

PERFECT IDIOT

It all started one evening at a backpacker's in Byron bay, Australia, where we saw him play pool. Nathan his name was. He'd bend down, aim, circle the table to check his angle, walk back to his spot, lean against the pole, bring the pole to the ball, then push it back a bit, and then, when we were absolutely certain he's gonna hit it immaculately, he'd bomb it like a five-year-old, shooting the white ball from the pool table all the way to the other side of the lounge area. Or, he'd lean against the table, measure, squint, aim, open his eyes and then close it again, the entire backpacker's squinting with him at this stage – and then he'd give the mildest tap on the white ball, so gentle it wouldn't even come close to the ball it was meant to hit. No matter if he kicked the ball off the table or didn't hit anything, his facial expression never changed. You don't come across an idiot like this guy too often, I thought to myself, and yet, I just couldn't take my eyes off the guy, as if condensing his stupidity to one small facial expression was too much for his face to carry, so it started radiating back a strange mixture of light, serenity and some other unidentified positive energy. I knew I had to make contact, to figure out his motivations and his way of shredding off any sense of negative criticism or desire for everyone to like him. I found him absolutely fascinating.

The days went by. I was busy surfing and writing my script, and Rami was busy pleasuring a young just-finished-her-compulsory-army-service girl who liked speaking on the phone with her paratrooper boyfriend at the same time. She told her boyfriend she loved him, and that she was learning how to surf, until Rami would amp up and she'd start moaning and groaning, saying she missed him and loved him, and that she can't take it anymore. Then she'd hang up, close her eyes, soften her breath and say to Rami, "don't get me wrong, I'm not some cheating bitch".

"What about your wife Rami? What did you tell her? I'd ask him whilst trying to ignore the ex-soldier's presence, because despite her being tall and hunchbacked, the fact she was a professional slut shocked me so badly that every time she'd twitch her ear I thought she probably wanted me to ear-fuck her. He said Galit should actually thank her from the bottom of her heart, because of it wasn't for girls like her he'd have absolutely nothing to fantasize on when he's in bed with her and his bits wouldn't have worked, not even a little bit.

Meanwhile Nathan continued impressing the tourists with his never-ending losses at the pool table as I was getting everyone to pay attention to his special skill. "Look at him play, look how present he is in the moment", I'd grab their attention, amazed myself by him ability to be such loser yet so serious about it and so deeply devoted to the cause. The cause by the way was losing, every single time. Slowly but surely, people started gathering around the table, to get a good view of the determined player. So much so, that it became the most enjoyable backpacker's

past time activity. Dozens of people would watch him aim, circle, measure, lay down on the green-felt-covered table, close his eye, then open it, and miss. Again. Miss all the time. Then, at the end of each game he'd walk over to his opponent, stare him down, then shake his hand with such deep sense of gratitude, as if they'd just finished off a serious battle of the giants during which he made a small, insignificant mistake that caused him to lose it in the end. It killed me. Does he seriously not realize what an idiot comes off as?

So, I continue getting them all worked up; I tell them he was a spiritual mentor in Chile, where he had dozens of believers, I tell them he had crossed the desert on foot with his cat beside him, that I sat with him nights on-end and that this guy has such a deep centre that he made me learn how to accept myself. It's not like the stories were that far off the stories he told me himself. He did travel in Chile, but just for a yoga retreat, after which he stayed there to clean the ashram for two years because he ran out of money. He did take his cat to the desert but drove with it not walked, except for one time he went out of the airconditioned car to piss. I was really so deeply amazed by him that I said to myself that if such an idiot can love himself so much, why can't I? 'Look at Nathan' and let go man, it's all good. over time people started listening to him, bought him beers, got him weed. I once saw a girl rub his chubby belly while he was eating ice cream, and another one braided his beard.

And then we left. We traveled up north for the screening of *Meatballs* for a few Jews in Brisbane who agreed to pay two thousand dollars for a post-screening Q&A session with the director and the lead actor – aka me and Rami. A week after, when we got back we saw Nathan outside the backpacker's surrounded by people. We quietly walked towards the circle of people around him and saw them looking to the sky with their eyes close, as Nathan whispered to them, "listen to the sun, listen to the sun". I was completely shocked. They really did try listening to the sun! Five seemingly normal people stood with their eyes closed and tried to listen to the sun! How stupid can people be? How lost? Enough, I thought. I have to document this. Rami and I looked at each other and smiled. The plan we dreamt about the moment we laid eyes on Nathan is going to happen – we're going to sell him off as a guru! And make a documentary about it. Ecstatic, we went surfing, to continue develop our idea further. Rami was so chuffed he even promised he'll never cheat on Galit again.

