

## A GOLDEN GATE

By

Christian Lawrence

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Joseph Lawrence

1172 Vista Oaks Dr, Colorado Springs, CO, 80918

719-459-3996

[Jchristianlawrence@gmail.com](mailto:Jchristianlawrence@gmail.com)

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## Part 1

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### Josef Straz – Emigration

I first met Josef Straz when I was his father's briefcase. Call me Ali! Ali the elf. Here's how it all happened. One night, a long way ago...

Josef had a nightmare. So he sat on his Molly mother's bed gently kicking his legs over the edge. His feet were stunted and stubby. So they made a funny sound. He was looking out the window. Their home was on the edge of the English sea. And he wanted to see the sun come up out of the sea.

He could hear the cold, Atlantic surf, crashing as *thalatta, thalatta*. And then there was a sound like water simmering, simmering. The ocean came to boil. There was a glow of orange and white in the water and that was the dawn.

A plume of steam, wider than any Tower, rose from the sea. Pillared the air. The sun borne of ocean, rose, shedding water and wave and foam and brine, rising with clouds there, the air, and burning, up, up, like a rocket, the sun rose from the sea.

And that was the morning he first remembered.

Molly was in the bed and she had red hair and Raphael was in the bed and he was dad and he was a Jew. Molly, half-woke from the light, bundled her eyes in her hair. And rolled. Away.

- Shut the window. She muttered back to dream.

Josef, seven years old then, shut the window with the bare, burred cloth they had. And he went into the other room, which was the only other room they had. Their house was small. Its walls moist, and a little green. Their floor was carpeted with torn rags and old papers and sometimes some straw. Their toilet was a pipe in the wall.

He walked funny. On those stubby feets. He walked funny to the pipe and made his water in it from his pipe. And that made a funny sound, like a rain gutter. And then he went over to me. I was a black briefcase back then. His dads.

Josef looked at his face reflected in my brief's black gloss. His face was thin. And small. He had black, curly hair like dad. And brown, maybe black eyes, like dad. His nose was beaked like a narcissus bird he pruned his hair.

Molly's packed pink bag happened to sit beside me. Really, she was too talkative.

- Josef? Josef, where are we going? The bag asked, in a sweet small feminine voice.

- We're going to Amerika. Said Josef, sitting down, his hand on his chin, thinking.

- What's Amerika? The bag asked.

- I don't know. Its where we're going. Dad says that's where the sun is going so that's where we gotta go too or we'll get too cold.

- Why's the sun going there? What's it want there? I like watching it here.

- I do too.

- (*sniffing*) I don't wanna go. Said the bag. I wanna stay the sun here.

- We can watch it there too. That's where it'll be. Amerika.

- When are we going?

- Today.

- How do we get there?

- The George Washington Bridge is supposed to take us there. Said Josef.

- What's a Bridge?

- ... I don't know. Said Josef.

Hey, I knew! So I stood up like a dog – that's what a briefcase standing up looks like – stood up and hopped onto the piss pipe and danced there and I smiled and I sang:

- A Bridge is a fridge for a boy! Giant George will put you in a quart of soy! You're not too old! When you're good and cold, he'll gulp you down like London'd town. London Bridge is falling down, falling down! Look at the boys he's gulping down, is gulping down!

Then I felt bad because he was scared; he'd clapped his hands over his ears he'd shut his eyes and he'd hummed to himself a song his Molly mother sang to him when he had bad dreams. I sat back down. By the bag. Molly mother came out and hugged him.

Josef felt better then.

They made a quiet, humble breakfast at the stove. Liver on the pan. Sizzling like the sea when the sun slept in't. And she, Molly, was a singer Raphael found in a tavern when he'd taught books at the college in Dublin. The prettiest lass he ever did see he'd said, and he'd been clever about catching her eye too, dancing clumsy and blushing. Well can I teach you my dance, lass? Why yes you can she'd said, laughing and tossing her hair like a blushing reddy dreamcatcher over his eyes. I was just a wee satchel back then. Ah, youth.

- Mum, what's a Bridge? Josef asked.

