

## MORRIS KAVESH, NEWSSTAND MAN

Imagine a man five feet, ten inches tall, barrel-chested, strong-limbed and hearty. Imagine him in summertime, sitting on a milk crate behind an improvised bench, reading the paper or arguing while you try to pay for your Daily News. Or, again, in mid-December: find him hunched over, a knit cap on his head, warming his fingers on an electric heater while snow drifts over rumpled copies of El Diario, Jewish Week, and Modern People. Or in April, amidst spring showers: see him crouched in the doorway of Machzeh Avruhom synagogue, blue plastic slicker shielding him from rain, handing out papers from beneath plastic sheeting, the edges of the piles of newsprint darkening as moisture seeps toward their centers. Now imagine him, summertime again, posed before three stacks of Sunday Times each half as tall as he is: hands in pockets, red Fortune apron hanging from his neck, shirt undone, proud as anything. Imagine him at the corner of West 98th Street and Broadway, beside Sloans supermarket, and imagine him there long before anybody ever thought about Sloans. Imagine Morris Kavesh, newsstand man.

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People say my newsstand next to Sloans. I was here before Sloans. I say Sloans next to me!

My stand here since 1928. Sloans wasn't here: was here a big restaurant. My mother established this business. I was not in this country; I came 1930. There was here Fleisher's Restaurant, very fancy, like Tip Toe Inn used to be here on Broadway once

before. Fancy restaurant. Was four partners, or three partners; one was my cousin, second cousin. So, when my mother came to America... Before she came, because she was married in Mexico... My mother was a widow... Ach! Well, it's a whole story:

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My mother established this business in 1928. I work with her since 1934. My mother lost my father, and I brought her from Russia to Mexico, because she couldn't come to America because of new immigration quota. She had two brothers here in New York, and there was here a man who knew my mother before she married my father. He came to America 1905, and my father died in 1922, a year before I left Russia. When my mother came to Mexico, this man find out from my uncles that she is a widow, so he came to Mexico and married her. Then she came here as American citizen's wife.

After my mother became citizen, my whole family came to America except me, because I was over 18. She brought all the children under 18, but she couldn't bring me. And she couldn't bring children right away after she married, because by American immigration law, her husband could not bring them in as they were not his. Only my mother could bring, when she became American citizen. Took her couple years, and then all the children came from Mexico except me. And then she send my wife to me, as sweetheart, and I married her, American citizen. Then I came here, too.

So... my mother was here, and one of our cousins who live in Canada came to visit her, and he told her a cousin here has a restaurant, so my mother asked maybe the cousin can give a job to my brother who came with my mother. So my brother work here, in Fleisher's restaurant. So, it's 1928, a lot of people go in here, so he says, "Mother"—he

work here—"why don't you put a newsstand here because a lot of people going to the subway." So my stepmother ask permission of my second cousin, and he says, 'Yes, you can put it.' And that's what.

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I struggle for my life, here in America. I struggle in Mexico, too. I was traveling selling hardware, all kind of tools, cheap German tools, to make a living. Used to go in the remote places of Mexico with Morris's Hardware. I was there seven years before coming here.

I used to make good money there, but I was always thinking to come to America. I thought, if Mexico is good, in America must be much better. So when I came here in 1930, I was very disappointed: Depression, people selling apples on corner, no job—and I thought to go back to Mexico, but my wife didn't let me. That's why I remain here. Otherwise, I would go. When I came in Mexico in 1923, it was like United States in 1890. The Jews who came to Mexico they are multimillionaires, now.

First year here, I work in the laundry with all the colored people, pressing shirts, and then in cafeteria, as busboy. And my wife had to work downtown, in the garment center, to make a living. Then I was working in a Brooklyn factory—that was Depression time, 1930—and it was very hard work, and it was not work for a Jewish man, you know, because I was educated man. <sup>1</sup>(I am not ignorant like you think. I train to be engineer, mechanical engineer. I was first Jew to go to Railroad Technical School, after Revolution in 1917. I went for three years, but I run away Russia before I finish.)

Factory in Brooklyn was only for laborer—good for Puerto Rican or for colored fellow. I say to my wife, 'What the hell I'm doing here? I have no future here.' And then my brother got married, and he stop to work here. My mother could not stay by herself, because stand was open up to twelve o'clock at night, that time. So-o-o-o... my mother had already the business, and I start to work with her. Since then, I work with my mother, since 1934. Before, from 1928 till 1934, my mother and brother and everybody helping.

My wife died twelve years ago, and my mother died six and a half years ago, and I'm still working. I'm 73. And I enjoy my work, because you see, fresh air makes me healthy. I never get sick, never missed a day; I never have a day off, never have a day off. (Well, I take a month vacation, but that's just for last thirteen, fifteen years.)

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When I was first here, Daily News was delivered in horse and wagon. Horse and wagon! Now, they have hundred-fifty trucks.

Neighborhood was very nice, verrrry... I should say, even aristocratic neighborhood. It was a very fine neighborhood. first of all, you didn't see no colored people here, no Spanish, only white people. As a matter of fact, at that time I used to sell only two, three Spanish paper a day. Now, I sell fifty or sixty. 'Cause that time, was predominantly Jewish neighborhood. And, it was safe. I used to come here early in the morning with my change apron, and sell papers, and never happened to be bothered for all the time. Was different: West End Avenue, everyone had doorman and elevator man—was no self-service elevator—and was all fancy stores along here. None of the stores you see today on this block not existed in that time. Next to me was Fleisher's Restaurant, very

fancy restaurant, as I told you. On corner was Da Viga store, sports store, like Herman's store on 42nd Street. Where is cleaning store was first a men's hat store, then was cake store (not baking, just selling cakes), and what else? That's all, and then came cleaning store, but cleaning store already has changed hands.

Neighborhood start to change shortly after Second world War; since, I should say, starting in 1955. Start to come a lot of Latin American countries' immigrants: Puerto Ricans, Santo Domingans. Looking for a better living, I suppose, better jobs. Gradually, gradually, gradually they start to move into this neighborhood; people start to come in the same like our East European Jews start to come here in 19th century, beginning of 20th century. Eighteen ninety-five till about 1923 they came, predominantly Jews, because they were persecuted. They looked for better living, too.

