea of music history. It was an enriching experience, one she thoroughly enjoyed and never regretted undertaking.

Six of the nine students participating in the program that year would eventually end up receiving doctoral degree in colleges. Josy wondered whether the English Honors Program at Gratz might have had something to do with introducing the idea of continuing their education this far along and might have helped motivate them in this direction.

IV

Twelfth grade brought with it several disappointments. One involved the *Spotlight*. At the beginning of 12A Mr. Williams had appointed Josy Features Editor and, with the present Editor-In-Chief due to graduate in June, she expected to take his place during her final term at Gratz.

Plans were then under way to form a Yearbook committee for the coming semester. Pupils interested were asked to turn in a letter of application. Josy's letter pleased Miss Voigt, the sponsor, so much that she approached her in the hall, shook her hand, congratulated her on "the most beautiful letter she had ever seen", and confided that Josy could practically consider herself Editor-in-chief of the *Yearbook* for the coming term.

The *Spotlight* announcement came first. Josy learned that next semester she would keep her position as Features Editor for an extra term while another girl in 12A (one semester behind her), Lorraine Feldman, became Editor-in-Chief for both semesters of her senior year. Josy was astounded. It seemed unreasonable and unfair for one person to keep a job for two semesters while the other was denied it completely. She went to see Mr. Williams after school to find out if there had been some mistake. When she asked why she had been skipped over, he hemmed, hawed, and shrugged, but had nothing to say.


Mr. Edgar Williams.

"You're doing a very fine job as Features Editor," he mumbled. "Let's keep it that way."

Josy pointed out the injustice of one person holding the same job twice, while preventing the other from holding it even once. She reminded him that Lorraine would still have a chance

to become Editor-In-Chief when she got to 12B, after Josy had graduated. He refused to budge. She asked if she was unqualified. After claiming that this was not the case, he concluded with, "This is the way things have to be."

Many thoughts whirled through Josy's mind. Perhaps he knew that she had already been chosen head of the Yearbook staff, and the faculty was against one person holding two top-level jobs. She wondered if, despite his protests, he really considered her unable to manage the responsibility. Maybe he failed to realize how many good articles by other students had resulted from her ideas. Perhaps he was unaware of how hard she worked, often staying late after school (sometimes till five o'clock) with nobody else in the building to make sure that everything was in order for a deadline. Her mother had always stressed how important it was to be modest, so Josy never mentioned the many extra hours she had put in and how many additional jobs she had done. She recalled how many times she had heard Lorraine Feldman brag to Mr. Williams, pushing herself forward to claim credit for even the slightest task. What Josy especially resented, aside from the unfairness of the situation, was that he was not being forthright with her.

She told him that, because she had put her heart and soul into the *Spotlight* ever since first coming to Gratz, it meant enough to her that she would be willing accept a lower position on the Yearbook committee, but not on the newspaper staff. Being Editor-in-Chief was something she had worked toward diligently and felt she had earned. Mr. Williams just stood there shaking his head, making no comment.

At this point, Josy made a decision. She told him that, under the circumstances, she was resigning from the *Spotlight*, since she no longer had the heart to continue on the newspaper. He gasped in disbelief, but still said nothing. Despondently, she turned and left the room, while he stood motionless gazing after her. She was near to tears, for she felt that she was leaving part of a dream behind.

There must have been a hurried meeting of the English Department shortly after this. A day later Miss Voigt approached her in the hallway. Embarrassed and stammering excuses, she congratulated Josy on being appointed, not Editor-in-Chief, but Features Editor of the Yearbook, a lower ranking job.

Josy accepted with whatever dignity she could muster. She asked Miss Voigt who would become the Yearbook's Editor-In-Chief, and Miss Voigt, averting her eyes, mumbled, "Isobel Rutenberg" and strode off. It was clear that the teacher must have fought for Josy but lost out to others on the committee. She supposed that they wanted to teach her a lesson by not permitting a student to alter a faculty decision. As unobtrusively as possi-

ble, she accepted the Features-Editor appointment and joined the Yearbook staff. She worked hard and with full dedication in this capacity, even contributing an impassioned poem dedicated to her classmates that appeared in the opening pages. But she never got over her bitter disappointment with the *Spotlight*, always carrying with her a feeling of sadness over a situation that had never been fully or satisfactorily resolved.

