

absolutely nothing, but I flipped violently to the page all the same and there at the top, (*And he reads in his houseplant book—*) “Zebrina Pendula, Latin for the common houseplant *Tradescantia*” ... and then...a shiver...for in parentheses...“also known as...the Wandering Jew...”

I swallowed hard. For in a little-used musty little corner of my head, I remembered hearing something once about a myth of a Wandering Jew. Oh Great Guns! In a flash I dashed to the card catalog, “move out of my way, Brody,” and “damn it, Brody, this is *more* important,” and “oh wouldn’t *you* like to know,” and “scramoosh, scramoosh, goodbye, scramoosh” ...made sure the coast was clear...went straight to the drawer I needed, because I’m clever...*and found it.* (*And he demonstrates a tattered library catalog card.*) *Tales of the Wandering Jew.*

As the story goes, and it’s been going for centuries, there once was a cobbler, a Jew, kept to himself, never married, stayed out of trouble, living in Judea, around thirty-six anno domini, although no one in the world knew it was thirty-six anno domini...not knowing there was a *dominus* in their midst to make it anno domini. And can you blame them. Would *you* recognize a miracle if you saw one? What if you think, “Oh, I’ll never see a miracle.” Or what if you think, “well at least I’m sure I haven’t seen one yet.” What if...you’re wrong?

It was April, hot day it was in Judea, the smells of the Pesach meal the night before still lingering, and he, our Jewish cobbler, at work with awl and

lace, in his little shop, on a shoe—when there was a terrific shouting and haroo outside his window. He went out on his front step and there on the street, a procession of soldiers and convicted men toting their crosses, no doubt to Golgotha. The cobbler had seen it all before, and had little to say about it—like I said, he minded his own affairs. When suddenly, one of the frailest and sorriest of the convicted lot collapsed, right there, right on the steps, right by the door of our cobbler. The name of the collapsed man was Yeshua, and he was a mess. Well. “What do I do,” thought the cobbler. Underneath the lintel, he stood. The lintel. The top of the doorframe. He stood under it. Yes? Good. Underneath the lintel he stood. Not lentil...*lintel.* You have to understand this or all is lost. Underneath the lintel he stood, and tussled with his quaking brain. “Let him lie on your step a minute, let him catch his breath, it can do no harm.” But already the Roman soldiers were pressing this Yeshua to get up, and telling the cobbler to cease in this aiding and abetting or he’d have to answer for it himself *with a cross of his own!*, and the cobbler was shot through and through with fear, he had a great fear of the law, you see, and a greater fear of death, and his hand was forced besides, and he thought, “I don’t know this Yeshua, he’s probably a thief, a murderer even, although he doesn’t look like a murderer, but a troublemaker no doubt,” and this was trouble the cobbler could do without, so the cobbler says to this Yeshua, he says to this man with the cross...“get off my step...go on...move on...enough tarrying...do your resting somewhere else!”...

And this Yeshua did get up, calmly, and turned to the cobbler and said— "I will go...but you, you will tarry til I come again."

And off he went, and there we go, and the cobbler didn't think twice about that little episode, and he lived to be an old man and knew his end was near, which was fine by him, by now he was sick of living. He got ill...wrote out his will...and then... he got well. Lived a few more years, got sick again, called everyone to his bedside...and then...fie upon it, he got well again. And then he began to notice an even curiouser phenomenon. He noticed, upon reaching the age of eighty, that instead of appearing older, he was looking, well, younger. And he suddenly got the urge to go for a walk, and he left his house and was never seen by his family again.

For fifty years he lived in this vagabond state, incognito, getting younger all the while, and then, he started to get older again, which went on for fifty years, and then, younger again, and fifty years of that, and on and on, older, younger, older, younger. And by this time there was more than a little groundswell claiming that this man Yeshua with the cross was more than he seemed to be, indeed...indeed, that he was the son of God...of all things...and that He would come again at the end of days as the long-awaited meshiach, and the cobbler hearing these rumors began to put two and two together, what was it that that Yeshua said? "I will go, but you, you will tarry til I come again." Holy Scamander, it all made sense to him now. He was going to be stuck on this lousy old

earth until the Second Coming. "So there was a God after all," he thought. Well that's Good. And God had it in for *him* specifically. Not good. Bad. Really awful. For over time, this Jew discovered two stipulations of this unique curse which made the thing more than unbearable. One—that he may never rest. Physically impossible for him. That means never sleep. Never lie down. Never sit down. Never kneel. Could he lean? A little. But just a little. So that's one stipulation, and not very nice—I mean...sitting down...it's a wonderful thing, a little rest, when you're exhausted, it isn't asking much, and if you're not allowed to sit, you become *beyond* exhausted, you just want to stop, for a moment, and if you can't stop, then at least crawl, on your knees, but if you're not allowed to crawl, then you just want to die, and if you're not allowed to die.... It's grisly. But Number Two Stipulation is just as worse, in a way, and it's this—the Jew *can never identify himself*. He is never allowed to confirm his own existence to his fellow man. He can be nothing more than a myth, whether he's a myth or not.

Now then. Let's get one thing absolutely clear. The Wandering Jew *is* a myth. Not the houseplant, mind you. No—

(We see a slide of houseplant.)

—this is a picture of the houseplant, and as you can see, the tendrils are, shall we say, wandering, from the pot, yes, and so it became known as the Wandering Jew. And this is a picture of it. And it's mine. A documented photeygraph of the Wandering Jew *Zebrina Pendula* houseplant.