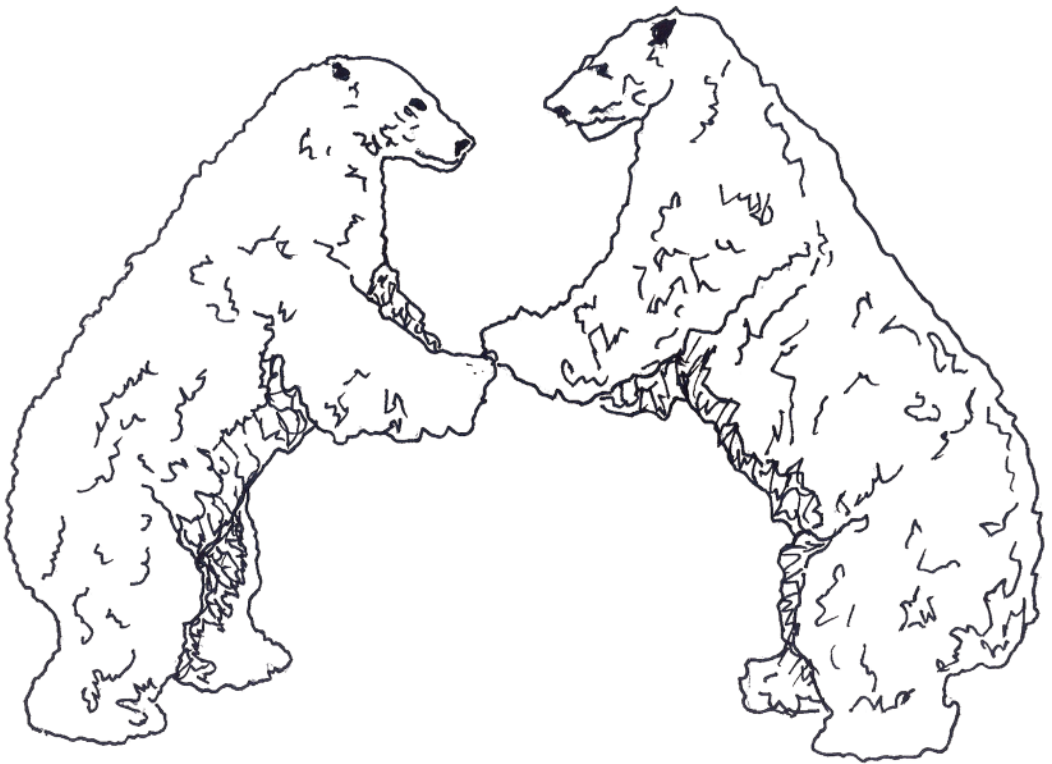


*The Smart One*  
*A Grandfather's Tale*



*Ken Goodman*  
*Award Winning Author*

THE SMART ONE  
A GRANDFATHER'S TALE

KEN GOODMAN

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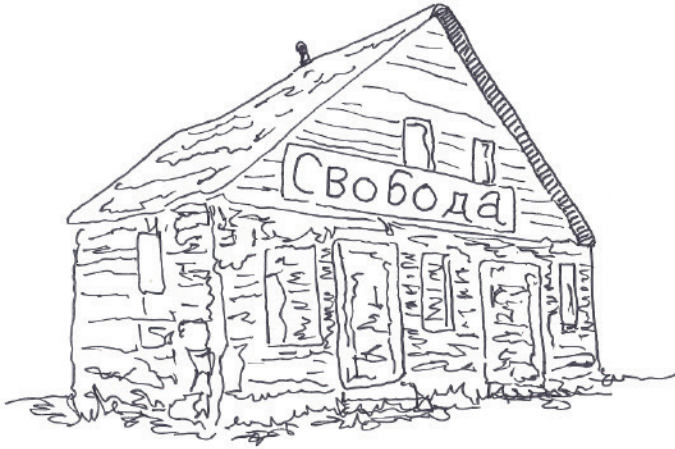
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## *Table of Contents*

Foreword	1
We're on Our Way: May 1906	4
Sukkos: October 1901	11
A Shabbos in 1902 When I Was Five	19
Chanukah: December 1903	27
Mixing in: The Strike on May Day, 1904	36
The Wedding: May 3, 1904	50
My First Whole Day Without Food: September 1904	65
Revolution in Smorgon: January 1905	79
The Kaziuk Fair and the Trial: March 1905	96
Purim and the Rescue: March 1905	115
Passover 1906 When I Was Nine	132
Goodbye Karka, Goodbye Smorgon: April 1906	148

## *Foreword*



My father, Maxwell David Goodman, who was called Max, was born Duvid Mendel Gutman in Smorgon which is now in Belarus, a former Soviet Republic. At the time he lived there from his birth in 1897 to 1906 when he moved to Chicago, Smorgon was in the Vilnius (in Yiddish Vilna) district of Lithuania. Lithuania, at that time, was a part of the Russian empire. Smorgon was a shtetl, a small, mostly Jewish village that was evolving into an industrial town with a developing leather industry.

