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Elsewhere

Novel

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Sample translation by Tess Lewis

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They took off. He was pressed back into his seat. The plane rose steeply and banked. He looked out through his neighbor's window. Far below, the city surfaced, its chalk-white and pitch-black flat roofs sporting water tanks and solar panels that reflected the sun's glare. A thicket of antennae and powerlines, silhouettes of high-rises, the Diamond Exchange, the scallop-shaped Greek Synagogue, City Hall square, Rabin Square, streets lined with trees and Bauhaus buildings, and in the middle of it all, the old city center complete with minaret and clock-tower, a wedge of history jutting into the sea. Tel Aviv and Jaffa, the beach and then nothing but water, and he craned his neck, just as the child he once was had done. Back then, a four-year-old on his first flight out of Israel, he had peered down towards the land his mother and father pointed out to him.

Homesickness or travel fever—what was it that had overcome him? He felt light-headed. The boy he was then, sitting between his mother and father, still crouched deep inside Ethan Rosen, lecturer at the Vienna Institute for Social Research, and Ethansch, Tuschtusch, Ethanni, as his mother called him, or Mr. Finicky, as his father teased, was watching the stewardesses' pantomime: a ballet in case of emergency. The short skirts,

the caps perched on their pinned-up hair, their dark stockings, and little Ethanni, eye-level with the swishing nylon pantyhose, watched the exotic temple dance performed to a woman's velvety monotone. Take off.

These days, nothing remained of the high-priestesses' ceremony from his childhood, none of the precisely choreographed movements that must have come from some strange world beyond the clouds. Now a short film with security procedures was shown on screens that folded down from the ceiling. Cold, dry air blasted from the ventilation nozzles. He knew that the tan he had gotten over the past few days, more salmon-red than golden-brown, would peel off in layers. He would return looking as pasty as when he had left. His eyes itched. His lips burned. Nothing soothed the sociologist Ethan Rosen's migraine. The pain just grew; his skull felt too tight. He had worked until three in the morning, writing an essay in German on 'Transculturality in Hebrew Literature' and then an op-ed piece in Hebrew for an Israeli newspaper, a polemic against any legitimization of torture. Rosen wrote these newspaper articles in a cold fury. He fired them off like little packets of explosives or batteries of firecrackers: fifteen minutes for a thousand words. He composed his academic studies soberly, but seethed in his commentaries, spicing them with the emotion he denied himself in his research.

Rosen was renowned for being eloquent in German, Hebrew, English, and French. More than a few people were impressed that he also understood Italian, Spanish, and Arabic. Some of his colleagues murmured that his theses and theories were simply translations of the many concepts he picked up here and there. He was just a peddler of academic ideas who profited from floating between continents and continuities, between regions and religions. But he wasn't motivated by a benevolent interest in the world. His intuitions and inspirations were fed by fear. He mistrusted civilizations and ideologies. He wrote along their fault lines.

It was no coincidence that he had been asked to write an obituary for Dov Zedek. First it was Katharina, the old man's forty-year old girl friend. Since Dov's death, she had cultivated a passion for him that Ethan had never seen in her while Dov was still alive. Then Fred Sammler, the editor of a Vienna newspaper, had called him in Tel Aviv. Since Ethan had already traveled to Israel for his old friend's funeral, surely he could put

together a few words for an appreciation, Sammler thought, a farewell to Dov Zedek for his Austrian readers.

Ethan had declined. He had never wanted to be a funeral orator, and was not going to be one now. He had never even been willing to offer a birthday toast. At the cemetery, he had hugged Katharina. Although surrounded by tearstained faces, he felt nothing and did not shed a tear. In the middle of the cemetery, the group of mourners appeared to shrink under the glare of the midday sun. It seemed to him as if each of those gathered here were shriveling up. This place bore no resemblance to Christian graveyards designed as shaded places of contemplation. Here, there was no sense of reconciliation. Unlike at Catholic funerals, there were no flowers or wreaths to offer comfort, no ensemble or orchestra to listen to, and no imposing family vault waiting to be visited.

The rabbi's chant sounded like a lament. The corpse was not hidden in a casket, but covered with a black cloth. Beneath it, Dov's body, which had always seemed so powerful, was short and slim. For a moment, Ethan thought someone else was lying there.

He'd only been in Israel for four days, and had driven straight from the airport to the funeral in Jerusalem, where Dov had lived for the past two decades: shiva in Dov's apartment. Ethan could not get the many discussions and arguments he'd had with Dov out of his mind. On the following morning, he took the opportunity to look up a colleague at the Hebrew University and discuss a possible collaboration. It wasn't until the third day that he headed to Tel Aviv to see his parents. His mother had pulled him aside to talk, but his father had intervened. He wanted to take Ethan straight to his favorite bar. As they were leaving, Ethan caught her laser-like gaze, still just as penetrating as it had been in his childhood. Father was scheduled for a thorough examination at the hospital the day after tomorrow.

On the return flight Ethan wanted to read a dissertation. He was trembling with exhaustion and felt as if he were fading, dissolving with fatigue. Not only his body, but his thoughts, too, were losing their consistency. On top of that, he had the impression that everyone could see how he was feeling, could see right through him, because he felt transparent. He had worked through the last few days and gotten less than three hours

sleep the night before. Still, he was ashamed of these thoughts. He knew that everyone around him must have also gotten up in the middle of the night as well. Who here wasn't bleary-eyed? They were hanging over their seatbelts. Everything was in limbo, up in the air.

The passengers had all arrived at the airport hours before departure. Just the day before yesterday there was an attack in the city center. He vaguely remembered the bar that had been hit. The emergency squad was filmed as they scraped bits of flesh from the walls and picked body parts up off the floor and put them in plastic bags.

To his left sat a woman in her mid-seventies, her waxen face covered with make up, platinum-blond hair, a lizard with a crocodile purse. On her right hand was a diamond ring with a matching pendant on her necklace. She wore a suit of crimson damask with dull gold buttons, garlands of flowers glowed in the weave of the silk. It reminded Ethan of the patterned Chinese wall hangings at Versailles. She could have been the Sun King, Louis XIV's secret Polish Yiddishe Mama, the mother of all absolute powers. When he briefly glanced in her direction, she caught his eye. She nodded to him as if she knew him.

On his right, a fat Orthodox Jew reached down for his bag, pulled out a velvet case which held his prayer book and straps.

