

## Epilogue

*To my son Joseph*

*October 1995*

Dear Joseph:

This letter is about the disposal of my body after my death, and some wishes I have concerning this matter that hopefully will involve your cooperation.

In my current Will I request that my body be cremated privately, without benefit of any religious service, or any ceremony whatsoever. I don't at all mind some of you having a drink afterwards, but no more than that. The problem is I forgot to say what to do with my ashes, and that is what this letter is really about.

Something has to be done with them. The undertaker will put them in a pot and hand them over to you if he is not instructed to do otherwise, for example, store them at an annual expense in some place or other. It is illegal to scatter the ashes on land or sea, other than beyond the territorial limits. So, it is likely that you will take the pot home and put it on the mantleshelf or in the basement or attic (if you have one or the other). Sooner or later your current wife or girlfriend will scream at you that the presence of your father's ashes gives her the creeps; and when you are not looking she will dump me in the garbage, or worse, down the toilet.

I don't look forward to this, so I have a proposal and will leave you money to put it into effect.

What I want you to do is to tell the undertaker to do a good job. He must first remove my dentures in case they won't make fine ashes, and ensure that no pieces of bones are left. Pay him to do the job twice if necessary. Then take the ashes and break them up into a number of little piles and package them somewhat like drug dealers do with grams of coke. I don't yet know how many packages you will need; you will have to use your noodle and work that out. Maybe you can keep some in reserve.

Now, I'm sure you remember your recent visit to London for my exhibition at the Tate Gallery and how I took you around to various places that I have known since my childhood. One of them was

Westminster Abbey, which impressed you mightily, especially the tombs of the various kings, queens, nobles, and famous people buried in the chapels, walls and underneath the floors. Of course, I can't be buried there because first of all I'm not Church of England. Jews, Catholics, Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, and strange Protestant sects like Mormons or atheists have to go elsewhere. Secondly, you have to be famous in the United Kingdom, or find another spot that will have you (for a fee of course). To be sure, unlike the USA the Brits allow your ashes to be scattered in the landscape.

Now, there is no way I can get into the Abbey by the front door. What I want of you, dear boy, is to get me in via the back door. Take a packet of my ashes to the Abbey. Have a good look around. As I told you, a substantial part of the various buildings and those surrounding the quadrangle are nearly nine hundred years old. Look for an interstice, or hole somewhere in the structure, open the package and pour my ashes into it. Please don't let any one put you off, especially in England, by saying that a more suitable place for an atheist Jew would be Highgate cemetery where Freud is buried. We had enough of Freud in my lifetime. Please make sure that the spot you pick will allow the ash to be permanently resident somewhere in the Abbey structure. Whenever you visit London you can then come and say hello to me.

Of course there are now a number of other packets to be deposited elsewhere. The next city is Paris, and I want some of me buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery, the last resting place of many of the most famous French artists, poets, and writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. This will be an easy job. Make a reconnaissance of the cemetery. Look for the grave of some one you think I would like to be near, and dig a little hole in the grass and put me in it. The hole must be deep enough, so take a child's shovel concealed on you.

I'm not too keen on the United States. If you insist on depositing some of me here then the only place that I will be comfortable in is one of the great Native American mounds. However, either of the great Mayan Temples in Guatemala or Mexico is mandatory. For the moment I can't remember their names, but it is easy to find out if you ask any one who has some knowledge of the Mayans.

There are a number of other places that are mandatory: the

Taj Mahal in India, the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka (a Buddhist shrine); the Parthenon in Athens; one of the Pyramids in Cairo. (The temple building of the Parthenon is fenced off nowadays but there are ample grounds abutting it. Maybe you could bribe someone to get you inside. Anyway, being my son I'm sure you'll be able to sort out something suitable. There are conducted tours to the chambers inside the pyramids. You may have to go twice to find a suitable spot.) Then there is the question of Jerusalem. Please, Joe, not the Wailing Wall. I can't stand all those black coated and bobbing hatted Jews wearing black shoes with soles made thick enough to last twenty years. Try Absalom's tomb, just outside the city's medieval walls. (He was the third of King David's sons and slain by Joab.)

I have no interest in Eastern Europe, Germany, or the Scandinavian countries. I don't care that much about Spain or Portugal. Italy is mandatory, but where? Florence, Rome, Venice? All are more than welcome to have a little of me. I especially like Venice, but there is the problem of flooding. You will have to do a reconnaissance, and decide where I will be most comfortable. Forget Australia and New Zealand. However, there is the question of Capetown, where I spent part of my childhood. I would like you to take the cable car up Table Mountain and find a nice place with a view.

I have never been to China or Japan, so I can't advise you where some of me should be placed. I'll make some enquiries, and see what I can find out. Will let you know.

Now, one last matter of some delicacy. It's the question of your Mother. I think it would be nice if you bought a beautiful silver locket and chain, and put a little of me inside, and offered it to her. I don't know the best way you could approach her to find out if I would be welcome. However, the last thing in the world that I want when I'm dead is trouble, so probe delicately into the matter, always bearing in mind that I want to Rest in Peace.

*Good Luck!*