

## THE CHOSEN PUDDLE

They look like a couple of old geezers. One woman. One man. Over and around the bus stop, rain is pouring. One ray of sunshine pierces through the dark gray cloud that seems to cover the sky in one great stretch. And this spot of natural light falls upon me. It gives me a feeling of new-found purpose, a feeling that I have been chosen. Rest assured, not by God, or god or G\_\_, but by a set of random circumstances, of causes and consequences, of luck. And evidently, this couple has noticed what I've noticed about myself.

Pity I have so small an audience. This aura of light rather appeals to me. My clothes are drenched, my feet are numb in a puddle of frozen water, my spine shivers at every drop of rain that lands on the cervical nerve – but I like the warmth of natural limelight.

A freckled teenager, rebelling against the values of today's uptight society, confronting his mum's dumb advice, and disputing his dad's obsolete common sense, arrives from a far away street corner without an umbrella. He's probably thinking proudly to himself "Fuck umbrellas!" I can certainly understand his bitter feelings. I myself would be pissed off at the world if I had freckles.

"Take shelter under the bus stop Henry! Look at you, you're wetter than water!" yells one of the geezers. I make a family connection between the two individuals. Henry stops underneath the wooden roof, one eye glaring with contempt, the other one expressionless. In a final desperate act of rebellion, the freckled teenager pokes his head out to catch half-dollar sized drops.

An added member to the audience. Just an extra spectator and I'd have myself a crowd. Ten seconds later, the boy's tired of his revolt and takes refuge under the roof. He peers up at the sky, notices the small overexposed spot in the clouds. Despite himself, his eyes follow the streak of light, and finally land upon my aural self.

What words should I speak? My point of view on the current political situation? My theory on existential metaphysics? The joke about the duck, the rabbi and Mussolini? I must make up my mind fast. Who knows how long the providential spotlight will last. Fifteen minutes of fame, right? And not a second more.

Suddenly, I know what I want to say. The most mundane, the most trivial, the most useless information – that is what I am going to offer my disciples. Convert bullshit to truth. I stare hard at my audience and establish eye contact. Then I gaze up to the sky. "Terrible weather", I comment, "cold rain". I keep my eyes fixed on the bus-waiters. I can't discern what they're thinking... if they are indeed thinking. Have they gulped down my divine words as truth, bullshit, or as a weather forecast?

The old lady is nodding, the old man eye's show no reaction, and the kid pfff's away what I said. "The ground is wet!" I thunder, "Your socks are soaked!" I pause for dramatic effect. "Sure the flowers on your balcony are thankful. Sure the reservoir is filling up and we shall have no fear of drought this summer". I pause, this time not sure what to say next. "But God dammit – and I mean that with all due respect – what a bummer! The rain is wet! If the rain were dry I wouldn't be here complaining. But it isn't! and it's cold! Cold and wet... what a drag!"

The old lady is nodding more vehemently now. She must have had a tragic experience with rain. I feel I'm establishing contact with her. But the two members of the opposite sex are still skeptical. Perhaps I could rally them to the faith with her story. I look up at the sky. My spotlight is still strong but I have a feeling that time is running short.

“It’s about my psychiatrist” she orates. Oh dear! A shrink story *again*? But already I see that the males are looking at her with interest. And she’s obviously aware of the attention. It’s OK. I don’t mind a temporary shift of spotlight, just as long as it returns here later.

“Doctor Mosestein was his name. Such a nice fellow. Ate a lot of food. Made his mother so proud! Anyway, there I was, sitting on the couch. But not lying down. How can you speak when you’re staring in midair? And anyway, I wanted to make sure that he’s listening and taking notes. Because my friend Sarah Hossenberg, she once was lying down on the couch, telling her life’s story to *her* psychiatrist. She turns around at one point and sees him kissing his young Swedish secretary. And the psychiatrist was her husband, doctor Hossenberg! Oy. So you know, I wanted to make sure that I’m getting my money’s worth.”

It feels like an over-developed joke, with the typical added useless details. I have to remain calm, and hear her through. I will need to improvise some kind of moral to this ridiculous parable.

“So I’m sitting up, a few meters from Doctor Mosestein, making sure he’s taking notes. I’m telling him about... let’s see... what was it already?...”

Alzheimer?

Pause.

Heart attack?

“Oh right... I was telling him how nice his mother was. Lea Mosestein. Always took care of her geraniums. ‘They were the best geraniums in the neighborhood!’ I tell him, making sure he’s taking notes. I tell him about how I remember the day I went to his house when he was just a little boy, and how I saw him pee in his pants when he was frightened by a trick or treater dressed as an Indian while he was dressed as Davy Crockett.”

This lady, despite her crazily advanced age, is still energetic. I’m surprised by her force and vitality. I might need to incorporate that in my final sermon. The rain is pouring harder now. Hopefully the clouds will remain still. The hyped-up nutcase has noticed the rain’s growing vigor and goes on with her story.

“So Mister Mosestein, my psychiatrist... I tell him that his mother has the best geraniums, but with the recent cold rains I was worried they wouldn’t make it past the season. Mister Mosestein looks into my eyes and tells me, I swear to God, ‘I love the rain. It washes memories off the sidewalk of life. Oy!’”

No time to lose, the dramatic tension is still lingering in the air with her final authoritarian “Oy”.

“Oy indeed! Memories? Life? Sidewalk? And most importantly, rain? Rain? The rain is wet!

The rain was indeed wet! And I can now see everyone deeply entranced with my words. I would need to make it majestic and brief. But suddenly, a dark cloud shuts down the light and brings me back to the world of mortals. The once-potentially-convert’s brains snap back to reality and I lose eye contact. From afar, the Maxwell-like puffing bus is heading our

way. From what deep subconscious reflex it comes from I cannot say, but all heads turn in the opposite direction of the sound's origin. It takes each person a few seconds to realize the bus is coming from the other way. But before their heads finish rotating to welcome the bus, their gazes fall once upon on me. I look up in the sky, and I swear to God, I see God winking. A subtle wink, but a wink nonetheless. The light is back on me and I have a few words to tell the people.

No. Who am I kidding? I have no words to say, no feelings to extrude, no cause to rally. Who does? Who doesn't? What does it matter? What words are sacred and what words are parodies?

Mosestein? What did he love? He loved rain. "God bless Mosestein."

"God bless Mosestein", I repeat. I have no additional words to offer. The bus halts in front of the bus stop, obscuring my view of my disciples. I imagine them mounting the step and paying the driver. The old geezer probably sneezed while searching for a couple coins in his pocket. The woman probably oyed in agreement or disagreement with her husband's head cold. And the teenager most certainly fumed and flickered and settled in a seat, far from everyone.

What was I doing there anyway? Who or what decided that I stand motionless on that sidewalk? Thousands of thoughts race through my head as I wince in embarrassment for not having found profound words to deliver to people who had believed in me, placed faith in me for just a little while.

I step out of the icy puddle. The blood in my feet begins to circulate again. It travels and saddles along through my body once again, discovering new muscles, arteries, and veins. But I have no place to travel to. I have nowhere to go. I back track the four steps I took and step back into the icy puddle, looking at the sky and I wait.