Why did he, of all people, have to sit next this revenant, Ethan thought, next to this ruminant of the scriptures, who reminded him of a sheep with his sidelocks, his woolly hair, and his long beard. These guys don't want to do anything but pray, and is going to rock back and forth the entire flight. How is he supposed to get any work done? The week before, on the way from Vienna to Tel Aviv, Ethan had also been seated next to a devout Jew, but the rituals hadn't bothered him, quite the contrary. They had each been immersed in their own world. What made this believer different from the other? Then, Ethan had seen the original Jew, had kept an eye on him, ready to defend him from any disapproving stares, to confront anyone who might look down their nose at his black caftan and broad-brimmed hat. Now, in the opposite direction, from East to West, he noticed the sickly-sweet, fusty odor of the man who was dressed too warmly and the smell reminded him of the cemetery, of the rabbi and cantor he had seen at Dov's grave and of the prayers and laments they'd intoned. Now Ethan was the one looking with

disapproval at the man praying, watching him bind the greasy straps to his left arm and his forehead, leaf through the book, droning on and trying to rock back and forth, to seesaw. But there was no room. His body seemed encased in fat and made Ethan think of an enormous caterpillar who did not want to emerge from its chrysalis, did not want to turn into a butterfly until the Messiah appeared.

The left armrest was occupied by the woman, the right by the believer. Rosen sat hunched, a four-year-old between mother and father. The signal sounded, the seatbelt light went off, clasps clicked open, and a number of the passengers stood up as if on command. He knew this ritual among his people, as if they were following an unspoken order, a law of their nature, an instinct of eternal restlessness. His pious neighbor was already asking to be let out, which meant that Rosen and the older woman next to him had to stand up to let him pass. The observant man stood by the screen that divided business class from the rest of the plane and, holding his compendium in one hand and bracing himself on the side of the cabin with the other, he started to rock back and forth as if he wanted to increase the plane's momentum and reach his destination more quickly. The prayer box on his head added to the sense of wildness; it looked like a horn springing from his forehead, a vestige of earlier eras. Ethan knew the Jewish mystics. He had studied the Hasidim in different countries but had never yet met a man who dove into the scripture with such fervor. He seemed to be shaking this world to get behind its façade.

Ethan grabbed his laptop and turned it on, then opened the dissertation file and started reading—an analysis of representations of immigrants in Austrian film.

She knew him, the woman to Ethan's left suddenly told him, she knew him well. He's little Danni, that's what they used to call him, as a boy, and Ethan agreed since many people had shortened his mother's nickname for him, Ethanni, to Danni because it sounded better in German. She'd been a close friend of his parents. When he assured her that from the start, he'd had the feeling they had met before, she waved him off. "Spare me, please." She reached into her purse and took out a medicine dispenser in which the various pills, tablets, and capsules for each day were divided into their own compartment. This was her breakfast. She spread out a white silk handkerchief and arranged her medication on it like pieces on a board game. Was she suffering from some medical condition? "No, from several." She looked around. Not even in a plane, she remarked,

could their common tribe, those masochistic cosmopolitans, just sit still for moment. Even in the air, they behave like nomads. The men are always restless, maybe it starts when they're circumcised. It's as if they have a twitch in their legs, a flight reflex that had probably been helpful in the shtetl.

From the row ahead of him, he could hear a Viennese accent. Scraps of conversation penetrated through the motors' vibration. Someone was talking about diving in the Red Sea: rays, sharks, moray eels. The other, a pilgrim, talked in falsetto about the Via Dolorosa, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Capernaum.

The Orthodox Jew whipped back and forth, bobbed up and down, then started head-banging like he was in a hard rock band, though his bouncing sidelocks looked more like a Rastafarian's dreadlocks. And then he started chanting like someone wearing headphones who doesn't realize he is singing along to the music. The passengers around him gaped. If two lovers had carried on in the aisle, they would not have gotten more attention. The stewardess asked him not to block the access to business class. He only wanted to finish his prayers. He held onto the drapery tightly, as if it were the curtain of a Torah Ark, as if he were standing before Aron Kodesh. He had to pray here.

A second stewardess came up from behind with a trolley. Would he finally just sit down, Ethan's neighbor called. Why is she butting in, the Orthodox Jew asked. Has she prayed yet today? And what about him, he pointed to Ethan, has he laid on his Tefillin yet and fulfilled his obligations? Is he not a Jew?

He definitely is and no less a Jew than someone who wears black clothes and a Polish fur hat, Ethan Rosen said, and he didn't lay on his prayer boxes this morning, just as didn't lay them on yesterday morning, and he won't be laying any on in the next few days either. He's not into leather.

Couldn't they give it a rest, the diver asked from the row in front of them, he'd like to drink his beer in peace. His neighbor, the pilgrim, nodded. The pious Jew didn't even look at the two of them, but lifted his hand, and both Viennese passengers as well as the stewardesses were silent. He looked at Ethan as if he'd begun the entire ritual just to provoke him, as if, from the beginning of time, everything had been leading up to saving this Jewish soul. "What if," he asked, "right here, right now, our father Abraham came

out of Business Class and asked you, ‘Tell me, have you laid on your Tefillin yet today?’”

The stewardess behind him said, “it makes no difference if your father is sitting in Business Class. You have an economy ticket! So please take your seat.”

A bald man sitting right in front of the partition stood up. They could switch. He didn’t feel like sitting there anymore with someone’s backside swaying in front of his nose. The rabbi could swing whatever he wanted up there all by himself.

The man sat down next to Ethan. An Israeli in his early thirties, in jeans, a gray jacket over a white T-shirt. A barcode tattoo decorated the nape of his neck below his clean-shaven head. On one wrist he wore a gold bracelet and on the other a stainless-steel sports watch with a large face and three smaller dials. He’s going to bring the whole plane down if he keeps swaying back and forth like that, he said to Ethan in English. Besides, it looks obscene, as if he wanted to get it on with the entire plane. These people’s ‘geschojkel’ had already gotten on his nerves in Israel: half the country rocks back and forth as if Israel were an asylum and every obsessive-compulsive believer, every fetishist of tribal rituals carries on likes he’s suffering from hospitalism.

Ethan acted as if he couldn’t hear and kept his eyes on his computer screen. The stewardess offered refreshments. Still water, the elderly woman said and put the first pill, a small, raspberry-red sphere, into her mouth. Ethan ordered tomato juice. His neighbor wanted a beer and put his glass and bottle right up against the laptop. Was Ethan happy with that computer?

