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## ENFOLD ME

SECOND EDITION (Newly Revised and Edited)\*

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## What Others Are Saying about *ENFOLD ME*

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"I was haunted... had to read this incredible book in short doses... so haunting was the premise." ~ *Jewneric*

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"Devastating, stunning, unforgettable... an amazing story, if you dare read it." ~ *Glenda*

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"...brutal... shocking... The book's conclusion will startle...." ~ *San Diego Jewish Times*

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## What Others Are Saying about *GALERIE*

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"...dark and gritty...the story and writing lift it up to the point of being nearly sublime. Buy this book and say goodbye to your family for the weekend, because you will not want to put it down once you get started." ~ *Eric W. Swett*

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"*Galerie* is a gripping read, rich with intrigue from beginning to end. As much a thriller as a Holocaust novel." ~ *BookWormNZ*

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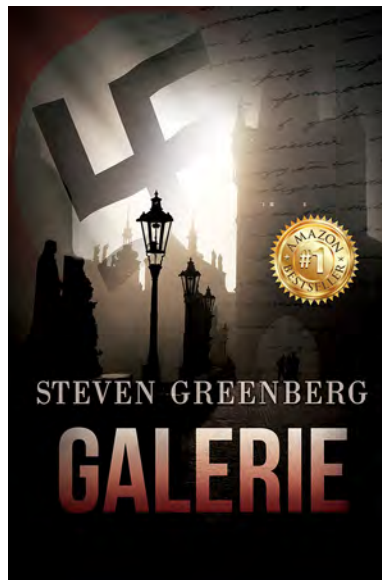
"Imagine Stephen King wrote *Schindler's List*.... *Galerie* manages to break away from the accepted treatment of Europe's darkest hour and explore the horror from an unexpected point of view." ~ *Nikki*

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We're pleased to offer you a Special Sneak Preview at the end of this book, in which you'll enjoy the First 5 Chapters of Steven Greenberg's critically-acclaimed *GALERIE*, which spent several weeks as a #1 Bestseller in 4 countries: US, UK, CA, AU.

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**WINNER:** Pinnacle Book Achievement Award, Fall 2015 – Best Books in Fiction

**FINALIST:** Readers' Favorite Book Award 2016 – Historical Fiction

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“A powerful story... with poignant lessons about choices and consequences.” ~ Readers' Favorite Book Reviews

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“Imagine Stephen King wrote *Schindler's List*...” ~ Nikki

