

King of the Hummus

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1.

I MET PHILLY in New York. I went to a Pet Shop Boys concert with a friend of mine and only then figured out that the song “It’s A Sin” was about the lead singer discovering he was gay as a young boy. It was a great show. Truthfully, as an Israeli, almost any show in New York would be “great.” The minute I stepped out of the taxi, I felt like the world was in my pocket. Here I am, *Amir from Israel*, going to a show in *fucking* New York City with an American audience and a box office line filled with Americans for an American *show*, and here comes the band on the stage and I’m here by myself with a friend seeing them live in an American stadium remembering the first few times I saw them in a video clip on “Od Lahit” (“Another Hit”) while my mom is frying schnitzels in the kitchen. Amazing. We left the show and my friend asked if I felt like visiting a girlfriend of his, and I said sure. I always like visiting girlfriends of my friends, not to mention that I just got to this scary city a week ago and don’t know anybody here.

We came into her apartment and I was in complete shock—how does this girl have her own rented apartment in New York at an age when I was still wearing Azzaro cologne and living in my parents’ house in Ramat-Gan? This girl’s only twenty-one!

My friend and I came inside and sat down in the living room. The girl asked if we wanted something to drink and even before we answered she said the water was already boiling. A girl who puts on the water before she even asks what we’re drinking totally turns me on. She had dreads in her hair and beautiful skin and amazing eyes and a

sweet ass, but instead of focusing on these things I couldn't stop thinking about her paying maintenance or buying a couch or hiring movers.

How did she find this apartment? Who did she sign the contract with? And in English?! *In The United States of America!* She noticed how impressed I was and it seemed to amuse her.

“Give me a week and I can have you fixed up with an apartment, too,” she said going in to fix the drinks for us. I nodded to my friend with an excited “pshhhh” as if to say, *she's incredible, you rock!* then followed her into the kitchen. She was using small mugs for the tea and we agreed that drinking from small mugs was best 'cause you can always see that the end is near. Only then do you appreciate every sip. I told her how I do all my shopping at the grocery store but I like to buy my baba ganoush at Nisim's corner store, where I buy a small sized baba ganoush and a *Petell* juice. A large baba ganoush is like a completely different kind of salad and I can never quite finish the whole thing. After a week there's always a small, yellow layer on top and I end up throwing it out. The small one from is never quite enough, I always want just another bite or two, but I think that's what makes it much better, which is exactly why it's more fun drinking tea from small mugs. She laughed, but more than the baba ganoush story, she loved the *Petell* juice and the fact that I make a special trip to Nisim's to buy it. “You can only find that in Israel,” she said, “those little sweet old stores, with the old couple running them for fifty years.” Then she added, “You can find every kind of juice in America, everything from blueberry juice to wheat grass juice, but *Petell*? WOW! I feel like *Petell* right now,” she yelled, and added sugar to the tea, not knowing that she had just uttered the

most amazing sentence of all time making me love her forever and ever till kingdom come, Amen.

I wanted to hug her. I felt my heart bursting when she said “WOW! I feel like *Petell* right now,” and went back to stirring in the sugar with a nostalgic smile on her face, all innocence and truth.

Not only did she boil the water before asking, but her eyes were filled with joy and life, her skin was amazing, dreads in her hair and a lovely ass, and she felt like having *Petell* in the middle of Manhattan, and not only does she want it, she’s *crazy* for it, she wants it from the deepest most visceral place. Her “I feel like *Petell*” was at a level of need, of longing, of nostalgia, of love for Israel.

She lives alone in an apartment in New York but hasn’t forgotten her life back in Israel.... Perfect. Exactly what I need.

We went back to sit on the couch and my friend said he was going to Pennsylvania next week, when suddenly she jumped up and said that Shaul would be there as well.

“Who’s Shaul?” my friend asked.

“Oh, just a friend of mine,” she answered.

Who is Shaul, what is Shaul, why is she bringing up this horseshit now? Is she trying to ruin our whole *Petell* connection? I can’t stand girls who namedrop in the middle of their boring stories! Names of people I don’t even know!

We kept chatting till my friend said he had to go, so I left with him. I went home and got into bed but couldn’t fall asleep. I kept imagining her paying our maintenance.

