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# Today

by CHARLES L. MEE

---

Music.

A guy brings out a wooden box  
and puts it down  
and throws 15 or 20 wine bottles into it  
throws them so hard they all shatter  
and then he sticks his head down into the box  
and does a head stand  
and he gets a guy to stand on his neck  
or the back of his head  
to shove his head down hard into the box  
and then he stands up  
and his head and his face are covered with blood  
and it wasn't a trick  
he didn't have a trick  
he just cut himself up all over his head.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

Music.

People come through  
from one side to the other,  
in and out:

The five year old girl,  
eating an ice cream cone, smiling,  
sitting in a red wagon pulled by her father.

A golf cart, driven like crazy by a caddy,  
while, in the back,  
a couple embraces passionately.

A couple being pulled along on a picnic blanket  
with food and a champagne bottle in a bucket,  
and she is drinking and drinking and drinking the champagne.

An electric wheelchair—  
a man driving,  
a woman sitting on the handlebars,  
she running her fingers through his hair over and over and over.

A skate board,  
with a woman lying on her back on the skate board  
as a man twirls it round and round in ecstasy.

A silk sheet, with silk pillows,  
she lying back in her lingerie  
he taking photos of her.

A homeless guy with cart of stuff.

A man and woman on a bicycle built for two—  
one peddles while the other eats pizza.

A woman onlooker speaks:

TILLY

I would eat tarte tatins  
and drink Chateau Neuf du Pape

and sometimes a glass of rose  
sitting in the garden in the afternoon  
and, if it wouldn't hurt too much  
or become a habit leading down the path to hell  
I'd like to have just one cigarette every day  
or even one every other day  
with an espresso, in the café  
one of the cafes  
and then I'd drive out to the hospital  
where Van Gogh spent that year  
painting the cypresses and the olive trees  
and you think:  
he was crazy  
and pathetic  
what a tragedy  
how he suffered  
but you know  
he turned out a hundred a thirty paintings  
or a hundred and forty paintings  
or, like a hundred and forty three paintings  
like he turned out a painting every two and a half days  
for a year!  
that's where he turned out The Starry Night!  
I don't even mention the olive grove  
or the field with the red poppies  
and that's what I would do  
I would be a painter if I could even just hold a brush right  
if I just had enough talent to dip a brush into some paint  
and slather it on the canvas  
because that is a perfect life  
you just get up in the morning  
and you get your cup of coffee  
and you wander into your studio  
and whatever catches your eye is what you do  
you think  
oh, that painting I was working on yesterday  
that could use a little splash of red up there near the top  
and so you dip your brush into the paint  
and you splash some red

and then a little yellow  
some green here over on the right  
you think  
okay  
I could put a sailboat up there in the sky  
and then you have another sip of your coffee  
and you notice the little ceramic vase  
you had been working on the day before yesterday  
and you think  
I could put some kind of flat, muted purple  
right there where its stomach bulges out a little bit  
and then you see that drawing  
that fell on the floor  
off that table down near the other end of your studio  
and you go to pick it up  
and you just can't resist  
doing a little something to it  
adding a little picnic table to the landscape  
and by the time you finish that  
you find yourself down at the other end of your studio  
near the door out onto the terrace  
so you go out onto the terrace  
and sit at the little table there overlooking the vineyard  
because by then it's time for lunch  
and your husband brings you a sandwich  
and maybe a little glass of beaume de venise  
and after lunch  
you make love for the rest of the afternoon.  
That's the life I have in mind.

[And a guy standing on a kayak  
that is on wheels  
paddles himself in one side and across the stage  
and out the other side

as 4 dogs  
or 15 dogs  
come through in the opposite direction—  
well trained dogs crossing the stage independently,  
or dogs on leashes with a guy taking them across the stage.

Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.  
Music.

And a solo dancer in a red dress comes out  
and a guy comes out  
and another guy in a suit  
and people come in from every direction  
—all sorts of people,  
a construction worker, a pole dancer, a secretary  
and all 10 or 12 of the people  
are making the same gesture together,  
scattered all over everywhere  
dancing the same gestures and moves  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
dancing  
and the music is wild  
and then they all just walk out.  
And two guys are left on stage.

EDMUND

I think you are lying to me, Herbert.

You are always lying to me

because you wish something would be true

but it isn't.

You are a weak spineless person, Herbert,

feckless, feeble and ineffective.

But I love you like a cicada.