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DEDICATION

*To my father,
who taught me a love of language.*

~~~

*And to my wife,  
who helped me believe that I could put it to good use.*

## Enfold Me Under Your Wing

Haim Nachman Bialik

Enfold me under your wing,  
be my mother, my sister.  
Take my head to your breast,  
my banished prayers to your nest.

One merciful twilight hour,  
hear my pain, bend your head.  
They say there is youth in the world.  
Where has my youth fled?

Listen! another secret:  
I have been seared by a flame.  
They say there is love in the world.  
How do we know love's name?

I was deceived by the stars.  
There was a dream; it passed.  
I have nothing at all in the world,  
nothing but a vast waste.

Enfold me under your wing,  
be my mother, my sister.  
Take my head to your breast,  
my banished prayers to your nest.

## הִכְנִיסִינִי תַּחַת כְּנָפֶךָ

חיים נחמן ביאליק

הִכְנִיסִינִי תַּחַת כְּנָפֶךָ,  
וְהִי לִי אִם וְאָחוֹת,  
וְיֵהי חִיקְךָ מִקְלַט רֹאשִׁי,  
כִּן-תִּפְלוֹתַי הַנִּדְחוֹת.

וּבַעַת רַחֲמִים, בֵּין-הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת,  
שְׁחִי וְאֶגְלַל לְךָ סוּד יְסוּרֵי:  
אוֹמְרִים, יֵשׁ בְּעוֹלָם נְעוּרִים –  
הֵיכַן נְעוּרֵי?

וְעוֹד רַז אֶחָד לְךָ אֶתְוֹדָה:  
נִפְשִׁי נִשְׂרָפָה בְּלֶהָבָה;  
אוֹמְרִים, אֶהְבֶּה יֵשׁ בְּעוֹלָם –  
מֵה-זֹאת אֶהְבֶּה?

הַכּוֹכָבִים רָמוּ אוֹתִי,  
הִיָּה חֵלוֹם – אֵךְ גַּם הוּא עָבַר;  
עֲתָה אֵין לִי כְּלוּם בְּעוֹלָם –  
אֵין לִי דָבָר.

הִכְנִיסִינִי תַּחַת כְּנָפֶךָ,  
וְהִי לִי אִם וְאָחוֹת,  
וְיֵהי חִיקְךָ מִקְלַט רֹאשִׁי,  
כִּן-תִּפְלוֹתַי הַנִּדְחוֹת.

17 February 1905

י"ב אדר, תרס"ה

# ENFOLD ME



**A Novel by  
STEVEN GREENBERG**

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# PROLOGUE

## *From the Journal of Daniel Blum*

*We all live our lives fearing events that could later be defined as “tragic” or “terrible.” As we grow older, the fear of meeting such circumstances intensifies. The fear is no longer abstract. And why should we not be afraid? Why should fear not be as constant a companion now as pride was in the previous century? Why should we not awaken in the middle of the night, reliving tragedies not yet experienced, feeling the loss of that not yet taken, screaming the primordial scream of horrors yet unwitnessed?*

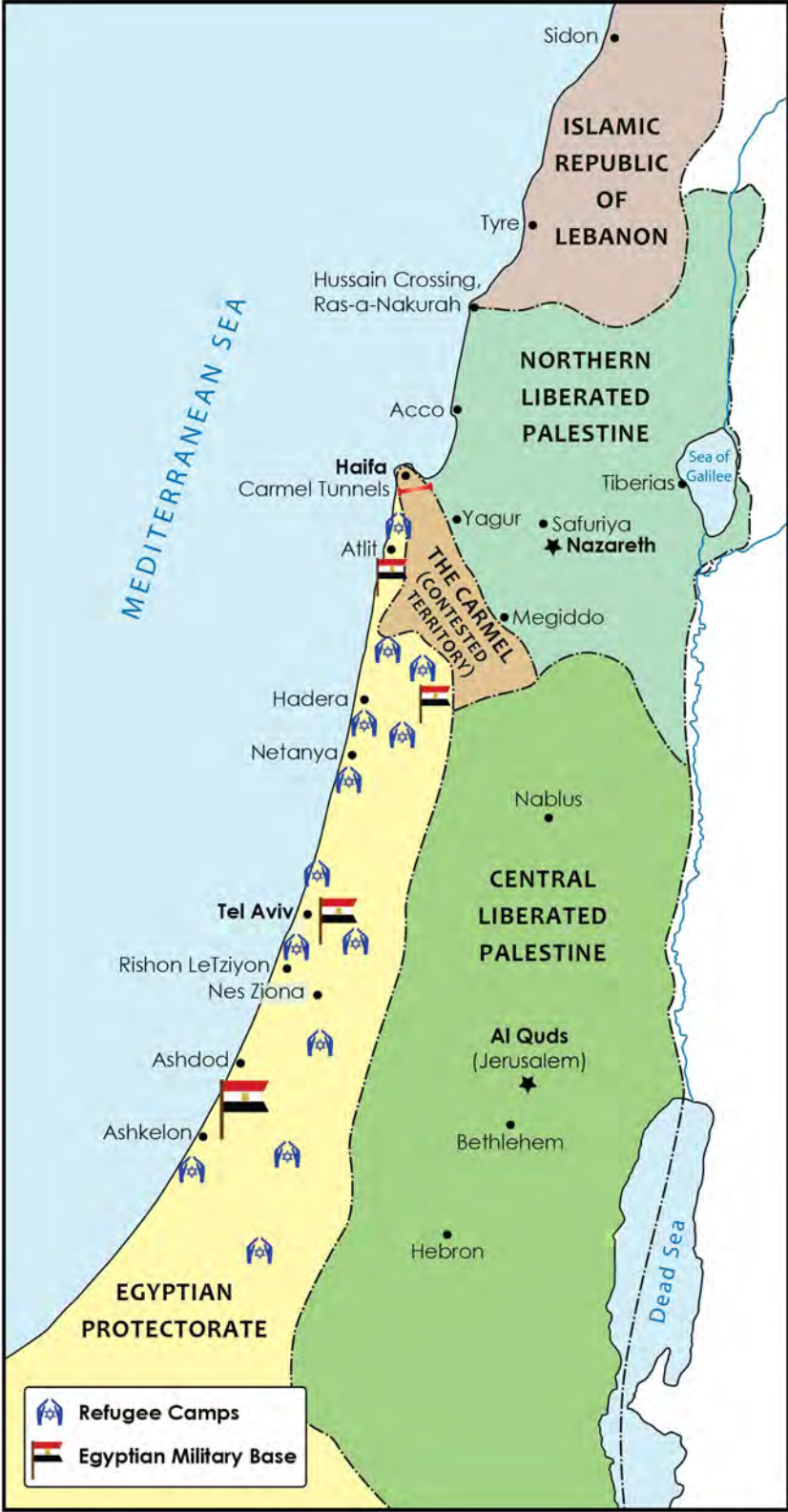
*Fear. It was, and remains, a focus of life in our part of the world – what we have, what we could lose, what others might or did take from us.*

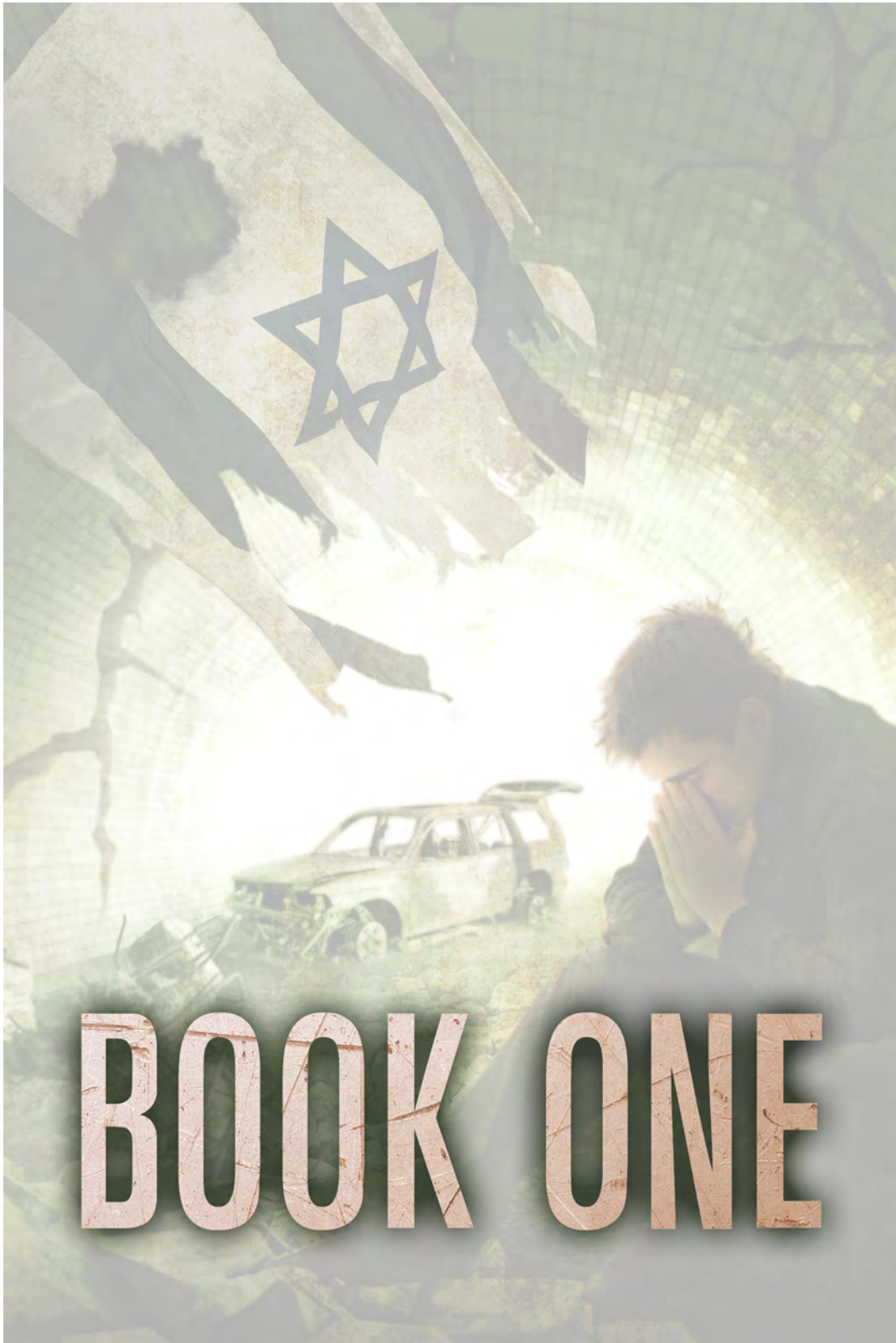
*Fear. It was our constant companion. It woke us up in the morning, adding a spicy pungency to the cardamom in our coffee. We took it to work over blood-stained asphalt that basked calmly as we scurried over it, waiting to claim its next momentarily distracted victim. We packed it in a green duffel when we left for army reserve duty, and brought it home when we returned, to be shared like stale chocolate or mushy ice cream with our children.*

*We savored our fear, nurturing it because it defined us even as it consumed us. We hid behind it when we looked in the mirror, pushing the truth out of our eyes again and again as it flopped, a pesky strand of hair obscuring vision, fogging understanding. It was our collective fig leaf, covering the nakedness of a terrible paradox and concealing our deepest, darkest national truth.*

*A story of Middle East tragedy is contemptibly trite, to be skimmed over, glanced at, forgotten. Until, of course, that tragedy becomes yours.*







# BOOK ONE

# CHAPTER 1

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## AFTER THE FALL

COMMUNIQUÉ

TO: IRF HQ, Carmel

FROM: Asset #483

RE: Nazareth Trip Report

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Traveled round-trip from home to market in Nazareth today via public bus. Dhimmi bus running only sporadically, so I waited for four hours while three separate air-conditioned Muslim buses came through the station. Driver no longer accepted NIS – had to exchange for PD with another passenger. Bus stopped multiple times to allow Muslim vehicles to pass. Note that Dhimmi inter-city foot travel not allowed.

Heavy Iranian Revolutionary Guard (RG) presence at primary junctions, especially at entrance to capital – two Tosans, two Cascavels, one T-55, and approximately 35 fully-outfitted RG infantry in plain sight. Also noted increased levels of Hamas troops. They were actually doing the work while the Iranians watched from defensive positions. The Iranians are apparently letting Hamas take the chances.

Hamas soldiers stopped the bus at the roadblock, forced all passengers to disembark. We were lined up, armbands and papers checked one by one by the Hamas officer, who also collected the *Jizya Sagheerya* (the “little Jizya”), delivered with the traditional slap in the face for the Christian and Jewish Dhimmis, which this officer seemed to especially enjoy. One passenger, apparently unused to the process, looked the officer in the eyes defiantly after the slap, and was rewarded with a rifle butt to the forearm – the sound of the bone cracking was a great source of amusement for both the Iranian and Hamas troops.

Within the capital, rebuilding is evident everywhere. Electricity seems to have been restored to many parts of the city, judging from the lighted stores and music playing. Orange-shirted Dhimmi gangs were still clearing rubble, but these have been supplemented by more skilled Muslim laborers since my last visit. Multiple fixed cranes towering over all – some still carrying Hebrew names of construction companies. Work underway to lower the dome of the Church of the Annunciation, to ensure that it’s less prominent than the neighboring mosques, as required under the new Dhimma laws.

Bus passed by the government compound, surrounding the former courthouse, which has been turned into the parliament. The *Shariyya* court convenes in an adjacent building. Renovations here are 95% complete, by rough estimate. High walls topped with razor wire have been completed around the compound.

Stores seem to be well-supplied, with many goods clearly of Iranian origin.

Streets have fewer cars than pre-Fall, but more than my last visit. Cars range from pre-Fall models to Iranian-produced Khodros. More red, green, and black Northern Liberated Palestinian (NLP) vehicle license plates seen – the Ministry of Transportation’s licensing program is in high gear. No yellow Israeli plates seen. Street signs all changed to Arabic. Constant patrols by RG Cascavels – one armored car goes by at least every 10 minutes on the main thoroughfares.

Dhimmi market was packed. Trading between Dhimmis took place standing in the allotted corner, without stalls or even tables, which are still limited to Muslims. Predominant currency is PD, with some NIS still seen in trade with Muslims only. Hamas patrols constantly within the market. No armband or eye contact violations witnessed, meaning either the soldiers were more lax today, or the population is getting used to the restrictions.

One security forces arrest did take place. An Iranian Khodros pulled up directly across from the market, its three occupants dressed as Dhimmis (western clothes and orange armband). Two got out, pulled out Tondar submachine guns and ran into a shop. They dragged out the storekeeper and shoved him into the car, which left in a hurry. Overheard non-Dhimmi passersby mutter “collaborator” in Arabic. Return trip uneventful.



Safuriya
Northern Liberated Palestine
Daniel

~~~

*From the Journal of Daniel Blum*

*A boy walks in his green yard, luscious Kentucky bluegrass massaging gawky bare feet, budding maple leaves overhead, azure sky inviting. He looks around in slow motion, taking in earth and sky in giant gulps, like a long drink from a milkshake, unstoppable despite the inevitable brain freeze. He smiles and starts running to the East. His size seven impressions glow lighter green in the verdant carpet, spaced farther and farther apart as he picks up speed. Then, as the hint of his smile morphs into an insuppressible grin, he looks around again and soars nonchalantly upwards.*

*It is flying at its purest, a natural extension of movement, glorious and effortless. The sun warms his winter-pale back, and the air is like a crisp swim on a steamy August afternoon. The wind rushes past his ears, creating a symphony of white noise. He does not exult in his ability, even though he knows it to be singular, yet he understands intuitively that it defines his uniqueness.*



His dreams used to start like that, back then.