From my experience I've learned; the more I'm into a girl, the less she's into me.

Why does the same thing keep happening to me over and over?

I realized the more excited I get about a girl, the more scared and insecure I get, and I end up treating her way too seriously, and girls don't like guys who are scared and insecure and treat them way too seriously. What's more, all guys get excited about the same girls, so every girl has experienced countless scared losers who treated her like the princess of England while she really wants to be treated like shit. At least in the beginning. Someone who doesn't make a big deal out of her, who lays down the rules, and isn't considerate of her or her schedule. Someone who'd treat her the way she thinks a real man should treat a real woman. That's all. How long can she put up with some petrified dork calling her all nervous, then waiting for her downstairs all excited in his neat sportscar, smelling all good, offering her a mint right away before she even has a chance to sit down, and then he drives them to a high class Japanese restaurant, the same one she'd already been to last night with a different loser trying to impress her? How long can she take it?

Go to her place one afternoon, on your scooter, give her an old helmet she can put over her "Pantene-d" hair, tell her you're hungry and drive to Ali Karavan to eat some chumus, and that's all. Don't make a big deal out of it.

I called her the next day and asked if she wants to come to my friend's party in Philadelphia. It's a three-hour bus ride and the party is at night, which means if she says yes we'll end up spending the night together. I'm going all in, betting everything. If she wants to – great. If she doesn't – also great. I'm so tired of the usual way. I called her.

What are the chances she'd even be free for two days, and not only that, but that she'd choose to spend those two days with a loser like me?

She said yes. Not only did she say yes, but she said it without hesitation. As if I simply asked if she had a cigarette.

I picked her up at her house like an excited little kid at an amusement park. We got all lost on our way to the station, though, and missed the bus at the last minute. It drove away right in front of our eyes. We kept walking around till the next bus was going to leave and then barely caught that one in time. We both knew that being late was a sign that we're connecting, so we didn't really mind if we missed another bus. We felt good together. We sat in the last row because those were the only free seats and we were psyched to have a whole row to ourselves. We started making fun of the stupid Americans—how they only sit in their assigned seats, doesn't matter if there's another empty one that's much better, they'll never move to it. After ten minutes of a sweet trip and holding hands and smiling at each other with longing and wonder like two little kids, the shit hit the fan. Literally. One after another they came in our direction emptying their bowels, practically on our heads. One after the other. We don't have bathrooms on buses in Israel, travel time is never that long, so who would have thought there'd be toilets on a bus for a three-hour trip?

We did, however, have a very important and responsible job on the bus: toilet guards. It seems the lock on the door wasn't working and didn't close all the way, so the putz had to hold the door while shitting, and count on us to know he's in there so when the next putz came and asked "Is there anybody in there?" we could tell them "Yes,

there's someone in there, but you're more than welcome to shit on our heads in about five minutes, thank you."

Sweet Philly also had to go pee but she didn't want to use the bus toilet. She said she'd wait till we got there, and I said do it here, what's the big deal?

Me, I can never go in those kinds of places, when I think about how someone's on the other side of the door waiting to hear me shit... it just shuts my whole apparatus down. Maybe I'm a little strange, but if it's not a *fucking emergency*, it seems a bit rude to shit on top of someone's head.

I wanted Philly to pee, though. The world exists and my opinion of it won't change, but the girl who's with me, after she's already with me, she can do anything. I can see other women who behave exactly the same way and they seem gross or rude or stupid or tiresome, but my girlfriend can act exactly the same way and still seem like a princess to me. She's always number one. And she's even allowed to shit on someone's head on a bus to Philadelphia.

By the way, Philly is short for Philadelphia, which is what all Americans call it. When we went to buy our tickets we said to the guy, "Two tickets to Philadelphia, please." So he said into a microphone, to someone or something, "Two tickets to Philly." So we looked at each other and smiled at the cute name, and said to one another, "We're going to Philly." Ever since then we called each other that. Philly.

