

Chapter Nine

Rabbi De Sade

And it was evening and it was morning, the first week of the Big Broch.

The speed with which we went from flavor of the month to stink of the week was dizzying and frightening. When one door closes another slams in your face, Chainik kept on repeating. The light you see is not the end of the tunnel but a train racing towards you, he said. Things crashing into you from behind may be closer than they appear. All his clichés proved their worth, they were all true, and they all seemed to be happening to us at once.

Once we took a good look at RABBIwatch.org we could see how it is constructed, it's not rocket science. The brainchild and raison d'être of a woman named, appropriately, Yifat Morron, a one-woman coalition against sexual abuse in the Jewish Community, RABBIwatch.org runs mainly on *bluff*¹. The welcome or homepage of the website is impressive, its list of names on the advisory board both ample and distinguished, and the veneer of the whole endeavor overlaid with a grim and hefty earnestness. But it isn't really what it purports to be; it isn't a coalition or a crusade, it's a life; one sad woman's life. Yifat Morron, as we discovered once Reb Chainik Malkes was induced to call home, has nothing else going on but this spiel called RABBIwatch.org.

In the end it required all of us acting in concert to get Chainik to call his ex-wife. I stood behind him pressing his shoulders back down into the chair as he tried standing up. Masha/Moshe stood to his right holding the telephone in her hands, while Perle stood to his left with a no-nonsense look on her face, (which in and of itself could have earned her a place of honor on a naughty calendar anywhere in the world). Basically she declared it her intention to remain in place to bump him on the head with her frontage should he so much as attempt to rise from the chair. Pesach planted himself, with folded arms all bulging muscles and testosterone directly in front of Chainik, who took on that hunted look I remember so well from the good old days appearing before the Beis Din, in Baltimore. Pesach had lured him to his house in Brooklyn, on the pretext of acting as chef at a barbeque he was throwing to cheer us all up. Chainik arrived and found himself outnumbered and overpowered. He was left with no choice, he bit the bullet and called home, and things began to turn around for all of us.

"Turn on the speaker phone," instructed Sarah Chainik imperiously. "And make sure the whole bunch of conspirators is tuned in," she added. "This is for everyone."

Chainik conveyed her message. Everyone looked to me for assurance, but I merely nodded quickly and turned the speaker on high and sat down. Everyone followed suit.

¹ *Bluff*: The yiddish version of 'smoke and mirrors', for people who can't afford sophisticated apparatus like mirrors and have nothing left to burn. "In our construction firm we have fewer than a hundred, full-time, employees." This said by a handyman who sometimes uses his father-in-law to help him unblock toilets, total *bluff*.

“And please, make sure you have pen and paper handy, I don’t want to have to repeat myself. There’s a lot of ground to cover,” she continued briskly as soon as we were all gathered and ready.

“Let’s begin with Jacob Frank.”

“No,” I countered. “Let’s not. What has this to do with us?”

Masha/Moshe and Pesach were looking at each other questioningly. Pesach shrugged his shoulders as though to say, don’t ask me, I never heard of him. But from a cushion on the floor at his feet came the clear, modulated voice of his slave, Bassie.

“Jacob Frank 1726 to 1791, another the false messiah, similar to the Sabbateans, but who encouraged in his followers the antinomian practices of the sexual orgiasts who later became popular as the hermetic orders.”

“Antinomian practices, what are antinomian practices anyway?” asked Masha/Moshe.

“It was based upon concepts from the Zohar, well, and from the Babylonian Talmud, really,” interjected Chainik. “That there exist rules beyond those of the simple, revealed Torah, that there exists a higher law.”

“Doesn’t sound that radical to me,” complained Masha/Moshe. “I don’t see what all the fuss is about.”

“He proposed the doctrine of inverted holiness,” responded Pesach’s slave. “To bring about the messianic reality by overturning this earthly reality we inhabit. So, as sexuality has been since ancient times the key to religious holiness, Frank inverted it to attain his goal of inverting the world. Having sex with forbidden partners was just the beginning. The more proscribed the sexual union the holier the inversion. He officially ended up having sex with his daughter, that being the most forbidden union. But that’s just the official version, the actual story goes on and on. They say that he went on to have homosexual sex, then sex with dead people, and then with animals, and then with demons. Each was part of a series of steps up the ladder to a higher reality and new holiness.”

“Who’s that speaking?” came Sarah’s voice through the speaker-phone.

