

These chapters were not included in the final cut of *The Ghost in Her*. They describe Gershom’s boyhood experience of immigrating to America from Russia with his father, Leo Moskowitz. I flesh out the origin of Gershom’s unhappy childhood relationship with Hulda Glickman, who is led to believe that they will marry one day. I also describe a very young Gershom meeting his future wife, Maggie O’Connor. The two share a magical and playful bond. The old witch Claddagh watches the exchange between the little Jewish boy and the bald Irish girl beneath a red maple tree.

I had intended for Gershom to realize at the end of *The Ghost in Her* that Maggie is the same girl that he met years earlier when he arrived on American soil. When he sees Maggie without hair in the NYC Lunatic Asylum, he has a memory of his childhood encounter with the bald little girl with dazzling violet eyes and realizes that she sits before him in real time. While I love these scenes, I understand that some good writing is not meant for the final draft. Still, I believe these chapters will help the reader of *The Ghost in Her* to understand what makes Gershom tick. Additionally, I delve into Gershom’s desire to become an architect and prosper in America in the years to come. I hope you like these “uncut” chapters!

Anika Savoy, January 4, 2023

Chapter 12

Gershom Moskowitz first set foot on the sundried grass at Battery Park, located at the southern tip of Manhattan, on August 5, 1874. He was a seven-year-old kid. His father was sixty-one. Both endured excruciating bouts of dizziness and nausea, what a French passenger called ‘mal de mer,’ during the arduous sea voyage. Trapped in the hell of steerage, steeped in darkness with only stale air to breathe and assaulted by the pernicious odors of decaying food amongst so many unwashed passengers, Gershom begged his father to talk to the ship’s captain.

“What would I say to him, son?”

“Tell him to turn the boat back!”

“To where?”

“St. Petersburg!”

“There is nothing left for us in that city,” Leo Moskowitz lamented.

“Papa,” Gershom insisted, “Mother is there!”

Sorrow crept across his father’s face. He gently laid his hand over his son’s furrowed brow. “She is here,” he softly said. His hand lowered to Gershom’s heart. “She is here, too. In your soul, in your heart.”

Gershom dejectedly wiped his runny nose with the back of his hand. He could still smell his mother’s lavender scent on the stained sleeve of the shirt that he refused to wash. He mourned

her sing-song voice, the way she happily pranced about the kitchen when preparing meals for Hanukkah, her mass of thick black curls tied into a tight braid that playfully flopped against her slender back. As a boy, The Festival of Lights was Gershom's favorite holiday, not only because it commemorated the Maccabee's heroic triumph in spite of great odds, but also because it was the holy day of gifts. During Yon Kippur, he would receive not one, not two, but *eight* presents.

Nestled against the bulkhead in the corner of a bottom bunk, the boy's mouth watered as he recalled his mother's scrumptious halva, dense and fudge-like and teeming with sugar and cinnamon. Leaving Russia for America meant leaving her and her pastries. Every fiber within him protested.

Leo Moskowitz lay down beside his son and wrapped him in his arms. Gershom pressed his face against his father's sweaty chest. He angrily dug his fingernails into the bunk's tumbledown frame where the markings of past passengers spoke their hidden stories of hope and despair. He wept, long and loud, as his father gently stroked his tear-soaked face.

"It's God's doing, son. She's with Him now."

At the age of seven, Gershom felt that his father was right. No matter how much he haggled with God, or how much he hollered for his mother to return, the horse-drawn troika, driven by Ilych Garbov, a noble landowner, had absconded the most cherished soul in his life. The horses unleashed by the driver had trampled Ester Moskowitz's diminutive body, and Garbov had not even bothered to stop his carriage. There had been witnesses, of course, Ilyushin the cobbler, Kharasov, the roofer, and Svitlana, the midwife, had all seen and recognized Garbov, but during the ensuing trial, they were silent like a rock. It was obvious they had been paid off, Gershom's father later explained to him.

There was no compensation for the crime, and that was the last straw for Leo Moskowitz. He would have none of this land of cruelty, this tempestuous kingdom of the Tsars. The elite class of St. Petersburg had been, and always would be, a formidable, and victorious, enemy. Contempt for all Jews prevailed and there was no way to get ahead. Nothing would change that. For the proud Jewish tailor, the writing was on the wall. It was time to escape to America with his little boy.