HERBERT

A cicada?

EDMUND

Yes.

HERBERT

Like a grasshopper you mean?

EDMUND

Do you know what a cicada is?

HERBERT

I thought I did.

EDMUND

There was a time long ago, in prehistoric times

when cicadas were human beings

back before the Muses were born.

And then when the Muses were born

and song came into being

some of these human creatures were so taken by the pleasure of it

that they sang and sang and sang.

And they forgot to eat or drink

they just sang and sang

and so,

before they knew it,

they died.

And from those human creatures a new species came into being  
the cicadas  
and they were given this special gift from the Muses:  
that from the time they are born  
they need no nourishment  
they just sing continuously  
caught forever in the pleasure of the moment  
without eating or drinking  
until they die.

This is the story of love.  
If you stay there forever in that place  
you die of it.

That's why people  
can't stay in love.

But that's how I've loved you.  
And how I love you now.  
And how I always will.

Edmund turns and walks out.  
And after a minute Herbert follows him out,  
not to catch up,  
just because he has nothing else to do.

Music.  
Men and women run through in their underwear,  
running back and forth  
and one by one  
and two by two  
begin to dance to the music.  
music.  
music.  
music.  
music.  
music.

music.

music.

music.

music.

So we have The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

The Underpants Dance

and then they all run out.

Two women are left on stage.

HIROKO

I'm glad to see you again.

CATHERINE

So you say.

And yet

I don't know how it could be true.

HIROKO

How could it not be true?

CATHERINE

Because if you were glad to see me

you would never have left me.

HIROKO

Of course I would.

CATHERINE

No, because

if you love someone



you don't leave them.  
You hold onto them for dear life  
you hold onto them forever  
unless you are a stupid person  
which I don't think you are  
so  
what else can I think  
except you never really loved me  
I was just another one of your flings along the way  
whereas I loved you  
I knew  
if you love someone  
you don't let them go

HIROKO  
And yet you did.

CATHERINE  
I never did.

HIROKO  
You said:  
if one day you are going to leave me  
then go now  
don't just keep tormenting me.

CATHERINE  
And so?

HIROKO  
And so.  
It's not that I left you.

CATHERINE  
Excuse me.  
I didn't leave you.  
And yet, you are not with me.  
What else happened?

HIROKO

It turned out  
we were at different points in our lives  
we couldn't go on.

CATHERINE

I could have gone on.

HIROKO

Shall we talk about something else?

CATHERINE

I see  
in the world  
people have wars and they die  
entire countries come to an end  
Etienne has died of cancer

HIROKO

I didn't know.

CATHERINE

How could you?  
And yet  
there it is.  
And one day I will die  
and so will you.  
And yet  
you could leave me.  
I don't understand.  
I will never understand  
how it is if you have only one life to live  
and you find your own true love  
the person all your life you were meant to find  
and your only job then was to cherish that person  
and care for that person  
and never let go  
but it turns out  
you can still think

for some reason  
because this or that  
you end it  
you end it forever  
you end it for the only life you will ever live on earth.  
Maybe if you would be reincarnated  
and you could come back to life again and again a dozen times  
then this would make sense  
to throw away your only chance for love in this life  
because you would have another chance in another life  
but when this is your only chance  
how can this make sense?

Do you think  
there will ever be a time  
when we could get back together?

HIROKO  
No.

CATHERINE  
Not ever?

HIROKO  
No.

CATHERINE  
Not ever at all  
even ever?

HIROKO  
No.

CATHERINE  
And yet  
this is so hard for me to accept.

More than anything  
I love to lie in bed with you at night

and look at your naked back  
and stroke your back slowly  
from your neck to your coccyx  
and let my fingers fan out  
and drift over your smooth buttock  
and slip slowly down along your thigh  
to your sweet knee  
only to return again  
coming up the back of your thigh  
hesitating a moment  
to let my fingers rest in the sweet valley  
at the very top of your thigh, just below your buttock  
and so slowly up along the small of your back  
to your shoulder blade  
and then to let your hair tickle my face  
as I put my lips to your shoulder  
and kiss you and kiss you and kiss you forever  
this is what I call heaven  
and what I hope will last forever

[Hiroko stands to leave]

HIROKO

I love you, Catherine.  
I have never loved anyone in my life as I have loved you  
and I know I never will.  
But we cannot be together.

She leaves.

