

A PLACE AT THE TABLE
(Working title)

A novel in the form of a series of interwoven short stories

BY

MASHEY BERNSTEIN

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SYNOPSIS:

Born in Dublin, Ireland into an orthodox Jewish family, Ezekiel, (aka "Ziggy"), the second son and third child of Hannah and Simon Zeiskind, fights for his place at the family table. Living in a community and country with strict concepts of traditions and values, as well as beset by his mother's frustrations, his father's distance, the belligerence of an older brother, Ezra and the mysterious absence of his sister, Aviva, Ziggy struggles to come to terms with his separate and sometimes opposing Jewish and Irish heritages, as well as the problems of his own emerging identity.

The novel, set primarily in the years 1953 to 1969, and in the form of a series of closely interwoven short stories, and while focussing on one family, provides a window into a special place and time, now virtually vanished.

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SOME COMMENTS TO THE READER:

All characters in A Place at the Table are the complete creation of the author, and entirely fictional. The exceptions, of course, are those public figures mentioned by name such as Jacobovitz, Briscoe, Herzog and the rest who were related to this particular time period.

The BBC telecast of Maria Callas in Tosca mentioned in "Maria Callas at the O.K. Corral" took place in 1964. For the purpose of the narrative, it was necessary to move the event to a year earlier.

Repetitions explaining family connections and places where the action occurs that appear in the separate stories are for the purposes of this draft only.

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A

PROLOGUE

"Why do they complain that the community is getting smaller, it was never big to begin with." Hannah Zeiskind

Nearly thirty years after he left and became an exile, Ziggy Zeiskind still hears the words of his friend, Gabriel Friedman, ringing in his ears: "The Dublin Jewish community is part of the air you breathe." No more apt words were ever said. However hard he has tried, he has never escaped his Dublin past. He carries ~~it~~ in his head, his bones, his blood, his ethos. It colors the way he views other cities. He still compares every synagogue he steps into with the synagogues in Dublin. Standing in a bar in New York or Kansas City or San Francisco or walking down a city block or buying candy in a store, an image of Dublin suddenly flashes into his mind and he wonders what he would be doing if he was in Dublin at that time of year or week. The other places become the illusion and Dublin the only reality.

He is no ordinary Irishman. No Catholic or Protestant he. And in that distinction there is a divide so large that few can ever understand his heritage or his peculiar nature. He is that rare hybrid, an Irish Jew. He does not claim that title through inheritance, some distant searching for his roots. He is the real thing. Born and bred there, he lived there for the first twenty three years of his life. He is a true Irish Jew. Few enough can claim that honor.

B

To many, he is as exotic as Pochohantas in London. Astonished, they exclaim: "An Irish Jew! Who ever heard of such a B thing?" He often wonders why they are so amazed--and so entranced. Is it because they do not expect to find Jews living at ease among a host of Catholics? Occasionally, an older one will remember that there had once been a Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin (or President, they get confused) called Briscoe and realize that it isn't so improbable.

And yet, maybe it is quite improbable. He was raised as a Jew in Ireland, not only a Jew but an orthodox Jew. With the exception of his next door neighbors and a few others, he did not know a non-Jew till he was eighteen. He went to Jewish schools, Jewish organizations, Jewish summer camps, and yet he did not recognize that there was anything unusual about that. Only later, did he comprehend that there had been something special about being Jewish in Ireland, something that being Jewish in no other city could quite replicate. It isn't the same as having been raised in a small isolated American town that might have had an equally isolated Jewish community or at the other end of the extreme in other capital cities like London or Paris with their huge Jewish communities. No! He belonged to one place and one place only: Dublin, the Capital of Ireland. A Jew of whom there were only a few thousand in a city of half a million on an island which in those days was cut off from the rest of the world. Ziggy is proud of his upbringing. Dublin suplied him with all his needs and if the community was smaller than other places or Dublin, a

city more isolated by religion and geography than other capital cities, he does not care.

Of course, he didn't realize that there was anything unique about his experience while he was living it. Why should he have? What reason did he have for comparison? Do children think that their experience is unique? They just accept the facts as the only reality they know. Even as an adult and with the changes that the years have brought, Ziggy has never resented that Dublin was his birth place. Despite the fact that in later years he has sometimes hidden his background like a guilty secret under his cloak and blushed when people ask why he does not speak with a brogue, he still remembers those years in Dublin as giving him something he could not have got from being reared in any other community or city and so he cherishes his upbringing.

Over the years, he has thrilled to hear of someone who met someone from Dublin: "A Jewish girl from Dublin called Yvette? Do you mean, Yvette Samuels?" He can remember them all just as his father could recall the Hebrew name of every barmitzvah student he ever taught, even if he hadn't seen them for thirty years. He could go farther with his little bag of tricks. "A Jackson? Is he in the jewelry business?" And when the astonished person acknowledged that he had guessed correctly, and wondered how Ziggy had known, Ziggy could answer with confidence, "All the Jacksons in Dublin were in jewelry!" ²⁴⁵⁸ He is like Oisín, the hero of

D

the Celtic past from his childhood books who went to live in a magical land where people never aged, Tir Na Nog. Ziggy is always young when he thinks of Dublin.

Even though, the Jewish community had dwindled from its high of three thousand to less than half that, and even though the former Jewish center of the city, Clanbrassil Street has only one Jewish store in it when it used to have a dozen and each one thriving, and even though, he sees the present community with more jaundiced or realistic eyes, he is not one to turn upon the past and reject it. Soon, he knows there will be no one to remember the old days, the old stories, the old people; he knows he is the carrier of that past, its stories, history, idiosyncracies, meshugas, insularity^{and} pettiness that is not his to lose. The irony of that role does not escape him.

i
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART(H) IS

Simon, Hannah and their children, Ezra and Ziggy Zeiskind lived at 13 Kenilworth Park in a middle class area on the south side of Dublin. It was exactly half way between the South Circular Road, near the center of the city, where the first generation of Dublin Jews had originally settled, and the areas further south, like Terenure, to where the next generation eventually moved.

The early immigrants came to Ireland in the first decade of the twentieth century from Russia and Poland. According to the myth, these families-- the parents of Simon among them--disembarked at Cork believing they had landed in America. By the time they learned the truth, the legend goes, they had grown to love the country so much that they stayed. The majority settled in Dublin along the small side streets off the South Circular Road: Lennox Street, Walworth Road and St. Kevin's Parade where they soon established synagogues, little one room shteibelch built on the style of the same places of worship back in Eastern Europe. The area was barely middle class with tiny houses without gardens, but with so little traffic that the children could safely play soccer on the streets. Further east (though no one ever described themselves as going "east" or "west" just "up" and "down"), the area became a little more middle class: Victoria Street, where Hannah Diamond lived when she came to Dublin from Poland in 1935 to be with her sister, Emorville Avenue where Simon Zeiskind had been born a year after his parents had come to Ireland and Bloomfield Avenue where the Chief Rabbi lived, a few doors down from the Zion National School, a non-demoninational institution

but with so many Jews attending it that the government gave it special permission to have the children learn their religion there also. Generations of Dublin born Jewish children would get their education there. At Leonard's Corner, South Circular Road met Clanbrassil Street, the heart of the Dublin Jewish community, where its members shopped and gossiped in its grocery stores and butcher shops. Further down one came to Dolphin's Barn and Dufferin Avenue, areas marginally even more well-to-do. For the first forty years of the century most of the community's three thousand Jews lived in this tiny area and plied their small trades making a living from tailoring, peddling and the like but about the time that Hannah and Simon Zeiskind married in 1939, the community had grown more affluent and begun to move further South.

Kenilworth Park formed part of a Protestant enclave, extending to Rathmines, Renalaigh and Rathgar, in the mostly Catholic Dublin. Around the corner from them was Clareville Avenue and then Westfield Road where his mother's sister, the aunt whom they all called Shevester lived. Not that Catholics didn't live on their street--there was hardly a street in Dublin that did not have a Catholic on it--but their area was nothing like Crumlin or Kimmage, large Catholic and lower class areas, where a Protestant or a Jew would never dare live. In the all the years he lived in Dublin, Ziggy never once walked through there.

The houses on Kenilworth Park were large, built of red brick, some two and some three stories high. Each one had a small garden in the front with a black railings and a gate leading to the pathway along the street. These houses did not open straight onto the streets. The front gardens sported all kinds of flowers but mainly roses. The Zeiskind garden was no different. The back garden sported a wide variety of fruit trees and bushes, raspberry and gooseberry, as well as apple. In the summer, Ziggy, his mother, and Ezra would collect all the fruit from which Hannah would make jars of jam.

The Zeiskind house was like most of the others. It opened onto a hallway with a front and a backroom separated by folding doors. The Zeiskinds did not call then "dining" or "sitting" rooms. The other room downstairs was the kitchen, and here everyone gathered around the table, not only to eat but to chat and sit. The kitchen was heated by a large iron range on which Hannah cooked her huge meals. It was Ziggy's favorite room in the house. Upstairs, they each had their own room, though Ezra's which had the hot press in it was the warmest. Ziggy's was the coldest as it faced the west and only got the late afternoon sun but he didn't mind.

To the untrained eyes the houses on the street might all look all the same but that was not true. The Zeiskinds actually lived at the "poor" end , the one nearest the Harold's Cross Road. Busses stopped right outside their door--a sign of their precarious financial status, as far as Ziggy was concerned. On

Saturday nights, he could hear the drunks from Crumlin and Kimmage pass by their house and he cringed. In the morning, he could see the dry vomit on the street or the signs of urine from the night before. The people who lived at the other end of the street, however, just beyond where Clareville Avenue ended at the junction of Kenilworth Park were never bothered by such nuisances. Ziggy was always conscious of the distinction, however marginal, between the two halves of the street.

Kenilworth Park merged into the Harold's Cross Road, one of the main arteries into the center of the city. Wending its way through several name changes, the Harold's Cross Road stretched from Christ Church Cathedral near the center of the city, all the way to Terenure and on to Rathfarnham and then into the mountains. On Saturdays, the Zeiskind family--Ezra proudly in front, Ziggy hand in hand with his father -- would walk to the Terenure synagogue past farms and detached homes until they reached the Terenure village and its rows of shops. Ziggy always felt conspicuous in his Sabbath suit as the goyim came out of their shops in their regular clothes. He could almost hear them think, "there goes a Jewboy off to his services dressed in his suit bought with his usurious money" but no one ever accosted him nor did he ever hear a derogatory remark out loud. It was something he just learned from his mother.

One wouldn't call the Kenilworth Park or its environs "Jewish," anymore than one would call it "Protestant." There was no Jewish area in Dublin, just areas where Jews lived in larger numbers than in others. Few, if any, Jews lived in the northern part of the city and only a few Jews lived in outlying areas like Ballsbridge or Foxtrot. Theoretically, everyone had to live in close proximity to a synagogue to which they could walk on the Sabbath. To live too far away was to publicly announce that one was non-observant and no one would, in those days at least, be prepared to be so ostracized.

Nonetheless, there was a lot of Jews in their little enclave, all with mezuzahs on the door, little scrolls of the Torah required of every Jewish home. Across the road directly opposite them lived the Michaelsons and a little further down, the Gudansky's and then the Steins. If Ziggy walked around the whole area he could count Wolfsons and Isaacsons, the two most common Jewish names in Dublin, but also Schwartzmans, Massars, Gafsons, Gurevitzs, Blairs, Segals, Walztmans, Yaffes, Garbs, Coppermans and Welenskis, names that revealed their origins and none of them very Irish sounding. He had been in nearly all their homes on one occasion or another depending on how his mother felt about them all or if they had children his age. The homes he had been in the most were those of his closest friend Gabriel Friedman who lived on Clareville Avenue and of course, Shevester, who lived in a three story house in the poshest part of the poshest street, Westfield Road.

Despite their different names and origins, they were all the same, "litvak" Jews, with virtually identical rituals and eating habits, some marginally more religious than the others just as the women were sometimes better cooks or housewives than each other, few of the women worked outside the home, some of them longer in the country by a few short years than others but all speaking with the same kind of Yiddish brogue. His father had been born there. He was Irish to the core. His mother was not: she was an alien, an exile who would never feel at home. Ziggy was a mixture of both, torn between the two.

"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."

"None," said the other, "save the undone years,

The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,

Was my life also;" Wilfred Owen: "Strange Meeting."

"95% of Ireland is Catholic, 5% is Protestant. I am Chief Rabbi of the rest."

Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovitz, Chief Rabbi of Ireland, 1948-1959.

1954: TWO DAYS AFTER THE BILLY QUEEN

EARLY DAYS

England was in the throes of passion. Even it would have a new Queen. The British people were so certain themselves in their joy and fervor. Union Jacks flew all over the place. Great Britain was once again the center of the universe. For the first time since the end of the war, the British seemed united in a common purpose. The mood was full of the anticipation of a great, great future, how the King would look, the form of the coronation, the special carriage, some of them real gold, that was being fitted out for the parade. Every detail was reported.

Despite its anti-British feelings, Ireland was not immune. Irish cinema showed a mixture of the patriotic and even though someone would come in a while about the occasional 'bloody British' remark or, as happened in the Green Cinema off St. Stephen's Green in Dublin, actually rip the canvas when the young Queen appeared on the screen, most people in Ireland were as eager to see the event as all of Britain and the talking family was no different.

Nicky and his father, Simon, had just come back from their Sunday outing to the Kenilworth Cinema and, having just seen the November Day, were full of the event. Nicky had an enormous griping his chair in awe at the pomp and circumstance. He wished he would have to go to school so he could stay at home and listen to the event on the radio. He wanted to be there. "I don't understand," Simon said at supper that night. They were all seated around the table in the kitchen. Simon at the head of the

1953: "WHO CARES ABOUT THE SILLY QUEEN?"

England was in the throes of passion. Soon it would have a new Queen. The British seemed unable to contain themselves in their joy and fervor. Union Jacks flew all over the place. Great Britain was once again the center of the universe. For the first time since the end of the war, the British seemed capable of enjoying themselves. The news was full of the preparations: the gowns, guest lists, how the Abbey would look, the route of the procession, the special carriages, some of them real gold, that were being dusted off for the parade. Every detail was reported.

Despite its anti-British feelings, Ireland was not immune. Irish cinemas showed newsreels of the preparations and even though someone would once in a while shout out the occasional "bloody British" remark or, as happened in the Green Cinema off St. Stephen's Green in Dublin, actually rip the canvas when the young Queen appeared on the screen, most people in Ireland were as eager to see the event as all of Britain--and the Zeiskind family was no different.

Ziggy and his father, Simon, had just come back from their Sunday outing to the Kenilworth Cinema and, having just seen the Movietone News, were full of the event. Ziggy had sat entranced gripping his chair in awe at the pomp and circumstance. He wished he wouldn't have to go to school so he could stay at home and listen to the event on the radio. He wanted to be there! "I don't understand," Simon said at supper that night. They were all seated around the table in the kitchen, Simon at the head of the

table, Ezra, their oldest son, to his right and Ziggy, squeezed up against the wall on the left. He had to push the table out to get to his place and Ezra kept inching the table back so that Ziggy had barely any room to manoeuver. He always resented his place at the table and wanted to be able to sit somewhere else but somehow he always ended up against the kitchen wall. One of these days, he thought, I'll move and get a better place. Only, his mother, Hannah, didn't sit while they ate. With the afternoon to herself after a morning doing the laundry, she appeared well rested. Thickset and fleshy, she hovered over them all to see that they each had enough to eat.

"I don't understand," Simon said again. "She's kind of young for that sort of thing. Shouldn't they wait till she's a little older?" He lit a cigarette as he drank his tea.

Ezra was quick to interrupt. Already fourteen, he felt he knew more than anyone, especially his father. "It's the law and that's the way it has to be," he pronounced with a sneer in his voice. Ziggy, although he thought Queen Elizabeth was pretty, felt that his father had a point. "Why don't they let her Ma run things for a while? Is there a law against that?" As he made the statement, he looked up at his mother but he really wanted to see if he had caught Ezra in a technicality which would force his older brother to concede, for once, that he didn't know the rule, or better yet, that Ziggy was right. No such luck. Ezra just snorted, leaned over, took a chunk of bread and smeared butter over it. Hannah smiled at Ziggy and moved over to his side of the table. "Here, tatalah," she said, "more chopped herring?" She proffered the food with her usual personal guarantee, "it's the best I ever

made" and added, "even sh'vester said so." Each week Hannah sent over to her sister, sh'vester as they all called her, homemade challah bread, enough gefilte fish to feed all her family and jars of chopped herring. Despite Hannah's renown as a cook, which extended beyond her admiring family, seldom did her sister praise her cooking, so if sh'vester had finally conceded, it had to be good indeed.

Ziggy took a dollop and smeared it on the challah bread. It tasted strong, acidy--the way he liked it, though it brought tears to his eyes.

Hannah, too, had her ideas on the subject of royalty. "Couldn't they bring back that brother of his, the Duke?" She spoke with a Yiddish accent that she had not lost despite having lived in Ireland for nearly twenty years. Although she addressed no one in particular, the question was obviously aimed at Ezra. Hannah had a romantic side and given the way her life had turned out, she took a vicarious pleasure in stories of true romance. Her bedside was stacked with women's magazines full of those types of stories. She thought that a King who would give up his throne "for the woman he loved" was one of the most beautiful stories she had ever heard.

Ezra, his mouth now full of gefilte fish, looked at his mother with disapproval. His blue eyes had a fiery look in them. He moved his hand to his yarmulke to make sure that it hadn't fallen off. "Why would they? He gave up the throne once. They wouldn't let him back. He can't even come to the event," he pronounced,

his rich tenor voice taking on a rabbinic tone. "Anyway, he's an anti-semite. He supported the Nazis." That was that. When Ezra took on that tone no one could argue with him. Anyway, he was already tired of the topic. "Enough of this. Who cares about the silly Queen?! Ma, do you have any milk? "

Hannah instinctively went to the fridge to get some for her son. The conversation ended, though not before Simon once again said almost plaintively, "I don't understand..." to which everyone chanted, "Ah, Da....."

But on June 3rd, the day of the Coronation, Ziggy had other things on his mind. His friend, Gabriel Friedman, had conned him into a dare. Gabriel was Ziggy's best friend, though Ziggy didn't really like him too much and Gabriel would have been surprised to find that Ziggy considered him in that way. Their personalities were quite different. Gabriel, (not "Gabby" or "Gay" as he was quick to point out, unlike Ziggy whose nickname came from his real name "Ezekiel") was a daredevil, always up to pranks and not afraid of anyone, it seemed. Ziggy liked his self-assurance and usually followed along marvelling at the way that Gabriel took chances and never suffered any consequences. Ziggy was much more cautious. He usually preferred to play alone and seldom went over to Gabriel's house to play. By nature a follower, quiet and self-contained and unlike Ezra not inclined to be a leader, once in a while, Ziggy got a reckless spirit in him and was ripe for a dare. That morning he had fallen prey to this tendency and now worried about how he might wriggle out of it.

The day had begun as usual. At 8:30, Ziggy ran around the corner to Gabriel's house and got into the back seat of Zalman Friedman's Morris Minor. Zalman, Gabriel's father, would then drop them off on his way to work in Capel Street in the heart of downtown Dublin. Usually, Gabriel and Ziggy sat together and talked about homework or chatted about their friends but this day Gabriel's green eyes flashed with devilment. Before Ziggy could ask him if he had learned the nine times table, Gabriel brushed back his jet black hair from his eyes and asked Ziggy if he had ever kissed a girl. Ziggy wondered why he asked him at all. Since they were all of seven years of age, Gabriel knew the answer to that question. Boys of seven didn't go round kissing girls. They had no dealings with them, at all.

In their class at the Zion National Schools, they sat at opposite sides of the classroom: the boys near the door and the girls further inside. Miss O'Connell, the grey haired and tiny sized martinet of a teacher of the first class, did not allow intermingling. They had to march in strict lines when they went to the bathroom. Most of the time, it didn't matter to Ziggy one way or another, but once a week, while the boys continued with their regular lessons, the girls were taken out. When they came back with strange words on their lips, talking of "pearls" and "dropping stitches," Ziggy ached to know their secrets. It was a world that he could not enter and yet he wanted to--though he knew he could not mention his desires to anyone, not Gabriel or Ezra, for fear of being laughed at or being called a sissy.

None of the other boys seemed to notice or care about what the girls did. Ziggy would ask to go to get a drink of water and as he walked along the corridor he would try to look into the room where they worked and see what they did but the glass windows were above his eye level. Once or twice, he would put his ear to the door but, afraid of being caught, would scurry away as soon as he heard a sound. It was all a mystery to him. But he wanted to know. He wanted to creep into their classes and learn the mysteries of their art.

In his mother's magazines, he could find patterns with directions but he couldn't decipher the hieroglyphics and since his mother didn't knit, he couldn't ask her. He wished his sister hadn't disappeared. She had "gone away" as his mother put it, a year or so before he was born. In the photos he saw of her, they looked almost identical with brown wavy hair, round faces and slightly pudgy bodies. She was born four years before him and two years after Ezra. It saddened him to think of his sister lost somewhere and his mother wondering where she was. He felt close to tears in those rare moments when his mother mentioned her name, "Aviva," with a sort of sigh. He didn't know what happened but had been afraid to ask for fear of upsetting her. He wondered if she would ever come back. Then he would have a sister! Aviva most probably would have told him about the mysteries of knitting and they would have made scarves or sweaters together -- unless she would have turned out to have a personality like Ezra's, God forbid! He wished she hadn't gone away and that they could have

been close. He could have told her his secrets and she would have sat with him and explained how girls do things.

Gabriel was not finished with the topic yet. His question was just a prelude to something even more threatening to Ziggy.

"Betcha you wouldn't kiss a girl!" Gabriel said with laughter in his voice.

Ziggy felt his hair tingle. He knew he was being dragged in to something unknown but he couldn't resist Gabriel's conspirational tone.

"Would you do it?" Ziggy whispered back.

"Might." Gabriel said without hesitation.

Ziggy knew that Gabriel would, given the chance. He might have already done it for all he knew.

"Which girl do you want to kiss?" Ziggy said playing along, although he didn't care for the conversation. He would much rather talk about the Coronation or their homework.

"Who do you think?" Gabriel asked looking straight into Ziggy's eyes. Ziggy hesitated. He looked out the window. They were only at the corner of Harold's Cross Road and Kenilworth Park. Zalman was taking the long way. They still had a quarter of an hour's drive. Ziggy was stuck.

Gabriel nudged him in the side.

"Well, who?" Gabriel wasn't going to go away. He was like a cat waiting to pounce and Ziggy felt like he did when Ezra quizzed him on something. There was only one right answer but he was never sure if he would get it. Which one did Gabriel want him to

mention? He pictured the girls in the class. There were at least twelve of them but he couldn't think of one that he wanted to kiss. No girl seemed better than any other. They all seemed the same to him.

"Dunno," he said sullenly as if he had failed the test. He hugged his school bag to his chest and sucked in his breath.

"How about Shoshana Cohen?" Gabriel said.

Ziggy thought she was kind of ugly. She had plain features, brown eyes and straight hair that was cut like a boy's.

"Maybe."

Ziggy felt relieved. No one could imagine him kissing Shoshana. But he wasn't getting off that easily.

"How about Susan Feldman?" Gabriel suggested.

Susan was a quiet girl who all the other boys--when they talked about these things-- thought was pretty. She was petite, had short dark hair and bright blue eyes. He had hardly ever spoken to her even though they were in the same class.

"Maybe." Ziggy repeated.

Suddenly Gabriel grew animated. "Betcha you wouldn't kiss her!" That was what Gabriel was up to and he was trapped. Although, he knew it was a dare and he could easily turn it down, he suddenly, felt tired of playing it safe.

"Betcha, I would." He said-- and immediately regretted it.

But Gabriel was not allowing any second thoughts.

"You're on! If you kiss Susan Feldman, I'll ...

"What?" Ziggy asked, though he didn't want anything--except how

to get out of the dare but he knew that Gabriel had him. If he reneged now, Gabriel would tease him mercilessly and he could easily get the others to do the same. But before he could think of a way to get out of it, Zalman Friedman turned to them:

"Hey, boys, keep it quiet down there. The parade is starting and I want to hear the news."

Zalman turned up the car radio. They could hear the chimes of the Big Ben and then the announcer reporting: "This is the 9:00 news from the BBC. Today all England and the world turns to London and the young woman who is about to become the most powerful woman in the entire world. Today is the coronation of Elizabeth Windsor, soon to be known as Queen Elizabeth the second. Just a few months ago, the nation was stricken with grief over the sudden death of her father, the beloved George the Sixth..."

The boys went silent. Gabriel slunk back in the seat with a smile on his lips. He took out the math tables and began reciting them to himself. Ziggy looked out the window again. They were at the Harold Cross lights at the canal, a few minutes from the school. There wasn't enough time to distract Gabriel and make him forget what had transpired. He was trapped and he knew it. Ziggy turned his attention to the news and tried to put all thoughts of kissing girls out of his mind.

The car drew to a halt outside Zion School and Gabriel jumped out and ran towards his best friend, Leonard Wolfson, a pudgy guy who was always getting into fights. Still, Leonard sometimes invited Ziggy over to play and they had a great time,

running around his back garden which was huge.

"Guess, what Zeiskind said he would do," he heard Gabriel say and then the two of them began giggling. "Susan Feldman? Go on."

By the time, he got to class, it seemed that all the boys had heard about Ziggy Zeiskind's dare.

Ziggy felt torn. Not only did he not want to kiss Susan, he knew that he would get into trouble if he was caught. Miss O'Connell would surely bring him down to Mr. Cassidy or "Casso," as they called the headmaster. Casso was a tall lanky man with jet black hair cut in a crew cut style. He loved the strap and showed no mercy using it to boys or girls, so Ziggy knew despite his age he would get six "of the best" lashings on each hand from Casso's thick leather strap, that was for sure. But if he didn't do it, the boys would cut him off and call him a "fink." Yet, he also felt proud. "I'll be the first boy to kiss a girl in the class." He knew that his status would change in the room. No longer would he be Ezra Zeiskind's little brother but a person in his own right. Few boys in the school had kissed a girl. Only maybe one of the big ones in the upper classes like Rory Stein with his red hair and huge hands had. He would be the first in his class, that was sure. He could live off that for some time.

They marched into class and with Miss O'Connell at the organ sang "Sine Fianna Fail," the Irish national anthem. Miss O'Connell knew what kind of day it was and she wanted no thoughts of England to infiltrate her class. In a fit of patriotism she ran them through three more Irish songs, in the vain hope of

drowning out the radio blaring from the kitchen below where the caretaker, Mrs. Murtagh was preparing their midmorning snack. Still, through the classroom door they could hear the crowds cheering the parade of royals on their way to Westminster Abbey.

Miss O'Connell kept them busy with their nine times table which they had to recite out loud. To Ziggy's dismay, she didn't call on them individually and he felt that he had wasted last night learning them off. No, there was no silent work for them that morning. They recited their Irish verbs and read aloud some Irish legends about Tir Na Nog, the legendary land of the young and then about the hero, Chuchulain. It was a real Irish morning. At 10:30 Miss O'Connell sat down at the organ again and they all trooped out to a rousing march: the girls first this time.

It was a clear June day, no rain and the sun shone brightly, one of the first really clear days in a long time, a beautiful Irish summer day, so they all gathered outside in the concrete yard, with its wall separating the boys and girls. While the girls played hopscotch or danced "ring-a-ring a rosies" or knitted their scarves, the boys stood around at first. Someone brought a soccer ball and started to play but the older boys pushed them aside. Once again, they wanted to play "British Bulldog."

Ziggy never really liked the game but it had been the popular game that year. Everyone had to play from the oldest to the youngest and puniest. No one could escape. The game was simple. One by one the boys had to dash over from one side of the

yard to the other without getting caught. If they were, they had to join their former opponents and then, as if becoming traitors, had to call on someone who then had to try to get over to the other side without being caught. Only a few ever made it and soon the line of guys would be standing there like an army blocking one's path. By the end of the game, it became impossible to get across without getting caught and pounced on.

The first guys had it easy as there was no one to challenge them. Ziggy hated being near the end when the entire team could fall on him. If he was lucky, the bell would ring before the end and he would escape. He didn't even like jumping on the poor guys who came after him. Usually Ziggy ended up in the middle section which wasn't too bad. Once he had been last and he thought he was going to be killed by the horde that descended with glee on his frame. He was crushed under their weight and only wriggled out from under them when they couldn't find him and they started fighting with each other.

Rory Stein was always the leader. In the sixth class, he was in his last year at the school. Although not a scholar, he ruled the roost and bossed everyone around. There was even a rumor that he took money from some of the weaker kids but he had never come near Ziggy, maybe because Simon Zeiskind was teaching him his barmitzvah. He was huge and thick with that mop of red hair always unruly on his head. He looked like a rugby player. He scared Ziggy. Once he had come up behind Ziggy and put his big arms around Ziggy's chest and squeezed him tight. He was big and

rough and Ziggy felt intimidated by his size. In a playful way, he had slapped Ziggy on the face. "Ziggy, me boy, how are ye doin'?" he asked in his thick Dublin brogue that bespoke his lower class origins and then went on without waiting for an answer. Ziggy stood still feeling the strength in his arms. No one had ever hugged him like that. He never forgot it, though he made sure to keep out of Rory's way.

"Pick me," they all shouted. "Pick me."

"Zeiskind" Rory said. He had never picked him first before.

When Ziggy didn't move, Gabriel nudged him. "Hey, Ziggy, he picked you," he said, a little peeved. "Lucky you. I betcha he picked you because he knows about the kiss." He leaned in closer to Ziggy and whispered: "You better do it today or you'll be last tomorrow."

Ziggy charged across the yard but he was no match for Rory who grabbed him and threw him down and leaned over him. His face was so close to Ziggy's that Ziggy could smell his stale breath and even his sweaty body odor. Ziggy looked up at his yellow teeth and the green eyes and up his nose and the thin line of hair just above his lip. Rory stared right into Ziggy's eyes and said the ritual words, "You're mine now." Ziggy shivered with a strange feeling of pleasure. He was "his" now and had to turn on his classmates.

He got to shout out a name.

"Pick me," Gabriel shouted above the others.

But Ziggy was in no mood to deal with Gabriel. He wanted Gabriel

to suffer a little.

"Alan," said Ziggy picking one of Rory's friends.

"Good pick, Ziggy," Rory said, endorsing the choice.

After the game, they trooped into the dining room for tea, sweating and excited.

Mrs. Murtagh's radio was blaring: "The Archbishop of Canterbury has just anointed the young queen. She is behind a canopy and will shortly ascend to the throne where she will accept the scepter of authority and where soon she will be crowned..."

Ziggy had all but forgotten about the coronation but now he listened raptly to what was going on, imaging the scene. He couldn't wait till the Movietone News the following Sunday so he could see it all for real.

Suddenly, like a dark angel who would not go away, Gabriel was at his side, breaking his concentration.

"You better kiss her or I'll tell everyone you're a fink," he said, his nose still bloody from the game. He didn't look too happy with Ziggy. But the game had inspired Ziggy and he decided he would do it. He would show them all that he wasn't afraid. He knew when and how he would do it.

When the bell rang for the end of break, they trooped up stairs. As usual, they lined up in two lines, the boys' line walking parallel to the girls. They stopped outside the classroom door waiting for the signal from Miss O'Connell to start marching. Ziggy saw that Susan Feldman was five girls down ahead of him. It was now or never. He dashed from his line and swiftly

planted a kiss on the astonished cheek of Susan Feldman who let out a scream.

"GOD SAVE THE QUEEN," blared the radio. "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN! GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!"

"The Archbishop of Canterbury has just crowned Queen Elizabeth the Second," the announcer said. "All the peers and royals have lifted off their crowns and tiaras as a sign of respect to her."

"Ziggy Zeiskind, get in here this instant," bellowed the voice of Mrs. O'Connell from behind her organ. "What did you do to that poor girl?"

Susan Feldman was in tears with all the girls hovering around her like she was sitting shiva or something.

"What?" Said Ziggy now back in line. "I didn't do anything." It was hard to sound innocent when he felt guilty yet proud. He had kissed a girl. He had done it. It didn't feel that special but he knew that the others would talk about it for ages. Yet, when he looked at Gabriel, he was laughing with Leonard and didn't even look at Ziggy-- not once. But Ziggy didn't care. He had done it.

"Don't argue with me. It's Mr. Cassidy for you, young man, and you better own up or he'll give you six of the best. He's in no mood today for young men who can't control themselves. Go down to him this instant and don't come back till he says you can. You should be ashamed and your father a teacher here. Go on with you." She got out from behind the organ and shooed him away. She bent over Susan Feldman who was still weeping. "Come here, child. Are you all right, dear girl? Now, don't cry. Sure he didn't hurt

you. He only gave you a nasty shock. Here, now stop your snivelling and dry your tears. Will one of you girls take this child to the bathroom and make sure that she's alright?"

As he descended the stairs slowly and walked along the corridor to Mr. Cassidy, Ziggy could hear the class trooping in to the sound of Miss O'Connell's organ. The bellowing from the pipes mingled with the roar coming from Mrs. Murtagh's radio as the crowd cheered the young queen walking up the aisle of Westminster Abbey. Ziggy took his cue and walked head held high as though he wore a crown. He was proud of himself. He had done it. He had crossed the line. He would face his punishment and bear the marks on his hands like a badge of honor, like a man.

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Ziggy had no idea what the Devil's had on their side of the wall in their backyard. He had never been there. Whenever he and Johnny played, they did so in the forbidden back yard. Johnny never showed his ear to his world. Unlike Johnny, who was by a year or so, who seemed to have the quality of a tiger. Ziggy

1954: "WANNA PLAY NAZIS AND JEWS?"

"Hey, Ziggy! Wanna play?" Johnny Doyle shouted from the top of the red brick wall that separated the backyard of the Zeiskind house from that of its next door neighbor's, the Doyles. Johnny wanted to play. That was good, Ziggy thought. Johnny didn't always want to play. He only played when he wanted to. Many a time Ziggy had asked him, calling his name over the wall but although he knew that Johnny was there, he wouldn't reply or would say he wasn't in the mood. But today he wanted to.

The wall served as an uneasy barrier that divided not just two houses but two worlds. Against their side of the wall, the Zeiskinds stacked the "slack," broken bits of coal which burned slower than nuggets of coal, besides being cheaper. In October, just a month before, tall, rugged men with grimy faces with burlap sacks over their shoulders and hair trooped through their house dumping the material on the back yard. Now, when his mother made the fire, she threw water on the "slack" to make it burn even slower--especially on the Sabbath when they could not light a fire or even touch it to add more material. It was a strict rule but Ziggy didn't mind. He would just get as close as he could to the slow burning coals and feel their warmth.

Ziggy had no idea what the Doyle's had on their side of the wall in their backyard. He had never been there. Whenever he and Johnny played, they did so in the Zeiskind back yard. Johnny never invited him over to his world. Unlike Johnny, his elder by a year or so, who seemed to have the agility of a tiger, Ziggy

could not jump up on the wall or over it. More to the point,

although they played together once or twice a week, Johnny made Ziggy feel uneasy. He was a non-Jew, one of the beytzemeer or schotzim, a goy or a shaygitz, or a yock, as his father would call them, (the women being called lapses or shiksas) mysterious yiddish words, words almost without meaning, more onomatopoeic, teeth-breakers, that all the Irish Jews used to describe their non-Jewish compatriots. For Ziggy the words captured the harshness of their personalities. Johnny with his pasty skin, brown straight lifeless hair that flopped over his forehead, facial features that made his face look like a pancake, brown eyes that were large and dominant and flat nose that looked thin and reedy, had the features of a typical non-Jew. No Irish Jew could look like a Catholic. They were all darker like Ziggy himself. What's more, Johnny smelled like a goy. Ziggy could always detect the odor of pig on him. He scared Ziggy.

In fact, all the goyim scared Ziggy. He got this fear from his mother. She had grown up in Poland and came to Ireland in 1935, narrowly escaping the fate that took the lives of virtually her entire family with the exception of her sister who lived around the corner from them. She remembered the Catholics in Poland and the Catholics of Ireland did not strike her as that different. Any country with Catholics in the majority would never be trusted by his mother. Even twenty years in Ireland had not cured her of those fears learned in her youth. Her mind, like a

repository of her race, was full of memories of the tales of pogroms on Easter week, the vehemence of priests ignorant and drunk, marginally less ignorant and drunk than their parishioners, spewing out their hatred at the Jews. The ignorant listening to the vileness of the ignorant till drink and despair overtook them and they lusted for the blood of the Jews who seemed so secure, so smug, so confident in their ability to rise out of their squalor. She could even remember the Beliss case, the last Jew in Russia to be accused of the famous "Blood Libel," when Jews were accused of killing non-Jewish boys to use their blood in the Passover matzha.

He hoped things in Ireland would never get that bad, though however safe Ireland was to the Jews--and its Jewish citizens boasted that except for one incident in Limerick in 1904, there had been no anti-semitic incidents in Ireland, not even during the war when Ireland was decidedly neutral-- Hannah could not trust any country with Catholics in the majority and she passed this fear on to her son, Ziggy, who soaked in his mother's ideas and feelings without question. Ziggy believed, like his mother, that even the friendliest non-Jew could in the blink of an eye turn into the Devil incarnate and burn their homes and murder them all.

When he heard the about the Nazis, he thought it would be wise to know what Christians did, so he could escape detection. He watched the people in the bus cross themselves as they passed the Harold's Cross Road Church and then at home in his bedroom,

he practiced it over and over again, with his head down as if he was praying. He didn't know how he would master the kneeling part, as Jews didn't kneel but he was sure if he had to he would. He even managed to learn the opening of the Lord's Prayer for the same reason, but he could never get beyond, "Hallowed name." He wasn't sure it would be enough.

He couldn't help but be afraid of Christians. The previous week, Hannah took Ziggy upstairs to her room, closed the curtains, even though it was still daylight, and huddled with him, holding him tight while hordes of little girls dressed in miniature wedding dresses, led by the priests and nuns, with the army at the head and Catholic songs and prayers blasting from the loudspeakers on the lampposts, marched by their house for the Corpus Christi parade. His mother sat at the end of the bed, shivering with fear, her lips tight. She patted his head constantly as Ziggy crept to the window to peer out. "Don't look, don't look," she whispered to him but even the fear that he would be stoned or flayed alive or struck blind could not stop him from taking a peek. He did not like it. All the goyim together. She never went near the window. When it grew quiet, after she was sure they had all gone into the Church to pray or gone back to their homes in Kimmage or Crumlin or Ballyfermot, she sent Ziggy to the window again. Seeing the streets back to normal, they went downstairs again.

The parade scared Ziggy as well. He knew that a Jew wouldn't dare go out on the streets at that time and he worried, like his

mother, that his father, coming home from the synagogue evening services would be caught in the rush. He knew that his elder brother, Ezra, would be able to take care of himself but his father always worried him. He worried his mother as well, though she "worried" about everyone it seemed. If only they lived on a better part of the street where the parade never passed but what was the point, they could never escape Catholicism in Ireland. It was just part of their lives. Still, it was a world he could not nor did not want to join--even though the worst that had ever happened to him was hearing the word "Jewboy." Still, you never knew!

Because he lived in a world that kept as much to itself as possible, as if the non-Jews lived in the ghetto and not the Jews, he always felt uneasy around non-Jews. It was also a fear of the unknown. Outside of shopping, school teachers and neighbors and their cleaning lady, he had few dealings with non-Jews. They were different. Only when they could not get to the Jewish stores on Clanbrassil Street would he go into the non-Jewish stores near their house: the Hanlons, the nice old couple where he got a turnover for supper. His mother told him never to go into Quinns as they were anti-semites and as if to test her words, he went in once and they called him a "Jewboy" to his face, so he turned and went out shivering with fear. He ran home, not telling his mother that she was right. From the grocer around the corner, Mr. Devlin to the milkman, Mr. Murphy, they seemed rougher, gruffer, their accents thicker, their manner more

threatening than the more genteel Jews with whom Ziggy felt comfortable.

Still, he always wondered what Catholics did. As he went by their churches he tried to peep inside but the heavy wooden doors and Latin phrases over the portals scared him. From pictures, he knew that they had statues of a woman, usually dressed in blue and white robes with a crown over her head and her hands clasped together. He thought of how different all this was from his own synagogue which only had stained glass windows and no ornaments. Jews were forbidden to decorate their houses of worship that way. He had also seen enough movies to know that they also had little rooms where people went in and talked to a priest, where they knelt in pews, and took some bread on their tongue in front of the alter, that looked like the bimah in his synagogue. On Sundays, he would see them come out of Church after the Mass, the women taking off their black scarves and the men putting on their hats, the opposite of what the Jews did, and then dipping their fingers in the little sinks which contained what they called "holy water" and crossing themselves with it. Ziggy just knew that they had most probably stolen the idea from the mezuzah that Jews had to put on their front doors. There were lots of them in the neighborhood where he lived.

As much as he wanted to do it, he knew that if a Jew went into a church, the priests would bring him to court or even kill all the Jews for desecrating their houses of worship. So he wouldn't dare go in, though he wanted to just once to see what it

was like. Once he ventured to the door and began to shake so much that he thought he would faint. Maybe one day when he was older, he would cross that threshold.

Their homes were as off limits as the Church. Although Kenilworth Park where he lived and the streets around them were full of Catholics like the Maguires across the road and the Shannons a little further down, he didn't really know them and never played with them. The only non-Jewish homes he had entered were those of his neighbors. On the left, Miss Waller a former Protestant missionary, who always stopped to talk to Ziggy, asking about his studies and sometimes about his older brother, Ezra. She was a spinster, not uncommon in Ireland but worse she was a Protestant and the Catholic neighbors on the street had as little to do with her as they did with the Jews--maybe even less. On the right, lived the Catholic Doyles, whose father was a police man who made no secret of his dislike of Jews. The three homes formed a miniature Ireland, a Catholic, A Jew and a Protestant living side by side in somewhat uneasy peace and tolerance.

Protestant or Catholic, it made no difference to the Zeiskind household. He knew that neither of his parents had ever been in their homes and neither Miss Waller nor the Doyles ever come into theirs, not even when they had the party for Ezra's barmitzvah. That was the way they lived and they understood the rules. Ziggy was the only one to have been in their homes. The first time, Miss Waller invited him in, he was petrified. He

wasn't sure he would get out alive. He knew that horrible things would happen to him there if he entered under their portals: cages would fall from the air, knives spring out of walls. He would be made to get on his knees and clasp his hands together and pray to their idols-- or worse, he would be made to eat pork, treife. When he went in, the first thing he saw in her hallway, identical to theirs, except with no coats hanging over the bannister, was a crucifix looming like a threatening arrow down at him. Her home was sad. It was drab and dark and linoleum covered the floors. Not a carpet in sight. Even the wallpaper was dark, browns and yellows, flowers dying in Autumn. It felt lonely. Even the crucifix seemed lonely: a dark wood without even the figure of Jesus on it.

The Doyle's house frightened him even more. Miss Waller was just one person and he could escape should she try to convert him into a Christian but the Doyle's were four people. The first time he had ever been there, he had come home early from school and everyone was out. It was Winter and he waited outside in the cold. It began to rain. Mrs. Doyle on her way home from her work at Cassidy's store downtown, saw him.

"Ziggy! Are you locked out?"

"Yes. But me ma will be home soon."

"Well, come on into our house. You can wait there. You can't be standing out here in the rain, to be sure."

Ziggy grew scared. He didn't want to go in there. Mrs. Doyle saw him hesitate and clutch his school bag. She took mercy on the

little eight year old.

"Now, don't be silly. I'll make you a nice cup of cha and you can have some cake."

"No, I'm not hungry." He couldn't eat their food. It was made from lard and lard came from pork. Treife. Treife.

But she took the little boy by the hand and led him into her home. "Sure I can't leave you out there. Your mother would never forgive me if you caught your death of cold."

They went down the hallway which like theirs was full of coats. Mrs. Doyle took the scarf off her head and taking off her dark coat shook it to get the raindrops off. She was a thin woman with black wavy hair streaked with grey. She wore no make up and Ziggy couldn't figure out if she was older than his mother or not. The hallway wasn't as dark as Miss Waller's and to Ziggy's relief had no crucifix on the wall. They went into the kitchen. "It's just like ours," he thought. It was painted the same sort of dark green, except the Doyle's had a bare light bulb in the center while his had a yellow lampshade over the bulb. Ziggy felt that theirs looked better.

"Do you want some rashers?" Mrs. Doyle asked and Ziggy nearly jumped out of his skin.

"NO! he yelped.

"Ah, sure what was I thinking," she said, laughing to herself. "You're not allowed eat pig are you? Well, maybe you're better off, the price they charge nowadays for a piece of pork. Are

sausages forbidden too?" She asked as she took out a grey looking sausage from the fridge. He had never seen anything like it. It looked like a piece of shit, he thought. How could they eat that? "Well a nice cup of cha will take the chill off our bones. Isn't that right, Ziggy.?" She took the kettle and filled it under the tap. Everything in their house was the same as his. The sink near the window, though they had a steel draining board while the Doyle's was made of wood.

How old are you now?" Mrs. Doyle asked.

"Eight."

"And Ezra?"

"He'll be fifteen on the 12th."

"Ah, that's right and poor Aviva"

But her voice trailed off and she said nothing more about his sister, now gone nine years. Ziggy realized that Mrs. Doyle had known his sister before she disappeared. Maybe one day he could ask her about Aviva.

As the kettle boiled, Mrs. Doyle made herself busy. She emptied out her bag and began to make supper. The warmth in the kitchen made Ziggy feel more comfortable and he began to look around the room --and then he saw it. It looked silly. He knew it was a painting of Jesus Christ. He had pink skin that looked like he had lots of make-up on and long hair that was brown and flecked with gold. His face was kind of pointy and his eyes looked like he had black eyeliner on them. The pupils were amazingly blue, bluer than he had ever seen on a human being.

Gold beams came out of his head. Jesus wore a white robe that look like a vest and over it a blue robe that looked like a dress. He looked feminine. He pointed to his heart which was painted a rich red and looked like a rubber ball. More sun beams came out of it. It looked like those books in the store where you could turn the pages and see more and more of the human body; first the skin, then muscles and then the veins. Close up, it frightened Ziggy. What did it mean? It's imagery was beyond him but he couldn't take his eyes off it. It repulsed and attracted him at once. But the image seemed to welcome him. It looked real romantic, like a vision. They had nothing like it in their house, only a bleak picture of the Wailing Wall--a grey deserted landscape of despair and sorrow.

Mrs. Doyle poured him a cup of tea which was almost as good as what his mother made but the smell of the supper cooking, the strange sausages in the frying pan, was making him feel ill and now that he thought of it, even the tea tasted of pork and lard.

"Are you sure you won't have a piece of cake?"

"No, thanks."

Suddenly, Johnny came bouncing in, all energy and roughness.

"Your Ma is looking for you Ziggy. You better be on home. Are the rashers for supper?"

"I'll be going now," said Ziggy using the excuse, and he was out of there in a flash.

He told his mother what happened and she soothed his beating heart and rewarded his almost ravaged soul with sponge cake and

lemonade.

Even Johnny frightened him, He was a good few inches than Ziggy and stronger too. When they played he always managed to hold Ziggy down or tie him up. Ziggy would fight back but he knew that he wasn't supposed to win. The games they played had a strange attraction for Ziggy. He felt seduced by their fear. With Johnny as guide, he went into areas that he would not go on his own and he didn't mind Johnny winning. He felt that he was taken over, brought to another world that he would or could not enter on his own. As much as he didn't trust Johnny, he liked his power, his aggressiveness and enjoyed falling under his spell.

Johnny belonged to the young rowdy boys from the Christian Brothers Schools who terrified him when they bounded on the bus on their way home from school. They threw themselves at each other and fought with reckless abandon, swore like fiends, using swear words that Ziggy would not dare utter, who smelled of bacon and sexual bravado, but who, despite these "failings," seemed to really have life in their dirty hands. Ziggy hated the fact that he was too gentle, scared. He had to be frum, religious and could not do anything wrong or God would punish him.

"I saw a great movie yesterday," Johnny said bounding off the wall into their yard. .

"Oh, yeah. Which one?" Ziggy said taking the bait.

"Jackboot Mutiny."

It wasn't Ziggy's cup of tea. He had seen the trailer and it

looked frightening. It was about Nazis and he didn't want to see anything about that type of thing.

"I didn't want to see it," he said to Johnny.

"Ah, but you should have," Johnny persisted. "It was really great. Here, let me tell you about it and then we can act out some of it."

"So, what was the movie about?"

"Well, Hitler, Der Furher, that's what they call Hitler in the movie, is leading the Germans to victory and these other guys plot against him." Johnny spoke with a glee, his brown eyes gleaming. Ziggy was never sure if Johnny liked the Nazis or not, after all his father was an antisemite. One thing was sure, he always wanted to play them. He always wanted to play the leader, too. Ziggy had no choice in the matter.

"These other guys plot against him," Johnny continued, spittle gathering at the ends of his mouth. Ziggy could also see the snot in Johnny's nose but Johnny did not wipe it off. "They plant a bomb near Hitler and it goes off but Der Fuhrer escapes. They capture the guys and torture them. It was great. Hey, wanna play Nazis and Jews?"

Ziggy didn't really like the sound of the game. It made him feel uneasy but he didn't want to chicken out.

"What do I have to do?"

"Well, I dunno," Johnny said, wiping his nose on the side of his sweater. The snot was still wet on it and it shone on Johnny's cheek. It looked like what a snail leaves behind when it moves.

You try to get away and I capture you and tie you up and torture you."

"Nah, that's no fun."

"Okay. How about if you have a gun and we fight and you try to kill me and let's see who wins?"

That sounded better to Ziggy but he still wasn't convinced.

"What will I use for a gun? Will this stick do?"

Johnny surprised him. "Nah, here, you can use my gun," and from his pants pocket he took out a revolver. Ziggy had never seen one up close. It looked big, bigger than he thought it would be.

"It's a luger," Johnny said. "The Germans used them in the war. Me dad bought it for me. It's the real thing. Here have a look! What do you think?"

He handed Ziggy the gun. It felt heavy. He looked for the cylinder like he'd seen in the westerns but couldn't find it.

"It doesn't have a spinner," Johnny said. "It has something called a clip but it's empty."

Seduced by the gun, Ziggy agreed to play Johnny's game.

"Ok, hide behind that tree," Johnny ordered, already assuming his usual bossy position.

They played for awhile. Ziggy crept up on Johnny and they battled but Johnny shrugged him off. They ran around the small garden for a while, Johnny hiding behind the apple tree.

Ziggy had enough and jumped on Johnny again.

"Hey, get off me, you.....," Johnny said.

Ziggy obeyed but then Johnny betrayed him and turned around and

pinned Ziggy to the ground. Their breath smoked in the November air and the ground felt cold under Ziggy. As he rolled in the dirt, his hands got all dirty.

Johnny leaned over Ziggy who now lay pinned under him.

"You're my prisoner now. Because you have turned on Der Fuhrer, you will die."

It always ends like this, Ziggy thought. He can never win with Johnny. He was getting bored.

"Here, beside the tree," Johnny said changing his mind.

Ziggy got up, his heart pounding.

"Put your hands over your head."

Johnny took the gun from Ziggy and stuck it in Ziggy's back and made him walk to the apple tree.

As Johnny pushed him against the tree, Ziggy felt taken over by Johnny's power.

"You're gonna face a firing squad," Johnny snarled. Ziggy wasn't sure if he was playing or not.

Ziggy stood against the tree.

"Put your hands behind the tree."

Johnny lifted the gun and aimed it at Ziggy's heart. He squinted as if he was taking aim although he only stood a few inches from Ziggy. Ziggy stiffened against the tree and leaned back. Johnny seemed so powerful, so sure of himself. He looked up at Ziggy again and leered at him, his mouth pulled back in glee. "Get ready to die."

"Johnny Doyle get in here." Mrs. Doyle's voice punctuated their

world and awakened Ziggy from his trance. The spell was broken.

"Johnny?" She leaned over the wall. "I need you here now. Hello, Ziggy. What are you guys doing out here in this cold?"

"Ah..." Johnny said beginning to protest. He once again wiped his nose with his sleeve.

"And where did you get that gun? Your father will give you a beating when he sees you playin' with it. Now get inside." Mrs. Doyle disappeared behind the wall again.

But Ziggy didn't feel like playing anymore anyway. Something just went out of him.

"Got to go, Ziggy. Play with you later." Johnny said as he stuffed the gun into his pants.

Quickly, he bounded over the wall. And was gone.

Ziggy felt sad. He didn't know why. He leaned against the tree again, reliving the last moments of their game. He closed his eyes and imagined Johnny still standing there and he ready to die. He liked that feeling but he couldn't quite get it back. It wasn't the same without Johnny.

Suddenly, he felt cold and tired. For some reason, he felt guilty. He shouldn't have played that game with Johnny. He shouldn't have let him get the better of him. He should have fought back. He was tired of always being the Jew. He wouldn't play that game again with Johnny. Next time, he would be the Nazi and Johnny would be the Jew.

Resolved, Ziggy went into the house to wash the dirt from his hands. 4369

1955: AN IRISH-JEWISH CHRISTMAS

One Wednesday around the middle of December 1955, Mrs. Sullivan, the Zeiskind's cleaning woman turned to Hannah Zeiskind and "out of the blue" as Hannah later put it to Simon, her husband, asked if she could take "little Ziggy" to see Santa Claus.

"They have a lovely show at Pim's store and it would be a pity not to take the little one to see it. I know you won't be going to such things yourself but sure, what's the harm in him seeing Santa Claus," Mrs. Sullivan said, as if, knowing Mrs. Zeiskind's reluctance, she had prepared a special speech. She looked up from her task, her face pinched and a little wan, "Sure, my own children are grown and I miss going and sure it would be nice..." Her voice trailed off as she waited for Mrs. Zeiskind to reply.

Hannah had been taken aback by the request and also a little put out by her cleaning woman's insensitivity to the Jewish faith. As far as Hannah was concerned, "there was a lot of harm" in these Catholic matters but she didn't say anything out loud. As always, she kept her thoughts to herself. She looked up from her work and bit her tongue. Better to be still, was her motto.

Jewish children in Dublin did not go to see Santa Claus. Hannah who had spent her childhood years in a little village in Poland certainly had never been herself as a child nor had she ever taken her children. Her sister, the austere sh'vester who lived around the corner had never allowed her children to go to see Santa, so Hannah had followed suit.

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The only concession the family made to the Catholic holiday season was when Rachel, sh'vester's only daughter, already a teenager, took Ziggy to the pantomime at the Gaiety Theatre downtown just off Grafton Street and St. Stephen's Green. Ziggy was looking forward to going again this year. He had scanned the "Evening Mail" and saw that the pantomime was "Dick Whittington." He didn't know that one, like he knew "Puss in Boots" from the year before, but he was all set to ask Rachel the story, though he knew that the plot didn't really matter. Rachel would be taking him in between Christmas and New Year's when she had time off from work.

He remembered the last one clearly. It had been a real expedition. They went on a Wednesday afternoon, Rachel all dressed up, with makeup on. Ziggy liked being with Rachel, though she was a lot bigger than him. She was large boned and tall with her mother's features, the strong cheek bones, the flared nose, the broad forehead but Rachel's features were softened by a clear skin and a youthful glow. Her head was crowned by a flowing mane of jet black hair and dark green eyes. One would think she was an "Irish colleen," a "black Irish" as they were called but her features owed more to her Jewish genes than any Irish influence. There was something warm and friendly about Rachel's nature that made Ziggy feel comfortable around her.

That year, she wore a bright red dress and a thick black coat. Ziggy's black hair was also aglow with brylcream and he wore a tie and long pants. He could barely eat he was so excited. It was

Rachel's treat and Ziggy knew and appreciated it. He always felt at ease with Rachel who loved to gossip about her friends with him: how this one smoked or that one drank or the other one was not as religious as she pretended to be. And with Ziggy it was always, "I can tell you. I can't tell anyone else. We're pals aren't we, Ziggy?" As they sat in the 16 bus on their way downtown, she would pry information out of Ziggy too. "How is Ezra treating you?"

And when Ziggy would hesitate, she would fill in the gaps, "He's mean to you, isn't he? Your brother gets full of himself sometimes. But don't worry, he'll get his comeuppance one of these days. I'll talk to him if you want. He won't start with me."

But Ziggy grew afraid. "No, no, don't say a word. He'll only hit me when you're gone."

"He doesn't hit you, does he," Rachel said with astonishment, her green eyes flashing. "What a creature, he is! Are you sure that you don't want me to hit him?"

In the Gaiety, they sat downstairs in the more expensive seats, surrounded by children, though the nosier ones sat in the cheaper seats upstairs. Soon the theatre was full of the screams of laughter or mock horror when the hero was threatened. As the villain strode with exaggerated movements up on the innocent Puss, they shouted, "Look out! He's right behind you." When the actors asked questions of the audience, Ziggy's voice joined in with everyone else's shouting answers, then he looked to Rachel who beamed at him. Ziggy loved it all, from the old theatre with its boxes and tiers of balconies to the show with its music, crazy

songs, pratfalls and stars like Jimmy O'Dea dressed up in women's clothes and his companion in comedy, Maureen Potter in men's. One of the best parts was when the cast came into the audience and played with the kids. It was even better than the movies, though he still loved them the best. It was his favorite once-a-year outing. And Rachel loved being with Ziggy. She always laughed the loudest in the theatre.

After it was over, they came back for a meal at their house and Rachel related to his mother about how Ziggy laughed and laughed and Hannah smiled wanly as if she resented the fact that her son had a good time when she didn't.

"Don't walk in the kitchen," she said. "Mrs. Sullivan and I just spent the whole afternoon cleaning the floor" before adding

"Oy! I'm so tired. I then had to iron everything."

Ziggy knew he had to feel guilty that he had been laughing at the pantomime while his mother slaved away in the kitchen. But Rachel would not be quiet. She retold the entire pantomime, always including Ziggy in the story. "Do you remember that bit when the cat came into the audience?" Ziggy couldn't help laughing and then he told his mother how the cat waved her tail in his face. Ziggy never told his mother that Rachel always treated him to ice cream with a Cadbury's chocolate flake in the middle. It wasn't strictly kosher, so it was their secret.

Christmas was a week away but already Chanukah had come and gone. For the Zeiskind family, as for all Irish-Jewish families, Chanukah, not Christmas, was the important holiday. Every night,

they had gathered in the backroom and Simon, Ezra and Ziggy lit the candles each in their own candleabras, the menorahs, reciting the blessings individually and then joined by Hannah sang the hymns, Hanevrot Hallaluh, and Moaz Tsur in loud ringing voices, Ezra's ringing tenor louder and clearer than everyone else's. They never hurried the songs and soon the room shone with brilliant light, gleaming off the metal menorahs. Afterwards, for practically every one of the eight nights of Chanukah, they ate Hannah's delicious latkes. Her potato pancakes were always crisp on the outside and soft and mushy in the middle and Ziggy relished the taste of onion and pepper that gave the grated potato its extra special quality. No one made latkes like his mother and he would eat three or four each night to his mother's delight, though she always tried to foist "just one more" on each of them.

"Go on, Simon, another one? It's a shame to throw them out..." and her husband or Ezra and Ziggy would comply until Ziggy felt he would not be able to move from behind the table. The only other event to mark the season was the annual Chanukah parade when all the Jewish youth groups would march around the Adelaide Road Synagogue. Ziggy loved the parade as well, though it was usually fraught with tension as they always held a competition to see who was the best group and he had been disappointed this year that his group, Bnei Akiva, the religious group, hadn't won the trophy for two years...

In fact, when Mrs. Sullivan had made her request to take Ziggy to Pims, Mrs. Sullivan--Brigid, though they never called each other

on first name basis--and Hannah had been cleaning out the Chanukah menorahs soaking them in hot water to get the wax off them. They then shone them before putting them back in the glass case for another year.

Brigid Sullivan was, according to Hannah who rarely complimented other women, and never non-Jewish women, "a nice lady, a real find," after all the other woman who had been grumpy or more interested in eating her food than helping her with the housework. She never trusted any of them and would go around the house to check on everything after they had left but Mrs. Sullivan, thin, almost waif-like, drawn, with little flesh on her bones had been recommended by Hannah's friend Mrs. Mandel and she had proved to be a real find. It was going on seven years now and she turned up regular twice a month, every second Wednesday afternoon.

Hannah couldn't afford a live in maid like sh'vester who had a series of Irish girls as live-in maids, all from the same family in Donegal, Mary, Kitty and Betty, each taking turns as the previous one got married and left. Besides she felt ambivalent about the whole matter.

"Sometimes, I don't know why I have her here." His mother would complain. "I can do the work just as easily myself."

On the one hand, she argued that she didn't really need the help, except before Passover when they had to change dishes and clean the house thoroughly from top to bottom, but on the other, she knew it was a good sign to have a cleaning woman, to show that they weren't so poor that they couldn't afford one and so she kept Mrs. Sullivan

around. She came at noon, had a lunch, sometimes she brought her own or sometimes, if his mother didn't mind, she would eat when they were finished and then she would work for a few hours and then she would have tea and a piece of cake and leave. Her mother paid her two pounds for the afternoon and usually gave it to her with the warning not to give it to her husband. She never said, "don't give it to the Church" as she didn't want Mrs. Sullivan to say bad things about the Jews.

Ziggy who was home from school on Wednesday afternoons usually stayed out of her way, though she tried to make conversation with him. "Are you a good boy, Ziggy? "Have you done your homework?" things like that. Sometimes she brought him a present, usually a comic book, a Beano or a Dandy and Ziggy would be touched. "Gee, thanks Mrs. Sullivan," he would say. "I was just going to buy this one" or " I was looking for this" even if he had read it already.

Ziggy liked Mrs. Sullivan. She was the only non-Jew he felt comfortable around, maybe because he only saw her in their world, in their Jewish home. He also felt bad for her. Mrs. Sullivan was the only person that Ziggy ever heard his mother say was truly worse off than herself.

One Wednesday, Ezra had yelled at him to close the door of his room and added, "Where do you think you are? A tenement house?"

Ziggy saw Mrs. Sullivan's thin face grow even tighter and her face pale. She turned on Ezra with a wrath Ziggy had never expected from her and certainly not to Ezra to whom no one ever raised their

voice. "Watch your tongue, Ezra Zeiskind. What did you say?"

Ziggy knew why she grew angry. Mrs. Sullivan lived in a tenement house, one step away from poverty. He had never seen any tenement houses for himself but he knew that they were places where poor people lived, cold small flats, with no privacy, linoleum floors, shared bathrooms, no heat, naked kitchens and bathtubs, sad places.

That night, after supper he had asked his mother about her.

"Where does Mrs. Sullivan live? Have you ever been there?"

Hannah eating by herself now that everyone had finished, looked up from her plate.

"Ach, somewhere on the North side. Near Parnell Square. Nah, I think she is ashamed to ask me. A few bare rooms. And what could I eat there, anyway. It's all treife. Besides, she has a husband I wouldn't wish on anyone. What a man. No Jewish man, would ever act like that."

Now Ziggy was curious.

"What? What does he do?"

Hannah looked embarrassed. "He takes her money for drink. Once, you know tateleh, she told me he beat her." Then, quickly trying to cover her tracks at her indiscretion, she added, "Now, don't say a word about this to her."

"I wouldn't. You know that." Ever the repository of his mother's stories, Ziggy shivered in fear. He pictured the bare empty room of their tenement house and poor thin Mrs. Sullivan cowering under the drunken temper of her bricklayer husband, his face distorted with

years of Guinness. He had seen people like him drunk on the streets, women too with their children pulling them home, their black shawls thrown over their heads. He had inherited the Jewish fear of drink and he recoiled with horror as he saw them on a Saturday night reeling home, falling against the wall, hands outstretched to stop their fall, vomiting or urinating in the streets. Outside his bedroom window, he could hear them singing football songs or picking fights with each other or with imaginary others. Then they would get up on a Sunday in their thousands, steaming out of areas that Jews would never go into like KImmage and stagger into Church. Their wives, tired looking coming after them, dragging their six or seven kids, huge Catholic families. How could they do it? He thought. He didn't understand.

Ziggy had visions of Mr. Sullivan taking a strap to his wife like Mr. Cassidy and the teachers at Zion Schoools did to him and his fellow students, thick leather straps, and giving her six lashes, and he winced at the thought. Did she have to stick out her hand, too? He felt awful. He had never heard of a man hitting a wife. Even when his parents fought, they fought only with words, shouting at each other in a mixture of Yiddish and English. However loud the arguments got, he had never seen his father raise his hands to his mother.

"Poor Mrs. Sullivan," Ziggy said. "Can't she leave him?" He asked as he stretched out his hand for another piece of cake. His mother slapped it away as she moved the plate of raisin buns to the other side of the table. "That's enough of that now. Leave some for

company."