- A Bridge is just like a road, Jo. Said Molly, managing the liver. It's just a really long road that's high up in the air. You've seen a hot air balloon? A Bridge is like a road on

hot air balloons way up over your head. But you can walk on it and that's where we're going today. There's naught to be afrightened of, *a stór*, we'll all be together there, up in the air. And then to Amerika too.

- What's Amerika like?

- Land of opportunity! Shouted dad, Raphael, coming from the bedroom his robe a billowing behind his payot dancing under his ears he bounded to bring Molly into his arms and spin her.

- Hava nagila, hava nagila, ve-nismeha, uru, uru aḥim! He sang, spinning her.

Josef watched – his brown eyes glowing.

Something smelled burnt and blackish.

- Ah! Aphrodite! Hark! Thy Prometheus burns 'pon his Gibraltar altar! Alight, alight! Shouted dad, rushing to the pan, and plucking it off the flame.

The liver was burned but it was their last so they ate it. They divided it, unevenly, for Josef the most, and dad ate his portion in a gulp, mum, a dainty cutting. She gave some to the pink bag and some to me and that filled us.

- Thank you, milady. Said the bag, talking too much.

I said nothing. Raphael leashed me and walked me to the door. He turned around and raised his arms and shouted:

- I cannot rest from travel: I will drink life to the lees: All experience is an arch wherethrough gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades for ever and for ever when I move. Here my family sits in character of Penelope and her Telemach', if that makes me a Ulysses, then I'd do better than he, and take you with me! List, today we haste to those

widest of margins, Amerika, new land sprung from the sea. Soon, the sun under which we grow will travel there, don't ya know, so let's follow that sun, let's move beyond our door, let's land 'pon that Amerikan shore!<sup>1</sup>

The two fans he had, Josef and Molly, cheered for that. They really wind him up. I still had a bad feeling bout' it all, but I didn't say anything.

He was right about Amerika though. It had come up out of the sea. My earth isn't really like yours. Firstly, it's flat, laid out like a map. And it might be infinite, I'm not sure. It's mostly greywater. But there's an island here and there, continents, really. But it's only warm near the sun. Every once in a while, a new continent will rise up and the sun will move there, and the last continent will get too cold so everybody's gotta move there too and they take a Bridge to get there. Usually.

So that's what a Bridge is. Nevermind that stuff about a fridge, or hot air balloons for that matter. We just say these things for fun, or to undo my fun like Molly did. Well, back to it.

Raphael whistled and led them out the door and up the hill from the cliff of the sea. We followed him in a line: Molly, Josef, the jawing pink bag, and me. That was all we had. We were real poor Jewish folks.

Other Jews were leaving too so we all formed together. The English government, still in power back then, wanted the Jews to be the last to cross over for some reason. So the city was all a husk when we left it. I remember some shoes were left on the ground. And

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<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, Ulysses

some gold teeth too. Some men came and pushed us with sticks – as if we didn't already want to leave!

They pushed us to the train station and onto the train. That train was a bellowing beast, taller than ten dads, that lurched its way along pulling hundreds of stacked houses of stone on its broad back. Josef and I saw mole men scurrying in the engine car, carrying blue flames on their backs, feeding a metal mouth. We slept in a car we could barely lie down in. But this wasn't a problem for me because I was a briefcase back then. But the bag didn't like it still; she cried and whinged and whined.

Some of the Jews were very angry and fought each other. Some were calm. The journey was very far. There was a blonde girl there Josef's age – how pretty she was. Butterfly nets her blue eyes on Josef's met, wow, caught him – but he didn't say hi.

The place we came to was very grey. Like all the colors were drained, except the color of grey, and cloth backs darkened to black by a constant drizzle from the sky. We, like a mob, were moved up a muddy path. We walked till the sun set back down into the sea, Josef on dad's narrow shoulders, under spotlights shining from squat, faceless towers.

Then there was a Tower with a face. It shined, red, white, blue, through the darkness, tall as a mountain. The Bridge. It seemed to rise to the shroud of heaven. Giant George Washington's Bridge. Its cables, thick, strong, like the arms of Atlas, carried layers of roads, railroads, paths and houses and hidden places.

And the spangled lights lit all along its span did dazzle our eyes, Josef's eyes...

