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THE BONG-BANG

Standing in the rain  
my arms outstretched  
half a mile from the  
water's edge  
I feel the power of  
nature and the

A lone, glowing  
with a light of  
golden light  
I feel the power of  
nature and the

My heart is  
beating fast  
I feel the power of  
nature and the

My heart is  
beating fast  
I feel the power of  
nature and the

My heart is  
beating fast  
I feel the power of  
nature and the

My heart is  
beating fast  
I feel the power of  
nature and the

*The less-loose strings of a life  
ARE easily tied  
in neat slip knots  
Guaranteed to slip  
When you cling to their potential*

BRIAN NADATA



## THE BOND WAS THERE

Standing at the rough frame door of the sukkah, I timidly slipped my hand into the comforting grip of my grandfather. He pulled me into the narrow hut with good-natured force. My eyes focused on a half-eaten piece of sponge cake, covered with dust resting on the dark, earthen floor, with a black swarm of ants moving across the top. A young man in a frayed, white jacket pushed past us, carrying a half empty crystal wine decanter that caught the rays penetrating through the heavy, dried-out roofing and reflected them in a bright pattern of yellow squares against the wooden wall.

A bent, quivering old man shuffled up to us and mumbled something, exposing a mouth, sparsely filled with crooked yellow teeth. He lowered his face to me, and the white stubble on his chin almost touched my cheek. After his first incoherent word, I was forced to hold my breath. I recognized the kindness in his cloudy, blue eyes but I did not like him. He patted me on my head and I was fascinated by his grime-encrusted fingernails.

Making our way towards the back, I looked up. Above the brownish green pine needles I could see the blue sky and the white sheets and pajamas flapping from clotheslines suspended over the sukkah. I heard the tinkling of a bell and the shouts of the Puerto Rican children running to meet the ice cream truck.

Tacked to one wall was a rain-soaked picture of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The colors had run together softening the lines. It now had the appearance of a dream-like castle drifting through a pastel mist. A mud splattered sign printed in sharp, black letters invited the sages of the past to eat with us.

We sat down at a small table, and I studied the deep purple stains in the white tablecloth. Slices of rich brown honey cake lay on a small, cracked plate. A rotten apple hung over our heads, giving off a peculiar, sour smell. My grandfather poured two glasses of wine. I listened attentively as he pronounced the proper blessing in a low voice I responded with a weak "amen." The wine warmed my throat. I ate a piece of cake and I then concentrated on dislodging a piece of candied fruit from my teeth with my tongue. In the background I could hear the steady drone of the other men chanting grace.

I sat apart as the others prayed, sang, and danced. I looked on from afar, removed from their strange ways. Something told me that I could never fit in. Yet, my heart demanded that I try.

STEVEN SILVERMAN



*To the American Jewish Committee*  
**HIEROSOLYMA EST PERFECTA . . .**

by Yaacov Stollman

*(Like) mini-skirted menopausals*  
*Letting their hair down*  
*Whore-like*  
*To the shoulders,*  
*to the kids, begging,*  
*I'm OK please.*

*They say*  
*Oh, you're so old-fashioned*  
*and the tortured dadas*  
*and the dessicated mamas*  
*Say*  
*Your mother and I think*  
*We virtually quite dig ya already*  
*And a razzmatazz and*  
*Away they go HEP.*

*And the little old ladies*  
*Are making bead necklaces*  
*Out of half-used saccharins and*  
*Delivering 'em on their motorscooters*  
*To their also-skullcapped*  
*Sons-in-law.*

YAACOV STOLLMAN



## WINNER TAKE ALL

The floor of the Russian Tea Room felt as smooth as a snifter of Courvoisier as Trudi and I danced. I could feel her close to me as I softly sang the words to the dance music. She rested her head on my shoulder and her long blonde hair dangled down my jacket.

"I wish we could just freeze this room and stay this way forever," I whispered.

She brushed her head against my cheek as the . . . RINGING! Where's the ringing coming from?

I looked up at that middle class definition for virtue, and noticed it was nine o'clock. The phone sounded like a battery of 104's. Only Trudi would be calling me this early in the morning, so I said,

"Hello, Trudi Darling," carefully covering a slight yawn, and Mary-Ann exploded.

"Who did you say? Trudi! And I thought you were sick last night.

"God, I was! My mother's nickname is Trudi, and I've been trying to get a loan on my allowance from her, so I could afford to take you out.

"Do you always call your mother darling?"

"When I'm in between-checks I do. Besides, what's wrong with a little filial affection. Don't you respect a boy-friend who cares for his relatives? So take it easy honey, you know I . . .

She hung up. So I called her back, and she was crying, and I promised not only to take her out on a date the night before my Physics test, but to buy her something special. Unfortunately, I was in no shape to do either. I was not only flunking Physics, but I was so broke that I could collect welfare in Biafra.

I looked on the calendar. April 12 was just too early for an additional loan on next month's allowance. Besides, as it stood, next month I was due to collect three dollars and fifty cents after deduction of the 1st loan. So I decided it was about time to see my one and only grandmother, whom I hadn't seen or called in over six months. Oh, well, I could fix that. I looked in my date book. Granny's birthday was February 22 – too far away. She became a citizen on March 15 – too late. It was a month to Mother's Day-not bad. It was a good opener, even though it was a bit corny.



As I left the dorm, the two beggar women were just posting themselves outside the campus gate.

"Be well, be well," they said as they blocked me from leaving. I was annoyed at the toothless one, because I had heard that she came in a taxi each morning, and owned stocks and real-estate. So I tossed the other one a quarter. Then I drove down to see Granny.

