Fugitive Pieces

By Anne Michaels
I did not witness the most important events in my life.
My deepest story must be told by a blind man...
from behind a wall...
from underground.
Hey, open the door.
Open up!
The second legato... should be slower.
We have to hurry,
I can hear them coming.
- Come on.
- Bella...
Under there.
Go, go!
This isn't a joke, Jakob, listen.
There are 32 cans in the cupboard.
Long before you run out, we'll be back.
Don't open the door to anyone.
Understand?
Wait for us.
Promise!
- Yes, I promise.
- And be quiet.
Stay where you are!
Go, check the upstairs!
Check over there!
- Please don't...
- Be quiet!
Shut up! Shut up!
You're coming with us.
You'll get us killed.
You understand?
You should have thought of that.
Damn it!
Stop!
Where are you going?
He works at an archeological dig, he's sick.
- You come from Krakow?
- Yes.
It may be typhus.
I'm taking him to a hospital.
Passport.
- Athanassios Roussos. Greece.
- Yes.
What's the matter with you?
A infection...
- much bleeding, hospital across border.
- Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.
Drive on!

By:
Athos Roussos & Jakob Beer
BEARING FALSE WITNESS:
HISTORY AND MEMORY
Jake... can you get me a towel?
Here you go.
I've been thinking about paper.
Paper or china?
China or paper?
- I think it's paper.
- What?
First year anniversary.
- That's next week.
- I know.
I think we should celebrate.
Why wait?
Hmmm.
Are you all right?
Yeah.
Maybe we should just get ready.
Okay.
You ready to go?
This woman at Birkenau...
she kept an image of
her husband and daughter...
cut from a photo, underneath
her tongue for three months.
She could've been killed at any moment.
Incredible.
Yeah.
That a person would die
for a photograph.
You don't wanna come, do you?
Everyone will miss you.
They're starting to think you don't like them.
You can't work on this all the time.
You'll drive yourself mad.
Actually, I've finished it.
Why didn't you say anything?
It's great, Jake.
You can move on now.
Start your own book,
do whatever you want.
- We could take that trip.
- What trip?
To the island.
To Greece.
Yeah. I...
Maybe.
Oh, Jake.
Come on. They'll be waiting for us.
- We can share the good news.
- No, I...
I'm not up for it.
- You go.
- Or...
- maybe I could just stay here.
- No, no.
Go alone.
Say hello to everyone.
Okay.
It's great, Jake.
A new beginning.
Hey...
We're here.
My son...
There it is...
Home.
What am I going to do with you?
When we were married...
I hoped that if I let Alex in...
if I let in a finger of light...
it would flood the clearing.
And at first, this is exactly what happened.
Mingus, Mendelssohn,
Mozart...
Mantovani.
- That's an odd selection.
- I'm on the "M's".
Ha...
Crash course?
Huh, yeah...
Something like that.
I really don't know
that much about music.
My sister used to play.
- Did she?
- Yeah.
- What?
- The piano.
- Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann.
- She had good taste.
- Yeah.
- Does she still play?
No... No, she's...
she doesn't play anymore.
Do you know about the
concerts at the conservatory?
No.
Ah... W.E.A... The Workers
Education Association.
The union...
Every Sunday afternoon at two.
It's all amateur stuff, really...
but a lot of my friends go.
Who do you hang out with?
Uh... I don't really
have any friends.
- No?
- Well...
A few.
Well, I could probably
afford to be...
more discriminating myself.
Oh!
Oh, look at those.
Those are perfect.
You need a pair of galoshes.
No, I need those...
It's the color.
They'll look brilliant
on the wet pavement.
Hee... haw!
What?
- You're so...
- Why you're laughing?
You're so...
- You're so serious.
- I'm sorry.
No, don't be sorry.
Okay, I'm not sorry.
I brought you back your books.
- Hi, Ben.
- Hey.
I really liked "the stranger"...
"seven days in may"...
not so much.
I don't know... I'm not really
into political thrillers.
You're a little early, Ben.
What time is it?
Uh... I don't know.
Ben?
Oh, there you are.
Leave Jacob alone... he probably
hasn't even had his breakfast yet.
- That's all right.
- Come on.
