



OUTTAKES

OF A UFO

INVESTIGATOR

DAVID HALPERIN

Chapter 7: Israel August

AUGUST 1966

1.

She hasn't been feeling too well lately.

It was the twentieth or perhaps the thirtieth time the thought had pushed its way into Danny's mind since the air-conditioned tour bus had pulled onto the highway from Eilat, and he had leisure to think. For the twentieth time, or perhaps the thirtieth, he tried to push it away. He tried instead to concentrate his eyes and his mind on the Pillars of Solomon, which were at that moment whizzing by the bus.

Of course they weren't really Solomon's pillars. They were natural formations, fantastic red cliffs which did look sort of like pillars carved out of the rock. Maybe Solomon had seen them at one time or another. Maybe, like the tourists on this bus, he'd gazed at them admiringly. But they weren't his in the sense that he'd built them, so that by looking at them you could know there'd once been a Jewish king in this country named Solomon, like the Bible said there was. There was nothing you could see in Israel anymore, by which you might know that things had been the way the Bible said they were.

The pillars sped by, outside the bus window. Danny, who knew he'd never see them or anything like them again, stared at them until they vanished in the distance, trying by some photography of his own to imprint them upon his brain.

Just how unwell do you have to be, for someone to write that you haven't been feeling well lately?

2.

He had found Leon's letter waiting for him earlier that week, two days before leaving for Eilat. He'd just come back, exhausted and sweaty and sunburned, from a week of hiking by the Dead Sea, still with a trace of the diarrhea that plagued him all the time he was there. He stopped by the Vereds' to see if any of

his UFO friends had written from the U.S. But there was only a blue aerogram from Sandy Creek Drive, in his father's handwriting.

I've been writing the past couple of letters, on account of Mom hasn't been feeling too well lately. We are having trouble with the fluid retention and her ankles and legs are all swollen again. The doctors have suggested a new drug which they say may help so we'll be starting to use it.

Yitzhak and Dalia watched, beaming, as Danny read the letter. The three of them sat in the living room. Shoshana was in the bedroom she shared with her little brother, entertaining a bunch of her school friends, or maybe they were her cousins. They were all laughing and jabbering in Hebrew while they listened to American rock music on the radio. She hadn't bothered to come to the door to welcome Danny back from the Dead Sea, which hurt him a little.

"Well," said Yitzhak. "What do they have to say?"

"Are they all right?" Dalia asked in English.

"Yes," said Danny, frowning. "I think so."

"You think so?" said Yitzhak.

"Dad writes," said Danny, " – he writes that Mom isn't feeling too well."

He expected both the Vereds to erupt with questions and expressions of concern. But Yitzhak sat calmly, smiling in his usual bemused way. This comforted Danny, who'd felt his stomach fall away when he first saw the words *on account of Mom hasn't been feeling too well lately*. Maybe it didn't have to be so bad.

"Her ankles are swollen," he explained.

Yitzhak Vered translated this for his wife. "Well," he said to Danny, "you'll see them again soon."

This was true. July was gone; August was half over. Three-quarters of Danny's Israel trip was past, finished, done. The Vereds would take him to the airport two weeks from tomorrow.

"I'll be back in fifteen days," Danny said. "I'll be there with them." *I'll see how things are with my own eyes*; and the thought made him feel in charge of things and much more confident.

"*Betach*," Yitzhak Vered said soothingly. *Betach* was the Hebrew word for *sure*. "Danny will be back with his mother soon, and *everything* will be all right."

From the bedroom came a sudden chorus of teen-age voices, boys' and girls', singing along with the radio in heavily accented English:

*"Return to sender,
Address unknown,
No such number,
No such zone."*

Elvis. They loved Elvis here in this country. They loved all the American rock-'n-roll garbage, which Danny had come to Israel to get away from.

Dalia Vered said something to her husband, and they both laughed. Yitzhak said to Danny: "Dalia says that you come back from the Dead Sea so *tan*, Danny."

"Thank you," Danny said to Dalia, in Hebrew. She'd surely intended a compliment, hadn't she?

"You'll go back to America so *tan*," Yitzhak said, "they won't recognize you any more."

"Maybe not," said Danny, laughing.

