

and that, therefore, it really was not a reconciliation at all.

He nodded his head slowly. 'Nu,' he said, not speaking only to me but to the entire class now, 'it is a very difficult inyan. And the commentaries' - he used the term 'Rishonim', which indicates the early medieval Talmudic commentators - 'do not help us.' Then he looked at me. 'Tell me, Reuven,' he said quietly, 'how do you explain the inyan?'

I sat there and stared at him in stunned silence. If the commentators hadn't been able to explain it, how could I? But he didn't let the silence continue this time. Instead, he repeated his question, his voice soft, gentle. 'You cannot explain it, Reuven?'

'No,' I heard myself say.

'So,' Rav Gershenson said, 'You cannot explain it. You are sure you cannot explain it?'

For a moment I was almost tempted to tell him the text was wrong and to give him the text I had reconstructed. But I didn't. I was afraid. I remembered Danny telling me that Rav Gershenson knew all about the critical method of studying Talmud, and hated it. So I kept silent.

Rav Gershenson turned to the class. 'Can anyone explain the inyan?' he asked quietly.

He was answered by silence.

He sighed loudly. 'Nu,' he said, 'no one can explain it. . . .

The truth is, I cannot explain it myself. It is a difficult inyan. A very difficult inyan.' He was silent for a moment, then he shook his head and smiled. 'A teacher can also sometimes not know,' he said softly.

That was the first time in my life I had ever heard of a rabbi admit that he didn't understand a passage of Talmud.

We sat there in an uncomfortable silence. Rav Gershenson stared down at the open Talmud on his desk. Then he closed it slowly and dismissed the class.

As I was gathering up my books, I heard him call my name. Danny heard him, too, and looked at him. 'I want to talk with you a minute,' Rav Gershenson said. I went up to his desk.

Standing near him, I could see how wrinkled his face and brow were. The skin on his hands looked dry, parchment-like, and his lips formed a thin line beneath the heavy tangle of gray

beard. His eyes were brown and gentle, and deep wrinkles spread from their outside corners like tiny furrows.

He waited until all the students were out of the classroom. Then he asked me quietly, 'You studied the inyan by yourself, Reuven?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Your father did not help you?'

'My father is in the hospital.'

He looked shocked.

'He's better now. He had a heart attack.'

'I did not know,' he said softly. 'I am sorry to hear that.' He paused for a moment, looking at me intently. 'So,' he said. 'You studied the inyan alone.'

I nodded.

'Tell me, Reuven,' he said gently, 'do you study Talmud with your father?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Your father is a great scholar,' he said quietly, almost wistfully. 'A very great scholar.' His brown eyes seemed misty. 'Reuven, tell me, how would your father have answered my question?'

I stared at him and didn't know what to say.

He smiled faintly, apologetically. 'You do not know how your father would have explained the inyan?'

The class was gone, we were alone, and somehow I felt an intimacy between us that made it not too difficult for me to say what I then said. I didn't say it without feeling a little frightened, though. 'I think I know what he would have said.'

'Nu,' Rav Gershenson prodded me gently. 'What?'

'I think he would have said the text is wrong.'

I saw him blink his eyes a few times, his face expressionless.

'Explain what you mean,' he said quietly.

I explained how I had reconstructed the text, then quoted the reconstructed text from memory, showing him how it fitted perfectly to the explanation offered by the simplest of all the commentaries. I ended by saying I felt certain that was the text of the Talmud manuscript the commentator had had before him when he had written his commentary.

Rav Gershenson was silent for a long moment, his face impassive. Then he said slowly, 'You did this by yourself, Reuven?'

'Yes.'

'Your father is a good teacher,' he told me quietly. 'You are blessed to have such a father.'

His voice was soft, reverent.

'Reuven?'

'Yes?'

'I must ask you never to use such a method of explanation in my class.' He was speaking gently, almost apologetically. 'I am myself not opposed to such a method. But I must ask you never to use it in my class. Do you understand me?'

'Yes.'

'I will call on you often now,' he said, smiling warmly. 'Now that you understand, I will call on you very often. I have been waiting all year to see how good a teacher your father is. He is a great teacher and a great scholar. It is a joy to listen to you. But you must not use this method in my class. You understand?'

'Yes,' I said again.

And he dismissed me with a quiet smile and a gentle nod of his head.