So, the neighborhood start to change. I don't feel too happy. The white people, it was the business people, used to buy more papers. Now I don't have the magazines, either. I didn't have much, but used to have two or three magazines, like Look, Life, sell five, six. Now, I cannot sell them. And then, I have problem for my own safety, you know? So, the neighborhood changed a lot; even when you go home, you have that problem; you have a problem when you even sleep in your own apartment.

Now I have man who sits with me Saturday night, as my body guard. I pay him. But, he borrows money from me. That's the trouble. I have arguments with him. Eventually, he pays me, but he wants too much! 'Give me ten dollars! Give me eight dollars! Give me five dollars!' He pays me, but I don't want to go too much to him, because if he owe me too much, he may not pay me. And he is a big thief, too. He sit here, anybody pays

him money, if I don't see it he puts in the pocket. He has no job. He gets pension, social security, and home relief. I don't know, he told me he gets about five hundred fifty dollars a month without working. But he is a gambler. He gambles, with racing. Sometimes he shows me a bunch of money, fifteen hundred, thousand dollars, and another day, he's broke.

He comes only Saturday night. Other times, I just look with my four eyes, that's all. That's why I like when somebody's sitting with me. What shall I do if somebody will come to me and he says, 'Listen, go inside'? Could happen again, what happen to me six years ago. Sunday morning, just when I open the door, somebody came to me with a big knife, came to me right away, 'Give me your money!' Luckily, I had ten dollars in my pocket. He put me, 'Lay down!' I lay down. 'Have you more?' 'No!' 'Turn around! Lie down here on the floor and turn around! Don't get up!' When I get up, I didn't see him no more, but blood was coming from where he stick me with the point of the knife. He held the knife to my head, that's right. Luckily, I had ten dollars. Suppose I wouldn't have? And then later, happened to be I saw a man I think it was him, with the nose and glasses, going into building next to my own. He lived there. But what could I do? How could I prove it was he? I live like in jungle, here.

You are never sure what could happen to you. You have to be careful, right? These days, especially.

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For me, most important in my life is my newsstand. The newsstand give me joy of life, and joy of having money, too. It brings me profit, and brings me joy of talking to

people, and not too much worrying. I will never retire. My mother died when she was ninety. She was still working.

You see my merchandise? It's advertise for itself, and everybody needs it. And everybody has money to buy a paper. Right? You don't need five dollars like to buy a pair of pants, you can buy with fifteen cents, and you have to buy every day; pants you buy only once a year. It's a good business, I like it, because I have no headaches. You know what I mean? Of course, I have headaches watching that nobody steals from me, or if it's a bad day, and I have to be frozen; wind and cold, I have some kind of extra work. But, I find joy of life here, and my children will tell me, 'Never give up this stand, because if you'll give up this stand, you'll be very lost, so if you don't want to work every day, work three days a week, work four days a week, cut your hours, but work.' And I know that. Because one day that I don't work—Jewish holiday Yom Kippur, because I am in front of shul, and if I work then, they throw me out of here, and besides it will be a disgrace if I should work that day—on that day, I'm lost. Usually, I get up like a soldier. But the day that I don't work, I cannot sleep longer anyway. So: ehhhhh! uhhhhhh! and then I get up, and then I'm lazy, and I feel already not in my right.

So, here I get up like a soldier. I know I have to go and I get up. And, wintertime, I don't feel cold, I'll tell you why: I put next to me electric heater, and warm my hands. I don't need no gloves. Body—uhhh!—I'm protected. So I don't give a care. In the rain, awning here [Sloans], awning there [cleaners]. I have good neighbors. When its rain, they let me stay under awning. If I would have to start to do the work the way I do now, I never would start, but it's in my blood already. If it's cold, if it's rain out, it's only the

weather. Take it for me for granted. And, such a stand like mine, open stand, you cannot get. This stand like mine is exceptional. Only because I have license for 48 years I continue to get. If I would apply, as today, as new news dealer, I wouldn't get no license.

I have no more any obligations. When my children, and my wife, and my mother was alive, I had to get through, to support my family, right? I don't have to support nobody now. If the papers don't sell, I don't give a care. I return the paper, and basta. I don't have to worry about myself. I am 73, I have enough to live for the rest of my life, right? I'm not going to live to a hundred and twenty—if I live to 90, I am lucky. I could retire. But I don't want to retire. Because, if retire, I would be very lonesome.

I feel joy in working. If I don't work, I don't know what to do with my life. As a matter of fact, I know many people who retired, they die soon. I read in the paper about people who worked all their lives in a factory; well, that's different. Here, I am in the fresh air. People—I read in the paper, and they were facts—people that stopped working, because they're working for a boss in a factory, when they retire, they are happy because they see sunshine. But then they have not much circulation, and in another few years, they die, from loneliness. I know it would be the same for me. I don't know if I die, but I know if I don't work, I wouldn't be happy. I'm more happy here. And besides, I see a live dollar. The dollar that I spend today, I make tomorrow another one. I go downtown, I spend five or six dollars, I don't give a care, because I know tomorrow I'll make another five. But if I don't work, those five, ten dollars count.

So you say about retirement? I don't talk about retirement. I don't want to retire. That's all. I don't want to retire. I sit here and sell papers. And then, if I want to retire, I

can semi-retire. I can stay only to eleven o'clock, because that's the time I make my money, and go home, and take a day off, too. Not to work seven days, but to work four or five days, right? Then I'm retired, too. So why should I?

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I don't belong to any temple. I'm not religious. But I'm a Jew. I'm hundred percent for Israel, but not religious.

People think if you are not religious, you are not a good Jew. Some of the people tell me, 'Why don't you go upstairs to the shul?' They say, 'You are Jewish.' Of course I'm a Jew. But I am not religious. I tell them as a joke I believe in two things: cash and girls; that's what I believe in. I'm not going for God. I am for Israel, to have Israel nation. But you don't have to be religious, you don't have to wear a beard, you don't have to wear yarmulka, you don't have to pray. You don't have to be a rabbi to be a good Jew. You know who is a good Jew? A soldier, in Israel, who stays with carbine, protecting Israel. That's what is a Jew.

I gave seventy-five dollars for Israeli children for Passover. But I wouldn't give nothing for the synagogue. Let them support themselves. But for Israel, yes, because I am a Jew. Besides, I want to tell you something, between you and me: I was brought up in Russia, and I got Russian education. I got Jewish education, too—I was going to heder, and I read Jewish very good—but Russian education teach me that religion is opiate of the people, and I believe that, then, and I still believe it. I believe in science, not religion, and even though they teach me that in Russia, and I hate Russia, I still believe in

that. Although I respect every religion. I'm just talking to you about my private opinion, you know?