The plane began to shake. The pilot’s announcement requested that passengers fasten their seatbelts. The woman spilled a bit of water on her damask suit. Two pills rolled and dropped between her legs. The man held on tight to his bottle and glass. Ethan, his tomato juice in one hand, snapped his computer shut and put it away.

Was he here on business?

Ethan explained that he was Israeli. His neighbor stretched a little, peeled off his shoes and socks as if abandoning all caution. Well then, he said, they could speak Hebrew. Why hadn’t Ethan said so from the beginning, why did Ethan let him go on like that, twisting his tongue out of shape with English?

Was he going to Vienna for vacation? No, Ethan answered, he works in Vienna, at an institute, for three years now.

The airplane dropped briefly and some of the passengers exchanged nervous looks. Does he still feel like an Israeli?

“I’m a citizen. Do you want to see my passport? What is ‘feel like an Israeli’ supposed to mean?”

The man smiled and nodded knowingly. “That’s a typical Jewish, a typical Viennese-Jewish question.” He took a swig of his beer. “I’m supposed to move there. To Vienna. My company wants me to.” He was prey to that old fear of being a ‘Jored,’ an emigrant. As if they were back in the pioneer days.

“I don’t want to stay there. Two years at the most,” he said. Ethan swallowed the comment that the road to the Diaspora is paved with Zionist intentions. He took off his jacket, grabbed a sweater from his bag, stood up, and asked the woman to let him out so he could go to the toilet.

He pushed his way through a cluster of stocky Bukhari Jews who were talking animatedly in Russian, and squeezed into one of the rows as the stewardess pushed the trolley past him and kept moving forward. An acquaintance he’d met once at an event in Vienna’s Jewish community center greeted him. He’d already spotted the man when they were boarding. At that point, the man had still been wearing a kippah, now it had disappeared.

There were quite a few people queuing for the toilet. He waited, feeling like he was falling asleep on his feet. A boy pushed passed him and said in Hebrew that he couldn’t wait because he was still little.

In the cabinet, Ethan thought his sunburned face seemed suddenly pale. In Israel, he always resembled those tourists who baked themselves in the sun until they were burnt to a crisp. He was careful, but his skin was practically allergic. His hair, golden-brown just a few hours ago, now seemed the color of dirt contrasted with his pallor. This change could not be due only to the neon light that drained the color from everything in the small washroom. Was it his imagination? He let the water run over his hands and splashed a bit on his face. He dampened his curls and smoothed them back, away from his forehead. He noticed that this changed his face even more. It looked smaller and his

features more severe. On top of everything, he had gotten his watch wet. He took it off and rubbed it dry with a paper towel.

He didn't want to return to his seat and, after leaving the toilet, was standing in the aisle as a stewardess approached with her trolley. He spotted a free seat and slipped into it. Before he knew it, a tray was put in front of him. He was going to decline it, noticed the woman next to him, and nodded to her. She smiled and said reassuringly in English with a Hebrew accent that he could sit there and eat if he wanted; her neighbor had disappeared at the start of the flight. Ethan unwrapped the food. In the seat pocket he found the Vienna newspaper that had asked him for the article on Dov. He opened it and saw the obituary. Apparently someone else had taken on the task of honoring his friend. The author began with an account of Dov's life in Vienna without any mention of persecution or flight, only of emigration. Dov Zedek was known around the world as a champion of peace and understanding. All those who'd heard Zedek's German speeches, his Jewish jokes, and his double-edged Viennese charm could not conceive of him as anything but an opponent of every kind of nationalism. And yet, it must be said that the kibbutz he had co-founded stood on Arab soil. Although Zedek always presented himself as open to dialogue, in his heart of hearts, he lived by his vision of an exclusively Jewish state in the Holy Land. Some voices in Israel had already criticized his campaign for commemoration, in particular, the organization Zedek had founded to bring Jewish adolescents to tour Auschwitz. Perhaps it would be suitable to outline here the heated debate currently raging among Jews. At this point the author of the obituary quoted from an article in a Hebrew newspaper, in which a well-known intellectual lambasted organized trips of Israeli adolescents to Auschwitz. Birkenau is not youth camp and the incinerators' chimneys are the place for campfire romanticism. The kids with their ringing cellphones and iPods should stay away from the crematoria. All they will learn from these trips is that the entire world is enemy territory. A few of them might be interested, some of them even sensitive, but collectively they become an ignorant, biased mob always ready to unite against the others, the Poles, the Germans, non-Jews. It would be better to take them a few kilometers west, to the occupied territories, to show them what is happening around them.

Ethan put the paper aside and looked at the woman next to him. In English he asked if he had taken her newspaper.

She shook her head and offered him a copy of *Ha'aretz*. Did he know Hebrew?

Ethan did not want to revisit the question of origin and identity, to have to justify where he chose to live yet again on this flight. He said that he didn't know a word of Hebrew and had gone to Israel on vacation, scuba diving in Eilat.

She told him she lived in Vienna, but was originally from Jerusalem. She had moved to Austria years ago, for love. But she'd been separated for a long time now. She worked as a freelance graphic designer, taking commissions from clients all over the world. She created typefaces and logos, redesigned newspapers, and also helped launch new websites, but at the moment she was showing her own work in an art gallery. She told him the name—an prominent gallery in the center of Vienna. As she spoke, her hands drew sketches in the air. Her name was Noa, Noa Levy.

“Johann Rossauer,” he said.

The better they got to know each other, the more fundamental the misunderstanding he'd caused through his lie, and with each sentence the gap widened between the person he was and the person he was pretending to be. When she explained that she came from a family that had lived in this country forever up until the pogrom in Hebron in 1929, he pretended he was surprised to hear there were Jews who had never left the country. He played the part of the clueless Austrian perfectly, so his eagerness to know more about her and her background did not come off as flirting, but as a discussion untainted by prejudice. Every glance at her décolleté was a contribution to cross-cultural dialogue. Every look deep into her eyes a step towards coming to terms with the past.

A short, stocky man with frizzy chest hair spilling out of his open collar interrupted their conversation. This was his seat. Ethan nodded goodbye. She smiled at him. He didn't dare ask if he could see her again.

To get back to his seat, Ethan had to wake the woman in the damask suit. He nudged her and asked her to let him in, but, half-asleep and confused, she started and said, “Absolutely not. There's already someone here.”