It had two claims to fame. It was the birthplace of the bagel (in Russian baronok). And it was home to the famous School for Bears which continued until World War I. The local noble family was the

Radziwills. Count Radziwill was the patron of the bear school. He also permitted a few Jewish families to farm some of his land and share their profits with him in the tiny community of Karka, just outside Smorgon.

That much is history. My father didn't talk much about his childhood. He was the youngest of five children and the only boy. He had four older sisters who ranged from 15 to 2 years older than him.

My intention in writing this book for young people is to show the events and conflicts in his young life and among the Jews who were migrating in large numbers to America at the turn of the 20th century. His childhood was a time of great change in Eastern Europe. Within his home there was conflict between the traditional religious views his parents represented and the "enlightened" revolutionary views and activities of his older sisters.

What I have created is a historical novel. The main characters in telling his story are his actual family members. I have stayed close to the events of their lives as I knew them. One exception is Kate's husband whom she did not actually meet until she moved to Chicago. I needed him in my story to bring the culture of the enlightenment into the family home. I have also taken great pains to stay true to actual historical events and their local manifestations. I visited Smorgon and was helped greatly by Valentina a local librarian and Nadya a museum curator. Svetlana Satalova of the Gaon National Jewish Museum in Vilnius was my guide and translated many original documents. The other characters in the novel are based on real people like those Duvid Mendel and his family would have known and interacted with.

My father and his family came to America as the result of complex and powerful events. They changed after coming to America.

But what they brought with them also changed America. To understand who we are as Americans we need to understand who we were and where we have been.

In America Max's father never found a place for himself. He died a few years after the move. His mother kept up the traditions and supported herself as she dedicated herself to her grandchildren. Max's sisters continued to work in the garment industry and were active in radical political and Yiddish cultural groups.

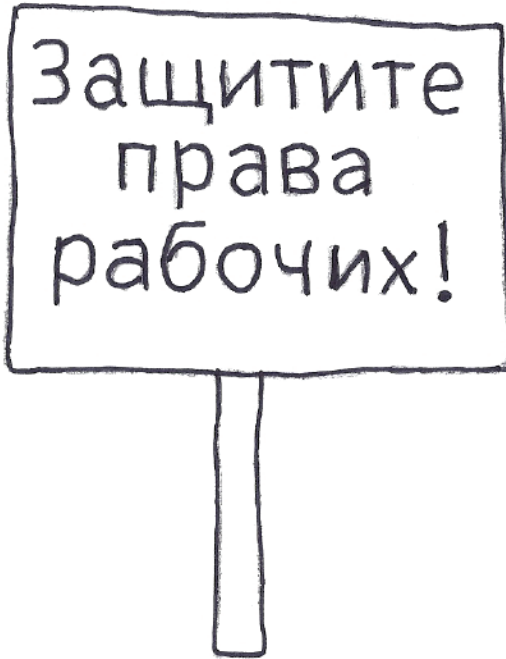
In America, Max rejected both religion and politics as he pursued but never achieved "The American Dream." The succeeding generations became writers, teachers, scholars, doctors. Some are religious, some not. Some are politically active, some not. And all of David Mendel (Max) Goodman's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren have been influenced by the events of his childhood in ways they may not know.

Ken Goodman

January, 2015

## *Five*

*Mixing in: The Strike on May Day, 1904*



It happened when I was just about seven years old. Sarale and I were helping Mama clean up her milk buckets and get ready for dinner. We asked Mama if we could go pick some of the pretty flowers that were starting to come up along the road. Spring was coming. The days were getting longer. And a misty rain was falling.

We hadn't gotten very far when we saw someone far down the



road coming from Smorgon. Sarale said, "I think I see Kate and Anna coming home."

"It can't be," I said. "They only come home on Friday night and today is only Tuesday."