Granny lived in an old apartment in Brooklyn, that has since been leveled. Her bedroom faced a pool hall, while the living room, at the front of the apartment, faced a newly-built high-riser apartment complex. I could never understand why she lived there, because she always went to the Pocono's and to Florida; and anyway, she was loaded. That was her business, though, being the nostalgic type she probably couldn't stand the idea of leaving her old home. So I put on my Morasha skullcap, and my Walt Disney smile, and went up to meet my objective.

Granny was in the living room, reading by her favorite lamp – a relic of Lublin with little purple pom-poms on a white shade with a smudged picture of a boy and girl running through a meadow on its purple base. According to Granny, she was hoeing in the field, while Grandfather was inside learning Torah when two polish teenagers in a wagon tried to run her down. She dropped her hoe, and stood there as the horses galloped towards her, and the brown dust whisped like smoke under their hooves. Then she deftly stepped aside, reined in the horses, and picked up a shovel. The Poles, terrified at the sight of a Jewess reining in two plow horses, turned the wagon, and fled, dropping part of their cargo—the lamp. A few months later, Gramps was killed and she left with her children for the streets of the Lower East Side.

The rest of the room was decorated with a long, green terry-cloth couch, and matching red and grey chairs. The walls were newly-painted off-white and held numerous browning pictures of the pre-war, old-country family, and two daugeurrotypes of Gramps which gave the room a stale, 1930's atmosphere, despite the new paint. The end tables were covered with pictures of the family; especially my cousins and myself when we were still babies, no pictures past the Bar-Mitzvah age. Taking up the whole far wall stood a large bookcase, filled with classics and with scholarly works on the Bible, including the complete Talmud – most of them in seeming good condition, despite the dull, aged color of the bindings.

As I came closer, Granny looked up from her copy of the Jerusalem Post, and stared blankly at me. She straightened a wisp of silver-grey hair from over her right eye, walked over to me, and smiled.

"Grandma, how are you? It's been such a long time I felt I had to come over and see you. Besides, It's almost Mother's Day, so I've decided to make this Sunday Grandmother's Day. I think my chances are very good, don't you?"



"Shlomo, have pity on your old grandmother. I'm just getting accustomed to this pleasant surprise, and your turning it into a national event. Don't you think we should take first things first? My G-d, you look much more grown up than the last time I saw you!

Today . . . "Let's not talk about me, let's talk about you, Granny. You look younger every time I see you . . .

"Which is very rarely, shlomo."

I just stood there calmly with my stepin-fetchit smile. "Yes, I really wanted to contact you, grandma, but my job . . ."

. . . Oh, you work now!

"I did for a while, but I had to give it up for more important things . . . my studies.

I figured it was about time for her to offer me something she had baked. Instead, she walked over to the living room next to her paper, stopped smiling, and sat down.

"Now, what can I do for you shlomo. This is a business call, isn't it?

"Granny! How can you say that? It's true I can use your help, but it isn't a *business* call. You see, with all my work and my Hebraic studies, I've had no time to work, and could use a loan to help me concentrate better."

She smiled again. "Of course, I understand. Have you ever read *Crime and Punishment*?"

"Sure . . . it's a great classic."

"So we both know how much a poor student can suffer, I know, I lived through some hard times, too." Her eyes kept staring.

"By the way, are your parents still regularly going to the racetrack?

"I don't think so. Besides, the season at Aqueduct doesn't begin until the 28th."

"Oh, I see." She smiled again.

"Yes, it's posted all over the subways, and occasionally I hear it on the radio. So they must have constant ads over all the media. I often thought that if you had advertised more back in the '30's . . . She laughed. "I'd still be a grey old lady today, and besides, I have more than I can deal with today; who needs more of that?"

"I could use a little of *that*, Granny."



"Yes I remember. to return to your problem. We don't want you just taking money from your poor Granny. Easy money spoils people. makes them soft, and weakens character-not to mention all that ruined potential. So let's gamble for it, sharpen your wits, teach you a few tricks of the trade."

"Wonderful, Granny." Who could ask for a better grandmother? She was the greatest. It would be almost like working for it, so no conscience pangs. We might even close the generation gap.

Granny walked into her bedroom and returned with a deck of yellowed cards, and a hard-knitted charcoal grey talis bag. She opened the bag and took out a roll of bills, held by a garter.

"Alright Shlomo, don't be shy. 10-1 odds on every bet. You must have some money stashed away for emergencies.

"Yes, I have some emergency money." And I removed a 20 dollar bill from my wallet lining, wrote a one dollar credit note and threw it on the table.

"I suppose it's only proper to straighten out the rules before the game, Granny -

"Aces high, nothing wild, winner take all."

"I see your Hebraic Studies are branching into all fields, Shlomo."

"Oh, Granny, it isn't against tradition to read. You couldn't call the great all-American western novel subversive, could you?"

"No, I suppose not."

Granny took the yellow deck into her crumpled right parchment-like hand, broke the deck, used the King's bridge Shuffle, flipped the cards up her arm, let them neatly fall back, reshuffled and dealt.

"Aces high, nothing wild, winner take all," she said.

As I watched closely, I could have sworn Granny bottom dealt, using her right pinky in a quick, almost imperceptible twitching action, but the cards were flying too fast to be sure. When I picked up my cards, though, my suspicions were confirmed. She had dealt me a full-house, Kings high, with a pair of queens. What a woman! I winked at her.

Her face remained blank-not a muscle twitched. "Cards?"



"No, not even one . . .

"I'll take three.

She rearranged her hand, put the cards face down on the table, and stated, "Your bet."

I threw down a five dollar note, and she matched me with fifty, and threw in another fifty. I saw her bet with a five dollar note, and put in my last four dollars to raise. She called with forty dollars. There were two hundred twenty dollars in the pot.