“But don't you recognize me? I'm the one who was sitting there. That's my jacket and my laptop.”

“Nonsense.” She turned to the bald Israeli. “Would you please tell him someone else is sitting here?”

The man hesitated and looked at Ethan closely. Suddenly, Ethan remembered how pale he had looked in the bathroom mirror, that he had combed his hair, now damp and brown, back over his head and put on a turtleneck sweater. He might as well have been in disguise, with new clothes and a different hair do.

“Excuse me,” the stewardess interjected, “Are you Herr Rossauer?”

He wanted to deny it, but thought of Noa. “Yes.”

“You forgot your watch.”

He glanced towards the rear of the cabin as the bald Israeli said, “Rossauer. Rossauer? You’re right. He’s not our neighbor.” And the woman answered, “Nu, that’s what I say.” The stewardess asked Ethan for his ticket and when he bent forward to fish his documents out of his jacket pocket, his neighbor objected. “That’s not your jacket. It belongs to Danni Löwenthal.”

“You’re confusing me with someone else. You did from the start. I’m Ethan Rosen.”

“Don’t give me that nonsense. I know who was sitting next me. Danni Löwenthal. I’ve known his parents and him since he was a child. Danni Löwenthal.”

He would have like to shout at the woman with her damask suit that she was meshugge and that instead of pills for her heart, she should be taking something for her head. He wanted to yell at the Israeli, but suddenly felt worn out. He was dizzy with exhaustion and closed his eyes, afraid he would collapse in the aisle. At the same time he realized that his silence spoke against him, that he had to say something so as not to appear completely suspicious.

He whispered hoarsely, “Listen. I am Ethan Rosen and that is my seat. Maybe I do look like your Danni Löwenthal, and maybe I went by Johann Rossauer just then, but my name was and is Ethan Rosen. Understand? I, Ethan Rosen, work in Vienna. I was in Jerusalem for my friend Dov Zedek’s funeral. He died. Do you understand? He is dead.” And as he said these last words, he noticed that, although he had been completely unmoved during the burial, his eyes filled with tears.

“Excuse me, please.” Ethan heard a voice behind him. It was the Orthodox Jew who had gotten up to sway back and forth. “I don’t know if this man’s name is Rosen, Rossauer, or Löwenthal, but he did not lay on his Tefillin today. And do you know why?” He grinned and looked around triumphantly. “He’s not into leather!”

Suddenly no one had any doubts about who he was, not the woman in damask, not the bald Israeli, and not the stewardess either. They remembered him and it seemed as if the three of them had elected the Orthodox Jew as a higher authority, one who would not be deceived by external appearances and for all time would be able to recognize Ethan among thousands.

After landing in Vienna, Ethan drove to the small apartment the Institute put at his disposal. He unpacked his bags, turned on his computer and checked his E-mail. Then he listened to his answering machine. His mother, whom he'd seen just the day before in Tel Aviv, asked him to call her back. Her tone of voice reminded him a bit of a siren. Then Esther Kantor. She invited him to an open house that weekend, a party for no particular reason. Everyone had to come. She talked about the food she was going to serve, hummus with tahini, pita and babaganoush, special hams and fine cheeses, cholent and zimes—you name it, we've got it—but also matzoh and matzoh brei in case there's anyone who doesn't have unleavened bread coming out of their ears from Passover. She'll do the cooking. Ray will grill the sausages. Oh, and they won't forget American steaks.

Ethan could not reach his mother. He called the Institute to let his secretary know he was back, and headed out, dissertation, pen, and keys in hand, slamming the door behind him. He sat in a café. It took him hours to read it all. Then he looked for the Viennese newspaper that had published the piece on Dov Zedek. He read the obituary again, but this time the article struck him differently than it had in the plane.

Back at home he called Fred Sammler and told him he wanted to write a response to the article. "But I had asked you for the obituary first. After all, you knew Dov Zedek very well."

Ethan was silent. He couldn't stand funeral talks or commemorative speeches. He felt physically ill when he was forced to listen to honorary speeches. He didn't send personal letters either. Even the women he'd been in love had only ever received sociological analyses or op-ed pieces from him.

"I don't want to write an obituary of Dov Zedek, but a response to Klausinger."

"If you can finish it today, it'll appear the day after tomorrow."

Ethan sat at his computer. Fifteen minutes of rage, writing in the heat of the moment. It is particularly fitting, he typed, for this writer to trot out, in the Führer's native country, an unnamed Israeli's arguments when the fundamental question is one of glossing over a nation's amnesia. Ethan wrote about the imperatives of memory and of tendencies, whether in Budapest or in Teheran, to deny the Shoah. He was writing against weariness, raging against exhaustion. Having read over his piece, he sent it off, and sat motionless. Still far too agitated to relax, he wrote an evaluation of the dissertation.

That night Ethan dreamed he was caught in a crossfire of memory shrapnel. He saw Udi once again, his belly torn open and bleeding, but Udi laughed and suddenly turned into Dov Zedek and he roared, "I'm dying." He yelled, "I'm dying, Ethan, I'm dying laughing." Dov's laughter, his infamous pipe organ, was drowned out by applause, by thousands of salvos of laughter flying in from all sides and exploding.

Ethan spent the next day in the Institute and at the university. He missed his mother's call again. He should just call back already, was the message she had left on the answering machine, it's about Father. The results of the medical exams in the hospital were not good.

Just as he was reaching for the telephone receiver the next morning, Fred Sammler called. The reaction to his article was strong.

"Is it really that bad?"

No, it's good, Fred told him. A real debate had sprung up. Ethan wrote his way right into the middle of a fray and seems to have landed half way between the two sides.

"Klausinger claims that the citation he worked into his article came straight from the horse's mouth."

"What?"

"Yes. He says the Israeli intellectual he quoted is you."

Ethan Rosen felt a wave of heat wash over him. It occurred to him that he'd been arguing in Hebrew for a long time against tour groups to Auschwitz. Not denouncing them completely, but issuing clear statements against the idea within longer articles. The memory of a recurring nightmare flickered briefly in his mind. In it, he was convicted of a long forgotten murder, his guilt seemed to stem from another life.

“I can’t believe it either. Klausinger said that he didn’t write who you were because until now, your name didn’t mean anything to him. He didn’t know that you also live in Austria.”

“Where did he find the quote?”