A guy comes in with a wrecked, ruined tiny car  
full of crap  
boards and canvases  
with awful Pollack like random scrawls of paint  
and more smeared, dirty paintings and sculptures  
that he takes out of the car  
and puts leaning against the outside of the car  
and

finally

gets a sign out of the car and leans that against the car, too,  
a sign saying ART FOR SALE.

A bunch of people come in  
one by one or two by two  
and watch the guy put together his art gallery,  
and some people bring in chairs  
and little round café tables  
and eventually everyone sits at the tables  
watching him  
and then starting a conversation.  
The conversation is a dialogue between two people  
of the sort we hear often in cafes,  
but in this case  
the two-person dialogue is spoken by  
eight or ten people  
in four or five different couples,  
paying attention only to the person they are with,  
not to the other people who are also talking.

TESSA  
James?

JAMES  
Tessa.  
Oh.

EDNA  
Have you found Amadou?

BOB  
Amadou? Oh.  
I don't know how we will ever find him.  
The truth is I feel lost myself.

LILY

You're always lost.

It's your most reliable quality.

You're lost when you drive a car.

You're lost when you walk on the beach.

You're lost in your own thoughts.

If you weren't lost

no one would ever know where you were.

HENRY

Right.

Still

I hope we find him

for Meridee's sake.

TESSA

She'll be better off

if he's lost forever.

JAMES

How can you say that?

EDNA

Here is a guy who

the moment he meets his fiancée's family

he turns around and runs away

and then

what?

he's going to make everyone run around and look for him

so that everyone gets lost?

BOB

Maybe sometimes it's not bad to be lost.

To be reminded how it is to step out into the unknown,

because,

whether a person is afraid or not

there is a certain sense of exhilaration

that comes from just throwing yourself into new territory

it sets you free.

TESSA

It does?

HENRY

Of course it does.

And what is life without an adventure?

EDNA

A guy will always say to you:

let's have an adventure,

when what he means is

he doesn't have a clue

where he is or what's going to happen next.

And then pretty soon he will end up asking you to marry him

because he doesn't know what to do next.

JAMES

It may seem like that

but it may be also that he knows

if I'm going to set out into the unknown

this is the person I'd like to set out with

because

even though she may seem a little

I don't know cynical and unromantic even

that could even be a good quality

when you need to face the difficult things in life

and even though it may seem she thinks the whole idea is

uh bullshit

that could just be coming from the place in her

that is vulnerable and scared

and you can tell

underneath that protective layer

there is a person who really wants something wonderful too

in life

and wants as much as you do

a life that is

thrilling.

LILY

Really?

BOB

Yes.

EDNA

I don't know if I'm the sort of person  
who just relishes an adventure  
in the unmarked trails of the wilderness.  
I like the well-lit avenues  
with street signs at every corner  
a destination known in advance  
and an up-to-date detailed map.

HENRY

Life doesn't come with maps.

LILY

Right.

JAMES

You can't let anxiety and fear and suspiciousness  
and a lack of trust  
yes there it is let's face it  
a lack of trust  
run your entire life  
sometimes you have to let go  
and just put yourself into freefall.

EDNA

You'll be there to catch me.

JAMES

Right.

[Ariel enters to the side.]



ARIEL

Are you proposing to me?

JAMES

Proposing to you?

LILY

Proposing marriage to me?

GEORGE

Oh.

Well, yes,

proposing marriage to you.

Yes, I guess I am.

EDNA

Out of what?

All of a sudden what?

Out of anxiety?

BOB

I think we're a couple,

so maybe we should be a couple.

TESSA

We are a couple,

we are a couple,

we are each other's significant other

ED

What is that?

EDNA

We can be together

but I don't think we can be engaged, or married

JAMES

We could be together:

what would that be like?

LILY

We could be like Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre.

JAMES

Jean Paul Sartre?

HARRIET

We go to cafes together  
we walk around together  
we talk a lot  
sometimes we sleep together  
just not the bourgeois marriage thing.

GEORGE

Because?

TESSA

Because  
what is marriage anyway  
if it isn't just part of the whole apparatus  
of the control of people by  
I don't even mention the patriarchy  
but think of it  
of control by the state  
an arrangement where  
the only way out of this system of self-policing  
is in fact  
adultery  
or murder  
an arrangement where  
the whole population just willingly gives itself up  
to an intensely repressive social order.  
I mean  
think of it:  
imagine that society is required to create certain  
character types  
and personality types  
in order to achieve its goals of stability and order.  
And ask yourself

what mind-altering substance  
could possibly compel an entire population  
to submit to such total social integration  
without even noticing it was happening  
without uttering the tiniest peep of protest?  
What possibly could do this better than  
love  
and marriage?