But it was them. "Hurray!" called Kate when she saw us.

"Hurray for the strike!" Anna shouted. We ran to meet them and they lifted us in the air and twirled us around.

"Down with the Bosses," said Kate.

"No more 15 hours work days," said Anna.

"Hurray for the strike!" they both called out together. And they took my hand and Sara's and we danced around in a circle.

"Hurray for the strike!" we all sang out.

"Hurray for the first of May!" sang Kate and Anna.

Mama came out to see what all the noise was about and they grabbed her hands too and made her dance around in a circle with us.

"Hurray for the First of May!" sang Sarah and me.

"Hurray for May Day!" sang Kate and Anna. "Up with Mama! Down with the Bosses!"

Mama laughed. But she pulled away. "What are you doing home in the middle of the week and what's all the excitement about?"

"We're on strike Mama!"

"You're on strike, Kate?" asked Mama.

"Me too," said Anna.

"You're both on strike?"

"Everybody, Mama. The leather makers. The bagel bakers. All the workshops and factories," said Kate. "We want more pay; we don't want to work so many hours. The leather makers want to be cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter."

“It’s May Day, Mama.” And they grabbed her and started dancing around in a circle again.

“May Day is when people dance around a pole and put flowers in their hair,” said Mama. “What does that have to do with a strike?”

“Not any more. May Day is the day for working people to demand their rights,” Anna said. “All over the world working people are marching.”

“Even in Vilna?” I said.

“Minsk too?” asked Sarah.

“Even in Moscow, and in St. Petersburg too,” Anna replied.

“Really?” I said. “Even in Moscow and St Petersburg? People are marching there too?” I knew those were very big Russian cities far away from Smorgon. “But what is all the marching about?”

“About workers telling their bosses they want to work fewer hours and get more pay,” said Anna.

“About safer and cleaner places to work,” said Kate.

“That’s why we’re having a strike. We won’t go back to work until the bosses give us what we want.”

“But not in America,” I said. “In America everybody has good jobs and makes a lot of money.”

Kate and Anna laughed. “Why are you laughing?” I said angrily. “Nobody would have a reason to march and strike in America!”

“May Day started in Chicago in America,” said Anna. “They had a strike just like we’re having. They want more pay and less hours to work and they want children in schools instead of working in factories and mines.”

I never heard of “Chicago” until that first day of May in 1904. Chicago is a hard name to pronounce in Yiddish or in Russian. It’s spelled a funny way in English too. The sound at the beginning

sounds like the beginning of shlemazl in Yiddish someone who always has bad luck.

“So if children work in factories and mines and working people have strikes,” I said, “why do people want to go to America?”

“In America,” said Kate, “everybody has the same rights as everybody else. But they still have to get money for food and a place to live. So they have to work. And sometimes their bosses make them work too hard.”

Just then Papa came home from the synagogue in Smorgon where he had been studying. He already knew about the strike and he didn't look happy. “You want higher pay? Strike! You don't like your boss? Strike! You want two Saturdays in every week? Strike!”

“Papa,” said Anna, “we just want to be treated like somebody, like a mensch. It's our right.”

As usual, Mama saw an argument coming and cut it off. “Come, I have to put some more water in the soup. We've got unexpected guests for dinner. Sarale, come and help. Duvidel, run down to Mrs. Shulman's and ask if she could spare a few potatoes and on the way back get a loaf of bread from the baker. Tell him I'll pay Friday.”

After dinner some friends of Kate and Anna's came to our house. Maish came and Avram and a friend of my sister Anna named Dunya. Maish sang a new song in Yiddish about May Day and then Dunya sang a Russian Song about the birch trees that grew in the woods of Smorgon. Then they talked about the May Day meeting that was planned for the next day in Smorgon. All the strikers would be there, and an important woman was coming from Vilna to speak. They called her Chavera Froidela. And a man named Comrade Vladamir was coming from Minsk. But what was most exciting was that Anna had been chosen to speak for the workers

in the bagel bakeries.

When Papa heard that, he was very angry. "I forbid it!" he said. "Do you want to get yourself killed? Besides, what have you got to say at such a meeting? You're only a young girl."

"The girls who work in the bagel bakeries elected her," said Kate. "They like the way she talks up for them. They like her courage."

"Courage?" said Papa. "You mean foolishness. Anna, Kate, you may not go to this meeting. None of us will go. I'm the Papa and I say no speech and no meeting for us."