Some old lady came out of the bathroom and nodded our way as if saying thank you and I'm sorry at the same time, and after her a fat Japanese guy went in and peed like a racehorse. Philly and I looked at each other and couldn't stop laughing. We talked about how a girl's pee usually sounds much louder because it hits the water from a

shorter distance, but this Japanese guy broke all the records. We felt like we were sitting next to a 50-foot waterfall.

After that I asked Philly what she wants to do when she grows up, and she said it depends when I ask her.

She said, “You’re asking me what I want to do when I grow up *now*?”

“Yes, now. When should I ask?”

“Well, in five minutes, or tomorrow, or in a month, you’ll get a completely different answer.”

I’m such an idiot—when people asked me what *I* wanted to be when I grow up, I always had the same answer.

She said she wants to travel the world for about two years and she wants to start a business that would provide jobs to homeless people and that she wants to be a chef and that she wants to live by the ocean and be a saleswoman in a toy store and study architecture and about a million other things and she wants to do all of them at the same time. She said it’s as if she has a lot of “me’s” inside her, yet not one “me” that *is* her. There’s the “me” that wants to fool around and have a good time, she told me, and then there’s the “me” that tells the other “me” to be serious, think about the future and rise through the ranks like normal people. Then she said there’s the “me” that wants to help people and do good in the world, and the “me” that just wants to take care of herself, and lots of other “me’s” and each one wants to do something different. And she has no idea which one to choose.

“It’s not that you have a lot of ‘me’s,’” I said, “it’s that we live like slaves to our desires and ego, and *they* are the ones who toss us around making us think there are a lot

of different ‘me’s.’ Okay: someone important gives you a compliment on a drawing you made—you get excited and imagine yourself working as an architect. You fail some test at college that everyone else passed—you want to become a social worker and help the world. You gained a couple pounds and some schmuck on the street asks you what month you are—you want to travel to Costa Rica and live on the beach, ‘cause you’re fed up with everything. I’m exaggerating of course, but what I’m saying is that we’re all influenced by our surroundings, like a leaf in the wind, and we have to get stronger from the inside.”

I leaned back satisfied that somehow my answer seemed logical. If ever there was a time for an after-sex cigarette, this was it.

“Okay,” Philly said, “so I won’t pursue my wants and desires since they’ll never fill the hole.... What *should* I do with my life, then?”

Man. She really shoved it in my face, the sneak. Twenty-one years old and stuck it to me good. They never brought up these kinds of questions in the workshops I went to, so I had no idea how to answer her.

The bathroom was vacant and this guy with a Texas hat, all fat and smiles, came walking back toward us, a guy who shoves down a lot of steaks and has a lot of shit in his ass. Philly and I held hands tight and covered each other’s mouths because we didn’t want him to hear our roaring laughs at the sound of his monumental plops. Each plop sounded like a huge ship dropping in the ocean.

We agreed that when he came out of the bathroom we’d pretend to be asleep, because if we accidentally caught his eye we wouldn’t be able to handle it. He came out and shot us a nod like the winner of some western duel, as if he and the plops had nothing

to do with each other, as if they never existed. He continued down the isle with his gun still smoking from the duel, and Philly and I felt our lungs tearing with laughter.

Sometimes I think if I could only get a great laughing fit like that once a week, I'd be the happiest man alive. But how can you get them more than once every two years? How?

Some guy in front of us grabbed his jacket from the back of his seat, while three seats in front of him we saw people's arms stretching up, and to our left some woman was digging through her bag, so we knew we were almost there. We laughed about how if you look around carefully, you can spot the first signs for everything.

Whenever you're not allowed to something and then suddenly you can, you always do that thing with greater pleasure, so when we got off the bus we sat on the curb, didn't talk and smoked. Time to shut up and enjoy the cigarette. The unifying cigarette.

My friend's name is Guy Pickering, but his nickname is Pick. Guy was a bit of a druggie back in the day who *somehow* got in to Wharton, one of the best business schools in the world.

A year before he got into grad school, he invited me to visit him in Jerusalem because he was creating a committee to "deepen the communication between Israelis and Palestinians in East Jerusalem." I was floored; what could Pick possibly have to do with a Peace committee? Did the drugs eat away his brain? Later, I learned *that* committee was the reason he got into Wharton. They love stuff like that over there.