It leapt boldly from the white cliffs, over black sea, unto horizon misty. Carriages, trains, black cars, and jeweled women went along, reclining out windows, tipping martinis into mouths, along the leap in happy line.

But we couldn't. The men with the sticks they pushed us down a muddy road that went, crisscross, down the white cliffs. It was very dangerous, that way down to the sea that plunged. Josef was so scared he dug his nails into dad's head! Dad's yarmulke leapt off and waved to us, and said, bye! and floated out into the air.

That blonde girl had a fit and she fell. From shoulders. Into the outer darkness.

There were red lanterns at the bottom, on poles, lighting the crashing sea. There were black boats, like black flies, floating on the body of the sea. We went into the boats drenched and cold and scared. But mum and dad hugged us all together and, I remember, Josef and I shut our eyes as we careened over the breakers and the surf.

Beside us was the Bridge so high above us. And glittering there, like a haven, a harbor, of light – red, blue, and white.

- Look, that's where Nessy is. I said, pointing to a Tower glowing with a dark red light, which was not like the other red lights.

- Like Ramses' long-lasting face... Raphael muttered, looking at it too.

Nessy was a very important committee. They oversaw the building of all the Bridges. No-one ever had seen inside their House, but we all knew they were very important. I met a man once who'd been on their committee, but he didn't remember it. But we all knew they were very important.

Our boats pattered along, the dark sea calming. We found our way by the Bridge. We followed the Bridge. Weeks on the sea. Josef got sea-sick and green, and he went chucking over the side. He thought he saw the girl there in the water beside - fish-tailed, muscled, moaning quiet girly bubbles. And his nightmare would be to fall into water.

I told him to look at the Bridge and that seemed to help. The Bridge was always very calm, and sure, and constant, above the ocean unrigid unconstant chaotic – sometimes cut with the fins of sharks – or glowing with the lights of things phosphorescent – or grey like the grey of a sleep without dream.

Dad recited things from the books he knew. And that really cheered everyone up and other dads told things too. But not as good as his, in Josef's opinion at least. I thought dad's stories were good – The Odyssey, The Faery Queen, A Midsummer Night's Dream – but it's not like they were really dad's he'd just memorized them but that's something I guess. To memorize something like that was really something.

I didn't say any stories, but I sang some songs. And I made a drum beat with my four feet and Molly sang her own songs to that and dad clapped with it and Josef danced.

An old man told us to stop so the rest of the way wasn't as much fun. And Josef got sick alot again. I told him to look at the Bridge.

One morning, we saw a coastline. It sparkled like diamonds it smoked like an engine it flowed like a mirage. It was Amerika and that's where the Bridge was going. The boat woke and watched as statues walked on the water. Lady Liberties. When we got close to shore, one walked up to our boat: A lady, crowned, ten stories tall, bronze, shining with the morning.

She had a horn in her right hand, full of grain and fruit. But in her left hand was a black sword which she held high above her head. She winked at us and gestured to an inscription engraved under her feet. Josef read it:

- Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to flee the setting Sun, the wretched refuse of your burning shore, and I will eat them for you.

- Eat them for us? Whatever does that mean? Asked Molly.

- A Bridge is a fridge for boys. I whispered to Josef, winking, chuckling.

- Dad! What do they mean? Josef asked, startled.

- Manna! Manna! Manna! Shouted the mean old man who'd made us stop singing – he was gesturing with his claw to the giant woman.

Some crows had flown out her crown, you see. They were taking the grains and fruits in their beaks and were dropping them into our boat. Dad caught a red apple from the sky and bit it and it tasted good so he said so.

- It means we can eat! He shouted, laughing.

He gave it to his son and Josef bit it its pallor stained his tongue a bright red it tasted sweeter than anything like candy like more than any candy his tongue would ever taste again. He hid it in his pocket.

- Amerika! Hosanna! New York City! Hosanna! A Jewess shouted.

When we landed on Amerika, we went to a palace called Ellix Island and there we met a man with no feet. I can explain that: A quirk of the Amerikan aristocracy, it was assumed that a man had only a certain number of steps he could take before death came to

take. And so, in an effort to delay the inevitable, some had simply removed their feet, plopped into wheelchairs, and trusted in the faith of sitting.