"Why can't she leave him?" Ziggy asked again. As much as he feared his own parent's breakup, he would not want his mother to stay if his father hit her.

"She wanted to leave him, she told me," continued his mother getting up from the table and taking the dishes to the sink. "She told me she went to the priest and he told her that this was her burden from God and she should bear it well. She would earn her reward in heaven. Have you ever heard such a thing? Such nareshkite, such nonsense. But what can I say? It's her religion. Those galochem..." she said referring to the priests.

Ziggy, too, found the priests to be mysterious beings, men in black clothes with strange white collars whom everyone addressed as "Father." Even he had said it once to a priest who had asked him for directions, "It's down there, Father." He felt odd doing it. One time Ezra had dressed up like one for the holiday of Purim and walked down the street and everyone he passed had said, "Good morning, Father," to him. Only Ezra would do something like that, everyone said, though Hannah was not too pleased with her oldest son's antics. "Luckily, none of their neighbors had seen him, that's all I have to say," though she could be seen stifling a smile. Ziggy too admired his brother's audacity. He could never do anything like that.

"How the priest could look at her and tell her that, I don't know," Hannah continued. "They're all the same, that Archbishop McQuaid

or the Pope. Look what he did for the Jews in the war. Ach!" She digressed on to her own topics.

Turning on the tap and letting the hot water run over the dishes, she continued, "Still, she gets up each morning to go to Mass. Can you believe it? She hides her money from her husband when she can but gives it away to the Church. Can you believe such a thing? I don't know how she puts up with such bad luck. I wouldn't wish her life on a dog.

"Does she have any children? " Ziggy asked, bringing over another plate to the sink.

"There too, no luck. You know, tateleh, she had a son. Paul, I think, was his name and he was going to be a priest. She showed me a picture of him once A lovely boy and he got tuberculosis and died. He was twenty one. Not a baby but still..." and her voice trailed off. "And yet I'll say this for her. She never complains. Not a word."

Ziggy felt sad again. Poor Mrs. Sullivan. How could she live like that? It all seemed so sad and empty to Ziggy: a bare house, a cold faith, a harsh religion, no joy in anything. They had no real fun holidays, no great feasts like they did. He knew nothing of their faith but he imagined it was bleak, always kneeling on concrete floors. How could she live that way?

His mother finished drying the dishes and came back to sit by him. The fire was still warm in the range and the kitchen felt warm. Just the two of them. Intimate. There was no one else in the world

when they sat like that.

"They think it is always for the world to come, " his mother explained. He was amazed that they could believe such things. They at least had their own house and there was always food and family. Judaism believed in rewards in this world. Only the punishments waited. That part didn't make Ziggy too happy but he was sure he could have enough good deeds before he died so he would not get punished too badly.

"Does she have other children?"

"Ah, a beautiful girl, a sheine. Peggy. She came here once. One night, I think you were asleep. What a princess. A lady. So beautiful. She was tall, with gorgeous black hair and blue eyes, she was" His mother's voice trailed away and he knew that she was thinking of his sister, Aviva, gone away, lost somewhere. She would be thirteen now, four years older than him. Almost a young lady. He felt sorry for his mother. She missed Aviva every day. He put his hand on his mother's wrinkled palm. The skin felt hard. Years of cooking and washing had taken its toll. He didn't say anything but tears welled up in his eyes. He felt so powerless. He couldn't replace his sister, though sometimes he thought his mother wished he was a girl.

"Peggy, a real Irish name. No Jewish girl would be called Peggy." That's all his mother added. Ziggy was afraid to look at his mother's face. He was sure she was crying.

So Hannah relented and on the following Wednesday, her day

off, Mrs. Sullivan turned up to take Ziggy to Pims. She came all the way across town from the North Side to pick him up on the South Side of the city and then take him back again to town. Mrs. Sullivan wore a black coat and a black hat with a black pin through it. She had on a little lipstick and her brown hair looked freshly washed. It was obviously something special for her. Hannah helped Ziggy into his heavy overcoat and his woolen gloves. He put on his school cap. Ziggy knew it was special for his mother to let a stranger, especially a non-Jew, a shikseh, take her son. She gave Ziggy a few shillings in case he wanted something but Mrs. Sullivan brushed it away. "It's my treat, Mrs. Zeiskind."

Mrs. Sullivan took Ziggy by the hand. He felt strange walking with her that way. As they stood at the door, Mrs. Sullivan again reassured Hannah, " Now don't you worry. I'll have him back in time for supper."

As they walked to the 16 busstop, Mrs. Sullivan turned to Ziggy. "Are you excited to see Santa, Ziggy?" She asked. "Every boy should get to see Santa. It would be a shame to miss him and Mrs. Flaherty, my neighbor, told me that Pim's is really great this year. We could go to Arnott's or Clery's, I suppose, but I prefer Pim's. Went there as a child meself and took poor Paul,"-- crossing herself as she said his name--and Peggy there many a year."

"I've never been before. Me Ma doesn't take us," Ziggy said, his voice a mixture of defiance and explanation.

"Ah, sure don't I know," Mrs. Sullivan said, her voice full of kindness, "but there's nothing religious about it at all. It's only

Santa Claus. Do you know what he looks like?"

Ziggy said he did, though he wasn't at all sure.

Soon, the bus came and they sat downstairs. Mrs. Sullivan and Ziggy sat together. As they went by the Harold's Cross Church, she crossed herself as did most of the women in the bus. Ziggy felt conspicuous, especially since he was with someone who did it and almost began to do it himself but then stopped. Mrs. Sullivan took a mint out of her bag. "For my indigestion," she explained. She was always burping and holding her stomach. Ziggy worried that she might have cancer. They went over the bridge on the Royal Canal and Ziggy pointed out the Zion National School where he was in the second class and Clanbrassil Street where his mother did her shopping. Mrs. Sullivan nodded.

As soon as the bus turned Kelly's corner, they entered Camden Street and he saw the strings of lights that stretched across the street from store to store. They looked great. The lights formed crowns and sleighs and snow flakes. The ones he preferred were those that flicked on and off creating different images with different colors, blues, yellows, oranges and greens. "Now, isn't that lovely," Mrs. Sullivan said. "I love it when the lights go up. It makes everything real Christmassy. Let's get off a stop early and we can walk down and see all the Christmas windows. We can walk down one side and then the other when we come out."

And so they did. They looked in all the windows of the stores.

They all had fairy lights around them. He liked Cassady's the best. It had all the famous movie stars and he recognized some of them: Clark Gable and the other woman from Gone with the Wind and Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne from The Quiet Man. He had seen them both with his father at the Kenilworth Cinema. Some windows had a little stable with animals and a baby inside. He figured it had something to do with Jesus but he didn't want to ask. Others just sprinkled white powder and shiny stuff over their windows and had the usual models in winter clothes.

As far as Ziggy could tell, Pim's was a classy store at the end of George's Street just before it turned into Dame Street. They dawdled outside to look at the window which this year was full of Walt Disney characters, Snow White, Pinocchio and Goofy, who waved at the crowd. Ziggy was impressed by their movements but Mrs. Sullivan was eager to get inside and so they entered the store through the great glass doors and nodded to the doorman. Ziggy liked the size of the store and the way the counters were spread out and not cluttered together like in the other stores he had been in. Facing them was a huge marble staircase. Its steps were orange and black while the railing was polished brass. A sign up above the staircase read: "This way to the North Pole." Quickly they marched upstairs and joined the line full of parents and eager children. They moved along slowly and then entered a little bubble built like an igloo that was to take them to the North Pole. When they were all inside, it turned around and around and Ziggy felt a little dizzy. They got out and Ziggy saw a fat, roly-poly man dressed in

a red suit with a white beard. He wore a red hat on his head and seemed rather happy. Ziggy realized that this was Santa.

All the kids stood in line and one by one went up to him, sat on his lap and spoke to him. Ziggy wasn't expecting this part. He began to panic a little. He wasn't sure what would happen when he got there. What were they talking about? Was there a quiz? Would he be asked about whether he had gone to Church? Would he be asked to say some prayers? What would he do if Santa found out that he wasn't a Catholic? That he was a Jew? Would he say, "What's this Jewboy doing here?" He would be mocked and stoned. The Garda would come to take him away and it would be a scandal: A Jew coming to see Santa. Had Mrs. Sullivan trapped him? Frightened, he turned to her anyway. "What is he saying to them? Is he giving them a quiz?" Mrs. Sullivan looked surprised. "What? Sure he's only asking them if they were good during the year and you have been Ziggy haven't you, so you have nothing to worry about."

But Ziggy wasn't satisfied. "Is that all?" It didn't seem that worthwhile to come all this way for that.

Mrs. Sullivan was patience itself. "Oh, then he'll ask you what you want for Christmas?"

Ziggy didn't know anything what he wanted for Christmas. He had got some money for Chanukah and the few comic books that he wanted. He really didn't want anything else. Still, although, he hated to ask so many questions, he was still confused. What would he do if Santa

gave him a baby Jesus or a cross. He couldn't bring it home. He needed her support. "What will I say when he asks me?"

Mrs. Sullivan laughed gently. "Oh, don't be worryin' yourself. Ask him for a toy or a comic. He has a lot of stuff in that sack of his."

Ziggy suddenly noticed a big red sack beside Santa's chair. As each child left he took something wrapped from the sack and gave it to the child.

Ziggy relaxed but he was still anxious. Sure enough when it came time for Ziggy to go up, it was simple. Santa lifted him on to his lap. He was a big guy, though he seemed a little older up close. Ziggy could tell that the beard was fake and that the man was getting tired. Each child took two or three minutes and then they were off his lap and the next one was on. But he was cheerful.

He asked his name. Ziggy paused. His was such a Jewish name but he didn't want to say "Ezekiel" which was his real name so he just said, "Ziggy." The Santa gave him a funny look but just repeated, "'Ziggy,' why that's a fine name for a young man" and chuckled to himself.

To Ziggy's relief Santa didn't ask him if he had been to Church or even any of the prayers and Ziggy didn't tell him he was Jewish or that he had never been to see Santa before.

As Mrs. Sullivan had promised Santa, just asked in a thick Dublin brogue if he "was a good boy" and Ziggy nodded in the affirmative.

"Ah, sure you have," Santa said. "And since you have, what would you like for Christmas, little boy?"

Ziggy remembered Mrs. Sullivan's advice and so repeated:

"Oh, I'd like a comic book."

"A comic book. Well, let's see what we have here." Santa dipped into his sack and pulled out something wrapped. He handed it to Ziggy with the warning:

"Now, don't be openin' this before Christmas morning like a good boy." Ziggy nodded and got down from his lap and nodded.

"Gura Mile mahagut." He thanked Santa in Gaelic. Ziggy didn't know why.

"Slan leat." The Santa replied in Gaelic, suddenly a little more convivial.

"What did you get? Mrs. Sullivan asked. Ziggy showed her the wrapped parcel. "Well, isn't that nice."

Ziggy told her that the Santa said he was not to open it till Christmas morning.

But Mrs. Sullivan said: "Ah, we won't wait. We'll open it when you get home."

Before they left the store she took him to the restaurant for a cup of tea and an iced cake as well. He couldn't resist. He hoped his mother wouldn't mind. He felt worse when he saw Mrs. Sullivan open her purse and count out the change. He was sure he was taking food out of her mouth but Mrs. Sullivan seemed happy to be spending her

money with him and he looked at her with great kindness.

"Thanks, Mrs. Sullivan. This was great. I really enjoyed it."

"Sure, I did too and you're a lovely boy, Ziggy. It was my pleasure."

Ziggy knew that she meant it too.

"Did you have a good time, Ziggy." His mother asked when he got home and Mrs. Sullivan stood beside him.

"Yeah. It was fun."

With Mrs. Sullivan at his side, they opened the present but it was just a drawing book. Ziggy was disappointed but he didn't want to hurt Mrs. Sullivan's feelings and said he liked it.

Later his mother was more honest. "Santa! Feh. What nareshkeit. Stupid. But still, it was nice of her. It's not often that a shikseh would do something like that!"

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1954: THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

"Ma, did you come to Ireland because of sh'vester?" Ziggy Zeiskind asked his mother as he sat in the kitchen and beat the egg as hard as his seven year old hands could manage. Thursday was her cooking day when his mother prepared the food for the Sabbath, just as Wednesday was her shopping- in- town day and Sunday her laundry day. They had a whole afternoon to spend together as he didn't have to go back to school in the afternoon yet. That would start the next school year after he turned eight in September.

She had begun early in the day. Before he had left in the morning, his mother had already "started" the dough for the challah bread that would be used for the Sabbath table as well as the bagels and her own special concoction, tzibeleh bondes, bread with onions. As he ate his breakfast, Ziggy watched her pour the flour into a large basin and then scoop out a little crater into which she put yeast, eggs and oil and finally cover it all with a dishcloth. She had time, so she started on her repertoire of cakes: cheese, apple and raisin. After she put aside the dough, she started the fire in the range, unlike the other mornings when that was her first task. Ziggy knew that after she had cleaned the dishes, she went shopping in Clanbrassil Street, the Jewish center of Dublin to get the fish and the meat and other kosher items they needed.

When he got home, she already had lunch cooking, though as always she complained.

"Oy, ich bin zeir exhausted," she spoke in her mixture of Yiddish and English. All heavily accented. She sat at the table sipping on a cup of tea. " My arms. All that schlepping. I had to carry the bags up and the wind blew against me the whole time. So cold, like Winter. Who would think Pesach is two weeks away. Oy, so much to do."

Ziggy listened patiently as he always did to his mother. He wanted to empathize but really he looked forward to Passover with the changing of dishes, the upheaval in the house, the seders, the special foods his mother made like the beet jam and the imbelech, the carrot and almond concoction that tasted like sweets. His mother never seemed really happy. She was always complaining. If it wasn't about shopping, it was about his father, Simon, who wasn't home yet from school where he taught Hebrew. He was late and Ziggy knew his mother was saving her frustration for him.

He didn't mind not having his father there. He loved it when it was just the two of them, no father, no Ezra, his older brother, who went to school at Wesley College near St. Stephen's Green and only came home for lunch on Wednesday, his half day. They ate meat that day; the rest of the week they had a dairy meal, never mixing the two, even waiting three hours between eating anything milk or meat. They kept kosher; after all they were orthodox Jews. On Thursdays, the lunch was small because in the evening they had a huge meal, the fruit of Hannah's labors. Whatever their financial status, which was precarious at best,

the Zeiskind family was not starved for good food.

As they were cleaning up, his father came home. Hannah let him have it: "Why can't you come home like Ziggy. I have so much to do. I can't be cleaning dishes all afternoon."

Simon stood in the kitchen doorway.

"I can't even take my coat off and she starts with me. I'll wash the dishes," his accent as thickly Dublin as his wife's was Polish/Yiddish.

But Hannah was not going to be placated.

"That won't do. I need the kitchen clear. I have all the cooking to do."

Simon strode into the kitchen.

"Alright, alright, I'll take the food and eat in the front room."

He went to the fridge took some sour cream and cheese, a piece of stale bread and quickly made himself a cup of tea. Mother and son sat silently while the father busied himself. Then, balancing all in his hands, Simon went out, hooking his foot behind the kitchen door and slamming it shut. The dishes shook on the table.

Ziggy grew glum. Even though he understood his mother's side of things, he hated it when his parents argued like that. It frightened him. He lived in fear that one day his father or his mother would walk out and never return.

"Nu, tatalah," his mother broke into his thoughts. "You want to

help me this afternoon?"

Ziggy's mood immediately changed. He loved to help his mother in the kitchen. It was a special time together. She seemed most content then. In the kitchen on Thursdays, she turned into a magician. Besides bread, she made gefilte and fried fish, lokshen noodle pudding, chopped liver and sometimes even cholent with beans and honey, potato pudding and tzimmi of carrots and prunes. She cleaned the chickens and got them ready for roasting on Friday. Finally, she made deserts like stewed apples or plums. If she had time, she also made milcheche, a pastry with raisins and nuts that he loved to smear with butter. His father loved it too but was always taking the raisins out or a cheese cake made from her own cottage cheese. She drained the buttermilk out of muslin bags that hung on the line outside. Everything came with her personal guarantee: "It's the best I ever made."

Ziggy didn't need one. The kitchen became a magical kingdom of aromas and he her little apprentice like Mickey Mouse in Fantasia which he had seen with his father in the Kenilworth Cinema a few weeks back.

"I'll have a little rest," his mother said, sitting down at the table again with a fresh cup of tea, "and we'll start."

"Ok," Ziggy said. He had a comic he wanted to read, the new "Superman" and then he would be ready to start.

When he came down, his mother had already started on the fish. She scraped off the scales and snipped off the fins, then slit them open and took out what looked like veins, blue threads

covered in blood, and chopped off their heads. The fish stared at Ziggy with cold, dead eyes. She put all this in some newspaper and took it outside to the rubbish bin. Then she scooped out the insides and made the flesh into mush, rolling it into little balls. Some she put into water with carrots and onions which Ziggy knew he would taste later and tell her what it needed and some she left for frying just before they sat down for supper. She worked without a pause as Ziggy watched her in awe, amazed at her talents.

When she finished with the fish, she washed down the sink and moved to the table where the dough had risen in the basin. She took it out and began to knead it into loaves and braided some into challahs.

"Give it a few minutes and then you can paint them with egg and put some poppy seed on them," his mother said.

It was one of Ziggy's favorite tasks. His sister must have done the same with his mother until she had gone away and got lost. He wanted to take her place for his mother.

"Here make yourself busy. Beat me an egg," his mother said looking up from braiding the bread.

Ziggy ran to the cupboard.

He cracked the egg and took a fork and beat the yolk.

"Later, will you be a good boy and take the fish and bread to sh'vester.

Sh'vester , "sister" in Yiddish, was his aunt, Hannah's only living sister, the rest of her family, mother, father, sisters,

brother, nephews, nieces, cousins, all having died in the Holocaust in Poland. Ezra and Ziggy had ended up, like their mother, calling her sh'vester, a nickname just like "Ziggy" was short for his formal name "Ezekiel." Only his brother and his teachers used "Ezekiel." He never called her "aunt" or "auntie something" as he did with his father's sisters. He didn't know her given name for sure, though he sometimes heard someone use "Alma" or "Irma" around her. He only knew her married name because his father used it. He never called her sh'vester, instead referring to her more formally as Mrs. Reich.

Ziggy had mixed feelings about his aunt who acted like a Queen around the Zeiskinds. She was the one person his mother really cowered before. It amazed Ziggy to watch his mother, a person who ruled their house with full authority become a meek figure around sh'vester. Still, however imperiously sh'vester treated her sister, Hannah preferred her to the Zeiskind family from whom she kept a wary distance. Ziggy absorbed his mother's attitude about all their relatives. Still, he didn't like the fact that every Thursday, Hannah sent over mounds of food, bread, gefilte fish and cake to her sister's house all going into his cousin's bellies.

"Why can't sh'vester make her own food, she has a maid and all," he asked as he beat the egg.

Ziggy couldn't figure out why with their meager budget, his aunt got so much of their food.

"You don't understand these things," Hannah retorted. His mother

had already finished with the bread and now turned her attention to making the lokshen noodles for the pudding. She stretched out the dough till it was paper thin and then rolled it over.

"Can't she make her own?" Ziggy inquired. He beat the egg harder and then poured a little water into the mix so it could last longer. "She's rich enough," he blurted out.

Hannah looked at him, the knife poised, ready to start cutting.

"Sha," Hannah replied curtly. "I owe her a lot. I would not even be alive if it wasn't for her."

She began cutting the dough, rat-a-tat. She moved so fast, she always Ziggy that she would cut her fingers. He was not allowed to try that activity.

Ziggy felt ashamed of his pettiness. What did he know of before he was born. Ezra was no help here. "I don't remember" was his response. "Why do you worry about these things?"

His father also didn't help. Simon had no love for sh'vester who treated him with undisguised disdain. Still, Ziggy had never heard his father say a bad word about her and he spoke of her husband with respect to Ziggy:

"Mr. Reich was a good man. You know he helped me with the down payment for this house. I wanted a house and he got me a good price." But Simon was not a welcome guest in their house and when Hannah and her children went round there, Simon found an excuse to stay behind and when she came to theirs, he made himself scarce as he did the previous Sunday when she paid them an unexpected visit. Of course, it was the one time, father and son

hadn't gone to the cinema. Simon was dozing in the backroom chair when she came in.

"How are you, Simon?" She said, her accent not as perceptible as his mother's, though still present. She had lived in Ireland longer.

Simon startled, jumped up in the chair, gathering the papers around him. He acted like a caught mouse. "Fine, fine." Ziggy, who lay on the floor at his father's feet playing with a jigsaw, looked up at his aunt. She was a larger figure than his mother who stood just behind her, a good two or three inches taller, wider everywhere, a good ten years older than his mother. Her hair already grey while his mother's was still a dark brown. Sh'vester's green eyes gave her a harder glint than Hannah's warm brown ones. Still, she cut an impressive figure. On her fingers she wore several diamond rings and on her arm a bracelet of silver and diamonds. In her lobes, earrings with more diamonds. How different from his mother who just had her wedding band and a single diamond engagement ring which lay in her jewellery box upstairs. It was the only real piece of jewelry in the box. All the rest was junk. Sometimes, when she was out, Ziggy would slip the ring on his finger. It was too big for his hands. His mother had big stubby fingers.

She never came in without some piece of advice for his mother. Last week it had been the kitchen floor.

"Hannah, when are you getting a new carpet for this floor? You can trip on it!" She declared.

"I don't know," said Hannah. Ziggy had heard his mother discussing it with his father and arguing over the money for the floor. It was still covered with linolium which made it seem like a tenement house. Ziggy was angry with his aunt for embarrassing his mother like that.

"Did you talk to the manager at Roches Stores?" His aunt said. "I'll talk to him and he will give you a discount." His aunt knew all the managers and was always getting discounts and breaks.

Outside of Wednesday afternoon, when they went shopping together, a visit from his aunt was usual. Usually, it was his mother who went over there two or three times a week. Sometimes, Ziggy went with. How cold and empty his own house seemed after those trips to his aunt's. He couldn't help it. It was only a few streets away from their own but on a quieter street in a much better neighborhood. No buses went by her door like theirs. Her house was also bigger and brighter. It had three stories, with rooms running off right and left, a huge dining room the center dominated by a glistening chandelier and a living room that was bigger than the two front rooms in the Zeiskind house. The kitchen had a breakfast room off it. Upstairs there were six or seven bedrooms, enough for one each for her six children and the live-in maid. Each day the maid set the table for breakfast and dinner and the family sat down to eat off good china and silver knives and forks using the King's pattern, something that the Zeiskind's only did on Shabbat and holiday. The rest of the week they used whatever cutlery their family had collected over the

years, a real ragtag collection.

Once when his room was being decorated, Ziggy got to live in his aunt's house. He had a huge room to himself and loved coming down in the morning to breakfast. The first morning there, his aunt sitting in the breakfast nook, already dressed for going out, the jewels glistening on her fingers had pointed to a chair: "Here is your seat. Open your serviette and Mary will get you breakfast."

A serviette! It was like being at Buckingham Palace. Mary brought him in a half grapefruit with a cherry in the middle, then there was toast from a toaster, not fried in front of the range and an omelette and cereal with milk. It was a feast. Then Mary took the plates away. He didn't have to do anything! It made him feel that he was someone to sit in that house, not like his own which was smaller, a little dingy. They didn't even have carpets for the stairs and still covered them with hard linoleum as if they lived in a tenement house. His aunt's was covered from top to bottom in a rich warm grey carpet that never had a stain on it. It also had two large gardens at front and back. The front was boarded by rose trees but the back had enough space to play cricket on it.

But something wasn't right. He wanted to know more about his aunt and his mother's curious relationship to her.

"Ma, did you come to Dublin because of sh'vester?" he asked his mother again as he went to get out the paint brush to daub the

bread.

"Ah, Ziggy why do you ask me always these questions?" Hannah said as she went at the rolled up dough with a passion, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat. Prying information out of his mother about her past was always hard. Ziggy knew a little about his aunt. A cousin, Leonora, who was even bigger and richer than sh'vester, had brought her to England where she had married Jacob, a tailor. He was an older man. In rapid succession, they had six children, all much older than Ziggy. While the youngest, Andrew, was just a year old, Jacob was killed in a car accident. They buried him in Jerusalem but couldn't get to his grave because the Arabs had captured the Old City. Luckily, Jacob had made some wise investments and sh'vester found herself a rich widow, though with six children to support. By the time, Ziggy was three or four, only the daughter, Rachel, who Ziggy adored and the youngest still lived at home. The rest had moved to America, Israel and England, appearing at High Holiday time or for a wedding when Ziggy would find himself looking up at strange figures who were his cousins and who seemed to have a familiarity with him and his life.

"Ma, come on, tell me."

"What, what you want to know? I told you already so many times," Hannah said, getting up to stoke the fire. She opened up the side compartment. "Here, get the poppy seeds and sprinkle them on the bread. The fire is nice and hot now."

"No, you never told me," he was not going to be put off. "Did you come here because of sh'vester?", he asked again. He went to the cupboard and got the poppy seeds and then sprinkled them on the egg covered bread.

"Yes, yes, now does that satisfy you?" His mother answered.

"Finished?" She took the breads and placed them on greased pans and put them in the range. "Remember what time is it. I need to check on them in half an hour. Ziggy looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. It was three o'clock.

"You want some tea?" His mother asked but Ziggy was not going to be led astray.

"God, are you going to make me pull teeth," Ziggy asked surprised at his own language. He had picked up that phrase somewhere.

"Pull teeth? Was is dos." His mother said. And then seeing that Ziggy was going to pester her till she gave in, she said, "You are such a tschep! Alright. I came because of sh'vester. Now are you happy?!"

Why was it so difficult for her to talk? Why did she not want to tell him the story. His seven year old mind ran to the romantic, the extravagant. Was there a dark secret here somewhere? Was sh'vester blackmailing his mother?

"She saved my life twice. There are you happy!"

Ziggy was stunned. "Twice."

"Yes. I owe her my life."

"Was one time when you left Poland before the war?"

Ziggy sort of knew that story. Sh'vester was lonely in Ireland. She asked her sister to join her. It was early in 1935. Most of her family still lived in Poland but his mother was anxious to get out. What life was there for her in a tiny village and besides, she owed her sister her life.

"Have I told you about that trip? Oy, it was not fun. In those days, you had to cross Germany to get to England."

Ziggy had seen enough films about Nazi Germany to know what it was like. He could only imagine his mother, a little Jewish girl--how old was she? Twenty five?-- on a train full of Nazi soldiers. He would have been scared, too. But she was lucky. The rest had stayed behind and they were all dead now.

"Yes, yes. I heard that before." It was taking forever to get to the new story. He dreaded if the phone rang or someone knocked. It would take for ever to get the story again out of his mother. She only opened up once in a while.

Suddenly, Hannah smiled and said, "Now, don't tell anyone what I tell you. You can't tell anyone." Her face looked flushed from the heat in the kitchen.

Ziggy nodded seriously. Another secret he would share with his mother. He knew a number already that no one else knew, especially about her courtship with his father and the infamous "can of salmon." He loved that one and every time his father's family came over he had to stop himself from offering them a can of salmon like they had done on the night his parents came over to announce their engagement. But this was about his mother's

family--this was different.

"First," she said, "'Try this tateleh."

He was her "official taster" for whatever dish she had concocted.

Hannah held a spoon of the fish broth to his lips.

He blew on it before he sipped.

"Does it need more salt, more sugar, more pepper?" His mother asked with a hint of desperation in her voice. She needed it just right.

Ziggy said "more salt" and was delighted when his mother taking a sip herself said, "Yes, you're right. I thought the same."

She poured a few dabs of salt into the mix.

"I think I want to try a new recipe for cheese cake, Hannah suddenly announced. "I got this recipe from Mrs. Mandel. She uses cinnamon but I think ginger is better." Hannah was always in a friendly game of one-upmanship with her friends. When they all came in on Wednesdays from their shopping downtown, they would argue over recipes and taste.

She took down a book and a new basin and some cream cheese from the fridge.

"Ma, the story," Ziggy said, coming over to the table to watch his mother.

Hannah sighed. Slowly she mixed the cheese and egg and sugar and put some ginger in.

"Now remember, we were very poor. Yashanovka was a little village. No bigger than a few streets, the yiddin on one side, the goyim on the other."

"How big?" Ziggy needed more info. "As big as the community here?"

"Here? Dublin is a huge community, compared to us. But it was a different sort. I think I liked it better there."

Ziggy was afraid that his mother was going to get distracted and go off being negative about Dublin. She always acted like somehow she got trapped here. She reminded him of Ronald Coleman in Lost Horizon, never sure where she belonged.

"How big?" he repeated to get her back on track.

"Ah, a thousand maybe.

She went to the range to check the bread.

"Go on," Ziggy said.

"Well, you know how I make wine here." She referred to the vats of raisins and grapes kept in a cupboard under the steps. In the next week for Passover, they would open the bottles but right now the cupboard was full of bottles and strainers, slowly dripping the wine into bottles.

"Well, I learned that from bobba, your grandmother Yenta. But in Poland that was illegal. Anyway, one time the soldiers found our vats and wanted to take my mother to prison."

Ziggy had never heard this before. His bobba made potcheen. That was fun.

"But she knew that if she went to jail it would be for years, so she told my sister, Chaya," here his mother sighed at the memory of her sister, before continuing

"The one who died in the camps?" Ziggy said.

"Yes," his mother said, "along with her girls." She sighed and then went on, "Anyway, Bobba told Chaya to say that it was her fault. She was so pretty that bobba knew that they wouldn't put her in jail. But she had to go to Warshaw to plead for her and she was going to be gone for who knows how long. So, she went and sh'vester had to take care of me."

Hannah finished mixing. Holding out a fork to Ziggy she said, "Here, taste." Ziggy licked the spoon. "It tasted better with cinnamon."

"Yes, I think you're right. Ok, I'll put in the cinnamon. Perhaps I can save it"

"What was special about sh'vester taking care of you?" Ziggy was disappointed. "Ezra took care of me when you went to England last year for that wedding of cousin Michael's."

"Yes, but bobba ended up being there for six months and during that time the flu influenza broke out. Thousands died all over the place. It was 1918 and I was just eight or nine. Well, I would have caught it if not for sh'vester. Once I caught a fever and she stayed up for nights and days taking care of me. I would have died without her."

"I didn't know that." His respect for his aunt suddenly rose, though it was hard to imagine this imperious woman hovering over his poor mother and nursing her.

"I promised sh'vester that I would always repay her for my life. So, when she wrote that she was lonely here in Dublin, I felt that I had to come." And then she added, " You know I was engaged

at the time."

Wow! His mother had been engaged before. This was real news.

"But he didn't want to leave Poland. Bobba was also sure that something bad was coming. She was a smart lady and knew that Hitler would be bad, even in Poland. She told me to leave. She would have left too but my brother Avraham didn't want to leave. They would all be alive today if not for him. Ach. Enough. What's left to do? I have to get the dinner."

"NO! Just a bit more," Ziggy sat entranced. He didn't want the story to end. "What happened to him?"

"He died too. I decided to go. I owed her my life. I had promised her. I broke off the engagement and I left. I had made her a promise but..." She paused hesitatingly.

"But what..." Ziggy wanted to know.

"I may have promised too much."

"Are you sorry, you came?" Ziggy said.

"Oh no, tateleh," she said coming over to him and putting his head next to her bosom. She smelled of flour and egg and spices.

"Oh no. But later she made me promise again and I don't know.

Sometimes you promise too much."

"What promise? A second promise. Did she save your life again? Did you get sick again?"

But Hannah was getting restless. She looked at the clock. "Oy, its nearly half past four. I have still the herring to make. " She opened the door for the bread and took out the trays.

"Perfect," she pronounced looking at the brown breads.

"Ok. But finish the story quick."

"So what happened," he prodded his mother again.

Hannah stood over the kitchen sink and chopped up the herring.

"Well, when I got here, I was very lonely. I didn't speak the language. The Irish were very cold to me. You know I am no dummy and well, they thought someone from a little village in Poland was a fool or an ignoramus. But you know I had read books. I was an intellectual. I could discuss politics but they didn't want that from me."

Ziggy knew his mother's complaint. She believed that they got their brains from her and why not, except for their father, the Zeiskind hadn't amounted to anything much, so his mother said.

"All she wanted was for me to work in the store, to make food and care for the kids. It was no life for me," her voice took on an edge. She sighed heavily. "Why are you making me tell you these things. It only makes me sad."

Her eyes were full of tears.

"I'm sorry, Mammy, I don't mean to make you sad." Ziggy's eyes filled with tears too as he thought of his mother's sad life.

"Just finish the story," he begged. He sat at the table with nothing to do but listen to his mother.

"What's there to say? I didn't want to stay here. I hadn't got the right papers and every few months I had to leave the country, go to Leonora in Liverpool and wait till I could come back again. They drove me mad."

"Had you met Daddy then?"

"Yes. But I didn't want to marry him. I only decided to do that later. He kept on asking me. I felt it was the best thing to do.

Ah, you should have seen me then. I was slim. Not like now."

Ziggy had seen pictures of his mother in the collection in the dining room chest drawer. His mother was right. She looked real pretty. Now, her once slender figure had filled out, her hair prematurely streaked with grey.

"But I was not getting any younger. Already I was twenty nine. Time to get married. So I married your father."

How different from his own father's version which was more romantic: "The moment I met her I knew I wanted to marry her. I can't imagine what my life would have been like without your mother. She saved my life."

But his mother did not feel that way and when Ziggy saw them together, he wondered which version was the truth. Maybe it was the truth for both.

"Ziggy set the table."

He took out a tablecloth and then the milk dishes.

His mother put out the herring, the bread and took the fish from the pot. She took out the frying pan and put some oil in it and then broiling the other fish put them in the pan. They sizzled. The room, warm with the heat of the cooking, smelled delicious. He was getting hungry.

Hannah continued: "I went to sh'vester and told her I wanted to leave."

"When was this?"

"I don't know. 1937, I think. I wanted to go to Israel."

"Gee, then. But Israel was nothing then. "

"I know but we had cousins there, Sara and Menachem and I thought there were more Jews there and I could speak Yiddish and be more at home."

Ziggy wondered about that. He thought of himself as an Israeli soldier. He would be tall and handsome. Life would have been different then, that's for sure.

"Why didn't you think of America?"

His mother had finished and sat beside him at the table.

"But I didn't know anyone there and everything in America seemed so far away. Well, whatever, I didn't think of it. I just thought of Israel."

"So what happened?"

"Sh'vester wouldn't let me go. She reminded me of my promise.

How she cried. She saved my life. You can't leave me here. I didn't know what to do. At least I had her. She got me out of Poland. She loved me. She told me that Palestine was a dangerous place, that I wouldn't get a visa, that the British would not let me in, that I would have to work on a farm, I would get malaria, that Sara and Menachem were poor and wouldn't support me, who can remember what she said." Hannah's voice grew bitter when she spoke. She got up from the table and opened the range door and saw the lokshen pudding bubbling there. She turned to Ziggy, her face flushed from the flames, "Hand me a towel, tatele, I need

to take this out. It will burn."

She put the pudding on the sink to cool off.

"So you stayed. Are you sorry?"

"Oy, what a silly thing to say. Now I have you, darlink and my life here. What's done is done. A promise is a promise. There is no point in thinking of these things. Jacob died, I married your father, Ezra was born, Aviva" She stopped on the mention of her lost child. "I don't know. Who knew in those days that Israel would be a state, that things would be so different. Ah, what's done is done. So I stayed. I stayed. "

"I don't think sh'vester should have made you stay if you didn't want to," Ziggy said.

"Ah, what do you know?" When a sister or a brother asks you for something, you do it. "Wouldn't you do that for Ezra if he asked you?"

Ziggy wasn't that sure. Ezra would never ask him for anything, least of all to stay with him, of that was sure. He could hardly bear to be with him now.

"No, I wouldn't," he countered.

But his mother was not going to be put off. "Ah, yes you would. A brother is a brother, a sister is a sister. You would stay, I know you would. Just like I did. A promise is a serious thing and I had given my word. But, enough. Here, take the food to sh'vester."

Now, after hearing this story, he didn't want to go. His aunt was a bully. She had changed his mother's life. His mother would have

been happier anywhere else.

"Why can't Andrew come?"

But his mother didn't want a discussion.

"Just go, tatalah."

"But by the time I get back all the food will be gone. Ezra will eat everything!"

Hannah smiled.

"Don't worry. There's plenty. I'll save a fresh tzibeleh bonde for you and fry some of the fish when you get in."

"But...." Ziggy didn't even want to step foot in that house. He felt bad that he preferred it to his own.

His mother grew impatient. "They're waiting. Sh'vester will be hungry. Do it for me."

Burdened with guilt, he gave in. He was just like his mother, caving it at the last minute.

Loaded down with the food, in two separate bags that he had to carry in both arms, he went to his aunts. The bags were heavy and he had to pause and let them down every few yards. By the time he got to his aunts, he was tired and hungry. Mary opened the door but she didn't take the bags from him. He had to carry them into the kitchen himself. The final indignity. His aunt sat there, looking rested and well at ease.

"Ah, Ziggy," she said. "I thought we were going to starve, that your mother had forgotten about us."

Ziggy grew angry. There she sat with her fingers bedecked with jewels, while his mother slaved in the kitchen. Ziggy unloaded

the fish and bread onto the table. His aunt she went to the larder and took out a chocolate cake.

"Here, child. Give this to your mother. I made it this afternoon."

Ziggy took the cake even though he wanted to reject it. His mother baked all this food and all she got in return was one single chocolate cake which Ziggy didn't eat anyway. Ziggy hated chocolate! He was disgusted. The least she could do was not have his mother cook so much. Sh'vester no longer looked like a Queen but an ungrateful tyrant. She had trapped his mother. He looked around the kitchen and thought it wasn't fair. His mother deserved better. He wouldn't go to his aunt's again if he could help it. The spell was broken. 5909

1956 : THE EASIEST PLACE TO GET TO IN THE WORLD

All roads on the south side of Dublin led to the Jewish heart of the city: Clanbrassil Street. At least that's what ten year old Ziggy Zeiskind thought. At the bus stop on the Harold's Cross Road just around from his house on Kenilworth Park, he could take the 16, 16A and 17 that came from Terenure or the 49 and 49A from Tallaght where few Jews lived or the 65 that went to Stone Grange. At the other end of Kenilworth Park, on the lower Kimmage Road, he could get the 54, 54A and 55 and if he was down in Rialto or coming from the Greenville Road Synagogue, he could also get the 19, 22 and 22A. Clanbrassil Street was truly the easiest place to get to in the world.

It had to be, so that all the Jews in the city could shop there. Dublin Jews had any reason to shop anywhere else. They bought their groceries or meat there, stocking up for the Sabbath, the High Holidays or Passover. Where else could they buy kosher meat or foods? Where else could they feed on the latest gossip? Every Dublin Jewish woman or man had to go there at least once a week. Even the rich from Ballsbridge came there to do their shopping. The stores did well as every home in the Dublin Jewish community was a kosher one. The Chief Rabbi could visit at a moment's notice and feel safe eating off anyone's plates. Ziggy had never heard his mother warn him about not eating in anyone's house for fear it was not kosher, not even on Passover when people were especially particular.

One Thursday in the summer, as Ziggy sat at the kitchen table, he asked his mother,

"Can I go shopping with you?"

It was only July and he was bored already. He had read the new Superman already and all his other comic books, had been to Bray every Sunday and now had nothing to do. Going with his mother shopping in Clanbrassil Street would be fun. He was sure.

Hannah looked up from washing the breakfast dishes.

"What would you do there?" She asked.

Ziggy was honest: "I don't know." Then, said, "I could help you carry your bags." That would make him feel important.

Hannah thought for a moment. He would keep her company.

"Ok," she said. "You can be my little helper today."

"Good," Ziggy said. "I'll get dressed and we'll be ready to go."

He got up from the table and went upstairs to change.

As soon as his mother had prepared the dough for the challah bread, putting it in the large basin and covering it with a towel so that it would be ready by the time she got back, she took off her apron, put on her cloth coat and her black felt hat and was ready. Ziggy tugged at his mother's arm. He wanted her to go hurry so that they could catch the bus but Hannah moved slowly. She was thickset, somewhat overweight and couldn't move as fast as her ten year old.

"Don't rush me. If we miss this bus, we'll get another," she had said almost wheezing.

Ziggy was not convinced. Usually the busses came down the Harold's Cross Road all bunched up together. If they missed a group, they would be stuck waiting for a half hour before another one came down. He never could figure out how if the busses were

supposed to leave at definite intervals how they all arrived together. Luckily, they caught a 16 bus without waiting too long.

Since it was the beginning of the month, it would be a big shopping. On the first Wednesday of the month, his father, Simon, got paid. After he paid the mortgage and electric and gas bills-- he paid them straight away, "I don't want debts" he always said-- he took out a few pounds for what he needed, like cigarettes and then gave the rest to Hannah to buy food and whatever else she had on her list. She took care of all the other finances. The money had to last her the rest of the month. Today's shopping would be big. She had to get all the fish and meat for the Sabbath. Ziggy didn't care about these matters. He hadn't been shopping with his mother in a long time, not really since last summer and he was looking forward to it.

They got off at Leonard's Corner, called after the Leonard's store on the corner of the South Circular Road and the Harold's Cross Road. Hand in hand, they crossed the South Circular Road and started the slow trek down Clanbrassil Street. Shopping on Clanbrassil Street was no easy matter. It was like a safari, a trip into a jungle. It required a lot of patience and energy. Although, navigating the short few blocks could take an hour or two. Already at only half past ten, it was crowded full of people, most of them Jews. All the Jewish stores were on one side of the street. The one nearest the corner, after Lynn's Pawnshop-- which his mother swore they would never go into--was Schmerzman's.

As they started to go in, they heard a voice calling "Mrs. Zeiskind, Mrs. Zeiskind."

They turned around.

"Mrs. Stone," Hannah said in her warmest tones. "Good morgen."

Immediately, the well-dressed lady and Hannah began talking rapidly in a mixture of English and Yiddish, Hannah's native tongue. Although she had left her native Poland for Ireland a good twenty years before, she preferred speaking Yiddish over English. Polish she never used. She couldn't even remember it.

"Nu, what do you expect? We only spoke Polish when we dealt with the police. The rest of the time, we spoke Yiddish," she explained to Ziggy when he asked her once to say something in Polish and all she could say was Dovadenza, which she said meant "God be with you." It was like the Gaelic he learned in school. They never used it outside of the classroom and there was no one to speak it to.

Nonetheless, even after all these years, her English was heavily accented. When she got flustered, she forgot it and lapsed into Yiddish. She never even liked talking to non-Jews because she knew that she didn't sound like a native.

Except for a few words, Ziggy didn't understand Yiddish. She and his father used it when they didn't want him to know something. It frustrated him but he respected his parents decision. Even his older brother, Ezra couldn't speak it.

Ziggy watched in amazement at how friendly his mother was with Mrs Stone. At home, his mother had nothing good to say about her.

Sometimes, his mother totally confused him. She said one thing in private and then another in public. Ziggy never knew where he stood with her.

"Why did she change her name?" His mother had asked his father who reading the paper had simply shrugged. "What's wrong with 'Stein.' It's a good Jewish name. Ireland has a lot of Steins. What's one more?"

"How do I know?" his father answered, ruffling the pages loudly. "It's none of my business."

"Ach," his mother said unsatisfied and turning to her son who sat at the kitchen table eating some challah sprinkled with sugar said, "they get a some money and forget where they come from. I know the little town she came from in Poland. No more than a village with one mud street and now look at her, fur coat, jewels, even on the warmest day. Feh."

Ziggy looked at Mrs. Stone with her well groomed hair and powdered face. His mother didn't wear make up to go shopping and her face showed her lines and furrowed brow. She only put on make up to go to a barmitzvah or a wedding. Mrs. Stone was not as flashily dressed as his mother had led him to believe. She certainly didn't wear a fur coat, even on this warm day. On each of her fingers she wore a ring with some stone and on her arm a heavy diamond bracelet. She reminded Ziggy of his mother's sister, sh'vester who always wore jewels even when she washed dishes. Still, Mrs. Stone talked to his mother animatedly. "Wasn't the food at the Bambinger barmitzvah awful" said Mrs.

stone. "We need another caterer. Mrs. Dinkstein is getting too old for these things. She should hire some help. She just can't handle these large functions. There must have been 250 there."

"And they stuck us by the door," Hannah said, ignoring the last comment. "Imagine! Simon taught the boy and we were nearly out the door. I wanted to go but Simon wouldn't leave."

Ziggy remembered his mother coming home enraged at the way she had been treated. She always felt that she was never being treated right by the community.

Every wedding or barmitzvah was identical. They used Greenville Hall, a huge draft shack next door to the Greenville Synagogue. Even non-members used it because it was the only reasonably sized Jewish hall in Dublin. Sometimes Adelaide Road synagogue members used a hotel, like the Shelbourne or the Gresham where his father earned a few extra pounds being a mashgiach, making sure that everything was kosher. He always came home yelling at no one in particular, " You could still smell the treife."

For Jewish functions Mrs. Dinkstein made all the food. His mother hated her cooking and made Ziggy eat a full meal before he went, "so he wouldn't be hungry." Then they had to sit through hours of speeches. Every Rabbi in the community had to speak, from the Chief Rabbi to the Rabbi of the synagogue and each of them took twenty minutes at least. Finally after that, they usually had a small band, Myra Kleinman and her trio. People laughed at Myra who tried to look Marilyn Monroe. They hired her anyway. It was a Dublin tradition and no one wanted to be the

first to break it.

"And Dayan Frumer?" said Mrs. Stone. "That man should be shot."

"Mrs. Davies told me that they weren't going to ask him to speak."

"What can you do?" said Hannah. "He's a Rabbi and if you ask Rabbi Jacobovitz to speak, you have to ask him. But he does ramble on."

Because, Dayan Frumer ensured that every item sold in the Jewish stores was kosher, no one wanted to cross him in any way.

"Remember the time when he stood up and said, 'Last time I made a mess but today, I brought paper,'" said Mrs. Stone. They laughed.

"Or the time, he told Mrs. Gruven that she was the finest woman who ever walked the streets," said Hannah. They laughed again.

"Can you believe that his sister-in-law still doesn't speak to him after all these years?" Mrs. Stone said.

When the young Rabbi had first come to Dublin, he had dated the eldest of the two Nandlestam sisters, the daughters of a Dublin Rabbi. Then he married the youngest of them. The other one locked herself in her house and never came out.

Ziggy grew a little jealous of the way this lady was taking attention away from him. He tugged at his mother's arm.

"Ma, let's go."

But Hannah didn't move. "Sha, in a minute," she replied waving him away and turned back to Mrs. Stone. "Don't be so impatient."

"I wish Kopul Rosen was still here," said his mother. "Now he could really speak. What a mensch. But like all the good Rabbis

they leave here." She clutched her bag to herself and suddenly hugged Ziggy. Ziggy smiled up at his mother.

"That college he started is wonderful though," said Mrs. Stone. Rosen had started a Jewish college on the lines of Eton outside London. "But who can afford it," she continued. "I wanted to send my Franklin there but the prices... We would be bankrupt in a year."

"Kopul is such a mensch. You know he always comes in here for a cup of tea when he is Dublin." Hannah interrupted. Her voice sounded proud for a change.

"So sad about his parents," said Mrs. Stone.

"What happened to them?" Interrupted Ziggy. They all looked at him as if they had forgotten he was there.

"Ah, long before you were born. Your mother had barely arrived in this country. said Mrs. Stone. "His parents were old. They put the challahs in the over for shabbos, went up for a rest and the gas went out in the oven. They died in their sleep."

Ziggy now remembered. His mother still had the clipping from the newspaper about their deaths in a box upstairs.

"Such lovely people," said his mother. "They don't make them like that anymore."

"Your father-in-law is the last of them," said Mrs. Mandel.

"Old-man Stein" as he was known had a house in the South Circular Road which always had an open door. His Passover seders were notorious for going on for hours, long after everyone else's had ended. Young kids would get up from their own tables and walk

down to his house to join the end of the Stein seder.

"Ah, enough. I have shopping to do and Ziggy is getting restless," Hannah said.

As they parted, Mrs. Stone squeezed Ziggy's cheek. He smelled her rich perfume.

They went into Mr. Schmerzman's store. Mr. Schmerzman was an old man from the "heim" who wore a big black yarmulke which covered the last remaining strands of hair on his head. To Ziggy, he looked ancient. His glasses hung down over his nose and almost to his mustache and he stooped over. His wife always had to get the products from the upper shelves. The store was dark--with barely any light and so small that it could hardly hold more than three people at a time. Ziggy thought the place was gloomy but his mother told him to have respect.

"He was in Bergen-Belsen. His wife too. They were lucky to get out alive. You can't imagine what that concentration camp was like, tatelah. He has had a terrible life. I wouldn't wish it on a dog."

Ziggy fell silent, ashamed of his snobbery.

Hannah usually bought some small items there that she could have gotten elsewhere like a pack of shabbat candles, sugar, matches, nothing special. She wanted to support Mr. Schmerzman. His shelves were not well stocked. Still, he made a living. But it wasn't just shopping that went on there. Again, his mother spent time talking in Yiddish to him or his wife as the customers came and went. The only item Ziggy wanted to get there was

shmalitze herring which the store owner kept in a large barrel of brine. He would stick his hand in and pull out one and then run his hands clean on his apron that was stained with scales and salt water. Ziggy liked the taste of the salted herring ever since his father had run it over his lips when he was a baby--a Zeiskind tradition.

They passed Mrs. Dinsky's millinery shop. Hannah never shopped there. If she wanted threads for her embroidery, she went downtown to Arnott's or Switzer's. As far as Ziggy could figure out, Mrs. Dinsky had slighted his mother by not inviting her to her son's barmitzvah and so they had fereble, they never talked to each other. They went on to the butchers. There were five thriving kosher butcher shops on the street: Blackman's, Goldfarb's, Eagleman's and the two Robertson brothers who had shops on opposite sides of the street. They weren't rivals. Each had enough business to keep them happy. Hannah went to Jacob Robinson's. Ziggy didn't know why since they always argued. Jacob had a terrible temper.

Hannah looked at the chicken and asked the price. When Jacob told her, Hannah 'tsked' and complained.

Jacob was having none of it.

"Listen, Mrs. Zeiskind, take the chicken and stop "tchepping" me. I haven't got all day. Ah,, Mrs. Abrahamson, so nice to see you." His mother bristled as Jacob turned to the wife of the Chair of the Representative Council, the most important committee in the community. She lived in Ballsbridge.

Hannah counted out the shillings and pennies from her purse.

"Are you sure that you can't throw in a little more "gribbenez," she added one more time. "This one looks like it has a lot of fat on it."

"IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, GO TO GOLDFARB'S! " Jacob yelled so the store heard but no one paid any attention, least of all Hannah, He yelled at them all. Ziggy cringed. He wished his mother wouldn't argue over money. It made him feel poor.

"Still," Hannah said as they left the store, "it's the best."

Ziggy preferred the more modern Gretz's--"Gretz's for Great Food"--even though Darla Gretz, its owner, displayed her goods haphazardly and never could find what she was looking for.

As they came in the door and the little bell rang, Darla was yelling to her non-Jewish helped: "Shamus, can you find the lockshen?"

"It's behind the kuchen, missus," came the answer from behind the boxes. The Irishman had a big nose and bright red face. He scared Ziggy. Still, he was amazed how the non-Jewish help could rattle off the strange names of Jewish foods in their thick Irish brogues. Shamus then turned to his young helper, Padrig, whom he saw putting the salami next to a milk item and warned him

"Now don't be putting the cheese next to the vursht." "

After years of practice, the help knew all the rules about mixing meat and milk. They were even experts on the holidays and the foods that went with them.

"Ah, Mrs. Gretz, we'll have to be getting in the Rosh Hashanah order soon. It's very early this year. You better order more of the mandelach or you'll run short again like last year."

Still, Ziggy always worried that one day the goyim would turn on the Jews and tell the priests that they "eat strange foods that no true Christian human being would want to touch." He couldn't help feeling that way. He got it from his mother.

In the store they met Mrs. Mandel, one of Hannah's downtown shopping partners. She was a thin woman who wore a shetil, a wig that denoted that she was a married woman. Few of the orthodox women in Dublin still wore them. Ziggy liked her. She was like a lot of his mother's friends. They were around around the same age, in their early fifties and from the same type of background: Some were refugees, like his mother, and others had married men who lived here already. Somehow or other they had landed up in Dublin. They were like most of the community that way. He suspected his mother was a little jealous of Mrs. Mandel. They had started out together, poor immigrants but as the years passed and the Mandels got richer and moved to nicer houses, Hannah was being left behind.

Mrs. Mandel had gossip. "You know I just saw old man Schoenberg walking alone the South Circular Road. He looked so shabby. It's a shanda. His sons don't take care of him at all and him a lovely man."

Hannah came to their defense. "But they don't live here. What can they do? They wanted him to go to Israel with them but he

refused. Said he was born here and would die here."

"At least put him in the Old Age Home," Ziggy piped in. He hated the place. The community had just opened one. Already it was full of senile women and it smelled.

Both women turned on him. Mrs. Mandel glared at him, "It's a child's duty to take care of his parents."

His mother joined it, "I would kill myself before I go in there. If you or Ezra ever do that to me, I would kill myself." Her voice had such vehemence that it scared Ziggy. Ziggy felt that a promise had been extracted from him. He could never let his mother die alone or have his father walk around without a son to care for him. He was sure it would never happen. Soon the women parted company.

Ziggy and his mother crossed over to the non-Jewish side of the street and entered Mrs. Byrne's fish store. It was tiny like an underground cavern. Mrs. Byrne had a corner on the market. All the Jews shopped there. She had the only fish store on the street and it saved everyone going to Camden Street. They could get all their shopping in one place. Mrs. Byrne a tiny woman, her apron covered with fish scales, was helped by her daughter Moira who slapped down whole salmon, trout, sole, haddock and place and cut them up as the women stood around, arguing, bargaining. "Oy, such prices today."

"It would be cheaper for me to get a boat and go out to sea myself...."

"Is that the largest salmon you have? I have a bar mitzvah next

weekend and I have out of town guests. How will I serve them?"

"Oy, I had the best gefilte fish last week, just add a bit of garlic. A mechaya. Delicious."

"Next?" Mrs. Byrne asked. No one followed any order. It was strictly who could shout the loudest or push themselves forward to the scale covered counter with its bloodstained weighing scale. The housewives preferred to stand around and gossip, until someone noticed that they were running late.

"Oy, "I'll miss my bus, Freyda. Do you mind if I go first?"

"Mrs. Byrne, what's good today?"

Hannah picked up all the town's gossip there and she reported it in dribs and drabs to her sister or her husband over the next few days at the Friday night table or on Saturday afternoons when she went around to her Der sh'vester.

"Has du ge hert, have you heard..." Mrs. Finkelstein, an elderly woman who stood at the back gossiping more than shopping, told her,Shmuel Dickman is going to America."

"No," Hannah said. "Well, what's for him here. He couldn't make a go of it. Doesn't he have a brother in New York? I hope he has some mazal, some luck, there"

Ziggy got shoved aside and lost track of his mother's conversation.

But the cavern was not short of voices.

"Can you believe what the Chief Rabbi's wife told my husband last week? She thinks that her husband should get free meat?!"

Her companion replied: "What a chutzpah! They get enough already

from the community: a free house and car. Why when Rabbi Herzog was Chief Rabbi, now his wife was a lady! You could go to her house anytime. Always time for a chat. She was a gem. Still another woman joined in:

"Sadie, you know my sister-in-law, saw Mrs. Herzog in Israel last week and she said she misses all of us and we can visit her next time we are there. A real lady."

"Sadie is in Israel? I didn't know that. For how long?"

"Next," cried Moira Byrne.

Some of the women patted Ziggy on the head or pinched his cheek.

"Out shopping with your mother, that's nice. Will you carry home the bag for her?" things like that.

Mrs. Friedman was there. Her son, Gabriel, was Ziggy's best friend. She was real nice. "Come around this afternoon and play with Gabriel," she invited.

Ziggy was about to answer when he suddenly heard another familiar name and turned to hear more.

"I hear that Bobby Briscoe might be Lord Mayor."

He recognized Mrs. Mendelsohn, the wife of the President of the Terenure synagogue. Everyone knew her. She came to services in the brightest dresses, her blond hair coiffed to look like Diana Dors with such heavy thick make up on her that even from his seat downstairs in the male section, Ziggy could see the color of her lipstick.

Mrs. Mendelsohn's comment soon got everyone's attention.

Said one lady. "What! That will be the day that they elect a Jew

Lord Mayor."

Another countered with: "Better he should take care of his daughter. Can you believe that she entered a convent!"

To his surprise, Ziggy heard his mother say, "Well, at least she does no harm there. Better that, than she marries a yock."

"Shah," said Mrs. Davis who looked at Hannah with disdain.

But Hannah did not back down: Ich hob nit kein meire. Why should I be afraid?"

Sometimes his mother amazed him.

Still, he was getting restless again. He was bored. He had seen no other kids with their mothers. It wasn't as much fun as he thought it would be. The store felt clammy. Besides, he was getting hungry. He tugged at his mother's sleeve. "It's getting late."

"Oh. okay," his mother said and nudged her way to the front.

Mrs. Byrne recognized her.

"Ah, Mrs. Zeiskind. And how are you today?"

Hannah seemed pleased to be greeted by name.

"Fine, good enough. What have you got for me, and not too expensive." She eyed the fish in front of her. "Ah, the salmon looks good."

Mrs. Byrne nodded and pulled back the fins. "Fresh this morning.

Look at how pink it is. "

Ziggy wondered how Mrs. Byrne a slip of a woman handled all these customers. She looked exhausted.

But by the time she finished, Hannah had bought a few place, some

haddock and a sole. Ziggy couldn't wait till they got home. As soon as his mother had rested, she would spend the afternoon making the fresh fried fish and boiled gefilte fish. After she had chopped and boned the fish, she added salt and pepper and then later would call him in to taste the fish soup. He looked forward to it. He loved Thursday evenings even better than Fridays. The kitchen smelled like heaven.

As Hannah went to life her bags, Ziggy piped up:

"Let me carry it Mammy," Ziggy offered. "That's why I came." He could hear the murmur of appreciation from the women: "Such a good little boy. A real mensh. Your mother can be real proud of you. "

"Are you sure you can manage?" Hannah asked.

"Sure," her son said. He felt grown up as he took the bag of groceries from his mother. It weighed a ton but he didn't complain. He wanted to prove that he could be a help, that he could carry out the hardest task. The other bag was full of the fish and smelled, so Hannah put her purse in the bag Ziggy carried.

They crossed back to the "Jewish" side. No time for gossip now. They had to be home in time for lunch. They were lucky, a 49 bus came along. They didn't usually take it as it only came along every hour but since it stopped on Clanbrassil Street itself they wouldn't have to walk back to Leonard's Corner.

"Ah, we are lucky today," his mother said. "That's because you are with me."

The bus was crowded but a nice lady made a space for them on the long seat near the door.

"Here, Missus, sit yourself down and you, young fella," she said as she scrunched up to make room for them. She was thin and wore a plain coat with a colored scarf over her head.

Ziggy sat beside her. His mother beside him.

"Ziggy, pay for the tickets," his mother said. "My hands are dirty with the smell of fish."

Ziggy opened the purse and took out some change, gave it to the busman and put the purse back. He held on to the tickets.

He turned to his mother.

"What will you make tonight. Can I help in the kitchen?"

"Of course, tatalah. I always enjoy having you with me. You can paint the challahs and taste the soup, like always. Maybe I'll make you a surprise."

As they were talking, the bus came to the next stop and the lady beside her at the last minute jumped up and got off the bus. Now they had more room. They got off a few stops later and walked up to their house. He went ahead of his mother and used his key to let himself in. When he got into the kitchen, he put the bag on the table and went to fill the kettle to make his mother some tea. The dough had risen and he put his finger in it. It popped like a balloon and the newly risen dough started to sink. He sucked on his finger, tasting the tart dough. He hoped his mother wouldn't be too angry with him for his mischief.

Hannah came in as he was putting the kettle on the gas.

she put her bag with fish on the sink counter and then looked inside the bag of groceries that Ziggy had carried.

"Ziggy," she said, her voice strained. "Where's my purse? Didn't you have it in your bag?"

Ziggy turned from the tap.

"It should be in there."

"No," Hannah frantically emptying the groceries on the table.

There was no purse.

Ziggy looked again. His heart beat rapidly.

Hannah fell into a chair. She had aged years in the few minutes.

"My purse. Ich hob given gegant. It's been stolen. Oy," she lapsed into Yiddish.

Ziggy grasped at straws. "Maybe it fell out on the bus? Someone might see it and report it."

But Hannah was not convinced. "Why? It had no name it and it was full of money. Oh, why did I take all the money with me?!"

Ziggy wanted to believe the best.

"But no one would steal it?"

Hannah thought otherwise. Close to tears, she said, "It was that shiksa beside us in the bus. She saw the purse. That's why she got off so quickly. Oy, what will your father say?"

Suddenly the kettle sang and they both jumped.

Ziggy needed to do something.

"Mammy, do you want some tea," he said quietly.

Hannah looked like she was going to faint.

"Yes, tatalah. Please."

ziggy ran to do her bidding. He poured the water over the tea strainer and put in some milk and two lumps of sugar. Hannah wrung her hands in her lap, swaying back and forth.

"What will I do? How will we eat? How could I have been so foolish."

Ziggy wanted to run. He knew it was his fault. If he hadn't been with his mother, if he hadn't carried the groceries none of this would have happened. He looked at his mother, the blood drained from her face. It frightened him. He felt helpless. He wondered what would happen now. Gone was the great Thursday evening feast. They would be evicted and starve.

"What will we do?" "What will we do?" his mother asked rhetorically. "What will we do?"

Ziggy felt so helpless. He crept out of the kitchen and went to his room upstairs and lay on the bed. He stared at the ceiling. He was frightened for what would happen when his father came home, when Ezra found out. He didn't mean it to happen. He wanted to die. It's all my fault, he thought. If I hadn't tried to be such a big shot and carry the bag it never would have happened. "I'll never go shopping there again," he vowed.

He turned his face to the wall and wept tears of guilt, of shame and regret.

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1956: "IRELAND, IRELAND."

Ziggy liked the Sunday mornings in Winter best when he could lie in. As soon as he heard his mother go downstairs, he dashed from his bed through the cold house and scrambled under the covers, holding his legs to his chin till he grew warm. The bed still smelled of his mother, a little rank and unperfumed, but with a lingering warmth. He found it comforting. He never rolled over onto his father's side. His side was cold. His father had been up for hours, gone to services and then to teach his barmitzvah students. He wouldn't come back till lunch time.

As he lay there, Ziggy heard his mother in the kitchen downstairs getting the fire ready. She had to start early if she wanted to get the laundry done before lunch. Sometimes, during the school week, he had ~~helped~~ started the fire, so he knew every stage of the chore. First brushed ~~out~~ the ashes of the dead fire, then set up the wood and paper for the new. ^{then light the pipe} She was better at it than he and usually didn't have to try more than once. Then she added the coal and later on the "slack," which made the fire burn more slowly.

By the time he got up, the kitchen was like a steam bath with basins filled with water on the range so she didn't have to use so much of the hot water from the tap. The kitchen looked like a regular laundry with different piles of clothes strewn across the red linoleum floor: whites, colors, linens and woolens, sheets, shirts and tablecloths, socks and towels. Mounds of clothes, hers, his, his father's and his older brother Ezra's.

When he came in, his mother was pounding the sheets in the kitchen sink. She punched and kneaded them. Then she took a basin, filled it with cold water, poured bleach in and mixed it up and then placed the sheets in it and placed the basin on the range to boil.

"There, I can rest for a moment," she said brushing her hair back from her face. She heaved a little, her ample bosom rising and falling.

She turned to her son.

"Some people have an easy life, I see," she said but without malice in her voice. "Some breakfast, tatalah. Here make some toast from the challah, though you could eat it like it is. It's still fresh."

Ziggy cut a piece of the bread and stuck it on a fork. He then turned the chair from the table, snuggled up to the fire and toasted the bread in front of the grill.

His mother sat at the table and look mournfully at the clothes.

"Oy, so much to do. "Ach, I hate Sundays," Hannah said. He heard the same every Sunday morning and his mother's moans never failed to strike a chord in his heart.

"Thursdays are so much better, even if the work is just as hard."

Ziggy agreed. On Thursdays, she prepared all the food for the weekend. Before he started school in the afternoons, he sat in the kitchen and watched his mother prepare her galaxy of delicacies. Those days were gone. Although they talked a lot during the week, Sunday was the only fixed time for them to talk.