They talk to me about religion, I say, 'Listen, you believe that? Great! It's freedom of religion. But it's a freedom of no religion, too, right?' My life belongs to me, not to anybody else, and I do the way I want to live, not my children or anybody else.

I don't know for your religion, whether you're a Jew or Spanish. You know, I look if you are a nice person, you are my friend. But still, but still... I wouldn't want my children to get married to the gentile woman. No! This is because I believe a Jewish boy should have a Jewish girl. Here is one thing I'm very unhappy. My son in New Jersey, his wife is kosher. My son in Seattle eats everything, because his wife cooks it. I don't care, but still, I respect more my son in New Jersey, because he keeps to the Jewish tradition more than the other son. I don't eat kosher, but I hate to see my children eat pork. I don't know why, but I feel it. I eat bread on Passover—my children don't know—but I would hate to see my children eat bread on Passover. But, what has to do with that? My son and his wife, I never tell them what to do or how to do. But, one thing I would hate: if my children would marry a gentile woman, I would quit my children. And I'm not religious. Because they would lose Jewish race. The child would not be Jewish. I don't care about religion, but I care about Jewish race. Jewish race should be Jewish, pure Jewish. You know what I mean? I would hate to see that. I was always afraid they shouldn't marry gentile. Even I gave them Jewish education, you know; but you never know. I'm very Jewish-minded, except that I'm not religious. But one thing I give the Jewish credit:

religion, Jewish religion, made them survive all these thousands of years. Because Jewish religion made those people get married with only Jewish, not gentile, they survived.

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In village where we lived in Russia, used to be seventeen Jewish families. No newcomers could come to live there, because what you call the police chief would not let nobody to live there from the Jewish people. Jewish people were very restricted to live where they lived, in Russia. For instance, we had seventeen families, we needed a rabbi, we needed to have kosher meat, we needed a regular butcher, a moil or whatever it is. So we had to send, but he could not live there. He had to come from city.

Well, anyway, my father was a rich merchant. When 1917 came, there, they tried to kill my father because he was rich, and besides because he was a Jew. But, gladly, luckily, my father escaped. Once, my father happened to be not home, they came. It was a lot shooting, somebody tried to get into our house and probably would kill off all of us, but my mother heard, we all start to cry—my brothers, sisters—and the peasants came, and finally they saved us. Since then, we didn't live no more there. Night after, another rich family, Christian, was wiped out. Twelve families, altogether, all was killed. But we ran away. Our store was burglarized, we were afraid to come, because was no order no more. This was, I think, 1918, before German occupied the place.

Well, what's use to talk? We couldn't live in our house, so we came another town. My father had money in the bank, but he bought two houses 1918; that is, after Revolution. Was civil war in Russia by that time, and nobody expected the communists will take power. Nobody thought. But then, when the communists won power, all the

property they took away. If you had a house, it was not yours anymore. So we lost everything. Instead to be a rich merchant, my father used to sell bread, to eat. And so we tried to get out of Russia as soon as possible. My father had relatives in Canada, and my mother had two brothers here in America, so we tried to get to leave Russia. Then, 1922, my father died. Only 44, but he was big smoker. Well, what shall I do? I decided to go before, and luckily I passed by. I run away from Russia and I came to Latvia. After Latvia I couldn't come to America, I came to Mexico. From Mexico I brought my mother to Mexico, and gradually we came to America. That's all the story. So, we were lucky that we get out from Russia. I had one of my brothers in Russia, and he didn't want to leave with me. So what happened during Second World War? He was taken Red Army and he was made prisoner by the Germans and because he was a Jew, he was killed. Hitler used to kill Russian prisoners. If he's a Jew, they used to kill them automatically.

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You know, the Americans don't know anything. They never had a war in their country, right? Except for Revolution and Civil War. But we, in Europe, and especially in Russia, we have many wars: First War, Second War—by Second War I wasn't there. Nazis... You know what happen to the Jews when the Nazi occupy? And besides, hardships, no freedom of religion. I don't care of religion, but no freedom of to live in Russia. When I had to go in high school, I couldn't get in because they took only five percent Jews. And Jews was not allowed to live wherever they want to; they couldn't live in Moscow, only certain parts. So you Americans don't know what we had. I had to run away from Russia. You want to go to Germany? America let you go ahead! Nobody

keeps you here! If you want to go to Russia, go ahead! If you want to go any place in the world, who needs you? You can go, they let you out. But if you live in Russia, they can't get out! Russian, Jews, they can't get out! Why they don't? I tell you the joke.

Somebody, the Russian refugees, told this joke: Kosygin say to Breshnev, 'If we let out all the Jews from Russia, then everybody will try to get out! In the end, will be remain both of us.' So Breshnev says, 'Why both of us? You alone!' In Russia, it's not freedom; it's dictatorship. The rule of the gun, and not election. You can't talk. Here, you can say, 'Fuck you, Johnson! Fuck you, Ford! Fuck you, Nixon! I'm not afraid of you or of anybody policeman.' But in Russia if you say, 'Fuck you, Stalin, fuck you, Breshnev' you know what you get? Siberia.

I know I have a freedom of living here. Nobody tell me, 'You damn Jew!' If want to send my sons in school or I want to go, I go. Really. There is some discrimination here in America, but personally, I don't find none whatsoever. I'm glad to be in America, and if I think what happened before, I'm re... I'm... [begins to cry] I'm crying [points to tears streaming down cheeks] because what I experience. That's why I love America. Because, when I was a student, in Russia, everybody told me, 'djid, djid, djid, djid, djid'—that's Russian, means 'damn Jew.' It's a bad word. Even when I was in Mexico, they call Americans gringo—I don't know what that means, but it's also not so nice word. Many times when I was in Mexico, when I was traveling, they ask me, 'Are you gringo?' I say, 'Yo no soy gringo'—you know, I'm no gringo—'Yo soy Alemana'—I'm German, because I didn't want to tell them that I am Russian, and besides that I am Jewish. Because Jews they call judeo, in Spanish. That's a bad word. They could say israelito or hebreo or whatever it is, but they call judeo. Judeo it's not religion literature word.

Well [wipes eyes with a crumpled handkerchief], it's came to my emotions.