Granny remained still and unflinching as I laid down my cards.

"Granny, you're beautiful – full house, kings high," I said, as I pulled in the pot.

The blow was swift. The pain shot up my arm, and I could see the pulsing mark on my knuckles. As the pain increased, I couldn't help jumping around the room, trying to move my paralyzed fingers.

"Darn it," I yelled.

Granny still held her vicious billy club of a walking stick in her right hand, as she turned over her cards and said, "Sorry Shlomo, I have four aces, and you did say winner take all."

Reeling in pain, I yelled, "You cheated, Granny. I should have cut the darn deck.

Granny's treacherous eyes looked at me. "What did you say, Shlomo?"

I left mumbling fiercely under my breath. An hour later, our family doctor assured me that my hand would be fine, although I still couldn't move my fingers for a week. When my parents heard about the incident, they were furious. They attempted to institutionalize Granny suspecting that she suffered from senile dementia. But Granny simply threatened to disinherit us, and the next day she was off to her cabin in the Pocono's with our blessings.

A few months later, Granny's will was read. We're still contesting it, although it's probably useless. Granny got the bets firm in the city to write it. My parents got two racing stubs, and I got a yellow deck of cards and a walking stick. The fortune, we were told, was passed on to the State of Israel. We don't believe any of it, though. We know what really happened. Granny figured out a way to take it with her.

LARRY JONAS

## PETTY POINT

*Standing at the corner of Maiden Lane  
Waiting for the light to change  
Dips her shellacked arthritis  
Into her petit-point money bag  
For a monogrammed handkerchief  
to blow her virgin nostrils,  
Proud of her heritage.*

*The light changes in the dead-end street  
She checks if her neat bun,  
hankering for some knitting needles,  
is still there and  
waits at the bus stop.*

*Do you know if the Warren bus  
stops here, asks the young man.  
Nothing, then no, then ten seconds  
And she boards alone that Warren bus showing  
her Golden Age card proud of her ancestry  
Going to her grandchildren  
Oh, they're almost full adults!*

*Proud of her ancestry, she sucks  
on Betsy Ross sour candies  
With an apple pie in a box in her hand for her  
dear Grandchildren. (The flag was too big  
and she couldn't get it off her porch anyway.)  
Proud of the D.A.R.  
She re-rouges her gracefully convoluted cheeks  
and mobilizing her packages and things walks  
attractively and modestly off the bus.*

*Into the bookstore she goes  
To get a volume on George Washington  
for her littlest  
by a respectable Vanderbilt, Proud of herself*



*Proud people walking out and in  
Raving about their  
Naomi Sims  
Whose grandmother was a doorprize  
At a hi-society Atlanta luncheon.  
They lied to the little old lady  
When they told her, Grandma the wealthy socialite,  
Was upright in the South.*

## GENOCIDE

*Paying for the hunting, the mumbles  
the Dresden lampshades  
Like the pock-marked do  
To see a film rated "X".  
It legalizes ogling.*

*They've had a long intermission  
(Theaters get so stuffy  
you can hardly . . . .)*

*There was no water  
in the first act,  
But they say there's plenty  
for us  
In their second.*

YAACOV STOLLMAN

## SPINOZA—THE MAKING OF A RADICAL

A thinker can be understood only as we relive his experiences, for each man is tempered by the events of his life. Thus, if we are to truly understand the varied aspects of Spinoza's political and social philosophy, we must first undertake a study of some of the more prominent events of his life.

Probably the most momentous event of Spinoza's life was his excommunication from the faith of his fathers, Judaism. Thus, Spinoza's ideas were tempered not only by the momentous events of the seventeenth century, but by this complete break with his past way of life. Thus, religion played as big a role as any other in the creation of Spinoza, the political thinker.

As one studies the general history of Spinoza's life, especially in its formative stages, we see a constant mixture of commercial and religious interests. His youth brought him into firsthand contact with the realities of commercial life. Baruch did not pursue the curriculum of studies which would ultimately lead him to the rabbinate. He was probably not more than thirteen years old when he joined his father's concern, a successful import and export trade. He was all of seventeen years old when his older brother, Isaac died. Thereafter, Bento D'Espinosa, as he was now called, took an even larger interest in the family business, which culminated in his becoming the manager of the family business upon his father's death.

But Baruch knew that business was not to remain his sole station in life. He began to cultivate friendships outside of the business community — friends in both literary and scientific circles. A life devoted to the accumulation of worldly possessions seemed futile — not because this would seem to adhere to the purest Judaic concept of spending one's days and nights absorbed in the study of the divine law found within the Torah, but to the more elusive studies of theory and philosophy. In March of 1656, Baruch began his withdrawal from the business world.

Many historians have ventured to suggest that Baruch Spinoza's father helped make his son into a "freethinker." Michael D'Espinosa was indeed a respected man within the Jewish community of Amsterdam. He had been a Warden of the Synagogue, a member of the "Santa Companhia de dotar Orphas e Donzellas", a society which provided dowries for orphans, and an administrator of the "Misva do Emprestito, a bank which provided interest-free loans for the poor. But the main thrust of the elder Spinoza's activities were along the lines of social betterment, and his conception of religion may thus be summarized as a social and practical one. Baruch himself received an education of both religious subjects, a necessity in the Amsterdam community, and mathematics, logic and the



like. During these formative years, the influence of Francis van dan Ende upon Spinoza's search for his own distinctive way of life cannot be minimized. Van dan Ende, a self-professed pantheist, opened Baruch's life to the Latin language, which offered him a gateway to the world of European learning and science, to the understanding of contemporary philosophy and the labyrinth of modern political life and radical political philosophy. Spinoza, under the direction of Van dan Ende, also encountered the original ideas of the Dutch Liberal Republicans, a group inspired by John de Witt, with a common allegiance to the mathematical method and the scientific study of economic and political questions – both of which became pillars of Spinoza's intellectual temple.