Maish tried to calm Papa down. "It's only a public meeting, Reb Yankle Laib, a rally to support the strike. Even your neighbors, the farmers of Karka will come. You are their Rabbi. You should be with them. Anna is a very good speaker. We're all proud of her. And there will be young men to protect her and make sure there is no trouble at the rally."

"Jews shouldn't mix in the troubles of the gentiles," said Papa.

"They're our troubles too, Papa. Our motto is 'Workers of the World Unite!' If we stick together, the bosses have to listen!" Anna shouted.

"We'll all be there," said Dunya. "The Jewish workers, the Christians, the Gypsies - all the working people, farmers - everyone. All of us together can make a better world."

Papa started to shout now - "I forbid--"

But before he could continue Mama put her hand on his arm. "It's only a May Day celebration," she said. "We'll make a basket of food to take with us to celebrate the holiday. We'll join with our neighbors. So there will be a few speeches. So Anna will speak for the bagel bakery women. Admit it, Yankle Laib, you're proud that she's been chosen. Who should they choose if not our Anna? In

the bible there are stories of many brave Jewish women who spoke out for their people. We'll go, all but Sarah and Duvid who are too young for such things."

"But, Mama!" Sarah and I called out together. "We want to go to the rally. We want to hear Anna," said Sara.

"It's not fair!" I said.

Papa gave us his special evil-eye look. "All right, we'll go together except for Sarah and Duvid. But if there's any sign of trouble we'll all come home."

Sarah gave a quick look at me that said don't argue.

Anna threw her arms around Mama and tried to kiss Papa but he pushed her away. "Get away! Such a girl," he said, but he couldn't help a little smile.

After that there was more singing and even Papa joined in. Sarah nodded to me and we slipped out of the room.

"It's not fair!" I said to her again.

"Sha, quiet," she said. "When everybody is gone, you and I will go too. There will be so many people there we can make sure Papa and Mama don't see us. We'll hide behind the speakers' platform and leave before everybody else so we can be home before the rest of the family."

I gave Sarah a hug.

"That's a great plan. We'll hear Anna and the others and we'll have an adventure and no one will know!" I said.

"Sha," said Sarah.

The next morning Sarah and I did our chores and acted really unhappy that we weren't going to the May Day rally. Mama packed a food basket. And our neighbors began to gather outside our house. Each different group of workers was marching together to

the square in the middle of Smorgon and the farmers had come to ask Papa to lead their group.

“Did you know that your Anna is going to speak for the bagel bakers?” said Reb Shimon, one of the farmers.

“Of course,” said Papa. “She asked my permission and I gave it. Who better than Anna to speak?”

Sarah and I could hardly keep from showing our excitement. But we waited until the farmers had marched off followed by the rest of the families in Karka. Then we took the food Mama had left for us, wrapped it in Sarah’s babushka, her head scarf, and went toward Smorgon. But we circled around on a little side path away from the main road. When we got to Smorgon, we found a place between some houses a little way from the square where we could see each group of workers marching into the square but not be seen by the rest of our family.

It was like the best holiday ever. Each group had banners and signs. The klezmer were playing happy music. Some of the marchers were singing songs. People going through the crowd were selling food and May Day flowers. We saw Avram with a trained bear pulling a cart in the parade and leading the bear trainers but he didn’t see us. And there was Anna leading the women and girls from the bagel bakeries. She carried a red flag that said, “Bagel bakery workers” on it in Yiddish and Russian. Behind her was Dunya with a sign in Russian. I figured out it said, “Striking for the 12 hour day,” and another sign said, “Defend the rights of the working people.”

By the time everybody reached the square we had never seen so many people in one place. They weren’t all from Smorgon. There were people from every little village in the whole area. There was a light drizzle falling but nobody seemed to care.

Sarah and I moved carefully around the crowd making sure nobody saw us from the family until we were behind the platform that had been built for the speakers. While we waited for the speeches to start, we ate the food we brought with us.

Then we heard klezmer musicians on the stage and a group of people began to sing the Bund Anthem. Maish's voice stood out clearly above the others. Then another group sang a Russian song, "The Warshavyarka."

"To the bloody battle, sacred and just, march forward working people!"

After that, came the speakers. Chavera Froidela spoke in Yiddish and Russian. Comrade Vladimir spoke in Belarussian. Other speakers from each of the worker's groups spoke in whatever language they chose. After every speaker, there were loud cheers. We could see young men with red armbands around the platform and the edges of the crowd. I expected to see some policemen or soldiers but there weren't any. Smorgon only had a few policemen and Maish had told me that some of them secretly supported the strike.

