

THE AMAZING
PROFESSOR
PARROT

A BURLESQUE

Gabriel Rosenstock

Editor:
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ORIGINAL WRITING

NOTE:

Originally conceived as a puppet play, the author has not included a *Dramatis Personae* or description of the characters.

The play could work for puppets, actors, or voices.

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Front cover '*Akshar Nirjhar*', 2011, Oil on Canvas

by AMIT KALLA

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<http://fineartamerica.com/profiles/amit-kalla.html>

<http://internationalartistsnetwork.ning.com/profile/AmitKalla>

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COUNTRY COUSIN: *(enters with suitcase)*
Ah, City Cousin.
It's me!
My good self.
Country Cousin!

CITY COUSIN: Sorry?
Who are you?
How did you get in here?

COUNTRY COUSIN: The key was under the mat.

CITY COUSIN: The key was – ?

COUNTRY: Under the mat.

CITY: How did you know the key was – –

COUNTRY: Under the mat?
As a mat-ter of fact, I didn't.
I looked.

CITY: Looked, did you?

COUNTRY: Yes, City Cousin.
Looked.
I always look.
And do you know what?

CITY: What?

COUNTRY: It was there, City Cousin.

CITY: It was, was it?
Why do you keep calling me City Cousin?

COUNTRY: Because you are my cousin.
And you live in the city.

CITY: I am your cousin and I live in the city.
 Hmm!
 How do you know I live in the city?
 No, forget that.
 How do I know I am your cousin?
 I mean, how do you know – em!
 Wait a minute.
 How do we know anything?
 Oh, I wish Professor Parrot were here!
 I – No!
 How?
 What? ... what I mean to say is, how do
 you know we're cousins?

COUNTRY: Of course we're cousins.
 Who do you think you are?
 You don't think I'd just walk in here and –

CITY: Well, as far as I'm concerned you could
 be anybody. The man in the moon!
 You have to be very careful these days.

COUNTRY: You do?
 Why?

CITY: There are a lot of funny people around.

COUNTRY: Funny, you mean – like this?

CITY: No, stop doing that.
 That's not funny.
 I mean, really strange people.
 Did I ever tell you about the guy that came
 to the door last Thursday?

COUNTRY: You never told me nothin'.
 We've just met.

CITY: Correct.
 Just testin'.
 Well anyway, this bloke comes to the door.

COUNTRY: Last Thursday?

CITY: No, I think it was a Wednesday.
 Anyway – very strange. Very strange
 indeed!

COUNTRY: Well, I'm not strange at all.
 I'm your cousin!

CITY: So you say.

COUNTRY: I do.

CITY: I don't like the way you said that.

COUNTRY: What?

CITY: I do....
 Are you married?

COUNTRY: Let's not go there, Cousin.

CITY: I agree.
 Cousin, you say, eh?
 How can I be sure?

COUNTRY: True.
 We haven't seen each other for years but –
 look at your nose.

CITY: My nose?
 I – I – can't see it all that well.
 What about my nose?

COUNTRY: We have the same nose.

CITY: The same nose?

COUNTRY: Same nose.

CITY: How could we have the same nose?
This is my nose.
That's your nose. (*Tweaks it*). See?

COUNTRY: Ouch!
Don't do that.
I don't like it when my nose is tweaked.
It's the only nose I have.

CITY: Look, em –
I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to
leave.

COUNTRY: I've just arrived.

CITY: Oh, so you have.
Sorry.
I'd offer you some tea but I'm out of milk.

COUNTRY: I'll drink it black.

CITY: No you won't.

COUNTRY: Yes I will!

CITY: Out of the question.
Black tea?
I could never offer someone black tea.
So, Country Cousin, if I can call you that ...

COUNTRY: I'd be honoured, City Cousin.

CITY: The honour is all mine.
What brings you to the big smoke?

COUNTRY: Well, actually I don't smoke.

CITY: Good for you.
What brings you to the city?

COUNTRY: Didn't you get my e- mail?

CITY: You sent me an e- mail?

COUNTRY: Sure did.

CITY: That's very interesting that is,
because guess what?
I don't even have a computer.
So!
How could you have sent me an e- mail?
I don't have an e- mail address.
Who are you really?
Are you from the bank?
I told them they'll get their loan back.
If I told them once I told them
a thousand times.
What's wrong with you people?
Don't you listen?

COUNTRY: I'm not from the bank.

CITY: You're not?
Come to think of it, you don't look like
you're from the bank.
People from the bank usually have these
little dots on their ties.
Or stripes.
You're not even wearing a tie.
That's a relief!

That was mighty good thinking when you decided not to put a tie on this morning. Congratulations!

COUNTRY: Thank you.
I never wear a tie.
Except at funerals.

CITY: Who died?

COUNTRY: No one.

CITY: The plot thickens.
OK, so who the hell are you?

COUNTRY: Your cousin.

CITY: My cousin?
I.D. please?

COUNTRY: I.D? (*He searches*)
Must be here somewhere.. I
– I think maybe I've lost it.
Or maybe it was stolen.
It doesn't matter.
My nose is my ID!
We're cousins.
We've the same nose.