That evening after my last class, I went to the school library and looked for Rav Gershenson's name in the Hebrew and English catalogues. His name wasn't listed anywhere. It was then that I understood why my father was not teaching in this school.

My father returned from the hospital in the middle of March. He was weak and gaunt, confined to his bed and almost completely incapable of any kind of physical activity. Manya cared for him as though he were a child, and Dr Grossman visited him twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, until the end of April, when the visits were reduced to once a week. He was satisfied with my father's progress, he kept telling me. There was nothing to worry about anymore, except to make sure that he had complete rest. During the first four weeks my father was home a night nurse came in every evening, stayed awake through the night in my father's room, then left in the morning. Talking tired him quickly; even listening seemed to tire him. We weren't able to spend too much time together the first six weeks he was home. But it was wonderful to have him there, to know that he was back in his room again and out of the hospital, and to know that the dark silence was finally gone from the apartment.

I had told him about my experience with Rav Gershenson while he had still been in the hospital. He had listened quietly, nodded, and had said that he was very proud of me. He hadn't said anything at all about Rav Gershenson. I was being called on regularly now in the Talmud class, and there were no silences when I read and explained a passage.

I saw Danny all the time in school, but the silence between us continued. I had finally come to accept it. We had begun to communicate with our eyes, with nods of our heads, with gestures of our hands. But we did not speak to each other. I had no idea how he was getting along in psychology, or how his family was. But I heard no bad news, so I assumed things were more or less all right.

The grim faces of the teachers and students in school reflected

the newspaper headlines that told of Arab riots and attacks against the Jews of Palestine, Jewish defence measures, many of which were being hampered by the British, and continued Irgun activities. The Arabs were attacking Jewish settlements in the Upper Galilee, the Negev and around Jerusalem, and were incessantly harassing supply convoys. Arabs were killing Jews. Jews were killing Arabs, and the British, caught uncomfortably in the middle, seemed unable and at times even unwilling to stop the rising tide of slaughter.

The Zionist youth groups in the school became increasingly active, and on one occasion some of the members of my group were asked to cut our afternoon classes and go down to a warehouse in Brooklyn to help load uniforms, helmets, and canteens onto huge ten-ton trucks that were waiting outside. We were told that the supplies would soon be on a ship heading for Palestine and would be used by the Haganah. We worked long and hard, and somehow loading those trucks made me feel intimately bound up with the news bulletins that I kept hearing on the radio and seeing in the papers.

In April, Tiberias, Haifa, and Safed were occupied by the Haganah, and the Irgun, with the help of the Haganah, captured Jaffa.

My father was a good deal stronger now and had begun walking around a bit inside the house. We were able to talk at length, and we talked of little else but Palestine. He told me that before his heart attack he had been asked to go as a delegate to the Zionist General Council that was to meet in Palestine during the coming summer. 'Now I will be glad if I can go to the cottage this summer,' he said, and there was a wry smile on his lips.

'Why didn't you tell me?' I asked him.

'I did not want to upset you. But I could not keep it to myself any longer. So I am telling you now.'

'Why didn't you tell me when they asked you?'

'They asked me the night I had the attack,' he said.

We never talked about it again. But if I was around, I always knew when he thought about it. His eyes would become dreamy, and he would sigh and shake his head. He had worked so hard for a Jewish state, and that very work now kept him from seeing it.

I wondered often during the coming months what meaning he could possibly give to that. I didn't know, and I didn't ask him.

We wept quite openly that Friday in the second week of May when Israel was born. And on my way to the synagogue the next morning, I saw the newspaper headlines announcing the birth of the Jewish state. They also announced that the Arab armies had begun their threatened invasion.

The next few weeks were black and ugly. The Etzion area in the Hebron Mountains fell, the Jordanian Army attacked Jerusalem, the Iraqi Army invaded the Jordan Valley, the Egyptian Army invaded the Negev, and the battle for Latrun, the decisive point along the road to Jerusalem, turned into a bloodbath. My father became grim and silent, and I began to worry again about his health.

In early June, a rumor swept through the school that a recent graduate had been killed in the fighting around Jerusalem. The rumor ran wild for a few days, and was finally confirmed. I hadn't known him at all, he had been graduated before I had entered, but apparently most of the present members of the senior class remembered him well. He had been a brilliant mathematics student, and very popular. He had gone to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to get his doctorate, had joined the Haganah and been killed trying to get a convoy through to Jerusalem. We were stunned. We had never thought the war would come so close.