Sammler mentioned an Israeli newspaper that had an English version on the internet. Ethan started stammering and stuttering. Even though it sounds crazy, he thought it might be possible, in fact, he was almost certain that five years earlier he had written something along those lines in that liberal Tel Aviv paper. So Ethan couldn’t rule out the possibility that he was, in fact, the intellectual Klausinger had quoted.

Fred Sammler took a deep breath. “Ok, hang on a minute. Just so we’re clear. Five years ago you wrote against these youth tour groups, in other words against your friend Dov Zedek’s project, got worked up about, how did you put it, campfire romanticism in the shadow of the ovens, and now you’re charging Klausinger with anti-Semitism when he writes the same thing?”

“Anti-Semitism? No. I explicitly did not do that.”

“Right, but by so explicitly *not* doing it, you did it implicitly.”

“What? You think I should have charged him explicitly, so that I would implicitly *not* do it?”

“Who cares what I think? I just gather other peoples’ opinions. Would you like to comment on the contradictions between your two articles?”

“I actually don’t see any contradiction,” Ethan whispered.

So much the better, the editor thought, then Ethan should explain his position more clearly in an additional article. In the next few days, he would like to publish the other viewpoint, and then, early next week, Ethan would have another opportunity to state his point of view.

After their conversation, Ethan was overcome with shame. He fled to the Institute. He bought the newspaper. The streetcar juddered up to the stop. There was a drunk on board. The voice over the loudspeaker announcing the next stop was distorted. He opened the paper, looked for his article, saw the headline and leade and was appalled. *Tradition of Alpine Ignorance*. He had used each of those words in his response, but not in that combination.

“So, what have you got against your colleague Klausinger?” asked Professor Wilhelm Marker, head of the Institute, philosopher, and media theoretician. He greeted Ethan with the question. Ethan answered that he didn’t know Klausinger, and Marker grinned, as if impressed by his colleague’s brazen lie.

“You don’t need to put on an act. You can tell me.” Klausinger had given a lecture at the Institute a few months earlier. He had talked about the cultural geography of Berlin. Didn’t Ethan remember? Klausinger had argued with Henri Lefebvre. You know what that’s about: no space is innocent.

“I know Lefebvre, not Klausinger. No space is innocent, but *I am* since I didn’t go to the lecture.”

“Yes, of course,” Marker agreed. He understood Ethan’s point of view. Klausinger overshot the mark in his article and should have expressed himself on the matter with greater sensitivity. Still, he had to contradict Ethan on one point: Marker could vouch that Klausinger was no anti-Semite.

“But I explicitly made sure I didn’t claim that he was one.”

Certainly, Marker offered, precisely that formulation was excellent, because a phrase that doesn’t state anything explicitly, says it all implicitly and who, if not Ethan, could impute suspect motives to an Austrian on this highly sensitive topic. He can trade off his identity, he can enjoy the advantage of, how should he say it, being able to play the Jew card, yes, the Jew card.

“But I specifically wrote that I didn’t want to question Klausinger’s motives.”

Exactly, Marker chuckled. He glanced around and said that Klausinger was one of the applicants for the professorship at the Institute. Of course, he doesn’t stand a chance, but still, he’s now Ethan’s competitor. After these words, Marker patted him on the back and turned away.

Many people mentioned the article to him, so Ethan wasn’t surprised when Esther Kantor called to invite him once again to her open house and to assure him that she supported his position against Klausinger and that Israeli he quoted. Ethan had forgotten his mother in all the commotion and then was unable to reach her at home. That evening, he finally dialed her cell phone number. She answered in a whisper. She was visiting

friends. They were doing well. Father was sitting next to her. “Did you need something?” Ethan asked. She would call him the following day.

Ethan read Klausinger’s reply the next morning in a café. The headline read “Two Different Rosens”. Klausinger didn’t just reveal who it was he had quoted in his obituary of Dov Zedek. Since he had not been quite certain if the author of the article in Hebrew was the same Ethan Rosen as the sociologist in Vienna, and since he and Ethan Rosen had both applied for the same academic position, Klausinger had deemed it more correct not to name the man who was now his rival, so as not to bring personal matters into the discussion. But now he felt he had no choice but to break his silence. Rosen held a different opinion in one country than he did in the other. Perhaps for him, it’s not a question of opinions or views, but just a matter of disposing of his competition. In conclusion, Klausinger cited Ethan again, who had warned, in the Israeli paper, against bringing up the accusation of anti-Semitism too hastily or too often. It would be good for Ethan Rosen, Klausinger wrote, to follow his own advice.

At the Institute, Ethan saw Wilhelm Marker disappear into his office. Later, as he was looking for a book in the library, Ethan felt he was being watched by an assistant and a colleague who were sitting between the shelves. That afternoon, he called Sammler. The general commotion had surprised even the editor. Massive numbers of comments and letters were pouring in. A professor of German studies pointed out that Klausinger was employing the traditional terminology of Jew hatred. In a whole range of responses, readers argued for the importance of memory and commemoration. But most reproached Ethan for using the anti-Semitism cudgel against Klausinger, against Austria, against Islamists, against the entire world. And one reader asked if Ethan were not simply talking about Austria’s history to avoid talking about Palestine’s present.

Ethan left the Institute earlier than usual. An early summer rain had set in. People hurried past him, pressed up against the walls, and sought shelter in doorways or under arcades. He trudged through the drizzle. In a corner protected by scaffolding, an East European woman sat in a loose, shabby dress, her feet bare and legs swollen. Her mumbling reached Ethan as an incomprehensible whine. The damp had reached her dress and was leaching up through the fabric.

The professorship at the Institute was tailor made for him, the position profile was a summary of his qualifications. His appointment had never been in doubt. But now everything seemed to have changed. How on earth had he risked gambling away his chances with a single article? No one had paid any attention to Klausinger before the controversy. It was Ethan who had drawn attention to him. After all, Klausinger had quoted Ethan without citing his name. So why was Ethan now suspected of having drawn his rival applicant into a trap? Klausinger had mentioned the Institute, not he. Why were all the reproaches aimed at him and not Klausinger?

Before, in the Sixties, as a small boy in this city, he had occasionally been greeted with a peculiar friendliness. Some people who seemed to hold his parents in contempt, respected him because he wasn't a 'ghetto Jew' but a young Sabra, born after the state of Israel was founded, one of those Israelis who refuses to put up with anything anymore. But that mood had been reversed a long time ago. He remembered a radio program he'd heard a few weeks earlier. A well-known historian had spoken about the extermination. The listeners could call in and speak. One woman said, "Professor, what you're describing, what the Nazis did, is horrible, of course. But what the Jews are doing to the Israelites is not acceptable either." The scholar corrected her, "You must mean what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians?" The woman then answered, "Oh, whatever they're called over there—I really can't keep track."