Then it was Anna's turn. Like the others she talked about the long hours and bad conditions of the workers. She told about how the women and girls in the bagel bakery had to work 14-15 hours a day, six days a week for 50 kopeks a day. She told about how women in Smorgon had started the Movement for a 12 hour day, how girls much younger than herself worked the same long hours for 25 kopeks. She told about two girls who got tuberculosis because the air was bad in the bakeries. She and the other bagel bakers had trouble with their eyes because very little light came into bakeries and there was no electricity. Then she read a poem she had written herself.

*We bagel bakers earn little pay  
We work through the night and half the day,  
We grind and knead and boil and bake  
And produce the profits the bosses take*

*The kettles are hot, the ovens too  
And always there seems to be too much to do  
Our bagels are sold throughout the lands  
But little of the money stays in our hands*

*So now women and girls have taken the lead  
to strike against the bosses greed  
We want shorter hours and better pay  
And until we get them, on strike we'll stay.*

When she finished, the whole square was silent for a minute and then people cheered and began to chant: "Strike! Strike! Strike!" The echoes of the chant bounced off the two story brick buildings that surrounded the square where most of the owners of the bakeries and the factories lived.

Then the leader of the leather workers got up to speak and Sarah and I decided it was time for us to head home.

We moved away from the square toward the next street so we could go around the crowd and not be seen. And then we heard the sound of horses and men's voices. We quickly ran between two houses and peeked out at the street. There were more police than we'd ever seen. They must have been sent in from Vilna or Minsk. The Smorgon police were there too. The police were in rows with



clubs in their hands. And in front of them all were a group of Cossacks on horses.

Sarah whispered to me, "Can you hear what they're saying?"

"Sha!" I said, and we both strained to hear the voices. A man on a horse was talking and the others became quiet. He was speaking Russian and saying something about teaching the strikers a lesson. We somehow knew he was telling them that when he gave a signal they were to charge the crowd in the square.

"We've got to warn them," said Sarah.

"But what about Papa?" I said. "We're not supposed to be here."

"We can't worry about that now," said Sarah. And we began running toward the square.

When we got near the speaker's platform we began shouting as loud as we could, "The Cossacks are coming! The police are coming!"

Avram appeared in front of us with his cart and bear.

"I can hold them off for a few minutes," he said. "Warn your sister and the other speakers. They're the ones they're after."

Some of the young men with the red armbands formed a line behind Avram and his bear facing where the police would be coming from. We ran to the front of the platform and ran right into Maish and Dunya. "100's of police are coming! And Cossacks on horses!" I shouted.

"Stay with me," said Dunya. Maish called to the men with red arm bands on the platform and they quickly got all the speakers off the stage and Dunya began to run toward the side of the square where the Orthodox Church stood. People scattered to make room for Dunya and us and the speakers who were following. And then they quickly moved together behind us. When she reached the

church Dunya headed around the side to a door that led down to the basement. We all followed.

“Oh it’s locked!” screamed Sarah. But Dunya took a key from her pocket and unlocked the door. We all followed Dunya into the basement of the church. She gave Maish the key and told him to go out and lock the door from the outside. Then Maish went to the front of the church and acted like he had just come out of the front door to see what was happening. Inside Dunya went toward the back of the church until she came to what looked like a solid wall. On the wall was a ring and when she turned it a door opened and we went through it. We were in a room with benches around the wall and a small lamp in one corner so we could barely see.

With the door safely closed, Kate and Anna came up to Sarah and me. “You disobeyed Papa,” said Anna.

“We wanted to hear you speak. You were wonderful!” Sarah said.

“You two could have been hurt yourselves,” said Kate.

“But we knew we had to warn you when we saw the police,” I said.

Just then I felt a big hand on my shoulder. It was the man they called Comrade Vladimir. His other hand was on Sarah’s shoulder.

“So who are these young heroes who gave us the warning? Do you use children in Smorgon as lookouts?” he said.

“This is Duvid and Sarah, my brother and sister,” said Anna. “They weren’t supposed to come to the rally and they were trying to get home without Papa seeing them. Fortunately for all of us they took the long way home.”

