

A Line A Day



Nicolas Eder

by Hailee Zhao

Thursday, 09 Apr 1914

Today is a big day.

At this second, I am on the train from Bucharest to Hamburg, where a new page of my life is about to start. Staring at the peaks of the mountains roaring past, I thought about my discouraging current life: I am a factory worker living in a tiny and crowded house with four other family members (mom, dad, and my two sisters) that we could barely feed ourselves. I am tired of working in the factory with vast work, little pay, and the risk of being unemployed at any time. My country had failed me, as I could not catch any hope or future in the mist that envelops Romania. However, I have heard from others' mouths that in America across the sea, there is a city where the streets are paved with gold, lands are filled with mine to dig, and full of dream and hope. New York! That is the name.

While I was hesitating, an incident pulled the trigger of my leave. I got into a big fight with my best brother Andrei on the street. Fury blinded my eyes and made me picked up a steel tube nearby and stroke on his head hard. It was raining on that day, and I could never forget seeing Andrei laid in the pool of blood. There were too much guilt and fear in me to carry around that his face showed up every time I closed my eyes, so I decided to escape and be a sinner. I had to leave my family behind, and it was the toughest part of this decision. Yet, this belief sticks firmly in my head that a man has to learn to give up in order to do big, and besides my family, there is nothing holding me back. I wrote a letter to uncle Daniel, who has lived in America for five years, to help me to settle there. Before my departure, I kissed goodbye to my dearest family, and little Oana burst into tears while tightly grasping my shirt. It's never easy to say goodbye.

PASSPORT

Family Name Eder

First Name Nicoles

Place of Birth Bucharest, Romania
(town, country)

