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Conversations with the Singers

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GRACE FARRELL LEE

*Conversations with the Singers**

ONE

Isaac Bashevis Singer is used to questions. They fill his head; they fill the pages of his books; they take up all his time. Each of his stories hones a series of questions to a brittle edge, and then quickly, ever so fleetingly, opens up as if to reveal an answer, but never quite reveals it, only forms another question in its stead.

“You don’t get answers,” Singer tells me. “Questions are all you get.” The last line of “Yentl the Yeshiva Boy” reads, “Truth itself is often concealed in such a way that the harder you look for it, the harder it is to find.” Now that I have come to know the man, I torture him, as he laughingly puts it, with my questions, until he asks with wonder, “Grace, do I know?”

Isaac Bashevis Singer: We talk about philosophers, but I’m more interested now in psychic research. Philosophy is able to reveal that we are unable really to know the thing in itself, but psychic research still gives us hope.

Grace Farrell Lee: Are you involved in the center for psychical research at Duke University?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: No, I’m not involved in it, but I read Professor Rhine and his wife and the proceedings of the Psychic Society. Lately so many books about it are being published that you could spend a lifetime reading them. But I have been interested in this business all my life.

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Grace Farrell Lee: In Hasidic thought time and space don't really exist . . .

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Not only in Hasidic thought, but for Kantian philosophy. They are only categories of our thinking.

Grace Farrell Lee: Does this tie in at all with psychical research?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: In a way it does; in a way it does, sure, because if time and space are only categories of human thinking, and we don't know what thinking itself is, then this gives way to many phenomena. It is a fact that Kant believed in the supernatural. He was interested in Swedenborg, who was a Swedish mystic. There are many things which seem to us to be contradictory, but we discover in nature that they are not. There can, for example, be a God and there can also be evolution. These two ideas, which some people think are contradictory, are not really contradictory in nature. This is true about other things. There is a place for logic and there is a place for the supernatural, for philosophy and for mysticism. All these things go together.

Grace Farrell Lee: You told me that we are always making folklore. Even the patient on the psychoanalyst's couch is making folklore.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: To me psychoanalysis is folklore. Folklore is a grain of truth veiled or mixed with a lot of fantasy; but fantasy itself is a kind of truth. It is eternal truth, although it may not be external truth.

Grace Farrell Lee: And folktales are very often one of the only ways in which we can get that grain of truth.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I think so. I mean, we also get grains of truth from science and mathematics, but this is a different method altogether. With folklore we get it by instinct and feeling. It's a different way of getting at truth.

Grace Farrell Lee: How do you connect folklore and ritual?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: They are very closely related to one another. I don't believe that all the rituals were really given to people by God who revealed himself and told us to do these things. They are also a product of human feelings about the godhead. As far as this goes,

they are actually a form of hope.

Grace Farrell Lee: Is there a power, if not a magic, or some kind of energy involved in just performing a ritual?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: There is psychic energy.

Grace Farrell Lee: And just in telling a story there is some kind of energy involved.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes. It's the same kind of energy. Except in ritual, it may be even stronger because it's repeated by many people, and it becomes more real the more it is practiced. Let's say, if you are a very believing Catholic, then for you the holy communion is very, very real. *Even if others may doubt it, for Catholics, who were brought up in the ritual for years and years, it is real.* The ritual has a kind of subjective reality, and since we don't really know the difference between what is subjective and what is objective, it has reality. I would say that everything we feel is, in some way, real. I also believe that everything which we imagine exists, really does exist. We cannot outdo the creativity of nature. All our fantasies are truths somewhere — if not here, somewhere else; if not on this planet, then on some other planet. If you imagine that you are walking with your head down and your feet up, I am sure that there must be some planet where there are such animals who walk this way.

Grace Farrell Lee: That reminds me of a passage in one of your books, where a rabbi gives four proofs of God. One is that if we can imagine a perfect, almighty being, then one must exist.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Exactly. That's a good idea; it's in my book, or did you read it somewhere else?

Grace Farrell Lee: I think it's in one of your books.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I will tell you, if it's in my book, it's right; if it's in another book, it is absolutely ridiculous.

