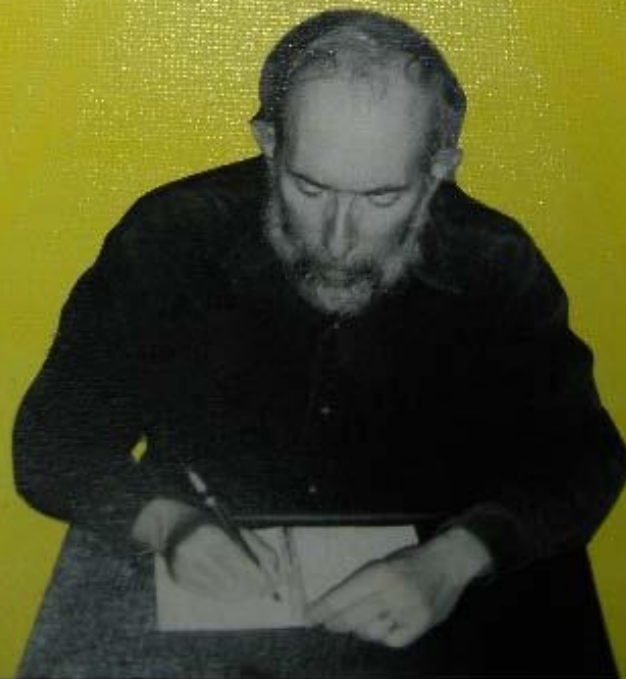


**OUTTAKES**

**OF A UFO**

**INVESTIGATOR**

**DAVID HALPERIN**



## Chapter 5: In the Promised Land

JULY 1966

### 1.

*"Yesh lekha mikhtav,"* said the clerk from behind the counter.

Danny, sweating heavily, had just walked through the open door into the lobby of the Tal-Or Hotel, his three new books in his hand. This was probably the last time he'd pass through that door. The realization gave him a sad sense of leave-taking, even though he had just arrived in Israel, hardly ten days ago now.

He must have looked blank for a moment, because the clerk, whose name was Shlomo, went on to say in English: "You have a letter." He peered into the cubbyhole marked with Danny's room number. *"Two letters, even."*

He didn't need to translate for me, thought Danny, slightly hurt. *Mikhtav* means "letter"; I knew that. I just needed a second to put it all together.

*"Todah rabah,"* said Danny as Shlomo handed him the letters. Thank you very much. *"Todah rabah,"* he said again.

*"B'vakashah,"* said Shlomo. The word meant both "please" and "you're welcome," which made sense when you came to think of it. Somebody gives you something, you say *thank you*, and he says *please*. Sort of like, I was pleased to do it.

*"Kanita sfareem?"* Shlomo said. He pointed to the three books, which Danny had laid on the counter.

*"Kayn,"* Danny said, meaning Yes. Yes, he had bought books, at Eisenberg's Bookstore in downtown Tel Aviv, where he'd dawdled away most of the afternoon. He'd then carried them back to the hotel, walking at double speed through the damp afternoon heat so he wouldn't be late when Yitzhak Vered came at five-thirty to take him to his new home.

Shlomo began thumbing through Danny's new books, no doubt trying to see how much of the English he could understand. Danny hardly paid attention. His two letters – the

first mail he'd gotten since arriving in Israel – had pushed Shlomo, and Danny's project of learning Hebrew through conversations with Shlomo, right out of his mind.

One was an aerogram, a flimsy piece of blue paper folded over itself several times and then sealed on three of its sides, the cheapest way other than postcard to communicate by air mail. It was from Kellerfield, addressed and return-addressed in his mother's familiar handwriting. The other was a real letter. It was in a real if lightweight envelope, with AIR MAIL and PAR AVION printed on it and several sheets of lightweight paper inside. The address – *Mr. Daniel Shapiro, c/o Tal-Or Hotel, 78 Hayarkon Street, Tel Aviv, Israel* – was typed with a green typewriter ribbon that could mean only one thing. Basil Richard.

He borrowed a letter opener from Shlomo, who by now was absorbed in one of the books. Heart pounding, he betook himself to one of the lobby's wicker chairs to find out whether the answer was yes or no.