But then a much better idea came along. What's the point wasting such a good idea on a bunch of stoners in Australia? Let's do it at home, in the holy land, where all the real smart arses are. Let's find a perfect idiot like Nathan and run him to be a front man, a social leader; the most talked-about celebrity, a consumerism guru and an admired figure. We will market him to the people as the height of intelligence, wisdom, knowledge and humanism, although in person, he's closer in his attributes to chimpanzees than he is to humans. We will make him famous and teach him to

repeat smart-sounding sentences, until people are convinced he's a true genius. And after they admire him, follow his steps and dream of their daughter marrying him, or at least have sex with him – whatever it will take to get her photo in the papers – then we will show them the movie. Then we will show them what an idiot he actually is, and what power marketing, PR and ads have. Then we will show them the movie and reveal to the world how deceiving and insidious the world of consumerism, politics and economics is. The film will win an Oscar and we will make millions and win a Nobel Prize for Economics because of our anti-establishment notions and sentiment. Now we just have to go back home and find the right man to lead the campaign. Now we just need to find our perfect idiot.

2.

As soon as I head out the airport she runs towards me waving about, climbing over taxi drivers, crawling at the feet of Arab women, cramming a bunch of teenagers into a group of orthodox men praying their evening prayer. When she finally gets to me she sticks a thermometer in my face.

"Look"

"What?"

"Go on, look!"

"What?"

"Don't you see the plus sign?"

"What's a plus sign?"

"I'm pregnant!"

I've been dreaming about this moment my entire life. If I wasn't being yelled at by a bunch of angry Israelis as they were trying to make their way into the terminal, I'd continue hugging her right up to the birth, I'd stand right here and hug her, for night whole months. We cleared the entrance and kept on hugging until I suddenly realized it was a thermometer. What's a plastic thermometer have to do with a baby? She tried to calm me down saying it's ninety nine percent accurate. Ninety nine percent accurate is a hundred percent inaccurate, don't you know the rule? One little asshole percent takes over the other cute ninety nine percent. We got into the car and looked for a pharm chain branch with high voltage neon lights and elderly women in chain uniform and a silk side-knotted scarf. I have to get another pregnancy test kit. I can't afford to be disappointed. I don't want to get excited for nothing. I mean, if this plus sign was strong and steady, a mildly bully plus

sign who knows what it stands for... but this plus sign? It's wimpy, the 'I'll-beat-the-crap-out-of-you' kind, a scared shitless plus sign, too scared to stand up for itself, will change its mind with the first wave that comes its way. As we were waiting to pay, we held hands like two excited teenagers who got the green light from their parents to have sex for the first time after two years, and they're waiting in line to get their first ever condom pack.

We bought six pregnancy test kits. I don't believe anything other than what I can see. You'll take the tests my love, one kit after the other. Until we know for sure.

"I know for sure, my love, it's the second test already".

"So what? Look how faded this plus sign is?"

She loved me so much in those moments, the moment my eagerness for our mutual cause was so great and heartfelt. And regardless, grabbing five medical kits without looking at the price is certainly not a common behavior in my case – I'm the kind of guy that stands by the milk products fridge for four hours at the supermarket, calculating which cheese is the cheapest per hundred grams.

We got home, and she ran to the toilet. I stood outside the door and paced about incessantly. After I hit the wall I stopped pacing and started praying to God: plus-plus-plus-plus-plus, let it be a plus God, be good to me, for once.

The most exciting minute of my life went by and she came out with a steady, strong, radiant red plus sign.

"Holy shit wifey, you're pregnant, we're pregnant, wifey!!!!" I grabbed her and hugged her and lifted her up and hugged and kissed her. Then I started crying. It just came out. Uncontrollable crying. I fell apart completely. Curled in a fetal position she caressed me and hugged me and said everything was going to be ok and that she loved me. "Love me more", I said childishly, and she loved me more and put my head inside her and wrapped me with her warmth. And the more warmth she imparted, the more I cried. She was my mother, and I cried that moment I stopped being her child. From this moment on, I'm a man. I'm a dad. The responsibility for the family is on my shoulders. I cried the end of my childhood. The end of my youth. The end of my escapism. I still didn't believe the test tube, so I took another kit and peed on it myself. There's no way this tiny thermometer is the maker and breaker of dreams. It will probably say I'm pregnant too. I peed on it, and no, I wasn't pregnant. I went back to her and hugged her again. She's going to bare my child, this naughty one. We lay in bed and hugged and kissed and wanted to make love but were too scared hammering the baby right from the start, so we decided we'll first call our parents and break the news. But whose parents should we call first? Back in the day you'd just make the call, and who ever picked up first knew first, now that we all have personal phones you have to think about who will be less offended. We decided to wait with it for now and make love in the meantime. Gentle love.

*

It's been a week since we got back. The first stage of finding our perfect idiot has come to an end and now it was time for my work meeting with Rami. I chose three finalists for our perfect idiot. I had the primary school tennis instructor; you only had to take one look at him to see what a dill he was. There was Ronen Katz's dad, Mr. lawyer with the three hairs he thought he could hide his bald head with. And there was my mum's grocer from Osishkin Street, who always ate carrot and laughed. Simultaneously.