Today, less than a year after the Fall, his dreams no longer involved flying. They were blurry, searing, burnt orange against sterile white, dust-choked and maddening with the sounds of breaking tree limbs. He could usually remember the dreams, and had become used to waking with numbness in the palms of his hands and an asthmatic tightness in his chest that left him feeling as though drawing a deep breath would burst something critical. And the familiar burning below.

Daniel had started almost every day like this since the Fall. For the last six months, he’d stepped out the front door of the empty house every morning, seeking the morning paper in his sleep-fogged habit. He’d survey the scene, recall again that no paper would be arriving, and think: *It shouldn’t look like this. How could it possibly look like this?*



It should have been a Munchian nightmare — a flaming orange-swirled sky blocking a feeble sun, which, sapped by grief, would lack the fortitude to light the scene. There should have been no green, no flowers, no dogs frisking in the sunshine, no people.

Ten months after the Fall, Daniel stepped off the front porch. The peeling paint and overgrown hedges were testimony more to absence than to apocalypse, and he was again struck by the excruciating normalcy of the scene.



## *From the Journal of Daniel Blum*

*Dear Alon and Liron, (and Mommy),*

*Finally, I can write to you! I found a way to connect to the Internet, and here I am, alive and well and missing you SO MUCH!*

*It seems like FOREVER since I've seen you! It's been a long time since we said goodbye, and you hurried to get to the gate on your way to visit Grandma and Grandpa. I was worried that you wouldn't make the flight, but that's me, remember? "Why wait to worry?"*

*And now, I don't even know where to start. So much has changed here. And with me. The biggest, most important thing is that YOU'RE NOT HERE! Ha-ha. But I'm glad to know you're safe at Grandma and Grandpa's, since the changes here weren't really for the better. I guess you know that from watching news there. I haven't heard real news for so long, or heard from you for so long either! I'm sure you're thinking of me, though, and probably worrying about me — at least until now.*

*So, I'll tell you all about the time since you left, but first, you'll never guess how I'm connecting to the Internet to send this. A couple weeks ago, wandering around the fields outside of Tzipori, I found a wrecked army Hummer with a satellite communications pack inside. It's like a hard-side suitcase, with everything you need for satellite communications — I used one once, in the army, way back when. It took me a while to get it home, and even more time to figure out how to charge it up and use it. I still haven't figured out how to receive messages or download mail — too bad I didn't find a manual with it — but I can send messages to you. I'm pretty sure you'll be able to receive them, since you're safe with Mommy and Grandma and Grandpa.*

*I guess you're curious about life here. The truth is that, although it was a bit scary at first, things have calmed down a lot. In many ways, it's become like a big camping adventure, just like we did that summer. Remember? Like camping, the stuff that's close to you is the most important stuff, and what's closest to me these days is our house and neighborhood. It's pretty much my whole world, except for the market in Nazareth, which I'll tell you about later.*

*The biggest problem now is the simple stuff like food and water, which isn't so simple, as it turns out. I'm so glad we enlarged our garden last year, Alon. It was a good start, and since you left I made it even bigger. Since the Fall (that's what we've taken to calling it), the stores — the ones that are open, since a lot of people aren't around — have a lot less food, and it all costs a lot more money. So, much of what I eat is stuff that I grow. It's a good thing I started this garden before I ran out of food, because you can't rush plants. What I can't grow, I trade for at the big market in Nazareth, which is now the capital city of Northern Liberated Palestine (that's what they're calling the area our town is in). Since there's no work now, and no banks, this is how I get by. I'm not going to get rich from it, but I'm keeping healthy and the house is OK.*

*Another thing that's like camping is water. No more long showers, or even short showers, that's for sure! No more water from the taps at all, in fact. The only water I have now is what I carry from the spring. It's not looking so clean these days (I filter it before I drink it), and I share it with the garden plants, so you can bet I'm careful with it! I even save my bath water, and give it to the plants.*

*Oh, and you won't believe where I'm going to the bathroom, either — in our yard! I dug a deep hole*

*in the corner by the olive tree, and built a bench with a hole, and a fence around it. This certainly makes sitting down more comfortable, but it can't cover the smell. And don't even ask about toilet paper!*

*Then there's power: there isn't any – no electricity from the grid. I rewired our solar panels to supply the house, but this is illegal since I'm what's called a Dhimmi (more about that later), so I can't use the lights and stuff that could be noticed. Instead, I use it to run my laptop, and to recharge the batteries for the SatCom pack.*

*This letter has gotten long, so I'll save some stuff for the next one. I really do think of you ALL THE TIME. You are in my head all day. Maybe 50 times a day – often at the strangest times – I stop and wonder what you're doing at that very moment, so far away, and I feel this big hurt in my stomach from missing you. Still, it's better you're somewhere safe, where you've got lots of food and water, and a school, and your Mommy, Grandma, and Grandpa to look after you. It's my job now to keep our house safe, so no hurt can ever, ever get in again, and to make sure the day will come soon when all this will change, and we'll all be back where we belong.*

*Please be extra nice to Mommy, and give a hug and kiss to Grandma and Grandpa for me. I'll write more very soon, and I can't wait until one of your letters gets through to me!*

*I love you with all my heart,  
Dad*



Daniel rose early to another incongruous, bird-chirping spring morning. He shook off the now-familiar constriction in his chest and rolled out of bed into the silence of the empty house, and the unnaturally quiet street.

Even before the Fall, Tzipori – now Safuriya – had been a quiet place. “A place for families, a place for life,” the neighborhood developer’s marketing material had prophesized. Pastoral beauty, fresh air, quality education, proximity to primary transportation routes, and a well-apportioned house – the move to the north from the apartment in central Nes Ziona had been smoothed, if not completely eased, by the joy of waking up without horns or the smell of diesel exhaust. The commute for Daniel to Nes Ziona had been significant, but telecommuting one or two days a week had made it bearable – catching up on documentation, correspondence, and journal reading, instead of on his feet in the lab.

The fact that Tzipori had such a rich history had not been lost on Daniel and Shira, and only served to strengthen their attraction to the place. Named, according to the Babylonian Talmud, because it “is perched on the top of the mountain like a bird,” Tzipori was first settled by Jews in the First Temple period, several hundred years before the birth of Christ. Conquered by the Romans, pagans, Byzantines, and Crusaders – and completely destroyed and rebuilt in an earthquake in 363 CE – Tzipori had remained an important Jewish city until its decline following the Arab conquest, when it was renamed Safuriya. Abandoned by its Arab residents during Israel’s War of Independence in 1948, the new collective farming village, *Moshav*, of Tzipori was established in 1949.

*Tzipori, Safuriya, Tzipori, Safuriya... perhaps we should have created some sort of revolving sign for the entrance, Daniel thought. It would have saved time and effort.*

Situated at the end of a cul-de-sac, hidden behind a tall hedge, Daniel and Shira’s home had mostly avoided looting during the Terror, and was structurally undamaged in the *Za’azua*, the Shakeup – the quake which had preceded the Fall. The house, which sat on half an acre of land, was built of commonplace local materials – concrete, thick composite building blocks, ceramic floor tiling – and had white aluminum windows with integral louvered sun screens, and a red clay tile roof.

The house, the yard, the pain.... What else was there?

Daniel had been able to trade some household supplies for staples and he still had some cash. In preparation for his weekly trip to the market in Nazareth, he pulled on worn jeans, a t-shirt, and orange Dhimmi armband. He re-counted his now-defunct New Israeli Shekels, and now-illegal US dollars, with a vague hope that the money fairy had perhaps visited in the night and added to his rapidly dwindling supply.

She hadn't.

