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Lusitania, her mother, sister and brother (all née Ginzburg-then-Weibrecht-now-Ginzburg again) arrive in America trying not to act like refugees. Refugees, they think, are people with no money who come to America covered in lice and suffering from tuberculosis. Refugees don't speak five languages fluently, including English. Refugees come through Ellis Island, standing in line with other refugees from other countries in a sweaty mix of baggage and sorrow (the Ginzburgs have both). Refugees don't make the crossing with a stateroom in which Mama Miriam hears the children's daily lessons. They're also called immigrants, but they feel, talking among themselves in a mix of French, Hungarian, German, English, Yiddish and whatever else seems necessary, like visiting dignitaries.

They don't feel like refugees, taking advantage of crazy wartime rental deals—three months free on a one-year lease—moving into a spacious apartment on Central Park West in New York, City of All American Cities. They have no furniture yet, so younger sister Wilhelmina dances around the living room like it is a ballroom, listening to American radio, forming the names of American songs as American-ly as she can. She will lose her accent by her graduation from Barnard, where she will enrol in September. Mina waltzes baby Bismarck in her arms, pronouncing 'Atchison,' 'Topeka' and 'Santa Fe' in measured American baby talk.

Bismarck gets dizzy, but he knows that as soon as she puts him down he will take two steps on the floor and be grounded again. But when Mama calls him Moishe he doesn't get his bearing for several minutes. Even though all three women sit down with him and explain very clearly, their voices soothing like wind chimes in a gentle breeze, that Bismarck was a name like a costume, and that he has everyday clothes named Moishe that he can wear now, he does not like Moishe. It is too tight; it doesn't fit him like his other name; he won't wear it. When they call him Moishe he runs into the closet in the front hall and hides under the hemlines of a dozen long coats. When they call Moishe to dinner he feels that Bismarck will starve if he comes, so he does not come.

In the end Lusitania decides that they will call her son-not-son Biz, diminishing the mark of secrecy and exile. She makes him promise that when people ask him what his full name is, that he will answer Moishe ben Avram, because anything else is a lie. Lusitania makes him promise because she is going away in a few months to another school, to Radcliffe, the only women's college that lets their student body wear trousers (even if it's just in the dormitories) and take classes with the men at Harvard. She wants him to behave well with Miriam, to take care of her since Lusie cannot. Lusie whispers in his ear, entreating in deeply inflected, throaty English. Later, when Biz hears Marlene Dietrich's voice on the radio for

the first time, he will rush to it, thinking it is Lusie. Lusitania will never lose her accent; it will, in fact, only ripen with age.

Just before Lusitania leaves New York, Miriam realizes that Biz isn't Moishe for a simple reason. He hasn't been circumcised. His own name doesn't recognize him because he is not recognizably Jewish. Even the ultra-rational Lusie and the almost uninterested Mina nod solemnly in agreement. So it is decided and the moil is called. It is an unusual request at such an advanced age, but many things are unusual and off their charted course in this new age of martyrs. The women know it is from an earlier 'to do' list, but what else is to be done?

A few friends and relatives are called to celebrate the joyous occasion. A distant uncle, cousin to the late Avram, brings the gold coins which will be passed around Moishe's supine body as the moil chants that these are in exchange for that, that thing he is cutting off and taking away, and that the trade is made on behalf of his soul. Biz fears the man with the long white beard and long black coat. He fears the sudden thick of knowing looks passed among the adults. He is afraid and he hides, crouched under the coats in the closet, his hands between his legs protecting himself, warming himself, touching the part of him that is Bismarck now, but will soon be Moishe. When he sees the razor, he fears they want to kill him.

Lusitania crawls into the closet on her hands and knees. Not even for this holy procedure will she put on a dress, and her loose trouser legs are hiked halfway up her calves. She is wearing a white broadcloth shirt with cuff links, and though in the half-light of this forest of coats she has the profile of a boy, she smells faintly of jasmine, gardenia and tuberose, especially between her breasts where Biz buries his face and cries and cries and cries. She sits Indian-legged and cradles him, his tears and weep snot running down her cleavage. While the rest of the family sits in the living room counting each other to make sure they are really all there, Lusie takes a handkerchief out of her back pocket and wipes them both off. In the dark, musty quiet of the closet, she strips Biz down to his underwear and wraps both her brown arms tightly around his naked body. He shudders the last sob and she says she will tell him a story about his father.

'It's about your father,' she says, 'but he will not appear in it except as the father of his children. But you'll understand why you must do a thing that hurts so that you will really be his son.' And Lusitania spares no details, nor does she embellish the truth with any change in her voice. Her bottomless, velour speech gives Biz another photograph to remember.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Alexandra Keller.*