The wealthy Jewish interests, allied to the dominant trading companies, were disturbed by the calls of "free trade" and criticism of the Republicans. Thus, as Spinoza began to formulate his political ideals, he found himself in an ever increasing position of opposition to the fundamental theories of the elders of his community.

However, one must now, in his effort to study the final move toward's excommunication and its ramifications, return to study the Jewish community of Amsterdam, for its political philosophy, as well as its economic "sacred cows" are those to which Spinoza would ultimately come into conflict. Amsterdam Jewry, with its outstanding traditionalists, found itself well within the mainstream of contemporary European culture, and not removed within a cultural ghetto. For instance, Mennasseh ben Israel, the rabbi of the Amsterdam community, member of the Bet Din (high court), and principal of the Yeshiva, prided himself on his close personal and intellectual relations with the Gentile world. The strict orthodox forms, usually associated with European Jewry, had declined. Rembrandt's portraits of the members of the Jewish community (which in and of itself is a significant development, as portraits are considered a graven image, and illegal in the strictest orthodox interpretation) show, in so far as the dress was concerned, an attempt to adapt to "the ways of the world." It was the Dutch authorities, not the Jewish community, which forbade intermarriage. The library of Spinoza's judge, Rabbi Isaac de Fonseca Aboab, housed the works of Montaigne, Hobbes, and Machiavelli, as well as the more traditional Hebrew tomes, such as the Books of Moses and the Talmud.

The Amsterdam Jewish community was dominated by a small commercial oligarchy which could impose its will in matters of politics and theology. Even more, it was a virtually autonomous socio-economic entity which negotiated with other nations, cities, and other Jewish communities. The political loyalties of the community can thus be seen in this economic context, and their loyalties respond to their economic attachments. Fealty to the House of Orange was their cardinal principle, and it united them, politically as well as economically, with the influential and numerous Calvinist party of the Netherlands. Spinoza was ten years old when the synagogue was host to the Prince of Orange and a queen of England. Poems of some passion were recited to celebrate the victory of the Dutch over the hated "pagan" Spaniards.



Wealth in the community was concentrated in a few hands, and with that wealth came the usual social power. The leaders of the community were the Portuguese descendants (Sephardic Jewry), although outnumbered by the Eastern European (Ashkenazic) Jewry. The average wealth of the Ashkenazic Jew was below that of the Amsterdam community at large. This wealth, which was securely in Sephardic hands, manifested itself in the usual manners of community control—education, charity, houses of worship, and others. Eastern European Jews were impotent before the oligarchical structure of the Amsterdam synagogue.

The constitution of the synagogue gave dictatorial powers to the *parnassim* (the wardens of the synagogue). This ruling body was self-perpetuating and unrestrained by any democratic restraints from the community at-large. The seven members of the Council, said Article VI of the Constitution, having elected themselves from the previously existent Council of fifteen, "will in the future always elect the new Council." Dissent was non-existent within the religious community. No book, whether in Hebrew or any other language, could be published without the permission of the governing council, or *Mahamad*. Article II decreed excommunication for a wide variety of offences—publishing libelous writings, impertinence or disrespect to the presiding authority, or participation in any other Jewish service within a six-mile radius without the prior two-thirds consent of the congregation.

The theory of Spinoza's excommunication has been debated by authorities, both within the Jewish intellectual community and without, for hundreds of years. However, one of the strongest ones presented, and probably the most widespread, deals with Spinoza's radical beliefs—in Judaism and in the political forces of Europe in the seventeenth century.

With the secular culture which spread with the Enlightenment and the entire Haskalah movement, winds of change began to stir in the dusty confines of the physical and mental ghettos of traditional, Orthodox Jews in Europe. Young Jews were rapidly drawn to extreme liberalism, radicalism, and socialism, as they were in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century. The next move was quite evident—assimilation, the most feared word to the heads of the communities. As the ideal of the equality and fraternity of all human beings took root in the young Jewish mind, the doctrine of Jews as the "chosen people" became less and less tolerable.

Spinoza is the early prototype of the Jewish radical. He was a pioneer in forging methods of scientific study in history and politics. Embracing the cosmopolitan attitude of the intellectuals of his day, he scorned the notion of a privileged people. But above all, Spinoza was a radical political thinker. Perhaps the Jewish community could tolerate the mad ravings against the faith of his fore-fathers.



However, the Amsterdam community, Sephardic in outlook, could not soon forget the traumatic expulsion from Spain and Portugal in 1492. They had learned the bitter lesson well—the wandering Jew cannot afford to profess radical political beliefs in a land which is not his. They could not tolerate a political and economic radical in their midst. They reacted with the fear and anger built up through years of hardship; they were not prepared to sacrifice their wealth for an intellectual maverick. Thus, Spinoza found himself cast out from the fold of his people.

Many political philosophers and students of such work downgrade the importance of Spinoza's excommunication on his later works. This opinion, I feel, comes from an ignorance of Judaism. Picture any Jew. He has lived his entire life within a small community. His family has lived there for years. Your daily acquaintances are all of the same faith, for you have many more friends within the ghetto than outside of its walls. You hope to marry and raise a family. Suddenly, you are put on trial for your soul, for that is what is lost to you through excommunication. Then, with candles flickering, the Rabbi of the community intones the fateful passages: "With the judgment of the angels and the saints, we excommunicate, cut off, curse and anathematize Baruch de Spinoza . . . Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night. Cursed be he in sleeping and cursed be he in waking . . . The Lord shall not pardon him, the Lord shall destroy his name under the sun . . ." Thus, his soul has been removed from the congregation of Jewry throughout the world. But that is not all. "And we warn you, that none may speak to him by word of mouth, nor by writing, nor show any favor to him, nor be under the same roof with him, nor come within four cubits of him, nor read any paper composed or written by him." Physical separation is ordered, and the excommunicant becomes an intellectual leper to his people.