Currency, though not a must in what had become a largely barter economy, remained a nice fallback. He hadn't managed to trade in his Shekels for newly-minted Palestinian Dinars, bills emblazoned with pictures of Haj Amin Al-Husseini, Yassir Arafat, and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Yet he could still use the Shekels to purchase from Muslims, who could exchange them at the original one-to-one rate that the government of Northern Liberated Palestine had offered to both local consumers and world markets.

He also had his memories – so many, and so clear they brought tears to his eyes. He would round a corner of the yard and expect to see Alon digging canals in his favorite corner, crafting intricate earthworks reinforced by sticks carefully designed to stop advancing plastic armies and Matchbox tanks. He would crest the stairs and turn to see Liron in her room, where he used to interrupt doll parties on her bed – heterogeneous parties wherein Barbies, Bratz, ratty stuffed dogs, and amorphous convenience store-bought toy animals occupied the same social stratum.

At night, the memories of Shira came. Even *in absentia*, she reigned over the house, permeating its nooks and crannies like the lingering scent of freshly-baked cookies in a cold oven. She had been the stitching that held the fabric of the home together, the organizer, the cook, the driver, the counselor, and the medic. Yet his most frequent memories of Shira were more intimate – the side of her neck where he nuzzled, the weight of her breasts during pregnancy, her inner thigh bathed in white Galil moonlight, the exact spot where, when he licked, she would curl away in giggles.

They'd met during his molecular biochemistry post-doctoral work at Hebrew University in the autumn of 1995.



Seeing him light up at the table next to hers in the campus coffee shop, and then search absent-mindedly for a place to rest the Marlboro, she met his eye briefly, gestured offhandedly toward her own ashtray, and turned her attention back to the Emily Bronte novel she was reading in English. Then, as if her mind caught some detail, some scent, some intangible vibe from him that took a moment to register, but then triggered an overpowering urge, she turned back toward him over her shoulder.

The image of that glance over her shoulder – straight full dark hair whipping back, youthful brown eyes flecked with green probing, questioning, silently interrogating, evaluating – was burned indelibly in his mind.

"Smoking can kill you, you know," she said in Hebrew, facing him and ashing her own Time cigarette into the stainless steel ashtray.

"So I've heard. It's all the buzz in the biology lab these days," he replied without hesitation and in a perfect deadpan. "Something about a Surgeon General report.... I was never really good with scientific details." He smiled, gesturing down at the pile of clearly scientific books stacked on the cluttered table.

"Me, I'm banking on a suicide bomber to get me long before the smoking does." She winked.

1995 had seen the continuation of the wave of Palestinian terrorist bombings, which had started with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. The most recent, a bus bombing in Ramat

Gan, had killed six Israelis.

"I'm Shira, by the way, and judging by your accent, your name is either Steve, or Jesse, or... wait... Ron. Am I right?" She mimicked his American-accented Hebrew, dropping her deep-throated R's in favor of sounds that originated closer to the palate.

He fixed her with a mock-offended stare. "I'm very pleased to meet you. My name is Shmuel David Ben Miriam V'Nissim, and I have immigrated to our esteemed country from the United States," he said, Hebrew and accent flawless. Then, reverting to a parody of Southern Indiana drawl, he smiled and continued in English. "But ya'll can call me Bubba."

He'd been spending long days, and many nights, in his Givat Ram campus laboratory. They were working on a targeted virus-borne gene therapy for Sertoli cells. "Huh?" was Shira's logical response to this news, so he explained the basics. As he talked, she watched him in the smoky campus coffee shop, her head cocked slightly to one side, giving him what they later came to call the "quizzical chicken" look.

Daniel explained that they were working to "train" a virus to identify a certain type of cell that played an important role in the male reproductive system, Sertoli cells. Once the virus identified and bonded with the Sertoli cells, it could deliver its payload – genetic material that would modify the cell's DNA and change its core functioning. The hope was that this type of therapy, facilitated by *his* delivery mechanism, could someday alleviate fertility problems in some men, enabling them to have children.

"The implications are astounding," he gushed. "And, if you pair my targeting mechanism with other mechanisms, or broaden it to target other specific types of cells, or both, the possibilities are endless. We're talking about personalized gene therapy here, of creating fertility treatments that are customized at the genetic level for an individual, or even a group of individuals. Imagine a vaccine optimized for the exact demographic it's administered to, or gene therapy that eliminates devastating ethno-specific diseases, like Tay-Sachs."

"So, what, you're like this crazed ethnic baby maker? Where did the obsession come from? Were you a stork in a former life?" she quipped with a sarcastic, piercing gaze.

"Crazed, absolutely. Baby maker, not yet. Maybe someday." He looked up and winked back. "But yes, I think that fertility is a crucial issue, and one that's of particular relevance in our neck of the woods." He gave a broad sweep of his arm, almost knocking his coffee cup to the floor in the process. "We live in a small and crowded country, in which demographics are a problem. Correct? Well, I think that as our exposure to ambient pollutants increases – mobile phone radiation, electrical wires, chemicals in the environment – we're going to see fertility become an even bigger issue. The more we understand of the human genome, the more targeted we can be with this type of therapy. I mean..." He lowered his voice somewhat. "This type of therapy could potentially impact this country in some very fundamental ways. Can you see that?"

"Got it. Crazed *Zionist, do-gooder* baby maker. Need more of those in the world." Then she dropped the sarcastic act and smiled warmly. "I respect your commitment to Israel, Daniel, but aren't the implications a bit scary, if you think about them?"

She was right, of course. Any gene therapy could be misapplied. Yet this was not in the forefront of Daniel's mind. He had his eye on the science, period. He expected to move to Nes Ziona, the most prestigious biological research institute in the country, where he could get virtually unlimited funding, be on the cutting edge of science in a country already recognized as an innovator in the fertility field, and simultaneously play a role in building a stronger Jewish nation. There wasn't a downside.

"So, Dr. Stork, do you have to wear a condom to work, or what?" Shira asked saucily,



bringing him back to the present.

He smiled.



The memory lingered as Daniel stuffed his few remaining barter items and cash into his backpack. He left the house, locking the heavy steel-reinforced door behind him. Exiting the gate to the yard, he casually turned the loose name plate, "*The Blum Family Live Here: Daniel, Shira, Alon & Liron,*" upside down—a pre-arranged neighborhood sign that he wasn't at home, should any disturbance be noticed in the house.

"You would have made a good hermit," Shira used to say, with her quirky but endearing way of pronouncing "hermit" as "hairmeat." Her English was fluent but Hebrew-accented, nonetheless. She had a point.

Daniel had always needed his space in order, and worked tirelessly to make it so, whether unpacking within a day after each of their countless moves, taking charge of the housecleaning, or following the children around straightening up until they were old enough to start making good-natured fun of him, after which he simply did the same thing, just not while they were looking. Home to Daniel was a refuge from a world inherently threatening, a microcosm of control in an uncontrollable universe.

Now, that microcosm lacked running water, electricity, propane gas for cooking, or any other municipal services.

He'd come back after nine foggy months away to a lonely, dirty, but mercifully intact house on a largely deserted street. Only a few neighbors remained in the new section of Tzipori—renamed to its Arabic version Safuriya—whereas many older houses were occupied by descendants of the former Muslim and Christian residents, who had fled the village in 1948 to Lebanon, or by repatriated Muslims who had the connections or cash to have a whole house assigned to them by the local Hamas satrap.

For reasons clear only to the provincial governor, the authorities had not yet seized the houses in new Tzipori for returnee resettlement, as they had done in many of the surrounding, formerly Israeli, towns.

"I just don't understand it. It's like they forgot us," Moshe had said, his eyes darting back and forth suspiciously, as if he expected Hamas soldiers to show up any moment to expropriate his house. Moshe was his only remaining neighbor on the street. "My best guess is that they're holding out for more money from some rich Palestinians, before they kick us out."

Daniel had thrown himself into the art of getting by. A long-time fan of Swiss Family Robinson-style self-made gadgetry, a veteran camper, and master of Israel Defense Forces improvisation from his army service, he had contrived workarounds for many of the daily challenges presented by this brave new world.

For electricity, a re-wiring of the house's solar panels worked wonderfully. The photovoltaic panels, widely adopted throughout Israel during the years prior to the Fall, were originally wired to provide electricity to the countrywide grid. Now the new government was reaping the benefits of this investment, enjoying free electricity without the hassle and expense of maintaining power plants, which were largely inoperable following the *Za'azua*, in any case. The only catch was that Daniel, as a Dhimmi, was not entitled to electricity. So, even following his pirate rewiring—which would cost him an arm, if not his life, were it discovered—he could only use the electricity covertly and carefully. Moreover, lacking a battery system, he only had power during the daylight hours.

