

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.