Grace Farrell Lee: Do you really believe in demons?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I believe in them. I am even afraid of them. When my wife goes out of town to visit a relative and I am alone in the apartment, I leave the light burning because I am afraid of the

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demons. If you are afraid of something, then you must believe in it. Furthermore, it is my deepest conviction that all demons speak Yiddish and all imps speak Hebrew.

Grace Farrell Lee: Who speaks Aramaic?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Aha! The angels. It is written so in the . . . in the Talmud.

Grace Farrell Lee: Were the demons in “The Black Wedding” real?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: In “The Black Wedding” I really describe a case of insanity. She was completely insane. As a matter of fact, part of that story was published in a psychiatric anthology.

Grace Farrell Lee: So the demons were not real?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: No. The whole thing was a delusion.

Grace Farrell Lee: How can we tell?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: The woman saw only evil. Everything was devilish; the whole wedding and every person there was demonic. In such a case, when everything is so one-sided, it must be insanity. However, you can also interpret it differently. I always make these stories ambiguous, so you can explain them either from the point of view of psychology or from the point of view of psychic phenomenon. I don't compel the reader to believe what I believe. I leave a way out for him.

Grace Farrell Lee: Do you remember the advice given in the story “A Piece of Advice?”

Isaac Bashevis Singer: If you are angry, play the part of one who is not angry, and if you play it long enough, you will lose your anger. If you are compelled for a certain time to play the one who is good-natured and if you play this part long enough, you will become good-natured. It is known in the lore of Hasidism that if you have a bad habit and you make believe that you don't have this habit, you cure it by making believe. In other words, as we were saying before, to make believe is a real power.

Grace Farrell Lee: At first I thought that the advice was a bit

hypocritical.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: You thought it meant to flatter everybody for eight to ten days? No, it's not hypocrisy. Actually even life itself is a play. Behind our clothes we're all naked, but we put on clothes and we make believe almost that this is what we are. We forget our nakedness and we see ourselves as always dressed. When you wear a mask long enough, it becomes a part of your face.

Grace Farrell Lee: In *The Manor* the Rabbi of Marshinov gives similar advice about the Ten Commandments.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: You don't have to believe; just keep them and you will begin to believe. How do you feel about the Ten Commandments? Do you think they are good advice?

Grace Farrell Lee: Yes, I do. They seem basic to human dignity. If they were all kept, then the dignity of each human being would be maintained.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: If people would live by these Ten Commandments, if they really would live by them, this world would be a paradise, or at least half a paradise. And if people break them, the world becomes a hell. It is not easy. Not to kill and not to steal for people like you and me is very easy. We would not steal; we would not kill. But there are other commandments which are sometimes difficult to keep. Like not to commit adultery or not to covet other's riches. People are tempted very much. It's not easy. Just the same if people kept all ten of them, life would be almost wonderful. The whole of the Talmud and all of the commentaries are actually about how to keep the Ten Commandments. They look simple, but they are really very profound. It is within human possibility to keep the Ten Commandments, but the Sermon on the Mount is something which we cannot keep. It's almost impossible, the demands are so great. They ask a maximum of ethics: to turn the other cheek and to love your enemies!

Grace Farrell Lee: My students always want to know where Herman is [the polygamous hero of *Enemies, A Love Story*] and now they also wonder where Yentl is [the woman who had to disguise herself as a man in order to study the Torah].

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Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yentl is supposed to be in a yeshiva, if she is still alive. And Herman supposedly either committed suicide or is hiding somewhere in another hayloft. The question is what would happen if Herman should meet Yentl. This never occurred to me. How's about this?

Grace Farrell Lee: I don't think they would get along.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: No?

Grace Farrell Lee: Yentl wouldn't put up with Herman.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Do you think you could put up with Herman?

Grace Farrell Lee: No.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Also not, huh? You wouldn't take him?

Grace Farrell Lee: I don't think so.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Well, there's no danger that Herman is in Connecticut. Too small a state.