July 10, 1966

*Dear Danny,*

*Writing to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 4th (or of the 5th really, the wee hours of the morning, wasn't it?), with the enclosed MS., which I was of course delighted, and more than delighted, to receive. Not that I quite expected to be sending my acknowledgment of receipt to quite so exotic an address; for which I must say –*

*Dammit, friend, what I must say is that I am thoroughly pissed at you!!! Congratulations on your marvellous achievement and all that, blah blah blah, but I am thoroughly pissed nonetheless!!! No doubt you have had a thoroughly hectic spring, winning trips to the far corners of the earth and mastering the internal combustion engine and all that, and on top of it all writing me this perfectly splendid book of yours*

– So he liked it. Danny breathed deeply for the first time since seeing the envelope. The sweat poured off him, though whether that was because of the accumulated afternoon heat in the tiny lobby, or the trans-Atlantic tongue-lashing he was now getting, he couldn't have said.

*but couldn't you have taken ten minutes out of it all at least to acknowledge my letters? Don't forget, Danny: we live by our correspondence, we UFOlogists. Neglect that rule, my friend, and you turn into a crotchety isolate. And we don't want that to happen, do we?*

*So I am furious at you, Danny; and my warmest congratulations to you, Danny, for being where you are at this moment and doing what you've done, UFOlogically and Biblically and all sorts of other things, no doubt, that I don't even know about. You are an amazing young man.*

Danny read on. There was good news and bad news, Basil told him. Mostly good, to be sure, but there was a touch of bad.

The good news was that Max Levinthal had *loved* the book.

Basil had shown the book to Max that very morning. It was Sunday; Max had come up to the Richards' apartment for brunch with "his latest," somebody named Lucinda. They'd gotten themselves all stuffed with coffee and danishes; at which point Basil had judged it the right moment to lure Max into his study to have a look at the brand-new MS. that had just turned up in his mailbox.

*So he plops himself down in my easy chair – still puffing and snorting, you understand – and opens it to someplace in the middle and starts reading. And twenty minutes later, damned if he isn't still reading it!*

Lucinda had called to Max to come back out of the study. She had pleaded, threatened, demanded. It was no use. Danny's book had Max riveted. The only hard part had come when Max demanded to know just who the hell this Shapiro guy was, anyway.

*So I've got to tell him you're a very young sort of guy, a very tender sort of guy; no, Max, not really a fresh-minted college graduate in journalism, all wet behind the ears, but rather ....*

*Well, Max hits the ceiling, of course. When I get him scraped off – the ceiling, that is – and sitting back down in his chair, he tells me, No, no way, we're not going to publish a UFO book by some highschool kid, we'll be the laughing stock of the business, blah blah blah. And I tell him, what about your commitment to quality ideas and top-notch writing, and all that great idealistic B.S. of yours, and anyway how old was Einstein when he came up with dear old  $E=mc^2$ ? And Max says, O.K., Basil, we'll go with this teenage Einstein of yours. BUT.*

*And with that BUT, Danny, I'm afraid the bad news begins.*

## 2.

"This Stewart Perowne," Shlomo said angrily from behind the counter. "Who is he?"

Danny looked up, dazed. The gist of the bad news, he had grasped, was that substantial revisions would be needed before Cloverleaf Press would be ready to put its reputation on the line for an unknown author who wasn't yet old enough to be trusted with a bottle of bourbon, not even in New York State where the legal drinking age was only eighteen. Page after page of Basil's letter, which he couldn't bring himself to do more than glance through, were filled with the details. Now someone was calling him from what seemed another world.

"Stewart Perowne?" he said.

"Did I pronounce wrong?" said Shlomo. He peered closely at the cover of the book and read aloud: "*Pee, ee, ar, oh, doubleyou, en, ee.*" He pronounced each letter very distinctly, and with considerable relish.

"No, no," said Danny. "You pronounced it right." He now recognized the name. Stewart Perowne was the author of *The Pilgrim's Companion in Jerusalem and Bethlehem*, which he'd bought at Eisenberg's this afternoon so he could learn something about the Jerusalem that he himself could never see, could never set foot in.

"No Jews here – anywhere!" said Shlomo.

His face, normally genial and tranquil, was so pained that Danny was startled. He held the book up, so that Danny could see it from where he sat, as though challenging him: *Here! Can you see any Jews here?*

"No Jews?" said Danny.

He was still a little confused, his mind still in the world of Basil and Max Levinthal and this Lucinda, whoever she was. He thought he'd seen a reference to Scofield somewhere in the letter, toward the end. Had Max Levinthal had some problem with Scofield?

"No Jews!" said Shlomo.

"Oh, well," said Danny. "The book's about the *Jordanian* part of Jerusalem. And Bethlehem's part of Jordan too, I think. There aren't any Jews there now, are there?"

"I know where Bethlehem is!"