Of course, this only made them fatter, their ends sooner, or wider, I should say, but their belief was so earnest that the ballooning of fact meant little to minds so high in the sky, so full of hot air.

Anyways, the footless man, very old and very wide indeed, sat in his wheelchair powered with steam. He ratcheted himself, like an elevator, high up into the air and we gathered round him – like water round a tower – as he shouted down to us.

- Hern! Hern! Listen! He shouted.

Well of course we already were, what else would you do, seeing such a swollen, puffed thing careening over your head. His ears were like long wax drooping onto his shoulders. And the bags of his eyes were like greedy purses. His ankles were wrapped like dumplings he wiggled these stumps at us winking like he was bragging.

Josef couldn't help but think of his own feet, which were mush-toed and swollen. Maybe he'd live long too, I thought. If all that blab about sitting was really true.

- Follow the lights of the hallways! Said the fatty. Nokhfolgn! As each passes a doorway, enter the first open door that they see! Tir! Obey the instructions that they hear! Folgn! Do they understand!?

Yes of course we did. We all shuffled forward, around the footless man on his little tower. I looked up and I saw that he had an elf on his shoulder, garbed in green. I'm an elf too actually. We're very important, us elves. Sure, maybe we seem just assistants. But we're not just that (nor hardly just!).

Really, the least we do is assist. For Josef and his family, I was to teach them all about how to be an Amerikan and what that means. But since I was just a briefcase then, I just followed them into an open room: It was empty except for the flag at the back.

A little chair came down from the ceiling and there was a little blue elf in it. He told us to take off our clothes for the medical inspection. Well, not to me or the pink bag.

Raphael was angry about it but he hadn't much choice. And Molly mother had Josef close his eyes after he took off his clothes. Doctors he didn't see came in doing something doctoring, muttering and scratching illegible notes onto pads, and asking questions about measles and mumps and any odd bumps – if they were churchgoers, if they'd ever read 'Marks', if they were good honest Kristian loyal folks.

About all the spellings with a 'K', pay that no mind it's not significant I assure you.

A voice told Raphael he couldn't be a teacher. But he could be a lamplighter. Which is like what it sounds like. But it's something, I guess. Molly was told she could be a mom, but I'm already a mom, she'd said. But they'd said she had to be more of a mom and all the time and that's all and that's it and that was that.

And then a big water came in and rushed us all through a traintube. And we came up, sputtering, coughing, awaking outside a halfway house in New York City, Amerika.

And then I was an elf. And that was more like the real me: Ali the elf.

I was about a foot tall. With little discernable feature but a dashing handsome handful of a face. Often, I spun my yarmulke and grinned and winked.

- You're Amerikans now. I told them.

And I was so happy to say that.

Charles Ellix – An Amerikan World’s Fair

*This Fragment of Charles Ellix’ Memoirs*

*Were read aloud at Josef Straz’ Trial,*

*Were instrumental to Josef Straz’ sentencing.*

Josef Straz has stolen my Bridge! My Golden Gate Bridge! This be proof of my argument, authorship, ownership. I’ll tell all. I’ll leave nothing out. Here’s how it all happened.

I first met Josef Straz at the Amerikan World’s Fair in San Francisco.

My Bridge stolen from me!

My name is Charles Ellix. I was young and Amerika was young. Amerika had risen from the sea and quickly, with importation from England, had covered its continent in the clog of cars, press of concrete, company, factory, and the condominium. The World’s Fair celebrated their victory over Nature and the Savage and the Other.

Josef Straz is not capable of designing or building the Golden Gate Bridge.

In youth I demanded of Nature and Person she stoop or strut to my sentiments. The willow would weep for that I’d weep; the lark ascend to my joys; sister obey in any play or game.

I succeeded in life. I suffered in life.

I’ve undertaken an extensive analysis of the red Towers of the Bridge – they will topple – I’m certain of it – Let these writings reach Nussy!

The World's Fair imagined an Amerikan life we would like to imagine and to live. I'd insisted my sister and mother attend with me. Before the Fair, I'd been accepted into many prestigious Univercities, and had my prick (*'pick'*) of them – I would be an Engineer.