How about I bring you a
new batch of books later?
Okay.
You've always spoiled him.
Oh... Hello.
Oh, this is Alex...
and this is Joseph.
- Joseph, um...
- Nice to meet you.
- he... he lives down the hall.
- Ha...
I've known Jakob
since he was a boy.
Really?
Oh yes... yes,
he was a lovely boy too, huh...
so quiet, so polite.
You're embarrassing me, Joseph.
Oh, well...
I'll, uh... I'll leave
you and... uh, your friend.
Bye... huh.
- What are you doing?
- Nothing.
So, you've lived in
this place a long time.
Yeah.
I've never lived anywhere
for more than two years.
Well, it's comfortable.
Hmm.
Mmm, what's that?
You're not too big
on change, I'm guessing.
Oh...
Jacob and I came
here on our first date.
That wasn't a date...
we'd just met.
Date or not, I thought you'd had taken him
to some horrible underground jazz club.
Or some god...
awful lecture by Marshal McLuhan.
Or to some very worthy, but also
very dull meeting on the joys...
of the Labor Progressive Party.
And now you're making
fun of my politics.
Well, we know you come
by them honestly.
Oh!
Hey!
Thank you.
- Hey, where's mine?
- There you go, it's right over here.
They liked you.
Hey, hey...
I learned some Jewish.
Uh'huh?
I have a yellow dog?
You don't even have a dog.
Is that what I said?
That lady in the
market tricked me.
Oh, I...
I think we should get married.
- What?
- And I don't wanna wait too long...
for you to ask.
I'm just saying,
I think it looks...
pretty inevitable.
You think so?
Yeah, I do... I think
we can make each other happy.
Mmm.

Alex never understands...
thinks that she's doing me good...
snatching me from the jaws
of despair, rescuing me.
But each time a memory
or a story slinks away...
it takes more of me with it.
Everything is wrong.
The bedroom,
Alex beside me, my panic.
How will Bella
ever find me here?
Beside this strange woman...
speaking this language...
eating strange food,
wearing these clothes...
- Hello.
- Congratulations on your book.
- Poppy seed.
- Poppy seed.
Elaine, you're a goddess.
- Give me your coat.
- Okay.
Alex... they're here.
- How are the children?
- Ah, who cares?
As long as someone else
was taking care of them.
- Hi.
- There she is.
- Hello.
- Mmm.
- Hi.
- Hi.
How are you?
Aha!
- Poppy seed.
- Your favorite.
Be right back.
So, Maurice, how's the museum?
Oh, you know,
It's paleontology.
It's not a very glamorous...
Not that much to say.
Well, never mind...
I get more than enough
history right here at home.
- Alex?
- Yeah.
Maybe I could give you
a hand in the kitchen.
Sure.
And there was this Czech woman,
a farmer's wife...
- Mm-hmm.
- she hid a family of Jews...
people she barely even knew.
Seven of them, for the entire war...
almost two years, feeding them.
- At the end of the war...
- Jake...
was the first time her husband
found out about it. Just a second.
You'd think
he'd be proud of her, yes?
Sure.
He beat her so badly,
she almost died.
Jake, maybe you should
just give Maurice a break.
- No, this is okay.
- No, it's not.
If you're not married to him... you're not obligated to listen to this stuff 24 hours a day.
- Alex, really, it's...
- No, Maurice... it makes your brain explode... his obsession...
- with these details...
- Alex.
It's obscene.
What's going on?
No. No!
"The moment I'd spent half my day... crawling through misery to reach... vanishes under a bulb. The shadows slip away... as Alex again barges in... with her shameless vitality".
Do you have any idea what this has been like for me? I can't take this anymore. This is what you want, isn't it?
Then you can...
sit in the dark forever. Every trace of me will be gone...
my clothes which you think are too flashy... and my job which you think is trivial... and my friends whose names you can't even remember. You're ungrateful, Jake.
- Alex.
- What?
Right.
I tried to bury images...
to cover them up with distractions...
with attempts at love.
By day, I entered the world...
but at night, my mother,
my father... Bella...
simply rose, shook the earth
from their clothes...
and waited.
To live with ghosts
requires solitude.
I know only fragments
of what Athos contained.