Water was another challenge. A 500-liter water tank, snagged from an abandoned field and scoured of fertilizer residue, sat on an upper porch of the house. Daniel filled it once or twice a

week, hauling jerry cans by wheelbarrow from the local spring, which was thankfully running well, if a bit brackish. He lifted the jerry cans with an improvised block-and-tackle scavenged from a construction site, pouring the water into the black tank's opening. It was beyond backbreaking—agonizing was a more accurate description.

*Now who's the Biblical 'carrier of water'? he would often muse.*

Through a hole knocked in the porch wall, three black pipes ran down the outside of the house to the kitchen sink, the first-floor bathroom, and the vegetable garden irrigation system.

Daniel had carefully planned the vegetable garden on the southern side of the house, where the Middle Eastern sun was strongest. He felt an earthy farmer's pride as he checked the thriving, yet young, plants basking in the spring morning sunshine.

Brownish-red drip irrigation lines marched in hungry 20-meter columns, gravity-fed for ten minutes twice daily via a manual valve mounted on the house wall. He'd spaced the cucumber, tomato, and green pepper plants, supplemented by potatoes, carrots, onions, and lettuce, to line up exactly with the integral drippers in the irrigation lines. A square compost container was fairly exploding with black loamy gold after being left unattended for so long, and this he spread regularly at the base of each plant. At the peak of its production, Daniel figured that the little plot would provide almost enough for his needs.

Turning again to the garden, he reflected that it was more than a source of sustenance. It was a symbol—a symbol of hope, of the force of his will. It was also a crucial part of the two-pronged mission he'd set out for himself after the Fall: maintaining the home until Shira and the children could return; and continuing his covert work with the Israel Resistance Forces, with whom he had spent the winter months in the dank caves of the Carmel.



## *From the Journal of Daniel Blum*

*I am a good soldier, and a good soldier knows that the mission comes first.*

*It's only been six months, and the nine months in the Carmel could have been a million years ago—the details eye-wateringly bright, like an over-exposed instamatic still, yet out of focus. Faces, voices—I remember these clearly. And the fear. And the rapacious hunger. And the exhilaration of the hilly country road stomach-in-your-throat joyride, topping a rise at 100 kilometers per hour and meeting hope, followed by a tailbone-crunching bottom-out in gullies of utter despair.*

*For posterity's sake—as it is for posterity that I write this journal—I should explain that I am a soldier in the Israel Resistance Forces. I'm a sergeant, which is a promotion from my Israel Defense Forces (IDF) rank of corporal. The IRF formed last year, during the period now known as the Terror.*

*The last of the IDF forces had retreated, and the Joint Islamic Forces (JIF) swept over the northern part of what was so recently Israel, pouring in unstoppable waves out of Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Iran. And, of course, our saviors the Egyptians came up from the south.*

*It had not taken much. The final US pullout from Iraq had left a vacuum, and something always fills a vacuum. In this case, it was Iran.*

*A perfect storm of mitigating factors ensued: the worst recession in a generation; several breakthroughs in alternative energy in the United States; a shift in world oil sourcing away from the volatility of Middle Eastern reserves; an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale with its epicenter in Rosh HaAyin, east of Tel Aviv; an American administration without excessive sentiment for the plight of what had proven to be a thorn in the side of its foreign policy efforts, lacking the commitment or wherewithal to make a significant impact in the regional peace process; a US Right busy consolidating its credit card debt; and a US Left busy pressuring the administration to make headway on the peace talks, at any cost. Command and control had remained intact, but with 75% of forces digging through rubble in*

*search of relatives, the IDF was on its knees.*

*The vicious knockout blow – in the works for years, everyone knew it – was quick to come, but not painless. Surprisingly, they left private property and much of the population largely alone, at first. Then, they started rounding up men over the age of 18, but they didn't just murder them....*

*With Shira and the children out of the picture, there really hadn't been a question. I stuffed what I could into a backpack and set out one night overland toward the Carmel, some 20 kilometers to the southwest. They'd said that some former IDF officers had regrouped in the caves of the Carmel mountain range, which was now a giant no-man's-land – trapped between the JIF, which had advanced as far as Yokneam and the Haifa Port on the north side of the range, and the Egyptian army, which had advanced to Zichron Yaakov and southern Haifa on the south side. Sensing the vacuum as Israeli control reeled, and fearing JIF troops on the Sinai border, the Egyptians had moved quickly north in a hastily-effected but quite successful mad dash, taking the entire center of the country in a matter of two weeks.*

*The Egyptians brilliantly positioned themselves as saviors rather than invaders, which kept insurgency down. It was a protectorate, not an occupation. Tel Aviv and surroundings were quick to adapt to the sight of Egyptian soldiers in the streets, and in the aftermath of the quake, people were busy just trying to feed themselves and their families, or find some way – any way – to leave. No one knew what was going to happen, but nobody was picking up a gun to change it, either. The silent majority remained silent, preferring sustenance to resistance.*

*The rumors had said that the resistance movement was being aided in part by the Egyptians. I left at first dark that night. I'd been alone in the forest at night before, but never with someone possibly hunting me. Vive la difference.*

*It had been slow and nerve-racking, but it actually wasn't that hard to avoid detection, and only took two nights. I spent the daylight hours hidden in a thick rosemary hedge – sleeping and brushing ineffectively at the insects. Who knew there were so many bugs in one damn bush? They worked maddeningly from both sides – a Chunnel under bi-national construction – down from the nape of my neck. They traversed my back and burrowed to meet their colleagues who had broken through the pants leg. Then they proceeded up through parts better left unscratched.*

*Following Road 75 southwest, I managed to avoid crossing any really wide roads, until the junction with Road 70. Four dauntingly wide and utterly exposed lanes of asphalt were all that separated me from the resistance forces.*

*I found a pipe – a pitch black, slime-choked pipe that smelled like a gourmet dish of fetid swamp simmered with eau de carrion and a dash of cow flatus. It was originally intended for jackals, rabbit, turtles and other sub-highway wildlife crossings.*

*That night, Israelis were the only wildlife out and about.*

*I had to crawl to get to the shoulder-wide entrance, and a curve somewhere in the middle of the pipe prevented me from seeing the other end. I used to go caving in college, and knew the leap of faith required before crawling headfirst into a dank, muddy hole. I couldn't allow myself the moment of pause to consider what it would be like to be stuck, or I'd never do it. I just had to act.*

*So I crawled into the pipe. About halfway through, I ran into an obstruction.*

*His name was Shalom, and he later claimed that from the moment my head collided with his backside, I remained up his asshole for eight months. He had a point.*

*Shalom Herskovitz was 45, but had the back of a 75-year-old, the teeth of an 18th-century English peasant, and more hair sprouting out the nape of his shirt than from the top of his head. He smoked two packs of Marlboro reds a day when he could get them, ate three hardboiled eggs for breakfast chased by thick black-mud coffee, and had spent his civilian days tending the chicken house built by his father. He was also a full colonel in the IDF Reserves, a decorated veteran of the Second Lebanon War, and had completed Division Commander training just before the Fall. And he was a former resident of Hosh'Aya, just up the road from Tzipori – a neighbor, and a grizzled Ubermensch.*

*I don't use the term *Urbemensch* lightly. Nietzsche said that man is something which ought to be overcome. Herskovitz had overcome his humanity – I see that now.*

*This man had lost his home, his two sons killed in the Golan, and his wife in a car accident, driving back from one son's funeral. He had overcome the frailty of grief, had channeled pain into action. He was driven – we were up every morning before dawn, out every afternoon on ambush, collecting food in the interim. Driven, but not by hate. Yes, he hated the Iranians, and the Hamas, and the Hezbollah for what they'd done. But in everything we did during that time, we retained the moral high ground.*

*And then, one morning, quite by surprise, Herskovitz called me to his "office" – a corner of the cave we'd been sharing where crates had been piled up to create a semblance of privacy. The intel from the north was sketchy, he said. They needed boots and eyes on the ground. They knew my house was intact, and I was to go back, to pretend I'd been away in the hospital, recovering from wounds suffered during the Terror. The neighbors wouldn't think twice, nor would the authorities. Nobody kept track of these things. There was no shortage of refugees trying to return home, and they could supply me with false release papers from the Nazareth Hospital.*

*So I went back, just showed up at the house one day. Not many neighbors left to notice, anyhow. They had the SatCom pack left near my house, and provided me with the electronic equivalent of a dead-drop box, to which I was to send reports several times weekly.*

*That's what I've been doing: my mission. I am a soldier, and the mission comes first.*

## CHAPTER 2

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# THE JIZYA

Safuriya, Northern Liberated Palestine

Daniel

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From the Journal of Daniel Blum

It was a warm summer night, and dark clouds started to slither across the moon, which had reared its angry orange head hours before. This was the first place I'd found to stop. A flashing green neon sign announced "Roadhouse – Food, Spirits." I parked the bike, took off my helmet, and slowly tried to work the crick out of my neck, born of 12 hours on the Harley. To call the wooden structure that housed this fine establishment "rickety" would have been a compliment. The long spring attached to the screen door slammed it shut with a metallic twang behind me. The place was dimly lit in a casual way, as if to suggest I'd checked reality at the door when I came in. That was just fine and dandy, since this place existed independent of time and space. It reeked of cigarettes, spilled beer, furniture polish, and sweat.

