

---

## MAUS TEXT SUMMARY

---

### CHAPTER 0: PRELUDE

Artie was skateboarding with his friends, and he fell by accident. He was laughed at, and his friend skated away without him. His father told him that if he and his friends were locked together in the same room with no food for a week then he would really be able to tell who his friends are.

### CHAPTER 1: THE SHEIK

Artie visits his father who is dealing with two heart attacks as well as the suicide of his wife. He has remarried to Mala who also survived the war and is someone that they knew in Poland before the war. Mala and the father did not get along well (this is seen by when Mala gave Artie a wired hanger instead of a wooden one and the father was extremely frustrated by this). After dinner, his father takes him into his old room and starts to pedal on an exercise bike which is good for his own health. Artie tells his father that he is writing a comic book about him and asks him to tell him the story of his life. Throughout the story, Art's father asked him to not include the story about Lucia in the story but Art convinced him that it made the story more real and human. Regardless, Vladek didn't want him to include but it was included regardless.

VLADEK SPIEGELMAN:

Vladek worked in the textile-purchasing and selling industry prior to the war, and although he did not make a lot of money, he always had enough to keep a living. He was at the time a very young and handsome boy who got chased by many girls. He was always told that he looked like Rudolph Valentino (Italian Actor: 1895 - 1926). He met a girl named Lucia through a friend named Yulek and eventually asked her to dance. Lucia became obsessed with Vladek and wherever he would go, she would be there and followed him. She kept insisting on going to his house even though he wanted no business with her. Even though they were together for 3-4 years, Vladek had no interest in marrying her. When he visited his family during holiday, he was introduced to a girl name Anja who was clever and came from a rich family, and she was also the girl he would eventually marry. The very next morning, the three went out and met up and Vladek's cousin would often ask Anja in English whether she found him attractive and she described him to be "handsome and seems nice". After his cousin leaves the two alone, Vladek tells her that she should be careful when speaking in English because a stranger could understand. He goes on to describe how he dropped out of school at the age of fourteen but still took private English lessons and dreamed of going to America someday. Before the two parted ways, she asked him if he had a phone at home and she would call him twice a day, everyday once he returned. She also wrote him very beautiful Polish letters described by Vladek: "nobody could write Polish like she wrote". Vladek also visited her, and she sent him a photo which he framed within his home. When Lucia saw the

photo of Anja, she became jealous of her and quote on quote will "make [him] happy". Even Anja's school director called Vladek a "very Lucky [man]" as she was one of the most sensitive and intelligent students that he had ever experienced. Vladek offered Anja to come to Czestochowa where he would introduce her to his friends. However, she described her family to be religious and old-fashioned and would never let her go to a bachelor's apartment. But she offered for him to come to her house to eat dinner with her parents who were "well off-millionaires". The Zylberberg family owned a Hosiery (stockings) factory which was one of the biggest in Poland at the time. He looked into her closet which is very "neat and straight" and just the way that he had liked it. However, he also discovered that there were pills and worried that she might have been sick and wrote down the name of the drugs. He later consulted a friend who worked in the pharmaceutical industry who told him that the pills were only because she was skinny and nervous. The story skips to the year 1936 when they became engaged, and he moved from Czestochowa to Sosnowiec. After they got engaged, Lucia tried desperately to stop the marriage and "fell on the floor and held strong to [his] legs". However, he ran out the door and called the friend who introduced them, and he calmed her down and took her home. After this incident, he stopped hearing from Lucia, but also from Anja and it turns out that Lucia had sent a letter to Anja's family blackmailing Vladek. He told the family that he could not explain it over phone and took the train down to the Sosnowiec to see her. She told him that she had received a letter that described him to "have many

girlfriends" and was "only marrying [her] for [her] money". However, he explained to her that she was only an old girlfriend and that she means nothing to him anymore and she was just jealous that he was marrying Anja instead of Lucia. They ended up marrying on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1937 and moved into one of his father-in-law's apartments whom the ownership he was given along with a golden watch as a wedding gift.

## CHAPTER 2: THE HONEYMOON

Art goes back to visit his father again to hear his story. The chapter begins with the father counting pills and it turns out that his father is sick. He has 6 pills for his heart from the heart attack, 1 for diabetes and 25-30 of vitamin pills. Vladek must "fight to save [himself]" by taking his prescribed medication. Art asks his father if his mother had any romantic relationships before she met him, and he told him that there was a tall boy from Warsaw who was a communist. Anja always "ran to see him" when he came to Sosnowiec even after they got married and he did not get to know the fellow very well because he was a communist. One time when Vladek returned from a selling trip, he heard the news that the Seamstress family who lived down the hall from him was arrested for having "secret communist documents". It turns out that Anja was helping translate communist messages into German and was involved in conspirations. It turns out that Anja was warned by her friends that she was being suspected of hiding communist documents and had to give the document away to one of her tenants to Miss Stefanska to hide it. When the police searched her house, they could not find any evidence, so they searched the neighbour