"You'll get on a bus," Yitzhak said, "and they'll say: *You can't sit in the front. Go sit in the back, you – black man!*"

He's joking, Danny thought. He knows they won't do that to me when I get home. He knows they don't even do that to the Negroes anymore.

3.

Danny woke up again and again that night, in the room he rented from Mrs. Rozenshtayn. The words kept playing themselves in his mind. *Mom hasn't been feeling too well lately. Mom hasn't been feeling too well lately ...*

He sat down at the small desk by his bed and pulled one of his aerograms out from the drawer. *Dear Mom and Dad,* he wrote.

He described the week he'd spent at the Dead Sea with a group of Israelis from the Society for the Protection of Nature. He told how you floated in the Dead Sea without even trying. How the water was oily, sinister, poisonous; how any scratches or cuts in your skin stung and burned as soon as it touched you.

They'd all hiked together to the rock pools of Ein Gedi, where David once fled to escape the fury of the mad Saul. He had bathed in the waterfall in one of those pools. He and the Israelis, he wrote his parents, had stopped again and again during those hikes to drink water and eat snacks of bread and tomatoes and cucumbers, which he sliced for himself with his newly acquired pocket knife. He didn't tell them how he had diarrhea, and spent much of his time by the Dead Sea squatting over the hole in the foul-smelling outhouse that served the Youth Hostel as a toilet, discharging watery stool into the unspeakable pit below.

I was very grieved, he wrote near the bottom of the aerogram, *to hear that Mom is not feeling well, and hope she will be feeling better when I return.*

4.

It was humid in Tel Aviv the next night, and unusually hot. But in Israel only the most expensive tourist hotels had air conditioning. Danny and Mrs. Ruth Friedlander and her son-in-law sat outside to talk on the balcony, which was the coolest place in her apartment.

"B'vakashah," Mrs. Friedlander said politely, as she offered Danny a tray on which were a plate of cookies and three glasses of orange soda. She was a small, thin elderly lady with black hair tied up in a bun, and delicate, almost papery skin. She was also the guiding spirit of the UFO Friendship Circle, which was

the closest thing to a UFO investigative group that existed in Israel. It had taken Danny the past six weeks to locate them.

From balconies above and below, to their right and their left, came the sounds of conversation and laughter. Directly beneath them, some fellow with a great bull-like voice held forth upon some subject or other. Every now and then one of his friends tried to interrupt, or respond, or object to something he'd said. He just went on talking.

"*Todah rabah,*" Danny said to Mrs. Friedlander as he took his drink and a cookie.

"*B'vakashah,*" she said again.

That was about the extent of their Hebrew conversation. Mrs. Friedlander had lived in Tel Aviv since the 1930s, yet she knew very little Hebrew beyond those small courtesy-words. She knew no English whatever. She spoke to Danny in German and her son-in-law Zvi Marcus, who was an English teacher in a Tel Aviv high school, translated for him. There were others in the UFO Friendship Circle, it seemed, but they weren't there tonight. Danny gathered they were all friends of Mrs. Friedlander, immigrants from Germany like herself.

Mr. Zvi Marcus, a slender man in his forties, spoke very fluent English. His accent sounded partly British, but also something else which Danny couldn't identify. Danny had told them almost as soon as he arrived that he'd need to leave early. He had scheduled a two-day tour to Eilat, and would need to get up early the next morning to meet the tour bus.

"You've not yet seen Eilat?" said Zvi Marcus.

"No," said Danny. He laughed, and added: "I think it's about the only corner of this country I haven't yet managed to see."

"A long trip, to Eilat," said Zvi Marcus, nodding. "But very much worth the seeing."

"We are not interested in UFOs as a *technological* issue," Zvi Marcus told Danny. He spoke slowly and emphatically, as though addressing a classful of teenagers for whom English was an imperfect second language. "Nor even as a *scientific*

issue in the broader sense of the word, although of course they *are* a scientific issue. We see them primarily as a *spiritual* issue.”

Danny nodded and sipped his orange soda, his heart sinking. Zvi Marcus paused for emphasis. The orator on the balcony below had also paused, perhaps to refresh his weary lungs. Danny could hear the brakes of a bus squealing a few blocks distant. One of those buses had brought him here. Before long another would carry him away.

“I’m not sure I entirely understand,” he said, “what you mean by a *spiritual* issue.”