Once home, he sat down at his desk to answer Klausinger. He waited for the tension that always flooded him, but, although he was full of rage, hatred even, he could not focus his thoughts. He had to keep starting again.

"Run him over," his mother had always said, during their first years in Vienna, whenever his father would brake for an elderly man at a crosswalk. "Dros oto" was her motto, and he, as a boy, had always joined in enthusiastically, "Dros oto!" "Run him over. He's old enough. Look at him. That's the way they looked at you. Run him over." And his father, who'd escaped from the camps, who'd lost his entire family, just laughed. He would smile at the pedestrian, gesture with the palm of his hand that he was free to cross, and say, "Next time, darling, next time."

After fifteen minutes, Ethan deleted everything he had written so far. What he wrote in Vienna must sound false in Tel Aviv, and vice versa. Nothing seemed to make sense anymore. Klausinger would be right after all. He closed his laptop.

When Esther called to remind him of her open house, he decided to put his work aside. He showered, dressed, and went to his car. The engine spluttered three times before catching. At that moment, his cell phone rang. His mother had finally reached him.

“What can I tell you, Ethan? My kidney, I mean, his kidney, in any case the one he got from me, isn’t working any more. Papa is back on dialysis. I’m scared.” She stopped speaking.

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“The best thing would be to get a new kidney,” she answered.

Esther lived on the other side of the river, not far from the Old Danube, in a development of single-family homes just outside the city. Her daughter, Sandra, opened the door. “Hey, Ethan.” He hugged the seventeen-year-old, and was peeling off his jacket as Esther came out of the kitchen carrying a full tray. “Ethan, how nice you could come,” she said, as if she hadn’t just telephoned him thirty minutes before. She passed the fruit plate to Sandra. “Here, take this in, please.” The kiss she gave Ethan’s cheek was as fruity as the peaches and plums on the tray. Her face retained some of that same firm ripeness. The way she beamed at him made him think of lines from a Yiddish folk song, *beckelach wie kleine pomeranzen, fisselech was beten sich zum tanzen*. (Cheeks like little pomegranates, feet that beg to dance.)

It was the same as ever. The house was full of people drinking red wine out of plastic cups and eating salad and dip from paper plates. He knew most of the guests who were talking animatedly, telling each other the latest variations of old jokes or whispering about new developments in intimate relationships. In the dining room, he happened on a couple of Israelis sardonically deriding their government. The kitchen was busy with collective cooking: Middle-Eastern salads, babaganoush, and hummus. Amos Stein was in a corner, chopping a tomato. “Hello, Ethan.” Ethan’s presence was causing a stir. At the foot of the stairs, two men and a woman were discussing in Hebrew a production at the Vienna Opera. Michael, a psychologist from Haifa who ran a jazz music store and

sold insurance policies on the side, greeted Ethan with a smile. He was speaking with a fashion designer whose words flowed as smoothly as her dress, her voice silkier than the outfits she created. In the living room, two women lounged on the sofa, giggling. One glanced around and said to the other, “Don’t worry, he’s in the kitchen.”

Mickey Scheffler squatted in front of the bare stone fireplace. His parents had been Jews of Communist faith. He had rebelled against them in communes and cadres, but since the New Left had begun to look so old, he longed for origins that not even his great-grandparents had wanted to have anything to do with. Ethan retreated to the foyer. The historian, Sonia Winkler, called out, “Hellooo, how are you? Now we can read you twice—for and against.”

“That Klausnitzer’s a Nazi,” announced Peppi Golden, a retired ornamental metalworker who, as a small child, had survived the persecution hidden in a cellar. His non-Jewish mother had given him life twice, him and his twin with whom he had hidden for months in a small bed behind a false wall but for several years now refused to see. He hated his alcoholic brother, that high-proof waste of space, as he called him, even though they’d escaped extermination together and fought side by side in the Six Day War. They were fighting in court over their grandparents’ inheritance, over possession of those houses that had once been stolen from the family and only restored to the brothers in recent years. He no longer knew exactly why, but if they were in the same room for more than five minutes, they always started shouting and sometimes came to blows.

“His name is Klausinger.”

“He has no right to write about Dov that way. It’s good that you answered him. It was just stupid to call him an anti-Semite.”

“I didn’t.”

“I know. Calm down. I agree with you regardless.”

Lydia Frank asked Peppi which of Ethan’s articles he agreed with.

“Both,” Michael interrupted. “I don’t see any contradiction. What if the articles are just two sides of the same coin? What if I feel at home in that discrepancy? What if we all come here tonight precisely because we all live in that abyss?”

“Nonsense,” Lydia said. She didn’t live in any abyss, but in an apartment in Währing. They couldn’t forbid Klausinger to view Dov just as critically as they did themselves.

“He’s a Nazi,” Peppi Golden yelled.

“What shit. He didn’t deport Dov.”

“He would have!”

Ethan wanted to watch, to listen without joining in. They were talking about him, about things that had been tormenting him for days, and now that others were arguing about him as if he weren’t even there, he was no longer upset about the situation he’d gotten himself into.

“Why is it,” Lydia was asking, “that when an Israeli expresses a certain opinion, he’s considered a Leftist, but an Austrian’s a Nazi when he says the same thing?”

Sonia picked a few sunflower seeds out of a bowl, cracking the shells between her teeth as she stole over to Ethan. Would Ethan explain to her why he had gone after someone who had quoted his own article. Had he really not recognized his own words? Could he explain that to her?

Ethan smiled and shrugged. Michael maintains that every word sounds different in Hebrew and in Israel than it does in German and in Austria. Ethan hadn’t recognized his own lines because they weren’t his anymore. The different context had changed their meaning into the opposite. Besides he didn’t understand at all where the mistrust of their common friend was coming from. Did anyone there believe that Ethan had intentionally lied?

“He’s a liar.” A woman’s voice came from the dark. Only now did Ethan notice the woman sitting in a wing chair, facing slightly away from the group. Only her calves were visible, tanned and slender. They dangled over the armrest. The timbre of her voice reminded him of someone, but he couldn’t remember who, until the stranger peeled herself off of the chair and he recognized Noa Levy from the airplane. He felt a curious delight at seeing her again.

