

Leonard Bernstein

Tied My Shoelaces

Yeah, that's right. Leonard Bernstein, the uber-famous conductor and classical music poster boy actually tied my shoes. In a dream.

He did it just like my Dad would have. (at least he didn't sneer or scoff). He was merely doing his job. Rather perfunctory, actually. No big deal (for him, not so much for me).

He wasn't wearing a tux. No symphony waiting in the wings. Actually, there were no wings. No Marlon Brando or Marilyn Monroe waiting for the privilege of his attention.

I have no recollection of the context of this bizarre incident. We were outside at some sort of brouhaha (I just love that word – so random, but soooooo descriptive). He knelt down – of course, you do have to kneel down to tie someone's shoe – at least most of the time. Very parental.

"Oh, Alan, look at your shoelaces. They're untied again. You're going to trip. Here, let me tie them for you."

Then the embarrassment of having someone tie your shoelaces for you, as if you don't know how to tie your own shoelaces yet. But, that's another digression.

So, you are probably asking yourself now (in addition to "why am I still reading this drivel?") – why Leonard Bernstein?

Well. I don't know.

Why not? Maybe he was just a random famous person that my cannabis-addled brain picked out of the assortment of celebrities I've been gorging on on YouTube lately. It was either him or Muhammed Ali or Gore Vidal. I guess Leonard was the classiest one.

Maybe it has to do with my recent resurgent interest in classical music. My wife and I are so proud of ourselves. We listened (and watched) the Vienna

Philharmonic play Barber's Adagio for Strings. We even shed a tear. Leonard would have been proud.

Maybe that's why he tied my shoelaces. He was a proud parent.

"Here, Alan, let me tie your shoelaces for you. I think it was just smashing that you listened to Adagio for Strings last night. However, next time, might I suggest...."

Something like that.

Or maybe it's my latent frustration at not being famous in my old age and my need to humble somebody really famous. I'm sure Leonard was humiliated to be tying some schmuck's shoelaces in public, for God's sake. At least he could have been tying Itzhak Perlman's shoelaces. Or maybe Glenn Gould. Van Cliburn? Better yet - Marilyn Monroe (except she only wore high heels).

Of course, all of this is a moot point, as I am in the camp that believes dreams are really just the random ramblings of a too busy brain that doesn't know when to shut up and let us get some sleep! I don't take any of my dreams seriously. I just look at them with detached amusement. Kind of like watching a Woody Allen movie.

I've read Freud's Interpretation of Dreams and C.G. Jung's theories about psychological archetypes. I grew up steeped in all this psychology mumbo jumbo (another of my favorite expressions). Now, I don't for a minute believe that I'm an archetype. I am definitely a type, but not the archetype type.

Okay, let's be honest. Dreams are really only about our precious, little egos, aren't they? I mean, you're always in it. And you're the center of attention. Either it's you who is trying to find something, do something, escape from something, or something is being done to you (like having someone tie your shoelaces). Whatever it is, you're the star of it. Either your ego is scared, or anxious, or angry, or confused. But, it's your ego. I doubt if anyone has had a dream where they solving a great mystery, or saving the day, or just being plain old altruistic. No, it's about us wanting something, or trying to avoid something, or something that really annoys us to save our precious self. Ego. Ego. Ego.

I rest my case.

I'm wondering what happened after Leonard tied my shoelaces. The dream went on and on but it's gone in the mists of unconsciousness. What say we plant a seed? Let's just imagine....

Leonard: Okay. There you go. (Standing up) There's actually I'm supposed to talk to you about.

Me: Oh yeah? Like what?

Leonard: Well, about your career. You should have done more.

Me: More?

Leonard: I mean - a school teacher?

Me: Well, I did get a Masters degree. (PAUSE) In Dance.

Leonard: Whoopee Shit.

Me; I started a school. An arts school. We turned a lot of kids onto Art. Even strings.

Leonard: (looking up and nodding). Okay, you get some points for that.

Me: Points? What for?

Leonard: The Lottery.

Me: The Lottery?

Leonard: Every millenia there's a Lottery and whoever wins gets to come back as whoever they want for one day. Anybody in history. All the way back to Adam and Eve.

Me: Wow.

Leonard: But, they have to keep to the script.

Me: The script? Who writes the script?

Leonard: Y'know. The Big Guy.

Me: (Puzzled look)

Leonard: Allah. Yahweh. The King of Kings. The Great Hooha. The Duderster.

Me: Oh.

Leonard: Well, anyway, that's what I was supposed to tell you.

Me: You mean this was an assignment?

Leonard: Let's just say I just got a few more points. If I win the Lottery, I'm coming back as Michael Jackson the first time he did the moonwalk singing *Billie Jean*. Man - that hair - the costume - he killed. The audience was screaming. All those performances I did, no one ever screamed for me.

Me; Too bad. Well, good luck.

Leonard: Yeah, well, we all have our cross to bear, right? I'm done here. (walks away)

Me: Hey, how many points did I get?

Leonard: Not many. But keep trying. Maybe you could come back as Baryshnikov. Or Steve Martin doing the Egyptian.

Me: Right.

They part ways.

This is what I get in my dreams - a beatdown from a famous conductor. A Life Lesson from Leonard. Well, at least I'm hangin' out with classy types. No Charles Manson in my dreams. Or Roy Cohn. No Donald Trump. Now that would be bad. That would be grounds for demanding a refund. Or a rewind. Or a second take.

Well, it's late. I've been working on this for half an hour. I'm exhausted. Actually, I've just run out of ideas.

I wonder whether Leonard will show up tonight? Maybe it'll be Groucho Marx. Except he'd probably be tying my shoes together. Or Abbey Hoffman, but he'd be taking my shoe laces off, or Stokely Carmichael telling me to take my shoes off because they're a form of white oppression.

Shoes. Maybe it was about shoes. Maybe Leonard was inconsequential. There to distract me. Shoes - that which protect our feet from harm. Provide comfort and an expression of our character. Our ego.

Geesh. Pardon me while I contemplate my navel.....