and eventually found the secret package. Vladek was upset and decided that they could not stay married if she kept dealing with her communist friends. Miss Stefanska sat in a prison for three months and her father-in-law got lawyers for her and gave her some money (15,000 Zlotys – Polish Currency). Anja's father also indicates that once he and Anja have a grandchild, he wanted him to be well off so he is providing Vladek with money and plenty of credit to start a textile factory in Bielsko and visited Anja every weekend. By October of 1937, Vladek and Anja had their first son Richieu who weighed over 3 kilograms (compared to 39 kilograms of Anja). By Art never knew him because he did not survive the entire war. He was also described to be premature as they were married in February, and he was born in October. He goes on to describe how when Art was born after the war, he was extremely premature and that the doctors thought he would not survive. They had to hire a specialist to break his arm and take him out of his mother's womb and as a child, his arms would shoot up from this incident. He was named "Heil Hitler" as it always made a Nazi salute. Vladek was working at a factory when he got a telephone telling him to come home immediately cause Anja was sick. She told him that "I don't know, I have a good family, a fine son, I should be happy... But I don't care. I just don't want to live." It turns out she was hysterical or depressed from the childbirth and is undergoing a mental breakdown. The doctors had told them that she had to stay at a sanitarium (a medical facility used for long term treatment of illnesses) but she has to go with someone she trusts. Vladek went with her to the hospital while he had her family

look over his factory as well as their child. When they went to the mental hospital, they passed by a small town and all of the Jews on the train were frightened as there was a Nazi flag in the middle of the town and it was the first time that he had seen the Swastika. He was told that he had a friend in German who had to sell his business to a German and run from the country without the money because the antisemitic atmosphere was too intense. Towns were labelled to be Jew free, and they had heard many stories of Jews who were burned, killed and beaten for no reason at all. The Sanitarium that Anja stayed at was very beautiful with people from all over the night and there were shops and even a theatre. The room that Anja stayed in felt like a luxury hotel and the nurse would visit her every morning and he would talk to the specialist doctor every once in a few days to check up on Anja's conditions. They even received letters from their family at home with a picture of Richieu. Every evening they would dance in the café or went to the theatre. He told her the story of their family's tragedy at the start of the 1914 war (World War One). They took what they would on a wagon pulled by four horses and went to their grandfather's home in Radomisko and someone rode past us and told us that they had dropped a pillow a few miles back and Vladek's father went back to find the pillow. And came back with it under his bloody "Tuchus". His stories kept Anja entertained and she kisses him and she was happy. They stayed at the hospital for around three months and when they returned, Anja was a completely different person. However, they learned of the news that Vladek's factory has been robbed. They did not believe that this was an anti-

Semitic attack but more so just a simple robbery for the purpose of gaining more money. When Vladek came home one day, he seemed visibly upset because he had witnessed a riot within the downtown of the city and two Jews were killed. Anja proposed to Vladek that they should move away and wait until the anti-Semitism runs out. But Vladek refutes and tells her that if things did get bad they would move to Sosnowiec. Soon, Vladek was drafted by the Polish government as he had been part of the reserve army, so he had to go help the government fight the war. He told Anja to take their son Richieu and head to Sosnowiec and Vladek was sent to the frontlines to fight against Germany. As he is telling the story, he knocks over his pills of the second time and states that it is the hemorrhaging and the glaucoma and that his vision was going bad. He described that the doctor who was supposed to operate on his eyes went away to give a lecture on television and did not perform the surgery on him and his eyes started bleeding. If he had not found another doctor to perform the operation, he could have died. The doctor had told him that his left eye was perfect, but he had cataract (blurry vision) in his right eye.

### **CHAPTER 3: PRISONER OF WAR**

He goes to visit his father again in the near future to get more information about his past. The story takes place at the dinner table and Vladek points out to Art that when he was a kid, if he did not finish his food, he would argue with his father until he ran to his room crying. His mother would offer to cook something that he liked more but his father would straight up tell him to eat the leftover food for the next meal. Sometimes, he would

purposely make the food that he didn't like and forced him to eat it or starve. Another incident about how Mala and Vladek did not get along well was shown in this seen when Art compliments her cooking saying it was delicious where Vladek complained that the "chicken, [he] thought was too dry". The story continues where they left off, Vladek received training in the army for a few days before he was sent to fight on the front lines. They were all digged into trenches near a river and on the other side of the river were the Germans. He later reinforced that everyone in Poland had to undergo some form of basic military training, where he went to the military for 18 months when he was 21 and he has to go to Lublin for a month every 4 years to maintain his training. Vladek's father saw someone who looked like a tree, and initially he thought he was seeing things because trees cannot shoot. However, after taking a few shots at the tree, the tree raised its hands up as if to surrender and he realized that there was someone behind the tree and that he had killed someone. Two hours later, the Germans overcame the Polish defense line and he was apprehended. As he was about to get beat up, he started speaking in German and he was stopped from getting hurt. They were marched over the river like prisoners of war and they were ordered to carry dead soldiers to nearby hospitals. He walked over to the body of the soldier that he had shot and realized that his name was Jan and at that moment, he realized that he had killed someone. As he is carrying the body to the trucks, he thought to himself that at least he did something in the war. The prisoners of war were taken to a place near Nuremberg where many of the prisoners and Jews were kept. They