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Early in her senior year Dr. Washco announced a contest for students to compose a new school song. Josy submitted an entry, writing both words and music, and not till many years later did she find out that there had been one other girl who also entered a song. For the next few months they heard nothing. When Josy finally approached Dr. Washco to inquire, he brushed her aside and, walking away, snapped out that they had decided to keep the old song after all. After the bitterness of her *Spotlight* rejection and her *Yearbook* Staff demotion, this additional disappointment hardly seemed to matter.

V

The class trip took place May 7, 1941. It was exhausting, and not particularly exciting. Accompanied by several teachers and the Principal, Dr. Werner, one hundred and forty students took the train to Washington, D.C. for the day. Boarding at North Philadelphia Station around eight o'clock in the morning, they arrived shortly after ten, then went by bus to several landmarks around the city. A photographer snapped a picture of the group in front of the Capitol Building, after which they continued on to the Treasury Building, the White House, and the Smithsonian Institute. Josy was shocked to hear the driver announce, as he pulled up in front of the Smithsonian, "You have ten minutes before we leave."

"Ten minutes!" she exclaimed in disbelief. "That's barely time enough to get in the door!"

"Ten minutes!" he repeated, "and then we're off!"

It would be some thirty years before Josy would get back to the Smithsonian Institute again. In the interim, she would have traveled to Canada, Europe, Japan, Mexico,

and South America, and lived in both Denmark and in England. Yet by contrast. it occurred to her that until the 1970s she had spent only ten minutes at the Smithsonian Institute, something she found ironic.

That afternoon of the class trip they also crossed the Potomac River and drove several miles through Virginia to Mount Vernon. The countryside was some of the most beautiful Josy had ever seen. Early in the evening they boarded the train for home, eating supper in the dining car in groups, each chaperoned by a teacher. They reached Philadelphia around nine o'clock, many irritable with fatigue, most slightly bewildered by the overly ambitious itinerary they had covered in just one day.

VI

Summer passed, and by fall Josy knew she would soon be parting from classmates who, she began to realize, had come to mean a great deal to her. The war in Europe was spreading. Letters from her cousin Krysia and other relatives in Poland had stopped. The heavy flow of European refugees into the United States had ended abruptly. Word came that, with Hitler's invasion of country after country, resistance groups were springing up all over Europe. Newspapers and radios hinted at atrocities in concentration camps. But isolationist voices in American government shouting for non-involvement, and their denial of the turmoil overseas lent a veil of conjecture and anxiety to the mood of the nation. There was a pall over everything, a nagging vagueness about what it portended for America. A feeling of melancholy and uncertainty settled over Gratz High during Josy's last term there, a feeling that no one was able to shrug off.

Then on December 7 came the attack on Pearl Harbor. That Sunday morning Josy had a cold and was lying in bed when she heard her parents' raised voices coming from the living room. Getting out of bed, she joined them as the radio restated that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. One day later, in a broadcast to the American people, President Roosevelt officially declared that the United States was at war. Suddenly the uncertainty of the past couple years changed; what prevailed was the shock of everything quickly coming to a head.

Malvina was unhappy that Josy's cold would keep her out of school the next day. "You should be there to hear what the 'the authorities' have to say," she maintained. "It will be a very historic day. But you can't go in with fever."

She told Josy about Alphonse Daudet's story "The Last Class" where, during the Franco-Prussian War, a little boy arrived late for school on the very last day that lessons were being taught in French, and how throughout his lifetime he never forgave himself for being late on this meaningful occasion. Malvina worried that Josy, too, would one day regret having missed these historic school announcements on that particular day in December 1941.

Indeed, Gratz High was in a state of excitement two days later when Josy returned. The "authorities" had had little to say, but it was a shock to hear boys Josy had grown up with talking about enlisting in the army or navy in a few weeks. A mood of uneasiness prevailed, especially among those soon to graduate. The slogan "Remember Pearl Harbor" had already been coined. Josy's classmate Pearl Albert, who always came to school dressed in high heel shoes and skirts provocatively hiked and belted at the waist, exclaimed that now she had a new line "Remember Pearl Albert" to use with boys she wanted to impress.