Grace Farrell Lee: How do you feel about Yentl. Do you think that she should not have gone to such lengths to do what was forbidden a woman?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I think that every human being must do what they must do. I mean, this is just how she felt. She was a woman with what was then thought to be a man's desires or ideas. She loved the Torah more than the kitchen. Since she could not study the Torah as a woman, she had to dress up as a man, and, having lived among men and having worn this mask for so many years, it became a part of her life.

Grace Farrell Lee: Do you think that she could be happy in her next yeshiva?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I will tell you, no human being is really happy. I don't believe in happy people. People have happy moments, but the course of happiness is not in human nature. At least this is how I feel about it. A person like Yentl could not be happy because, although she is living according to the way she wanted to live, she is

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also a woman and she also has the desires of a woman. I would say the conflict between being a woman and being a man stayed with her for the rest of her life. This is the way I see it.

Grace Farrell Lee: You have a story called “The Psychic Journey.”

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes. This story is half ironic. I feed pigeons, and while I feed them, I find another pigeon feeder and we get acquainted. I carry my magazine about the supernatural and she also carries such a magazine. She makes her living teaching awareness and such things. She persuades me to go to Israel with her, and I go. This is more or less the story. There are all kinds of other things in it as well. In it I make fun of the supernatural and at the same time I show that I believe in it. In this story I am both the scoffer and the believer.

Grace Farrell Lee: In your story “The Seance” you also make fun of the mystics.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Here I also make fun of them. I do so because many of these people are swindlers or they fool themselves. It is only once in a while that they touch on a spark of truth. But in most cases the spiritualists fool themselves. So when I write about this subject, I always try to give both sides of the case, both their belief and their cheating, whether others or themselves.

Grace Farrell Lee: In “The Shadow of a Crib” Dr. Yaretsky has a debate with himself about whether the world is seeing will or blind will.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: He was a complete pessimist and a disciple of Schopenhauer. According to Schopenhauer the essence of the world was blind will, nothing but blind will. He’s actually a materialist. From Schopenhauer’s point of view there is no redemption whatsoever. No hope and no redemption.

Grace Farrell Lee: In this story Dr. Yaretsky somehow did not follow his fated path. He comes back after he dies, looks in the new rabbi’s window, sees the woman whom he didn’t marry and a cradle of an unborn child. Is it as if he had a path which he should have taken, one which the seeing will had set out for him, but which he did

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not take?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I would say, yes. According to this story he feels that he didn't accomplish what he had to accomplish. He made mistakes. He believes in blind will when actually there is sense to the universe. He avoided women because he believed that all women are treacherous, but because of this he avoided a woman fated for him. He had to come back to atone for his mistakes or to correct them. In a certain sense he had to apologize.

Grace Farrell Lee: But do people have one fate which they must live out?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I don't know. I only write the story. I know just as much as you, and maybe less. Who knows, maybe you know something which you do not want to reveal. As I've said to you before, if you could tell me why we are born and why we must die, I could answer all the other questions.

TWO

"He lectures too much," Alma Singer tells me with much concern. "He says yes to everything and tires himself out."

"She lectures me not to lecture," the Nobel Laureate chuckles from the bed on which he is resting. Her concern for him inspires my concern for her, and as she brushes a bug off the bathroom door, I swoop down upon it, to the rescue, slamming my foot where it lands.

"Murderers!" booms an accusing voice. And while I stand horrified and without excuse, Alma Singer tells a story.

"Once it happened that my Uncle Karl, who was also a great lover of animals, was rowing on a lake near Munich. The 'beautiful people' went there; it was a very popular resort. He wore a bathing suit and a raincoat. He put a couch in the rowboat and he took a

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book and he sat in the couch and he rowed himself out. Suddenly he saw a bee drowning. He was trying to save her with the oar when his whole boat tipped over and he fell into the lake. All he could see was his raincoat which was spread like a lotus flower around him. So he swam to save his life. I don't know what happened to the bee."

Grace Farrell Lee: And did you really have pet birds which flew around the apartment?

