

Shabbos goy

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [July 29, 2020](#) issue

The early palaver of nestling crows  
Outside my window in the white pine tree  
Calls back a childhood in which such ruckus  
Seemed prelude to possibility.

But I need to resist any rosy nostalgia:  
I had my small troubles. I scarcely believed  
The world would be nothing but pleasure and promise.  
Even young, I wasn't entirely naïve.

Still I woke eager for my gang of pals,  
For games we devised by improvisation,  
And of course the vigor of our *own* palaver,  
Which was graced by savvy. Or so we imagined.

A beloved friend from San Francisco,  
Raised a Jew near Coney Island,  
Now a *cultural Jew*, left here today.  
I cherished the weeklong visit with him.

Our talk would get silly, but not truly childish.  
It didn't involve emphatic insistence  
On one team's being superior  
To some other, to mention a tiny instance,

Or on faith, for much larger. For near sixty years,  
There've been very few secrets we haven't shared,  
However wildly different our backgrounds,  
With this man I love. So I wonder from where

I get the sense we left some things  
Unsaid, and I wonder what they might be?  
In this after-time, it's as if I were thirsty.

This is not, to be sure, confined to me

In my dealings with that particular man.  
It's just that his stay has roiled a thought:  
The older I get, the less I suspect  
I'll ever get my ardors across—

To God, to the woman I'll love until death,  
To our burgeoned family, to other dear friends—  
If I can't identify them myself.  
Though spring days grow long, some dusk descends

On my soul sometimes, and not only toward dark.  
No need to acknowledge it's metaphorical.  
Whatever its nature, I proceed through that darkness  
Like a Shabbos *goy*. Such as I'm able,

I spread light, although I fear it's feckless.  
*Talk! Talk! Talk!* the nestlings gabble.