CITY: (*Tweaks nose*) No, no, no, no!
I've told you before.
That's your nose.
This is my nose.
Your nose.
My nose.
My nose.
Your nose.
Gottit?

Anyway, lots of people have the same noses. For all I knows you could have had a nose job.

COUNTRY: I don't have a job.

CITY: A nose job?
Hello?

COUNTRY: Hello?
We've already said hello.

CITY: My God!
Listen, what was it you said in this
– this e– mail?

COUNTRY: I said I was comin' for a week and could you put me up while I'm lookin' for a job.

CITY: Oh!
I see!
A week.
A week, did you say?
A week is a long time in politics.

COUNTRY: Not really.

CITY: A week?
Sure it is.
Let me see.
A week...a week!
That's seven days, isn't it?
Seven days.
22 hours in the day.
Seven by twenty two – let's see –

COUNTRY: Sorry, there's 24 hours in the day!

CITY: Maybe in the country, here there's only 22...

You subtract two.
 To allow for the traffic.
 Now, let's see, where was I?
 Seven by twenty two, that's
 – how many hours is that?

 COUNTRY: Well, it's – (*under breath*) seven twos are
 12
 – it's a lot but – I won't get in your way.
 I'll be workin', maybe, and,
 well, I'll be sleepin' some of the time.

 CITY: Sleepin'?
 Do you snore?

 COUNTRY: No.

 CITY: Sure?

 COUNTRY: Positive.

 CITY: Well, if you snore you're out,
 and I mean out, comprende?
 O– W– T out!
 Do you walk in your sleep?

 COUNTRY: Never.

 CITY: Do you talk in your sleep?

 COUNTRY: Talk?
 No.
 Sometimes I sing.

 CITY: In your sleep?

 COUNTRY: Yes.

CITY: Hmmm!
 He sings in his sleep! (*He takes out a list*)
 Sings in sleep...
 Are you at this moment a member of the
 Tory Party, or Fine Gael, or have you ever in
 the past been a member of said organisations?

 COUNTRY: No.

 CITY: I take it that's a No?

 COUNTRY: Yes!

 CITY: What?

 COUNTRY: Yes, it's a No!

 CITY: Have you at this moment or did you ever
 have a contagious disease?
 Leprosy, insomnia, dropsy, scurvy or the like?

 COUNTRY: No.
 Once I had the muscles.

 CITY: The muscles?
 You don't look all that strong to me.
 Ah!
 You mean the measles?
 That's a No then?

 COUNTRY: Yes!

 CITY: What?

 COUNTRY: Yes, it's a no.
 Look, Cousin, I'm not goin' to be
 any bother. As soon as I get a job I'll find my
 own apartment.

CITY: *(Puts list away)* Hold on a while,
I didn't say you were stayin', Country
Cousin; you see, I'd like to be the Good
Samaritan here and all that but the truth is
– I don't have any room.

COUNTRY: What about that room in there?

CITY: It's let.

COUNTRY: Maybe I could share?

CITY: No way.
Share?
Are you crazy?
The gentleman what lives there
is a very private person.
Oh, speak of the devil.
(Enter PROFESSOR PARROT)

COUNTRY: He's a devil?

PARROT: Have the rent for you next week, old boy!

CITY: That's alright, Professor.
Whenever it suits.

PARROT: So kind! *(Exits)*

CITY: A genius!
A walking genius!
Amn't I the lucky one having someone
like that staying in my house!
There'll be a plaque outside in years to come!
Professor Parrot Stayed Here!
Imagine!

COUNTRY: Owes rent does he?

CITY: He's a little bit behind. But –

COUNTRY: A month? Two months?

CITY: Two and a half years. But –

COUNTRY: Two and a half – ?

CITY: Shhh!
I wouldn't like him to hear.
Do you have any idea who he is?

COUNTRY: No idea.
Did I hear you say Professor something
or other?

CITY: The Amazing Professor Parrot.

COUNTRY: Are you serious?
The Amazing Professor Parrot?!!!
Never heard of him!
Why is he amazing?

CITY: He just is.

COUNTRY: What's he a professor of?

CITY: Everything.

COUNTRY: Everything?
You can't be a professor of everything.

CITY: Oh yes you can.

COUNTRY: Oh no you can't.

CITY: Well, he can.
That's why he's amazing.

Oh look!
It's nearly time for his sherry.

COUNTRY: His what?

CITY: He likes a wee drop of sherry around this hour.

COUNTRY: I bet he does!

CITY: Look, you can sleep on the sofa tonight.
OK?

COUNTRY: Thanks City Cousin.
I knew you wouldn't let me down.
We have the same ears, have you noticed?

(Enter PARROT)

PARROT: How do you do?
I'm Professor Parrot.

COUNTRY: Very pleased to meet you, I'm sure.

PARROT: You sure?
Quite sure?
And you are?

COUNTRY: His cousin.

PARROT: Really?
I wouldn't have thought so.
Different ears.
Different noses.

CITY: There!
What did I –

COUNTRY: Cousins don't always look alike you know.