He loved talking to his mother. Ever since he was a child, his mother had spoken to him and confided in him about whatever was on his mother's mind. Sometimes she described the play she had gone to see at the Abbey and sometimes about the family. He felt closest to her then. He never said much. Just listened or repeated back what she said. He soaked in her attitudes and ideas so readily that for years he never figured out where he ended and his mother began. At other times, he simply had to ask a question that he knew would lead to another insight. It came to him naturally. He, on the other hand, never shared his feelings with anyone but no one seemed to notice. He was a better listener than talker.

The kitchen was made for gossip and chatter. Almost as good as Sundays were Wednesdays when all the ladies who went shopping with his mother ended up in their house: Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Mandel and Mrs. Allis, along with his aunt, all gabbering in Yiddish. How he loved to listen to them as they shared what they had heard in the community, especially the scandals. Since they spoke in a mixture of Yiddish and English, he couldn't grasp everything they said. He preferred the times alone with his mother, though Wednesdays were more like a holiday for her, a mid-week treat. So different from Sundays when Hannah rarely got a break. She had to do all the laundry by hand. Her husband, Simon refused in that obstinate manner of his, to break down and buy her a washing machine. He wouldn't budge on the issue.

"Don't ask me anymore," he shouted at her again earlier in the

week. "I don't have any money. It's too expensive. Over a hundred pounds. Where would I get that kind of money?"

ziggy upstairs in his bedroom heard the yelling. He put his hands over his ears. He hated when they argued. But he could still hear them clearly.

Trembling, he came out on the landing.

"Stop fighting," he called out, near to tears.

His mother came out of the kitchen.

"It's alright, tatalah, we're just talking. Go back to bed."

He went back but the arguing continued. His mother had left the door open and he could hear it all.

"I'm going to sh'vester," he finally heard her say. She was going to her sister who lived a few streets away on Westfield Road.

"Go then," Simon replied. "And don't hurry back." "

I won't."

Ziggy heard the door slam. Panic stricken he ran into his parent's bedroom which was next to his and craned his neck to get a last glimpse of his mother's receding frame as she turned the corner of Kenilworth Park into Clareville Avenue. Depressed, he went back to bed. Although his parents carried on like this at least once a week, Ziggy felt frightened whenever he heard his mother leave in a bad mood. He worried that she would never return and he would have to leave home and move into sh'vester's with her. But his mother was always there the next morning, the fire burning and his breakfast ready. Still, he could not let go of the ritual. He was worried that if he didn't look, she would

not return!

She looked up through the kitchen window.

"Ah, the sun has come out. I can hang out the sheets. Get me the mangle.

He went to the yard and wheeled in the mangle. It was old and the handle was hard to turn. She had to put all the clothes through a mangle before hanging them out to dry. That took her the most time. He would have helped but his ten year old arms couldn't turn the handle. His mother had big arms but still it took all her energy.

His mother took the sheets and began to run them through the mangle. She huffed as she turned the handle which wheezed and groaned. It didn't turn easily.

"Can I help?" Ziggy felt guilty sitting by the fire while his mother slaved away.

"No, I can manage. You are too small to help anyway. One of these days, you'll be big enough to help but by then, I'll be dead."

Although his mother loved to talk of her martyrdom, Ziggy it.

Tears sprung to his eyes. He always felt that even though she usually ended up blaming his father, it was his fault that his mother suffered, that he had done something wrong but he never could figure out what it was. Maybe if his sister hadn't gotten lost, things would have been different. He didn't know. He wondered what he would do if one days his parents found her again. But he never dared to talk to his mother about it.

"Why doesn't Daddy buy you a machine?" Ziggy said, knowing full

well the answer but wanting to show his mother that he took her side.

"What can I do with him?" His mother said. "He's a Zeiskind. They are all angeshpart, stubborn as the day is long. His mother never had kind words for his father's family."

Even though they lived in the same town and the Dublin Jewish community was not large, Ziggy hardly knew the whole slew of aunts and uncles in Dublin and cousins that constituted his father's side of the family. He never saw them from one year to the next. He never even spoke to them when he did see them at a barmitzvah or wedding. How could he? He saw them through his mother's jaundiced eyes.

"Are they ever nice to you? Do they bring you presents? Take you anywhere? Do they ever invite you to their house?" His mother rattled off her litany of complaints.

He only knew his aunt's family and even there he only played with her daughter Rachel and youngest son, Andrew who was a little older than Ezra.

His mother took a basin full of sheets to the kitchen door.

"Mop the floor while I hang these outside."

Ezra came down downstairs. The two boys looked nothing alike: Ziggy short, stout and dark and his brother at seventeen, tall, blond and reedy. He grabbed a glass of milk. He barely looked at Ziggy. "Going out. Tell Ma, I'll be back for lunch."

"Tell her yourself. I'm not your messenger boy," Ziggy said as he wiped all the water from the floor.

Ezra gave him a look. "You're such a baby."

Then turning from Ziggy, he opened the kitchen door and shouted, "I'll be back for lunch."

"Don't be late. The food will get cold."

Ziggy went upstairs to dress, happy that his brother was out of the way for awhile.

When he came down, the basins were full of the colored clothes and his mother was taking a break. She sat with a cup of tea and a piece of cake.

Although she looked a little rested, Ziggy could sense that his mother had been sitting there brooding on her lot in life. As soon as Ziggy sat down, she started:

"I can never figure your father out. Why do I put up with him? He is so stubborn. I can't get through to him. He knows I need a washer but he won't get me one. Look at my hands." She showed her palms to her son who stared at them, all red with the skin peeling off them. "They're all broken and cracked. This washing has ruined them. I can't keep doing this. If he just stopped smoking those cigarettes, we would have enough. Why do I have to put up with this? He smokes and smokes. He burns money."

Ziggy felt her words enter into his soul. He sat there and became angry at his father. He boiled inside. He was his mother's messenger. He would tell his father. He hated him. He was such a waster. His poor mother. How she suffered and his father did nothing. His mother who had grown silent suddenly said:

"Oh, I suppose if I want one, I'll have to get the money myself."

His mother earned a little money designing tombstones and cloths for the synagogue.

"Could you ask sh'vester?"

As much as Hannah held her in-laws in contempt, she held her sister in esteem. She was rich and lived in a beautiful house with a live-in maid.

"Could you ask sh'vester?" He repeated.

For some reason, Hannah ignored him.

"What a family they were." His mother continued. " Did I tell you that when your father and I went over to announce our engagement, they opened a can of salmon to celebrate."

His mother had told him that story nearly every week. It seemed to mark the beginning and end of her relationship with them.

"What about Aunt Sonya?" Ziggy suggested. She was the only one of his father's siblings who had struck it rich.

His mother snorted.

"That witch? Do you know that she actually sold me, sold me a pram for your sister for ten shillings!"

Ziggy knew that in those days, maybe even today, ten shillings was a lot of money to his mother.

"And she married to a millionaire."

She got up from the table and went to pound the colored clothes in the basin. Ziggy wasn't sure if it was the money or the fact that it had to do with his sister, Aviva. Anything to do with her brought back bitter memories to his mother. Gone. He did not know quite where.

"What will I do with your father?" His mother said plaintively. She took out a wash board and began to scrub some of the stains out of the shirts.

"Do you know that when your father was a schochet, I had to wash all the blood out of his clothes? It took forever. That's why I made him give up the slaughtering and go into teaching."

Ziggy knew some of the story but wanted to hear it again.

"When was that?"

"I don't remember exactly."

His mother was always vague with details.

"Soon after we got married. I told him I hated the smell of dead animals. Too much death. It was the one time he listened to me, thank God. He wasn't crazy about it anyway."

Ziggy got up from the table and moved to his mother. She moved the cloth up and down the washboard. It looked like hard work.

"Is that when he became a teacher?" He asked.

His mother looked up.

"Yes. I sent him to the Board of the Talmud Torah school and they gave him a job. I always have to tell him what to do."

Ziggy's father taught in the same school he attended. He had a good reputation. People loved his father. He had infinite patience with children, the same kind of patience one needs to calm an animal before killing it. His students always did well on their barmitzvahs. Nonetheless, Ziggy always bowed his head when people praised his father. If only they knew how mean he was to his mother, he thought. But that was private. No one had to know

their troubles.

"What do you mean?" he asked, knowing full well the answer.

"He doesn't fight for his job. The board bosses him about and have no respect for him. I can't get your father to do anything.

If only, if only he would stand up for himself," Ziggy took on his mother's feelings and grew disgusted at his father.

His mother's worrying only made Ziggy nervous. He envisioned them being thrown out into the streets.

He had even gone to Ezra to get his help.

"What can I do?" Ezra said looking up from a book.

"You could go to them and make them understand that he is a good teacher," Ziggy said. "They won't listen to me but they would to you."

"I don't want to go. Daddy has to fight his own battles. I'm not going to fight them for him. If he wants to keep his job, he will have to stand up for himself."

"But you know he won't do that. You know that's not the way he is!"

Ziggy got nowhere. His mother never tried to persuade Ezra to go in and speak on his father's behalf even though at sixteen he was marked in the community for great things and people flocked to hear him speak. She sat in the kitchen and "worried." Ziggy grew to hate that word.

"What good does it do to worry?" He said. "It does nothing."

His father remained nonchalant. "I always hope for the best and expect the worst," was his retort. "Not to worry, not to

worry," he said with a laugh to Ziggy. That infuriated Ziggy, too. An indifferent brother, a frustrated mother, a passive father. A helpless child.

"He's just like the rest of his family. Never amount to anything," his mother's repeated word on most family matters. His mother wrung the clothes before putting them in the mangle. The colored water ran into the basin.

"But no one says anything bad about Daddy at school!"

"Of course. You like someone if you pay him bobkas! He works for nothing. Maybe I should Ezra there to talk to them."

She put the clothes through the mangle to wring out any last drops.

Ezra already took control in their house. Ziggy knew that people respected him, more than they did his father. He would one day be a great Rabbi, everybody was sure. Even his father seemed in awe of him, as if surprised that he had produced such a child. He never acted like a brother. He was the real father in the house. It was he who slapped him and packed him off to bed.

"Your father is so weak." His mother broke in, still mangling the batch of clothes. "What will I do with him? He worries me so. He never makes a decision. I have to decide everything. It all falls on me."

Ziggy knew that she also meant Ezra. He wanted to go to Israel to study at a Yeshivah and his mother wanted him to stay in Dublin and go to Trinity College. They ignored his father as they argued over and over again about the topic, until finally, last week,

his father, last week, got up from the table.

"Can't I eat in peace. I'm not sitting here."

"Go then," his mother said. "Take your soup and eat somewhere else"

His father took his soup and went into the living room.

The house had existed under an uneasy truce since then.

"Do you want me to talk to Ezra?" Ziggy volunteered.

"Ach you. What good will that do? What do you know? It's not Ezra. It's your father. I should never have married him."

Hannah was convinced she had married a man beneath her intellectually and so different emotionally. He lacked her drive. His mother looked angry. Her white skin was flushed, from anger or the wash. Her brown hair was damp with sweat and her body heaved a little with exhaustion. No wonder he liked agreeing with his mother. She was the only one he felt really connected to in that house. Ziggy leaned over to kiss her. She brushed him away. "What are you doing? You are such a sensitive boy. I don't know. Why don't you help me instead of sitting here. Set the table for lunch."

Ziggy felt something leave him. He hated it when his mother did this to him. She got him all riled up about his father and then shut him out. He was ready to yell at his father but now he kept quiet.

"Ach., Look at time. If I hurry, I can get the laundry finished before lunch. It would be nice to have the afternoon free. I can relax while you and your father go to the cinema."

she left the kitchen again with another batch of laundry to hang out.

Ziggy was no longer sure that he wanted to go to the films with his father. His mother had got him all agitated. He couldn't figure how at the end of the day she could share a bed with his father.

At nearly one o'clock, his father came home from the Sunday school. Ezra, too, came back. His mother hadn't finished the laundry.

"And now it looks like it will start raining. Oy vey. I will have to leave it to hang out tomorrow," she said with resignation.

Ziggy sighed silently along with his mother. It wouldn't happen if his father stood up for himself, if he earned more, he thought to himself. His father said nothing. He took off his coat and lit a cigarette.

They all gathered around the table. Ziggy put out the meat plates and cutlery. They were having left overs from the Sabbath meal.

As he took his place at the table, Ziggy glowered at his father.

"Da, why don't you get Ma a washer. It's not fair."

"I can't afford it, " His father said brusquely. "Nu, Hannah. What's for lunch?"

He opened his jacket and sat at the table.

Ziggy wasn't finished with his father.

"Why not? If you asked for a raise maybe we could get one. It's not fair on Ma."

"Shut up you," said Ezra. He had washed his hands, broken some

break and dipped it in the salt, making the hamotzei prayer.

"It's none of your business."

"Shut up yourself," Ziggy retorted. He didn't even move to take some food, he was so worked up. "Da, look at Ma's hands. They're all broken and cracked. She can't keep doing this. All this washing has ruined them."

"I said I can't afford it right now. That's enough. Pass me the chopped liver please."

Ziggy took a dollop of the liver and passed the rest to his father. Still, he would not give up. He would say what his mother would not say to his face nor Ezra. Someone had to defend his mother. He loved her and she relied on him.

"If you just stopped smoking those cigarettes, you would have enough. You smoke and smoke. You are burning money and poor Ma..."

Suddenly, Ezra looked up from his plate and growled: "Shut up, or I'll belt you one."

"OH, the great Ezra response!" Ziggy retorted. There was no stopping him now. He didn't know what he would say next. His anger boiled against his father.

"Da, you treat Ma so bad sometimes."

Suddenly, he felt a stinging wallop on his ear.

Half expecting to see Ezra, he turned to see instead his mother standing over him, her hand still extended. There was a look of fear in her eyes.

"Don't talk to your father like that." She said, her lips

trembling. "I'll manage. It's not that bad. You shouldn't talk to your father like that. Sometimes, I don't know what to do with you. You are such a wicked child."

Ziggy was lost. His mother had hit him. All he wanted to do was help his mother and now she had turned on him for doing what she wanted. He didn't understand. What had he done wrong?

With tears streaming down his face, he yelled, "I hate you all."

He ran out of the kitchen. As he went upstairs, he could heard was his mother asking his father if he wanted more soup. 3811

1956: RACHEL THE BELOVED

Sh'vester's only daughter, Rachel, was Ziggy's favorite female cousin. To be correct, as far as Ziggy was concerned she was his only female cousin. He had a number on his father's side but he didn't know one from the other. They never came to visit and on the rare occasion when his parents went to visit the Zeiskind side of the family, he usually played alone or sat quietly. Primed by his mother, he was wary of them all. "They are not your type," his mother said and so Ziggy, trusting her word, kept his distance, even when his cousins asked him to play. Once, one of them had mocked him.

"You're stuck up just like your brother Ezra. He thinks he is so high and mighty."

Ziggy wanted to say he wasn't like Ezra at all but what was the point: He was Ezra's brother and that was enough for them.

Rachel was different. Although, a lot older than him and even older than Ezra, she did not allow age to create a barrier. Her warm nature made the young Ziggy feel comfortable around her. A year before, she had moved to London to work as a secretary returning to Dublin for the High Holidays, Passover and Christmas time, though they never said "Christmas" but "Chanukah" whether the two holidays coincided or not. As soon as she unpacked, she usually bounded over to the Zeiskind home in Kenilworth Park. Although Ziggy's mother, Hannah loved to see her niece, her visits also saddened her. Seeing Rachel inevitably reminded Hannah of her own lost girl.

While, she sat and talked to Rachel about her work in London and who she was dating, all the time, Ziggy knew that his mother was thinking of the kind of conversations she would have had with her own daughter if circumstances had permitted. Always when Rachel left, Hannah sat quietly by herself looking at the photo taken on that June day with Rachel and Aviva. Ziggy knew it was not a good time to "tchep" his mother. She wanted to be left alone.

His father took a rather dim view of Rachel.

"She wears too much makeup. A little bit is alright but that thick red lipstick and the stuff around her eyes. It makes her look like a hurvah," his father said.

"Simon!" Hannah said. "You embarrass me. Rachel is not like that at all."

"What's a hurvah?" Ziggy asked his father.

"It's a word you shouldn't use," Ezra said.

"It's a woman who is not nice," his mother said.

"Is it worse than a macahasheyfa?" Ziggy asked.

"That's a witch, a hurvah is a" his father struggled for a definition suitable for a young boy.

"...woman of loose morals," his brother finished. "Can we change the topic please?"

Ziggy blushed. He didn't know what "loose morals" meant but he knew it was something he wasn't meant to know....

He didn't care as every time Rachel came back, she took

ziggy somewhere special. Once they went to the new Dublin airport where Ziggy saw planes take off and land for the first time.

"Do you fly over in those?" Ziggy asked, standing on the roof of the airport building, his hand in Rachel's.

"Oh, no. It's too expensive," she said looking down on the little boy. "I come by boat from Hollyhead or if I'm visiting Cousin Leonora in Liverpool, I take the B & I boat from there."

Another time, she took Ziggy to the zoo where he stood in front of the monkey cage eating the peanuts that were meant for the animals. Usually, they went to a movie like The Court Jester with Danny Kaye when Ziggy got the hiccups from laughing at the scene where they snapped their fingers and Danny Kaye got frightened or brave. Always with Rachel, he remembered laughing, more than with anyone else.

The Chanukah visits were the best of all, not because she brought him any presents --she never did--but because she took Ziggy to the pantomime at the Gaiety Theatre, downtown just off Grafton Street. They had just seen Sleeping Beauty in December, her last visit home. They had a great time. Over cake in Bewley's, she shared her secrets with Ziggy: how she hated her job in London, went dancing in nightclubs, knew a poet who brought her flowers every Friday and how she didn't got to services. She talked about her friends and what they were up to, how this one smoked or that one drank. Always with Ziggy, she said, "I can tell you, I can't tell anyone else. We're pals aren't we, Ziggy?" As they sat in the 16 bus on their way

downtown, she also pried information out of Ziggy.

"How is Ezra treating you?"

When Ziggy hesitated, she filled in the gaps.

"He's mean to you, isn't he? Your brother gets full of himself sometimes. Don't worry! He'll get his comeuppance one of these days. I'll talk to him if you want. He won't start with me." Ziggy grew afraid.

"No, no, don't say a word. He'll only hit me when you're gone."

"He doesn't hit you, does he," Rachel said with astonishment.

"What a creature, he is! Are you sure that you don't want me to hit him?"

To his surprise, Rachel came home suddenly in February. He didn't know why. No one was ill and there was no barmitzvah or wedding. Even more surprising, although she had been home for a few days, she had yet to appear in the Zeiskind kitchen.

"Have you seen Rachel yet?" Ziggy asked his mother, as painted the challah breads with egg yolks.

Hannah looked up from the stove where the gefilte fish was boiling.

"No, I haven't had a chance. Maybe tonight, I'll go around."

"Is she ill?" Ziggy asked.

"She might be," his mother said.

Ziggy senses that something mysterious was afoot. He even volunteered to take over the food that Thursday, a job he usually refused to do but his mother wouldn't let him.

"Ezra will do it. I need you here."

"Need me for what?"

"I need you, that's all. Ezra will go."

When the Sabbath came and still she hadn't appeared at the Zeiskind doorstep, Ziggy grew real worried.

Hannah went to her sister's, something she never did on a Saturday afternoon, especially not in the winter when the Sabbath ended as early as five o'clock. Ziggy waited anxiously for her return and news about Rachel.

Hannah came in, took off her coat and said nothing. When his father returned from evening services and made Haydalah, signifying the end of the Sabbath, he heard his parents talking in Yiddish. He couldn't understand a word.

"What are you saying?" he asked sitting down to supper at the kitchen table. "Why are you speaking in Yiddish?"

"Mind your own business," said Ezra. "It's none of your concern." Ezra could understand Yiddish and knew what was going on which especially annoyed Ziggy. .

He only understood the word shanda. It meant "shame."

His father used it and then he said in English, "I don't want you getting mixed up in this, Hannah."

What was happening? What had Rachel done? Ziggy wanted to see her.

The next morning, he got up and without telling anyone where he was going ran over to his aunt's house. He hoped Rachel would be at home, maybe alone, so he could talk. Mary, the maid, would be at Church and if he was lucky, his aunt would be at

Clanbrassil Street doing her shopping. He rang the doorbell three times but no one answered. He lifted the letter box lid and called out "Rachel are you there? It's me. Ziggy." He let the lid fall with a clang and then waited some more. A door slammed and through the glass panes on the front door, he could see a figure coming down the stairs. Rachel.

When she opened the door, Ziggy was shocked at her appearance. She looked terrible. Even though it was eleven thirty in the morning, she still wore her dressing gown. Her hair was a mess, her eyes puffy and red.

"I missed you. Why haven't you not been around to see us? Are you sick?" Ziggy asked with concern in his voice. "Is that why?" He paused to take a breath.

"No. I'm...." Rachel started to speak but then she paused.

"I missed you," Ziggy repeated leaning over to kiss Rachel. She backed away.

"I'm sorry, Ziggy, " Rachel said in a quiet voice so unlike her usual boisterous self.

"I wanted to see you. Maybe we can go to town and have ice cream or even a film."

He wondered why she hadn't asked him in.

"Ah, you're a good boy, Ziggy, don't let anyone tell you otherwise," said his cousin. This time she leaned over to hug him.

"Listen, go on home now. I have a headache and I am still a little tired. I'll come over later and we'll do something, I

promise."

Ziggy realized he had better go. Anyway, he didn't want his aunt to catch him there.

"How long more are you staying?" He asked.

"Oh, at least a week. We'll have time for some fun, don't worry.

I won't let my favorite cousin down, now off with you."

Ziggy looked behind to get one last glimpse of his cousin but she had already closed the door.

"I went to see Rachel today," Ziggy announced at lunch.

"You did. Is that where you went. I looked and called for you. I needed your help with the laundry," Hannah said without any disapproval in her voice. She stood over the table as everyone ate. "Finished with the chopped liver? Eat a little more or I will have to throw it out," she urged Ziggy.

"Yes. I'm finished. I'll have my soup now please." He couldn't move from his place at the table. "She looks awful. Is she sick? Is going to die?" Ziggy blurted out.

"God Forbid," said his mother immediately. A look of terror momentarily passed over her face. She put the plate full of soup down so suddenly that it almost spilled.

"You can be such an eejit sometimes," said Ezra, seeing his mother's face. He had finished his soup and was helping himself to the meat and potatoes.

"What? What did I say wrong? Will someone tell me what is going on?" Ziggy demanded. He blew on the soup.

"It's she wants to get married to someone and your aunt doesn't

want it to happen, that's all," interjected his father. "Are you happy now?"

she was getting married. Was it to the poet? He felt jealous. Now she wouldn't come alone on her visits to Dublin. He still didn't fully grasp the issue.

"Why doesn't sh'vester want him? Is it like Princess Margaret and Peter Townsend? Is it because he's divorced?" Ziggy said. He took a spoon of the soup. The papers had been full of that thwarted romance the past year.

"No, you fool., He's not divorced. Only a princess can't marry a divorced man and its her sister who won't let her, not her mother. " As usual, Ezra knew everything. "Besides, Rachel's no princess, I can assure you. "

"Ezra, don't jump on your brother so," Simon said as Hannah handed him a plate stacked high with meat. Ezra ignored his father with a "bah."

"Then, what's wrong with him? Is he not Jewish?" asked Ziggy. His question was met with another "God Forbid" from his mother. There could be nothing worse than marrying a non-Jew for an orthodox Jewish family.

"What's the problem then?" His mother took the soup plate and handed him his meat and potatoes.

"He's not religious. There, are you satisfied," said his mother. Sh'vester only wants her children to marry orthodox Jews. She said that all her sons have married religious Jews and her daughter has to marry one too."

"But Rachel's not religious either, " Ziggy blurted out. He wanted to defend her but realized he had only made the matter words.

"What do you mean?" asked his father looking up from his plate.

"Well, not as much as she used to be," Ziggy said quickly trying to recoup something for Rachel. "Besides if she loves him..."

"Love, shmlove," again interrupted Ezra. "What do you know about these things? You're too young to talk about that."

Sh'vester said she'd sit shiva for her if she marries him," announced his mother.

"Sit shiva?" Jumped in Simon and startling Ziggy who rarely heard his father oppose his sister-in-law. "As if she died? Is she crazy? You only do that if someone marries a non-Jew! Is she out of her mind?" Excessive religious acts spoiled Simon's sense of religious propriety.

"Well, you know how stubborn my sister can be," said Hannah feeling the need to put up a defense of her sister. "I bet she won't do it in the end."

"Have you met the fella?" asked Ziggy. He was ready for his dessert.

"No. But Rachel showed me a photo of him. He seems pleasant enough. A little older than her. They met where she works. He wants to go to Canada. He's a newspaper photographer. He has a chance of getting better work there."

"What's his name?" Ziggy took the dish full of prunes and apricots. It tasted sweet and tart at the same time.

"Gregory Upshot, something like that. I can't remember."

"Doesn't sound very Jewish," said Ezra.

"His father converted. He's a kosher Jew. Rachel assured me. Barmitzvahed in the United Synagogue," continued the mother.

"What's going to happen?" Ziggy wondered aloud. He still hoped that he and Rachel could go into town together where he could hear the story of her romance firsthand.

The opportunity never came.

On Tuesday when he got home from school, his mother was sitting in the kitchen.

"Oh, you just missed Rachel. She wanted to see you before she left."

"She left?" For where?" Ziggy said taking off his school bag.

"She went back to England. She just went to Dun Laoighre to catch the evening boat. She said she's sorry about not taking you out. She promises you a big present next time she is over."

Ziggy felt betrayed. For all their secrets together, Rachel hadn't trusted him with her real secrets. Even though he was only ten, he could have kept her secrets. She had betrayed him. He couldn't trust anyone. He was left out. Everyone had known about the problem except him. He was hurt. Deeply hurt.

"What's going to happen with the wedding?" He asked, though he felt so hurt that he wouldn't even go.

"Who knows? Sh'vester said if she marries him, she can do it in England. She won't go to the wedding."

"Will you go, Ma?"

"I don't know. I promised Rachel I would go but I don't know. Rachel can't get married on her own."

A week later, Sh'vester came over and sat down in the their kitchen. She wore black as if in mourning. Her fingers and wrist were bereft of the jewelry that usually bedecked her hands. She only had on her wedding ring and two simple earrings. Her face looked bleak without any makeup.

"Ziggy, I need to talk to your mother alone," she said ordering Ziggy out of the kitchen but Ziggy stalled so long that they just ignored him and carried on their conversation as if he wasn't there.

Sh'vester was adamant: She wouldn't sit shiva but she forbade Hannah to go when the wedding was held a month later.

"How will it look if you are there and I'm not. It will be a shame. Do you want to make a rift between us," Sh'vester said.

Hannah sat down and took a sip from her cup of tea. Ziggy saw that his mother's hands shook. His mother hated arguing with her sister. She usually obeyed her like a private to a general but this time she was putting up some defense.

"I promised I would go."

"Well, you shouldn't have promised something that you would not be able to keep. "

"But a promise is a promise. You know that."

Sh'vester dismissed the reference to their past but Ziggy understood.

"Listen, sister," his aunt said, "He's not religious and if you

or I go to the wedding, it means that we support something bad. Next thing, we will be going to Ziggy's wedding in a church --or worse."

Hannah stood her ground as long as she could.

"A church? He's a Jew. It's your daughter. Your only daughter."

Ziggy knew that his mother would never have done that to his sister or even himself.

Sh'vester had too much pride invested to give in.

"If you go, I will not speak to you again. I swear it. Leonora isn't going and I have told everyone from the family not to go."

Sh'vester could pull that sort of rank. Hannah knew it was no idle threat. If she went she would be ostracized.

So, the following month, when Rachel got married, the bride stood alone with not one member of her family present. Even though he was still angry at Rachel, he was disappointed with his mother. "You should have gone," he admonished his mother the Sunday of the wedding. "What difference does it make if sh'vester doesn't like it?"

Hannah looked guilty.

"What do you want me to do? Fight her. I can't do that. I can't fight my sister. Maybe I should have. Maybe I was wrong not to go. Maybe I was wrong to promise. Who knows? I will have to live with that. Rachel knows I wish her a happy life and if they ever come here, they are welcome in my house. I sent her a present, a lovely challah dekel," she added weakly.

The following Chanukah, Ziggy received a card from Toronto. It

had a picture of "Puss 'n Boots" on one side and on the other, the words "They have great pantomimes here. I owe you one, love Rachel and Gregory."

He tore the card up. Those days were gone now. You couldn't trust women. First his aunt, then his Rachel and now his mother. They let you down. Betrayed you.

Later that year, sh'vester made up with her daughter and flew to Canada to be with her when she gave birth to her son. All her children, even the most orthodox, went to Canada for the bris. Hannah didn't. She hadn't been asked nor could she afford to go.

"I'm a fool sometimes, my son." She said to Ziggy as they sat one day drinking tea together. "I should have known that sh'vester would make up with her. And what have I got for sticking up for my niece. Nothing. They didn't even invite me to go with them to Canada. My only niece. I should have kept my big mouth shut and not get involved. I should have known that sometimes it's not wise to make promises that you can't keep."

The two victims of love and family loyalty sat together in the darkening room.

1957: "ARE YOU A CATHOLIC JEW OR A PROTESTANT JEW?"

Although his older brother, Ezra, never had time for his younger brother, Ziggy, and treated him with disdain, Ziggy looked on Ezra with awe. He couldn't help it. In the Zeiskind household, Ezra ruled the roost, taking precedence over his father in all decisions. What he said went. His every whim was indulged. His exploits, the stuff of legends.

At Chanukah, they all laughed at the time when at a rehearsal for the annual Chanukah parade where he was supposed to be a Chanukah candle and recite a poem. Instead, he had come forward and said, "I am an Eskimo, I eat this candle." He was promptly expelled from the pageant but the story entered into the Zeiskind folklore. Ezra had willingly repeated it for Ziggy's friends. Ezra loved the attention it brought him, although he wouldn't do anything as zany now. Instead, his Rabbis and teachers respected his learning and brilliant mind. The Dublin Jewish community had produced great Rabbis but Ezra promised to be the best of them all. No wonder his parents held him in awe.

Ziggy's position as "Ezra Zeiskind's little brother" was a decided mixed blessing to Ziggy. On the one hand, it got him noticed. He wasn't sure that would have happened if he was just plain Ziggy Zeiskind. Not even in his own home did he get treated like Ezra. His parents never treated his accomplishments, his prizes in Hebrew school, his essays, whatever, with anything like the respect they gave Ezra. Ezra had so many talents. The previous month, they had gone to hear Ezra sing in the National

Music concert, the Feis Ceol and had come home excited that he had won first prize in the teenage tenor category. Deep down, Ziggy accepted the fact that he wasn't of the same caliber. He saw the difference in how his mother treated her two sons: Ziggy was her confidant; Ezra her salvation. He struggled against it but he also tolerated it. He didn't know any reason not to. It had been like that since he was born.

At the same time, it put him in an invidious position. If he had a regular brother, a gulf wouldn't exist between them. He was sure that they could share things. But Ezra was indulged and spoiled. He had no time for brothers seven years younger. It was like being the brother of a King but not considered of the same lineage. He didn't blame anyone for his position in the household. It hurt nonetheless. He ached for that fraternal love he never got.

He was especially worried as for the first time, he would be fully totally dependent on Ezra for his welfare. They were going to a summer camp in County Antrim run by the Bnei Akiva religious Zionist youth movement; Ezra as a leader and Ziggy as a simple camper. More than that, they were going to enemy territory: Northern Ireland.

Ten year old Ziggy had never been out of Ireland before. The furthest he had ever been out of Dublin had been to the seaside resort of Bray where the family would take a respite on a Sunday afternoon and meet all the other Jews from the community who would walk along the shore, or play the slot machines or ride

the bumpers. Some even climbed to the top of Bray Head. But most sat on the sand or dipped in the water or ate ice cream. That was the extent of it.

The trip frightened him.

"I don't want to go to the camp," he said to his mother one Sunday morning.

"Why?" Hannah said, as she stoked the fire. She had been late getting started and needed to get going on the laundry. "If you get homesick, Ezra will be there."

Ziggy wasn't worried about Ezra or about being homesick. He was worried about the people he would meet up there. The border between the two countries was as thick as between Russia and the United States. They knew little about each other. What little he had heard scared him. He had soaked up the attitude of the Southern Irish towards their Northern counterparts.

He had heard terrible things about the Northern Irish, especially that they treated the Catholics badly and even though he wasn't a Catholic, because he was from Southern Ireland, they would consider him one.

"Do you know any Jews there?" He continued.

"You know," his mother said, putting down the poker. "I have never been there. I don't know anything about them. Ask Ezra when he comes home."

Ezra was only too happy to lecture Ziggy on the finer points of Irish Jewish history.

"Pass me the chopped liver," he said to his father.

As he smeared the challah, Ezra explained to Ziggy. "It's simple. You know your Irish history, right? How the Six Counties are ruled over by British but they have their own Parliament in Stormont."

Ziggy nodded.

"I know that but are the Jews there the same as here?" He liked this conversation with his brother. Ezra, so seldom, explained anything to him at all.

Hannah ladled out the soup to each of them.

Ezra sipped at the soup. Holding the spoon in his hand, he went on: "Well, the Jews of Southern Ireland, mainly here in Dublin and in Cork supported the cause of the Catholics and the Jews of Belfast supported the parliament in Stormont. So, they split into two groups. They have their Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Carlebach and we have ours, Rabbi Jacobovitz. It's crazy. The Catholics in all 32 counties are under one Archbishop and so are the Protestants but not the Jews. We have to have two Chief Rabbis. Can you believe it?"

It had become a little too complex for Ziggy but he didn't want to appear stupid. He knew that if he asked Ezra to explain it all again, he would get angry. Ezra had a short fuse that way, so he sat at his place and nodded as Ezra spoke.

Simon made no bones about where he stood on the matter.

"Only Jews would act like that. They only have a little community in Belfast. I have nothing to do with them. No dealings with them at all."

But Ziggy needed reassuring.

"I hear that they don't know anything about Jews there."

Ezra laughed. "Yes. If you say you're a Jew. They ask are you a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew."

His father and mother laughed but Ziggy didn't. He didn't understand the joke.

All the kids were nervous about going to the North.

"I hear they don't like kids from the South, " said one.

"If they recognize your accent, they won't serve you in the stores," said another. "They only serve Protestants, so you have to say you're a Protestant."

As the weeks went on and the date for the camp grew closer, the stories got wilder.

"They hate the Catholics and keep them in ghettos like the Nazis did."

"I heard that Nazis live there as well."

A number of the kids dropped out and wouldn't go to the camp.

"Me Mum says that they'll kidnap me and turn me into a Protestant."

Ziggy didn't know what to believe.

The night before they were to leave, Ziggy went to his brother.

Ezra lay on his bed reading an old comic book, his long legs dangling off the end of the bed. He didn't look up when Ziggy came in.

Ziggy begged him to watch over him. Ezra laughed.

"Don't be stupid," he said. " You'll be in a Jewish camp with

Jewish kids. If you go into town, you'll have a leader with you. But Ziggy was still frightened. " Will you watch out for me, Ezra?"

Ezra looked up from his comic book and gave his brother a quizzical look.

"If I have time. I'll be a leader. I'll have things to do. I can't keep worrying about you all the time."

Ziggy went downstairs to his mother who sat in the kitchen stitching his name on his underwear,

"Oh, don't worry, tatalah," she said, "Of course, he'll keep an eye on you. He's just teasing you."

Ziggy wasn't so sure.

He sat anxiously by as his mother finished putting his name inside every shirt, pants and socks and then packed his haversack. The next morning when he got to the Amiens Street Railway station, he saw that in spite of the fear and the rumors nearly every one of his friends had turned up and were going. He found a seat by the window and anxiously looked out as the train sped up the Irish coastline.

It stopped at Drogheda to pass customs. Ziggy remembered the story of his mother on her way from Poland crossing Nazi Germany in 1935 and how the train journey frightened her. He felt the same. What would they ask him? Would guys in long leather coats get on the train and demand their passports. He hadn't got one. No one told him he needed one. Would they open his backpack and make him empty the contents and notice the Jewish objects? Would

they take them into a barn and shoot them all? He sat, shaking with fear but they passed through without even having to get off the train. The train passed through the station and he looked up and saw the Union Jack and realized he was truly in British territory.

They soon arrived in Co. Down and made their way to the little town of Antrim and the boy's school where they would be staying. They were divided into groups and found their rooms and bunks. They emptied their haversacks, made their beds, ate lunch. Ezra ate with the group under his charge at a different table. He waved to his brother before joining the leaders for a meeting. After they had all sung the Grace After Meals, they trooped into the large meeting hall and stood in a rectangle around the room. The head of the camp rang out the order: Amod Dom. "Stand to attention." All the instructions would be in Hebrew but they were simple and Ziggy knew them from his weekly meetings with the organization.

The leader who spoke in a British accent that sounded alien to Ziggy's ears welcomed them to the camp and went through the plan for the first few days. They would have lectures on Israel in the morning, alternating with Bible studies and then special activities in the afternoon, like arts and crafts, singing (led by Ezra), drama (Ziggy planned to do that), scouting and so on. In the evening, they would have games and competitions. There would be a bus tour to Belfast and to see Stormont. Finally, the

town was declared strictly off limits. Ziggy was relieved about this final announcement.

Then the leader turned to the man beside him who were it not for the square black yarmulke on his head, Ziggy would have mistaken for a priest. He wore a black robe and white tie around his neck. He had a small beard on his chin, not like the full beards that Ziggy had seen on most Rabbis. He was also incredibly tall, taller even than Ezra who was almost six feet. Ziggy guessed that the man was in his sixties.

"Boys and girls, I would like to introduce, the Chief Rabbi of Northern Ireland, Rabbi Carlebach."

Ziggy stared. Rabbi Carlebach! The man who kept the Jews of Ireland separated. He didn't like him.

The Rabbi didn't smile at all. The group cheered him anyway, applauding loudly. They wanted to have fun, instead of standing around in a cold hall. The Rabbi raised his hand for then to quiet down and looking at his stern face, the group quickly regained composure.

"Shalom to you boys and girls." His accent wasn't Northern Irish or British at all, it was German. Ziggy now remembered that someone had mentioned that he was a refugee and had come to Belfast before the war, just like their Chief Rabbi who was also a refugee from Germany.

The Rabbi continued: "I want to welcome you to Northern Ireland. As you can see, it is a beautiful area and one that we are all very proud of. We are sure that you will have a wonderful time

here. I know your leaders and as you have heard they have planned an exciting time. I am delighted that you will be visiting Stormont and be able to see our Parliament building.

"And now I have a special word for my young friends from the South."

Ziggy thought it was nice of him to greet them since he knew that they may be feeling a little homesick.

"I know that you come from another country and that you are patriotic and show allegiance to the Dail." Some of them laughed, hearing him mispronounce the word for their parliament, calling it the "dale" and not the "daw-il" as they did.

The Rabbi ignored the titters and continued.

"But we in this part of Ireland, show our respect for the Union Jack and her majesty the Queen. So, you must, I repeat MUST, stand for "God Save the Queen" when it is sung and not sing your National Anthem here, for this is part of England and not Ireland. Again, I repeat, you are required to stand for "God Save the Queen."

Ziggy could not believe his ears. They were going to be forced to stand for the anthem of the enemy. He never had considered it possible. He wanted to go home.

And sure enough, the gathering ended not only with the Israeli national anthem, the "Hatikvah" which they all knew and sang loudly but the British anthem as well. The Irish hung their heads and did not join in.

The head of the camp then stepped forward.

"Ok. Everyone will have a nap until 4:30. Camp fire tonight."

Before they went to their bunks, Ziggy and a number of the other Irish kids went over to Ezra, hoping to find a supporter in him.

"Can you believe he said that? Can he make us do that?"

Ezra seemed unperturbed. "You have to obey the rules when you go to another country. You always stand for their national anthem."

"But England?!" Ziggy said who led the opposition. "He seemed to like telling us to sing."

"He didn't say 'sing,' he said 'stand.' It's quite a different thing," Ezra corrected his brother. "Anyway, don't get so worked up about it. It's not that special."

Ziggy went away upset. He wanted to go home. Before taking the nap, the kids discussed taking some action but couldn't come to any conclusion. Although tired, Ziggy couldn't rest. It was so unlike Ezra to back down. For the first time in his life, he was disappointed with his brother. Ziggy kept out of his way and didn't look for him at dinner.

Ziggy was assigned to help build the campfire. He gathered firewood and then built up a huge fire. As the fire blazed, they threw in potatoes which they would eat when they were cooked, scraping off the charred skin. They also had cocoa and sat on their coats. The heat made everyone tired and friendly and soon they began singing sang songs they all knew. Hebrew camp and marching songs. One Irish boy wanted to sing the Irish ballad "Vermayo" but the leader felt that they should only sing songs

that they all knew. Ziggy felt downhearted again. He was an alien here. It wasn't Ireland at all.

He could hear Ezra's tenor voice above them all. Fresh and powerful, it sounded beautiful.

"Ezra, sing a solo," the head of the camp asked.

The Irish kids who knew him took up the cause: "Ezra. Ezra." Even Ziggy joined in the cheers.

Ezra stood up and paused for a moment. What would he sing? Would he sing some famous cantorial piece of music? The Kol Nidrei? The piece of opera that had won him the Feis?

Ezra looked around, commanding his audience. The flames from the fire, cast a rich glow over his tall straight frame. From his back pocket, he took out the Irish Tricolor and waved it in the air. In a loud and stirring voice, he began, "Sine Laochra Fail..," the opening words of the Irish National Anthem. Ziggy was stunned. He should never have doubted him. His brother hadn't disappointed him after all. Ezra beckoned for all the Irish kids to rise and join him. They quickly jumped to attention and in their loudest voices, joined Ezra. Tears streamed down Ziggy's face. He looked at Ezra, proud that he was his brother. Ezra was his hero. When Ezra finished, the Irish kids ran to his side. Ziggy wanted to be the first to embrace him but the others beat him to it and he stood on the outside of the circle around his brother.

"Ma? Do you ever think that Aviva will come back?" Ziggy asked his mother as she sat embroidering in the back room. She sat close to the slow burning fire. The "slack" stacked high made the fire look like a volcano about to erupt. Although it was Sunday and he usually went with his father to the Kenilworth Cinema, Ziggy had made an excuse to forego his weekly pleasure. He had other things on his mind. He wanted to find out what happened to his sister. Until then, he hadn't really thought seriously about his sister who had vanished eleven years previously, a year before he was born. All he knew was that she had "gone away."

The sudden death of Peggy Sullivan, the daughter of their cleaning woman, had triggered this interest. Mrs. Sullivan had taken him to see Santa Claus for two years in a row. As the Christmas season approached, he suddenly realized that he hadn't seen Mrs. Sullivan for a few weeks, not since the end of the High Holidays in October.

"Where's Mrs. Sullivan?" He had asked his mother the previous Wednesday when she didn't turn up yet again. Ziggy sat at the kitchen table watching his mother. She had spread newspaper on the table and had taken out the Chanukah menorahs. She smeared silver polish on them and as it dried, began to wipe them to make them shine again after a year in the glass case. She usually shared this job with her cleaning lady.

"She's not coming back," His mother curtly replied without looking up.

"What's up? Did something happen to her? Did she leave?" Ziggy wondered if Mrs. Sullivan had done something or upset his mother. Maybe they couldn't afford her anymore. His mother said nothing. Her silence only intrigued Ziggy.

"Is she coming back?" He asked.

"I doubt it." His mother still didn't look up.

"What happened? Did you fire her?"

"I don't want to talk about it. Here, take a cloth and help me instead of sitting there and asking questions."

Ziggy took a cloth and began wiping the film of polish off his menorah. He could see his face in it, sort of, rather distorted. His hair stood up straight instead of curly and his face which was round, looked as if he had broken up into pieces.

"Is she ill? Did she steal something?" Now that he had started work, getting the answer had to be his reward.

"Nah, don't be silly. Something sad happened. Her daughter, Peggy, has gestorben.

"Died? Wow. Was she killed?" He stopped wiping.

"She got a blood clot in her head and died overnight. What a thing!" his mother said and grew silent again.

Ziggy grew silent too and they worked together not talking any more.

He thought of poor Mrs. Sullivan, married to an acholic wifebeater, with one son dead of tuberculosis and now another child dead. How could she go on?

As soon as he could, he went up to his room, lay down on his bed,

put his hands behind his head and thought what it would be like to lose a child, to lose two children. He could think of nothing worse. Was it a punishment from God to have one child die before a parent and then another later? What could Mrs. Sullivan be feeling? Had she done something wrong. Thank God, his sister wasn't dead, only lost somewhere.

His parents never talked about it at all and her name rarely come up--at least not in his presence, unless it was when they spoke in Yiddish and his meager vocabulary could not grasp what he heard. "Gone away," that was all they said and all he knew. He got the implicit message that he shouldn't talk about it and so had never asked anyone, not his brother Ezra nor sh'vester, his aunt, the only other people he would have approached on the topic. His sister's absence just settled into the recesses of his mind, another part of the strange tension that permeated the Zeiskind household, something he couldn't quite put a finger on, an unnamed source of pain.

Where had she gone? She might be anywhere: in Dublin, the country side, England. How could his parents go on knowing that she was out there somewhere and they couldn't find her? Strange, he thought, they can still laugh about the day that Ezra, all of three years old, had wandered off down the street, carrying a too large shopping bag. Mrs. Doyle, their Catholic neighbor, had stopped him at the end of their street, Kenilworth Park, just as he was about to cross the busy Harold's Cross Road.

"Ah, Ezra Zeiskind and where would you be off to with that big

bag. Has your mother sent you to do the shopping?"

"I'm leaving home," Ezra had pronounced with all the authority that he could muster.

"And why would you be doing that now?" Mrs. Doyle asked.

"I don't want to live at home anymore," Ezra said.

Mrs. Doyle took him by the hand and eventually persuaded him to give his house another chance.

How Ziggy's parents, Hannah and Simon still laughed as they told that story. Even Ezra, now sixteen and already the ruler of the roost, joined in their laughter as well. But the disappearance of Aviva brought no laughter.

Lying on the bed, Ziggy felt his parent's pain. He thought of the lines of sorrow on his mother's face. She was old. How old was she? Born in 1909. Barely fifty. That old. His father two years older. He couldn't understand how they could live with the knowledge that she was somewhere out there. What had they done that day when she didn't come back? He could see his mother going crazy with worry? His father running to the police? They must have run up and down the streets looking for her? Frantic. Knocking on doors. Hoping against hope that she would turn up the next day or the day after that, till days turned to weeks, months, years and they resigned themselves to the thought that she would never return. Somehow they got on with their lives.

When he had thought about her at all, Ziggy had fantasized about her. Had a family found her? Would she remember that she was Jewish? Was she a Catholic now? If they found her one day

would his parents have to retrain her like they did Pearl, a cousin on his father's side, who was rescued from a Polish convent and still crossed herself every time the church bells rang for Mass. It would be strange if someday she turned up. What would they say to her? Would they tell her off for wandering away? Would they cry and weep on her? What would they do? It would be a strange meeting.

And what about him? Would his mother love him anymore? Would it be just Aviva and Ezra and he no longer needed. He was torn between wanting the family to be complete and worrying about his own place in it. The nights after the news of Peggy Sullivan brought him no peace. He could not rest easy. He became obsessed with finding out more about his sister. He needed reassurance.

He planned his strategy. On Saturday, after the meal when he ordinarily went for a schlof, the regular Saturday afternoon nap, he stayed up. He waited till his mother had cleaned the table and sat down to read by the fire. They had only recently they had given up eating in the kitchen and started eating in the dining room --and then only on the Sabbath. They had got a new ornate dining room set, a rich red and brown beautiful mahogany table with eight chairs. The Milofsky Brothers had made it specially for them. As always, his mother, rather than his father, had argued over the price but when it appeared the family was overjoyed. Now they had a home.

His father and Ezra had gone to sleep and would not get up until they had to go back to synagogue for the final service of

the day and then return home to make Havdalah, the ritual that marked the end of the Sabbath. No one would disturb his mother and himself. As nonchalantly as he could, Ziggy went to the dining room drawer and took out the family photos they had stacked there.

He got on his knees on the chair and leaning over the table spread the photos out.

"Ziggy, I told you not to get on your knees on the chair, " his mother admonished, looking up from her magazine, Woman's Own.

"Sit proper."

Ziggy got down, though sitting he couldn't stretch out over the photos.

He began gently.

"Mammy? Why are there no photos of your wedding?"

Everybody else had a wedding photo but not their house. When he got angry with his father, he sometimes wondered if his parents were really married.

"We never took them," she said. "Someone died at the wedding. The President of the school. It marred the day. A terrible way to begin a marriage."

"Yuck." said Ziggy. He didn't like things like that. A bad omen.

No wonder his parents never seemed happy.

But he didn't want to get distracted.

"Where is Uncle Shlomie now?" He asked pointing to a photo of his mother's cousin.

His mother glanced at the photo.

"In Mexico where he went after the war. You know that."

"Is this Edward's wedding?" He asked pointing to another when he

had been a page boy in a beautiful white shirt with ruffles and blue satin pants with a white satin yarmulke that his mother had made. Edward was one of sh'vester's sons.

"No, Edward got married in America. This one is...." she squinted over to look more carefully,Paul's wedding. Remember when we went to Leeds." Paul was another of sh'vester's sons. She had five, all married now except the daughter, Rachel and the youngest, Andrew.

Sure he remembered.

He picked out the only three pictures of his sister he could find, none of them framed but jumbled up with all the others. Ziggy picked them one. In the first, she stands at the end of the road, her cardigan unravelled. She holds the end of it, looking sweetly at the camera. That was the one in which she looks most like him. They have the same thick brown wavy hair and her face is round and open, like his; they even have the same half smile. The only difference is that she wears a big ribbon in her hair. If it wasn't for that, he would have thought the photo was of himself.

There were two others, taken in their backyard. In one, Aviva stands in the middle of a group of her cousins and Ezra, all in light summer clothes, except for Aviva who wears a coat. Again, she has a ribbon in her hair. She looks sadder than in the other picture. It's almost as if she was placed in later after the picture was taken. No one seems to notice her. Ezra stares straight at the camera, proud and happy. He must have won a game.

"When was this taken?" He asked his mother. She looked over again and seeing his selection, said, almost in a whisper, "I can't remember. Put it away."

As usual, she didn't want to talk about his sister but he wouldn't give up.

The last photo was his favorite, maybe even his favorite of all the photos in the house. Ziggy had figured out it was taken in 1944, a few months before Aviva had gone away. His parents sit with Ezra and Aviva. Hannah holds Ezra who has his usual happy go lucky look on his face. Her hair, cut short with a little bob, wears a white blouse and a skirt. She looks younger and more content than he could ever imagine.

If his mother had grown older, his father still looked the same. His face as young looking now as it was then, ten years earlier. The striking part of the photo is the look on his face. Sheer ecstasy, unabashed in its declaration of love. Ziggy is almost ashamed to look at it, as if he had caught his father naked, in a pose that he never wanted anyone to see. It was too much. Yet his father never talked of her, never mentioned her name. Was it his fault that she had gone away? Had she been out with him and wandered off? Was that why his father always held Ziggy's hand tightly when they went out together.

Aviva sits on his father's lap. Actually she rests against his chest. Again, she wears the large ribbon which presses against her father's jacket. She looks so at ease, so at home. How could she look like that and want to leave? Ziggy wondered.

Maybe she didn't run away. Maybe someone kidnapped her, snatching the beautiful girl away and not allowed her to come back. How she must have cried those first few weeks till the kidnapper won her over and she had forgotten them all.

"Mammy?" Ziggy said again, getting ready to ask the big question.

"What?" his mother said impatiently.

"Do you...."

"Ma, Mammy!" The loud voice could be heard through the dining room door.

Ezra.

Hannah got up from her chair and went to the door.

"What? What?"

"I need you up here for a moment."

Hannah went out. The mood was broken but he waited a few minutes.

He heard Hannah and Ezra talking. Then she went to the bathroom.

Ziggy waited for her to come downstairs again but she went to her

bedroom. Ziggy heard the door close. She was going to rest

upstairs. He scooped up the pictures. He would have to try again as soon as he could.

The next day would be best. Ezra had gone out and his father to the movies. Simon had been surprised when Ziggy turned him down; they had gone together without a break for ages. His father went anyway. Ziggy had other plans. When his mother finished the laundry, he joined her in the backroom. The Ben and Bebe Lyons show had just ended and the next show "Palm Court Hotel," where they played waltzes, not one of Ziggy's favorites, just began. He

had an hour before his favorite show, "Movie go Round," when they played music from the films and talked about the stars, plenty of time.

He looked at his mother, absorbed in her work. She sat embroidering a piece of satin which was held in a wooden frame. Although she made large items like tablecloths or the cover for the Ark in the synagogue, she preferred to work on small things, like the challah dekel, the covering for the challah bread for the Sabbath table which she worked on that afternoon. It had Hebrew letters and lambs and candles. He had seen the same design in sh'vester's. She and his mother often embroidered the same patterns but even his aunt admitted that Hannah was better. She had the touch. Just as she had in cooking.

His mother looked up at Ziggy.

"Tatalah, find me a number 169."

Ziggy sifted through the various skeins in her box of threads till he found it.

"Which one do you think is better?" she then asked, holding up two shades of purple.

"That one. It looks brighter."

Hannah took the thread, wet it and expertly put it through the eye of the needle.

Already the satin canvas was an array of gold, green, grey and red. When she finished one, she put a white fringe around the edges of the white satin. It shone. She had one put aside for him when he got married.

His mother looked relaxed. The perfect time to raise the issue. He went into the front room and took out a photo of Aviva and came back in. He couldn't wait any longer. Holding up the picture of Aviva with the ravelling cardigan, he asked,

"What was Aviva doing here?"

"Ach, again with the photographs," his mother said. "Leave them in the drawer. If you keep taking them out, you'll ruin them."

He ignored his mother's complaint. Now was the time to ask.

"Do you think that Aviva will ever come back?"

His mother looked up, her face suddenly as white as the satin.

Ziggy realized he had said something wrong but he wasn't sure what. His mother's mouth quivered as if she would break down in tears.

"What kind of silly child are you? Why ask such a question?"

Ziggy felt his heart sink.

"I don't understand. What did I say wrong?"

There was a silence for a moment.

His mother put down her embroidery and looked at him.

"Don't you know Aviva is dead," she said quietly, her voice almost a whisper.

Ziggy sank back in his chair, astonished. He had never expected such an answer.

"No. I thought she had ran away," he blurted out. He felt stupid.

"Ran away? What ever gave you that idea?" His mother admonished him.

"You said she had 'gone...." Ziggy fell silent. He now realized

now what they meant by "gone away." They didn't want to use the word "died" or the yiddish geshtorben.

His mother cut in. " She died when she was four. She got leukemia..."

Ziggy sat back in his seat, mumbling, "I didn't know, no one told me."

He couldn't say anything more. He didn't want to stay in the room any longer. He wanted to be alone.

"I'm going upstairs."

"Go," his mother said.

When he got to his room, he lay down on the bed. His heart race. It was awful. He couldn't believe what had just happened. "How could I be so stupid?" He thought to himself. He should have realized that she hadn't run away. It had stared him in the face the whole time. Every year they observed the anniversary of the day that she had "gone away." They lit a yahrtzeit candle and turned off the radio and listened to no music, like one does for someone who had died. He had never taken her death literally. He was such a fool. Why hadn't he realized the truth before. Why had no one told him? Why had they kept it a secret from him? He turned over and buried his face in the pillow. He wanted to cry but no tears came. How would he face his mother at supper? Would she tell his father what he had said? What would he do? Or Ezra? Would Ezra come barging into his room to tell him off?

Over the weeks that followed, he managed to pry the story of

his sister from his mother. She would feed him little bits and pieces, a sentence here and there. She could not bear to tell the story at any length. He slowly pieced it all together, or at least as much as his mother would tell him. She was the only one he could turn to for information. He never spoke of it to his father. He never mentioned it to his brother either, although Ezra was six when she died and most probably remembered the events. Hannah told Ziggy that before Aviva died, Ezra wouldn't leave his room and cried the whole time and when he was born, his brother had not let him out of his sight. Ziggy could hardly believe that this was the same brother who tormented him now. What had happened to change Ezra? Maybe one day, he could ask Ezra. When they were both older.

Ezra and Aviva shared the same birthday ~~day~~, born exactly two years apart. Ezra, in fact, nine months to the day after his parents married. Ziggy thought how strange it was that his sister's short life had touched both her brother's: she had died on the same day as his birthday. No wonder there were no birthday parties in his house.

As Ziggy sat beside his mother, frightened of the sorrow in his mother's face and in her voice, Hannah told the story of the life and death of his sister, all four years of it. "She would come into the kitchen and take the brush and ask me could she help me sweep. Such a little person." Hannah paused. It was hard for her. Tears glistened in her eyes. Ziggy put his hand on his mother's arm. He fought off the tears

himself. He could hardly bear to hear the story. But he had to. "Ach, I remember it all as if it was yesterday. On the day that the photo in the garden had been taken, I was peeling potatoes. I was making a potato kugel. Aviva said she was cold. I felt her forehead. A little sweaty but nothing to worry about. She was so frail, so thin. Always lately catching cold. I should have realized something was wrong.

As she sat beside Ziggy, she looked around the kitchen as if for something to do but there was nothing, the food prepared, the dishes washed.

"I took down the coat and put it on her, even though it was sunny outside. I got a ribbon and put it in her hair."

Hannah's hand went up to Ziggy's forehead and she ran her fingers through the wavy hair. "I shouldn't tell you this but your hair was just the same and until you were one or two, I tied a ribbon in your hair too."

Hannah laughed to herself. Ziggy blushed.

"Sh'vester told me to stop. She told me to stop lots of things,"

Hannah added bitterly.

"What do you mean?" Ziggy said.

Hannah got up from the table to put on the kettle. She did not care what she said anymore in Ziggy's presence. She had kept quiet too long.

"She told me to stop crying over her death. After only a few months. She didn't want me to talk about it anymore."

This information only made his aunt sink even more in his

estimation. Still, getting up from the table to get some cups and saucers, he wanted to give his mother another point of view.

"Maybe she didn't mean it. Was it a year later or something?"

His mother came back to the table.

"Oh, she meant it. It was only three months.

Ziggy could imagine her, an older version of his mother, the same green eyes, round face, lined with age but immaculately maintained with just the right touch of lipstick and rouge, the mouth ample and lips firm, shouting at his mother: "STOP CRYING ALREADY! I don't want to hear more. You have another child to take care of."

His mother continued: "It was a bad time for us all. The concentrations camps and then Uncle Jacob in the car crash.

Ziggy could only imagine his aunt laying into his mother, a mother who had only stayed in Ireland because his aunt had blackmailed her. And now when his mother needed her care and tolerance her sister had turned on her.

She most probably had sat in this very kitchen, at this very table and said in that tone of ice that Ziggy hated and resented and which had been turned on him often enough: "We all have suffered. Look at me, with Jacob dead, a widow with six children. I just got up and did what I had to do. I didn't sit around crying all day."

It was easy for his aunt to talk. She sat in her big house, rings on her finger, a maid upstairs and thought that she done better than his mother.

"Did you tell sh'vester off?"

"What could I say, tatalah, that losing a husband is not the same as losing a child? I kept quiet. I stuck my hanky in my mouth and was dumb."

The kettle whistled. Ziggy jumped up and got the tea. He poured some into the strainer and poured the water it. He cut a lemon and popped it in and handed it to his mother with two lumps of sugar. She put a lump between her teeth and sipped some of the tea.

"Anyway," she continued, "that night Avivalah took ill. She vomited. I thought that she had eaten some berries in the garden but she said 'No. Mama, the pain in my side is terrible.' It was appendicitis. If only I had noticed things earlier."

She sucked again on the sugar. Ziggy took his tea, poured in some milk and sugar. He felt weak.

"Then she before she left the hospital, she got the measles, then they diagnosed leukemia," she sighed again, "then she died. Two months. That's all. From the end of June to the beginning of September. You can't imagine....and your poor father..."

She sipped again on the tea.

In all the telling, Ziggy had never thought of his father. It was his mother's story but when she mentioned his father he could only imagine the pain, Aviva's death held for them both. He wondered if he would ever talk about his sister with his father. Ziggy handed his mother a plate with cake.

Hannah refused it.

Almost to herself, she said, "I breast fed her when she was born and I wasn't well."

Ziggy shuddered. The image of his mother's breasts made him feel uncomfortable. What did she mean? That the leukemia had been connected to her milk and that she had poisoned her child? He didn't know if that was possible but he hoped his mother didn't think that. That would be awful.

He remembered that there had been talk that his mother had not wanted to breast feed him. Was that why?

His poor mother.

Then she sighed and took a piece of cake.

"Dr. Robinson told us to have a child straight away. It would help us recover and so you were born," she said.

Hearing this tale of how he came to be gave him a strange feeling. To be born like that.

"Did you wish I was a girl?" He couldn't help asking his mother.

Hannah put her arms around him and kissed his forehead.

"What a silly thing to say. I wanted a child, boy or girl what difference. Of course, I loved you."

Ziggy was not convinced. She had wanted a girl, not a pudgy, ten pound boy. Knowing his mother as he did, he could easily imagine the scene: The minute she could catch her breath, with the sweat still on her brow, the pain from her abdomen a dull ache, his mother had asked the midwife, Nurse Smith, in a whisper: "Is it a girl?" And then the look on her face, when she heard it was a

boy. She must have been sad. God had betrayed her--yet again. Her last chance of happiness gone.

"Did Daddy care?"

"No. I remember when Aunt Leonara sent a telegram that said, 'Mazal tov. Maybe next time it will be a girl' he tore it up in little pieces."

She laughed at her husband's actions.

He still wasn't convinced. They wanted a girl. She didn't want him. That's what wrong. He's not a girl. There was nothing he could do about that. All the dressing up in the world would not change him into a girl.

He finished his tea.

"Did you want other children?" He had to ask his questions as they came to his mind. He never knew when his mother would clam up and he would never have the chance again.

His mother, for once, didn't seem to mind answering. Maybe after all the years of silence, she welcomed the chance to talk.

"I wanted another child after you but your father said he could not afford it."

Again the division between them.

"I was getting on as well. I was nearly forty when you were born. So we just had you, tatelah. Thank God, you are healthy and will one day grow strong and have your own children."

Rather than reassure Ziggy, his mother's story tortured him. For days afterwards, he retreated into himself and kept to his room. He began to have nightmares in which his sister came back.

No longer was she the happy, healthy child of his earlier fantasies but a dybbuk, a demon, her hair all tousled, the ribbon, unravelled and almost falling out of her hair. She demanded the life that had been robbed her. They wrestled, fighting for a place in the family. He awoke in the night, afraid that he had cried out. He couldn't tell his parents what was happening.

Nor could he get rid of the feeling that he had done something wrong. He felt like a stranger in his own home. He was born wrong. Whatever his mother said, he knew that he was brought into this world for one purpose and one purpose only: to be a girl. And he had failed. He had failed before he was even born. No wonder they don't love him as much as Ezra. They didn't want him. He should have been a girl.

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1959: A PLACE AT THE TABLE

After the High Holidays in 1958, Ezra was gone. He left their home in Dublin to study in Israel at the famous talmudic school, the Yeshivah of the Ponovitz Rabbi in Jerusalem. He wouldn't be back till just before his younger brother, Ziggy's barmitzvah the following September.

The house was strangely empty without his presence. It was as if no one quite knew how to act, a ship without a captain. Although Ziggy now had more freedom, he could not get used to the fact that his older brother was not around. He kept expecting Ezra to turn up at any moment to chide him or tell him what to do. He sensed that Ezra could see what he did, even from Israel.

His parents too reacted very much in character. His father Simon carried on as before, though he was quieter, had less to talk about and said little at the dinner table. Hannah was a barrel of nerves. She took Ziggy into her confidence. "To have him not take the scholarship?!" She said to Ziggy, her Yiddish accent more pronounced as it would when she became angry or upset. It easily lost the superficial veneer of the nearly twenty five years in Ireland and sounded as if she had just arrived from the Poland of her youth.

They sat talking at the kitchen table one Sunday morning sometimes after Ezra had gotten his way, still reliving all the anxiety of the preceding months. As usual, the table had been placed against the wall so that his mother could wheel out the washing machine. It had taken his mother years of cajoling to get

his father to buy it and now it proudly made swirling and gurgling noises like a contented child. Hannah had steeped the sheets in the sink first and the kitchen smelled of bleach and the roast already in the range. Ziggy ate his breakfast. He had toasted the challah bread on the grill at the front of the fire in the range. For a change, still in his pajamas Ziggy, sat, not in his usual place against the wall but on the outside, in his father's seat. He smeared butter on the toast and stretched out his arm for the jam. His mother took a sip of tea.