No.  
We can be together,  
this is good to be together  
but  
marriage....  
I don't think so.

[she turns and leaves]

ED  
Oh.

ARIEL  
James?

BOB  
Oh! Ariel!

HARRIET  
I didn't mean to surprise you.

JAMES  
No. No.  
That's OK.

LILY  
I just....  
I couldn't help but....  
Seeing you standing here

feeling lost and abandoned  
my heart just  
went out to you.

BOB  
Your heart?

HARRIET  
I couldn't help but feel  
knowing how it is to feel suddenly abandoned  
I couldn't help but feel  
such tenderness for you.

[he looks around— who's speaking here?]

JAMES  
Oh.

LILY  
It's confusing I think  
when a person steps into the middle of nature.

ED  
Right.

TESSA  
There are no guideposts  
and all the rules are off.

[he looks around again]

GEORGE  
Exactly.

ARIEL  
You think you carry civilization with you  
wherever you go

BOB  
Right

HARRIET  
and yet when you are in the middle of nature  
and it's beautiful  
so lovely it makes your head a little light  
and you think  
oh, well  
nature!

GEORGE  
That's true.

HARRIET  
and so you just lose your head.

I just  
it's just  
everybody went running out of the house  
all of a sudden  
everything fell apart  
suddenly we're in the wild.

HENRY  
Right.

LILY  
And a person could feel totally unhinged.  
I saw you here  
you seemed so sweet and vulnerable  
I thought:  
am I falling in love with you?

ED  
You did?

LILY

Is this just a feeling I never knew I had  
and all at once  
for no reason that I know  
now I know it?

BOB

You do?

ARIEL

Sometimes I think no one knows what they are doing  
they just do it  
and then they wonder and wonder.  
All they can do is wonder.

GEORGE

Yes.

Yes.

[Ariel kisses James.]

JAMES

Oh.

[A guy with a bird for a head enters,  
looks around at everyone who is there.]

And now we hear an American musical song from the 20s

and the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music

the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music  
the birdhead dances to the music.

A three hundred pound guy  
in a wife beater undershirt  
steps out on stage.

[Or, this could be done with a video projection  
with the people at the café tables watching.]

His hair slicked back, he's wearing sunglasses,  
and, if this is done in video projection,  
he sits in a black leather desk chair in his office,  
with shelves with stuff on them,  
papers on the table next to him,  
his shirt tossed over something behind him.

He speaks:

Hey, the big man's back. [www.thekidfrombrooklyn.com](http://www.thekidfrombrooklyn.com).

You know, the big man got up this morning  
you know I felt like having a hot cup of coffee  
and a piece of pound cake  
I wound up in one of them Starbucks you know  
I knew the joint wasn't right soon as I walked in you know  
I seen these people sitting on couches  
lounge chairs  
whatever they were fucking drinking  
they looked like fucking ice cream cones  
fucking mounds of fucking whipped cream  
and fucking all kinds of shit on top you know  
finally I get up to the girl  
she says you want an el grande?  
you want a chocolate latto?  
carmelo latto?  
cherry lite?  
I say listen honey  
I don't know what kind of fucking place this is  
I just want a large fucking coffee  
and a fresh piece of fucking pound cake you know

she says that's seven dollars  
plus she had the fucking balls  
to have a fucking tip cup over there  
she expect me to give her a fucking tip  
I says seven fucking dollars for a fucking coffee  
and a fucking pound cake?  
fucking stick it  
I went right around the corner to fucking Pancake House  
I take an oath to my mother  
I take the fucking breakfast special  
two eggs over, home fries  
bacon, sausage, two pancakes  
all the coffee you can drink  
threw in a shot of fucking OJ  
and for an extra buck and a half  
they gave me a fucking cheese danish  
I walked out of there fucking stuffed  
cost me eight and a quarter for the whole fucking ball o' wax  
I could have eat the rest of the fucking day  
what's a fucking working man supposed to do?  
you go to one of them fucking Starbucks  
the poor working guy  
what do they think they're fucking serving over there?  
fucking liquid gold?  
fucking cup of coffee and a piece of pound cake  
for seven dollars?  
stick it up your ass, fucking Starbucks!  
what about the fucking working man?  
anyway, thinking about it  
this is the old Big Man  
[www.thekidfrombrooklyn.com](http://www.thekidfrombrooklyn.com)  
and the Big Man's always happy to see you.

