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The Grinder Baruch Espinosa
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THE GRINDER BARUCH ESPINOSA

The lenses he ground refracted another world, not the musky woods far beyond Amsterdam that surreptitiously opened into gently rolling plains of bare brown earth, muddy black in some places, dry and burnt umber in others; not the heavy gray haze of fetid air that sat on the landscape and made mystery of bogs and grainy trees on the canvas of the Dutch painters; not canals whose brackish waters twisted past silvery bridges and sly alleyways and gaudy gabled houses that would some day sequester Anne Frank until her forced liberation into the woeful world outside; not the bearded stooped elders of Rembrandt's vision with their own eyes socketed in sorrow and even a little fear as they proclaimed the law of the outcast against his way of seeing; but a world that transcended earth, air, water, fire—even people—and posited a God that would not be moved from stasis to concern Himself with any human thing, much less the grief of a mere stripling of twenty-six repudiated by his people.

Moses said to God, destroy me but do not harm your nation; Spinoza might have said the same had he thought that God was listening.

Still he prospers in our minds like Moses who alone saw the nape of God's neck and the holy knot of the dark phylactery; without Rembrandt's skills, Spinoza missed the finer faces, but with his ground lenses and his lipping soul he peered, in a stupor of joy, beyond the red blood of men and the golden glow of women and the shifting kaleidoscope of the shaded world into the colorless black hole eternal of God.