Hannah had not let Ezra go easily. He had been awarded a scholarship in Maths to Trinity College, one of only three offered that year. It was an incredible achievement but he wanted to turn it down so that he could go straight to the Yeshivah and become a Rabbi. But his mother opposed the idea and for months that had been locked in a fierce battle over his plans.

"What if he decides he doesn't want to be a Rabbi and had lost the scholarship, what would he do then? We don't have the money to send him to university." Her voice had a pained, almost strained tone to it, as if she and Ezra were one and the same.

Ziggy didn't know what to say. He looked at his mother, her brown hair now streaked with grey, her body fleshy and thick, even though she never seemed to eat a solid meal, her face lined which make her look older than his father whose face was the face of a young man, even though he was already in his early fifties and two years older than his wife.

"What are you worried about? I'm sure that Ezra will become a

Rabbi. That's all he talked about for ages," Ziggy said, dreading this conversation. He got up from the table and went to toast another piece of bread. That way he could have his back to his mother and not have to look at her grieving face.

He wanted to agree with his mother but he wanted to take Ezra's side for once. He was pleased that Ezra, who never discussed anything with his younger brother, who was after all seven years his junior and at eleven and eighteen that was a large gap, had once come into his room to talk about his plans. Ziggy was flattered and tried to rise to the occasion. Maybe this was the start of a new phase.

"I don't want to go to Trinity. Math is stupid," he said, his voice desperate. Ezra lay down on Ziggy's bed, his long lanky frame stretching over the edge. Ziggy looked at his brother, so different from himself. More a Zeiskind physically than him, blond, wavy hair, striking blue eyes, a real baby face. Not like Ziggy who was a Diamond like his mother. Dark wavy hair, brown eyes, slightly pudgy body, short and stocky. So different in temperament too. Ziggy was quiet, content to be alone. "The sensible one" his mother said. "I can always talk to you." Ezra was the brilliant one, impetuous, impatient. Ezra bit his nails to the bone. He was always restless, tense, on show. No wonder his mother was worried.

"But you're great at Math. You won a scholarship. Why do you say it's 'stupid'? Ziggy asked.

Ezra jumped up from the bed. He was edgy. He didn't want a

discussion after all; he just wanted a sounding board. The connection was shortlived.

"It's a waste of time. I'd much rather study Talmud. That's worthwhile."

What could Ziggy say? The idea of reading the Talmud for ten hours a day, six days a week and discussing little else certainly did not appeal to him at all. He was not going to a Yeshivah if he could help it. He just hoped that his mother wouldn't force him. But he thought if he sided with Ezra he would win a few points with him and they could be closer.

His father, didn't seem to care either way. It wasn't that he was a Hebrew teacher, had gone to the Yeshivah himself for a year or two, though he hadn't become a Rabbi, and would be expected to be proud of having a son who was a Rabbi. He honestly didn't want to force his son to do something he didn't want to. That was Simon's way. He never wanted to force his way on anyone. "Let the boy do what he wants," he said to Hannah, one day as the family sat down to a meal without Ezra present. "It's his life and I'm sure he know what he wants to do. Why make an issue over everything?" He dipped the bread into the salt to make the hamotzie prayer that began every meal.

Hannah looked scornfully at her husband and Ziggy did the same.

"If your father had his way," Hannah said to him at the table that Sunday morning, "he would end up a waster like the rest of the Zeiskinds'.

Ziggy knew what she meant. In her eyes, none of the Zeiskinds,

not even his father who taught Hebrew school, had ever amounted to anything, salesmen, clerks, shelpers, workers, not a degree or decent career among them. So his mother said and he believed her. He couldn't decide for himself. He really didn't know his father's side of the family, although there were lots of Zeiskinds in Dublin, aunts, uncles, cousins. Their paths seldom crossed. They used to come around on Sunday mornings but they stopped a while back. Now, he only saw them from a distance and barely knew most of their names. They lived in a small community but still it was possible to ignore those you didn't want to see. Of course, it wa a two way street, the Zeiskinds and even his father made no attempt to keep in contact. The only relatives he knew were his aunt, sh'vester, his mother's sister, who lived around the corner from them.

Ziggy sitting by the fire worried that he would inherit his father's genes and be a "waster" too. He knew he wasn't as bright as Ezra but hoped that he wasn't too dumb. Had Ezra inherited all the brains in the family? What would happen to him then? Would he be just like his father? He didn't want to think about it. He had to study harder that's all. He had the Primary Certificate coming up that year when he would leave Zion Schools and then the Scholarship exams to Stratford College. Would be get either?

Eventually, after weeks of bickering, rowdy dinner table conversations, tears and slammed doors between husband and wife and mother and son, Ezra won a compromise. Trinity said he could wait a year before entering and his mother gave him the year to

try the Yeshivah to see if he still liked it. He still had to take his degree but after that he could go back to the Yeshivah, "as long as he had something to fall back on."

Every week, Ezra sent them a letter and a postcard. He never called. Calls from Israel were too expensive and anyway it was so difficult getting through. The letter was addressed to his parents. He usually wrote about where he had been, what cousins he had seen and how he spent his time and also what he had been studying. Ziggy noticed Simon would take down the books that Ezra mentioned and start reading over the same text as his son was reading. The postcard usually had more of the same. The card was addressed to Ziggy, although Ezra used his formal name, "Ezekiel" which Ziggy hated. Only Ezra used it and the occasional school teacher. There was nothing personal on the card to Ziggy, no message to him. But he collected the cards and put them on his wall....

Two weeks before Passover, as Ziggy was still in his bedroom getting dressed for school, the phone rang in the hallway. His mother yelled from the kitchen for Ziggy to get the phone. "My hands are dirty from the ashes from the fire." He bounded down the stairs. It was early. Who could be calling at this hour? Had someone died?

"Ezekiel Zeiskind?" A woman's voice at the other end asked.

Ziggy was a little startled. He hadn't expected it to hear his name. He had to be important. She was using his real name.

"Ye--es," he said with hesitation in his voice.

"Good morning young man," the voice continued. "My name is Mrs. Nathansons. I am chairman of the Board of Governors of Stratford College and I have some important news for you."

Ziggy's heart began to pound heavily. He wanted to call his mother. A month before, he had sat for the scholarship exams for the Jewish high school but he was sure that he had done badly and had put it out of his head. He hadn't talked about it to his parents who, anyway, had just asked how he did and when he had just replied, "ok. I don't want to talk about it," they didn't press him any further which annoyed Ziggy. If it was Ezra they would have gotten every detail out of him or Ezra would have given them a detailed account of every question and every answer. That was Ezra. It wasn't Ziggy.

Ziggy remembered Mrs. Nathansons from a long time before when she came to their house to try and persuade Hannah to send Ezra to Stratford College. It was just before Ezra's barmitzvah in 1953. The Stratford College, the first Jewish High school ever in Ireland, had just opened. They opened it because the other private schools had imposed a quota on the number of Jewish students they would take in. As a rule, Jews only went to the Protestant schools like High School, St. Andrews and Diocessan for girls, staying clear of the Catholic ones as they missionized and were anti-semitic. Then the Protestants saw that too many Jews wanted to get in and set their quotas. Ezra was a victim of their policies. He had a place at Wesley College, one of the best in the city, but they had used up their quota for Jews that year

and he had to wait a whole year to get in. So, that Spring, Mrs. Nathansons had come to Hannah to ask her to send Ezra to the new school but Hannah was frightened.

"What happens if the school fails? I can't take a chance on my son's education," she had said as she and Mrs. Nathansons sat in the Zeiskind kitchen. Hannah had put out her best china and cakes. Ziggy sat at the table with them, drawing in his coloring book. He was just six and no one minded him sitting there.

"I guarantee you it won't fail," said Mrs. Nathansons, a woman of imposing stature, with flaming red hair and a stick thin figure. Still, she loomed over the smaller Hannah. She had an upper class accent and a tone that Hannah resented. Mrs. Nathansons sipped her tea, her pinky extended and took tiny bites out of Hannah's kuchen. She ate like she didn't approve of Jewish food, though everyone knew that Hannah was a marvelous cook.

"What do these people know of our situation?" His mother said to Ziggy later after Mrs. Nathansons had left, defeated. "We don't have the money to make changes. It's ok for them. Her husband drives a big car and they live in a huge house in Palmerston Road. I can't take chances. I can't. "

Hannah paused to nibble on the cake that Mrs. Nathansons had left unfinished. "Besides, she only comes here when she wants something. When was I ever invited to her house?"

Hannah always felt the indignity of her situation. She knew she was considered a lower class Jew. Even though Hannah was adamant, she sounded like she felt guilty. Ziggy felt sorry for his

mother. His father abdicated all decisions to her. She had to make all the decisions in the family, though if Simon ever disagreed, he never got his way. Hannah did not give in easily to them.

So Ezra went to Wesley. But now six years later, Stratford was thriving, with a national reputation, even though it only had Jewish students and lots of Jewish children still went to the non-Jewish institutions.

"Young man," Mrs. Nathansons continued in her clipped British voice, "I am delighted to tell you that you have won a full six year scholarship to Stratford College. The examiners were very impressed with your work on the papers and we look forward to having you with us in September."

Ziggy could hardly catch his breath. A six year scholarship and there he was thinking he had failed and would be shaming his family and his brother.

He thanked Mrs. Nathansons and ran to tell his mother.

Hannah still covered in ashes, beamed with pleasure. "I would kiss you, darling, but look how messy I am. Oy, this is such a relief. I didn't know where the money would come from to send you there and I hated to ask for charity. Mazal-tov." Just then the post came through the letter box and Ziggy ran to get it. There was the weekly card and letter from Ezra. He brought them to the kitchen where Hannah had washed up and was making breakfast. "Nu, let me see the letter from my son," said

Hannah taking the letter from Ziggy.

She quickly read it and said, "what a teire kind, a dear child, that Ezra," she said. " He bring me so much nachas, such joy."

"What?" said Ziggy feeling his moment in the sun fading fast.

"What did he do? Did he get a scholarship to the Yeshivah?"

Hannah laughed. "No. But listen. The head of the Yeshivah has placed Ezra beside him at his table when he speaks on Friday nights. Do you know what an honor that is?"

Ziggy didn't but assumed that it was some kind of great honor.

"Wait till your father hears this. He will be so proud."

Was the scholarship forgotten already? Would it take second place to that? Ziggy wanted to say to his mother. Does that not count for anything? He was tired of coming in second place to Ezra. He wanted a place of his own. But he was silent. He ate his breakfast and left the house. His mother, still holding the letter from her son sat in a dreamlike state.

Ziggy waited impatiently for the bus. Long gone were the days when he went in the Friedman's car. He used to sit in the back with their son Gabriel and go over their homework together. They had moved from Clare Avenue around the corner from their house up the hill to Rathgar Road. He hardly saw or talked to Gabriel, his old childhood pal, anymore. They were in the same class but somehow they just weren't that friendly anymore. Of course, that day to his chagrin, the 16 bus was late so that by the time he got to school, everyone had heard the scholarship results. Even though he was late, his teacher, Mr. Cassidy

refrained from giving him two lashings on each hand with the strap, the usual punishment for being late. Instead, in a gentle voice, he called Ziggy aside. Smelling of cigarettes and Old Spice aftershave lotion, he leaned over to Ziggy: "Ezekiel, I'm as proud of you as I was of your brother, Ezra. We expect you to do as well in the future as your brother. Didn't he win a scholarship to Trinity? One of these days you will as well, young man. This is just the beginning." Ziggy bowed his head as the teacher spoke. He wasn't used to such praise. Still, his delight was mingled with resentment. Why does Ezra have to be dragged into everything? He gets enough praise.

The class had started work already so there was no opportunity for talk. At the eleven o'clock break, Ziggy found himself surrounded by his classmates who congratulated him. He wasn't used to the attention. He never thought of himself as special or standing out from the crowd. In fact, it was the first time he had ever won anything.

"Do you know who else won?" Michael Green asked Ziggy.

Ziggy hadn't thought about that matter at all. He didn't know how many scholarships had been offered.

"Well, I do," said Leonard Wolfson. Leonard was a big burly kid with straight brown hair that fell over his forehead. He had a big round face and wore glasses. He and Ziggy had been friends since they were five or six and Ziggy had often played in his house in Templeogue, near Terenure. They had studied together for the exams and spent nights on the phone going over the material.

Ziggy was positive that Leonard had won one as well and was ready to put out his hand to congratulate him but he noticed that Leonard did not look happy.

"They gave one to Maeve Nathansons, Gabriel Friedman and yourself," Leonard, glaring at Ziggy, said in a voice that sounded peeved.

"You didn't get one?" Ziggy asked, standing back a little. He felt sorry for Leonard and a little guilty for having beaten his friend.

"NO! Leonard said in a loud voice, "Me father is going to demand another reading of the tests. If you ask me you and Friedman only got it cause you're poor and Maeve got it cause she's the daughter of the Chairman. It's all favoritism. Me Dad told me it's a farce. Wait till the next exams. I'll trounce you." He pushed Ziggy aside and walked off bitterly. Some of the others went with him. Ziggy felt ill at ease. He had never realized that winning could bring him enemies. And just yesterday, Leonard and he had talked on the phone for half an hour. Ziggy wanted to follow him to tell him it wasn't his fault, that he had nothing to do with it, that he was sure there was some mistake. But he was also frightened. What would happen if they did read the exams again and decided he didn't really deserve the scholarship or he failed his first exams at Stratford? Could they take away his scholarship then? Was he really that bright? Was it all a sham? Suddenly, someone tapped him on the shoulder. "Don't give a fig for what that cretin says. He's just jealous." He turned and

there stood Gabriel Friedman. "He won't start anything," Gabriel said, smiling and showing a mouth full of clear white even teeth. They seemed to catch the light. Ziggy wondered how people got such teeth. He brushed and brushed but his teeth stayed yellow. Gabriel looked as happy as ever, his black hair slicked with brylcream, his green eyes full of delight. His face had already acquired a more mature, adult look. He even had some down over his lip and along the side of his face.

"How do you know?" Ziggy asked. "He sounds serious."

"Don't worry about it." Gabriel turned to walk away. Ziggy was sorry to see him go, they hadn't really talked in ages and now they shared a scholarship.

Suddenly, Gabriel came back.

"Hey, Ziggy. Do you want to come over tonight. Me parents are throwing a special dinner for me. That would be fun, the two of us together. It's been a long time." Gabriel sounded really eager to have Ziggy there. Ziggy hesitated. He knew his mother hated him eating anyone else's food except her's.

"Unless of course..." Gabriel paused, "your parents are doing something for you."

Ziggy knew that they wouldn't. They would never even think of it. But he wanted to save face. "I don't know. They haven't said anything. My father doesn't know yet. He wasn't home when I left."

"Well, come on by if you like. We could easily add an extra place at the table for you. We can take a walk together later."

Gabriel's calm tone reassured Ziggy and he felt warm towards Gabriel, warmer than he had in ages. Maybe they could be real friends. He could use one.

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Like all orthodox Jewish boys-- and orthodox Jewish boys in Dublin, Ireland where he lived were no different--Ziggy Zeiskind eagerly anticipated his barmitzvah. It would occur in early September on the first Saturday after his thirteenth birthday in the Hebrew Calendar. He looked forward to all the pomp and circumstance. He had been fitted for a new suit, his first with long pants, which would be made by Louis Copeland who had a store in Capel Street. Even though his parents did not approve of a man who had married out, he was the best tailor they could find for the money.

Although there were still months to go, every morning, Ziggy eagerly ran down to get the post and see if there were letters from abroad. The list of out- of- town guests grew constantly with cousins and friends from all over, England, Australia, Mexico, Israel and maybe even America, planning to come. Ziggy knew only their names but Hannah, his mother--they were coming mainly from her side of the family-- would grow rapturous at who was coming.

"Moshe from Mexico City will come with Shloime from Guadalajara and Frieda from Israel," she would announce. Followed by a "Where shall I put them all?"

Still, Hannah was delighted. After years of feeling neglected and living in the shadow of her sister sh'vester who lived around the corner from the Zeiskind family but in a wealthier area as befit her income, his mother was being acknowledged at last. People

were coming to her simcha, her moment of joy.

Ziggy felt honored too. They were also coming for him.

His mother had decided that they would make a big dinner in their house on Friday evening, a kiddush after services on the Sabbath and another big dinner at their home after that and then a reception on the Sunday afternoon at the synagogue. The reception would fall on the yahrtzeit of his sister, the 23rd of Ellul in the Hebrew calendar but, for once, they would not mourn on that day. After all the years of never having a birthday party because the anniversary of her death always fell close to his birthday, he was finally getting honored. A barmitzvah took precedence. Nonetheless, they never mentioned this fact to anyone, as though they were ashamed of what they were doing.

Hannah would cook all the food herself.

"Why have it catered? I can do better than Mrs. Danker."

Mrs. Danker did all the catering for the community. The house was always full of the smells of her baking as she made and stored all the foods that they would need. Ziggy knew that his mother was a great cook but he suspected that money was behind it all. At night, he could hear his parents huddling in the kitchen over who to invite and discussing what they could afford. He didn't mind when they told him that he could only keep ten percent of what he got--two shillings out of every pound. The rest would go to paying for the food and whatever debts they had. He knew that his friends kept all that they got but if his parents needed the money then it was what had to be done. He wanted to help his

parents and hoped he would get a lot of money.

"We'll put the rest in Prize Bonds for you with your name on them, like we did for Ezra."

For Ezra, his older brother's barmitzvah, they had knocked down the wall between the front and back rooms and had the reception at home. He could barely remember it. He was only six at the time and they had shooed him off to bed before all the guests had arrived, though he sneaked out on the landing to hear them come and go.

Besides the parties and the presents, Ziggy looked forward to the ritual itself. He was going to read the whole Torah portion, an unusual feat. He had to learn the melody and then to read without vowels and verse breaks from the Torah scroll itself. Most of his friends just read the final portion of the Torah service and the Haftorah, a section from the prophets which was like reading straight from a book-even if one had to learn a special melody. But as Simon Zeiskind's son and Ezra Zeiskind's brother, he was expected to do more. His father, after all, taught all the barmitzvah boys at their synagogue and his son should be able to master more than the average boy! The extra burden did not worry Ziggy. Rituals did not bother him. He loved Judaism. It came as natural to him as breathing. He was Jewish and to be Jewish meant to be Orthodox and to be Orthodox meant carrying out the rituals properly. The rituals never seemed rigid to Ziggy. He carried out every nuance of observance as best he

could. He kept his head covered at all times, wearing either his school cap or a yarmulke at all times; he fasted on the right days. He never ate anything that wasn't kosher nor carried anything on the sabbath, instead wrapping his hanky around his waist with the house keys attached. Nothing filled him with joy like Friday nights at the dinner table when they sang songs or the Holidays-- Purim, Passover, Pentecost, Rosh Hashana --with their special services and foods.

He eagerly awaited being called to the Torah, his name announced in Hebrew by the cantor, "Ezekiel Ben Shimon," "Ezekiel son of Simon." After he was barmitzvahed, he knew he would count towards a minyan, one of the ten men needed to hold services and could put on phylacteries, tefillin. He would have a legitimate place in his faith.

All that lay in the future. Every week he met with his father to go over his Torah portion. Ziggy could see why his father was known in the community as an excellent teacher of barmitzvah boys. His father was a gentle teacher. They took it slowly. First he taught Ziggy the trop, the melody, and then the Hebrew words from a regular book that printed the words with vowels and the text with verse breaks. Then Ziggy had to transfer his knowledge to the Torah scroll proper where there were no vowels or verse breaks. Despite the fact that he still argued with his father and had been raised by his mother to be wary of him, Ziggy loved his lessons with his father. He could not escape the feelings of warmth that being with his father gave him.

Ziggy spent hours on the task. Everything had to be "just so." He knew that if did not preform the reading precisely as written down in the codes, it would not count. Ziggy had to follow the letter of the Law, careful not to deviate to the "right or the left." It had to be just so or

His parents, Simon and Hannah all prescribed to that tenet-- as did all orthodox Jews in Dublin. He had seen people snicker during services when someone stumbled at the ritual or didn't know how to perform it correctly. They had no mercy. "What an ignoramus." He had heard his father often exclaim, railing to his wife or sons about someone who had made some minor error that to Simon revealed a major flaw.

"You would think he would know better. That's what happens when you don't go to shool from one year to the next."

His father was a stickler for obedience to the law. He brooked no one breaking the law as he understood it. A year before, when Simon heard that Rabbi Jakobovitz, the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland who had moved to a synagogue in New York that was situated on the thirtieth floor, took an elevator to services on the sabbath, he had been appalled. The conversation at the Zeiskind Sabbath table had been full of it for weeks. Simon would turn the pages of the "Jewish Chronicle," the Bible of all Jews in the British Isles, see an article or letter on the topic and be off again on his tirade.

"I would rather climb up all the stairs myself than get in a lift on shabbos," he said in a tone of righteous indignation. "I don't

understand how you can ride in a lift on shabbos, despite what anyone says. He's not an orthodox rabbi anymore, if you ask me." Ezra, however, rose to his old teacher's defense. "Jacko" was one of his few Rabbinic heroes.

"You know, Jacko. He wouldn't break the law if he felt it was wrong. The Rabbis in New York said that if the elevator went up and down on a time switch whether anyone was in it or not, it was alright."

Simon was not impressed. He reached for his skullcap. "I betcha he made up that rule himself. Terribly disappointing."

Ezra was in his element now, attacking his father. He looked up from his plate and holding his knife out, he pointed at his father. "Well, I am sure that if it wasn't right, he wouldn't do it. I looked it up myself and Rabbi Tetelbaum argued that it was permissible. That's good enough for me."

Simon smearing some chopped liver on to the challah bread carried on as if he had not heard Ezra's declaration.

"I still don't understand. How does a lift work like that? What if people see him get in the elevator? Won't they think he is breaking the Law?"

Ezra snorted. "If everyone does it, then it is no sin. THEY know. Ziggy who had finished his kiddush wine and was feeling quite good about himself, piped in, "It's like those Jews in India who were able to ride on busses on Shabbos because they had an arrangement with the company."

Ezra turned to look at his brother, as if he was surprised another person was sitting beside him. "That was different, stupid."

"How was it different?" Ziggy asked, Ezra's cold tone sobering him up. When Ezra didn't answer, he asked again, "How is it different? To me it's exactly the same."

Ezra pushed his plate of liver away and his mother handed him a bowl of chicken soup. "I haven't the time to explain it to you but its different."

Ziggy seeing he was ignored by Ezra, tried a more personal attack against his father. After all, it was Ezra and his mother often did. Poor Simon was always under attack: "It's not like you don't break the law. You carry your handkerchief on shabbos."

"Shah," said Hannah, rising to her husband's defense. Ziggy felt annoyed. She was always doing that. In private she would tell Ziggy how disappointed she was with his father but around the table she came to his defense. Her actions always confused Ziggy. Simon needed no support. "That's different. Anyway, I'm not the Rabbi of some fancy schmancy New York place." Simon was obstinate. He wouldn't give it up. When he got something in his head, it was impossible to make him change his mind: "I still don't understand..."

"Ah Da!" Ziggy and Ezra said in unison turning to their food.

"I explained it to you already," Ezra said, his voice exasperated. "What's so hard to understand?" You can be sure that if the Rabbis in New York said it was alright, it is and anyway,

you know Jakobovitz is a religious man and he wouldn't do it." Simon ignored the complaint. He would not go down without a fight, "Do you trust the Americans? They drive to shool on shabbos for God's sake!"

"There are orthodox Jews there," Ezra said. "Look at all the great Yeshivoh there...."

"Alright, alright. Keep your pants on," their father interrupted, seeing the armies arrayed against him but he would not die without a fight and throughout the dinner he could be heard mumbling, "I just don't understand...I wouldn't ever get in an elevator." Suddenly, he piped up and in a loud voice, added the zinger, "If I see him again, I'll ask him."

"You will not, " Ziggy jumped in horrified that his father might indeed ask him and embarrass them all.

"I once opposed a Rabbi," Hannah said out of the blue.

"Where?" asked Ziggy in disbelief. "In Dublin?"

"Nah, in Poland, in Yashanovka," Hannah said.

"How could you do that? That must have taken guts," Ziggy continued.

"Don't you know the story?" Ezra interrupted. "A Rabbi was visiting..."

"Let Ma tell the story," Ziggy said. "I want to hear Ma tell it."

"No, let Ezra tell it. He tells it better."

Ezra appropriated the story so that it almost seemed like it happened to him.

"A Rabbi comes to Yashanovka and speaks out against the Zionists. He said that Herzl was an apikorus, an apostate, and that anyone who followed him would be put in cherem."

"When was this? How old were you?" Ziggy interrupted.

"I was maybe eighteen, twenty, maybe sixteen. Who knows? I was secretary of the local Zionist group," Hannah answered. She sat proudly at the table.

"Anyway," Ezra said continuing, "then he said that people should wait for the messiah. When Elijah came would be plenty of time to go to Eretz Yisrael. So Mammy stood up in the middle of the shool and told him that he was wrong, that Jews should go to Isarel now. Ezra even sounded proud of his mother. "Can you believe Mammy doing that?" He said in conclusion.

"Hee, hee," Ziggy laughed with glee at his mother's chutzpah.

"Wow. What did everyone say? What did the Rabbi do?"

"Ach, I can't remember. It was so long ago," she said smiling recalling her moment of glory. "I was outspoken in those days.

People were afraid of me in those days. I was no fool. I was quite an intellectual in those days. I read Sholom Aleichen, Asch, even Dostoyevsky in Yiddish.

Ziggy had no idea who the latter was but he figured he must have been someone only bright people read. I wanted to be a teacher but well, I left and came here. People don't realize how intelligent I am."

Now all his mother did was cook and embroider and "worry." How frustrated she must be. But still this was a story to be proud

of.

"Why don't you read those books now?" He asked. All she read were women's magazines, like Women's Own or Woman's Weekly full of romances about handsome men and gorgeous women which Ziggy would also surreptitiously read.

"Who has time for that now," his mother said dismissing his question. She had ventured out as far as she wanted to and now needed to get back to shore, to familiar surroundings. Food. "Here, more tzimmi, Ziggy. You haven't had enough to eat at all. It's the way you like it. Some more food, Simon."

"Sure," said Ziggy's father, looking up from his plate. "A little kugel. Lovely."

Despite his father's obstinacy, and his mother's outspokenness, at least at the kitchen table, Ezra lay down the rules in the Zeiskind household. No one was such a stickler for procedure as Ezra. Ziggy wondered if God was like Ezra: harsh, merciless, demanding-- and liable to wallop him if he even dared to suggest an alternative way to do something.

"Why does it have to be exactly this way?" Ziggy would ask, sometimes straining under a new ritual that Ezra had discovered or a new way to perform the ritual that superseded the old. Exasperated, Ezra would answer, "Just do what I say!" or "Because, that's how it has to be. It isn't worth doing, if you did not do it properly."

So, Ziggy knew he would represent not only his father's teaching ability but also his brother's reputation. With seven

years between them, Ziggy always felt intimidated by his brother and never really able to get close to him but sometimes, Ezra got carried away with his ritual observances and attention to detail. One of their fondest memories was when, in his zealotry, he had made Ziggy drunk at a Passover seder. Ezra had announced at the table that he had learned that one had to drink "the equivalent measure of an egg and a half" of wine for the required four cups of wine and insisted that they all drink that amount, including Ziggy. Despite Hannah's reluctance, Ezra persisted. "He hasn't fulfilled his duty if he doesn't follow the directions exactly. He may as well not even drink any!" His father thought it was silly and refused to drink that much but he did not argue when Ezra filled up Ziggy's glass . Ezra warned him to drink it all. Ziggy thought it would be fun. Anyway, he also wanted to follow his brother's orders. Ezra had insisted that no one could eat from lunchtime till the seder and the seder did not begin till after nine. So Ziggy had the first two large glasses on an empty stomach. They him feel real happy. They sang all the songs they knew and Ezra explained the story of the Exodus with all the fancy commentaries that he had learned. Passover was so beautiful. On the first night, all the cups were silver and they ate off the fancy Passover dishes that they used only once a year for the Holiday. The table dazzled with beauty. For the second night they would use the crystal and eat salmon. His mother went all out for the Holiday. In the second half of the seder, Ziggy had two more huge glasses, and even Ezra was a little tipsy so

they sang crazy songs they made up and laughed at silly jokes. Even Hannah was relaxed and they all laughed when Simon fell asleep but they carried on without him anyway. They sat around the dining room table and it felt warm. Now every Passover, they all laughed at the incident. If only his barmitzvah could be like that. So he studied and anticipated....

Ziggy hoped that the barmitzvah would give him the opportunity to finally triumph in his brother's eyes. He ached for his brother's acceptance, though Ezra still treated him like a child. Ezra would be back from the Yeshivah in Israel where he had gone to study for the year and Ziggy wanted them to start anew, on a better footing. He felt sure that once he had been barmitzvahed, they would have more in common and share things. He had to do well, then Ezra would be proud of him. So every evening, he went back and forth between the two texts, singing out the melody. He had to be just right, word perfect. No mistakes allowed. Not only did he have to be good for his family's sake but for Ezra as well.

Ezra came home in August a month before Ziggy's barmitzvah. Despite his anticipation, Ziggy felt uneasy about his brother. The first time Ziggy saw him, when he came in from the boat at Dun Laoighre, he almost didn't recognize his brother. He looked different. He stood even taller and now stood an imperious six foot three, though he was as thin as ever. He had also grown a beard that hid his baby face like a mask and made his blue eyes stand out like two bright blue balls of fire. They had all stood

in the hallway in the early morning to greet him: Hannah, near to tears, Simon looking proud and Ziggy beside his father. He loomed over Hannah as he kissed her and shook hands with his father. Ezra's blond hair, lightened from the Israeli sun, made little licks of gold fire as he said "Hello, Ezekiel" to his much smaller and fatter Ziggy who stood beside his father. Ziggy hated it when Ezra used his formal name. He backed away from him as his mother led her son into the kitchen. Not only physically, Ezra seemed more out of reach than ever, changed in some fundamental ways. They had read his letters about his triumphs at the Yeshivah and they had added to his sense of importance.

Nothing had changed for Ezra. When he had unpacked, he came into Ziggy's room without knocking. Ziggy was lying on his bed reading a "Beano" comic book. Determined not to get upset with his brother, Ziggy stifled his request that Ezra could at least knock before entering.

"What are you reading?" Ezra asked. He grabbed the comic. " You would be better off studying for your barmitzvah."

"I'm doing fine, " said Ziggy now resentful but still wanting to connect to Ezra. "See what I did with the cards you sent."

He was hoping that Ezra would talk about his time in Israel or share some stories with him. The cards would be the entree. Every week, Ezra sent the family a letter and a postcard. The letter was addressed to his parents and the card to Ziggy, although Ezra used his formal name, "Ezekiel." The letter usually

spoke of where he had been, what cousins he had seen and how he spent his time and also what he had been studying. The postcard usually had more of the same. There was nothing personal to Ziggy, no message to him but the cards were beautiful. Israel looked glorious: bright sunshine, ancient ruins, lush gardens, even the desert looked fascinating. His favorite were the cards of Jerusalem with its pink stone and buildings like the Knesset and the Building of the Book. He couldn't wait to go there himself. Ziggy had tacked all the cards up on his bedroom wall, even though his mother complained that he was ruining the wallpaper. But it gave the room a warm glow.

"Huh!" Said Ezra. "Don't destroy them. I want them back." Ziggy was disappointed. He thought that the cards were his but now Ezra wanted them back. He hadn't even noticed how well Ziggy had put them up. Ezra had not changed. Ziggy could never figure him out. Why was he like that to him? They were so different in body and mind that Ziggy wondered if they were even brothers.

After a few days home, Ezra wanted to hear Ziggy read his Torah portion to make sure that everything was right. Ezra made no secret of the fact that he did not trust his father. Although he wanted to surprise everyone with his performance on the day, Ziggy didn't mind giving Ezra a preview. He was sure he was doing great and would astonish Ezra by his expertise. Ezra felt otherwise. As he began to read, Ezra stopped him at nearly every word, pointing out mistakes. "Don't you know how to read Hebrew? That's a segol, not a kometz" saying the name of the vowels and

slapping his brow. Even if Ziggy got the word right, Ezra would criticize the way he sang it. "YOU IDIOT. Don't you know the trop yet? That's a munach reeve not a kadmah azla! What has Da been doing with you. That man. He'll never teach you anything."

By the time, Ezra finished testing him, Ziggy had lost control. His eyes had filled with tears so that he couldn't see the words; he had lost track of the verse breaks and ran them into each other, not to mention forgetting the melody. He started sniffing but Ezra was unmoved. "I can't have you go up there like that. If you don't get every word exactly right and every tune, you are going to let everyone down. You must do it right. It will be a blasphemy if you get up there and do it like you did today. You continue to make mistakes like that and I'll disown you as my brother," he pouted. Ziggy took the threat seriously. He would be thrown into the street and he wouldn't get any presents. Worse, he also felt that he was letting his father down. Ezra needed so little to disparage his father. Ziggy grieved for his father as much as for himself.

After the browbeating, Ezra left Ziggy crying in his room and went downstairs to the backroom to tackle his father. "What's going on?" Ezra demanded. "He knows nothing. He'll get up there and make a fool of himself."

Simon looked up from his paper and put up a mild defense. "He's got a month to go. He'll do fine. He's a good boy. He'll learn it. I have had boys a lot worse than that near their barmitzvah. What are you worried about?"

Ziggy could hear the discussion clearly. Ezra hadn't even bothered to close the door to spare Ziggy's feelings. When Ezra felt he was right, nothing else mattered.

"He's lazy," Ezra argued. "He doesn't practice. He made thirty-six mistakes in the first three portions." Ziggy was sure that he hadn't made that many but after the first few times that Ezra stopped him, he gave up counting. "And he hasn't learned enough. By this time, he should know it all." And then came the zinger: You're too easy on him. He'll never learn it right at this rate." The scorn in his voice was palpable. Even his father wouldn't have been able to ignore it.

Ziggy wondered if his father was withering under the attack. Was he going to make a strategic retreat or hold on to the job which any father would take pride in: teaching his own son his barmitzvah portion? But Ziggy knew where all this was heading and he dreaded it. After a pause, he heard Simon say, in a tone that Ziggy had only heard his father use with his mother when he was going to concede defeat, too tired to maintain his position: "If you are so concerned, you teach him then." So, Simon relinquished his role and Ezra had triumphed once again. Ziggy fell on the bed in despair.

As he expected, Ezra was a ruthless taskmaster, seeming to take almost perverse pleasure out of tormenting Ziggy. After the first lesson, Ziggy went to his father and pleaded with him to resume his lessons but his father was no match for his elder son. "I told Ezra he could teach you and he thinks he can do it better

than I." He conceded one point, "If it gets too rough, you can come back to me."
Ziggy was not going to give up.

"But that will be too late. He yells at me and picks up every little mistake."

Simon did not look happy either. He took out a cigarette and lit it. He turned back to his paper, rustled the pages and said from behind the sheets. "But Ziggy, you have to get it exactly right. If you don't, they will stop you and make you say it again." Ziggy knew it wasn't true. They had never done it to a barmitzvah boy but, well, they could in his case. After all, he was Sam Zeiskind's son and Ezra Zeiskind's brother. He had to have it right.

The lessons continued with tears on Ziggy's part, yelling on Ezra's and frustration on both their sides. Ezra had a litany of pronouncements : "You'll never get it right!" "You don't practice enough" followed by threats, "You can't go to any films until you learn this section" or "Stay in your room till you get this right and I'll be back in half an hour to hear you." Every time Ziggy made a mistake, he had to repeat the entire section until Ezra got fed up and cut the lessons short. Pleas to his mother and father got him nowhere. "What do you want me to do?" His father asked. "Fight with him?" Ziggy knew that the question was

rhetorical. "Yes," he wanted to say to his father, "Yes, I want you to fight with him. He's not my father." His mother was even worse, "He means well. You will be fine. Ah, you don't remember Ezra's barmitzvah. He was wonderful." That was all Ziggy needed to hear, how wonderful Ezra had been.

The month passed. Ziggy saw little of the sun. Even when he went out, he took his books with him and would sit on the shore at Bray going over the sections till they haunted his dreams. In the final week before the event, he had a full blown run-through in front of his father and Ezra in the front room. Everyone pronounced themselves pleased. Ezra grudgingly so. "You still have to practice or you'll be in trouble. Simon said, "Shah. He'll do fine. I always knew there was nothing to worry about." He tried to win back Ziggy's favor but Ziggy had grown annoyed with him for not standing up to his defense and now looked on his father with scorn. He had gone back to his mother's view of his father. Their little foray into mutual affection, now broken in little pieces.

When he came into the kitchen, his mother beamed at him. She was busy making chickens for the dinner in the house. She looked up. "Come, have a cup of cha. The worst is over. You'll make us all proud." She also kissed him on the cheek. It was the first time she had been affectionate with him since the ordeal started --but Ziggy squirmed away. They had betrayed him, left him to his brother. His mother looked hurt at his retreat from her and then Ziggy felt guilty about what he had done.

Within a few days, the out of town guests arrived and sat in the kitchen chatting to his mother. Flowers and presents arrived. The books he kept, the money disappeared into the bank. He could hear his parents complaining about the fact that some people had sent less than they had expected and vowing not to exact some sort of petty revenge for the slights. He tried on his new suit, his father taught him how to put on tefilin, the table was laid for the big dinner for after the services. He was ready to be pronounced a man....

His hair neatly cut and combed, swept back and held in place by his silver yarmulke, his new long woolen tallis wrapped over his jacket, Ziggy ascended the bimah as they took the crown from the Torah and lifted its cover. The President of the synagogue handed him the silver pointer to follow the words on the parchment and he held it firmly in his somewhat sweaty palm. He had to stand on a little box as he was not yet tall enough to reach the Torah scroll on his own. He hated that. Around him stood the President and Vice President of the synagogue as well as the person who was getting that particular honor of being called to the Torah with the person who had just preceded him. Behind him stood his father, singing the melody and reciting a difficult word before Ziggy had to say it out loud, helping Ziggy along.

His voice, still high and not yet broken, rang out clearly as he began to read from the Torah scroll. The congregants all followed along in the text to see that he made no mistakes. Ziggy

wasn't worried. He knew he was word perfect. As he reached the end of each portion, the voices of the congregation joined him in reciting the final words which they would only do if he was doing well. He felt pleased with himself. In between the sections, he looked up at his mother who was praying devoutly, sitting in the front row, the seat of honor for the mother of the barmitzvah, along with her friends and relatives. The synagogue was full. As the honorees came up to the bimah and left they shook his hand heartily. "Great job. Mazel-tov. Yasherkoach." Only words of praise.

Suddenly, there stood Ezra. Ziggy had thought he was not getting an honor as they had used up all their allotted places but a last minute cancellation meant that he could have one after all. Ziggy's mood changed from confidence to one of panic. He looked to Ezra for some sort of endorsement, sure that his brother would relax today and take pride in his brother's achievements but Ezra looked glum and didn't smile at Ziggy at all. Immediately, Ziggy wondered what he had done wrong. As Ezra bent over to kiss the Torah scroll and say the blessings, he hissed in Ziggy's ear, "If you don't go slower, I'm going to punch you in the mouth." The words, were so unexpected, so mean that Ziggy reeled back from them as from a blow and his father had to catch him. "Are you ok, Ziggy? " He asked. "Do you want some water? You're doing great. Only a little more." And then pushing Ziggy towards the scroll, he added, "Now say "amen" to Ezra's blessing." But his father's soothing words could not serve

as an antidote to the bile of Ezra's venom that he had poured
into his ear and which had quickly slithered down into the
barmitzvah boy's soul.

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1961: THE CHANUKAH PARADE: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

"Ziggy, hurry up, " Hannah Zeiskind shouted from the kitchen up to her son. "We'll be late. Ezra has left already and you have to eat dinner and I have to clean up and then get to Adelaide Road." Ziggy upstairs in his room lay on his bed reading Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. He had seen the film with Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson the week before in a reissue and had started reading the book immediately. He was so engrossed in the Bennet family upheavals that he hadn't noticed the time go by. He loved Austen's humor and wished he could write like that but of course, nineteenth century England was a far cry from his home in twentieth century Dublin, Ireland. Besides the Zeiskinds were Jewish. The etiquette of genteel England had nothing in common with the sturm and drang of his Jewish household. His father, Simon, might have a lot of Mr. Bennet in him and Ziggy could see himself as the sensible sister, Elizabeth and his older brother, Ezra, could be the proud Mr. Darcy but silly Mrs. Bennet and his stern sounding mother certainly shared little. Nonetheless, it would have been fun to see them drink tea together. Maybe Hannah's sister, his aunt, the dreaded, Der Sh'vester, who lived around the corner, would do better in those surroundings. His mother's voice broke into his fantasies. He jumped up off the bed and opened the door.

"What time is it?" He called.

"Half past twelve already. Nu, come on," his mother called again.

"I haven't all day and I want to hear Ezra."

"Is Daddy going?" Ziggy asked.

"I don't know. He hasn't come back from teaching cheder yet. But I can't wait for him," Hannah repeated, her voice now muffled as she went back inside the kitchen.

His father taught barmitzvah boys on Sunday mornings and sometimes the classes ran late. Ziggy was surprised that his father had not come home early. After all, his elder son was going to light the candles at the Chanukah Parade. Ziggy knew that Hannah did not want to miss this singular honor. He saw her take such pride in Ezra's every movement, as if she knew that through him she would get the honors she so desperately wanted out of life and had been denied her. She made no bones about the fact that her husband just trudged along not going anywhere.

Ziggy fell somewhere between the two. Compared to Ezra at fifteen, he showed little of the promise that Ezra had at the same age. It was Ezra who held the family hopes and so far, he hadn't disappointed them.

"Nu, Ziggy," she called again. She was certainly anxious to get to the Synagogue. "The soup is on the table. Hurry or it will get cold."

"Don't worry," Ziggy called down as he opened the chest of drawers to find a clean shirt. "The parade won't start till two. You have plenty of time."

He stalled. He couldn't help it. He had such mixed feelings about the way she treated Ezra. But Ziggy was proud of his brother too. Although Ezra usually ignored him at the parade and marched tall

and straight at the front of their group carrying the flag, his blond hair standing out in the crowd, Ziggy had never known a time when Ezra had not gone to the parade. This year was special. For the second time in succession, he had been the singular honor of lighting the candles and saying the blessings--they only chose one boy a year for that and Ezra had been chosen twice. His rich tenor voice had thrilled the crowds so much the previous year that they had asked him back for a second time. As much as he resented Ezra hogging the limelight, Ziggy felt proud, basking in his brother's glory. They didn't have to notice him, he was "Ezra Zeiskind's little brother." Ezra's coattails got him a notch more recognition than he might have otherwise.

He couldn't find a shirt.

"Ma, where's my white shirt?" Ziggy shouted down the stairs. "I need a white shirt. Is there one dry yet?"

"I just took one off the line and ironed it and put it in the warm press. It should be hanging in there," shouted back his mother from the kitchen.

Ziggy went into his older brother, Ezra's room, where the clothes were airing.

"Ma," he called again. "Should I wear long or short pants?"

"It's cold. Wear the long ones," His mother said. Ziggy knew she liked making all the decisions for him. Besides if he came down in short pants she would have made him change into long or if he came in long, she would have made him change into short. Better to resolve it now.

He came downstairs in full uniform: a white shirt, blue bandanna tied with a leather thong, long grey pants, black shoes, the uniform of his group, Bnei Akiva, a religious Zionist group. Nothing special that had to be bought, not like the Scouts. The uniform of the proletariat and one that his family could afford. Ziggy wore a yarmulke to eat but would put on his blue beret for the parade and attach some of the medals he had earned. He looked good. Upstairs when he looked in the mirror, he had noticed that he was getting a fuzz. He was surprised and delighted as he was barely fifteen and thought he would have to wait a year or two. He wished he were taller so he could catch up with Ezra but he was sure he would grow some more in the years to come. He had measured himself at five foot three that morning. How come Ezra had grown so tall? He stood six feet. His father was barely taller than Ziggy and his mother was an inch or two shorter than that.

As he came into the kitchen, his mother was standing over the ironing board. "How do I look? Do you think we will win this year?"

His mother barely glanced at him.

"Here's the flag, " she said. "Ezra was in such a hurry that he forgot it. I just ironed it. Doesn't it look marvelous. I think it looks wonderful. It took so long to wash. I had to do it all by hand. I remember when I made this for the group. It took me weeks to find the right satin but who remembers that now. They just take and no one remembers how hard you work for something."

she fingered the white Israeli flag, her hand caressing the Star of David.

Ziggy was irritated with his mother--ever the martyr. Even in little things like this, she had to dredge up her sorrowful past. She put the flag aside and moved to the range.

"Here. You took so long I reheated the soup. Eat," his mother stuck the soup and chopped liver in front of him.

He began to eat fast. On school days he could bike home, eat one of his mother's five course dinners and bike back to school all within an hour.

"Don't choke yourself," Hannah said seeing him devour the liver on some challah bread. "Eat slowly. You have plenty of time."

"But you said...." It was always the same. His mother constantly changed. Stop. Go. Hot. Cold. She always confused him like that.

"Is Gabriel going with you?"

Gabriel Friedman was Ziggy's best friend. Ever since they had both won scholarships to the Jewish school, Stratford College, they had been buddies, though at certain points they diverged. "Nah," Ziggy said with a hint of scorn in his voice. He pushed away the plate of liver wiped clean. "He's in the scouts. I tell you that every year."

The Dublin Jewish community had its fill of youth groups. As well as Bnei Akiva, there were the Boy Cubs and Scouts, the Brownies, Girl Guides and Habonim, another Zionist group, though

not as religious as Ziggy's organization. Ziggy and Ezra looked down on the Scouts and Guides because they were "goyish," organizations that were connected to non-Jews. Bnei Akiva had only Jewish and Zionist connections. It had kibbutzim in Israel. Every Sunday, the various troops learned about Israel and sing songs and on Wednesday he had his own group. In the summer he went to Bnei Akiva camps. Sure, they learned scouting things like knots and had tests for which they could earn badges but most of the time they drew maps of Israel, learned the names of the cities, the history of Zionism and learned Hebrew words. Ziggy took this stuff seriously. He was already a group leader. He wondered if one day he would leave Ireland and move to Israel.

On the first Sunday of Chanukah, usually in December, all of them paraded at the Adelaide Road Synagogue. Nearly every Jewish kid in Dublin belonged to one or other of the groups and so over five hundred kids would assemble and, organization by organization, march around the downstairs of the synagogue. Parents sat upstairs and since it was not a religious service, they could sit together not separated by sex which they had to be on other occasions. The groups marched past the Chief Rabbi, the President of the Synagogue, Ernest Newman, the head of the Representative Council, Herman Good and head of the Women's Guild, Sophie Faberman who would then choose the best group and give them a plaque.

Everyone Ziggy knew took the parade seriously. Rivalries ran high. The members of the different organizations threw baleful

eyes at each other. No one broke ranks. Not even best friends. Ziggy swore he wouldn't smile at Gabriel when he saw him all decked out in his green shirt, yellow bandanna and grey slacks with his green beret.

"Betcha, we win again," Gabriel had taunted Ziggy the day before at Sabbath services as they sat together. Already they were rivals, the gauntlet thrown.

"Yeah, that's only because the Newman's and the Goods are scouts and they always vote for you," Ziggy retorted wrapping his talith, his prayer shawl more tightly around him.

The leaders of Bnei Akivah believed that the parade was rigged--the Scouts had won the year before and before that the Girl Guides, and then the Brownies. They put it down to snobbery. All those groups came from the richer elements. Ziggy couldn't remember the last time Bnei Akivah won.

"We looked better and we deserved to win last year and you know it," Ziggy continued, turning to his prayer book and standing for the final prayers of the service.

"Yah did not," Gabriel responded. He played with the fringes on his talith making knots out of them. "You're always a scraggly lot and never march in step. Our troop has been practicing for weeks. I bet you didn't practice once."

He was right. Believing that there was no real point in putting in a lot of effort, the group had practiced one time before the parade. It had been a fiasco with everyone out of step and Yaacov Marmerstein, their leader, yelling at everyone. Even

Ziggy had burst out laughing. Even so, he wasn't going to concede the point.

"Of course, we did. We spent the whole time at the last meeting marching. Wait till you see us this year!"

Gabriel was unimpressed. "Yeah, but you'll have a hard time beating us. We have 150 members this year. How many do you have? I betcha you don't even have fifty!"

Ziggy was stung at Gabriel's astuteness. He wasn't far wrong. He hoped all the kids in his troop would show up at least. He closed his prayer book and took off his shawl.

"We'll see. Good Shabbos."

And so they parted.

After he finished his meal, Ziggy ran upstairs to give himself one more look over. Ziggy combed his brown hair carefully so that the wave was noticeable and placed his blue beret on. Who did he look most like? His father or his mother? Both sides claimed him as their own. Strange that he should look like both. Ezra was definitely from his father's side. Ziggy was ready. He came downstairs and went into the kitchen.

"Do I look alright?" he asked her.

His mother looked up. She had cleared the table but the sink was full of the dishes.

"I don't know where your father is. Why is he never on time?"

Still, I want to go now," she took off her apron. "He can wash the dishes when he gets home."

Her hair was matted with sweat and her face was pinched and

flushed. Ziggy looked at her, wondering again if he looked more like her or his father. Ziggy and his mother had the same brown eyes and the same wave in their hair. Her face was rounded like his but her's seemed sadder.

"Do I look alright?" Ziggy persisted.

"Sure. You look perfect. Didn't I do a nice job on the shirt?

It's so white." Then changing the subject, she asked, "what do you want for supper? I could make latkes."

Ziggy, bristling at the way she dismissed him, knowing that she wouldn't treat Ezra like that. He decided to spite his mother even though he loved her potato pancakes, a Chanukah specialty. They were crisp on the rim and soft inside.

"Nah, we had them twice already. I'll just have corn flakes."

His mother looked upset.

"Suit yourself. I'll make them for your father and Ezra. Eat what you like." She hated when her cooking was rejected. Now, Ziggy felt guilty for upsetting her.

"Do you want me to wait for you?" He asked.

"Nah you'll be late and you have to take the flag. I need to change. Go on. I'll see you there."

She never usually went to the parade preferring to rest after all the washing she did on Sunday mornings. She only had gone when Ezra lit the candles. Last year she had sat in the front row and Ziggy looking across the aisle saw her beaming with pleasure. Her eyes were wet. You would think Ezra had already become a Rabbi the way she acted. She went everywhere that Ezra

performed, to the Feis Ceol when he won the prize for singing, to Wesley College to see him act in the play about Florence Nightingale, "The Lady with the Lamp." He had about ten minutes in the play but Ziggy and Hannah had sat through the whole three hours of it and then, when they went backstage, Ezra had already left with some friends.

For a moment, Ziggy grew angry at his mother who had never come to see him do anything but then he never had done anything special. Not yet. He never asked his father. He needed his mother's validation. She was the important one. He wanted his mother....

The busses were on a Sunday schedule and took forever to come. It was past 1:30 by the time he got to the Adelaide Road Synagogue. He felt awful that he was late and ran all the way from Kelly's Corner to the synagogue, sure that Yaacov would bawl him out when he got there. But other children were arriving in hordes, all decked out in their colors: A limited rainbow. The hall was a hubbub. The leaders of the various groups ran around getting organized while the regular troops stood patiently waiting for their orders. The Bnei Akiva group was still trying to get itself set up. Gabriel caught Ziggy's eye and winked but Ziggy pointedly ignored him.

The kids in Ziggy's troop were delighted to see him. They liked him as a leader and obeyed his orders quickly. As soon as he walked in the door, they gathered around him babbling with

nervous anticipation: "Thank God, you're here. Where is everyone? Half of the group hasn't turned up yet."

Yaacov, a stout and tall twenty-three year old with a full beard and straight brown hair and blue eyes didn't even comment on his arrival; he was in too much of a frazzle.

"Did you bring the flag? Trust your brother to forget it. Get in line, Ziggy. No, on second thoughts, count how many we have and get your group in line."

Yaacov moved away quickly to take care of another crisis. Ziggy could note the sweat under his armpits.

Ziggy tallied about fifty. He began to feel sad. There was no way they could win this year. The Scouts had at least three times that many. Gabriel was right. They looked so organized. They even stood in an orderly line orderly. His group were standing around talking.

Ziggy could see Ezra nowhere. He turned to Yaacov.

"Where's Ezra?"

Yaacov answered impatiently. "He's upstairs practicing with the choir. They want him to daven as well."

Ezra was going to lead the afternoon prayers! Geez, Ziggy thought. I hope Ma gets here on time. She would hate to miss that.

By two o'clock their number had risen to seventy-five and the group began to look pretty presentable. Yaacov unfurled the flag and the whiteness of the flag and their shirts gave them a brightness that the greens, browns and blues could not reflect.

As always upstairs was late getting started and so Ziggy looked across the room at the other groups and wondered who they were. Outside of the kids in his group and from his school, he hardly knew any of them. Even though he had lived in Dublin all his life, he realized that there were huge sections of the community he didn't know. If they didn't go to his synagogue in Terenure or his Jewish high school or his youth group, their paths never crossed. Maybe he knew seventy-five kids all told out of the hundreds in the community.

Besides, he carried inside him his mother's class distinctions. She was sensitive to their genteel poverty and the fact that his father was an employee of the community. These other kids looked so rich, so free, so able to do what they wanted. He knew some names the Handlemans, the Feldmans, the Harrises but he had never spoken to them in his life. He envied them as much as he feared their power and was sure they would never include him in their ranks. His mother resented them. The heiche fenster as she called them, using the old Yiddish term for people who could afford "high windows," houses with two stories. They all lived in the fancier parts of Dublin like Ballsbridge. Rich areas. Places Ziggy couldn't get to on a bus and so had never seen.

For once, in a strange congruence, but for different reasons, his parents agreed on this one matter. His father hated Adelaide Road with a passion. It was too govish for him. He

thought its wooden pews made it look like a Protestant Church. All the "ascendancy, " the rich and/or the powerful who for many years ran the community went there. Their roster contained names like Abrahamson, Newman and Good--families that had built the community and created its institutions, the Representative Council which hired the Chief Rabbi, the Board of Guardians which watched over the poor, the Board of Shechita which looked over what was kosher and the Holy Burial Society. All the important religious functions and ceremonies of State were held there as all the prime movers of the community were members and they didn't want to go to the other synagogues, like his father's in Terenure.

The Adelaide Road group considered the Terenure group as ufgekoomeners, upstarts who had all made their money recently and lacked the "class" of the Adelaide Road members. The rivalry between them was worse than between the scouts and Bnei Akiva. Seldom did members go from one synagogue to the other. He once overheard Ernest Newman say that if there was only one synagogue in Dublin and it was Terenure, he would never go to services. Ziggy felt the same way about Adelaide Road. Except on ecumenical occasions like this, he always felt like an interloper when he came through the heavy wooden doors that led to the sanctuary as if everyone looked at him and said, "what are you doing here? You are not good enough for us."

He preferred his father's synagogue in Terenure which had been built only a few years before when the community had started

moving south of the city to places that had been farmland, not even built when his parents had married in 1939 like Greenlea Road, the closest that the community had now to a "Jewish area." The animosity of Adelaide Road was felt by Terenure because the former owned all the committee chairmanships. Terenure members were not invited to sit on the best committees; their leaders might wear pinstripe suits and silk hats when they sat in their boxes facing the Ark but everyone knew they were grubbe yunge, rowdy men, who did not know how to behave in polite society. They had money but no class. The difference was most evident in the decorum of the services. Adelaide Road members knew how to conduct themselves. They had no problem with talking during prayers. Even on Simchat Torah, the rowdiest day of the Jewish year when the members of Terenure got drunk and littered the floor of the synagogue with bits and pieces of chestnuts from the trees outside, Adelaide Road members carried themselves off with dignity. A number of years before, a young couple, the son from an Adelaide Road family had to elope with the daughter of a Terenure family as their families hated each other with the passion of the Montagues and the Capulets.

To his surprise then, Ziggy saw Ezra come down stairs to the hall and cross the room to speak to Michael Greenblatt, the head of the Scouts and on the board of Adelaide Road. Greenblatt greeted his brother warmly. He put his hand on his brother's shoulder and whispered something in his ear at which Ezra burst out laughing. Ziggy felt betrayed. Ezra had let him down. He was

betraying the Zeiskind family.

As if to compound the problem, he felt a tap on his shoulder and there stood Gabriel who had left his group. "Hi Zig, having fun?" Gabriel said nonchalantly as if nothing was going on. "I saw you come in but you didn't seem to see me."

"No, Ziggy lied, "I had so much to do. Shouldn't you be with your group?"

"I just wanted to say hi," Gabriel seemed to have forgotten the rivalry of yesterday. "Jesus, you sure are jumpy today."

"Who do you think will win this year?" Ziggy asked still looking at his brother who had crossed the room to claim the flag. Yaacov gave it to him willingly. Not only was Ezra going to lead the prayers, sing the blessings, he was also going to march at the head of the group.

"Who cares," said Gabriel, fixing his beret. "I'm getting out after today. I can't be bothered with this stuff anymore. I haven't been to a meeting in weeks. They just called me up and begged me to come to make up the numbers. Sure half the group turned up for the first time in ages today. It's all a lark, anyway."

Ziggy was stunned. He based his life on these dependables and now they were falling away. Was he a fool? No one was taking any of this seriously.

"But yesterday.....?"

"I was only trying to get you riled up. You take this crap too seriously."

Ziggy didn't know if he was more upset over yesterday's row, or having Gabriel call it "crap" or watching his brother trample on his beliefs.

"Well, gotta get back, " Gabriel said putting his arm around the distraught looking Ziggy. "See you in school tomorrow."

He returned to his group.

Yaacov came over to him: "Listen, I want your troop to go in first. Right behind Ezra."

Ziggy came up to his brother who stood with the flag by his side.

"How's it going, Ezra?" Ziggy asked.

"Fine. Fix your beret," Ezra responded.

"Ma is coming," Ziggy said trying to be pleasant, moving his hand to his head.

"That's nice," Ezra said non-committantly. He didn't seem to care one way or the other.

Yaacov came up to the Zeiskind brothers and told them to get ready. "We're next."

Ziggy got the group in line and they climbed up the stairs they stood in the hallway outside the doors of the Sanctuary. They waited until the Sexton would give the signal.

Ezra took up the flag and placed it against his side. He wore a leather belt with a socket for the flag. From behind Ezra, Ziggy could see the last of the Scouts march past the Ark and the Judges and enter the right hand pews. The Brownies and Guides sat in the center section. They would sit on the left side. Looking up, he saw the adults craning to see who would come next. They

always "oohed" and "aahed" at the kids from all groups. He couldn't see his mother and hoped she had arrived in time. Ziggy turned to look at the group. They didn't look too bad. Maybe they would win this year. Why not? Perhaps the judges would realize it was their turn.

The choir in its loft over the Ark finished singing "Hava Nagila." There was a pause as they took out their new sheets of music. The leader took out his little tuner, raised his hand and the choir began "Anu, Anu HaPalmach," the Israeli Army marching song.

The Sexton nodded for them to start.

Yaacov gave the order: Kadima Tza'od. Forward march. On your left foot."

Ezra turned to Ziggy. "Don't get too close. I need my space. Just keep your distance behind me and we'll all be happy."

And they entered the sanctuary. 4347

ANNUS MIRABILIS

1963: GIRLS

JANUARY

At sixteen years of age, Ziggy Zeiskind felt that he was being left behind. Something was obviously happening to all his friends that wasn't happening to him. Girls. It took him by surprise when his classmates who had never talked about girls suddenly started dating them. He was being left behind and soon they would notice he hadn't a girlfriend. For him, women were a generality. He liked the girls in the class but they were his friends and he palled around with them easily. He could rattle off the names of six or ten girls that he liked but he would only discuss work with them or general stuff. He had never felt inclined to ask them on a date on their own. What would he do?

For the other boys, girls were a whole different matter. That was all they talked about. They went to dances and tried to pick them up. They dated them: Stephen Franks with Shoshana Cohen and Leonard Wolfson went steady with Esther Bloomfield--all fellow students in his Fifth Form class at Stratford College. Irving Wolfson, the handsomest boy in the class, flitted from girl to girl. No one could keep up with him. Some of the boys and even some of the girls went further afield. The previous week while walking down Grafton Street, he had seen Miriam Simons, who had once dated Ezra, his older brother, looking into the Switzer's store window. The whole community was abuzz with the news that she was now engaged to a non-Jewish boy. He shuddered and hoped she would not see him. He wouldn't know what to say. To

speaking to her would be to endorse her actions and that he could not do. Even her parents had disowned her. Yet, he still thought of her fondly and remembered the times she had come to their house.

With a mass of blond curly hair and green eyes and a petite figure with pronounced breasts, Ziggy had always conceded that she looked kind of pretty, though he had a hard time figuring out what was "attractive" in a girl. He had yet to discover what everyone else seemed to take for granted and to whom this knowledge about the opposite sex came naturally. Others knew what he didn't and he had to know. At the same time, Ziggy was torn about the whole matter. Girls scared him.

"What do you look for in a girl?" he asked his best friend, Gabriel Friedman as they walked down by the Dodder River in Rathfarnham, watching the geese waddle around and making honking noises, on an unusually warm day in early January. Gabriel was already on his third girlfriend, Judy Levinson, and had considerably more experience in these matters--though he never pressured Ziggy about double dating or anything like that. He just accepted Ziggy as he was.

Gabriel wasn't listening. "Do you think this looks good?" He asked Ziggy. He was trying to fix his latest acquisition, a red beret, so that it had a rakish angle. Gabriel was on to his latest fad--cultivating a bohemian look. He had let his black hair grow long so that it curled over his shirt collar and, already a daily shaver, had grown a goatee beard in a few short

weeks. Ziggy still kept his hair short and had shaven off his moustache when the school had forbidden the boys from having any facial hair. Even their sideburns had to be above their ears. Gabriel, as always, did not heed the rules and, as always, got away with it. Gabriel was still the same daredevil kid who had dared Ziggy into so much mischief and Ziggy admired him as he had since they were children. When the headmaster Kiljoy had told him to shave of his beard, Gabriel had refused. Turning to Ziggy who was standing beside him when Kiljoy had made his request, Gabriel had walked away saying, in a loud voice, "A pox on their houses." Ziggy had never heard the phrase but thought it sounded great. Gabriel was always coming out with these aphorisms way ahead of anyone else in the class. Ziggy looked back to see Kiljoy smile at Gabriel's audacity. Gabriel was quite the debonair one. "It looks fine," Ziggy answered, sure that he would never wear a red beret and certainly not the way that Gabriel had it on his head. It looked silly. Ziggy wore a trilby hat to synagogue services on the Sabbath, a school cap on other occasions and a yarmulke at home. Pretty regulation. He didn't want to stand out in the crowd.

Gabriel's sartorial problems didn't really concern Ziggy-- not then anyway. He wanted to get back to the subject of girls. He was so on edge broaching the topic that his throat had gone dry but he was determined to get some answers. Gabriel was the only one he could turn to. He couldn't even get information from the library. Ireland had strict censorship laws as regards books.

In the few books that he had seen, they had no pictures just diagrams with side views and the like. It didn't seem very inviting. His dick would get swallowed in there or vanish. It all seemed too complicated. He would never be able to navigate that terrain. Movies were no better. They would come in with cuts so deep that the movie never made any sense. He couldn't see anyone do anything more than kiss. It made sex even more attractive, more desirous and more sinfully alluring. He wanted to go to London to see movies in England and to get some manuals to see what people did. When next they went, he planned to sneak away and go into a seedy bookstore in Soho and buy a book. The idea frightened him, though he thought it was thrilling as well. He knew he would then have to hide it in his clothes and pray that the custom officials would not open his luggage and discover it. They would arrest him for sure if they found it.

Desperation drove him to Gabriel. He had no one else to talk to about sex: his father and Ezra, his older brother, got so edgy when he asked a question about the subject that he had backed off from asking them anything. A few years before, Ezra had even hit him when he asked him what the word "abortion" meant. Nonetheless, Ziggy had inherited their fear and shame about it all. He couldn't help thinking that sex was a "dirty" topic.

Strange thoughts came into his mind. He wondered if his parents ever did it. He could hardly image them in the act but knew that they must have --or else he would not be here! But he could not picture them together and certainly not enjoying it. He

slept in the room next to their's and had never heard any sounds like it from their room, whatever it might sound like, as he had never heard anyone do it so he didn't know what to expect. The only sound he heard came from his father's snoring. Besides, they fought so much that he was sure they wouldn't, but then again, his mother was always backing down in the face of his father and she might let him. The image of his mother lying under his father while he did his business frightened him and made him feel nauseated. She couldn't possible enjoy it. How could she read all those romantic stories in her magazines with their tall handsome heroes and willowy young heroines-- so unlike his father or his mother, who were short and stocky or himself who had the same build and who feared that he would never be tall--and sleep with his father. It was all too much. He was confused.