In the bunk above, nine-year-old Hulda Glickman slept beside her father, Abraham. They were also emigrating from St. Petersburg. Early into the voyage, Leo Moskowitz and Abraham Glickman had struck up a lively conversation over a scanty dinner of fish stew and potatoes doled out from large kettles into dinner pails provided by the steamship company. They had heard through the vessel's grapevine that the food in the second tier was excellent: roasted chicken and beef, even venison, but no such extravagance was shown to the impoverished passengers below. In steerage, you took what you could get- and it always tasted sour and stale.

The two men gulped down the stew while sharing bits of life stories, each adding embellishments for the conversation's sake. It was astounding, how many memories they had in common. Both were widowers twice over, and each had raised one young child. They were born in the same shtetl of Shlisselburg, a town known for its mighty brick fortress shadowing the Neva River. As

young men, they had relocated to St. Petersburg in hopes that the city would offer them opportunities for upward mobility.

Abraham was a baker. His loaves of bread had gained him an eager clientele. Leo was a tailor, and it did not take long for his fur winter coats and hats to become the talk of the district. They agreed that working with their hands gave them great satisfaction, but they wanted more for their children in a world free of persecution. Leo confided with pride that Gershom would one day be a seminarist at the Yeshivah and study to become a rabbi.

“Sababa!” Abraham exclaimed with delight. “I want my Hulda to marry a rabbi!”

Abraham took a quick inventory of Leo, the well-worn kippah on his balding head, the modest sack coat, and the crumpled woolen suit, and instinctively felt that his new friend could be trusted. He wished he could reveal the leather satchel buried in the bottom of the locked trunk containing all his earthly possessions, including his young daughter’s impressive dowry. That would seal the deal. Nonetheless, Abraham’s well-proven suspicious nature faulted the boastful urge. His knowing gaze darted to the spectral figures roaming the narrow passageways. Threatening stares accosted him. Dark countenances bespoke sinister schemes.

‘Criminals are everywhere,’ thought Abraham.

Innately meddling, Hulda had eavesdropped on the conversation between her father and his new friend, Mr. Moskowitz, that evening. It ignited her instinct to survive. The young boy in the bunk below would one day be her husband, a rabbi. Until then, she reasoned, it was her job to keep an eye on him. For the remainder of the trip, Hulda stalked Gershom about the steamship decks as an anxious mother hen tracks her stray chick.

On a brutally hot afternoon, Hulda watched as Gershom vomited over the taffrail into the North Atlantic waters. “Wipe your mouth,” she ordered, brushing his lips with a wet rag.

Offended by her forwardness, Gershom reflexively pushed her away. Hulda was stunned. She looked over at her father. Abraham Glickman stood a few feet away, fully engaged in a lively conversation with Mr. Moskowitz.

She turned her gaze back to Gershom. “That’s no way for a future rabbi to behave,” she said. She gave him a last scornful look before darting to the downward staircase that led to steerage.

Gershom chased after Hulda, calling out her name.

Chapter 13

On the final morning of the voyage, Gershom’s father grabbed him by his collar and dragged him upstairs to witness the steamship’s entrance into New York harbor. The crowd of immigrants pressed against the brine-drenched taffrails, thrusting their heads to the shoreline in hopes of getting a glimpse of the New World. In the distance, the New York City skyline spread forth before their eyes.

Leo could not recognize the cityscape. It was not the same Baroque-style architecture of the imperial city of St. Petersburg, where palatial edifices with brightly painted, onion-shaped domes dotted the heavens. It was bland and uninspiring.

Young Gershom also absorbed the view. He was not so much disappointed as confused. Whenever he thought of America, he saw towering structures made of steel and glass. Where had that image come from? His imagination, he supposed. He yanked his hand from his father's grasp and pushed his way through the throngs of passengers, their mouths wide open at the magnitude of the colossal skyline.

"Son, get back here!" Leo shouted.

Gershom ignored the command. His face was sandwiched between bulging bellies and bony hips. He gasped for air, his chest pressed by the crowd of onlookers. He eventually succeeded in getting to the very edge of the foredeck where he filled his lungs with the bay's salty and pungent breeze.

Gawking at the skyline, the seven-year-old boy experienced an epiphany. One day, he would decorate the city's silhouette with sleek towers of metal and cement that would dart toward the moon. What was the name of those builders? *Architects*, his father once told him.

