

## Discussion points for The 35¢ Dowry

1. Minouche took a big risk sailing to India with little money and no guarantee that Stefan would meet her. If you were her close friend, would you have advised her to stay or go?
2. Minouche's mother who was young and single when she had Minouche at the beginning of WWII did not try to stop her from going to India alone at the age of eighteen. Why do you think she supported Minouche's decision? Do you think parents are more protective now? If you were her mother, would you allow her to make that trip?
3. When Minouche applied to the Paderewski Foundation for a grant to study in India, she wrote that she had a Polish grandfather. This was untrue. Do you think the lie was justified? Was she wise to make such a claim?
4. Minouche had a poor and difficult childhood with an alcoholic stepfather. What strength or personal qualities did she develop that helped her in her struggle to go to India?
5. Minouche and Stefan didn't know each other very well when Stefan left for India. Do you see any differences between them that could cause strain in their marriage later?
6. Minouche's mother married a man returning home after five years in a German prisoner-of-war camp. He was clearly sick in body and spirit, and the marriage was a failure. Was Minouche's mother naive to think that she could heal her new husband? When men and women return from war, what challenges do their spouses face? How can they make their marriages work?
7. Stefan's father who was imprisoned by the Russians was allowed to leave Siberia in order to fight Germany, who at the time was their common enemy. After the allies won the war, they divided Germany between themselves and "gave" Poland to Russia in exchange for their help in defeating Germany. Do you think the Allies had the right to give an independent nation to another country?
8. Stefan and Minouche's stepfather both lived through terrible experiences in war-time Europe. The stepfather was broken and became a bitter, angry man. Stefan, in contrast, set himself a goal to find wisdom and enlightenment in Europe. Why do you think some people recover from horrendous experiences and others cannot?
9. Some of Minouche's friends think she is using Stefan to find a better life for herself. Do you think that's true? Or did she fall in love with Stefan because of his lofty goals and his talent for making positive things happen? Could both be true?