

SWINGLINE 7

SWINGLINE #7 is by Joyce Katz, 59 Livingston St., #6-B, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Dated for the seventh mlg. of APA, September 1, 1972, this is being typed at the thirteenth hour on my office typewriter, so I'm not certain how this will come out... One warning: I have no corflu here at the office. Sorry.

ROSS To get serious about Astrology (which is almost a contradiction in terms) I guess I'll have to repeat that the reason I dislike it is because of the exactness it's purported to possess. And, my intelligence just won't let me believe that it's an exact science, for all the reasons we've discussed so far. The reason I used to like palmistry, and tried my hand at it quite a lot, was because it leaves a great deal wide open to interpretation, and doesn't pretend that the lines and crosses are an exact roadmap. (Oh, occasionally you'll run into someone who tries to give that type of interpretation to some specific palm marking; they're always on shaky ground though, and if they continue talking will invariably find themselves in a contradiction.)

What the question really comes down to, is, do you believe in psi powers? -- It's part of my cultural heritage that I should, of course, and for a good part of my life I was no disappointment to my maternal grandmothers (all of whom were prophetesses, or reported to be.) My mother also had The Gift (..please, Dear Friends, do not reflect too strongly on what my Here-And-Now opinions of this subject would be; I'm not certain of my own feelings in the matter, so I damn well know that you don't know.) Manifestations of some type or another of psi around the house were considered to be common-place; if my mother said she Knew such-and-such, or that some event was going to happen, it was accepted as gospel, prepared for, and followed to the letter. This isn't really the time, I think, for any long debate as to whether this was superstition or genuine psi power manifesting itself. Suffice it to say that, in my generation of the family, I was supposed to be the one..and the older I got, the more aware I became of my tendencies in that direction. (Or..the more encouraged in that direction I was by my mother..) By the time I started highschool, I had developed an acute interest in things psychic, and began combing the shelves of Poplar Bluff's public library for information on the subject. I discovered palmistry very quickly, and it became a hobby, an entertaining party trick, a way to get to hold the fellows' hands, a means of expressing and focusing the psi powers I might have had. ~~XXXXXX~~ (Choose one or any or all of the above; they all had a bit of truth in them.)

The entire point, with palmistry, is that it provided a focal point; something to concentrate on, and also a means of establishing physical contact with the subject (which most mediums find desirable.) And, by using the palm in this way, I imagined that I could give a slight boost to psi, and give a more entertaining reading. (I imagined I could do more than entertain..but we Scientific People in apa are far too full of quant stuff to discuss my youth-

ful imaginings.) I did palmistry off and on for years. Sometimes I'd go long periods and never give it a thought, and then I'd get involved in a flurry of readings.

While I was in Los Angeles was actually my last major period of activity in this field. I used to sit in a mildly bohemian coffee house, called "The Brothers", and do readings for whoever asked. Usually for free, but never for more gain than a cup of hot spiced tea. (I also spent a couple of nights each week at Shelley's Manhole, Ted, listening to jazz. Though I didn't enjoy doing readings in that environment, I would for anyone that asked. That's how I became acquainted with Shorty Rogers, Paul Horn, Shelley Mann, etc. Paul was a pretty good friend of mine, and hung up on psi manifestations, so used to have me "do my trick" for other friends of his.)

All was going along smoothly enough that I suppose I'd still be reading palms if a couple of things hadn't happened. The two owners of The Brothers began to proposition me, encouraging me to let them set me up as a pro. They had pretty elaborate plans for me too, evidently, since they wanted me to stop working, take an appropriate stagey name for myself, and wear some type of razz-ma-tazz costumry that bespake philosophy and religion. Flowing white robes and sandals..you know the bit. They promised to do all the necessary hoop-la; they seemed to understand it would be unseemly for me to cope with the business and advertising and management end of it, and were willing (anxious..) I should continue to be a Pure & Spiritual Soul, so this particular unicorn wouldn't be frightened away. (Personally, I never could tell that celibacy affected me one way or the other..but a lot of people really consider it prerequisite for any kind of Truth Searcher, so this entire period of my life was spent in that innocent state.)