Year of Birth 1896

Age 18

Height 180 cm

Color of Hair Black

Color of Eyes Brown

Passport issued at Romania

Date issued Jan. 16. 1914

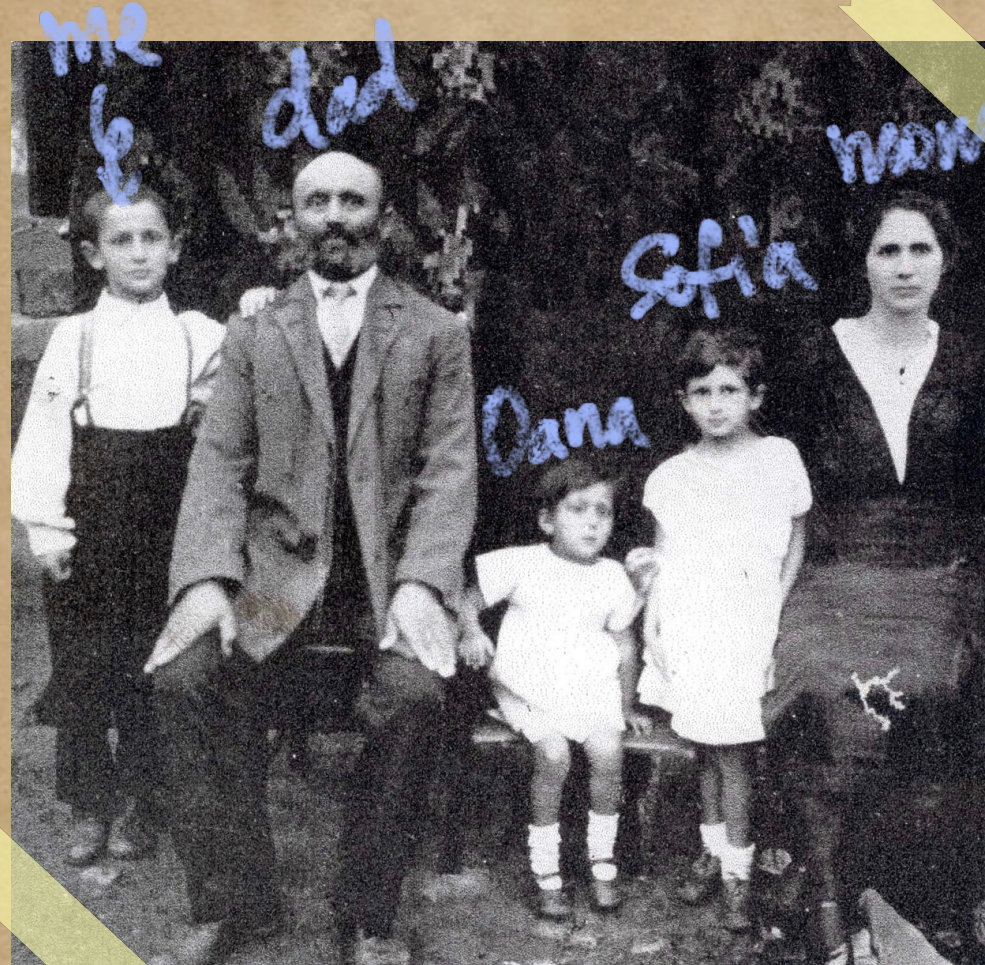
Signature Nicoles Eder



There are only a few things in my suitcase: some clothes to change, 68 Romanian leus (all my savings), a razor blade, a lighter, a watch, a picture of my family, and a harmonica from my father. Besides the tangible items, I carry the heavy mental burden. I seek for safety and a place to hide, as the police will never find me once I got out of the country. On the other hand, it is a difficult but exciting journey, as I had craved about going to New York City, to witness the prosperous buildings and streets paved with gold, and to get a nice job from the millions of choices and make a living. Today is a big day, and I wish myself luck.



Wesley.
11/04/09



This is my lovely family. I was only 8 by then. Mom, dad, please take good care of yourselves. Oana and Sofia, my dearest little sisters, please don't cry while I'm gone. I love you all.

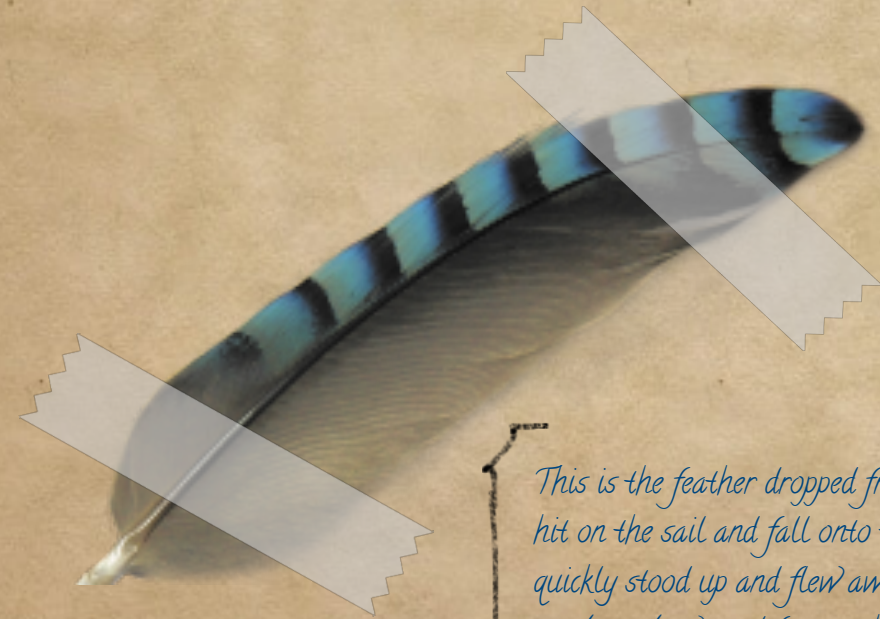
Wednesday, 06 May 1914

I have spent a week on the voyage to America, and I started to adapt to living on the ship, although it is still unbearable.

After I arrived in Hamburg, the port city of Germany, I spent two weeks at the local boardinghouse with my paperwork completed until the assigned departure date. I waited impatiently. On April 30th, I woke up with excitement and nervousness and got to the port early in the morning. After answering some questions given by the inspector, I finally, finally set foot on the ship.

I have imagined the condition on the ship countless, but the reality still slapped me hard, without any mercy. I followed other steerage passengers down a passage, passed through the boiler room, kitchen, fishing room, and finally entered an enclosed cabin under a narrow and wet staircase. I unpacked my luggage in a compartment, and my journey on the water began in anguish. There are over 1,000 passengers in the steerage, exchanging the same air in the muggy and dark cabin. There is never sufficient light under the deck, which turned me extremely anxious and stressed. I lost my appetite, and thankfully, there isn't even enough food to arouse it. We were fed by bean puree, shriveled fishes and sometimes bread twice a day in the first week, and it started to curtail to once a day. Sometimes I don't get to eat at all. People suffered from seasickness every day, especially women and children who have weak immunity. I got sick in the bathroom yesterday, but because there isn't much food in my system, the liquid that I vomited was purely bile. The foul odor of vomitus, sweat, and rotten food pervades the whole place and gets worse day after day, devouring my remaining willpower.