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Here in America, the children don't take care of their parents the same as the children in Russia used to make before. I don't know about the gentile people, but the Jewish people, when they had an elderly father, he used to live with the children, and they took care. Now in America, the father gets old or mother gets old, they send her to nursing home, or if she lives alone, they don't care and they have a good time, the children. They don't take care of the elderly parents the way it used to be before. But I'm happy I don't need the help of my children. Happy to take care of myself. I hope that will continue until the end of my life.

I already felt ingratitude on my son in Seattle last visit to him. I'm an old father. I'm working, I'm independent. And I give a lot to my son in Seattle. But he disappointed me, and I don't want to come no more there.

<sup>2</sup>Last year, he invited me for Bar Mitzvah of his son, my grandson. Which he invites me every summer for a visit. Usually, I come during July, when they have a lot of sunshine, the weather is better. Last year I had to come in April because my grandson was Bar Mitzvah in April. I don't like to leave in April, but I went in April. I arrived there April first, and a week later was Bar Mitzvah in the synagogue. My grandson made a beautiful speech, in English, of course. Long speech, and in that speech he openly declared gratitude of my visit all the way from New York, his grandpa, Morris. After that ceremony was, of course, special room where guests have cold drinks, sandwiches, all kind of delicacies. After everybody left, I step in my son's car, and my son told me I use

his home as hotel. He said when I come to Seattle, I should not stay a month, I should stay only two weeks, because to take care of me a whole month was too much for him and his wife.

<sup>3</sup>First of all, I don't like his wife. She is very selfish, doesn't talk much, sephardic Jew. But besides, what kind of care they give to me? Nothing! I used to sleep there at night, I used to come in the morning, right away take a bus, go to Seattle, and I stay all day. At night, I come and they serve me supper. I don't need that supper. That supper I could eat in Seattle for two dollars, two and a half. But I thought, why should I spend money there; I come home, I eat there. But I notice that the supper they didn't give me very pleasantly. Ehhhhhhh... something like I'm unwelcome, you know what I mean? She watch television, my son working, so I was something like a boarder for them. Besides, when I get there, I gave them nice presents, more than what hotel would cost me if I stay in the best hotel.

So, that's insult, when he told me to stay in hotel. Did he not invite me to his Bar Mitzvah? Where he expect me to stay? In hotel? Why did you not put hotel to me? And if you want me to home, why the hell you tell me to use hotel? But he meant to tell me that because I used more than two weeks; stay a month. <sup>4</sup>But even month—suppose I needed to take care, if I have no way to make my livelihood? Suppose I have no stand, suppose I have no money to live? Who would take care of me? He would not take it. I see that. If he didn't want to take care of me for two weeks as guest, how could he look to me like a pest, because that's what it was. First week I was there a guest, second week I was there a pest. Well, that's how the children do, now.

After I put him through college, after I give him presents, he gives me a choice on premises of the synagogue an hour after I saw my grandson thank me for coming to them. Isn't that insult? It's terrible feeling, but I couldn't make, because I would upset my other son. Next day, supposed to be invitation. If I would leave that, would not come there people who ask where is your father? And make him very feeling bad; I know he would ask me to stay. And then, I want eventually to go to Alaska, cost me two hundred dollars for eight day trip, I was very excited. So I couldn't cancel. Otherwise, I would right away pack my valises and go to hotel or YMCA that costs five, six dollars a room, stay another few days, and go home. If I ever come to him again, I won't stay with him, I will stay in hotel, and I wouldn't give him not a penny presents.

So, I want to thank God I don't have to depend on my children's support. I don't say they're bad, but I suppose every children is the same. What happened to my brother and sister when my mother was sick? Were they better? I have one brother still alive. I don't talk to him. I'll tell you why. My mother lived with me 30 years. My wife took care. When she died, my mother, six years later, became sick, and I asked my brother his wife should come to my house and to cook dinner for his mother. I am here, I have nobody, my mother is old woman. So my brother says, 'My wife wouldn't come.' I say, 'You son of a bitch!' I told to my brother, 'My wife took care of your mother for 30 years, and your wife cannot come around to take my mother to the cafeteria to feed her?' So, my mother died after that, and I don't want to talk to him anymore. And I told him, that when used to be Mothers' Day, he used to send big cards, Mothers' Day cards. but when my mother was sick, he didn't lift the first... He used to bring her dinners, from Brooklyn. Chicken

dinners, chicken soup. Once in two weeks. I say, 'Why can't your wife come and cook for her at least every other day?' He lives in Brooklyn; it's not so far. So, I don't talk to him.

I'm only happy that I know my son sooner than later, what happened in Seattle. I can't say anything to you about my son in New Jersey; I know they give me children very good to me, my grandchildren. Of course, when I go there, I stay four hours. Maybe if I would stay there more, they would not appreciate. I cannot say yet. I don't want to think about it.

But, I don't give a care. Why do I care about? I don't give a care. I'm happy they are well, and that's all. Why should I give a care? Despite of everything, I want to be my son well, be healthy; even he didn't treat me like supposed to treat. But... I don't give a care. I still send cutouts from newspapers; doesn't cost me anything. I don't go to him no more, that's all. Right? And if I want to see, I can go on my own. I paid my carfare anyway before. If I didn't pay hotels and food, so I don't have to give presents; I have that money for food and hotels.

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<sup>5</sup>I work eight days a week, because Saturday I work during the day and then again at night. But even seven days. Who works seven days? Not too many. But how many days do I work a week? If you get a job and work five days, work seven days and you make twice as much money. Right? Go in supermarket, try to get a job. They work five days, six days. Who stops them to work seven days? They don't want to. But they could work seven days. 'What the hell,' they say, 'I want to work every day and make money,' right? Naturally, they would get paid. All right. So, I'm better off because I work eight days a

week, seven days? Do I have a day off? Do you see my stand closed here? No. And despite of everything, I'm the happiest man in the world. I don't envy you, that you work five days. I work eight or seven days, and I'm happy. Because I don't know any better. I'm like the worm that got into the radish. I mean apple. (In Jewish is radish; in America is apple.) The worm comes into apple, sleeps there, eats there, he doesn't give a care. I'm worm, here on Broadway. This is my apple, and I don't know any different. And if I wouldn't be happy, I would take a day off today, after I work hard yesterday, right? But I'm happy the way I am. I can take off right now.