VII

Several teachers recommended that Josy send some of her poems in to *Scholastic*. The magazine had already published one, and now she was invited to come to New York City to read another on their sponsored weekly radio broadcast "Between the Bookends" scheduled for noon, December 17. The program ran coast to coast.

Encouraged by her parents, and with the school's permission, she took the train for New York early that Friday morning. Just ten days after Pearl Harbor, the trains were already packed with men of all ages in uniform, some surprisingly young. There was hardly a seat available. It was clear that the country had shifted to wartime footing in just a few days.

Uneasy about Josy being in New York alone, her parents had arranged for her to report directly after the program to the apartment of Dr. Edja Morgan, a dentist friend of the Wolkowiczs who lived in Upper Manhattan. She would spend the night at Edja's, then return home the following morning. Malvina was so excited about Josy's being on the radio that she telephoned the Tecotskys and several other friends in Chicago with instructions to make sure to tune in to the program. (Josy never found out if any of them ever did.)

Her parents were nervous that she might not get to the radio station on time.

However, she arrived with an hour to spare. Later Jacques told her how he had rounded up all the customers in his store, as well as his partner Daniel Berkowitz, insisting that everyone delay talk of business and listen to her on the radio.

The poem she read was "To A Little Chinese Girl", written in November of 1940.

You are pretty, little Chinese girl
Sitting alone in the laundry shop, dreaming
Of the far-off Yellow Empire and its glories
Where people work in rice-fields to the accompaniment of bells.

They tried to make you into an American, but I know they have not,
For when I look at you, I think I see
A blue and white pagoda in your eyes
With smooth green tiles along its tilted roof
Where creep dark shadows of the Chinese night.

A boy from out of town named C. Hall Thompson also read an original poem after the announcer, Ted Malone, interviewed both of them. The program lasted half an hour. After the broadcast, she left for Edja Morgan's, proceeding to the corner where she had been instructed to take the bus to the apartment. It was raining, and she opened her umbrella as she left the building. Halfway down the street, she noticed two workmen lounging on the curb. One got up and approached her.

"Do you mind if I get under your umbrella with you so I won't get wet?' he asked. "I'm just going to the corner"

Innocently, she agreed, holding the umbrella up to shield them both as they walked. Suddenly she felt the man's arm slip around her waist. With a jab of her elbow, she shoved him out from under the umbrella and kept walking, leaving him staring bewildered on the pavement behind her. Later, in answer to questions by Edja, she recounted the incident. Edja narrated it all by phone to Malvina who, almost beside herself, swore that this would be the last time in a long while that she would permit Josy to go out of town alone. It was almost four years before Malvina ended this restriction.

When Josy awoke the following morning, Edja had already left for her office. Letting herself out of the apartment and leaving the key with the janitor as instructed, Josy took the bus to Penn Station. She decided to have breakfast there before boarding the train home. Inside the huge depot she noticed a large elegant restaurant which she entered.

A maitre d' in a tuxedo rushed up to her, bowed low, and escorted her to a table. There a waiter, also in tuxedo, held back a chair for her to sit, then with a flourish handed her a napkin and a long menu. As she opened it, he filled her glass with water and, as

soon as she took a sip, he bent over and filled it again. This puzzled her, but she turned her attention to the menu. There she was unable to believe what she saw. The cheapest item was a cup of coffee at five dollars (at the time, coffee generally cost ten cents a cup.) Since she never drank coffee, she looked for something else to order. The next less expensive item was a cocktail (a Manhattan) for ten dollars. Not knowing what to do, she sat staring at the menu, sipping water while the waiter continued to bow and refill her glass. For the next several minutes she struggled with her thoughts, wondering what to do and how to avoid embarrassment. Taking a deep breath, she finally gathered her courage, rose, reached for her suitcase, and walked briskly toward the door. From the corner of her eye she saw both the maitre d' and the waiter staring in disbelief as she exited the restaurant. So shaken was she by the experience that she boarded the train without eating anything. The only thought she had was to get out of New York City and back home as fast as possible. In Philadelphia, at least, things seemed familiar, and she knew what to expect.

