Maus is the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and of his son, a cartoonist who tries to come to terms with his father, his father's terrifying story, and History itself. Its form, the cartoon (the Nazis are cats, the Jews mice) succeeds perfectly in shocking us out of any lingering sense of familiarity with the events described, approaching, as it does, the unspeakable through the diminutive. It is, as the New York Times Book Review has commented, "a remarkable feat of documentary detail and novelistic vividness...an unfolding literary event."

Moving back and forth from Poland to Rego Park, New York, Maus tells two powerful stories: The first is Spiegelman's father's account of how he and his wife survived Hitler's Europe; a harrowing tale filled with countless brushes with death, improbable escapes, and the terror of confinement and betrayal. The second is the author's tortured relationship with his aging father as they try to lead a normal life of minor arguments and passing visits against a backdrop of history too large to pacify. At all levels, this is the ultimate survivor's tale—and that, too, of the children who somehow survive even the survivors.

Maus takes Spiegelman's parents to the gates of Auschwitz and him to the edge of despair (with a sequel to come). Put aside all your preconceptions. These cats and mice are not Tom and Jerry, but something quite different. This is a new kind of literature.

"In its effect on the reader, on a par with Kafka."

—David Levine
“The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human.”

Adolf Hitler
It was summer, I remember. I was ten or eleven...

LAST ONE TO THE SCHOOLYARD IS A ROTTEN EGG!

...I was roller-skating with Howie and Steve...

...til my skate came loose.

OW!

HEY! WAIT UP FELLA'S!

ROTTEN EGG! HA HA!

W-WAIT UP!

SNK, SNF:

My father was in front, fixing something...
Artie! Come to hold this a minute while I saw.

Snark?

Why do you cry, Artie? Hold better on the wood.

I-I fell, and my friends skated away w-without me.

He stopped sawing.

Friends? Your friends?

If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week....

...then you could see what it is, friends....
MY FATHER BLEEDS HISTORY
(MID-1930s TO WINTER 1944)

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CHAPTER ONE

The SHEIK
I went out to see my Father in Rego Park. I hadn't seen him in a long time - we weren't that close.

"Poppa! Oh, Artie. You're late. I was worried."

It's a shame Françoise also didn't come.

"Uh-huh. She sends regards."

He had aged a lot since I saw him last. My Mother's suicide and his two heart attacks had taken their toll.

"Malai! Look who's here! Artie!"

She was a survivor too, like most of my parents' friends.

"Hi, Artie. Let me take your coat."

He was remarried. Mala knew my parents in Poland before the war.

The dinner is on the table.

"Ach, Malai!"

A wire hanger you give him? I haven't seen Artie in almost two years. We have plenty wooden hangers.

They didn't get along.
After dinner he took me into my old room.

Come- we'll talk while I pedal...

IT'S GOOD FOR MY HEART, THE PEDALING.

But, tell me, how is it by you? How is going the comics business?

I still want to draw that book about you...

THE ONE I USED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

About your life in Poland, and the war.

It would take many books, my life, and no one wants anyway to hear such stories.

I want to hear it. Start with mom... tell me how you met.

Better you should spend your time to make drawings what will bring you some money...

But, if you want, I can tell you... I lived then in Czestochowa, a small city not far from the border of Germany...

I was in textiles--buying and selling--I didn't make much, but always I could make a living.
I was, at that time, young, and really a nice, handsome boy.

I had a lot of girls what I didn’t even know that would run after me.

Hello, Vladek? This is Yulek...

A friend of mine, Lucia Greenberg, would like to be introduced to you.

Eventually, I took Lucia to dance...

Do you live alone?

Yes.

People always told me I looked just like Rudolph Valentino.

I have a small apartment; my parents moved to Sosnowiec.

I’d like to see it sometime.

Maybe sometime.
WHEREVER I WENT - I LOOKED AROUND - AND LUCIA GREENBERG WOULD BE ALSO THERE...

VLADIK! - WHICH WAY ARE YOU GOING?

JUST TO THE MARKET.

ME TOO - LET'S WALK TOGETHER.

BUT, POP... MOM'S NAME WAS ANNA ZYLBERBERG! ...

ALL THIS WAS BEFORE I MET ANJA - JUST LISTEN, YES?

WHY DON'T YOU EVER INVITE ME TO YOUR HOME? ... ARE YOU ASHAMED OF IT?

SHE KEPT INSISTING ME TO SHOW HER MY APARTMENT...

-SO FINALLY, I INVITED HER...

EVERYTHING'S SO NEAT AND CLEAN! I LIKE TO KEEP THINGS IN ORDER.

YOU MUST HAVE ANOTHER GIRL-FRIEND WHO CLEANS FOR YOU - NO?

NO.

...I DIDN'T WANT TO BE MORE CLOSER WITH HER, BUT SHE REALLY WOULDN'T LET ME GO.
Was she the first girl you... uh...
Yes... we were more involved, so like the youths were today.
We saw each other together for maybe three or four years.
Let's get engaged, Vladek.
It's late, I'll take you home.
Not yet, please. Come on—your parents would worry.
Her family was nice, but had no money, even for a dowry.

Well, every holiday I went to visit my family... it was maybe a journey of 35 or 40 miles.
Cousin Vladek!
It's good to see you again. Listen...
There's a girl in my class—I want you to meet us tomorrow—her name is Anja.
She's incredibly clever, from a rich family... a very good girl...
The next morning we all met together. My cousin and Anja spoke sometimes in English.