Philly and I took a cab to Pick's house and drove and drove and drove and we didn't know when it was going to stop and we loved it. Until it stopped. We rang Pick

on the intercom and he came down to greet us and we hugged and went up to his house. (Philly really loved the house.) We talked for a bit then went downstairs to eat a little something on the way to the big party. It was actually an end of the year party for the second-years at Wharton.

We caught a cab to what turned out to be the lamest party in the history of parties. Ameri-cocksuckers: the sons and daughters of the rich, the stupid, the empty and hypocritical, everyone trying to show everyone else how much fun they're having. The men in choking ties and expensive suits, the women in fancy dresses and cramped high-heeled shoes. There wasn't a single move on the dance floor that wasn't carefully planned, one movement that came from the heart, from a feeling, from the love of music and dance. It was as if each man and woman wore a "poster" of their father around their neck, and by the number of cluckings and smiles around them you could tell how important the poster was. Those with the more well-known posters strutted around like puffed-up peacocks enjoying the attention they've now come to expect. Most of them didn't even dance (if you could call what they did "dancing"). It was a total disaster. Philly was bummed out, the cutie, and so was I, by Pick and his insistence that we come down to this "awesome party." What *happened* to him, man? Can't he see what's going on around him? Is the big money that blinding?

At least I enjoyed seeing Philly getting bummed out because she was so cute. Every time she's upset she squeezes her eyebrows together like my little nephew and curls up her upper lip. It's funny how she's so mature and wise sometimes and other times she's just a little girl who pouts and mopes when she doesn't exactly get what she wants. From the "towers of my age," I've already eaten so much shit in life, had so many

disappointments, that one more doesn't affect me one way or the other. I'm actually more surprised if I'm *not* disappointed by something. The only thing that disappoints me is that I *don't* get disappointed anymore, which simply means I have no more expectations in life, which essentially means life has beaten me.

But I'm not ready to accept it. Not - ready. Not ready to accept the fact that I don't get disappointed, because not being disappointed by life means you're not *surprised* by life, it means you live for nothing: no ups, no downs, no hope, no despair. If the sun is shining and my family and I are healthy, that should be enough to make me smile. We all know that, yet nobody's smiling-- and when I say smiling I mean a real joy that comes from the heart and doesn't depend on some lavish vacation, a new piece of clothing, a compliment, a big deal you just signed, or half a bottle of whiskey. Because, eventually, you come back from the vacation, and the excitement of the new piece of clothing goes away immediately after you wear it the first time, and the deal always passes, and the buzz always fades.

I want real happiness, the happiness of eternal love, of being content with what you have, being grateful. How the hell do you get to that?

We went back to Pickering's house and slept on the couch in the living room. My arm was under Philly's ribs and I felt it falling asleep. But I didn't want to move it because she seemed really comfortable, and I'm supposed to be the man, and a man doesn't complain that his arm is falling asleep when his girl is insanely comfortable. At one point it felt like I was getting gangrene, but just then she mumbled something like, "I'm so comfortable with you," and it was clear that even if they had to cut off my arm I

wasn't taking it out. Later, though, it got to be too much. I lost all feeling in my arm and I knew, if I ever wanted to masturbate again, I had to take my arm out of there right now or else start learning to stroke it with my right hand.... Yes, I'm a lefty.

I gave her a sort of "Hmmm, honey," and she lifted herself up a bit so I could get my arm out, but I couldn't pull it out because it was completely asleep and weighed a thousand tons and wouldn't do what I asked it to. With my other arm, I pulled the gangrened one out from under her ribs, the palm of my hand hanging like some sad, dangling leaf. Luckily, in a few seconds, I got the feeling back in my hand, and with it my mojo. I started tickling Philly on her back a little, trying to gently go in the direction of her ribs as if I wasn't on the way to her breasts, just caressing her back, but was blocked by her elbow which didn't make the impression that it intended to move. No matter how much I tried to turn her on with little kisses on her back, sweet nothings in her ear and light licks of her neck, the elbow didn't move and she stayed stubbornly on her side, refusing to turn around for a kiss. About every five minutes I gave up and tried to fall asleep too, but after a while I'd get a signal from my cock insisting that it wasn't letting me go to sleep like that. You can't take the donkey to the well and *not* let it drink. My cock complained and started its revenge with a pain in my balls. So I tried to turn her on again, failed, tried to fall asleep again, failed at that too, another try with Philly, and that's how it went until the light came up in the window and darkness came down on my balls.

