



100 BANANAS

by owen mould

Everyone in the business knows about the 100 bananas. It goes something like this: One guy tells a patsy in a bar that he can prove the patsy is actually a monkey. The patsy places the bet and then the con keeps offering the patsy bananas until the patsy finally breaks down and accepts the banana, having long since forgotten the nature of the original bet.

The story has been around for ages, but few people know the story does not end with the 99th banana finally being accepted by the patsy. The true story has it that the patsy was named Dan Nidelbaum and he never sat through that whole spiel run out by this guy named Frank. Of course such a situation would not be real. The perceptive will observe that the little story is more than just an old adman's anecdote about the persistence of sales, but a fable about the unconscious and delusional megalomania.

The symbolism of the bananas is obvious to anyone who has even heard of Freud. Frank, suffering from infantile paranoia, is anxious that Dan may have slept with his mother. In fact, Dan has not slept with Frank's mother at all; he has slept with Frank's sister and has refused numerous offers from Frank's wife. But that is beside the point.

By offering bananas to Dan, Frank recaptures his sense of lost manhood by establishing himself as omnipotent alchemist benefactor, the Giver of the

Golden Phallus-Fruit. Frank thereby usurps his father's place and seizes ownership of the mythopoeic banana grove. We can see, at this point, the invaluable contribution of psychotherapy to the field of anecdotal comedy.

Freud, in fact, was a jovial guy whose appreciation for wit and humor have been well documented. Many of his case histories are, in reality, not accounts of neurosis, but sketches the Viennese Genius devised in his spare time to entertain the citizens of Vienna.

We can imagine the bearded father of psychotherapy ducking around the corner after a hard day dealing with hysteria to don the august mantle of the nightclub stage comic at the little cabaret on Witzboldgasse, there to step forward between the singing Pomeranian act and Ludmilla the Balloon Gal, where he would twirl his cape before astonishing the audience with tales of wild and wacky Victorians in turn-of-the-century Vienna. "Evening, ladies and germs, hope it's not too cold for you. Met a gal the other day who was absolutely frigid. Hey, but what the heck, every doc knows a little temperature is bad for you. Which reminds me: I was taking a stroll down Tiergarten way the other day when a guy comes bounding up to me making like he thought he was a wolf . . .".

To return to the matter of the bananas: Frank has attempted to reinstitute the magic kingdom of childhood where no evil can happen, a sort of prelapsarian kingdom where he remains colonial sovereign playing the role of successful father-usurper over the tacitly removed yet implied maternal seat of desire and origin, symbolized by the interlinked patterns of his atrociously mismatched tie -- which, in a condensation of several cathexes, features obvious allusions to that

chinese classic of omphallic power, The Dream of the Red Chamber. The whole delusion comes crashing down when Dan, disgusted by the repeated offering of the severed bananas, which he takes as an insult, punches Frank in the nose, becoming the Lancelot who reinstitutes the dialectic of history into the unhealthy stasis of self-involved Camelot. Dan stalks away to eat a nice lunch with turkey and maybe a piece of apple, while Frank remains sitting among his 100 bananas, scattered about him like so many used cars, unwanted, cast aside, impotent.



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