This experience reveals itself within the framework of Spinoza's political philosophy. Although Spinoza feels very strongly the need for government and obedience to authority, as a means towards unity, he does not wish man to become the slave of a monolithic tyranny. The self-interest that an individual accrues through society must be equaled by the self-interest of the sovereign authority in governing reasonably. It should, at all costs, avoid causing indignation by the people through tyranny. Thus, on the basis of this idea and the idea that the natural passion should be transformed to the servant of reason, Spinoza rejects monarchy in favor of a democratic government, for democracy best provides for a "state of nature" condition to exist in the governing of men. The state exists for the sake of the individual. Thus, if all the people willingly agree to bestow power in one government which expresses the will of all men, they are in fact participating in self-government.

One striking feature of the democratic state according to Spinoza is that it gives to the sovereign power the right to legislate laws on religion. While Spinoza does not wish to abolish religion in his political state, he wished to keep the diverse passion of religion away from the arena of political action. Furthermore, when religious leaders are granted political power, they seem to corrupt both their religious obligations and the political power which they attain. The perfect form of government, in Spinoza's mind, balances the need for public harmony and stability in a pluralistic society with complete private freedom of speech, thought and faith—freedoms which he dearly missed in the confines of the Amsterdam community structure.

Thus, Spinoza was definitely a creature of his own environment—especially when that environment turned on him. As a result, Spinoza's political philosophy takes on new meaning when viewed as a reaction to his excommunication, as well as deeper insights into the man and his ideals.

HOWARD DORFMAN

### REQUIEM FOR JIMINY CRICKET

*Good-night my ever proper friend,  
Sleep well.  
I leave your wagging digit  
And the eyes that stare accusing  
Even shut.  
The Hell of guilt to which I'm damned,  
The closing vise whose levers you've wrenched round  
Despite the cries for love and mercy  
From my pressured frame.  
Now Dagon's pillars fall!  
I exercise thee, Ethic,  
As my lips pronounce thy name—Beelzebub,  
'Tis the same  
To one who's tasted fruit from Eden's Tree of Knowledge  
Whose green branches bud aflame in Sheol's blaze  
Still unconsumed.  
I see my soul depart  
But save my final breath,  
To taunt cruel conscience  
Joining me in death.*

JOHNATHAN BLASS



*Does it pay  
To digit-dial  
my hopes*

*The absurdity  
of pouring my heart  
Into a piece  
Of black molded plastic*

*To receive perhaps  
a busy signal*

BRIAN NADATA

## HOW I LOST MY FAITH IN . . . .

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE NOT LISTENED TO *ALICE'S RESTAURANT* RECENTLY, PLEASE DO SO BEFORE READING ANY FURTHER. THANK YOU.

— THE MANAGEMENT

### Directions to the Reading Public

The is to be read as Arlo Guthrie would read a narrative tale of adventure and deep inner contemplation. And now, for The Entertainment proper.

I got a story to tell you. It's the story about How I Lost My Faith and The Truly Amazing Consequences of that adventure of the mind.

I was sitting on the grass, smoking some of the same, playing a verse of *Alice's Restaurant* on my guitar, and messing around with my nymphomaniacal girlfriend. I was having a real swell time, engaged as I was in all these groovy things, planning on doing even more fantasmagorical student radical activities, when all of a sudden — I had to go to the john.

I walked into the nearest rest-and recreation room, and was soon engaged in deep contemplative thought about all kinds of earth-shattering proposals, when a thought occurred in my brain which completely shattered my deeply contemplative thoughts and totally blew my mind, to say nothing of making a mess out of my graffiti.. This thought which completely shattered my deeply contemplative thoughts and totally blew my mind, to say nothing of making a mess out of my graffiti, was none other than the horrifying cogitation that I had been at college for five entire months, doing all kinds of radical, groovy things like smoking grass, playing verses of *Alice's Restaurant* on my guitar, and messing around with my nymphomaniacal girlfriend, and yet—I was still a Member of the Establishment. I still believed all the antediluvian, outdated advice my parents had given me. I still believed in Motherhood, the flag, and apple pie. And, yes, and, yes, I still believed that I Had a Friend at the Chase Manhattan Bank!!!

After giving my poor, utterly destroyed, and totally blown mind a sufficient interval of time to recover from this stupendous blow—a period of five or ten seconds—I realized that I would have to find Something To Lose My Faith In, as well as departing from the john, in order to return to the grass, *Alice's Restaurant*, and my evereager, mosting undressed, nymphomaniacal girlfriend. I came to the conclusion, based on much deep, analytical thought, which had its roots in Plato's *Republic*, Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *The Vocation of Man*, and Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part One, Proposition Thirty-Two, Corollary Two, that I had better get the hell out of the john before they locked it up for the night.



One my way outside, back to the grass and all the other groovy things that were happening, I tripped and fell. As I rose to a standing position, I looked around in an angry, eye-glaring, fist-clenching attempt to discover who or what it was that had so cruelly laid me low. My glaring, but every alert, keen, and generally sharp eyes caught sight of a small piece of black string on the ground, next to my foot. Upon closer inspection and general looking-into, I discovered that my shoelace, my trusty black shoelace, had broken. Applying the principles of Plato's *Republic*, Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *The Vocation of Man*, and Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part One, Proposition Thirty-Two, Corollary Two, I came to the horrendous conclusion that I had tripped on my very own shoelace, the same shoelace I had sheltered and given warmth to since infancy. And then, in a flash, in a veritable bolt of Mental Lightning, I came to the sad conclusion that I Had Lost My Faith In My Shoelace.

