

Abandon The Old In Austin-Town

By  
Timothy Braun

*(Outside Home Slice Pizza, 1415 S Congress Ave, Austin, TX 78704. The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine stands, waiting. He is dressed in black pants and a white button down shirt. He has a broken leg. The Man In The Old Coat enters. He is elderly, and moves slowly. The Man In The Old Coat tap dances for attention, and makes the kid laugh. The Man In The Old Coat looks into a trash can and finds a tabloid newspaper, a half eaten slice of pizza, and the remains of a chocolate shake.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Hey. Hey!

*(He motions to The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine. The Kid ignores him.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Hey. Hey. Hey. Come. Come 'ere, friend. I want to show you something.

*(The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine looks around, points to himself in questioning if The Man IN The Old Coat is talking to him.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Yeah. Yeah. You. You see this? *(He holds the newspaper in the air.)* You see this?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yes.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You can't see it from there.

*(The Man In The Old Coat goes to The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Can you see it now?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yes. Yes, I can see it.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Ain't it odd? Don't you see something peculiar about this? Tom Cruise. Madonna. Kathy Lee Gifford. You see? You see it? Where have all the space aliens gone? Little green men? Headless baby horrors. Animals and insects possessed by the Devil. Don't you see what's goin' on? Don't you understand?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I guess they're goin' after real people now.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Real people? Real people? Friend, they've been goin' after real people since the dawn of time. Since 1948. Since I was your age. They been houndin' the real people for years now. For eons and eons and eons. Don't you find this just a little bit odd? A little bit strange? A little bit strange? A little bit out of the ordinary? You know, when was the last time you saw Charles Manson on the cover of a publication?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don't know...

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Eight months. Can you believe it? Eight months. It's a conspiracy of some sort. A conspiracy. The U.S. Government is trying to keep us down. Trying to keep him down, trying to keep you down, trying to keep me down, trying to keep us all down. Puttin' pictures of pretty movie stars on our literature. Tryin' make us think the way they want us to think, feel the way they want us the feel, see what they want us to see. You think I give a rats ass if Kevin Spacey is a fag? You think I care if Woody Allen is bumpin' some kid? The pretty people. The beautiful people. I want the news! The real news! I want to know what's goin' on out there. Whatever happened to Roswell, to project Blue Book, to the grassy knoll? Whatever happened to investigational journalism, my friend? Do you see what I'm sayin'? Do you see what's goin' on? What's your name, friend?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Excuse me?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Your name?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Jim.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Jim?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Jim.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

James? James is your God given name?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

I will call you James. Is that what your mother calls you? James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Sometimes.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Well, don't you worry, my friend. I will call you James. From now on out, you are James to me.

*(The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine tap dances for the kid.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You call me...say James, what would you like to call me?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

What do you want me to call you?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Isn't this wonderful? We can call each other what we will. I will call you "James". You will call me, "Anthony". Like St. Anthony. I've always wanted to be called St. Anthony. I like you, James. I like you a lot. You and I, we think alike. We see eye to eye. We got the same M.O., that is "modus operandi." Hey, can you spare some change my good friend, James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Sorry.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

A quarter? Come on, James, just one quarter.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Really, I can't spare change.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Not even a quarter?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I really can't.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Don't feel bad, my friend. You're not the first individual of your stature to let me down. It's fine. I'm not all that disappointed. Hey! You wanna hear a joke. It's a good joke. A great joke. I've been dying to tell it to someone. You wanna hear it?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Sure.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

This fellah...uh...who was the guy who said “I think, therefore I am.”?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don't know.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Come on, James? A fellah. A poet, writer, philosopher, mathematician, scientist, architect of the human mind. An intellectual. You know who I'm talkin' about. Don't you?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah, I just can't remember his name right now.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Don't get down on yourself, James. I can't remember the bastard's name either. Anyways, you know who I'm talkin' about, right?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah, I know who you're talking about.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You've heard that sayin', right? “I think, therefore I am.”.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah, I've heard it.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

So, that fellah walks into a bar, strolls up to the bar man and the bar man says “Would you like a beer?”, and that fellah says “I think not.”, and “POP!” He's gone.

*(The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine giggles as The Man In The Old Coat breaks out into uncontrolled laughter.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

*(While laughing.)* You, you get it? You get it, James? “I don't think so”. I don't think so. I don't think so. Isn't that a thing of beauty? Ha!

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah. Yeah, I get it. I like that. It's funny.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

God, that's a good one. Best one I know. Now you tell one. Tell me a joke, James.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

What?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You tell a joke. I told one, now it's your turn. Tell me a joke.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don't know any jokes.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Come on, James. You know at least one joke. Everybody knows a joke.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I got one. How do you keep a thief from stealing your bagels?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Bagels? Don't know.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Put lox on them.