The people at the café tables leave  
one by one and two by two  
and come back right away  
with a billion musical instruments



so they are a giant orchestra  
but they don't really play these instruments:  
they make amazing sounds with them  
ending with a Big Noise

Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise  
Big Noise

and, while they play,  
a couple keeps falling down a set of two or three steps  
like rag dolls

and then  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
a blonde sings a duet with a guy  
in the midst of the Big Noise

and the whole crowd joins in the singing  
singing  
singing  
singing  
singing  
singing  
singing  
singing  
singing

and finally  
one woman's harsh almost screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
screaming singing  
dominates the room  
and the others stop singing one by one  
and stop making noise with their musical instruments  
one by one  
and finally  
people begin to leave one by one  
and the very last guy tries to stop her screaming singing  
so she kicks the shit out of him  
gets him down on the ground  
pounding and kicking him  
while she finishes the song

and then she gets up and leaves angrily  
and he pulls himself together more slowly  
and finally is able to leave.

A woman comes in and puts a soft cello case over her back  
so she looks like a cockroach

and a guy steps through a door and sings a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song

a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
a love song  
and we see  
on his T shirt it says:  
(with an arrow pointing up)  
the man  
(and with an arrow pointing down)  
the legend

and the woman does a cockroach dance on the floor.

While the guy continues to sing  
another woman tap dances  
and another woman in bikini underwear runs in and out  
left to right  
right to left  
a guy ditto

A ballet dancer goes through doing high kicks

and a woman in a nice black dress  
with a living room floor lamp  
walks around with the lamp,  
not knowing what to do  
so she finally dances with the lamp

And a guy in underpants wearing a crown  
and covered in gold leaf  
sits down and eats a sandwich

CATHERINE

More than anything  
I love to lie in bed with you at night  
and look at your naked back  
and stroke your back slowly  
from your neck to your coccyx  
and let my fingers fan out  
and drift over your smooth buttock  
and slip slowly down along your thigh  
to your sweet knee  
only to return again  
coming up the back of your thigh  
hesitating a moment  
to let my fingers rest in the sweet valley  
at the very top of your thigh, just below your buttock  
and so slowly up along the small of your back  
to your shoulder blade  
and then to let your hair tickle my face  
as I put my lips to your shoulder  
and kiss you and kiss you and kiss you forever  
this is what I call heaven  
and what I hope will last forever

HAROLD

I listen to your voice, I think  
I could nestle right into it,  
I could crawl right up inside it  
you take me to a world that frankly  
seems not altogether rational to me  
more a world of tarot cards and chakras and the I Ching  
mystical stories and folk tales  
I guess I'm saying stories from the heart  
I could get happily lost in your world  
just letting go of my mind  
and feeling your sweetness and your vulnerability  
your tenderness and frankly your generosity  
your lack of judgment of me  
even though  
or even at the same time really

that you were raking me over the coals  
at the same time not holding it against me  
as though it were some final judgment  
sending me to hell  
but just speaking the truth  
that seems so generous to me and ultimately loving  
in the deepest and truest sense  
that I have to say  
I've come to think of you almost as a mountain.

Like a mountain rising up from a lake  
smooth and soft  
covered with fuzzy fir trees  
but solid rock underneath  
strong and everlasting  
the valleys and crevices  
the swelling softness  
the little village on the shore  
nestled into the mountainside  
secure, protected  
settled there for eternity  
on the breast of the earth.  
I look at you, I think  
Mother Earth.

ARIEL

I love you, with all my heart.  
I love your hands and your kneecaps and your hair and your ears  
and I love the way you are sweet when you are sweet  
and the way you fuck up  
because even when you fuck up  
and it makes me so mad  
you are actually so incompetent at it  
such a wild, untargeted loser that I love you  
because I think the reason you are such a loser  
is that your heart is good  
and so you can't hit the bullseye  
when you are acting like a nasty shit  
so that people don't have to take it seriously

and they can just wait till you realize  
how wrong you've been  
and also right  
also right  
because I don't think you are a pathetic loser  
that people love out of pity  
or because they want to be with some weak  
useless guy they can manipulate  
you really are a winner  
because of your heart  
which is always there  
and when you come around  
we all see it  
and see you always were a good human being.