How you like him?

He's a handsome boy and seems very nice.

They couldn't know I understood.

Well, I promised to be home early... I'll leave you two alone.

You know, you should be careful speaking English - a "stranger" could understand.

You-know English?

Y-You know English?

DID YOU STUDY IT IN SCHOOL?

I had to quit school at about 14 to work.

... but I took private lessons... I always dreamed of going to America.

It's a shame you have to return to Czestochowa so soon.

Yes, but I have my business.

Have you a phone at home?

As soon I came back to Czestochowa, she called - once a day... twice... every day we talked.
AND THEN SHE STARTED WRITING TO ME SUCH BEAUTIFUL LETTERS—ALMOST NOBODY COULD WRITE POLISH LIKE SHE WROTE.

I VISITED A COUPLE TIMES TO HER. SHE SENT ME A PHOTO.

I BOUGHT A VERY NICE FRAME...

I'M GOING TO GET ENGAGED TO HER, LUCIA.

PSHH! AND LOOK AT WHAT A BEAUTY YOU PICKED.

IT PASSED MAYBE A WEEK UNTIL LUCIA AGAIN CAME AND SAW THE PHOTO...

LOOKS AREN'T EVERYTHING, LUCIA. IT ISN'T GOOD FOR EITHER OF US THAT YOU KEEP COMING UP HERE.

...WE HAVE TO PLAN FOR OUR FUTURES, AND...

FORGET HER! LET ME MAKE YOU HAPPY!

IT WAS NOT SO EASY TO GET FREE FROM LUCIA.
Mom wasn't that attractive, huh?

Not so like Lucia... but if you talked a little to her, you started loving her more and more.

One time we walked into the director from her school.

You're very lucky, Mr. Spiegelman.

...You don't know what a girl you're getting—I've had many students...

...but never one as sensitive and intelligent as Anna!

Yes—that's why I picked her.

I wish you could visit me in Cze-Stochowa—I'd like to show you off to my friends.

I've begged my mother to let me go—but she's so religious and old-fashioned.

She would never allow me to go to a bachelor's apartment!

Oh, my parents would like you to come to dinner tomorrow night.

Anja's parents were anxious she should be married. She was 24; I was then 30.

The Zylberberg family was very well off—millionaires!
The Zylderbergs had a hosiery factory—one of the biggest in Poland... but when I came in to their house it was so like a king came...

Welcome, welcome.

Anja—Vladek is here!

Make yourself comfortable while I help with the dinner.

To see what a housekeeper she was, I peeked into Anja's closet.

Everything is neat and straight just the way I like it!

But what's this—Pills?!

I wrote down every pill.

If she was sick, then what did I need it for?

Dinner is ready!

Later, a friend, a druggist, told me the pills were only because she was so skinny and nervous.

What about some more gefilte fish, Vladek?

So, to make a long story short, by the end of 1936 we were engaged and I moved from Czedochowa to Sosnowiec.
ACH! HERE I FORGOT TO TELL SOMETHING FROM BEFORE I MOVED TO SOSNOWEC. BUT AFTER OUR ENGAGEMENT WAS MADE.

ONE EVENING THE BELL RANG...

LUCIA

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I'M ON MY WAY OUT.

NO, YOU CAN'T COME WITH US!

PLEASE, VLAD! I'LL COME WITH YOU.

SHE FELL ON THE FLOOR AND HELD STRONG MY LEGS.

DON'T RUN AWAY!

I SAW NOW THAT I WENT TOO FAR WITH HER.

I RAN OUT TO MY FRIEND WHAT INTRODUCED US. HE WENT TO CALM HER DOWN AND TOOK HER HOME.
I didn't hear more from Lucia - but also I stopped hearing from Anja...

No telephone calls, no letters, nothing! What happened?

Hello, Mrs. Zylberberg. Could I speak to Anja?

She says she won't speak to you!

But why?

Well, I can't convince her on the phone. I'll come down by train on Friday after work.

She got a letter from someone in Częstochowa. My God! It says the worst things in the world about you!

It wasn't even a holiday, but I went anyway to Sosnowiec.

So, tell me, Anja - what have I done? That's so horrible?

You should know - just read this!
I don't even want to see it. Just tell me who wrote it. Or, better yet, I'll tell you —

-Lucia Greenberg, right?

It's just signed "your secret friend, L."

It says you have a very bad reputation in Czestochowa.

That you have a lot of girlfriends.

And that you're marrying me for my money.

Ach, Anja — you should know me better... Ask anyone in Czestochowa about my character.

Lucia's an old girlfriend who won't leave me alone. She means nothing at all to me.

And after much talking, I convinced her.

So I moved to Sosnowiec at the end of 1936; and February 14, 1937, we were married.

And now some vodka to toast the young couple.

I moved into one of father-in-law's two apartments. He owned both, and he gave to me part ownership and a very beautiful gold watch for a wedding gift.
But this what I just told you—about Lucia and so—I don’t want you should write this in your book.

WHAT? Why not?

It has nothing to do with Hitler, with the Holocaust!

But Pop, it’s great material. It makes everything more real—more human.

I want to tell your story, the way it really happened.

But this isn’t so proper, so respectful.

...I can tell you other stories, but such private things, I don’t want you should mention.

Okay, okay—I promise.