Well, I wasn't so innocent that I didn't understand. Betty McCann was the hottest piece of property on the coast at that time, working two weeks in the Bay Area, a week in LA, and a week in Hawaii each month. (Once in a while, when the routine got too stifling, Betty'd fly off to London to frolic around with some English spiritualists.) I had heard her readings; for \$30 she gave 15 minutes of some of the heaviest bullshit I've ever heard in my life. Her only bit was Past Lives, and lemme tell you, that's a wonderful racket since no one can deny what you say. The window dressing on her act was that she Delivered her spiel from "trance-state" and claimed not to remember a word afterward. -- Neither did the people who'd paid the money..it was really very mushed-up stuff, hard to follow, and frenetic...but from what I heard, no one lost anything at all by forgetting it.

At the same time, coming up on the horizon was what I think might have been the first of the big-time Indian Yogas. He was doing great; his bit was that he founded "prayer gardens" and "meditation rooms", and had

already built two in LA and one in Hollywood...and there was talk among his managers of maybe expanding The Movement to San Francisco.

Like I said, I knew what the two brothers wanted. And..oh..well..of course it was tempting. Who wouldn't like to live in sybaritic ease, surrounded by admiring followers, doing something he really enjoyed? But, the more I thought about it, the more inclined I became to miss my own apotheosis; although Little Tin Godhood is undoubtedly the career I'm most well-suited for, I did decide I couldn't go along with the bit.

This isn't the only reason I left LA..but those people were really very anxious to cash in..and all things considered, it seemed like a good time to split. And it wasn't long after that I completely gave up giving even quasi-serious palm readings; I caught myself, one day, dolling up a reading and throwing in bullshit just to please the listener, for the sake of the \$20 he had laid in front of me. I didn't want to be that particular type of prostitute. The final motivation for my giving it up was my increasing awareness of just how influenced some people are by fortune-tellers. If told, in the properly mystic tone of voice, "I see you have a tendency to jump out of airplanes", there are a lot of people who'd go right out and do it. I didn't want that kind of responsibility attached to something that should have never been taken any more seriously than a game.

As I've said, I never really got into astrology. It just didn't allow enough leeway for "psychic phenomena". I have read palms, crystal balls, tea leaves, Tarot cards, regular cards, the I Ching, plus learning a smattering of voodoo from a Cuban cultist (in LA)..maybe one or two other "methods" that escape me now. And it's my experience that while there can be honest communication in some of these methods, it's usually so buried beneath the motivations of the reader that you'll never find it.

NEAL Of course you're right; you should always come out of a bad experience a "better person" than when you went in. But, you should also come out of a good experience a better person than when you went in. I tell you the truth, I could do with being a little bit worse and having had a few less bad experiences. --That's a joke, of course, but nevertheless, there's no reason why you should have to learn life-lessons only from bad things happening; the real trick (and one it took me a hell of a long time to understand) is to have a good life and be a good person. I really don't think suffering should ever be necessary, and I think anything anyone gains from suffering could have been better gained by more pleasant methods.

I think, in fact, that when I reflect on How It's Been, that's the thing that makes me the most angry at myself. Seems like, for the longest time, I just couldn't learn anything the easy way. Looking back, I can see how I usually had an opportunity to learn whatever needed knowing, without going through any hassle; I was just too damn stupid, tho, and too eager to experience everything firsthand. Which makes for Colorful Living and Rich Experiences..but not necessarily for happiness and comfort while learning. Next time through, I'm going to pick it all up outta books...