After my mental outlook and general opinion of life had been totally uprooted by this astounding change in my mental processes, I walked back onto the grass, rolled some of the same, picked up my guitar, and tapped on the shoulder that quivering mass of femininity already referred to as my nymphomaniacal girlfriend. "Nymph," I said, "Nymph, I have just Lost My Faith In My Shoelace." Upon hearing this, my friend was so amazed, overjoyed, and generally hot and bothered that she insisted that we make love, that very minute, right there on the grass. A couple of hours later, she looked up at me and asked me how I Had Lost My Faith In My Shoelace.

By the time I had finished telling the truly unique and soul-stirring tale of how I came to Lose My Faith In My Shoelace, a small crowd had gathered. After the smoke from the grass and other swinging prettysmelling things had cleared, and I had climbed over the pile of guitars, all being played to the tune of *Alice's Restaurant*, I was surrounded by a veritable harem of new found nymphomaniacal girlfriends. This entire crowd of grass burners, guitar players, and nymphomaniacal girls then proceeded to descend on the nearest university building and sit down and block off all exits to that building, so that I would have an even bigger audience for my next rendition of How I Lost My Faith In My Shoelace . . . I'll just wait for it to come around on the guitar again . . .

Now, folks, you may well ask of what consequence is My Losing My Faith In My Shoelace. And to be perfectly honest with you, if I were the only person in the entire world to Lose My Faith In My Shoelace, it would be a small thing indeed. But if *two* people, *two people*, were to Lose Their Faith In Their Shoelaces, the man who runs the corner grocery store and sells black shoelaces as a profitable sideline, might get worried. And if *ten* people, *ten people*, were to Lose Their Faith In Their Shoelaces, the black shoelace manufacturers might start to get a little queasy, and get the shakes and all kinds of ailments, and if *fifty* people, just think of it, *fifty people*, were to stand up, all over America, and Lose Their Faith In Their Shoelaces, while quoting Plato, John Gottlieb Fichte, and Spinoza (*Ethics*, Part One, Proposition Thirty-Two, Corollary Two)—why, it'd be a revolution, friend.





## AUTUMN

His entire body trembled, from the dark and weather-worn shoulder and powerful arm, straining against the warped wooden stock of the shovel, that showed the wear of at least one winter too many, to the tight midsection covered by the faded coarse woolen shirt tied around his waist, to his foot exerting strength against the bent and rusted shovel. It was an amusing contrast, every inch of his massive six and a half foot frame intently concentrating on a mush melon that could not have been larger than six and a half inches in diameter, now half-uncovered through his labor, but neither he nor his slight wife who stood by him smiled. She never once took her eyes off the melon as he labored. Her intense concentration paralleling his intense effort, was a poor attempt to mask her feeling of inadequacy, for her hands that nervously tugged at the strings of a non-existent bonnet would have surely betrayed her, had her husband looked at her.

When a last violent thrust had unearthed the fruit from the ground, he bent to retrieve it and placed it in his wife's hands. As she carefully placed it with the others in the broken wheel-barrel, he smiled a full smile through his uneven but unbroken teeth in his wife's direction, but it was only by chance that his smile radiated in her direction, for it was the smile of his own pride in his own achievement, and she was not to be included. She had been included in less and less of her husband's life—speech between them was now rare—ever since she detected the scent of perfume on his overalls after one of his mysterious night-time "trips," and she had never owned a bottle.

As her head turned towards him, he turned his eyes away from her sharply and looked at the sky, now darkly over-cast with its burden of imminent rain. He untied the shirt that had slipped to his thighs and as he buttoned it, he motioned with his head in the direction of the small shack. As he resolutely marched behind his wife towards the little wooden shack he paused to look at the half of a rusty horse shoe that hung precariously over his doorway. When he closed the door behind him, he looked up at the sign that hung above it:

GOD BLESS OU H

and thought about the lettering that he'd been planning to repair. Then, as if to shake the doubt from his mind, he gave his head a slight shake and began to speak: "Its' the good kinda rain" he mumbled as he wiped the grime from his shiny face with a grimy shirt-sleeve. "Whut?" she whispered absently.

He cleared the tightness of labor from his throat, "It's the good kinda rain that's comin'. The kinda rain that feeds the earth, washes away the dust o' too much winter. Spring's a new year."

"Winter's a bad part o' the year, but spring's another part o' the year" she added too eagerly.

"Winter's the year's end," he noticed her by him at the dull window that neither of them were looking through, only at, "spring's a new year . . . This here's gonna be a spring rain. The dust's gonna melt, an' the flowers'll bloom, and' . . ."

". . . An' the pond'll o'erflow agin," she said barely raising her voice, almost apologetically, "that was spring."

His eyes narrowed and vacantly, quietly he responded "It was winter."

"Winter!" she tugged at a bonnet string, "Billy never seen winter," she sobbed, "an' he never will . . . after he seen spring." "It was winter . . . not fer folks," he whispered at the window, "jest fer Billy, an' the Lord." He smiled a faint smile at the window and absently touched the window sash that was badly in need of paint. "It was winter fer Billy jest as sure as this here's gonna be spring fer folks."

He turned away from the window and slowly, deliberately he grabbed the empty potato sack that had been lying near the stove for the past week, and began to fill it with the clothes and food that he would need. But the pain in his eyes made it clear that a more than occasional memory had joined the little in the worn sack.