Salt, olives...
vine leaves, sea foam...
a life spanning two
wars and one love.
Elena.
Were there words
that they regretted?
Did they imagine children?
When a man dies...
his secrets bond like crystals.
There is no one here.
You can come out.
You need some fresh air, Jakob.
Come out.
One day you have to come out.
At least we have this.
Your gums are bleeding.
I'll soak some bread
in water for you.
Eat... eat.
And this?
Who is this?
Your father.
That's right.
Your Greek is still
better than your English.
Hmm?
Oh, Nicolas...
thought I'd lost it...
my brother.
I haven't seen this photograph
for a long time.
He died at age of 18...
in a traffic accident.
Hmm.
Sometimes people die
when it's not expected...
not just during wartime.
Come here.
No one will see you.
We're too high up.
My grandparents
used to have a house...
on the island of Hydra,
overlooking the sea.
Once when Nikos was a boy...
he folded a paper airplane...
and sent it over the edge.
It landed in the hat
of a man drinking ouzo...
in a cafe near by the dock.
On the wings of the airplane...
my brother had
written a note...
begging to be saved
from a kidnapper.
And he described where
he was being held captive.
Then... the police
came to our house...
and Nikos laughed
and laughed...
while my father...
chased him yelling,
halfway down the hill.
It's all right!
It's all right.
I'm here.
Don't be scared.
Don't be scared.
Don't be scared.
- Good morning, Athos.
- Good morning.
Where did you get these fish?
My nephew has a boat,
he managed to hide them from the Nazis.
You know...
they made us take in a German officer.
He steals from us.
Everyday he takes something.
Knives, forks, needle and thread.
Whatever he finds.
He brings home potatoes,
butter, meat...
just for himself.
He forces me to serve him,
while my family watches.
Are you sure you can spare these?
If we don't look after each other,
who will?
I almost forgot.
I don't know if they'll fit.
They grow fast at his age.
Actually, he's hardly growing at all.
What is it?
It's just...
I don't know how to handle him.
He's not like other children.
He's different.
Don't say that.
He's a normal child.
He's just experienced things
that no child should.
Maybe we can find a family
to take him.
You've already done so much.
If not for you, he'd be dead.
A few days after we left Poland,
the archeological site
where I was working,
was destroyed by the Nazis.
They burned everything,
then shot five of my colleagues
in the forest.
They others were sent to a camp.
If it wasn't for Jakob
I'd be dead too.
We saved each other.
You are very good looking.
All the girls will want
to marry you.
You understand what I'm saying, hmm?
You learn fast.
You're smart.
You're like a sponge.
Did Athos tell you he was married?
Hmm?
Her name was Eleni.
They were together only five years
before she died.
He never told me.
Hmm... hm.
I'm only telling you Jakob...
so you know that Athos
has also been through a lot.
He's strong in many ways,
but sometimes you might need
to take care of him too.
Hmm?
You understand?

GROUNDWORK:
Damned war!
Not even a decent cup of coffee.
Beethoven counted out
exactly sixty beans...
for each cup of coffee.
Noodles and cheese...
or potatoes and fish...
but not from the Danube...
were his favourite meals.
And he only drank spring water...
or beer.
That's enough of that.
Come here, little one.
To hell!
It's okay, it's Mrs. Serenou.
Something wrong?
I'm sorry...
I hate to ask.
You know my daughter...
She's married to a Jew.
They'd be grateful
if they could stay the night.
The Gestapo ordered the mayor...
to write down the name...
of every Jew on the island.
The mayor took the list
to the Archbishop, who said:
Burn it.
I'm sorry, it's not much.
Please don't apologize.
Almost everyone managed to escape.
The Jewish ghetto is empty.
This morning,
the few Jews who were left...
were rounded up at gunpoint...
then herded onto a truck
and taken away.
What happened to them?
Can he understand us?
Maybe we shouldn't...
He's already heard so much.
I'm sorry to ask you this, but...
we left some things
hidden in our house.
It's to dangerous for us to go back.
Could you perhaps...
Of course... I'll do it.
Thank you.
Be careful.
I have to go into town.
Why?
Hey... don't worry.
I'll be all right.
We know that many of the Jews have
escaped and are hiding somewhere...