“It’s Pesach’s slave,” I replied. “She’s always full of surprises.”

“Well,” continued Sarah. “She’s right on the money. We need to talk of Frank a moment because Yifat Morron, who owns and runs the RABBIwatch.org website, believes she’s a childhood victim of the Frankist conspiracy to destroy the world, Judaism and everything, using rabbis who practice Frankist versions of Satanism, involving ritual, sexual abuse of children.”

“How d’you know?” asked Perle.

“I’ve spoken to her about it at length,” said Sarah.

There was silence.

“When?” croaked Chainik, joining the discussion for the first time. “When did you talk to that woman?”

“Hhhmmnn, let me see now. It was around the time of Yosi’s Barmitzvah, he’s going on sixteen now, so that would have been three years ago or thereabouts. She’d just moved to Baltimore and was accepting invitations to Shabbes dinners and such. We’ve talked more than a couple of times on the phone since then as well.”

“Why did you talk to her, what did she want?”

“I’ve been keeping fairly close watch on her, Chainik, because someone needs to. And you’ve been too busy, haven’t you? That’s if you even knew of her existence, which I’m prepared to bet a considerable sum you never did, until yesterday. Right?”

Chainik merely scratched his unshaven chin in response, sat back in his chair and left it to us, who were wide-awake, to take notes.

“Back to Yifat and Rabbi Frank,” Sarah went on. “She really believes her family are secret Frankist followers who came to the USA from Europe with rabbis who brought Frankism to these shores. Let me stress that she really, *really* believes. It’s important you not lose sight of this tenet of faith, because her life is built around it and you need to know what you’re facing before you try to climb out of the mess you’re in. Many people pooh-pooh and dismiss this detail of her worldview and thus miss the point entirely. I know, because I’ve been talking to quite a few of them. Yes, and before you ask me why I’ve been talking to people about Yifat Morron and RABBIwatch.org, let me say that I’m not going to tell you, I have my reasons, and that’s that. So don’t waste your time. Just listen because there’s a lot of material to cover.

“In the 1980s there was a wave of recovered memory scandals. Adults of all ages assisted by specially trained therapists, recovered memories of incest, of being sexually abused by their parents. Many parents ended up serving long prison sentences. Families and communities were destroyed. By the mid 1990s most of their testimony was discredited and the recovered memories phenomenon became a footnote in hysteria. But there are diehards who continue to believe. Some of them held out in organizations like Believe-the-Children, insisting that satanic ritual sex abuse flourishes ‘underground’ throughout the world in churches and synagogues. Yifat is one of the staunchest militants against lowering the flag on this battleground. She genuinely believes this stuff happened to her. In 1989 she appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show to tell the story of how her family has been secret adherents of the Frankists since the 1700s and how she was forced to sacrifice her incest-begotten babies and eat them.

“She talks of being possessed by demons; of fornicating and defecating on open Torah scrolls. It’s all pretty messy and ugly. But listen. None of that is at all important to the

rabbis and Jewish leaders who are on her board of directors and advisors. They don't care about her self-image as a Frankist victim, they see in her website a perfect way to propel their careers into Jewish superstardom. Rabbis Bloat at Yeshiva College, God Devalue-Schwartz in Chicago, Darf Schmutz of JSafe, Basil Matjes, Heshie Bittel, Reuven Bagel in Canada and all the others from the NARC who support and encourage her, they think her delusions and her obsession with Frankism is a minor, if unfortunate, detail of the platform they stand on. It's like that time, Chainik, when that sweet boy came to you wanting to be converted to Judaism, and it turned out his reason was because when Jesus does his Second Coming it's going to be the Jews who are saved first, or something like that, remember?

“So, these are the phone numbers of the people who are already working to stop Yifat in her tracks. This is not for publication, ok? These are the names of the rabbis and organizations that help her with money, advice and encouragement, I'm faxing you a list of lawyers, the one's I've talked to; their names and contact info, right now. You may need to speak to our liaison in Israel, he's coordinating data gathering there. Apparently Yifat's got the chief rabbi of Israel in her sights for the next course. But she's a messy person so she leaves a trail of dirt wherever she's been. She's on disability and receives a pension which enables her to move around without having to work, but she's voraciously greedy for money to finance her website bandwidth and mailings and telephone and rent and stuff. Not big money, she doesn't need millions or even thousands, but she needs a steady stream of hundreds, so she runs all sorts of legal scams to raise the moola. She borrows from friends in every new place she moves to until she runs out of friends. Rabbis, like those on her board of directors, channel discretionary funds to her. They write it off as a charity donation. She has a kazillion sob stories tailor made for every situation.