He had to turn to Gabriel. Little did Gabriel know that despite the casualness and seeming spontaneity of the question, Ziggy had worked out the exact time and place to broach the subject with Gabriel. It was the perfect time. They were in no hurry, the evening was quiet, not yet dark.

"What do you think is most attractive about women?" he asked again.

This time, Gabriel turned to Ziggy, looking like he had never expected Ziggy to ever ask that type of question.

"Their tits," Gabriel responded with a touch of bravado in his voice.

Ziggy squirmed. He never used sexual slang. It protected

him, he thought. If he used language like that it would somehow give away his secrets, then his classmates would know that he was up on those things and there would be more pressure to be "normal." He wouldn't be able to perform to their expectations. He wanted to remain neutral, as if he still didn't know anything. That way, he would not feel that he had to prove anything. As Simon Zeiskind's son and Ezra Zeiskind's brother, he could get away with pretending to be an innocent, even though he knew that he was crazy about sex and wanted to know all about it. He felt bad enough about the fact that he masturbated.

He had a crazy belief in his head. He was sure that for the twenty four hours after he played with himself he was under a curse where something bad could happen to him. And sure enough it would. It was a terrible way to live but it didn't stop him from his vice. With the sperm still on his belly, he would look at his watch note the time and know that till the same time next day, he had better watch out. If he did it twice in one day he knew he was in for a bad time. God would surely punish him. If he didn't masturbate for a full twenty four hours, he felt relieved but he could barely make it to the third day before giving in again. He knew his vice had to be a secret. He was really sick and depraved he decided. No one could know that Ziggy, the good student, the religious exemplar, loved to masturbate. He had to hide his true nature. No one could know how much he liked sex. It was enough that he felt that his pleasures made him bad, sick and sinful.....

He was so confused. He was a prude when it came to language. He would sometimes use the word "whank" for masturbation but he usually used the proper terms like "penis" and "testicles." That was male sexuality and he didn't mind as much talking about that, like who had the most hairs around their penis and that sort of thing but he could hardly bring himself to use the words for the female anatomy like "vagina" or "clitoris." It would be like taking a wafer in his mouth, the ultimate in betrayal and damnation. To say them made him feel nauseous. The words seemed almost dirty, the ultimate in sexual perversity, indicating the mysterious and hidden, dark places that he had never seen.

"Ziggy?"

"What?" Ziggy looked up startled.

"You asked me a question and then you look blankly at me,"

Gabriel said with laughter in his voice. "You were a million miles away. What were you dreaming about? Some cunt?"

Ziggy blushed, even though he knew that Gabriel was just using it to get a rise out of him.

"Sorry," Ziggy said, trying to get his equilibrium. "What did you say?" As if he could have not heard.

"I said I like women's tits," Gabriel said each word really slowly while cupping his hands.

"Their breasts?" Ziggy repeated.

"Yes, their breasts," Gabriel said emphasizing the word. "I love them big," he went on with gusto. "Nothing like feeling them in your hands. Jeezus, I love to put my face between them and push

them around my ears. They are so soft, so gentle. Like soft cushions. Have you never felt them, Zig? "

Ziggy wasn't sure if what Gabriel said was true. It was if he was talking about eating ham. The experience was so alien to Ziggy. He couldn't ever see himself doing it. He tried to hide his shudder. An image of his mother flashed into his mind and he thought of her large breasts. They looked like mountains of flesh that would bury him. He would be smothered by them. The image did not seem comforting at all. Then he had another image of his mother standing in her corset with its metal stays and strings around her belly. Sometimes when she was getting ready for a wedding and Simon was not home, she would call on Ziggy to help tie the strings. He felt strange standing behind her mother doing it as if he was doing something sinful, something only a husband should do.

But it wasn't just his mother. He had looked at Jennifer's big breasts when they had met in Grafton Street and they scared him too. Marion Levinson had bring breasts as well and Ziggy imagined Gabriel with his face between them but the image left him cold. He tried to picture himself doing it and felt his penis shrivel inside his pants at the thought.

"No, you know I haven't Gabe."

"Oh, I thought when you were at summer camp or something like that, you would have. What part of a woman do you like best?"

"The dark meat," said Ziggy suddenly finding a sense of humor. He wanted to say, "I really don't have an answer. That's why I

wanted to talk to you."

Even the Bible offered him temptations. It was Gabriel who was his mentor there, too. Gabriel was the intellectual rebel in the class. He and Ziggy and Maeve Nathansons were one, two and three in the class hierarchy, as they had been since they won scholarships to Stratford. They called themselves "The Triumverate." Gabriel was certainly the leader of the troop. Two years before, they had been given new translations of the Bible, the Magills, a line by line translation of the text. They had to learn sections of Genesis for their Intermediate exams. Like most kids his age, Ziggy knew the stories of the Bible but even though he attended services every Saturday and took extra classes in Rabbinic texts like the Mishna and Talmud, even at age 14, he had never read the Bible from cover to cover. Ziggy took the book and started on the homework assignment: to read the first chapter of Genesis.

The next morning, Gabriel turned up with a big smirk on his face.

"Guess what I discovered last night?" He said to Ziggy.

"What?" Ziggy said.

"Just wait till class," he said with a hint of glee.

In third period, they had Mr. Regelman for Hebrew. He smoked a pipe and the tobacco was always foul smelling. Ash covered his clothes. He has a nervous habit of moving his yarmulke back and forth on his head. He had no variety in his teaching method which

consisted of making them from the text. The students were bored in his class and ended up talking to each other and ignoring him. He spent most of the hour trying to keep the class quiet, so much so that Mr. Kiljoy had to come in to restore order, usually by taking out a student or two --Ziggy among them on occasion--to cane.

"Alright, who wants to read?" Regelman asked.

Gabriel raised his hand. Regelman looked up with surprise as Gabriel not only never offered to read but when called on never even knew the material.

Regelman looked cautiously at his student's change of heart. Did he suspect something was afoot or did he think he had won a convert?

"Begin, then, Bereshis barah elokim...."

But Gabriel did not want to read or translate. Instead he said,

"Mr. Regelman, I have a question?"

"Yes. What is it?" Regleman said now suspicious.

"Well," Gabriel said, standing up from his desk, "Why is some of the text in the Magill's translated and some of it not?" He had a cocky air about him as if he already knew the answer but wanted to trap the teacher. As soon as Ziggy saw Regelman blush and his hand go to his head to play with his yarmulke, Ziggy knew that Gabriel had caught him. The others were turning the pages to see what Gabriel meant. Ziggy had noticed those sections when he was preparing the class the night before but thought that it might have to do with the passages not being on the exam.

"Er, which pages?" Regelman asked, obviously stalling for time. Gabriel was ready and taking out a note rattled off the pages: "On page 16, the end of the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gemorrah and again Chapter 38, the whole," --and here Gabriel emphasized "whole,"-- "chapter is not translated. Regelman swallowed hard and then trapped, his voice took on a tone of anger.

"Some sections are not suitable for children. They contain episodes of a" he stumbled for the right words," certain nature that the translator felt was inappropriate. That children of your age should not know or discuss."

Gabriel was not daunted. "Are they about sex?" Gabriel asked. Ziggy was aghast at Gabriel's nerve. No one had even said the word "sex" to a teacher in their class. Ziggy grew frightened at what might happen to Gabriel. Regleman and Kiljoy would bring in his parents. He could be expelled. But Gabriel stood his ground. Sounding more mature than his years, he added, "We're not children. We're fourteen and we know about the facts of life."

Ziggy wondered if that was true for everyone in the room. Nearly everybody was looking down at the texts. They didn't mind a bit of teasing about the lessons or Regelman's personal odor but they didn't feel prepared to get caught up in a discussion about sex, not with an adult or a teacher. Gabriel stood alone on this one. As far as Regleman was concerned, Gabriel had indeed gone too far. "I will not have you use such language in my class. Sit down," he said smugly thinking he had caught the student in a

technicality.

But Gabriel was not giving in.

"What language? 'Facts of life'? What's wrong with saying that?" he repeated.

But Regelman had enough. "I am not narrow-minded and will discuss sex, eh such, matters with you at the appropriate time and place. This is not the time or place for this type of discussion. If you are truly interested in the Torah, I am willing to talk to you about those passages privately but since they are not on the exam, I do not want to give class time to irrelevant material. If you want to talk about it with me, I am willing to stay after class. Now, please translate."

Gabriel sighed. He had made his point and did not pursue it any further.

The conversation had not only surprised Ziggy because of what it revealed about Gabriel but because he had never thought of the Torah as containing sexual material.

"What an idiot," Gabriel said to Ziggy after the class.

Ziggy asked. "Did you look them up?"

"Sure. It's easy. Just get the Magill's, turn to the places that are not translated and then get the Hertz and you can read the translation. Magills made it real easy to find the best places. If only he knew what he had really done! " He laughed as if he had discovered a secret wealth. "It's ok. I have read a lot hotter things."

But the bell rang before Ziggy could get any more details. When

he asked Gabriel at break to tell him what he found, his friend told him to read them for himself. Ziggy couldn't wait to get home.

Following Gabriel's advice, Ziggy soon was reading about Sodom and Gemorrah and the part, which Magill had blocked out, where Lot slept with his daughters after the destruction of the cities when they thought they were the only people left alive. The text described the incest so timidly described that Ziggy wondered what all the fuss was about or why Magill felt he couldn't translate it. He was disappointed. "If that's all they are covering, this will be a waste of time." He was a little annoyed at Gabriel for raising his expectations.

Then he turned to Chapter 38 of Genesis and began reading about Judah and his sons and then about Onan. He had never heard this story before. It was sandwiched in between the story of Joseph being sold by his brothers and the episode of Potiphar's wife and her attempted seduction of Joseph. It told the story of Judah and his three sons and their relationship with Tamar, his daughter in law. Ziggy read that one son died after he married her and then God killed the second son Onan because he had "spilled his seed."

As Ziggy read about this episode he found himself getting aroused at the thought of the sin of Onan. His erect penis strained at his pants and he opened up the fly. The blood was rushing to his head. He felt an uncontrollable urge. The thought

of Onan excited him. He couldn't even move from the desk to get to the bed, so he sat with the Holy Torah on his desk and stroked his penis. He read the section over and over again, reciting the words in Hebrew and then in English. He imagined himself and Onan in the same room. Onan. Onan. He repeated the words like a mantra. Onan was his hero. Before he could help himself, he had masturbated himself to a climax and sat there exhausted with white sperm all the pages of the Torah, his shoes and the desk. It had been a powerful ejaculation. One of the best he had ever felt. After a few moments, he began to feel horrid, guilty that he had used the Torah to get aroused. He wiped the pages and hoped that they wouldn't stain....

Despite his desire to pursue the matter further with Gabriel, Ziggy decided to let the matter drop. He felt that Gabriel was too advanced for him. "It's getting late. I better be goin'". Rather than helping Ziggy, the talk only made him more confused and unhappy.

As he walked home, Ziggy came to the conclusion that he had to date a girl to find out what it would be like. He wanted to do it that weekend. But who could be pick? He thought of all the girls he knew and went through the list thinking of who he would feel most comfortable with. No one girl was better than another. He didn't want one that had been around a lot with other boys. He felt that he could not possibly measure up to the other guys who seemed to know their way around. Even though he wasn't bad looking, he was stocky and a little fatter and hairier than he

would like, and not as tall as he wanted to be and he wished he had blue eyes instead of brown ones and straight hair instead of curly black, he didn't think the pretty ones would want him. people remarked that he had a nice smile and a cheerful nature but was that enough? He wanted someone who shared his interests and he could talk to. Oh, it was impossible. It was Tuesday and if he wanted a date for Saturday night, he had to act quickly. Finally, he decided on Maeve Nathansons, the female member of the Triumverate. The cleverest girl in his class. They had worked on projects together and her mind was quick and agile. She wasn't really as pretty as some of the other girls and as far as Ziggy knew, no one had dated her yet. She would have to do. Trembling a little he approached her about seeing a movie together on Saturday night. "You can pick the movie," he offered as a sop, hoping that would help her agree to the date. It worked. She agreed to go out with him, though he never discussed if it was an official date or not.

Now, he had a new set of fears. Would he have enough money for the date? What would he wear? Would he try to kiss her? Did he want to end up dating her?

No one at home kicked up a fuss about the date. All Ezra wanted to know was where they were going so that he wouldn't end up at the same theatre. Suddenly, Ziggy realized that they might bump into some classmates. Sure, they would be teased but in a way, he wanted it to happen, so people would see him out with a girl. Then it would all be worthwhile. It wasn't worthwhile, if

no one was going to notice that he was dating someone. That was why he was doing it, after all.

He looked forward to his mother's endorsement of the event but when he told her about it, Hannah had been nonchalant. Ziggy was a little upset. Whenever Ezra dated someone, his mother gave her elder son the third degree about his choices but Ziggy was sloughed off.

"She's a nice girl," his mother said. "Have fun. Do you want to bring her back here for a drink? "

"I don't think so. We'll go out for coffee." He had it all planned. He would walk her home and they would kiss passionately at her door. His fantasies didn't get any further than that.

Maeve looked pretty when Ziggy picked her up. She had on a red skirt and a grey sweater over a white blouse. She even had on a little lipstick. She smelled of a sweet perfume, an almost delicate aroma of peaches. Having only seen her in the blue of the school uniform, he was pleasantly surprised and glad that he had worn his new slacks and a sweater. He had shaved and also dabbed some "Old Spice" on his freshly scrubbed cheeks. It was going to be a real date, he thought to himself.

As they got on the bus, Ziggy tentatively reached for Maeve's hand, unsure of what would happen, and to his delight, she let him hold it. Ziggy felt his heart skip a beat. But to his disappointment, she paid for her own fare and ticket at the

cinema as well. Ziggy was confused. Was it a date? Was she being nice to him because she knew that he had little money? At least, she let him buy her an ice cream.

She had picked The Five Pennies with Danny Kaye. He wondered if Maeve knew that it wasn't a comedy like Kaye's other stuff but didn't want to argue with her about her choice so he went along with it. It turned out to be a sentimental story about a trumpet player and his daughter that soon had Maeve sniffing into her hanky. Ziggy felt embarrassed. He didn't know what to do. Should he put his arm around her? Should he comfort her? Maeve looked like she wanted to be left alone.

"What did you think of the movie?" He asked as they left.

"I wish I had picked something happier," Maeve said. Her eyes were still red from the movie.

"Not to worry," Ziggy said, putting his arm around her. "Let's go for coffee."

"Oh, I can't," Maeve said. "I promised to be back by eleven and it's nearly ten thirty now."

Ziggy felt disappointed. They had barely talked on the bus, had not talked in the movie and now she had to be home.

"But tomorrow is Sunday. We have no school and we got off with nearly no homework."

"I know but I promised Colum that I would go to Brittis Bay to look at some sites for the Scout camp in the summer. We're leaving at eight."

Ziggy was lost now. Colum was Maeve's brother and tended to be a rather bossy type a lot like Ezra. But still.... Ziggy felt it was a plot. This was not going like he thought it would. Now, he just wanted the evening to end. He grew angry. If she didn't want it to be a proper date, why did she agree to go with him? "Are you sure?" He asked. "Not even a quick cup?" He had to give it a try.

But Maeve was adamant. "I'm sorry. I didn't know the movie would run this late. I'll just get a number 15 and you can get the 16 and I'll be fine."

Ziggy felt that she wanted to get rid of him. She didn't even want to go home with him. What had he done wrong? He was a failure at this. He could tell. He was doing something wrong and he didn't know what.

"No," he insisted. "I'll take you home first and I can walk home from there. It's only about 15 minutes to my house."

She conceded and they sat at the back of the bus. This time, Maeve didn't object when Ziggy paid her fare, though he made no attempt to hold her hand.

What would they talk about? He wondered but Maeve quickly turned the conversation to their history teacher, Mr. O'Donnell and the class. As usual, she took over the conversation talking about upcoming tests and homework and their schoolmates. Ziggy was relieved to be on familiar ground, though they could have had this conversation in school.

As he came to the door, Maeve asked, "Do you want to come in

for a drink?"

But Ziggy wanted the evening to be over. "No thanks. It's after eleven and you have to be up early. I'll just say goodnight. Thanks for a lovely evening."

Despite his anger, he wanted his kiss. He wondered if he should just kiss her. He got nervous. This would be his first time kissing a girl. To his horror, he felt his penis began to harden in his pants. He would have to lean so that she wouldn't feel it. Could she see him blushing? He leaned over to kiss her. Maeve stood stiffly without moving, her arms at her sides. like a policeman. He didn't know if he caught her by surprise. His lips hit hers. She did not respond to his kiss and all Ziggy felt were the coldness of her lips. He didn't know how to proceed. It was the first time he had kissed a girl and it was not what he expected. Should he put his arms around her and hold her but how could he with his erection? He felt embarrassed. He began to grow angry at her.

But he knew enough to be polite. He backed away from her. It was obvious she was not interested.

"Do you want Colum to drive you home?" Maeve asked, as if the kiss had been nothing, less than nothing, between them. It did not mark any new stage in their relationship. He would not talk about it on Monday and he doubted that she would either.

"No, it's a nice evening. I'll walk."

One thing he did not need was her brother driving him home after the date.

"Ok. Thanks for a lovely evening. See you in class on Monday." Maeve said as she opened the door. The light came streaming out and Ziggy moved into the shadow. He did not want to be seen and invited in.

He walked home and mulled over the evening. He felt near to tears for the way things had worked out. It had not resolved any of his confusion. Would it ever be right for him? Would he know what Gabriel knew? He would have liked a real kiss but part of him was relieved. He couldn't see himself holding Maeve's breasts, even if she had been nice to him. All said and done, he didn't want to have a girl friend. He thought of other girls he might try and ask out but he wanted to wait awhile. It was all too much trouble. Maybe after the next set of exams. He would work on those instead. At least there, he was sure of success. 5402

They were all seated around the kitchen table, Ziggy with his back against the wall, not able to sit where he wanted like when Tara was not there. Radio Eireann was on to the usual Wednesday program, "Hospital's Requests" where people sent in letters to their families and friends in Ireland's hospitals and the station played a variety of pop songs. Suddenly, a newscaster came into the regular program and announced that the Italian actor Benigno Gigli had died and in his honor, they would play his signature tune "Return to Saragosa." Since she usually let her children talk as loudly as they liked, said "Shh, Gigli has

1963: MARIA CALLAS AT THE OK CORRAL

FEBRUARY

Simon Zeiskind had two great loves: Westerns and classical music. Westerns pretty much came first. He never missed one. "I love a good shoot 'em up," he would say. "Some action." Who could imagine that he was a mild manner teacher in a Hebrew school? They were simple: good guys versus bad. His taste in classical music was more subtle. He didn't walk around the house singing or even listening to the classical programs on the radio but he had a respect for the music that was unspoken. The first time that his son Ziggy realized how much music meant to his father was one day in 1958. It was lunchtime, a Wednesday, Ezra's half day from Wesley college, and because his older brother was home, they were having meat. They only ate meat and had a full five course dinner when Ezra was home. The rest of the week, they ate milchig, dairy.

They were all seated around the kitchen table, Ziggy once again stuck against the wall, not able to sit where he wanted like when Ezra was not there. Radio Eireann was on to the usual Wednesday program: "Hospital's Requests" where people sent in letters to their families and friends in Ireland's hospitals and the station played a variety of pop songs. Suddenly, a newsman broke into the regular program and announced that the Italian tenor Benjamino Gigli had died and in his honor, they would play his signature tune "Return to Sarennto." Simon who usually let his children talk as loudly as they liked, said "Shah, Gigli has

died. Quiet." Something in their father's voice made them obey him for once and so they all sat quietly and listened to the silver sounding voice of the lyric tenor singing the Neapolitan serenade come over the tinkly radio. Ziggy looked at his father who had tears in his eyes.

"What a voice!" Simon said when the music ended. "They won't find one like that in a hurry, I can tell you."

"Maestro Vianni said he was the best of the Italian tenors. He knew how to save his voice," Ezra said. He took lessons twice a week for the upcoming Feis Ceol, Ireland's premier musical competition, from some Italian expatriate whom Ziggy had never met but imagined as wearing a large hat, a large bow tie and velvet pants and speaking with a heavy Italian accent. Ezra had won his category two years in a row and was going for the third and final time. Every morning Ezra went over his scales, his ringing tenor voice rising in splendor. Sometimes, he even came in to Ziggy's room to have him listen to have him to how he pronounced the Italian words of "La Donna Mobile" one of his selections. No one could deny that he had a good voice. But as usual, Ezra had become the expert.

"That's nice," Ziggy said, lifting a piece of roast to his mouth.

"What?" Ezra said almost turning on his brother.

Ziggy got nervous wondering what he had done wrong.

"You and Daddy agreeing for once," he said quickly to placate Ezra. But Ezra found the idea of being caught favoring his father obviously repulsive. He looked angry.

"Oh, shut up," said Ezra.

Ziggy felt embarrassed. He should have said nothing.

"Ma, can I take piano lessons?" He asked figuring that this was a good moment to put in his request once more.

"I told you, we can't afford it," said his mother. It was always a question of money with her. "If we had the money, we could...." leaving it up to the listener to fill in the gap with whatever they desired. As usual, she stood at the side of the table watching them eat.

"Hannah, why don't you sit?" said his father.

"I'll eat later, when you are all out of the room. That way I can eat in peace," his mother said, ever the martyr. She moved to Simon, "Nu, some more mashed potato. There's just a little left over and it's a shame to throw it out."

"I have enough," Simon said but did not resist when Hannah put a spoonful on his plate.

Simon who still, at nearly fifty, had a slim figure was able to eat huge meals and never gain weight. Ziggy figured it was because his father walked everywhere. He, on the other hand, was always a little pudgy like his mother. Ezra was a real Zeiskind, tall and lanky.

"But Ezra got violin lessons," Ziggy persisted. He did not remember when that was but they had pictures of Ezra, looking no more than six or seven, standing violin in hand with Mrs. Robinson, the Jewish woman who taught the Jewish children piano and violin.

"Yes, and looked what happened?" His mother asked, her voice rising accentuating her accent. "He gave it up after a year. A waste of money. I can't afford to spend money on nothing," his mother said.

"Mrs. Robinson doesn't charge that much," Ziggy argued. He wanted to know how music worked. Ezra could read music but Ziggy couldn't decipher anything and Ezra wouldn't explain it to him. He was sure he would make a good pianist and envied his friends when they could sit at a piano and play a melody. If only he could play. "Anyway, I'm not like Ezra. I won't give up." He added plaintively. He clenched the fork and knife in frustration. "If you earned some money, you could pay for the lessons yourself, like I'm doing," said Ezra.

"But you're seventeen, I'm only eleven," said Ziggy. "Please Ma. I could practice at sh'vester's. She has that big piano in the living room that no one is using." When he was over there, he would run his hands over the keys almost willing them into playing a melody but he could not pick out a tune.

"No, I said no," Hannah repeated, not giving an inch. "Anyway, she doesn't want you over there playing on the piano. Now, stop pestering me. We can't afford it and that's that. Some more meat, Ezra?"

Even if Ezra was the only one to play an instrument, the whole Zeiskind family loved music, mainly classical music and chazanut, the art of cantorial singing. They were always listening to classical music, either on Radio Eireann or the BBC.

Ziggy knew his parent's tastes. His mother loved operas like "La Boheme" and "Carmen". She had recited the stories to him often enough: the gentle Mimi dying of tuberculosis and the vixen gypsy driving the poor soldier to despair. Her favorite was "Madama Butterfly," the sweet Japanese girl waiting for her faithless American husband to return, her love for her son and her suicide. Ziggy wanted to go to the opera but Hannah said he was too young. She went herself once or twice a year to the Dublin Grand Opera Society which had seasons in October and March. She complained that they were a second rate group with singers on the way up with no experience or on the way down after their prime. Still, she loved to go. Afterwards, she passed judgement on the soprano with statements like "she was no Carmen but she would have made a good Butterfly."

His father, not fond of large productions never went. He preferred the solo voice, singers like Gigli and Chaliapin. But both Simon and Hannah liked the great cantors like Rosenblatt. Before the High Holidays, they would listen on a scratchy record to the cantor, Sirota, who had died in a Concentration camp, sing the great Yom Kippur hymn, "Kol Nidrei." They once took Ziggy to see a film of Moshe Oysher's. He had been a great cantor in his youth but turned to making Yiddish movies. Their favorite was "The Cantor's Son" in which Oysher echoing his own life played a man who gives up being a cantor to sing opera in Warsaw. The whole movie was in Yiddish, even the opera. At the end, grief stricken over the death of his son, he trudges back to his

village home through the snow to die in the synagogue singing the Kol Nidrei. Ziggy could hear everyone around him weeping at the end. "He should never have become a movie star," Hannah said wiping her eyes. "He lost his Yiddishkeit and his voice." "But still he sounds grand. He's like a Jewish Mario Lanza," Simon interjected.

"Yes. And made the same mess of his life," said Hannah, not to be crossed. Lanza had really disappointed her. His mother took a dim view of singers, especially tenors. She knew that they were prone to drink and worried that Ezra would end up with a taste for the "shnaps." Already she had remarked that Ezra was drinking brandy before his lessons. "You need it to oil the throat," he argued. "Maestro Vianni said it did no harm."

"Still, I don't like it," said his mother. "You'll end up a shikur, a drunk." She didn't approve of anyone who drank--insinuating once to Ziggy that the Zeiskind family were undone by whiskey but Ziggy never saw his father drink more than the Sabbath wine. Once Ezra had taken his parents to hear Joseph Locke at the Theatre Royal. But although she liked his voice, his mother didn't approve of the Irish tenor. "He's another shikur. I don't care how nice his voice is, I can't listen to him. I prefer John McCormack. He doesn't get into trouble with all those women!"

"But they're all like that," Ezra said, a tone of exasperation in his voice. "Look at Jussi Bjorling. He goes on stage plastered, hangs on to a chair or a table 'cause he can't stand up straight

but listen to him. His voice is glorious."

"Well, I wouldn't go to hear him either," his mother said. She had that "I don't care how wrong I am, don't argue with me" tone in her voice that Ziggy knew only too well. She was just being difficult. She wouldn't give in even she knew she was wrong. He had encountered it often enough. It drove him crazy.

"And what about Maria Callas?" Ziggy said. He had seen a Movietone clip of her walking out of singing some opera in Italy. It was a huge scandal. The President of Italy was in the audience but no one could persuade her to go on.

"Callas?" Ezra said turning his wrath on Ziggy who had taken out a "Beano" comic and hadn't meant to get involved in the discussion. "What do you know about opera, ya ijeet? Don't be butting in with things you know nothing about. Go on reading your comic! It's all you're good for."

Hannah put up a defense for Ziggy. "Don't talk to your brother that way. He meant no harm."

Ezra turned back to his mother. "He's such an ignoramus. What does he know about Callas? She's not a patch on Tebaldi. Did you ever hear that wobble in her voice? I tell you she won't last. It's going already. In ten years, no one will even remember her name."

Nonetheless, Ezra admired Callas in some respects. Suddenly, he laughed. "Did you hear that Callas turns up on opening night to terrify Tebaldi! She sits in the front box at La Scala and stares at Tebaldi!" Ezra laughed at the idea of it. He seemed to relish

Callas's chutzpah. His voice had taken on a level of excitement when he talked of her. "She can't sing but she sure puts on a good show."

Ziggy could see Ezra doing something like that: turning up to scare his enemies.

Ziggy sat quietly. He knew it was pointless to argue with Ezra. Ezra may know more about music but Ziggy still liked Callas's voice. It sounded frightened, as if she wasn't sure what would happen when she opened her mouth, and Ziggy liked that fear. The other sopranos all sounded too sweet. They knew the notes but their voices had no "umph." As far as Ziggy was concerned, they were just singing songs. Callas's voice got inside him like James Dean did in East of Eden. They expressed what he felt but had no words for. Dean and Callas would understand him as he felt he understood them. Besides she was thin. All the rest were fat. Callas looked like a real person. You could believe that the tenor was really in love with her.

Despite their different views on Callas and opera, the entire Zeiskind family gathered around the television one night in November 1962 to see what were rumored to be her last performances of any opera on the stage, "Tosca" from the Royal Covent Garden. They kept the lights off and a roaring fire threw red and orange colors around the darkened room. Hannah sat near the fire so she could see what she was embroidering, Ziggy sat on the floor in front of her. Ezra sat in the armchair and Simon brought in a regular chair from the kitchen. It was like being in

the movies. Ziggy felt uncomfortable as they so seldom all watched the same show together. He hoped it wouldn't end up with them all arguing.

Ziggy had never seen the opera and his mother had never told him about it. They were only showing the second act so before it began, Ziggy asked his mother about the plot but before Hannah could say anything, Ezra jumped in: "It's simple, Tosca's in love with this guy and Scarpia, the head of the town, threatens to kill him unless she goes away with him. That's all you need to know."

As soon as the opera began he realized he didn't need Ezra's synopsis. Something magical was happening. As Tosca begged Scarpia for her lover's life, Ziggy got goose bumps. He wished no one else was in the room. Callas seemed to be singing to him, pouring out her anguish, her love, her despair. It was terrifying to watch. Ziggy felt that he was intruding on someone's personal sorrow, yet he couldn't take his eyes off her. He had never seen such passion. She stretched her hands out and seemed to be about to claw the furniture to pieces. Ziggy didn't know what she would do next. He wondered if she had gone out of control. She looked as if she would fall apart before the act was over.

When she collapsed on the sofa and began to sing, "Visi D'arte" it was frightening to watch. The aria was about Tosca's career, how she had lived for love and art but Ziggy got the impression that Callas was singing about herself, her own sorrow, her own sacrifices. He felt the hot tears roll down his cheeks.

It was heartbreaking: a woman giving everything up for love and always suffering the consequences. It tore at his soul. Then the scene took a twist. Suddenly, Callas suddenly lunged at Scarpia with a knife, stabbed him and he fell dead. For a moment, Ziggy worried that she had actually killed the man who sang the role.

Only when the act was over, did he realize that he had been holding his breath and that no one in the room was talking. Ziggy turned to his mother who had put down her embroidery and was looking with astonishment at the screen. Her mouth was half open. "Oy, I need a glass of tea. I'm exhausted from watching her. I tell you Ziggy, she's the best Tosca, I have ever seen. You really believe it's her," she said.

Ziggy's eyes glazed with tears again. He so seldom heard his mother give an unqualified praise to anyone. But then she added, "I read in the Women's Own that the rich man, Onassis, breaks her records. Who could believe such a thing? Some people have no mazal, no luck at all."

Ziggy wondered if his mother was turning the conversation to herself again and he wanted to reclaim the purity of the moment: "It looked like she actually stabbed Scarpia. He looked scared of her."

But Ezra was having none of it. "At least Gobi can sing. Did you hear the way she screeched," he said. "No breath control."

"Always the mayvin," said Ziggy, who had no idea what "breath control" meant but was angry at Ezra's heresy. How could he miss the emotion? Could he not feel her terror?

Ezra ignored him. " I told you that she wouldn't last. What a mess!" But this time, he did not prevail.

From the back of the room, Simon suddenly said: "Shah, Ezra!" He had been sitting there silently. He hadn't fallen asleep like he usually did so that his snores would interrupt the music. Ziggy would yell at him, "Da" and force his father to leave the room but not tonight.

"She was extraordinary," Simon pronounced. For Ziggy, it was an unusual moment. His father actually disagreeing with Ezra!

"Oy, that Scarpia," his father said with a hint of glee in his voice. "What a mamser, Ziggy. He deserved to die. She sure got him good." His father laughed.

Ziggy looked at his father with amusement. It was as if Simon had been watching one of his favorite westerns: She got the bad guy. Callas at the OK Corral.

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1963: "WITH EVERLASTING LOVE...."

MARCH

Ziggy had it all down to a science. It was all under control. He knew exactly, to the second, how long he could stay in bed and still make it to school just as the 9:00 bell was ringing for assembly. At exactly 8:05, he would get up, wash, say his prayers--putting on and taking off the phylacteries in ever shortening time-- and eat a quick breakfast under the watchful and baneful eye of his mother who disapproved of her food, even Kellogg's Corn Flakes, being eaten without due respect, and grab his bike, praying that he wouldn't be caught at the traffic lights at the Harold's Cross Road intersection and then bike up the hill to the Rathgar Road, arriving at Stratford College, usually just as the door was closing on the assembly room. If he was late, he would have to wait outside till the assembly was over and have the headmaster Killjoy reprimand him or even give him a caning on his hands. Already this year, he had been late ten times which was a new record. But still, he hated getting up early.

The assembly, held in the front room of the school building, which also served as their makeshift library, never varied: The students stood in two lines, the boys on one side and the girls on the other, ranked in order of their classes, the first form at the front and the sixth at the back. Killjoy would make a few announcements and then a student, usually someone like his classmate Maeve Nathansons, would read "With everlasting love

hast thou loved us O Lord our God," a translation of the section before the shema which they then all recited together. Ziggy didn't much care for prayers in English or for girls leading prayers either--though no one, even those more religious than him, ever objected. "It wasn't a real service so what difference does it make," they said, but ever the traditionalist in many ways, it still irked Ziggy. He thought it made the assembly seem too Protestant but maybe that was the idea: they were imitating Wesley or one of the other Protestant schools.

One morning in February, Ziggy skidded in the door just at the stroke of nine as the bell rang and almost collided with Killjoy who was standing with someone new, a student Ziggy had never seen before. The room was abuzz with noise but before Ziggy had time to take the situation in or ask anyone about what was happening, Killjoy silenced the school.

"This morning, I would like to introduce a new student who will be with us for a few weeks." Killjoy had his arm on the boy's shoulder which was difficult as the boy was actually a good few inches taller than the headmaster. The boy looked awkward, a look that his ill-fitting clothes seemed to emphasize. He kept his eyes on the floor and never looked up once.

"His name is Eli Gaon," Killjoy continued, "and he is from Morocco..."

A murmur arose from the school at this news. Ziggy looked at Maeve who seemed to know about it all already which was not surprising as her mother was the Chairman of the Board.

..... on his way to Israel. I expect you all to make Mr. Gaon feel at home. He will be in the third form for now."

Ziggy was surprised and mildly disappointed that the new boy was not in his class. He looked big enough to be sixteen like Ziggy was, though the new boy stood a good six feet, far taller than Ziggy or any of his peers.

Killjoy looked out at the group of students to where the third form class stood. "Brian Ridland, will you make sure that our new pupil here gets the right books and knows where to go."

Brian, a gangly kid of about fifteen stepped from his class place but Killjoy raising his hand said, "after the assembly."

Brian quickly stepped back into his place.

"Maevie Nathansons," Killjoy went on, "will you lead the prayers...."

As they filed out of the room, everyone stole another glance at the boy who now looked up and half smiled at them. He fascinated them. They had ever seen a Jew like him before. They all shared a common value system, a common understanding of their position as regards Judaism, Ireland and each other. They understood their place in the unspoken social strata of the Dublin Jewish community. What's more, they were Ashkenazi, all from the same type of background--Russian, Polish, English, or Irish--and he was so different--a Sephardi Jew, another breed altogether. No one in the school had any idea what Sephardi Jews were like, though they weren't short of ideas.

"I hear that they eat pork," said Shoshana Cohen, the class know-it-all. Even when Maeve came to Eli's defense, Shoshana was not to be dissuaded. "I should know. My father has been to Morocco, so there!"

Others had equally wild theories. "I hear that they have concubines like in the Torah. I betcha his Dad has three wives." Gabriel whispered to Ziggy, "I bet he isn't even circumcised." Ziggy blushed and said nothing. He kept his thoughts to himself. Simon Zeiskind was especially skeptical. "Does he know anything about Judaism? Is he Jewish at all?" He queried Ziggy at the supper table, his voice scornful.

"How do I know," Ziggy said, a little edgy. "He's not in my class. All I know is that he is joining his family in Israel and there is some paper work and the Jewish Agency thought it was better to place him here, what with the troubles in Morocco and all that. Happy now!"

None of that interested his father.

"Sure, he doesn't even look Jewish!" Simon continued, buttering his bread.

He knew what his father meant. Eli was black.

Ireland had any blacks in the country as a whole and most of those attended the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. Few settled in Ireland. Everyone in Ireland was white. Blacks most probably felt as at home there as they would in white South Africa. But Ireland did not practice apartheid. It was just that who would want to be the only black person in a nation of all

white people. Even the post offices had little money boxes made up like little thatch huts with a black boy on top. People would drop coins in so that the Franciscan missionaries could go to Africa and convert the savages.

But no one in Ireland considered themselves racist. Even when Jeruda Gandhi, an Indian student at the Royal College chopped up his Irish Catholic girl-friend in a fit of rage, they knew it was unusual. They did not even mind that the Jewish lawyer, Joseph Greenberg, defended him and got him a reduced sentence or when Irish soldiers in the U.N. keeping the peace in the Belgian Congo were killed by a tribe of Africans, the Belubahs--the first Irish soldiers killed in peacetime, an event that prompted a national day of mourning. Ziggy and his classmates had gone to the funeral which was down O'Connell street. Or even when the kids in Dublin ran around saying, "ya fuckin' belubah, you" to one another. It seemed harmless.

But for Ziggy, Eli was like a God. He had no doubt that even if Eli was white he would be the center of attraction. He was imperious. His skin was not exactly black, more bronze, a deep burnished, almost copper tone that caught the sun and seemed to shine. When Ziggy got close to him, he could see that Eli had hazel eyes, a round, though masculine face with a strong straight nose that flared only slightly at the end and brilliant, even, white teeth, whiter than Ziggy had ever seen. Everyday Eli came to school in pants that seemed too big for him as if they were castoffs but he wore them so that they seemed to add to his

stature. He had a tiny waist and the pants seem to fold naturally around his backside which looked full and hard. His hair was black and curly and his eyelashes so long that they curled up. Eli was entranced.

When the classes went out to play soccer in their shorts, Ziggy would steal a look at Eli's shapely body, his strong thighs, flat hairless stomach, chiseled chest. Ziggy could see the curly black hairs coming from his crotch and he wondered what his penis was like --if it was indeed circumcised--but once again, drove those thoughts from his mind. All in all, he looked almost as good, though in a smaller version, than Ziggy's previous subject of envy, Steve Reeves. Every time one of Reeves's movies came to the Kenilworth Cinema, Ziggy would sneak in and sit in the back row entranced by the tanned flesh of the muscular Reeves set off by his white tunic. He envied that masculine power that he knew that he could never possess. He was too hairy, too fleshy, too short. He could only admire men who were tall, bronzed and handsome.

Soon, it became clear that Eli didn't care one way or the other for their little ordered world. He strode across it without so much as a glance. It was not that he scorned them; it was just that they were irrelevant to his needs. He did not care for Judaism, even if he was Jewish. He went to one Shabbat service and never went again. He never wore a yarmulke unlike all the other boys in the school and seemed to know little of their rituals. The teachers left him alone, though. They knew he wasn't

worth fussing over, not like the real Irish children.

All the negative kind of talk died down and the kids began to try to take Eli into their midst--after all he was handsome and once they got over their fear, the girls found him attractive. At first the Maccabi crowd got a hold of Eli: the boys with the reputations, the Steins and the Wolfsons, the boys who would snoggle with the shiksas after the Saturday night dances, who talked openly about sex and poked each other in the groin, activities from which Ziggy cringed. But Ziggy didn't go to Maccabi or to the dances or hang out with the other guys. He was not "in" and they never told him anything. Even in a community that small there were different roles for people and Ziggy was cast as one of the "orthodox" crowd. Little did they know what evil lurked in his heart, what fantasies propelled his mind.

Ziggy was so confused about sex. It scared him. He had no one to talk to about how he felt. About two years before, Gabriel had shown him a book explaining the facts of life and tried to explain them to Ziggy but Ziggy couldn't quite grasp the female anatomy. All those tubes and holes and different places the sperm could go to and the eggs every month. He couldn't figure out the diagrams, (because of Ireland's strict censorship none of the books were allowed to print actual pictures.) At first he thought that all the women's organs grew outside and that scared him but he pretended to understand.

One night had approached his father. He found some excuse to dawdle in the kitchen while his mother was out. He put on the kettle and stammering, his voice, tentative and unsure, he said, "Da, the rest of the class are talking about the "facts of life." Could you, eh, could you, explain them to me?"

Simon grabbed the kettle from Ziggy's hands. He looked as uncomfortable as Ziggy felt. "Plenty of time. When you are Ezra's age, we'll talk then."

Seven more years! By that time, he was sure, he wouldn't need his father's expertise. But he was glad that he brought the topic up. He gave the kettle to his father and left the room. They never broached the subject again.

He had even gone to Ezra but his brother, looking as nervous as his father, had brushed him off. "Why do you want to know these things? You're too young," he said looking up from his Talmudic tome. Then staring straight at Ziggy he wagged his finger. "I hope you're not playing with yourself. It's a sin. Now get out, I have things to do."

But Ziggy was "playing with himself." He had hardly told anyone that he masturbated. Gabriel and he had once done it together but Gabriel didn't want to do it together again. Ziggy was left with a terrible sense of guilt and retreated into his silent world. Who could he talk to about these things? He knew that a few of the boys masturbated. Frank Weinstein had once appalled the class by telling everyone how he had done it inside a turnip. "Go on," they all said, laughing at the idea. But Frank

insisted that it was a great way to do it. Ziggy had no intention of following his example. He didn't like turnips for starters and he wondered that they would scrape his penis.

Ziggy was sure that Eli knew things. If he could wheedle his way into his company but how... But there was no easy way to get to talk to Eli. He was in the class below and fourth formers did not talk to third formers unless it was to order them to be silent on the stairs. But he kept looking at Eli. He couldn't take his eyes off him. Once, at assembly, Eli turned and saw Ziggy staring at him and smiled. It was a strange smile, almost as if to say, "I know the real you. I know what you feel. You can talk to me. I will help you." Ziggy blushed and looked down. But he caught Eli looking at him again, as if he too wanted to make the contact but didn't know how. Ziggy was confused. He didn't know what he wanted from Eli, if anything at all.

After a few weeks though, the gloss seemed to be off Eli. The Maccabi crowd dropped him. Ziggy was not sure of the cause. Edwin Wolfson who took him to the dances led the attack. "He is stuck up. He thinks he's better than us. He acts so superior." His pal, David Stein, added, "And he smells." The latter intrigued Ziggy. According to David, an obnoxious child who was always in trouble, Eli either smelled badly because he didn't shower or he smelled badly because he covered himself in after-shave lotion. Ziggy was sure that there were other reasons, reasons no one was mentioning.

The girls certainly avoided him. He had dated a few like the prissy Susan Litvak and the flirtatious Esther Blumengrad but they never spoke of their dates and avoided Eli after that. Was he too forward? Did he want them to go too far? Beneath their veneer of sophistication, they were all small time girls and Eli came from another culture. He imagined him groping for their breasts or kissing them real hard and having them recoil. Did he want them to feel his prick? Ziggy could only imagine.... He so wanted to get to Eli. How could he do it...how? It had to be the right time, the right moment.

One Monday afternoon, it just happened. As he was leaving school and going to get his bike, Ziggy saw that Eli was still in his class, talking to Mr. O'Donnell, their history teacher. Ziggy decided to stall and telling Gabriel that he had forgotten a book, went back. He climbed up the stairs and just as he got to his classroom, he heard the door slam. Eli came out, looking flushed and angry. Ziggy turned around quickly and followed Eli down the stairs but Eli had already gone out the front door of the building before Ziggy could catch up with him. He dashed for his bike but as he came around the corner, there was Eli one foot against the wall, about to light a cigarette. Ziggy could have sworn that he was waiting for him. Eli flashed him a smile. "Hi. You're late leaving school." His accent was faint, almost a lilt. "Yeah, I forgot a book." Ziggy got off his bike and without any ado soon they were walking together. Eli offered Ziggy a

cigarette but Ziggy declined.

"Don't smoke, huh? In my country we start smoking at ten," adding provocatively, "we start everything at ten."

Ziggy started shaking a little. This was going faster than he had anticipated. Was Eli going to tell him some deep secret?

Then, Eli continued, "You know the girls in this country are not like the girls in my home. They don't like to fuck here."

Ziggy was stunned. He had never heard anyone speak like this before and even the wildest boys in the class and in sixth form never swore or mentioned, at least to him, if they had "fucked" or not. Ziggy had never even used the word to another person.

"Oh," was all he could say. "I didn't know that they girls did that in Morocco. I thought that they were, eh, virgins till they get married."

"Oh, some are but there are lots of girls who love to fuck. Have you ever fucked a girl?" Eli asked, provocatively. He looked at Ziggy and Ziggy could see the light streaks in his eyes. Eli did not look threatening and so Ziggy decided to be honest.

"No, I haven't."

Eli didn't seem fazed by Ziggy's inexperience.

"Oh, you should," he said, his voice almost musical. "Nothing is like a woman. I like woman. You know, older woman, woman with breasts." He cupped his hands. "I love to suck breasts." He pursed his lips.

Ziggy was disappointed that the conversation was taking this turn. He didn't want to talk about women. This was not what he was expecting. Then he began to wonder why Eli was talking to him like that. What was on his mind?

To his surprise, Eli suggested: "Maybe one night, we go out together and we pick up some woman and we do it together. That's exciting too. My older brother and I used to do that all the time. I could show you what to do. You could watch me and then you could join in."

The idea was not totally appealing to Ziggy but the idea of seeing Eli naked with a woman suddenly sprang into this head and it seemed exciting. The traffic seemed to vanish. He was totally absorbed in Eli's world of sexual conquest. He felt himself being seduced by Eli. He would take up the dare. Why not?

"Ok. Sound's good to me."

"Maybe you could get some of your friends to come along too?" Eli suggested.

Ziggy felt disappointed that it would not just be the two of them. He liked the fantasy of him and Eli just doing it together. His mind was already leaping ahead. Where would they go? He didn't even know if there were prostitutes in Dublin.

"Ok. I'll see what I can do."

They had reached the gates of the boarding house where Eli was staying. As they stood in the driveway, Eli suddenly pointed to his crotch and pulling the pants tight around his leg, said,

"Look, how hard all this talk is making me."

Ziggy could see the outline of a large penis. His was nothing in comparison. He wanted to see it. Was Eli going to suggest something? That they masturbate together? Ziggy hoped that would happen, though he wouldn't dare offer. He wanted Eli to seduce him into it and then they could lie on a bed together and he could see if Eli was circumcised and what he looked like and then..what would happen then? Would Eli kiss him? Or making him do something, he didn't know what....He waited for Eli to say something.

Suddenly, he heard, "Hello boys," and jumping back, saw Mr. O'Donnell right behind them. Ziggy was petrified. What had he overheard? What had he seen? But Mr. O'Donnell walked on. Still, Ziggy was upset. The fantasy had been interrupted.

"I have to go now. I'll talk to you later." And without giving Eli a chance to resume the conversation, he jumped on his bike and pedalled home.

Even though he had masturbated that morning, and tried never to do it more than once a day, he couldn't resist. He ran to his room, and quickly stripped. He lay on the bed and thinking of Eli's member through his pants, he quickly climaxed. What would happen to him now ? What would happen the next time he saw Eli. He couldn't wait. At last, a friend he could talk about sex with, who could teach him things. Ziggy was scared but excited. But Eli did not come to school the next day or the day after. Then Maeve told the class that Eli was leaving the next day for Israel. His papers had finally come through.

That evening, Gabriel came over to Ziggy's house. They wanted to go over A Midsummer Night's Dream for the exam. They had to learn most of act three by heart. Gabriel was Hermia and Ziggy Helena, both lost in the woods, betrayed by the men they loved. Ziggy was just reciting the lines, "O, is all forgot?/All schooldays 'friendship, childhood innocence?" when the phone rang in the hall. Ezra coming downstairs answered it.

"Ziggy, it's for you, " he yelled out. "Someone called Eli."
Gabriel was stunned.

"Eli? Do you know him? How did that happen?"

Ziggy felt ashamed. Caught. What could Eli want? Quickly, he left the frontroom to take the phone.

"Hi. Ziggy. It's Eli."

"What's up?"

"Can you meet me tonight? We leave tomorrow for Israel and I want to say goodbye."

Ziggy hesitated. What could he say? If he went, would Eli seduce him or take him to a brothel? What would Gabriel say if he found out? Ziggy was torn between desire and caution but the latter forced his hand.

"I'm sorry. I can't go tonight. I have to go over some work for the exam." He felt awkward and wanted to get off the phone.

"Good luck in Israel."

Eli did not argue.

"Ok. Good luck to you too."

Ziggy put down the phone. What had he done? What had he done? He knew he should have gone with him. What a coward he was? And for what? For Gabriel? Because he was worried what Gabriel would say? It wasn't worth it. Eli could have taken him to places he had never been and now it would never be. He was a fool and a coward and he knew it. Eli was gone and he would never come back and he would never know what lay ahead.

His regret ate at him even as it would feed his fantasies for years to come.

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He looked up from reading the New Musical Express which he picked up on his way home from school. He had had just enough time to glance at the Top Twenty and see that the Beatles were once again with "I Want To Hold Your Hand." He couldn't believe that they had four songs in a row at number one. It was as if it were aimed to him personally. After all, he was the only one in his class to have gone to see them live at the Adelphi Theater in London. Most of his classmates still looked over Cliff Richard and the Shadows. The old guard. Old music. Old style. Ziggy was only for the sound of something new, something exciting, even dangerous. He had already joined his best friend Gabriel in growing his hair longer. His wavy brown locks now reached over his collar. He sensed his classmates' disapproval and translated it into a guilt which, along with all the other sins of his secret life, he carried and held to himself with a strange pride. Was it like the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Animals, the Beatles? He didn't care. He just wanted to catch up on all the

DISTINCTIONS

NOVEMBER 1963

"Ziggy, shouldn't you be going to Rev. Delaram's?" Hannah Weiskind asked her son as she cleared the Friday night table. "It's already seven thirty." Then she quickly added, "Will I save the tzimnis for tomorrow?" She stood holding the bowl of carrot and prune stew in her hand. Ziggy knew the question was rhetorical. His mother had no intention of throwing any of her food out.

He looked up from reading the New Musical Express which he had picked up on his way home from school. He had had just enough time to glance at the Top Twenty and see that the Beatles were there again with "I Want To Hold Your Hand." He couldn't believe that they had four songs in a row at number one. It was as if it mattered to him personally. After all, he was the only one in his class to have gone to see them live at the Adelphi Theater in October. Most of his classmates still mooned over Cliff Richard and the Shadows. The old guard. Old music. Old style. Ziggy was ready for the sound of something new. Something exciting, even dangerous. He had already joined his best friend Gabriel in growing his hair longer. His wavy brown locks now inched over his collar. He sensed his classmates disapproval and translated it into a guilt which, along with all the other sins of his secret life, he nursed and held to himself with a strange pride. Was it a sin to like the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Animals, the Beatles? He didn't care. He just wanted to catch up on all the

other rock 'n roll news before he had to go to his lesson.

This time of year, Shabbos came in early in Dublin, Ireland: 4:45. Nonetheless, he didn't mind the long Friday nights as the Sabbath went out early too and he could catch a movie downtown. He hated the Summer when the Sabbath didn't end till 11:00! When school had ended at 3:00, he had grabbed the 15 bus, dashed into the Iona Bookstore on Camden Street, got the newspaper and then got a 16 home. He took a quick bath, changed into his Shabbos suit and rushed out again, getting to the Terenure synagogue after the service had already begun. His father scowled at him. "You get here later every week! It's a shame!" Ziggy said nothing. He knew his father was right.

Although he wasn't ready for a formal break with ritual and still followed it properly, Ziggy, at seventeen, had begun to feel restless. He couldn't put his finger on it but something wasn't working for him. He loved Judaism but was beginning to find all the laws restrictive rather than liberating. He still only ate kosher food, kept his head covered at all times and observed the Sabbath, but did he have to keep everything exactly to the letter of the law? More and more, he had to force himself to keep the series of "don't's and "do's" that dictated his faith. It was slipping away and he couldn't figure out why. He was not like his father or brother who loved all the rituals and would no more have these thoughts than they would at eating ham or pork.

Already he had begun little breaks from the rituals, little deviations. He no longer prayed or put on phylacteries in the mornings and he did not begin each meal with the ritual washing of the hands and saying the hamotzei, the prayer over the bread. He was surprised that no one complained. He sensed that some big break would come one day but it would have to wait till he left his home and could experiment with a life not so bound by the requirements of orthodox Judaism. At the same time, he wanted to remain a part of it all. He loved Judaism. He felt Jewish through and through. He just didn't know how it would work out. Was there no compromise? Did it have to be so black and white?

"Ziggy! I'm talking to you. You didn't answer me. What about the tzimnis?" His mother said again, abruptly breaking into his thoughts. "And hurry up. Put down that paper. Rev. Delaram will be waiting."

"Okay, okay, I haven't forgotten," Ziggy said irritated. "Save the tzimnis. You know I like it better when it's a few days old." He glanced around the room. The scene was the same as ever. It looked like it always did on Friday nights. The candles still burned brightly in their silver cups; his mother had wiped the tablecloth clean of crumbs and put the Waterford crystal bowl full of fruit in the center of the table. His father had fallen asleep at his place at the table, his black silk yarmulke dangling precariously on his head, his snores making a low buzzing sound. He wondered how his mother could sleep beside that noise. Nothing disturbed his father. It amazed Ziggy how he could

asleep anywhere. Nothing troubled his father.

His older brother Ezra looked up from his book. "Have you done your hazara? If you don't do any revision, you won't remember anything!" "Yes, I have," Ziggy retorted. He hadn't even looked at the Talmud once in the previous week. After a year of lessons with Rev. Delaram, he knew he wasn't getting inside the text, the way Ezra did. The Talmud was not for Ziggy. Like a bad chess player, he knew the moves but could never guess how the game would turn out twelve moves hence. Not like Ezra who could remember whole chunks of the stuff, pages of text and commentary. He could piece it all together and make sense of what Ziggy felt were trivial arguments about "eggs" and "sunrises."

Anyway, he didn't want to study the Talmud for eight hours a day at any Yeshiva. He hoped Hannah wouldn't force him to go. Ezra, on the other hand, was already counting the days till he could leave. He had spent a year in a Yeshivah in Israel and had only come home because he promised his mother that he would take his scholarship and go to Trinity and study Math so that he would have "something to fall back on" if he decided not to be a Rabbi. He was barely scraping by at Trinity. Still everyone excused him. They knew he wanted to be a Rabbi and he would be a great one. If Ziggy got marks like Ezra did, he would be so ashamed. They were so different, Ziggy and Ezra. He would have to work out a compromise with his mother. Simon wouldn't force the issue. He never did. Ziggy knew that if he yelled loud enough, he would get his way.

Ezra wasn't fooled.
'You're so lazy! If you don't do the bloody hazara, how are you going to remember this material?' He snarled, his voice growing rich with scorn, his blue eyes glaring and widening. Slamming his book shut, he stood up and loomed over Ziggy, who cowered, not sure if Ezra would hit him or not, but Ezra just pointed his finger at his hair. "And get your hair cut. You look like a slob." And so it ended. That was the way it was with Ezra. If you weren't with him, he had no time for you.

After the disaster of the barmitzvah lessons when Ezra had tormented Ziggy to distraction, he had never taught Ziggy again. Instead the task fell on Friday nights, for thirty shillings a lesson, to Rev. Delaram, a young Moroccan Rabbi who had come to Ireland as a schochet, a ritual slaughterer. He lived on the Lower Kimmage Road, not far from the Zeiskind house on Kilkenny Drive. It seemed best to have the lessons on Friday nights. He couldn't do anything else, after all. The Zeiskinds kept the Sabbath according to the strictest of orthodox rules: all electricity controlled by a time switch that turned the lights on and off, no films, no radio, no music, no television. In between going to services and eating meals, he could either read or sleep. There was nothing else to do....

The November air was crisp as Ziggy walked from his house around the corner to Clare Avenue. Winter hadn't really hit Ireland yet. He noted all the Jewish homes with mezuzahs on their doorposts like the Glazers, and then Eastpark Road where his

mother's sister, the aunt whom they all called Der Shevester, lived. Within ten minutes, he reached the Delaram's house. The family was somewhat of a scandal. Mrs. Delaram, Shirley, was an Irish girl who, according to his mother, had no control over her kids. Like many religious folk, they had a child nearly every year-- five now and another on the way. When Ziggy looked at the little Moroccan Rabbi who had infinite patience with him, he could hardly believe that he had that much sex with his wife!

Ziggy knocked on the door with his knuckles. Ringing the bell or using the doorknob was also forbidden. The Rabbi came to the door, holding the two year old, David, snot running from his nose. Delaram, with dark hair cut close to the scalp and a long black beard down to his round belly, seemed unfazed by his child's demeanor. Ziggy recoiled a little from the image, though it was the same every week when he turned up. One dirty kid or another, his clothes half on or off dangling from his father's arms.

"Gut Shabbos," the Rabbi and the student greeted each other. The house smelled of dirty clothes and roast chicken, the smells competing with each other for prominence, actually combining into some rich pungent odor, part shit, part garlic and gravy. The remnants of the meal lay on the table, crumbs of bread and chicken bones all over, the shabbos candles dying in their cups. Dirty clothes heaped in hampers around the room. Shirley lay on the couch, her ritual wig, worn by the wives of the ultra religious, dangling askew. On her protruding belly lay a three

year old child her face unwashed from the meal, her bib almost black with grime. In the corner another child, the youngest, lay in his pen, his dirty diaper giving off the smell of shit.

"A kos tea?" Delaram asked Ziggy in Hebrew, though he taught the Talmud in English. Really good students, like Ezra, learned it in Yiddish but Ziggy was not of that caliber.

Ziggy said yes.

Shirley got to get it. She poured the water from the Sabbath kettle, as they could not boil water on the Sabbath. Ziggy took off his hat and coat, leaving on his yarmulke.

She put the cup of tea with lemon on the table.

"Have you heard, Ziggy?" She asked, her question surprising Ziggy to whom she rarely spoke.

"Heard what?" Ziggy replied. For a moment, he thought he would get some gossip that he could report back to his mother. He would "scoop" her!

"Kennedy was shot." Delaram interrupted his wife. Ziggy wasn't sure that he heard him correctly as the Rabbi's English was heavily accented.

"Yes. Kennedy," Shirley repeated.

Kennedy? Ziggy wondered which "Kennedy" they meant. There were so many Kennedys in Ireland. He went through the list of those he knew or had heard about. Was it Kennedy, one of Ireland's famous bakers? Why would they care about that? Kennedy the grocer whose daughter had married a Jew? Which one did they mean? And shot? That was even weirder. He hadn't heard of anyone he knew getting

shot in Ireland? Was it a robbery?

"Kennedy, the grocer? Who would shoot him?" He blurted out. Delaram chuckled.

"No, not that Kennedy. Kennedy the President."

Ziggy's mind went blank. Which Kennedy was a President?

Was the President of the Bank of Ireland a Kennedy? Who did they mean?

"The President of what?" He asked.

Seeing his puzzled face, Shirley said with an air of triumph,

"The President of the United States."

"America," Rabbi Delaram added.

THAT Kennedy?! The President of the United States! Was the world ending? The idea seemed impossible. Who would do such a thing?

It had to be true. He knew the Delaram's wouldn't make such a thing up.

"That's amazing!" Ziggy managed to say, feeling the ground shift under him. His body shook. He thought for a moment he was going to be sick.

He had to sit down. He lifted the glass and took a sip of the tea. It scalded his tongue. The sensation cleared his head. They had said "shot"? How is he? Did they hit him badly?"

"He is meit," Delaram said. "He's dead."

Ziggy couldn't believe it.

Out of habit, he said the blessing for hearing of the death of someone famous, "Baruch Dayan Haemet," Blessed be the Just God."

His scalded tongue made the words a little jumbled but the Rabbi

and his wife both replied, "Amen" anyway.

Ziggy squeezed the lemon into the tea and blew on the glass before taking a second sip. It tasted tarter.

"Are you sure? Where did you hear it?" Ziggy said, wondering how they would have the information and no one had heard it in their house. "Mrs. Farrel, from next door, came in. She heard it on the radio. Can you believe it?"

Neither of the Zeiskind neighbors, the Protestant Miss Waller or the Catholic Doyle's had told them. But it was only to be expected. They weren't that close.

Over the next few minutes, the Delarams tripped over each other in their haste to gave him the skimpy details they had, though neither had much information. Somewhere in America. In the South, Texas. A city called Dallas or Dulles or Detroit, they weren't sure. That morning. As they tried to piece the information together, Ziggy half listened. He was thinking back to Kennedy's visit to Dublin in March. They had gotten the afternoon off school and he had gone down to O'Connell Street with his friend, Gabriel to see him. He had got a glimpse of Kennedy's car as it sped down Dublin's main street. And now he was dead.

"Have they caught who did it?" Ziggy wanted more information.

"That's all we know. Such a young person, a great man," Delaram said. Even he, a Moroccan Jew, who most of the time seemed so unconcerned with the outside world, was not immune.

But life went on.

"No," he continued, "there's nothing we can do. Let's learn."
He opened the text and Ziggy, also feeling helpless, knew that for the next hour there was nothing to be done but to study, even though he felt even more alienated from the aramaic text than ever and really wanted to get home to tell his parents.

Delaram started to read: She-novim ochzim be talith. He translated it for Ziggy: "Two men hold on to a prayer shawl and both say that they own it." So began their entry into the world of disputes, arguments over property rights and responsibilities, damages and harm. They finished the lesson with a section that deals with a man who digs a hole in a road and another man's cow falls into it. How much damages can the owner of the cow claim? It all seemed even more petty, more alien, less relevant than ever. But Ziggy didn't complain.

He dashed home wondering if the other Jewish homes had heard the news. He had to tell his mother. Hannah and Simon were already in bed. His father was sound asleep, his back to his wife. Ziggy excitedly told Hannah the news. She couldn't believe it. The news seem to frighten her. Perhaps it brought back memories of more troubled times from her past but Ziggy had other things on his mind.

"Can we turn on the t.v.? I want to see what's happening." He was sure that she would concede this once and an inroad could be made into their impenetrable strictness.

But his mother didn't miss a beat. "No, it's shabbos."

Ziggy began to argue. "But, Ma, it's important. It's a major event. Just this once." His voice was getting whiny. He couldn't believe that his mother would refuse him.

Hannah was adamant. "No. He's dead anyway."

She spoke as if she already knew how events would unfold. Nothing could force her to break the rules of Shabbos. You couldn't break the rules-- that was the first rule of their household.

"We'll get the Irish Times tomorrow and then we'll have all the news." She turned over and went back to sleep.

Defeated, Ziggy retreated to his room, wondering what was happening in the United States.

When he got to services the next day, he found that others had not been as particular about the injunctions and spoke of watching television without any guilt whatsoever.

Gabriel told him, " You should have seen Charles Mitchell read the news. He was actually crying!" Ziggy felt anger at having to miss something like that. He knew everyone would have seen it and he would be left out.

On the way home, he tried to compensate by looking at the sets in the shop windows. Television was still new in Ireland and few homes actually had sets, so people crowded around the windows, looking to see what was going on. Ziggy could hear the sounds of women sobbing. The usual gabby people were silent. Ireland had lost "its" President. He was a Catholic, a descendant of a family in Wexford. More than if it had been their own President, De Valera or the Pope, they felt a grief that could

not be measured.

Ziggy felt that something awful was starting. He had hardly known anyone who had died and here was someone so young that it did not seem possible. When Pope John XXIII had died a few months before, he felt sad but that was different. He was over eighty and however good that Pope was to the Jews, it was different. This was "history." There would be a "before Kennedy" and an "after Kennedy."

Nonetheless, in the Zeiskind house, it was Shabbos as usual. Ezra grabbed the Irish Times and held on to it, only feeding Ziggy the barest of information. Simon kept repeating, "I don't understand. Who would do such a thing? America, bah!" His father shuffled in his seat like he did when he could not find the words to express his frustration.

Hannah said little. She handed Ziggy the tzimmes. "Nu, it's more done that yesterday." Ziggy looked at the mixture of carrots and prunes. It was all a mess.

Thank God, it was winter and Shabbos would be out early.

As part of his break from ritual, he had already stopped going to evening services and today he felt even less inclination. Still, he waited impatiently for his father to get home, say the Havdalah prayer that marked the end of the Sabbath and then they could put on the television. For some reason, Hannah was adamant about waiting. It was as if she didn't care. Was she afraid to see the news? To see someone so young dead. Did the death of the young still frighten her?

Of course, that would be the day that Simon took his time getting home.