“He lives off of changing identities. I’d believe anyone else saying they hadn’t recognized their own words. But Ethan? Not Ethan. Culture gaps—that’s his profession, his field. He’s a specialist in the art of jumping from one context to another.

Isn't that what he's always going on about? About—what's his term?—perceptions. The reciprocal translation of ideas and theses, that's his subject. Everyone says that he always knows what has been said and argued here and there and everywhere. And he's the one who's meant to have lost sight of the big picture? He's a liar."

The others contradicted her, but so faintly, they seemed actually to agree with her. Lydia claimed she was exaggerating. Ethan wasn't a fraud, at least not intentionally.

Michael took a stand for Ethan. How did Noa come to think she knew Ethan so well? Why is she so sure he's a liar?

"Because he already introduced himself to me with a false name and fake biography. He disowned himself. He wanted to fool me." She spoke very loud. Others noticed and started to gather around the little group. Esther and her husband were among them.

"That's not how it was. It was completely different," Ethan said.

"He said his name was Rossauer. Adolf Rossauer."

"Oh please, it really wasn't Adolf, but Johann. Johann Rossauer."

"So it's true, then," Michael said.

"Johann Rossauer? You couldn't come up with anything better than that?" Peppi Golden asked.

"Johann Rossauer, an Austrian who wanted me to explain everything about Israel and Judaism."

They all seemed taken aback, except for Lydia. "I wouldn't have expected something like that from you," she smirked.

Noa told Lydia that she might find cons like that amusing, but not for a minute should she imagine that Ethan didn't recognize his own quote. The whole farce about Cohen and context, yidden and identity is ridiculous. It was malice, pure and simple, to brand Klausinger as an anti-Semite.

"Show me exactly where I did that. And why? I don't even know him."

"Exactly. You don't even know him. You don't even need to know this Klausinger to go after him, because you think you already know all the Klausingers. I sat next to Ethan when he read the article in the plane, while he was pretending to be one of these Klausingers or Rossauers. He let me go on and on about Israel, as if he had no idea.

It was clear to me then that he already knew more than he wanted to about both sides. His understanding for whatever the other side happens to be at any moment is, in fact, nothing but contempt.”

Ethan didn't answer. The others were silent until Michael finally said, “You know, you should have just written Dov's obituary.”

Ethan turned and went into the library. He was hungry and thirsty, but didn't want to join everyone in the kitchen or at the buffet. He sidled along the shelves. He was alone and thinking of Dov. And he was growing more and more concerned about his father.

When Noa came into the library, neither spoke. She came up to him, her arms behind her back, and stood before him. He was in the corner and did not try to slip past her. They stared at each other fixedly until he whispered, “Dov Zedek is dead. What do you want from me now?”

“Just be Johann for me,” she answered. “So what if we're Noa and Johann again? Leave the dead in peace. From now on, just be Johann.”

He paused and smiled faintly. “Who else would I be?”

“Good. I brought you an Israeli specialty. You must be hungry. Burekas. That's what we eat in Israel, Johann. From street vendors. Try one.”

Before he could object, she stuffed his mouth with a small, stuffed pocket of dough. “That one is cheese, this one's potato, and this one eggplant. They should be eaten warm.” And she kissed him.

They left the party together, a bottle of wine under his jacket. He drove her home and as Noa unlocked her front door, she asked with a grin, “Do you know how to yodel, Johann Rossauer?”

“Word of honor.” But when he tried to start crowing, he could only snicker and she burst into laughter along with him. He didn't know why, but he couldn't get a hold of himself. He was being swept along with her and she with him, plunging from a great height, and he let himself fall. Head over heels, he suddenly realized what was rushing up towards him from below, what lay far beneath him and deep within. He saw himself with Dov and then at the cemetery. Then, as if on a bungee cord, he threw himself into the depths as it stretched, tightened, and pulled him back upwards, up to the apex of the

arc, and he sank once more, rose again and fell. He was just a yo-yo, rising and falling. Everything welled up again inside him and his eyes filled with tears.

And so he told Noa, over the next few hours, about Dov and the funeral, about his father and his father's kidney disease. And she admitted that she had recognized him right away, even in the plane. He hadn't fooled her, since she'd heard one of his lectures a few months earlier. They listened to each other and afterwards fell asleep until they kissed one another awake the next morning, at which point many things fell into place.

“I don’t need anyone to say Kaddish for me. You hear, Ethan? Katharina’s still sleeping. I’m in my study. I’m tired and I can’t sleep. Outside I can hear the first buses driving through Jerusalem. I’ve got my tape recorder in front of me, the one you always found so amusing, for some reason. Listen to me, Ethan.

I don’t need anyone saying Kaddish for me, no prayers or eulogies on my account. They’ll write obituaries and mount a plaque or maybe name some bus-stop shelter after me. Everywhere we look, we’re told who paid for this park bench or for that seat in the cinema or for some flowerbed somewhere. Pretty soon every single pissoir in Jerusalem will honor some Moische Pischer from New York. Urinals against forgetting. Public conveniences of commemoration. Powder rooms to prevent silence.

But still: you were out of line with your article five years ago, the one against school trips to Auschwitz. I was there. Thousands of teenagers, not just from Israel, but from all over Europe, from the United Shtetls of America, religious, leftist, rightist, apolitical . . . And at the center of it all, the survivors. Some turn pale every year when they enter the gate. Some come alive as soon as they find themselves back here with other survivors. When I visit them in Tel Aviv, Los Angeles, or Buenos Aires, they seem lost, afraid they might wake up one day back in the barracks, but the minute they’re back in the camps, they look like they’ve been liberated, like they’ve come home.

Some wander around, going over the same old story, clinging to the familiar sentences. They hold on tight. They were branded and have themselves become the chronicles, like living versions of those audio-guides you get in museums. Type in the numbers on the sign, and you get the story. They were written off, and now they’re superfluous. They show their number . . . their tattoo always ready at hand.

And all around them, the kids. Are you listening, Ethan? Everything revolves around the survivors. They stagger from one station of the Cross to the next. They circle

around their sorrow. Those of us who are still here put on show. Toys for adolescents, each of us is a skip-jack and all together, we're just a carousel.

