



Source: James Button, 'Turkey waits at the door as EU argues', Sydney Morning Herald, 03/10/05.
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You're Jewish? said I.

What's wrong with that?

It's unexpected. Out here. You've got goats!

What's wrong with that?

Goats created the Holy Land, said I. Goats ring-bark every tree and eat everything in sight and you know why?

Why?

Because they turn everything into a habitat only suitable for goats. And they stink and the billies put their piss-stinks everywhere...

Like all men.

No, worse, they're like the extreme of men. You're Jewish...

So you said. I killed Jesus, I expect you're going to say next.

Did you? I thought that was the Italians, specifically the Romans, said I.

If you're worried about goats you could fix the holes in the fence...

I can't get over the fact that you're Jewish.

So I see.

I mean. Not many Jews round here. White Anglo Celtic, couple of Greeks raising olives. Chinese folks with their restaurant in the bowling club.

You could just say I'm ethnic.

Do you feel...alienated here?

What, in this conversation?

Maybe I'm Jewish myself. My mother was adopted. She never knew her mother.

You're not Jewish, maybe a Jewophile.

Well I like you, said I.

That just means you're bright.

So are you a hundred per cent?

Jewish? That is a very offensive question.

I mean do you identify as Jewish, were both your parents Jewish?

Even my goats are Jewish. My fence is Jewish, speaking of which.

Do you...practise?

Are you religious?

Me? said I. Don't change the topic.

You brought up religion.

The topic is you.

The original topic is fences and goats.

You are beautiful. Like Bacall.

What is your Bacall thing?

She was beautiful, said I, she chose a crotchety old bugger who smoked himself to death and said things like 'Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she had to walk into mine.' She reminded me of you.

Since you didn't know me when you first fell for her, maybe I remind you of her.

Different sameness, said I.

I like that. Different sameness.

You can use it.

Thanks. So can you.

It's mine.

So it's original?

I can't remember. The old brain injury, you know, got it in the war.

The Arab-Israeli War?

Maybe the Suez War, said I. So, you're Jewish.

What's wrong with that, eh? Different sameness.

No, it's like being at the single most complicated locus of ideas and conflicting discourses in the history of the world. It's like being responsible for everything, and yet victim of everything. It's like having your mother and eating her too. It's like you're someone I have to pretend is just like everyone else because you are and yet you're not you're this—single most complicated locus et cetera

and so on and so forth.

That was impressive. Maybe you are Jewish.

Maybe, said I.

So is that a yes?

To fixing the fences or marrying you?

Marriage.

Ah, said I, hmm.

So you're brain-injured, said she.

What's wrong with that?

It's unexpected. Out here. You have to manage your cattle.

What's wrong with that?

Cattle have to be counted, and drenched and checked and moved from paddock to paddock. You need...memory.

I have some memory. I have systems.

And you're cocksure, like all men, that'd help. Brain-injured...

Yeah. I masturbate in public, you'll be saying next.

Do you? I thought that was the Yanks, specifically the Californians, said she.

If you're worried about my cattle you could keep an eye on them yourself...

I can't get over the fact that you're brain-injured.

So I see.

I mean. Not many like you around here. Do you feel...alienated here?

What, in this conversation?

Maybe I've got a brain injury. I'm always forgetting where my keys are. Dad used to say I was dropped on my head as a kid. Repeatedly.

You're not brain-injured, maybe a village-idiotophile.

Well I like you, said she.

That just means you're dim. Who's being offensive to Jews now? Conflating brain injury with Jewishness, it sounds to me.

I'm allowed to offend Jews, I'm Jewish.

Even your goats are Jewish.

Don't change the topic. The topic is you. You don't sound like someone with short term memory problems.

The original topic is Lauren Bacall.

And that crotchety old Bogart bugger, said she. You remind me of him.

That's my intention.

Said she: so, you've got a brain injury.

What's wrong with that, eh? Different sameness.

No, it's like being at the single most complicated locus of emotions and conflicting desires in the history of the world. It's like being responsible for nothing and victim of everything. It's like watching Freud have sex with your mother and getting the joke. It's like you're someone I have to pretend is different to everyone else and yet you're not. You're this...single most complicated locus, et cetera, and so on and so forth.

That was impressive.

Ta, said she. So is that a yes?

To fixing the fences or marrying you?

Marriage.

Ah, said I, hmm. What was the question? The old brain injury, you know, got it in the war.

The Arab-Israeli War?

Any and every war ever. Any and every victim. Lot of brain injuries in war.

Well?

I don't know, said I. Do we have clarity yet?

It's going to be a long day, said she.

You know, there's a lot more of us around here than you think, said I.

Ditto, said she.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by John O'Brien.