Zvi Marcus translated Danny’s response into German. He and his mother-in-law conferred. Then he said to Danny: “You must think of it this way. The presence of the UFOs betokens transformations in the human consciousness. Precisely what these will be, we do not yet know. That is the nature of any great transition, any great” — he paused for a second — “any great *passage*, from one spiritual state to another. Before the passage is undertaken, what lies on the far side of it is literally unthinkable. Unimaginable. Once the passage is completed, we remember only with difficulty the condition from which we emerged. Does the butterfly remember what it was to be a caterpillar, do you think? Can the caterpillar even conceive what it would be like to be a butterfly?”

This was madness. What did caterpillars and butterflies have to do with UFOs? Danny listened impatiently to Zvi Marcus’s lecture, while he caressed with his thumb the thick manila envelope that lay on his lap, containing the real UFO stuff. He had brought with him, as proof of his UFOlogical qualifications, the press reports of sightings he’d received — so long ago, it seemed — from Basil’s friend Murray Whitaker. Zvi Marcus had glanced at his material, said “Very interesting, very interesting,” and handed it back. Then he’d begun to talk about spiritual UFOs.

“What exactly is that *passage* you keep talking about?” Danny said.

“The *chrysalis* state,” said Zvi Marcus.

Was this supposed to answer his question? Or restate it? “Yes,” Danny said. “The *chrysalis* state.”

"That," said Zvi Marcus, "is the great unknown." He added: "That is why the flying objects remain *unidentified*, you see." He added further: "That is what we seek to discover."

How, precisely, did the UFO Friendship Circle intend to go about discovering this great unknown? By reading a lot of Jung, apparently; plus whatever of the American contactee literature they could get their hands on. George Adamski was their particular hero. They believed he had met and communicated telepathically with human-like people from outer space: Orthon of Venus, Firkon of Mars, Ramu of Saturn. They believed he had traveled into space with his extraterrestrial friends. They believed there were twelve planets, not just nine, in the solar system.

Or maybe none of this was literally true. But it didn't matter.

Danny tried to argue with them about whether Adamski's close-up photographs of flying saucers were genuine or, as Danny thought, obvious fakes. They weren't interested.

"You must remember," Zvi Marcus said, "that everything that Professor Adamski experiences and describes is *symbolic*. That toward which it points is beyond our understanding, and probably Adamski's as well.

"What Adamski encountered is not a phenomenon of the nineteen-fifties or the nineteen-sixties. It is ageless. It has been part of us, and our environment, since before we were human. When we first crossed the threshold into humanity, many thousands of years ago, the UFO was waiting for us."

Danny tried to tell them about his own book on UFOs, soon to be published by Cloverleaf Press. He found himself stammering, fumbling for words, unable to express himself with any clarity. Maybe it was because he couldn't think of the book without feeling guilt, that he'd done no work on it since arriving in Israel. He hadn't even gotten around to answering Basil's letter.

By this time Zvi Marcus had grown tired of translating. So he and Danny sat in the humid, noisy darkness of the balcony, talking in English. Mrs. Friedlander smiled upon them with weary benevolence.

At last she cleared her throat. She reminded "Herr Shapiro" that it was getting late, the buses beginning to run less frequently. If he needed to be in bed in

Herzliya this evening, it might be time for them all, regretfully, to say good night.

The three of them went inside. They positioned themselves beside the opened door to the apartment. "So you're going to Eilat tomorrow?" said Zvi Marcus. "Yes?"

"Yes," said Danny. He'd told them this at the start of the evening, and it irritated him that Zvi Marcus seemed hardly to remember it.

"Well, goodbye, good trip." Zvi Marcus shook Danny's hand vigorously. "It was wonderful meeting you. Very good to hear what the younger generation is doing with UFOs. In the States, that is."

"I'll send you — I'll make a note to myself — when I get home I'll send you a copy of the latest *PURA Bulletin*. And my book, as soon as it comes out —"

"Yes, yes. Very interesting."

Mrs. Friedlander shook Danny's hand. She was smiling again. "Good-bye," she said in Hebrew. "Good-bye, and all the best."

"A long journey to Eilat," said Zvi Marcus. "But very much worth the doing."

5.