Shlomo stepped around from behind the counter and sat down in the wicker chair next to Danny, carrying Danny's books in his large soft hand. He was a plump, balding

man, dark-skinned, in his forties. Like most of the men Danny had seen around the beachfront area of Tel Aviv, he wore his light summer shirt open most of the way down to his belly. He carried with him a strong odor of cologne, mingled with the sweat of a clean body. That smell would turn out to be one of Danny's most persistent memories of Israel.

"Listen, Danny," said Shlomo. He spoke in English, not the simplified Hebrew in which he and Danny normally tried to conduct their conversations. "Jews were in Jerusalem maybe three thousand years. Not just in what now we call *Jerusalem, the capital of Israel*. This Jerusalem, the one you can get on a bus and go visit tomorrow if you want, is the *new* city. A hundred years old, maybe. We were in the Old City too. The part the Jordanians now have. You understand me?"

"Uh-huh," said Danny, nodding.

"So why we're not there any more?" Shlomo didn't wait for Danny's answer. "Because in the War of Independence, back in '48, the Jordanians *take* the Old City for themselves. They take it and they make it *Judenrein*. You know what is *Judenrein*?"

Danny nodded again, biting his lower lip.

"They make the city *Judenrein*. And then this man, this Stewart Perowne" – Shlomo tapped the book with his forefinger, hard, angrily – "he writes this book and he makes it *Judenrein* all over again! Three thousand years, no Jews. Read the book: there's no Jews in Jerusalem. Never were any Jews in Jerusalem. There's Christians, there's Muslims. No Jews."

Danny had read parts of the book already, while squatting beside the cluttered shelves in the coolness of Eisenberg's. There were a lot of quotations in it from the Old Testament. But maybe that wasn't quite the same thing as there being Jews.

"And why?" said Shlomo. His voice came to a climax of pain and anger. "I'll show you why." He opened the book to the dedication. "There! '*To the king, government, and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, this book is respectfully dedicated by the author.*' You see?" He handed the book to Danny. "He wants to please the Arabs, so he makes Jerusalem *Judenrein*."

"But –," said Danny. He had the sense that Shlomo was being unfair to Perowne and his book, but didn't know just how. "But, surely he mentions the Wall, doesn't he?"

"No!" Shlomo cried triumphantly. "I looked for the Wall. It's not there! He gives you guided tours around Jerusalem, this Perowne, in his book. He shows you the — the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He shows you the Dome of the Rock. Which the Muslims built where *our* Temple used to be, so we wouldn't build it again, ever. But our Wall, our Western Wall? Not there! As if King Hussein dropped a bomb, and — poof! — it's all gone."

"Are you sure?" said Danny. "I thought I saw something about the Wall."

"Not there," said Shlomo. "Read the book."

He left Danny's books on the floor beside the chair where he was sitting, and stood up. He stopped for a moment and pointed to the letter, typed with green typewriter ribbon, that lay on Danny's lap.

"From New York City," he said. "From your father?"

"Oh, no," said Danny. "Not from my father. From a friend." He added in Hebrew: "*Mey chavair shelee.*" From my friend.

"Very good," Shlomo said wearily. He stepped back behind the counter. "Be healthy, Danny my friend. Very good indeed."

### 3.

*All this stuff can be fairly easily fixed, Basil wrote at the bottom of the fifth page of his letter, though I know it will be a rotten nuisance, and will probably mean a few less evenings with the fair young maidens on the back seat of your Dad's jalopy. What won't be so easy to fix, and what will require a pretty thoroughgoing rewrite, is that blessed "Scofield landing" of ours.*

*I've got to be blunt with you, Danny. (Though not quite as blunt, I need to tell you, as Max was with me!)* What you've written about Scofield is just not convincing. It's the only part of the book that's not convincing. And you've got to get rid of it.

Basil himself had originally been convinced, when he'd read Danny's perfectly splendid article in the *PURA Bulletin*, that the Scofield landing was the real thing. But they were in a new era now, Basil explained, the era of "A.F." or perhaps "A.M.F." Which, of course, stood for "After Marty Fogleman."

*Now, I can see you right now jumping up and down and yelling, "No! No! No! Fogleman's a liar! Dammit, I spent seven pages of the MS. proving he's a liar, didn't I?" That's right, you did. You've shown conclusively that he's a liar, a cheat, a money-mad conniver, and all in all an absolute nogoodnik. But you haven't shown that he wasn't the feller who dug the hole in the woods and set off the cherry bomb in it, just like he says he did. Matter of fact, the more you show he's a liar and a cheat and all the rest, the more likely it comes to seem that he's a UFO hoaxer as well!*

Danny had mentioned, in a footnote, that Frank Crenshaw had plans to confront Fogleman, together with his two sons, and force Fogleman to admit that his "confession" was one big lie.

