

MAUS, A Survivor's Tale:
My Father Bleeds History -
Reading Journal

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Note to the reader:

This journal gives a summary of Maus I. In the section ***Plot Summary***, there are synopses of each chapter, brief analyses on language, themes, important quotes, as well as my personal thoughts; in the section ***Plot Analysis***, there is a more detailed retell of the plots and analysis on those details.

Plot Summary

PROLOGUE

Date: Oct 02, 2019

Pages: 1-6

Setting: Rego Park, New York, c. 1958.

In the beginning of the book, instead of going right into the story, Spiegelman uses this little episode of his childhood life to give the readers the impression of his father's characteristics. It also implies the trauma the Holocaust brings to the Spiegelmans.

Synopsis:

Hearing that Artie's friends discarded him, Vladek showed little sentiment towards his son's cry and told Artie that friends cannot be trusted.

Perspective: Childhood Artie

Theme: the Holocaust, transgenerational trauma, family

The prologue serves as a basis for the distant family relationship between Art and Vladek as shown later in the book. Moreover, it is an outward display of the impact of Holocaust trauma in Vladek. The values that he developed to survive the Holocaust has become his life-long value that he still keeps after the Holocaust. This value also influences his way of education to his son, which leads to the further investigation on the theme of transgenerational trauma in the book.

Language:

- Artie uses typical languages of a child. This is in accordance with his narrative perspective.
- Vladek's English is broken. This implies that he is an immigrant to New York. Interestingly, however, English is also a crucial factor for his survival in the Holocaust.

Quotes:

- "Friends? Your friends? ... If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week... then you could see what it is, friends!..." (6)

This is absolutely not a good way to educate a child of six years old. He would never understand this. All he needs is comfort and care from his father, but not the cruel revelation of the reality that he couldn't understand yet; this sentence is also a demonstration of Vladek's values. After the Holocaust, he doesn't trust anyone, which is a demonstration of his suffering from Holocaust trauma.

ONE/THE SHEIK

Date: Oct 03, 2019

Pages: 9-24

Synopsis:

Artie comes to visit his father and his stepmother. Vladek talks to his son Artie about his romance at youth, about how he fell in love with Anja, who then becomes his wife, and discards Lucia, his old girlfriend.

Perspective: First person Artie; first person Vladek.

Setting:

- Rego Park, many years later, in Vladek's home.
- Poland, before the war.

Theme: family; romance; the Holocaust; power; reproduction

- Artie's objective and calm narrative at the beginning of the story provides the readers with a picture of their family situation. Also, the interaction between Vladek and Mala suggests the unhappy nature of this relationship. All these give rise to the theme of family.
- A lot of details in the book hint at the Holocaust that influences this unfortunate family. For example, while Vladek is cycling, we can see the number on his number, which he got during the Holocaust.
- In Vladek's story, we can clearly see that even before the Holocaust, Vladek valued power and money a lot. He chose Anja mainly for the wealth and the reputation of her family. Even with Anja, he considered discarding her when seeing her taking medicine.
- At the end of the story, Artie and Vladek also discussed briefly about the reproduction of literature. Their views differ. This is characteristic of postmodernism.

Style: bright. White is the dominant color.

Compared to Vladek's later stories, the overall color is much brighter in this chapter. This is before the war, and Vladek lives an ordinary life like anyone else.

Other thoughts:

The argument at the end between Artie and Vladek interests me. They represent two perspectives: should the literature describe the objective historical fact or shall we focus more about the more humane aspect of the history and its influence on humans?

Quotes:

- "I want to tell YOUR story, the way it really happened." (23)
Spiegelman is trying to convey his belief about reproduction to his readers. By putting this discussion with his father here in the book, Spiegelman also encourages his readers to ponder upon this idea.

TWO/THE HONEYMOON

Date: Oct 12, 2019

Pages: 25-40

Synopsis:

Artie visited Vladek again. He is counting his pills. He tells Artie that Anja used to get involved in a communist conspiracy. In 1937, Richieu was born. Yet Anja suffered from postpartum depression. Soon after Anja recovered from her depression, the Nazis came, and the war started. Vladek got sent to the army. Vladek spills his pills twice and tells Artie about his distrust towards doctors.

Perspective:

First person narrative Artie; first person Vladek.

Setting:

- Rego Park, New York, Vladek's home.
- Poland, at the start of the war.

Theme: family; jewishness; depression; distrust; trauma

- The absolute control over Anja's political stance shows the belief of jewish families that wives should obey their husbands' wills. It shows that women are at a lower position than men in the society. But at the same time, Vladek's care for Anja is also noticeable during her depression.
- Vladek expresses his distrust towards the doctors. He even distrusts his son for counting his pills. This is a result of the Holocaust and relates to the distrust Vladek shows in the Prologue.

Quotes:

- "And she was so laughing and so happy, so happy, that she approached each time and kissed me, so happy she was." (Vladek, 35)

In this sentence, Vladek repeated "happy" for three times. This not only shows Anja's happiness for Vladek to be with her and comfort her, but also shows Vladek's own joyfulness to see Anja recovering from depression. The word "happy" Vladek uses a lot. In the end of Maus2, Vladek also says that Anja and he are very happy. However, the more he repeated his "happiness", the more it reveals that all the happiness Vladek says is just his own fantasy. Neither Anja nor him is happy after the war. Anja even committed suicide. This also casts doubt and provoke thoughts on the validity of Vladek as a primary source.

- "Mrs. Spiegelman — how can you say such a thing. I think of you as part of my own family!" (37)

These words establish a stark contrast with what happened after the war broke out. The governess refused to provide shelter for Anja and Vladek immediately and even stole all

their valuables after the war. This is a manifestation of the evil nature of human as well as the impact of warfares on every victim.

- “NO! You don’t know counting pills. I’ll do it after... I’m an EXPERT for this.” (Vladek 30)
Vladek is clearly declaring himself as an expert on everything — even on counting pills. This shows Vladek’s unfavorable characteristics and his constant denial of his own son. It hints at the negative impact his way of education on Artie, and explains Artie’s depression and hatred towards his father. This, however, is also a result of the Holocaust. Vladek needs this to show that he deserves surviving the Holocaust, and to make himself less guilty. Holocaust’s impact is fundamental in this way.

