

CHAPTER TWO

**Four Years Later
January
1913
Brest-Litovsk, Russia**

Kazimiera had spent the morning in prayer at the Troyetskiy Catholic Church, an old wooden structure common in the western part of Russia. She was happy in Brest where she had grown up and where the people were simple, hardworking and friendly. It was a pretty town with tree-lined streets and wood framed houses. After the fortress was built in 1836 to protect the western boarder of Russia, Brest was transferred from the beautiful banks of the Bug to the Muchavets River.

With the roads and railway assessing large cities like Warsaw and Minsk, Kazimiera and Tomasz often enjoyed the social and cultural exchange of city life, but as time passed they began to avoid the parlors of the politically minded where talk of war dominated conversations. An intellectual change was also gaining recognition throughout Europe that was disturbing to those with a strong catholic faith. It emerged from the legacy left by the controversial writings on evolution by British naturalist Charles Darwin and the application of his theory to people in society by philosopher Herbert Spencer. A debased form of their genius created a harsh and assertive nationalism and an acceptance of being racially superior to other European societies. It was now appropriate to mock and demonize foreigners. After all the twin Darwinian

notions of “the struggle for existence” and the “struggle of the fittest” was an example of ultimate strength.

Tomasz and Kasimiera kept silent as they saw their world changing. They chose the safety of separation from those too outspoken. Tomasz focused on the purchase, restoration, and processing of a one hundred year old brewery in the middle of Brest-Litovsk, while Kazimiera continued to paint and write poetry for her own entertainment and for a few close friends. They were happy until one afternoon while visiting the family estate in Dworzec, Kazimiera overheard her father-in-law speak her name. Curious, she stood outside the library and peered through the crack of the open door, feeling a tinge of guilt for eavesdropping.

“What is wrong with her?” complained Romuald. “She needs to see a specialist. Four years of a childless marriage is reason enough to be rid of her.”

Tomasz poured himself a shot of vodka. “And go against my Catholic upbringing. I think the church would not approve your advice.”

“Don’t be smug with me. What good is having all we’ve worked for if we don’t have the next generation to carry on our name?”

“I have all that I need and want. Besides, did you ever think that our childless marriage might be the fault of your own flesh and blood? I love Kazimiera. She is my life so don’t you ever speak unkindly of her again. Her spirit and dignity have elevated this family.”

Kazimiera never heard Romuald’s reply. She hurried to the peacefulness of her mother-in-law’s rose garden where she could think and be alone. Before her was the old

oak tree that her husband had climbed as a boy. She leaned against it and her heart filled with love for Tomasz. If only she could give him a child.

Outside the church, Kazimiera climbed into her carriage. The winter morning had been clear except for a bitter and persistent wind. Quickly she covered her long skirt with a wool blanket and the shoulders of her coat with a shawl. The anxious feeling she had risen with became more urgent as Mitzi, her chestnut mare, headed down the country road beyond the town. Today, she had an appointment with Lutisha, a midwife that had given her a thread of hope that she could possibly bear children. Lutisha was mostly a self-educated woman who had studied with some of the local doctors. She combined the logic of medicine with the healing methods of centuries past. Some said she had a second sight, sensitive to psychic forces or spiritual influences. But it was her faith and trust in God that had drawn Kazimiera to Lutisha and their second meeting.

Kazimiera stopped the carriage in front of a small wooden house. Off to the north storm clouds gathered. She prayed it wouldn't snow before she returned home. Tying her mare to the hitching post she removed her gloves and pulled some sugar cubes from her coat pocket. "There you go Mitzi. Be a good girl now. I'll be back shortly." Mitzi nuzzled her pocket for more sugar. "Sorry. You'll have to wait until we get home. Tomasz will be back tomorrow and all will be well." Kazimiera kissed the white star on Mitzi's forehead. "Lutisha's going to help me I just know it."

Beneath a blanket, Kazimiera lay naked on Lutisha's bed. Every inch of her body had been probed and examined; yet she didn't feel invaded or uncomfortable. Intense heat radiated from smooth and gentle hands that followed the curvature of her stomach. Lutisha mumbled what sounded like a prayer, then Kazimiera found the older woman's hand on her forehead and cheek, her voice saying, "Get dressed, my dear, and join me by the fire."