TED I'm sorry you didn't get to continue writing immediately after your trip; I would have appreciated hearing what you had to say while you were experiencing that level of desire for honest communication. Arnie and I have been sort of building up for tripping again; it's been a long time since we have. (The mescaline mentioned in the first mlg. was too light-weight to hardly even count.) We don't do this frequently; wouldn't want to do it too often, frankly -- I'm a "slow learner" and it takes me some time to digest a good strong trip. But it's been a considerable time since our last heavy trip, and as soon as we have a comfortable opportunity when neither of us is ill, we'll probably go again.

I'm really sorry about you and Bill not hitting it off right. Seems to be a legitimate case of two good people who really got off on the wrong foot. Maybe someday you two will have a chance of becoming acquainted on a more engaging level; I sure hope so.

I'm curious, Ted & Robin; you mentioned wanting Kitten to be aware of her heritage, and to recognize Jewish Culture. Have you any concrete plans yet as to how you're going to accomplish this? --It's a meaningless conversation of course when Arnie and I have it; nonetheless we do occasionally talk about what we would have wanted to do about this question If Things Were Different. Like you, we think it would be a good thing for any child to be aware of his heritage; on the other hand, there's a natural feeling of revulsion toward the idea of filling a child's head with Religious Hangups. --Since the problem is only an imaginary one for Arnie and me, we're not forced to make any decision on the subject; I do wonder, tho, how others have coped with the question.

Indeed, you've cut right through the bullshit and to the heart of the matter when you say that the description of Hard Times In Louisiana sounds better than it really was. That's exactly what I meant, in an earlier mlg. of apa, when I said that I didn't really think that being without anything was True Freedom: there's nothing less Free than the sound of a child crying for food when there's nothing to give him...and Louisiana was just filled with that kind of Joyous Living. I'm not yet prepared to formulate any Positive Statements about my worldview, but I've been coming more and more to the thought that it's really a fine thing when everyone has enough to eat, and really a bad thing when they don't...and just a whole lot of the rest of it is bullshit, or at least nothing to be worried about until everyone's had their mess of pottage.

Well, yes, I did know that there are all-night convention orgies. I just wasn't sure if you knew.

~~XXXXX~~ I told you I suspected I had a naive view of the Newport Jazz Festival. I found out just how naive when I read the price of admittance. Wow! It was expensive... and I had thought it would probably be Free...

If you recorded someone, let's say Richard Tucker, in a dual session using on the one hand the most modern stereo equipment, and on the other hand the same type of equipment that Caruso was recorded on, and then you compared the two recordings, using some computer-scanning device (--you can tell by my description that I have a really Solid Grasp of the scientific elements of this proposal--), would it then be possible to play a Caruso recording and make a new one that added, via computer, the things that weren't on the old records? -- I really can't give a better description of the hardware involved than that, but it's my pet theory that someday, by a method of this type, they'll be able to give me a modern-quality recording of Caruso.

JOHN The things you said to Seth were well worth reading for all of us, I think, and I appreciated them. Like you, I have little interest and no time for the standard type of apac...I already have good outlets for that type of communication, and the level of communication available through a regular apa would not be enough to hold me in this group if that were all that's available to us. I believe, given another mailing or two, the chips are going to start falling into place, and this group will thrive or die, depending primarily on everyone's view of what they think this group should be. It's quite logical to assume that there will be some, as the apa turns one way or the other, who will decide this group is not what they thought it would be, and not for them. For my part, I couldn't agree with you more in your desire for a private congenial group in which we could communicate as people rather than as fans or debating teams. During this interim period, as everyone makes up their mind whether they truly belong in this group, it's a little Wearing to tread the line between basically friendly but impersonal apac between basically friendly-but-not-intimate people, and intimate personal communication between people who really have things they want to say to each other. (And, of course, doubly wearing to have to tread this line in a hostile atmosphere where privacy is doubtful.)