Now, it's time to travel while I'm able to—how long can one man work? I'm 73. But this is business unique. I don't want to give it up just for travel. It's like you have a choice of two things, you don't know what to decide. Like, I was in Russia, and my mother wrote to tell me should I stay another year to finish the school, and then come to America, or to smuggle now. That time, I didn't know what choice to take it. Good thing I took right choice. If I would stay another year in Russia, I would remain in Russia. I would not be able to get out, then my mother wouldn't be able to get out. Maybe I would get job, my mother would remain. With Hitler invasion, Nazis' invasion Russia, they would kill us. They kill all Jews in my town, when Hitler invaded Russia, and my brother who remained was killed as prisoner of Hitler's army. I'm glad I run away. Even if I would be engineer, and I would survive Hitler's invasion, I would be probably less better than I'm here as news dealer.

So, you don't know what choice to take it in your life. You have choice, things that you don't know what to do. Even when I was in Mexico, I married my wife. I took a

chance. I say, 'I have to marry a woman I don't like it? Who forces me?' I was twenty-six years of age. <sup>6</sup>But I took that choice, and I married my wife, and happened to be I got a good choice. Luckily, my marriage was lucky. I didn't care who I married. I want to come to America, that's all. So I married just to become husband of American citizen, and I could come to America. I came! And luckily she was a nice woman, she helped me in the business, I had two sons which was very good, and now, my sons are well and I am well, and I'm healthy, too. Happened to be good choice. Otherwise, I would still be in Mexico. Who knows? You don't know your future.

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I don't know what's so interesting about my life. Everybody has his lifetime story: you have lifetime story. Maybe you haven't got such life story as mine, because my life was more adventurous: run away from Russia adventurous; adventurous to come to Mexico without money, then come to America without anything, and have family, have nice children, grandchildren... and the way I am now, something to be thankful, and nobody else but me. Nobody helped me, nobody did me. Because you were born in America, you didn't know any of this. You didn't have no adventures. We Europeans, especially Jews, have a more rich story to tell of their lifetime, right?<sup>7</sup>

\*

I'm happy the way I am. I'm happy in many ways. I have a good spirit. I'll tell you why I have a good spirit. You know why I have a good spirit? I have everything to be happy.

I am 73. My health is good, I have little business, I have my own apartment, I have good children, my sons get good education, they're very well off. I have nice grandchildren, they're good students. Why shouldn't I be happy? Why shouldn't I be happy?

And besides I am in America, in a country that I don't have to be like in Russia. You know what I mean? That they say you're a damn Jew, they didn't let me to go in schooling. I am a free man, right? Why shouldn't I be happy?

When people tell me, 'Morris, but you work every day! In cold weather!' I say, 'No matter is that.' I'm still the most happy man in the world. It's not what you have, it's what you feeling.

Thanksgiving day, holiday, then I really... It's holiday to me. I'm just thanking everything that happen to me and my family. (I mean, of course, I lost my wife, and I lost my mother, you know what I mean? But... we all have to go sooner or later.)

Sometimes, I'm lonely, but, for instance, I come home, right now, today, I eat, I lie down, then have to go here in the cellar to make my returns. That's work, too. I have to sort them, then I have to make a list, so I should know if they give me right credit, and then I come home, and I watch television, for one hour. Mostly I like television about animals, wild animals, which is every day. Today will be something about bears eight o'clock tonight. And then I go to sleep. That's every day, except sometimes I go downtown for a Jewish meal, and once in three weeks I go with my girlfriend. I have telephone home, but I never use telephone, except that my son every once in a while calls me up, or my girlfriend I speak every night. That's all. Lonesome, yeah, I'm lonesome,

but that's why I like here, because I spend my time, and I make couple dollars, too. I enjoy it, even wintertime, doesn't bother me.

You know why I'm happy? Because I know that other people are worse than I, and some people are better than I, but I don't look who's better than me. I look at those people who are worse than me, so I'm happy the way I am, right? That's it. In spite of everything, I'm the most happy man, because I don't know about doctors, I don't know about hospitals, all I know I'm healthy and... so far, I'm 73 years young. And every day, I make my living.

I say, why should I not be happy? Happy in every way. Happy because I reach all my age 73, never sick. And hope to live much longer. Happy because I'm not a roomer, I got my own apartment, and, of course, because it's my rent control, too. Happy because I don't have to ask for a dime in the street, and happy because I don't have to depend on nobody, even my children. So what else you want? What you want me, to have a golden egg to eat?

Why shouldn't I be happy? Happy because I have my newsstand right one block from where I live; I don't have to travel in subway, right? Happy because I'm my own boss. Happy because I work here, and not work hard, and I see people and enjoy, and besides I make a live dollar. And, what else? What else do you want me to be, to live on Fifth Avenue and have a Rolls Royce? Of course, I could go higher and go to the moon, too! Why not? Why not?

I look on my life in a different way. I could be worse than I am now. So I'm happy what I am now. Right? That's all. It could be better, but it could be worse. You can't

have everything. And, it's easier to get worse than better. So I'm happy the way I am now, right? That's all.

Now, I got good appetite, and I'm going to eat without any worry, whether the rain got wet my papers or not. To hell with the papers! I make my day working, and I don't care about; no use of those papers anyway, even I return them dry or if I return them wet. They are no good no more. Right?

\* \* \*

### **Alfredo**

Alfredo is an economist, originally from Brazil. He has been in the neighborhood 28 years, but is planning, soon, to move back to Brazil, where he feels his prospects are better. He has been married and divorced, and he has an eighteen year old son, who might stay behind. He has sold his apartment and furniture and found a good job down there, but he is still undecided, mainly because of his involvement with a 45 year old widow with four grown children and a business of her own. "She's a perfect match for me," he said.

Alfredo has known Morris since he, Alfredo, moved into the neighborhood. As I come upon them, he and Morris are talking about Alfredo's dilemma. Throughout their conversation, Morris continues to sell papers.

Alfredo: I ask you because I like you, Morris. You are double my age. You were married, you have two grown children, you are a widower. I am a divorced man. What—

Morris: It's how you feel, don't ask me how to do. If you feel better to fuck Brazilian, don't fuck American. Go home! And if you want to fuck American, stay here!

Alfredo: [laughing] Okay, Morris. That's what I want to hear!

Morris: Listen, I want to ask you same question: What color you like better, red or green?

Alfredo: Well, Morris, makes no difference.

Morris: How can I tell you better? Is there any choice? I like green, you like red.

Alfredo: That's right, Morris; exactly.