First thing in the morning I already heard Pick on the phone with another loser bragging about last night's amazing exploits. Here was this guy, once a cool, smart guy, who loved life and cherished truth. "Dancing" for him used to mean getting wasted and

dancing twenty hours straight while yelling into a megaphone. Now he dances for half an hour, waving his hands in the air, wearing a suit and tie and calls it a great night? What happened to this guy? Can new interests completely change people like that? Or is the change in position the catalyst to the change in knowledge, like the guys in the opposition yelling with all their hearts against something, but when they're chosen for the coalition, they do exactly what they used to fight against?

What can I say: maybe from every angle you really do see something different.

Later we went to a very *smart* coffee house, and drank coffee in an intellectual environment. Philly spilled coffee on Pick's new shirt and felt really bad, but Pick, with the new manners he learned at Wharton, didn't let her feel guilty. We had to go back soon anyway, so we said our good-byes with hugs and kisses that, despite the disappointment from the party and him, were completely real. What can I do, I still love the guy.

We walked around for awhile until we found this awesome clothing store and went in and made out for a long time until one of the sales women came over and told us they were closing soon so we might want to start actually looking at the clothes.

I picked out an orange skirt and an amazing white tank top for Philly and when she came out of the dressing room my heart started to act weird. It was thumping and thudding and the world changed color. Suddenly, everything looked beautiful, sweet, pink. I watched her watching herself in the mirror and tears came to my eyes. In one moment my whole world changed.

I fell in love.

2.

IT'S ALWAYS EASIER to fall in love when you're traveling. You know it's going to end eventually, so why not? You free yourself completely because you know it's temporary so there's no risk. You give it a chance. Even if you have just a little bit of a feeling for someone, you go for it. None of the usual long-term calculations that kill your joy, none of the "but she's like this, but she's like that." What difference does it make? You feel something – you go for it. After all, it's not your real life. It ends when you go back to Israel. Even *before* a trip abroad, there's a tendency to fall in love... not only *abroad*. You know you're going on a trip and somehow, *every* time, you suddenly meet some woman and fall in love. And then you don't know if you should go on the trip or not and your whole life gets confusing and you're like an idiot who doesn't understand why she had to fall on you "just now" – after all, if you *weren't* going away, she'd be just another girl who "doesn't have enough of this" and "doesn't have that" and "if she only had a little bit more of that."

Philly worked as a secretary at the New York branch of an Israeli start-up company. Every day she got up at 8 am, put on her Roller Blades, and rode down from the apartment on 14th Street to Wall Street. I always worried about her until she got to work. So every day, about twenty minutes after she left the apartment, she'd call to let me know

she arrived at work in one piece, and I'd fall back into my King's sleep. A couple hours later, I'd wake up, get on my Blades, and meet her at work. On my way, I'd stop to buy her a surprise: a lollipop, an umbrella, or any little thing that showed I was thinking about her the entire ride down to see her. I'd go up to her office, bring her the "surprise," and then wait for her work to be over so we could continue having fun together.

Since it was a few hours every day, I got a little bored sometimes just sitting next to her holding her hand while she answered the phone, so I'd appoint myself her secretary, and she'd give me assignments that I'd have to fulfill efficiently. One time, I had to stuff envelopes. I never thought there was actually someone who had to do that, it always seemed natural to open the envelopes and find a neatly folded letter inside, but now I understood that was in fact someone's job and today that someone was me. I had to fold each letter into thirds with Nazi perfection, and then fold it again in a specific way to fit it inside the envelope, then lower the flap and seal it up. Each envelope, on its own. Each was an entire world. I did about 2000, and it was exhausting. After 50 she allowed me to have a break of "leaning, breathing and stretching," and after every hundred, a cigarette break outside the building. Every third cigarette break, which was after 300 envelopes, she'd join me, which was the *real* celebration and a huge motivation for me to work quickly and efficiently. When I got to 250, I'd start getting excited that in 50 more Philly and I would be kissing in the elevator on our way to our unifying cigarette downstairs.