Kazimiera dressed quickly. It was cold in the sparsely furnished bedroom. Anxiously, she entered the kitchen and small living area where books were stacked on shelves and a roaring fire made the room cozy. Lutisha placed a plate of sour rye black bread with red currant jam and butter on the table. "Sit," she said to Kazimiera, indicating the chair closest to the fire. "I need to finish the tea, then we'll talk."

Suddenly, Kazimiera felt hungry, and the simple meal of bread and jam looked delicious. She was curious why Lutisha did not use the samovar to prepare the tea, but she kept silent. On the counter was a row of beautifully hand painted tin boxes rich in color and detail. Each one depicted a wild creature from the region. Kazimiera leaned forward anxious to observe every detail of what Lutisha was doing. She watched her selectively choose four containers then take several pinches of what appeared to be tea leaves and a gray powder. She moved quickly and with purpose and before Kazimiera knew it a simple white tea cup was placed before her. She stared at the tea leaves floating about puzzled why they had not been strained.

Lutisha smiled at her expression. "Don't drink it just yet," she warned. "It needs to settle." Lutisha poured the rest of the tea into a large container and sealed it tightly.

“You will take this with you when you leave. You can drink it cold or hot, it doesn’t matter. Each morning and evening, one cup until it’s gone.”

Kazimiera frowned, her voice skeptical. “What’s in it?”

Lutisha’s smile reached her eyes. “Do you really wish to know?”

“Yes.”

Lutisha sat next to Kazimiera and moved the plate of bread and jam closer to her.

“For now eat. Once the tea leaves have settled to the bottom you will drink it as it is. The taste will be bitter.”

“May I add some jam or milk?”

“No. It is necessary for you to taste its strength. Your body is fertile Kazimiera, it is your mind that is not.”

Kazimiera sat still as death. She took a deep breath and tried to swallow.

Lutisha reached out and patted Kazimiera’s hand. “There is nothing wrong with your body except for irregular periods that we can fix. You were built for child bearing.”

Kazimiera released her breath unaware she had been holding it. “Then why did the doctor say what he did?”

“You were badly injured after the riding accident, but you healed better than I’m sure anyone expected. Eat. Your nervous stomach will make you sick if you don’t.”

Kazimiera did as she was instructed. After the first bite of warm bread and jam she was hungry again. Her heart was pounding so hard she feared becoming ill.

“You need to listen to me Kazimiera and try to understand what I’m about to tell you. Your accident and what you were told created a tremendous fear in you. We all suffer this emotion in one way or another. If you can remember that fear is the absence

of love, you won't resist it. By avoiding fear it gains control and eventually robs us of our courage and freedom to seek the truth."

"I'm generally not a fearful person, but you're right. I accepted what I believed was the truth. I should have questioned."

"There are many types of fear Kazimiera. You have been so afraid of not conceiving that you've allowed your mind to control your conception."

"My mind can do that?"

"Yes." Lutisha sat back in her chair. "What do you fear the most?"

Kazimiera was quick to answer. "Disappointing Tomasz. I would like to give him what he thinks I can't . . . a child."

"I thought it made no difference to your husband."

"All men want sons. He would be a wonderful father. I know in his heart it would make him happy."

"And would it make your father-in-law more agreeable?"

"Yes." Kazimiera lowered her eyes. "He can be such a tyrant, yet we all keep forgiving him. I've tried to be a good daughter-in-law, and I know in his unique way he cares about me. It's just that his words that day cut deeply. I can't get them out of my mind. Tomasz took the blame and because of it I am here with you."

"How lucky you are to have someone who loves you so much . . . but what does Kazimiera want. All your reasons for having a child are about everyone else. The only person who can make this happen is *you* and if it is what *you* truly desire."

Kazimiera's eyes filled with tears. "Next to Tomasz I can think of no greater joy than to hold my baby in my arms."

Lutisha remained silent for a moment. She pulled her long gray braid from her back, rested it over her left shoulder and then in the next second, like a nervous habit, switched its side. She was thin and sinewy and her sharp brown eyes slowly narrowed as she formed a plan. “Very well, then. First we need to regulate your periods then reset your mind into believing you’re capable of becoming pregnant. I wish I knew more about the interrelationship of the psyche and the soma. The mind and body are so complex.”

Kazimiera was intrigued. “How can we do this?”

