

To Hunt a Wild Utopia
A Play on Bicycles
by Dara Silverman
Performed by Agile Rascal Theatre
Bethlehem, PA, Oct. 2019

ACT 1, SCENE 5 - BABY EATERS AND SUNGLASS STEALERS

LOCATION: THE CORNER OF CONESTOGA ST. AND W. LEHIGH STREET

The group encounters THE SIGN SPINNERS, standing on the corner of Conestoga St. and W. Lehigh Street.

SIGN SPINNER 2 holds a big arrow sign that reads CAPITALISM, pointing in one direction.

SIGN SPINNER 1 holds an identical big arrow that reads ANARCHY, pointing in the other direction.

As the group approaches, both call out to the group, trying to get them to follow their sign.

THE SPINNERS

Hey, excuse me! You on horses! Yes you! Are you looking for utopia? A big one? The biggest one! Yes I thought so! Big utopia right this way. So big it could just about swallow you up. Just follow this sign. No, don't follow his sign, follow my sign. His sign is going in all the wrong direction!

THE LEADER

The biggest utopia! Wow! Did you hear that?

THE SPINNERS

So close! You're so close!

THE LEADER

But, which way?

(reading the signs)

Capitalism. Anarchy. Hmm.

SIGN SPINNER 1

Go this way! It's non-hierarchical. Decentralized. Imagine, no bosses!

To Hunt a Wild Utopia - Writing Sample

SIGN SPINNER 2

Don't listen to him! He wants you to go the way of chaos! People running through the streets with no pants on! Burning down houses. Eating babies.

THE LEADER

Eating babies!?

SIGN SPINNER 1

No I don't! Anarchism is actually highly organized. It's about collective decision making from bottom to top! Microcosm to macrocosm. Affinity groups and collective action councils.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Yeah sure. And who's supposed to lead these "action councils" anyway? What happens if people can't agree?

SIGN SPINNER 1

Well, the process of coming to consensus would first have to be defined, collectively, through the process of consensus...

SIGN SPINNER 2

Come on! Get real! You need leaders! You need some kind of government. After all, what if one of your "collective action councils" decided they wanted to...eat babies?

SIGN SPINNER 1

They wouldn't do that.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Wouldn't they? Wouldn't they?

SIGN SPINNER 2 mimes eating babies.

SIGN SPINNER 1

Ugh! No, Accountability is... I mean... basic ethics would... eh... eh... eh... All you care about is money!

THE LEADER

(to THE PARTICIPANTS)

I'm fairly confident that utopia definitely doesn't have baby eating. Let's go that way.

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(points in the direction of the CAPITALISM sign)

SIGN SPINNER 1

Wait wait wait! You want government intervention? Yeah? That's what you're into? Well, what do you think about this?

SIGN SPINNER 1 tears off the label on his sign, revealing SOCIALISM underneath.

SIGN SPINNER 1

Eh? Eh? Yeah! Yeah! Think about it! Even more government intervention. And not just for wimpy things like roads and libraries. I'm talking healthcare, education, housing, distribution of wealth.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Don't you mean REDISTRIBUTION of wealth?

(goes up to a participant)

Sir, those sure are lovely sunglasses you have? May I see them?

(takes the sunglasses)

Oh, you know what? I think this person needs your glasses more than you do. Sorry!

(hands the sunglasses to another participant with no sunglasses)

Did they buy these sunglasses? No! Did they earn the money to pay for them? No. Does Socialism care? Nope!

SIGN SPINNER 1

All you care about is money.

SIGN SPINNER 2

And don't even get me started on taxes!

SIGN SPINNER 1

Wait wait wait. Listen to me. Without intervention, free market Capitalism means that eventually, all the sunglasses trickle up to this guy, while the rest of us go blind!

(takes the sunglasses back, gives them back to their original owner)

THE LEADER

(to THE PARTICIPANTS)

Well I don't want to go blind. Let's go that way.

(points in the direction of the SOCIALISM sign)

To Hunt a Wild Utopia - Writing Sample

SIGN SPINNER 2

Wait wait wait! You do want redistribution of wealth? I hear you. I can work with that. Heck, why stop there? Feast your eyes on this baby.

SIGN SPINNER 2 opens up his jacket, like a man on the street selling watches, revealing COMMUNISM inside.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Check it out! Completely classless! From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. Don't wanna work? Doesn't matter. There's nothing to buy anyway! Sunglasses for none!

SIGN SPINNER 1

Wait a second now, let's be reasonable. I think we can all agree that Socialism is a pretty reasonable middle ground.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Middleground? Middleground! Ugh! Go hard or go home, ammiright???

It's like, do you have private property or don't you?? Do you have a class system or don't you? Is the state in charge? Or are the people in charge?

THE LEADER

Uh, I don't really feel equipped to make these decisions.

THE PROFESSOR

I really think we should get out of here.

SIGN SPINNER 1

Stop pretending that you've got a government run by the people, ya big phoney bologna! You're always squashing dissenters! Killing people and forcing them into hard labor and re-education camps.