Despite the condition in the ship is a complete nightmare, I and others acquire joy during the trip. Young and old fellows would sing and dance with the accompany of string instruments. Every time the cheerful music starts, the pain and dreariness would disappear, and the whole cabin would burst into a party with cheers and laughters. I met two Hungarian boys, Izsak and Edvard, and one German boy, Luis, who are all about my age, and we quickly became close friends. We spent every day together, chatting, drinking, and play music together with my harmonica and their guitars; we talked about our previous lives, our family, and our dreams and ambitions; we decided to make our way together in America, the unfamiliar country for us all, to keep each other's company. As days passed, my night dreams about New York City and the accompany of three of them are the two only things that support me through the arduous and lengthy days on the ship.



This is the feather dropped from a bird who hit on the sail and fall onto the deck. But it quickly stood up and flew away. I wish I can be as brave and free as that little bird.

Hamburg-Amerika Linie, Hamburg

Nicht übertragbar.

Beförderungs-Vertrag Dritter Klasse № 001975

Kammer Nr. 594

Buch Nr. 1

Liste Nr. 19

Zwischen der Hamburg-Amerika Linie und dem unterzeichneten Reisenden (bei Familien als Familienvorstand) ist der nachstehende Beförderungs-Vertrag geschlossen worden:

§ 1. Die Hamburg-Amerika Linie übernimmt die Beförderung der in § 3 dieses Vertrages benannten Reisenden in der dritten Klasse ihres Dampfers

New York von Hamburg nach New York und von New York per Eisenbahn bzw. mit Dampfschiff weiter nach: St. George Staat: St. George

§ 2. Während der Seefahrt erhalten die Reisenden die durch die gesetzlichen Bestimmungen vorgeschriebene Verpflegung. Die Verpflegung beginnt am Abfahrtstage nach erfolgter Anbordnahme der Reisenden und endet mit deren Vonbordgehen im überseeischen Ausschiffungshafen.

§ 3. Der Fahrpreis ist wie folgt vereinbart worden:

Vor- und Familiennamen des Reisenden und der mit ihm reisenden Familienmitglieder	Alter	Familienstand (ob Vater, Mutter, Sohn, Tochter usw. mit Einbeziehung, ob verheiratet, ledig)	Bisheriger Wohnort	Fahrpreis für		
				Servise ab Hamburg	Wieder- beförderung	
				2	1	2
Lurua Kunzigbrock	37	l	Greslau			
				im ganzen 115,-		

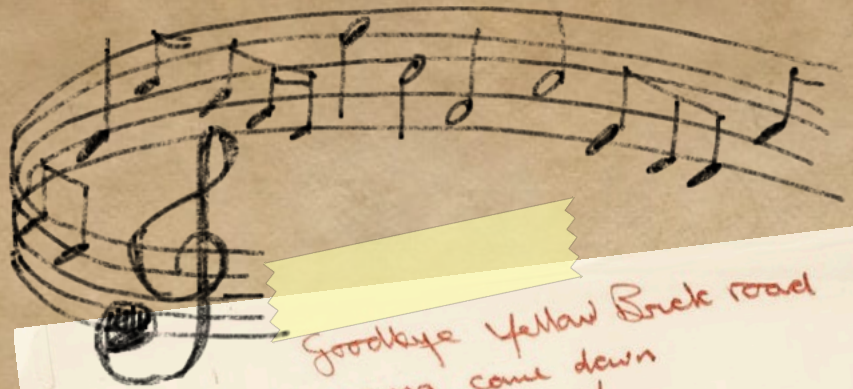
Das von der amerikanischen Regierung verlangte Kopfgehd von Dollar 8.- ist für 1 Reisende entrichtet mit Dollar 8.-

§ 4. Außer dem vorstehend bezeichneten Preise ist für Beförderung, Beköstigung oder Unterbringung von Hamburg bis zum außereuropäischen Ausschiffungshafen nichts mehr zu bezahlen; es sei denn, daß für Gepäck Oberfracht laut § 13 dieses Vertrages oder Transportgebühren von der Bahn zur Gepäckverladestelle zu entrichten wären. Die Aufenthaltskosten in Hamburg vom Eintreffen des Reisenden bis zu der in diesem Vertrage festgesetzten Abfahrtsstunde des Schiffes sind zu Lasten des Reisenden.