*Well, all I can say is: more power to Frank Crenshaw! I hope he pulls it off. If he does, then maybe it'll be a horse of a different color. Maybe then you can make a case for Scofield; keep the "Scofield landing" in its current place of honor at the center of your book. But as things stand, it's got to be demoted. Demoted, dismissed, and gotten the hell out of the MS. Or the word from Max will be NO NO NO.*

*And what's so all-fired marvelous about Scofield, anyhow? That a UFO touched ground? Big deal. They've done that dozens of times. You know that, better than anybody else. That it left some kind of alleged mark? Again: big deal. At Socorro, to name just that one example ...*

What's so all-fired marvelous about Scofield?!!!

Danny flushed with anger, frustration, and grief. The feelings passed; his head cleared. Somehow he hadn't made his point adequately: how important the Scofield landing was, and how essential it was for understanding the developing pattern of UFO activity in the mid-sixties.

Perhaps Crenshaw and his sons had already confronted Fogleman. Perhaps they had already forced him to retract his bogus confession. Danny really should write to Crenshaw, as soon as he was settled into his new room, and find out.

"Danny, *habibi*, come. The truck's outside. Shoshi's waiting for us."

He sat facing the door. He really should have seen Yitzhak Vered come in. But he'd been lost in his thoughts, and was startled to hear the familiar soft voice.



“Does he have your suitcases?” Yitzhak asked, gesturing with his head in Shlomo’s direction. But Shlomo was already heaving the suitcase up onto the counter. “Don’t forget your typewriter,” Shlomo said in a jocular tone, even though Danny had given no indication that he was about to forget his typewriter.

Danny stuffed into his bulging plastic folder his letter from Basil, which he hadn’t yet finished, and his letter from his mother, which he hadn’t yet opened.

#### 4.

“Shalom, Danny,” Shoshana Vered said sleepily, from the back of her father’s truck. She pronounced it *DAHN-ee*, which flattered him, made him feel more Israeli. More one of them.

“She’s had a long day,” said her father. “Haven’t you, *chamoodeleh?*”

She murmured something in Hebrew, to which Yitzhak replied in Hebrew. To Danny he said: “No, no, Danny. We’ll leave Shoshi in the back, with the suitcases. Today you ride up front. With me.”

Ten days before, Danny had ridden in the back with twelve-year-old Shoshana and her little brother Uri, and with his suitcase and folder and typewriter. The Vereds had just picked him up at Lod Airport. They were driving him to the Tal-Or Hotel in Tel Aviv, for his first night in Israel.

Yitzhak Vered had explained, as he carried Danny’s suitcase from the baggage claim area, that he was a building contractor, very busy these days what with all the new developments springing up all around Tel Aviv. That was what he used his truck for, he told Danny: hauling building materials for his men.

It was dark in the back of the truck, that first night. The only windows were up front. Dalia Vered sat next to her husband on the front seat, which was the only seat the truck had. Shoshana and Danny and Uri sat in the back, on cinderblocks. Danny held tight to the back of the front seat, so he wouldn’t fall off his cinderblock as the truck lurched down the narrow and poorly paved road from the airport to Tel Aviv, at what seemed to Danny to be a very high speed. Yitzhak Vered caught a glimpse of Danny awkwardly hanging there, and chuckled. “Danny’s used, in America, to a little more luxurious — how you say? — *veehicles.*”

It wasn't clear who Yitzhak was talking to. Neither Dalia nor Uri seemed to know a usable amount of English. And Shoshana? So far she'd said almost nothing in any language, only stared at Danny with what seemed to be curiosity.

"Oh, this is just fine," said Danny, smiling although it was doubtful if any of them could see whether he was smiling or not. These were his first Israelis. He was anxious to be pleasant, agreeable, complimentary.

No one answered for a minute or two. Then Shoshana spoke from the darkness.

"Why are you alone?"

Her question took Danny by surprise. He began gabbling a complicated story about how his mother couldn't come with him to Israel because she was sick – not anything to be concerned about, of course, but she was sick and it did prevent her from travelling – and his father couldn't come because he had to stay home and look after his mother, and of course his brothers and sisters couldn't come with him because he didn't *have* any brothers and sisters, and –

"Why are you so frightened?" said Shoshana.