*(The Kid In The Cool Shoe Shine breaks out laughing. The Man In The Old Coat does not.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You get it? Lox. Lox and bagels. Get it?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Not really, James. But, it was a valiant attempt at making a joke. An "A" for effort. Lox. That's a fish. I like that. Put lox on 'em. I like it. I like you, James. You got style. You got class. Say, what happened to your leg, Pilgrim? Looks like you got a busted wing.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Broke some bones in my foot.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

I'm sorry to hear that. How'd you do it?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Car accident.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

That's a shame. Your car?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

What kind of car do you drive, James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Citation.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

A Chevy? You're a Chevy man, James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Well, not really.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

But, you do drive a Chevy?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

What year?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

'76.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

A fine year for automobiles. A great steel beast of a car, I bet. Where'd you get her?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I bought it off my neighbor.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Nice. Keep it local. A Citation. A '76 Citation. What a fine car. I used to have a car just like that when I was your age. A '48 Pontiac. It had the finest wheels. You waiting for the bus now?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Yeah.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Yeah, I haven't seen you around here before. No car. That's a shame. And a broken wing. Must be hard to get around. I'm hungry. You hungry, James?

*(The Man In The Old Coat walks back to the trash and gets his food.)*

Not really. THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

No? THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

No. THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

You don't like pizza? THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Not really. THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Would you like some shake? THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

No, thanks. THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

It's chocolate. My favorite kind. THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

I'm not hungry. Thank you. THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT  
You know, Charles Manson auditioned for the Monkeys. It's true. Chucks a good old fella. A real nice guy. Got a bad rap. Got a real bad rap. But a real humanitarian. He auditioned for the Monkeys. You know that? It's true. He auditioned for the Monkeys. And look where it got him. Look where he is today. He messed with the pretty people. That's a cryin' shame. Never mess with the stars. Never mess with 'em, James. Saw him once. I saw Manson.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE  
You saw Charles Manson?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT  
Yeah. Honest to God. Before he was put away by the government. Walkin' down the street in Beverly Hills. Beverly Hills, California. He said "howdy" to me.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE  
He said "Hi" to you? What did you do?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Huh?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

What did you do?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

I said hi back. He said “Howdy” to me, so I said “Hi” back. I was lookin’ for a place to eat. I think. And there he was. Charles Manson sayin’ hi to me. To me! He’s a good fellah, he is. They’re trying to keep us down. They are trying to keep us all down. You, me, him. Tryin’ to keep us down with their economics. Voodoo economics, Reaganomics, Trickle down economics. Tryin’ to make it so we don’t have no pot to piss in. Tryin’ to keep us down. I blame 9-11. You got a job, James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

No.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Well. You dress like you work. You dress like you’ve got some sort of employment.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I work at a theatre.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

A theatre? A movie theatre?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Sort of.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You lied to me? You lied to me, James. Well, don’t feel bad. Lots of people have lied to me. You’re not the first. Here this for you.

*(The Man In The Old Coat does a tap dance once again.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

James, do you think you could help me out with a quarter?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don’t have a quarter.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Come on, James. I told you the funniest joke I know. I told you about my relationship, my friendship with Chuck Manson. Don’t you think that story deserves a quarter?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Look, I really can't spare a dime.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You can't spare a dime. You can't spare a ten cent dime. You see? You see what's goin' on? It's the elite. The beautiful people, the pretty people. Bastards! They think we don't know what's goin' on. The pretty people. The politicians, the movie stars, sport stars. All of 'em on a list. A short list. You work. You work hard. You work in a legitimate theatre, and you can't even spare ten cents for a friend, your friend St. Anthony. It's like they have all abandon us, here in Austin. Austin-town. Don't it make you sick? Ain't it wrong? Hey! Do you read People magazine?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Actually, I do.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Then you know what I'm tryin' to tell you now, James. "The Fifty Most Beautiful People In The World", an annual publication from the ladies and gentlemen of the People Magazine. All of 'em movie stars. All of 'em elite. Not a God-damned one of 'em works at Denies. Robert Redford, Paul Newman, could be flippin' burgers at the Red Robin, but they wouldn't be on the cover of the People Magazine. Do you know who they are, James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Paul Newman makes salad dressing.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Damn right he does! As long as some ones on the tube, or a bottle of salad dressng, that's what they care about. The beautiful people. The elite. The ones that are tryin' to keep us down, to stay on top, to stay on top of our world. If we ain't down, if we ain't pumpin' gas and buyin' the People Magazine, they are nothing. They are not beautiful. They are not important, and they can't have that. They are the ones makin' the money. That's why you can't spare a dime. That's why you can't spare a dime for friends, James. Don't get on that bus. Don't get on that bus, James. 'Cause if you do, if you get on that bus, your only helping out the list and fightin' against the workin' man. James, I need me a quarter.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Anthony...

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

St. Anthony.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOW SHINE

St. Anthony...

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Look at these hands, James. You see 'em. Look at 'em good now. They've seen work. They've seen their fair share of labor. And look where I am now. They are keepin' us down. By the way I love your shoes.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Thanks?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Can't you help me out?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Look, An...St. Anthony, I really can't...

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Look here. Show me your hands.

*(The Kid With The Col Shoe Shine shows him his free hand. The Man In The Old Coat grabs him by the neck.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

All I need is a quarter, James.