He glanced at the well-dressed woman standing beside him. She reeked of a floral perfume that made Gershom's stomach turn and carried a frilly parasol that matched her rose-print gown.

"Not very impressive, is it?" she asked, extending her white-gloved hand towards the city's edifices.

"What do you mean?"

"It's not St. Petersburg or Moscow...."

"It's the New World, Madam."

She shrugged. "It may be new, but I find these buildings very forgettable."

Gershom stared straight ahead, enraptured by the view. "I will never forget today...."

The woman raised her hand to her eyebrows, shielding the sun's glaring light. She squinted down at Gershom; tiny wrinkle lines formed around her mouth and eyes. "You are a young boy. You have not seen the world."

"My people have lived in the world, and they want to forget it."

"You are Jewish?" she asked.

He nodded.

She opened the frilly parasol and shaded her face with the cream-colored crepe. "And what brings you to New York City?"

“Papa and I are leaving Russia forever. He says there is nothing left for us there. Papa is going to get rich in America. So am I.”

“You will get rich,” she said as if announcing a foregone conclusion. “But first, you must lose that brooding disposition and replace it with optimism. Otherwise, you will not succeed in America.”

Gershom looked up at her. Rose Print woman was more than just a pretty face. She gave excellent advice. “Are you coming to America to get rich, too?”

She wryly smiled. “I’m already rich.”

“Then why come to America?”

“Why else? To hear the performance of Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet* at Carnegie Hall. Do you like the music of Tchaikovsky?” Before Gershom could answer that he had no idea who Tchaikovsky was, she excitedly went on: “But of course, you must! Who does not love Tchaikovsky? His Rococo pastiches conjure a far purer world than our own...” She stared dreamily ahead as if the music of Tchaikovsky had come to life in the delicate stirring of the breeze.

“Gershom!” Leo Moskowitz anxiously approached the unlikely pair. His face contained a mix of anger and immense relief. “Don’t run from me like that again, son. You could slip and fall through the rails!”

“I’ve kept a close eye on him,” said Rose Print woman.

Leo turned to the female passenger: “Oh, yes. I see...” he stammered, taking in her powdered face, plump pink lips, and rouged cheeks. His eyes discreetly lowered to catch a glimpse of her breasts. Large and round, with a generous serving of bare cleavage blossoming across the tight cut of her lacy bodice. “My son has fine taste in woman,” he flirted.

The woman winked in Gershom’s direction as if to communicate to Leo that she had eyes for only one Moskowitz- and it was not he. “Your boy tells me he will make his fortune in America.”

“Then he’ll be the only wealthy rabbi in the world,” laughed Leo.

The woman affectionately gazed down at Gershom. The child was no more destined for a future as a rabbi than she was destined for a future as a nun. “Keep an open mind,” she told Leo, a serious look on her face. “America has a way of taking us all by surprise- disrupting our plans, shattering our notions of what should and shouldn’t be....”

Leo stepped back. Her enigmatic words affected his libido like an ice-cold shower. “My son will be a rabbi,” he said, obstinate.

Gershom’s held his breath and waited for Rose Print woman to respond.

Silent, she twirled the parasol between her bejeweled fingers as her eyes followed the course of a seagull soaring across the clear blue sky. She began to hum. Years later, Gershom would

recognize the tune as Tchaikovsky's arrangement, *None but the Lonely Heart*, though all he understood at the age of seven was that the melody Rose Print woman softly purred on his first day in America belonged to the saddest of angels.

Chapter 14

There was no describing the relief that Gershom felt as he finally descended the companionway of that wretched ship and walked on ground that did not tilt with the incessant rocking of the sea. He followed his father into a round sandstone building, formerly an American battle fort called Castle Clinton, which had been converted into a station for immigrant processing.

Gershom underwent a quick physical examination in which he was told to pull down his pants and reveal his bare buttocks and crown jewels, as his father blithely called them, to a severe-looking nurse wearing a starched white gown. She listened to his heart and rummaged her fingers through his hair. Having found no ticks, lice, or cockroaches, she pronounced him fit to enter America.

She stamped his papers with a circle of ink that lifted from the parchment-like brail. "Pronounce your full name again," she said.

"Gershom Yehezkel Moskowitz."

She grimaced. "That is a mouthful. You are American now. Your last name is Bell." She wrote it on his paperwork: Gershom Y. Bell.