When I was born, the sun was still rising and setting in the East. The West was cold. I was born in Oakland, California. My father died when I was seven, lost at sea, and my mother, my little sister, were my whole family. I was intelligent from a young age. And I was lonely for that.

I've never written a memoir before.

The morning was very cold, and we'd bundled up in coats. The Fair started at the Tower of Jewels, the glittering spoke round which the wheel of the Fair turned its junk its lights its stuffed promenades, techno shows, bazars, bawdy displays.

A telegraph wire went all the way from New York City to the Tower, and a telegram from President Woody Wilson started everything up with a hum, like a weak bee, pulsing, and waters filled a wide, shallow pool surrounding the Tower.

- President Woody Wilson sends water! Our Amerika's Fair begins!

We went through a tunnel, muraled with, 'The Departure', which showed the entire Continent of England following the sun in happy crossing over the George Washington Bridge, marvel of all Engineering, until my own Golden Gate. It ensued, in bold signification, the *end* of the one country, the dominance of its other.

Imagine my dishonor to be stripped of my credit – I bridged the Gate!

There was much to see at the Amerikan World's Fair: Uproar and rabblement and exhibition of automobiles and automatons and automations of motions useful and useless.

The Atom Bomb. A diorama of an oriental city and a countdown by a woman. We saw from the sky an Ali elf upon a bomb striking the ground an explosion turned the vast Orient to gentle ash, gently smoking.

*Amerika Tomorrow* was a city in miniature. Skyscrapers and raised highways and flying cars. We walked through the city like giants my face reflected in tall steel and glass. My sister stepped on one of the cars. She picked it up, like a tortoise shell, and an elf was in it, crushed. She cried so we left. The car was replaced before the next family came through.

Ads blared through the bazar:

- Isn't life like a dream? Don't we like to dream, on a dais, on a stream? Slip a barbiturate, slip down on a deserved drowse, a tranquil dreamless drowse...

- Tires spin on Red's supreme rims!

- Aren't crowns nice? On all 'eds a crown, make your own model-T, come on down.

There was a large baseball field and we had lunch in the stands and watched as aeroplanes looped the clouds and landed on grassy fields at the end of the inning. Fog came in from the sea. We were just by the Bay. It was hard to see.

We found a red wall of incubators, like a thousand red eyes, in each a little infant. Doctors ran round peering into each pod, carrying ladders, clutching notes. My mother tried to inquire of them, but they waved her away.

- Nussy, Nussy, lay in her loch. Morton's cribs lounge stork's stock. Nussy, Nussy, sea's her bed, Morton's cribs perfect baby's head. Said the shining red wall, the red eyes.

We passed into a tunnel, in each window was a little place and one said 'China', and it was a Chinese fishing village on the banks of a mechanical lake. Yellow men and women

were lying on the ground (*we'd terminate his terminology!*). Ali elves in blue wandered the village, spreading gassy opium up noses, in eyes.

One window displayed Brown children (!) pulling plows into a panorama of a Punjaby field. A mechanical was in the center of the field, a mouth at bottom. They would take corn and throw it into the mouth.

- I O W A. Said the machine, swallowing.

The tunnel seemed endless. Our feet were tired. There was a man in black who was running up and down the tunnel, stopping at each window, and laughing madly, trying to take my hand to run with him. I didn't like him.

Finally, we found an exit: A harbor, blue lights strung up in air. All was blue and calm and there were mothers with children and childish music. From the pools leapt fish and dolphins and seals. My sister and mother were very pleased. I was bored so I left them, going into a gate that said, 'Venus', where I saw some men were going.

With the men into a room, all dark. Red lights, the walls vanished, there was a stage and on the stage were statues of naked Venus. My heart raced. Arabian music. Shining strangely, the statues shed their marble like soap under shower and the women were statues made women. Women made statues.

They danced. The men hollered and whistled and banged on the glass. I flushed and left the room. I didn't tell my mother what I saw there.