PARROT: That's true.
I had a cousin once.
She wasn't a bit like me.
Very strange beak.
She used to sing in the bath.

CITY: What did she sing, Professor?

PARROT: Songs mostly.

COUNTRY: Songs?
Now you're talkin' my language.
I'm a country and western singer myself.

PARROT: How unfortunate!

COUNTRY: Hoping to get a job in the city.
Some night club maybe?

CITY: There's not much demand for country
and western in the city, I'm afraid.
Would you agree, Professor?

PARROT: Absolutely, old boy!
Drop of sherry, perhaps?

CITY: Oh, certainment, mon ami!

PARROT: You speak excellent Spanish!

CITY: Merci!
(Gets the sherry. PARROT sips loudly)

PARROT: No, you'd be much better off in the country
with that country and western stuff.
No great demand for it here.
We don't wear boots or wellingtons here you
know.

COUNTRY: I thought the city was full of country people.

PARROT: So it is.
All trying to be city people.

COUNTRY: Perhaps if you heard me sing a little?

PARROT: I don't think so.
No, not really.
Well, if you must.

CITY: Not too loud.
This is a very respectable neighbourhood.

COUNTRY: I'll just unpack my geetar.

CITY: Not electric, I hope.

COUNTRY: No no, acoustic.

CITY: Write your own material?

COUNTRY: Yes. Of course.
I'd like to sing you my latest.
This is a song called 'A Lover's Tears'.
It's a true story.

:

Oh my darlin' take out your hankey
And wipe these tears away
Take out your lily – white hankey
For I feel like cryin' today
Oh I feel like cryin' today, my sweet,
And I feel like cryin' all night,
So darlin' take out your hankey
Your hankey so clean and so bright.

Well... what do you think?
(Thundering silence)

PARROT: I wonder – might I have another drop of your excellent sherry?

CITY: But of course, Professor!

COUNTRY: I guess you didn't like it then?

PARROT: *(Slurps his sherry loudly)*
You know what I think?

CITY: It was absolutely pathetic!
I mean, really!
Is that the best you can do?
I'm sorry Country Cousin.
Let's be honest.
There's simply no point in –

PARROT: Excuse me?
I disagree.

CITY: You do?

COUNTRY: You do?

PARROT: Indeed I do.
This is not my type of music, you understand.

CITY: Of course not, it's complete rubbish.

PARROT: Exactly! But –

CITY: But – ?

COUNTRY: But – ?

PARROT: Rubbish is precisely what the public wants.

CITY: It is?

PARROT: Of course!
Yes.
Total and unmitigated rubbish!
That's all they want.
Yes sir, whatever it is, your cousin has got
it, that indefinable quality; call it crap, call it
what you like. Yes sir, if you ask me – we're
all going to be filthy rich.

CITY: Rich?

PARROT: We're going to make buckets!

COUNTRY: We?

PARROT: Well, you don't think you're goin' to make it
all on your own now, do you?
I mean you can't just go out there and sing
–
what was it again?

COUNTRY: 'A Lover's Tears'.

PARROT: Exactly.
'A Lover's Tears'.
You need backing, that's what you need.

COUNTRY: Backing?
What sort of backing?
Financial backing?

PARROT: No, that's not what I had in mind.
How much money do you have by the way?

COUNTRY: Eight –

PARROT: Thank you, I'll take that and keep it in safe
keeping while we're planning your campaign.

(Takes it and counts)
Five, six, seven – that's only seven.

COUNTRY: I always keep something for the bus. Just in case.

PARROT: Humph!
Where was I?
Yes, you'll need a lot of backing.

CITY: Backing!
Like drums.
Keyboards, that kind of thing?

PARROT: No no, someone to watch your back...
an agent.
You need an agent.
Someone to talk to the media.
Arrange your gigs.
That kind of thing.
You need a name for a start.
How about Howard P. Hicks?
Or Sonny Starlight or –

CITY: Sonny Starlight sounds good!

PARROT: James Moonshine.
That's it.
Sign here. *(Produces contract)*

COUNTRY: What's this?

PARROT: Standard contract.
I get thirty per cent of everything.

CITY: What do I get?

PARROT: Twenty per cent OK for you?

CITY: Sounds fine!

COUNTRY: That leaves 50% for me?
Right?

PARROT: Yeah, well, after expenses.
CITY: What's my role exactly?

PARROT: Oh, you know, whatever.
Make the coffee.
Answer the telephone.
A little bit of this, bit of that, bit of the other.
Don't worry.
There'll be plenty for you to do.
So, everybody happy?

COUNTRY: I'm happy.
For the first time in my life.
I'm really, really happy!

CITY& PARROT: Aw!

PARROT: Sing that song again, Mr. Moonshine.

CITY: *(to COUNTRY)* That's you!

COUNTRY: Oh!
(He sings again)

PARROT: Yes, I think it's going to be big.
A hit.
You know what I mean?

CITY: Wow!
What – what happens next?

PARROT: Good question.
First thing is we have to get the name

known. Moonshine.
Moonshine!
It's got to be on everybody's lips.

COUNTRY: How do we do that?