On a day in the second week of June, the same week the United Nations truce went into effect and the fighting in Israel ceased, the entire school attended an assembly in memory of the student. Everyone was there, every rabbi, student, and college teacher. One of his Talmud teachers described his devoutness and dedication to Judaism, his mathematics professor talked about his brilliance as a student, and one of the members of the senior class told of the way he had always spoken of going to Israel. Then we all stood as a prayer was chanted and the Kaddish was said.

Reb Saunders' anti-Zionist league died that day as far as the students in Hirsch College were concerned. It remained alive

outside the school, but I never again saw an anti-Zionist leaflet inside the school building.

The final examinations were not too much of a problem to me that semester, and I made all A's. July came and brought sweltering heat, and the happy announcement from Dr Grossman that my father was now well enough to be able to go to the cottage in August and resume teaching in September. But he was to rest in the cottage, not work. Yes, he could write – since when was writing work? My father laughed at that, the first time he had laughed in months.

In September, my father resumed his teaching, and I entered my third year of college. Since symbolic logic was part of philosophy, I had chosen philosophy as my major subject, and I was finding it very exciting. The weeks passed quickly. My father was doing nothing but teaching for the first few months; then, with the approval of Dr Grossman, he went back to some of his Zionist activities and to teaching an adult class one night a week.

The war in Israel continued sporadically, especially in the Negev. But the initiative had passed to the Israelis, and the tension was gone from it by now.

Reb Saunders' anti-Zionist league seemed to have gone out of existence. I heard nothing about it, even in my own neighborhood. And one day in the late spring of that year, while I was eating lunch, Danny came over to my table, smiled hesitantly, sat down, and asked me to give him a hand with his experimental psychology; he was having difficulty setting up a graph for a formula involving variables.

I felt a little shiver hearing his voice.

'Welcome back to the land of the living,' I said, staring up at him and feeling my heart turn over. It had been over two years now that we hadn't talked to each other.

He smiled faintly and rubbed his beard, which was quite thick. He was wearing his usual dark suit, tieless shirt, fringes, and skullcap. His earlocks hung down along the sides of his sculptured face, and his eyes were bright and very blue.

'The ban has been lifted,' he said simply.

'It feels good to be kosher again,' I told him, not without some bitterness in my voice.

He blinked his eyes and tried another smile. 'I'm sorry,' he said quietly.

'I'm sorry, too. I needed you around for a while. Especially when my father was sick.'

He nodded, and his eyes were sad.

'How do you do it?' I asked.

He blinked again. 'Do what?'

'How do you take the silence?'

He didn't say anything. But his face tightened.

'I hated it,' I told him. 'How do you take it?'

He pulled nervously at an earlock, his eyes dark and brooding.

'I think I would lose my mind,' I said.

'No you wouldn't,' he said softly. 'You'd learn to live with it.'

'Why does he do it?'

The hand pulling at the earlock dropped down to the table.

He shook his head slowly. 'I don't know. We still don't talk.'

'Except when you study Talmud or he explodes.'

He nodded soberly.

'I hate to tell you what I think of your father.'  
'He's a great man,' Danny said evenly. 'He must have a reason.'

'I think it's crazy and sadistic,' I said bitterly. 'And I don't like your father at all.'

'You're entitled to your opinion,' Danny said softly. 'And I'm entitled to mine.'

We were silent for a moment.

'You've lost weight,' I told him.

He nodded but remained silent. He sat there slumped over, looking small and uncomfortable, like a bird in pain.

'How are your eyes?' I asked.

He shrugged. 'They bother me sometimes. The doctor says it's nervous tension.'

There was another silence.

'It's good to have you back,' I said. And I grinned.

He smiled hesitantly, his blue eyes bright and shining.

'You and your crazy way of hitting a baseball,' I said. 'You and your father with his crazy silences and explosions.'

He smiled again, deeply now, and straightening up in the chair. 'Will you help me with this graph?' he asked.

I told him it was about time he helped himself with graphs, and then showed him what to do.

When I told my father about it that night, he nodded soberly. He had expected it, he said. The Jewish state was not an issue anymore but a fact. How long would Reb Saunders have continued his ban over a dead issue?

'How is Danny feeling?' he wanted to know.

I told him Danny didn't look well and had lost a lot of weight.