A long journey indeed. Eilat was at Israel's southern tip; to get there, you crossed a string of Biblical deserts. Danny tried to concentrate on the deserts, and how each desert was different from the others, in order to keep his mind off his father's aerogram.

When at last they reached Eilat and settled into their hotel, Danny had dinner with a group of French tourists from the bus. Afterward he tagged along with them to a nightclub, the first he'd ever seen. It was called *The End of the World*, presumably because Eilat was itself at the edge of the world, as seen from Israel. You could write on your post cards, *I've been to The End of the World!* The nightclub was in a basement, and very smoky; and you went down a flight of steps to get to it.

Danny didn't like the French. They weren't much for conversation, at least not with him; they didn't speak Hebrew and wouldn't speak English. He probably wouldn't have come here at all except that he'd felt so restless and wide-awake after dinner, not at all ready for bed. Now that he was here, he didn't relish the prospect of sitting by himself with all these people and not being able to say a word. So it was a great relief as well as a marvelous surprise when, as soon as he'd gotten to the bottom of the steps and was starting to follow the others to a table, he heard a voice cry out: "*Danny! Danny! Over here, lad!*"

Douglas. The bearded Roman Catholic from Scotland, in his mid-twenties, whom Danny had met a few weeks earlier at the Youth Hostel in Jerusalem.

He was with two German girls, whom he introduced as Lisbet and Kristin — though Danny wasn't sure he'd gotten the names right, it was so noisy in here. He was delighted to see Douglas but just a little bit jealous of him, with his girls. Danny had found it as hard to make time with girls in Israel as it was back in America, if not even harder, and the prestige of having won the Bible contest hadn't helped a bit. And here Douglas had *two* of them.

So what was Douglas doing in Eilat?

Pretty much what Danny was doing, actually; except Douglas hadn't come with an organized tour. He and the girls had pooled their money and rented a car. They were staying in a hotel, though not the same as Danny's.

In the same room? Danny wondered. How do you work that out when you travel with two girls?

The nightclub had an excellent Israeli singer. Douglas and the girls drank beer while they listened, sometimes chatting softly among themselves. Danny had coffee. He didn't like the taste of beer, and besides had come to believe it was wrong for people to blur their rational faculties with alcohol. Douglas and the girls smoked, and offered a cigarette to Danny each time they lit up. He always said, No thanks. But that didn't stop them from offering.

Lila, lila, ha-ruach goveret

Lila, lila, homah ha-tzameret ...

Night, night, the wind blows strong;

Night, night, the leaves rustle

It was a lullaby, sung for a baby girl. Danny knew the song; he recognized it the moment the singer began. He imagined the infant snugly blanketed against the wind, her little head on the pillow, mommy and daddy right beside her singing her lovingly to sleep. The tiny girl might be sick, dying. This might be the lullaby that would soothe her into her last sleep; and the thought of this gave the song a sinister and heartbreaking sweetness that was almost beyond his power to endure.

He longed to be home, more than he could remember having longed for anything in his life. Another moment and he'd be in tears. He stood up to leave.

"Danny!" said Kristin. She was the chunky, bosomy one, with the curly blonde hair and the not-so-great complexion. "Where are you going?"

"I think I'll walk back to the hotel," he said, "and turn in."

"Turn *in*?" said Kristin. "You mean, go to *bed*? Danny, it isn't even ten o'clock!"

"I've got a big day tomorrow," he said.

He turned and glanced back, just before he reached the steps that led up out of The End of the World, and was disconcerted to see Kristin still looking at him.

6.

He got back to Herzliya late the next night. In the morning he walked over to the Vereds' apartment to look at his mail. His mind buzzed with hope and dread and anticipation.

Surely there'd be a letter from Leon, with the latest news on what was happening with his mother. Surely it would be good news. It had to be. The new drug would be working. Her swelling would be down; she'd be breathing normally. She'd sleep through the night, just as in the old days ...

Yes. A letter from his father.

Mom isn't doing so well these days ...

He read and reread the aerogram, all but suffocating in futility and rage. As if there might be something in it he didn't already know; something, beneath all the banal and evasive words, that might give him – if not ground for hope, at least some clue to what was really going on.

Nothing. Nowhere.