HAROLD

People are unique, each one of them.

I knew a fellow  
who used to go to a bar in Oregon  
where he knew a couple of women  
who were willing  
to go up to his hotel room with him  
watch him strip naked,  
get into a tub of bath water,  
and walk back and forth.  
His only request was that the women  
would throw oranges at his buttocks  
as he walked back and forth.  
Then he would get out,  
pick up the oranges,  
put them in a paper bag,  
get dressed,  
and leave.  
That's simply how it was for him  
how he was able to connect to another human being  
in an affectionate way.  
This went on for some years  
this relationship among the three of them.

In a sense, you might say,  
this is the way in which they were able to constitute a human society  
in which they felt comfortable.  
Freud never explained that.

MARIA

Sometimes a woman likes sex,  
and not always something gentle and considerate  
sometimes a little wild or it could be ridiculous  
like a ride on the handlebars of a bicycle  
and therefore she will do something wrong to have this  
and not be very proud of having done it  
but not be needing a lecture afterwards  
from a person pretending to be a sort of moral authority  
or even actually being a sort of moral authority  
but even if he is  
being a little boring and depressing because of it  
a little like a heavy thing  
as much as she hates to say it  
because she may feel this person is a really good person  
deep down  
deeply good and kind and considerate  
and deserving real love in return because of that  
not just some stifling person who ought to be snuffed  
but in his own way  
even if it is not her way  
in his own way even lovable  
but possibly lovable by someone else.

[A homeless guy sits against the back wall  
drumming on rusted cooking pots  
and plastic wastebaskets  
with metal drumsticks—  
drumming  
drumming  
drumming  
drumming

drumming  
drumming  
drumming  
drumming  
drumming  
fantastically well.

While he drums  
men and women  
solo  
and in pairs and groups  
all in their underwear  
run and dance through  
again and again  
pairs run around and around in circles  
with arms outstretched, smiling happily  
running in pairs and groups  
solo runners  
parting and returning together  
everyone smiling  
2 guys jump up and down  
up and down  
up and down.]

MOLLY

Did you hear about this two ton guy?

PETER

Two tons?

MOLLY

About two tons, something like that, you know, like 240 pounds, five feet four, who didn't want to admit he was fat and so he wore clothes several sizes too small for him. He had a 44 inch waist but he wore pants size 38, and he choked himself to death on his shirt collar. One minute he was eating spaghetti with his fork and the next minute he was on the floor gasping for breath, and his shirt was so tight no one could get it unbuttoned. He died with a forkful of spaghetti in his hand.



[SILENCE]

I knew this guy who killed himself with his pants.

PETER

How did he do that?

MOLLY

He let them get so tight they choked off his circulation and he had a heart attack.

PETER

You mean he gained weight?

MOLLY

Sure.

PETER

A lot of weight.

MOLLY

I don't know. I guess so.

[Silence]

Did you hear about the little girl who fell into the washing machine?

PETER

I don't think so.

MOLLY

This is a true story. She was, like, 2 years old, and her mother had gone to take a shower, so she climbed up to look into the washing machine and she fell in and turned blue and her eyes were glassy.

PETER

Did she die?

MOLLY

No.

PETER

That was lucky.

MOLLY

That's like this guy who's a champion skier who skied off a natural little ski jump and landed head first in a snowbank and suffocated to death.

PETER

Sort of like that.

MOLLY

There was another guy.

PETER

This isn't going to be another story about death, is it?

MOLLY

No. There was a guy who died—I mean it starts out about death, but then it doesn't stay there. There was this guy who died but then he came back to life...

PETER

I think I've heard this story.

MOLLY

Wait. He came back to life and this is how he proved he had died. Wait a minute. Start it this way. There was this kid named Charan Varma from India who claimed he had been killed by British soldiers in 1857 during the Sepoy Rebellion. He said he had been shot twice in the chest, and slashed over and over with sabres after he was dead—by British soldiers (I don't know why)—and nobody believed the kid, so he led four archaeologists out to this grave where they dug up a mummified corpse that had the fragments of two bullets in the chest and markings on the rib and legs and arms consistent with stab wounds and sabre slashings. And this corpse had on the remains of a uniform worn by sepoy soldiers.

[silence]

FETER

Well. So.

What did he learn from the experience?

MOLLY

Learn from it?

PETER

Has he learned anything from coming back to life?

FIGLLY

Well.

He forgives the British.