§ 5. Die Einschiffung findet in Cuxhaven statt. Die Abfahrt von Hamburg mittels Sonderzuges erfolgt am 30 Apr. 1914 vom Hauptbahnhof, Bahnsteig 5 um 6:40 Uhr vormittags.

Die Reisenden haben sich pünktlich zur Einschiffung einzufinden; das Ausbleiben eines Reisenden zur festgesetzten Abfahrtszeit zieht den Verlust des halben Schiffsahrgeldes nach sich.

Fortsetzung des Vertrages auf der Rückseite

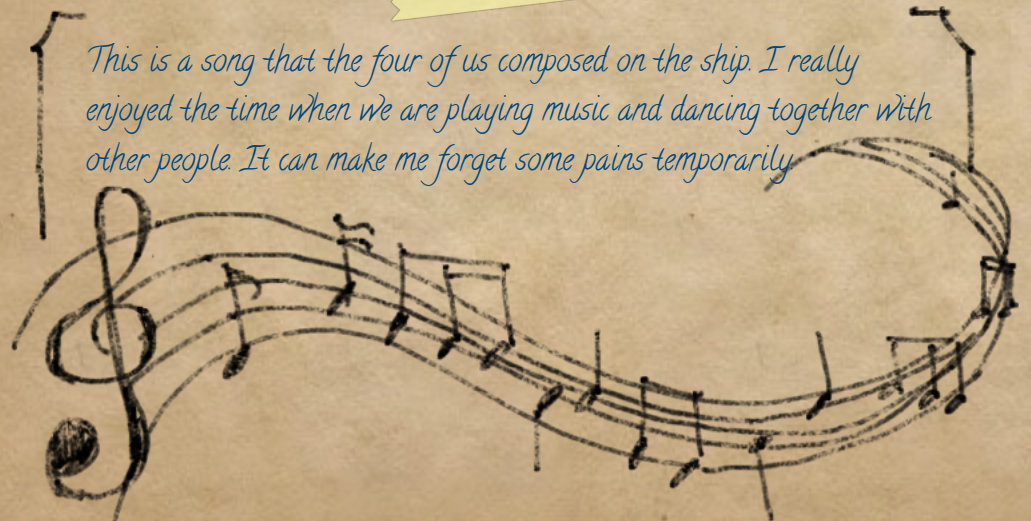


Goodbye Yellow Brick road
When are you gonna come down
when are you going to land
I should have stayed on the farm
I should have listened to my old man

You now you can't hold me forever
I didn't sign up ^{with} you
I'm not a present for your friends to open
It's boys to you to be singing the blues

So goodbye yellow brick road
I'm going back to my plough
You can't plant a tree in a penthouse
where the dogs of society hunt
You can't plant me in your penthouse
I'm going back to my plough.

This is a song that the four of us composed on the ship. I really enjoyed the time when we are playing music and dancing together with other people. It can make me forget some pains temporarily.




Saturday, 16 May 1914

It's raining today, and I still couldn't believe that I arrived in New York, the place that have only been existing in my mind! Before we disembark, a group of health inspectors performed some basic health checks on us. After 15 days of sailing, most of the people are in a weak and unstable condition, so lots of them turned sick and were detained for further medical checks. Seeing that, I began to worry, but Izsak told me that they only focus on the potential of contagious diseases. After the health check, we went up to the deck, and the view caught my eyes. A magnificent statue of a goddess emerged above the sea horizon, which caught everyone's eyes. The Statue of Liberty, that is her name. Along with a loud whistle, the ship halted. As I stepped off the board, breathing fresh air, exposing myself in daylight, and feeling my feet standing on the actual ground, I felt reborn. On the sign by the shoreside, the letters "Welcome to America" were so conspicuous.

