



### **Margaret's Story, Chapter 3**

So we spent some dreadful years in the ghetto. We didn't know where my father was, he had disappeared, he went out and never came back. Somehow the only thing that kept us from despairing was hope. A) we were absolutely convinced for a long time that the war couldn't last long. The Allies are definitely going to defeat the Nazis very soon so, you know. And we didn't think of an annihilation programme. We just knew that they surrounded some people and they shot some people but somehow hope persisted. Strange how people hope against hope but we did. So we were hungry, we were frightened, we had to do a lot of hard labour, they took brigades out to the airport where they were doing a lot of hard building work, people who had never done any stroke of physical work in their lives, you know. It took its toll on health, on morale, of course. Then I met Joseph. And Joseph was an extraordinary sort of person that my cousin Irena had met and she said to me, "You know you've got to meet him. He is extraordinary. He's got food and butter", you know "he's got food, he's got records, he's got a gramophone", gramophone, you know, what's it called, it isn't called a gramophone any more, it was called a gramophone then, "He has lots of nice classical records, you must meet". So of course that was all very interesting and I did meet Joseph and I said, he said well - being extraordinary of course he didn't live in those congested, we were all herded into very very congested circumstances, like we lived in two rooms with, there were three families living in the two rooms. He wasn't going to do that. He built himself, he erected a tent in a vegetable garden and one day we were walking and he said "Will you come to my tent? See my tent, I want to introduce you to my tent", and I said "Yes sure I'll come but you need to bring me a bottle of vodka and the Fourth Symphony, Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, and then I'll come". You know it was like saying, you know reaching for the moon, bring me the moon, and about two weeks later Alik was our little messenger boy, he brought me a little note from Joseph saying "I've got both" (laughs). So we had a very nice, so he had a primus stove and eggs and sausage and butter and bread and we cooked and we ate and we drank vodka... no, I'm sorry I must correct myself, I drank vodka, and at some point Joseph said, "How about me a bit of vodka?" I said, "You? I said I wanted a bottle of vodka. Did you bring another bottle?" And he said, "No but surely you're going to share it with me". I said "No, no way". So I drank all the bottle of vodka – it wasn't a very large one, it was a small bottle, and we had a fabulous time and I was

stone sober and Joseph was very gentle with me and very nice and we parted good friends and I, Irena was vindicated, he was an extraordinary person. Joseph unlike so many others who hoped against hope was absolutely sure that we were going to be exterminated and we had to, if we wanted to stay alive we needed to somehow get out of this hellish ghetto. My mother by the way incidentally also believed that but there were some people who used to say to me and my, "Your mother is destructive". I said "Why is she destructive?" "She says that we are all going to get killed. This is people like your mother who are creating panic so going to be the destruction of the ghetto". See how different people's perceptions were. But Joseph knew and my mother knew. But I didn't want to leave my mother and Joseph was building this, he said he had got a hiding place where he had planned to take his mother and he would take me too. And I was to come with them, get married and go into hiding. I said I couldn't go because I couldn't leave my mother and my brother. And eventually there was a friend whom I worked with, Chana Bravo, she helped me in the way that she had a friend, who was Macenavicius, and she went out to him and took Alik and he agreed to keep Alik. So that was one obstacle but there was still my mother. So you know Alik, who was blond and blue-eyed and was actually even not circumcised, was less of a risk than many another child could have been and, but they were even so they were heroes, the Macenaviciuses, because people said "Where has this child suddenly come from?" you know. But they were steadfast and they kept him throughout the dangers and Alik was as safe as anybody could be in the war-torn Lithuania. My mother, Joseph as you know from later years is the best salesman in the world that I have ever met and Joseph went round everyone that he knew was in contact with me trying to sell the idea that I should marry him and go out. And eventually of course he got round my mother and my mother laid into me and she said "Look, what good are you going to be staying in the ghetto and perishing with me? If you get out into hiding you might be able to find me a place, some documents". So eventually we went out. I decided that that was the sensible thing to do. I was persuaded, we went and got married – well it wasn't sort of a white wedding or anything but we went to the ghetto registry office, we got registered and I – Joseph got another little bottle of vodka and there was my friend (?Nika) and her boyfriend who were the two witnesses and we were going to go back to our – to the loft of the place we lived in and drink the vodka. I said to Joseph "Give me the vodka, I will prepare a bit of something to eat with it." He said "No way! You? How can I trust you with a bottle of vodka, it won't be there when we need it!" So he hid it from me and when we went to the loft, guess what? It had been stolen there was no vodka! (laughs). So we had a vodkaless wedding. And soon after that I went with the

labour slave brigade that Joseph worked with and never came back, we went up to the loft, his mother and he, and we stayed there for about 9 months in hiding.