Outside the church we could hear running feet, horses, curses, and people crying out in pain. Then we heard noisy feet walking

above us and loud voices. The police were searching for the speakers. They sounded very angry that the speakers had gotten away so quickly. We all held our breath and didn't make a sound. Then we heard the priest's voice. He sounded calm but angry. I couldn't tell what he was saying. After a while the noise above stopped and we could hear the police leaving the church.

It seemed like hours before the door to our room opened. It was the priest, Father Vasily.

"Do you think it's safe for us to come out now, Papa?" said Dunya.

Father Vasily said, "The police are on their way back to Vilna."

"You call your priest 'Papa'?" I said.

Dunya laughed. "He is my Papa. How do you think I had the key to the basement door?"

Chavera Froidela thanked Father Vasily for hiding them. "I didn't hide you," he said. "My daughter did. What can a father do with such a child? She thinks that a church should be concerned about the suffering of working people."

Dunya said to her father, "These are the children of Rabbi Yankle Laib Gutman."

"I know your father," he said. "A scholar and a good man. We talk often about our disobedient children."

Anna and Kate took us home. Dvoira met us outside our house. They'd been waiting for us. "You're all OK?" asked Dvoira.

"Yes, our plan worked thanks to the warning these two were able to give us," said Anna. "Dunya hid us and her father ordered the police to leave his church."

"Papa is more worried than angry," said Dvoira. "We saw you two come running and yelling that the police were coming. We

were all watching the rally from the steps of the synagogue and went inside when the trouble started. The police came in and went through everything but Papa and the other rabbis said there was nothing for them to find and they finally left. I explained Dunya's plan for hiding the speakers if there was trouble."

"Wasn't Anna wonderful? Didn't you love her poem?" I said when I saw Papa.

"Wonderful, wonderful," he muttered. "And what are your mother and I to do with two children who don't stay where they are told to stay? What would have happened to you and to all of us if the police had caught you?"

"It's my fault," said Sarah. "I got Duvidel to go with me. It was my idea to go hear Anna."

I was about to object. I didn't like the idea of Sarah taking credit for the whole thing. But I decided it was best to keep my mouth shut.

Kate got the last word. "I know, Papa, you don't agree with the strike and what your daughters do but I also know you are a courageous man yourself in fighting for what you believe and you take pride in us."

Actually Mama got the last word. "One slice of black bread for your supper and to bed, both of you. And in the morning we'll talk about the extra chores you'll have for the next month."

As we were finishing our bread, we heard running footsteps and a knock on our door.

"Who's there?" Anna called out. "It's me, Dunya, Let me in."

"The police have arrested Maish," she said when Anna opened the door. "He's in jail now with some of the rally leaders."

So that was our first May Day. In our place, on the stove, I whispered to Sarah, "It wasn't all your idea."

“It really was my idea. Anyway we’re heroes,” she said. “Do you think we’ll get medals?”

“I’d settle for a bowl of Mama’s chicken soup,” I said.

I didn’t sleep well that night and I had a dream that Sarah and I were riding Cossack horses and chasing the Cossacks out of Smorgon and everyone was cheering for us. But then the Czar suddenly appeared on a huge black horse. The funny thing was he looked like Papa.

“I’ll teach you to disobey your Papa!” he shouted. Then he took a rope like an American cowboy and threw it around Sarah and me and dragged us off our horses.

“Duvid Mendel, wake up! Wake up!” Sarah was shaking me. “Stop kicking me.”

I opened my eyes and for a minute I didn’t know where I was.

“You were rolling around and kicking me and mumbling something about the Czar. That must have been some nightmare.”

# *In Memoriam*

## *Ken Goodman*

*1927 - 2020*

On Wednesday, March 10th Ken Goodman was able to join his family to celebrate Yetta Goodman's birthday. Together they were surrounded by their three daughters, Karen, Debi and Wendy, and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. At dawn on Thursday, March 12th he left this Earth with his family around him.

By common consent, Ken Goodman was one of the greatest - the greatest - reading researcher of the 20th Century. He was a fearless advocate for teachers and children - an empathetic, moral force - whose reading theories based on his disciplined, systematic and utterly brilliant miscue research have been proved right over and over again. Working closely with Yetta, a giant in the reading field in her own right, Ken Goodman will continue to be a force for good in an increasingly fragile world.

In memoriam, at Garn Press, we are sending love to Ken's family and sharing with you the fifth chapter of his novel *The Smart One*, which is a biographical story of his father's journey to the United States of America at the turn of the 20th Century.