The Germans know...
that many Jews have escaped
or are in hiding.
and we know that a lot of you
people did help them to escape...
also helping them to hide
at this moment.
They know that many of you
have helped them...
or hiding them.
Everybody has to stay in the square,
while we're searching every house...
right now everyone's a suspect, until
we find out who's been helping them.
As suspects,
your homes will be searched.
This has gone to far.
Do you think, I'll stand here
like a criminal?
- Stop! Stop!
- I won't be humiliated any longer.
Stop! Don't walk away!
- Stop!
- Fire!
Come here.
Can you read this?
It belongs to loannis and Allegra.
Talk to me, Jakob.
Talk to me.
Jakob.
Jakob! Jakob.
Stop, Jakob!
Stop! Stop!
Stop! Jakob!
Oh...
You are back.
It's over.
Come outside.
It's safe now.
This is a letter,
I received a few months ago.
It's invitation
to teach in Canada.
See the stamp?
Mountain...
Snow...
When?
As soon... huh, as I get a visa.
Jakob.
Jakob!
Jakob!
Jakob. Ja...
Jakob, what's the matter?
You're going to leave me!
Dummy!
We're going to Canada together!
You're putting on some weight,
Finally.
That the dead may drink.
That the dead
may not go hungry.
For your parents.
For Bella.
For all who have no one
to recall their names.
And for Eleni.
How do you know about Eleni?
Tell me.
Jakob...
it may not mean
anything to you now...
but you must try to be buried...
in ground that
will remember you.
I long for the loss of memory.
Though I have tried
to will my parents...
and Bella from my sleep...
this will amounts to nothing...
for my mind betrays me
in a second.
I've crossed an ocean and
lived many years without them...
yet I can feel Bellas
gentle fingers on my back...
my father's hand on my head...
and suddenly I'm afraid...
and turn around
in empty rooms.
How are your parents?

Ben:
They're fine.
- How are you?
- I'm all right, I guess.
- I start university next Year.
- I know, that's good.
- I'm dating someone.
- Oh, really?
- Is she here?
- No.
Oh.
What's her name?
- Naomi.
- Ah.
An excellent name.
- Do you know what it means?
- No, I don't.
In Hebrew, it means "Full of Grace".
I didn't expect you to be here.
Do you still think it's true, that I...
wanted to change you?
I mean, it's in the book,
so I suppose you do.
Alex, if it hadn't been for you...
I never would've written the book.
I would never have...
Gone to Greece.
I don't know if that's true.
Well, I...
So what now?
I'm going to teach here
for a few months every year...
when Im not on the island.
- Are you seeing anybody?
- Uh, no.
- You?
- Sort of.
He's a musician.
Aren't you lonely?
Yeah. Same old Jake.
You've written a very good book.
You should be proud.
From Mr. Taylor, my new colleague.
It's invitation... to party.
Look how popular we are already.
Yiddish-speaking neighbours.
How do you like that?
Electricity.
Running water.
It's like living in hotel.
I was looking forward to snow...
but there is hardly any at all.
You're like a lot...
you've got a fascination with the cold.
Well, a few winters here,
will change that, I'm sure.
Excuse me.
I hope you're having a good time.
I'm sorry there aren't
more children here.
Thank you, it's very nice.
Oh, wait...
I have something for you.
I know you're not...
I mean...
well, everyone should be able
to take part in a celebration.
Right?
Thank you... you're much too kind.
Oh! I almost forgot.
Jakob...
why don't you pose with Athos?
Oh. Hmm.
Come.
Good.
Smile.
Oh, thanks, Jakob.
Too much champagne.
I'll feel better in the morning.
Mmm!
Ah, excellent.
I taught you well.
You didn't open your present.
What do you think it is?
Refrigerator?
Locomotive?
A frog?
Open it.
Put it on.
Ah... looks good on you.
What is it?
My god.
Stay where you are.
Oh... careful.
Now what?
I'm... um, I'm sorry to bother you.
- Everything all right?
- Ah...
This crazy storm.
Do you want to come in?
Ohh, no, no, no, no.
Thank you... Um...
I was wondering if...
if you had any extra candles?
Of course... take this one.
- I'll bring you some more.