She's having trouble getting rid of her fluid, and this makes her very uncomfortable and she finds it difficult to eat well. As a result she spends almost all of her time in bed resting. We are thinking of trying a new drug that the doctor has suggested. I'll tell you how we make out.

Hope you're having good weather there ...

At least they hadn't sent a telegram. So it couldn't be all *that* bad, could it? He reassured Dalia Vered, who was hovering around him looking worried, that everything would be all right. He said goodbye to her and took the bus into Tel Aviv.

There in Tel Aviv, later that day, he managed to lose his wallet.

7.

At about the same time Danny was groping in his pocket for his wallet, and realizing with horrified disbelief that it wasn't there – Yitzhak Vered arrived home from work.

"I'm worried about Danny's mother," Dalia told him. It was the first thing out of her mouth after he walked in the door.

"What's the matter with her?" said Yitzhak.

"I don't know. I don't think *Danny* knows. He said something about her being tired. I don't know what he meant by that. I don't have the impression *he* knows what he meant by that."

Yitzhak Vered didn't want to talk right now about Danny's mother. It hadn't been an easy day. The irritable thought crossed his mind that, for a bright boy who was capable of winning a national Bible contest, Danny seemed to know rather little about some rather important subjects.

"Yitzhak," said Dalia. "Do you think we ought to be doing something?"

They stood in the living room. The telephone was on a small table beside them. Yitzhak gestured toward it. "If they need Danny," he said, "they'll phone him. Danny's on vacation in *Israel*. Not on the dark side of the moon."

The daily newspaper lay on the table beside the telephone. The headline caught his eye. More bad news about the economy, not to mention the Syrians. Their American guest was very *nechmad*, as you said in Hebrew: nice, polite, agreeable, eager to please. But one could not carry him always.

"Yitzhak," said Dalia.

He'd picked up the paper, begun to thumb through it. His wife persisted.

"Should we tell him to pick up the telephone?" she said. "Give his parents a call?"

Yitzhak didn't want to think about this. He'd left his mother behind in Czechoslovakia in 1938, when he set out for Palestine as a young boy, younger even than Danny. He never saw her again.

"Dalia," he said. "We've done *real* good for our young Danny, haven't we?"

"Well, of course we have —"

"He's not our family. He's not our friend. He's a friend of a friend, right? Or a *relative* of a friend of a friend, really. Isn't he?"

"But he's here all alone. He doesn't know —"

"We can't make things right for the whole world," said Yitzhak Vered. When his wife didn't answer, he added: "Can we, now?"

8.

How exactly had Danny lost his wallet? Had he left it somewhere while buying a bus ticket, or perhaps an orange soda? Or had somebody stolen it?

Sure, Tel Aviv had its pickpockets, Yitzhak Vered told him. Tel Aviv was *full* of pickpockets.

"Israel is not a country of — *holy saints*, Mr. Danny. Israel is a *country*. Just like any other country."

"Well, I knew that," said Danny. "But still —"

He was going to say he'd been to Philadelphia many times, and had always come back with his wallet in his pocket. Yitzhak would not let him finish.

"You have your *thieves*, in America? You have your *dishonest people*, in America? Sure you do!"

Danny nodded.

"Well, so do we! We have our thieves, here in Israel."

Again Danny nodded. This conversation was not very comforting. The loss of his wallet seemed to have opened inside him a spurting fountain of grief and outrage, which now threatened to flood him. He tried to reassure himself the loss hadn't been so bad. He tried, while Yitzhak droned on, to reconstruct how much he'd been carrying in his wallet. Only when Yitzhak's speech reached its peroration — "And *that*, I am sorry to say, is the way it is!" — did he once again find himself paying attention.

He says he's sorry to say it, Danny thought. But he doesn't sound sorry at all. Triumphant, more like. Just like Dad. He loves to tell you what "reality" is supposed to be, and then rub it in as hard as he can.

Yitzhak looked closely at Danny's face. Still distracted as ever, he thought sadly. Still tight and gray with worry, as though this raw young boy were struggling to track, with his thoughts, not only a missing wallet but an entire missing lifetime.

We've got to stop him from thinking those thoughts. Give them free rein and they'll eat him away from the inside. What's left of him will just collapse into itself. Any moment now.

"Danny," he said softly. "Have you written back to your father? About your mother?"

9.