Gut Voch, he said amiably as he walked in the door, wishing everyone a "Good week" in Yiddish. His mood was jovial as though nothing special was happening in the world. Ziggy looked at him with disgust. Does nothing penetrate that man's skull? His father gave his mother a kiss but Hannah leaned away from him. Ezra came downstairs, all dressed for his date. Ziggy couldn't believe that he would still go out on a night like this. It would be a shame, a scandal. He could hear the Catholics say, "only a Jew would do that." He knew, at any rate, that he couldn't sit in a cinema with everyone in mourning. He wouldn't be surprised if the cinemas had closed down. He grew angry at them all. He wanted the ritual over. He needed to get back to the real world. "Da," Ziggy said with irritation. "Make Havdalah. I want to watch the television."

"Alright, keep your hair on. Just get the things. I'll make "half-a dollar," Simon said, punning as always.

Ziggy felt his blood rise at his father's bad jokes. He got the candle, the spice box and the glass for wine. He lit the candle and held it up "as high as he wanted him bride to be," though that thought was far from his mind that night. Simon, still in a happy mood, teased Ziggy. "Are you planning to marry a giant? Put it lower." Simon took the glass and began the blessing, the ritual that marks the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the week. He passed around the spice box, which

revives the spirits after the extra soul which had joined them for the sabbath had returned to Heaven. He held his fingers up to the flame to catch the image in his fingernails, remembering Adam's discovery of fire and then intoned:

"Ha-mavdil beyn kodesh le choyl, beyn or le choshech. He who makes the distinction between holy and profane, between light and darkness."

The words sounded meaningless to Ziggy, the ritual, usually one of the most beautiful in the Zeiskind household, without impact. His father poured the wine into a plate and doused the flame which sputtered and died.

It was over. The long Sabbath had ended.

In a flash everyone disappeared. Ezra was out the door, Hannah went into the kitchen to wash the dishes from the Sabbath meal and his father went upstairs to read his post. Alone, Ziggy put on the television and watched the images of death on the six o'clock news.

3858

1963: THE LESSON OF BRIAN EPSTEIN

DECEMBER

As Ziggy Zeiskind sat in the back of the 16 bus coming home from his first classical music concert, Van Cliburn playing the Rachmaninov Second Piano Concerto at the Adelphi Theatre, he felt deliciously sad. When his elder brother, Ezra, who had promised to accompany him reneged at the last moment taking a date instead, he had gone alone. Ziggy didn't really mind. It gave him a chance to relive the experience of hearing the music for the first time. As soon as he had money he planned to buy a recording of it. The LP would be his and not Ezra's, presuming that his brother would let him play it on his new hi-fi which only Ezra could use. Once Ziggy couldn't resist and when Ezra was out played Ezra's new recording of Tchaikovsky's Pathetique symphony and to his horror had scratched the record. Ezra hadn't found out yet. He dreaded what would happen when he did! He might have to buy him a replacement first.

The concert had run late but Ziggy got the last bus and grabbed a back seat upstairs. As the bus slowly wended its way from O'Connell Street in downtown Dublin, he replayed the languid, limpid, sad sounds of the second movement in his mind. It spoke to a different side of him, different from when in October he had seen the Beatles live and come out of the theatre excited, energized, thinking he had heard the future. So much had changed in that short time. Kennedy was dead. All had changed. He could still remember the long Friday night he heard that news and

how he had to wait till the Sabbath was over to get all the details on the television. He hadn't felt the same about the world since. Now in December, the Rachmaninov echoed this deep melancholy in his own heart. Things were happening too fast. He couldn't keep up with them. He closed his eyes and let the music overtake his soul. He wallowed in the delicious rapture.

Suddenly, he felt a man's hand on his leg. At first he wasn't sure what was happening. It might have been there for a few minutes. He turned to say something but the man stared straight ahead as if he was doing nothing unusual. The man looked so ordinary, maybe in his late thirties, thin, with a faint tan, the skin sallow, straight hair brown and damp. His shirt was ripped at the collar as was his jacket collar and sleeves. He wore no tie. His hand was thick and calloused, the fingers stained with nicotine and dirt. A laborer. Ziggy didn't know what to do. The man smelled of drink, so Ziggy thought that maybe he was drunk and the man didn't realize that he had put his hand on someone else's leg and not his own. He was about to brush the hand away when the man lifted it on his own accord. Ziggy felt a moment's relief but like a record needle finding its groove, the hand came to rest again on Ziggy's crotch. Ziggy's throat went dry and he couldn't say anything. His terror however was mixed with a new realization: he had an erection.

As they crossed over the bridge at the Royal canal, the man grasped Ziggy's penis through his pants and ran his forefinger and thumb along the thickness. Without letting go of the

erection, he moved his hand towards the zipper of Ziggy's fly. With his other hand, he reached for Ziggy's hand and moved it in the direction of his own crotch but Ziggy recoiled at the feel and jerked his hand back. The man began rubbing himself while he continued to rub Ziggy unperturbed. Ziggy's heart raced and he breathed in short gasps, petrified that someone might see what was going on. Even though they were at the back of the bus, the seat was raised and people had to exit by them at the stairs. Despite the comings and goings, no one seemed to notice.

Ziggy thought that if he pressed the man's hand down, he would feel the pain and take it away but the man took this action as an invitation and continued to rub while still fumbling with Ziggy's fly. If he dared take it out, Ziggy thought, he would jump up and get off the bus! The man's actions were bringing Ziggy close to a climax. His face flushed. Suddenly, in a flash of insight and wondering why he hadn't thought of it before, Ziggy crossed his legs. The man took his hand away and looked out the window of the bus. He had never looked once at Ziggy. By the time the bus reached his stop at the bottom of Kenilworth Park, his erection had subsided. Ziggy jumped off the bus and ran home.

His mother was in bed but his father was still up making his evening snack, his usual cup of tea with a slice of bread and butter. He could easily have avoided his father and gone straight up to his room but Ziggy felt the need to tell him about what had just occurred--even though he knew that Simon wouldn't know what to say about it. He had to confess, to get someone to acknowledge

that something sexual had happened to him. He came into the kitchen and faced his father.

Simon looked up and smiled.

"Ah, Ezekiel," sometimes, like Ezra, his father used his son's formal name, though Ziggy hated it. "How was the concert? Did you see Ezra there?"

Ziggy stalled in the doorway. "It was fine. No, he had seats upstairs and the crowd was huge."

He moved towards the table and sat down. But he got restless and stood up again. Talking about sex in their house was no easy matter. But he had to get it out. He stumbled on the words.

"Eh, Da, I got to tell you something."

Ziggy so seldom began a conversation with his father that he felt Simon would have to react, even though he also realized that this was the type of conversation that his father, a master of evasion, would like least. Simon avoided any kind of confrontation. It was how he got through a life with his wife who loved to confront him. Ziggy definitely was cut from his mother's cloth.

"What?" Simon said tensely, buttering some bread. He stood by the sink, leaning over so the crumbs wouldn't fall on the kitchen floor.

Ziggy had to force the words out. He would cut the story to its barest bones.

"Er, something happened on the bus and I don't know what to do."

"What happened? Sam said as he stirred his cup of tea. "Was there

an accident?"

Ziggy began to sweat. This was a lot less pleasant than the experience itself.

"No. But...Er, a man put his hand on my....," he hesitated to say the word in front of his father, "...penis on the bus just now, as I was coming home." It was all he could get out. But he had said it. Now someone else knew.

His father said nothing but lifted the cup and took a sip of tea. Ziggy knew he hadn't said enough. He had to add more. He had to dramatize the event, to react as he thought someone who would be truly horrified, might react:

"Should I go to the police?" He added.

Ziggy could see that his father was nervous. His face had gone pale and his brown eyes had widened. His father's hand went to his skullcap. Ziggy could read his expression which said: "Why are you telling me this?"

Ziggy regretted saying anything. Why did he tell him at all?

But he had to tell someone and it couldn't be his mother and if Ezra found out he would flog him. There was little sympathy there. At the back of his mind, Ziggy had the faint hope that telling his father would connect them in some way. It's the kind of thing one told one's father. But he could sense his father who wanted no part of this, recoiling from him.

Simon lifted the cup but his hand shook and he put it down. He felt his yarmulke again and took a huge bite out of the bread, stuffing his mouth. The butter ran across his moustache.

"What should I do?" Ziggy asked again.

Simon retreated to his old defense. "Just forget about it. If he didn't hurt you, then there is nothing more to be said. Why make a fuss over it? It's nothing." He looked pained.

Moving to the kitchen door, he said, "I'm going to bed. Turn off the lights when you come upstairs."

He left the cup half drunk and the half eaten bread and butter on the plate. He had been so eager to get away that he hadn't washed up the dishes as he usually did.

Ziggy turned on the tap and too excited to go upstairs, finished the job that his father had left undone.

Telling his father had been pointless. He also hadn't told him the awful truth: he had enjoyed the man's hand on him. Ziggy finally had to face something he had been avoiding for months. At first, he didn't even know what he knew, couldn't even face what he knew or sensed that he might perhaps know. He had no word for the feelings he had and without a word he had no real idea of what was going on. The feelings were vague, abstract, fleeting, nothing concrete, ideas that came and went randomly, quickly suppressed, unconscious thoughts, easily denied. He didn't want to know; he didn't want to be thrown from the carousel of life. He wanted to be like the other people, he wanted to be an orthodox Jew, to live in Dublin, to be like his brother, his parents. He knew now that it would never be possible. Now he had to face facts. He was different.

He didn't want it to be that way. He blamed Gabriel. His

return had changed everything. He brought new words, new ideas. Gabriel was always the leader, taking Ziggy to different places. But he couldn't blame Gabriel who had no idea what he was doing to Ziggy, no idea of how he had opened his eyes. Gabriel had no such inclinations.

A few weeks before, Gabriel had returned to school, long after the year had begun. He had gone to a Butlin's Holiday Camp in Blackpool for the summer to work as a chef. Ziggy found it hard to believe that a Jewish boy would take a job like in a place like Butlin's. Ziggy could never imagine himself in such a place, among no-Jews, eating treife food, not keeping shabbos, having no Jews around. He wondered what kind of Jew Gabriel could be. But Gabriel didn't see the world that way. "Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heaven," had been his credo ever since their class discussion religion. "Besides," he said to Ziggy, "the pay is great."

Nonetheless, he kept it a secret till the last moment.

"I'm off to Butlin's. See you in September. I'll drop you a card when I get there," he had simply announced in late June as they came home from swimming. Ziggy was always in a strange mood after going to the D'Olier Street baths. In the past year, his body had developed a lot of body hair and he felt self-conscious about it. It seemed to cover him all over. He couldn't looking at the others who were swimming, his eyes focusing on the hairless ones and the ones who were lean. He felt self-conscious about his fat. He wasn't overly fat but he looked at the athletic bodies of the

non-Jews at the pool and felt inadequate. His eyes wandered down to their swim suits and the bulges beneath them and he was envious of those that seemed to have a larger endowment than him. That night he had done it again and when he looked up, he saw the boy staring at him as if he knew the object of Ziggy's attention. He smiled at Ziggy but Ziggy blushed and turned away quickly. It didn't mean anything, Ziggy argued with himself. It was all physical he just wished he was thinner, taller, smoother, bigger in the right places.

Gabriel and the other boys didn't share that feeling. One day, when he was toweling himself down, Gabriel suddenly grabbed Ziggy's penis and said, "how do you do!" Everyone laughed but Ziggy was astonished. He would never have done that to anyone. Wouldn't they think that there was something odd about someone who shook another boy's penis. But no one else seemed to mind.

Sex seemed to be on everyone's mind but no one really talked about it in any open way. It came in odd moments: When Irving Wolfson, the handsomest boy in the class with an angular face without a trace of acne, bright blue eyes well spaced in pale skin, under black eyebrows with eyelashes that curled over on themselves, with well developed legs and chest from his love of rugby, had offered to run naked around the football field at the back of their school, Stratford College, if everyone threw in two and sixpence, no one took him up on the offer, though Ziggy would have, if he had the money. Ziggy had never seen him naked.

Ziggy remained wary of Irving. He liked girls too much. In

the last week of school in June, though, he had bought Lady Chatterly's Lover from him. It was banned in Ireland but Irving had picked up a copy in London and smuggled it in. Ziggy was timid about buying it from Irving but for Irving it was just his way of making his money back. Ziggy wanted to be noble and so didn't turn immediately to the well worn sections that Irving had obviously read over and over again but plowed through the turgid Lawrentian prose until he came upon the racy parts. As soon as he began reading them he found himself in a continual state of erection. Mellors, the musky gamekeeper on the Chatterly estate, Mellors filled his dreams. Ziggy pictured himself watching that rough hewn body "fucking" Lady Chatterly. He didn't dare tell anyone of his fantasies and when Irving asked him about the book, Ziggy just said "it was interesting." No one seemed to care that the son of a Hebrew school teacher and the brother of Ezra Zeiskind was reading such material. He couldn't tell anyone that he masturbated once, sometimes twice a day, thinking of Mellors and his lady. The crudity of the gamekeeper's speech was as much a turn on as anything. Ziggy had yet to say "fuck" to another person. Sex was all twisted in his head. He wanted it but he was scared of it --and where could he go to find it. He wished that someone would simply seduce him, look in his eyes and see the need, the desperation there.

That summer, Ziggy's mind was full of fantasies. Besides Mellors, he kept thinking of the missed opportunities with Eli, the black boy who had appeared in the school for a few weeks the

year before and then left. He still had the crazy belief that something bad would happen to him for the next twenty four hours after he did masturbated. But it didn't stop him from doing it two or sometimes three times a day. It took so little to get him aroused: the thought of a kiss, the feel of flesh, the look of a person, eyes, lips, Adam's apple, hair on one's chest. Vague ideas about sex. The feel of his own groin. Oh, he was doomed. No one else was like him. He was dirty, God would punish him, Ezra would punish him, his mother would punish him. Who could he talk to?

He might have talked to Gabriel sooner but Gabriel had stayed on till the season was over at the end of September and then went to London for a few weeks. He had just arrived back at the school in mid November but he was quickly catching up. After all, he was no dummy. Like Ziggy, he had gotten ten honors in the Intermediate. That year, the class had thinned out. Half of them gone, mostly the girls to get jobs. Gabriel's return brought the number up to thirteen.

Ziggy's nervous anticipation though came to nought. When his best friend came back that November he seemed changed. He had entered another world. On his first night back, though, he called and asked Ziggy to meet him. He wanted to continue their ritual of walking from Gabriel's house to Ziggy's and if the conversation was lively, back up the hill again to Gabriel's house. Sometimes, his mother invited him in for a drink and then he would go down the hill alone, mulling over what they had

discussed.

Gabriel looked changed. He had filled out in the three months at the camp. He had grown his hair longer and was again sprouting a beard.

"Gee," said Ziggy, ever the cautious one, "Do you think that the school will let you keep it?"

"Who cares? I'll give it a try and let them try and make me shave. Hey, why don't you grow one too?" Gabriel seemed so much older, though he still wore his red beret at a rakish angle.

"Naw," Ziggy laughed nervously. "I don't want to yet. Anyway, tell me about the camp. What was it like?" They stood outside Gabriel's door. They wore dufflecoats against the cool November evening.

Gabriel skipped over the details rather rapidly. He had cooked, cleaned, washed dishes, dated a few girls, nothing special. "It got real boring after a while. His main girl had been Moroccan, Charna."

Ziggy felt a tinge of jealousy. He wasn't sure if it was jealousy that he hadn't a girl or over the fear that he might lose Gabriel. He wanted to ask Gabriel if he had gone "all the way," but backed off not wanting to hear if he did.

"A lot of the staff were homos," Gabriel said suddenly, catching Ziggy off guard. He certainly wasn't expecting to hear that.

"Homosexual." Where did he first hear the word? It had been skipping around the edges of his mind. No one had used the word "homo" around him before. He had never thought about it but it

gave him an odd sensation to hear it being used.

"Were they?" he managed to gasp out.

"Yeah, they were real fun. Can you believe? One of them wanted to go out with me but I told him I wasn't that way," Gabriel giggled as he spoke. He did not speak of them disparagingly, almost in a neutral tone. Ziggy could never imagine himself being that easy going about it all.

He looked down at the cracks in the pathway, sure that he was blushing. "Wanted to go out with you? What do you mean?" He wanted to appear a little more innocent than he felt.

"You know, on a date," Gabriel said with a tone that almost sounded superior. "He wanted to go to bed with me."

Ziggy couldn't believe what he was hearing. Gabriel was taking all of this in stride.

"Agh! You didn't mind?"

"Nah, he was nice and left me alone when I respectfully declined. He was just our age, like sixteen. Can you believe it? He had a special boyfriend back in Southport. He ended up going with the head cook. They would carry on together all the time. And the cook had two kids of his own."

Ziggy was in awe of this world.

Bending over real close to Ziggy, Gabriel whispered in his ear:

"You know, sometimes they would pat my bum, like this." He cupped Ziggy's but Ziggy squirmed away. He didn't find it funny.

"Ah, don't be such a scardy cat. They, I, didn't mean any harm." He laughed.

"Are you teasing me?" Ziggy asked.

"Honest. I swear to the Powers that Be," Gabriel said laughing.

He thought the whole thing was some kind of joke.

God, he had gone to a place where there were all these

homosexuals! Ziggy wondered what he would have done if he had

been there but stopped before the idea of it began to make

inroads in his mind. He wasn't ready for this idea yet.

Gabriel broke into this thoughts: "Want to hear some juicy

scandal?"

"Yes," said Ziggy hoping he was changing the topic.

"Guess who is one of them!"

"I've no idea." Ziggy wondered if he meant someone he knew in

Dublin.

"Brian Epstein," Gabriel said triumphantly.

"Brian Epstein? Of the Beatles? But he's Jewish!" Ziggy was stunned.

"What's 'Jewish' got to do with it?" Gabriel admonished his friend. "They have Jewish fags too."

Ziggy still wasn't convinced. "How do you know?"

"About Jews?"

"No. About Epstein."

"One of the guys at the camp had gone to bed with him. He was from Liverpool too."

Ziggy was becoming fascinated. He had never thought about who could be a homosexual, certainly not about Jewish ones. He wished he had known before he went to the Beatles concert. Was Paul

McCartney? Then Ziggy suddenly remembered looking through his binoculars at Ringo and seeing his penis stretch along the side of his silver pants. It looked enormous. He couldn't believe that he had done that. Who goes to a Beatles concert to look at someone's penis? He had blotted out the memory of it till this very moment. The memory made him uncomfortable. He didn't want to carry on the conversation any further.

'Listen, let's talk about the work you have to make up,' Ziggy said with finality and soon they were deep in Milton, the Leaving Certificate, the new headmaster and movies.

Ziggy had successfully put the conversation out of his mind, that is until he went upstairs after cleaning his father's dishes. Thoughts of the man on the bus wouldn't go away. He was sure the man knew that Ziggy secretly wanted it to happen. That's why he did it. The man could tell he was one before he even knew it himself. He couldn't escape it, even if he tried.

"Homosexual." The word swirled around in his head. " Homosexual." The word made him shudder with revulsion. That was what he was. "Homosexual, I am a homosexual," he confessed to himself, saying the words as if he were blaspheming, cursing himself. He understood himself at last. How could have been so dumb. Now at last, he had a word for what he felt, for himself, but it didn't make him happy at all. He now knew now why he kept to himself, why he didn't want to be with the others. He was different.

What little he had read a little about it had been too horrid, too vile, too sinful for it to register. A few days after

the conversation he had come across a Life magazine article about men in leather outfits doing terrible things to each other. He hadn't dared buy it but read it at Eason's Bookstore quickly scanning the pages in case anyone saw him standing there. He read on about married men in their slippers going out for a bottle of milk and picking up men, arrests, men in women's clothes. It was nothing he could relate to. He put the magazine back, relieved that this life would never be his. But now he realized that it was. Where would he go? He had turned into Cain, doomed to wander the earth.

Ziggy tried to muddle through what he felt. How had it happened? Was it to do with his dead sister? His mother? His father? He had no answers. He just was. It had happened somehow.

He took off his shirt. Underneath it, he wore a small tallith, an indication of his religious dedication. He lifted it over his head. "I won't wear this again. I am not a religious Jew." He put the garment, that looked suddenly lifeless, like a limp rag, on the back of his chair.

He turned angry. Why had God done this to him? Had the man in the bus who hid his face been sent by God to let him know that there was no escape. God knew what was in his mind. What could he do? Judaism hated homosexuals. But he didn't want to give up Judaism. He loved the rituals, the faith. He wanted to keep kosher, to keep the sabbath. He didn't want to give these things up. He was still a Jew, trapped in a faith that offered him no respite. What would he do? He hadn't chosen to be this way. How

could the Bible condemn him for what he had no choice in, something that was part of him, that made him who he was, that came naturally to him. It made no sense. It wasn't fair. But how could the Bible be wrong? That wasn't possible either.

His mind was in turmoil. Clenching his palms together, he got down on his knees, like a Christian, and prayed: "Please God. Let it not be true. I didn't ask for this. I didn't want it. I want to be a good Jew. I won't masturbate again. I'll study the Torah harder. I'll go to services every day. I'll dedicate my life to You." But as soon as he said the words, he knew that God wouldn't be fooled. His words were false. He wouldn't be able to keep his promises. Already, thoughts of the man on the bus crept into his head and he started getting an erection.

He fell on the bed in despair. Opening his pants, he said, "I'm damned. Damned. Damned." 4345

TRINITY COLLEGE

...the principal was Ziggy. He asked the girl how to
...Professor Gibbons. Gibbons was about Jonathan's age.
...the end of the first week of lectures in English language and
...at Trinity College. Gibbons was beginning to have some
...about what he had gotten himself into.

TRINITY DAYS

Peter Gibbons, a few wispy strands of grey stretched
...his balding plate, golden rimmed glasses perched well down
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1966: THE PRODIGAL SON

TRINITY COLLEGE

"Who's the 'prodigal son'?" Ziggy Zeiskind asked the girl next to him as Professor Gibbons droned on about Jacobean drama.

At the end of the first week of lectures in English Language and Literature at Trinity College, Ziggy was beginning to have grave doubts about what he had gotten himself into.

Patrick Gibbons, a few wispy strands of grey stretched across his balding plate, golden rimmed glasses placed well down on his patrician nose so that they looked as if they would fall off, barely five foot nine, aged about sixty but looking more like eighty five, looked like a parody of a University don. He stooped over his notes and read in a monotonous tone, sounding like he was bored to tears and had been doing the same for far too many decades. He made absolutely no effort to look up at the sixty rather eager Freshmen students who filled the lecture hall.

His note paper looked so yellow that it could have been parchment. It was as if he was reading from a Torah scroll and had the same import to Ziggy who sat at the back of the room in the middle of the row of hard wooden benches. Straining to hear, he took down every word Gibbons said, not even sure what he was writing about. How would he ever learn this stuff?

Since no one raised a hand to ask a question or even to suggest that the Professor read slower or louder, Ziggy figured out that he shouldn't either. He wasn't one to break rules and was only too quick to pick up on the tacit and implicit. He had

seen enough movies about Universities to know that you sat and took notes and didn't ask questions. That was the system. The rules. It was the orthodoxy and Ziggy was a slave to Orthodoxy. You were supposed to know these things.

He was just happy enough to be there. After all, this was Trinity College, the last stronghold of Protestantism in the heart of a Catholic city. It was a tiny enclave, a Pale, in the midst of a city with barely three thousand students. Its cobbled entrance, cloaked and gowned professors, rituals and terms like "Commons" for the evening meal reeked of tradition. Women still had to leave at ten o'clock at night when they locked the gates or they would be expelled. Inside those gates that faced onto Dame Street, where Ziggy would catch the 16 bus home every night and sometimes even for lunch, the sounds of a capital city dissipated. Trinity existed in a temporal and spatial warp.

It was Irish but outside of Ireland. Its pretensions leaned more to Eton and Harrow than a Catholic Brother's School. The Archbishop of Dublin, McQuaid, had even forbidden Catholics from attending it on pain of excommunication. They had to attend University College, Dublin which everyone knew was run by priests and nuns. No Jews went there. Trinity was harder to get into and therefore the place of intellectual superiority. Ziggy with his three Honors in the Leaving (English, History and Hebrew) and a pass in Latin had managed it. He had felt so proud to be accepted.

But now he wasn't so sure. He was lost. He wondered why on earth he had chosen to major in English Language and Literature. He had to make a decision two years before in order to apply to Trinity and if Maurice O'Neill, the headmaster at Stratford College, the Jewish High school, hadn't cried when he read the poems of Shelly and Keats, he would be "reading" History or even Hebrew, though his father, Simon, an Orthodox Rabbi, considered the way they studied Hebrew at Trinity to be one step away from heresy. It was the one time that his father had put his foot down.

"I won't pay for you to study Apikorsus."

Ziggy put up a mild defense, "But Saul Walzman, the head of the department goes to shool and wears a yarmulke. He is no apostate."

Ziggy hated arguing with his father who when he made up his mind was impossible to dissuade.

"I know Saul. I went to Yeshivah with him. Sure he goes to shool and wears a yarmulke but I won't have you studying that way."

His father opened his Torah and began studying. That was that.

Ziggy knew that once Simon got worked up like that, there was no changing his mind. And this time, Simon held the cards as Ziggy was not eligible for a scholarship like his elder brother, Ezra who had got one, seven years before. Ironically, his brother didn't want it. Ziggy barely barmitzvahed at the time could still remember the fights between Ezra and his mother. He wanted to go to Yeshivah and study to be a Rabbi. "You have to have something

to fall back on," Hannah had argued. Simon stayed out of that fight. It was between Hannah and Ezra. He had no role to play in their affairs. Ezra went in the end but did as little as he could. He got a third class honors which for anyone else would have been a scandal but to Ezra, it made no difference. Everyone knew he was brilliant and the Third was to spite his mother. He did not even stay for graduation. He took the finals and was off to Yeshivah. Ziggy didn't put up much of a fuss. He wasn't that crazy about studying Hebrew anyway. What would he do with it? He wasn't going to be a Rabbi and if he couldn't be a Rabbi then ...He had to make a decision.

Unlike with Ezra, his mother didn't seem to care what he studied. "If you want to study Hebrew, fine. If not, choose whatever you like. I know you are a bright boy and will do well." Ziggy felt he was being put off. "If she cared, she would fight with me," he concluded. He knew his mother. That was how she operated. If she cared, she fought to have it her way.

At first it was going to be History. Michael O'Donnell, his history teacher, had made the subject so lively and complex that Ziggy fancied himself a Will Durant but then in Fifth Form after he had finished his Intermediate Certificate, Frank Killjoy, their first headmaster left to write plays and they got a new headmaster, Maurice O'Neill.

Ziggy hated change, especially when he had been used to something for so long and a new headmaster was not to his liking. When he heard the news, he dreaded the next two years till his

Leaving Certificate. O'Neill was a stout, though not obese man, whose face had a red veined look that intimated a drinker but there was no smell of liquor on his breath. His hair was black and slicked down with Brylcream, his eyes a light shade of blue that gave his face an eerie look. He was clean shaven and used a particularly pungent aftershave lotion. Ziggy wasn't sure what to make of him.

After the Intermediate, most of the students left and the class was reduced to no more than twelve students. The whole school had seventy students, all of them Jewish. On the first day of school, O'Neill came into their class and opening the text book, said to Maeve Nathansons whose mother ran the school, "Turn to "Ode on a Skylark" and read." Maeve stood and began, "Hail to Thee Blithe Spirit..." After she had read a stanza, O'Neill sighed audibly. Maeve looked up and paused.

"Ah, Shelly, Shelly, what a great poet," the headmaster said.

"Does anyone know about his life?"

When no one answered, he began to recite the details of the poet's life not from the textbook but as if he was personally there. When he got to his death, "he drowned, he drowned, and they pulled his body from the lake," tears flowed down O'Neill's cheeks. No one laughed, no one moved. They had never heard anyone speak that way of literature. Ziggy looked down at his book, almost embarrassed for the teacher but also moved by his words. O'Neill was different than Killjoy who treated English like a science or their first teacher George Singer who marked

everything with red and blue pens and handed back Ziggy's literary efforts with numbers more than comments. "Six out of ten, Zeiskind. You can do better than that." O'Neill made it mean something. Ziggy took a vow to read more and then he realized what he wanted to study in Trinity.

But he wasn't so sure now. These lectures seemed to drain the life out of the subject. He couldn't figure out what was happening. The first week had been one boring lecture after another. It began when the Head of the Department, Prof. Williams, opened his lectures on Shakespeare with a long discussion on the folios and whether a line in Hamlet should read "too too solid flesh" or "too, too sullied flesh" as if the play hinged on these picayune concepts. Ziggy hadn't even read Hamlet yet. They had read Othello for the Leaving but he quickly added Hamlet to the ever growing list of books, poems and plays he had to read as soon as possible.

The second lecture couldn't have been more different. After sitting around waiting for it to begin, nearing the end of that magic twenty minute period after which they would be free to go, in bounced the Professor, Harriet de La Rue, a young woman in her early twenties wearing the smallest and tightest mini-skirt, with straight hair cut in a Prince Valiant style and smoking a cigarette. Her face had a pale ashen look as if she had were in a Kabuki play. It gave her the pinched look of a starvation victim. Her eyes had dark rings around them and they seemed ready to jump out of her head. Ziggy thought she might be mad. In a voice that

quaked with fear or shyness, she apologized for being late but she had just been for lunch with Patrick Kavanagh, Ireland's greatest poet," a fact that struck Ziggy as odd since he thought it was Yeats and had never heard of Kavanagh. Oh, God, he thought, who is he? Maybe everything he had learned was wrong? She lectured for twenty breathless minutes on Wordsworth and then flew out again. Ziggy didn't know what to make of it.

The next lecture was equally disappointing. B.D. English seemed to lecture on how to pour tea instead of talking about Drama but the rest of the class, laughed at his jokes. Ziggy thought he was a snob. He hoped the last new lecturer, Brian Kingsworth would save the day.

Besides the lectures, Ziggy was so intimidated that he had not spoken to a single person in his class. Trinity was a strange place. It belonged to another world. It was Rugby and he the young Tom Brown. It was as alien to him as he was to them. He had never mixed with so many non-Jews. In fact, although he was eighteen and had lived in Dublin all his life, his experience of the city was incredibly limited. He did not know a single non-Jew except Hugh O'Donnell his next door neighbor and Brigid O'Dowd their maid and the non-Jewish teachers at his school. He wandered through the city but his Dublin was a Jewish Dublin: Jewish schools, Jewish organizations, Jewish food, Jewish summer camps, Jewish houses of prayer, Jewish friends.

And now he was surrounded by Gentiles. He did not see another Jew in the class. His thick black curly hair, stocky build and short stature gave him a definite chasidic look among these blond, fair haired and sallow skinned youth. People spoke in slightly affected accents. He hardly heard a thick Irish brogue and had already begun to subtly change his vowel sounds and watch the way he spoke. He didn't want to stand out.....

"Who's the 'prodigal son?" He whispered to the girl beside him. He had to ask someone. He didn't care how stupid he sounded. He was drowning. The red haired girl, turned to him with a look of astonishment in her eyes. Her gaze made Ziggy realize he had really revealed how stupid he was. She would tell the class and they would all know he was an ignoramus. She turned from taking notes and said in an accent that Ziggy recognized as coming from North of the border: "You don't know who he is?"

When she saw Ziggy's face go pale and that it wasn't some sort of joke, she said quickly in a whisper, "It's a story about two brothers. One stays at home and is real pious and the other goes away and gets into all sorts of trouble. When he runs out of money he comes home and the father kills the 'fatted calf' for him."

Ziggy found this quick synopsis intriguing, reminding him of the rivalry between himself and his elder brother, Ezra who was nearly a Rabbi. There was no question which role he would play!

"Where can I find it?" He whispered back to the girl. She wrote "Luke" on a piece of paper and passed it to Ziggy.

Ziggy was still confused.

"Luke who?" She wrote back.

The girl looked at Ziggy with astonishment. "It's a book in the New Testament. One of the Gospels," she laughed. "Are you having me on? What planet are you from?"

"From here. Dublin. But I'm Jewish. We don't read the New Testament." Ziggy babbled out his secrets.

Someone shouted "sh" and they returned to taking notes. Ziggy though could hardly follow the lecturer. He had to work out how he would sneak a New Testament into his house. If his father saw it... and where could he buy one? Would they have one in Hodges Figgis? He had already spent a fortune on books there as he made list after list of books that the professors had named. How would he read all this stuff? He was going to fail that was sure.

When the lecture ended, the girl gathered up her notes and turned to Ziggy. "My father would be horrified to hear you say you didn't know the parables of Christ. He's a Protestant minister. But you really should read the New Testament. You won't be able to follow a lot of material here if you don't. By the way, my name is Regina Stone, Reggie."

"Ziggy. Ziggy Zeiskind," Ziggy said in response.

As they came out of the hall, Reggie said, "a bunch of us are going to the Buttery for coffee, do you want to come along?" Ziggy hesitated. He was so scared that he had never even gone into the Buttery--the watering hole of the college--yet. He had peeked in once, didn't see anyone he recognized and scurried out

as quick as a mole on seeing daylight. Besides, the food they served there was treife but he wanted to get to know these people, they seemed so worldly-wise. He couldn't keep himself isolated. And what was a cup of coffee? Sure, didn't his mother drink one in Arnott's when she went shopping and so he agreed. He was sure that it was the first step down a slippery slope and soon he would be eating non-kosher food.

Ziggy followed her across Front Square into the underground cellar that was named the Buttery. He looked around. It was full of students with large glasses of Guinness or lager sat along the wall on long benches or at round tables. Wisps of smoke filled the air.

"There's John," Reggie said. Although petite in size, Reggie bellowed out his name. Ziggy saw a guy he recognized from class sitting at a table with others that Ziggy also recognized from the class. Reggie shouted: "Save two seats for us."

They grabbed a cup of coffee and squeezed in at the table. Reggie squeezed in beside John to whom she gave a kiss. Ziggy sat beside her.

"Everyone this is..." Reggie said, "sorry I have forgotten your name."

But she knew everyone else's. She went around the table as everyone nodded in turn. "John Hancock, soon to be a famous poet and my boy-friend." John looked stuffy. He wore a grey suit and a yellow tie as if he was going to a play and had an upper-class English accent. His blond hair was slicked back and his green

eyes peered out of horn-rimmed glasses.

The girl next to him introduced herself: "Dorothy Oakland, returning scholar. Everyone calls me "Dotty," not that I am or anything. You understand..." She also had an English accent. A slim woman with long black hair that enhanced the startling beauty of her face. She wore a wedding band and indeed seemed older than the rest.

Regina took up the introductory chores again: "David Glickstein, our token American." "Yeah," David said, "from Manhattan." Ziggy wanted to ask him how he came there but hesitated. David was short and stocky with a pleasant open face. His hair was wavy like Ezra's. Ziggy liked him immediately. A Jew, at last!

The next person said in a thick Dublin brogue, "Paddy Gallagher."

He had a pasty look to his unshaven thin face and smoked with passion. His fingers were yellow with nicotine and he wore a raggedly assortment of clothes that made him look disheveled.

Last of the group was Darien Raintree. A tall effete boy dressed in a dark suit, with a blue striped shirt and white color with a red tie. He was tall and slender and had the face of a sixteen year old. Ziggy found him attractive. Inadvertently, Ziggy blurted out, "What kind of name is Darien?" He had thought that all Gentile boys had names like Johnny or Paddy.

"What kind of name is Ziggy?" came back the retort but it was good natured. He had an English accent.

"It's short for Ezekiel."

"Mine is Greek," Darien said.

"A Peak in Darien," said John. "It's from 'Endymion,' Keats."

Ziggy made a mental note to read the poem as soon as he got home.

"Darien's father is a Lord. Very posh. Dines with the queen and all that," said Dotty. Ziggy was even more taken with him.

"Actually, I was thinking," Regina said turning to Darien, "If you carried around a teddy bear, you would be just like Sebastian in Brideshead Revisited."

Everyone agreed. "You're right."

They all seemed to know so much, Ziggy thought as he added whatever that last reference was to his ever growing list. Was it a poem? A play? He wouldn't ask Regina again. One revelation a day of his ignorance was enough.

"How did you all meet?" Ziggy asked. It had only been a week but they all seemed to know each other so well.

"We met at Fresher's Week," Dotty said. "Were you there?"

"No, I couldn't go. It was our High Holidays."

"I'm Jewish but it didn't stop me," David said jocularly, but then seeing Ziggy blush, "but then I'm a sort of lapsed Jew, even though I would take off for all the holidays from school and go to the movies. " Everyone laughed and Ziggy smiled. He had never met a Jew before who spoke so openly about not keeping the Laws. No Dublin Jew would tell him that. They all pretended to keep anything. He made a mental note to invite David to his home for a Friday night meal.

"Ziggy is so Jewish," Reggie said, "that he hasn't even read the Gospels. He asked me who the Prodigal Son was!"

Ziggy felt momentarily embarrassed and a little upset with Reggie for revealing his secrets but the group did not seem put out.

"Well, you're exotic," said Darien. "A Jewish Irishman." Ziggy looked at him taking in the youth of his face and wondering if they would become friends. Was it a gap too big to span? A son of a Lord and a Jewish boy? He could see himself bringing home Darien to meet his mother who after thirty years in Ireland still spoke with a thick Yiddish accent. That would be something.

"Better start now, young man," John said, "and maybe by the time you graduate, you'll figure them out. I sure can't.

"That's because you're a Protestant," said Paddy. "You need a good Catholic education."

"But there are no Catholics here," said John.

"Only excommunicated Catholics like me," Paddy said. And everyone laughed.

"Anyway, wasn't Harriet wonderful?" Paddy said, turning to Dotty. Ziggy wondered how he had gotten on first name terms with his lecturers already. How could he tell anything from her twenty minutes of somewhat obtuse romantic theory?

Paddy lit a cigarette as he continued: "Of course, she got her theory of poetry from I. A. Richards and he is rather passe now."

Ziggy began to sink in his chair. He didn't even know who the "prodigal son" was and they were up to poetic theory.

Before the discussion was over, Ziggy realized that this group was full of heavy hitters. They would all get "Firsts." He would be lucky if he got a "third."

Even though Ziggy was intimidated by their quickness and knowledge and was sure they would see that he was a neophyte and out of his depth, he soon was welcomed to their group. Years of sitting with his brother who dominated every conversation had taught him when to throw in a word or two and when to keep silent. Besides, they helped him see what was important. They seemed to know the lectures even before they were given. While Ziggy tried to figure out what the material even meant, they were already on to secondary criticism.

Ziggy felt like a stranger in a strange land. Everyone seemed to be staking out a place. His communication with them was limited to class. Although they would invite him to their parties, they were usually on a Friday night when he couldn't go and he couldn't go to their dinners as they served non-kosher food. Frustrated by the limits placed on him, he would take the bus home leaving the others to revel and fraternize. How would he ever fit in?

The day of reckoning came eventually. Animated, interactive and apparently concerned, Brian Kingsworth, an up and coming poet and a dynamo was the best of the lecturers. He enthralled and captivated Ziggy. His lectures on critical theory "sang." He talked about literature not as a "dead thing" but as something that was alive and vital.

Every week Kingsworth chose five or six students to address an issue. Ziggy dreaded the day he would be called. About five weeks into the semester, he handed out a poem "Speaking of Poetry" by John Peale Bishop and read off a list of names of people he wanted to speak on it: "Raintree, Gallagher and Zeiskind." "Raintree, I want you to talk on Bishop's use of Othello, Gallagher on Bishop's poetic theory, and Zeiskind-- did I get the name right-- talk about its "poetic diction."

"Poetic Diction"? Ziggy's nightmare had come true. Ziggy looked at the poem's free verse and drew a blank. Having feasted on the riches of Keats and Shelly, the poem seemed rather "unpoetic." But Kingsworth said it had "poetic diction." Ziggy was undone. It was one thing not to know the Prodigal Son, after all that was a religious thing, but another to be an English major and not the recognize poetic diction. Could he send a note saying he was ill?

Panic-stricken, he took the 15 bus and ran up to Stratford College. He had to see Maurice O'Neill. Walking into his office, Ziggy said with such panic in his voice that O'Neill was sure something dreadful had happened, "You have failed me."

O'Neill looked at Ziggy. Taking out a cigar, he lit it and asked, "What happened?"

Ziggy continued, "Kingsworth asked me to write a paper on the "poetic diction" in this poem." He thrust the manuscript at his teacher. " I have no idea what "poetic diction" is. You never

taught us that."

O'Neill remained calm. "Well, sit down. Let me read it and see what we can do."

After he finished, O'Neill took a deep breath.

"What a load of tripe!" He pronounced. Ziggy felt relieved. He wasn't alone. "Sure, there's no diction here at all, at all. No wonder you couldn't find any. Now, let's compare this to Shelley's diction...."

Within the hour, Ziggy had enough material to tackle the poem. He went home and worked on fine tuning his essay. Every word had to be perfect. There could be no mistakes. Still, he would have preferred not to be called on at all. He prayed that Kingsworth would forget who he had asked but no such luck.

"Ok, Raintree fire away." Darien stood up and without any notes spoke glowingly of Beale's use of metaphor.

Paddy went next. It was typical Paddy, a thousand allusions to everything from Plato to Eliot. It was overkill, if ever Ziggy heard it but as Paddy spoke, Ziggy's sense of security drained from him as if someone had placed a literary Kryptonite nugget next to his literary soul. They must be right! They all liked the poem and Kingsworth was agreeing with them. Oy, what was he to do?

After Paddy sat down, Kingsworth asked, "Wasn't there a third response?" Ziggy sitting in the corner of the class, raised his hand. "Ah, yes, Mr. Zeiskind. Ok, then."

Despite his doubts, Ziggy knew that he had to give it his best shot. He had written it, it was good and there was no alternative. He may as well give it his all. In his best declamatory voice, sounding eerily like his elder brother Ezra, the preacher Rabbi, and a lot more confident than he felt, he began: "In a work, such as this, that speaks about poetry, it is somewhat surprising to find only a few lines which actually contain any poetry...." For the next ten minutes, he proceeded to vent his spleen on the poem, ripping the poem apart, complaining of its lack of beauty, comparing it to Shelley and talking about what poetry "should be." He concluded with "the poem is a justifiable attempt at non-poetry."

So dramatic had been Ziggy's reading of his argument that the class spontaneously applauded when he had concluded. Ziggy looking abashed, sat down exhausted and sweating profusely. Sneaking a peek, Ziggy looked up to see the lecturer smiling at him.

"Not bad, Zeiskind. Well put together. You certainly have the courage of your convictions. But what do you think of use of some of the same diction in "The Waste Land"?

"The Waste Land"? He didn't even know what it was. He sensed that it was an unfair bit of oneupmanship on Kingworth's part but Ziggy had said his bit. He had claimed his place. He didn't have to pretend anymore.

"I'm sorry, Sir, I haven't read "The Waste Land"---yet."

"Well, not to worry, you will, I am sure," Kingsworth said, gracious enough not to push his superiority and went on to discuss the poem from his perspective. Ziggy didn't care. He was home safe and sound....

"I guess we can go kill the fatted calf now, Ziggy," Reggie said to him as they came out of class and headed towards the Buttery.

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By the end of the Winter quarter of his Freshman year at Trinity College, Ziggy realized that his infatuation with his classmate Darien Raintree was going nowhere. He didn't care. It fit all his romantic notions of what tragic gay love was all about. Darien was the first boy, Ziggy had ever admitted to himself that he desired sexually. It went beyond the unconscious feelings he had had for Eli, the black boy who had come to their high school, or even the man in the bus who had felt him up and about whom he still fantasied. He hadn't moved forward with his desires, still stuck, unresolved, between the demands of his orthodox Jewish background and the demand of his emerging sexuality. He didn't know how much longer he could keep his pact with God that he wouldn't go to hell, if he didn't actually go to bed with anyone.

Ever since he first saw Darien, the day that Reggie had introduced them in the Buttery, Ziggy had been taken by Darien's insouciance, the way he moved so gracefully across a room, his air of assuredness, the way he seemed to belong to this new world that Ziggy found so threatening but wanted to be part of: non-Jews, outside the insularity of the Dublin Jewish community. He still went home every day for lunch, attended synagogue regularly and took part in the community's functions. But he itched to leave it and try new things. Could he belong to both camps?

Ziggy sensed that Darien could feel Ziggy mooning over him but didn't encourage him, even though Ziggy was sure that Darien

shared his inclinations and most probably had already acted on those impulses already. Ziggy knew about those British private schools. He certainly hung around with some obvious types, like Stephen de Groot, the most notorious homosexual on campus. De Groot strode in an exaggerated style, wore black make-up around his eyes, sprayed his hair so that it had a bouffant style and wore slinky see-through shirts that revealed a skinny hairless torso. He looked something like a thin Beardsley drawing. Despite his flamboyance, everyone tolerated De Groot. He was like the village idiot, a fool but harmless.

Stephen wasn't the only gay person at Trinity. A group of five or six always could be found at a table in the Buttery teasing each other. They behaved brazenly and flounced around like faux Oscar Wildes or the actor Michael MacLiammoir, Ireland's most famous homosexual, who openly lived with his lover, Hilton Edwards. Stephen and his cohorts smoked cigarettes through holders, made exaggerated gestures and talked in loud fluty voices. They sacred him in a way. He knew he could never be like them nor did he want to draw attention to himself. He liked more masculine types but at the same time, he was attracted to their joie de vie. At least they knew who they were and seemed to have no problems leading the kind of life they wanted. They always seemed to be having fun and laughing. Not like him. Acknowledgment of himself and who he was had not eased his confusion or bewilderment.

As much as he tried, Ziggy couldn't get Darien out of his mind. He was so different. Ziggy had never met anyone like him. He had followed Darien into the Buttery one time, coming up behind the English boy, intending to pretend that it was just a coincidence but Stephen beat him to the punch.

"Darling, over here," he called out. "Let me clean down this horrid chair for you." He took out a green silk handkerchief and made a desultory gesture of wiping the stool.

"I'm surprised he doesn't lick it clean," Ziggy heard one student say behind him, a big burly rugby type he recognized from the engineering department.

"Or sniff it," said the guy he was with. They both snickered. Ziggy blushed as though the remark had been aimed at him. He felt so guilty most of the time, afraid that someone would notice the objects of his desire. He ended up taking a seat at a table over from where Stephen sat as if being seen next to him as if he could be tainted by association. But Darien had no such qualms. They were all British Public School boys and shared the same ethos.

Stephen leaned over and kissed Darien on the cheek.

"Darling," he had a loud, almost braying type of voice that bespoke drama and affectation. "You really shouldn't wear such dark colors. Your delicate and so, so fair skin needs light blues. Do let me come over and go through your wardrobe and just redo you....." The conversation became secretative, every so

often punctuated by loud laughter and a "gir-ul."

When Ziggy got up to leave, Darien noticed him and called him over.

"Ziggy, meet a friend of mine, Stephen de Groot, Ziggy Zeiskind."

Stephen extended his hand and gave Ziggy a rather limp handshake.

"Delighted," he smiled wanly at Ziggy. Close up, Ziggy noted

Stephen's acne ridden face crudely covered with what looked like

make up, his pale green eyes, deeply sunk into his head and

surrounded by dark circles. He was actually quite ugly.

Stephen turned away and paid no further attention to Ziggy.

Ziggy figured he didn't match up. He had seen Stephen's type. He

liked pretty boys and walked around campus with his arm draped

over the shoulder of one or another of that sort. He obviously

had no time for a rather dumpy sad looking Jewish kid, with long

curly hair and strange inquisitive eyes.

"Time to join us? We're going for a drink?" Darien asked

pleasantly. He looked straight at Ziggy with his warm blue eyes

fringed by long black eyelashes. His straight black hair was

carefully groomed, parted at the side and neatly cropped. His

hands were manicured, the nails shining even in the darkly lit

coffee shop. Though Ziggy liked more rugged looking men and

Darien was slender and tall, he had a vigor in his limbs that

entranced Ziggy. He was too beautiful. Ziggy knew he would just

pine for Darien. There really was no way they could connect.

Ziggy hesitated. He wanted to join them but he had to be

home for supper. If he called home, his mother would suspect the worst: that he was not eating her food. It wasn't worth starting with her. But, oh, he wanted to join Darien, how he wanted, even though he had seen Stephen squirm when Darien had made the invitation.

"I'm sorry. I can't. I was just leaving. I have to be home," he stumbled over the words, feeling awkward.

Darien didn't seem put out.

He turned to Stephen, "Mr. Zeiskind lives chez his parents."

"Tres bien for him," said Stephen. He no longer sounded affected but petulant. "Come on, we're late, we have to meet the others. Bartley's will be getting crowded."

Ziggy jumped. They were going to 'Bartley Dunnes.' He regretted saying 'no.' It would have been a way into a world he ached to join. Through the grapevine, he had discovered that Dublin had a whole demimonde of homosexuals, bars like "Bartley Dunnes" where they would hang out. He had walked by it one night but the loud laughter had scared him away. Besides, heterosexuals went there with their girlfriends and if they saw him there, standing alone, they would know why he was there and he would be ruined. He had lost the chance to go with Stephen and Darien and met some people. No sooner did he think that than he realized that he was not ready yet. He was such a coward. He didn't want to have Stephen come running up to him in the Buttery the next day saying something, like "Ooooh, Darling, we're all going to Bartley's tonight. Won't you join us." Some Jewish friend could see it and

spread it all over town that "Ziggy Zeiskind is a queer, a fag." It would be like taking an announcement out in the paper. He couldn't have that. The Jewish community was too small. He didn't want his parents knowing anything, or his older brother, Ezra, so nearly a Rabbi. It would be too much.

The fixation on Darien only grew worse. He waited outside the lecture hall till Darien appeared and then went in at the same time and found a way into his row, saying innocently, "Anyone sitting here?"

After the lecture, he made every effort to find out his plans:

"Hi, are you going to the Buttery? Mind if I join you?"

He followed him everywhere. If Darien mentioned that he was going to a movie or someone mentioned that Darien would be at such and such a place, Ziggy turned up there too and silently sat by and watched Darien with his real friends. Despite the warmth of his greetings when they met, Darien seemed to care less about Ziggy. He didn't mind Ziggy joining him but he never sought him out. The pursuit was all on Ziggy's part. But Ziggy didn't care.

As the year went on, Ziggy saw less and less of Darien who started skipping lectures. There were rumors that he was found naked one time walking around campus drunk.

"I wish Darien would get his act together. All this drinking is not helping him at all," David Glickstein said one day to Paddy Gallagher when Ziggy joined them. "He has to decide what he is?" "What do you mean?" Ziggy asked but the others did not answer him and the conversation turned to another topic.

Ziggy soon realized that if he was going to become a better friend with Darien, he had to act quickly.

In May, before the end of the third and final quarter, Darien suddenly turned up at Harriet de la Rue's lecture which he hadn't attended all quarter. Her lectures were still as brief as her mini skirt and she puffed on a cigarette even though no one was supposed to smoke in the lecture halls. Darien looked disheveled and wasted, although he still exuded a wan charm. Seeing Ziggy, he sat down beside him, delighting Ziggy.

"What is she talking on today?" He asked. His breath smelled of liquor and it was only eleven o'clock in the morning.

"I think we're up to Tennyson. Maybe Browning," Ziggy answered.

"Maybe Kipling," Darien said laughing to himself. "Would you like a little kipling?"

Ziggy realized that Darien was making some sort of innuendo but he wasn't sure about what. He answered, "Not tonight dear."

Darien looked at Ziggy a little astonished at the repartee and then said, "I guess not, man, I guess not."

Ziggy knew he had to spring then. It was now or never.

"How would you like to come over to my house for supper?"

"I'm afraid that's out," Darien replied with a sad look.

"How about later?" Ziggy couldn't believe his audacity.

To his surprise Darien acquiesced.

Sure enough that night at nine, Darien stood at his doorway. Only his mother was home. The great meeting between the middle aged Jewish lady with a heavy Yiddish accent and the son of a

Lord with a clipped British upper class tone finally took place. A meeting of two different cultures. To Ziggy's surprise, his mother treated Darien coolly. She looked up from her embroidery, over her glasses.

"Nice to meet you," she said in a clipped voice as if to hide her still prominent accent in the face of someone who once had dined with the Queen and knew Charles and Andrew personally. Maybe she suspected something about Darien or Ziggy's feelings about him? Her power of perception constantly amazed her son. Darien was not put off.

"Can I see what you are doing?" He said. He poured on the charm he had been taught at Eton and in the court of St. James, no doubt. 'You can't beat good manners,' Ziggy thought.

His mother was flattered and lost some of her coolness.

"It's a cloth we put over the bread for the Friday night table,"

"Did you design this?" Darien asked, just like the Queen did when she went to tour a factory or something, always the right question and the art of appearing interested.

Hannah explained the design that contained a candelabra, sheep and the blessings in Hebrew. Darien nodded as she went along.

"Look at the stitches," Ziggy said, joining in. "You can't tell the back from the front."

They left his mother and went into the dining room in the front of the house. Ziggy brought in a tray his mother had prepared with tea and her cheese and sponge cakes. Darien helped himself to plenty of both. Ziggy wasn't sure what would happen now. Could

he steer the conversation into risqué topics?

"You're still friendly with Stephen de Groot?" Ziggy asked.

"Yes actually," Darien said. "But I don't see so much of him anymore. He's.....living with someone."

"What's he like? I only met him that one time you introduced us." Ziggy said.

"Oh, he's a hoot. You know. Always good for a laugh."

"Why? Fancy him?"

Ziggy blushed. "Me? No." He was astonished at Darien's forwardness. So he does know about me! Maybe Darien was just teasing him.

Darien continued: "You know he's not coming back next year. He finds Dublin a little stodgy. Can't blame him myself. I may not come back either, unless I do really well."

Ziggy's heart dropped. He wanted Darien to come back.

"I say, Zeiskind, I asked around and everyone says that you take good notes. Would you mind, old chap, if I borrowed them."

Ziggy now understood why Darien had suddenly befriended him and come to his house. He felt used but also flattered.

"I'll repay you," Darien said. "Take you to dinner or something."

"Well, dinner is out," Ziggy said. "You know I don't eat out. We keep kosher."

"Oh, yes. Sorry, but, well,....We'll think of something. Book token or something like that. Could you?"

Ziggy did not want to part with his notes but he looked at Darien and wondered if it would make them closer if he gave him the

notes. Could he trust Darien not to lose them? He didn't know if he could take that gamble or not. To lose the notes would be awful. He had to do well in his first year exams.

"Look, it's not like I'm competition. You're way up there with Glickstein and Gallagher and that lot. I just want to pass,"

He was flattered that Darien considered him with the others. Ever since that first oral report in Kingsworth class which he thought had been a fluke, people had treated him as if he were one of the bright stars in the class. He thought he was an imposter.

"Oh, that's not the problem," Ziggy said. "It's my hand writing. I doubt that you could make it out. Do you need them for all the lectures? That's a lot."

"Hm. I think I can get Gibbon's from Hancock, and Shakespeare's no problem. It's this damned poetry stuff from de la Rue. How about just her's." Darien putting his hand on Ziggy's. The intimate gesture jolted Ziggy. Darien's hand was soft like a cushion. He didn't move it away. He still hesitated. He knew that Darien was using his charm and he was having a hard time resisting. No, it was too great a risk.

"Listen, I'll go through them and give you the outlines. But I don't want to let the notes go. You understand."

Darien drew his hand away.

"Sure."

"I'll have them for you on Monday," Ziggy reassured his friend. It would give him a chance to revise the material. Ziggy spent nearly all of Sunday copying copied out the most important parts,

correcting the misspellings and tightening up the prose. Luckily, de la Rue gave the shortest lectures, so the notes were not that long.

He brought them with him to class on Monday. When he got to the lecture hall, the place was abuzz.

"Darien Raintree tried to commit suicide last night."

Ziggy felt his heart sink. The lecture began before he could get the information but in the Buttery the group, Hancock, Gallagher, the usual lot, gathered, while David Glickstein who had found Darien told them the story.

"He put towels around the door of his apartment and turned on the gas. I just happened to come by and smelt the gas. He's in the Meath Hospital."

Simon de Groot had joined them. He looked pale and drawn. He wore a black turtle neck as if he was in mourning.

"I just came back from the hospital," he spoke in a low voice with none of the energy that he usually had. "His father, Lord Raintree, came over this morning. They're taking him back. That's the end of him here, I guess."

David turned to Ziggy.

"How did he seem when he was in your house?"

Everyone turned to Ziggy. He wasn't sure what to say.

"Fine. He got along great with my mum. He seemed fine."

He never mentioned anything about the notes. Could he have saved him if he had given them to him then and there? Was it over the upcoming exams?

"Anyone know why it happened?" Reggie asked. "David?"

David leaned over and the group leaned in too.

"He was madly in love with this laborer, a big burly guy. Darien was crazy about him, a big brute of a guy.

"I never liked him much," de Groot piped in. "I warned Darien about him."

There was silence for a moment.

"Anyway," David continued, still speaking in a low voice, as if anyone could hear at the next table from all the hubub. It was hard enough for Ziggy to catch the words. "The guy threw him over. Darien couldn't stand it."

Ziggy leaned back. He wanted to leave.

"A laborer," Ziggy thought. "And here I thought I wasn't good enough. Him the son of a Lord and me just a Jewish kid from Dublin."

When he told his mother what had happened, leaving out the real reason, of course, saying that it was exams, his mother just looked up from the nearly finished coverlet and said,

"Goyim. Perhaps you'll choose a Jewish friend next time."

Ziggy went to his room. He knew he'd never see Darien again. He tried to recreate him in his mind's eye but already the image was fading. He thought back to Eli and how he had let him, too, get away. The years were going by. He had to take a chance soon or he would just be tormenting himself for nothing.

1966: TRINITY DAYS 111: "THAT GIRL HAS DEATH IN HER VOICE..."

Ziggy preferred Jews. He couldn't help it. The Gentiles, whether they were Protestant or Catholic had different values and as much as he liked his non-Jewish classmates, he always felt an outsider in their presence. The only one he had ever invited to his house was Darien Raintree and he had dropped out and had disappeared from their lives. He couldn't relate to gentiles as easily to Jews. He even felt close to an alienated Jew like David Glickstein. David understood where Ziggy was coming from. He took up Ziggy's side from the first day.

When Ziggy met him at the Buttery the next day, he had come over to Ziggy who sat alone sipping a cup of tea.

"You made quite an impression yesterday. Many of them had never met a Jew close up. Of course, I don't count and besides the fact that I'm an American overrides everything."

Ziggy liked David's manner. It was warm. He looked so Jewish to Ziggy's eyes. He was short like Ziggy with black curly hair, a round face with a pronounced nose but off set by light blue eyes that seemed to twinkle. He didn't seem to find the world a hard place. Here he was from New York and he fit right in to the strange world of Dublin, maybe even more than Ziggy who only knew the Jewish Dublin.

"You have to understand, I told them, I hope you don't mind," he said, "that you're an orthodox Jew. I can't believe that you have a whole community here. I never expected it. I told them they should see the chasidim in New York, with their black robes and

sidelocks. You seem almost normal by comparison." He laughed good naturedly. Ziggy didn't mind; he was flattered that David took the time to explain his side of things.

"You keep kosher, shabbos and all that?" David asked.

"Yes. Still do," Ziggy answered.

"How will you navigate this place? You won't even have a cake here."

"Ah, I will." To prove it Ziggy took a bite from David's, although he didn't tell him that was the first time he had eaten anything in the Buttery.

He was as exotic to Ziggy as Ziggy was to him. He was the first Jew that Ziggy had met and become friendly with who was not orthodox. He was just "Jewish" and it didn't matter if he kept anything or not. He didn't even fast on Yom Kippur. Ziggy didn't care. Unlike his elder brother, Ezra who demanded total observance, Ziggy somewhere had become more tolerant. He thought it might be because he knew that he might one day not be as observant as he was now and how could he judge others. He didn't believe that he would ever drift that far but he admired David's sense of self. It did not limit him, the way it did Ziggy.

Nonetheless, despite David's disclaimers, that he wasn't an observant Jew and didn't care one way or the other about his faith, Ziggy treated him like he was a Dublin Jew. He told him when the holidays were and invited him home nearly every Friday evening.

"Come on. My mother is an excellent cook. You'll love her food."

And my brother's away so you won't have to worry about him." Finally, at the beginning of the Sophomore year, David relented. It was Sukkoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, when they ate in the garage renovated for the holiday.

"Isn't that the one that you have the palm tree and the citrus fruit?" David asked Ziggy.

Ziggy replied with glee, "Yes, yes. See you're not such a lapsed Jew after all."

Thankfully, the family liked him a lot. David knew when to sit and stand for the right prayers; he even could read a little Hebrew and went along with all the religious functions of the Zeiskind household.

His mother fussed over him liked he was a starving refugee. "Eat, David, eat. More soup?"

David was the perfect guest. "Yes, just a little more."

Somehow, he packed in two helpings of everything on to his tiny frame. He weighed a good twenty pounds less than Ziggy although they were the same height. Ziggy envied the tightness of his frame.

hey loved him and wanted him to come again. His mother gave him cake to take home. Ziggy didn't know if David thought it funny or really was touched by his mother's endeavors.

"Ziggy, why do you have to keep kosher when you're not at home?" David said as they walked to the bus stop after the dinner. Ziggy had gulped when David said he was taking the bus home. They observed the laws of the Sabbath strictly and going on a bus or

car was strictly forbidden. Even Ziggy kept those laws. His mother even offered to put him up for the night so that he wouldn't have to desecrate the Sabbath. Ziggy too felt embarrassed but decided to walk him out anyway.

"You've seen my family," Ziggy said. "Dublin is like a fishbowl. People would see me and they would tell my parents. You don't understand. You were not born and raised here."

"Such a nice boy," Hannah said to Ziggy when he got back in.

"Ach, but he's not orthodox," his father said. He sat with a book of commentaries on the Torah in his hands. "He eats triefe in the university. Doesn't keep shabbos. What kind of Jew is that?"

"A good Jew," his mother said, cleaning off the table. "He comes from a good home and is sweet-natured. Who cares if he keeps Shabbos or not?"

His mother's tolerance surprised Ziggy. She wouldn't let her son deviate one iota from the norm but didn't mind if others did.

When they went into the kitchen, she turned to Ziggy.

"I'm a modern woman. I know how these things are. Just you don't get ideas in your head. I want you here every Shabbos and don't be eating in the Buttery. Ezra got through Trinity without eating there and you don't have to either."

"Ezra, Ezra. Well, I'm not Ezra," but he bit his tongue.

"As long as you live in this house," she continued, cutting herself a pomegranate, "you keep our rules. What you do when you leave is your business. Just don't shame us while you live here."

Ziggy felt ashamed and grew defensive. He cracked two walnuts

together and scooped out the kernels.

"Ma, what are you on about? I come home every day, I keep shabbos, I keep kosher. You don't have to worry."

"I know. I know." she said.

Ziggy wondered how much she did know. Could she sense his biting at the leash.

David had rooms in college and soon after class, Gabriel ended up usually inviting Ziggy over for tea. He sat around listening to David's horde of American material. He was up on the latest ideas and all the hippy stuff that they only had seen in the newspapers. David soon had him listening to Allen Ginsberg's "Howl." Ziggy loved the freedom of the verse.

More than that, Ziggy had begun to harbor the idea of one day going to America. He peppered David with questions.

"What's New York like? Would I fit in there?"

David regaled him with stories of Greenwich Village and the free life there. Ziggy sensed that David knew what Ziggy was seeking.

"There," he told Ziggy, "there, you can be yourself."

He left it as cryptic as that.

Towards the end of their sophomore year, David too, decided to return to the States.

"There's too much happening there. I'm missing out," he told Ziggy. "The world is exploding and this place is still in the nineteenth century. I need something else. I'm switching to medicine. Anyway, you have to come and visit."

Seeing Ziggy's crestfallen face, he reassured him, "Don't worry,

"We'll keep in touch. Listen, come on over. I have a special record I want to play you."

It was to be their last time together. Darien was gone and now David was too. Ziggy hated change but it was happening all around him.

As they settled down into the cheap sofas, David took out a red and acetate album. Ziggy had never seen anything like it.

"Listen, it's a live recording of a rock and roll concert given by a woman. I saw her in the village. She was incredible. A tiny figure with a bottle of Jim Beam in her hand. God, she was fucking amazing. Listen."

The voice sounded raw and harsh and the music so startling to Ziggy's ears that at first he couldn't adjust to it. It was like she was breaking too many rules. Women didn't sound like this. She was no Petulia Clark. She sounded more like a man. He wanted to say something but David was swaying to the music, his eyes closed.

She sang a song called "Ball and Chain." It sounded indecent, bawdy, exposed. Ziggy didn't want to like it. It scared him. It had a sort of rattle in it. Then she sang "Summertime." He had never heard a version like that. It had none of the sweetness of the way other women sang it. But as she went on, he heard the freedom in her voice. The freedom to interpret the song her way. She was different. She knew what she wanted. When she finished, the room was silent. David opened his eyes. "That girl has death in her voice. Did you

hear it? She'll be dead in a year."