- Thank you.
I'm, uh, sorry to bother you.
It's... it's...
it's my husband... he...
What is it?
Oh, he doesn't
take too well to, huh...
I shouldn't leave
him alone too long.
Uh'hm.
Do you need matches too?
You speak Yiddish?
Are you afraid?
It's just a little rain.
At least the gas stove works.
Lemon or milk?
Lemon.
Like all the greeners.
Shall we take them their tea?
Sure.
No.
Let them wait.
My mother always said,
a house is like a human body.
And the kitchen...
the kitchen is the heart.
It's true, isn't it?
You'll come visit again soon?
It's so nice
to have a young man around.
So, this book you're writing.
"Bearing False Witness".
But it's not really a book yet. Just a lot of notes, ideas. Who knows if I ever finish it. And, uh, it's about what happened during the war? Well, uh, it's about the abuse of history. It starts, uh, with Biskupin in Poland... where I met Jakob. a river dried up there... and people started finding artifacts. But then the Nazis came and they buried everything. As far as they were concerned... there couldn't possibly be an advanced culture... that they didn't create. So they destroyed the evidence. It's a good thing you're doing. Already, people say the things I lived through... never happened. You'd think they'd at least wait a few years... until we're all dead. The mitzvah that you did... for that boy... it's a blessed thing. Did you know... that Joseph was a conductor in Warsaw... - Huh. - Before the war? A very good conductor. Oh, not that good. And he's a very good piano teacher too. Parents pay me... and children resent me. Is that good teaching? Don't listen to him. - Thank you.
- My Sara...
she was a singer.
Not bad either.
Now I sell dry goods
in the market.
I'm the singing dry goods lady.
Things change.
My sister played the piano.
Really?
Was she good?
Some more sugar.
You eat so slowly...
like an aristocrat.
I think about her too.
You think she's dead.
I don't know, Jakob.
Maybe it's better to hope.
Listen...
when I feel things...
building up inside me, I write.
You have also
something to express.
So...
you will write too.
Write what?
What you must.
There is an old saying:
"The great mystery of
wood is not that it burns...
but that it floats".
Understand?
No.
There is a good and
bad side to everything.
You can choose to see
what destroys something...
or what saves it.
"There is earth that
never leaves your hands...
rain that never leaves your bones".
"At night, memory roams your skin".
"While you sleep,
the sea floods your house".
"You wake in the bog...
burning with the smell of earth"
"Nothing releases you...
not death in the dream, not waking".
"This is how one becomes
undone, by a smell...
a word, a place...
a photo of a mountain of shoes".
"By love that closes its
mouth before calling a name".
Jakob, it's beautiful.
Beautiful.
Ohh, damn you.
Look at us, huh?
Uh?... Ah'hah.
The two bachelors
crying into our coffees.
Another cup?
No, thanks.
Okay.
Then Im going to do
some work of my own.
Ben, it's getting late.
Your parents will
think we kidnapped you.
I know you're not asleep.
Come on, Ben.
Come on, time for bed.
Ah, there you are.
Did he fall asleep?
Come on, now, time for bed.
Don't make me go.
Ben.
Come on, Ben.
Ben, Ben.
Come on.
Okay... go on.
Good night.
You always know, Jakob.
If he ever gives you any trouble...
you just send him back, huh?
- He can overstay his welcome.
- It's no trouble.
- Good night.
- Good night.
You should rest.
It's not good for you...
to work night after night
like this.
There is an old Greek saying.
"Light your candle
before night overtakes you".
You have a saying
for everything.
Yes...
I do.
That was a beautiful ceremony.
So many people.
Yeah.
You know, when you first came here...
you were what... 11?
- Mmm-hmm.
- Just a little bit older than Ben.
Hey! What's this?
An apple.
Is an apple food?
Why do you throw it away?
I don't want the other half.
Can you imagine?
Take it.
I said take it!
During the war...
everything had value,
no matter how small.
A button, a pencil, a spoon!
Not to mention the things
that could make you weep.
A good pair of shoes.
Hot water, a scrap of food.
Isn't that right, Jakob?
Now my own son
throws away an apple.
Joseph.
Well, if my only son doesn't even
understand the value of things...
why did we even survive?