Karei Deshe Youth Hostel, Israel

Tuesday, August 23, 1966.

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am writing this on the lawn of the Youth Hostel here, where I am sleeping tonight, there being no room inside the hostel. So pardon the handwriting.

Karei Deshe is at the east of the Galilee, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, about three miles from Capernaum. I'd wanted to make it to Capernaum this afternoon, to visit the ruins of the ancient synagogue; but the buses, and their schedules, were not especially cooperative. So I'm spending the night here, and will walk out to Capernaum in the morning.

He'd spent the whole day criss-crossing the Galilee in one bus after another, trying to reach Capernaum. He got to the Youth Hostel at sunset, discouraged and thirsty, to be greeted by a sign announcing there was no room. Now he sat cross-legged on the long soft grass, writing his letter. For a desk, he used the backpack in which he carried his change of underwear. The broad sky above him was almost entirely dark. The great lake they called the Sea of Galilee, which had been visible in the distance, was swallowed up in the darkness. It was only thanks to the flickering light of a not-too-distant bonfire that he was able to see what he was writing.

He wasn't part of the group that sat around the fire singing folk-song type music, having what the kids a few years ago used to call a hootenanny. Yet just by sitting near them he felt semi-included, warmed by their presence and the singing.

After I've seen Capernaum, I'll head off across the Galilee to Haifa, for one day. Then to Jerusalem, for one day. Then back to Tel Aviv and from there to Herzliya; and that'll be pretty much the end of my travelling.

How, exactly, to phrase what he must say now?

I am extremely distressed, he began to write.

The blue aerogram, fire-lit, disappeared from his vision. He saw his mother: blanketed from head to foot in the double bed she'd once shared with his father. She slept, or perhaps was in a coma. The muffled noise of her breathing filled the bedroom. If he were to come into the bedroom right now, she wouldn't know who he was.

I am extremely distressed to learn of Mom's condition, and hope that everything is OK now.

Well, I'll see you soon, anyway.

He'd just written those words when he heard a girl's accented voice saying, in the darkness above him: "Danny? Is that you?" He looked up and there she was: a short, full-bodied young woman whom after a moment he recognized as Kristin – his friend from Eilat, from The End of the World nightclub. Kristin. The German girl, the friend of his friend Douglas, the Roman Catholic from Scotland.

Kristin.

He told her, right after they said their hellos, that he was planning to sleep on the grass because there wasn't any room for him in the hostel. She went and filched a blanket from the hostel office and brought it out to him on the grass.

They sat for hours on that blanket, talking.

About UFOs, mostly. Almost as soon as she sat down with him, Kristin had said, "Well, Danny, what do you do?" He hadn't wanted to say, *I'm a high school student, with one year school left to go*, because it was obvious she was a few years

older than that, and if he told her he was just a high school kid she might get up and leave. So he said: "I'm a UFO investigator. I investigate UFOs."

She was interested. She didn't believe in UFOs, even after he described to her the evidence and told her about the book he'd written. But she had an open mind, she said.

"If you send me your book when it comes out, I'll read it."

He learned a few things about her too. One of the first was that she wasn't German after all. She was Dutch. This came out early in their conversation, when she asked if he'd mind if they moved their blanket away from the bonfire, because she couldn't stand sitting so near all those Germans.

"Germans! Wherever they go they've got to sing. And at the tops of their voices, too."

The hatred and disgust in her voice puzzled Danny. "But aren't you a German?" he asked.

She pulled away from him, glaring. He hadn't realized until then how close they'd been sitting. "Me? A German? Do I *look* German? Do I *sound* German?"

He decided he'd better not try to answer that one.

The people around the fire had earlier been singing Israeli folk songs. But now, sure enough, the words sounded like German. It wasn't a folk song anymore but something more formal, operatic almost. They sang a line or two, then burst into laughter, then started up again.

"They can't even do Beethoven right!" said Kristin.

"That's Beethoven?" said Danny. He couldn't believe it. Beethoven oughtn't to sound like this, like something you could sing around a campfire.

"Of course it's Beethoven. Danny, don't you listen to music?"

It was Schiller's "Ode to Joy," she told him, set to music by Beethoven for the choral movement of his Ninth Symphony. He asked her what the words meant. She translated them, line by line.