The kisses in the elevator always turned into an event.

Philly loved to turn them on: the suits. Twelve business men, tied and grey, in the middle of a boring work week, coming down in the elevator, worried about the rest of their day, when all of a sudden a colorful pair, full of life and passion, slaps the French

kiss of their lives right in front of them.

Man, she hated them! Even more than I did. She didn't understand how a man could dress like that all his life, work in buildings like that all his life, sacrifice his entire life for money. So she liked to remind them exactly why they were working.

I hated them, too. I thought they represented the height of idiocy in the Western world. Chasing your own tail. An emptiness, a void, a hole of desires that will never be filled. But the hate of a twenty-one year old girl is so real, so strong and unforgiving, that it couldn't compare with mine. Same with Love. There's something about that age, where every feeling from inside you bursts out like lava from a volcano. There's no modifying, no thoughts, no logic, and mainly – no perspective. Everything is here and now and full of burning energy. I hate, so I hate! I love, so I love! There's no middle. When you get older, *everything* is in the middle. There is no black or white. Just grey. Everything has another side and there's no "absolute truth." If you had a great steak, you'd say "Hmn, not bad", and if it wasn't so good, you'd say, "Hmn, I've had better." Everything's in the middle, zero excitement. If someone hurt your feelings, time was you'd hate that person so much you'd thirst for revenge. Today, you tend to think, "Oh well, he didn't really mean it" – after all, every argument has a different point of view and arguments are really just misunderstandings as a result of miscommunication. Even the word "hate" no longer exists in the adult's vocabulary. "Hate" becomes "don't like" or "don't really care for."

And when there's no "hate," there's no "love." No "I'm crazy about her," "she's my life," "I'll do anything for her." In the army, after not sleeping for two weeks, I'd come out for the weekend, take my dad's car, and drive three hours to a kibbutz up north

for some chick I only met the week before, just to *see* her again. Today, I'm too tired to drive around the corner two blocks to have *sex*.

All the things we used to love have become a big pain. To *go out* has become a pain, you only dance because someone's twisting your arm, and going to the beach isn't even an *option*, it would be such a disaster. If you forgot your towel, you'd rather sit up straight for an hour because you don't want to lean back on your elbows and get them all covered in sand that you'll just have to clean up later. Going into the water's a total hassle. Even *fucking* is a pain, 'cause it's really hot and you already know what's coming and you've got work tomorrow, so what's the point. And let's not even *talk* about how we used to chug two bottles of Coke a day plus two cans of Spring and grape juice, and today you find yourself leaning over your kitchen counter like a wimp pouring yourself a glass of water because you figured you didn't drink enough today. Even farting among friends has become impolite.

And all the things that used to be a pain have become pleasurable. Studying was a crazy pain, now it's a privilege. Reading a book was boring, having a decent conversation wasn't even a possibility, and going to the museum just for fun was unthinkable. I remember how my parents would come back from a trip abroad, and we'd ask how it was, and the first thing they'd say was, "Oh, it was wonderful. We ate in such amazing restaurants..." And, as kids, we couldn't understand what was so great about eating in a restaurant? Where's the fun in that?

That's how the old pains have turned into pleasures, and the old pleasures into pain.

But Philly... she doesn't even *know* about the middle yet. Only innocence, excitement, happiness and curiosity for life. Her skin is still pulled tight, like her instincts, feelings and senses. You touch a spot – a response; she experiences something – a response; she sees something – a response. There isn't that horrible blasé approach to life that seems to affect everyone in their late twenties. Something about that decade between 20 and 30 pushes people down, wins them over, takes away their happiness. Terrible.

And what fills the void? The pursuit of money. Running after it with the belief that with money comes happiness. And that's what Philly hated the most. That stupid way of thinking. That's why she wanted to molest me in front of all those people in the elevator. To try to shake them up.

The elevator got to the first floor and the line of ants filed out of the building. Philly got a few more glances from the horny riders, whose only lesson from the experience was to go home and order a \$1,000 call girl.