PETER

Unh-hunh.

Really, nobody knows whether he was telling the truth or he had already been out in the field, happened to dig up a body in a shallow grave, see the uniform, and make up the story.

MOLLY

Sure, anything is possible.

PETER

Yes, well, some things are more likely than others.

MOLLY

Sure. That's what makes this such an amazing story. This is the first time anyone has proved there is life after death.

[A guy sings a love song into a mike

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

while he wears a roller blade on one foot

and he goes in circles

while  
a man and woman at a table  
eat rice cakes and spit them out  
as they sing with the guy  
and, now and then,  
throw cotton candy and cake at each other.]

EDITH  
Do you believe in love at first sight?

HAROLD  
No.

EDITH  
Neither do I.  
And yet there it is: I'd just like to kiss you.

HAROLD  
Oh.

EDITH  
I think for me it took so long to be able to love another person  
such a long time to grow up  
get rid of all my self-involvement  
all my worrying whether or not I measured up

HAROLD  
Yes.

EDITH  
or on the other hand  
the feeling that perhaps other people were just getting in my way  
wondering if they were what I wanted  
or what I deserved  
didn't I deserve more than this  
to be happier  
is this all there is

HAROLD

Right.

EDITH

Or I thought

I need to postpone gratification

and so I did

and I got so good at it

I forgot how to seize the moment

HAROLD

breaking hearts along the way if someone else was capable of love

at that earlier age when you weren't

EDITH

exactly

and now I think: what's the point of living a long time

if not to become tolerant of other people's idiosyncrasies

HAROLD

Or imperfections.

EDITH

you know damn well you're not going to find the perfect mate

HAROLD

someone you always agree with or even like

EDITH

and now you know that

you should be able to get along with someone who's in the same ball park

HAROLD

a human being

EDITH

another human being

HAROLD

because we are lonely people

EDITH

we like a little companionship

HAROLD

just a cup of tea with another person

what's the big deal

EDITH

you don't need a lot

HAROLD

you'd settle for very little

EDITH

very very little when it comes down to it

HAROLD

very little

and that would feel good

EDITH

a little hello, good morning, how are you today

HAROLD

I'm going to the park

OK, have a nice time

I'll see you there for lunch

EDITH

can I bring you anything?

HAROLD

a sandwich in a bag?

EDITH

no problem

I'll have lunch with you in the park

HAROLD

we'll have a picnic

and afterwards

I tell you a few lines of poetry I remember from when I was a kid in school

what I had to memorize

EDITH

and after that a nap or godknows whatall

HAROLD

and to bed

EDITH

you don't even have to touch each other

sure, what

a little touch wouldn't be bad

HAROLD

you don't have to be Don Juan

have some perfect technique

EDITH

just a touch, simple as that

HAROLD

an intimate touch?

EDITH

fine. nice. so much the better.

HAROLD

that's all: just a touch

that feels good

EDITH

OK, goodnight, that's all

HAROLD

I'd go for that.

EDITH

I'd like that.

HAROLD

I'd like that just fine.

EDITH

I'd call that a happy life

HAROLD

as happy as it needs to get for me

EDITH

Sometimes in life

you just get one chance.

Romeo and Juliet

They meet, they fall in love, they die.

That's the truth of life

you have one great love

You're born, you die

in between, if you're lucky

you have one great love

not two, not three,

just one.

It can last for years or for a moment

and then

it can be years later or a moment later

you die

and that's how it is to be human

that's what the great poets and dramatists have known

you see Romeo and Juliet

you think: how young they were

they didn't know



there's more than one pebble on the beach  
but no.  
There's only one pebble on the beach.  
Sometimes not even one.

[Repeat the lovely dance of the red dress woman  
from early in the piece.

She joined by all the other dancers.

And then the whole stage floor is covered in paper  
on which the dancers draw with pencils  
and blood red and black ink with a sponge  
so in the end you have a raked stage floor that looks like  
an Arshile Gorky painting.

The red and black ink runs down the rake into the gutter  
as almost all the dancers leave.

A woman lifts her dress up above her head  
hiding her upper body entirely  
exposing herself from the waist down  
and takes a long, slow exit.

So, alone, covered with red and black ink—  
after a pervasive feeling of tragedy has overcome everyone  
spattered with blood and dirt  
looking wrecked  
a couple dances on  
really tenderly  
and lovingly  
to a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo

a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo  
a heartbreaking piano solo.

The End.

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