Ziggy sat dumbfounded. What David had said frightened him. He spoke about music in ways that Ziggy had never have thought possible. David lived in a different world than him but it was one that he wanted to enter. He took a vow then and there that when he got his degree he would go. He had to grow. He had to leave. He would never have that astuteness as long as he lived in Dublin, surrounded by the community. He had to get out. He had heard the future and even if it meant facing death, he would go.

1708

1967: WITH HIS FATHER IN THE DARK...

Ziggy Zeiskind owed his love of movies to his father, Simon. His father had taken him to his first movie, Walt Disney's Peter Pan at the Metropole Cinema in down town Dublin. Ziggy had eagerly awaited the event. Even though he was only three, he knew that films held an important place in their household. They formed an important part of one's life. Everyone in the family considered it a rite of passage, an initiation into something special. He could still remember that first time clearly: his mother kissing him as if he was embarking on a journey into the unknown and would return a different person, even his older brother, Ezra, stood on the doorstep and waved goodbye to him, his hand in his father's, waiting in line as it inched slowly forward to the box office, his father deciding what seats to buy, "upstairs or down," they went down, getting a box of popcorn and an ice pop, then entering the huge auditorium with its rows and rows of seats, he had never been in a place that big, the darkened lighting that made the cinema mysterious yet warm and inviting, seductive and yet formalistic, almost like being in a synagogue, a holy place, searching for two seats together, the red plush seat into which he sank, the rich red curtain with gold tassels that hung across the screen, the hubbub that died as soon as the lights went down and the curtains parted, the magic on the screen that did not end till the lights came up again and he realized that hours had passed. By the time, the experience was over, he had fallen in love and it was a love that would never

disappoint him.

Films were the one unalloyed joy he shared with his father. Going to the movies together was their special time, a ritual that they shared. They went together to the matinee at the Kenilworth Cinema just around the corner from their house. Next to religion, the Zeiskind family, like nearly every family in Ireland, took films --or "filums" as they pronounced the word-- seriously. In the morning, hordes of Catholics trooped past their house to Mass and then come back again in the afternoon to the cinema, except this time, the Zeiskinds, father and son joined them.

It was strange. Ziggy hardly talked to his father during the week and seldom went anywhere with him but there was something special about going to the cinema with him. Every Sunday, Ziggy stood in line holding his father's hand and then they would enter the movie house together, searching for the best seats. "Do you see two together, Ziggy?" Then the lights went down. It was the one time that Ziggy felt protected by his presence. They were never so close as when they were in the movie house together and in the dark.

No one, not his mother or his brother Ezra shared it with them. On those occasions when his father couldn't go and Ezra, chronologically seven years--but in truth a million years--older than him, took Ziggy, it was not the same. Ezra never held his hand so that Ziggy got swept away into the crowds and Ezra always sat too close to the screen so that all Ziggy could see was a

blur.

He never went with his mother. Hannah preferred opera or the plays at the Abbey Theatre to which she went every Saturday night in the Winter with her sister, sh'vester. Ziggy's pleasure in theatre was purely vicarious. On the Sunday mornings as she did the laundry, his mother recounted to him the play of the night before, passing judgement on the acting and the story. By the time he was eight, Ziggy already knew all the O'Casey and Synge plots. He couldn't wait till he was old enough for her to take him. He wanted to go already but his mother kept putting him off with "you're too young. Next year" till he had given up asking. The only theatre he saw as a child was when his cousin Rachel took him to the Pantomime at Christmas time and that was different. Not as classy.

Hannah only went to the films if the cinema showed something like a Jeannette McDonald and Nelson Eddy musical or a romantic story like Random Harvest with Ronald Coleman and Greer Garson. How she had loved that movie, even though Ziggy's mind couldn't quite grasp the complexity of the plot which sounded really weird. How come Coleman never recognized his wife, he had asked his mother the first time she had told him the story four years before. "He had lost his memory in the war," she had said. "Doesn't make sense," was Ziggy's pronouncement, wondering nonetheless if he should add it to his list of "must see" movies. Anyway, his mother had given away the plot so why bother going to

see it.

The only actress his mother liked was Bette Davis, especially in The Little Foxes. Ziggy remembered how, as she pounded the sheets in the kitchen sink, kneading the linen and wringing out the bleach and soap, she recounted to him how Davis had refused her husband his heart medicine and watched him die. Rather than being appalled, Hannah smiled and said "what a machashevfa. what a witch, that Bette Davis is. Oy, a terrible woman" and then laughed to herself. Ziggy wondered if his mother saw herself as a Bette Davis character or wished she had more of her traits in her personality. Unlike Hannah, Davis never backed down from a challenge.

Hannah and Simon seldom went to the movies together. They had gone when they opened the Kenilworth Cinema. What a night that had been! His parents even splurged and bought reserved seats. The movie was Mario Lanza in Because You're Mine, something they both could enjoy. Five years old, Ziggy had begged them to take him but they had argued he was too young, it was too late and they couldn't afford it. Ziggy wept, but to no avail. He couldn't wait till they came home and described the place to him. Of course, his mother had not cared for it. "Ach, its all dark inside and the bathrooms are small. You have to wait for ever. The seats are too cramped." On and on she went. Ziggy figured he

wasn't going to be seeing too many movies there with her. His father had been non-descriptive. "It's fine, " was all he said.

But no pleasure came without its trial and tribulations in the Zeiskind household and Ziggy's was to get his father to the Sunday matinee on time. Every Sunday, they went through the same ritual, a ritual devised, Ziggy was sure, to torment him. Impatient to get going, he ended up yelling at his father who always found a reason to dawdle:

"Daddy! Hurry up! We're late."

Ziggy knew that the film started at three and if they didn't get in line by half past two, they ran the risk of not getting in at all. He spoke from bitter experience.

"Hold your horses. I'm coming," His father finally said, sticking his head out of the bathroom door where he had been languishing for what seemed like ages. He laughed at his son's impatience.

"So, if we don't get in, we'll go next week."

"No, no," Ziggy said, growing anxious and already wearing his hat and coat. "I want to see this movie." Ziggy didn't care what kind of movie it was, musical, comedy, tragedy, foreign with subtitles or American, he wanted to see them all.

"What is it?" His father wanted to know, coming down the stairs. Even though his father went at least once a week and sometimes even twice, taking Ziggy with him as well to the Wednesday

afternoon matinee, he never seemed to know what film was showing. Ziggy was different. Every week Ziggy he grabbed the Evening Mail or the Irish Times papers to see what was on or even sneaked around to the lobby of the theatre and looked at the posters in the front windows to see what was coming the next week. Ziggy knew how to entice his father. "It's a good movie. A western. "

Like his son, Simon saw anything but despite his eclecticism, his father had more limited tastes. He loved westerns the best of all. He never missed one. "I love a good shoot 'em up," he would say. "Some action." Who could imagine that he was a mild manner teacher in a Hebrew School?

His father was slow to take the bait. Ziggy was sure his father deliberately stalled just to annoy him. To get his father moving, he opened the front door.

Simon got the hint and took his hat and coat from his son.

"What's the movie called?" He asked as they went out the door.

"Gunfight at the O.K. Corral. You'll love it." Ziggy said with haste.

His father was skeptical.

"Ah, haven't I seen that one already? Isn't that the one with Gary Cooper?"

Ziggy grew disgusted. Already he was an expert. "No, that's High Noon. We saw that two weeks ago. Jeez, don't you remember anything! I don't know why you go at all!"

At moments like this, he sounded uncannily like Ezra who was

always complaining about his father's lack of intelligence. Ziggy quickly regretted the remark. He needed his father to go with him so that they could sit upstairs. They didn't let kids sit upstairs alone on a Sunday afternoon. Although, they usually sat downstairs, if the line for downstairs looked too long, Ziggy would try and persuade his father to go in the upstairs line. It only cost twopence more to sit upstairs, ten pence downstairs and a shilling upstairs. Ziggy preferred the upstairs, anyway, as the crowd was quieter. The beitzemer from Kimmage and Crumlin were all downstairs and their rowdiness upset and frightened Ziggy. But his father was often reluctant to part with the extra pence for an upstairs seat and said, "we'll find two seats together downstairs, I'm sure. Not to worry." But often they didn't and Ziggy hated those times when he had to sit alone because they came in late. He never enjoyed those films at all. He spent most of the time looking for his father who, when he saw him, seemed content sitting alone.

"And don't fall asleep this time," Ziggy warned his father as they moved into line. The last Sunday, when they watched The Glass Mountain, a movie about a man who wrote a ballet, definitely not his father's taste, Ziggy heard Simon's soft snores in the seat next to him. "Da," Ziggy said appalled that his father could sleep anywhere, especially at the movies, "wake up." He nudged his father awake, ashamed, as if his father had fallen asleep at services. He wondered if his father really liked films or only paid the few pence so that he could have a hour or

two of a break from the tensions in the house. Ziggy really didn't care as long as they got there on time.

He dreaded being late. The cinema full before they could get inside. Too many Sundays the uniformed usher had come along and say, "Sorry, no more room. We're all sold out." On the way home, frustrated to the point of tears, Ziggy yelled at his Dad who always remained nonchalant.

"What are you all worked up for? Sure, we'll go next week. Stop making all this fuss."

As soon as they got home, Simon would take out the paper and in five minutes would be fast asleep. Ziggy had to content himself with the BBC program, "Movie-Go-Round" which began with the overture to Carousel, gave gossip and the background of upcoming movies. Usually, they broadcast whole scenes from a movie that only whetted Ziggy's appetite and made him feel even more frustrated and angry at his father, an anger that would last till the following Sunday when the ritual would start all over again-- unless it was during the Omer, the seven week period between Passover and Pentecost and the Three Weeks in July when orthodox Jews were not allowed to go to the cinema. How Ziggy hated those times and wished his parents would let him go! Still, he feared God's wrath if he broke the law, besides if anyone saw him going in to the Kenilworth they would tell his parents or Ezra. At times like that he hated being a religious Jew. He even resented it when the cinema closed from Holy Thursday till Easter Monday.

His father hardly ever commented on the movies afterwards either, except to say "not bad" or "nonsense" or drek, the yiddish word for garbage, usually for a film he had slept through. Ziggy was equally reticent. Anyway, when the lights came up, the spell between father and son would be broken. They reentered the real world. Impatient with his father, he ran ahead, not holding his hand anymore. When he got home, his mother would be sitting in the backroom, embroidering and looking up, asked "Enjoy it? " or "where's your father?" or "Ah, good you're home." She did not want to hear his assessment or the plot or anything. She had had a few hours peace to herself and that was her pleasure.

After the movie Ziggy too wanted to be alone. He would run upstairs and lie on his bed and replay the movie over and over again, only sorry that he couldn't go and see it again, as the Kenilworth brought a new film every Monday. Sometimes a film made him deliciously depressed. The year before it had been Wuthering Heights. He imagined himself as Heathcliff, he imagined himself as Catherine; their whole twisted romance ate into his soul. Stories of thwarted love affairs when the lovers couldn't get together and instead suffered for their love appealed to him no end. He hated mushy stuff but the pain in love attracted him. He didn't know why. He found a copy of the book in Ezra's room and started to read it but the Bronte's rich prose was no match for Goldwyn's version or Olivier and Oberon's acting. He preferred to look at the ceiling and re-view the film.

As soon as he was old enough though, Ziggy deserted his father. Simon didn't seem to mind that Ziggy skipped the Sunday afternoon matinees. He continued going on his own. Ziggy preferred the newer films shown during the week. But no one took his father's place. He never went with anyone, just running in at his convenience whenever he had a few hours to spare. While other people who used movies for dates or for special occasions and never went alone, going to the movies was part of Ziggy's life and he didn't need to make a fuss of it. It was like going to Sabbath services. He didn't need a date for that and sometimes he was in the cinema more than he was at synagogue. Anyway, he preferred to be alone without having to worry about what other people thought. If anyone went with him, he felt that they were in the way. Even if he went to a Wednesday matinee show and saw his father there, he would slink back so his father wouldn't see him. He liked being alone in the dark.

Soon he was going downtown, not waiting for the two or three weeks for the movie to hit the Kenilworth. He soon learned that the movie houses in the city had their own personalities. They all had great names like the Stella in Rathmines, the DeLuxe in Camden Street, the Rialto in Maynooth. The Adelphi in Lower Abbey Street was the classiest house in Dublin. It had Todd-AO and one Sunday afternoon, he sat entranced through South Pacific falling in love with Bali Hi under Bloody Mary's spell. The passion on John Kerr's face had him spell bound. Then there was the Ambassador, beside the Rotunda Hospital in Parnell Square, where

they had all gone to see The Ten Commandments. How Simon had hated that movie.

"So many things wrong. It was so govish. Only a Reform Rabbi would find that Jewish," he had fumed. Later on, when Ben Hur came out, Ziggy went alone. He didn't need his father's biblical criticism. The Carlton on O'Connell Street showed trash and he hardly ever went there. Across the road was the Savoy which had the best variety of movies and always had something new that he liked. Each house was a palace with multi-colored lights, thick curtains, great seats. In the old days there had been the Theatre Royal down by the quays which had a variety show and guest artists but Ziggy liked his movies pure. Beside it was the little cinema the Regal. One St. Stephen's Day he had gone there to see Exodus and thrilled to hear the "Hatikvah," Israel's national anthem blast out of the screen. He wondered what the govim thought about that. Also on the quays beside the Liffey were the Corinthian and the Astor. Once the Astor showed a movie called The Sky Above, the Mud Below which was about tribes in Africa and had male nudity. It ran for half a year! Ziggy saw it five times, until he was sure that the ushers were beginning to look at him suspiciously.

Male nudity was as rare as the female variety. Ireland had such strict rules on censorship that movies often came in minus huge chunks of time. The Irish censor had no categories of separate movies for adults or children. All films had to be suitable for all ages whether a child would be interested in

going to see it or not.

Movies marked the signposts in his life, marking every transition from childhood. He started like his father with westerns, the simplicity of the good guy versus the bad. His favorite was Shane. The longing of the little boy for the proud enigmatic gunslinger dressed in white over the less exciting father resonated in his own heart. How he cried, silently sniffing in the back row of the cinema when the boy called out, "Shane, come back, come back, Shane." Then he found an echo for his own adolescent trauma in James Dean's East of Eden. He became fixated on Dean's portrayal of the troubled Caleb. The first time he had gone to see film at the Kenilworth Cinema, he stayed through the movie twice and almost a third time to catch that moment when Caleb sat shivering on the top of the train after learning his mother was a prostitute. With his arms around himself, he not only protected himself against the cold but against the knowledge he had just acquired. He looked like he didn't know where to go or what to do. It was as if Dean wasn't acting. He was Caleb. Ziggy felt he understood the trauma in Caleb's soul. The other movies spoke to him in different ways: the thwarted romance of Tony and Maria in West Side Story appealed to his sense of a world in which true love never works out. In the sword and sandal epics of Steve Reeves, he got the first unconscious inklings of his own destiny. And so on, movie after movie making an impression on him, speaking to him the way nothing else, not books or music could.

When he entered Trinity, he joined the college Film Society which in those days was a way round the censor. Soon he was feasting on Godard, Feilini, Bergmann, Bunuel, Trouffaut, Resnais, Savijat Ray and a host of Japanese movies.

His father, whose tastes had not changed since Ziggy was a child, had not kept up with him. Strangely though, on Sundays and Wednesdays, his father would come to Ziggy and ask him, "Well, son, what should I see this week?" Ziggy loved movies so much that he couldn't help but take the paper and look it over. "Do you want to go to town? The Carlton has a Western."

"Nah, why should I shlep into town? It'll be here in a few weeks." He only went to town if it was a movie of Jewish interest and he was sure the Kenilworth would never show it.

"Tell me," he continued, " what's on at the Kenilworth? Is it any good?" His father passed the cinema every day but still never seemed to know what was showing there. He always asked his son instead.

Ziggy scanned the paper. He hardly went to the Kenilworth himself anymore.

"What have they got? Ah, just some tripe. A Rock Hudson, Gina Lollabrigeda movie. Garbage," Ziggy's voice was full of scorn. But his father was not deterred. "It'll be good for a break. What do I care? What time does it start?"

Ziggy annoyed that his father had rejected his opinion, threw the paper at his father and said, "Here, look at it yourself. I have

work to do."

His father took the paper and without a care said, "Hm, 2:30.

Yes, I can make that."

Ziggy grumbled: "God, what about movies that teach you something?

Good filming?" He imagined what it would be like to take his father to a Fellini or a Bergman. Ziggy had sat through Last Year at Marienbad so bored that the only way he amused himself was to think of his father sitting there watching the camera go up those endless staircases for the umpteenth time.

Despite his expectations, Ziggy could never resist asking his father what he thought of the movies he had recommended, though, if they were outside his father's repertoire, the answers did not vary: "I fell asleep" sometimes followed by a "sorry" or drek, or "I couldn't understand it."

They all sent Ziggy into paroxysms of anger.

"Then why do you bother asking me what movie to see? You never like what I send you to see. Do you do this to annoy me" or some such variation on this theme.

One thing Ziggy admired in his father and a trait that they shared: they never left a movie in the middle. That would be sacrilegious. However bad it was, you sat through it.

Sometimes, Ziggy took a chance and knowingly sent his father to something different, hoping against hope that his father would like it and could learn to appreciate different kinds of films. Usually it ended in disaster. Once he had packed the poor man off to see Rashomon with its intricate plot line and unresolved

ending. Simon came back full of scorn. "Sure what kind of film was that?" "You never knew who did what? Did he attack the woman? And they told the same story over and over again. Ach. A waste of good time and money. I don't know why I ask you about films, Ziggy. You send me to some awful ones." He still said "film" though Ziggy now that he was at Trinity said "film" the proper way and considered his father's accent a sign of a lingering lower class tendency that his son was trying to be rid of.

Simon almost missed The Magnificent Seven because Ziggy let it slip that it was based on a Japanese film.

"One Japanese film is more than enough for me," Simon announced at the dinner table. His older brother Ezra snorted at his father's declaration, almost willing to share his father's opinion. Ezra had dropped out of the club. He didn't share their passion for movies at all. He had only room for one religion and that was orthodox Judaism. Movies were for dates, that's all. Simon never asked Ezra for his opinion. Movies were Ziggy's domain.

Most of the time, Ziggy chose the straight and narrow. It was easy if a western was on. Simon had never stopped liking westerns and still believed that "You can't beat a good western." In truth, Ziggy didn't mind catering to his father's taste. "Here, Daddy, go and see, The Man who Shot Liberty Valance, you'll like that." And his father would come home pleased. "Now that was a good piece. Very clever."

Ziggy even missed it on the rare occasion when his father just went on his own and didn't ask his advice.

In Junior year at Trinity, Ziggy was elected Secretary of the Film Society.

Ziggy announced the results at dinner, his place still up against the kitchen wall.

"As if anyone cares," Ezra said. And then to add salt to the wound, he turned to his father and said, "Do you want to see Carry on Cleopatra at the Stella in Rathmines?"

Ziggy bristled at the way that Ezra had one-upped him but to his surprise, his father declined the offer. Looking up from his soup, he stared straight at Ezra: "I don't like those comedians. Too crude for my taste. Sidney James is an apikorus."

Ziggy wondered what James' disavowal of Judaism had to do with his comic talents but kept his peace.

"Suit yourself," Ezra responded, not in the least put out. He finished his compote, got up from the table. "Nice meal, Ma. "I'm stuffed."

Hannah beamed.

Ziggy was surprised at his father's reaction to Ezra. He would have thought that his father would have jumped at the chance to go with his eldest son. It was something different but by the following week, when his father came to him again for his advice.

they were back to their regular patterns of behavior.

"Ziggy, this movie at the Kenilworth? Is it any good?"

"What is it?" Ziggy yelled down from his bedroom where he was

working on his King Lear paper. He was examining the difference between the two sisters Reagan and Goneril, looking for something fundamental in their characteristics. Was one better than the other or where they both venal condemning an old man to horror and desperation?

"Eh. Let me see, something called Zorba the Greek. Will I like it?

Ziggy couldn't resist the temptation. He was sure his father would like it.

"Oh, yeah," he came to the door. "You'll really like it. It's a great movie."

But Simon was not totally convinced.

"It's not one of those foreign films, with subtitles and things. One of your types of movies?" Ziggy could detect the hint of sarcasm which irritated him.

Ziggy replied that "No! it wasn't any of those things" and went back to his work in a sort of educated huff. Sometimes his father just drove him crazy but he was sure that he had struck a bull's eye with that one. At last, a movie they could both enjoy.

But his father hated it. "Drek. A waste of time."

Ziggy couldn't believe his ears.

"You didn't like Zorba and his life? What he meant? The dance on the beach?

His father answered, "No." "No." "No." to every point. He was a waster."

Ziggy felt himself getting angrier and angrier. How he hated this

man.

"I don't know why you bother to ask me. You never like anything I send you to. Why do you come to me every week, ask me what to see and thenYou like only one kind of movie. Honestly, you are so stupid some times," his face had gone red and he paused to catch his breath.

His father took the tirade in stride. "Why do you get so worked up? It's only a movie. You would think it was the end of the world. It's only a movie, son."

Ziggy looked at his father and then, he could have sworn he saw his father smile. Stunned, Ziggy lost his power of speech and went back to his room.

The paper lay unfinished. He had suddenly lost the inclination to touch it. That smile really threw him off. Was his father laughing at him? He couldn't believe it. He felt chastened as if his father had seen through him and his pretensions. What had just happened? The smile. So innocent. So without blame. God, he had insulted the man for years. How had he put up with it? He lay on the bed and thought anew about his father. He had inherited his mother's disapproval of him and imitated his brother's openly expressed scorn, both without question, but now he began to see his father differently. What had his father done to him that was so bad? Nothing. He never interfered in his career choices and if he wasn't as strong as Ziggy would have liked, well, maybe that was better than most. Suddenly, he thought back to the days when he had gone to the Kenilworth with his father and how he had

liked that feeling. It had been a long time. He hadn't thought about that in ages.

When he came downstairs. He looked at his father, again asleep with the newspaper draped around him, a cigarette dangling from his fingers, the ash precariously near the paper. He began to grow angry and was about to yell at his father about how careless he was, the automatic reaction, but stopped himself and instead gently tipped the ash into his own hand. It burned just for a moment. Let him sleep. Ziggy looked at his father as if for the first time: the face was still young, not bad for a man over sixty, the hair still jet black with only a strand or two of grey, the face relaxed was that of a young man almost. His father. Was he changing sides? Was he more of a Zeiskind than he imagined?

The following week when his father came up to his room, to once again ask for his opinion, Ziggy grabbed the paper. He prayed that he would find a movie that he knew his father would enjoy. He couldn't believe his luck.

"My God, they're showing Gunfight at the OK Corral at the Kenilworth. Do you want to see it?"

"Didn't I see that before?" His father said.

But Ziggy was not going to be deterred. "Yes. Years ago but I'd go with you, if you'd like. I'd like to see it again."

His father hesitated for a beat. "Are you sure? And then,

"Alright."

As they settled into their seats, Ziggy caught a glimpse of his father, as nonchalant as ever. He felt that this was a special occasion but he wondered if his father felt the same. Ziggy wished he was a kid again and could hold his father's hand in the dark.

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1967: "ARE YOU A JEWISH IRISHMAN OR AN IRISH JEW?"

"We're as Irish as you. I was born here. My father was born here," Ziggy glowered at his next door neighbor, Johnny Doyle, who sat on the top of their backyard wall while Ziggy stood below in the Zeiskind yard. Johnny had just returned to Dublin after a few years away. He had grown into a tall burly man, a good few inches taller than Ziggy who to his chagrin hadn't grown to more than five foot five. Still, Ziggy was the stouter of the two by far. At twenty three, two years older than Ziggy, Johnny had hardened. His face had become more angular, the brown eyes duller and the mouth a strip of light pink in deathly pale skin. He looked like what he had become: disappointed.

Ziggy had expected to see him ever since, on his way home from the Trinity library, he had met Mrs. Doyle on the 16 bus a few weeks before. She got on in George's Street coming from her work at Cassidy's where she sold dresses. Now that her husband was dead, she lived all alone. He came downstairs and took the seat beside her. She was surprised to see him.

"Ziggy. Why?...How nice."

Soon the talk turned to her son.

"Ah, he's in London now. Trying to be a rock musician. It's all the thing now, isn't it Ziggy? He wants to be a Rolling Stone or whatever they call these groups," she clutched her purse. Ziggy felt sorry for her. The years seem to have brought her down. Thin, almost smothered in a black cloth coat with a black hat on her head, she appeared older than her sixty or so years.

"The Animals? The Kinks?" Ziggy contributed.

Mrs. Doyle looked at Ziggy. Her eyes had a sad look.

"Who knows? I can't say I get much pleasure out of him. First, he wanted to be an artist and then a writer. Let's pray this latest lasts. He's not like your Ezra on his way to be a Rabbi..."

...Like most Catholics, she had a respect for people who took the cloth, that is except for Protestants but Jews were alright in that respect...

"or," she continued, "you with a degree. Your mother told me that you were doing well at Trinity. Almost finished?"

"Not quite," he said. "I still have two years to go."

"English, is it?" she said.

"Yes." They chatted till they got to the Zeiskind front gate.

"Tell Johnny to come by when he gets back," he said as he went into their front yard, though he had no real desire to see him.

"I will, God bless."

A few weeks later Johnny returned home to lick his wounds.

"He's building his own band," Mrs. Doyle told Ziggy but Ziggy wasn't fooled. He could see the failure and the anger. Johnny was waiting for him when he had come out to throw out the rubbish. He sat on the wall.

"Hey, Zig, how do you feel about those Israelis kicking the shite out of those Arabs?"

It was June 1967 and the six day war had just ended with Israel reclaiming Jerusalem. Every Jew in Ireland felt elated. His cousins and aunt had called from Jerusalem to tell them the news.

His aunt, sh'vester, told Ziggy that she was going to see her husband's grave in the Old City as soon as the troops gave the word. They hadn't been able to get there since the Arabs captured had captured it in '48. But his mother wouldn't talk to his aunt; she hadn't in over a year not since the day Sh'vester had marched into their kitchen and just announced: "Hannah wish me well. I've decided to move to Israel. I'm selling the house."

Hannah who had been wiping the dishes almost fell into a chair. "You're moving to Israel?"

"Yes. The children are all grown and Andrew has left. What is there for me here?"

Hannah had gone pale. "But the promise? Remember the promise?"

"What promise?" her sister said, as she took a nibble of Hannah's chopped herring. She put it on a piece of matza and it crumbled in her mouth.

Hannah didn't repeat the words of the promise but Ziggy standing silently by remembered it: The promise that sh'vester had extracted from his mother after she had wanted to leave Ireland. Had her sister forgotten? Now that her sister didn't need her any more, she had betrayed her without a moment's thought.

Hannah had never forgiven her desertion.

"It's great," Ziggy said to Johnny. "We have the Wailing Wall again. You know the Temple." He could see Johnny's mouth tighten but he continued anyway, "We're having a service tonight to celebrate."

Johnny couldn't hide his point of view.

"Yeah, great," he said. "You know the last place I played with me band was in Morocco. They sure hate you Jews there. They want to kill the lot of you." Johnny made this announcement with such glee that it was clear that he endorsed the emotion.

He still hates Jews, Ziggy thought to himself. He hasn't changed a bit since he played at being a Nazi. He looked up at Johnny sitting so smugly on the wall, like a cheshire cat.

Ziggy stood there with the rubbish in his hands. "Well, I don't think that Morocco is in this war and anyway, the Arabs failed again just as they did in '48 and '56. So much for that idea." He made himself sound real smug about it all.

Johnny was not put out. He swung his legs over as if he were going to drop down into the Zeiskind yard.

"Well, that's because the Americans are always helping them," he said taking out a cigarette and lighting one up. He put the pack back in his pocket. He didn't offer one to Ziggy who would have refused anyway. Only his father smoked. "Without the Yanks, them Israelis would be nothin'," Johnny concluded, taking a drag from the cigarette.

Ziggy hated these kinds of discussions. Johnny just wanted to bait him. Why argue? Johnny would always be an anti-semite and there was nothing to be done about it. It was weird having an anti-semite for a neighbor. His mother was right after all. You couldn't trust them. He just wanted to get back to his studies. His family had been watching the news non-stop for days but he only popped in at moments. What was the point? The Israelis had

won. Watching the news didn't make it any better or worse. Arguing about these things bored him. Some Irish kids had volunteered to go to Israel to help but Ziggy thought that was silly. "They'll just be in the way." Anyway, he had his exams coming up and he had to pass. The Israelis would do well without his worrying. That was his mother's area. Worrying.

"The politicians will do what they want," he told her when she got angry at Lord Brown for condemning Israel at the United Nations. "What are you getting worked up about? He'll be gone soon enough and Israel will still be here."

Johnny changed the subject suddenly.

"Tell me Zig, if Ireland went to war with Israel which side would you fight on?"

"That's a stupid question," Ziggy retorted. "Why would Ireland fight Israel? They don't even have an army!"

"Just for arguments sake. Which side would you be on?"

He knew what Johnny was getting at. Non-Jews didn't just argue with Jews about this type of thing; Jews did with other Jews as well. He had this type of argument when he was in high school:

"What would happen if you were in the Inquisition would you convert to Catholicism?" "What would you have done if you lived in Nazi Germany, would you have stayed?" Questions that had no truthful answer, nothing that one could really prove, like this Vietnam business. The communists at Trinity were all worked up about it. Ziggy ignored them. It didn't affect Jews or Ireland. Ziggy knew that Johnny was testing his loyalty to Ireland, trying

to trap him into saying that he would support Israel over Ireland. Next would come: "You're not a real Irishman. You Jews all stick together."

Ziggy put the rubbish he was carrying into the bin and slammed the lid down.

"It's a silly question. Let's say the Vatican declared war on Ireland. Which side would you fight on?" Ziggy shot back. But Johnny had no problem with that.

"Fuck the Pope. I can't even get a rubber in this country 'cause of him. I'd bomb the bloody Vatican if I had half the chance." He sounded gleeful. His large yellow teeth adding a patch of jaundiced color to his pale face. "You can't answer me 'cause you know the truth, you'd support the Jews."

Ziggy could have ended the conversation there and then but he wanted to have his say. He wasn't going to walk away and think of all the great answers he could make afterwards.

"You think I'm not a good Irishman, don't you. That all Jews don't belong here." He went to the outdoor sink and washed his hands.

Johnny swooped down into their yard, over the logs attacked against the wall and stood facing Ziggy. "Why don't you go and live in Israel?"

Now that Johnny faced him, Ziggy grew a little frightened. Would he start a fist fight?

"Why should I do that?" Ziggy said. "We're as Irish as you. I was born here. My father was born here,"

Johnny was not dissuaded.

"So what does that prove? You could live here a thousand years and it wouldn't make any difference."

Ziggy had a hard time arguing with that thesis because he sensed that it was true; he wasn't a "real" Irishman. Irish history wasn't his history. He wasn't Catholic and Irish history was all about how the Catholics had suffered for their faith. He had no one who died in the Potato famine or the 1916 revolution. Sure Bobby Briscoe had been a Lord Mayor of Dublin and a member of the Dail but he was the only one. He couldn't see any other Jew ever getting into the Dail after him or running for President. Or even a Minister.

Nonetheless, he wasn't going to let Johnny get away with it.

"So? What's your point?" Ziggy said. His hands wet, he turned to face his neighbor. Ziggy didn't want to fight but fuck, he was tired of running and hiding. Let Johnny start something! He looked down at the logs in the yard. If Johnny got rough, he could grab one and hit him. "My father was born and bred here. He is Irish through and through."

"Yeah?" Said Johnny. He had the look of someone who didn't like to argue. He wasn't one for intellectual discussions. "How did he get here? How did his parents?"

"What difference does that make? For your information, they escaped from Russia and got off the boat in Cobh and someone told them it was America and they stayed." It was an old apocryphal joke about how the Jews came to Ireland but it would have to do.

But Johnny wasn't laughing. "Huh? I betcha not one Jew fought in the 1916 uprising!"

"Actually one did, Bobby Briscoe! But what has that to do with anything? They had only arrived here. You couldn't expect them to join in anything. Most probably they were trying to make a living!"

"Yeah, usuring the poor people of Ireland."

Ziggy knew it would come to this. He wagged a finger at Johnny's nose. He didn't care.

"You know Johnny, that's the worst lie. My father has worked all his life and never did anything to hurt anyone. What harm has a Jew ever done to you?"

"You're fucking Christ-killers!" Johnny punched Ziggy on the shoulder. Ziggy didn't push back. It was an adult version of those Nazi-Jew games they had played as kids. He knew he would easily lose if it got physical.

"Fuck, Johnny, you don't even go to Church, what are you on about?!"

But Johnny was having none of it. "I know what I know, Jew-boy," he sneered. "Ye, arse-licking Jew-boy. If I had my way, you'd all be thrown out of here. Keep away from me or I'll fucking make you bleed I will." He went for his pocket and pulled out a knife. Ziggy stepped back but Johnny jumped back on the wall and was gone. Ziggy stood there trembling.

"God, that Johnny Doyle has turned into a real anti-semite," he said to his mother when he calmed down and went inside. He

didn't mention the knife.

"Just like his father," his mother said. "But Mrs. Doyle is so nice. But don't worry about him. His mother told me that he is going to live in London."

So much for being a real Irishman, Ziggy thought.

That night he decided to go to a special service in the Adelaide Road Synagogue that the community had called to give thanks for Israel's triumph in the Six Day War. The synagogue was crowded and to everyone's surprise the President of Ireland himself attended, even though Ireland, following the Vatican line, did not officially recognize the Jewish state. That was a major coup for the community. Delbert Gelechte, the Chair of the Representative Council and the nominal head of the Community ran around in a state of joy. It was the first time that a major Irish figure had been in their synagogue.

As he sat downstairs, Ziggy thought of Johnny's words and his aunt's departure, one of a growing number of families of Dublin Jews who had left Ireland to live in Israel. They had lasted in Ireland only a generation or two. Maybe Johnny was right. They weren't really Irish.

....He suddenly remembered a conversation he had as a child with his mother's shopping group, nearly all of whom had left Ireland or died, one Wednesday afternoon as they sat around the Zeiskind kitchen table.

"In the old days, Dublin was such a lovely place," said Mrs. Mandel, his mother's closest friend.

"It's not so bad now," Ziggy said rising to the community's defense. "I like it here. I can't think of a better place to live."

"Good for you, child," said his aunt with a patronizing tone in her voice. "But what do you know? Have you ever lived any place else? All children like where they live. Here, get me some more tea."

"Don't be teasing the poor lad," said Mrs. Allus, an elderly woman who had died a year or so later. "Dublin is a nice city. I like it here. It's good to the Jews."

"What about Limerick?" said his mother, always on the lookout for anti-semitism. She lived in terror of it.

In 1909 there had been an anti-semitic riot in the city of Limerick on the west coast and all the Jews had to leave there. A priest had got the crowds all worked up.

"One time, that's not so bad. In other places it's worse," said Mrs. Davis, who had also died in a tragic fire. Her children lived in Israel too.

"You're right, said Mrs. Mandel. "My husband travels there and they're all nice to him. He never has any trouble and he wears his yarmulke and only eats kosher. Goyim respect that. They like it when Jews are religious."

"Mrs. Sullivan, our cleaning woman, says she likes working for Jews," said his mother pushing a plate of her cake in front of her friends. "We respect God, she says, not like the Protestants. Can you believe the way the goyim hate each other? Catholics and

protestants. Look what they do to each other in the North. She said she would rather die than walk into a Protestant church. Can you believe it?"

They did not follow his mother into the realm of politics. They only discussed what affected Jews.

"I like it here. I can't think of a better place to live."

....Yes. Once he had believed it. Maybe it was a childish thing and time to put away childish things.

Coming out the door of the sanctuary, Ziggy bumped into Maeve Natansons, "his first girlfriend." Maeve had been the brightest girl in their class at Stratford College, the Jewish high school they had both attended. She always took first place in the annual exams and therefore he was amazed the year before, after the first quarter, she had dropped out of Trinity. There were all sorts of rumors about the reasons: she had taken ill, had a nervous breakdown, had a love affair with a married man, had a love affair with a non-Jew. Ziggy didn't know what the truth was and he didn't care. Despite her coldness to him on the sexual level, he had always liked her and they had maintained a warm friendship. He hadn't seen her since her disappearance from the academic scene but she looked the same. Her hair was cut short, almost like a boy's and she wore a severe grey tweed suit. Her face was without make-up and her heavy framed glasses took away any sort of femininity from her. She looked like a nun. "Ziggy Zeiskind, how are ye," she said, giving him a hug. Ziggy noticed that her Dublin accent had become more pronounced just as

his had softened since he went to Trinity. He sounded sort of mid-Atlantic but she had a thick brogue as if she came from a lower class area like Crumlin. No one would ever think she was raised on the South side or even that she was even Jewish. Ziggy wondered if it was some sort of perverse affectation. Ziggy returned the hug.

"I haven't seen you inside a house of worship in ages," he said. "I didn't know you cared about Israel."

"To be honest, I don't," she responded. "Israel doesn't mean a thing to me--never been there and never intend to-- but me mum wanted to go and I had to drive her here. She broke her ankle. They let her sit downstairs. So nice of them. My brother, Colum is taking her home." She held on to his arm. "Hey, it's still early and I haven't seen you in ages. Do you want to have a drink?" She asked.

"A drink drink or a coffee?" Ziggy asked as they walked down the stairs into the fading Dublin sunset. He didn't mind being seen with a girl on his arm. People had always thought that Maeve was his girlfriend anyway, though the relationship on that level had been a dud from the start. He didn't mind the cover.

"Well, let's go to a pub and we can have both," Maeve said. Ziggy hated pubs: they were smelly and noisy. The Trinity crowd drank a lot and he only went with them to be social. He didn't drink much and usually when he went with them he ordered an orange juice. But he wanted to chat to Maeve. Her friendliness took him by surprise. They found a pub, called "Rices" near

Stephen's Green which wasn't too crowded. The front bar was busy. Ziggy thought it odd that the only patrons seemed to be men. They looked at him oddly and made him feel uncomfortable. They went to the back bar. Maeve ordered a Guinness.

"Do you want one? I'm paying," Maeve said with some bravado.

"No. I never touch the stuff. It looks like poured tar." He was going to order an Irish coffee but thought that would seem stuffy. "I'll have a larger and lime."

"Half or a pint?"

"Half."

Ziggy had never seen a Jewish girl drink Guinness and watched in some astonishment as she sucked the foam off the top. It obviously wasn't her first time.

"How's Gabriel?" Maeve asked. The foam had made a little moustache over her lip. The three of them had been the "triumverate" at Stratford, the top three students in a tough class.

"He's fine. Studying philosophy. I see him every few weeks. We still walk from his house to mine like in the old days. But tell me about yourself," he took a swig of the lager.

Maeve began with sketchy details. After she left Trinity--she didn't say why and Ziggy didn't ask-- she went to America but didn't like it.

"Didn't like the States?" Ziggy said. "I was thinking of giving it a try, you know for a year or two." it just slipped out. He had never told anyone that before. "Don't say anything. I haven't

even told my mother yet."

Maeve nodded. They were still pals.

"You can have it, for all I care," she said. "I'm Irish. This is the only place that I feel at home. No values in America. Pack of nothin's. No sense of fun. Sure, the stupidest Irish farmer has more education than any Yank. Besides, I couldn't get a decent glass of Guinness anywhere." Ziggy wasn't put off. He figured they were looking for different things anyway.

Maeve took another swallow. Her glass was half empty already. She sure can swill it down, Ziggy thought.

She put down her glass. The foam had made a yellow moustache over her lip.

"Once they heard that, that I was Irish and Jew, they chewed my ear off about Bobby Briscoe. All the Americans think is that there is only one Jew in Ireland and he's Bobby Briscoe. No one could believe that there were any other Jews in Ireland at all or that we haven't suffered any anti-semitism."

"Really?" Ziggy hadn't really thought about this side of things. He had another agenda for going altogether.

"I think it's because the Irish in America are not like the Irish here. They're harder over there, not the same joy at all. Only on St. Patrick's day. You should see them then. They go bonkers. They make the rivers green. I didn't have the heart to tell them that it's a bloody bore here. Just one little parade with the army walking down O'Connell street."

She finished her glass.

"Another?" She asked Ziggy but seeing that he had hardly touched his, she added, "I guess not." She caught the waiter. "Another Guinness, young fella."

"Anyway," she said continuing on her topic. "They all say they're Irish even if they're not from there at all. I'd say I was Irish and they'd say they were as well and I'd get excited and say 'from where'? and they'd say, oh, my great-grandfather was from a little village in Sleego, they'd pronounce it. Stupid, I tell you. Americans are real stupid. In the end, I kept secret about where I came from."

A little hard with that accent, Ziggy wanted to say but was too polite. They were getting along too well to be snide now. He still felt that America might be the best place for him.

She continued her saga. After coming back, she went to work in Galway of all places and had just returned to Dublin. "You won't believe who I ended up working for? Frank Killjoy! He's working for the University of Galway there."

Ziggy sure did remember their old headmaster, a thin faced surly man quick with the cane which he hadn't hesitated to use on his behind a few times.

"Did you read his novel?" Maeve asked.

Killjoy had just published his first novel to rave reviews: The Life and Times of John 'O'Reilly. Ziggy had read it. It was terribly autobiographical but worked nonetheless. Ziggy recognized that O'Reilly, a less than sympathetic protagonist,

was clearly based on Killjoy himself. At least it had been honest. It also had a homosexual character whom Killjoy had depicted sympathetically. Ziggy liked that though a number of critics had taken him to task for it.

"I guess he'll have to leave Ireland, like Joyce," said Ziggy. "All the great Irish writers do. You know, 'Ireland is a sow that eats its young' and all that."

"Well, he told me has no intention. He likes it here. He's working on his second novel already."

"Anything about us in it?" Ziggy said with a laugh but Maeve didn't join in. Was this the guy she had an affair with?

Maeve had finished her second glass and ordered her third. Her face looked a little flush but like many of the Irish, she could hold her liquor well. She took out a cigarette and offered one to Ziggy. "Fag?"

Ziggy winced at the word but knew she meant a cigarette. He declined. He hoped his face didn't show his disapproval of her vices. He was really in no position to make judgements.

"What brings you back to Dublin?" Ziggy asked.

"I plan to run for the Dail!" Maeve sprung on him. Ziggy couldn't believe his ears. It was as if his words with Johnny had come back to haunt him.

"Really?" He admired her balls. "Which party?" he asked. He was sure it would be Fianna Fail, the party most Irish Jews voted for. They had been in power for ages and good to the Jews. No Jew would vote for its main rival, Fine Gael, as it had once been

associated with the Blueshirts a fascist group in the mid thirties. He couldn't think of Jews being associated with the other parties. He remembered two teachers at Zion Schools who had been involved in politics: Mr. Barron had led the Clann na Publichta and Mr. Edwards had been a member of the Communist party. They most probably got jobs there as no other school would have them. Ziggy wondered what the teacher's staff meetings would have been like. But they never pushed their politics on the children.

"Labor," she said proudly. He would never have thought about them. It was Ireland's third party and was pro-Union. Although small, it was gaining in prominence and sometimes had a swing vote.

"I didn't know you had political leanings?" Ziggy said with wonder, taking a large swallow of the now flat lager.

"Well, people change. Do you remember Mr. O'Donnell, our history teacher at Stratford."

"Sure," Ziggy said. "He ran for the Senate in the last election." Her fourth Guinness arrived and she ordered another pint of lager for Ziggy.

"Half," he protested.

"Well," Maeve said after taking another huge swallow. "I helped him on that. It was great."

Ziggy recalled that O'Donnell had asked Ziggy to help but he couldn't. He had a paper to write. He felt bad as O'Donnell narrowly lost.

"The party thinks I have a good chance in Dublin North Central," Maeve said concluding that part of her saga.

"Across the Liffey! Well, at least you won't be running against Bobby Briscoe."

"He's not running. He's retiring. His son Ben is taking his place. He has that place sewn up. Can you imagine two Jews in the Dail!

"Why are you picking Dublin North-Central? There's no Jews over there!" His drink arrived. One of those and he felt flushed.

"What difference does that make?" Maeve said indignantly. "How many Jews are there at all in Dublin? Do they count for five hundred votes. Not enough to get anyone in anywhere. The North side is more towards Labor and I have a better chance there." He couldn't argue with her statistics but he resorted to the old arguments about the difference between north and south Dublin.

"But they hate Jews over there," Ziggy said. "If they find out you're Jewish they'll never vote for you."

"Where's your head, man?" Maeve was having none of this. "I'm fuckin' Irish and if anyone wants to throw that Jew shite at me, they'll have another thing coming. I'm as Irish as the next person."

Ziggy saw the old fire in her, the one that had burned so brightly in school. Whatever the rumors about her, she sounded the same old Maeve.

Ziggy was still unsure. "But this afternoon, I had this huge row with my next door neighbor. He claimed that the Jews weren't

really Irish."

"Listen," Maeve said, real earnest as if she was preparing her campaign speech. "I was born and raised here; I speak Gaelic. So what if my religion is different than their's or if my father didn't make poteen or die in the Potato famine, that doesn't make me less Irish than the next man. I can still help them with whatever problems they have and get them a voice." Four drinks in her and she sounded so lucid. How did she do it? The second lager was making him feel dizzy. She was on a roll.

"We have to make everyone feel equal. Look at Northern Ireland. It's that kind of thinking that will make serious trouble up there. I tell you Ziggy, it's coming. There is such hatred between the Catholics and Protestants. You mark my words, the Catholics will rise up one day and good luck to them. Do you not feel Irish yourself then?"

Ziggy felt trapped and didn't know what to say. He wanted to be honest but was worried that Maeve would bite his head off. "Of course I do. I'm like you. I was born, raised and educated here. That's what I told my neighbor."

He could lie with the best of them, after all.

"Damn right," Maeve said.

Suddenly, the bell rang and the barman called out "Last Call." There was a mad rush for more drinks. Ziggy was amused. You'd think they were never going to drink again, even though he knew they'd be back the following night for more of the same. "Another one, Ziggy. Jesus, you hardly touched your drink. Well,

I'm for another."

Somehow, she got a fifth Guinness down her. Ziggy left his lager unfinished.

They parted at the 16 bus stop. Maeve was going to her flat in Parnell Square and it was silly for her to drive him all the way to the South side again. Ziggy laughed to himself about their dismal date so many years before. At least now, he had no illusions about him or her. This time, however, she kissed him warmly on the cheek.

"I always liked you, Ziggy. You know that. Come and help if you have time," she said.

"Good luck. Yeah, if I get a chance I'll come down and lick envelopes."

"Slán Leat," she parted with the Irish farewell.

As he sat in the bus, he was glad that Maeve had found her place. He wished that he was as lucky. Would he always feel as Irish as Maeve felt? He was Irish. He'd always carry that with him but, after all, Ziggy Zeiskind was hardly the most Irish of names. Maybe he should change it to Ziggy O'Zeiskind. 5172

1968: FIRST TIME: NOT BAD

ziggy felt he had waited long enough. Too many years of pining, of tormenting himself. It was time. There was no putting it off any longer. It had to be tonight, the night he had picked out, calculating when would the most auspicious time to enter his new life. If everything went according to plan, he would have a few weeks to recover, adjust, work hard for his exams and plunge into his final year of studies at Trinity. And if it didn't... well, he would still have time to try again. He didn't care any longer if he was damned to be an outsider, doomed to leave home and wander in exile, that his family, if not his friends, would shun him, that he would have to hide from the world. He didn't care if the whole world turned on him.

And here it was: the first Monday in August 1968, the day after Tisha B'Av, the darkest day in the Jewish calendar. In his mind riddled with superstition and religious lore, it was the perfect day. The three weeks preceding that date were not auspicious for Jews, since it was the time when the Temples in Jerusalem had been destroyed, a time of extreme bad luck. He remembered the time when an El AL plane had been shot down on Tisha B'Av over Yugoslavia. It was that sort of time and he wanted no "bad vibes" to add to the tension. He had enough trouble feeling guilty every time he masturbated and then turning up in synagogue, his body still recovering from the pleasures with the sticky sensation still in his groin, to wrap himself with intensity in his prayer shawl, offering to lead the

services, to take on extra religious duties--in the hope that God would answer his prayers and take away these desires. Free him. Free him so he could lead a normal life. All to no avail. In all the years since he first recognized these feelings, nothing had changed. No amount of prayer, of denial, of hope had made them go away. All the torment seemed pointless. What's the point of suffering, he reasoned, if I'm damned anyway? At least let me have the pleasures of the other. Yesterday, he had followed the rigors of the fast day, going without food or drink for twenty four hours and today here he was outside a men's public lavatory. That's how it would be.

Not sure what to wear, he put on his tightest pants and since it was a nice summer evening, wore a shirt with the buttons open revealing a lot of his hairy chest. He had read that they liked that sort of man. He had looked for a perfect shirt, choosing a light blue one that offset his dark coloring. In the drawer, lay the tzizith, the small garment that religious Jews wore under their shirts. There was no way he could wear that. Too much to explain. He thought back to that day, when he first acknowledged to himself how he felt sexually. He had taken off the garment, never to wear it again. Now, it lay limp and lifeless in the drawer, a constant reminder of his fall from grace.

ziggy left home at 7:30 saying he was going to a movie. He caught a number 16 bus at the end of the street and took a seat at the back, remembering the time a few years back when he had sat there and a man had felt him up and he had ran in panic to his father when he got home. His father said, "forget about it," but he never did. As if tempting fate, Ziggy sat there again. But nothing happened this time.

He got off the bus at the corner of O'Connell and Upper Abbey Streets in the heart of downtown Dublin. In the dimming daylight, he stood looking over at Burgh Quay on the side of the Liffey, taking in the place, a small brick building, where he would enter and offer himself to someone. He had no choice. He had no other place to go to meet someone. As he waited to cross O'Connell street, he kept his eyes peeled on the entranceway. A steady stream of men came and went, some lingered and, after a brief pause, reentered the building. Others came out and moved quickly away. A few walked slowly until they were joined by someone else who engaged them in conversation and they went off together or drifted apart. He found it extraordinary that in the middle of Dublin's main street and under the imperious eyes of its namesake, Daniel O'Connell, the Great Liberator, who stared down at one and all from his statuesque position, these men went about doing what they did to the ignorance of all others except those who were involved in the same nefarious activities. It was weird.

As Ziggy crossed the street, he felt that he was daring; he knew it was reckless to be seen there. He hoped that no one would see him go in, yet he didn't care. His heart thumped with excitement. He needed to be there. Finally, he would face his demons and no longer deny himself to himself. Ziggy was going to find a man with whom he would have sex. He took a deep breath and with deliberation, started towards the men's toilet on the side of the Liffey as if he really had to take a leak--although in all his 22 years in Dublin he had never gone in before.

The entranceway was wet and his shoes seemed to thud and splash on the tiled floor. He turned the corner into the main part where groups of men stood by urinals. An aroma stale piss, beer and sweat hit him suddenly. Rather than repulsing him, however, the aroma struck him as "masculine." It had the effect of an aphrodisiac. The bare bulbs gave the area a yellow look reflecting off the porcelain of the urinals. He realized that there must have been about thirty places and a good number of men stood there, some in groups of twos or threes, others alone. Despite the sexual agenda, he could feel the tension. For some strange reason, it reminded him of a line up at a concentration camp.

Nearly all eyes turned to look at him. He heard, rather than saw, a flurry of activity, some men buttoning their flies and making a quick bee line for the exit, no doubt afraid at the stranger in their midst or scared that he was a garda, a police man, who would cart them all off. Ziggy had the same fears. That

would be a fine irony, he thought: Arrested before he had done anything. After a moment, some seemed to move back to their stalls. He wasn't sure what was going on. There were obviously a ritual and language that he would have to learn and learn fast. But after a few moments, he took in the whole picture, as if the signs and signals, the runes and the codes had simply lain dormant, always known, already imprinted on his dna.

He stepped to the first empty spot. There was no one on either side of him. "Big mistake." What now, he wondered. He unzipped his pants and took out his cock as if to take a piss. "It's too small." Scared, it seemed to have shriveled up and looked no larger than a button. He dribbled a bit and then felt himself calm down. He glanced around. Do he pass muster? Will they think him handsome? Will he get picked up?

Perhaps two or three minutes had passed and he got restless. He chastised himself. What did he expect to happen? That some young handsome guy would come over and together they would ride off into the sunset? That it would romance and roses? He quickly realized that the reality was grimmer, less inviting, more prosaic.

He began to notice a pattern: there were those who lingered longer than was needed and those who came back in after stepping out only a moment before. When the men realized that he wasn't moving and was taking longer than was normally required, they became more daring: stepping back to reveal themselves, urging him to do the same, some stroking themselves into an

erection--they had big ones, bigger than he had ever seen but some looked weird, uncircumcised, ugly, red and uninviting. The few that he had ever seen before had been like his own: circumcised. They quickly stepped back into the urinals when someone new entered the place, then as the new man joined their ritual, they became daring again. Some moved nearer to each other, one or two tried to catch his eye. None looked like the men he had fantasized about: bronzed specimens, young and fresh. These were mostly nondescript, plain, drab, even shabby. Some were old, so ordinary, you would never think that they would be the sort of men who would look for other men for sex. Some wore wedding bands. It would take a practiced eye to know who was his kind and who not. They could fool anyone.

A tall thin man with grey hair stepped into the stall next to him. Ziggy went to zip up his pants but the man quickly took out his cock and began stroking it. Stepping back to show off his erection, the man leaned over to look at Ziggy's. At that moment, someone new entered. Ziggy's leg began to shake uncontrollably. All the tension and unease hit him and in a state of panic he zipped up his pants and hastily made his exit.

Once outside, he paused. He wondered if the man would follow him. He decided to wait a few minutes and then go in again. He walked over to the wall above the muddy, dark green waters of the Liffey and stared down at the boats, as if he had never seen them before. "Nice night," a voice said behind him. It was the man from inside the toilet. Outside, he looked older, maybe in his

forties. His skin was soft giving his face a kind look. Taking out a cigarette, he smiled showing yellow splotchy teeth.

"Smoke?"

"No, thanks."

"You from Dublin?"

"Yes."

"Haven't seen you before. You know, this isn't a safe place."

"Uh. Why?"

"A lot of rough types hang out here. You look like a nice kid. You want to be careful."

"Oh."

"My name's Tom."

"Mine is....Zi..." Instinctively, he knew he should give himself a new name. That way he could keep his two lives separate..."eh, Michael, Mike."

"Hi, Mike." Tom stuck out his hand. Ziggy shook it. It seemed a strange thing to do.

Holding the hand for a moment longer than necessary, Tom asked:

"Want to come back with me? I have my own place"

Ziggy hesitated. Tom wasn't anything like he wanted or even really desired but at least he wouldn't have to look for someone else. It would be done and it would be over and he could get on with the rest of his life.

"Ok." Ziggy didn't worry that he was going home with someone who he had just met. It seemed perfectly normal. For whatever reason, he trusted Tom.

"My car's over there," Tom said, pointing to his car, a grey Morris Minor across the street.

They walked the few paces. As he got to the door of the car, Ziggy had a desire to tell the truth.

"I should warn you. It's my first time."

"That's ok." Ziggy then realized that whatever happened he would never forget Tom. He would be the first one and Ziggy knew that people never forgot their first one. Most probably, he is just another trick for Tom he thought, but he didn't mind.

Tom lived in Rathmines and Ziggy worried that they might run into a relative or a friend in the area and slunk down in the car.

"How did you find out about that place?" Tom asked as they drove.

"A friend mentioned it."

"Is he?"

"No." Ziggy said abruptly and then continued, "It seemed kind of busy."

"Yep. Usually around this time of night. It closes at about 10."

"How old are you?" The man asked, lighting another cigarette.

He offered the pack to Ziggy who declined.

"Twenty," Ziggy lied again, shaving his age by a year or two.

"You're a good looking lad," Tom said glancing over at Ziggy.

He drove at a snail's pace. Ziggy just wanted to get there and have it over with.

They fell into a long silence. Tom shifted gears.

"Do you know of the other places?" He asked Ziggy.

"Like Bartley Dunnes?" Ziggy said referring to the bar that he

had passed so many times but never dared to enter. It was too public for his taste and besides, with its mixture of hetero-and homosexual, he worried that he might bump into someone from the community who would question why he was there.

"And 'Rices'?" Tom said.

Ziggy gulped. He had gone there with his friend Maeve once. He never realized that it was a homosexual place.

"Are you sure?" He looked down at Tom's hands. They were calloused. Soon they would be on him!

"Yes. In the front bar. The back one is a regular place. And what about the other toilets. The one in Palmerston Road?"

Looking at Ziggy's astonished face--there was one near his house!--Tom laughed. "Maybe I shouldn't be telling you this!"

Ziggy felt dumb. There were places he passed daily and never knew about. Dublin was rapidly becoming another kind of city: a city of mystery and attraction. Maybe things wouldn't be so bad after all.

They arrived at the flat which consisted of one room, with a kitchen in the corner. Tom clicked on the light, a bare bulb without a shade in the middle of the ceiling. The furniture was sparse: a kitchen table, a few chairs and a bed which seemed to take up most of the room. The bed was neatly made with clean white sheets and a grey blanket. It reminded Ziggy of a hospital bed or like a bed in an army barracks. The only decoration, a cross which hung on one wall. The sparseness made Ziggy sad. He thought of the warmth of his own home and those of his friends,

and wondered if he would end up like Tom, living in a drab room, picking up frightened boys for one night stands.

"Tea?" Tom offered going to the tap to fill up a battered kettle.

"No thanks." Ziggy wanted to get it over with.

Tom must have sensed his impatience as he next said: "Shall we go to bed?"

They sat on the bed and stripped. Ziggy thought that they made an odd couple, him with his hairy stocky build while Tom was skinny, the bones clearly visible beneath his hairless flesh. They got into bed and Tom hugged him. Ziggy began to shake. Tom stroked his back and it calmed him down. They kissed. The stubble on Tom's cheek scratched Ziggy. Tom smelt of cigarettes. It wasn't pleasant. Then Tom suddenly stuck his tongue in Ziggy's mouth. He recoiled. It tasted like a cold pickle. He didn't like it. He suddenly realized that he actually didn't know what to expect. In his fantasies, it had always been warm and romantic with someone young, someone caring and big.

Ziggy felt Tom's hard penis against his belly and he liked that. It was warm, hot, and large. He let his hand touch it.

"Want to suck it?" Tom asked.

"NO." The thought repulsed him. No one would ever make him do that! How could someone do that?

"Can I ride you?" Tom asked, moving his legs between Ziggy's thighs and trying to pry them apart. Ziggy resisted.

"NO!" he almost shouted. The thought scared him.

"I won't hurt you," Tom said, unwilling to give up the chance.

"I'm sorry." Then truly feeling sorry and inadequate, Ziggy added, "not tonight. Maybe next time," fully planning never to see Tom again.

Ziggy liked the hugging. He only wished that Tom wasn't that skinny as he felt that he would squash Tom but Tom seemed to enjoy holding him. Tom kissed him again and stuck his tongue in Ziggy's mouth. Ziggy accepted it as he felt guilty about doing so little else. Tom moved his hand to Ziggy's penis and suddenly, too soon, Ziggy felt himself coming. It hadn't been more than a few minutes. He was embarrassed. Tom quickly followed.

Ziggy lay on the bed: ashamed and yet proud. He did it. He did it. It was over now. It was over. He did it. And then...Is that all it is? Is that all there is to it?

Tom got out of bed and went to the sink and got a washcloth. He proffered it to Ziggy. Ziggy just jumped out of bed, dabbed his groin and grabbed his pants.

"You don't have to go so soon." Tom said, pleadingly.

"I do," Ziggy said, afraid he would be trapped. "My parents are expecting me. I told them I was only going to be out for an hour." The lies came quickly, as if he had trained for this moment. Years of duplicity, of hiding, of other lies, had led to this moment.

"Where do you live?" I'll drive you home."
Ziggy began to relent. He felt sorry for Tom. He must be lonely. He realized that Tom was nice, not pushy. It could have been a lot worse. Tom could have been mean or robbed him or raped him.

It had worked out well.

"Um, Harold's Cross."

Quickly, they dressed. When Tom dropped him off at the bottom of his street, Ziggy took his phone number and promised to call.

He let himself into the house. Everyone was out except his father who was watching tv. He sneaked past the room and went up to the bathroom. He looked in the mirror. Hm. No different, he smiled at himself. "You did it. It's over. You did it," he said to himself. He washed his hands, his face, his groin and his teeth. He didn't want to shower even though he smelt Tom all over him.

He went downstairs. Got some orange juice and joined his father who reminded him to put on his yarmulke. Ziggy hesitated but acquiesced. He would take up his struggle with God later. His father was watching an opera.

"What is it?" Ziggy asked.

"Don Giovanni. Mozart. It's pretty good. "

He was surprised that his father was watching this opera, any opera, for that matter. It wasn't his father's usual cup of tea but tonight was full of surprises. Ziggy wanted to sit with his father. He was glad that his mother wasn't home. He wanted to share the feeling with his father. "Tonight, I am a man, he wanted to say. I did something tonight. You don't know about it and you might never know about it but from now on my life will never be the same. I am a man. An hour ago I was in a man's bed, kissing him and here I am watching television with you. If only I

could tell you. Maybe one day."

Instead, he just said: "Yeah. It looks good."

They watched the opera together till the Don, after a series of sexual escapades, was dragged down to hell.

"Not bad." His father said.

"Not bad." His son replied.

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1968: NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY

standing in front of the English department window at Trinity College, Ziggy searched frantically for his name in the class list of exam results. He wasn't optimistic. Sure that he had done poorly, he had started checking the names from the bottom, looking for his name among those who got Thirds. Barely passing grades. His Junior year had been a killer: Restoration Comedy, Spenser, the Augustans. He liked none of them. Give him a Shelly and Keats any day.

He had done well the first two years, rising to the "A" list and gaining the notice of his lecturers and peers. They had encouraged him in his Sophomore year to try for "Schol," the major exam at the University. He took it and failed. He knew why. He didn't have it. He wasn't like Ezra, naturally brilliant. He had to study long and hard to absorb everything. That was his virtue. He was incredibly disciplined and could put off friends and fun till he had finished studying. He allocated himself a ten minute break every two hours, grabbing a cup of tea and a slice of cake and joining his mother in the backroom to watch a little television. However absorbing the show, whether it was "The Fugitive" or "Panorama," he could steel himself to get up and leave the room, drawn back to "The Faerie Queen" or "She Stoops to Conquer." With exams in September, he never saw much of the summer--except for that one excursion into the netherworld to which he had not returned. He had put his life on hold, renewed his vow of celibacy. No action, not till his Trinity days were

over.

He hadn't come across his name yet and he was half up the list well into the 2.2's. He began to sweat. God had punished him for his sinful acts! He had done so badly, they didn't have his name up on the board. He continued up the list anyway. Then he found it. Fourth from the top, just ahead of "Regina Alexandra Stone." A high 2.1. He had done it again. God was merciful after all. Hancock, Gallagher and Oakland, as usual, had claimed top honors, getting clear Firsts. He would have joined them if he hadn't gotten a lowly 2.2 in his old bugaboo, Anglo-Saxon. How he had studied Beowulf and Sir Gawain! He got annoyed. It was pure rote learning, translation. What purpose did it serve? Still, he had triumphed again. Sometimes, he surprised even himself. He couldn't wait to get home and tell them all.

As he came in the door, his mother greeted him from the kitchen where she sat, a roll of challah dough in front of her. "Mazal-tov, mazal tov," she exclaimed. Ziggy wondered how his mother had already found out about his results.

He came into the kitchen and kissed his mother.

"Thanks," he said. "I really was surprised myself."

His mother looked up at him quizzically.

"What are you saying? It's Ezra. You knew Ezra was taking his exams this week." She took a sip of the tea. "He just called. He passed his exam. He's a Rabbi at last, thank God." Ezra had been away at Gateshead Yeshivah in the north of England

for several years, coming back only on vacations but the house still spun on his ups and downs.

"Oh, is that all?" said Ziggy. He couldn't help it. Every time he turned around there was Ezra.

"What's the matter with you?" said his mother, putting down her saucer. "You are so resentful of your brother. You never say anything nice about him."

"Why should I? He never says anything nice about me," said Ziggy. He stormed out of the kitchen, only pausing at the door long enough to say, "For your information, I just got my results from Trinity. I came fourth."

He knew that his triumph fell on deaf ears. A third year result hardly compared to a son becoming a Rabbi. But why should this year be different from any other? Even in his Freshman year when he had gotten an elusive First, he had come home to silence and indifference.