What we'd usually do, after we rode down the elevator, was we'd sit on this cement bench, which bordered a little garden, and light up a cigarette. Today was no different. We lit up and a magical warmth passed through me. I thought: here I am, in the greatest place on earth, there's no place I'd rather be. We watched the people coming and going into the building like bees to their hive. Everything was humming and buzzing, horns honking, people talking, cars and airplanes whizzing by, and me and

Philly, sitting on our cement bench, feeling like we were all alone on our own private island of peace and love in the middle of Manhattan.

After our smoke, we'd go back to the office and continue working until the bell rang and we were set free. We'd burst out of the building, put on our Roller Blades and glide through the city streets. We'd go to Central Park, to art galleries, plays and movies, getting to know cool people all over the city.

But like all good things, that too had to end.

Next week I start classes. I'm going to study film.

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What am *I* doing studying film? Good question. After all, judging by my first degree, I'm an economist. But after getting that degree, it took me exactly two months to figure out the business-world wasn't for me. I thought I loved it because my father loved it, and so did all of his friends, and they all built enormous mansions because of that love.

But how can you really know that *you* love what you love, or if you just love it because your parents do? How can you know which is the "you" that is *actually* you, and which is the "you" that is you-plus-your-education? And how can you separate them? After all, you came into the world with some genes and DNA or whatever it's called, and then you got a certain kind of education and saw a certain world from the very start, so how can you differentiate between the "you" and the you-plus-your-education, since it is after all the same "you," so who am I? What do I really want?

Wait a minute, why am I asking such stupid questions? What happened to me, when did I turn all spiritual? “*Who am I?*” Go to work, man, you have too much time on your hands. Only crazy people ask questions like that. Have I totally lost it?

So, after I got my degree, I went on a bunch of stupid interviews, and the whole business seemed cold and boring. Not to mention idiotic. After floating around for two years-- during which I found a job, left it, found another job, got fired, had dozens of other stupid interviews and building block tests-- I decided I needed air. I had to try something new, something completely different. I still didn't know what I loved, but I knew what I *didn't* love: being an economist.

I wanted to make a clean break. I wanted to go to Costa Rica and from there to South America. To spend some time with myself, quietly. Maybe then I'd find some answers. But I didn't think I deserved it yet. Me, I have to suffer before I can enjoy myself, and I didn't feel like I'd suffered enough, that I'd done enough. What made things worse, all the other shitheads from my class had already gotten respectable jobs and were making their way in life. I couldn't see myself getting groovy on a beach in Thailand while my friends were closing million dollar deals back home.

So I decided to go to New York to study something. That way I'd get the experience *and* “not waste my time.” From New York it's easier to hop down to Costa Rica anyway, and this way I could combine something constructive with making a dream come true. All I had left to decide was what to study. I wanted to get as far away from Economics as possible. To study something where you don't have to memorize equations, where you can just sit in lectures and enjoy. To find something I love.

But what is it that I actually love? I mean, we all grew up with such a practical education, we learned early on that what you love doesn't *earn a living*. To make a living you have to suffer. So I thought about journalism. Traveling the world, photographing revolutions, exposing corruption and saving lives with one great article. But then I felt like photography was a better bet— to save the world with one shot. Shock them all and expose the truth. A picture is worth a thousand words, or so I was told. But then maybe photographing tigers in Africa would be cool. And what about psychology? That sounds pretty nice, and maybe once and for all I'd understand why hot chicks look straight ahead all the time, and the girl in bed with me strips off all her clothes on her own yet leaves her thong on for *me* to remove. And what about anthropology? Travel to the end of the world and live with some tribe for a couple of months? Or perhaps history? They say history repeats itself, but from all my high school studies I can hardly remember when the 1928 massacres happened, so why not? Or maybe I'll open my own business? That's the best. To be independent, nobody telling you what to do or when to do it. You're the boss. Obviously, that would suit me best. But in what field?

