

# The Frierdiker Rebbe

By Yehoshua November

*And isn't it amazing  
that men walked by you in Latvian hallways,  
and had no idea they were passing a man  
who knew the day they would die and the women  
they would marry,  
but also asked simple questions  
at information booths, like  
How many miles to Nikaloyev?  
and Will I arrive before nightfall?  
until these words too were flooded  
with the mysticism of every Russian lake.*

And at the station in St. Petersburg,  
where your Chasidim had gathered,  
risking their lives  
to see you one last time,  
you turned from the steps of the train  
that was to carry you into exile  
and proclaimed,  
*They only have our bodies;  
the soul was never separated from God.  
The soul is never in exile.*

There was even holiness in the rain  
that fell on the hats of your followers  
as they paced before the river in Rostov,  
reciting your discourses by heart,  
line by line,  
until they would float like boats  
into the luminescence of your teachings.

*From the book G-d's Optimism*