Alma Singer: We had oodles and oodles of them. One day I came home from work on a winter evening and Isaac said, come into my study and I will show you something. I went in and there was a little bird sitting on a table. It seems that Isaac had gone to the window, and although it was already darkish, he could see that there was snow on the windowsill. Then he saw a little yellow bird sitting there, so he opened the window, and with his hand he pushed the little bird in. Right away it was very much a personality and very much at home. But we didn't know what to do with it. We had never had a bird. We had no cage; we had nothing. So we asked the handyman for help, and he brought an old cage up from the cellar. Isaac gave the bird oatmeal and a little water on the bridge table and the little bird picked at it and ate. The cage the handyman brought up was dirty and had no bottom, so the next day we went out and bought a proper cage for him. And he began to sing and to talk. He was a very intelligent parakeet, that one. And then later, before we went on vacation, we bought him a wife. Isaac said, how can we leave him alone; he has to have somebody to be with. But I will tell you, it went from bad to worse. As long as we had a relative to send the birds to when we were away, it was okay. Then sometimes we found a decent person to take care of them. But most of the time it ended with tragedy. We had to put them into a pet shop or there were people who were not reliable or the bird went under the bed and wouldn't come out or we couldn't find the bird or the bird died . . . there were so many things that when the last one died, I said, for God's sake, no more; I can't take it. You know, you get attached to animals. So the last one lived a long time alone. When he went I said, I don't want any bird anymore. We took out the cage. By then we had a beautiful, big cage. But I do not want a bird anymore. We travel too much.

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Grace Farrell Lee: You came to the United States in 1936 and you met Isaac in 1937. In the Poconos?

Alma Singer: No. In the lowly Catskill mountains. The Poconos would have been one notch higher! It was on a farm.

Grace Farrell Lee: What was your first impression?

Alma Singer: Oh, it was very strange. He was lost! He had on a blue shirt with short sleeves. His white arms had a lot of freckles and he had very red hair — he had a little hair left then. He had friends in a summer colony nearby and he went to visit them, but he got lost. A farmer told him how to go, but somehow he missed the way. He didn't get there. So he came back to where I was and asked instructions. And I thought to myself, that's funny that a young man can't find something nearby. And that was my first impression. We had an occasional meal together, but then he would disappear and go to New York. One day we got into a conversation about literature and right away we agreed on many things, and then we had regular sessions on the porch about literature. That's how we got acquainted.

Grace Farrell Lee: And he used to bring you Emeraude perfume.

Alma Singer: Oh, that was later. Not in the Catskills! . . . We were married in a terrible snowstorm, a real blizzard. I had gotten a new hat and a new dress and I had my fur coat, and still the wind went right through me. We had to battle our way to city hall through snow, oh so high! We were the only couple there.

Grace Farrell Lee: At what point did you know that he was writing really great literature?

Alma Singer: When I read *The Family Moskat* and later *The Slave* I knew that this was the real stuff. How do you know? I can't put it in mathematical formulas; you know through the emotions. It has to do with reading a lot. You know what's good and what is not. I was very enthusiastic about *The Family Moskat*, but for some reason Isaac always picked on that book. He always said, yes, it's a good book, but it has flaws. I thought it was a superb work. And *The Slave* is wonderful, and recently I reread parts of *The Manor*. My favorites are *The Manor*, *The Slave*, *The Magician of Lublin*, *The Family*

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Moskat, "Alone," which is a fabulous story about Miami, "The Admirer," about the woman who comes to the apartment in New York, "The Joke" is very good, and of course "Yentl."

Grace Farrell Lee: I loved "Yentl" on Broadway. When will it be a film?

Alma Singer: I think the job Cheryl Crawford did with "Yentl" on Broadway was superb. She had a good cast; she had a nice theatre; she had nice stage designs and props. Everything was very, very fine. With this we were lucky. We were definitely unlucky in the beginning with "Yentl." This story was originally bought by a man who was a jeweler who had a wife who was a casting director. She foresaw that this would make a wonderful play or a wonderful movie, and she visualized Barbra Streisand in the title role. But for some reason Barbra Streisand postponed it and postponed it. The jeweler and his wife were not rich people, and she felt that unless they had an actress of Streisand's status, with all her theater publicity, that they could not undertake the project. They did not want to risk it with another actress. Finally this jeweler found himself in financial straits, so he sold the story to Barbra Streisand's company. All of this went on for many, many years until one day Isaac gets a telephone call from a young man saying that he wants to do "Yentl" as a play. Isaac says, I don't own it anymore; it's out of my hands; it belongs to Barbra Streisand. But the younger man, Robert Kalfin, was determined to contact Barbra Streisand in hopes that arrangements could be made to let him do it on the stage. And so it was. The only thing was that she did not want to give him the right to do it with music. With music it would have been an even greater success. We were only allowed to put a few notes in. She wanted to have that for when she was ready to do the movie. Anyway now she has begun to do it. She must have bought it a dozen years ago.