He stared down at her loopy cursive writing. Gershom Y. Bell. It was a hideous name. Even though he disembarked the ship hours before, the mal de mer suddenly returned. He pressed back the bile as it rose in his throat.

Leo watched as Gershom stepped away from the curtained area, the freshly stamped paperwork bunched in his fist. "You look like you've just seen a ghost."

"She changed my name, Papa. I don't like it."

Leo took the paper and read. "Mph," he grunted. "She did the same to me." He knelt to the floor and looked Gershom directly in the eyes. "Son, it doesn't matter what they write on the papers. You are a Moskowitz. That will *never* change." He lifted the heavier of the two duffel bags, stuffed to the brim with clothing and linens and a miscellany of kitchen wares, mostly pans, and utensils along with one family heirloom, a nickel-plated menorah, and labored to the building's front entrance. Gershom hoisted the smaller bag in his arms and dutifully followed from behind.

Outside, the sun had lowered, though the air remained heavy from an afternoon of coal smoke and scorching August heat.

"Where do we go now, Papa?" Gershom called from behind.

"To a boarding house," Leo replied. "Where you can sleep in a bed of your own."

"You mean better than the bunk in the boat?"

Leo snickered. "We're not in Gahanna anymore, son."

Gershom trudged along the gravel path, trying his best to keep up with his father and not drop the lopsided duffel bag cradled in his spindly arms. They bumped elbows with fellow immigrants, travelers from steamships from many nations. The new refugees eyed The Battery's grassy parkland and bustling adjacent roadways with stupefied looks of awe and nervousness. Swindlers were everywhere; the poor and wretched from the Old Country begging for a nickel on every street corner; the raucous prostitutes luring the new arrivals who just stepped off the decks of the transatlantic boats....

"Where is the gold?" a little Irish girl walking ahead of them asked her mother. Her head was shaven, making her blue eyes sizzle like amethyst on her freckled face.

Her father, red-faced and bleary-eyed, muttered, "I need a pint."

"Don't you dare," hissed his bony wife.

The man shoved her to the side and slipped into a nearby tavern, leaving the mother and daughter standing alone on the curb.

Gershom's heart sank. He tried to imagine how it would feel, to finally arrive in America, only to have his father abandon him on the street.

"Oy vey, this bag is heavier than a sack of bricks...." Leo grumbled. "Let's rest a little." He placed a hand on Gershom's shoulder and guided him to a bench that was shaded by a faded red maple tree growing in a miniature park a few yards from the street. Gershom dropped the duffel bag to the ground. His back sloped as he sat.

"What's wrong?" Leo asked.

Gershom pointed to the little bald girl standing in the shadows of the red maple's strong branches and burnt amber leaves. Tears trailed down her cheeks, making the freckles sparkle. Her mother's hollow eyes looked haplessly about.

"Sit down and rest, mam," said the child. She pushed the wicker trunk standing between them to the back of her mother's knees.

The emaciated woman gave her daughter a sad smile. She lowered her body, draped in schmattes, onto the flimsy luggage. Anyone else would have broken it, but she could not have weighed more than ninety pounds.

"I have an idea," Leo said, forcing a jovial tone. He reached into the front pocket of his trousers and produced a dime. "Take this and give it to the man selling gelato over there."

Gershom looked at the vendor standing behind a pushcart. The street tenor sang in Italian and his crooning voice sounded spectacular. "What's gelato, Papa?"

"It's fruit syrup poured on crushed ice. Buy one for you, one for the girl, and one for her mother."

Gershom thought it was a great idea. What better way to heal a bruised heart than with a dollop of sugary ice? “Don’t you want one, Papa?” he asked.

Leo pulled a half-smoked cigar from his shirt pocket. “I prefer my Madura,” he winked. “Go on then, that tub of gelato is melting in the heat!”

Gershom rushed over to the vendor and handed him the dime. “Three cups, please,” he said with confidence.

Leo scratched a match on the sole of his shoe and inflamed his cigar. He watched as Gershom balanced the dripping cherry ice against his chest and carefully walked over to the mother and daughter. The infirm mother said nothing, but her rigid facial features indicated a stoic refusal to accept charity. What pride Leo felt in his young son as he listened to him urge the mother and child to accept the gift. It took some coaxing before the mother raised forth her arm and took the cup. She nodded to her daughter, who happily seized the icy dessert.