He didn't try to answer. He didn't know why he was so frightened.

## 5.

That had been his first ride in the Vereds' truck. Now that same truck was taking him to the coastal town of Herzliya, where the Vereds lived and where they'd arranged for him to rent a room from a widow named Mrs. Rozenshtayn. In the week and a half that had passed in between, he'd been outside Tel Aviv only once. This was for a three-day tour of the Galilee, which Yitzhak had booked with a company called Promised Land Tours Ltd.

Danny was waiting in the Tal-Or's lobby at eight-thirty the preceding Monday morning, when a man who introduced himself as Chaim, and as his guide, came to pick him up in a white Pontiac. Normally, Chaim explained jovially, they'd have gone in a tour bus. But they were lucky today. Their party was very small. He would drive them in the white Pontiac, and would be with them to answer all their questions.

Jovial. Chaim was always jovial. That was the word Danny used to describe him that night, as he recorded the day in his blue notebook. *He is a jovial, multi-lingual chap, with a squat and powerful body and a serious yet pleasant face. He is extremely personable and easy to get along with. Nevertheless I do not like him.*

They stopped at one of the other hotels along Hayarkon Street to pick up old Mr. Abramsky from Australia, and at a third hotel for the two girls from Los Angeles. Then they were off on the road heading toward the Galilee. Danny carried on his lap his blue notebook, in which he would record his observations, and Zev Vilnay's *Israel Guide*. There was a map in a pocket at the back of the *Israel Guide*. Danny unfolded it and examined it as the car headed northward.

Galilee was in the north of the country; Danny hadn't realized that before. It looked on the map sort of like a basketball, attached on its left-hand side to a long vertical pole. Further down on the map, the pole thickened abruptly, extending itself toward the right. Then it narrowed again, ending at a point at the bottom of the map.

That was Israel.

The vertical pole was the narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean, which Tel Aviv was part of. Where it thickened on the bottom was the beginning of the Negev desert. The basketball at the top was the Galilee. Between the basketball and the Negev, it seemed, there was a huge chunk that wasn't Israel at all. According to the map, it was part of the Kingdom of Jordan.

"So what you girls do in your spare time?" Chaim said to Robin, who sat next to him on the front seat. She was the brunette, the nursery school teacher. "Chase boys?"

Sandy, the blonde secretary, answered from the back seat, where she sat between Danny and Mr. Abramsky. "No. They chase us."

The two girls, who both seemed to be about twenty, burst into a fit of giggling. Danny turned away in disgust and looked out the window. The trees – planted a few decades earlier by the pioneers of Israel, Chaim had explained, in what had once been a swampy marsh – whizzed by.

The farther northward one got, the more Arabs one saw by the side of the road. This surprised Danny, who hadn't known until then that there were Arabs in Israel. The Arab men were heavily dressed in spite the heat, wearing thick dark jackets over their caftans. They didn't look like they were comfortable, or exactly uncomfortable. Stoic,

rather, as if the categories of comfort and discomfort meant nothing to them. Often they rode donkeys, or led donkeys. The donkeys were often loaded, heavily, with clumsy bundles. As the Pontiac zoomed by them, Danny felt an immense sadness for them, although they were Arabs and therefore to be presumed his enemies.

In the Arab town of Nazareth, where they stopped after lunch, the donkey manure was everywhere. Danny took care not to step in it.

Chaim took them to the Church of the Annunciation. "This is a holy place," he told them, in a loud hoarse voice that was obviously accustomed to addressing groups larger than four. "For the Christians. This is where the angel Gabriel – that's *Gav-ree-ALL*, as we say it – came to Mary the Virgin, and told her she was going to have a child."

"Ridiculous!" Mr. Abramsky cried out.

"The Christians tell the story," Chaim said, in a somewhat milder tone. "They tell it in their New Testament. Their *Evangelion*."

"The Gospels, you mean?" said Danny.

"Yes, that's right," said Chaim. "The Gospels."

"Which Gospel?" Danny asked.

Chaim ignored his question. "Ridiculous!" Mr. Abramsky said again. "What did she think, this *virgin* of theirs, when this big angel flies down to her all of a sudden with his big wings and says to her, *Whoa, you're going to have a baby!* Wasn't she a little bit *surprised*, don't you think?"

Mr. Abramsky spoke with a heavy Yiddish accent. He'd grown up in Poland; he lived there during the Holocaust. He'd been in the Warsaw Ghetto, where the Jews were kept before being hauled off to the death camps. He had escaped.