Joining my family, we walked along the water and there were less people and I felt better. We stopped at a bench and watched the water. I'll describe my sister and my mother

briefly. My sister, Beth, looked a lot like me. She was tall for her age and very pale and had a strong jaw and big ears. And she had little eyes of grey blue and brown hair.

My mother's name was Betty and she looked similar. But she had blonde hair. She was often sad. Her voice was melodic, pretty, and sparsely spoken. She supported me in all things. She was important to me. None other could love me as well as she.

We talked memories and an old family dog. And dad. And I looked at the endless, infinite sea spread out before me, and I wondered if a new country, after-America, would ever rise from it and who would Bridge us there. And I thought then that I might be the one to Bridge us there.

A thicker fog rolled in from the ocean. And plunged the view.

A path led us to a large pier wading over the water. A gull on a buoy watched us – silhouetted. Then, through the fog, under lit streetlamps on the dock, I saw what seemed the severed arm of a Giant, some two hundred feet long, lying limp on the pier, a velvet carriage in its hand.

- What is it, Charlie? Beth gasped.

- Oh dear, it's another incubator. Said my mother.

- An incubator? Mama! How could it be an incubator. Beth answered.

- My dear you really must learn to recognize an ironic statement. She riposted.

- What is it, *Charlie*? Beth asked again.

And all this time I had been looking at this magnificent thing, slowly piecing and drawing it together in my mind, its forces – one this way, one that way – I intuited these together – like a body from parts – a symphony from instruments.

- Charlie? They asked me.

- It's a type of bascule. A drawbridge. But only half of one, and it's been placed upon a rotating disk. It is like a playful Giant's arm then - that carriage is the car it holds in its hand which, like a child, would lift soaring into sky and turn through air. Look, the arm's sleeved in red, white, and blue lights. (*looking inside*) The carriage's velvet seated, martini glasses luxuriate and chill in holders. The view when lifted thereto must be a most magnificent spectacle.

- That is exactly right! Boomed a deep, Amerikan, masculine voice behind us.

He came through the fog. A man cloaked in black, in a black hat, a black scarf. It was Josef Straz.

My first impression was, he lied often. And he lied well. And he was very short for his deep voice, only a little over five feet tall. He was a Jew. He had black, curly hair. He had a long nose (!). He was thin. And his eyes, his eyes were dark and warm like there were terrible fires under the irises he could not stamp, like a hunger extended all around him he could not stop.

He seemed to have two heads! But the other I saw was an Ali elf, leaned upon his shoulder, smiling down at us. So, we knew he was an immigrant. Elves go to immigrants.

- Oh, hello there. He must be here to *lend a hand*. Mother quipped.

- Oh dear. Beth groaned.

- She's not far from the truth, I suspect. Said I quietly.

- Who are you, sir? Asked my mother.

Josef Straz came up to us, wreathed in the light of lanterns and swirling fog. He looked magnificent. He was even shorter than my mother. The Ali elf scampered down from his shoulder, shouldered through us, and climbed up onto the Giant's arm.

- Mam, it was I who built it. My name is Josef Straz. Few have come all this way to see it. I must admit, humbly, that I followed you three here; I want to show you how my hand works.

- Well, we might shake it first, sir. Said my mother, always on her toes.

He laughed at that. He had a beautiful, deep, reverberating laugh. He laughed like he lied. We shook hands his was small but a firm grip like he wanted to show me his firmness he looked young but I was younger.

- Charles. Said I.

- Charlie. Said he.

Oh I winced but I respected his gumption. Never called me Charles. Never ever.

- Your hand there, it's not violent, is it? My mother asked him. Oh dear we've seen such strange things here, one cannot know what to expect and, well really, not all of it has been very appropriate for children you know.

- A spectacle which requires violence to arrest the attention is often unworthy of it, mam. Said he, his eyes twinkling. I'm interested in a more subtle aesthetic: One content to please only with its powers of elevation and rotation. The view thereby does the arrest.

- Do not seem alarmed! Nuncle Sam's arm does no harm! Nuncle Sam's arm's a charm! We mean to appease, Amerikainers be pleased! Sang the Ali elf.

- This is my assistant, Ali. Said Straz. Pay him no mind.

- Unless you mind to pay me. It shouted, grinned, and scampered up the arm.