I'm sorry.
Why don't you play something?
I know I have
written to you before.
This letter is in regards
to a missing person.
First name Bella...
last name Beer.
Biskupin, Poland, 1942.
Age fifteen.
I'm seeking
any information...
regarding her possible
whereabouts...
Please post the following
every Friday for one year.
I know the records
are incomplete...
I know I have written
to you before.
Check your list,
taking into account...
possible variations of spelling.
First name Bella,
last name Beer.
Age fifteen.
Jakob...
I want to tell you something.
Hello?
Jakob?
It's Ben, how are you?
Oh, hi, Ben. Uh, I'm fine.
- I'm just sleeping.
- We were thinking of you.
How are things in Hydra?
Good... how's Naomi?
- She's fine.
- And your dad?
How's he, since...
He's okay.
Well, I'll be seeing him soon.
I'll be back for class,
in a couple of weeks.
- That soon?
- Yeah.
Okay, hang on.
- Jakob!
- Hi, Naomi.
Good to hear your voice.
Well, say you'll come to dinner.
Oh yes, of course,
soon as I get back.
Great.
Finally!
How was your trip?
Oh, you remembered my olive oil.
How could I forget?
Hi!
Welcome back.
Listen, there's this woman
from the museum knows.
She's a curator, very smart.
Oh, no!
All right, then.
"All right", what?
Invite her over sometime.
Uh'hu...
Well, actually, she already did.
Jakob... Michaela.
Naomis had us on her
thesis diet for months now.
When I was doing the Russians...
all we ever ate was
cabbage soup and perigees.
Then it was the Latin Americans.
Empanadas, rice, beans.
And now it's Sweden.
And every other day,
we're eating salted fish.
That's not true!
And... what's wrong
with salted fish anyway?
You know, when I was small...
I was obsessed with salt.
I think it started because
we traveled so much...
and everywhere,
I kept hearing about salt.
City of salt.
Road of salt.
And in the Sahara, there were
entire cities built of salt.
I used to imagine caravans...
weighed down with
thick cakes of salt.
I'm talking too much.
So, Naomi.
- How's your project?
- Um, good.
I... Collect songs and lullabies
from everywhere in the world.
Become a kind of a mania with me.
A song for every occasion...
or person.
By now I can match a song
or a ballad to anyone.
- What about Jak...
- What about Mich...
What about Jakob?
- What about Michaela?
- Jakob. No!
No, I don't...
Try, try. Um...
Well, for you, I... I would
have to say, "Moorsoldaten"...
Hmm...
"The peat bog soldiers".
Peat bog.
You're very good.
Do you know the song?
Oh, yeah.
- It's... well, it's...
- Huh...
it was written by
prisoners during the war.
And they weren't allowed to
sing anything but marching songs...
while they were working...
so they wrote something that
sounded like a marching song...
but...
Well, really,
it's a song about hope.
Sing it.
Uh...
"Wherever the eye may wonder... heath and bog everywhere".
"Birdsongs brings no solace... and trees stand bare".
Very good.
So, you still live in Greece.
Back and forth.
I write there, teach here.
How long have you known Naomi?
Well, to tell you the truth, not that long.
I've only been at the museum a few months.
How long have you known each other?
Well, I've known Ben all his life, really.
I was there when he was born.
His parents lived in the apartment next to ours.
Ben was very premature.
And when his mother went into labor...
His father came running into our apartment in a panic.
And Athos, my godfather, was away at a conference...
so I called the ambulance and...
anyway, I ended up being at the hospital when she gave birth.
When they brought him from the delivery room...
He weighed less than three pounds.
So small.
In this almost transparent body.
He was like a spirit.
Not even a person.
No bigger than my hand.
Take off your coat.
I'll make some tea.
Oh, this is...
From my mother's
side of the family.  
She's Russian, he's Spanish.  
Fabulous arguments,  
as you can imagine.  
And they used to go on for hours.  
What stamina.  
Hmm.  
Hmm.  
What?  
Lemon.  
Why? You... you want milk?  
No.  
Even the horror of the past...  
you try to reinvent it  
and re-imagine it.  
Like my grandmother.  
Yeah, sort of.  
Not always so amusingly.  