"Yes," Chaim said vaguely. "She must have been surprised."

Sandy and Robin had greeted Mr. Abramsky's initial outburst with a flurry of giggles. Then, apparently bored with the conversation, they'd ambled over to the church and were taking pictures of each other in front of it. Chaim went to join them, leaving Danny with Mr. Abramsky.

"Absolutely ridiculous!" Mr. Abramsky said to Danny. "So much ridiculous, in religion!"

"Christianity especially," said Danny.

"All religion!" said Mr. Abramsky fiercely.

Danny didn't reply. He wasn't sure he wanted to endorse this statement. On the other hand, how could he show it wasn't true?

"I like to *laugh* at religion, and all its foolishness," said Mr. Abramsky. As though to illustrate, he gave three or four barks of angry laughter. "I, I am an atheist!" he announced, so loud that Sandy and Robin, who'd finished taking pictures and were laughing together with Chaim, turned to stare.

## 6.

A few miles outside Nazareth they saw an Arab plowing his field beside the road. Two animals pulled the wooden plow while the Arab held it, walking behind.

"Oh, Chaim!" Sandy exclaimed. "Can we stop here, please?"

Chaim was already slowing the car, pulling it over to the side of the road. They stopped a few hundred yards past the field, past the Arab, past his two animals.

"You see that Arab over there?" Chaim said to everyone in the car. "Plowing his field?"

It was a fairly stupid question. Of course they'd seen the Arab. How could you not see him?

"Look at him," said Chaim. "He plows with an ox and a donkey, together."

So he was. Danny hadn't noticed that. It was interesting. But he wished they had not stopped to look at the man.

"That's the way Arabs do," Chaim said. "Jews are forbidden! By our Torah! The Torah says, *lo tacharosh b'shor v'chamor yachad*. You shall not plow with ox and donkey, together!"

Mr. Abramsky snorted derisively, as if this was a parade example of religion's foolishness, more ridiculous even than Mary and the angel. Danny wanted to reach out and punch the old man. He remembered the passage Chaim was quoting. It was from Deuteronomy, toward the end of the book.

"I'm getting a picture of this!" cried Sandy, opening the car door.

"I don't think you should," Danny said.

"Why not?" Sandy said to him. She turned to Chaim. "You don't mind, do you, Chaim? It'll only take a second."

"Sure, why not?" Chaim said. To Danny he said, smiling: "No hurry. Nobody's chasing after us."

"That's something you don't see every day," Robin said to Danny, gesturing toward the Arab.

It was the first time either of the girls had spoken to Danny for the past several hours. Back at the beginning of the trip they'd teased him about how he was always writing, writing in that little notebook of his.

Sandy stood outside the car, snapping her pictures. The Arab hadn't looked up from his plowing, or given any sign that he saw them or their car. "*Damn* this film," said Robin, trying to force it into place in her camera. "I want a picture too, Chaim. We have time, don't we?"

"*Nobody* chasing after us," Chaim said.

"I really don't think we ought to photograph him," said Danny.

"And why shouldn't we?" said Sandy. She was back in the car, settling herself on the front seat next to Chaim. "These are *wonderful* pictures, Chaim. I got the mountains, in the background."

"He's got his dignity," said Danny.

"*Dignity?*" Robin exploded. She'd apparently gotten the film to go in right, and now clicked the camera shut. "How's he any less dignified, if we take pictures of him?"

Red-faced, hot, Danny groped for the words. How to explain what he was feeling, that the shame and the sorrow of those left behind are not to be used for the entertainment of those riding in white Pontiacs? ... This old Arab, stranded in the middle of the Jewish country, still plowing with his wooden plow and his stupid ox and donkey together, which the Jews had known three thousand years ago you weren't supposed to do.

"Listen," Chaim said to Danny. "You go to Acco, to the old city. You'll see – we visit Acco tomorrow. The Arabs *want* you to take their picture. They *beg* you. They say, 'Meester, come take my picture. *Geev* me a dollar, *Meester*, take my picture.' "

Sandy whooped with laughter at Chaim's imitation. Even Mr. Abramsky chuckled. The only one who didn't laugh was Robin; and that was because she was already outside the car, taking her pictures. Danny felt his face burning. He looked out through the car door, which was still open. The Arab had reached the end of his field and had now turned; he was plowing in the opposite direction, *their* direction. Surely he must see this foolish American girl, turning him with her camera into a piece of scenery.