were ordered to put down all their valuables and he had around 300 Zlotys on him when all of the other prisoners only had 5-6 Zlotys. He was ordered to show his hands to see if he actually worked and his hands were delicate and in pristine condition. They were ordered to clean up a horse stable in an hour, which was an impossible task. After the hour has passed, they were not done with their task and they were told "[it] will cost them their soup later that night". As he is telling the story, he drops his cigarette on the floor, and he asks Art to clean it up in which he does. After working for a few weeks in the stable, they were taken to an even bigger prisoner of war camp. It was evident there that the Polish POW were kept in heated cabins where the Jewish people were kept in tents out in the cold. To stay warm, they only had their summer uniform as well as a thin blanket and were only provided a crust of bread and a little soup compared to the two meals that the Polish prisoners received. To pass the time, they made a chess game out of stones and breadcrumbs and once a week, they could write letters through the International Red Cross. The letters had to be in German and were inspected by the Germans before they could be sent. He received a package one day with chocolate bars, cigarettes and Jam and it was then that he knew his family was safe. Because Vladek did not smoke, he was able to trade the cigarettes with others for food. This went on for about six weeks when they received an announcement that said they could work in labour camps where they will be provided with more food and more adequate housing. Many of the prisoners thought that it was a trick and refused to volunteer as many said they would rather die in

the prisoner of war camp than the labour camps. Vladek wanted to be "treated like a human being" so he signed up to work at the labour camps. When some of his comrades saw that he had signed up, followed his lead and signed up for the labour camps. Right away, they were sent to a house with proper heating as well as actual beds for them to sleep on. For the rest of the day, they rested and were able to regain their strength. The next day, they were given shovels and pickaxes and they were ordered to level hills. Many who were too old and young to keep doing the manual labour chose to go back to the POW camps to freeze and starve. He had a dream one day, where his dead grandfather told him that one day, he will escape this place and be free. When he awoke from the dream, it was "Parshatruma". Each week on Saturday, they would read a section from the Torah (the five books of Hebrew culture). After they worked for a few weeks, they were told to line up on the road in two rows, they were not sure what the Germans were going to do to them, so the atmosphere was extremely tense. They were lined up and asked where they were going to go after release, and upon signing a form, they were free. He thought the Germans were very systematic as they document precisely every detail. The next morning, they all received a care package from the red cross and were loaded onto a train for Poland. The train passed Sosnowiec, his hometown and they took the train over 300 miles away all the way to Lublin when they unloaded all the prisoners. They learned of a very grave situation upon their arrival, as the previous train of prisoners or war with over 600 people were marched into the forest and executed. They were told that they had

bribed the local German authorities to release the prisoners into the homes of local Jews who will claim them to be their relative. Vladek told the Jewish people that there was a friend of his named Orbach in Lublin whom he had met when he was here for army training and the Jewish authorities promised to register him as Orbach's cousin. Eventually, he got picked up by Orbach and he was free. Vladek and Orbach's family had a meal together and he gave Orbach's two daughters the chocolate that he had saved from the Red Cross Package. Vladek eventually made his way back to Sosnowiec and sent food packages back to Orbach's family. However, they ended up being confiscated and the letter exchange stopped completely. As he was still a border away from his family, in order to sneak past the checkpoint, it required legal papers that he did not have. So he approached the Polish train conductor and told him about his story of being a prisoner of war and the conductor agreed to hide him if the German checked. When he arrived back to his side of Poland, he first checked up on his parents, who were ecstatic that their son was alive. He learned that news that his mother was diagnosed with cancer and died a month or two later, and she never got to comprehend how terrible the world would become after her death. Vladek's father tells him the story about how in September of that year, the German soldiers grabbed many of the Jews into the street and made them sing prayers while they laughed and beat them. Before letting them go, they cut off their beard which is religious in Jewish culture. Before curfew that day (all Jews had to be back in their home with the lights out by 7pm), Vladek's mother brought him back to Anja and

reunited him with his wife. He was greeted by his ecstatic son who cried upon seeing him. He stops the story and exclaims how happy he was with Anja but feels the opposite with Mala. He blames how if Anja was still alive, everything would be different, and that Mala keeps pressuring him to talk about money and his will. Art stops him and says that the topic is for another day and gets ready to leave. However, he realizes that his coat was gone even though he remembered hanging it in the closet when he first arrived. Vladek tells him that the coat is old and shabby and threw it out before dinner. Much to Art's frustration as he exclaimed that "[he] liked it". Vladek says that "it's a shame my son would wear such a coat" and gave him a new windbreaker jacket. Art was still frustrated that he was 30 years old, and his dad was still picking his clothes for him. As he leaves the house, he checks the garbage and sees that his father had in fact threw out his coat and he leaves into the night.