*(The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine takes a dollar bill out of pocket with his hand.)*

THE MAN THE OLD COAT

I SAID A QUARTER! I SAID A GOD-DAMN-QUARTER!

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don't have a quarter.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You don't have a quarter? Then how are you goin' to get on the bus?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I got a pass.

*(The Man In The Old Coat lets go of The Kid With The Cool Shoe Shine.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

A pass. Perfect. Outstanding. How much did you pay for that pass, James? How much coin did you fork up for that thing?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Look...I...would you please...

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Do you understand what I am talkin' about , James? This is serious. This be serious business. This is Hiroshima. The list has all the power. They got us in a strangle hold with our own literature. Spendin' all your nickels and dimes on the People magazine. We all need money to survive, James. We all need money. And they are takin' it all. They are robbin' us blind. Your just a stooge, a puppet, a monkey for the beautiful people. Buyin' the People Magazine. Gettin' on the bus, buyin' their literature. You see what I mean? They want you to ride the bus. You can't even afford to give me a ten cent dime. James, this is St. Anthony here. Talking to you. I worked for almost forty years on my feet. And now I am asking for twenty five cents from you. They abandon me, baby.

*(The Simple Girl enters. She waits for the bus.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

*(To The Simple Girl.)* Hey. Heeyyy. Hey. I'm talkin'. I'm talkin' here.

*(The Simple Girl attempts to ignore him.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Do you mind? I'm tryin to have a conversation with my friend, James.

*(The Simple Girl is still ignoring him.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Hello! Are you deaf?

THE BOY WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

We are across from a deaf school.

THE SIMPLE GIRL

I can here you just fine. Thank you.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Amazing! One might think otherwise.

THE SIMPLE GIRL

I'm just going to wait for the bus.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Gonna wait for the bus. What is this, a running gag? A joke. A cruel joke. "Pop", he's gone. Can I ask you a question? Where are you going?

THE SIMPLE GIRL

What?

Where are you going?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

I'm going to me sisters, sir.  
THE SIMPLE GIRL

No. I don't mean where are you going, I mean where are you going?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Anthony...  
THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

St. Anthony...  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

St. Anthony, leave her alone.  
THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Do you read the people magazine?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

No.  
THE SIMPLE GIRL

Do you read?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Yes, yes I read.  
THE SIMPLE GIRL

What do you read? The nutrition labels on soup cans?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

I read books and magazines. What do you read?  
THE SIMPLE GIRL

Magazines?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

What do you read, St. Anthony? What do you read? Besides People Magazine.  
THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don't like your tone, friend. (To the THE SIMPLE GIRL) What magazines do you read?  
THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

THE SIMPLE GIRL

Why do you care?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

You see! That's what they want us to say.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

Leave her alone.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Leave her alone? Leave her alone? (*To The Simple Girl.*) Don't you know what the elite are tryin' to do? They're trying to poison your mind, your soul, with pretty people. Like tainted ice cream. They're tryin' to run you down. Keep you down.

THE SIMPLE GIRL

Well, when the fit hits the shan you gotta deal with it, I guess.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

When the...oh, that's clever. That's nifty. You think of that all by yourself, you pathetic monkey?

*(The Man In The Old Coat grabs the trash can and throws it at her.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

GET AWAY FROM MY FRIEND! GET AWAY!

*(The Simple Girl runs away.)*

*(The Kid with The Cool Shoe Shine takes his crutch and hits The Man In The Old Coat in the stomach with it.)*

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

STOP IT! JUST STOP IT! What do you want? What do you want?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

What do you want!

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

James?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I don't care! I DON'T CARE! I don't care about what you think! I don't care about Charles Manson! I don't give a damn! The pretty! The elite! I don't care! Would you just

*(The Kid With The Cool Shoe shine cont.)*

go away! Would you just go away! I'm trying to wait for the bus! I don't want to hear you talk, old man. Look. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell. I didn't mean to yell at you.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Yes you did.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

No. I apologize. I'm sorry. Why don't you take this dollar?

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Keep your dollar, James.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I want you to have it. It's like four quarters. St. Anthony, take the dollar.

*(The Man In The Old Coat takes the dollar.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Thank you, James. Thank you. You're a kind man. You keep workin', James. Work hard at that theatre. What do you do at that theatre, anyways?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I cut tickets. I...

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Don't say it, James. Don't say it. 'Cause your not. I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

No. No I am not.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Oh. I better go pound the pavement. Stop botherin' you. I think I'll go get me a Whopper. Yeah, a Whopper sounds might fine right now. Cheese. Tomato, onion, pickles, mayo. You want a Whopper, James? This bus is never on time.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

I'm really not hungry.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

Fine. Fine then. You have a good day at work. Next time the Monkeys have an audition, you sign up right quick. They could use a guy like you. Get yourself on that list. It was nice talkin' to you, James.

THE KID WITH THE COOL SHOE SHINE

My name's not James.

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

And I am not St. Anthony.

*(The Man In The Old Coat tap dances for a moment then stops.)*

THE MAN IN THE OLD COAT

All I want is a quarter.

THE END