Morris: You tell me two extremes.

Alfredo: I'm going to invite her over, to spend a couple of months. We'll fly down together. It's a good idea?

Morris: I tell you what happened to me. Just a second. [He asks a woman who has just given him some money how much she has given him. "A dollar!" she says, surprised at the question. He hands her her change.] I want to tell you. When I was in Mexico, I want to come to America, and I couldn't unless I'm the husband of American woman. My mother send me a woman, happened to be she's young. If she would be a hundred years old, I would marry her, too. You know why? I would become her husband, come to America, divorce her, and fuck yourself!

Alfredo: Uh-huh. Right.

Morris: Right! So, but, I took a chance to marry a woman I didn't know if I like, just for to sell me myself for America. Happened to be I was lucky. But now, you take that chance, too.

Alfredo: No, because with you it was different. You was waiting for to come to the United States and you met your wife.

Morris: Right!

Alfredo: So, she was...

Morris: But I had to marry her! I didn't even know her!

Alfredo: She gave you two children.

Morris: But suppose I would not like her, suppose she would be too—

Alfredo: So what! She gave you two PhD's! What the hell are you talking about!

Morris: All right! So hear my answer! So you marry and you have two children, too!

Alfredo: Well, I got one, Morris, and she has four, and it's five altogether. I don't need any more.

Morris: So I'll tell you what you do. You do the same like I, get married and have two children, and you'll be happy.

"Exactly! But this happened a century ago, Morris!" Alfredo laughs. I ask him what he is seeking Morris's advice on. "Oh, I'm just kidding him," he says. "I'm going home to Brazil something like the end of the month. So I told him that I met a beautiful woman, and she has all kinds of sex appeal, and she wants to marry me, so I asked him what to do:

to marry the woman or go back home? So he said, 'If you want to stay here you fuck an American pussy, and if you go to Brazil you fuck pussy in Brazil.'"

"He asks me my advice," Morris says. "Why do you ask me such questions? It's how you feel!"

"Well, Morris, I think that's the point," Alfredo replies. "If I marry her—"

"Then you know the answer! You know what to do!"

"Morris, love don't give you fifty thousand dollars. If I marry her, I have to give up—"

"So I'll tell you what to do," Morris cuts in again. "I'll tell you sign I saw: 'Buy American, fuck American!'"

Alfredo laughs. Morris guffaws. "That's my only joke. Use American prostitute." Morris laughs so hard he can hardly speak. "Fuck American," he says.

A thin old man who has been standing in front of the stand, scratching his white head, watching all this, takes a step forward. "What the hell are they talking about?" he asks me.

\*

"Do you come to the stand often?" I ask Alfredo.

"Every day," he says. "If I don't come to see him, I die. Every day. Right, Morris? I have to take the blessing twice daily, right, Morris? I'm gonna miss you a lot Morris, you know?"

"Yes, yes; freedom of speech," Morris says, rearranging his papers.

"I'm telling you!" Alfredo insists.

"Yes, go on, bullshit!"

"No parusky rusky, Morris. No parusky. No parusky, Morris. What I'm gonna do over there?"

"You'll invite me, in New York," Morris says, looking up.

"Well..."

"And we'll go on Amazon River," Morris says, smiling, and both of them laugh, again.

#### The Parochial School Teacher

Later in the day, Morris is preparing to leave for home for a while. He removes his change apron (this one is a red one from TV Guide) and turns to a man with a scholarly face and longish red-brown hair sitting beside him. The man looks to be in his early or mid thirties. "I go home for mail for a few minutes, okay?" Morris says to the man.

"If you go home, yes," the young man replies, looking up from the paper he is reading.

"I hope the mail is there. I'll be right back. I have no more change, so don't give nobody without paper. I'm going home, okay?" The young man nods okay. Morris turns to me. "I'll show you book from Alaska my son sent me. I'll go home. I'll be back."

"Okay," I tell him. "I'll see you."

The young man takes Morris's seat and I move to the crate he has been sitting on. "Usually," he says, "Morris gives change to everybody. Anybody that passes by here, they all know that he gives change to them. Many people also cash checks. He's not in a good mood today, so he hollers a little. He's a little bothered with all the small change and such. There are many days when you see him in a much better mood. After all, he's not a young man, so he has his ups and downs."

"Do you come here often?" I ask.

"Yes."

"How come?"

"How come I come?"

"Yes."

"You see that I read all the papers? I am a teacher, teaching in a Jewish parochial school, a high school on Bank Street, if you know the neighborhood. My work is afternoons and evenings, so as soon as I am going home and having lunch then I'll go there. For me, coming here is an opportunity to read all those papers—I mean, without paying any money. It's my library. I can take a quick look at the Wall Street Journal, at Jewish papers, at all the range of papers, free. And I'm not the only one. There are maybe fifteen guys every day coming. We are all friends. You come, especially the weekend, you'll see how many. Sometimes they are sitting on the steps of the hallway behind here," he says, gesturing to the entrance of the shul, "like a reading room."

"I also borrow papers," he went on, "take them home. I'm not the only one to do this, either, by the way: it's a whole Chinese business, a cycle. When I came here—I don't know if you saw—I gave him a paper that I had home. I borrowed from him and returned.

"For me, it's very convenient. But besides, I'm very good friends with him. I've known him two years, since I am in the neighborhood. First, I was just buying papers, and gradually I got to know him. And really, it's a fair trade. We take care of the stand for him while he is not here. Also, he talks to us; he is not lonely. And, it gives him a certain safety, too. He doesn't want to be alone here.

"You should go home with him, once. Go home with him, then you'll see a lot of things. You'll see how he lives, first of all. Then he'll show you all kinds of pictures, tracing back his history. He speaks a lot of languages, as you know. I don't know if you had an opportunity to see him exchanging with conversations with customers: in Spanish, in Russian, one after the other.

"The man was molded in his very young age, in his teens, in Russia, when the Revolution took place—or what you want to call it, if you want to call it Revolution or you want to call it the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. (I was born also in what is the Soviet Union, now, but it's really Lithuania.) What I tell you is very accurate, in my opinion. He was fed—you talk to him, ask him, he'll tell you the same thing—he was really brainwashed that religion is opium, like Lenin said. His upbringing, maybe until the age of ten, was in a Jewish heder, a religious school. But later, after 1917, the Jewish community was completely shattered by the communists: all the institutions abolished,

closed down forcibly. And he was influenced by certain of those ideas, being a young man, enthusiastic. Nevertheless, he left the country, I don't know when, '21 or '22. I think his brother was killed in the civil war there, or his father died young—he'll tell you the details of it. He has the pictures; he'll show you the pictures, too, when you visit him at home.