TREE/PRISONER OF WAR

Date: Oct 14, 2019

Pages: 41-70

Synopsis:

Artie visited Vladek more often. At dinner, he talks about how strict Vladek was as a father. Vladek tells Artie his story in the army. He used to quit serving for the army because of his father. He was experiencing struggle for whether or not he should shoot. He killed someone, and got marched to a prisoners’ camp. He was forced to perform heavy labor and suffered from cold and hunger. His grandfather appeared in his dream and gave him mental support to survive the painful life in the camp. He finally got home with the help of his friend Drbach. After he finishes telling the story, he started arguing with Artie. When Artie was leaving, he found his coat got thrown away by Vladek.

Perspective: First person narrative, both Artie and Vladek.

Settings:

- Frontier, Poland, 1930s and 1940s.
- Rego Park, Vladek’s home.
- Lublin, Poland. c. 1940, prisoners’ camp

Style:

The overall style of the comic darkens. More shadow is put on the war scene. The contrast of black and white is more evident. Ex: p51 the spotlight on the hands.

Theme: the Holocaust, superstition, religion, power, trust

- There is evidence of Vladek’s superstition. He believed in his dream of his grandfather. This also gives him the faith in keeping his life.

- The theme of religion is showed with Vladek's father's beard as well as his hat that he always wears. Interestingly, regardless of Vladek's father's religiousness, Vladek seems less religious — he didn't know the day of Parshas Truma and asked a rabbi.
- There are a lot of evidences of the German's power over the prisoners of the war. They treated them as slavery and forced them to work for them. Abusion prevailed. The source of this power seems to come from no where but the guns and violence.
- In this chapter we can also get a sense of where Vladek's distrust comes from. He got deceived by the Germans and got carried to Lublin. He almost died there. Moreover, Vladek kept his life by lying. Ex: he lied to the soldier that he didn't shoot; he lied to the Polish train man about his situation.
- The fact that Vladek throws out Artie's coat implies the effect of the Holocaust on him. He still thinks that Artie is a child and puts absolute dominance over him even though Artie is now fully capable to decide what to wear as an adult. This also shows Vladek's ignorance to others' feelings and his strong tendency to control others.

Thoughts:

I got very related to Artie in terms of his father's over frugality. I used to blame my grandmother for being stingy about everything. She could wear a t-shirt for over ten years with so much mending but not to buy a new one. But like Vladek, she went through a really tough period in Chinese Famine in 1980s. She must have witnessed a lot of death and poverty. Now with the story of Vladek, I come to understand why she is like that now — and I come to understand the trauma on both Vladek and my grandma.

Quotes:

- "I'm not going to die, and I won't die here! I want to be treated like a human being!" (54)
This sentence shows Vladek's strong desire to live. It was this kind of strong sentiment that played a key role in Vladek's survival. Because of this, he keeps seeking for any possible chance. However, the sentence also shows that at this stage, Vladek still wanted to be treated like a human being, which is different from how he is afterwards during the Holocaust. At that time, the only thing he cared about is to survive.
- "International laws protected us a little as Polish war prisoners. But a Jew of Reich, anyone could kill in the streets!" (61)
This shows the defect of international laws as well as the cruelty of human nature: people kill each other without a second thought!
- "Always I saved... Just in case!" (63)
Vladek is conscious of his own stinginess, and he is proud of it. It is true that he survived the Holocaust largely due to his constant consideration of the future. This tendency he keeps even after the Holocaust.
- "Even though everything was very tough — and it was REALLY very tough — we were happy only to be together... Not so like it is now with me and Mala. I tell you, if Anja could be alive now it would be everything different with me!" (67)

Vladek is emphasizing again the happiness he enjoyed with Anja. Now he compares that with his life with Mala, and concludes that things would be better if Anja is alive. It is ironic because Anja's death might be because of his weird behavior after the Holocaust.

- "You always tell me the same things. There's nothing I can do." "But I haven't with whom else to talk!" (67)

Artie is disrespectful to his father. Feeling irritated, Vladek reveals his vulnerability that he has no one else to talk to as a result of his weird temperament. This reveals the fundamental problem underlies in this father-and-son relationship. The son is unwilling to talk to his father because of his stinginess that he can never understand; the father, on the other hand, is afraid of showing his vulnerability to others and thus becomes distant to his son. We can feel the frustration and anger from the lines.

- "Look, Dad. You can't do this to me. I'm over 30 years old. I choose my own clothes!" "I can't believe it!" "...I just can't believe it..." (69)

Artie's shock, disbelief is clearly showed. He doesn't know what to do with it. To him, it is just too unexpected and absurd that a father would throw away his son's coat without asking. There is a gap in the time of Vladek and Artie. Neither of them can understand each other.

FOUR/THE NOOSE TIGHTENS

Date: Oct 19, 2019

Pages: 71-94

Synopsis:

Artie visits his father again. They once more have an argument because of money. Vladek continues his story. The family continued their life as if nothing happened. Vladek had no choice but to do black business. He almost got shot once. The Germans even went to people's home to grab the valuables. Jews were hanged in public, and the big family had to move to worse and worse places. Still, Anja refused to give out her baby in that situation. The grandparents were forced to be sent to the gas. Soon afterwards, all Jews were asked to go to the square for selection. Vladek lost his father. After Vladek, Mala tells Artie's story during the Holocaust.

Theme: the Holocaust; Jewishness; love; unknown future; genocide

- The whole big family gathered together at the beginning of the war. This shows the importance of family to the Jews. The importance of family to them at that time contrasts with their completely different attitude during the Holocaust, when people could only care about themselves. Also, it is different from Artie's view about family.

- Vladek's father chose to accompany his daughter regardless of his own safety. This is the warmest part of Maus. It shows that power of love and family during the warfare.
- People kept guessing for their possible futures throughout the Holocaust. They never knew what they were going to face and all their decision makings were based on intuition and luck.
- The Holocaust is not only on Vladek but also Mala. As a survivor, she also has a long story that she could share. She is also altered by the Holocaust, as shown in page 93, where she angrily shouts at Artie. But soon afterwards, she becomes frustrated. Her moods are very unstable, just like Vladek.