On a related, tho not necessarily connected, subject: in the past 2-3 months the subject of communication has become very interesting to me in an academic sense. I've been thinking about it a great deal; I believe you and I have actually even discussed it once or twice, John, about the different types of conversation people have. I've been a couple of places during this summer where there was virtually nothing (apparently) in common. It's seemed to me that the first "layer" of communication is an exchange of facts. Someone starts out ignorant of some particular subject matter, and someone else gives the first party facts. It seems to me that most casual conversation is at this level. From that stage, an advancement seems to be an exchange of philosophies, and this covers the entire range that runs from instruction in dogma to (what seems to happen whenever two members of the current generation meets) a testing of each other to make sure that each is at the proper stage of hip awareness, and cued in to the appropriate philosophies. -- A very wide spectrum of conversation is covered in that grouping, as you see. Next there seems to be a more-difficult-to-obtain level that has to do with emotional reactions; ie, how do you feel about this idea; how do you react to it. And, there's also the faction (maybe another whole level, but maybe

the part of/same bag as emotional reactions) that discusses "Why do you feel this way; what has happened to cause this reaction; etc." (More on that one later...while I think it's one of the more satisfying levels of communication, I think it also has pitfalls.) -- I'm not certain that I have any real point, yet, about my theory of communication, except that it seems very difficult to move anyone from one level to another (and whether the movement is up-and-down, or parallel is purely meaningless, I guess.) I told you, when you were at the house, how incredibly barren the conversation was with my family, since it was completely without emotional content; in fact, even philosophic content ~~had~~ had to be avoided since it wasn't possible to discuss opposite views because of all the (admittedly humorous) cultural conflicts arriving from the hippy-returns-to-bible-belt situation. But, I found that the lack of discussion of philosophies was no real loss to me, and realized that usually I do very little of this nowadays, anyhow. (Or, more realistically, I probably do as much of it as I have at any time since I passed that age where I fancied myself a great debator..I used to love to argue philosophies, but now I'm rather bored by the arguments.) What I was really starved for was for conversation of the "I feel"- "I react" variety...which is, I guess, for me, Where It's At, right now, together with the "How did you come to think this way" excursions that I think help me to understand a person much better.

I think there's a great conversational trap to be avoided in the "why I turned out this way". Although reflection on what happened to produce such-and-such result can produce some interesting anecdotes, too frequently it never gets past the anecdotes to the real meat of the matter. I've known, as I'm sure we all have, some people who had it down to a fine art, and could go on for hours at a quasi-serious level, telling of one interesting incident or another, or even very personal traumatic uncoverings of the soul, without ever really getting any more out of it..or never really telling any more..than the interesting story. The art of the story-teller is a fine one (and especially beloved of all fans), but sometimes it becomes so refined as to lose the art of communication within itself. -- And of course an even worse trap is the one where a person relives over and over, for his listening audience, his past traumas..and has Realization after Realization, when with tears in his eyes, he says "Yes, now I understand Why.." but never does anything about it. I mean, it's one thing to uncover the reason you're afraid of animals..and it's quite another to go on kicking dogs after you've "uncovered the reason" six times over.

I don't know if all the above has any real meaning at all. It's just something I've been thinking about.

As you only very recently became aware, Arnie and I had been struggling for quite some time to get conversations to "break down" into ones and twos, away from that giant kindergarden-type circle. We'd tried a tremendous variety of solutions, too, ranging from variations in the seating pattern, to both of us getting up and leaving the room and staying out for a while.

We're both very pleased with ourselves that we've finally been able to accomplish our goal...and after only about a year-and-a-half of trying... by the simple expedient of turning the stereo slightly louder. -- This may seem like a strange goal, to anyone who hasn't really thought about it. But to me it seems like a wonderful accomplishment; until we learned how to break the group down, trying to hold a private conversation with anyone was like taking a bath in a gold fish bowl -- and even that's ok now and then, but Arnie and I were getting pretty unhappy with it for a regular diet. I mean, sometimes it's fun to be entertaining and tell stories for the fun of the entire group. But after a while, you begin to wish you could actually talk to some of the people who come around.... and ~~WW~~ we're both really glad we've finally been able to accomplish this.