Gershom experienced his first taste of the Italian delicacy and experienced bliss. It was far better than ice cream because it had no milk, which he was not permitted to drink without the rabbinical stamp of approval. While ice cream was not kosher, gelato was. He was captivated by the spectacle of the little girl licking the ice. She lapped up her gelato before his was half finished.

Enthroned on the park bench, Leo puffed on his cigar like a Wall Street tycoon and observed the merry scene. ‘All kids love their sweets,’ he thought, ‘and look at the mother go!’

Gershom returned to the Italian vendor. “Thank you very much!” he told the man.

“Bravo!” the vendor bellowed. “Sono contento che ti sia piaciuto!”

Gershom went to Leo on the bench, “Papa, I’m going to play with the little girl.”

Exhausted from the voyage, Leo wanted nothing more than to find an inexpensive boarding house and flop his body down on a cot with clean sheets. But seeing the excitement on his little boy’s face, he put aside his needs. The boarding house could wait.

“Go have fun,” he said, giving Gershom’s back a frisky slap.

The children began with a spirited game of tag, circling round and round the red maple tree. The game grew more frantic as the gelato’s sugar infused them with a second wind. Leo watched on. ‘If only I could give him a little sister,’ he thought, ‘I’d name her after Esther.’

Tired from so much running and having only gelato in her stomach for nourishment, the little girl collapsed to the ground, giddy with delight. Gershom plopped down beside her and produced a penny from the pocket of his trousers. He flipped the coin, challenging the little girl to dare heads or tails. He tossed it into the air repeatedly; each time, she called out the correct answer, bewildering Gershom.

“How old are you?” he asked with English words so difficult to mouth.

She held up her hand and spread out her fingers and thumb.

“Five?”

She shyly nodded. “How old are you?” she asked.

“Seven. I am from Russia. Where are you from?”

“Donegal.”

“That’s a funny name. Is it far away?”

“It’s in Ireland. Near the ice mountains.”

“Huh!” Gershom thought about that for a while. The gelato vendor was Italian, the little girl sitting beside him was from Donegal, and he was born in St. Petersburg. His father was right-America was a giant melting pot for people from all over the world.

He pointed to her head. “Why don’t you have hair?”

The dazzling light in her amethyst eyes darkened. “The lice,” she whispered, shamefully.

“You must have pretty hair. It will come back.”

Her eyes glowed with a renewed sparkle. “That’s what Mam says, too.”

Gershom raised his eyes to the top of the red maple. It looked nothing like the green-needled trees that colored the forests of Russia: pine, larch, spruce, fir, cedar, and aspen. None of them had paper-like rhubarb-colored leaves and sturdy branches which invited the climber to an upward ascent. He jumped up from the grass and approached the robust trunk.

“Watch this!” he gloated to his new friend.

A faded purple kite desperately flapped against the tree’s highest branch. Gershom started to climb. He deftly mounted the treetop and unraveled the diamond-shaped kite and its tangled strings. He carried it back down like a trophy and dropped the winged toy with its broken cross-shaped frame of cedar to the little girl’s lap.

“Look, I caught a bird for you.”

She stared in wonder. “It’s so beautiful, but what is it?”

“A kite. Don’t they have that in your Ireland? It flies with the wind. I don’t know if this one-” he paused, struggling to find the right words in English, “I don’t know if it can fly anymore, look, the wing is broken.” He was about to suggest that her father fix it for her but thought better of the idea. He furtively glanced at the door of O’Houlihan’s tavern across the street. Why had the red-faced man been gone for so long? Didn’t he care about his daughter?

An old hag wearing a black pirate patch over her left eye and clothing in tatters entered the clearing where the children sat cross-legged beneath the tree. Trancelike, her good eye fixed on them as her bloodless lips muttered an incoherent string of words. She turned to the red maple and nodded, babbling more indiscernible words. Though she was probably just a homeless old woman who had lost her mind, the sight of her staring at the children and talking to the tree made

Leo uneasy. He rose from the bench, stomped out his burning cigar stub on the curb, and lifted the large duffel bag.

“Time to go, son.”

“But Papa-”

“No arguing. You can play with your new friend some other time.”

“But how will I find her?” Gershom asked.

Ignoring the question, Leo plodded ahead.

Gershom reluctantly went to the bench and retrieved the smaller of the duffel bags. He waved goodbye to the little girl. She waved back. He was happy to see that tears no longer filled her pretty blue eyes.

Now, she smiled.