Style:

In this chapter, a lot of details make the comix more movie-like. For example. On page 74, starting with a bird's-eye view with a long shot, the lens zooms in on specific person with Vladek's description. Then lens moves forward as the description proceeds. Also, as they were talking, Richieu's interaction with his mother makes the scene realer. The behavior is also characteristic of young boys, and thinking that this little boy will also suffer from the war makes the reader feel empathetic. Another example is on page 81, where Valdek is cycling to rest. This also puts the static comix into motion.

Quotes:



- “With money you can always get anything!” (75)

It is true that without money and trading and bribing, Vladek would not survive the Holocaust. However, this is just part of the story. With this mindset. Vladek's father-in-law died even though he tried to bribe. Maus is putting an interesting question out here about the importance of wealth.

- “I’ll NEVER give up my baby. NEVER!” (81)

When Anja was asked to give her baby out to others for safety reasons. She showed absolute rejection. Even more noticeable is how Spiegelman depicts her facial expression. Her eyes are wide open, with dark, sharp lines scrambling around. It is almost horrible when a



reader looks at this picture. Richieu is lying on his mother's shoulder, seeking for comfort. This scene, horrible as it is, reveals the most painful part of this story — the separation of mothers and children, forcing the readers to reflect upon the cruelty of the Holocaust.

- “Ilzecki and his wife didn't come out from the war... But his son remained alive; ours did not... And ANYWAY we had to give Richieu to hide a year later.” (81)

While saying this sentence, Valdek cycles to rest. This absolutely reminds him of the most painful memory when talking about his deceased son. Also, there is a ironic here that even though they had to give out Richieu anyways, he died because of that. But if they had chosen to give him out at this stage, he would survive. However, this is seen from the current perspective, years after the event had happened. The author here is offering the readers to ponder upon the theme of destiny and future, and its unpredictability.

- “But if Fela decides to go, of course I'll go with her.”
- “My daughter! How can she manage to ALONE - with four children to take care of?” And, what do you think of? He sneaked on to the BAD side! And those on the bad side never came anymore home. (91)

It turned out that he really did so, as he said. Vladek's father chose to accompany his daughter regardless of his own safety. This is the warmest part of Maus. It shows that power of love and family during the warfare.

- “Can I have another cookie?” (89)

The child's innocence is magnified here. It is in stark contrast with the rest of the story — the evil human nature, the cruelty of the Holocaust. It also evokes empathy in the readers and forces them to reflect upon the cruelty of warfares in general.

FIVE/MOUSE HOLES

Date: Oct 22, 2019

Pages: 95-128

Synopsis:

Artie receives a call from his father in the early morning. He is asked to help him fix the roofs. When he later visited him again, Mala tells Artie that Vladek saw his comics “Prisoner on the Hell Planet.” The comics tells the story of his mother's suicide, and Artie's sense of guilt and hatred towards his mother. Vladek says he feels sad after reading this. He goes to to tell Artie his story. Richieu finally got sent away. Other kids were cruelly killed by the Germans shortly afterwards. However, Richieu died soon with Tosha. The family at that time were hiding in the bunkers. However, they got reported by a stranger one day. Even though Vladek and Anja survived later because of bribing, Vladek's in-laws got sent to the gas. Vladek had a heart attack on the streets. Back in the camp, Lolek was sick of

hiding. Anja had a mental breakdown. They finally survived by hiding in the bunker. At the same time, Artie and Vladek got the bank, and Vladek wants to give his money to his son after death.

Perspective: Artie and Vladek, first person narrative.

Theme: Knowledge; trust; suicide;

- It is noticeable that Lolek survived the Holocaust. He is the only one in the whole family that survived besides Anaj and Vladek. He is brave. He went straight to the unknown future without hesitation just because he was tired of hiding like a mouse. He not only survived physically, but also mentally. He lived like a human. He survived using his knowledge and his skills that no one else could compete with. Notice that when everyone else was seeking for food, he took back a bag of books. He was not understood by his family, but it was the knowledge he possesses and the bravery he has that saved him out of the Holocaust.
- The theme of trust appears again. This was probably the last time that Vladek trusted anyone to go to Hungary. However, he got deceived again.
- There were two attempts of suicide in this chapter. Tosha killed himself out of bravery and rationality, yet Anja didn't want to live any more because of the oppression she was suffering from.

Style (of the comics "Prisoner on the Hell Planet"):

- Characters' ghostly looks
- The overall dark style.
- The texture of the brush — almost like engraving on a wood piece.

Other thoughts:

The scene that really touches me is on page 109, where out of despair, Tosha decided to suicide. At the same time, she killed the three kids with her. Even though that was just four panels, I can see the sweat coming out of Tosha's head. She was making a big decision and going through a lot of inner struggle. With the lens gradually zooming in and her eyebrows flattening, she decided to kill the kids so that they wouldn't suffer anymore. By doing this, she would forever be accused of murder and be resented by the kids' parents. She was the bravest one and took the most responsibilities not only for her own child but also her sister's. It also reminds me of a movie I watched, *the Mist*. In the movie the father killed his parents and his son for a similar reason. However, it was ironic in the end because right after the father killed his son and his parents, the mist was gone. I still remember the blood-curdling cry in the end of the movie. I believe Tosha had a similar experience when she killed her own child. Some people might think Tosha had gone crazy because of the oppression and killed her kids, but from my point of view, it was really brave and respectful of her to do so.



Quotes:

- “One reason I became an artist was that he thought it was impractical — just a waste of time. It was an area where I wouldn’t have to compete with him.” (97)

The conflict between the father and the son; the impact of the transgenerational trauma.

- Well, Mom if you are listening... “congratulations! You’ve committed the perfect crime... You put me here... Shorted all my circuits... Cut my nerve endings... and crossed my wires! You MURDERED me. Mommy. And you left he here to take the rap!!!” (103)

Mother’s suicide has driven Artie crazy. He is imagining himself being in the jail. His mental state is extremely unstable. He shows his hatred and resentment towards his mother in this way. However, behind the resentment is his guilt towards his mother because he was not nice to her.

- Some kids were screaming and creaming. They couldn’t stop. So the Germans winged them by the legs against a wall. And they never anymore screamed. (108)

This is probably one of saddest scenes in the book. The cruelty of the Holocaust is juxtaposed with the innocence of the children. This makes the readers to reflect upon the nature of warfare.