“Freude, schöner Götterfunken. That means, Joy, O you beautiful – how do you say it? – spark of the gods. Daughter out of Elysium.

“ – Oh, Danny, it’s just so silly! –

“Drunk with fire, O heavenly one, we enter your shrine. ...”

She didn’t like the “Ode to Joy.” It was romantic scribble – hysterical, pretentious. Just the sort of stuff a German would write. If it weren’t for Beethoven’s marvelous music, she told Danny, no one would even have heard of the “Ode to Joy.”

Yet when she got to the part about how *your magic binds together that which custom has strictly divided, all men become brothers wherever your soft and gentle wing lingers*, her eyes shone as though filled with tears. And he realized by the end of the poem that they were again sitting close together, almost touching, though he hadn’t been conscious of either of them having moved.

10.

They traded addresses. He promised to send her the latest *PURA Bulletin* when he got back to America, and a copy of his book as soon as it appeared. She promised to write back with her comments. She would be honest, she said, and tell him exactly what she thought.

She went inside to sleep. He rolled himself up in the blanket she’d brought him, and tried to sleep.

It was hard, he found, to lie on top of a blanket and at the same time cover yourself with it. The bonfires around him hadn’t died down, though it was past one in the morning. Groups of young travelers sat around the fires singing their folk songs. Some sang in Hebrew, others in languages Danny couldn’t recognize.

Night, night, the wind blows strong.

Night, night, the leaves rustle.

A meteor like a large phosphorescent glob passed across the sky, leaving its luminous trail across the blackness.

He awoke in the cool soft light of the very early dawn. His arms, his feet, his face were wet with the dew of the grass. The flies buzzed around his legs as he dressed. They didn't bother him. A phrase from one of the Psalms, *thine is the dew of thy youth*, kept running through his mind. He'd never felt so splendid in all his life.

11.

Tuesday. The day before he was to leave Israel. With obvious relief, Dalia Vered handed him the letter.

"From your mother?" she said hopefully.

Yes, Dalia. Yes. That *is* Mom's handwriting, on the envelope.

"From my mother," he said.

He tore it open, his heart pounding.

There wasn't any letter inside. Only the *PURA Bulletin*, that she'd sent him by sea mail at the beginning of the summer.

It had taken this long to get here.

"Danny," said Shoshana Vered. "Can you help me?"

At first he didn't hear her. He hadn't moved from the chair into which he'd slumped, although he knew he had to go back to the Rozenshtayns' to begin his packing. Years of weariness lay upon him. He couldn't shake that dreadful image of his mother in her bed: comatose, suffocating in the blankets. The *PURA Bulletin* lay open, unread, in his lap.

“Can you help me, Danny?”

She explained shyly that she’d written out the words of her favorite song, as she thought she’d heard them. Could she read them to him, so he could see if she’d gotten them right? If they made sense in English?

She wouldn’t let him look at the paper. She was too ashamed of her spelling. She insisted that he listen while she read aloud.

“I gave a letter to the postman

He put it in his sack ...”

Elvis and his girlfriend had had a quarrel, a lover’s spat. He wrote to apologize but the postman kept returning his letter. “She wrote upon it, *Return to sender ...*”

Danny explained the words she didn’t know: what a *zone* was, and what *bright and early* meant, and that *spat* and *quarrel* meant the same thing, and both were the same as *argument*. Her small face filled with indignation.

“Why do they say *three* words?” she demanded. “Why isn’t *one* enough?”

Danny tried to explain.

“Say *argument*,” said Shoshana. “Or say *quarrel*. Or say *spat*. Why do they need *all three*?”

“English is a very rich language,” said Danny.

“What’s *that* got to do with it?” said Shoshana.

He looked into her dark eyes and realized that, yes, here was a pretty little Israelian girl, just as Basil and he had talked about in the Stuyvesant Hotel so long ago. With emphasis on the *little*.

Still, she wasn't much younger than Rosa Pagliano had been when he fell in love with her. Not much younger than he'd been when he became a UFO investigator.

If only he could somehow unravel time. *Unspin* time. Roll up the last four years like a winter rug, then start them over again. If only they'd let him do that.

Four years. It didn't seem too much to ask.

And yes, she told him, she'd like very much to ride with them tomorrow, when her Dad took him to the airport to go back to America.