“She's mad and paranoid and delusional, but she's a licensed clinical counselor, and an art therapist. So, remember, she can keep her shit together and make it smell like roses, and she can think rings around you because she's cunning, pragmatic, patient and hyper-vigilant; she's practiced at what she does. This is not something she does for money or love. This is her life. And if you think we are anywhere near stopping her, you're mistaken, big time.”

Perle was taking notes furiously. Masha/Moshe and Pesach looked at me bewildered. I threw my pen down on the table and asked the obvious question.

“What's the plan, where's her weakness, what are you suggesting, Sarah?”

“Bloat. Rabbi Joseph Bloat PhD., *Mashgiach Ruchani*, director of religious guidance at Yeshiva College. She refers to him as her partner in crime; in my opinion he's the key to bringing her reign of terror to an end. He's second in command at RABBIwatch.org; he's her deputy. Bloat's told her what to expect in making Chainik the focus of her current campaign. She's been coached exhaustively, she knows what phone calls he's going to make, she has a list of Chainik's friends and resources, of all your friends and resources, for that matter, Rabbi Schreiber. She can make fairly accurate predictions about your next move, probably as good as I can, because your colleagues in the rabbinate are keeping her fed, informed and buttressed. She knows what phone calls you tried to make last night. She

may even have been there in the room when you called Shlomo Fahrter on his cell. They're thick as thieves, that pair. I only heard all about your call to him through the grapevine, but it didn't take more than twelve hours to get to me. So, just be aware that details of every public response or move you make are shared among your enemies, and just because you think a phone call to Shlomo Fahrter is private and man-to-man, it doesn't make it private. All your privacy is gone now, so adjust your thinking accordingly. The RABBIwatch movers and shakers don't expect you to go down without a fight, but they know how powerless you are against this sort of attack. Still, I think Rabbi Bloat is the key. Now, Yifat doesn't own a change of clothing; she has nothing to lose and no assets beyond her laptop computer, so she's impervious to threats or action at law. But Bloat has a reputation, he owns a house, he has a job and a reputation, he has a wife, kids and family, concentrate your efforts there."

"What do you have on him?" I asked. But Sarah would not be drawn. She gave us more names and a bigger list of people to call for information on Yifat's history and current situation. The material she'd provided was indeed thorough and as copious as she had promised.

"Oh" said Sarah. "There's one final thing I think you ought be aware of, Chainik. Chanda Jerpa called me at home and tried asking some penetrating questions about you. I couldn't figure out who she was at first. She was very polite and nice and sweet. She mentioned something about writing an article about Jewish scholars and wanting to know more about you. But I remembered her name from when you and her were dating, so I thought it sounded fishy. Do you know what she was calling for, or shouldn't I ask?"

She said goodbye and left us to our own devices.

"Now here's a strange coincidence," added Bassie, Pesach's slave. "Chanda's been pumping me ever so gently for information too. She's been writing to me in one of the online communities I belong to, called, Jews by Choice. Sort of asking me about why I wanted to be practicing Jewish and stuff like that. But also asking me about BDSM and my lifestyle, she can be pretty nosy in a subtle way. It's very good friendly and all, I mean, she's always very positive and encouraging. I wonder what she wants?"

"Sorry to have to ask this," said Masha/Moshe to me, with apologetic glances at Chainik, "but how can we trust Sarah? What do we know about her motives, how do we know this isn't all part of the whole setup?" Pesach nodded his agreement.

I looked at them before answering. Chainik caught my gaze with a cool appraising look in his eyes, as though to say, 'what could you possibly know about her thinking, she's *my* ex-wife?'

"Sarah made it clear she doesn't want to answer questions about her motives or involvement," I said evasively. "I think we should accept her help without questioning its veracity. It's my feeling she has her own valid reasons for fighting this battle, that have nothing to do with her relationship to Chainik here."

Perle's look seemed to say, "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" I shrugged and left table to get some ice-cubes and a cold drink from the fridge in the kitchen. Perle followed shortly citing the same excuse, iced tea. We shared a companionable drink in silence.

Perle looked up at me and said speculatively, "So, you think Sarah is a survivor?"

"Oh, for sure," I answered. "She knows what kind of threat Yifat represents to genuine victims. This is a holy war for her."

