

The limousine pulled up to Barney's gravesite, gaping ready for his coffin. Dirt was piled to one side. "They've covered my son," Selma said, getting out of the car and holding John's arm as she looked around. "I asked them not to." She took a crumpled tissue from her pocket and wiped her eyes.

John hadn't been here before; he wasn't sure why. Selma and Barney drove out to the cemetery once a year on the anniversary of their son Buddy's death. Buddy had been killed in combat in Sicily. Selma and Barney had never asked John to come, but he should have. It would have been the generous thing. He was, after all, the "son" they had taken in via Mainz and Treblinka and all the DP camps that blurred together. The son who had finally landed in New York at aged fifteen.

"This is our family plot," Selma said, bending down to pick up some stones from the side of the road. She clung to John's elbow as they walked across the grass. "My parents." She placed a stone on each marker. "Uncle Sam and Aunt Bertha. Buddy." She shook her head. "I can't even get near that poor boy," she said, eyeing the mound of dirt dug from Barney's grave that blocked Buddy's headstone.

"Let me do it." John took the pebble from her hand and climbed around the mound to Buddy's grave.

"Thanks dear," Selma said, turning to the long line of cars pulling in behind the hearse. "Family means more than family." She smiled sadly, watching clumps of people walking toward them. "Family is who you love and who loves you." She looked up at John. "Barney's favorite expression."

The rabbi came forward and put his arm around her. "Over here, Mrs. Katz." He seated her in a folding chair. "For you, son," he said, seating John next to her. The other mourners gathered behind.

"Friends," the rabbi said. "We are here to bury Barney Katz, beloved husband, father, and friend." He waited for a few stragglers to arrive.

*O, God, full of compassion, Thou who dwellest on high, grant perfect rest beneath the shelter of Thy divine presence among the holy and pure who shine as the brightness of the firmament to the soul of our beloved who has gone to his eternal home. Mayest Thou, O God of Mercy, shelter him forever under the wings of Thy presence, May his soul be bound up in the bond of life eternal, and grant that the memories of our husband, father, and friend's life inspire us to noble and consecrated living. Amen.*

Amen, the crowd murmured.

"Selma asked for this next prayer which Barney liked to recite when he visited his beloved son Buddy's grave," the rabbi said.

John's eyes welled with tears. He was crushed that he hadn't been with Barney and Selma during their visits here.

*At the rising of the sun and at its going down, the rabbi chanted.*

*We remember them, the mourners intoned.*

*At the blowing of the wind and the chill of winter*

*We remember them.* John's recitation was a scant whisper. His first family funeral since Oma's, when he was six years old, twenty-three years ago. Dressed in short pants and freezing, but proud that Papa had let him attend. John was Janko then.

*At the opening of the buds in the rebirth of spring*

*We remember them.* John hadn't been able to bury the rest of his family.

*At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer*

*We remember them.* Papa was shot for violating curfew when Janko was ten.

*At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn*

*We remember them.* Mutter died in the gas chamber.

*At the beginning of the year and when it ends*

*We remember them.* Max died in the gas chamber in Mutter's arms.

*As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,*

*As we remember them.* All the unburied.

*When we are weary and in need of strength*

*We remember them.* The sound of John's memory was the roaring ocean between his past and his present.

*When we are lost and sick at heart*

*We remember them.* Barney Katz.

*When we have joy we crave to share*

*We remember them.* Barney and Selma were John's family and he was theirs.

*When we have decisions that are difficult to make*

*We remember them.* How had he never looked through Mutter's eyes, despite his endless clammy cold sessions in Dr. Roth's office? How was that possible? John was a budding psychiatrist, meant to examine feelings with the care that Mutter selected apples for Rosh Hashanah. Slowly turning them every which way, considering all the angles, holding them to the light to check for bruises. The vision was an anvil that hammered in its blatancy. Of course Mutter hadn't looked up when Janko left with the SS man to sing for the Commandant. Of course not. It was Mutter who insisted that Janko sing. Mutter had willed Janko out of line, little Max squirming in her arms.

John gasped, in thrall to his mother's pain. As if by sucking in his breath, he could take the measure of it.

Poor Mutter. For the impossible unbearable decision that was thrust on her. May she not have suffered; may she not have known that she and Max were condemned to die. John would rather have died with them than sing for their killer. He would rather have joined them in their march forward into death than endure the anguish of survival.

*When we have achievements that are based on theirs*

*We remember them.* No. John would rather live. He would rather fight--every day--to fill the empty spaces with something other than negativity and despair. He would rather sail into Barney and Selma's open arms; he would rather float in their swelling billowing embrace. He would rather fall on his knees in unspeakable gratitude to his mother who, in a

moment of daunting fearsome perspicacity, had faced down the enemy and saved the life of her firstborn. Mutter was victorious. Mutter had won.

*As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,*

*As we remember them.* John remembered his family; he would always remember them. Papa, Mutter, Max. He was the guardian of their memory. The agonizing past, the crowded aching present, the vast uncertain proliferating future, the collapsing imploding chaotic spectrum of time unleashed by tragedy. Without John--son and brother, brother and son—his family were but dust motes swirling in history's cyclone.

He would remember.

*Amen.*