PARROT: Simple. Got a phone book?

CITY: Sure. *(Gets phone book)*.

PARROT: No, the other one.
The yellow one. *(CITY gets it)*
OK.
Now, how many hotels are listed?
(CITY looks up Hotels)

CITY: Hotels?
That begins with an H, right?

COUNTRY: H– yeah.

CITY: Wow!
There's hundreds of hotels here, Professor.

PARROT: OK.
You get on the phone, right?

CITY: Right.
Get on the phone.

PARROT: You ring up all the hotels.
Right?

CITY: Ring up all the hotels?
Right.

PARROT: One after the other.
Right?

CITY: Right.

PARROT: And you get through to Reception.
Right?

CITY: Right.

PARROT: Then, you ask for a Mr. James Moonshine.

CITY: Who?

PARROT: James Moonshine.

COUNTRY: That's me, right?

PARROT: Correct.

CITY: Oh!
Right.

PARROT: OK.
Let me hear it.
Let me hear how you're going to say it.

CITY: James Moonshine.

PARROT: Nah!
Like this: Hello, good evening.
I wonder could I speak to
Mr. James Moonshine, please.
Moonshine, that's correct.
He may be in the lobby.
Or the bar.
Thank you so much!
And then you put down the phone, very quickly.
Or it's going to cost a lot.
Meanwhile, the reception desk announces
Mr. James Moonshine.

Mr. Moonshine doesn't come to the phone
– why?

COUNTRY: He's in the jacks!

PARROT: Please!

COUNTRY: Sorry.

PARROT: Mr. James Moonshine doesn't come
to the phone – because –

COUNTRY: Because I'm not there!
I'm – I'm here!

PARROT: Precisely.
So, Mr. James Moonshine is announced again.
And a third time if needs be.

CITY: I don't get it.

PARROT: Simple!
You ring fifty, a hundred hotels.
And people hear your name!
They don't know you from Adam.
But they're thinking.
Who is James Moonshine?
Where have I heard that name before?
So, we do this for a week and the
whole town is buzzing.
I mean, it's nothing but Moonshine,
Moonshine, Moonshine.
More sherry, please?
I'll help myself. (He does)

CITY: *(to COUNTRY)*. I told you he was amazing.

PARROT: So, try it!

(CITY goes to phone.)

CITY: Ahem!
Mmm!
What hotel will I try first?

PARROT: Doesn't matter.
Try the Maddison.

CITY: Maddison.
That's with an M, right?

PARROT: M.

CITY: I've got it.
I've got it.
The Maddison.

COUNTRY: Great!

PARROT: OK, dial!

COUNTRY: This is exciting!

PARROT: It's the start of your career, old boy!

CITY: It's ringing!

COUNTRY: Oh, I'm so excited.

PARROT: As well you should be!

CITY: Shhh!
Hello?
Yes, good evening, could I speak to
Mr. Maddison please?

PARROT: Moonshine! Moonshine!

CITY: Sorry, Moonshine! Moonshine!
Yes, James.
James Moonshine.
I'll hold, thank you.

PARROT: Don't put down the receiver yet.
Wait!
Listen!

COUNTRY: Oh, this is the most wonderful –

PARROT: Shhh!
Hear anything?

CITY: Yes!
Yes!
I can hear it!
She's announcing it.
I can hear it!

PARROT: OK, I want you to do that every day for
a week, every hotel in town.
And when you're finished with all the hotels
here, then you do the same with hotels in
other cities...
(To COUNTRY)
There'll be lots and lots of people wanting
to meet you, my boy!
You've made it!
To the top!
Well, almost.

COUNTRY: Almost?
What else do I have to do?

PARROT: You don't have to do anything.
That's the beauty of it.
You let others do all the work.

COUNTRY: I just sit here doin' nothin'?

PARROT: Compose, dear boy!
Compose!
Compose or decompose!
Must make a call.

CITY: Who are you ringing?

PARROT: Billy Brocklebank – good friend
– we go backa long way.
(On phone) Hi Billy, that you?
Professor Parrot here!
Yes, it's me! What do you – what do you
mean you thought I was *(whisper)* locked
up?
Very funny! *(Hysterical laughter)*
Really? *(Hysterical laughter)*.
Yeah well, you know, the usual.
A bit of this, a bit of that.
Well right now?
Right now I'm managing this very talented
C&W artist, James Moonshine.
I'm sure you've heard of him.
You haven't?
You will, Billy.
You will.
Yeah!
Yeah!
Exactly!
Yeah, so I was hopin' maybe you might get
your ass over here and – . You can?
I appreciate it Billy, really do.
How's herself?
Oh, sorry to hear that.
Ah well, yeah, yeah, fine, great, super!
Well, see you then. I know.
Ha Ha!

(To CITY & COUNTRY).
He'll be with us shortly.

CITY: He will?
Who is he?
What's he goin' to do?
I mean, do we need him?

PARROT: We need him.

CITY: That's good enough for me, Professor.
Billy Bottlebank, you said?

PARROT: Brocklebank.
He's an enabler.
Best in the business.

COUNTRY: An enabler?
What's that?