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When she returned to school the following Monday, Dr. Hoffman called her into his office. During assembly the previous Friday they had listened to her on the radio, he told her. Now she had been selected to read one of her poems at Houston Hall, at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Education's Cultural Olympics. This was a poetry symposium to be held March 7th, several weeks after her high school graduation, but Dr. Hoffman insisted on preparing her anyway. Four of her poems were chosen ("Twilight on Wildwood Bay", "Sonnet on Time", "Melody", and "Oddity") The last was one of her favorites:

We passed each other in the world
As on a highway, long and wide;
You looked at me, I looked at you
And never turned aside.

Josy and Jacques.

But when we passed beyond the grave
They thought it strange, each friend and brother
That we should come from the same earth
And never know each other.

Dr. Hoffman had her read the poem aloud, then declared that she badly needed help on her oral presentation. He called in a student-teacher who was training at Gratz High and assigned her to work with Josy. During the next two days they drilled together, practicing inflection, voice projection, the stressing of important words, and pausing in the right places. It was extremely helpful, and Josy not only delivered her poem better, but also felt more proficient in public speaking.

On the night of the presentation Malvina went with her. Jacques had asked Daniel Berkowitz to replace him at the store that night, but got a refusal. For some time relations between the two business partners had been cooling, so this came as no surprise.

The program was scheduled to begin at eight-thirty. Halfway through the evening, with no customers in the store, Jacques decided to close early. Hurrying to the trolley stop, he boarded the streetcar, changing to a second trolley at Twenty-third and Walnut, and reached the University close to nine-thirty. He finally located Houston Hall, mounted the steps two at a time, reached the second floor auditorium and pulled open the door just as Josy was walking down off the stage after having read her last poem. He had missed her presentation by only seconds. Frustrated by having come so close, he nevertheless caught her eye, and she was elated to see him. Knowing what an effort he had made meant almost as much to her as if he had been there for the entire performance.

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For assigned reading in twelfth grade Josy plowed through *The Way of All Flesh* and *Vanity Fair*. On her own she read British poetry of the Victorian era, especially admiring the works of Tennyson and Kipling. The poems “Dover Beach” by Matthew Arnold and “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley particularly impressed her. One book affected her for years to come. This was *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells. Written in a far more simple style than many of the classics she had been reading, it nonetheless dazzled her with its central idea: the nature of the time-paradox.

She wondered, had the central character found a way to go slightly back into the past soon after experiencing his future tragedy, might he not, knowing it was coming, have been able to do something to prevent it from ever happening. If one could change the course of events this way and manipulate time itself, then what was it that really constituted the true future or, for that matter, the past or present? It was an exciting thought that continued to intrigue her for months to come. In moments of leisure, sometimes out for a walk, sometimes at night before falling asleep, she would deliberate on this, the idea haunting and overwhelming her. She searched the library for books on the fourth dimension hoping for answers, but everything she found was far too technical, and never addressed her specific concern.

She discovered in H.G. Wells's writing premises that impressed her far beyond what she had expected. The powerful terms in which he conveyed, in *Outline of History*, the image of earth as the only known supporter of life in the vastness of time and the universe overwhelmed her. And his fiction, with concepts like that of two mutually exclusive universes occupying the same space at the same time and accidentally converging, led her to new ways of thinking. Some of his short stories that she stumbled upon in a dusty volume in the Mercantile Library (like "The Blue Bacillus", "The Green Door", "The Pearl of Love", and "Under the Knife") charmed her, and left her wondering why they were not more widely acclaimed.

VIII

Her family's lease on the apartment at Clifford Street expired at the end of December. They had lived there for a little under a year, but the four-story climb was too much for them all, and they decided to look for new accommodations. Instead of renting, they decided it was time to buy a house. Some of the huge four-story homes on Thirty-third Street facing Fairmount Park looked inviting, but their asking price of six thousand dollars was prohibitive. Jacques and Malvina settled on a house at the northeast corner of Thirty-second and Norris Streets, just two blocks from the store. It sold for four thousand dollars, which they gradually paid off in monthly installments over the next several years. The address was 2001 North Thirty-second. They bought it from a physician (Dr. Levy) who had used the front two rooms off the side hallway as a waiting room and office, the rest of the place as his residence.