Grace Farrell Lee: In his writing your husband always maintains a reverent silence on the Holocaust. *Shosha* comes as close as any of his novels in treating it, and there he does so by omitting it. We see his characters just before and just after what is the central fact of their lives. Can you talk to me about your experiences?

Alma Singer: It's very hard to explain to an American. In

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Germany, where I was born, the Jews felt part of the nation; they were born there, they were raised there. They thought some miracle would happen and nothing would happen to them. But the miracle never came. But still, it was very hard to decide in the middle of one's life to suddenly pick up and go.

Grace Farrell Lee: Did all of your family get out?

Alma Singer: No. My grandmother had a niece in Geneva who was willing to take her. My uncle, Uncle Karl, got out at the last minute. He left penniless because he waited so long. But he was lucky. My father waited too long and my mother didn't make any move to leave. We wrote to them and urged them to leave. We couldn't get them straight to America, so we tried to get them to Cuba. We collected funds from the family and rented a room in Cuba. But my mother never made up her mind, so nothing came of it and they perished. My father was put under such enormous pressure. They said that he should bring foreign funds to the government. He didn't have such funds, but they didn't believe him or made believe that they didn't believe him. They told him that if he didn't raise it by a certain time, he would be deported and my father knew exactly what this meant. Luckily he had a heart attack and he died in his business, surrounded by his employees. Then my mother didn't want to leave. She lingered on. She thought that nothing would happen to her. But the truth was that one morning she was summoned and put on a train and the train left for an unknown destination. I have somewhere a letter. All that is known about it is that this train never arrived. They were in the middle of Poland or somewhere. They pushed them into cattle wagons and then in the middle of a field they were herded out and they were machine-gunned. This is the report we got. So.

Grace Farrell Lee: Yesterday you were talking to me about Oscar Wilde's thoughts on bitterness.

Alma Singer: He said you are lost not if you lose standing or money or anything that you consider important. You are lost only if your soul becomes bitter.

Grace Farrell Lee: It would be a most difficult thing, in this context, in the context of the Holocaust, not to feel bitterness.

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Alma Singer: In two weeks a woman comes here who, with her husband, was rounded up in the night and shot. They fell when the shots rang out and pretended to be dead. When the Nazis left, they waited a while and then they crept out. She's alive. She is here to tell the tale. I would say it's harder for these people to be alive, to have gone through this, to have lifted themselves up from this, than it is for those of us who lost others.

Grace Farrell Lee: A friend of mine, who was in two of the concentration camps as a very young child, firmly believes in God. But I have talked with other people who reacted to the Holocaust by saying that never again will they believe that there is a God.

Alma Singer: No. I stopped believing right then and there. Perhaps I wasn't a very strong believer right from the start, but it all seems so senseless, because what did these people actually do to anybody. Nothing, except that they were born in a religion like you are born in your religion. That's all. This persecution was senseless and was cruel and it just doesn't make any sense. How can you believe in a higher power that lets this happen? After that I said, no more for me. No. No.

Grace Farrell Lee: Herman Broder in *Enemies, A Love Story* thinks at one point that perhaps a Hitler reigns on high, that maybe there is an evil God.

Alma Singer: Well, then again many things in creation are so perfect, so beautiful, that they could not be the product of an evil mind. When we consider the wings of a butterfly or a snail or a stone . . . there is such untold beauty in the universe. There must be something behind creation. I would not call it God. There must have been a power in the beginning, a first cause, and then creation evolved and refined itself. Who did it, or what did it, who knows? Let's substitute Power or Original Motor for God. God connotes a divine person.