He was thoughtful for a moment. Then he said, 'Reuven, the silence between Danny and Reb Saunders. It is continuing?'

'Yes.'

His face was sad. 'A father can bring up a child any way he wishes,' he said softly. 'What a price to pay for a soul.'

When I asked him what he meant, he wouldn't say anything more about it. But his eyes were dark.

So Danny and I resumed our old habits of meeting in front of

my synagogue, of riding to school together, eating lunch together, and going home together. Rav Gershenson's class became a particular joy, because the ease between Danny and myself now permitted us to engage in a constant flow of competitive discussion that virtually monopolized the hours of the shmur. We dominated the class to such an extent that one day, after a particularly heated Talmudic battle between Danny and me that had gone on uninterrupted for almost a quarter of an hour, Ray Gershenson stopped us and pointed out that this wasn't a private lesson he was giving; there were twelve other students in the class - didn't anyone else have something to say? But he said it with a warm smile, and Danny and I were delighted by his oblique compliment.

A few days after we had resumed talking, Danny told me that he had resigned himself to experimental psychology and was even beginning to enjoy it. When he talked about psychology now, he invariably used the technical language of the experimentalist: variables, constants, manipulation, observation, recording of data, testing hypotheses, and the advantages of attempting to refute hypotheses as against confirming them. Mathematics no longer seemed to be much of a problem to him. Only rarely now did he need my help.

We were sitting in the lunchroom one day when he told me of a conversation he had had with Professor Appleman. 'He said if I ever wanted to make any kind of valuable contribution to psychology I would have to use scientific method. The Freudian approach doesn't really provide a method of accepting or rejecting hypotheses, and that's no way to acquire knowledge.'

'Well, well,' I grinned. 'Good-bye Freud.'

He shook his head. 'No. It's not good-bye Freud. Freud was a genius. But he was too circumspect in his findings. I want to know a lot more than just the things Freud dealt with. Freud never really did anything with perception, for example. Or with learning. How people see, hear, touch, smell, taste, and learn is a fascinating subject. Freud never went into any of that. But he was a genius, all right, in what he did go into.'

'You're going to become an experimentalist?'

'I don't think so. I want to work with people, not with rats

and mazes. I talked to Appelman about it. He suggested I go into clinical psychology.'

'What's that?'

'Well, it's the same as the difference between theoretical and applied physics, say. The experimental psychologist is more or less the theoretician; the clinical psychologist applies what the experimentalist learns. He gets to work with people. He examines them, tests them, diagnoses them, even treats them.'

'What do you mean, treats them?'

'He does therapy.'

'You're going to become an analyst?'

'Maybe. But psychoanalysis is only one form of therapy. There are many other kinds.'

'What kinds?'

'Oh, many kinds,' he said vaguely. 'A lot of it is still very experimental.'

'You're planning to experiment on people?'

'I don't know. Maybe. I really don't know too much about it yet.'

'Are you going on for a doctorate?'

'Sure. You can't move in this field without a doctorate.'

'Where are you planning to go?'

'I don't know yet. Appelman suggested Columbia. That's where he got his doctorate.'

'Does your father know yet?'

Danny gave me a tight, strained look. 'No,' he said quietly.

'When will you tell him?'

'The day I receive my *smicha*.' 'Smicha' is the Hebrew term for rabbinic ordination.

'That's next year,' I said.

Danny nodded grimly. Then he looked at his watch. 'We'd better move or we'll be late for the shiur,' he said.

We raced up the stairs to Ray Gershenson's class and made it just a moment before he called on someone to read and explain.

During another one of our lunchroom conversations, Danny asked me what good symbolic logic was going to be for me when

I entered the rabbinat. I told him I didn't know, but I was doing a lot of reading in philosophy and theology, and some good might come of that.

'I always thought that logic and theology were like David and

Saul,' Danny said.

'They are. But I might help them get better acquainted.'

He shook his head. 'I can't get over your becoming a rabbi.'

'I can't get over your becoming a psychologist.'

And we looked at each other in quiet wonder.