“When you finish the tea I am sending home with you, I will give you something more potent. It will further help to regulate your periods. Now the next three or four things I’m about to tell you will seem strange to an educated woman, but these methods have been around for centuries. Faith, healing, or magic can create surprising results; they all rely on believing and visualizing what it is you want. On the day of the next full moon you will take a ruby, place it in a glass, and cover it with spring water. Leave it overnight exposed to the moonbeams. In the morning visualize a healthy baby growing in your womb, then drink the water.”

Kazimiera’s eyes were wide with wonder. This was crazy. It made no sense, yet already it consumed her thoughts and she felt the excitement of hope.

“Next I want you to find a fruit or nut bearing tree.”

“There are several apple trees by the house.”

“Perfect. Trees are associated with fertility. This was a favorite of my grandmother’s. She claimed it gave her my mother on the month she wished to be pregnant.”

Kazimiera's face was alight with laughter. "So you wouldn't have been born without this ritual?"

Lutisha smiled, but the seriousness in which she spoke did not change. "I question everything, as you should, but I never doubt another's faith or a belief that does no harm."

"Please, go on," encouraged Kazimiera, hoping she hadn't offended the older woman.

"The magic is in the transferring of the tree's fertility to you. The more you concentrate on these acts of being fertile, the more you will control your mind. It will battle you, but you must not listen to its negative side. You are in control of your thoughts and that is the miracle of it."

Kazimiera nodded finding the wisdom in what Lutisha was saying.

"Bury a terracotta pot filled with menstrual blood at the foot of the tree. Tell the tree why you admire it and that you wish its fertility to be transferred to you. Say this in your own words, but most important believe it. And lastly, burn red candles before, during, and after sex to enhance the chances of conception. These are methods from the past that women believed in. You need something tangible, my dear, to change your thinking. The visual and physical acts will help break down your old belief system and they will give you the fortitude and commitment to change." Lutisha put Katherine's tea cup in front of her. "Now drink the tea and leave just enough liquid for the leaves to swirl in the cup."

Kazimiera drank, finding little pleasure in the bitter taste. When she set it down, she asked. "You never said what was in it."

“Basil to release a suppressed period, a combination of other herbs and teas and a pinch of dirt from my grandmother’s grave. She was a fertile woman when she lived.”

Kazimiera was speechless then burst into laughter. “Oh my God, I drank that.”

After much laughter, Lutisha leaned forward and smiled at Kazimiera. “Has this been too much for you?”

“A little disconcerting . . . but no.”

“I was raised by my mother and grandmother. They were both midwives. They also valued the healing of herbs and the power of the tea leaves to see into the future. I guess you can say I have been blessed with their gifts. You must always listen to your heart Kazimiera. It’s where God speaks to you. If your heart tells you not to trust something or someone, listen to it for its God’s voice that you’re hearing. Would you like me to read your tea leaves?”

“Yes. I would like that.”

“Then turn your cup three times in a counterclockwise direction, that’s it, now carefully turn it upside down on its saucer to drain. Good.”

Kazimiera’s face became serious. “The day I met you at the church I was praying to the Virgin Mary for help and then you were there, sitting next to me. I have never believed in coincidence and now I’m not sure. I am a very logical person and logic doesn’t go with spells and magic. Yet life is a mystery that can’t always be explained. I’ll put my faith in God and follow the steps you ask of me. My heart says to trust you, so I do.” Kazimiera slid her upside down teacup and saucer toward Lutisha. “Shall we see what the leaves have to say?”

Lutisha nodded. She lifted up the teacup and peered into it. Clusters of leaves took shape. She moved the cup around checking out different angles. Three childlike shapes appeared, and a possibility of a fourth. Lutisha's eyes squinted to get a different perspective. The fourth figure was rigid. The form of a frog next to it could mean bad to good health or good to bad health. She thought hard on this. The tea leaves on the fourth child were unclear. Moving the cup back to the first one, she saw the letter R.



Eight Years Later
1922
Brest, Poland

Kazimiera sat at the kitchen table reading the newspaper. The house was unusually quiet except for a wind that rattled the outside shutters that faced the north. Zodia, a stout woman with a large heart and the agility of someone half her size had been Kazimiera's personal maid and companion since she was a small child. Standing by the stove she busied herself preparing *Golabki*, cabbage leaves stuffed with rice and meat, Tomasz's favorite dish as well as young Romuald's.