Take specific moments and...  
your mind fills in the gaps.  
I've spent years  
trying to imagine...  
Bella's route from the house.  
Where did she die?  
In the street?  
In the train?  
In the barracks?  
You try to reconstruct...  
visualize every possible scenario.  
I used to dream that  
maybe she escaped.  
I haven't dreamt  
that in a long time.  
I also used to wonder...  
what might have  
happened if I'd stayed.  
Waited in the house  
instead of running away.  
Maybe she came back.  
There's a poem by Akhmatova.  
"You are many years late...  
how happy I am io see you".  
Joseph?  
Joseph?
We shouldn't tell the rabbi... or they won't let him into the cemetery. At least he waited 'till my mother died. I still can't believe he would do that... after everything he went through. Your father suffered a lot, Ben. He didn't suffer. He was impenetrable. Can I ask you something? I don't understand how you could have gone through what you did... and still be so generous, Still write the things you do. I used to think that if I understood you... I could understand my father better. But it's like you're from different worlds. Well, I don't think so. Your father told me not long ago... that he still would dream... about his mother and father. The smallest things. The detail of his mother's coat, a button... his father's shoes, outside in the rain. And that when he woke up in the morning... old as he was... he was still crying. Jakob... I want to tell you something. The mystery of wood is not that it burns... but that it floats. Go, Jakob. After years of trying to be closer to them...
I now fear that I am only haunting...
my parents and Bella with my calling,
Startling them awake in their black beds.
All the years I've felt
Bella entreat me...
filled with her loneliness...
I have misunderstood
her signals.
Like other ghosts,
she whispers...
not for me to join her...
but so that when I'm close enough...
she can push me back
into the world.
Whoa!
Ah!
Mmm.
Garlic.
And, uh...
Basil.
Mmm. Sweat.
Honey.
Mm, oh, coconut oil.
Salt.
Read it.
You sure?
"I did not witness the
most important events of my life".
My deepest story must
be told by a blind man...
from behind a wall,
from underground...
from the corner of a small
house on a small island...
that juts like a bone
from the skin of sea.
While I hid in the radiant
light of Athos' island...
thousands suffocated
in darkness.
While I hid in
the luxury of a room...
thousands were stuffed
into crawlspaces...
stables, pigsties.
While I was learning
Greek and English...
learning geology
And poetry...
Jews were filling the corners
and cracks of Europe.
I didn't know that while I
listened to stories of explorers...
a Jew could be purchased
for a quart of brandy...
for sugar, cigarettes.
What do our bodies make us believe?
That we're never ourselves,
until we contain two souls.
Now Im not afraid when
harvesting darkness.
Night after night it is
happiness that wakes me.
There is room at last for
everyone I have ever loved.
As Michaela approaches,
I shake like a compass needle...
feeling for the first time a future...
my words, my life,
no longer separate...
after decades of hiding in my skin.
"Here is a woman who will
slowly undress my spirit...
bring my body to belief".
We're gonna be late.
Coming.
Your Heart's desire is she's
a girl, Bella if he's a boy, Bela.
"Each morning I write
these words for you all...
for Bella and Athos
and Elena, for Alex...
for Joseph and Sara, for...
Ben and Naomi, for Michaela.
Michaela.
I can describe what
her wrists look like...
or how her hair grows
at the back of her neck.
But more, I know
what she remembers.
I know her memories.
I pray that soon my wife will
feel new breath inside her own.
I pray and press my head against
her side, and whisper a story.
Child I long for, child I dream...
if we conceive you,
think of us sometimes...
your mother and me,
when it rains.
And one day, when
you've almost forgotten...
I pray you'll let us return.
That through an open window,
even in the middle of a city...
the sea air of our
marriage will find you.
I pray that one day...
in a room lit only by night snow...
you will suddenly
know how miraculous...
is your parents' love
for each other.
My son, my daughter...
Bella.
Bela.
If we conceive you...
know that once
I was lost in a forest.
I was so afraid...
my blood pounded in my chest...
and I knew my heartstrings
would soon be exhausted.
I saved myself without thinking.
I grasped the two
syllables closest to me...
and replaced my heartbeat
with your name.
Bella.
Now I see that I must
give what I most need". 