In June, Danny's sister was married. I was invited to the wedding and was the only one there who wasn't a Hasid. It was a traditionally Hasidic wedding, with the men and women sitting separately and with a lot of dancing and singing. I was shocked when I saw Reb Saunders. His black beard had begun to go gray, and he seemed to have aged a great deal since I had seen him last. I went over to congratulate him, and he shook my hand warmly, his eyes dark and piercing. He was surrounded by people, and we didn't have a chance to talk. I didn't care. I wasn't particularly eager to talk to him. Levi had grown up a little, but he still looked white-skinned, and his eyes seemed large behind his shell-rimmed glasses. Danny's sister had become a beautiful girl. The boy she married was a Hasid, with a black beard, long earlocks, and dark eyes. He looked rather severe, and I quickly decided that I didn't like him. When I congratulated him after the wedding and shook his hand, his fingers were limp and moist.

When the school year ended and July came around, I went over to Danny's house one morning. Except for the wedding, I hadn't seen Reb Saunders at all since Danny and I had begun talking again, because my father was teaching me Talmud on Shabbat afternoons. So I decided it would be the polite thing to do to go over one morning after the school year. Danny took me up to his father's study. The third-floor hallway was crowded with dark-caftaned men, waiting around in silence to see his father. They nodded and murmured respectful greetings to Danny, and one of them, an incredibly old man with a white beard and a bent body, reached out and touched his arm as we passed. I found the gesture distasteful. I was beginning to find

everything connected with Reb Saunders and Hasidism distasteful. We waited until the person who was with his father came out, then we went in.

Reb Saunders sat in his straight-backed red leather chair surrounded by books and the musty odor of old bindings. His face seemed lined with pain, but his voice was soft when he greeted me. He was, he said quietly, very happy to see me. He hesitated, looked at me, then at Danny. His eyes were dark and brooding. Where was I keeping myself, he asked, and why wasn't I coming over anymore on Shabbos afternoons? I told him my father and I were studying Talmud together on Shabbat. His eyes brooded, and he sighed. He nodded vaguely. He wished he could spend more time talking to me now, he said, but there were so many people—who needed to see him. Couldn't I come over some Shabbos afternoon? I told him I would try, and Danny and I went out.

That was all he said. Not a word about Zionism. Not a word about the silence he had imposed upon Danny and me. Nothing. I found I disliked him more when I left than when I had entered. I did not see him again that July.

Our last year of college began that September. Over lunch one day I told Danny a mild anti-Hasidic story I had heard, and he laughed loudly. Then, without thinking, I mentioned a remark one of the students had made a few days back: 'The tzaddik sits in absolute silence, saying nothing, and all his followers listen attentively,' and the laughter left his lips as suddenly as if he had been slapped, and his face froze.

I realized immediately what I had said, and felt myself go cold. I muttered a helpless apology.

For a long moment, he said nothing. His eyes seemed glazed, turned inward. Then his face slowly relaxed. He smiled faintly. 'There's more truth to that than you realize,' he murmured. 'You can listen to silence, Reuven. I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own. It talks to me sometimes. I feel myself alive in it. It talks. And I can hear it.'

The words came out in a soft singsong. He sounded exactly like his father.

'You don't understand that, do you?' he asked.

'No.'

He nodded. 'I didn't think you would.'

'What do you mean, it talks to you?'

'You have to want to listen to it, and then you can hear it. It has a strange, beautiful texture. It doesn't always talk. Sometimes – sometimes it cries, and you can hear the pain of the world in it. It hurts to listen to it then. But you have to.'

I felt myself go cold again, hearing him talk that way. 'I don't understand that at all,'  
He smiled faintly.

'Are you and your father talking these days?'

He shook his head.

I didn't understand any of it, but he seemed so somber and strange that I didn't want to talk about it anymore. I changed the subject. 'You ought to get yourself a girl,' I told him. I was dating regularly now on Saturday nights. 'It's a wonderful tonic for a suffering soul.'

He looked at me, his eyes sad. 'My wife has been chosen for me,' he said quietly.

I gaped at him.

'It's an old Hasidic custom, remember?'

'It never occurred to me,' I said, shocked.

He nodded soberly. 'That's another reason it won't be so easy to break-out of the trap. It doesn't only involve my own family.'

I didn't know what to say. There was a long, uncomfortable silence. And we walked together in that silence to Rav Gershenson's shuir.