Grace Farrell Lee: In your husband's fiction, he asks these questions and he has characters who are filled with doubt and disbelief not unlike your own, but ultimately he believes.

Alma Singer: Yes. He believes.

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Grace Farrell Lee: Do you debate it with him?

Alma Singer: No. I don't like to let him know that I have a contrary view, because those people who believe in God are happier than the ones who doubt. Why disturb him? I think that it's better to leave him his belief that there is a God, that there is a hereafter. Good for him if he feels that way. I just say I don't know what there is.

But I want to tell you something that is very significant to me about destiny in life. Perhaps it is the only really mysterious thing in my life which ever happened. Actually as this thing with Hitler started to get worse and worse, my husband, who was not Isaac, of course, was more alert than I was to the problem. The trouble with me was that I really hated to give up the business. It was a fantastic business which we had in Munich and there already were two children. I thought, only in extreme need will I give this up. Maybe we can live through it. One day I wheeled my baby carriage with the children around a big square near our house. It was a nasty day; there were not many people on the square. Suddenly I saw an elderly man who also pushed a baby carriage. He pushed; I pushed. It was unavoidable — we got into a conversation. While I talked to this man it became very clear to me that we had to leave. Why he talked to me, I do not know. People were already very careful to whom they talked and what they said. He told me terrible things were going on in the east. They were building concentration camps, extermination camps. He said that he had a relative who came from the east and saw all these things. When I heard this I asked him questions, and he said, they are going to wipe out all the Jews. They will all be shipped there and killed. When I came home that day, I said to my husband, I think we'd better make it final. I want to go. But why on a rainy day an old man wheels a baby carriage and comes over to me and tells me this! It does seem like providence. This is the one thing in my life that seems inexplicable, almost supernatural.

Later, when I ask Mrs. Singer if her husband really believes in

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demons, she says, "I don't know. He says sometimes that they are a means of expressing something. Why don't we go and ask him."

Alma Singer: Isaac, Grace wants to ask you something.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: So what is the situation now? Did you get all the information about us? All the intimate details?

Grace Farrell Lee: I know I'm not going to get a straight answer on this one. Actually I wanted Alma to tell me if you really believe in demons.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I absolutely believe in demons and I will give you proof of it right now. I will tell you, it happens once in a blue moon, very seldom, that Alma goes away and I stay home alone . . .

Grace Farrell Lee: I've already published that one.

Alma Singer: This is the one about leaving the lights on?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes. Actually there have been times in my life when I was so afraid of the demons and the supernatural powers that I was half mad with fear.

Alma Singer: You were?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes.

Alma Singer: Not me.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: I will tell you more. Even until today whenever I have the slightest problem I pray God, and I always suspect that the higher powers and the lower powers are after me. Whenever I was in love I always felt there was a telepathic *esprit* between the person and me. I always feel that if I'm angry with a person, this person knows about it, or if I like a person very much, I feel that an *esprit* of sympathy flows between me and him.

Alma Singer: This is true about everybody.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes, but what is true about everybody doesn't make it less true. It's true about all of us. I don't believe in the history of love that any real love affair between a man and a woman

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can develop without telepathy.

Grace Farrell Lee: Did you have this with Alma?

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes. As a matter of fact we have a case where I went somewhere and waited for her and in the most unexpected way she just promptly came there. To the library. Remember?

Alma Singer: This was just an accident.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: You see, she is a rationalist. You call it an accident, but I do not. I feel that streams of knowledge and of love and of hatred and of all kinds of emotion exist.

Alma Singer: I will tell you the way it was. I asked him once, what do you do in New York; where do you do your writing? He told me that he goes to the periodical room on the first floor of the library. So one day, several months later, I decided I would go to that library and maybe by chance I would see him. I found the room and walked in and the first person I saw sitting there was Isaac.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: Yes! But I went there that day with the idea of meeting her! I wouldn't say that this is really evidence of telepathy or of clairvoyance, but I believe that there is no evidence that even love exists or that talent exists. There is no evidence for these things, but these things do exist just the same. I believe.

*These conversations, held in New York City, Miami, and Annandale-on-Hudson, are excerpted from a longer collection, *Isaac Bashevis Singer: Glimpses*.