You wrote about a 'Disneyland of extermination' in your article, and asked if teenagers could deal with these experiences, if they wouldn't just confuse history with a horror film. I remember your words. As boys we went to the Prater. Step right up, Ladies and Gentlemen! Take a seat in the ghost train! Back then we still paid money to be frightened. These girls and boys who come to the camps in groups are the same age we were then. They stand in formation. They raise their flags. History as scavenger hunt. The extermination camp as vacation resort. What can I tell you? On one of these visits, some kid was running around wearing earbuds listening to music as he made his way through the barracks. "Turn it off right now," another of them yelled, barely older than the first. "Put that thing away! Otherwise you can't come with us into the gas chamber." It sounded like they were talking about a Javanese temple complex, some sacred place, some inner sanctum. Then the first one said, "You're going to stop me going into the gas chamber, you Nazi!" Those were his words. "You're going to stop me, you Nazi!"

Are you listening, Ethan? They were still just kids, standing before mounds of suitcases and piles of eyeglasses. And ringtones in the crematorium, the latest hit, part of a movie soundtrack or a TV show theme song. Once, right in the middle of a moment of silence, all of a sudden Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' rang out, the first syncopation soft, the next ones louder, and then some poor schlemihl ran to his backpack, emptied all the pockets, sending the contents flying, trying to find his cell phone as the ring tones stormed on in full gallop, and when he'd finally gotten ahold of the thing, Gerhilde and Helmwig's *Hojotoho* resounded through that bleak room.

You were wrong with your criticism. I'm sitting here. Do you hear me? I'm sitting here and talking to you from Jerusalem. I've known you since you were a child. I visited your family in Vienna, with Malka, my girlfriend at the time, the gym teacher—do you remember? Your father, as usual, was elsewhere, on a business trip. Your mother insisted we take their bed. She moved to the sofa. Early in the morning, I felt something crawling up my leg, something creeping up along my body, then the covers were thrown

back and you, you were four then, suddenly appeared. “Are you my Papa?” And I told you no, but you snuggled up to me anyway.

I’m not going to pretend your article didn’t hurt. But I wasn’t angry when I read it, over and over again. In fact, I was proud of the boy who had lain on my stomach back then.

Years later you moved to Paris, London, and New York. But no matter where you were, you were the Israeli; only in Israel, were you Viennese, a ‘Yekke’, French, or American. Even as a seven-year-old, you were as comfortable in Hebrew as you were in German. You didn’t have the slightest accent, and that’s exactly why you never felt like a native anywhere, you still don’t. No matter where you are, you’re always a little detached.

I remember one time when your parents dressed you up as a little forester, in *Lederhosen*. I can still hear the undertone in your voice when you told us that in Austria, kids your age still believed in Santa Claus. They didn’t recognize the kindergarten teacher behind the fake beard. You asked, “Are they blind?” A few summers later, I saw you in Tel Aviv. You were watching the kids next door, and you said—again, not without a touch of mockery, “They think that in Vienna I’m persecuted for being a Jew.”

You’re a hodge-podge from Tel Aviv, and a *mélange* from Vienna, Ethan. I visited you again when you were a student. Your parents told me how you’d announced in high school that you didn’t want to learn Latin. No one needs it in Israel. The teacher advised you that it’s useful to study a classical language and you apparently told him, “Unlike you, Sir, I can speak Hebrew, which is older and more classical than all of your ancient Rome.” Do you remember?

Do you not remember? At some point you read about the rumour that Hitler had survived. For an entire year, you ran around the city, trying to ferret out the Führer. “Dov,” you once asked me, “if Hitler isn’t dead, could he be living on our street?” Remember? You suspected a certain man. You wrote him letters. Your mother was terrified when she found some of your drafts and read what you’d written to this high ministry official. You threatened to expose his past. You blackmailed him. “And if he sues us?” your mother asked. She wanted to go and apologize the next day, but the morning papers reported that he had stepped down unexpectedly, for health reasons.

He's a reverse chameleon, your father always said about you. He never fits into any environment, but always stands a little bit apart.

But what will happen when we're gone? When they come from Dresden, Teheran and Tennessee, from Vienna or Vilnius and not one of us will rise from the dead, no one will bear witness to what we went through. No, for me it's not about my own death. I don't need anyone to say Kaddish for me."

Ethan turned off the tape recorder. Somewhere a dog barked. The light of a cloudy afternoon shone languidly into the room. The tape recorder's tiny lights glowed like small red, blue, and green jewels. He and Noa sat on large, mud-colored beanbag chairs, next to a table with a teapot on a warmer lit with candles.

She said, "He recorded the sections separately or recorded over others. You can hear the click when he turned it back on." Noa was curled up on her beanbag, her chin on her knees and her arms hugging her shins.

"He always had this ancient tape recorder with him. He even brought it to conferences. He'd bring the thing out and push the buttons until no one could follow the speaker any more. Even he was too busy trying to record everything so he could listen to it later, to follow what the speaker was saying. But he never played the tapes back. They just gathered dust on his shelves. And the truth is, he didn't need to. He knew perfectly well who said what. He even knew what everyone was going to say, before they could say it. He could tell you what you'd been planning on saying in the next minute. And the worst part is, he was never wrong. He'd interrupt me and say something like, "As for the question you were about to ask me," and then would go on about some topic that caught my interest the minute he started talking about it—"let me tell you, Ethan." And so it went. On the other hand, he never recorded his own lectures. He never recorded himself on any subject. He gave a speech titled, "Never Forget!", and threw it out as soon as the last word faded away. He demanded that memory be preserved, but covered all his traces. So why did he make these recordings? Why suddenly break his habit? Ethan opened the cassette compartment. "Besides, there's no date on the label. He doesn't name the day or the month. I hear his voice as if he were standing next to me.

Just this week, I shoveled dirt onto him and now . . . Greetings from the crypt. And why the talk about Kaddish or my article from years ago?” The barking dog began to howl.

Noa said, “His voice sounds so intimate, so close. One of those old guys—in Tel Aviv or Netania.”

“Jerusalem,” he said.

“Jerusalem, then. There aren’t many of them left.”

“There was no one like Dov, no one.”

Noa told him she’d been thinking about that country, that she was thinking about going back.

Ethan didn’t look at her. He had sensed from the very beginning that all that had happened over the last few days was too good too to be true. She never would have noticed someone like him back when she left Israel. He told her, “I wouldn’t have stood a chance in Israel.”

“No, you wouldn’t, but Johann Rossauer would have.” She drew her foot along his shin and he felt as if she had struck a chord within him and the two of them were in tune.