Folding the newspaper Kazimiera leaned back in her chair, enjoying the heat from the open fire. All morning she had been chilled to the bone and the weight of worry that burdened her thoughts found no relief as the clock on the wall ticked away the hour. She blamed her anxiety on the weather and the misery of the world. She knew Tomasz would be angry with her for reading the newspaper. He didn't want her upset with the toxic political unrest that Poland continued to endure in spite of its freedom and its inability to

rebuild as rapidly as other countries. People were too quick to be optimistic when times were still unstable. She feared for her children's future and any political associations that could be misinterpreted and used against them should Poland ever again become the target of Germany or the new Russia now the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Dabrowski family like many others had been stripped of their lands and the documentation that verified their nobility. Perhaps that was what had kept them alive during the unspeakable murders of the Royal family and the brutal killings of those closely connected to them. No one predicted the monstrous cruelty of the Great War and the Russian Revolution, or the disease, famine, and the Spanish Flu that took millions of more lives. Economies were shattered, and as money lost significance a bartering system had emerged. Yet somehow Tomasz and his family had managed to secretly hold on to portions of their wealth. Not all Polish aristocracy chose to withdraw from the political and social status they believed was their birthright. While a nation starved many of them continued to live excessively.

Kazimiera rubbed her protruding stomach. She was due with her fourth child, an unexpected surprise, and one that Lutisha had been furious about the day she had discovered her pregnancy. "Didn't you follow my instructions?" she had scolded. "I warned you not to get pregnant. Your body needs time to heal and repair itself. I could strangle Tomasz with my bare hands."

"You're being too protective. My last three pregnancies went like clockwork."

"You just had Maria two months ago. How could you allow yourself to get pregnant again so soon after the other? No wonder you complain of being exhausted." Lutisha had sat on the edge of the bed and stared out the window. Her face creased with

worry. Kazimiera had taken her hand not knowing what else to do. After a moment Lutisha said, “Does Tomasz know of this child? Did you hint to him that you may be pregnant?”

Kazimiera shook her head no. “I’m sorry Lutisha.”

Lutisha squeezed her hand, her face somber. “Listen to me. You have three beautiful and healthy children. I want you to abort this child. It will be just between us. No one needs to know.”

Kazimiera’s eyes had widened. “I can’t. I can’t do that. I’ll do whatever you say, just not that.”

Lutisha sighed heavily. “I’m worried about you. Your body’s not ready for another baby.”

“God wouldn’t give me something I couldn’t handle.”

“God didn’t give it to you. Tomasz did and you were a willing partner.”

“I’ll do whatever you say. I promise. Don’t be angry with me . . . that I couldn’t bare.”

“You hate staying in bed and that’s exactly what you’re going to have to do.”

As the months passed Zodia and Lutisha became a formidable pair. Kazimiera’s rest, diet, and exercise were carefully watched. She did what she was told, but she never regained her full strength and of late her appetite was a forced effort even when Zodia placed her favorite foods in front of her.

Kazimiera slowly rose from the cushioned chair by the open fire. She could feel her stomach tightening. Putting her hands under the weight of the baby she walked

toward Zodia who was stirring a spicy tomato sauce. "I'll be in my room. Did Romuald finish his studies with Isabella?"

"Yes. She said his Russian is perfect and his German is getting better. I sent her home early with the others. There's a heavy snow storm expected."

"Where are the children now?"

"In the study." Zodia added a pinch of salt to the tomato sauce. "I need Romuald to taste this. He has such a gift for knowing exactly what is needed."

Kazimiera smiled. "Are you telling me my son should become a cook instead of a priest?"

"Why not both. When he's a priest he'll give the blessing and when he cooks he'll be a blessing."

Kazimiera laughed with Zodia. "I like that combination."

"Most women would."

"When Lutisha arrives send her to me. She said she'd stop by this afternoon."

"I hope she gets here before the storm breaks. She's the only one who can get you to eat."

"That's because she threatens me." Kazimiera kissed Zodia's cheek. "Besides, you love me too much to be overbearing."

Zodia wiped her hands on her apron and hugged Kazimiera gently. She was worried about the paleness of her skin. With the other three pregnancies she had been full of energy and laughter like a moment ago. "Oh child, you're so precious to us all. You're the heart of this family. You keep us all going. I'm sure Lutisha will stay for dinner and the night. Maybe she can bring some color back into those cheeks." Zodia

gently pinched them, like she used to do when Kazimiera was a child. She had watched her blossom from a gangly girl to a sensual woman. As Kazimiera grew up her parents had little time for their daughter. Their lives were preoccupied with travel and climbing the social ladder. When they died in a carriage accident, Kazimiera was in her twenties, accustomed to their absence and a life as a single, independent woman. Her marriage to Tomasz had been an answer to Zodia's prayers and the children were a miracle from God.