Entry to the living quarters was from Thirty-second Street into a small vestibule and then a long corridor. The waiting room and office area, which Josy's family rarely used, stood off to one side. In the long corridor Malvina placed a small table against one wall to fill the empty space. On top of this she set a two-foot high bronze statuette of a young girl that she had purchased at an auction house on Chestnut Street, a place she frequented for "bargains". The corridor led to a living room where they set the baby grand piano in one corner between the adjoining dining room on one side and the steps leading to the second floor on the other.

The back of the dining room was separated from the kitchen by a brick wall that, oddly, had a window in it between those two rooms. At one time it must have been part of the outside of the house, with the present kitchen added later as an attachment.

On the side wall opposite the one adjacent to the street they hung an enormous oil painting in somber tones of black and brown. It depicted several bearded patriarchs in yarmulkes seated around a synagogue table poring over their bibles. Josy's grandmother Dina had carted it all the way from Europe, and since then it had hung in every home they lived in. It was far from Josy's favorite, and she often teased her parents by referring to it as "The Old Pals". The picture she preferred was a smaller oil painting of the Luxembourg Gardens in the living room. Years later she would learn that when her parents were living in Paris in 1915, their apartment at 6 rue Gay-Lussac faced this very spot from across the street.

Upstairs their present house had four small bedrooms and a bath. The front room, which had a rounded alcove in the corner extending over the street, they turned into a study, since noise coming from the Number 9 trolley cars repeatedly disturbed her parents' sleep when they first used it as a bedroom. Before long they moved to the back bedroom instead. Josy slept in the room next to the study. This, too, had a projecting bay window that overlooked Norris Street at the side of the house. The fourth bedroom, little more than a cubicle, they used for storage.

They moved into the house the week between Christmas and New Years one month before Josy's graduation. She loved the place. It was her favorite of all the homes they had lived in. One reason she loved it was that it was a house, not an apartment. She always felt there was something temporary about an apartment, whereas a house represented continuity and stability. As she was growing up many of her classmates had looked at her askance when she mentioned that she lived in an apartment. In the five years they would stay on Thirty-second Street, she always objected when Malvina occasionally suggested

moving to a smaller place with fewer rooms to clean. They would continue to remain at 2001 North Thirty-second Street until after Josy got married.

IX

When she returned to school early in 1942 after the Christmas vacation, everyone's thoughts were focused on graduation. She submitted an essay for the closing exercises, and as at Cooke three years before, hers was chosen again. Once more her mother was delirious with happiness.

Josy was told to go over the essay with her English teacher for last-minute corrections. Dutifully she showed a copy to Miss Derr (the guidance counselor who had so unsuccessfully taken over her English class). Miss Derr read it over and pronounced that it was "good", but that there was one expression that needed changing.

'You write," she declared, "that Columbus saw America rising out of the blue Atlantic. Now how can land possibly rise, unless there's a volcano? You'll have to change that. It makes no sense."

Josy was extremely proud of that sentence, seeing in it a fine example of imagery, emotion, and metaphor. She knew without a doubt that it was entirely justifiable from a poetic point of view, but Miss Derr failed to see it that way. Lacking any sense of poetry herself, she took it completely literally. Josy accepted her other corrections on punctuation, spelling, and grammar, but when it came to this particular sentence she balked.

"I'd rather have my entire essay taken off the program than change that image," she insisted. Puzzled both by her vehemence and the concept itself, Miss Derr demurred and allowed it to remain unchanged.

As had happened in ninth grade, Josy again got into an argument with her mother about who would read her essay at commencement. Malvina insisted that it be Josy, and again Josy adamantly refused.

"I don't want to spoil the memories of my graduation by being nervous," she persisted, "I want to concentrate fully on my last moments at Gratz."

The more Malvina pointed out that the speaker, not the author got all the attention and acclaim, the more Josy resisted. As in junior high school, she won again. But it was over fifty-five years before she would find out the full story concerning that essay.