SIGN SPINNER 1 tears his pants off, revealing TOTALITARIANISM on the butt of his underwear.

SIGN SPINNER 1

At least I call it what it is! Come right this way folks! You don't like having to think anyway. It makes your brain frowny face. We'll give you a purpose, an identity, a destiny. You might even get a cute uniform.

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SIGN SPINNER 2

You wanna talk cute uniforms? Don't stop there!

SIGN SPINNER 2 tears his shirt off, revealing FASCISM written in on his chest.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Boom! Easiest way to bring people together? A common enemy! I'm talking totally militarized, all out war all the time! The enemy within and the enemy without. I'm talking scapegoating, secret police, victim-blaming, race-baiting! I'm talking eugenics!

THE LEADER

This all sounds terrible! We're way off track.

THE PROFESSOR

Let's get out of here!

THE LEADER

Saddle up! Let's ride!

SIGN SPINNER 2 and SIGN SPINNER 1 continue bickering.

The group heads in a direction that neither sign was pointing, across W. Le High Street.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Wait! Come back! Was that too much?

SIGN SPINNER 1

I'm sure we have a utopia here that fits your needs.

SIGN SPINNER 2

Have you considered Feudalism??

SIGN SPINNER 1

Or Corporatism?

The group rides over the little Main Street bridge to SAND ISLAND PARK.

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THE PROFESSOR rides ahead and stops in front of the Ice House.

As THE LEADER gets back on their horse, THE PROFESSOR approaches.

THE PROFESSOR

Excuse me, excuse me. Would you mind if I asked you some questions?

THE LEADER

You may.

THE PROFESSOR

I wanted to ask you about your decision to pursue utopia here in Bethlehem.

THE LEADER

What about it?

THE PROFESSOR

I was just curious whether you were more influenced by the Moravian movement, or if it was inspired more by the full-blooded Americandreamish-ism of the Bethlehem Steel Mill era. Or maybe it was the more recent revitalization initiatives around the arts and culture?

THE LEADER

No, none of those.

THE PROFESSOR

Well, I must say, for not knowing much, you really couldn't have picked a better spot.

THE LEADER

Well, I didn't pick it. My sources did.

THE PROFESSOR

Well of course, no scholar works alone. We draw from a body of knowledge that has been developing over hundreds, sometimes thousands of years.

THE LEADER

Sometimes millions of years!

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THE PROFESSOR

Yes! Well...I mean, actually no. Or, what?

THE LEADER doesn't respond.

THE PROFESSOR

If you don't mind my asking, what are your sources?

THE LEADER

My sources?

THE PROFESSOR

Yes. Were you informed by something you read? Thomas Moore? Samuel Bellamy? Ursula Le Guin?

THE LEADER

No. I don't know who those people are.

THE PROFESSOR

So how did you settle on Bethlehem?

THE LEADER

How did I settle on Bethlehem?

THE PROFESSOR

Yes.

THE LEADER

Termites.

THE PROFESSOR

Uh, is that John Termites? I'm not familiar with his work. Is it contemporary?

THE LEADER

No, just plain old, creepy crawly termites.

THE PROFESSOR

Termites? Termites! I can't publish a paper about the pursuit of utopia guided by termites! I'll be the laughing stock of my department!

THE LEADER

To Hunt a Wild Utopia - Writing Sample

Listen, I know how this sounds, but you have to believe me. I admit, when I put out the call for applicants, I was having a hard time. I didn't have a job. I was living in a barn. I had stacks and stacks of applications from people who wanted to come on this hunt and I didn't know who to choose. Would we need a butcher? Or a botanist? Did we need a police officer? Or a priest? Should we hunt in the jungle? Or the desert? I didn't know! Sure, I had read the books, or at least their titles, but I didn't know where to begin.

But then one night, as I slept fitfully, the hay poking through my pajamas, I heard the faint rustling of a thousand tiny creatures. I dared not move, terrified they would come and gobble me up. And that night, I dreamt of a thousand tiny creatures, gobbling up the whole world and oozing it out, bit by bit, as something altogether new.

When I woke, the termites had chewed through my books. Out of the stacks of applications, only twenty had big holes chewed through. And those were yours! All of yours! So, I spread out the map of the whole country, and there, where the word "Bethlehem" used to be, was nothing but a big, chewed through hole.

THE LEADER looks to everyone like, now you get it right?

THE LEADER

Don't you see? They know! And they were trying to tell me. All those other attempts at utopia, they were missing something. Sure, they talked a good game of grassroots activism, ground up mobility, but how far down did they really go? People! They started at people! That's the top of the food chain people! If we are really gonna find this thing, if we are really gonna hunt it down once and for good, we gotta start from the bottom. The real bottom. We have to listen. Listen.

THE LEADER drops down to the ground, listens to the earth.

Beat.

THE PROFESSOR

This is ridiculous.

THE LEADER

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Shhh...listen.

Beat.

THE BUSKER pops over the stone wall.