Mr. Straz approached his machine. He walked with a limp, what had become of his feet? He turned a silver key in a panel. The carriage in his hand warmed with light and gentle music played. My mother and sister went in. I stayed out.

- I want to see it work. Said I.

- (*quoting Shakespeare*) ‘The heavens themselves, the planets, and this center, observe degree, priority, and place. Insisture, course, proportion, season, form, office, and custom, in all line of order.’

He put on a metal glove like the carapace of a hand. As he raised it, the Giant’s arm raised – slowly, up, up – two hundred feet into the evening air glowing orange by the distant, eastern sun setting into Atlantic.

- ‘And therefore is the glorious planet Sol in noble eminence enthron’d and spher’d amidst the other.’ Straz boomed loud. ‘Whose medicinal eye corrects the ill aspects of planets evil, and posts, like the commandment of a king, sans check, to good and bad.’ I’ll raise this Amerikan arm, and with, these Amerikan eyes, to see high their setting sun and wide landscape – this the boom and boon of the Giant’s regard.

The gleam in those dark eyes was like the twinkle of a seller’s wares of tin, called gold, as light slants into his wary bazar. He lied at every other word. He waved his hand as though to fan that hot, deceptive air upon me – and if I was an anti-Semite (*is he?*) – I’d call it Jewish hypnotism (*well*). Straz was an Amerikan snake oiler.

- You’re quoting Shakespeare to mix your own poeticks. Ulysses spoke best when it was only him: ‘Take but degree away, untune that string, and, hark, what discord follows!’

He laughed deeply at my challenge, and his dark eyes smoldered. I'd impressed him. I could hear my mother and sister, lifted high in his hand, in a gentle orbit of him, laughing through fog and mist and setting sunshine dancing in mist and fog and air.

I was impressed too.

- Who are you really, Mr. Straz? I asked.

- Tell me how my hand works, Charlie. He answered.

- Your Ali elf, I suspect, somewhere along the arm is hid. And hidden manipulates a concrete counterweight attached by trunnions to a swing-bridged form mounted 'pon that turntable...

- Yes... Go on. Said he, excited.

- And this is rolled on wheels, imitates the omni-movements of an arm, x, y, z axes.

How long is the turning track?

- How long is the turning track?

- twenty-five-foot radius?

- Thirty and a half feet radius. But who moves the Giant's arm? Where the brain?

- The Giant arm's brain is yours but is perhaps not a giant one.

- Hahaha! Clever, but go on. Elaborate. Let's see if you're more than a wit.

- That glove you wear, like your booming, quoting words, is just for show. An illusion, a performance. The Giant's arm raises and turns on a set path, balanced by water ballast, raised, lowered, by electric motor which, like your elf, like you, you've hidden.

He didn't say anything, so I went on.

- You're imitating a controller, an Agamemnon. You're like the Ulysses you quote in this regard: Ulysses, while still clever enough to dream up Troy their horse, cannot trot to them, but *is pushed* by some greater, Agamemnon power...

He still didn't say anything. His hand went higher up into fog. I could hear my sister laughing. I couldn't see her. He went to the railing and watched the sun setting.

- Have I offended you, sir? asked I.

- You are very clever, Charlie. You will be an Engineer then? You sound like one.

- Yes. I want to design the next Bridge.

- Which one?

- The one that takes to an after-America. That Bridge'll begin on this shore.

- Then we are of an accord. We've come into the world like brother and brother.

That is also my wish, Charlie. To build a memorable Bridge of Amerikan means. Yet this to surpass Amerika... Immemorial its span be heard forever, beyond its country, its bold leap be without equal or precedent, its fame without fault, its Golden Gate a continuity without counterpart. You'll help me bridge it won't you, Charlie?

He'd had me already hooked on his lines. Remembering it distinctly, perhaps I wanted what he was, what he seemed to be, what I believed he was. Or we were brothers. And we needed to build something between us.

I nodded. And he simply smiled and turned his silver key and lowered my mother my sister back down to me in his Giant's hand. As he did, he winked and lowered his gloved hand too, as though he could not end his strut and acting even though I knew better.

I would not see Josef Straz again for a long way.