Kazimiera walked slowly toward the study. She could hear the voices of her children. Romuald was about to tell a story. He was such a creative child, both sensitive and imaginative. Like his father he was athletic and loved to hunt, fish, and ride. He also had Tomasz's gift of reading people and knowing instinctively what they needed or what they were after. He was only eight, but his intelligence was that of an older child.

Kazimiera stopped before entering the study. She wanted to linger unnoticed for another minute. Resting against the side of the door she realized that God had given her everything she had ever wanted. She smiled as her eyes touched each child with motherly pride. Four-year old Lonik was standing with his hands on his hips staring at the Dabrowski coat-of-arms above the fireplace. He was her little daredevil, fearless when he should use caution. The horseshoe with three elevated crosses held his attention. Romuald was seated on the sofa with Maria content on his lap. To the left of him was a map. He was about to tell his father's favorite story of the first Dabrowski. Last evening he had insisted Tomasz repeat it in detail. It was both comical and touching how he had memorized his father's words.

“The first ancestor of the Dabrowski clan was a foreign knight. He was big, strong, brave, and very handsome. When the Christian armies made an expedition to Jerusalem, he decided to go.”

“Why?” asked Lonik. *Why* being his favorite word.

“It was dangerous. Brave knights go where there is danger.”

“Why?”

“They just do. Come here and I’ll show you where Jerusalem is.”

Lonik sat on his knees in front of the sofa as Romuald’s finger trailed across the Mediterranean Sea to the Holy Land. Maria tried to grab the map, but Romuald quickly caught her hand. “This happened in 1096.” Then he thought for a moment, calculating the numbers in his head. “That was 826 years ago.”

“Is that very long?” asked Lonik as he turned around and stretched his feet in front of him. His eyes back on the coat-of-arms above the fireplace mantel.

“Yes. They crossed the sea to recover Jerusalem and with it the grave of Christ.”

Lonik made a face. “Why would they do that?”

“Because someone of great importance told them to. The knight was so brave that the Kingship of Jerusalem honored him for his courage. Romuald kissed Maria’s chubby fingers and pointed them toward the Dabrowski coat-of-arms. She gurgled with pleasure. “Papa says it is supposed to represent Calvary, the hill of Our Lord’s death with three crosses.”

“Lonik didn’t understand most of what Romuald had just said, but he liked the part about the knight and digging up a grave. “Then what happened?” he asked.

“Well, after several years in Europe the knight decided to return to Palestine. On his way to Jerusalem he traveled through Poland. When he rode his stallion through the lush forests and crossed our many rivers, he decided to settle down and live here.”

“Did he like to hunt and fish like Papa?”

“Yes. Then he met a Polish girl. She was in a field picking wild flowers. Papa said her hair was so long that it draped behind her like a cape. Anyway, they fell in love, married, and had lots of children.”

“How many?”

Romuald frowned not expecting that question. “I think a dozen or more, but I’ll ask Papa.” Maria began to squirm in Romuald’s arms. He bounced her on his knee as he looked up at the coat-of-arms. “Some day when I’m a priest I’ll travel to Jerusalem and make Papa proud. I’ll find a beautiful woman like mama, and marry her.

“Will you come back to Poland?”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t thought about that yet.”

Lonik’s lips began to pout. “You have to come back. I won’t let you go.”

“Don’t be upset, Lonik. If I go to Jerusalem I’ll come home.”

Kazimiera spoke up. “Romuald dear, take Maria and Lonik to Zodia in the kitchen, then come and sit with me for a while. Oh, and Zodia needs you to taste her sauce. It probably needs sugar.”

“Shall I bring something for me to read? Papa thought I’d like *Konrad Wallenrod*?”

Kazimiera smiled. “Isn’t that the tale about a Lithuanian child who is captured by the Teutonic Knights?”

“Yes. It’s historical and when the boy grows up he collaborates with the enemy, but not in the way you think. He remains a true patriot.”

“That sounds exciting.”

“Yes,” piped in Lonik. “Then Romuald can tell me the story.”

“An excellent plan. Now give me a hug Lonik and go and help Zodia in the kitchen.”

Lonik looked up at his mother with an ugly face. “Why?”