The bartender glanced up from the heavy, hardbound novel he was reading. His unkempt hair, with long bushy sideburns, framed spectacle-rimmed eyes that took about a tenth of a second to evaluate, classify, and become bored with my presence.

The only patrons, two women seated at the bar and strategically placed in semidarkness, sipped their drinks somewhat uncomfortably, as if they'd just come to a lull in their conversation and were anxiously scanning their memories for something of mutual interest to talk about next. Their eyes, unlike the bartender's, did not seem to get bored with me at all. In fact, these eyes – all four of them – were tactile organs, hungrily touching my forehead, neck, chest, and points south. They were in their late 30s, maybe well-preserved early 40s, with long brunette hair that hid their faces – not a hint of gray visible through decades of hair color sediment. One wore a miniskirt that all but said 'Open for Business' on the front. The other wore jeans showing off curves that slid right into the horizon, heavy breasts swelling slightly as she leaned forward to ash her cigarette into a glass ashtray on the bar.

I sat a couple of stools down from them.

They both turned their heads to look at me, and then, giving each other a little nod of coy assent, smoothly slid off their barstools and started toward me.

Something stirred, and I shifted uncomfortably on my own bar stool.

"Oooh, look, Betty, a man," one of them said, drawing out the word "man" so that it ended in a breathy whisper: "may-un."

"Ooh, I do believe you're right, honey, it is a man," the other answered huskily.

They stepped out of the semidarkness, and the scene shifted. The detail in the room softened and grayed, as if an eraser had been drawn lightly over the charcoal sketch atmosphere, smearing but adding mystique at the same time. The light sharpened, shadows pronounced in a way never seen in the real world. The excitement of the women slinking toward me grew, anticipation washing over me in waves until the very second when their faces emerged into the light, and they both morphed into hideous cartoon caricatures of women – curves shifting to all the wrong places, faces contorted in fury, mouths full of

rotting teeth, snarling.

One of them drawled, "You are a may-un, aren't you, honey? Come on over here and show us who's the may-un!" She tried to make her voice honey-smooth, but only succeeded in emitting a screechy challenge. Then, in perfect synchronization, with the rot of the grave on their breath and throats expunging vile phlegm, and with claw-like hands outstretched, they both chanted, "Who's the may-un now? Who's the may-un, now? Who's the may-un, now?"



As the previous night's dream faded, a chill dawn rose over Nazareth. Sharp, wispy orange beaks of clouds pecked the carcass of the landscape bloody. All that remained of the bus stop was an old sign pole, the sign removed, the pole painted sloppily in orange oil-based paint. A few rocks that had been caught in the orange deluge moped stickily at the base of the pole.

Daniel trudged up the stony embankment through dust-encrusted Rosemary bushes with multicolored plastic bags nesting in tangled branches, and over shards of broken glass that gleefully caught and played with the morning sunlight. The asphalt lay like a grey skillet, still cool in the viscous morning fog, but waiting, biding its time until the sun heated it into a grease-splattering conduit, sizzling at the feet or tires of its conveyances.

He looked at his watch, a cheap digital thing he'd traded for in the market last week, and approved his excruciatingly consistent, yet clearly pointless, promptness in arriving at the Dhimmi bus stop on Road 79, the Nazareth highway.

The remaining evergreens dotting the hills to the southwest drooped morosely, as if bemoaning their dramatic fall from pampered Jewish National Fund poster children to plain old future firewood. Daniel watched as the other Dhimmi men of Safuriya began to arrive, some clad in threadbare, graying work clothes, carrying lunches of bread, *lubbaneh*, and desiccated cucumbers in various-hued plastic bags. Others had on worn designer-label jeans and slick running shoes that had seen better days, their t-shirts brightly emblazoned with hi-tech company logos.

Backlit by the menacing orange sun, which was now consuming houses in the east with a mouth of blazing shadows, they shuffled to the makeshift bus stop. The lines etched on their faces told the tale of the trials they'd endured these past months, much as the dull reflections of their eyes would do in the evening light, after this day's trials.

All had lost loved ones. All had lost property – things, trifles. Some had lost all – humanity, compassion, self-respect, love. These moved mechanically, responding in monosyllables to any enquiry, enduring humiliation with bent back and lowered head. Post-Zionist *Mussulmen*.

The bus shelter, now reserved for Muslims only, shone in the morning sunshine, its fading plastic roof an untouchable shrine, its cracked wooden bench an unreachable luxury. The Dhimmis waited, alternating standing, sitting uncomfortably on the curbstones, walking back and forth, and leaning on the lone orange signpost. The hours passed, and tense nonchalance gave way to subdued impatience, which morphed momentarily to disguised outrage, and then came to rest squarely in the realm of mute resignation.

Dhimmi regulations permitted inter-city travel only on pre-approved methods of transport – walking was not an option. Besides, nobody knew where they were being taken.

Finally, at 9:00 AM, with the sun already high and heating the asphalt, a diesel-belching bus overloaded with travelers came sluggishly around the curve. It pulled over to allow the Dhimmis to embark, and Daniel and several others made straight for the ladder at the back of the bus, which led to the roof luggage rack. They preferred the dust and sun to the sardine-like conditions of the interior for the presumably short ride.

Daniel heaved himself wearily up the rusty, rickety ladder at the rear of the ancient bus,

and threw himself over the top rail of the luggage rack, alighting heavily on a cushion of worn suitcases and, to his surprise, a significantly less cushioned man who had been lying prone across the luggage rack.

His elbow in the man's stomach produced a "what the hell?" that Daniel was surprised to hear in English. "Sorry," he mumbled, sizing the man up briefly before casting his eyes downward, seeking a roosting spot from which he'd be less likely to tumble when the bus lurched forward. "Didn't see you there."

"Well you bloody well would have if you'd been looking, wouldn't you?" the man spit testily in a clipped British accent. He sat up and turned away from Daniel's intrusion on what had been his personal space. "Like I haven't got enough people figuratively stepping all over me on a daily basis, I need one of our own to do so literally."

Daniel sat clumsily clutching the luggage rack as the bus pulled away from the bus stop, jerking the roof passengers in perfect unison, like marionettes in a synchronized swimming meet.

After a few minutes of uncomfortable silence between them, the man looked up.

Daniel, casually swung his gaze away from an invisible spot on the horizon, met the man's eyes for a brief moment, then looked away. "Name's Daniel." He offered his hand.

"I'm David." The man used the Hebrew pronunciation *Daveed*. "Used to be called David, once upon a time, in the seat of the British empire." The man tried unsuccessfully to again meet Daniel's eye, and grasped his hand with a limp, almost effeminate handshake. "You a Yank, then?"

"Way back when. I grew up in a little town in the Midwest, before I came to the Holyland to seek fortune and glory." He smiled ironically. "And look how far I've come."

David was a slight man, so clearly an academic that "Property of Oxford," or whatever institute of higher learning he represented, may as well have been tattooed across his forehead. Completely bald, he wore glasses with lenses as cloudy as watery milk, perched on an understated nose that seemed to exist for the sole purpose of diverting attention to a thick-lipped mouth with a set of crooked white teeth.

Daniel's eyes unconsciously locked on those teeth as he listened to the *professor*, as he immediately began to think of him.

"Been here over twenty years, myself," said the professor. "Taught over there, until the Fall, that is." He gestured vaguely to the southwest, in the direction of the only university in the region, the now-ruined Haifa University. "Islamic History, believe it or not. A Christian, living in the Jewish state, teaching Islam to Jews and Arabs. I guess I had all my bases covered, religiously and ethnically. I'm staying now with my daughter in Nof Alonim. Not doing much but reading, these days."

The bus driver had been instructed to proceed directly to the *Jizya* collection venue – the only destination of any Dhimmi traveling that morning. None of the passengers knew exactly where the bus was going, but they speculated on Nazareth. For once, the speculators ruled the day, as the bus took the right fork at the junction with Road 79, toward downtown Nazareth.