- “No! I won’t go to their gas chambers! And my CHILDREN won’t go to their gas chambers.” “Bibi! Lonia! Richieu! Come here quickly!” (109)

This is what Tosha said before she committed suicide — with the four children. The cruelty of the Holocaust has smashed her last hope for life.

- “At that time it wasn’t anymore families. It was everybody to take care for himself!” (114)

This contrasts with what it was like before the war. The whole family lived together and sit in big tables. The impact of the Holocaust is destructive.

- Haskel took from me father-in-law’s jewels. But, finally, he didn’t help them. “On Wednesday the vans came. Anja and I saw her father at the window. He was tearing his hair and crying.” He was a millionaire, but even this didn’t save him his life. (115)

The author is sending us another message about wealth here. Under the warfare, even money cannot help. Letting Anja witnessing his father’s death but could do nothing to help emphasizes the helplessness of individuals during a huge trend/historical event.

- “But if he’s dead why are his eyes still wide open?” “He was struggling to survive.” (117)

The unyielding tenacity of life is vividly shown in this brief conversation. Everyone, no matter what he did, was struggling to survive. However, even though he went through a lot inner struggles and decided to help the Germans to survive, they viewed him as nothing.

This shows the unbalance of power relationship during the Holocaust.

- “Why are you pulling me, Vladek? Let me alone! I don’t want to live!” “No, darling! To die, it’s easy... but you have to struggle for life! Until the last moment we must struggle together! I need you!”

The two completely opposite mindsets of people in the warfare is presented here. Anja survived because of Vladek’s constant support. The importance of family during the Holocaust is that it served as a mental pillar whenever someone loses hope.

- “Anja and I didn’t have where to go. We walked in the direction of Sosnowiec — but where to go?!” (125)

The aimlessness and helplessness during the Holocaust.

- “Oy, Anja! Anja! Anja!” “Easy, pop... Let’s go home.” (127)

This is the first time that Vladek and Artie show their true sentiment towards each other. Vladek finally confesses his own vulnerability and helplessness he always has since the Holocaust. Artie, on the other hand, shows his care and love for his father, which he has been doubting and hiding since his childhood.



SIX/MOUSE TRAP

Date: Oct 24, 2019

Pages: 129-159

Synopsis:

This is another visit. Mala complains to Artie about Vladek’s stinginess and she feels like being his nurse. In Vladek’s story, he and Anja were trying to find a shelter. After several setbacks, Vladek managed even to find food from a black market. They soon moved to Mrs. Motonowa’s house. After a brief period of peace, they got driven away because of insecurity. They later went back and stayed in the basement, because Mr. Motonowa was back home. Vladek decided to go to Hungary despite others’ rejection. It turned out that he got cheated and was sent to the concentration camp. Mentioning Anja’s diary, Vladek tells Artie that he burned it. Artie leaves in despair, calling his father “a murderer.”

Theme: trust; humanity

- The theme of trust appears again. This was probably the last time that Vladek trusted anyone to go to Hungary. However, he got deceived again.
- The theme of humanity is discussed when Spiegelman puts the two human mice, Anja and Vladek, together with real mice living in the basement. By showing that they are fundamentally different, Spiegelman argues that the Jews are absolutely a race as well as human. (against what Hitler said, “The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human.”)

Quotes:

- “Well — you’re better off with the rats than with the gestapo... at least the rats won’t kill you!” (148)

Now Anja and Vladek were really living in the basement, like mice. And they even met real mice there. However, Anja’s horror reveals their true identity. They are humans. They are not mice that any cat or pig could eat and kill.

- “It’s good to be ‘home’ eh, Vladek?” (148)

There is no home for the jews now. They took wherever accept them as their home. This establishes a great contrast with before the war, when it was a so important for a jewish family to get together even in the hardest times. The impact of the Holocaust is so destructive and fundamental in altering its victims’ behavior and thoughts.

- They marched us through the city of Bielsko. We passed by the factory what once I owned... We passed the market where always we bought to ear, and passed even the street where we used to live, and we came ’til the prison, and there they put us. (155)

This is another demonstration of the changes that took place during the Holocaust. There is a strong sense of nostalgia in these sentences. People could no longer go back to their homes. Everything that used to be their property was now under their enemies’ control. This is the story of every warfare. This forces the readers to rethink the destructive and cruel nature of warfares in general.



Plot Analysis

Prologue

Date: Oct 02, 2019

Pages: 1-6

Summary

In epigraph: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human."

Artie goes back to his childhood in 1958. He recalled an incident when he was ten or eleven years old. He was going roller skating with his friends. Artie's skate came loose and fell behind. None of his friends waited for him but laughed at him instead.

Artie was heart-broken and went home. His father was sawing. Artie was sniffing while helping, so his father asked for the reason. Artie told him and he stopped sawing. He stared at Artie and said cynically that if Artie got locked with his "friends" without food for a week, he would see what "friends" are.

Analysis

Use anti-semitic images to attract anti-semitism.

All the characters are drawn with mouse heads, implying all are jews.
The kids are depicted so that the scene seems innocent, but what happened is somewhat cruel, creating a sparkling contrast.

The father is portrayed as indifferent and practical. He doesn't seem to be bothered when seeing his son crying. Instead, he gives a harsh comment on what friends really are, which is very pessimistic and too much for a kid of ten years old.
This whole prologue uses childhood anecdote to reflect and explain the personality formed when Artie grows up later in the book.

One - The Sheik

Date: Oct 03, 2019

Pages: 9-24

Summary

The title: the Sheik

Artie has grown up now. He is visiting his father in Rego Park. He remarks that he hasn't seen his father for a long time and they are not very close. Vladek gets angry when Mala uses a wire hanger instead of a wooden one.

When Vladek is pedaling for his heart, Art asks about his father's story for his comic book. In the middle panel, there is a number written on Vladek's arm. After some resistance, Vladek started his story. He was a textile-guy. He was very handsome at that time and there were a lot of girls who run after him. He took Lucia to dance.