CITY: You know, an enabler.
(He doesn't know either).
Tell him, Professor.

PARROT: You tell him, I'm thinking.

CITY: The Professor is thinking.

COUNTRY: Does a lot of that, does he?
Thinking?

CITY: How do you think he got to be a Professor?
Sittin' around doin' nothin'?
Of course he spends time thinking.
That's what professors do.
They think.
He's a professional tinker – eh, thinker.

COUNTRY: *(Watching PARROT as he paces the floor silently)*
 Must be fierce hard work.
 All that thinkin'.
 I did some thinkin' once.

CITY: You did?

COUNTRY: Sure did.

CITY: What about?

COUNTRY: You know, my mama and papa, my dog.

CITY: You have a dog?

COUNTRY: Had.
 It got killed.

CITY: Oh!
 What happened?

COUNTRY: Well, we were out playin', me and my dog.
 It was a nice sunny day.
 The birds were twitterin' in the sky!
 You should have heard those birds
 a- twitterin'.

CITY: Never mind the twittering!
 Tell us about the dog. How did it die?

COUNTRY: Well, he was a poodle.

CITY: A poodle?
 Not one of those white poodles!
 I –

COUNTRY: Yes, as a matter of fact.

I know – it wasn't my first choice.
 The reason –

CITY: Get to the part when it gets killed.

COUNTRY: Well, like I said, we were out playin',
 and the birds were twitterin'.
 You should have heard those birds
 a- twitterin'.
 Sweetest music I –

CITY: Get on with the story!

COUNTRY: Suddenly, this thing kind of came out of the sky!
 Whoosh!
 Like that!
 Flaming red hot thing.
 With a blue tail!

CITY: What?
 What are you saying?
 Flamin' red hot thing?
 What kinda boloney –

COUNTRY: Yeah, flamin' red hot thing.
 Blue tail.
 Hits my dog on the head.
 Big hole in the ground.
 Smoke comin' out of it.
 Well, all the birds stopped their twitterin'.
 There's this silence – except for a sizzlin' sound.

CITY: Holy mother of – !
 Sizzlin'?

COUNTRY: Yeah, like – you know when you're fryin' sausages?

CITY: Sausages?

COUNTRY: You know that sound?

CITY: Yeah!

COUNTRY: And there's my dog – Cat Stevens.

CITY: Cat Stevens?
That was the name of your dog?

COUNTRY: Cat Stevens, yeah.
There's Cat Stevens there, you know
– and – he's all – (*emotionally disturbed*)

CITY: What?
What?
He's like a sizzling sausage?

COUNTRY: Worse!
He's just a mess, you know?
And I'm sittin' there and I'm just too numb
to cry. You know the feeling?

CITY: Not exactly, but go on, this is the most – .
(*COUNTRY blows his nose.*
It's like a foghorn)

COUNTRY: I don't know how long I was there, just
sittin' there, looking into this black hole,
with the smoke coming out and all, and Cat
Stevens, he's messed up really bad.
I mean, really bad and the birds are all quiet
and all. And this sizzling sound – and that's
when I did my thinkin', you know.
And I was thinkin' a lot, you know
– about God, and my mama and papa,
and school, and Dolly Parton.

CITY: Who?

COUNTRY: Dolly Parton?
And I'm thinkin' about Cat Stevens.
And about myself.
First time I really started thinkin' about
myself anyway, next thing you know –
these men come along in white coats.

CITY: White coats?

COUNTRY: Yeah, and they're all wearing masks.

CITY: Masks?

COUNTRY: And they're all talking in American accents,
but not nice accents like Dolly Parton or –

CITY: Who?

COUNTRY: Dolly Parton?
Anyway, mean, bad accents like– like –
George W.

CITY: Who?

COUNTRY: And it's really scary and all.
And they say, 'Get back, kid! Get away from
that hole!'
And I say, 'Cat Stevens is down there!'
And they all look at each other and say,
'Cat Stevens?
Are you sure?'
'Sure I'm sure, I say and it's hard to hear
what they're sayin' behind their masks and
one big guy comes up to me and he says,
'Would you repeat that, sonny?' And I say,
'Cat Stevens is down there'.
And this seems to upset them in some way,
I dunno. And they start sprayin' the place

and goin' around with these things – like metal detectors or somethin' and then I just decide to run – I mean, this is worse than a nightmare.
I'm outta here, I say to myself, I'm gone.
So I start runnin' and runnin' and – .
And ... and

CITY: And?

COUNTRY: I've stopped now.

CITY: Right.

COUNTRY: Don't do any of that thinkin' stuff no more, it's not good.
Brings me back, it does, watching the Professor there. I was just like that; walkin' and runnin' and thinkin' and lookin' over my shoulder, chewin' me nails.

CITY: Chewin' your nails?

COUNTRY: Yeah, my toe– nails.
I was in a bad way.
Thinkin' thinkin' all the time.
About my mama and my papa and Cat Stevens and those bad men chasin' me.

CITY: Bad men?
They're not ... they're not comin' here are they?
I mean, did they follow you?

COUNTRY: I gave them the slip.