"I figured they'd get around to putting on a show for the masses, one of these days," David reflected, half to himself. "Looks like today's the day, and you and I are going to be on center stage, my friend."

Daniel nodded glumly. A student of Middle Eastern history, he'd known the term Dhimmi well prior to the Fall. Under Koranic law, a Dhimmi is a non-Muslim subject, afforded protection under the Dhimma, or protection pact. Never, even in the farthest reaches of his creatively pessimistic doomsday fantasies, had he expected to live as one.

David pointed. "I'll bet you didn't know that by donning that orange armband, we've joined the ranks of an auspicious tradition dating back to the Prophet Mohammed himself." His voice took on a bombastic, if somewhat monotonous, lecture timbre that must have bored generations of students to tears. "It's true. In the year 629, after his army conquered the oasis of Khaybar, which is in what used to be Saudi Arabia, Mohammed granted the Jews there religious freedom and security, in exchange for a yearly tithe. Of course, this was short-lasting freedom, as Caliph Umar reneged on the agreement several years later. Modern-day Muslim scholars, and especially our friends in the Hamas government, prefer to overlook this little blip in the storyline."

Daniel had now turned, interest piqued, and actively listened to the professor's soliloquy.

"You see, Muslims love using the Dhimmi system as an example of the historically enlightened nature of Islamic government. And I suppose it *could* be considered 'enlightened' by historical standards," he mused. "I mean, Dhimmis were neither systematically massacred nor forcibly converted. They retained basic property rights, they were guaranteed basic freedom of worship, and they even had legal recourse against Muslims. It's not a mystery why the status was even welcomed by Jews when the Muslims took over after centuries of Byzantine persecution."

Something behind Daniel's eyes caught fire. "Enlightened?" he snapped, just as the bus lumbered through a deep but smooth pothole, slamming his ass down hard on the luggage rack.

"Enlightened, indeed," the professor continued, shifting uncomfortably, enjoying the parley. "You see, you and I understand, in 20-20 hindsight, that the Dhimmi system legitimized disenfranchisement, segregation, arbitrary violence, and disproportionate taxation. However, history is nothing if not relative. Some scholars compare the *Dhimma* status to life for ex-slaves in the southern United States, from the end of the Civil War until the 1960s. And, the very fact that these people were no longer slaves made their treatment more 'enlightened' – even though by our standards it was abysmal. Enlightenment is in the eye of the enlightenee, so to speak."

Daniel looked up. The Dhimmi bus had already crossed into Nazareth from the northern checkpoint – no hassles getting in today – and was working its way through slow-moving traffic on the main streets of Nazareth. As David finished speaking, Daniel noticed the hush that seemed to fall over the street as the bus passed – the way a blanket draped over his head at the beach dulled out the sound of waves just enough so he could focus on each watery crash. Bypassers stopped, pointed, and stared at the bus with its hastily-painted but distinctive orange stripe. Their eyes displayed an array of emotions – some curious, some mocking, even a few pitying – but most hardened like red-hot metal cooling in a blacksmith's water bath.

The Hamas-led government of Northern Liberated Palestine, with the enthusiastic support of its Iranian masters – who had a long history of zealously embracing the Dhimmi system – had enacted Dhimmi legislation soon after taking power in the previous August. The Christians and Jews that remained in Northern Liberated Palestine – those who had not fled to the Egyptian-held territory south of the Carmel, secured a coveted ticket out prior to the Fall, or been slaughtered in the post-Fall Terror – were now officially Dhimmis.

"To sum it up...." The professor broke the silence, jolting Daniel back into focus. "The Dhimmi system was – *is* – a codification of the discrimination and subjugation of minorities under Islamic rule. It ensured basic rights, true, but far more for the financial gains of the ruling majority than for some greater humanistic ideal." David's voice became less oratorical and more conspiratorial. "For as we are likely to soon find out firsthand, at the base of the Dhimmi system was the collection of the poll tax – the *Jizya*."

Imposed only on Dhimmis, Daniel recalled, the *Jizya* was not just a crushing tax – ostensibly to cover the cost of the protection pact – it was an opportunity to ceremonially demonstrate the Dhimmi’s subjugation to Muslim rule.



The bus stopped at the Nazareth municipal stadium, not far from the new government compound, and Daniel felt as if he were in a movie. A flimsy celluloid veil descended, as his psyche retreated to a safer haven, attempting to delude itself that the phantasmagoric was only the surreal.

Tires crackled on gravel as the bus turned into the parking area, and their rooftop perch afforded David and Daniel a view of the scene in the soccer stadium. There, the *Jizya* officials had set up a stage at one end, and marked out two paths in lime from the parking lot gate to the stage.

Recognizing individual aspects of the scene, yet still unsure of their holistic meaning, Daniel focused on the first item he could identify. Industrious municipal employees, lacking plastic garbage bags to serve the refuse needs of the substantial crowd in the stadium, had diligently created an environmentally-friendly, reusable alternative. From simple steel frames located every several meters around the stadium hung grease-stained cloth trash bags, sewn from old Israeli flags.



The *Jizya* had been fixed at PD 2000 for this first collection, around US \$500 at current exchange rates, and was to be payable in any currency, including the now-defunct Israeli Shekel.

For Safuriya residents, the early-morning bus stop meeting took place on less than a day’s notice, following receipt of notes in Arabic deposited in the mailboxes of all residents the evening before. A thoughtful local Arabic-speaking resident had quickly posted a Hebrew version of the order by the mailboxes, which sent Daniel and the other Dhimmi residents scabbling to gather or borrow enough cash to meet the household tax. According to the notice, a Dhimmi bus would arrive at 6:00 AM to transport the male taxpayers. Attendance was, of course, unquestionably and unpardonably mandatory.

Daniel and the professor clambered down from the bus rooftop and into a sea of Dhimmis. They were quickly separated in the throng of *kippah-wearing* religious Jews, white-capped Druze elders, and Christians or secular Jews who wore nothing definitive... except their fear. Music blared festively from the stadium’s tinny loudspeaker system, and the giant TV screen on the scoreboard alternated between white-on-green Arabic text, video of children making the “V” sign climbing on burnt-out Israeli tanks, and live action shots of the Dhimmis themselves, thronging in the parking lot.

The Muslim crowd had taken advantage of the government-declared holiday and turned out *en masse* to witness the spectacle. Daniel watched the crowd from his position in the mass of Dhimmis – these people who had been nothing to him previously, and with whom he now shared a common, uncertain fate. How ironic that the people in the stands, many of whom he undoubtedly also knew, had meant equally little to him in pre-Fall Israel. They now held the power over his life, or at least part of the power that controlled his life.

Did I once hold such power? If so, did I abuse it? Would I have come when bidden to gloat in the misery of former enemies?

The Dhimmis shuffled forward toward the crowded stadium, where the *Jizya* collection had already begun. Pushed and herded by heavily armed Hamas guards into a chain-link chute, which had been erected outside the gate, they awaited their turn to approach the Hamas official

on the stage.



Despite a fundamental disregard for international convention, a tight communications and media blackout, and the Western powers' profound silence and inaction in the face of the events leading up to the Fall, the Nazareth-based Hamas government was not entirely inept at public relations.

Daniel had to admit that they had initially implemented the anachronistic practices of the Dhimma, fundamentally unjust and warped as they were, in an intelligent way. As CNN looked on, Dhimmi had been mandated to pay the *Jizya*—at a yet-unspecified time and place—to maintain residences separated from Muslims, to study in separate schools, to limit public religious displays, and to carry their blue Israeli ID cards as a temporary Dhimmi identification.

Some of these requirements differed little from *de facto* practices in the former Jewish state, where segregation had existed, albeit undeclared. It was easy, therefore, for both the world media and the local Dhimmi populace to accept the changes—the former because the regulations so closely resembled past practice, and the latter out of pure gratitude for not suffering the outright slaughter that many of their ranks had met during the Terror.

Only with the second round of Dhimmi legislation—passed quietly in January without media fanfare, and slated for gradual implementation—did the Northern Liberated Palestine Dhimmi system reveal its true nature.

From the beginning of February, all adult and child Dhimmi would be required to wear the orange Dhimmi armband. Their Muslim overseers mandated separate public transportation, and strict rules of conduct in Muslim-Dhimmi interaction—notably forbidding Christian and Jewish Dhimmi from operating motor vehicles on Muslim roads, forbidding interaction of Dhimmi with Muslims except in necessary business matters, delineating Dhimmi behavior upon meeting a Muslim, and setting up the first annual *Jizya* collection.