"What does it mean?" his father asked. "I never understand what you are studying? Is it writing or what? I'm sorry, son. It's beyond my comprehension."

Ziggy answered in disgust. "What's so difficult to understand? I'm studying English Language and Literature. I beat out some of the finest students in the class. Can't you just congratulate me?"

"Fine. Congratulations," his father said, almost pouting. But he didn't mind about his father. He was honest. Different from his mother who had professed an interest in intellectual matters but

then dismissed his studies.

"A First. Why not? I expect no less from my sons," she said. Such a petty praise, Ziggy thought. He wanted her to sound like when she did when she spoke about his brother, undiluted admiration, basking in his glory.

Over the past few years, his frustration at living in a home where he could not tell the truth about himself had grown. After years of listening to his mother talk about the community, her marriage, her sister, the Zeiskind family, her life, Aviva, Ezra, he realized that he wasn't a confidant, he was a convenience. When it came time for him to tell his story, to take his proper place at the table, there was no room for him. He had hoped that she would hear his silent cries for help and see the pain in him but she hadn't. She only had time for her own pain. He grew tired of her complaining. Lately, all he and his mother did was argue. Now the table was their battleground, knights jousting at each other with the longest, deadliest weapons they could find.

After a few moments upstairs, Ziggy came down again. He boiled with anger. He sat at the table.

"You never know what I am studying, who my friends are or what I feel. But if Ezra sneezes in Gateshead, the whole house trembles."

His mother got up as he sat down, her hands steady, not even trembling at his anger.

"Don't start that argument again. I don't favor Ezra over you."

You know I love you both. Both of my sons are precious to me." She went to the sink and washed her cup and saucer.

"That's not what I'm saying." He opened the cake tin and took out a piece of cheese cake. "I'm just saying that you always pay more attention to Ezra than to me." He tried to keep his voice calm. "Sometimes I think if I became President of Ireland, you'd still not care. It would still be Ezra, Ezra, Ezra, or the fact that I didn't wear a yarmulke. When was the last time you asked me what I was studying? Do you even know that I am editor of the college newspaper? Secretary of the Film Society!"

"So what?" His mother said, keeping her back to him as she wiped the dishes. "Is that important? Being with govim all the time? No wonder you don't wear a yarmulke! Do you eat treife too? Better you should study more. Then you would get all firsts!"

"See, see. That's exactly what I mean." Ziggy said, biting into the cheese cake. "Why do you twist everything I say? Why I am always wrong?"

His mother turned to face him.

"Oh, and I'm wrong?! That's right blame me. If it wasn't for me, you'd be nothing." She said wringing out the towel, twisting it round and round like in a mangle. "It's your father you ought to blame. You know that you and Ezra get your brains from my side of the side of the family. You want to be like a Zeiskind, a good for nothing."

"Daddy? What's he got to do with this? I don't blame him at all." Ziggy didn't accept this theory. Not any longer. She had

used it to often.

"It's you," he spat the words out at his mother.

"Oh, so it's my fault?" his mother said. Her face looked pale, the mouth thin and drawn, the eyes small and the lines looking even deeper. "Go you ungrateful child! You'll be happy when you dance on my grave!"

Ziggy was outflanked. He couldn't argue with his mother when she took the emotional highroad and dragged him into the quagmire of her frustrations. Arguing with his mother was like arguing with Ezra. Pointless.

Defeated, he left the kitchen. He around the corner to the Kenilworth Cinema. The movies were his refuge. Only there he could hide from the memory of his mother's face. His choice was unfortunate: a black comedy called No Way to Treat a Lady in which Rod Steiger played a serial killer and George Segal, a Jewish detective beset by his Jewish mother. No escape.

When he got back in, his mother was sitting in the backroom, working on a shawl, the embers of the fire dying down, a drained cup of tea by the table. He hated it that she was still up. "Still up, Ma? It's eleven-thirty. You should be in bed." She looked up.

"I'm just finishing this section. See," she held up the frame with the cloth stretched tightly across it. "Tell me what you think? The pattern asks for a purple but I prefer this blue instead. What do you think?"

She acted like there had been no argument before he left. It was

her defense mechanism. If she ignored it, it didn't happen. Ziggy felt his chest constrict. He didn't want to discuss colors or embroidery patterns. No wonder he was the way he was. He had stepped right out of Freud. Passive father. Dominant mother. Dead sister. What chance did he have?

He stepped closer to his mother's outstretched arm.

"There both fine. I can't tell."

"I don't know. I think I like the blue better. So, where did you go? You had no supper. Ezra called. He wanted to talk to you."

Ziggy stepped back. The old resentment crept up on him.

"Gee, I'm sorry. I should have stayed in just in case he called."

His mother stuck the needle in the cloth, snipped off the thread with her teeth and put down the frame.

"Don't start again. I just thought it would be nice to talk to your brother and wish him mazal tov." His mother had that resentful tone again.

Ziggy stood in the doorway. Unsure whether he wanted to stay or go.

"I will when he calls me to congratulate me on my place at Trinity."

Hannah got up from the chair slowly.

"I don't like it when you boys fight. You sound like your father's family. They don't talk from one year to the next. You know your brother loves you. I want you to call him tomorrow. It's not nice that you haven't called him. Come into the kitchen. I'll make you some supper. You didn't eat did you?"

Ziggy was hungry. The pop corn at the movie had satisfied nothing. He followed his mother down the hallway.

"I don't want to call him. He knows how I feel. It's so phoney." His mother poked around in the fridge.

"Some herring? Gefilte fish? Here, get a plate and sit. I'll serve."

Ziggy took a plate and sat at the table while his mother put a spoon full of the herring and two balls of the fish.

She sat opposite her son.

"I don't ask you for anything. He asked about you."

"He just wants me to kiss his ring," Ziggy said.

"What ring?" He knew that his mother didn't get the allusion.

"Nothing, nothing." Ziggy was feeling frustrated. "I just wish that you took as much interest in my life as you do in his."

Hannah got up from the table.

"Oy, again with this business. You make me sick with this. What do you want from me? My life is hard enough what with your father." She pointed upstairs to where his father slept. "I have little enough happiness as it is," she continued. "Why do you have to make everything so difficult for me? I ask you for so little and you always fight with me. You know, Ziggy, if you keep behaving this way, you will be a very unhappy person. No one will want to deal with you."

Ziggy wondered if his mother knew more about him than she said.

"That's not fair, Ma. Don't speak to me like that. It's just that...." But he stopped before he said anything more. Maybe he

was the coward. "The fish is good."

"Isn't it," his mother said.

"Mammy, can we talk for a moment. There's something I have to tell you."

His mother looked up. He saw fear in her eyes.

"What, my child."

"I'm going to apply for a scholarship to study in the States.

Trinity gives them. I was worried that I hadn't done well in these exams but now I think I can get one." He paused.

His mother sat by him again. She put her hand on his arm.

"Can't you find a job here?" She said, her voice sounding as if coming from far away. "You could get a job at Avon College."

He knew she wouldn't want him to go but he had to be strong.

"It's not just that," Ziggy confessed. "I want to.... I want to try different places." He skipped over the truth. "I can't live the way I want to here."

"Why, what's stopping you. Your father and I don't stop you from doing anything you want."

Ziggy wanted to shout at his mother: "What are you talking about?

I have to keep all the rules, I have to be religious."

Instead he said, "Its different. You don't understand."

"What, what don't I understand. Listen, Ziggy, I am a learned woman. Sure I would understand."

Maybe his mother would but he didn't want to take any chances. He

was not ready to enter that dark territory with his mother.

Instead he said, "It's different. You don't understand."

How could he tell her about his needs. About what he had done in the summer and would do again, now that the exam was behind him. If he stayed in Dublin, he would be suffocated.

Hannah wasn't going to go down without a fight.

Ziggy had finished his food. "Any compote left?" He asked his mother.

"Sure in the fridge. Take it yourself."

Ziggy got up and took a good helping of plums and apricots.

His mother still sat at the table.

"Ziggy," she said in a pleading tone, "I don't want you to leave.

I am here all alone. Sh'vester left, Ezra will stay on at the Yeshivah for another year or two and then get a job elsewhere. If you go who will I be left with? Who will I talk to? I'll have no one to share anything with."

He wanted to say "Daddy " but he knew that argument meant nothing to her.

"What will I do without you?"

Ziggy could not carry on. He felt himself breaking in two.

"Don't worry. It's not for a year or two yet," he lied. If he got it, he would be able to go the following June. "I can't get one till I graduate. A lot can happen in that time."

His mother sighed deeply.

"Nu, we'll see."

She got up and kissed him on the forehead. "I'm going to bed. I'll see you in the morning." His mother slowly left the room. Sitting in the kitchen alone, Ziggy felt stricken with a terrible

sadness. She loved him. He loved her. It had got all twisted up in their separate needs. He knew that he had to go. To stay would demand too high a price. He hoped that leaving would put it right again between them. As he crept up to his bedroom, he looked in on his mother sleeping wondering as always how she managed to fall asleep with his father's steady snoring. The light from the landing cast a pale glow over her face. Ziggy stood in the doorway and looked down on her. He wanted to kiss her but thought he would waken her. Only in sleep did she look peaceful. It was easy to love her when she lay like that. Better to let her sleep. He crept into his room, closed the door and fell on his bed. He hoped guilt wouldn't keep him awake. 2769

1969: "SMOTHER THE CHILDREN AT BIRTH"

In January of 1969, Hannah and Simon Zeiskind family flew to London to see their son Ezra inducted as Rabbi of the Crooked Usage Synagogue, one of the most prestigious synagogues located in the heavily Jewish populated area of North-West London. (As the members were quick the point out to visitors unfamiliar with the way that the British named their places of worship, "Crooked Usage" referred to the street in which the synagogue was located and not to its ritual, which followed that of the Orthodox United Synagogue.) Ezra had been fulfilling his duties since the High Holidays and the Induction had been delayed owing to the illness of the Chief Rabbi, the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, Rabbi Jacobovitz. Hannah and Simon kvelled with nachas, at the way their son had risen so fast in Anglo Jewry, even if, at the same time, he seemed to have vanished from their lives. They didn't complain however; he had only done what was expected of him.

Their other son, Ziggy, did not share their enthusiasm and put off going to the last minute, arriving just in time for Friday night services. He would have delayed coming till the special induction services on the Sunday had his mother not prevailed.

"You have to come before Shabbos. You want to embarrass us? Everybody will see that you're not there."

Standing at the kitchen door, Hannah yelled up to him.

"I don't want to be put on display," Ziggy yelled down in turn

from his room. He sat at his desk, an open copy of John Rechy's City of Night in front of him. His old college chum, David Glickstein, now enrolled in medicine at NYU and enjoying the hectic life of Greenwich Village once more, had sent it to him. Somehow, it had got past the Irish customs. Ziggy was glad it did. Its graphic depiction of homosexuality intrigued him. Parts of it could have been written about Dublin, at least from what he had seen in the past few months, though his experience was still limited to a few brief encounters, one of them again with Tom, the man he had first had sex with. Rechy's book excited him and showed him a side of America he wanted to know. In six months, he would be walking the streets of New York himself.

"Ziggy do this for me," his mother pleaded. "It will make me happy."

Ziggy put down the book and came to the door.

"But he doesn't even care if we are there or not--or at least, me." He yelled down.

"Don't be silly," his mother yelled again. "He's your brother, of course he cares. Come, don't do this to me. I can't stand it."

His father came out of the backroom.

"Do you have to shout all over the house?"

He popped back into the room.

Ziggy looked down over the landing at his mother still able to twist his emotions into a knot. He gave in.

The induction service, full of pomp and circumstance, promised to be only marginally more tolerable than a regular

Sabbath service at the synagogue. Part of his dislike for the services grew from his own increasing alienation from orthodox ritual. Once he acknowledged who he was sexually, he recognized that he had no place among these people--and certainly not as the brother of a rising voice of orthodoxy. Part of it, too, was that he never liked attending services in British synagogues. He put it down to the residue of his first exposure to them in Northern Ireland as a child at summer camp when he was instructed to stand for "God Save the Queen." He never felt as Irish as when he came to England. He refused to use the words "United Kingdom" with its implied continued British domination over Ireland. For Ziggy, British synagogues reflected the pretensions of British aristocracy.

The synagogue seated over one thousand and, even at the early hour of 9:15 when the Sabbath services began, it was essentially. As he walked into the sanctuary with his father, the officials -- the President, Vice President, Secretary and the Treasurer all dressed in black top hats, black jackets and striped pants--sitting in the "box"--a section reserved for them at the front of the bimah nodded to them with a sense of hauteur that struck Ziggy as having come from the pages of a Thackery novel. His brother sat in the seat of honor near the Holy Ark, wearing a black robe and square hat. Ezra smiled almost imperceptibly at his brother and father as they took their seats in the front wooden pews of the men's section. Hannah took her seat upstairs in the women's section. Ezra did not look up there

since it would be unbecoming for a Rabbi to glance up at the women, unless he wanted to rebuke them for talking too much, a practice Ezra had already become notorious for indulging in.

Dressed in a light green suit with a bright yellow tie, looking like a Carnaby Street flower child, Ziggy definitely stood out from the norm: under their white and black woolen prayer shawls, the men all wore grey or black suits, their heads topped by trilbys of a blue shade or black silk yarmulkes.

The night before Ezra had tackled Ziggy on his choice of clothes.

"You're not going to services in that, I hope," he had snarled at Ziggy, from his seat at the head of the dinner table in a voice loud enough to be heard by all present.

Ziggy immediately got on the defensive.

"And what's wrong with this?"

"You're the Rabbi's brother," his mother said, joining the fray. Turning to her other son, she said, "I told him to wear his blue suit. I said he would be shaming his brother to wear one of his hippy outfits."

A murmur of agreement rose from the other twenty or so guests all seated round one large table. He felt alone but decided to stand his ground. He had no other suit with him anyway. He would have to go through with it.

"What's the problem? It's clean, I'm neat." He shot back, as the waiter ladled out the soup in front of him.

No one came to his defense.

"At least wear a white shirt instead of that purple one," Hannah offered as a compromise.

Ziggy was silent.

"Don't argue with him," said Ezra. "He's always like that. Always thinking of himself. I'll just disown him."

Everyone laughed at the table but Ziggy wasn't sure it was an idle threat. Ezra would have if he could.

In the three months since Ezra had moved to London, he had found a new group of friends, all rich and monied. Unlike his father, these men, it struck Ziggy, were of a kind, all powerful in their own way, all well to do, all with strong right wing opinions on politics and the arts, Judaism and Israel. He could see that Ezra would be attracted by their glamour and position. He had acquired new fathers, maybe the kind he always wanted.

At Ezra's left side sat two of them, Sherman Greenblatt who had made millions on the stockmarket and on his right, Freyda and Heinrik Berg. Berg with his neatly combed grey and silver hair, manicured nails and light brown tan was a man of about sixty who maintained a well proportioned figure and held himself with great aplomb. He was a famous art dealer in London who, according to rumor, counted among his friends the painters Hockney and Bacon. Some said he would soon be knighted. He had dined several times with the Queen already. Ezra had begun dating his daughter, Sharon, who was seated in between her parents. She was blond,

quite beautiful, but Ziggy hadn't been introduced to her. He didn't know if Hannah and Simon parents had either. He noted that Ezra had hardly spoken to her all evening, reserving his comments for Heinrik Berg and Sherman Greenblatt. When Sharon spoke, it was only to agree with Ezra. She would obviously make the perfect wife for Ezra, Ziggy thought.

Ezra turned to Berg and said, in a whisper loud enough for everyone to hear, "Have you seen this week's Jewish Chronicle? They wrote an editorial on the fact that I left that shiva house because I saw a Reform Rabbi there."

"They only look for ways to destroy orthodoxy," Berg said.

Ziggy wanted to object. If anything, the "JC" as it was known, only supported the right wing. No other opinions ever got in there. Berg must be ultra-right to consider the JC, "soft."

Ezra reached behind for the paper, as if it were a theatrical prop and said "Look at the audacity of what they said."

He read out loud: "It is considered preferable for an Orthodox Rabbi to shake hands with the Archbishop of Canterbury than to do the same with a Reform Rabbi."

Berg readily agreed. "It's a shame. The Reform are hardly Jews anyway. You were right to leave that house."

Sharon leaned over and, in a voice, as cultured as her parents but with a strange squeaky tenor to it, said, "They could have written instead of the way you saved the Bloom wedding. Wasn't that something, mother?"

Heinrik Berg nodded and turned to Simon half way down the table

stuck in between people he did not know. "What a son you have there."

Simon smiled but said nothing.

There was little to argue about. Even Ziggy, had to acknowledge that his brother was extraordinarily talented and possessed an amazing mind. He awed one with his abilities. He could talk on the Torah with brilliance and depth, illuminating arcane passages with ease, knew classical music, and was urbane. He was also one to rise to the occasion. A week after he arrived in London, he was invited to a wedding of some member's. He had another function to attend first, so he arrived for the reception. As he walked in, he found the party in disarray. The bridegroom had collapsed and suffered a stroke at the dinner table. No one knew what to do. The bride's father came over to Ezra and pleaded with the new Rabbi to do something or the simchah, the occasion of joy, would be destroyed. According to what Ziggy heard, Ezra, hardly knowing the family, strode to the microphone. Drawing himself to his full height, standing tall and erect, he looked out on the people gathered there, sitting in panic at their tables, and without saying a word, silenced them. He began in a low voice, referring to the tragic event that had just occurred and then recalling his own parent's wedding where a similar event had happened and in a slightly off-color remark mentioned that he was born nine months to the day after the wedding. People who moments before knew nothing more of him than he was the new Rabbi from Dublin laughed, enamored of his Irish gift of the gab and

the beauty of his power of speech. Ezra then mentioned that he had just been reading that week's Torah portion which dealt with the trials of Jacob and Rachel in their efforts to marry and how Rachel's father, Laban,--"nothing like our dear father of the bride here--" put obstacles in their paths so that they had to wait seven years. "But it seemed like a few days so deep was their love for each other." He was sure it would be the same for the young couple. "A love built on such a crisis cannot help but endure." By then, despair had given way to a feeling of serenity in the crowded hall. Supremely calm, like the steady center of a storm, Ezra's voice rose but exuded calmness and people saw the young Rabbi, barely thirty years of age with a beard that was blond and red and gold, assume the image of an aged sage. His presence awed them. They already couldn't wait to get home to tell people about what they had witnessed but Ezra was not finished. His voice thundering in the vast hall then declaimed quoting the Psalms, "travail at first will give way to happiness. The Holy One Blessed Be He does not begin something with a trial that will not end in a joy." He promised that the following year everyone in the room would be attending a bris, a circumcision in the Bloom family. Who would not believe him? He seemed to have acquired the mantle of prophecy. The room thundered with applause and the guests rose as one to their feet to toast the young couple's future happiness.

The next day all of London was abuzz with news of the new Rabbi and how after the party, he had gone straight to the

hospital and spent the night with the patient and comforted the families.

No one else could have done what Ezra did that night. Certainly not Ziggy. That's what made him so difficult to contend with, thought Ziggy. Ezra had that power that comes from self-assurance. Ziggy couldn't argue like that. He was only too aware of his own frailties, of his own duplicities. When it came to the Torah, Ezra was in control. Ziggy was torn between his admiration for his brother as a Rabbi and his disappointment with him as a brother-- and even worse as a son. Ezra treated his parents so dismissively, like poor guests at the table. Why? He was their pride and joy. They had given everything to Ezra. Maybe that was the problem. His mother had indulged his every whim and trained him to scorn his father and now that training had come back to haunt her in the worst way.

Before they sat down to eat, Freyda Berg dressed in a fine silk peach colored outfit, a heavy diamond bracelet on her wrist, her hair coiffed beautifully, extended a richly ringed hand to Hannah who was dressed in a simple blue dress with her handmade shawl draped over her shoulders. She looked a lot plainer, sadder, older than she had in years. If there was joy to be gleaned from this occasion, Hannah had yet to get her share. "So nice to meet you, Mrs. Zeiskind," Mrs. Berg said with an accent that bespoke the finest houses in Britain. "We just came back from our holiday in the Costa Del Sol for this occasion. We were on a cruise, you know, for ten days, with the Duke of

Gloucester--he laid on kosher food especially for us, it was our second trip with him-- but we had to come back, I told his highness. We just could not miss this wonderful moment. You must be so proud." Her voice dripped like arsenic and honey to Ziggy's ears. Did his mother need to hear this?

"You know, " Mrs. Berg continued, " Ezra has become like a son to us, like one of ours. He is always in and out of our house. He simply adores my kosher eggs benedict."

Ziggy saw his mother withering under the woman's grandeur. She certainly knew how to get at his mother who Ziggy suspected had never heard of "eggs benedict." There goes the years of kuggel and latkes, Ziggy thought. Did she not know how sensitive Hannah was about other people's wealth and opportunity and that her one pride was in how her children would travel from far and wide to sample her cooking.

Hannah smiled wanly but did not answer.

His father, too, slunk in the background. At first he had latched on to Rabbi Neremensch, the head Rabbi of Gateshead Yeshivah, Ezra's Talmudic College, but Ezra soon took his old rabbi away to discuss some point of Torah. Ziggy could overhear the familiar phrase, "I read a wonderful thing today in the"

With no one else to talk to, his father found a couch and sat down, located a rabbinic text and began reading while around him people huddled together talking with gentle banter.

"Are you ok, Daddy?" Ziggy asked, making his way over to his

father. He felt sad that Simon sat so alone.

"fine, son. Not to worry, fine." Ziggy could do nothing.

He didn't feel that at home himself. Henrik Berg had subtly put him in his place. When Ziggy heard that Berg had represented Hockney and Bacon, he thought he had found a kindred spirit. He knew about the painters' lives and that he shared a common sexual orientation with them. Ziggy hoped if Berg represented them, he would be at least openminded and simpatico. A friend in this alien crowd.

As they gathered before the meal, Ziggy raised the topic but Berg was not interested.

"Oh, I gave them up a few years ago, " he said to Ziggy in a voice that struck Ziggy as very Etonesque. "I didn't approve of their lives, you know. Very disreputable people. I felt that it was bad for me to represent people who led lives of such-- how shall I put it delicately for the brother of a Rabbi-- lives so different from the norm. I'm surprised that the brother of a Rabbi would admire the paintings of Bacon. Hockney's work is fine but both men disgust me." He shook his shoulders as he spoke. "I really don't even want to talk about them. Does your brother know that you like that kind of work?"

Berg reached for a glass of wine and the large diamond in his pinky caught the light.

Ziggy squirmed under the ridicule of the trader but before he had a chance to express any opinion, Berg continued, "Do you like opera?"

connect with this man. He took a sip from his glass.

"Oh, too bad," said Berg. " My wife, Freyda, and Sharon our daughter--have you met them yet?-- are taking your brother to the opera in Covent Garden on Tuesday. It's Verdi's Il Travatore. I'm afraid I have bought the seats already. If only your brother had mentioned that you were interested. Your parents like opera as well?"

"yes," said Ziggy. "My parents go all the time." Not exactly the truth, only his mother did but this was not a time for nuances. Berg took a small sip of the wine, made a face and put it down. "Manishewitz is not my favorite wine. Israel produces some fine wines. Hm! Strange that your brother didn't mention your parents fondness for opera. Still never mind. I'm sure you can get good tickets if you try. We're in the orchestra. I'm afraid they're sold out, old chap, it's a charity benefit, but I'm sure you can get some seats together in the cheaper sections."

Ziggy feeling like his mother had with Mrs. Berg, smiled and walked away. He had the impression that Ezra had told Berg about his family and given the impression that they weren't worth dealing with. Yes, Ezra was moving on, moving up.

The private slights against Simon and Hannah became more public at the Sabbath morning service. As Ezra was called to the Torah for his alivah, to accept the honor of being called to the Torah, and left his seat to go to the podium in the center of the sanctuary, the congregation rose in respect, as they always did when a Rabbi went by. Ziggy and Simon stood. Ziggy had never got

used to seeing his father stand in honor of his son. He thought that it should be like when the Rabbis of old would beckon their fathers to sit in their presence and not stand-- but Ezra was not like that.

Something else struck Ziggy as odd. His father was not being given an aliyah. Ziggy did not mind about himself. He knew that he didn't count but it would have been expected that the father of the new rabbi would be honored. As the service proceeded, and a steady stream of people ascended to accept their respective honors, Simon sunk lower and lower into his seat, pulling his prayer shawl over his head, barely looking up from his prayer book. Ziggy looked up and could see his mother. Rather than sitting in the middle which would have been her right, she was seated at the end of the row. Freyda and Sharon Berg commanded the middle. Hannah had a pained look on her face.

There were only two honors left and unless Ziggy did something, his father would be horribly hurt. He went up to Ezra now back at his seat near the Ark. Ezra looked up disdainfully at his brother who had disturbed his concentration.

"Are you going to give Daddy an aliyah?" Ziggy whispered.

"Didn't he get one?" Ezra said. Ziggy was surprised. Either his brother had really not noticed or he was pretending.

"I'll see what I can do, but I'm not in charge of those things."

Ezra said.

Ziggy slunk away. He could hardly start a fight with his brother in front of everyone. His brother had lied. Berg and Greenblatt

had been given honors and they were not people of importance for this occasion, so Ezra must have asked that they receive an aliyah. The final two honors came and went without Ezra ever informing the sexton about his father. Although Ziggy knew that the slight could not have gone unnoticed, no one said anything, least of all his father. Ziggy was so annoyed that he did not stay to hear his brother's sermon and walked out as it began. When he came back into the sanctuary after the roar of "amens" signaled its conclusion, he half expected his father to tell him off for missing his brother's sermon but Simon said nothing. By the time the service ended, Ziggy could see that his father was in a black mood but he did not vent his anger on anyone but himself.

"Bah," he said. "A terrible service. I'd much rather be in Terenure." Ziggy wasn't fooled by the displacement of his anger. And then Simon added cryptically:

"Sometimes Ezra hasn't come down from Mount Sinai."

His mother, on the other hand, was not silent. She knew she had been grievously insulted. As she came down the stairs from the women's gallery, she grabbed Ziggy by the arm and whispered into his ear: "I will never forgive Ezra for this. He has shamed your father. I will never respect him after this."

Ziggy had never his mother come to his father's defense before. It indicated a major shift in her allegiances. She was a proud woman with an exquisite sensitivity to slights of which she had a lifetime of experiences but never so publicly as the one from her

own son. Her face grew tight and pained as she watched her son shake hands with the congregation. Hannah, though, could put on a good show and smiled sweetly as people wished her "mazel-tov" and said "you must be so proud" and moved on.

Ziggy wondered how long his mother's anger would last? They would still kowtow to Ezra. They couldn't do anything else. They had too much invested in him but maybe now they would understand Ziggy's frustration with his brother.

Ziggy, though, couldn't let the insult pass. He may be the "criminal" in the family but he never would have publicly hurt his parents as Ezra had. Part of the reason for his going to America was to keep his life out of their sight.

He had to raise the issue with his brother. The opportunity came on the day after the Induction service which was exactly the kind of service Ziggy thought it would be. It was like the coronation of a king. After the choir sang some hymns and the cantor showed off his voice, the congregation rose in anticipation. Ezra flanked by the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Israel Brodie, and Jacobovitz, the current Chief Rabbi, entered the sanctuary. The choir sang out in great glory. The open Ark revealed the Torah scrolls bedecked in white as for a High Holiday, with the silver breastplates and newly polished crowns catching the light. They were magnificent to behold.

Ziggy looked up at his mother, now standing in the center of the front row of the balcony. Tears streamed down her face and her lips moved in silent prayer. What could be going through her

head, Ziggy wondered. Was she thinking of his dead sister? Of how finally life had given her something to rejoice? Of how, despite Ezra's arrogance, he was still her son and she could take pride in him? His father stood silently by. His face revealed nothing, nothing at all.

The Rabbis spoke. Each in turn praised Ezra's brilliance. Brodie spoke of the synagogue's great tradition of Rabbis which Ezra would now continue and Jackobovitz of Ezra's youth that he knew so well, even praising his father. Then Ezra spoke. Beginning quietly, he spoke with seeming great humility mentioning his parents and their hard life, he even mentioned the loss of his sister. Soon his voice rose in grandeur to speak of the Almighty. It was a grand performance. Ziggy knew that nothing he could or would do would ever match this moment in his parent's life. It was everything they could wish for.

The next day, he went to Ezra's office on the third floor of the synagogue building. He had to climb the stairs as the elevator was broken. As he walked up, he tried to figure out how to approach his brother. He knocked at the door.

"Enter," shouted his brother.

Ziggy came in and noticed that the office was laden with religious tomes, nearly all in red and black leather binding, their names in gold leaf on the covers. Ezra sat at a large desk in front of one of the stacks of books.

"Ah, Brother Ezekiel," he said jovially. Ziggy hated this false

formality. It meant nothing only that Ezra never called him by his nickname even though every everyone else did. "And what can I do for my favorite brother?"

He signalled for his brother to sit. Ezra was in a good mood. It was going to be even harder for Ziggy to tackle him.

"I have to ask you something," Ziggy said, shuffling in his seat. Ezra's eyes immediately grew colder, his demeanor a little wary.

"Fire away, " Ezra said. He grabbed a pen and played with it as Ziggy began.

"Why did you not call Daddy to the Torah on Saturday?" Ziggy blurted out. There he had said it.

Ezra paused before answering.

"I have my reasons. They were religious. You wouldn't understand. I don't want to talk about it." He shuffled some papers on his desk as if he looking for a book.

"But..." Ziggy leaned forward. Ezra raised his hand and cut off his brother.

"I said I had my reasons. Did Daddy say anything to you? Did he ask you to speak to me?"

Ziggy began to shake with anger but he knew that if he lost control, he would get nowhere.

"No. You know Da would never do that. But I know he's upset. And so's Ma."

"Well, that's their problem," Ezra said with finality.

Ziggy wanted to argue further but he would have to take his anger and go home. There he could imagine all the great things he

and go home. There he could imagine all the great things he should have said to Ezra but as always he slipped into his old habits. He never could argue with his elder brother who had been invested with the power of the Almighty.

Ezra leaned over from behind his desk and said with a cold gleam in his eye: "I don't think you're in a position to cast aspersions on me."

Ziggy was taken aback. His brother had caught him off guard.

"What do you mean?" He felt himself blush.

Ezra went in for the kill. "I know what you have been up to. I know how you are."

Ziggy grew frightened. He wasn't prepared for this. What exactly did his brother know?

"What do you mean," Ziggy asked, stalling.

Ezra stood up and leaned over the desk.

"People have seen things. They have noticed you in certain places. It's a good thing, you are leaving for America."

Ziggy's throat went dry. Who had seen him? He couldn't speak.

Ezra had metamorphosed. No longer was Ezra his brother but a Rabbi, an austere authority.

"Whatever I may do," he said pointing to himself, "it's nothing compared to the hurt that you would inflict on them if Ma or Da ever found out. I tell you, if you carry on like that, you'll be dead in a year."

Ezra's cheeks flushed with rage and his lips quivered. He moved the books around on his desk, as if ready to fling one of them at

his brother.

Ziggy shuffled in his seat. "What do you want me to do? Would you rather I married a non-Jewish girl?"

Ezra scoffed out loud.

"Are you planning to?"

"And if I was?" Ziggy allowing himself a little anger.

"Then I would tell you to stay in America and smother the children at birth!" Ezra snickered at his humor. "Listen, my friend, I'll tell you this. As long as our parents are alive, I will always act as a brother towards you. You will be welcome in my house. You can eat at my table. I will not keep my children from you. That much I will give you. But as soon as they die, I will reexamine the situation." He had the same tone of voice as when he delivered a sermon.

Ziggy knew that Ezra was right about that. Whatever his parents felt about what Ezra had done to them, he knew Ezra would always come out on top. He was the first born; he was a Rabbi. Nothing he did could compete with that. He could only bring them despair and pain.

Ziggy stood up to leave but Ezra had not finished with him yet. "Furthermore," he continued, "I don't want to talk about your life style. If you choose to act this way it is your own concern. Don't drag me into it. I don't want to know about your friends or hear about what you do. Let's just leave it at that. The less I know about it, and the less I hear, the less harm you

can do me. I do not need people talking about what my brother does."

As his brother made this pronouncement, Ziggy retreated into a dark place deep down inside his soul. He became a five year old child accused of a crime and speechless in the face of an irate parent. However much he may have rationalized his behaviors and justified himself to himself, Ziggy still struggled with the tenets of his upbringing and felt himself slipping back into that world, a world he so deperately sought to escape. Whether he was guilty or innocent, he now felt guilty. He had no words to offer in his defense against the prosecuting attorney who was his brother. Ezra was right. He was Esau to his Jacob, Cain to his Abel. He would always be an outcast in his eyes, guilty of heinous crimes against nature and bound to suffer the consequences of his actions. What option had he but to accept the punishment of those who sat on the right hand of God and knew His bidding.

Abruptly, Ezra waved his hand. " Now I have a sermon to prepare and a eulogy to deliver. I don't want to talk about this anymore. You know where I stand. "

He opened a religious tome and Ziggy knew he had been dismissed. His legs shaking, he left the office as if he had been flogged within an inch of his life but yet glad to have yet escaped alive. He wondered if he should have shaken his brother's hand and thanked him like the student who had been caned always did to the prefect who administered the punishment. The victim absolving

the perpetrator of any personal guilt. The prefect only performed his duty to preserve the integrity of the institution.

Ziggy walked down the uncarpeted stairs. His shoes resounded on the concrete steps and echoed through the empty synagogue building.

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1969: "THE UNDONE YEARS, THE HOPELESSNESS..."

After Ziggy left the synagogue, he walked along the Finchely Road and thought about what his brother had said. It was a typical Ezra response to Ziggy's needs. He wished that he could have some good memories of his brother, instead all he had were memories of beatings and distance, like when once he and Ezra had sat quietly reading in the backroom. Ezra read Herman Wouk's The Caine Mutiny and Ziggy a Time magazine Ezra had brought home. How old was he? Ten? Eleven? Ezra seventeen or so. Seven years older. As Ziggy read a review of the movie Peyton Place, he came across the word "abortion." He had never seen it before and didn't know what it meant. The dictionary was in the other room but Ezra was right there. He would know. It would give Ezra a chance to show off.

"Ezra, what does the word 'abortion' mean?" Ziggy said coming across to Ezra's side and pointing to the word in the article. Ezra jumped up and grabbed the magazine from his younger brother's hand and slapped his face with it.

"I don't want you using words like that!" Ezra pronounced. "It's a filthy word. You're too young to know these things. Besides, who said you could read my magazine?"

Ziggy, caught unawares, started to cry, more out of frustration than pain.

"I HATE YOU," he yelled, but made no attempt to retaliate. Ezra, a good ten inches taller, could easily defeat him.

"You can't keep hitting me, Ezra, I'm not a baby anymore," he said between snuffles. Ezra ignored his declaration.

ziggy stopped crying and grabbing his dignity, said, "You'll never make me cry again. What did I do to you?!"

Ezra was not impressed, "I'll hit you if I damn well want." Ezra made a leap at Ziggy, raising his hand:

"Get out of here or you'll get a real one from me. Leave that magazine here. I don't want you reading it anymore. Not until you're older."

Ziggy left the room, slamming the door behind him. When he looked up the definition of the word in the dictionary, he could not figure out why Ezra had responded as he had. What was "filthy" about the word?

Ziggy had only a few good memories of them together. When he was five or six, on Friday nights in Winter when the Sabbath came in early, he, cousin Andrew and Ezra used to hold "concerts" in Ezra's big bed. All three at the one end. They took turns to get out from under the covers and stand up at one end of the bed and tell a story, sing a song or tell a joke. Everyone had to take part. Finally, Ziggy had to go to the other end of the bed where he slept with Ezra and Andrew's feet sticking into him but he didn't mind. They never argued on those occasions. Long gone, those days, almost as if they had never been.

As the years went by and Ziggy passed into troubled adolescence and Ezra into acclaim, the distance grew ever larger. Ezra never made any attempt to develop any kind of relationship with his brother. Ziggy wondered if Ezra's reluctance grew in some way from his sister's death, that event in the Zeiskind

household from which none of them had recovered. After his mother told him the truth about his sister's death, he had gone to Ezra, thinking he would be one of the few people he could talk to about his dead sister. Maybe sharing some piece of information would bring them closer together. How he ached for his brother's love. He knocked on Ezra's door.

"Ezra, can I come in? I have something to ask you."

"Yes." Ezra sounded like a disembodied voice. He lay on his bed, looking up at the ceiling, in a dream state.

"What do you want? I have a lot to do." He growled at Ziggy.

"Mammy just told me about Aviva. You know I thought she had got lost," Ziggy laughed. Ezra looked at him blankly. Do you remember her?" Ziggy asked. Ezra got a strange look as if he had been trapped.

"Why do you want to know? It was so long ago. I don't remember her that much." He sounded nervous, on edge. Ziggy had been so sure that his brother would open up that he had no Plan B. He thought that Ezra would have sat him down and talked about playing with his sister or share some sad memory about her. Instead, he seemed scared, almost frightened to remember anything.

Ziggy pushed on.

"Mammy said that when I was a baby you were always frightened that I would go into the hospital and never come out. Is that true?"

Ezra rolled over on the bed with his back to his brother.

"I never said such a thing. I don't remember. Why is this important?" He spoke in staccato sentences.

Ziggy didn't know where to go. He sat down on the end of the bed.

"I just want to know, that's all. Don't you remember her at all?"

Ezra turned again, this time his face to the pillow.

"No. I...." Ezra started to say something. Then he paused.

Suddenly, he sat bolt up. "I wish Ma would put it behind her.

She is always moping about it and how she never had anyone to talk to and how sh'vester shut her up. Enough already." He swung his long legs off the bed. "Anyway, I have to go and meet Rabbi Chasen for a lesson. I need to study so I don't fall behind."

He left the room. Ziggy sensed a deep fear in his brother, a fear that had festered and grown. His brother's fear frightened Ziggy. Why did he feel that way? Ziggy had no answers. They never discussed his sister again. Not in all the years. It struck Ziggy as ironic how a child no more than four years old had stained the family's life with her death.

That night Ziggy went to meet Gabriel Friedman. It had been nearly a year since they had seen each other. He had left college after taking his June exams in Philosophy the previous June. "I contradict myself. Very well I contradict myself/I contain multitudes" he had written at the top of his major paper for which he got a First. Then he vanished. One day he was there and the next he was gone. Never returned for his Senior year. Ziggy wasn't sure if he would come back to take his degree. No one seemed to know where he was. Gabriels' mother wouldn't talk about

it. "He sent me a card from London. That's all I know. 'I'm all right, Love Gabriel.' Here look at the card yourself. What can you make of it?"

Ziggy took the card. It had a picture of Buckingham Palace and that was it.

"I suppose he knows what he is doing," Ziggy said. Gabriel never sent Ziggy a card and there was no contact.

Ziggy wasn't upset. He had always admired Gabriel's independent spirit. It seemed to fit his friend's profile: the elusive pimperl. Ziggy had images of Gabriel leading the life he wanted, a free bird, not like him tied still to the demands of the community, afraid that his actions would ruin the reputation of his brother and his family. He wished he were more like Gabriel.

Then suddenly a few weeks before, a card arrived from London: "If you are out this way, call me."

Ziggy called the number and they didn't say much, except to arrange to meet at Leicester Square tube station.

"Hi, there, Ziggy!" Gabriel said, cool as a cucumber, same as ever. He wore the red beret that had been his trademark since high school and he smoked a pipe, a habit he had taken up in college. His beard had started to turn grey. It added years to his age, twenty-two, the same age as Ziggy whose hair and beard were as dark as ever. Gabriel also wore glasses and in general, looked by far the older of the two.

After they found a quiet bar, they sat down to chat. The gap of

time faded away. It was as if they were once again walking up and down the Rathgar Road from Ziggy's house to Gabriel's as they had for years.

"What's been happening?" They both said in unison as soon as they got their drinks and found a quiet corner. They sat on bar stools with their drinks on a shelf.

"You first," Gabriel said.

Ziggy had already made up his mind to share his secret with his Gabriel, but when the moment came he stammered and stuttered, trying to work up the courage.

"I'm a homosexual," he said the words so low that Gabriel had to ask him to repeat the statement.

Gabriel didn't hesitate. He got off his bar stool, walked over to Ziggy and put his arms around him and hugged him so tightly that Ziggy had almost burst into tears. Gabriel planted a kiss on Ziggy's cheek. Ziggy admired his audacity. He knew he had been right to tell him. Gabriel had always been a free spirit. He had been the first to grow his hair long, to wear psychedelic shirts and bell-bottomed pants. Ziggy had followed suit and now had a thick black beard and long hair that curled around his neck. He wished that Ezra was more like Gabriel.

"God, Ziggy. Did you think I didn't know? I've sensed it for ages. Remember when I told you about Brian Epstein. I was hoping that you would tell me then." He sat down again.

"But I was only seventeen. I hardly knew myself. How did you know before me?"

"Sure, I'm a man of the world, " Gabriel said with mock bravado.

" A summer with those guys in Butlins and you could tell one a mile away." He took some tobacco from a pouch and filled the bowl.

"Am I that obvious?" Ziggy took a sip from his beer trying to look nonchalant.

"Well, you might have kept your hands in your pockets a little more. Your hands used to wave about so much that I thought you would take off on your own wing power." Gabriel laughed but then saw Ziggy's crestfallen face and how quickly he stuck his hands in his jacket and quickly added, "Just kidding, just kidding. Though you might try not to look so hungrily at every man who walks by. I sometimes wonder if you are going to leave me in the middle of Leicester Square. You've become a terror."

"I have not," whispered Ziggy, knowing it was most probably true. He'd have to watch that.

Gabriel continued. "You know I was so pissed at you for not telling me. There I was your best friend and you hadn't told me. I was really hurt. I thought you didn't trust me."

Ziggy felt.

"Gabriel, you're the first person, I have told."

"Go on," Gabriel said, reaching for some tobacco for his pipe. "I was sure you were having it off ages before with that Eli guy. You know the African kid who came to school years ago? " He reached for a lighter and sucked on the pipe making the flames rise higher and brighter.

"No. I didn't. I wanted to. Do you know if he was?" he coughed at the smoke from Gabriel's pipe.

"Sorry, " Gabriel said, moving the pipe from Ziggy's face, "I don't know. There were all these rumors about him but no one would talk. You know, he'd be friendly with one guy for a few days and then they wouldn't talk to him. And then you began hanging out with him and I thought....

"No, we never did anything but I do wonder about him. Something was going on. I wish I had. It would have saved me a couple of years. "

"Yeah. Anyway, my turn," Gabriel said. "I married Charna."

Charna was the Moroccan girl that Gabriel had met when he worked at the Butlin's camp and had, more or less, been together with ever since.

"She converted and all. Went to France and did it."

"Wow! She converted! I didn't think you would care about those things," said Ziggy, surprised that his friend, the grand rebel, had conformed in the end.

"Er, Well, when you have a child, it's different. A boy. Born last month." Gabriel said with a hint of pride in his voice. He took out his wallet and flashed the picture of a chubby darkskinned child in front of Ziggy. So that's why he disappeared. He had gone in June and the baby had been born in December. He must have got a message and scarperred over to Charna.

Suddenly, Gabriel's demeanor changed. "Can you believe it? The

fuckin' orthodox Rabbis wouldn't accept her French conversion. They decided on the eve of the Brit Milah, just before the circumcision, they decided that she wasn't Jewish enough. So, I went to the Reform and they accepted us."

"Yeah, I can believe it only too well", said Ziggy. He could see Ezra pulling a stunt like that. "What's your boy's name?"

"Zachariah, Zak! I'm glad that you came over. We're moving next month to Israel. I'll finish my degree there. And you? Still planning to go to America, NOOO York?"

"Yeah, I got a scholarship to study at New York University and then we'll see."

"Can't hack it in Dublin huh?"

"You know I can't be gay there."

"Yeah. I understand, of course. I suppose you haven't told your parents yet or Ezra? I read a lot about him in the Jewish Chronicle. He's making quite a name for himself."

"Ezra told me today in a round about way that he knows. It wasn't pleasant I can tell you but I haven't the balls to tell my parents but I will. I promise you."

"You don't have to promise me anything, Ziggy. I trust you. That's why I told you about Charna. We share too much you and I, too many years, walking up and down the Rathgar Road, sitting by the Dodder River." Gabriel leaned over to his friend and put his arms on his shoulder.

"Listen," he said, "Why are you really leaving Dublin? It's not just the scholarship or the gay thing, is it? America is

certainly a lot freer than here but I have a funny feeling that there's a deeper reason."

"What reason?" Ziggy said, looking up with shock. They had been getting along so well, that Gabriel's comment jarred the happy mood. He noticed the people in the bar. They were quieter than any Irish one he had been in.

Gabriel banged the pipe against his hand and shook out the ashes.

"Are you really leaving because of your life in Dublin?"

"Of course," Ziggy said. "What kind of future do I have there? Teaching English at Stratford, sneaking into a gay bar or other places to meet people. Always afraid that they'll find out that I'm a fag and fire me. Is that a life? I deserve better. Can't you see that?"

"Yes, I can. Don't get so worked up," Gabriel said laughing goodnaturedly. "I agree with you. I'd never live in Dublin with an African wife and a half caste child. Can you see the community accepting us? But I never cared for the community the way you do, Zig."

"What do you mean?" Ziggy took a sip of the fresh lager. "You know life in Dublin is impossible. The place offers me nothing. It takes everything from me and gives me nothing in return."

Gabriel waved his hand.

"That's just your frustration talking. Be honest. Dublin is part of the air you breathe. You love Dublin. You carry it around in your head wherever you go. That's the ironic part. You love it so much you have to go."

Gabriel looked up for a waiter. One came over. "Another round?" Ziggy nodded. Even though, the conversation threatened him, Ziggy didn't want the discussion to end. He missed Gabriel. Who else could speak the thoughts that Ziggy had been afraid of even saying to himself. The waiter set the glasses down beside them. He took a sip of his lager and turned to Ziggy.

"Can I tell you something? I've thought about this for a long time. I think that Dublin is not the only reason you're going. It's because of Ezra and maybe even your mother, isn't it?" Ziggy fell silent.

"I mean, you didn't choose to come to London. You chose somewhere where you think they can't get to you. If you came to London, Ezra ~~was~~ would still be here. Isn't that what you think?"

Ziggy sat, impressed as always by Gabriel's astuteness.

"Why is what Ezra does or doesn't say important to you? Who gives a damn about your illustrious brother? To be honest, I think he's an arrogant asshole."

That argument didn't hold water with Ziggy either. As much as he resented Ezra, he hated it when others put his brother down. It was okay for him to resent his brother, he was his brother after all, but not for them. He had to be honest with Gabriel.

"Yeah, you're right," he admitted. "But you make it sound like a crime," he said. "I'm just tired living under my brother's shadow, fighting with my mother about my brother or my father. What kind of life is that? I just want to go somewhere where people won't know about Ezra Zeiskind, the famous Rabbi, and I

can make a life for myself."

"Oh, Ziggy, Ziggy," Gabriel said "If that's the truth, then I think that you're going for the wrong reasons. If you're not careful you'll end up carrying Ezra and your mother around in your head, as real as if he lived next door."

Gabriel continued. "Before you leave come to terms with your family, Dublin, the way you feel about yourself. Unless you do, you won't be any different when you get off the plane in New York?"

Could Gabriel be right? Ziggy had never imagined that type of scenario.

Ziggy took a swig of his lager. They had forgotten to put lime in the lager and the drink tasted sour.

Gabriel was not finished with him yet.

"Look Ziggy, I may not see you again for a long time but I have to tell you that if you're not careful you'll always be looking for your mother to tell you that you're good, you'll be waiting for Ezra to acknowledge you and you'll still feel guilty everytime you achieve some success. You think that if you do well in America they will finally acknowledge you. But it won't work that way. You have to free yourself of them. If you don't, it will be like ashes in your mouth. You won't be able to enjoy the pleasures. Well, some of them...And maybe not even them. Until you come to terms with your Jewishness and your gayness, you'll always feel guilty about both. A stranger in either camp."

"I know, I know," said Ziggy. "That's why I want to get away. I

want to do exactly what you say. That's why I'm going. Don't you see that? I just can't deal with those issues here. I can in America."

"Yes. Yes. I hope you do. I just wanted to be sure that you knew. I love you and wish you the best. Get ready for a visit one of these days. Here, let me bless you," said Gabriel. He ran his fingers through Ziggy's thick mop of curly hair and kissed his head. "Next time you come over, you'll meet Charna and Zak. We'll make a place for you at the table."

So it goes, Ziggy thought. Here was the rebel, the one who had never conformed, off to find religion and dedication in Israel and here was himself, the religious one, off to the fleshpots of America, eager to drop ritual and faith to pursue other desires.

With Gabriel's warning ringing in his ears, Ziggy returned to Ezra's house. His mother was still up, sitting in the kitchen, working on some embroidery.

"How was Gabriel?"

"He married Charna." Ziggy said. He wanted to see her reaction but she said nothing. Just nodded her head.

"And how was your chat with Ezra?" She went back to the cloth. In and out with the needle. Immaculate stitches.

"Ok." Ziggy sat at the table.

"I hope you didn't mention to him about the business about the aliyah," she said.

Ziggy knew it was coming. He stood in the hallway with his coat on his arm.

"Why do you always do this to me?" Ziggy said. "I try to help you and I get shot down. You always did that with me and Daddy. You say one thing to me in the kitchen and then another later. I wish you wouldn't say anything to me in the first place."

The day before, she had sworn never to forgive her son over the way he had slighted his father and now the next day, she didn't want Ziggy to mention it.

"What did he say?" His mother asked, ignoring Ziggy's outburst. Ziggy was tempted to make something up but he was too tired.

"He said it was due to some religious reason but he wouldn't explain it. He acts like I don't know one end of the Torah from another. I certainly won't miss him when I go to America!"

Ziggy didn't inform his mother of the part of their conversation about his "lifestyle."

His mother put down the embroidery and stretched out her hand to Ziggy.

"You can't be hard on Ezra. There's a lot you don't understand." How she infuriated Ziggy! Ziggy knew she couldn't be angry with her elder son for long.

He got up from the table. He didn't want to sit with her anymore.

"Don't be angry with me, with Ezra," his mother pleaded. "I worry about him. He seems to burn himself up. He can't relax. I don't know what to say to him. When you are brilliant like that, it brings a burden as well. You're different, Ziggy. I never worry about you. Whatever you do, you'll survive and grow."

ziggy's eyes filled with tears. He had waited for years to hear his mother say something like this to him. But he still couldn't accept her blessing. He was like a student constantly berated by a teacher until one day the teacher admitted that he thought highly of the student-- but it was too late. So used to the sneers and blows, the student thinks it is another ploy by the teacher to humiliate him. Why had she waited this long?

"But Ezra, Ezra....She nodded her head. " I never told you this but after Aviva died, he had a nervous breakdown. I had to keep him inside all summer."

Ziggy sat down again beside his mother. They could have been sitting at the kitchen table back at home in Kenilworth Park like in the old days.

"Don't you mean the time he had the measles and he had to lie in a darkened room?" Ziggy asked.

"No," his mother said. "After. He was only seven. It was awful. Just before you were born. I have been scared for him ever since."

That was the cause of the fear Ziggy saw in his mother's eyes. She understood that Ezra had some kind of torment inside him. She had never forgotten those awful months. Ezra most probably hadn't either.

"What caused it?" Ziggy wanted to know. "What was he afraid of?"

"Who knows," Hannah said. "Aviva's death? Nerves? High-strung."

"Did you bring him to a therapist?"

"A therapist? In those days who knew of such things. No, I prayed

and said psalms. Who knew what else to do? The doctor said it would pass."

Ziggy could see his mother, a daughter dead and now a son crying in a darkened room, relying on old remedies, alone, frightened, no husband to talk to, nowhere to turn.

Ziggy got up. He put on the kettle.

"He should go to one now," He offered.

"What good would that do?" His mother said taking up her embroidery again, the intimacy over. "I don't believe in those things."

Even if Ezra went, Ziggy couldn't see Ezra willing to explore his dark side. Ziggy doubted that Ezra had ever come to terms with a past that no one, not his mother, not Ziggy, could help him confront and which he had to do alone. Instead, as Ezra assumed higher and higher positions, he surrounded himself with people and ideas that he thought would protect him from the demons of his childhood. It hadn't worked. The dark fear that he had never faced and conquered but run from instead, ate at him, haunted and claimed him. Ultimately, he had grown more inflexible, an angry bitter man no longer hitting with his hands but with his words. Ziggy realized that Ezra ^{did not} hate him; for whatever reasons, Ezra feared him and his fear made him lash out at Ziggy. Ziggy moved to adopt his mother's position, afraid for his brother, as well as afraid of him.

The realization didn't bring Ziggy any closer to Ezra; he just began to understand him differently and the awakening gave

him strength. He thought again of Gabriel's warning and he now knew that one day, once he had left Dublin, he would come to terms with who he was and live with it. Gabriel didn't have to worry. Ziggy had already begun to confront his own being and faced its reality. But Ezra, up on Mount Sinai as his father put it, was set on a path that could only lead to some awful end. Ziggy hoped that one day, before it was too late, his brother would have the courage to face who he really was. Maybe then they could act as brothers. Somehow, he doubted it.

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1969: ST.PATRICK'S DAY IS MY YOM KIPPUR

A few nights before he left Dublin, Ziggy went on a pilgrimage from one end of the city to the other, saying his farewell to all the places he had known and had been important in his life. When he next returned to Dublin, he would be not be a native but an exile.

First he walked around the streets near his house and remembered all the Jewish families that had lived there and who were long gone, the mezuzahs stripped from the outside doors. Only a handful of families still lived there, all the rest the Michaelsons, Gudanskys, Schwartzmans, Massars, Gurevitz, Blairs, Segals, Yaffes, Garbs, Coppermans and Wellenskis, all gone now to England, Canada, Israel, Australia, America --a world of Dublin Jews who lived anywhere but Dublin. They had fulfilled that most Irish of tasks--leaving Ireland, all emigrants, joining the exodus that had begun with the potato famine and which Ziggy would now join and which would continue long after he had gone and been forgotten. Who would remember the Zeiskind family thirty, forty, fifty years hence? They would be no more than names on tombstones gathering moss.

From Kenilworth Park, he walked up the Rathgar Road where he had spent many an hour with his friend Gabriel Friedman who had moved to Israel and then stood outside the gates of Stratford College. He came back down the road and on the Harold's Cross Road, he took the 16 bus downtown. At the bridge of the Royal Canal, he looked down to Dolphin's Barn and the Jewish cemetery

where his sister lay.

The previous week, he had asked his father to take him there. He had never seen his sister's grave. He couldn't leave Ireland without visiting that sight. He had never spoken to his father about his sister and so Simon was a little taken aback at his son's request.

"But I don't even know where it is? I could never find it myself." Ziggy argued.

Simon seemed a mass of contradictory emotions when they got to the cemetery. At first, he seemed oddly content, almost happy that Ziggy wanted to go. Ziggy followed at a respectful distance from his father not wishing to intrude on his thoughts as he shuffled along the pathways. He saw his father's mood change. Simon muttered to himself as he kicked the twigs and grass that littered the way, getting angry at inanimate objects, rather than dealing with the pain of his own suffering. Ziggy couldn't stand it and even though there was barely room for them to walk side by side, he caught up with him. He linked his arm in his father's and the two of them walked together.

As they walked along the pathways of the graveyard, Ziggy saw the names of people he had long forgotten, the doctors, cantors, presidents of synagogues, of the Representative Council, of people he had never known but who had glorious tombstones that attested to their power and virtue, all with Hebrew and English. "Do you remember him?" Ziggy asked pointing to one person or another.

His father looked up at the name and smiled.

"Ah, yes. A great man" or "He tried to fire me once. Now look at him!" So they passed through the cemetery.

His father showed Ziggy his parent's plot, Ethel and Rupert, side by side. Now joined by some of their children, Sonya, Brian, Edith. Cancer. Old Age. Bitterness. Ziggy touched the stones with his hands and kissed them. He never knew them, dead before he was born. All he knew was what his mother had told him but that didn't matter now. They were his past too. Standing at their graveside, he took a vow. Wherever he ultimately ended up living, Dublin would be his final resting place, buried next to his father and mother.

They reached the section of the cemetery reserved for young children. A row of tiny graves with tiny headstones, like teeth in the grass, their epitaphs telling in a few short words of the voluminous sorrow of parents and siblings. Aviva's tombstone includes the line, "deeply mourned by her brothers." Hananh had told him that they waited till he was born before setting it. Standing by the grave, Simon took out a prayer book and recited a prayer in her memory. Ziggy stood close by but at a distance from his father. Closing the book, Simon turned to Ziggy and said, "There's not a day goes by when I don't think of her." Ziggy overcome by hearing this epitaph walked brusquely away, afraid that his father would see the tears streaming down his face.

Tears sprung again to Ziggy's eyes as he remembered that

moment. Suddenly, the bus lurched as it turned Leonard's Corner. Ziggy looked down Clanbrassil Street, once the hub of Jewish life in the city but now bereft of all the Jewish stores, save one, a kosher butcher shop. Just one for a city that had once boasted five or six. Schmerzman's little cubby hole of a store was gone, as was the Blackman's, Goldfarb's and the two Robertson brothers butcher shops. Only Eagelman's was left. Gretz's grocery store had moved to Terenure. Mrs. Byrne's fish store was long gone and now his mother bought her fish from a women with a cart in Camden Street. Clanbrassil Street was inhabited by ghosts, brought to life only by those who spoke of them. Ghosts and legends.

The bust went up the South Circular Road and at Bloomfield Avenue passed Zion Schools which had closed its doors. All those hundreds and thousands of boys and girls. Miss O'Connell, Mr. Cassidy. Prize Day. Concerts. The empty halls did they still ring with the sound of children long gone? Where were all those children now?

Behind the school in little streets, the shteibelch, the Small synagogues, Lombard Street, St. Kevin's Parade, Lennox Street, all gone, their members scattered to the only remaining synagogues, Adelaide Road and Terenure. How long would they last? Only a handful of Jews were left. On and on the bus went, down Camden Street, then Aungier Street and on to George's Street, past where Pim's used to be. He wondered about his cleaning lady, Mrs. Sullivan. He doubted that he would recognize her any more. A sad Irish lady. How happy she had been that day she took him to

see Santa Claus for the first time. So many memories, fragments of a past now out of reach.

The bus turned into Dame Street and ahead stood the entrance to Trinity College. His final exams were over and he had gotten that elusive First Class Honors degree. The bus turned the corner into Westmorland Street and then across the O'Connell Street bridge where he saw the men hurrying in and out of the lavatory. He smiled, knowing what activity they pursued under the watchful eye of the Great Liberator, Daniel O'Connell. "Goodbye, goodbye," he said to them all.

He got off in front of the Metropole, the first cinema he had ever entered and stood looking at the spot where Nelson's Pillar had once been until terrorists, angry at "British Imperialism," blew it up four years before. His city ended at Parnell Square as except for a few forays into the North Side of the city, his Dublin was all on the South side. In the years to come, they could expand Dublin to the North, East, South or West but his Dublin would remain a tiny enclave in the larger city. When all was said and done, his Dublin was just the Jewish Dublin, cut off from the larger city. He loved Dublin but he knew he had to go.

He wondered what he would remember about Ireland in the years to come. How long would it take before he forgot what the buildings looked like, the names of streets, the intonations in the voices? How long before he died as an Irishman and was resurrected as an American?

The eve of his departure arrived. While his father slept quietly in his chair, the newspapers scattered at his feet, his mother Hannah fluctuated between moments of manic concern and moroseness. She cheered up when Ziggy asked her for some of her recipes. "How do you make tzimmes again? Potato Kugel? Latkes?" She sat and dictated all the ingredients, that were precise and vague at the same time.

"I don't know. Three or four eggs. Some baking powder."

"How much is some? A tea spoon, a soup spoon?"

"I don't know. I just went on instinct. You get used to it after a while. Try a tea spoon."

They laughed together as he wrote down the directions. He doubted that he would be able to recreate his mother's culinary skills. Would he make chopped liver for himself? Despite all the years watching his mother cook, he had never learned the secrets of her art.

Later, as Ziggy packed his cases, Hannah hovered about downstairs moaning, "Do you have to go tomorrow. Why so soon?" Every statement niggled at Ziggy. On the one hand, he wanted the perverse satisfaction of having his mother miss him, he wanted his departure to hurt her but, on the other hand, her desire for him to stay touched him deeply. "Maybe Gabriel was right. Maybe I'll never escape them. Maybe I really don't want to," he thought to himself.

A knock at his bedroom door, surprised him. Had someone come by to say goodbye? He opened the door and to his surprise, there stood his father.

"Ziggy? Can I come in?"

Ziggy lifted his suitcase to the bed.

Sure, Da. Come in. I'm almost finished."

Simon put his hand in his pocket.

"Tatalah, I see no point in going to the airport tomorrow. Your mother wants to go alone with you. But I want to tell you this: I have the greatest respect for you. You wanted to go to America and now you are. Make a good life for yourself."

He took out a hundred pound note and handed it to his son.

Ziggy was stunned at the money but more at the affection with which his father spoke to him. He leaned over and kissed him, the first time he has done that since his barmitzvah. Simon's eyes opened wide and he smiled.

"Keep sending me the names of movies to see and I'll write and let you know what I think!"

Ziggy laughed.

"I will, Da. I will."

"I'm going to bed now. I'll see you in the morning," Simon said and vanished.

When he came downstairs, his cases packed, his mother was waiting for him. Her whole demeanor was different. She seemed calmer, more resigned.

She took out a challah dekel.

"Here, take this with you. Put it on your Friday night table." Would he even have a Friday night dinner? He wasn't just leaving Dublin, he was leaving a way of life. No longer would he call himself an orthodox Jew. The following Friday night where would he be? In a gay bar wondering why he wasn't at home? And his parents, they too had to make a new life for themselves. No sons at the table. Empty places at the table.

Ziggy got the sense that his mother understood why he had to go. They sat one last time at the table. She took out some cheese cake and cut a slice for him. They sat and drank together.

His mother put her hand in his.

"I know why you want to go to America. What you want to do there. I know, I know. But listen, tatelah, I don't want you to shame us. Promise me you want forget that you are a Jew."

Ziggy felt guilty. She was right but at the same time why didn't she leave it well enough alone. He stifled his desire to start another argument.

"What do you mean? Of course, I'll remain a Jew. What a silly thing to say."

His mother still held his hand and squeezed it.

"You think I don't know why you are going but I'm not a stupid woman. I know. I know. I'm not blind like your father...."

Nothing had changed. She still hung on to the past, the old wounds, the old sorrows, the scapegoats.

"Why do you have to say that about Daddy," Ziggy interrupted, trying to release his hand. She wouldn't let go and carried on

undaunted.

"Don't interrupt. You just be a good Jew. I want you to say kaddish for me!"

Ziggy sat with his mouth open. His mother was certainly pulling out all the stops.

Now he got annoyed.

"Kaddish is years away. You have a long time to live." Then remembering his father's few words, he said, "Why can't you just wish me well. Why do you have to say these awful things to me?" His mother let go his hand and leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. It was soft, wet.

"Of course I wish you well, tatalah. Of course I do."

Suddenly she started to cry, lapsing into Yiddish: "Mein kind, mein teireh kind. Do not forget your mother."

Thirty years in Ireland had not made her an Irish woman. She was an old Yiddish lady speaking in broken English. Ziggy grew sad looking at his mother as the tears fell on her cheeks. Was she remembering the scene when she herself left Poland knowing that she would never see her family again? Was this what she feared? That she would never see her son again.

He wondered if this was how he would always remember his mother: a handkerchief caught in her hand, her face aged, her body stooped. A woman hard done by in life: frustrated by her desires, an alien in a foreign land, a daughter dead, a son risen so high he could not be seen in the glare, a sister who broke a solemn vow, a son now vanishing to who knows where. He was caught

in a vise. Could he ever escape his mother? Going to another city was not going to help. She would be with him always. He would see her again and again on the streets of New York.

But he knew he had to go. His mother was like Dublin, suffocating in her love, demanding in her needs and frustrated in her desires but the one who also nurtured and showered him with her form of love and to whom he was tied so intricately that to separate himself from her took an act of courage and terrible sadness. He had to go, wrench himself away from a bond that while it gave him life demanded so much in return. He would join the band of exiles who were the trademark of Irish history. And yet... he felt he was about to commit a grave sin, an act of betrayal so grievous, an act of desertion so heinous that it would demand a daily act of atonement. He knew that on St. Patrick's Day while the rest of the world would turn Irish, he would be hiding his heritage under his guilty cloak. St. Patrick's Day would be his Yom Kippur.

As he sat on the Aer Lingus plane and looked westward, he took out a brand new journal book and noted, "Today June 25, 1969, I begin a journey westward." 2576

THE END