"I wonder if Chainik ever suspected?"

"Who can really know a woman like Sarah; she's too deep isn't she, and resourceful. Glad I'm not in her gun-sights."

"Me too," said Perle. "But you know who I'm worried for, don't you?"

"No need to scare Masha/Moshe at this point," I said. "But, yes, I think it's inevitable. We're sitting ducks for the powers of holiness now. Do you think you can do anything to protect him?"

Perle looked down into her tea, watching the liquid swirl around and the ice cubes changing shape as they melted. Holding it around with both hands, her graceful fingers twined through the handle, she seemed to be holding them in prayer. Smiling up at me she said, "You think this is all a big love affair between me and Moshe, don't you, Ooshie?"

I said nothing, just waited.

"Of course I love him. Who wouldn't? But you didn't answer my question Rabbi Schreiber, you think this is about our love?"

I shrugged, making a face that said, rather eloquently as it happens, 'it's obvious to the whole world, he's mad about you and you about him'.

"You're his rebbe," she whispered. "Do what you can to protect him from them. They'd chew him up and mulch him down if they knew he was transgendered. It breaks his heart to see you under attack and him so powerless to defend you. Don't let him do anything brave and foolish and young." She turned and left silently.

Days passed into weeks, not much changed, certainly, nothing got better. I came home one day to find Chainik and Masha/Moshe trying to make sense of the masses of material Sarah had unloaded. There were interviews with men and women who had business or social interactions with Yifat Morron in the USA and overseas. Many had horror stories of one sort or another. Some were about money. Yifat had the habit of battenning onto generous people, moving into their homes on one pretext or another, running up huge telephone or credit card bills in their names, or borrowing large sums of money from their friends.

There were affidavits of people from whom she had attempted to extort favors with menaces. Rabbis in Synagogues who'd been tricked into emptying their discretionary funds to help her RABBIwatch.org website stay afloat only to watch her spend the cash on newspaper and magazine campaigns in communities elsewhere in America, to prevent a rabbi of whom she disapproved from being hired. Transcripts of conversations with those she had chased and heckled at job interviews and job tryouts. Copies of statements and invoices from companies marketing the kind of lightweight placards, printed with the slogans, 'Clean Out The Rabbinate' and 'Listen To The Victims' displayed so prominently in front of the NARC building such a short week ago.

There was a lot of writing about the Frankists in fascinating and horrible detail.

And tucked away at the back of a collection of reports concerning Yifat's health and physical condition leading up to her classification by the Social Security Administration as unfit for work, was a summary of a private correspondence between Rabbi Joseph Bloat at Yeshiva College and Yifat concerning her periodic incontinence.

"Look," said Masha/Moshe. "Here's a transcript of the appearance she made on the Oprah Winfrey talk show, back in 1989. Did they really have television talk shows back then?"

We looked daggers at him, but he refused to be nonplussed. "In color?" he asked. "You had TV in color?" We pretended not to have heard a word, and turned our attention back to the Yifat material.

"Says here," he continued. "Oprah introduced her saying: 'As a child, my next guest was used also in worshipping the devil, participated in human sacrifice rituals and cannibalism. She says her family has been involved in rituals for generations.'

"Then Oprah asks her: 'You don't have to give us the gory details, but what kinds of things went on in the family?' And Yifat responds: 'Well, there would be rituals in which babies would be sacrificed, and you would have to, you know...'

"Now, Oprah asks, 'Whose babies?' and Yifat answers: 'There were people who bred babies in our family. No one would know about it. A lot of people were overweight, so you couldn't tell if they were pregnant or not, or they would supposedly go away for awhile and then come back...'

"You're making this up," I reproached him. "It's bad enough the way it is without making things up."

"No, he's not," said Chainik. "This is what Yifat says happened to her, for real. She said it on Oprah and in a hundred other public places. And you've no idea how many neo-nazi, Islamic and other anti-Semitic websites link to the Oprah Winfrey Show on Rabbinic-Satanic-Cannibalism and stuff all stemming from this one Yifat appearance. I'm reading about it right now, online. You know something. My ex wife is pretty thorough, don't you

think. I mean this is amazingly well researched isn't it? What was I doing when she was collecting all this data?"

"Her father got her pregnant five times, she says" continued Masha/Moshe. "Enough. I think I'll stop right there... Five times? There's more to read, much more, but it could make you queasy to your stomach."