Even though Vladek clearly showed no interest in Lucia, Lucia was always around and even insisted going to his apartment. Vladek seems to be awkward to acknowledge that he got more involved with Lucia. In the next panel, just after having sex, Lucia hoped to get engaged with Vladek, but he quickly changed the topic and noted that the girl has no money.

Vladek met his cousin at the train station and got invited to live in their house. The cousin recommended him Anja, a clever and wealthy girl. When the next day Vladek met Anja, the cousin talked with Anja in English and went away soon. Anja said he was nice and handsome. Vladek told Anja afterwards that he understand English and Anja was a little embarrassed. But they had a nice chatting afterwards and began phoning each other.

Analysis

Sheik is a Slang referring to a man held to be masterful and irresistibly charming to women.

In several panels, the author reveals several traumas: father's aging and diseases, mother's suicide, unhappy remarriage. Also, Vladek seems to very welcome his son but is very ill-tempered towards his second wife.

The number on Vladek's arm is what he get at during the Holocaust. It is the symbol of the indelible damage that the Holocaust brings to the survivors.

There is an allusion to Rudolph Valentino, a famous actor, and the 1921 American silent film *the Sheik*.

The nature of this relationship gets gradually revealed when Vladek kept refusing Lucia. He clearly didn't plan to marry Lucia at the beginning of the relationship. Also, Vladek is presented as a mammonist because even though he thought Lucia's family was nice, he looked down upon them because they were poor. He views marriage more as an exchange of money.

Through the train ticket and the conversation with his cousin, we can feel that Vladek was very close to his big family. Both Anja and Vladek presented their best selves and had a nice time together. Vladek shows that he was knowledgable and Anja behaved decently. When she got embarrassed knowing that Vladek understood her personal comment on him, she cleverly turned the topic.

Anja sent Vladek a photo. He framed it and when Lucia saw it, she got extremely angry, but Vladek just coldly told her that he and Anja were going to get engaged. Lucia threw herself at him and begged him to leave Anja.

Artie remarks that Anja was not as attractive, and Vladek admits. He loved talking to Anja because she was intelligent and sensitive, as described by the director from her school. Vladek invited Anja to his house, but Anja politely refused by saying that her mother was too conservative to let her to that. Instead, Anja invited Vladek to her family for dinner.

Before dinner, Vladek peeked at Anja's closet to see how tidy she was, but found some pills. He took some and got a friend examined it. He didn't want to marry Anja if she was sick. The pill turned out to be nothing serious and they got married in 1936.

Lucia once again found him. Regardless of Lucia's begging on the floor, Vladek slammed the door indifferently. He stopped hearing from Lucia since then. Anja received a letter saying Vladek had a lot of girlfriends. To comfort Anja, Vladek addressed Lucia as "an old girlfriend who won't leave me alone" and "nothing to me." In the end, Vladek got one department and a gold watch as wedding gifts.

After telling these stories, Vladek warned his son not to put them on his comic book, because he realizes that it is not proper or respectful. Artie promised not to write about it.

Vladek had fallen in love with Anja regardless of his girlfriend Lucia. He was much more considerate with Anja when he carefully bought a frame for the photo she sent him. Anja wore nice coat in the photo, also indicating her wealth.

There was a huge contrast between Anja and Lucia in terms of visiting Vladek's apartment. Anja was much more demure and met the expectation of a good woman at that time. Also, Anja got great education and reputation, which can be seen through the conversation with her director.

Despite his love for Anja, Vladek was still very aware when he saw the pills she took. He was rational enough to not marry a woman if she is sick or cannot do housework well.

Vladek once again discarded Lucia. He didn't view her as a girlfriend but rather a pet. But he received punishment for that. In the end, Vladek got what he wanted: Anja and her family's wealth.

It is clear that Artie doesn't keep his promise and put all these stories on the book. It also shows that Artie and his father has very different views regarding the book: Vladek wants to present the real objective story, yet Artie wants to real human nature through the Holocaust.

Two - The Honeymoon

Date: Oct 12, 2019

Pages: 25-40

Summary

Artie goes frequently to his father's to hear his story. Vladek is busy counting his pills. To him, "I must fight to save myself." And "doctors, they only give me 'junk food'."

Vladek says Anja had a communist friend that always came to see her. Soon Anja got into trouble because she was involved in conspiracy.

Anja hide the secret document in a seamstress's place. The police searched the whole neighborhood and found it. The seamstress was arrested.

When Vladek heard the news, he planned to break the marriage. He said to Anja, "if you want me you have to go my way." So Anja stopped.

The seamstress got out from the prison after 3 months. Anja's father paid her a good fortune. He also helped Vladek to operate a whole textile factory.

Soon Richieu was born in 1937. Mentioning that he was a little premature, Vladek goes on to recall that Artie was very premature. He mimics how Artie would walk in childhood, yet spills his bottle of pills. He got irritated.

Analysis

This shows Vladek's stubbornness. He would rather take medicine himself than trust a certified doctor.

The anger and disdain on Vladek's face shows his hatred toward communism. Anja was between the two groups and even though it was not depicted in the book, we can still feel how ambivalent she was.

Even though Anja protected her secret for the sake of the communist party, she did great harm to the innocent seamstress, illustrating a sense of helplessness and tough choices in life.

Vladek is so dictatorial that he didn't allow his wife to have a different thought from him. Still, facing this kind of moral lemma, Anja made another tough choice: discard her communism party whatsoever, and continue with Vladek.

Anja's father is very supportive of his son-in-law.

Here by intersecting reality and memories, the author juxtaposes the joy at Richieu's birth with the cruel death in reality. This reveals the cruel and irretrievable nature of the war. The fact that Vladek mimics Artie shows he used to be a caring father who had carefully observed his child. This contrasts sharply with his behavior now. His emotion is so unstable now that he blames his son when he himself accidentally spills his pills.

After giving birth to Richieu, Anja experienced severe depression. She cared about nothing and didn't want to live. Vladek decided to accompany Anja to a sanitarium in Czechoslovakia.

On the train to the sanitarium, Vladek saw the flag of swastika for the first time. It was 1938. Other people on the train started to talk about tragedies involving Nazi at other places and they prayed Nazi would be thrown out of power here.