Danny's brother's bar mitzvah celebration, which I attended on a Monday morning during the third week in October, was a simple and unpretentious affair. The Morning Service began at seven-thirty - early enough to enable Danny and me to attend and not come late to school - and Levi was called to recite the blessing over the Torah. After the service there was a kiddush, consisting of schnapps and some cakes and cookies. Everyone drank l'chaim, to life, then left. Reb Saunders asked me quietly why I wasn't coming over to see him anymore, and I explained that my father and I were studying Talmud together on Shabbat afternoons. He nodded vaguely and walked slowly away, his tall frame somewhat stooped.

Levi Saunders was now tall and thin. He seemed a ghostly imitation of Danny, except that his hair was black and his eyes were dark. The skin on his hands and face was milky white, almost translucent, showing the branching veins. There was something helplessly fragile about him; he looked as if a wind would blow him down. Yet at the same time his dark eyes burned with a kind of inner fire that told of the tenacity with which he clung to life and of his growing awareness of the truth that for

the rest of his days his every breath would depend upon the pills he put into his mouth at regular intervals. The eyes told you that he had every intention of holding on to his life, no matter what the pain.

As if to emphasize the tenuousness of Levi Saunders' existence, he became violently ill the day following his bar mitzvah and was taken by ambulance to the Brooklyn Memorial Hospital. Danny called me during supper as soon as the ambulance pulled away from in front of his house, and I could tell from his voice that he was in a panic. There wasn't much I could say to him over the phone, and when I asked him if he wanted me to come over, he said no, his mother was almost hysterical, he would have to stay with her, he had only wanted to let me know. And he hung up.

My father apparently had heard my troubled voice, because he was standing now outside the kitchen, asking me what was wrong.

I told him.

We resumed our supper. I wasn't very hungry now, but I ate anyway to keep Manya happy. My father noticed how disturbed I was, but he said nothing. After the meal, he followed me into my room, sat on my bed while I sat at my desk, and asked me what was wrong, why was I so upset by Levi Saunders' illness, he had been ill before.

It was at that point that I told my father of Danny's plans to go on for a doctorate in psychology and abandon the position of tzadik he was to inherit one day from Reb Saunders. I also added, feeling that I ought to be completely honest about it now, that Danny was in a panic over his brother's illness because without his brother it might not be possible for him to break away from his father; he did not really want to destroy the dynasty.

My father's face became more and more grim as he listened.

When I was done, he sat for a long time in silence, his eyes grave.

'When did Danny tell you this?' he asked finally.

'The summer I lived in their house.'

'That long ago? He knew already that long ago?'

'Yes.'



'And all this time you did not tell me?'

'It was a secret between us, abba.'

He looked at me grimly. 'Does Danny know what pain this will cause his father?'

'He dreads the day he'll have to tell him. He dreads it for both of them.'

'I knew it would happen,' my father said. 'How could it not happen?' Then he looked at me sharply. 'Reuven, let me understand this. Exactly what is Danny planning to tell Reb Saunders?'

'That he's going on for a doctorate in psychology and doesn't intend to take his place.'

'Is Danny thinking to abandon his Judaism?'

I stared at him. 'I never thought to ask him,' I said faintly.

'His beard, his earlocks, his clothes, his fringes – all this he will retain in graduate school?'

'I don't know, abba. We never talked about it.'

'Reuven, how will Danny become a psychologist while looking like a Hasid?'

I didn't know what to say.

'It is important that Danny know exactly what he will tell his father. He must anticipate what questions will be on Reb Saunders' mind. Talk to Danny. Let him think through exactly what he will tell his father.'

'All this time I never thought to ask him.'

'Danny is now like a person waiting to be let out of jail. He has only one desire. To leave the jail. Despite what may be waiting for him outside. Danny cannot think one minute beyond the moment he will have to tell his father he does not wish to take his place. Do you understand me?'

'Yes.'

'You will talk to him?'

'Of course.'

My father nodded grimly, his face troubled. 'I have not talked to Danny in so long,' he said quietly. He was silent for a moment. Then he smiled faintly. 'It is not so easy to be a friend, is it, Reuven?'

'No,' I said.

'Tell me, Danny and Reb Saunders still do not talk?'

I shook my head. Then I told him what Danny had said about silence. 'What does it mean to hear silence, abba?'

That seemed to upset him more than the news about Danny's not becoming a tzaddik. He sat up straight on the bed, his body quivering. 'Hasidim! I heard him mutter, almost contemptuously. 'Why must they feel the burden of the world is only on their shoulders?'

I looked at him, puzzled. I had never heard that tone of contempt in his voice before.