"Now, he's not religious, though he's very strongly a Jewish ethnic and nationalist. He gives a lot of money to various schools and charities in the Jewish community, and he's a strong supporter of Israel. You see, this is a much more encompassing thing than just strictly religion, as far as Jews are concerned. It's a much wider phenomenon, and he's very much about it. He has strong sentiments about being Jewish, and on the other hand, he went away from religion, which is a very essential part of Judaism. It's a part of him, but a part of him that's what we call mixed feelings."

### Shake My Hand

A black man, obviously drunk, with no front teeth and gold in most of his other teeth, stumbles up to the stand and wobbles before Morris. His speech, due to alcohol and toothlessness, was difficult to understand. I do my best to report it.

"Hey, mac! You know my name! Why you mistreated me? Or everything I'm comin' back! Yeah! Heavy! He-ho! Boo-boo! Excuse me. You know, you're a very nice-a fella? Beh! He! Ahh-ha-ha! Fuggu!"

Morris extends his right leg, bares his ankle, and says to the drunk, "Shake my hand!" The drunk continues to babble, utterly incomprehensible. Morris and Alfredo and the

parochial school teacher tell the drunk he is impossible to understand, but he continues to babble. Morris turns to me. "You think I'm bad? He's worse!"

### Alaska

Morris returns with a large coffee-table book about Alaska. From it, he pulls out a photocopy of a letter he wrote to the members of his family while he was there. It reads, in part:

Am riding back from my all-Alaskan FUNtastic trip talked about, dreamed about, and now my own seen about.

I am riding through greatest valleys and forested inlets on the water of Pacific of the world's famous inside passage of Alaska—of most spectacular beauty and wonder scenic settings and photographer paradise delight.

Incredible vast plush wilderness steady occupies my admirable mind and far beyond of my imagination of my daily hustle and bustle in New York.

I saw three bald eagles majestically gliding in air above island we pass... also most beautiful mirror-reflections of mountains in some very calm waters from bright sunshine rays. In all—it was great of Greatness to see—the Greatest Land on Earth—Alaska!

\* \* \*

Morris Kavesh was my newsstand man during the year and a half (November, 1974 to June, 1976) I lived on West 98th Street and Broadway. At first, he and his stand were just visually interesting to me: a self-contained whirl of activity on crazy Broadway, like a pinwheel spun by its own wind. I was struck by that characteristic which Morris himself

later noted made his stand "exceptional," and one of the factors that made his a "business unique": that he had no kiosk. He stored his newspapers and the planks and crates on which he displayed them like so much produce in the basement of a hole-in-the-wall shul sandwiched between Sloans supermarket and the neighboring dry-cleaning establishment. When it rained, he got rained on, when it was cold, he was chilled, and when it was windy, his papers blew here and there; I had more than once seen him and the others at his stand scurrying to retrieve them.

While the open quality of his stand made him subject to the vicissitudes of weather, it also opened him to the helter-skelter life of Broadway on the Upper West Side. Initially, I noticed only that there seemed to be an awful lot of people gathered around the stand. Later, I realized many of the same faces reappeared, and that they were not merely buying papers, or skimming through them deciding whether or not to buy, or shooting the breeze for a moment or two. They were hanging out, sometimes for hours, talking and reading the great variety of papers at Morris's stand. From time to time, I noticed, one regular or another would even mind the stand for Morris when he had something else to do. ("I have no wife, no children, to help me, right? Everybody has a wife, friend, or partner. I haven't got. My partner is all the people whom I know," Morris later explained.) As the months wore on, Morris's stand began to seem like a "business unique" to me, too.

Eventually, it occurred to me that there might well be more to Morris, himself, than met the eye. I'd had my notions about him before, vague feelings of being sorry about how he had to stand out in the cold and wet at his age, and a sense, based on his floppy hats and worn sneakers and greasy work pants, and the impoverished look to his stand,

that he was just barely scraping by. I saw him as a type: immigrant ignorant poor, hard working, but a little desperate. I also felt a kind of affection for him. I liked buying my papers from him, hearing his gruff voice (hoarse, I presumed, from years of hollering to customers over the roar of Broadway's traffic). It occurred to me he must have seen a lot, and I wondered how much he had noted the changes in the neighborhood.

I got more curious about Morris when I heard him speaking to a customer as I waited my turn to pay him for a paper. His discourse to me had been mainly restricted to saying "Right!" when I handed him 20 cents for the Times, but he had been speaking at some length to the round, bald man standing beside him. He was speaking Spanish, fluently. I had heard him speaking Yiddish many times, and a little of some Slavic language, and had surmised from his accent he was an East European Jew. That he knew Spanish considerably better than the few words he might have needed to deal with his Spanish-speaking customers surprised me.

One day I asked Morris if I could take some pictures of him at his stand.

"Pictures? Why you want pictures?" he asked. "You work for newspaper?"

I told him I just liked taking pictures, and that his stand seemed very interesting to me; in all New York, I'd never seen another quite like it. He sold a few papers and thought it over. "All right," he said; "Where you want me?"

Morris wanted copies of the prints, and I brought them by the following Sunday. He showed the pictures around proudly. "How much you want for these?" he asked, reaching into his change apron. I told him I didn't want anything, but in the end accepted a Sunday Times, and asked him a few questions about himself. He began to talk at some length, in

scattered fragments, about his stand, and his past, and seemed willing to go on for some time more, keeping customers waiting while he talked, realizing he was doing this, selling a few papers, and then resuming his oration. He rummaged through a cardboard box and pulled out photocopies of an article written about newsstands (and featuring him) that had appeared in [More] magazine a few years before, and a couple of articles about his sons, both engineers, from the trade journals of their respective fields. I wasn't prepared to take all that in right then, but asked him if I could come by again, to spend some more time. He suggested the following morning. I told him I'd come by when he started the day. "Six o'clock!" he said. "Not a minute later." That night, I prepared a list of questions; I was the objective reporter, the investigator, and Morris was my subject, my field of study. (I was, in fact, a little sorry someone else had discovered him first.)