The sanitarium was a beautiful place with everything needed. With Vladek's praises, Anja would only respond "un huh." Vladek kept comforting her and told Anja the joke of his father getting the pillow in the war, and Anja was "so laughing and so happy."

After three month them went back, the factory got robbed. Thanks to Anja's father's help, another factory was built and they were well-off again. However, Nazis' frequent riot and slaughter made them plan to move out, as they thought the German would only want part of Poland.

The bad news came when the government asked Vladek to join the army. Before leaving, Vladek let Anja take the dolls with her, which turned out to be a wise choice. Anja and Richieu went farther away to a safer place, while Vladek went to the front. At this point, Vladek spills his pills again. Vladek starts to complain about his cataract and the irresponsible doctors. After hearing father's story of his glass left eye, Artie seems to be exhausted and stops this interview.

Anja's depression corresponds to the medicine she was taking for her nervousness. Also it indicates Anja's fate afterwards — suicide.

The foreshadowing of the tragedies. The first encounter is filled with fear, as we can see from the depiction of the mice's facial expression as well as the sense of oppression and coldness shown by the huge flag outside the train window, occupying half of the page.

At that time, Vladek seemed to be a completely different person. He was so caring and understanding compared to his sensitivity and testiness now. Back then, Anja loved him so much.

The easiness father-in-law took this robbery fully demonstrated the family's great wealth. The unrest was the forewarning of upcoming disaster. The relationship between Jews and Polish seemed to be less stable. Also, Jews was too naive about German's ambition.

As a jew. Vladek was astute enough to let Anja take the doll for future sell. Also, in the picture Jews and Polish were together in the army fighting against the German, so at that time, the relationship was good. The second spilling pushes the tension to its climax — we still don't know what happened in the war, and there seems to be another outburst coming. Artie didn't say anything during Vladek's long description of his eye disease. He shows little interest and only wants to go back. His selfishness can be seen clearly here.

Three - Prisoner of War

Date: Oct 14, 2019

Pages: 41-70

Summary

Artie is visiting his father again. At dinner, Vladek blames him because he hasn't finished his food. They start talking about how strict Vladek used to treat him. Vladek still complains about Mala, but Artie interrupts with impatience.

Artie is shocked that Vladek went on to the frontier after just a few days' training. Vladek explains that he used to be in the army. He goes on recalling that his father didn't want his son to join the army because of his suffering. He put his sons on horrible starvation diet to escape recruit. The first year Vladek escaped but the second year he couldn't bear it any more and joined the army.

In the war against Germany, Vladek shot at a moving tree and killed someone. By speaking German, Vladek didn't get beaten by the Nazis but got marched and ordered to find dead soldiers. He found the soldier he killed. He got sympathetic but at the same time thought he "at least did something."

Afterwards, all the Jews were asked to stand out. The soldier shouted to them, "it's all your fault, this war!" They were then ordered to do clean a stable in one hour, which is impossible to do. At the same time, Vladek is blaming Artie to drop ashes on the floor, "you want it should be like a stable here?"

Analysis

Vladek is illustrated as a miser and strict - even inhumane - father. This hints at the deep tension within the family. The great care Mala shows to Artie and their harmonious relationship suggest that the main cause of unhappiness within the family is Vladek.

The way Vladek's father helped his sons to avoid recruit was cruel, but he had no other choice. He valued life more than anything else. Vladek was absolutely influenced by his father. He had grown up from the young man who'd rather face death than bear temporary torture to someone who knows the importance of long-term benefit.

Vladek demonstrated his strong interpersonal skills. He knew how to empathize with the German, which was an essential quality for him to survive the war and imprisonment.

The Jews didn't say anything even though the war had nothing to do with them, implying their cowardice. There is a parallel drawn between the war and the reality when Vladek urges Artie to clean the ashes. Vladek is just like the soldier in the war, implying the trauma the war has brought him.

The living condition was horrible in the bigger camp they moved to. They didn't have enough cloth nor food. Despite of coldness, Vladek bathe in the cold-autumn river. He didn't get frostbite wounds as a result.

He also mentions that "I was very religious, and it wasn't else to do." He received a package from home also.

Later, they got a notice saying there was an opportunity for labour assignment with much better offers. Others deemed it as a trick, while Vladek signed up, saying, "I'm not going to die, and I won't die here! I want to be treated like a human being!" Other people, seeing Vladek registered, followed.

They got much better treatment even though the work was very tiring. Vladek was much more positive than others. Still, some people went back to starve regardless of the help that Vladek was trying to offer.

One night, Vladek dreamed about his grandfather. He told Vladek, "You will come out of this place - FREE! On the day of parishes truma." Artie was confused about religious the term.

It turned out that the dream came true. Vladek remarked that Parshas truma "is a very important date" for him.

One distinction between Vladek and other prisoners' was his full consideration for long-term benefit. He would be willing to bathe in cold river everyday because he knew that otherwise he might face much worse consequences.

Vladek was always very astute. He didn't smoke cigarettes, so he traded them and made good use of them.

This was the biggest difference between Vladek and others, and the main reason why he survived the war: he had a much stronger desire to survive. While others had already pessimistically determined they would die, Vladek had decided to survive, and live like a human. He was not satisfied to the unpleasant present and was always longing for the better.

Another important characteristic that kept Vladek alive was his optimism. He also cared a lot about other people and was always willing to help. That seems to be a completely different person compared to him now. The trauma the war had on him was irretrievable.

Grandfather absolutely gave Vladek more confidence and determination. Artie's ignorance towards parishes truma implies his distance to his family, his origin, and his culture.

Vladek detailedly recounts all the important things happening on that week, including Vladek's performance. Even though he was deeply affected by the trauma, he still holds deep love for his son.

However, the train didn't stop until Lublin. From the Jewish authorities, he learned that Jews sent here were being killed. Luckily, he got registered as a cousin of his friend and got free next morning.

Vladek went to Orbach's house and they shared food with each other. But soon after Vladek returned home, he didn't hear from them any more.

Vladek managed to pass the border by cottoning up with a Polish train man. He pretended to be a Pole and said bad words about the Nazis. Vladek went back home. His mother had a cancer, and his father's beard got shaved by the Nazis. He gave Anja and Richieu a big surprise by going back.