Much later, in 1996 her former classmate Marcelle Linnett Freyman would impul-

Dr. Alec Washco.

sively make an astonishing admission to Josy. In 1942 Marcelle had drawn up a petition objecting to this essay as the winner, since her own had been disqualified over a technicality. She got several students to sign, and then presented the petition to the faculty. Josy never suspected a thing. When she balked at reciting her own essay, the faculty quickly offered the speaking part to Marcelle, splitting the honor between both girls and averting a confrontation.

Another curious incident happened that month. Dr. Washco, the pompous music teacher that Josy so disliked, called for auditions to perform at the closing exercises, and Malvina urged her to try out. After school one day, Josy met with Dr. Washco in the school auditorium and played Liszt's "Second Hungarian Rhapsody" for him. When she finished, he stood up and stretched.

"You realize, of course." he pointed out, "that we are at war."

Josy stared at him uncomprehending.

"We are at war," he repeated, "and this will never do."

"I don't understand," Josy replied, puzzled.

"Hungary is our enemy!" he snapped. "The Germans have occupied Hungary. You can't play something Hungarian when we are at war. It's out of the question."

Staring with disbelief, she thanked him and, secretly relieved, hurried off before he could change his mind. This was the last encounter she would ever have with him, although years later she would hear of other similar incidents involving him before he got eventually promoted to a high position as a member of the Philadelphia School Board.

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As graduation approached, each student was issued two tickets. Because her essay was on the program, Josy received four. She was proud of this, but she never got to use the extra two. Aside from her parents, nobody else was able to come. Michal Wolkowitz had patients during evening office hours; his wife Halina, then eight months pregnant, was unwilling to drive alone at night. The Sokoloffs were out of town. That Monday evening her cousin Leah Margolius and Bernie Kabacoff finally got married, which also occupied Uncle Ben, Aunt Liba, and her cousins Mary and Mitch Greenbaum (sister and brother-

Bernie and Leah Kabacoff on their wedding day.

in-law of the bride). Josy was doubly disappointed, for not only did the honor of having extra tickets come to nothing, but she also missed her cousin's wedding.

There were further disappointments. A few nights before, the school held a banquet for the seniors at MacAllister's Caterers at Seventeenth and Spring Garden Streets. After dinner, announcements of Gratz's two scholarship winners sent tremors of shock through the class. Everyone had always assumed that Ephraim Catsiff, the class genius, would easily walk off with the boys' scholarship. Tall, lanky, hunched-over as he mumbled correct answers to every question ever directed at him, introverted unsociable Ephraim lost out. Instead the scholarship went to Gunther Cohn, a German refugee who had arrived at Gratz High only months before. Gunther was two years older than the others in the class, and had finished high school in Germany before coming to the United States. He had enrolled at Gratz mainly to improve his English and earn an American diploma. With a self-assured smile he rose to accept the award. Ephraim was more brilliant by far, but lacked the social graces, generally speaking in grunts, his eyes fixed to the ground. The scope of his knowledge on just about every topic was extraordinary, but until he got to display this knowledge he made a poor impression. Later Josy heard that at his scholarship interview Ephraim had shuffled into the room, sat crouched over, and replied in monosyllables about his background and why he thought he deserved the award. Gunther, on the other hand, must have presented himself in a poised and articulate manner, and it was rumored that he "had connections". The announcement cast a pall over the evening, since everyone realized that Ephraim, from an extremely poor family (his father earned most of his income selling hot dogs on the Atlantic City boardwalk) would hardly be able to manage the cost of a college education.

They had barely absorbed the jolt of this announcement when a second shock came. The girls' scholarship went to Miriam Hoffman. Although Miriam was bright, nobody in the class had ever considered that she would be the one to win the scholarship. It was clear that as daughter of the Head of the English Department, she too had an inside edge. A couple people had even heard her leave her interview crying out, "I'm in! I'm in! The interviewer is a friend of my father!"

The scholarship announcements, along with the realization that in a few days everyone would be going their separate ways, cast a damper on everyone's spirits. The gloom continued all week and through the commencement ceremony itself. This was the first class to graduate during wartime, and the future looked uncertain and bleak. Although Josy was excited to see her name on the program and hear her essay well recited and applauded, she was already filled with nostalgia. She came away with a deep sense of sadness and loss as she said goodbye to classmates and the school she had come to love so well.