Kazimiera tried not to laugh. “Because you’re a good boy and your little sister who loves you will need looking after.”

Kazimiera lay on the four poster bed with pillows stacked high against her head. She was very uncomfortable. The baby wasn’t due for another three weeks. Feeling overly tired she prayed Tomasz would leave the brewery early and return home. She could rest when in his arms. He gave her strength.

Romuald knocked on her door then opened it. “Are you ready for me?”

“Yes, come in.”

Romuald dragged a French brocade arm chair to the side of the bed and sat down. In his hands were two books of Mickiewicz’s poems. The one he opened first was her favorite . . . *Ballads and Romances*. Kazimiera was touched by his thoughtfulness.

Romuald smiled up at his mother. He loved these moments with her. When they were alone, he could tell her anything. Unlike Papa, she would listen and not scold him when he was wrong or if he said something foolish. She made him feel good about

himself, showing interest in whatever he said or did. She understood that when harshly scolded he would shut down and become quietly defiant.

Reaching under the sheet, Kazimiera said. "I have something for you."

Romuald moved to the edge of the chair and leaned forward, but the cherry wood framed bed was too high. He stood up and rested his elbows on the mattress. "What is it, Mama?"

Kazimiera removed a bejeweled statue of a Lithuanian horseman saddled to a spirited stallion. The fiery temperament of both rider and horse were expressed through the pounding hoofs of the stallion in a raised position on its hind legs. She handed it to Romuald. His green eyes so like his father's opened wide with astonishment. He was never allowed to touch the statue without his mother present and now she was giving it to him. Red rubies decorated the saddle and blue sapphires became the horse's eyes. It was a gift to his mother from her grandfather. He had been a great horseman and this was her treasure. "Why, Mama?" was all he could say as he held the statue with the greatest of care.

"You have the courage and heart of my grandpa and I want to give it to you. I don't know why, I just do." Lovingly she touched the statue. "When I was a young girl he was the one who taught me how to ride and to play cards."

Romuald was speechless then he smiled at her with adoring eyes. "I love you, Mama." Carefully he set the statue on the end table beside the bed, then leaned forward and kissed her cheek.

Kazimiera held his head next to hers. "You were my first miracle. Your father and I love you so much. You have brought your Papa such peace and joy. Before you

were born your Grandpa Dabrowski was not always easy to live with. Thank God he has mellowed.” Suddenly Kazimiera cried out with pain. She placed her hands on each side of her and tried to sit up. “I’m so uncomfortable. Here, help me out of bed. I need to walk.”

Kazimiera struggled to stand. As she took a step forward, something warm ran down her leg. “Oh God, I think I’m going to faint.” Quickly she sat back on the bed, but not before Romuald saw blood on the sheets.

“Lie down, Mama. Everything will be alright.” He tried not to show he was afraid. Gently he lifted her legs and covered her with a blanket.

Kazimiera closed her eyes. “You must get Lutisha. I need her now.”

Romuald started to leave, but Kazimiera grabbed his arm. “And Papa . . . Romuald get your papa.”

His heart was beating so fast he was out of breath before he could reach the bedroom door. His legs carried him to the kitchen, but he would never remember how he got there. He heard Lutisha’s voice and Lonik’s giggle. Lutisha had already arrived. Relief flooded his pounding heart. He yelled her name, but no sound came out. Every one stopped what they were doing. They were now staring at him. Finally he heard his voice. “Mama’s bleeding. She’s about to faint. I must get Papa.” He swallowed the sobs in his throat. He had to be strong. Nothing seemed real. *Oh God, don’t take Mama from us. Not Mama. Not Mama.*

Maria began to cry from her crib and Lonik who was never still, sat quietly watching Lutisha and Zodia run from the kitchen. Lutisha was shouting orders. “Get towels and ice.”

Romuald wiped the sweat from his hands onto his pants. He picked up Maria and grabbed Lonik's hand. What was he going to do with them while he went to get Papa? All the help had been dismissed. He tried to think but his brain was blank. Lonik pulled free of Romuald. "I want Mama," he cried. Maria wailed and squirmed in his arms. Romuald turned to the demanding voice of his father as he entered the kitchen.

"My God, Romuald, what is going on in here?" One look at his son's grief stricken face and Tomasz was down the hall and up the staircase, racing toward Kazimiera's bedroom with the same panic that Romuald had left it a few moments before.