Vladek again starts to show nostalgia towards Anja and complain about Mala. Vladek and Artie start an argument again. Artie can't bear this anymore and planned to go home, but he can't find his coat. Vladek threw it away and thinks it is "a shame my son would wear such a coat." Artie gets irritated.

Even though the Jewish authorities didn't know Vladek at all, they were willing to help. It was this kind of helping each other among Jews as well as other races helped them through the war.

Another nice characteristic of Vladek - always save something. It has become an annoying habit now when they have enough to eat. It also shows the cruelty of the war — among most of the people Vladek met, they were never seen again.

Vladek again showed his great interpersonal skills. He clearly knew what kind of men would a Polish train man have empathy with, and he pretended well. The situation back home was not very promising, but in the war, people are usually more easily satisfied: being together with families is their greatest joy.

Vladek is too nostalgic and always compares his present to past. He never thinks positively now — another sign of the trauma. The way he treated Artie is too controlling and autocratic. He still sees Artie as a child rather than an adult — as a lot of parents does. Artie's anger again escalates the tension between the family and shows the misunderstanding of each other.

Four - The Noose Tightens

Date: Oct 19, 2019

Pages: 71-94

Summary

Vladek blames Artie for being late and not able to help him repair his roof. He doesn't want a handyman because that cost money. He is not satisfied even when Artie bought a tape recording at \$75.

A big family were living together at that time. At the dinner table, they started to talk about the disasters Nazis brought them: not enough food, danger of death... yet no one else in the whole family seemed to care about the future and still wanted to live the way they used to live.

Vladek went to secret markets to make money, and sent half of them to his family. In consideration of safety, he later went to work in a tin shop, in which he learned skills useful later in camps.

A friend of father-in-law came and cheated them to take out the furnitures, but the officials came and took the furnitures without paying anything.

One time Vladek encountered a slaughter and Ilzecki saved his life. He also offered to hid Richieu, but it didn't happen because Anja didn't want to. It turned out that Ilzecki's son came out of the war alive.

Analysis

Vladek's thriftiness has already exceeded the common point. Ironically, even though Artie doesn't understand why his father doesn't even want a handyman, he is also proud of himself buying the tape recording at a cheap price.

The family was big and still had some momentum to move forward because of the great fortune they had accumulated over time. But without the foresight and sensitivity Vladek had, they could not go very far.

Vladek was resourceful. He knew a lot of people and was an excellent businessman. He was also wise enough not to send all the money to his family. He was calm and knew clearly the nature of his family members.

The dark side of human nature can be seen in this friend. The worst thing in a war is allies' betrayal.

Vladek started his endless hiding from now on. The jews were shot of no reason. Also, the great reaction the family had on giving up Richieu was understandable but not wise.

Artie says nothing to comfort his father, but rather redirects to topic and asks him to make it chronological.

The family moved to a much smaller house. One other day, four people got hanged. Vladek gets emotional when thinking of them again. However, Artie changes the topic again to Anja and her notebooks.

Vladek then had some jewelry and food business. Afterwards he did carpentry as well.

There came the news that older jews had to be taken away. The grandparents first hid, but finally all got forced to be sent away, right to Auschwitz, the gas.

After the grandparents, it was for everyone to go. Vladek's father came for his son's advise and brought some cookie to Richieu. He said that his cousin might be able to help him, but if Fela goes, he would go anyways. At that moment, Richieu came and asked for more cookie.

At the stadium, almost everyone came, and they were split into two groups: the strong labor, and the weaker ones. Mr. Spiegelman was first taken to the good side, but Fela got sent to the bad side, and he sneaked over, to the bad side.

Artie either has no idea how to comfort his father so he simply shows his coldest aspect to hide his embarrassment.

The Germans were making an example of those four. The guilt Vladek had has lasted for such a long time, implying the trauma. Artie emotionlessly redirected the topic again and asks for Anja's diary. He address Anja by her name instead of calling her mother.

Even though Vladek was not a risk-taker by nature, he wanted to live. He had no choice.

It was a shock when the police was jewish. They were betrayers, but also, they just only wanted to live themselves. Everyone was struggling to survive, but they never knew which step was the correct one.

Everyone was worried, but lost. They chose their way blindly, and the consequence of the wrong choice was death, but more likely, they would die anyway. The detail that Vladek's father would go if Fela go shows that the power of love and family connection can exceed the fear of death. When Vladek and his father were talking about this life threatening situation, the appearance of Richiue and his innocent request for more cookie invokes great sympathy towards this group of jews.

The death of Vladek's father and sister were so sudden. A stamp in the hands of a jew can now decide another jew's life.

Mala's mother managed to go through that, but got killed. Artie wants to find his mother's diary. Mala starts to complain about Vladek's magpie mind, but Artie seems to be happy to see his father's collections. In the end, Mala's anger scared Artie away.

Mala has another story to tell, but Artie is not interested. Artie's interest in those useless collection highlights the similarity between the father and the son. The anger of Mala implies that the similar kind of trauma she had like Vladek. This tells us that the trauma is on everyone going through the war, but not a single case. Artie again shows his indifference when he chooses to escape to home instead of staying and comforting his stepmother. Besides, Vladek's behavior of collecting so many useless things highlights his nostalgia to the past.

Five - Mouse Holes

Date: Oct 22, 2019

Pages: 95-128

Summary

Artie gets a phone call from his father while sleeping. He is asked to help him fix the roof. He doesn't go. He said that his father "loved showing off how handy he was, and proving that anything I did was wrong." "He made me completely neurotic about fixing stuff."

Afterwards, he visits Vladek again. Mala tells Artie that his father has seen his comic "Prisoner on the Hell Planet."

In the comics, Artie talks about his mother's death and the infinite guilt she left him. Vladek says he thinks of Anja again when he sees the comic.

The family got moved to another place and everyday they were marched to work by Jews with sticks. Persis came and took 5 kids away. This time everyone had no choice but to agree.

Then they talk about how Richieu died. Tosha was informed that they were all going to be sent to the gas. Out of despair, killed herself and the three kids with her.

Vladek made bunkers for his family and helped them survive. But one day, a stranger came and claim he was here for food. The family took pity on him but got deceived.