It's very true, John, that I've been more free in my discussions of my past here than I ever was in the earlier apas, despite the less congenial group that this now is. And it's also true that the reason for this is because I'm now much happier and stronger than I was then; as I've hinted to you, some of my earlier silences stemmed from unpleasant causes. I could probably come up with a cool half-dozen reasons for why I'm so inclined to blurt out my past experiences..nonetheless, it really is funny how I've tended to pour out my history to you, John. No doubt that, as this group shakes down, I'll be able to get down past the what and into the why..hopefully even into the meaning it all had then and now. I have a great desire to delve into some of these darker corners, probably because they were left dusty so long..but also because I feel that only in the past few years have I developed enough maturity to really be able to grapple with the subjects. I've really appreciated, Johnny, the way you and Arnie have been helping me to feel more free about discussing them. And, given the continuation of the apa, there's no doubt whatsoever that I'll tell you more about it in months to come. -- Maybe you'll be the person who'll finally, after all these years, get me to commit some of this stuff to paper; until the past few months, the only thing I'd ever written about it was some poetry.

Indeed, I think you've hit on a Great Truth when you say that some of the exaggerations of normal relationships in fandom come from the fact that it's not possible to actually cut off all contact with someone else. In the mundane world, if you don't like someone all that well, you just drop them from your circle...in fandom, unless one of you gafiate, you're constantly in some kind of contact; even if you cut each other from mlg. lists, you still read about the person in other fanzines, etc. -- When you stop to think about it, it's a wonder there aren't more feuds than there are. -- I Wonder at your desire to, when becoming "too embroiled" in one group of friends, leave them for another group where you don't have to worry about feedback. I love being Embroiled...I'm very very tribal, and enjoy the sense of Continuity that continuing in contact with the same people gives to my life. (If it weren't for fandom, my life would be incredibly choppy; it's enough that way already to distress me, but knowing the same people for years, and through Change Periods, helps me a little.) To throw one back at you: I don't understand how you can just Walk Away from your old friends.

On the subject of self-realization (in the religious sense)...well, I've had some pretty potent experiences, and some of what I took to be major Realizations (..and even now, behind all my cynicism, throw no rocks at..) right up to the point where I felt I had Found Truth (..but only for me, and nothing I could or would be inclined to pass along to anyone else even back then when I trusted in the guru-concept.) But, to me it's seemed that even if you accomplish Godhood, this didn't really mean that it was Finished; In retrospect, I can see that there are other pastures to graze in, and sheep in other folds. -- In many ways, I feel more self-realized now than I ever did even during those days when I felt I lived in White Light. My self-realization now is of a totally different type, and in a totally different x field ..and, incidently, doesn't detract from or take away from any previous realizations I might have had; this kind is totally different from the others... --- That's all pretty metaphysical, and maybe not any thought I really want to follow up on right now, except to say that I'm really pretty happy these days -- which probably makes me a much more boring person to be around than when I was a Truth-Searching-Tormented-Soul ...but I'm a lot happier now, and no less a part of the Godhood.

Decadence? -- Gee. That's complicated. I don't mean it in those sinister ways, though. To me, decadence is just letting go and not worrying. Probably the most decadent thing I ever do is when I just turn loose and let Arnie take care of me; I don't worry about the world situation, or sin, or Saving Fandom, or any of the things that are usually very alive subjects in my mind. I simply regress to a point where I don't worry about the world, and concentrate on being very happy and content and secure. "Not Caring" doesn't enter into it at all. -- Probably I'm misusing the ~~wxx~~ word "decadent", but that's as close as I can come to explaining it.

And, speaking of Decadent, these are the most decadent pages I've ever done for apa -- completely formless, and not at all well thought out. Ah, well.. I've enjoyed doing them, for all of that...