

[I'm a Might-Have-Been]

Beliefs and Customs - Folkstuff Folk Stuff '38 N.Y. 8 I'M A MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN

“Are you, in fact, a privileged ghost returned, as usual, to haunt yourself?”

(This stooped over park-bench-philosopher with his hands in his pockets started talking when they put him on relief and he won't stop until they put him back to work. Worry has made his face pasty and he makes sure to sleep as little as possible so he can exhaust himself into a tolerating his world. He is in his late thirties, of average height xxx and his solid body has grown fat through disuse.)

(This stooped park-bench-philosopher with his hands in his pockets started in talking when they put him on relief and he won't stop until they put him back to work. Worry and lack of sleep makes his face pasty. His large belligerent mouth twists with ironic pleasure as he talks. He is in his late thirties, of average height and his solid body has grown fat through disuse.) 8

—I'm A Might-Have-Been

I ADMIT it, I'm a hog. In other words human. I enjoy women and a pair of doughnuts like anybody else. Say tomorrer I wake up I'm covered in communism, say I can go and get what I want by asking — I want six wives. You maybe want 24 suits and him, they gotta give him twelve yachts — otherwise he's miserable. We're nuts, we're all deprived so long we went nuts. Plain hogs. It's chemical, you can't do nothing. We're 90% water, H2O, etc., and 10% other miscellaneous things —sodium helium oxygen hydrogen potassium phosphorus calcium and so forth. At the same time in In this kinda world 2 plus 2 makes 5. Now Look at me. I look like [I am a dirt monkey*1]. True? I'm among the world of missing men. I'm so insignificant if they sent out a radio call for me a hundred years nobody would find me. *1 Economically I'm collapsed, I could write my whole will on a postage stamp,

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not a single coin of the realm you'll find in my pocket, I ain't got enough real estate to put in a flower pot. [?] then Then, why should I sing my country 'tis of thee or welcome sweet springtime I greet you in song? And yet, my friend, you can never tell the way you stand by the way you're sitting down. Listen to what I'm gonna say to you now, [?] —the bacteriologist of today was himself a bacteria in primeval times. Sh! [?] Think that over...

Myself, I'm a might-have-been. I could tell you something else—I'm a genius and so forth, after all, you're a stranger to me. But it ain't what you call yourself, you can say you're Jesus and you ain't even St. Patrick. True? Well, I got Most of my life I was lost inside a sweat shop like a fly in winter time. You go into it a man and you come out cockeyed hunchbacked knockkneed pigeon-toed flatchested—you're a washrag and a walking prospect for the undertaker. You gotta put a mark on your feet to know right from left. The gray matter and the different parts of the cerebellum are deflated. # So I was fired. The boss said he gotta make sacrifices he started with me. Before, I was lost, [after?] I was still worse. I had bicycles in my brain. I was asking myself always: am I coming from or going to? Here I was free, the whole day in the air, in the sun, but still I was groping the park [was the same*2] [?] and as the shop *2.

One swallow don't make a summer. When you're alone you can bark at the moon like a boogie dog, you can go sit down on the ground and open up your mouth you'll catch mosquitoes, that's all. A chain is strong like its weakest link and that was me. I don't say I didn't let off a lotta hot air in them trying times, it's a free country. I lived by my own oxygen. But also—we got a check and balance system here, there ain't no dictatorship, nobody gets away with murder, you can manifest yourself, true, you can express yourself, but the other guy can check up on you if he wants to.

Well, I got plenty checking up but in the end I was a citizen of the world. I didn't bow down to the dollar, I was international, a progressive. I followed the head, you understand, the others followed the rear end, they were retro-gressive. You find some people in this day and age they like to be both. If they're down in the Battery they're up in the Bronx

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too, these budweisers, these political fakers. They claim if you're in a steam room at the highest temperature you're freezing and if you go into a frigidaire you're hot. Why does ice smoke? They tell you: because it went crazy with the frost. They're always arguing: if it's hot as it's warm while it's freezing it should be cold you think it's gonna be hot? Bah! I wouldn't stoop myself so low. The average man should think twice before he speaks and then—shut up.

Which reminds me—ain't it time for me too? Here I'm riding a whole cavalry of ideas and I ain't got enough to buy doughnuts. If I had my life to live over again I'd choose an existence of plenty. Otherwise it's better for us to shut our eyes, the undertaker downtown got a special this week.

Which means this, this whole spiel. It's an explosion, I mean an explanation, of one thing—I got cursed with a social consciousness and how much I would like to do something about it I can't. Brain I got plenty, but the will power of a Chinese Eskimo.