Analysis

Then tension between family relationship is illustrated. Artie explains more why he is reluctant to be with his father. This even influences his career path. But he never considers that his father's request implies his aging, given his stubbornness.

Mala is becoming sensitive because of living with Vladek for a long time.

The style of the comic is as raw as its content. The brushes express out loud Artie's anger, as well as the guilt that he wouldn't admit. There is no real human face. He uses those ghostly faces to express his inner world at that time.

It is so ironic when looking back. But the people who were experiencing it didn't know anything. For them, every choice led to an unknown path.

Tosha's action is understandable: she didn't want either her or her children to suffer from the dehumanization and the gas. Vladek understands her too. He didn't show anger when talking about Tosha.

The hardest thing lies in how to distinguish between the kind and evil when they got mixed up. The wicked nature of human being is the greatest thing to be aware of. And there was no way to tell which decision to make.

They got taken to another ghetto. Haskel, Vladek's cousin helped him because of his gold and jewels. But he didn't help his in-laws despite the great money they gave him. Vladek's in-laws died.

Vladek went on to work for the Germans. He also accidentally buried the rat who turned his family in. Then Vladek had a heart-attack in street and sit down. He then mentions that Miloch died of a seizure on street even though his family survived the war. Vladek comments, "so life goes."

Lolek got taken to Auschwitz too. And the bad news of Richieu came too. Anja was completely hysterical. Because of Vladek's encouragement, she calmed down.

They hid in the bunker again. They ran out of food and someone bribed the police to let them go. They were deceived again. A young couple asked Vladek for advice. In the end, few people got free, but for Vladek and Anja, they had nowhere to go.

Anja had left a ring for Artie, and Vladek still has it now. Vladek says that Mala asks only for money, and for the first time, Artie comforted his father.

At that time, everyone only focused on their self-interest. The cry through the window was so painfully depicted. Every touch gives out the sense of despair and resignation.

Again the author emphasizes that people did everything out of the eager to survive at that time. Even though giving out people who showed kindness to him is despicable, the man was also struggling for life. Moreover, there is another parallelism drew when Vladek and Miloch both had heart attacks. Human's mortality is inevitable.

Lolek seems to be the only one who is so brave and direct when facing death. He didn't try to hide like a mouse, but go straight to the ovens. Vladek had always been Anja's emotional support both before and during the war.

Vladek still kept his morality even in those circumstances. He only took the smaller watch from the young couple. However, when he got out, he got lost like a bird in cage suddenly got freedom. The road was in the shape of the nazi sign, implying that wherever they go, they could not escape.

Now it seems that Mala is not that innocent as she appears to be. After all, both Vladek and Mala had been fundamentally affected by the war, and the misery of this remarriage is not the fault of either, but both.

Six - Mouse Trap

Date: Oct 24, 2019

Pages: 129-159

Summary

Artie comes again and sees Mala only. Mala complains to him again how cheap Vladek has been to her. When Vladek comes upstairs, they started arguing unstoppably. Vladek tries to give some advice, but he finds himself powerless over this.

Anja and Vladek first went to Richieu's governess'. She chased them away. The couple went to Mr. Lukowski's place and he accepted them, but they still have to find a better place to hide.

On the street, afraid as he were, Vladek answered a well-camouflaged jew. He followed his advice and found the black market. He not only got food but also another place to hide. At Mrs. Kawka's place, however, they were not treated very well and it would be cold in the winter. Mrs. Motonowa, the woman he met at the black market, was willing to help.

Artie asks naively whether they paid for Mrs. Motonowa. Vladek angrily said yes. Anja taught Mrs. Motonowa's son German. One day, the pole got searched at the black market and she got the couple away angrily even though it was not their fault at all.

Analysis

Now it seems that the misery of this remarriage is because of their contradictory characteristics and different beliefs. Also, Vladek says he doesn't want to talk to a counselor shows that he has no intention to even try to make a better relationship.

Relation between word and picture: Anja is more easily recognized as a Jew is depicted in the panel with a long mouse tail. The contrast between good and bad is shown when Anja was saying to themselves: "thank God there are still some kind people left" and meanwhile an old pole who didn't even know them wanted to give them out.

Vladek, though careful and prudent most of the time, made the right decision to admit his Jewishness this time. It depends not only on luck but also on his acute intuition and observation.

Even though Mrs. Motonowa agreed to help, she was very miser if there was no money given to her. However, it was already very valuable and kind at that time because of the risk involved.

The couple spent a night at a construction site and went to Kawka's place the next day. She told them they could go to Hungary.

They went back to Motonowa's place. Her husband came and the couple had to stay at the cellar with rats and no water for showers. They decided to go to Hungary.

On his way back, he almost got recognized by the kids, but he successfully deceived the adults. They met their uncle at the smugglers' place. The uncle decided to go first and write letter to tell them the situation if possible. Anja was reluctant to go.

Vladek went to find his cousin Miloch. He was in a bad condition, living with the janitor. Vladek drank with her customers for the whole night. He was glad that Vladek could offer him a better place to hide.

They received the letter saying everything was fine and they went on the trip to Hungary. They got cheated.

They soon got sent to the concentration camp in Oswiecim. They knew everything by then.

When Artie asks for Anja's diary again, Vladek tells him that he destroyed them. Artie yells at his father and calls him a murderer.

Even though Kawka showed unfriendliness towards the couple at first, when she noticed that Anja was shaking, she invited her into the house.

It is funny that jews, depicted in the book as mice, are afraid of rats. Also, Anja addressed the house to be "home". They had no home to go, so wherever they could stay, they considered it home.

The reaction of the kids revealed what their parents taught them about jews. Also, the weird way of greeting at that time seems to be so casual to them.

Vladek's strong interpersonal skill was once more demonstrated when he skillfully dealt with the customers. It was also ironic that he gave up his place that was much safer.

We can see Vladek had been so stubborn since then when he almost forced Anja to join him. Anja couldn't even decide for herself, but to follow Vladek whatsoever.

Vladek was always able to get food and surprise Anja, but this time, she didn't want it any more. Maybe her depression had begun long time ago because of constant anxiety.

By calling his father a murderer, Artie is referring to the killing of Anja's last legacy to his son. He killed her soul. Interestingly, Artie also thought that Anja murdered him by suiciding herself.