'It is a way of bringing up children,' he said.

'What is?'

'Silence.'

'I don't understand.'

'I cannot explain it. I do not understand it completely myself. But what I know of it, I dislike. It was practised in Europe by some few Hasidic families.' Then his voice went hard. 'There are better ways to teach a child compassion.'

'I don't.'

He cut me short. 'Reuven, I cannot explain what I do not understand. Danny is being raised by Reb Saunders in a certain way. I do not want to talk about it anymore. It upsets me. You will speak to Danny, yes?'

I nodded.

'Now I have work I must do.' And he went from the room, leaving me as bewildered as I had been before.

I had planned to talk to Danny the next day, but when I saw him he was in such a state of panic over his brother that I didn't dare mention what my father had said. The doctors had diagnosed his brother's illness as some kind of imbalance in the blood chemistry caused by something he had eaten, Danny told me over lunch, looking pale and grim, and blinking his eyes repeatedly. They were trying out some new pills, and his brother would remain in the hospital until they were certain the pills worked. And he would have to be very careful from now on with his diet. Danny was tense and miserable all that day and throughout the week.

Levi Saunders was discharged from the Brooklyn Memorial

Hospital the following Wednesday afternoon. I saw Danny in school the next day. We sat in the lunchroom and ate for a while in silence. His brother was fine, he said finally, and everything seemed to have settled down. His mother was in bed with high blood pressure, though. But the doctor said it was caused by her excitement over Lev's illness and all she needed now was to rest. She would be better soon.

He told me quietly that he was planning to write to three universities that day - Harvard, Berkeley, and Columbia - and apply for a fellowship in psychology. I asked him how long he thought he would be able to keep his application a secret.

'I don't know,' he said, his voice a little tight.

'Why don't you tell your father now and get it over with?'

He looked at me, his face grim. 'I don't want explosions with every meal,' he said tightly. 'All I get are either explosions or silence. I've had enough of his explosions.'

Then I told him what my father had said. As I spoke, I could see him become more and more uncomfortable.

'I didn't want you to tell your father,' he muttered angrily.

'My father kept your library visits a secret from me,' I reminded him. 'Don't worry about my father.'

'I don't want you to tell anyone else.'

'I won't. What about what my father said? Are you going to remain an Orthodox Jew?'

'Whatever gave you the notion that I had any intention of not remaining an Orthodox Jew?'

'What if your father asks about the beard, the caftan, the-'

'He won't ask me.'

'What if he does?'

He pulled nervously at an earlock. 'Can you see me practising psychology and looking like a Hasid?' he asked tightly.

I hadn't really expected any other answer. Then something occurred to me. 'Won't your father see the mail you get from the graduate schools you've applied to?'

He stared at me. 'I never thought of that,' he said slowly. 'I'll have to intercept the mail.' He hesitated, his face rigid. 'I can't. It comes after I leave for school.' And his eyes filled with fear.

'I think you ought to have a talk with my father,' I said.

Danny came over to our apartment that night, and I took him into my father's study. My father came quickly around from behind his desk and shook Danny's hand.

'I have not seen you in such a long time,' he said, smiling warmly. 'It is good to see you again, Danny. Please sit down.'

My father did not sit behind the desk. He sat next to us on the kitchen chair he had asked me earlier to bring into the study.

'Do not be angry at Reuven for telling me,' he said quietly to Danny. 'I have had practice with keeping secrets.'

Danny smiled nervously.

'You will tell your father on the day of your ordination?'

Danny nodded.

'There is a girl involved?'

Danny nodded again, giving me a momentary glance.

'You will refuse to marry this girl?'

'Yes.'

'And your father will have to explain to her parents and to his followers.'

Danny was silent, his face tight.

My father sighed softly. 'It will be a very uncomfortable situation. For you and for your father. You are determined not to take your father's place?'

'Yes,' Danny said.

'Then you must know exactly what you will tell him. Think carefully of what you will say. Think what your father's questions will be. Think what he will be most concerned about after he hears of your decision. Do you understand me, Danny?'

Danny nodded slowly.

There was a long silence.

Then my father leaned forward in his chair. 'Danny,' he said softly, 'you can hear silence?'

Danny looked at him, startled. His blue eyes were wide, frightened. He glanced at me. Then he looked again at my father. And, slowly, he nodded his head.

'You are not angry at your father?'