Surely – Danny found himself hoping, perversely – he would march over to them, shaking his fist, screaming curses. He would show them that Chaim was wrong, that Danny was right.

But the man looked straight at the space where they and their car and their camera stood, and saw nothing there.

## 7.

"So how was the *Galeel*?" said Yitzhak Vered. Danny had gotten back from the three-day trip, sunburned and depressed, the night before.

They passed a sign saying WELCOME TO HERZLIYA in Hebrew and English. The scenery didn't look much different than it had since they'd left Tel Aviv twenty minutes ago: brown, hot, weedy fields, interrupted by an occasional orchard. But now there were also a few clusters of oblong apartment buildings, on one side or the other of the narrow road, so Danny supposed they were getting into a town. He wasn't sure what he should tell Yitzhak about how the Galilee had been. He didn't want to talk about Sandy and Robin, who since their quarrel that first afternoon had entirely stopped treating him as if he existed.

He said: "It's very commercialized."

"I'm sorry?" said Yitzhak.

He must not know the word *commercialized*. "It's like one big market," Danny explained. "Everything's for sale. Everywhere you go there's souvenir shops, gift shops, people trying to sell you things. Everybody wants your money."

He was exaggerating, and he knew it. But it was true that they'd spent a remarkable amount of their time in souvenir shops. Almost everywhere else, they hadn't been there two minutes before Chaim told them they needed to leave – especially at places like the ancient synagogue at Capernaum, which had interesting ruins that nobody but Danny had wanted to look at. For the souvenir shops there was always plenty of time.

"Commercial-ized," said Yitzhak Vered, as if he was committing the word to memory. Then he said: "Commercial-ism." Then he said: "Well, Mr. Danny, money makes the world go round. In America, people want money too, don't they? Of course they want money. That's what capitalism is all about, isn't that right?"

"Well, yes, but –"

"In Israel, we are socialists. But still we want money."

*What makes you so superior then?* Danny thought. He'd noticed it was a central article of Yitzhak Vered's personal credo that Israel was a better place to be than any other country in the world, most especially than America.

He heard the sound of heavy, rhythmic breathing from the back. Shoshana must have fallen asleep. How she managed to keep herself seated on the cinderblock while sleeping, he couldn't imagine. He didn't turn around to look.

"You're going to Jerusalem tomorrow," Yitzhak Vered said. "In Jerusalem you'll *really* see what is commercialism. Jerusalem's a holy city. Holy people want money *a lot*."

## 8.

They'd turned off the paved road. The oblong apartment buildings of Herzliya were all around them. So were the young people – children and teen-agers, in couples and in



groups. They wandered and they played, in the broad, straight, dusty streets. Yitzhak Vered weaved his truck among them, occasionally sounding his horn.

The children waved to the truck as it passed. Yitzhak waved back. So did Danny.

Yitzhak parked in the street in front of one of the buildings. He and Danny hoisted Danny's suitcase and typewriter out of the back of the truck. Shoshana, it turned out, hadn't been sitting on the cinderblock at all. She was curled up on the floor of the truck, her small dark head resting on the cinderblock as on a pillow. She smiled at Danny as he took his typewriter, then closed her eyes again.

Mrs. Rozenshtayn, Danny's new landlady, was a thin, nervous woman with streaks of gray in her brown hair. Her son was in the Army, which was why Danny would be renting his room for the next month and a half. She didn't speak much English. She and Yitzhak had already worked out the terms of the rental, which sounded reasonable enough to Danny.

She showed Danny, mostly with gestures, how to light the gas burners in the kitchen. "Here," she said, pointing to one of the shelves. "Coffee. Tea. All right? *B'seder?* You take. Any time you want, you take." She pointed to the refrigerator. "This, no. This you don't take. *B'seder? B'seder?* All right?"

She opened the refrigerator, which was very small and seemed to be filled mostly with small containers of yogurt. There was also a tall silvery jug with a lever and a spout at the top, which Danny recognized as a seltzer bottle. You filled it with water, attached a cylinder of gas, and, *voila!* seltzer. "*This* you take," she said, pointing to the seltzer. "But this, this, *this*" – indicating the rest of the refrigerator's contents – "this you don't take. Please? All right? You understand?"

"I understand," Danny said in Hebrew, nodding reassuringly.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Rozenshtayn," said Yitzhak, who'd been watching all this with an expression of quiet amusement. "We'll keep Danny fed. Danny, you come to supper with us right after this, all right? You unpack later."