CITY: You sure?
(Looks to PARROT who is staggering)

You alright, Professor?

PARROT: Feelin' a bit dizzy.
The weight, you know.
The weight of thought.

CITY: Heavy!
Can I get you one of your special biscuits?

PROFESSOR: Yes please.
(CITY gets the biscuit. PARROT munches loudly)

COUNTRY: Can I have one?
I haven't eaten since the day before yesterday.

CITY: Those are the Professor's special biscuits – they restore energy to the nervous system, flush out toxins, reduce the heart rate, increase perspiration, strengthen the beak, bring a shine to the eyes, ruffle the feathers a bit and melt the wax in your ears. They are imported specially from Pondicherry.
That's in India.

PARROT: Give him half one.
No!
Make that a quarter.

(COUNTRY takes quarter of biscuit. He goes into a trance. Music on the sitar and tabla. He sways to music, with the odd absurd energetic hop, twitch and moan. Recovers his balance momentarily).

COUNTRY: That is definitely the most amazing biscuit I ever had in my life.

PARROT: It hasn't really kicked in properly yet. Wait until it gets into your blood stream.

COUNTRY: When will that be?

PARROT: About 20 seconds from now.

COUNTRY: What kind of biscuit is it anyway? What's in it?

PARROT: You don't want to know.
Ginger, ginseng, liquorice.
Essence of lotus.
Hemp from a hangman's rope,
faruka from a snake-charmer's foot.
Essence of elephant urine.
And a few secret ingredients.
Oh, I see it's getting into the blood stream now.
(COUNTRY goes bananas to the rhythms of Indian music)

CITY: *(to PARROT)* He's a bit stressed out. While you were doin' your thinkin' there, Professor, he was tellin' me how he lost his dog.

(ENTER BILLY BROCKLEBANK)

BROCKLEBANK: Hmm.
(COUNTRY flops down, exhausted)

PARROT: Billy, old boy!
Long time no see.

BROCKLEBANK: Professor, you haven't changed.

CITY: Welcome to our humble abode.

Can I offer you something?

BROCKLEBANK: No no, I'm grand.
Well, what's the scene here?

PARROT: I'm glad you could make it.
We've got this thing going here, Billy, and all it needs now is –

BROCKLEBANK: Yeah yeah, I know.
The Brocklebank touch.
OK, give it to me.

PARROT: What you see there is a Country & Western talent.
No, not a talent, a genius.
He's going to go all the way, Billy, to the top, right to the very top.

BROCKLEBANK: But he needs a leg up.

PARROT: Precisely.
That's where you come in.
(To CITY)
He knows everybody, everybody there is to know.
Also, he's a master of media manipulation.

CITY: Pleased to meet you!

COUNTRY: *(Dazed squeak)* Me too!

BROCKLEBANK: Well, let's hear it.
You'll be doing the usual routine, ringing every hotel in the country, I suppose, getting him paged?

PARROT: Naturally!

BILLY: Good.
Well, let's see what we've got here.
The raw material, so to speak.

PARROT: Raw being the operative word.
Mr. Moonshine! (*Impatiently*)
Mr. Moonshine!

CITY (*to COUNTRY*) That's you!

COUNTRY: Oh, sorry.
Yes?

PARROT: Do your thing for Mr. Brocklebank,
if you don't mind.

COUNTRY: A song?

PARROT: No, a big plate of steaming hot curry!

COUNTRY: I can't cook.

PARROT: The song man, the song!

COUNTRY: I thought – oh, yes, the song.

(COUNTRY composes himself and instead of the C&W song, he sings a traditional Pakistani Sufi song in the happy-clappy style. All watch and listen, stupefied)

BROCKLEBANK: Not quite what I expected!

PARROT: Sorry about that Billy, it's the Indian biscuit.
Obviously the effects haven't worn off yet.

CITY: And he's lost his dog.
He's a bit traumatised.

BROCKLEBANK: Aren't we all.
The important thing is that he can sing.
Well, in a sort of a way.

Not, of course, that it matters if he can sing or not.
So, James Moonshine, is it?

COUNTRY: James Moonshine, sir. Yessir.

BROCKLEBANK: Hmm, let's see.
I'll have to take some photos, of course.

ALL: Of course.

COUNTRY: I don't pose in the nude.
I want that to be clear from the start.
(Thundering silence)

BROCKLEBANK: I thought we might –
(whispers to PARROT)

PARROT: Excellent!

CITY & COUNTRY: What? What?

BROCKLEBANK: Break the story to the newspapers.

COUNTRY: What story?

BROCKLEBANK: Moonshine Missing!

COUNTRY: Missing?
I've only just arrived.

PARROT: Listen to Billy.
He knows this business like the back of
– beyonds!

If he says you've gone missing,
you've gone missing.

CITY: But, I mean – I don't gettit...
let me figure this out.
He's gone missing?
So?
So what if he's gone missing?
Who cares? I mean, (to COUNTRY) with
all due respect, dear cousin, I mean, who
has heard of you?
I never heard of you before today.

