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**“LIST OF SCENES OF MY
CHILDHOOD TO BE
WRITTEN”**

Raymond Federman

1. Scene describing how my uncle Leon planted a tree in the courtyard of our building.

2. Scene describing the savings-account booklet I found in the box in the small closet, and how I succeeded in collecting the money when I returned to France for the first time, after ten years in America.

3. Scene describing how I once stole a ring in a department store.

4. Scene describing how after school with the other boys from our neighborhood we played soccer in the street, not with a soccer ball but with a little wooden palette that would demolish our shoes, which made my mother very unhappy because she could not afford to buy me new shoes. In fact, concerning shoes, I had to wait until my cousin Salomon’s shoes became too small for him to be handed down to me by my aunt Marie. But these used shoes were already too small for me because, even though I was younger than my cousin Salomon, my feet were bigger than his. I suppose there is nothing more that can be said about that.

5. Scene describing how mean one of the teachers in school was, and how he would throw a metal ruler at us if we spoke in class, and how when he came back from the war he had lost a leg, and he was not as mean, and how we would laugh when we saw him walk with only one leg and his crutches. We would call him *le boiteux*.

6. Scene describing how one day when I went to my cousin Salomon to ask him to help me with my algebra homework he tried to force me to suck his cock.

7. Scene describing how, one day, when I was playing doctor with my sister Jacqueline, we almost got caught by my mother. It was the day war was declared.

8. Scene describing how my cousin Salomon, one day, when we were playing in the street in front of our house, tied me with a rope and threw me down into a ditch some workers had dug in the street, and how he shoved a handkerchief in my mouth so I couldn't shout, and how I couldn't untie myself and answer my mother when she called out from the window of our apartment for me to come home because it was starting to get dark.

9. Scene describing the exodus at the beginning of the war, and how all the people left Paris as the German soldiers approached the city, and how my parents and sisters and me walked carrying suitcases on the roads of Normandy with thousands of other people, and how we saw French soldiers in retreat, and also how we saw dead people when the enemy airplanes fired at us with machine guns.

10. Scene describing how we wandered for days on the roads of Normandy, and how when we arrived in Argentan the Germans were already there, and

how I was impressed with their uniforms, especially the officers' uniforms.

11. Scene describing the house in Argentan in which the Germans put us, and where we stayed for almost a year, and how my mother would fix the German soldiers' uniforms, do their laundry, press their shirts, and how my father would get stuff from the black market for the German soldiers, and how they would bring us food, and how in the evening German soldiers came to our house to discuss politics with my father, and how I would go to the store to buy bottles of beer for the German soldiers, and how before leaving late in the evening they would all raise their left fists and together with my father would sing "The International," and me, too, I would sing with them in a soft voice. The German soldiers who came to our house were all Communists, like my father. My father explained to me that the best place for German Communists to hide was in the army.

12. Scene demonstrating how verisimilitude often becomes improbable when one tells a story.

13. Scene describing the Argentan Lycée where I got my *certificat d'études*, and how the boys used to fight each other with chestnuts that fell from the trees that surrounded the school playground, and how I would also throw chestnuts at them.

14. Scene describing how during the very cold winter we spent in Argentan, one day the German soldiers who came to discuss politics with my father unloaded a whole truck of coal in front of our house, and how all the neighbors were saying that we were collaborators.

15. Scene describing how the children in Argentan played on the big square in front of the church where the Germans had piled up the gas masks and

the rifles and the helmets abandoned by the retreating French army.

16. Explain how, when the war started, all the people in the cities had to carry a gas mask everywhere they went. Even the children.

17. Scene describing the night when the tannery in front of our house caught fire, and how all the people in our street had to be evacuated, and how the firemen fought the fire, and how I wished our house would also burn so we could move away from this neighborhood.

18. Describe how, after the burned factory had been completely demolished, we had a view of the whole city from the window of our apartment on the third floor.

19. Describe the wasteland—*La Zone*, as it was called—between Porte D’Orléans and Montrouge, and how the Arabs from the colonies, we called them *Les Sidis*, slept in this no-man’s-land in cardboard boxes or wrapped in newspapers, and how the people who had to cross the Zone to get home were scared of them.

20. Scene revealing how I masturbated in my bed or in the hothouse in the courtyard, and how once my mother caught me doing it and told me that if I continued to do that I would become blind.

21. Scene describing how at the beginning of the war, before the Germans arrived in Paris, during a bombardment alert, my father and I stood at the open window of our apartment to watch the German planes bombard the Renault factory in Malakoff. It was like the fireworks on Bastille Day. My mother, before going down to the shelter with my sisters and the other people in the building, shouted at my father to go down to the shelter, but

my father refused, and I was proud to stay with him during the entire alert.

22. Describe how on Sunday, my mother, my sisters, and I would walk from Montrouge all the way to rue Vercingétorix in the 14th arrondissement to have lunch at my grandmother's with the aunts, uncles, and cousins, and how my sisters and I always complained that it was too far to go, and that we should take the metro or the autobus, because our feet hurt, and how my mother would tell us we could not afford the metro or the autobus, and how my father never came with us on Sunday because everybody on my mother's side of the family hated him.

23. Tell how when we walked home to Montrouge after the visit to my grandmother's, we always went before it was dark because we were afraid of the *Sidis* in the Zone.

24. Tell how, when I was old enough to take the metro alone to go visit my aunts on my father's side and play with their children who lived in the Jewish neighborhood of Le Marais, I would make a detour to rue Saint-Denis to look at the prostitutes standing in the street.

25. Tell how I always dreamed of becoming a great adventurer. An explorer. Or else a stowaway on a pirate ship. I also dreamed of being able to fly.

26. Tell how once my mother bought me *un éclair au chocolat* for my birthday.

27. Tell how I liked to go to the market with my mother to do the food

shopping.

28. Describe how the man who delivered the coal for the building where we lived dropped it from his truck in the street, and how my uncle Leon would make me carry it to the cellar with a big pail.

29. Describe how I would sneak into the Montrouge cinema, Place de la République, to see the Charlie Chaplin movies.

30. Describe how Yvette, the pretty young woman who lived on the same floor we did, one day asked me, when I was only eight years old, to come to her place to show me how to make myself feel good.

31. Tell about the stolen spoon.

32. Describe how my father used to take me with him to Place de la Bastille to demonstrate with the Communists against the government, and how we all sang “The International,” and how one day the police dispersed us by striking us with their sticks, and how my father got hit on the head and was bleeding, and how he wiped the blood with my handkerchief, and how my mother screamed when she saw the blood on my handkerchief, and how she told my father that he should never take me again, that he was trying to have me killed, and how I loved those demonstrations.

33. Describe how one day my father packed his little Polish suitcase and said he was going to Spain to fight with the republicans against Franco, and when my mother started crying and screaming my father screamed even louder than her, and how we the children were so scared because they were screaming so loud, we hid in the kitchen, and how when my aunt Marie heard the screaming she came up to our apartment to see what was going

on, and when my mother explained while still sobbing that my father wanted to go to Spain to fight against Franco, my aunt Marie started screaming at my father that he was a *salopard*, that he had no right to abandon his wife and children, that he was a stupid Communist, and that he would die before reaching Spain because of his tuberculosis, and how my father threw his little Polish suitcase against the wall and walked out of our apartment slamming the door and cursing aunt Marie, and we even heard him arguing with my uncle Leon in the staircase, and how my father finally came home three days later, and nobody ever talked about that scene again.

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