"You mean, jest as sure as this here's gonna be spring fer you" she said, still facing the window.

He dropped his bag and took his place by her, facing the window once more.

"Could be spring fer you too."

"How?"

"It's still early, an'," he looked at her, "you've still got the summer ahead of you."

"Summer?"

"Yer young, an', an' purty still."

For the first time in along while, her face twisted with the emotion she no longer tried to hide. "As young an' as purty as her?"

He avoided her eyes as the silence engulfed them. For several intolerable seconds neither of them moved for fear of colliding with the other who might choose to move at that same instant, and contact was to be avoided at all pains. They could have remained there indefinitely had it not been for the redeeming dark clouds that grew darker with the moment.

"Rain's here soon" he murmured.

"Whut?" she cleared her throat.

"I say the rain's here soon," he put on his hat, "I best put a move on."



As his hand started for the latch that fastened the door, her words halted him: "Might wash out the road."

"Mebbe," he said, "There's other roads, jest gotta find 'em . . . Gonna be a good rain."

"Gonna wash out *our* road" she implored.

He paused on his way out of the cabin to say softly; "Gonna grow flowers," and as he slowly stepped outside the cabin, "put the first one on the boy's grave."

As he mounted the tired horse, never once looking back, he felt the drops mingle with the tears already on his cheeks, and a single snowflake melt on the tip of his nose.

From inside she whispered, perhaps to the window, for he could no longer hear her, "Go well," and more softly yet, "Grow well." She moved closer to the stove to warm herself from the chill in the air.

BRIAN NADATA





## SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

The sound of the record falling onto the turntable brought him back, but slowly, hesitantly. The heat was oppressive, hot and humid, like it wanted to suffocate him, but the bunsen burner, the giant, ugly bunsen burner, the instrument of Dan's torture, was gone. He couldn't see it anywhere, it was no longer roasting him in its gaseous flames, it had disappeared.

"What kind of lab doesn't have a bunsen burner?" Dan masochistically wondered aloud, sounding stoned, throwing his question at the voices coming from the other end of the room, as he slumped forward in his seat and scrutinized the top of his formica-topped desk, his nose half an inch from the surface.

"What kind of lab doesn't have black stone desks?" He received no answer from the voices and added in an irritated shout, "HUH?" Yeah, he thought, this desk is brown. Labs have black desks, black slabs of cold stone. He touched his nose to the desk. Warm.

The thin gray film of sleepless sleep began to dissolve from his eyes, and the subtle pounding in his head gradually subsided. His senses slowly returned to normal and informed him that the whirring machine, going round and round on the elevated platform, was the record player atop his dresser, not a centrifuge apparatus. The voices he heard were the whining blues of the CREAM, not the whining pedantics of his lab mates. The shelves were filled with labelled objects, but the label which had seemed to read  $\text{NH}_4$  DIL AMMONIUM HYDROXIDE 6M only moments ago now read QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND ELECTROLYTIC SOLUTIONS, First Edition. He smelled the heavy air. The stench permeating the room was that of pot, not potassium, and he knew he was in his dorm room, not the lab. Dan took a deep breath; a sigh, he decided, a sigh of relief, because here he was relatively safe. Safe from the fire-breathing bunsen burner.

Dan abruptly ran out of patience with the concept of "Limiting Equivalent Conductance" and slammed the book shut. He concluded that the only limiting aspect of equivalent conductance was that it limited him. Here he was, shut off in the stifling atmosphere of the dormitory in the middle of July, while most of "the guys" were in the mountains, working the hotels and camps. And getting layed, too.

"Damn it," he said to the Albert Einstein poster on the wall, as he reached for the comfort of the phone on his desk. He had just written an exam that same morning, and it irked him that he had to start studying for the next exam already. He dialed Sharon's number. Yeah, Sharon, the cause, direct or indirect, of his current misery.



"Hello Sharon."

"Hello?"

"Yeah, I said hi."

"What? . . . Oh, Danny . . . it's you."

"No, it's him. What's with you? Two years, and you still can't recognize my voice?" She always did, always knew it was him, sometimes even picked up the phone saying "Hi, Danny" before he even got a chance to open his mouth.

"You sound surprised I called, honey."

"Huh? . . . No. No, no. Not at all. I, uh, just . . . well, yeah, I'm surprised. I guess. OK?"

"Pleasantly surprised, no doubt." Dan let his irritation seep into his voice, but Sharon didn't detect the mocking tone, and stupidly, from a distance, said, "Yeah, yeah. Very pleasant." The sight of Dan's chemistry professor flashed through his mind. "Mr. Lasky," he would say after jolting Dan out of one of his classroom reveries, "I suspect your mind is elsewhere." Dan uneasily began to suspect that Sharon's heart was elsewhere, but he couldn't fathom the situation, she had always been so zealous in her pursuit of him, sometimes over-zealous, to the extent that it had sickened him.

"Well, what have you got to tell me?"

"Nothing."

"Not a thing, huh? Nice relationship we got."

"No, I mean, uh, it's your dime, right? So you talk. But it wouldn't hurt if you opened your mouth every once in a while, too."

"What do you mean?"

"You head what I said."

"What do you want me to say, Danny?" she almost screeched in exasperated anger.

"You can start by telling me what the hell is going on with you."

"With me?"

"Yeah, you, like in relation to me."

"In relation to you?"

"Will you cut the crap and quit repeating what I'm saying, SHARON." Don't give me grief now, Danny thought. I've got enough crap with this lousy concentrated super-duper summer session chem course so I can be your damn stupid doctor-husband, SHARON.

He could sense her impatience with him, she communicated best in silence, she wanted him to hang up.