All the passengers got into a few lines, awaited for the examination and health check. Each of us received a name tag and a number, and we waited until our numbers are called. I followed the line up a steep stairway, and a doctor was standing at the top. I calmed myself down and tried my best to act sedate. The doctors in the room checked our head, neck, and hands. They marked some letters using chalk on a few passengers in front of me. Next, the doctors tested our eyes, and I heard that there is a horrifying eye disease that could cause death. After all the inspections completed, the people with marks on them were directed to another line. Luckily, the five of us were healthy enough to pass through all the checks. Finally, I was brought to a room to answer 31 questions from an inspector. I was nervous that I will be detained from this section due to my poor background, but I passed way more fluently than I thought. I receive a card pin, representing

that I am now officially an immigrant in America. I pulled out all the 68 leu in my pocket and exchanged it to 15 dollars. I met uncle Daniel, and I decided to live with the other three boys since he has his family to take care of. Fortunately, there is a tenement next to uncle Daniel's is available for renting, so we will settle there. With the tremendous exhilaration in my mind, I am ready to begin my a new chapter in New York.



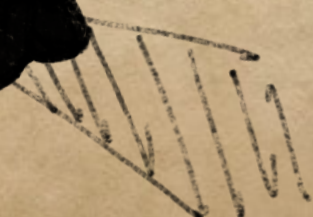
Identification Tag

0819

Number

Nicolas Edel

Name



Saturday, 18 July 1914

Time flies. It has been two months since I arrived in America. The life here is tough yet unexpected. I live in the Southside of New York, in the lower Manhattan district. The tenement shared by the four of us is small and rough, which has two bunk beds, a wardrobe, a shelf, and a little table all filled into a small space. However, it didn't stop us from turning the room into our little base. In these two months, the tenement has witnessed our lives: the jokes we used to make fun of each other, the music we played, and the tears hidden in the corner. I have been through a lot. First of all, New York is completely different from what it seemed to us. There aren't streets paved with gold, fancy buildings or prosperous views, and in fact, we are supposed to pave the street. The first job I found was a railroad worker, and I couldn't even describe the pain it seared on me. I was forced to work 12 hours a day and sometimes more. I had to carry heavy steel around and walk down the rugged road. The blisters and wounds on my feet damaged them so badly that I could not take off my shoes at night. Meanwhile, the workers there were exploited by our manager with low wages. After two weeks, I quit the job at the railroad. Uncle Daniel sometimes visits, but I never thought about seeking his help as I want to use my own strength to strive in this country. Izsak and Edvard work at a steel factory, and Luis is a waiter at a cafe.

While I was looking for a new job, I met a French girl called Susan at the market. Susan is the most gorgeous woman I have ever seen, and I am completely subdued by her beauty and those enchanted blue eyes. She is a dancer. She talks about her passion for dancing and her dream of being a performer in Broadway theater. I poured out my secret that I carried years to her, and she showed empathy to me. She helped me to get a bartender job in "Sicily", a bar



This is my favorite picture, taken with my brothers in a parade with our best outfits on.

two blocks away from Broadway, and I was so thrilled. Working in the bar is new and fun to me, as I really enjoy the atmosphere, and I am able to support myself with the salary. However, I got into a fight once as a drunk customer tried to beat me because of my accent. Before I realized, I am already so in love with this girl, and so does she. We have our future well-planned out: we will rent our own apartment, and adopt a puppy. Susan will continue to pursue her Broadway dream and I will support her while earning money at the bar. We will live for ourselves and for each other. Although I am a little nobody in the enormous New York City, I have a fulfilled life, a future for me to chase, and a beloved girl by my side. I wrote some letters to my family, and they are thinking about moving here, too. After all, I think I did it. To me, this is the life that I would dream of before coming to America. Although there were countless hardships in this journey, I think I'm witnessing the dawn. And I will continue to head, with luck and courage, forward.



This is Susan, my angel I couldn't move my eyes off her raven black hair and those marvelous eyes. When I meet her, it's not gravity that's pulling me anymore. Everything changed. I would do anything and be anyone for her.

My dear Susan, I know that I'm still young and reckless, but this young man is crazily in love with you. You light up my world.



Susan gave me this picture of a Broadway theater. It is her dream to dance in there, and I believe that it will definitely come true. She is a great dancer.



My favorite!



These are the musical tickets and a poster that we watched together. She said that someday she will stand on that stage instead of sitting below.



This is Sicily, the bar I now work in. I am very lucky to own this picture as two of my colleagues left after this, and they've been very good to me.

Harry Johnson's
Bartender's Manual!
I don't even know
where did I get
that!