To assuage the international media's occasional scrutiny, and the occasional Red Cross outcry, the Hamas government spun the new regulations as part of its magnanimous campaign to protect the minorities that had fallen under its care: the armbands would assist security forces in differentiating law-abiding citizens from insurgents; segregation had occurred in part naturally, the result of wartime emigration and population movement, and in part to alleviate sectarian frictions. It all made perfect sense, given the mitigating circumstances and recent upheaval.

Thus, its curiosity appeased and its passing pangs of guilt eased, the world moved on to the next human-interest story.



As the bizarre and terrifying scene before him resolved itself in Daniel's reeling mind, it became clear that the Hamas government was making the most of the *Jizya* collection. Traditionally, collection of the *Jizya* had both financial and symbolic significance. On one hand, collection of the *Jizya* provided a serious boost to Muslim economies; on the other hand, it was a very public affirmation of the Dhimmi's state of absolute subjection—*saghir*.

As each Dhimmi arrived from the crowded chute to the stadium gate, two guards, one on either side, forced him to his knees at the origin of the lime-delineated path. Daniel had the sinking rollercoaster feeling he always felt when entering a situation utterly lacking control—an operating room, a dentist's chair, the army induction center, a trans-Atlantic flight. He moved forward, pressed by the crowd, herded like sheep by whip-wielding Hamas soldiers, and then kicked or prodded in the direction of the stage.

Daniel watched the line of Dhimmi on the field waddle forward slowly, clumsily. Every

now and then, a roar went up from the crowd as a Dhimmi tripped or fell, often causing a domino effect that knocked down several meters of the line, or when the Hamas official on the stage delivered a particularly resounding blow with his cane.

Upon arriving at the stage, still on painful knees, each Dhimmi was forced to kiss the holy Koran held out to him. Each then handed over ID card and the tax, and following a careful counting and rubber stamping of the ID card, each Dhimmi then received either a blow to the back of the neck or a kick in the buttocks, depending on the whim of the Hamas soldier.

As Daniel was swept forward, the rollercoaster feeling was supplanted by something more removed, yet more ominous in its distance. He watched as a young man of perhaps 25 arrived on his knees at the stage. Ignoring the threats, shouts, and blows from the Hamas guards, and the pleading from the other Dhimmis, he defiantly rose to his feet. The crowd fell silent almost immediately in anticipation. The young man stared directly at the officials on the stage, and then looked around to ensure the eyes of the crowd were upon him, and ripped off the orange armband. He then turned and spit luridly onto the Koran which had been waiting, extended, for him to kiss.

Absolute silence.

After several seconds of collective shock, the crowd, soldiers, and Hamas officials simultaneously broke the silence with a roar that rocked the stadium.

They took him to the side of the field, within full view of the crowd, and beheaded him without ceremony.

At the Hamas official's bidding, soldiers crossed from both sides of the field and closed in on the line of Dhimmis. An officer came forward and counted off the next twenty Dhimmis in line. The soldiers marched them to the sidelines and lined them up with their backs to the line. Bearing a still-dripping bloody sword, the executioner and his assistant, who held the heads, worked their way down the line. The sword bearer, visibly panting from exertion and covered in gore by the fourth or fifth head, persevered to the end of the twenty.

While this was going on, the crowd remained respectfully, perhaps fearfully, silent.

The line began to move forward again. An hour had gone by since Daniel had arrived. As another thirty minutes passed and the guards became bored, the blows became more and more theatrical, growing in crowd-pleasing humiliation, if not in pain infliction. Still the Dhimmis kept moving forward to the stage, then shuffled back slowly, still on their knees, to the gate.

After that, they were free to go.

Daniel eased forward with dew-dampened grass soaking his gravel-racked knees. The hard eyes of the guards tracked the line's progress with the aloof bemusement of schoolchildren watching a line of ants. The still twitching, orange-armed bodies lay to his right. In the stands, the spectators' eyes displayed not silent outrage, not indignity, not pity, and not even mild surprise at the extremity of the abasement; rather, they showed pure, undeniable Schadenfreude.

As he approached the stage, bent his head to kiss the Koran, and handed over his money, Daniel realized that fear has an older brother – one who, in the absence of mitigating motherly hope, is far more powerful in the family of emotions. When the sting of the soldier's hand slapped his cheek, he met, and truly came to know, despair.



From the Journal of Daniel Blum

Dear Darling,

And now, a letter of your very own, my love. I hope this finds you well, and that you haven't been too worried about me. As you've read in the previous letters to the kids, I am safe and relatively sound. Of course, the picture I painted for kid consumption wasn't exactly accurate.

But first, how I wish I could hear about you! This technology that brings me closer to you still leaves you so far from me. You must be terribly busy chasing after two little ones, and, knowing you, going crazy for not working. What's the latest on the Green Card?

Spring is upon us here in Northern Liberated Palestine. God, it still makes me cringe to write that, like taking a bite of a rotten piece of fruit – that split second between when you register the rottenness and your brain screams out YUCK, before instructing your mouth to spit it out.

I'll save the bravery for the letters to the kids. Things are bad here. Thankfully, there is a steady water source, which means I'll have enough food, if I can keep the plants growing. Despite my efforts, it looks like the garden won't produce enough to actually fill my previously prodigious belly. The bathroom scale confirms this – I've lost 10 kilos. I won't even go into how sick I am of cucumbers, green peppers, tomatoes, and the few small potatoes I've managed to grow.

From a security point of view, things are a bit better. I think the Iranians have realized that chaos serves nobody's interests, and have instructed their Hamas puppets to tone it down a notch. The really dark, scary days just after you left seem to be behind us.

Dark and scary. Sounds too shallow, lighter, somehow less than it was. How can I describe it? I'm not sure there are actually words, because that level of fear is primal, prehistoric, pre-verbal – a grunt, a groan, a drawn-out preternatural moan.

They've reined in the gangs from the local villages, and attacks in our neighborhood have mostly stopped. A lot of people were killed – people we knew. Remember the Litanis from two blocks away? Both of them were beaten to death in their home, the children taken away to God-knows-where – perhaps ransomed. Perhaps killed. But shit, should we even be surprised? Having experienced this insanity firsthand, I'm actually not. It was so clear, so predictable. What did we truly expect? Mercy? Pity? That they'd just say "Yeah, okay, whatever. You know what, forget about it. Let's just all get on with our lives."

This is not the neighborhood for pity, and we knew it when we made this deal. We examined our options a century ago, didn't we? After World War II, we looked them right in the eyes with an understanding of this eventuality, and made our choices anyhow. Did we gamble with our children's lives? Did we have a choice? And then, while saner minds were silently busy making money, living suburban lives and going to PTA meetings, more committed minds were digging in, building brick by brick walls so rigid that it was only a matter of time until they came down. And they did, with only a shake, at that. On top of all of us. And now, the silent majority's not so silent, are we? But it's screams now, not words, not objections. No more commuting. No more playdates. No more debates over steaming espressos.

The violence now is at least understandable, in that it's institutionalized and less random. We have an occasional public hanging, generally in the main square, over in front of the community center. I think that even though our presence here is seen as a bother, and on some level an impediment, the Iranians know they can't get away with outright genocide. They're not stupid. There are too many holes in the censorship net – mine included. With satellite modems like the one I've got – especially if you keep the connection times short, irregular and infrequent – these holes have got to be hard to track.

So it seems that in their disorganized way, the Iranians have decided to create a viable economy in this section of the country. Of course, the fact that all of greater Tel Aviv, with what's left of its business infrastructure, is under Egyptian control doesn't help. Although I would be among the immediate beneficiaries of economic normalcy, I have to say that I'm enjoying watching them make a bloody mess of things.

All this news, of course, comes from word of mouth. Nobody really knows anything, and any

gathering of more than four people still risks being broken up if it's discovered. So, word travels like the telephone game – the information I receive may or may not bear resemblance to the original, having been passed on so many times.

Watching. That's what I do most every day, when not mindlessly working. Watching time go by, thinking of new primitive home improvement projects that may help me eat or be more comfortable, but mostly keeping my hands busy. No banks, no cars, no news. I've read most of my books twice, most three times. Now I can thankfully send these letters, even if I can't receive replies. And there's my work for the resistance, which is ongoing and the subject of an entirely separate letter.

But I hurt – every day, every hour. Some wounds take longer to heal than others, and it's a good thing there were antibiotics left in our bathroom. I can function and work, which is good because otherwise I wouldn't be eating. But it does hurt, this dull ache, the burning that has become my companion, a small but persistent buddy who's not ashamed to make his presence and position known. Even as I write to you, and imagine the smell in the warm place between your hair and the back of your neck, my companion commands part of my attention. I've taken to calling it Demon. Every pet needs a name.

*Please tell the children I love them, and give them long, tight hugs and warm kisses.
Love, D*

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