Hang up? he asked himself. And end the conversation like this? He couldn't believe she was capable of this, Sharon, who always nagged him into reconciliation, Sharon is gonna leave things like this?



"Sharon, I'm sorry. Forget it. Look, I jsut took an exam this morning and I wanna unwind, so how about if I come over now, alright?" Sharon's answer to such proposals had always been a enthusiastic yes.

"No."

Dan was stunned.

"No?"

"Well, like, I sort of have plans for tonight, already."

"You do?" She had always been subservient to him, he assumed she'd be sitting around waiting for him whenever he wanted her. He couldn't believe this.

"But Sharon, it's me, Danny, your doctor, Danny, number one, remember?" Gaining reassurance from the past, he pushed forward.

"Break the date, I'm coming over."

"Are you sure about that?"

"About what?"

"That you're number one." The words came over Dan's receiver slowly, agonizingly. He remembered now dozens of occassions when he had been on the verge of breaking up with her, but she had always cried her way back by arousing his compassion.

She had paused to let the full effect of her stunning revelation sink in, and he took the opportunity to try to regain his composure. Finally, he broke the silence, calmly, he hoped.

"Since when is this?" he asked.

"It's, uh, been quite a while."

"QUITE A WHILE? So what the hell have you been going out with me for?"

"Because I knew it would make you happy."

"Make ME happy? What the . . . who . . ." Dan sputtered helplessly for five seconds, astounded by what seemed to him the utter absurdity of Sharon's reasoning, then hung up in an impotent rage.

Dan looked out the window to see the hot sun rising just above the line of two-story houses across the river. "It looks like another scorcher," he said to the red apartment building across the way, and turned back to his desk. He wondered about the cardboard sign tacked to the bulletin board:

**NOTICE: DUE TO LACK OF INTEREST, TOMORROW IS POSTPONED.**

To what extent was it a mere joke?

The CREAM were still moaning in the background, as they had been all night:

"One summer day, she went away.  
Gone and left me, she's gone to stay."

The sun had frozen him into mourning, into self-pity, he kept on going over those few lines in his mind, all night. He couldn't escape it, he couldn't sleep, he just sat in his chair, all night.

"The whole damn night," Dan shouted at himself, "just because of that dumb broad."

His cigarette was down to the filter, and he rubbed it out in the ashtray, counting all the butts already there. Thirty-three. 1.65 packs, he calculated. He also calculated that he must do something, anything, get out of the room, he had to escape his painful surroundings, escape the sorrows of CREAM, and his own, but he couldn't turn off the record player, that dam song, for the one hundred and seventy-third time, at least, but he couldn't shut it, HE COULDN'T.

Do something, Damn, do something. You need a change, change of mood, change of mind, change of scene, Dan, you're free, do you realize, you've broken loose, or she's let you loose, what's the difference, you can do what you want, do it. Yeah, do it Dan, you don't need it, you were doing it for her, she's not part of your scence any more, do your own thing.

"I will, Danny, I will."

Nine-thirty Dan strode out of the Registrar's Office. It had been so simple, only three forms and five dollars. He felt lighter, he thought the sun was shining brightly, but it didn't even seem to be the summer sun; the sun of advanced inorganic chemistry. It was the kind of sun that warmed, but didn't burn.

He couldn't wait for the dorm elevator, he ran up the eight flights of stairs to his room, and began packing. The CREAM were still groaning, but they didn't sound as pained as before, and this time Dan listened to the complete verse:

"One summer day, she went away.  
Gone and left me, she's gone to stay.  
She's gone, but I don't worry,  
I'm sitting on top of the world."

WILLIAM J. CYBUCH



## DRIFTING ROADS

*Drifting down the road  
pulling my axils and  
my sleeping bag unrolled  
trying to find some comfort*

*watching people cross my  
path to guess what's  
happening of yester-*

### THE TEASE

*Giggle, giggle  
They eat carnivores that eat . . .  
Lusciously lust-delicious  
Animals do that it's  
animal-like only  
animals would do such a thing  
nutritious sodomy.*

*The obscenity of vending machine  
Alka-Seltzer, don't tell the children  
Chinese PTA's must be warned to vote "No".  
Pacem in terris, then –  
Suc-  
culence is immoral.*

YAACOV STOLLMAN

## DRIFTING ROADS

*O' drifting down the roads from the cities to the town  
peddling my songs and my rhymes  
my sleeping bag unrolled 'neath a tree inside a park  
trying to find some comfort for my mind*

*Watchin' people cross my path, watch them go their way  
tryin' to guess what's flowin' in their mind  
dreamin' dreams of yesterday, tomorrow and today  
thinkin' of what I might have left behind*

*I turn to the girl whose lying beside me  
touch the flower in her hair  
wondrin' where I'd be if she wasn't here  
I watch her breasts a'risin'  
as she sleeps away the dawn  
for a second there I thought I lost a tear*

*I pick up my guitar and strum a tune  
and hum some notes so low  
her eyes are opening  
she holds my hand  
it's time to leave I know*

*So I paint myself a picture  
and I place it in my hand  
it's time to leave I know*

*So I paint myself a picture  
and I place it in my head  
and I think of what I'm going to say  
as I go along*

*O' drifting down the roads from the cities to the towns  
peddling my songs and my rhymes  
my sleeping bag unrolled 'neath a tree inside a park  
trying to find some comfort for my mind*



### LARRY'S POEM

*An empty street bears witness  
to the lateness of the hour  
and my disregard for it*

*I have come to visit you  
but you are just a sleeping form  
a parked car*

*If I sleep  
Will the street disappear  
If I disappear will the street sleep*

*Does the street play games with me as well*

BRIAN NADATA