BROCKLEBANK: Listen you guys.
If the papers say JAMES MOONSHINE IS
MISSING then everybody cares, right?
The police.
You might be kidnapped for all they know.
We appeal to the public: anyone with any
information at all on the disappearance
of renowned C&W artist, Mr. James
Moonshine, is asked to ring this number.
That kind of thing.
We'll have your mugshot on prime- time
television. Bus drivers, taxi drivers, all
sorts of people will be ringing in saying they
saw you.
Big reward, of course.
And then we bring in the well-
known psychic, Professor Parrot!

PARROT: Side- kick?

BROCKLEBANK: Psychic!

PARROT: Oh, psychic?(*Aside*)
Been a while since I did that.

(*Acts the psychic*) Moonshine is alive.
Very much alive.
He may have lost his memory.
Temporary amnesia.
He is in Ireland, or somewhere beginning
with I. Maybe Iceland!

CITY: And what happens next?

COUNTRY: Do they find him? I mean me?

BROCKLEBANK: Nope!

CITY: He's not found?
Hold on!
I don't gettit.
How could he stay missing?
How are we going to make buckets of
money if he doesn't show up?
He's gotta turn up and sing for his supper,
right?

BROCKLEBANK: Wrong!
He never turns up.

PARROT, CITY,
COUNTRY: What??? Never?

BROCKLEBANK: Never.
He's made a record.
We release it.
Posthumously.
It's played on every station from Cork to
Cairo.
We create a legend.
Get it?
A living legend.
All they've got is your photo,

a misty shot, soft focus, you know
– and your voice.
Everything else – they fill in for themselves.
Gettit?
They fantasise.
Every one out there, fantasising about good
old James Moonshine.
See how beautiful it is?
James?
Happy– go– lucky type.
James Moonshine?
Yeah, I knew him.
Very sad, retiring type of fellow.
A recluse!
Moonshine?
Yeah, everybody knows Moonshine was crazy.
A playboy!
He was once a stunt driver in the movies.
Lived for motorbikes, he did.
Couldn't slow down!
Get it?
A story to suit everyone!

PARROT: Stroke of genius.

BROCKLEBANK: Look, open any paper or magazine and
you're gonna read about some celebrity or
other, right?
So, someone's getting married,
or getting a divorce, or someone is caught
taking drugs.
Someone becomes a Buddhist.
You know the way it is with these big stars.
But our man, James Moonshine?
He's untouchable.
He's out there somewhere in the misty
background, a pure voice, a pure talent.
Legend.

No one can touch him.
No one can marry him or divorce him,
nothin'.
He's immortal!

PARROT: I luvvvvv it.

BROCKLEBANK: Yeah, thought you would.
And then, just when interest in
Mr. Moonshine here is beginning to
slacken a bit, we break the news!

COUNTRY: What news?
What?
That I'm dead?
Hey, no thanks.
I'm not goin' to be another martyr for –

BROCKLEBANK: Who said anythin' about being dead?
Did any of you guys hear me sayin'...listen.
James Moonshine isn't James Moonshine.

CITY: He's not?

COUNTRY: I'm not?

BROCKLEBANK: Nope, never was.
James Moonshine is an alien.
And we have the proof!
(Thundering silence)

PARROT: I like it.
I love it.
Billy, this is – this is the best.
Best ever.

CITY: I don't gettit.

PARROT: You don't have to get it.
It's marvellous.
Billy, you're the best.

CITY: *(to BROCKLEBANK)* What's in it for you?

BROCKLEBANK: I write the book.

COUNTRY: The book? What book?

BROCKLEBANK: The book! The book!
The authorised biography.
And then they make the film.

COUNTRY: Right, well, I was born in Ballybunion
where my mother ran a small hairdressing
saloon called Monica's.
When I was five years old I broke my –

BROCKLEBANK: You break nothin', see?
You say nothin'.
You leave all the details to me, OK sunshine?

COUNTRY: I thought it was Moonshine.

BROCKLEBANK: You're not goin' to get smart with me now are you?
He's not goin' to get smart on me
Professor, is he?

PARROT: Smart?
No no, not at all!

BROCKLEBANK: We've a business to run here, do you dig?

PARROT: *(to COUNTRY)* Billy has his own way of
writing these things.
Trust me, it's best left to him.

BROCKLEBANK: Ballybunion!
Monica's hairdressing saloon.
Huh!
You were an orphan!

COUNTRY: An orphan?

PARROT: Beautiful!

BROCKLEBANK: The Night the Moon Shone Brightly: The
True Story of James Moonshine,
the Singing Alien.
That's the title.
Like it?

PARROT: Like it?
Love it.
Adore it.

BROCKLEBANK: That's when you were born.
That's why you were called Moonshine.

CITY: I'm cryin' already.

PARROT: It's so – . beautiful!
Billy, you're an artist.

BROCKLEBANK: OK.
Make yourselves comfortable.
I'm goin' to tell you the story of
James Moonshine. This time next week
it will be with my agent.
Three months from now the book will be
on the shelves, or rather, not on the shelves
because it's gonna be a sell-out.
OK, ready?

ALL: Ready!