For years, a good friend and I have been trying to find a great idea for a business together. In our minds, we developed every company imaginable: we were the owners of a dry cleaning chain, whose logo, "Max and Moritz", was proudly printed on the side of all our vans; we had our own painting business where huge companies sponsored us to improve the face of the town in exchange for having their tiny logo on the side of a building; we were the first to think of mini-baba ganoush and mini-Milkys (like Jell-O pudding snacks) and mini-popsicles so everything would be more delicious (because things are tastier in smaller doses); we were the CEOs of a hi-tech company that planned

to create a barter's network website; we were the exclusive agents of a dozen retail chains that we discovered while traveling abroad, and the first to bring them to Israel; and a million other things. But every time, we had the same problem. When the idea first came up, it was the best business in the *world*. When the time came to put down some money, however, the business became extremely unattractive. All the dangers and fears jumped up in our faces, and instead of seeing the positive and remembering our initial enthusiasm, we only saw the negative and the hundreds of things that could go wrong with the idea. My friend Fenigstein says, a pessimist is someone who sees in every opportunity a difficulty, and an optimist is someone who sees in every difficulty an opportunity. I actually think Churchill said it, but Fenigstein always takes credit for famous quotes as if he had said them himself.

In any case, at the moment of truth there's always a tendency to become a pessimist. Suddenly you forgot to calculate the taxes, and the political climate is very sensitive in Israel right now, and something similar just opened, and why would a lot of people be interested in your silly product anyway?

And let's not talk about the biggest question of all that keeps floating around you like an annoying cloud – "If it's *such* a good idea, why hasn't somebody else already created it?"

This is how I ended up with film.

To create a world from my imagination, where "work" means hanging out with hot chicks and cool people with long hair taking hits off bongos all day, to travel to all sorts of exotic shooting locations, and in the end, see everything on a huge screen with a big audience, something that used to only live inside my head.... Huge, right? To build

an entire world? Since the world we live in is such shit, why shouldn't I build a different one? And then another, and another. To make movies....

I'm sitting at home in Tel-Aviv watching the Oscars and I feel like I've found my destiny. After all, I've always liked writing, I've always liked creating something from nothing, I've always liked hot chicks, so if I'm going to succeed in something, I may as well get to go to an event like the Oscars and not some convention at the Hotel Continental with some old dudes in grey suits and their withering wives. Wow. It's fun to find your destiny.

I began to research studying in New York, and after a couple of hits on the internet I realized I should get in touch with Israelis who already study there, because otherwise I'll never understand what it's really like. It's like when you're traveling in the Far East and you get to some small village, and, getting off at the train station or off a bus, you run into some German or American or Swiss dude and pepper them with questions for a full hour about where's the best place to sleep, and what's fun to do here, and where can I get settled, and what's what, but you never really understand what they're saying, even if you talk to them for *three* hours, but then, from the corner of your eye, you spot an Israeli coming your way and within three *seconds* you know where to sleep, where to eat, where's the cheapest, where's the most fun, what's the set up and what's what. Three seconds. And it doesn't matter what kind of Israeli. Loser, hippy, hot chick, drunk, clear-headed, a man's man or a total asshole. Three seconds.

So I knew I needed to talk with an Israeli, and soon, to get the run down on what kinds of programs they had over there, what's the best, the quickest, how do I enroll,

what's what. Finally I found an Israeli who was studying in a cool program and over the Internet she told me everything I needed to know. How to enroll, what courses I should take, why this program is better than others, how the people are, how to manage the English and so on.

I applied for a one-year program of practical film studies, and after completely forgetting about it, I got a letter saying I was accepted. I never for a moment thought I'd actually get in, since I have no experience in the field, but just like Pick got into Wharton because he started a committee, I was accepted to film school because I used to study economics.

From the moment you know you'll be leaving in a couple of months, your life is sweet. Everything is for the last time. Everything is wonderful. You live in a state of total excitement and every outing to the Israeli street spoils you with fun experiences and fascinating energies. All the people you meet are enchanting, the streets are filled with a sense of brotherhood, the most beautiful girls in the world turn around and smile at you, everything is perfect. So perfect in fact, that a few days before leaving you can't remember why you were leaving in the first place, since it's so good here in Israel, what are you trying to find somewhere else? And on top of that, you have the goodbyes-- the *worst* part about taking a long trip. Especially the farewells to people you think you may never see again. Your grandfather and grandmother, for example.