"*B'seder*, all right," said Danny, perhaps to both of them. To Yitzhak he said: "Thank you very much."

Mrs. Rozenshtayn beamed with relief. She groped for a pack of cigarettes, and held it out to Danny. "Cigarette?" she said.

"No, thank you," said Danny. "I don't smoke."

Yitzhak Vered laughed and said, "Danny's a *good* boy, Mrs. Rozenshtayn."

She gave him a key to the apartment. It was the first house key Danny'd ever had. In Kellerfield his mother was always home; the door was never locked. What would he need a key for?

"Danny," Yitzhak said to him as they walked down the stairs. "Do you have with you a—a wake-up clock?"

"An alarm clock?" said Danny. "Yes, I do. I packed one."

"Good. For tomorrow morning, you set it for five o'clock. Then you come over by us, have something to eat. Then I take you in with me, to Tel Aviv. To the Central Bus Station. From there you take a bus, straight to Jerusalem. *B'seder?*"

"Well, thank you. I really appreciate —"

"You wake up early like a working man, you have a working man's breakfast. *B'seder?*"

"*B'seder,*" said Danny, laughing.

"You come back to America, you'll be so much like an Israeli they won't know what to do with you!"

Danny laughed again at this thought. Then he said: "Yitzhak?"

"Yes, Danny?"

"Do teenagers here smoke cigarettes? I mean, is it accepted for them to smoke?"

Yitzhak shook his head, clicked his tongue. "Not till the Army," he said. "Why? Because Mrs. Rozenshtayn offered you a cigarette?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, you see, Danny. By her you're not a *teenager*. By her you're a *world traveller*. Something completely different, you see."

Danny thought about this as they walked to the truck.

“By the way, Danny,” said Yitzhak. “I forgot to ask. You got mail from home, haven’t you? Tell me, how are your parents?”

## 9.

The very first thing Danny did when he got back to his room, from having supper with the Vereds, was open the aerogram from Kellerfield. His hands were shaking.

Dalia Vered had asked him almost right off the bat, maybe fifteen seconds after Yitzhak had shepherded him and Shoshana through the door of the Vereds’ apartment: “How is your mother? Your father?” What was Danny to say? That he’d gotten a letter from home but he hadn’t opened it yet, because it arrived at the same time as a more important letter, from a friend in New York telling him he was about to be a published UFO author? That he’d needed to read and digest his friend’s letter first, before finding out what his mother had to tell him?

So he lied. “Oh, they’re doing fine,” he said.

Yitzhak asked, as Danny and the Vereds sat eating their eggplant salad, if it wasn’t true that Danny’s mother had been sick for a long time with heart problems. He then translated the question into Hebrew so his wife could understand.

Danny nodded. “She was very sick a long time ago,” he said, while Yitzhak translated. “Maybe – oh, about thirteen years ago. But then she recovered. And since then she’s been doing fine.”

But what if she weren’t? What if she’d written in her aerogram, which he’d been too busy to read: *My son. I am sick. I am dying. Come home.*

His hands trembled as he cut the folds of the frail blue paper.

But he’d told the Vereds the truth after all. His mother was fine, cheerful and chatty as ever. She was writing the letter, she said, because it seemed like she’d *never* be able to get Daddy to sit down and do it. They were all fine at home. Nothing much was new, she said, unless you wanted to count the news that Cousin Peter, who was the oldest

son of his father's brother and was three months younger than Danny, had just gotten his driver's license.

Well, hooray for Peter. Danny had taken his driver's test twice before leaving for Israel, failed it both times. He read on, and saw his mother had one other bit of news to report. The latest *PURA Bulletin* had arrived for him – wouldn't you know it? – the very day after he had caught the plane for Israel. She and Leon assumed he would want to read it, in preparation for his homecoming, so they had already mailed it to him. They had used sea mail, of course. It was too heavy for air mail.

She's her old self, he thought as he set the aerogram aside. Still joking, still kidding. The thought relieved and comforted him, as though he were now assured that when he came home he would find everything just as it had been.

But he awoke after midnight and lay awake for hours in the hot, close night. His sweat poured onto the meager pillow. His mind boiled over with furious harangues, none of which made any real sense. At last he dozed off and dreamed briefly of a strange dying infant, who repelled him and whom he wished he'd never seen, but whom he knew he must love and nurture and protect and rescue even if it cost him his own life.

He saw her lying awake in her bed, her eyes wide open with fear. He heard her loud, gasping breaths. He could feel her poor lungs struggling helplessly to extract life from this world's ungenerous air.