BROCKLEBANK: James Moonshine was born on the night the moon shone brightly. He travelled to earth on a moonbeam. It was snowing heavily at the time.

COUNTRY: Hang on a minute. I'm from the country and I know a little about these things. You see, you don't get snow if the moon is shining. And vice versa.

BROCKLEBANK: *(To PARROT)* What's he sayin'?

CITY: Excuse me cousin, don't interrupt please. This is your life story here. Show a bit of respect.

COUNTRY: But –

BROCKLEBANK: Is he getting smart with me, Professor?

COUNTRY: If it's snowing, that means the whole sky is full of these snow clouds. Now, if the moon is shining brightly, that means the sky is clear. So, how could it be snowing? It just doesn't make sense.

BROCKLEBANK: Is he right about this, Professor?

PARROT: Well, as a former Professor of Meteorology, I can see his point. I mean, I can see where he's comin' from. But, of course, it's a matter of opinion. On the one hand, facts are facts, on the other hand –

BROCKLEBANK: You guys!
You amaze me!

You think people are interested in facts?

ALL: Well –

BROCKLEBANK: No no no no.
People aren't interested in facts.
They want thrills, right?
Thrills and spills.
They want – you know.
They want to be tickled.
They wanna laugh.
Or maybe they wanna cry.
Or both together.
Facts?
Spare me!
They can't be bothered with facts.
If you're talkin' facts here,
then we're in the wrong business.

COUNTRY: *(Yawns)* Sorry folks, I'm totally banjaxed. It's been a long day. I think I'll just crash out.

BROCKLEBANK: Yeah, you do that, amigo.
Look, why don't we all pack it in?
We'll continue with this tomorrow.
Yeah, I'll write a chapter or two first thing in the mornin'.

(Yawns. They all yawn. COUNTRY slouches down and snores. They all look at him)

I'll bunk down with you Professor, if that's all right.

PARROT: Er – umph – sure, Billy, sure.
(BROCKLEBANK exits)

See you tomorrow then, Billy.
And thanks for your time.

CITY: I think I'll hit the sack myself, Professor.

PARROT: You do that!
Lots of calls to be made tomorrow.
(COUNTRY starts singing 'A Lover's Tears' in his sleep)

CITY: He sings in his sleep!
Good night, Professor.

PARROT: Good night!
I'll stay up a while – with my thoughts,
you know.

CITY: Sure, sure Professor.
You have some good thoughts now.
Good night.

(Exits. PARROT is left alone with his thoughts. And the sherry. After a while, there's a loud knock at the door)

PARROT: Who is it?

VOICE: CIA!
(Enter CIA woman)

CIA WOMAN: CIA.
We're here for the contaminated one.

PARROT: The what?

CIA WOMAN: The one who glows.

PARROT: Listen Mrs, I think you're in the wrong
movie or something.
This isn't America.
CIA?
You haven't any jurisdiction here.
What the hell do you want anyway?

CIA WOMAN: I'll just turn off the light a second.
(Lights Off. COUNTRY is glowing)

Aha!
(Lights on. COUNTRY being lifted off stage by CIA people. He wakes up, in confusion)

COUNTRY: What's goin' on?
Where are you bringing me?

CIA WOMAN: You have come in contact with Russian
space junk.

We have to decontaminate you.

COUNTRY: What?
Help!
Help!
(He's gone, his cries fading in the distance. CITY and BROCKLEBANK enter)

CITY: What's up?
What's all the commotion?

BROCKLEBANK: What the hell is cookin'?

CITY: Where's my cousin?

PARROT: It – it all happened so fast I –
It seems he's a Russian spy or somethin'.

They took him away. *(PARROT & BROCKLEBANK laugh cynically. CITY frozen to ground in horror. Slow fade of lights to the sound of the C&W song)*

CITY: What?

BROCKLEBANK: Russian spy, eh? I thought he was a bit of a smart ass. ENDS

CITY: My God! *(Silence)*
So, what do we do now?

PARROT: Good question!

BROCKLEBANK: This doesn't change anything.
I mean, we can still go ahead with our plans,
(to CITY) Eh, James?

CITY: Wha'?

PARROT: *(Conspiratorially)*
Of course!

CITY: Whoa!
Hold on you guys.
You're not makin' a –
a James Moonshine outta me. No, no!
No way!
No, guys, I'm not a Country & Western singer.
Listen!
I can't even sing. Listen:
'And I feel like crying all day, my sweet'
I mean, I'm just awful!

PARROT: Sounds good enough to me!

BROCKLEBANK: Yeah, he'll do.

CITY: No guys. Please!

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Two books on haiku as a way of life, *Haiku Enlightenment* and *Haiku, the Gentle Art of Disappearing* from Cambridge Scholars Publishing are available from Amazon. *Uttering Her Name* (Salmon Poetry) is his début volume of poems in English. *Dialann Anama* (2007) is an interactive diary drawing on the world's wisdom traditions, mostly Advaita. His debut novel in English is *My Head is Missing* (OW, 2012). *The Pleasantries of Krishnamurphy: Revelations from an Irish Ashram*, is published by Non-Duality Press, www.non-dualitypress.org

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