Initially, Morris seemed really happy to have me there, sitting beside him, scribbling down notes and making him talk into my tape recorder, and I was fairly happy to be there, too. I was a curiosity to him, and probably a little ridiculous, but my presence seemed to amuse both him and the others who regularly frequented Morris's stand—among them Alfredo, the Brazilian economist; the Jewish parochial school teacher; Henry, the retired elevator who more than once had carried Al Capone to his floor and who now referred to himself as an "indoor astronaut" (formerly indoor aviator); and a former translator for the U.N. But after the first day (in the end, I stayed parts of every day over the course of a week—he would not let me talk to him anywhere but at the stand itself), dissatisfaction began to build on both sides. I felt he was feeding me false information at times, since many things he said seemed to contradict themselves, or to conflict with reports I'd gotten from neighbors in my building, who'd known Morris as a newsstand man for years. I

suspected there were skeletons in Morris's closet, and began to try to find ways to reveal them. He, in turn, grew increasingly annoyed at my prying, and increasingly skeptical of the whole venture. In the end, though, we both came to mean something to each other.

\*

In going over the transcripts of the tapes I made of Morris, I came across the following exchange, which occurred toward the end of my last day at the stand:

"With all your questions," Morris said, "you will know more about me than even I do!" He laughed. I laughed, too. "I'll know more about you," I told him, "than I do about myself."

I learned something from Morris that is, even now, years later, difficult for me to put into words, but still an active principle in my life. Two statements he made to me a number of times have particularly lingered in my mind. These are Morris's belief that you "can't have everything," juxtaposed against his conviction that he is "the happiest man in the world."

From what I now see as condescending pity, I was moved to admiration for Morris Kavesh, newsstand man. He had made peace with his life, with his ambitions, with disappointments and limitations, with what chance and choice had to offer in a way that I and most of the people I know have yet to do. By knowing his life as I have come to, I have also come to see how the kind of compromise and deliberate blindness implicit in Morris's comparing himself to a worm in an apple (or radish—the Yiddish proverb goes something like: 'A worm in a jar of horse radish thinks he's in paradise') can be a powerful, positive thing, a way to get from one stage to another, without distraction from what has

been or could be. Morris was willing to choose, and to make the best of what came after, and to find a way to be satisfied, overall, with the results of his choices. Morris's was an example I needed to see, then, and I remain grateful to him today for providing it.

Somewhere in the middle of my week with Morris, when he was getting tired of my pestering him, this interchange occurred:

Morris: It's getting to be a nonsense, you coming every day with questions, questions.

I want you to tell me who's buying this book and how many pages it will be. I don't think I am a man who is fit to be written in a book.

Me: What kind of man is fit to be written in a book?

Morris: A man accomplished, famous: doctor, scientist...

Me: Well, those are the kinds of people I don't really want to write about, because everybody writes about them, and people like you are, in a way, an awful lot more important.

Morris: Well, what I say to everybody: 'You are right, too.' Right? [Laughs.]

Meantime, my hat [which people had been commenting on all week] makes me famous!

Coming upon that in the transcripts, I was embarrassed at having said it, and wondered if I believed it. Was I so naive and simpleminded? And yet, thinking about it now, I find (except for amending to the milder "at least as important" the final phrase) that I stand behind it, still.

\*

The last time I saw Morris was nearly a month after I moved out of the apartment on 98th Street and Broadway, to one just above Columbia University. He was standing with another old man, another Russian Jew, who was showing him a letter. The Jewish parochial school teacher was there, too. Morris, still wearing the baby blue, narrow-rimmed hat he's been wearing the week I'd spent with him, pointed toward me as I approached. "Here comes the young man," he said in Yiddish, which he translated for me later.

They seemed glad to see me.

I asked how it was going with Morris. "The same," he said. The teacher asked the same of me, meaning what was happening with my book, and I told him it had been to two publishers, so far, but neither of them had been interested.

"My story is not interesting," Morris said.

I told him it was. I asked the teacher, as much for my own as Morris's affirmation if he thought Morris's story was interesting. "Of course," he said. "There are thousands of immigrants like him," which was not quite the answer I had wanted to hear.

Morris told me he thought the stories of those who had escaped the death camps after the war—like the rabbi of the shul behind us—were more interesting. He told me how the rabbi had been hidden in a basement for months, and how he still wrote to the man who had concealed him. Morris said that he, himself, when he had made his escape from Russia, had claimed he was not Jewish, so they would let him out. They had believed him

because of the way he looked, and because he spoke without an accent. But one of the men who had been with him had not escaped.

The other Russian Jew, a shriveled old man with a beret on his head and white stubble on his chin, said, in Yiddish (the teacher translated for me) that Morris was lucky they didn't look at his shmuck. "Do you know what that means?" the teacher asked me. "To see if he was circumcised?" The teacher nodded yes, smiling, chuckling. "They could also have asked him to make the sign of the cross," he went on. "They might have spotted him as a Jew if they had."

While we talked, a trim young man in pale blue slacks and a white shirt came to the stand to buy a Times. Morris, grabbing the young man by the shoulder and pulling him to his side, told me that the young man was a famous dancer with the American Ballet Theater. "He lives here on 98th Street; his parents are Cuban. He is very famous. He has Cadillac, he was just in Turkey. And he is only 21!" He had given Morris a ticket, once; Morris told us that the audience had given the young man a standing ovation.

The young man smiled, embarrassment and affection evident on his smooth, brown face. A little louder, Morris added, "I introduce you to everybody who comes here!" and he smiled, proud and avuncular.

The young man smiled again, took his paper, eased out of Morris's grasp and walked away. The teacher left, too, saying he'd return later. Morris and the old man resumed reading their letter in Russian, and I continued on my way to the subway; I'd walked from uptown, so I could say hello to Morris before I took the train downtown.

Before I also went on my way, I assured Morris that when I found a publisher, I'd tell him, and he'd believe his story was interesting, too. Later that day, it occurred to me that Morris was already a celebrity, in his own way, and that he needed no help from me.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> include more stuff where he talks to me, like this, so I am not a nonentity

<sup>2</sup> this is an important section, and needs a better buildup

<sup>3</sup> this is important, too

<sup>4</sup> something garbled here

<sup>5</sup> emphasize parallels with the Margie story, and group this in a section on Corners

<sup>6</sup> Play on this. Michael is also 26 years of age, and has to make some choices at this point in his life.

<sup>7</sup> maybe put in stuff about my wondering if he's really interesting?