Chainik looked thoughtful. "D'you know," he said. "If you told me the woman driving that car with the Maryland plates, who brought Cindy around the other day, ate five of her own babies, I'd believe it. Course, I'd want to know what she had for dessert afterwards that was so fattening, but I'd believe it. And I bet her father's out to lunch, too"

I left them in them in my living room roaring with laughter, giggling like kids gleeful with new, dirty jokes. When I returned from a business meeting the room was quiet. Masha/Moshe and Chainik were studying a page of the Talmud together.

The phone rang. "Have you seen the latest to appear in the blogs?" It was Perle. "Things are getting pretty nasty on the ground out there, you know. Someone calling himself the Jewish Whistle Sucker started a blog yesterday, and another one called YIFATwatch.org came online this afternoon. Wonder if anyone but me noticed the word twat in there? Oops. Sorry."

"Oooh, look at this little gem." Perle was reading it to me over the phone. "This is on Whistle Sucker. The following is cut and pasted from the archives on the main server at Yeshiva College. Apparently, according to this blog, every Email ever sent or received at the college is stored on their server. Wow! I'll bet there's more than one or two anxious students this afternoon. Thought they'd deleted Emails, hah!

"So, what's it say? 'Dear Rabbi Bloat.' This is from Yifat to Bloat you understand, December 7th, a Friday afternoon. 'Thank you for your invitation to Shabbat lunch, and please extend my grateful thanks to your wife, the rebbetzin, as well. I feel I need to inform you though that I am still incontinent, and will be wearing a diaper-like hygiene aid to the dinner table. I would not normally mention it, but I was taught by a rabbi from Israel that there are those who refrain from making Bracha-blessings over the wine and challa bread in the presence of someone wearing a continence aid, for Halachic reasons.'"

"Wait," I said. "Chainik and Masha/Moshe are here. I'm switching to speakerphone so they can hear as well. "

I turned on the machine so they could also hear Perle reading out loud the latest from the online blogs. But as I watched the two of them from the corner of my eye, it seemed they had a suspiciously innocent and guileless demeanor which made me think they had probably been busy in my absence, that they may have something to do with this new blog calling itself YIFATwatch.org. I wouldn't put anything past them.

"Ok, here's the response from Bloat to Yifat." Perle continued. "Dear Yifat etc. I will convey your sentiments to the rebbetzin. She joins me in extending our hospitality to you

etc. You and I have discussed your condition on a previous occasion. My halachic ruling remains what it was at that time, and I see no reason to apprise anyone of your disclosures to me. I will repeat what I told you last time we met. I am touched by your openness to me in this matter, and feel it is somewhat serendipitous, because I myself am not at all averse to thought of sitting to dinner with a woman wearing a diaper at the table.’

“Oh, my gawd,” Perle remarked. “He’s into golden showers. Bloat is a shitster. Rabbi Joseph Bloat PhD., *Mashgiach Ruchani*, director of religious guidance at Yeshiva College, her partner in crime is a watersporter. I’ll bet he’s into toilet training too. An anal retentive like that would have to be, wouldn’t he?”

I looked over at Chainik and Masha/Moshe, who both looked as though butter wouldn’t melt in their mouth. Now that I’ve been around them both for a while, I’m sure I know when they’re taking me for a ride.

“This changes nothing,” I told them both, coldly. “Chainik, your enemies have the advantage, they occupy the moral high ground. You can’t win anything against them with this silly campaign of cut and paste gutter journalism. It achieves nothing.”

“Shhh,” whispered Chainik portentously at me, holding a hand up behind his ear. “I hear something. Yes. I do declare, I can purely hear the sound of the Mashgiach Ruchani, the perpetual Bloat PhD, screeching down the corridors of Yeshiva College. Hush a moment. I hear him from Washington Heights, yea and verily, even unto the Lower East Side. There he is, banging on the door of his boss, Mr. Joel Richards. He enters, into the very inner sanctum-sanctimonious. I hear him stomping his feet, Amen, Brother. And do I hear a gnashing of the teeth? Why, ladies and gentlemen I do declare, a gnashing of false teeth is happening in the office offifucurum...”

I left them, still clowning around in my bookroom, with nowhere to go. “Let them have their fun,” I thought, “nothing we do is going to change the situation much. Might as well leave them to it.”

I went and joined Shulamis in the kitchen. She was cooking and serving dinner to the little ones, I had a home to be thankful for.